

THE JOYBELL

The Baptist Church of Grafton

An American Baptist Church

Dr. Frank Armstrong, Interim Pastor

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Message from Pastor Frank

“Nothing that is worth doing can be achieved in our lifetime; therefore we must be saved by hope. Nothing that is true or beautiful or good makes complete sense in any immediate context of history; therefore we must be saved by faith. Nothing we do, however virtuous, can be accomplished alone; therefore we must be saved by love.”
--Reinhold Niebuhr, *The Irony of American History* (New York: Scribner, 1952).

This happens to be one of my most cherished quotes written by Reinhold Niebuhr. I was privileged to hear it spoken during my time as a student at ANTS where we were able to take courses at Harvard Divinity School as members of the Boston Theological Institute (Professor Reinhold taught at HDS). What always strikes me is that portion which states, *“Nothing which is true or beautiful or good makes complete sense in the immediate context of history; therefore we must be saved by faith.”*

Who among us would deny that one of the greatest treasures we embrace is our faith? It is not in the things we own, the status we have attained, the number of friends we have, or the money we acquire. No, it is in that upon which our **ultimate concern** is focused! Think about this for a moment.

For example: many people play the lottery and few win. Those who win will tell you having millions of dollars is a real treasure. Not all would dispute this. But lottery winners will also tell you there comes some big problems with big winnings. One man won the Powerball ten years ago and now blames it for his granddaughter’s fatal drug overdose, divorce, hundreds of lawsuits, and no friends.

If you say “no” to requests, there are hard feelings. One winner said they rode a roller coaster of feelings, from joy to anxiety, guilt, and distrust.

A serious disease will quickly drive many to embrace the reality that health is the most important thing in life – bar none! But in a world where life is unequivocally unfair, we cannot rely on living without all those unexpected happenings that drive us into despair.

But the treasure of the **Resurrection** and the words of the **Gospel** are worth more than all the money in the world- giving joy and salvation. If you share that faith, you are investing it wisely so others might come to believe and be saved. And the great thing is the treasure never is depleted. Best of all, millions have the treasure of eternal life, while only a few will ever have millions from the lottery –let alone a life lived without hurt and heartache. Thank you God for staying beside us on our Emmaus roads of life! Yes. “Faith is the Victory.”

Post Easter Blessings,

Pastor Frank

Central Massachusetts Baptist Association Annual Women’s Association Prayer Breakfast

On **Saturday, May 6** women from all over Central Mass will be gathering for their annual Prayer Breakfast. This year the event will be held at the First Baptist Church of Fitchburg. **Registration** begins at 8:30 am with **breakfast** served at 9 am. The key note speaker will be Pastor Ken Whitson. The cost of this event is \$6. Please speak with Pat Knowlton if you would like to attend. There is a sign-up sheet on the Clock Table and carpools can be arranged for those who would prefer not to drive to Fitchburg.

Mission Committee Report

Please look at the new copy of International Ministries Newsletter “On Location” –it’s on the Mission Table in RFH.

The Committee designated the remainder of April and May for **Church World Service “Blanket Offering America”**.

Thanks to generous donations to Planned Missions in the weekly offering envelopes and money raised at the Missions Soup Supper, we had a healthy balance in our funds available in April. The Committee members voted to give \$50 to each of the 21 organizations that we had not yet sent money to this year.

Donation List:

Local Missions:

Grafton Food Bank, Grafton Community Harvest, Friends of Grafton Elders, Worcester, County Food Bank and Project New Hope, Worcester.

American Baptist Churches of Massachusetts (TABCOM):

Central MA Baptist Association, Friends of Regional Ministries, American Baptist Women's Ministries, Campus Ministries and Lanier Mission House.

Regional Baptist and Ecumenical Ministries:

All Hands In, Seafarers Friends, The Massachusetts Council of Churches, The Northern Baptist Educational Society, The Massachusetts Baptist Charitable Society, Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, Pastoral Counseling Center of Massachusetts and Heifer International.

American Baptist Wider Mission:

Murrow Indian Children's Home, Rev. Hector Newman-Honduras and Brian Smith Mission to Haiti

Diaconate Report

The Easter Season at the Baptist Church of Grafton was a success. From Lent through the days and Sundays with Pastor Frank to Palm Sunday, and Easter week we celebrated God's message. An Anabaptist Maundy Thursday service, the viewing of "The Passion of Christ," the Good Friday evening service, and Easter Morning were a complete success of the message of the Christian Faith. Thank you to those who ordered and arranged the Easter lilies and to those who took the plants to our shut-ins and others in the Church family. The Deacons continue their ministry with visits to both our shut-ins and those recovering from falls and health issues.

