

Good News and good news

Volume 5, Number 9 • April 23, 2024

The Believing Worker...

by Judi Sweeney

Over twenty-five years ago, I was preparing for serious surgery. I had needed the surgery for a while, but I had put it off because my boss, a man I had known for over 10 years, needed my help. I finished teaching a graduate course for him, submitted grades and was ready to head out and go home to rest before surgery scheduled for the next morning. Just as I was leaving, the phone rang. I was asked to come upstairs to the office of the new dean of my department. My boss was with her. I went up, thinking how nice it was of them to thank me for finishing up the course and to wish me well on my surgery. That wasn't their plan. I walked into the office, and my boss didn't even look up to greet me. The new dean started talking right away. "We have been talking," she started. "We don't think we need to pay you for your six weeks post-surgery." She stated that because of my pay coming from grants primarily, she couldn't okay my using that money, even though I had been working there for 12 years and it was part of my contract. My boss never said a word, never looked up and met my eyes.

I had surgery, filed a grievance with the professor's union, won it, and resigned based on the fact that the dean also changed my hours from 40 hours a week to 4 hours a week. Eventually, I learned she wanted to bring her best friend from her previous university to take over my position. I was without a job. But, God had plans for me.

It took me years to get over the betrayal I felt from my boss' not speaking up for me. I decided that I would never work for another person again. I would be the boss, and I would make sure that people who worked for me knew that they could trust me. I didn't seek God's wisdom on bosses and workers at that point in time; but over the years, God brought me to many examples in the scriptures that taught me so much more.

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New Altar Flowers Procedures...

by Judi Sweeney

For many of us, flowers on the altar are a part of our worship, "*Flowers appear on the earth; the season of singing has come, the cooing of doves is heard in our land.*" *Song of Solomon 2:12.*

On May 1st, our church's procedures for putting flowers on the altar each week will be changing. We'll be gradually working on a new method, but we have some beginning ideas on which we will build.

1. If you want to bring flowers to church on Sunday, you can still do this. Please have them in a vase and put them on the altar table or on the platform on either side of the pulpit at least 15 minutes before the start of the service. After the service, you should remove the flowers yourself.
2. If you want to commemorate the flowers you bring for a certain person or anniversary, you must contact Deb Arnold, who makes the announcement slides, and Judi Sweeney, who does the newsletter. These commemorations should be sent to Deb and Judi at least one week before you bring the flowers.
3. When no flowers are on the altar by 15 minutes before the service starts, the Diaconate will place one of several high-quality flower arrangements on the altar. (See some below.) These have been purchased by flower special funds and donations from individuals. They are to be used only for the worship services.

If there are multiple flowers, how beautiful that will be! If you have any questions or suggestions, please contact Judi or Deb.



good news...

These are the birthdays of people age 65 and older and couples with anniversaries from April 24th and May 8th.

Birthdays:

Susan Jorritsma	April 25
Joan Calverley	April 26
Mike Palumbo	April 28
Bob Banthin	May 7
Linda Ostiguy	May 7
Celia Daniels	May 9

Anniversaries:

Andy & Sue Caron	April 30
Leon & Bev Mimeault (53 years)	May 1
David & Janet Nelson	May 2
Mark & Joan Hume	May 6

Altar Flowers

April 28 - Flowers are given by to celebrate the birthdays of Deb Dwelly on April 22 and Ray Dwelly on April 29 by their mother, Pauline Dwelly.

Flowers are also given with love by Sharon Combs to celebrate the birthday of her sister Judy and also to remember the birthday of her father, Shaler Combs.



Monthly Prayer Based on Colossians 2:6-7

Lord, may we both receive you and walk in you. May we be rooted and built up in you, and may we be fully established in our faith through your teaching. And may we be a people abounding in thanksgiving for all you've done. Amen.

