

# *Federated Church of Ashland*

## *“The Chimes”*

### **February 2010**

## **From the Deacon’s Bench**

Well Christmas has come and gone and the New Year has begun and we at the Federated Church have much for which to be thankful. On the first Sunday of Advent we arrived to find our sanctuary once again beautifully decorated for the Season. The Advent services were filled with promise as our Pastor preached on the theme “Show us who You are!” And on Christmas Eve our church was awash in candlelight and the music and readings were truly a blessing for all who attended. **Thanks to all who worked so hard to make the Season one of Beauty as well as Joy!**

It is my custom during the Advent Season to take out some of my audio book classics to listen to while I drive. My favorites are “At Home In Mitford”, “Anne of Green Gables” and “Little Women”. It was while I was enjoying once again the story of Jo and Meg and Beth and Amy that I was struck by a bible verse paraphrased by one of the characters. I played it several times and wrote it down because it had such meaning for me. It is from Paul’s letter to the Philippians, chapter 4:8 and loosely says, “Whatsoever things are true, are good, are lovely and virtuous, on these things should you keep your mind and the God of Peace will be with you.” In these difficult times it is so easy to get caught up in all the negativity that surrounds us in the world today. I like to think that if we can open our eyes and our hearts to God’s wonders and try to focus on what is good we will be able to find Peace within ourselves that will translate to others as we go about our daily lives. While I know that our church is struggling at present there are many positives that we can look to for comfort.

The Lenten season will be upon us very soon; Ash Wednesday is February 17<sup>th</sup>. We will be asking for people to contribute articles for a devotional for the 40 days of Lent. So start thinking about stories or poems that will be uplifting to the congregation as they journey toward Easter Sunday. See Jason if you are willing to participate in this offering. We will be talking more about this in the coming weeks’ announcements.

In the coming months the Deacons and the Council will be working very hard to come up with some plans to take our church forward despite the financial difficulties that face us. We cannot do this alone and hope that anyone with an idea will come forward. We are open to any suggestions and will take all under advisement. Please join us as we work and pray for our congregation.

Signing off with great hope for the future of our church,

Pam Dunham and Nick Paternostro

## **WEATHER EMERGENCY**

If we need to cancel worship services due to inclement weather, please tune into Channel 7 or Channel 56. Also, if you have Internet access log onto the churches website and it will have the latest up-to-date information.

## Autumn Leaves Fair

Can you believe it? We did it again! Over \$7,000!!! That's including the Christmas Boutique. That's wonderful. Thanks to all of you doing your best, contributing, participating and supporting our All-Church Fair. It still proves that "Together, we can make it happen". Everyone's "little bit" comes together to make a super FAIR! There's time now for a little rest (that is, if you want one). Then we start all over again.

I've told the Church Council that it's time for someone else to Chair (Coordinate) the Fair. That's right, it really is a "Coordinator" that pulls it all together, because each department does their own thing. We just need someone to pull it all together. So, think it over, pray about it, and tell the Council, that YOU would like to be considered. I'd like to take this opportunity to THANK EVERYONE who helped in any way, to make our Fair grow and be able to contribute around \$7,000 each year to our Church, either for special projects or towards the budget.

You are "fantastic". You're a great group of dedicated folks to work with. THANKS!

GOD BLESS YOU ALL!

*Irene Brown*

## Christmas Eve Service

A HUGE THANK YOU to the following people for their participation in our Christmas Eve Service.

*Jeffrey Rivas, Jimmy Russo, Meredith Daly and Gina Guidi, ushers; Meredith Daly and Gina Guidi, altar candles and arbors; Kimberly Conner, Laura Conner, Andrew Puntini and Nicole Puntini, pew candelabras; Annabelle Rutherford, Emily Wenzell and Nicole Wenzell, handed out individual candles.*

Because of everyone's willingness and cooperation we were able to have a very impressive Christmas Eve Service.

Whereas I have retired as head usher and the person responsible for coordinating the youth for the Christmas Eve Service, I'm sure you will give the next person the same willingness to participate that you have given to me. **Thanks again, you're great!**

*Bob Brown*

# **Worship Committee**

LENT is the season of spiritual preparation of the Christian year preceding Easter during which the life, teachings, and ministry of Christ are remembered. Beginning on Ash Wednesday, the Lenten Season lasts forty days plus six Sundays (although these Sundays are not recognized as Lenten days).

