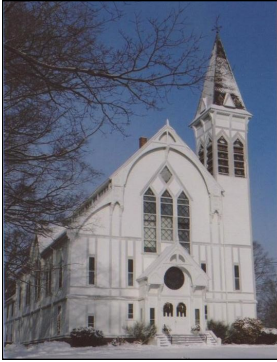


From the Hill



First Congregational Church of Georgetown

**7 Andover Street, P.O. Box 200
Georgetown, MA 01833**

Telephone: 978-352-8443

Email: churchoffice@georgetowncongregational.org

Website: www.georgetowncongregational.org

March 2019

LENT

Recently, my 7 year old asked to go on a hike at Weir Hill in North Andover. Since he typically refuses to hike, and it's my favorite activity, I jumped on it even though I really felt like I had too much to do. Fairly close to the beginning of our walk, we passed an area where the remnants of dark scorch marks, cleared ground, and bare trees indicated a fire had passed through at some point. The scorched areas still had a gritty, textured quality to them that evoked, for me, the fresh ashes that would have covered the area after the fire. It made me think of the ashes of Ash Wednesday services.

But the area also evoked sharp memories of my hikes in Colorado, passing burn areas that swept across large stretches of mountainsides in Rocky Mountain National Park. I often hiked with my husband Mike, who was a wildland firefighter at the time, and our good friends, Terri and Keith, who are, respectively, a senior biologist for the Nature Conservancy and a senior botanist for Nature Serve. We talked about these fires and forest fires in general. I don't know how many of you remember the iconic Smokey the Bear who warned us all that "Only You Can Prevent Forest Fires," but I was surprised to learn of the widespread agreement that the popularity of this ad campaign was actually terrible for the health of our forests. While the intent was to

curb human-generated fires that do cause massive damage to fragile eco systems, the impact was to create an aversion to all forest fires.

Turns out, forests need to burn for their survival. Keith explained there are varieties of pine trees who cones do not release their seeds except in fire. So when there is no fire, there is no new growth of multiple varieties of trees. And, it turns out, forests need to burn regularly for their survival. And Mike explained to me forest fires function to clear out underbrush. A regular forest fire will sweep through areas rapidly, burning the brush away and skimming the surface of the land, leaving trees mostly intact and just burning the top layer of soil. The cleared space encourages new vegetation and the ashes left over nourish the soil in important ways.

However, if an area does not experience a fire regularly, which has happened because Smokey the Bear did his job too well, this underbrush grows much denser and taller. And then when fires do start, they can't move through as quickly. So they penetrate deeper into the earth, causing soil damage, and they climb high into the trees, where they destroy the trees and jump in unpredictable ways with lighting speed across massive areas of

(Continued on page 2)

(Continued from page 1)

forest. These are the fires that overwhelm areas and create disastrous, dangerous situations.

And this is why the forest service now conducts controlled burns. They deliberately set small forest fires in strategic areas to clear out the underbrush, before it gets too overwhelming. This allows room and air for new growth to emerge from the ashes.

As I gazed out into fire-marked woods of Weir Hill, I reflected how this process could be a model of Lent. The need for a regular, periodic culling of the underbrush in my life. The various things and habits that keep me from new growth, from fuller connection to my life-breath of connection to God and others. And I began to imagine what sorts of controlled burns, or practices, might help clear that underbrush a bit.

I think a Lenten clearing of the underbrush can include practices of giving things up, like social media or unhealthy habits, or adding things. Some people have found that adding certain practices clear out a kind of underbrush, like adding the practice of looking for the good qualities of others, as a way to clear out the divisiveness and tension that's crowding us. I'm sure we could name many more practices that can help clear the way into a deeper relationship with God.

So whatever underbrush, whatever brokenness, might be crowding out life and connection to God and others for you, I pray you experience grace and life in the ashes, and find some way to practice a life-giving controlled burn of the underbrush in these 40 days of Lent.

Lenten blessings,
Julie



New Member Sunday

Our New Member Sunday will be on June 2nd. We have two Sunday classes to introduce you to First Church, the UCC, and to get to know you better; May 5th and May 19th. Contact Pastor Julie with questions or an interest in joining at: pastor@georgetowncongregational.org.



It's That Time of Year!

Have you noticed how much lighter the sky is in the morning? Or how much more daylight we have in the late afternoon? Spring is coming! **Be sure to turn your clocks ahead one hour before going to bed on Saturday, March 9th (official change is March 10th at 2:00am).**

Greetings From the Diaconate

“You are all God’s children through faith in Christ Jesus. All of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek; there is neither slave nor free; nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. Now if you belong to Christ, then indeed you are Abraham’s descendants, heirs according to the promise.” Galatians 3:26-29

Greetings from your Diaconate! In reading Galatians 3:26-29 from the Upper Room devotional magazine, it warms my heart to know that our church practices and encourages inviting everyone to the communion table. By inviting everyone to the table, we are assured that no matter of where we are in our faith journey, no matter of how far we’ve strayed, no matter of good or bad choices in life, no matter if we are working or not working, no matter what, God is with us, with open arms, inviting us to share in our faith together.

The month of March brings us opportunities to practice sharing our faith and sharing meals. Please join us Tuesday March 5 for a Pancake Dinner at 6pm as we celebrate God’s grace and enter into Lenten season. Also, please join us after worship on March 17 for a traditional St. Patrick’s Day meal as we celebrate and remember the spreading of the Gospel through St. Patrick. As always, we are very thankful for all of you and your faithfulness to the community.

If it has been a while since you’ve stepped through the doors, if you are new to the church, or if we have the pleasure of seeing you regularly, please know that we are here to welcome you at any time and any step of your faith journey. May God bless you all! Love, your Diaconate



Palm Sunday—April 14, 2019 @ 10:30 am

Morning Service—Procession of the Palms



Maundy Thursday—April 18, 2019 @ 7:00 pm

Candlelight Service with Music



Good Friday—April 19, 2019 12:00—3:00 pm

First Congregational Church Rowley

The Last Seven Words of Christ - come and hear local clergy as the each speak on one of the last seven words. Come for part of the time or joins us until the end.



Easter Sunday—April 21, 2016

6:30 am Sunrise Service @ Camp Leslie
(W. Main St. RT. 97)

7:00 am Breakfast in Fellowship Hall

10:30 am Easter Service followed by Easter Egg Hunt on the lawn

Outreach News

On February 10th, in time for Valentine's Day shopping, the Outreach Team sponsored a **FUDGE & MORE SALE** to benefit **Heifer Project International**, one of our most popular mission interests. As in the past, enthusiasm abounds as we get in the spirit of choosing an animal category from which we'll make our purchase.

We wish to thank all those who made different kinds of fudge and candy, to those who packaged the goodies in festive boxes and bags, to the children who canvassed the Coffee Hour crowd to garner their votes, and lastly to our patrons who gave so generously to the donation baskets. It was a happy time knowing that these efforts would help many families in different countries overcome their hardships with the gift of a Heifer animal or animals, and knowing that with that gift they would be able to provide for their children.

The winning animal this year was SHEEP, and with the \$441 received in donations, we'll be able to purchase **THREE SHEEP!** But there's more! After the purchase of three sheep, there's a balance of \$81. With that balance, our Team is recommending that we also purchase a **TRIO of RABBITS** and a **FLOCK of CHICKS!** Well done, everyone!

With gratitude to our Church Family,

Faithfully,

The Outreach Team

***DURING THE MONTH OF MARCH ...
LISTEN TO THE STORIES ...
EVERY LIVING CREATURE REQUIRES
CLEAN WATER FOR DRINKING ...
CLEAN WATER FOR LIVING
WE TAKE IT FOR GRANTED ...
ISN'T IT OUR RIGHT?
GAIN INSIGHT TO THE
WATER CHALLENGE ...
FACED BY 700 MILLION PEOPLE
AROUND OUR FRAGILE PLANET ...
SAFE WATER FOR LIFE
KICKS OFF IN MARCH...
PLEASE LISTEN!***



Lenten Study

I am deeply glad to be approaching the Lenten season with you all. I am particularly excited about having a Lenten study throughout Lent that will also shape our worship experiences together. Each Sunday in Lent, we will have the opportunity to share a soup lunch and conversation about a study called “Gifts of the Dark Wood” by Darkwood Brew ministry.* The study is based on the book *Gifts of the Dark Wood: Seven Blessings for Soulful Skeptics (And Other Wanders)* by Dr. Eric Elnes, and it is accompanied by facilitated video discussions from some of the most prominent, respected theologians today. We will have a few books available at church if you aren’t comfortable ordering online or if cost is an issue. You are also welcome to order the book online. I will be using resources from Rev. Dr. Marcia McFee that have been designed to complement and explore the themes of our Lenten study during worship.

Here is the description provided by the series creators:

Though commonly understood as a place to be feared and avoided, the Dark Wood is the surest place to meet God...It is a place where you may feel uncertain, empty, lost, tempted, and alone. Yet these feelings - these gifts of the Dark Wood - can be your greatest assets on your journey. According to the ancients, you don't need to be a saint or spiritual master to experience profound awakening. You don't even have to be "above average." All you really need to be is struggling.

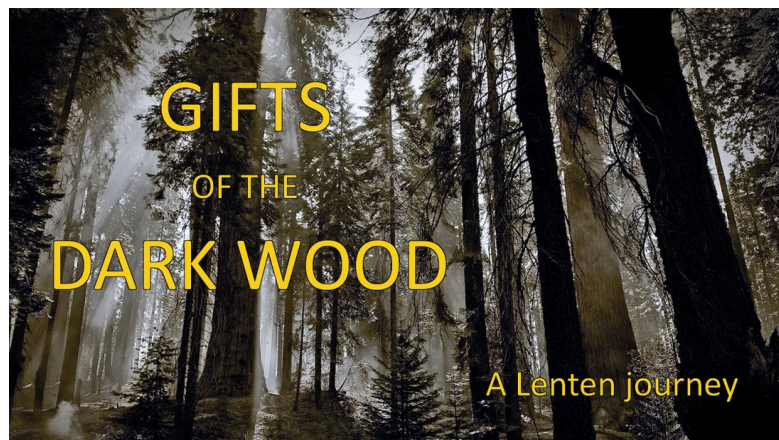
In clear and lucid prose that combines the heart of a mystic, the soul of a poet, and the mind of a biblical scholar, Dr. Eric Elnes demystifies the seven gifts bestowed in the Dark Wood: the gifts of uncertainty, emptiness, being thunderstruck, getting lost, temptation, disappearing, and the gift of misfits.

This is a book for anyone who feels awkward in their search for God, who seeks to find holiness amid their holy mess, who prefers practicality to piety when it comes to finding their place in this world.

The study will be deeply enhanced if you are following the book, but please come anyway if you would like. The introduction videos will still allow you to engage meaningfully. I hope we have a rich Lenten journey together!

Peace and blessings,
Julie

*On Sunday, March 17 Ruth Soper and Rich Brock are hosting a special St. Patrick’s Day boiled dinner so we will meet at 9am before worship that day. I will bring the bagels!





Church Pantry

Tuesdays and Thursdays, 9:30 am—11:30 am

Following is a list of items that are in need:

Individually wrapped soaps
Individually wrapped toilet paper
Paper Towels
Shampoo
Deodorant (men's & women's)
Dish soap
Cleaning products (409, Lysol, sponges, etc.)
Toothpaste & Tooth Brushes
Juice Boxes & Bottled Juices
Coffee & Tea

Donations of grocery store gift cards are always welcome! These enable families to get perishable items that they cannot get at the food pantry.

Pet Pantry Items: We offer pet food and supplies to help families keep their animal companions fed and healthy too!

Canned and Dry Food & Treats & Litter



Women's Guild News

Afternoon Guest Social Tuesday, April 2 at 2:00 o'clock.

"Medical Quackery"

Welcome back Dr. Mike Cross, chemistry professor on faculty at Northern Essex Community College. Last year Dr. Cross gave an entertaining talk on the subject of chocolate. This year's subject is equally fascinating . The early part of the last century was considered the "Golden Age of Quackery". Dr. Mike will share his knowledge of that history- but wait! There are snake oil hucksters even today! Can you recognize them?

Please bring a friend or two or family member. This is a "Guest Social."

Light refreshments: Everyone!!



**Come join in on the
Annual Church Clean-up on
Saturday, March 24, beginning @ 8:30 am.
Help get the Sanctuary ready for Easter!**

Definition of Cleaning: the activity of removing dirt from things and places, especially a house (of God!); figuratively, it can apply to spiritual purification (of one's soul!).

So much gratification in the activity of cleaning!



Thank You



Thank you to everyone who supported the Fundraiser on Super Bowl Sunday. Over 70 sub sandwiches were ordered by the congregation and friends of the church. This event raised over \$600. The proceeds will be donated to the Continuing Our Legacy campaign.

Storm Cancellations

In the event of a Saturday night or Sunday morning snowstorm, you can check with Channel 7 or Channel 56 (CW) for storm closings. Also, we will send a church-wide email and update our Facebook page.

There is also a mobile app that you can download for free by searching WHDH in the app store and view storm status anywhere, anytime.



Nancy Aberman

Carol Lutes

Cecelia Andrus

Barbara Morehouse

George Comiskiey

Cadynce Pesce

Chuck Davis

Lyla Schneider

Haleigh Harris

Tim Southwick

Gladie Kneeland

Our Church is in need of a replacement lawn mower!

Our church lawn mower is broken and we would like to ask if anyone has a riding mower they'd like to donate to the church (24" to 42")? Or possibly be able to repair the current one, which seems to be a faulty electric power transfer or switch.

Thanks for your consideration! Your Property Team.



