

# THE CHURCH MOUSE

APRIL 2011

## Choosing Religion

We all make choices that reflect what we have faith in. We borrow and lend in faith. We plan our futures in faith that important things will remain predictable. We have faith that 2+2 will always equal 4 and that things we drop will never go up instead of down. And then there are more ephemeral beliefs such as faith in the basic goodness of others or that it is right to treat others as you would want to be treated. It is by no means necessary to hold religious beliefs to create a belief system consisting of faith statements, whether organized or disjointed. So some of us will attempt to organize our beliefs in line with traditions that we receive, while others will attempt to create systems *ex nihilo*; and indeed, some will not care about order and simply live by the beliefs they find necessary.

I've gotten to the point in my life where I am much more interested in learning from others about how and why their beliefs matter than trying to convince others that my beliefs are superior. That may be surprising, coming as it does from a religious professional. I have chosen religion because I find it easier to hone my own beliefs by comparing and contrasting them to the collective wisdom of centuries of tradition. That doesn't mean that I don't believe in the evolution of belief. The gift of tradition is that I don't have to reinvent the wheel. I also don't have to take it on as a burden. Rather, it is a tool that I can use to shape the particular beliefs that will get me through my journey.

I believe that this power that I name *God* exists apart from me and therefore is real for everyone. Unfortunately, religion has done a lot to give God a bad name, so I don't blame people for rejecting what they think they are supposed to call God. I much prefer the wisdom of the twelve-step programs that insist that recovery necessitates the belief in a higher power, whatever that means for the individual. At its best, religion is about getting us out of ourselves and into community. That is also religion at its core.

It is also clear that we are beings that rely on ritual. We all do repetitive acts that connect us with others and place us in a historical context. Whether it is blowing out candles on a birthday cake or taking a bit of bread and grape juice on a Sunday in a church, we value ritual. Different religions provide different rituals; I'm not going to suggest that some are superior to others. But again, my personal decision is to practice Christianity, not because it is the only path to truth, but because it is the one that I know best.

But in the end, I am sure that those of us who take time to ponder how to live ethical lives can gain strength in being in conversation and community. Knowing that I can never fully describe the being I call God since God is necessarily greater than my limited ability to comprehend, I am content to say simply that God is love. Logically then, love is God. Isn't that a simple enough place for us to begin our conversation? And, yes, it is also mind-blowing when you stop to consider it.

Peace,

Ian

<b>Pastor:</b>	
Rev. Ian Lynch	245-9429
<b>Secretary:</b>	
Joyce Beaton	267-4798
<b>Clerk:</b>	
Anne Dutka	245-7266
<b>Sexton:</b>	
Judith Sessler	283-4605
<b>Moderator:</b>	
Richard Morris	245-7350
<b>Administrator:</b>	
Vacant	
<b>Treasurer:</b>	
Sheila Noyes Miller	245-6118
<b>Assistant Treasurer:</b>	
Linda Weston	245-9325
<b>Financial Secretary:</b>	
Ron Christensen	283-3520
<b>Auditor:</b>	
Ellen Lovett	245-6158
<b>Historian:</b>	
Joyce Beaton	267-4798
<b>Council Members-at-Large:</b>	
Rose Cadieux	245-0938
Dorothy Perman	245-9831
Steve Carlson	436-7386
(2 vacancies)	
<b>Board of Worship &amp; Education:</b>	
Cynthia Truax	245-3940
Cynthia Clark	245-3826
Patricia Northcott	413-230-8963
Pam Hoy	508-347-7858
Vivian Wells	245-9276
<b>Board of Fellowship &amp; Outreach</b>	
Gina Lynch, Chair	245-9429
Lynn Boutellier	245-9340
Joanne Baldrige	245-6638
Elizabeth Sutton	245-9345
(1 vacancy)	
<b>Board of Membership &amp; Ministry</b>	
Diane Midwood	283-3783
Vivian Wells	245-9276
Marianne O'Connor	267-9966
Heidi Bressette	967-7896
Carolyn Haley	245-3267
<b>Board of Finance and Properties:</b>	
Jack Riddle, Chair	245-7040
Michael MacFadden	245-7530
Paul Watson	245-9276
Judith Sessler	283-4605
Carol Foster	508-347-7657
<b>Pastoral Relations Committee:</b>	
Lynn Boutellier	245-9340
Paul Foster	508-347-7657
Marianne O'Connor	267-9966
Jack Riddle	245-7040

