

First Congregational Church of Braintree

“Not just good works, but God works!”

Inside this issue:

Women's Prayer Break-
fast 3

Annual Meet-
ing Minutes 3

Sodalitas News 4



Community Inter-Church Lenten Worship Scheduled Again This Year

In the spirit of community outreach and extending a worshipful hand to our neighbor Congregational churches in Braintree, the Diaconate of First Church is once again joining with the Diaconates of Union and South Congregational Churches to sponsor a series of Wednesday evening Lenten Pot-Luck dinners followed by Lenten Worship. The services will be led in a rotation by Pastor Scott Killian, Rev. Richard Hotchkin, and the new interim pastor at Union Congregational. Last year's services were such a success that we enthusiastically join in again this year. The first in the series begins on Ash Wednesday, February 17 at South Congregational Church, at 6:30 p.m.; Pastor Dick is preaching. The remainder of the schedule is:

| | |
|-----------------------------------|----------------|
| February 24: First Congregational | Interim Pastor |
| March 3: Union Congregational | Pastor Killian |
| March 10: South Congregational | Interim Pastor |
| March 17: First Congregational | Pastor Killian |
| March 24: Union Congregational | Rev. Hotchkin |

Host churches are responsible for desserts and beverages. Main courses and salads are supplied by everyone. Plan to attend one evening, or as many as you like. Please join us as we enter into this, the most holy of Christian seasons, with our Congregational sisters and brothers in Braintree, worshipping the glory of Christ in fellowship together.

First Congregational
Church
12 Elm Street
Braintree, MA
02184
781-843-3616

Richard E. Hotchkin
Pastor and Teacher

Dr. Paul Kaatrud
Director of Music

Carole Morse
Administrative
Assistant

Worship Service and
Church School
Sunday Morning
9:30 a.m.

Office hours:
Monday—Friday
9:00 am—2:00 pm

Email:
firstchurchbraintree
@beld.net

Help Wanted for Marian Heath Greeting Cards

Since the passing of Norma Johnson, First Church needs someone to take over the maintenance of the Marian Heath greeting cards. The job involves selling the cards on Sunday mornings after church, and maintaining inventory by ordering the cards, and keeping the rack stocked. The proceeds — 50% of each sale — go towards paying down the remaining balance on the reconstruction of the roof. It does not involve a lot of work, just a small commitment of time. If you are interested in taking over this job, please call the church office.



FROM THE PASTOR

Are we not all like Peter? We are fond of Jesus, as was Peter. We count ourselves among his disciples. We would not hurt Jesus. In fact, we work for his cause - in church and in our homes. We give money - too little it is true, but we do

give something for his kingdom. But there is a limit, as there was for Peter. We dare not risk all. At some critical moment, we may, like Peter, deny Jesus. We may not say openly, "I never knew him," but by our silence and our shoddy behavior, we in fact let Jesus down.

The risks for Peter were high. Warming his hands before the fire that Thursday night, had he admitted to being Jesus' disciples, Peter may very well have been crucified too. Rarely are the risks that great for us, if ever. Our denials therefore are more shameful than his.

That tragic night before Jesus' crucifixion, seeing Jesus and hearing the cock crow three times, Peter did repent. He went out and wept bitterly. It is at this point where we may part company with Peter. Denying Jesus, as Peter did, we may nonetheless go our casual way and do nothing about it. We may feel no shame, weep no tears, and go on through life denying him again and again. For Peter, the denial was a transformative moment. He was never the same again. He became a leader of Jesus' followers, and died rather than letting him down again.

It was after the resurrection that Jesus asked Peter, "Simon, son of John, do you love me?" Three times Jesus asked it, and three times Peter answered, "Yes, Lord, you know that I love you." Jesus said, "Feed my sheep." He entrusted his kingdom to Peter.

And Jesus entrusts his kingdom to us, who like Peter, may fail him. It is Christ's way. He sends no angels to take over if we fail. He forgives, and forgives, and forgives - and keeps on trusting us to carry on. This is the risk Jesus has been willing to take. He counts on you and me with all our weaknesses to carry his mission to all the world.