The forty days of Lent are most likely symbolic of the forty days Jesus is said to have spent in the wilderness – in self-examination and clarifying values and priorities – after his baptism and just before the beginning of his ministry.

The Worship Committee is hosting prayer and praise services on Wednesdays during Lent. They begin with Ash Wednesday, February 17, and continue each Wednesday night through March 24<sup>th</sup> at 7:00 pm in the Mandella Room. The next week, Holy Week, will offer a Maundy Thursday Service and a Good (Dark) Friday Services, both at 7 pm, in the sanctuary. Also, on Dark Friday afternoon a Spiritual Labyrinth will be set up in the Sunday School rooms and available to walk through between 4 and 7 pm. For more information on the Lenten season or the worship opportunities available, please contact a member of the Worship committee or Pastor Jason. May God bless you in this season as you grow deeper, wider, and taller in your faith journey.

The Worship Committee

Melanie Conner  
Pam Dunham  
Vickie Mancini  
Alan Mancini  
Kelly Rutherford

# **Hospitality Notes**

I want to start this message by stepping back a moment. I would like to thank everyone who purchased and donated Poinsettia's in December. The Sanctuary looked beautiful. I can also tell you that the people we delivered them to appreciated receiving them so much.

Unfortunately, because of the snowstorm on December 20<sup>th</sup> we were not able to have our "cookie sale." We were hoping to raise some money for the church, as well as supplement your holiday cookie platters. Better Luck next year!!!

Now more then ever, we would like to have a GREAT turnout for our "2010 Community Supper Series." January 31<sup>st</sup> is our 1<sup>st</sup> dinner featuring Chicken Cacciatore. We are planning our February and March meals, so keep a lookout for more dates and info. It's the best deal in town and we hope to see you all there.

Keep warm and safe through the Chill of February. Spring will be here soon. I hope!!!!

Bless you all,

Nick Paternostro and the Hospitality Committee

# THRIFT SHOP

We will open Tuesday, January 26<sup>th</sup> to begin our winter–spring season.

Our hours are 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

## Schedule for January, February and March

January 26 <sup>th</sup>	10 a.m. to 4 p.m.
February 2, 9, 16 & 23	10 a.m. to 4 p.m.
March 2, 9 & 16	10 a.m. to 4 p.m.
March 23 <sup>rd</sup> <u>½ price day</u>	10 a.m. to 4 p.m.
March 30 <sup>th</sup> <u>\$2.00 Bag Day</u>	10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

The thrift shop will be CLOSED April 6 & 13

*Note: We will accept clothes on any day we are open. We ask that they be clean, from a **smoke free** environment, and have more than a few memories left in them!! **We do not take electronics, vhs players, telephones, computers or printers.** Small household appliances are acceptable, if in working condition. We appreciate your contributions and hope you will comply with our restrictions.*

**In the case of inclement weather we will be closed. When in doubt, please call the church office before coming.**

## Theta Phi Delta Ladies

Our next meeting will be held on **Monday, March 1<sup>st</sup> at 7:00 PM.**

## YOUTH GROUP NEWS

The Youth Group will be making and sending Valentine care packages to our college students. We will be baking during our class time on Sunday, Feb. 14<sup>th</sup>. The college kids love to receive our packages with home baked cookies and candy. If you have a child, grandchild or someone close to you that is in college (or serving in the military) please call the office with his/her name & address. Also, donations of candy, gum, and other goodies would be most appreciated!

Mark Nelson, Linda Russo & Vickie Mancini, Youth Leaders

## MISSIONS NEWS

The 2009 Retired Ministers and Missionaries Offering taken at our Christmas Eve service was **\$829**, split among the three denominations. The funds will be distributed as thank you gifts and financial assistance to retired ministers, missionaries and their widowed spouses who have served so many in churches and mission fields around the world. **THANK YOU to all who contributed.**

Thanks to all who brought in hats, mittens, gloves and scarves for our mitten tree. They were delivered via 'Santa ' to the men's and women's shelter and to the Ashland Food Pantry. We received a lovely thank you from the director of Crossroads Shelter and a card signed by the residents. Please take the time to read them - they are posted on the Missions bulletin board.