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## APRIL BIRTHDAYS

4/01 Jerry Belber  
4/09 Ellen Zepp  
4/11 Grace Arbour  
4/16 Thomas Bouteillier  
4/17 Jerry Suprenant  
4/18 Ruth Andrews-Bys  
4/19 Scott Senecal  
4/19 Alexander Watson  
4/21 Sally Meitzler  
4/21 David Andrew Bell (Beaton)  
4/22 Michael A. Koprowski ("MAK")  
4/29 Andy Truax

*If you know of a birthday that's missing from this list, please contact the church office.*



**MARK YOUR CALENDERS:**

**April 3 Breakfast with the Bible and Book Club "Three Cups of Tea"**  
**April 9 Grace Arbour's Birthday Party**  
**April 17 Palm Sunday**  
**April 21 Maundy Thursday**  
**April 22 Good Friday**  
**April 24 Easter Sunday**

## Lenten Series: The Economy of Love

Each Wednesday during Lent, we will gather from 5:30 to 7:00 PM to discuss a video series called "The Economy of Love." Food will be available starting at 5:30 and throughout the evening. Each session will start with a short worship time at 6:00. After worship, we will watch the short video and then spend the rest of the time discussing it. Here is the schedule:

**April 6:** Practice – following Jesus with our hands, our feet, and our resources

**April 13:** Review and follow up discussion

## Breakfast with the Bible

Our first Breakfast with the Bible was a delicious time of feasting on the word of God. The second one is scheduled for Sunday, March 6 from 9:00 until worship begins at 10:30. While the schedule coincides with the Sunday School Units, the breakfasts are meant for everyone in the church. Take some time to look over the scripture that we will be reading during Lent, then come to the breakfast with your thoughts and questions. Here are the lectionary passages:

### April 10, 2011

Ezekiel 37:1-14 Psalm 130 Romans 8:6-11 John 11:1-45

### April 17, 2011

Isaiah 50:4-9a Psalm 31:9-16 Philippians 2:5-11 Matthew 26:14-27:66

## Living Faith 2011 "Living with Wisdom & Purpose"

The Ecumenical Fellowship Community will sponsor Living Faith 2010, "Living with Wisdom & Purpose," on the remaining Sundays in Lent, as follows:

### April 10 – Potluck Supper at 1:00

Each session will run from 2:00 to 4:00 p.m. at The Sturbridge Worship Center, 9 Mashpaug Road, Sturbridge and will consist of worship, round table discussions, music and fellowship. Refreshments will be served and while there is no charge for the series, a free will offering will be gratefully accepted at each session.

For more information, please call Rev. Mary Gustafson at 508-765-4973.

## FOOD PANTRY

You can continue to help us support the Food Pantry by donating kid friendly food items such as cereal, tuna, mac and cheese, pasta and sauce, spaghetti O's , ravioli, canned vegetables, peanut butter, etc.



## **Book Club: "Three Cups of Tea"**

The next book in our book club is very special. It is "Three Cups of Tea" by Greg Mortenson. Reading this book will give us an insight into the dire situation in Afghanistan and how one man has set out to bring change through building schools. Options for purchasing the book while helping to support Mortenson's work can be found at [www.threecupsoftea.com/purchase-three-cups-of-tea](http://www.threecupsoftea.com/purchase-three-cups-of-tea)

Reading this award-winning book will be one part of a special series of events, including the screening of a documentary about Afghanistan and an evening to meet the author.

To kick things off, come to a luncheon following worship on April 3. This will be our first chance to discuss the book. If you can't come that day, or if you want more discussion, the next opportunity is our regular monthly book club meeting on Wednesday, April 6, from 1:00 to 2:30. Additional discussion times can be offered on subsequent Wednesdays and Sunday mornings at 8:30 AM should there be interest.

