



FOCUS

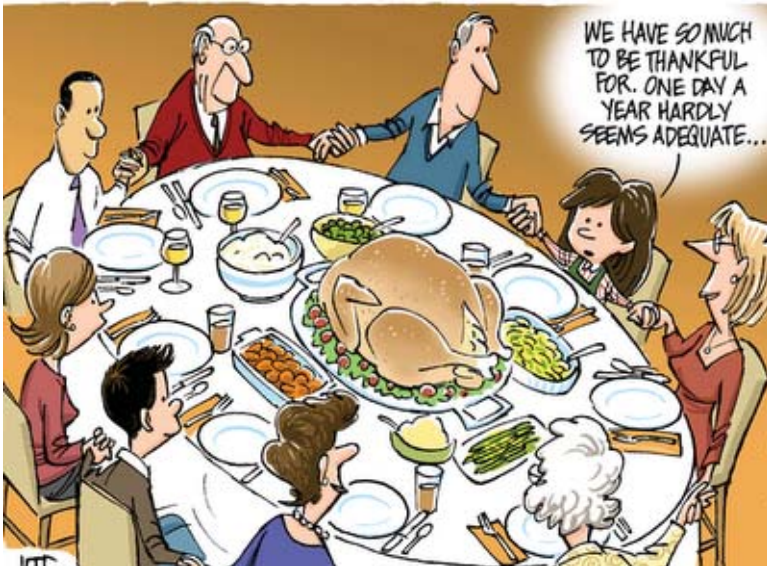
November 2015 | Vol. 38 Issue 9

A Message from Rev. Heike Werder

The Holiday season is upon us. Soon we begin to make preparations for our Thanksgiving and Christmas party guest lists, meals and table, or we are in search of good plane tickets to visit family and friends. Or, maybe this year, some might even “escape” the festivities, and travel far, far away. Most of us will soon enough be caught up in the busyness of the

find ourselves in some mess and don’t know how to get out of it, thinking grateful thoughts can be a real stretch. Giving thanks to God in the midst of chaos is a challenge most of us have not mustered.

Practicing gratitude (or learning how to) is not just good for the soul but has actual health benefits. Gratitude increases happiness and sustains it. Gratitude protects us from stress and negativity, and reduces our desire for material things which in return are the cause of less happiness. Gratitude makes us socially smarter, leads to better relationships and friendships, improves our quality of sleep (counting blessings, not sheep), and strengthens willpower to make better decisions. The practice of gratitude has an impact on everything – myself, the people around me, and the world.



There are wonderful ways to practice gratitude:

- Make a gratitude list; write down five things you are grateful for – daily! Or think them while driving the kids around or doing the dishes.
 - Notice the beauty around you!
 - Take three deep breaths and say thank you to God.
- There is always something, even in the midst of the chaos, to be thankful for.(1)

seasons, and we sort of forget why we have been given these Holy seasons in the first place.

As much as the Thanksgiving Holiday is a national holiday, it is filled with the religious theme of gratitude. The topic of Gratitude is present in our Holy Scriptures from the first page to the last page. Our biblical spiritual guides want us to live gratefully. It is when we are grateful that we see how God has been part of our life’s journey.

Gratitude though does not come easily to us. We are too easily caught up in worry and anxiety. When life does not turn out as expected, we worry. When tests come back inconclusive, we get anxious. When we

As a community of faith, we do have a lot to be thankful for, even in the midst of ‘chaos.’ We still have each other. I am grateful for that.

May your Thanksgiving Celebrations be filled with many blessing and expressions of gratitude!

Heike

(1)If you like to read more about the “most psychological correct holiday”, go to this article in the NY time by John Tierney go to: http://www.nytimes.com/2011/11/22/science/a-serving-of-gratitude-brings-healthy-dividends.html?_r=0.



Guest Preacher for November

On November 15, 2015 the Rev. Estelle Margarones will be the preacher for the day. Rev. Estelle was the part-time minister at Pilgrim Congregational, UCC, in North Weymouth, and most recently she was the bridge pastor at First Trinitarian Congregational Church, UCC in Scituate, MA. While in the process of seeking a full-time call in ministry, Rev. Estelle is a Creative Services Director for Greater Media Boston.