Yours in Christ,

Pastor Dick

Women's Prayer Breakfast to Benefit Interfaith Social Services



Saturday, March 13, 8:30 a.m.
St. Ann's School Hall

1 St. Ann's Rd., Wollaston

All women are invited to join in a morning of prayer, music, and fellowship. The guest speaker is Linda Erickson, former Regional President of The Church of Jesus Christ's Relief Society. She currently serves as Committee chairperson for the 2010 New England Family History Conference.

Tickets are \$12.00. See Grace Reinelt, or call 617-773-6203, for reservations.

Annual Meeting Minutes

Sunday, January 31, 2010

The meeting was called to order at 10:55 a.m. Forty-three members were present, representing a voting quorum. The Moderator opened the meeting by asking Pastor Dick to give an Invocation. The Clerk read the Articles for the Call to Meeting.

Nominations: The Moderator referred everyone to page 26 in the Annual Report saying that everyone had "rolled over"

in their respective duties for 2010 with the exception of new members on Diaconate. **The congregation unanimously approved the 2010 slate of nominees as presented.**

Treasurer's Report:

Treasurer Diane Francis reported that all invoices were paid up through January, and there is a healthy balance in the operating account. To meet all fiscal obligations, the church borrows some monies from the unrestricted investment funds. **The congregation unanimously approved the Treasurer's Report.**

Trustees Report: Carl Francis, Chair of Trustees, referred everyone to the Trustees Report published on page 24. He asked how do we create a balanced budget. He said it was a happy day to come to this acknowledgement and the willing determination of the congregation. Instead of presenting the traditional Trustees report, it's time for the congregation to think about the church's future. He congratulated Moderator Rick Durham who communicated this difficult issue in a letter sent to the full congregation. The meeting today is not about the past or people - but about financials and the future. The congregation has

lots of choices spiritually as there are plenty of churches and a temple in town. We could go bankrupt. We could become a completely commercial operation, and rent a church in another location. There are many ideas to mull over, but we will not be making any decisions today. We need to base our future discussions on a common assumption. ***Carl asked the congregation to vote on a motion that we remain a Christian church in a Congregational tradition. This motion passed unanimously with no dissent.***

The Moderator pointed out that we are still losing more than \$50,000 per year even though expenses have been cut to the bone. That leaves staffing and programs. We need to meet on a monthly basis to discuss finances. He asked the congregation to vote on a motion to meet once a month to discuss financial issues. Diana Watson asked how long we would meet. The Moderator said initially through April, but it could go on indefinitely. Don Porter spoke to say there should be a tight timeframe to deal with these urgent is-

(Continued on page 4)

(Continued from page 3)

sues. Trustee Glenn Holton spoke up saying the Trustees have taken on the burden of the legal, financial, and property responsibilities of the church, but now they need the congregation's involvement and help. We are a small congregation now of 133 members. The Moderator said there were only 17 families in our church in the late 1800's, and we have come a long way building it and bringing presence and joy to the community. Janet Holton said maybe we should think of raising money to close the deficit? The Moderator acknowledged her suggestion, and said it would be brought up at the next meeting. Jane Elliott agreed with others that we should put a deadline on these meetings. Don Porter thought we should meet every couple of weeks. Craig Barnes said a timeframe with a plan ready by April 1 would be ideal. Sarah Shepherd asked about using technology - such as blogs - to communicate about ideas with each other. It was later decided that comments and ideas should be emailed or called into the Moderator since

most members don't have access to newer forms of technology. **The congregation unanimously approved meeting to discuss financial issues as a group. The next meeting was scheduled for Sunday, February 7 after church in Fellowship Hall.**

Carl Francis said that 66% of the budget is staffing; 28% is property-related, and 6% is programs. This makes it clear we'll need to look at changes in people and property. This may include practical ideas like a part-time pastor. Doris Baier asked that notes be taken at future meetings involving the church finances. The Moderator agreed.

Doris Baier addressed the congregation. She said it was difficult to say this since Pastor Dick had done a wonderful job counseling her family when family members had passed away, but she felt it was time we move to a part-time pastorate. Perhaps members could rotate visiting the sick? Perhaps Don Porter could be used as a triage for those needing counseling.

Nancy Mills brought up the idea of selling the parsonage. The Moderator said we made that mistake twice in the past, and we won't dump a property

in a bust market. Housing is a key bargaining chip. We need to look long-term. Don Porter confirmed the Parsonage is a tangible asset of the church. Trustee Lucile Baker asked the Moderator if she could read a four-page letter written by Tom Williamson. He wanted it read at this meeting since he is out-of-state for the winter. The letter expressed his concerns about the operation and financial condition of the church. The meeting adjourned at 12:05 p.m.