The monthly Prayer for our Search Team:

Lord, we pray that our search team will find godly contacts and friends as part of their search. May these new friends be encouraging, and strengthen their resolve to bring to us a pastor. Help our search team provide us with a pastor that will bring us more of the fellowship we enjoy today with perhaps new wonderful meaning. Amen

Philippians 2:19–25 "But you know Timothy's proven worth, how as a son with a father he has served with me in the gospel." —Philippians 2:22

From Grotonwood: A message to our youth and for all of us:

Jesus, we pray that we all will use discernment in the use of email, the internet, and other media. Guard our hearts with the use of free time. Amen

Pastoral Search Committee

On **Sunday, May 7**, we will all be gathering after Worship to work on our Church Profile. The work will start after a catered luncheon so that everyone can enjoy the meal and

then work on the project without the worry of dishes, pots and pans. If you haven't already signed up, please let Ruth Ballantyne know that you are planning to attend so she can be sure there is plenty of food.

The purpose is to gather data to help the Committee complete a profile of our church and its people. Our goal is to hear from as many members and friends as possible – you do NOT have to be a member to participate. Your input is critical to the search process whether you are an established member or have just started to attend services with us.

There are three things to remember:

1. This is everyone's chance to participate in the search process.
2. The session should last no longer than 90 minutes.
3. Lunch will be served

We look forward to talking with you on the 7th!

Finance Committee Report

The Finance Committee discussed the Church's income and expenses at its April meeting. These are the revenues for and costs of operating the church. The amounts below are for the months of January - March:

The main message about the Church's financial situation as of the end of March is that while we are doing well, this is due primarily to having a part-time pastor.

Year to Date Income

Actual	Budget	Difference
\$21,689	\$22,139	-\$449

Year to Date Expenses

Actual	Budget	Difference
\$19,612	\$20,896	\$1,284

Many thanks to all who have contributed to the financial health of our church. Also, thank you to the church's committees who are managing their spending carefully.

Property Committee Report

Property Committee met and discussed the following at its April meeting:

- Welcome to Sam Greenberg who is considering joining the Committee.
- Tom Hodgdon attended the meeting representing the Deacons as there have been several suggestions from the Deacons as to things that need attention at the church building.
- Parsonage lawn has been dethatched with the Church paying for half and the Frost paying the remainder. This will encourage better lawn health. The Frosts will be responsible for mowing the lawn.
- John Renaud and Allan Bolivar will be correcting the dryer venting issued at the Parsonage.
- The fire escape inspection remains. A call has been placed to get this inspected to conform to new Town requirements.
- Barry will gather the necessary facts to present to the Board of Directors the proposal for installing LED lights in Russell Fellowship Hall. One concern is the length of time necessary to break even as the present lights do not burn out often.
- **Date for All Church OUTSIDE Clean-up will be Saturday, May 20.** At that time we hope to accomplish garden cleaned up, edging of walks, lawn raking and repair from snow plow damage, work on handicap-accessible ramp, cleaning out window wells, washing siding, putting down the screens and similar chores. The Committee hopes that there will be lots of help available to get this accomplished in a short amount of time.
- Committee would like to purchase a sign that could be put up at church to temporarily advertise special events. Prices will be gathered. Also a replacement sign needs to be created to indicate that we have an interim pastor. Barry will ask the Frosts if this is something that they can make for us.
- Replacement of the Men's Room floor and reconfiguration of the room is still under consideration. Al Harvie will be asked to provide an estimate of cost and date when work could be started.

Christian Education News

Christian Education met and discussed the following at its April meeting:

- Spring yard sale to support our Campership Fund
- Donna Nichols and Leta Delong-Stochaj will be leading a music program for our young people on a regular basis. This will be a time to learn some of the old songs and introduce new songs. The opening program for youth will work on the songs over the following weeks and hopefully will share them with the Congregation on Children's Day and similar occasions.
- Susan has proposed buying some new supplies such as flannel board and char-

acters to help the nursery class understand the Bible stories covered in the curriculum.

- Children's Day will be June 11 with a picnic/cook-out after Worship on our side lawn. We have been offered a grill to keep in the shed for occasions like this which will be a great incentive for more picnic type activities when good weather permits.
- Several of our youth attended the Spring Awakening and were able to share their spiritual growth during Morning Worship. It was a very rewarding time for those who heard their message.
- Camperships will be increased this year to help with the cost of camp. At present there are two teens who have expressed an interest in attending Grotonwood, Susanne will discuss the Leadership Development Program with the camp director at Grotonwood. She will also find out if LDP training is still happening at Oceanwood.
- Susan Searles is hoping to recruit more people to share the Children's Message. Please speak with her if you are able to share a moment with our youth. She has several books, websites and ideas for stories. Share your light!!
- Tuesday Bible Study class is finishing its study of II Corinthians. This group meets on Tuesday nights and welcomes everyone who is interested in growing their understanding of the Bible and their faith.

Campership Yard Sale and Mission Luncheon and Bake sale

Congratulations to the hardworking people who set-up, baked, prepared food, acted as salespeople and then cleaned up after our very successful Campership Yard Sale and Mission Bake Sale/ Luncheon. Susan Fleming Susan Searles, plus Marcia Kamilewicz and Everett Beaman were the chairs this year and did a wonderful job.