Music News with Valerie J. Becker, Music Director



Hear Ye! Hear Ye!

Come join us for "A Winter Mosaic." We hope that you will put December 6th at 4pm down on your calendar. Our Chancel Choir along with The Friendly Ringers will perform selections appropriate to the season. A light reception will follow.

Anyone who wishes to make a donation to help with this concert can contact Danielle in the church office. We hope to see many of you at our concert!

FOCUS

Focus is published monthly. Contributions from members and friends of the Church are invited. Please submit materials by e-mail to office@needhamucc.org.

December issue deadline:
Thursday Nov. 19, 2015.

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ENVIRONMENTAL MINISTRIES TEAM NEWS

...EARTH STEWARDSHIP FOR OUR LIVES TODAY...

The EMT would like to bring your attention to an event which could change the course of our world's climate forever. Join us as we pray for the members of this conference that they come to decisions that will protect our environment and its occupants. And, we are planning to participate in a preach-in on climate change in early 2016.

Paris Climate Talks

France will be hosting and presiding over the 21st Session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, otherwise known as "Paris 2015" from November 30th-December 11th. With over 40,000 participants, this will be a crucial conference, as it needs to achieve a new international agreement on the climate applicable to all countries, with the aim of

keeping global warming below 2degrees Celcius. France will therefore be playing a leading international role to insure points of view converge and to facilitate the search for consensus by the United Nations, as well as the European Union, which has a major role in climate negotiations.

The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change adopted in 1992, is a universal convention of principle, acknowledging the existence of human induced climate change and giving industrialized countries the major part of responsibility for combating it. The aim of the conference is to reach, for the first time, a universal, legally binding agreement that will enable us to combat climate change effectively and boost the transition towards resilient, low-carbon societies and economies.

<http://www.cop21.gouv.fr/en>

Noah's Ark Preschool

*a place where children grow
and learn*

Noah's Ark Preschool is in the process of enrolling children for the 2016-2017 school year! We offer priority enrollment to members of the Congregational Church of Needham, as availability exists, now through

November 20th. We invite you to call us to receive information about our program and to schedule a time to

come in for a tour!

Noah's Ark Preschool was founded in 2001 by a small group of church members and has developed into a thriving school which offers developmentally appropriate opportunities for children to socialize and learn together. Our current Board of Directors consists of Laurie Davis, President, Anna Hunnicutt, Becky Krechting, Elisabeth Meyi, Susan Miller and Heather Salerno.

We believe in the philosophy that early childhood learning is best promoted through exploration and play. Our primary objective is to foster the cognitive, social, physical, and emotional growth of each child; and in doing so, we strive to instill in our children a confidence and enthusiasm for learning! It would be our privilege to be a part of your child's preschool experience. Please call Frankie or Ann at 781-449-2439, or visit our website at www.noahsarkneedham.org.



Alternative Giving Program to Benefit Computer Center

The church's August delegation to Santa María Tzejá learned that the community's Computer Center, funded largely by outside donors and student fees, has experienced declining support recently and has had to double the monthly fee



*Director Javier Urizar
at the Computer
Center*

it charges to middle school students. This is simply beyond the means of some families, so regrettably some students are dropping out or postponing their middle school studies. In order to keep the computer center (and a 9th grade education) accessible to virtually all students, the Guatemala Partnership has decided that the Computer Center will be the focus of our annual Alternative Giving program. The increase in student costs that we are attempting to offset is about \$35/year per student for the approximately 100 students enrolled.

So if you would like to honor a relative, friend, or teacher with a meaningful holiday 'gift', please consider this opportunity.

Donations in any amount are appreciated. In return you will receive a decorative card describing your gift to give to the special person you are honoring. Please visit our table in Coffee Hour during December, or e-mail Val Kistler at any time: valk228@gmail.com. Thank you in advance for making a difference.