*Respectfully submitted by
Joanne Durham, Church Clerk*

Dr. Sarah Sciascia to Speak at February Sodalitas

All women of the church are invited to the February Sodalitas meeting on **Tuesday, February 23, 2010**. Our own Dr. Sarah Sciascia will be the guest speaker, speaking on "Navigating Hospitalization."

The business meeting begins at 7:30 p.m., followed by the program at 8:00 p.m. A time of refreshment and fellowship follows the program.

February 2010

| Sun | Mon | Tue | Wed | Thu | Fri | Sat |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 1 6:45pm Boy Scouts, LPH 7:00pm Bells, Sanc. 7:00pm OE Anon, FH | 2 3:00pm Missions, LPH 7:00pm Diaconate, Lib. | 3 6:30pm Men's Club dinner, LPH 7:00pm OE Anon, Lib. 7:00pm Leadership Team, FH 7:30pm Men's Club | 4 6:00pm WW, FH 7:30pm Choir, MR | 5 4:00pm Girl Scouts, LPH 6:30pm OE Anon., Lib | 6 9:00am CJM Church, Chp. |
| 7 8:30pm Choir, MR 9:30am Worship 11:00am All church meeting, FH 4:30pm Cub Scouts, LPH | 8 6:45pm Boy Scouts, LPH 7:00pm Bells, Sanc. 7:00pm OE Anon, FH | 9 7:30pm Trustees, Lib. | 10 7:00pm OE Anon, Lib. | 11 6:00pm WW, FH 7:30pm Choir, MR | 12 9:15am Ladies Bowling, Olindy's 6:30pm OE Anon., Lib. | 13 9:00am CJM Church, Chp. |
| 14 8:30am Choir, MR 9:30am Worship/Nursery 6:00pm Youth Fellowship, LPH (Food collection for Braintree Food Pantry) | 15 Holiday Office Closed 7:00pm OE Anon, FH | 16 | 17 6:30pm Pot luck supper & service, So Cong. 7:00pm OE Anon., Lib. 7:15pm Troop Comm., LPH | 18 6:00pm WW, FH 7:30pm Choir, MR | 19 9:15am Ladies Bowling, Olindy's 9:00am 30 Hour Famine Begins 6:30pm OE Anon., Lib | 20 9:00am CJM Church, Chp. 4:00pm 30 Hour Famine ends |
| 21 8:30pm Choir, MR 9:30am Worship/Nursery 3:30pm Cub Scouts, LPH 6:00pm Youth Fellowship | 22 6:45pm Boy Scouts, LPH 7:00pm Bells, Sanc. 7:00pm OE Anon, FH | 23 7:30pm Sodalitas, LPH, FH | 24 Cook for Fr. Bills 6:30pm Pot luck supper & service, First Cong. 7:00pm OE Anon., Lib. | 25 6:00pm WW, FH 7:30pm Choir, MR | 26 4:00pm Girl Scouts, LPH 6:30pm OE Anon., Lib. | 27 9:00am CJM Church, Chp. |
| 28 8:30am Choir, MR 9:30am Worship 4:00pm Cub Scouts, UPH, LPH 6:00pm Youth Fellowship (Food collection for ISS) | | | | | | |

You'll find that in this church we cherish God's Word as a "lamp to our feet and a light to our path" (Psalm 119:105). We hope that God will move you to share your "Faith's Journey" further by worshipping with us on Sunday mornings.

We're on the web!
www.firstchurchbraintree.org

Our Vision for 2010 and Beyond

First Congregational Church offers a welcoming, friendly, and joyful home to believers in Jesus Christ, and to all men, women, and children who are true seekers of the hope, peace, forgiveness, and spiritual guidance that only He can offer. We encourage a deepening of Christian belief through greater understanding of scripture, and by way of forward-looking approaches to worship. We also endeavor to be active in the life of our community through loving Christian outreach, and by providing a safe venue for a wide range of worthwhile organizations and groups.

First Congregational Church of Braintree
12 Elm Street
Braintree, MA 02184

**DATED MATERIAL
RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED**