

Good News and good news

Volume 5, Number 4 • February 13, 2024

My Bibles...

by Judi Sweeney

I was cleaning my bookshelves the other day when I came across a well-worn whitish (It was really white once) leather covered King James version Bible. It was my very first Bible given to me by my parents in May of 1956. My mother wrote in it, "For three years of perfect attendance in Sunday School. We hope this will always be your favorite book! Love, Mom & Dad." How I loved that Bible! I was proud of it, always bringing it to church and Sunday School. In church, I paged through it, looked at all the colored pictures of great art about the stories I had learned in Sunday School. I discovered the colored maps. I loved maps and started sharing them with other kids in my Sunday School class. Then one Sunday, during a very long sermon, I found the concordance. I whispered to my mother, "What's this?" She showed me that I could look up a word, like in a dictionary, and then look up the verses that contained that word. I think, even at 8 years old, I was in love with using the Bible to help me understand how God wanted me to live my life. I looked up words like "love," "obey" (my mother's suggestion), "sins," and more.

Student and Study Bibles

This is the Bible I carried into my married life. But Jack and I soon found ourselves in a Bible Study; and somehow within a short time, I found myself teaching the Bible Study. My next Bible was an NIV Study Bible. I had memorized certain parts of the King James Bible, and I was sad to give up some of that beautiful language. However, in difficult to understand areas of the text, I found that the modernized language and the Study Notes on the bottom of each page, really helped me understand. Sometimes, though, the notes weren't enough. One day, my father showed up with a set of easy-to-understand paperback commentaries. He had used them for years, and he wanted to give them to me to build on my growing love of studying scripture. (We have a full set of laymen commentaries in the Conference Room library which you may borrow for your studies.)

Continued on page 5...

Lenten Services

February 14

Simple Supper • 6:15 pm

Service • 7:00 pm

February 21

Service • 7:00 pm

February 28

Service • 7:00 pm



good news...

These are the birthdays of people age 65 and older and couples with anniversaries from February 15th through 29th.

Birthdays:

Ted O'Neill	February 18
Janice King	February 26
Linda Jones	February 27

Anniversaries:

Altar Flowers:

February 18 - Flowers are given to the glory of God.

February 25 - Flowers are given by Marcia Cummings in loving memory of her mother, Carol Daigneau, as she remembers her birthday.

Want to Give Flowers?

Add your name to the flower calendar in the foyer, and Laurie Drake will contact you about price and flowers you want. Flowers must be paid for by the Sunday before their appearance on the altar. After the service, you may take the flowers or give them away.



Good News About Our Fasting/Prayer Event

by Jane Ingersoll-Mahoney

Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. Phil. 4:6

On January 29 – 30 we held our quarterly 24-hours of fasting and prayer event. It is becoming clear that we are a praying church! Every time slot (broken down into half hour sessions) was covered. In many cases, 2, 3, and 4 persons were praying at the same time! We had 23 men, 45 women, and several home-bound individuals who prayed.

Continued on page 3...

Our February Verse

He told them, "The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field.

Luke 10:2 (NIV)

Blue lettering indicates those groups that have updated information.

Adult Sunday School Class

This adult Bible Study meets weekly during the school year from 9:30 - 10:15 am in the Conference Room. Starting on January 21st, the class will be taught for awhile by Patti Barney using the book *Psalms 91*.

Monday Morning Women's Bible Study

Meeting weekly at Phyllis Cobiski's home at 23 Gilbert Street from 10 - 11:30 am. The group will be starting a new study called "Breaking Free" on January 8th. Contact Pauline Dwelly for information.

Women's Monday Afternoon Bible Study

This Bible Study will be meeting in the Conference Room on Monday afternoon from 12:30 - 2:00 pm. Contact Susan Gainley.

Prayer Shawl Ministry

This group meets the 2nd and 4th Mondays of each month from 6 to 7:30 pm. The group meets in the Parlor. Contact Karen Bessette for more information.

It's All About Jesus

This Bible Study group meets to learn more about Jesus through the Scriptures. The group meets on Tuesday evenings at 6 pm. Contact Jade Ford for more information.

Men's Bible Study

This group will be starting a new Bible Study entitled *The Essential 100* on January 16th. They meet on Tuesday from 6:30 to 8:00 pm in the Conference Room. Contact Brian Roth for details.



Christian Yoga • Balanced in Him

Meeting every Wednesday night in the parlor. Contact Holly Kularski for information.

Prayer Group

This group meets weekly on Fridays at 9:30 - 11:00 am in the Conference Room. Contact Nancy Olson for details.

Celia Daniel's Bible Study

This Bible Study meets in the Multi-Purpose Room on Thursdays from 1:00 to 2:00 pm. Contact Celia Daniels for more information.

Sweeney Bible Study

We are starting up again. Our next meeting will be on February 29th. Contact Judi Sweeney for details.

Men's Saturday Breakfast and Study

The monthly men's breakfast and Bible Study is on the second Saturday of each month. Contact Dale Wadsworth for information.

The next breakfast is March 9th at 8:15 am.

Drawing Closer

The Bible Journaling Group will meet in the Multi-Purpose Room from 9:30 - 11:00 am on Saturdays. Contact Deb Arnold.

Parents of Little Ones Bible Study

This new group will meet at the Hulsebus' home on the first Saturdays of the month. This group is starting a new study called "Grace Based Parenting" by Dr. Tim Kimmel. Please reach out to Brian or Jessie for more information.

Jr. KICK

This group for students in grades 6 through 8 meets from at 2:00 to 3:30 pm in Fellowship Hall.

Ignite

This group for high school students meets from 4 - 5:30 pm in Fellowship Hall.

Sharing Christ Through Cards

Watch the newsletter for the next session.

Joy 'n Hope

The Cancer Care Ministry supports people with cancer as well as their caregivers. They also pray for people whose life is impacted by cancer each month. See Melanie Silva for more information.

If you want information about a small group, please contact – Judi Sweeney, (508)383-5384, or jpsweeney58@charter.net

Prayer and Fasting Day...continued from page 1...

For each of you who took part in lifting your prayers to God in church unity, I am sure you received your own blessing as you gave honor to our Father. For any who missed the sign-up opportunity or were unable to participate, you will have another opportunity to do so in March.

The next 24-hour event is scheduled for Thursday, March 28 at 6:00 pm (just prior to our **Maundy Thursday service**) **through Good Friday, March 29 at 6:00 pm.** What a perfect time to spend in prayer as our Lord and Savior suffers mock trials, undergoes endless beatings, and hangs for three hours until dying on a cross. Our fasting/praying will end after He is taken down from the cross and placed in a tomb.



Please consider signing up to fast and/or pray during this very solemn and sacred time. Remember that fasting is always optional.



Women's Weekend Spring Retreat

by Annie Shea

We are again planning to send a group of women from our church to the Spring Retreat at Camp Monadnock on May 17th – 19th. The cost of the full weekend is \$215.00. You'll encounter the Spirit of God through 4 chapel sessions with applicable, Scripture-rooted teaching and intimate worship. There are also classic camp activities like nature walks, archery, and crafts.

To register, go to Camp Monadnock (<https://www.monadnock.camp>) and register. When registering, you will be asked for a group name. Please let them know that you want to room with women from First Congregational Church of North Brookfield. You will also need to check off you are attending with a group.

If you will need a ride, let me know, and we will arrange one for you. As we get closer to the retreat date, I will also make a list of things you will need to bring for the weekend.

Don't miss out on this very special opportunity! You will leave there a different woman!

If you need help with registration or if you have questions, please contact Annie Shea at (508) 873-2837 (phone or text) or annie@agenerationinneed.com.



The Mission's Committee is sponsoring a Virtual Baby Shower again this year during the month of February. We are collecting baby clothes and needed items for our two mission groups in Worcester which support pregnant women who have decided on life for their babies. Throughout February, we will be collecting clothes, diapers, and money to split between Clearway Clinic and Problem Pregnancy of Worcester. Place your clothing and baby items gifts into the cradle at the front of the church. You may also donate money to allow these groups to buy bigger items such as car seats.

Clearway Clinic Specific Requests

Neutral colors
1 piece sleepers - sizes 3-6 & 6-9 months
onesies - sizes 3-6 and 6-9 months
diapers - sizes 1 and 2

Problem Pregnancy Specific Requests

1 piece sleepers - sizes 0-3 & 3-6 months
onesies - sizes 0-3 and 3-6 months
diapers - sizes 4 and 5



Both Groups Need:

winter clothing
towels, wash clothes, bibs
receiving blankets
socks and booties
baby wipes
lotions, shampoos



All donations must be received by Sunday, February 25th. If you have any questions, please contact: [Pauline Dwelly](mailto:Pauline.Dwelly@firstcongregational.org) or Sharon Combs.

Women's Retreat Committee Meeting



Sunday, February 18th

15 minutes after church in the Sanctuary

Committee Meeting

Memorial Day Chicken Barbecue...

A committee for planning a Chicken Barbecue for Memorial Day, May 27, 2024 is forming now. Anyone who is interested in helping make this a reality should come to the first meeting of this committee on **Sunday, February 25, about 15 minutes after the end of the service in the Sanctuary.**

It takes so many people to make this successful, so we hope that you can offer some of your talents, gifts, and time to this endeavor. It is a wonderful way for us to work together as a church family and serve the community around us. We are also hoping to offer a concert during the activity.



For more information, see Karen Bessette.

Age 4 - Grade 2

Jonah and the Big Fish by Bethanie Wheeler

In Sunday school on February 4th, we read the story of Jonah and the Big Fish. God wanted Jonah to go tell the people in Nineveh to stop doing bad things and turn to Him, but Jonah didn't want to! He didn't like those people at all! No way! So, Jonah tried to run away from God and ended up getting thrown overboard from a boat during a scary storm. God sent a big fish to swallow up Jonah and rescue him from drowning. For three days in the big fish Jonah prayed for God to forgive him. Then the big fish spit out Jonah on the beach, and he went right to Nineveh to tell the people there how much God loves them. Just like Jonah told the people in Nineveh, we need to tell everyone we know how much God loves them!



Grade 3 - 5

The Day of Atonement... by Karen McGrail

On Sunday, February 4th, we reviewed the major stories from Genesis and Exodus, and then we started Leviticus. We then talked about the meanings of the words "atonement," "sacrifice" and "scapegoat." The story we centered on was concerning the Day of Atonement and the students colored pages they could put into their Bibles.



To encourage bringing their Bibles, we have been giving tickets which can be traded in for a stuffed animal.



Age 4 - Grade 2

Favorite Stories by Mary Beth Kularski

On February 11th, we talked about God's people returning from slavery. They were sad about the rules but they also remembered it's not the rules that save them but a God who loves them no matter what. We revisited what we've learned throughout the Old Testament, and everyone shared their favorite stories. It was so special that each child had a different favorite from God's Word that they shared about David and Goliath, Moses, Daniel and the lions' den, and Jonah.

It was such a blessing to see. Everyone is looking forward to the New Testament and is ready for the arrival of the King!

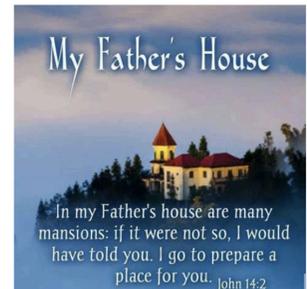


Grade 3 - 5

12 Spies... by Sue Caron

On February 11, 2024, after prayer, we viewed the Biggest Story Video *Big People, Little Faith: The Story of the 12 Spies (Numbers 13-14)*. God's people got to the border of Canaan, known as the land of milk and honey (the Promised Land). Twelve spies were sent to secretly gather and report information on the people living there. Ten of the spies believed the Israelites would be destroyed if they tried to claim the land. Only Joshua and Caleb trusted that God would keep his promise to give them the land. The people complained and even said they wanted to go back to Egypt. Those that were unfaithful were not allowed to enter because they feared the giant Canaanites more than they trusted God.

We talked about the Promised Land and compared it to Heaven. We discussed how to know for sure that we can go there. We are thankful to Jesus for his great love. He was willing to go the cross to pay the debt for our sin. Because of him, we can live eternally in a place he has prepared for us.



Next Step...Bible Resources

I didn't change Bibles for quite a few years. (It's important for me to remind you that I am talking about the 70's and 80's during which there was no internet.) If I needed additional resources in my study, I had to go to the library (not much in Bible Studies there) or to buy books. I bought 2 big books that really helped me prepare for our Bible Study and helped me teach Sunday School. The first I got was *Strong's Exhaustive Concordance* of the Bible. It made that first concordance I used look like a pre-primer reader. It also introduced me to the original Hebrew (Old Testament) and Greek (New Testament) words of the Bible. The second book I got was a parallel Bible. When I opened the book (it was a big one!), across both pages I saw a given section of scripture in 4 different translations. Many of the people in our Bible Study used different versions of the Bibles, so we began to compare the different ways the verses were translated before we really dug into a passage. This is something I still do every single day.

Different Bible Types

When the computer age started to spread everywhere and the Internet was born, Jack and I got Bible software so that when I wanted to make an original Bible study, I could simply copy text from the Bible on my computer and paste it into a document. I began writing more and more original Bible Studies. To this day, I always use Bible software for creating Bible Studies and creating messages for Sunday morning.

But I also started to get Bibles that featured other specific interests. I had spent a couple of years looking at, reading about, and studying prophecy and End Times. I was given a Prophecy Bible one Christmas. Every possible verse in the Old Testament that was prophetic, especially in terms of Jesus' coming, was marked and annotated.

I also purchased my first chronological Bible. The stories of the Bible had been rearranged into their correct chronological order. In reading through the Bible before this, I had discovered that the same story was often retold in another book. This Bible, using the text from the NIV version, told the complete stories as found in all the different books put in the correct chronological order. I also knew where each part of the story came from because the original book, chapter and verse was printed in the side margin. This was particularly helpful in studying the life of Jesus through the 4 Gospels.

More Bible Types

By this time, I was well into different delivery Bible types. I kept expanding my computer Bible with additional add-on modules. These modules included maps and commentaries, Strong's concordance, and historical Biblical dictionaries. I also tried listening to the Bible on audio tape. While many of my friends really did much better in their studies with this type of Bible, I had a difficult time following along and remembering what I was hearing, especially if I was doing anything else (driving, for example). I can remember telling one of my friends that in terms of my ability to learn by listening only, I was definitely in need of special services.

Bible Journaling

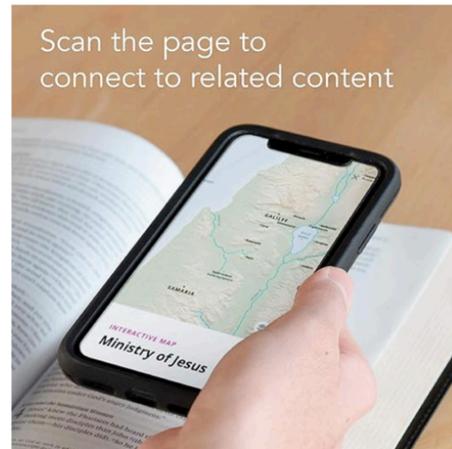
And then Bible Journaling hit my life. I had just seen an article about what Bible Journaling was all about. People were printing Bibles that left open spaces for taking notes or for doing art work on edge of the pages. I always loved to paint and draw, and I wanted to really get into this new way to study God's Word. (My mother once caught me underlining a verse in my Bible. "NEVER write or mark up a Bible," she had said sternly. "It's God's book, not yours." Years later, as I was cleaning up her apartment after her death, I opened her well-used Bible next to her chair.

It was full of underlining, highlighting, notes and even stickers! She had never said a word to me or showed me her Bible.) Now, I was ready to do art in a Bible...and then Deb Arnold called all excited about starting a small group that would do Bible journaling together! That was 2017, and today we sometime have as many as 15 or more women learning about God's Word, meditating over verses, and studying scripture together as we produce art within these special Bibles.



A Future Bible - the Filament Bible

I probably will be getting at least one more Bible. While I have been home taking care of Jack after his knee replacement, the Bible Journaling group has latched onto the newest type of Bible, the filament Bible. The best way to explain this is to use the idea of QR codes you have seen for some church events. If you have a smart phone or tablet and you open the camera and focus it on the filament image (often next to the page number) in a filament Bible, you will be taken to a variety of study resources that fit what you are reading. These resources could include articles, other verses, pictures, videos, devotionals, maps and more.



I have often said that once you are "infected" by God's Word, you never can get enough from it or run out of things to learn and study in it. As Paul wrote to Timothy, *"All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work."* 2 Timothy 3:15-16. The life I lead is led by God's revealing himself to me every time I open His word. His Word is a living word. Every time I open the Bible and read a verse, even a verse that I have read or heard many times over, He opens my eyes to a new meaning, a new way to incorporate His truth into my life. My Bibles remain and will always remain my favorite books.

Psalm 23

N S T I L L E A D S S V V
B E N E M I E S W A N T L
D F C D E A T H K T V N O
S S E N S U O E T H G I R
M V V A E R A P E R P O D
L H I T R S H H E I S N L
A T L R U C E E S H T A P
S E R O T S E R A ' V M B
P E T F S H D D P D A E E
I L S M A R O E I K L ' V
I B R O P W T U E S L S E
D A L C U A P S G R E E N
S T A F F L D L K H Y B V
B N ' W U K K H R F T F H

ANOINT

DAVID

EVEN

GREEN

LORD

PASTURES

PRESENCE

RIGHTEOUSNESS

SHEPHERD

STILL

VALLEY

BESIDE

DEATH

EVIL

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MAKES

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SAKE

SOUL

TABLE

WALK

COMFORT

ENEMIES

FEAR

LEADS

NAME'S

PREPARE

RESTORES

SHADOW

STAFF

THOUGH

WANT