2016 Calendars for a Cause

This year, the Guatemala Partnership will once again sell beautiful calendars created by the Network in Solidarity with the People of Guatemala (NISGUA). This human rights organization links people in the U.S. with people and social justice movements in Guatemala. Sales of these calendars help support both NISGUA and our partner village, Santa Maria Tzeja. The calendars are \$18 each or \$30 for two. They will be available at the Guatemala table after worship during the Sundays in December, or through Val Kistler at valk228@gmail.com or (781) 449-6270.

Become a 'Partner Family'!

Additional families in Santa María Tzejá would like to be matched up to write a family in our church, sharing letters twice a year. If you are interested in becoming a 'partner family' or would like more information, please contact: caryljohnson@gmail.com.

FAMILY PROMISE METROWEST



Family Promise Metrowest is a community response to family homelessness.

We are a support congregation, which means we provide support to other local congregations who house the families. As a Family Promise volunteer you will gather with other members of the

congregation to cook, serve and share family supper with the families. Needham UCC supports these congregations four separate weeks over the year. Our next support week is November 22.

Don't have time to volunteer? In-Kind Donations are also needed.

If interested in participating, or have questions, please contact Heidi Wiesel at heidi.wiesel@gmail.com or Susan Kirk at susanckirk@comcast.net.

Youth Ministry News *from Maddie Downer, Director of Children and Youth Ministries*

SUNDAY SCHOOL & YOUTH GROUP ONLINE REGISTRATION

ALL FAMILIES with children in Sunday school or Youth Group MUST fill out a form. This form registers your child for Sunday School (crib/toddler through 8th grade) and/or Youth Group (grades 6-12). Register Online at <http://needhamucc.org/registration>

Each family is asked to sign up to teach 7 times during the year. To sign up, please visit: <http://www.tinyurl.com/ChildrenYouthSignUp>

SUNDAY SCHOOL

Infants, toddlers & Preschool: Childcare is offered throughout the service in the Noah's Ark Preschool room.



Grades K-5: On most Sundays, children in grades K-5 join their families in the worship service at 10 AM for the first 20 minutes and then attend Bible Village, an interactive Sunday School experience with

Art, Cooking, Theater, Story, Games, and Science workshops for the rest of the hour. On the first Sunday of the month, kids start in Bible Village for chapel and workshops and then are dismissed to the sanctuary to join their parents at the Communion Table.

BV 6-8 is our Sunday School program for students in grades 6-8. Fall classes are taught by Maddie and a volunteer. Students in BV6:8 follow the same morning routine as grades K-5 – they begin with their families in the sanctuary, are dismissed to chapel and then move to Stevenson Hall with Maddie. Please note, students should not wait in Stevenson Hall before church school begins.

High school students are invited to teach our younger students!

On Sundays following holidays, there is no church school. A movie or group activity may be offered as an alternative to childcare – or your student may stay in the Sanctuary and worship with you.

Sunday, November 8: Students begin in Sanctuary, dismissed to Chapel
Sunday, November 15: Students begin in Sanctuary, dismissed to Chapel
Sunday, November 22: Students begin in Sanctuary, dismissed to Chapel

Sunday, November 29: No church school, movie/activity offered

YOUTH MINISTRIES

Beginning on November 1, our youth meetings will pickup the same schedule as last year. Junior High will meet from 5:00 – 6:30 pm and Senior High will meet from 7:00 – 8:30 pm. We will no longer eat dinner between meetings. Snacks will be offered.

Sunday, November 8

Junior High 5:00 – 6:30 pm
 Senior High 7:00 – 8:30 pm

Saturday, November 14

Elf Shoppe at the Village Fair! Please come and help kids purchase and wrap their Christmas gifts! Elf attire encouraged but not required!

Sunday, November 15

Junior High 5:00 – 6:30 pm
 Senior High 7:00 – 8:30 pm

Sunday, November 22

All Youth Group Potluck Dinner – families invited! Please bring your favorite Thanksgiving side dish. A turkey and apple cider will be provided! Please RSVP by November 15th if your family will come!

Sunday, November 29

No youth group – enjoy your Thanksgiving break!