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 *Psalm 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 group will begin a new study using the book *Grounded in the Faith* which has twenty-four low prep, in-depth sessions that are meant to ground believers in the basics of their faith. Topics include justification, sanctification, evidence for the inspiration of the Bible, the Trinity, God's attributes, Jesus' humanity and divinity and much more. The cost of the book is \$20. We'll begin this study on April 29th. 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.

Overcomers - NEW

This new women's Bible Study meets on Monday nights at Jeannine Fish's home. Contact Jeannine for details.

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 is currently in the book of



Exodus, working through the Bible with a Bible Study entitled *The Essential 100*. We're discovering the 100 most inspirational passages in God's Word that truly identify the Bible as a unified story that leads to Jesus. We meet on Tuesday from 6:30 to 8:00 pm in the Conference Room. Contact Brian Roth.

Understanding Spiritual Gifts - Zoom

This Zoom Bible study biweekly on Wednesday nights from 6:45 pm. They are studying Spiritual Gifts, a study by Kay Arthur (available on Amazon). Contact Marcia Cummings to get a Zoom invite for the class as well as for more information.

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 continue with our life application Bible studies. Our next meetings will be on April 25th and May 9th. Contact Judi Sweeney.

Living Single - NEW

This new group for singles aged 30+ meets on Thursday nights. On first and third Thursdays in each month, they meet in the Conference Room. On 2nd and 4th

Thursdays, they do activities in the area. Contact Bridget Reynolds 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 May 11th 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 Fortier for more information.

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

Filled Full...

by Sue Caron

On Sunday, April 14, we opened with prayer and praise, and the children listened to "Filled Full" read aloud from The Jesus Storybook Bible; the story of the feeding of the 5000. We snacked on five oyster crackers (loaves) and 2 goldfish (fishes) with refills, of course! (The people ate until they were full, too.) Then we used our new watercolors to paint baskets of fish and bread. The verse "With God all things are possible" was printed like a puzzle on the back." We learned that the same God who created the world turned a little boy's lunch into dinner for over 5000 people with 12 baskets left over.

Our God is A.M.A.Z.I.N.G!



Meeting Dates

Vacation Bible School for Helpers and Teachers

If you are called to help out at Vacation Bible School this summer (July 22 - 26), please make note of these meeting dates. The meetings will be held from **6:30 - 7:30 pm in the Multi-Purpose Room in the Church Office Building.** The meeting dates are:

May 8 • June 12 • July 10



David and Goliath...

by Karen McGrail

We studied the story of David and Goliath-starting with a movie and snack. The Lord rejected the first King Saul because he rejected God's word. We learned that God values what's in our hearts, and young David was anointed as the next King. David was a humble shepherd boy who completely trusted God and was able to defeat the giant with a sling and 5 stones. We don't have giants challenging us to fight, but we do have giants of sins like wrong thoughts, laziness, jealousy to name a few. Just as David couldn't win in his own strength, we need God to help us. We reviewed with story cards, tried out old fashioned slings using marshmallows and aiming for a picture of Goliath placed 9 feet high. David's humility pointed to Jesus' humility. David's trust in God was great, but Jesus' trust was even greater. We also had a brief game where each student put on the armor of God - reminding them that David didn't use King Saul's armor. He fully relied on God and every day we need to put on armor of God to defeat Satan's attacks.



David Sins...and Repents... by Sue Caron

On Sunday, April 21, we began with praise and prayer. We viewed The Biggest Story Video, *David Sins...and Repents*, and discussed that even David, (who was called a man after God's own heart) had some mighty BIG SINS. David loved the Lord, and with true repentance asked God to forgive Him. He asked for a new clean heart and God, in His mercy and grace, forgave David.

We talked about the difference between saying "I'm sorry," and really being sorry. Real repentance means acknowledging your sin, feeling guilt, shame, and/or regret, confessing it, and asking for forgiveness in an effort to make things right between you and the one/One against whom you've sinned.

We also did an object lesson to show that the Light of the World takes away the sin that stains our lives and gives us a clean heart too!



