

First Congregational Church of Braintree

"Not just good works, but God works!"

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Sunday School and New Pre-School Focus on Ten Commandments and New Testament

The Sunday School and Pre-School at First Church will kick off 2010 on January 3 with a focus on the Ten Commandments, and the teachings of Jesus from the New Testament. The Nursery—for infants through 3-years-old—will run every Sunday thanks to Diane Francis who provides a safe and caring environment for our youngest children.

The Pre-School, geared for children ages 3-7, will use stories, crafts, music, and art to learn about right and wrong, based on some of the Ten Commandments, as well as the teachings of Jesus during his ministry. Ms. Leanna Work, who joined the church as Pre-School teacher in September, will use her unique education and experience in Early Childhood Education coupled with her compassion, to guide the students through this important curriculum.

The Sunday School, comprised of older kids through fifth grade, is taught by Joanne Durham and Janet Holton. They will learn the Ten Commandments and discuss stories of Jesus in the New Testament leading up to Lent and Easter. Some of the parables covered will include Sermon on the Mount, the Twelve Disciples, the Lost Sheep, and more. Sunday School classes use reading, games, puzzles, discussion, and crafts to learn more about God's Word.

Bring your children, grandchildren, nieces, nephews, and neighbors to Sunday School and Pre-School. Sunday School is fun—you'll be glad you did!

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First Congregational
Church
12 Elm Street
Braintree, MA
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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.

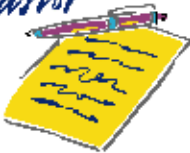
Office hours:
Monday—Friday
9:00 am—2:00 pm

Email:
firstchurchbraintree
@beld.net

Annual Meeting
Sunday, January 31, 10:45 a.m.

All members of the church are invited and encouraged to attend the Annual Meeting of First Church. All reports are due into the Church Office by Friday, January 15 so they can be published and printed. The Moderator also needs rosters of all ministries and officers who will be serving the church by January 15.

*From the
Pastor*



To join the ranks of God is more like enlisting in the army than joining a club. You may join Rotary without altering the course of your life very much. But join the army, especially during wartime, and every area of your life, every habit, every plan, may be radically changed. At the recruiting office, you are asked for more than your good will and signature. Your very body comes under a new command.

It is significant that the Apostle Paul tells his Roman congregation to present their *bodies* as a living sacrifice. It has always been easier to offer God something vague and indefinite, like praise or adoration, than to give something concrete. Most people are all in favor of God and mercy and righteousness. They are pleased to have their children interested in Church and Sunday school. But to have God step in and demand their bodies - well, that is going a bit too far.

If only Paul had said, "Present your good wishes, your sympathies, your occasional prayers, as a living sacrifice." But Paul made it rather rough when he said *your bodies*. That involves our eating and drinking, our working and resting, our speaking, our choice of spouse. And eventually, it means that we are to place this world's economics and politics, its agriculture and industry, its arts and science, on the altar of God.

This means, said Paul, that we be no longer conformed to this world. We are not to be regulated by, nor adjusted to, this world. We are to be *transformed*, to come under the policies of a higher world - the Kingdom of God.

It is not enough for us Christians to be nice gentle people who get along well with our neighbors. If your neighbor, in a drunken frenzy, beats up the paperboy, you will have to confront your neighbor. If as a new member of the police force, you find your fellow officers accepting bribes, you cannot be nice about it. As Christians, we have a prior obligation to a Kingdom. And to this Kingdom and its King, we have pledged *our bodies*, our lives!

May this New Year prove to be a special time of hope, peace, joy, and love.

Yours in Christ, *Pastor Dick*

Leadership Team Minutes No Longer in Newsletter

Responding to feedback from members of the congregation, the Leadership Team is ending its practice of publishing its monthly meeting minutes in the church's newsletter. Instead, the minutes will be published and printed for distribution in the Lower Parish Hall within 10 days of the meeting. Many believe that the space in the newsletter could be better used for other news; and any member can access the Minutes from the church once it is printed. Questions or concerns may be directed to Joanne Durham, Church Clerk.



From The Moderator...

2010 will be an important year for First

Church. We have faced many challenges in recent years; many we have overcome, and many yet to be resolved. We face the physical challenges of our building, on deferred maintenance these last several years. We face financial challenges in a time of recession with deficit spending and dwindling principal. We face challenges with a membership

largely advanced in years, and a younger membership too slow to fill its ranks. We face challenges of church Rediscovery. We face challenges of faith. I feel that 2010 will be a year of making decisions to deal with these challenges. It will be a pivotal year. The 2008 NACCC Annual Meeting quoted a statistic: "80% of the Protestant churches in this country are in decline or are dead." To be sure, many feel that we are part of that statistic. As grim as many believe our situation to be, there are many churches out there who are in much worse straits. Many among us are looking through a glass darkly.

But the patient is still breathing. It is not yet dead. And many of the challenges ahead of us can be dealt with if we face them directly. While these issues are important to the ministry of this church, we must remind ourselves that these issues are **NOT** the ministry of this church. They are peripherals, important peripherals, but peripherals nonetheless. The true mission of First Church is not the building. The true mission of First Church is not balancing the budget. The true mission of First Church is not even growing membership. The

true mission of First Church is **actively loving Jesus Christ and doing His discipleship. It is doing His good works, and loving Jesus Christ as He loves us.** We can never forget this. And we must constantly keep focused on it. *"Let not your hearts be troubled; believe in God, believe also in me."* (John 14:1) *"Truly, truly, I say to you, he who believes in me will also do the works that I do."* (John 14:12)

We have come a long way in terms of becoming a healthy church once again. We have learned to love each other. We have learned to trust each other. We have learned to reach out to our community and our neighbors, and doing God's work. We have opened our doors to spread music into our town, and we have opened our hearts to feed the less fortunate in our community. Many of our members have learned the intoxication of feeling God's **JOY**. Sodalitas felt God's **JOY** when it raised over \$4,000 with the Fair; the most money in its long history. Our Youth Fellowship felt God's **JOY** when it performed its many hours of

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community service. And many of our members even giggled with God's **JOY** as we delivered 163 frozen turkeys to Interfaith Social Services to feed their client families for Thanksgiving. It's all about the **JOY**.

While some may feel that First Church is in decline, by many tokens we are growing. We are growing stronger in our Missions. We are growing stronger in our Vision. We are growing stronger in our Discipleship. We are growing stronger as a single church family. And yes, there are even a few fresh faces sitting in the pews.

The Apostle Paul reminds us that the future of a church, of ANY church, lies in the **FAITH** of its congregation in the love of Jesus Christ, and in the **HOPE** of salvation by Christ's righteousness.

*"Through him we have also obtained access by **faith** into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in **hope** of the glory of God." (Romans 5:1-3) and again, "if indeed you continue in the **faith**, stable and steadfast, not shifting from the **hope** of the gospel that you heard, which has been*

*proclaimed in all creation under heaven, and of which I, Paul, became a minister." (Colossians 1:22-24) **Faith** and **Hope**.*

As we embark into the voyage that is 2010, we must be reminded that Christ is leading us still. We have successfully completed Steps 1-8 of our Rediscovery Plan, initiated six years ago. The focus of Step 9 (and the final) is to actively bring Christ into our hearts and souls and lives; and to share His Works, His Love, and His Joy among ourselves, and with others. *"As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you; abide in my love...that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full."* (John 15:9-11)

Let us let Christ fill our eyes with His **LIGHT**, our hearts with His **LOVE**, and our souls with His **JOY**. Let us walk with Christ into tomorrow. Blessed be His name,

Rick Durham, Moderator

Come to the Sodalitas Events Scheduled for Winter/Spring 2010

All women of the church are invited to shake off the "winter blahs" by attending the programs scheduled at

First Church by Sodalitas. Fellowship and support for our greater community mark each of these events. The first one of the year will be a pizza and movie night on January 26. Come join us! If you have any questions, please call the church office at 781-843-3616.

Tuesday, January 26, 2010

6:30 pm - Pizza Supper
7:00 - Business Meeting
7:30 pm Movie Night

Tuesday, February 23, 2010

7:30 pm - Business Meeting
8:00 pm - Speaker: Dr. Sarah Sciascia on "Navigating Hospitalization"

Tuesday, March 23, 2010

7:30 pm - Business Meeting
8:00 pm Speaker: Mr. Josh Nespoli, Community Outreach Manager from "Cradles to Crayons"

Tuesday, April 27, 2010

Annual Meeting and Banquet
6:30 pm - Social Hour
7:00 pm - Dinner
Regular Meeting followed by the Annual Meeting
Location to be determined

Storing of the Greens

Sunday, January 3, 2010
6:00 pm

Come, join the Youth Fellowship in storing our Christmas "greens" for another season.

January 2010

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
					1	2 9:00am CJM Church, Chp.
					630pm OE Anon., Lib	
3 8:30pm Choir, MR 9:30am Worship	4 6:45pm Boy Scouts, LPH 7:00pm Bells, Sanc. 7:00pm OE Anon, FH	5 7:00pm Diaconate, Lib.	6 6:30pm Men's Club dinner, LPH 7:00pm OE Anon, Lib. 7:30pm Men's Club Meeting, FH	7 6:00pm WW, FH 7:30pm Choir, MR	8 9:15am Ladies Bowling, Olindy's 6:30pm OE Anon., Lib.	9 9:00am CJM Church, Chp.
10 8:30am Choir, MR 9:30am Worship/ Nursery 3:30pm Cub Scouts, LPH 6:00pm Youth Fellowship, LPH <i>(Food collection for Braintree Food Pantry)</i>	11 6:45pm Boy Scouts, LPH 7:00pm Bells, Sanc. 7:00pm OE Anon, FH	12 7:30pm Trustees, Lib.	13 7:00pm OE Anon., Lib. 7:00pm Girl Scout Leaders, FH 7:00pm Leadership Team, FH	14 6:00pm WW, FH 7:30pm Choir, MR	15 9:15am Ladies Bowling, Olindy's 4:00pm Girl Scouts, LPH 6:30pm OE Anon., Lib	16 9:00am CJM Church, Chp.
17 8:30pm Choir, MR 9:30am Worship/ Nursery 3:30pm Cub Scouts, LPH 6:00pm Youth Fellowship	18 Holiday Office Closed 7:00pm OE Anon, FH	19	20 7:00pm OE Anon., Lib. 7:15pm Troop Comm., LPH	21 6:00pm WW, FH 7:30pm Choir, MR	22 6:30pm OE Anon., Lib. 7:15pm Cub Scouts, LPH	23 9:00am CJM Church, Chp.
24/31 8:30am Choir, MR 9:30am Worship 6:00pm Youth Fellowship <i>(Food collection for ISS)</i> 31 10:45am Annual Meeting, LPH	25 6:45pm Boy Scouts, LPH 7:00pm Bells, Sanc. 7:00pm OE Anon, FH	26 6:30pm Sodalitas Pizza and Movie Night, LPH, FH	27 -Cook for Fr. Bills- 7:00pm OE Anon., Lib.	28 6:00pm WW, FH 7:30pm Choir, MR	29 6:30pm OE Anon., Lib.	30 9:00am CJM Church, Chp.

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