STOWE SKI TRIP

The Stowe ski trip is offered to students in grades 9 – 12. If your student is planning to come on the ski trip this year, please email Maddie to let her know at youth@needhamucc.org by Monday, November 16. There is a cost to parents which will be based on how many kids sign up. At 20 people, the estimated cost is \$250/person; this could change if we have significantly less or more participants.

FOR ADULTS

ALL adults are invited to volunteer to teach Bible Village and/or chaperone our young people in Youth Group. You do not need to have children in the programs to volunteer! Volunteers are necessary to continue offering these wonderful faith formation programs.

To signup, visit: <http://tinyurl.com/ChildrenYouthSignUp> Or contact Maddie, ext. 104 or at youth@needhamucc.org

THE GIVING TREE

**Sunday, Nov. 29
to Sunday, Dec. 13**

Ornaments with wishlist items for the Elizabeth Stone House will be on the Giving Tree located outside the chapel. Take an ornament, purchase the gifts, and bring them back to the church by Sunday, December 13.



Together with Outreach, the youth group will wrap the gifts and deliver them to the Elizabeth Stone House. Pickup Ornaments by December 6th
Return Gifts by December 13th

HAUNTED THANK YOU!

Thank you to everyone who helped make this year's haunted house a great success! The sci-fi and fantasy-themed rooms were wonderful and the party room upstairs offered a fun and festive atmosphere for kids!

Visitors toured the Haunted Hallway with bad science experiments and a skull filled morgue. Our adventurers went through maintenance tunnels filled with rats, snakes, and limbs... Gross! They attended a Zombie Prom, were greeted by a mad, mad scientist, and his assistant and Dr. Boo and a Sobbing Celestial Being gave great scares.

Zombie Princess Leia and a Star Trek crew member fought to the death. Guests exited through a crashing spaceship into the party room.

Our youth groups and their parents worked so hard to pull off this night. We also had some help from members of the church community and the staff. Whether you donated candy or items, helped set up or tear down, helped during the event, or came as a guest, please know this event would not have been the same without you.

And now, after expenses, our grand total raised was \$1,277 to go toward the youth group mission trip this summer!
Thank you, thank you!

PAGEANT MEETING

**Sunday, November 8
Following worship
Library**

If you have helped organize the pageant in the past, or have offered your gifts to the pageant in any way, please come to this meeting and help us begin to plan! Note: this is not a cast sign up - this is just to gather as much knowledge as possible to help in planning the pageant.

ELF SHOPPE DONATIONS NEEDED

Do you have tchotchkes or other little items you need to clear out? What better time than right before the New Year?! Donate your items to the Elf Shoppe for children to purchase and wrap as gifts for their family members! The donation bin will be in the hall on the main floor of the church.

ELF SHOPPE SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 14 STEVENSON HALL

Kids, come and buy your Christmas presents while your parents shop upstairs!

We will have a wrapping station so that kids can leave with a completely wrapped present - a fun surprise for your family members on Christmas morning!



CHRISTMAS PAGEANT

**Cast signups are due by
December 6th!**



Rehearsals:
Sun, December 13, after church
Sun, December 20, after church
Thurs, December 24, 2 - 4 pm.

**Pageant:
4 pm on Christmas Eve!**

ADVENT WORKSHOP

**Saturday, December 5
3:00 - 5:00 pm
Fellowship Hall**



Join us to decorate gingerbread houses, make advent wreaths, sing Christmas carols, and more!

STEWARDSHIP UPDATE

Thank you to everyone who has sent in their pledge. We are on our way to our goal of \$450,000! We have currently received pledges totalling \$160,331.00.

We hope that all members and those of you who are not members but call this church community "Home" participate in our efforts to make our church a vibrant, joyful community of faith. Your gifts, talents, and financial commitment matter!

There are a number of ways you can pledge:

1. **Drop off or mail** a pledge sheet to the church
2. **Pledge online** at <http://needhamucc.org/stewardship-pledge-form>
3. **Email pledge** confidentially to pledge@needhamucc.org.
4. **Online Electronic Giving:** go to needhamucc.org, and click on the "Pledge/Donate" button to use your credit card or checking account.
5. **Call your pledge** into Danielle Jurdan at 781.444.2510.