The Missions Committee makes and serves a monthly meal at the Women's Shelter in Ashland the third Thursday of each month and the men's shelter in Framingham on the fourth Wednesday of each month. If you are able to make a side dish, bread or dessert, or if you would like to come help serve, please call Vickie Mancini at 881-3263 or Mark & Dee Heaton at 881-2968.

Our biggest church mission project currently is the IHN program. Our church's next hosting week is Feb. 7-14. The sign-up board is in the sanctuary. There are all levels of giving available- from giving a food item, to part of a meal, being a greeter, mingler or an overnight host. Thank you to our coordinators who spend countless hours making sure the guests are well fed and their needs provided for during their stay at our church - Thank you to Lois Tougas, Lavonne Krishnan, Nancy Lynch and Mark Heaton. Thanks to all the many volunteers - without you we couldn't do it!

Give and you will receive the blessing of the Lord.

Vickie Mancini, Missions

## A Note From Our Pastor

Our weekly worship services are essential and were created out of necessity in people's lives. Worship is not a new art or fad for expressing ourselves, but rather a deeply held practice that unites us with our God and with one another in ways not found in any other part of our life. Holy Scripture is a source of both guidance and inspiration in our worship. The Psalms, or songs, are prayers and readings that may illuminate our souls to dance, enable our eyes to see, and encourage us in our spiritual journey to the house of God. Psalm 84 is a psalm of worship. It is believed to be a liturgical account of the annual fall pilgrimage to the temple at Jerusalem. Early worshippers would unite each autumn for a fall harvest festival and worship. The journey to the house of God would have been a holy experience, uniting people together as they prepare to worship their Lord. "How lovely is your dwelling place, O Lord of hosts! My soul longs, indeed it faints for the courts of the Lord; my heart and my flesh sing for joy to the living God. Happy are those whose strength is in you, in whose heart are the highways to Zion. As they go through the valley of thirst, they make it a place of springs; the early rain also covers it with pools" (Psalm 84:1-2, 5-6).

Centuries later, we still journey to the house of the Lord uniting to worship the one, true God. Today, as before, we journey together, hope filled, anticipating something truly miraculous. In the ancient world, pilgrims may have feared drought, robbery, illness, or any number of obstacles on their journey to the House of God, but nevertheless they persevered because their life, and the fullness of it, depended on their arriving together to worship. As we approach the House of God today, we too might be deterred along the journey. Certainly, we suffer from natural disasters, illness, war, and times of personal ambivalence. And, we sometimes become tethered to some other quest for personal fulfillment that only leaves us unfulfilled. These do not have to be permanent obstacles. **When we believe, whole-heartedly, that our life depends totally on uniting together with the Lord, we will become encouraged and skilled at overcoming any obstacle that might otherwise deter us from worship.** And, our times together will be joy-filled, reflecting the true fulfillment only found in the Lord. Although it is profoundly painful to see the havoc in people's lives that storms, political upheaval, and spiritual desolation will bring, we are also faced with an opportunity to help one another. **We are faced with opportunities to lend our hand, our heart, and our willingness that no person be left in the valley of thirst and desolation, but rather be lifted up and strengthened so that he or she might also have opportunity to give thanks and adoration in the House of the Lord.** My encouragement today is that you consider what might prevent you from taking a drink of living water, and then be willing to ask for help in overcoming your obstacle. My encouragement to you today is that you consider lending your hand, your heart, and your life to help people who are left out so that all may participate and be renewed in the Holiness of God. The Federated Church of Ashland is a House of Worship, a place for service, and a congregation of people bonded together who believe in the power of God. Be encouraged that there is no obstacle worthy of causing us to miss out on our united worship of the Lord.