Light The Church Fund

Contributions for lighting the church can be made in memory of loved ones or in honor of someone special. If you would like to make a contribution or need more information please contact JoEllen Fielding at 978-352-6904.

We have PayPal!



Go to our website and you can donate to or pay for church fundraisers at First Church using your credit card; you can get the points and help our church out, too. Just remember that we get 93% of what you give. Please send an email message to the church office to let us know about the donation, and if it is going to a particular place.



Each month we have a group of people who meet to talk about books selected by members. Meetings are held in different houses or at the church. If you are interested in attending a meeting, contact the Church Office or any of the people listed below to get directions to that month's meeting.

All are welcome and you do not have to RSVP to attend.

Below is a list of the books they will be discussing in the coming months in case you want to get the book ahead of time or you might just be looking for a good read.

Mar. 27, 2019	<i>Evening Class</i>	Maeve Binchy ©1997 432 pp.	Nancy Aberman 199 W. Main St. Nancy: 978-352-2793
Apr. 24, 2019	<i>Another Side of Paradise</i>	Sally Koslow ©2018 352 pp.	Pam & Carol Sheehan Church Sheehan: 978-352-6329
May 29, 2019	<i>A Gentleman in Moscow</i>	Amor Towles ©2016 480 pp.	Dee Wyatt Camp Denison Lodge, 84 Nelson St Dee: 617-957-6090
June 26, 2019	<i>Educated, a Memoir</i> Non-fiction	Tara Westover ©2018 352 pp.	Ruth Soper, Gladie Kneeland & Sylvia Johnston Church Ruth: 978-352-2500

From the Member-at-Large

The Church Council is very interested in your ideas as to how we can grow spiritually as a church. How can we expand what we do well so that it reaches beyond our own walls? Please share your thoughts with any of the Council members. Other thoughts and concerns may be told as well at any time.

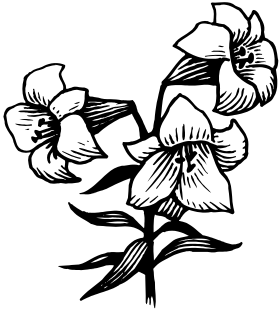
Our new Member-at-Large to the Council is Ruth Soper.



March 2019



Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
					1 7pm AA	2
3 9:30am Choir 10:30am Worship	4	5 6pm Pancake Dinner/Ash Wednesday Svc	6 7pm Boy Scouts	7 5:15pm Staff Mtg	8 7pm AA	9
10 9:30am Band 10:30am Worship 11:45am Bells Lenten Book Study/Soup Lunch	11	12 6pm Finance Mtg 6:30pm Bells 7:30pm Band	13 Ash Wednesday 7pm Boy Scouts	14	15 Newsletter Deadline 7pm AA	16
17 Happy St. Patrick's Day Lenten Book Study/Soup Lunch 9:30am Bells 10:30am Worship Boiled Dinner	18	19 6:30pm Bells 7:30pm Band	20 7pm Boy Scouts	21	22 4pm GS 62977 7pm AA	23 Rental (10-3pm)
24 10:30am Worship Lenten Book Study/Soup Lunch	25	26 6:30pm Choir 7pm Bells	27 7pm Boy Scouts	28	29 7pm AA	30
31 9:30am Bells 10:30am Worship Lenten Book Study/Soup Lunch						



Easter Plants: In Memory Of or In Honor Of

The front of our sanctuary will be filled with beautiful flowers on Easter Sunday morning. The Diaconate welcomes your contributions in memory of or in honor of beloved friends and family members. Donations may be made payable to The First Congregational Church of Georgetown and may be placed in the offering plate or mailed to the church at PO Box 200, Georgetown, MA 01833.

The deadline for your contribution will be Sunday, April 19 2019. A listing of those who have contributed will be printed in the Easter Sunday bulletin. Flowers will be delivered to members who are homebound and to those who have recently lost a family member.

Yes, I would like to make a donation (in any amount) \$_____

IN MEMORY OF or IN HONOR OF (please print))

From: _____



First Congregational Church of Georgetown
PO Box 200
7 Andover Street
Georgetown, MA 01833
www.georgetowncongregational.org
(978) 352-8443



Inside This Issue

Book Club.....	9
Confirmation News.....	4
Diaconate News	3
Easter Plant Form.....	11
Food Pantry News	6
Holy Week Schedule	3
Lenten Study.....	5
Membership Class.....	2
Outreach	6
Pastors Message.....	1
Women’s Guild.....	6

Our Church Mission Statement:

*“To nurture those in our own faith community
and to act on our faith by reaching out to others.”*

We are an Open and Affirming church of the United Church of Christ.