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Believing Workers

Imagine my surprise years later when I found out about and then taught a class on the responsibility of Christian workers. In Ephesians 6:5-9, Paul described a believer's proper attitude toward his or her boss, "Bondservants, obey your earthly masters with fear and trembling, with a sincere heart, as you would Christ, not by the way of eye-service, as people-pleasers, but as bondservants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart, rendering service with a good will as to the Lord and not to man, knowing that whatever good anyone does, this he will receive back from the Lord, whether he is a bondservant or is free." While Paul was particularly addressing slaves, what he says applies to all workers (bondservant or free). When we accept a job, we should recognize our boss's authority and submit to his requests and even commands. We should do our job with our whole heart because that system of authority was set up by God. Most importantly, we need to render service as if we were working for the Lord. That kind of work takes complaining off the table. We took the job, so we need to follow our boss's directions. If we do not respect our boss, if we complain about him or her, then we risk setting a poor example of what Christ wants us to show to the rest of the world. We weaken our witness to others and to our boss.

Evil Bosses

So, what if the boss tells us to do something unwise, illegal, or anti-Bible? Daniel, in his captivity in Babylon, gives us several examples from which we can gain knowledge. One of them involves Daniel and his friends, right after they were taken to Babylon. Daniel and his friends (all teenagers) had arrived in Babylon and were put under the authority of the Chief Eunuch. This man told them that they would each day eat what the King ate and drink what the king drank. Daniel knew he couldn't do this and disobey God's commands, but he could try to negotiate with his new boss about the situation. In Daniel 1:11-13, we read about his suggestion to the Chief Eunuch, "Then Daniel said to the steward whom the chief of the eunuchs had assigned over Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, 'Test your servants for ten days; let us be given vegetables to eat and water to drink. Then let our appearance and the appearance of the youths who eat the king's food be observed by you, and deal with your servants according to what you see.'" His plan worked, and the boss's instructions were changed to fit the needs of Daniel and his friends.

Sometimes, though, there is not any room for negotiation with an evil boss. Peter and some of the disciples ran into this situation in Acts 5. They had been sharing Christ in Jerusalem and many were coming to

faith. This did not sit well with the Pharisees and other religious leaders who felt that these men were still under their authority. They had thrown them into prison, yet when the guards checked in the morning, the locked cells were empty. As they were complaining about the disciples, someone came in excitedly to tell them about the disciples preaching in the Temple! The disciples were brought before the Pharisees once again. They were forbidden to speak of Jesus. This was Peter's answer, "We must obey God rather than men. The God of our fathers raised Jesus, whom you killed by hanging him on a tree. God exalted him at his right hand as Leader and Savior, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins. And we are witnesses to these things, and so is the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey him." (Acts 5:29-32). The religious leaders were enraged and wanted to kill them, but one religious leader, an "honored" teacher named Gamaliel, advised caution, urging the leaders not to touch them and thereby turn Peter and the other disciples into martyrs. God worked through this man to save the lives of his faithful servants. The disciples had no choice. They had to obey God, and they all were beaten and sent away. They were no longer under the authority of these godless clerics. They had suffered for Christ. Later, Peter writes in 1 Peter 2:18, "Servants, be subject to your masters with all respect, not only to the good and gentle but also to the unjust. For this is a gracious thing, when, mindful of God, one endures sorrows while suffering unjustly." This is what he learned from his break with the religious leaders of Jerusalem, and this is how we must also live.

My Bible Study of what it means to be a Christian worker, brought me to one more set of verses that define every situation in which I am working for and under someone in authority. In Colossians 3:22-24, Paul tells the church and us, "Bondservants, obey in everything those who are your earthly masters, not by way of eye-service, as people-pleasers, but with sincerity of heart, fearing the Lord. Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward. You are serving the Lord Christ." I have learned that, in reality, I am working for God and his Kingdom purposes, in all the things I do. If you are fortunate enough to have a believing boss, then 1 Timothy 6:1-2 reminds us just how fortunate we are, "Let all who are under a yoke as bondservants regard their own masters as worthy of all honor, so that the name of God and the teaching may not be reviled. Those who have believing masters must not be disrespectful on the ground that they are brothers; rather they must serve all the better since those who benefit by their good service are believers and beloved. Teach and urge these things." We are to work heartily and to work for the Lord. It couldn't be a more simple or more profound lesson for each of us.