CHAPEL CHAIRS, CHAIRS, CHAIRS!!

Now that the chapel renovation is completed, we need to give everyone a lovely place to sit.

To consolidate shipping, we will be placing chair orders a few times a year. The next order will be placed November 20th. If you are not able to get your order in by 11/20 don't worry - we'll be ordering another set in March 2016!

You may purchase one for \$175 which can include a plaque denoting a memorial or tribute. This is a fine way to honor a family member, celebrate a birthday, anniversary, or other special occasion. Other monetary donations are welcome and will be applied to additional chairs. Checks and inscriptions can be sent to the church office.

Thank you,
The Chapel Committee



ONA NEWS

NATIONAL UCC GROUPS

MAKE HISTORIC STATEMENT URGING TRANSGENDER SUPPORT AND RECOGNITION:

CLEVELAND, Oct. 26, 2015 – In a joint statement, the Open and Affirming Coalition of the United Church of Christ and the UCC Collegium of Officers urged congregations to join local observances of Transgender Day of Remembrance on Nov. 20 and to renew their commitment the following Sunday, Nov. 22, to welcome and advocate for the transgender community. This year's Day of Remembrance comes as an "urgent time," the statement said, after a record number of 22 transgender murders in the United States this year.

Nov. 20 is Transgender Day of Remembrance (TDOR) – a national day of mourning for the transgender persons who have lost their lives, through murder or suicide, in the past year. TDOR is also a day when we renew our commitment to stand with the transgender community whenever their rights and dignity as human beings are under attack.

READ MORE... <http://openandaffirming.org/transgender-day-of-remembrance-2015-time->

to-stand-as-one-church-with-the-transgender-community/

Transgender Day of Remembrance events in the Boston Area

Service - Sunday, November 22, 4 pm; potluck reception 6:30pm at St. Paul's Cathedral in Boston

Documentary: Growing Up Trans - Thursday, November 19 at the First Church in Belmont Refreshments at 6:45 pm, film starts at 7:00 pm, followed by a Q&A with panelists Parish Hall of First Church in Belmont, 404 Concord Avenue, Belmont, MA 02478

FMI: contact fcbadultprograms@gmail.com
Go to freedommassachusetts.org

URGE YOUR LEGISLATORS TO SUPPORT PUBLIC ACCOMMODATIONS FOR TRANSGENDER PEOPLE

There is positive legislation up for a vote this fall which would provide access for transgender people in areas of public accommodations (including hotels, transportation, restaurants, medical offices, theaters and parks). The ONA Team asks you to contact your senator and representative before the Thanksgiving break to urge them to support this legislation. It's easy. Go to freedommassachusetts.org, click on Take Action/Email Your Lawmakers.

NOVEMBER 2015

Sunday	Mon.	Tues.	Wed.	Thursday	Fri.	Sat.
1	2 Cancer Support Group	3 Community Dinner	4	5 Faith Circle Book Group Lunch with Heike	6	7
8 Worship Bible Study	9 Cancer Support Group	10	11 Veteran's Day Church Offices Closed	12 Faith Circle Book Group	13	14 VILLAGE FAIR
15 Men's Breakfast Worship Bible Study	16 Cancer Support Group	17	18	19 Faith Circle Book Group	20	21 Thanks 4 Giving!
22 Bible Study	23 Cancer Support Group	24	25	26 Thanksgiving Church offices Closed	27	28
29 Worship Bible Study	30 Cancer Support Group					

COMMUNITY DINNERS

**6-7pm, November 3 & December 1
Linden Hall**

Once a month we offer dinner for the families of Baby Basics and the volunteers involved in the program. Everyone is invited to join us for dinner, and/or if you are looking for a volunteer opportunity for your family, this is an opportunity for children and adult alike. Dinners are on the first Tuesday of the month.

Help is needed with shopping for food, meal preparation, eating with our guests, and clean up.

Please contact Rev. Heike or Diana Conroy if you are interested in participating in the service project.

THURSDAY LUNCHES WITH REV. HEIKE

Noon-1pm, Nov. 5 and Advent Lunches Dec. 3, 10 & 17 at 1180 Great Plain Ave.