A special opportunity to meet Greg Mortenson is coming up on Tuesday, May 3 in Worcester at an event sponsored by the Massachusetts Conference of the United Church of Christ. Proceeds from this event will go to help build a school in Afghanistan. See the separate article below or visit [www.macucc.org/events/detail/111](http://www.macucc.org/events/detail/111) for details

## **Birthday Party for Grace Arbour**

The Family of Grace Arbour will be celebrating her 90th Birthday on Saturday, April 9th, 2011 in the Fellowship Hall at Church.

Please see invitation on separate page of this Church Mouse.

## **Easter Sunrise Service**

Looking ahead to the end of Lent, Easter is on April 24. We will hold our sunrise service at the same location as the past few years, Roger DeBruyn's field on top of Tower Hill. The service will begin at 6:30 AM.

## **An Evening with Greg Mortenson: Promoting Peace through Education**

The Pastoral Excellence Program of the Massachusetts Conference, in partnership with the Worcester Area Mission Society and The First Baptist Church of Worcester (an American Baptist Congregation), cordially invite you to this special evening.

Mr. Mortenson is the co-founder of nonprofit Central Asia Institute, founder of Pennies For Peace, co-author of the #1 New York Times bestseller "Three Cups of Tea," and author of bestseller "Stones into Schools." During his talk, Mr. Mortenson will share insights into his life, the experiences that have shaped him, and will tell anecdotes about building schools in Afghanistan and Pakistan, all with powerful images as a backdrop. For a more complete biography, visit Mr. Mortenson's website: [www.gregmortenson.com](http://www.gregmortenson.com)

When you buy a ticket to this event you will get to come to a great night out...

AND you will also be supporting the building of a school in Afghanistan - as of October 2010, the Central Asia Institute has built or significantly supported more than 80 schools in Afghanistan. Your ticket purchase could help to make that 81! AND you will be helping fund after school programs in Worcester through the Community Ministries Fund, a permanent endowment created by the Worcester Area Mission Society, UCC and Worcester Area United Methodists at the Greater Worcester Community Foundation.

Schedule for the event is as follows:

6:30 -6:45 Introductions

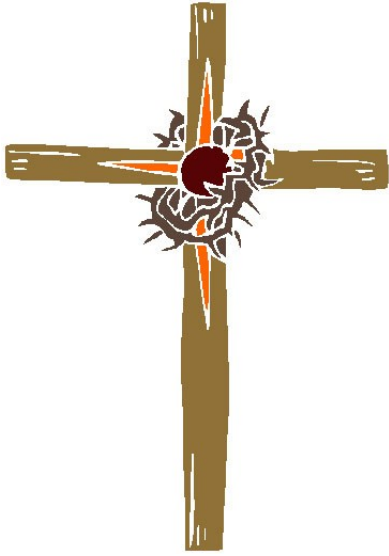
6:45 - 7:15 PM Performance by the Worcester Children's Chorus

7:15 - 8:15 PM Program with Greg Mortenson

8:15 - 9:15 PM Dessert Reception and book signing (Bring your own book to sign or purchase one at the event.)

Cost of the event is \$51.50 general admission and tickets are on sale now! For tickets and information, please contact the Mechanics Hall Box Office by phone 508-752-0888 or online at [www.mechanicshall.org](http://www.mechanicshall.org)

## EXPERIENCE OUR GOOD FRIDAY VIGIL



A UNIQUE, SELF  
GUIDED, ALL  
SENSORY  
JOURNEY....  
THAT TAKES YOU  
THROUGH TIME  
AND TO PLACES  
Where you will....

MEET JESUS ...

Friday, April 22  
Noon to 7:30 PM

Plan to spend up to an hour to fully experience this self guided vigil. The day will end with a Vespers service at 7:30 PM

Visit [virtualvigil.blogspot.com](http://virtualvigil.blogspot.com) to see previous year's vigils and to join in this year's vigil if you cannot be present in person.

## HANDBELL NEWS

Handbell practices for the month of April will be on Wednesdays at 7:00 PM. During the month of May these practices will be on Wednesdays at 6:30 PM.