Milk Money and More...

One of the most important and popular recent additions to our **Food Pantry** is the availability of fresh milk, butter and eggs. This is especially important for families looking for food assistance. Each week, Celia goes out to purchase these all important fresh staples.

Like everything else, the price of these items has jumped up and up. If God calls you to make a cash donation for these items, please see Celia or leave money or a check in the offering tray clearly indicating that the money is to be used for milk, eggs and butter.



Help Needed for Hope Armenia...

by Sharon Combs

Hope Armenia is requesting donations to go towards 2 summer Youth Day Camps in the villages of Massis and Sevan. Also, 14-year-old Mane, daughter of Tatevik, smashed her knee during basketball practice. There is no health insurance in Armenia. She needs an implant in her knee, and it's very expensive. If you feel led to donate money towards this procedure and/or the summer camps, any amount will be greatly appreciated and needed. Please write checks out to: Hope Armenia, Inc. and mail to PO Box 94, North Brookfield, MA, 01535. If you don't want to mail a check you can make donations through the website: Wayofhope.am



Church Security...

by Jack Sweeney

The following text is the introduction of our Church's formal Security Policy:

"Safety is a top priority at First Congregational Church North Brookfield. All laws of the Commonwealth, ordinances of North Brookfield and recommendations by the North Brookfield Fire Department, Police Department, and/or our Insurance Carrier shall be honored. The safety and well-being of all members, children and guests of our church must always be our primary concern."



Reminders from your Security Task Force:

- See something wrong or concerning, say something immediately!
- See fire or smell smoke, pull the Fire Alarm! Do NOT fight the fire with an extinguisher unless you have been trained to do so. Evacuate the building.
- Courtyard and Handicap Ramp Doors MUST remain locked at all times during worship services and/or when the Nursery or Fellowship Hall classrooms are in use. Do not admit persons unknown to you.
- Sunday School classroom doors and the Office Building doors MUST remain locked during Sunday School. No one should be admitted that is not known and trusted by the teacher. Classroom two-way radios MUST be turned on, volume to maximum, and not allowed to be accessed by children. All classes MUST have a completed attendance sheet at the start of the class. This is required to account for every child in case of fire or a fire drill.
- All entry doorways must be kept clear of objects; i.e. shovels, pails, chairs, etc. Nothing can be stored on stairways.
- Do not park in the driveway...this is a fire lane. Park only in marked spaces.

Please read the Fire Safety Policy and the most recent Fire Inspection Report posted on the bulletin board next to the Fire Alarm panel in the Courtyard foyer (near the restrooms). The safety of our congregation and building is everyone's job. If you have any questions about church safety, please contact Jack Sweeney.

Annual Baptism Service • June 23, 2024

It's time to save the date for our annual Baptism Service held at the Sweeney's home on Lake Wickaboag in West Brookfield. Baptism in our church is an individual choice of a person who has made a personal decision to publicly affirm Jesus Christ as his or her Lord and Savior. Babies and small children are dedicated by their parents in our church.

If you or your older child wish to be baptized, please see Pastor Joe or any Diaconate member as soon as possible. Please also talk to us if you have any questions.



Blessings to Babies...

by Pauline Dwelly

We had another successful and blessed Virtual Baby Shower earlier this year. All the clothes and baby necessities were shared between the two pregnancy centers we support through mission's donations, Clearway Clinic and Problem Pregnancy of Worcester.