The Sunday before the sale tables were brought upstairs to hold all the clothes that had been donated. On Thursday a tireless team of peelers and pie assemblers met under the direction of Pat Knowlton to bake apple, strawberry-rhubarb and plain rhubarb pies in preparation for the bake sale. Friday there was a flurry of activity as the tables were covered with a wonderful assortment of donated items from small to big for the yard sale. There were toys, games, household goods, craft items, clothing, hats and bags linens and much, much more. On Saturday, under beautiful sunny skies shoppers arrived seeking bargains and treasures. Saturday afternoon a dedicated team packed away the remainders and helped deliver them to a variety of places that could use them. At the end of a long day the grand total was \$1500. The Christian Education Committee added \$795 to the Campership Fund and the Mission Committee added over \$685 to support designated missions. Campership fund also received money in the morning offering which brought the total to \$880.

Congratulations to everyone on the hard work and the amazing results! When we all work together we can certainly create miracles.

Richard's Swedish Meatball Dinner

On Saturday, May 20 our chefs will be offering you a wonderful down-home dinner of Swedish Meatballs with all the fixings. This, of course, will be accompanied by our famous and delicious dessert buffet. The donation remains the same – just \$12 for adults. We will begin serving at 5:30 so be sure to be there promptly to get a seat. Please call the church office [508-839-4911] to make your reservations or sign-up on the reservation sheet in Russell Fellowship Hall. As with all our events, reservations are critical to enable us to provide adequate food for those attending.

Important Dates for May

1	Monday	~	6:30 Long Range Planning with Meredith Christian
2	Tuesday	~	5:15-6:15 AA Reflections Group
		~	7:30 Bible Study with Meredith Christian
4	Thursday	~	9:30 Prayer Time in the Sanctuary
5	Friday		12-9pm TABCOM Annual Gathering
6	Saturday		7am-3pm TABCOM Annual Gathering
			8:30am Women's Prayer Breakfast - Fitchburg
7	Sunday	~	Sunday. 10:00 Worship Service to God's Glory, Sunday School classes for our youth. <u>Meeting/lunch with Pastoral Search Committee following Worship.**</u>
		~	11:30 Choir Rehearsal with Pat Knowlton
8	Monday	~	10:00 Mission Committee with Garfield Atchue
9	Tuesday	~	5:15-6:15 AA Reflections Group
11	Thursday	~	9:30 Prayer Time in the Sanctuary
13	Saturday	~	9:00-2:00 Quilt Class with Paula Moore
14	Sunday	~	Sunday. 10:00am Worship Service to God's Glory, Sunday School classes for our youth. Coffee Fellowship following Worship.**
		~	11:30 Choir Rehearsal with Pat Knowlton
15	Monday	~	7:00 Board of Directors with Bert Engvall
16	Tuesday	~	5:15-6:15 AA Reflections Group
		~	7:30 Bible Study with Meredith Christian
17	Wednesday	~	3:00 Worship Service at Crescent Manor
18	Thursday	~	Prayer Time in the Sanctuary
			7:00pm Property Committee with Barry Keith
20	Saturday		9 am Outside all church clean-up Day
		~	5:30 pm Richard's Swedish Meatballs Dinner
21	Sunday	~	10:00 am Worship Service to God's Glory, Sunday School classes for our children and youth. Coffee Fellowship following Worship.

		~	11:30 Choir Rehearsal with Pat Knowlton
		~	11.30 to 12:30 Pastoral Parish Relations Committee
22	Monday	~	7:00 Deacons with Tom Hodgdon
23	Tuesday	~	5:15-6:15 AA Reflections Group
		~	7:00 Christian Education Committee with Susan Searles
25	Thursday	~	9:30 Prayer Time in the Sanctuary
28	Sunday	~	10:00 am Worship Service to God's Glory, Sunday School classes for our children and youth. Coffee Fellowship following Worship. **Sandwich Sunday**
		~	11:30 Choir Rehearsal with Pat Knowlton
29	Monday		Memorial Day – Church Office will be closed
30	Tuesday	~	5:15-6:15pm AA Reflections Group
		~	7:30 Bible Study with Meredith Christian

Every Week in MAY

- **Worship Service to God's Glory, 10:00am**, with Childcare and Sunday School Classes for children in Nursery through High School. Church Family Fellowship Time with refreshments following the Worship Service.
- **Deacons for the Month** – Meredith Christian and Barry Keith
- **Tellers for the Month** - Shawn Searles and Janice King
- **Church Office Hours** are Monday – Friday with the Church Secretary 9:00 am–11:30 am.
- Call the Church office for the Pastor's hours.

Graduate Search

We are planning to **celebrate our High School, College and Graduate School Graduates in the June Joybell**. Please help us to collect the names of the graduates in your family, both near and far away. Here's what we need to know about each student: **their name, school from which she or he is graduating, degree being received and future plans.**



Sunday, May 14 is Mother's Day! Bring your Mother or a special person who has been like a Mother to you to church with that day to celebrate Mother's and all they do for us! We will save a seat for her!