If you are available for a different kind of lunch break, why not have lunch at the church on the first Thursday of the month and weekly during the season of Advent and Lent?

Rev. Heike will be offering a delicious, nutritious soup, good bread, and dessert. The cost for the lunch remain \$ 3.00 per person, and we have purchased take-out containers for take-away.

Our first Thursday & Advent luncheons will take place in our new building at 1180 Great Plain Avenue.

ADVENT MEDITATIONS

Mondays, November 30, December 7, December 14 & December 21

Would you like to find some quiet time as the holiday season begins? Starting the Monday after the Thanksgiving holiday, Rev. Heike will offer guided Advent meditations and prayers for the season, and make time and space available to walk the labyrinth in Fellowship Hall. We will gather for the four Mondays of the Advent season - Nov. 30, Dec. 7, Dec. 14, and Dec. 21, 2015



THANKS 4 GIVING!

Saturday November 21, 7-9pm

In celebration of our stewardship campaign, we would like to invite the Congregation to a **Thanks 4 Giving Event** on Saturday, November 21, 2015 from 7-9 pm in Fellowship Hall.

Please join us for some yummy desserts and harvest inspired drinks and some good old fashioned fellowship.

If you would like to donate a baked good or have any questions, please see Christine Weitzel or email her at cweitzel@verizon.net.



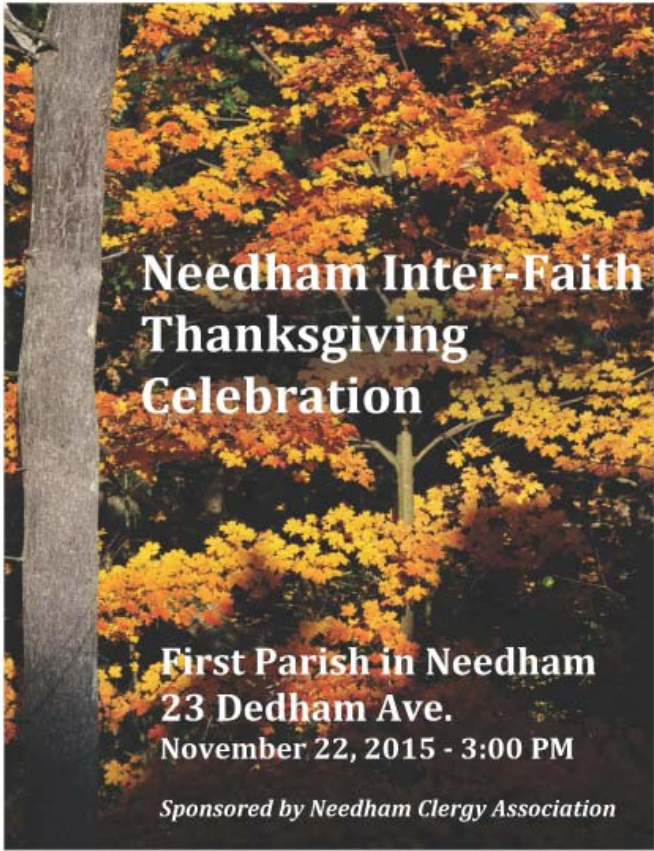
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On the web at
needhamucc.org

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Congregational Church
of Needham UCC



Needham Inter-Faith Thanksgiving Celebration

First Parish in Needham
23 Dedham Ave.
November 22, 2015 - 3:00 PM

Sponsored by Needham Clergy Association

Men's Breakfast Sunday, November 15th

On Sunday, 11/15, the Men's Breakfast Fellowship will welcome all church men to breakfast.

The Men's Breakfast brings men of all ages and persuasions together in the Library on the 3rd Sunday of the month before worship in honest and lively discussion touching our faith and our lives in today's complex world. We welcome men of all ages and accommodate those with scheduling challenges. Arrive at 8:15 AM for fellowship and breakfast or by 9:00 AM for the discussion.

Contact: John Baldwin (jsbaldwin@comcast.net) or Rob Dunlavey (rob@robd.com) for more information.

address

stamp

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