The Handbell Choir will play during the church service on Sunday, April 3 with the following musical selections: "Meditation on Psalm 31 – Anguish and Joy" by Dorothy Frisch and "How Can I Keep From Singing" by Arnold Sherman. We will also be playing for both Palm Sunday and Easter worship services.

## ONE GREAT HOUR OF SHARING

This offering is traditionally received during Lent in United Church of Christ churches and offers hope and well-being to people around the world. By giving to One Great Hour of Sharing we join with communities struggling to overcome poverty, illiteracy, illness and the dangers of wars and disasters. Together we follow God's call – sharing resources, changing lives! This year we will receive this offering on Palm Sunday, April 17.

## LBS NEWS

The LBS is requesting knitted or crocheted Prayer Shawls to replace our suddenly depleted supply. If you can help, please call Diane Midwood at 283-3783.

## Central Association Seeking Nominees

Greetings from the Central Association. I am Rev. Doreen Oughton, and I serve on the nominating committee of the CA Board of Directors. As member churches of the United Church of Christ, we are covenant partners with the national denomination, the Massachusetts Conference, and the Central Association of the UCC. This covenant gifts us with blessings and rights, as well as responsibilities to each body. I am writing to ask you to consider serving at the Association level by accepting a nomination for the Board of Directors or the Committee on Ministry. Participation of laity on these committees is vital to their integrity. The only requirement is membership in a Central Association church.

The Board calls and plans the Association meetings; has a representative preside over Ecclesiastical Councils, Ordinations, and Installations; meets at least five times through the year to hear reports from standing committee, the Conference and WAMS; serves as trustee for Association assets; creates Ad Hoc Working Groups or Task Forces to benefit the Association; and hears appeals from the Committee on Ministry or Fitness Review determinations. The Board meetings are held on Thursday evenings in Worcester. The term for officers is one year, for Board members two years.

The Committee on Ministry oversees all issues of clergy ordination, licensing, and fitness in the Association, as well as the standing of Association churches. The term is three years, and the Committee meets monthly on the third Thursday from 9am-3pm in Worcester. Partial-term slots are available for people who want to try it out before making a longer commitment. It is a big time commitment, but it is also an awesome, committed group of people doing important work. You will learn much about the denomination, the ordination processes, leadership and ministry.

Nominations will be made at the spring meeting in early May, so please give some thought to serving, and let me know by e-mailing me at [pastorfccleicester@verizon.net](mailto:pastorfccleicester@verizon.net) or by calling 978-846-6498. You can also contact Rev. Phil LaFollette at [revphilucc@comcast.net](mailto:revphilucc@comcast.net).

**6th Annual  
Molly Frances Watson  
Memorial Hand Bell Concert  
Sunday May 22, 2011 @ 3:00 PM**

**First Congregational Church, Brimfield**

The Brimfield Bells is a memorial hand bell choir, founded in 2003 by Vivian Wells and Paul Watson in loving memory of their infant daughter, Molly Frances Watson, who suffered from the rare blood disease, Langerhan's Cell Hystiocytosis. Each hand bell has special meaning, as each has

been given in dedication to a friend or loved one. The handle of each bell is inscribed with its special dedication. The concert benefits the "Songs of Love" Foundation, whose mission is to create an original personalized song for any child with a serious illness. This hand bell concert will also feature Special Guest instrumental soloists Dessert Reception immediately following the concert. Freewill donations gladly accepted

**More info? 413-245-9276**

EASTER LILY ORDER FORM

Easter 2011

Cost \$10.00 each

I would like to order an Easter lily to be shared with the Church family at our worship service on Easter Sunday. I understand that the cost of each plant is stated above.

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

TEL. NO. \_\_\_\_\_

NUMBER OF PLANTS \_\_\_\_\_

Additional information (in honor of, in memory of, with love and appreciation for, etc.)

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Please complete this form and place it in the offering plate, hand it to an usher or send it to the Church Office, P.O. Box 203, Brimfield, MA 01010 no later than April 15. Checks should be sent to the Church by that time also. Thank you!

\_\_\_\_\_ I will be taking my lily home after church on Easter Sunday.

\_\_\_\_\_ Please give my plant to a shut-in.