The Reverend Jason Rutherford

## A Note From The Office

*A friendly reminder...If you are the last one out of the building; please turn off ALL the lights, lock the door(s) and shut the heat down. The Church has been found to be empty, with the lights on, the heat left on and the door unlocked. **Thank you!***

# IHN Communication

Happy New Year,

Although we are in the grips of winter, we as part of the Interfaith Hospitality Network (IHN) have many reasons to be excited. First, we celebrate the completion of a very successful hosting, the week of November 15<sup>th</sup>; we hosted 4 families with up to 15 people per night depending on guest schedules. It was a friendly, cooperative, loving group of families who worked together and shared their joy among themselves and with us. The children played well together, as the adults enjoyed the delicious meals prepared by our generous volunteers and the lively conversations around the tables. There was an element of sadness on Saturday evening as our guests prepared to move on to the next hosting Church. A number of our guests were able to participate in our Coffeehouse performance on Saturday evening and several also joined us for our Sunday morning worship service.

Our second reason for excitement was the “graduation” of Steve and Mary’s family from the IHN program as they moved into a home in Milford. Although they were grateful for the support of IHN and all of the volunteers, it was a great relief for them to be “home” for Christmas. I would like to share their letter:

*“Dear Federated Church Of Ashland:*

*“Thank you so much for everything you have done for my family and me. I had so much fun getting to know all of you! Everything was so well put together! All the volunteers made us feel so welcome and I felt like we were part of the Church family! All of the meals were absolutely amazing! I really appreciated how you have made my family’s hearts warm and put together once again! We do sincerely thank you for opening your arms and taking us as part of your family and friends! Nothing could have made this experience go any better (than) the way it did and we (would like to) show our gratitude and gratefulness for that.*

*“Happy Holidays and God bless you all like you all have blessed us.*

*Sincerely, Sarah, John, Mark, Lisa, Mary and Steve B”*

A “Farewell and God Speed” gathering was held for this family during December where they received numerous gifts for their new home including, \$130 in gift cards from the Federated Church of Ashland thanks to your generosity. Reverend Jason and several volunteers attended this gathering, which ended with many hugs and some tears.

Our third reason for excitement and renewed energy is our upcoming hosting week beginning February 7<sup>th</sup>. There are currently 2 families (8 people) in the system, although we anticipate that others will be on board before February 7<sup>th</sup>. The volunteer sign-up board is in position in the front of the sanctuary. We need volunteers to stay overnight, join us for evening conversation, and prepare the delicious meals for which the Federated Church of Ashland has become well known. Tear off strips for breakfast and lunch items are posted. Please search your hearts and give as you can. Know that we are making a difference in people’s lives, for “There, but for the grace of God, go I”.

We, of course, will need volunteers to assist with the set up of the rooms on February 7<sup>th</sup> and take down the following Sunday, February 14<sup>th</sup>. Laundry bags will be in the lower level hallway following our service on Feb.14<sup>th</sup>. If this is your first time to volunteer, we welcome you; every task is important to the welfare of our guest families. Thank you!

Another reason for excitement is the FIRST ANNUAL “WALK AWAY HOMELESSNESS” Fundraising Event. This event is scheduled for Saturday, February 6<sup>th</sup> Indoors at the Natick Collection from 8:00 to 10:00 am. This is a wonderful opportunity to put together a group for some fun as you walk around the mall. It is suggested that walkers raise \$100, but any amount is appreciated. Come; help make this first walk a success. **Information and pledge forms are available on the table outside the church office.**

**The Metrowest IHN Newsletter will be posted on the Missions bulletin board every month. Please take some time to read it.**

With the help of God let us continue our good work,

Thank you, Lavonne Krishnan, MIHN Coordinator

# **Financial Summary for FY 2009/2010 through December 2009**

As of the end of December the income exceeded expenses by \$5,323. This positive position is due to the application of 2006 and 2009 fair money plus the receipt of designated memorials and income from the Thanksgiving and Christmas offerings.

Our actual receipt of contributions from pledges versus anticipated pledges at this point is about even.

However, going forward our only major source of income is from pledge contributions and special offerings. As a result we will end with a shortfall of approximately \$20,100. **We do not have the financial resources to cover this amount of shortfall. Unless increased income from contributions and other sources is achieved, drastic cuts in expenses will have to be made.** Employee compensation and utilities make up the major portion of our expenses.