This year we want to give a special thank you to Steve and Ashley Ottman for the loan of the crib we used to collect and show all that was so lovingly given for these babies whose moms chose life for them. Here is what was collected and given:

- 2 \$100 checks given to purchase car seats
- 37 baby afghans
- 9 car seat size afghans
- 19 baby outfits
- 2 packages of onesies
- 1 white sweater set
- 2 quilts in matching bags
- 1 toddler pull over sweater
- 1 knit dress
- 4 receiving blankets
- 2 newborn snugglies to swaddle babies
- 4 baby bath towels and 10 wash cloths
- 20 bibs
- 5 pairs of booties
- 30 pairs of socks
- 4 pairs baby mittens
- 5 baby hats
- 12 soft toys
- 1 diaper bag
- 1 tactile baby book
- 6 bows
- 1 pacifier
- 2 toothbrushes
- 1 brush
- 8 shopping bags with baby cereals, fruits and veggies
- 1 Portacrib



Book Signing

Apples and Oranges

by Ron Martin

May 11, 2024
Leicester Public Library
noon - 1:30 pm

Communion • 2nd Sunday in May...

Communion will be served on the second Sunday in May (May 12). Pastor Joe will not be in church on May 5th, and Judi will be sharing a sermon version of the Women's Retreat topic *Deeply Rooted*.



Just a Reminder...

Some people in our church family have asthma related to fragrances including perfume, body lotions, after shave, etc. that have strong fragrances. With pollen soon to be in the air, the addition of fragrances can make some people really ill. Please keep that in mind.



Spring
CLEAN UP
This Saturday, April 27
8:30 am - 12:30 pm
We'll be cleaning up the property, and we need all the help we can get. Please bring a rake, broom or shovel if you can.

April Cabinet Report...

by Nancy Bemis, Cabinet Chair

The Cabinet met on Thursday, April 11. Reports were received from the Treasurer, Pastor Joe and the following committees: Diaconate, Finance, Nominating, Property and Missions.

Celia Daniels, our Treasurer, reported that our March income was \$26,328 and our expenses were \$22,560.

Phil Ingersoll-Mahoney reported for the Finance Committee. He presented a budget for fiscal year 2024-2025. The budget was approved by the Cabinet and will be proposed at the June annual meeting. Our projected income for the current year is \$250,961 based on the average giving to date. The proposed budget is \$252,915.

The next Cabinet meeting will be Thursday, May 9, at 6:30.

Secret Sister Updates...

by Annie Shea

Thanks to all the women who came to the retreat on April 6th and participated in the first Secret Sister. I just want to make sure that the women who took part in this check the Secret Sister box on the small table near the bathrooms. If you see you gift for someone you know who doesn't go to our church, please deliver it to them. I am also working on a Secret Sister Reveal, but haven't ironed out the details yet! If you still have your paper for your Secret Sister, great; but if we need to, we will fill out another paper for our next Secret Sister event. I hope you are all enjoying and having fun with this. Sometimes you can guess who she is; but from experience, your secret sister is usually someone you would never guess. God always knew who she would be!



Café at the Mill
Millbury, Massachusetts

May 3rd

Blue Cat Groove!!! The Cat is back!!!

May 10th

Closed for The Mill Church event.

May 17th

Undefeated!!! Christian Indie Pop! A great night to bring the youth (of all ages 😊)!

May 24th

Closed for Memorial Day weekend. Thank you all for your service!!!

May 31st

Glenn Hillard!!! Christian Rhythm & Blues / Jazz!!! Amazing!



If you need a note taking journal for Pastor Joe's sermons, you use this link:

Link on Amazon
 ESV Scripture Journal: Luke
<https://a.co/d/02MA8Rd>

Luke 12

O V S D K C L O T H E
F K N I S A I D O O G
C I M V O R S S E R D
F F A I T H I N G W E
D F S D G O A L O L L
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ACKNOWLEDGE
BEAT
CROWD
DRESS
FEAR
HOUR
MASTER
PENNY
TELL

AUTHORITY
CLOTHE
DENIES
FAITH
FIND
KILL
MORE
SAID
THING

BARN
COME
DIVIDE
FATHER
GOOD
KNOW
MUCH
SERVANT
WHEN