



THE SPIRIT

From Your Pastor:

Inside this issue:

<i>Words from the Treasurer</i>	2	In his recent book, <i>Prayer: Experiencing Awe and Intimacy with God</i> , author Tim Keller reminds us that God's word is "alive and active" (Heb. 4:12). Therefore, the way to experience God being alive and active in our lives is through reading God's word—the Bible. Keller observes, "To understand the Scripture is not simply to get information about God. If attended to with trust and faith, the Bible is the way to actually hear God speaking and to meet God himself" (p. 54).
<i>CE News & Sunday School for All Ages!</i>	2	Following from this are implications for prayer, one of which is that prayer becomes our response to a conversation that God has already begun. As Keller explains, "We should listen, study, think, reflect, and ponder the Scriptures until there is an answering response in our hearts and minds. It may be one of shame or of joy or of confusion or of appeal—but that response to God's speech is then truly <i>prayer</i> . . ." (p. 55).
<i>Holy Week at FCCOE</i>	2	One of the comments that surfaced out of our recent church health focus groups (for a complete report of the survey results please join us Sunday, March 22 @ 4:30 p.m.) had to do with an uncertainty about how to spend time in personal Bible reading and prayer. So let me direct you to our "Daily Devos," found under the "Resources" tab on our church web site (www.fccoe.org). Each week, I have sketched out a way to spend some daily quiet time with God, reading, pondering, and praying. If you're one who is looking for some structure, I hope this will help. If it doesn't do the trick, please see me and we'll see what else might work for you. If you've never done anything like this before, it might just be a good habit to "put on" and begin during this season of Lent.
<i>Youth Group Happenings</i>	3	Several years ago, while walking the streets of Pasadena, CA, I noticed the slogan on the box that contained the daily <i>Los Angeles Times</i> newspaper. It said, "Essential Reading for the Real World." To be sure, newspapers (or the on-line equivalents), are essential reading if we want to be people who know what's going on in the world. But in fact, to really know what's going on in the "real world," we need to have God's perspective on reality, and that we get by reading <i>His</i> word.
<i>PAX Offerings</i>	3	So I encourage you to open the Book on a daily basis in order to hear from God, to be informed about his world, to allow him to share his joy with you, and to engage in life-transforming conversation with him.
<i>Family Promise</i>	4	Grace & Peace, Tim
<i>Open Door</i>	4	
<i>Missions</i>	5	
<i>VBS</i>	5	
<i>Deacons</i>	5	
<i>Women's Corner</i>	6	
<i>Holiday Fair</i>	6	
<i>Bell Choir</i>	6	
<i>Do you know...?</i>	7	
<i>Thank You</i>	8	

St. Augustine's Prayer to the Holy Spirit

Breathe in me, O Holy Spirit, that my thoughts may all be holy; Act in me, O Holy Spirit, that my work, too, may be holy; Draw my heart, O Holy Spirit, that I love but what is holy; Strengthen me, O Holy Spirit, to defend all that is holy; Guard me, then, O Holy Spirit, that I always may be holy. Amen.

Words from the Treasurer

Since October the finances of the Church have shown an improvement and we have not had to transfer any money from the Endowment Fund to cover operating costs. As you know, the Endowment Fund consists of money given to the Church by our forefathers to insure our ability to continue our work in the community by spreading the Word of our Lord.

In November we held the most successful Christmas Fair ever thanks to Pam Prichard and all her wonderful workers. The grand total was \$5,397.46 (see the breakdown in the Holiday Fair article).

By working together we have been able to meet the obligations of the Church and the Trustees have made several changes to keep on budget. Jane and I appreciate your faithful giving each week and thank God for all of you. The next big news will be in the Spring when we see if the windows you all helped to purchase have lowered our heating bill.

If you would prefer to give your financial support electronically, please see the "Donate" tab on our website, www.fccoe.org.

Any questions about church finances, please feel free to ask. God bless you all.

Nancy E. Roberts, Treasurer

Christian Ed News & Sunday School for All Ages Sundays @ 9:30 a.m.

The CE program here at FCCOE has had quite the busy winter, and our offerings for our church family continue through the spring!

Sunday school for all ages meets before worship from 9:30-10:20am. The curriculum we have been using for children and youth classes will continue through the end of the school year. Each of our teaching tandems – Robin and Lexi (Pre K to K using *Godly Play*), Peggy and Steve (Gr. 1-3 using *Bible Studies for Life*), Steve and Carol (Gr. 4-6 using *How Majestic Is Your Name*), Tom and Andy (MS to HS using the *Gospel Project*)— loves the content they are teaching and the kids they get to spend time with every week! Please join us on **March 22** for a special Children's Moment highlighting our teachers & the curriculum followed by an Open House to meet the teachers and ask questions, directly after worship.

For adults, the study of Daniel will be coming to end on **March 15**. From **March 22—April 26**, the Hoovers and Steve Brown will help us ponder how our Christian faith informs, interacts with, and even inspires our politics. Then in **May**, Ben Boyd and Bobby Ross will prepare us for the summer months with some thoughtful, practical teaching on sharing the Christian faith with our neighbors and in our community.

Also, a quick reminder of the monthly rhythm of Children's Offerings during Worship:

- ◇ 1st Sunday of the Month: "**Family Sunday**" all children remain upstairs for the entire worship service to celebrate the Lord's Table with their families (nursery is available)
- ◇ Mid Month Sundays: "**Children's Church**" for children ages 3-9, they are dismissed before the sermon with Diane Naeger or Pam Cilluffo (and helpers) where they have been learning the "fruit of the Spirit" from Galatians 5
- ◇ Last Sunday of the Month: "**Service Sunday**" for all children, they are dismissed before the sermon with Lisa Clark and Robin Lawrenz (and helpers), where they work on projects that serve people in our church, in the surrounding community or abroad.

If you have any questions about the CE offerings, please don't hesitate to contact the CE Committee Chairs, Diane Naeger and Jason Lawrenz. Thanks!



"Instruct the wise and they will be wiser still; teach the righteous and they will add to their learning.

-Psalm 9:9

Holy Week

- | | |
|------------|--|
| March 29th | Palm Sunday Worship @ 10:30 a.m., Sandwich Sunday to follow (please bring a sandwich to share) |
| April 2nd | Maundy Thursday @ 7:30 p.m., Reading of the Passion Narrative and Celebration of Communion |
| April 3rd | Good Friday @ *2—7 p.m., Stations of the Cross, Follow Jesus on a guided journey to the cross at seven interactive locations throughout the church (*2—4 p.m. is for families with young children) |
| April 5th | Easter Sunrise Service @ 6:00 a.m., at Conomo Pt., breakfast to follow (TBD) |
| April 5th | Easter Worship @ 10:30 a.m. |

Youth Group Happenings

Camp Berea

Recently a group of 13 of us from the youth group returned safe and sound from Camp Berea! It was a wonderful weekend of fellowship and tubing and playing in the snow! Along with the activities, we spent the weekend looking at how 'upside down' our world is compared to the kingdom of God. We don't even recognize it until we hear Jesus' words – "love your enemies, and pray for those who persecute you..." or "he who exalts himself will be humbled and whoever humbles himself will be exalted" – now that sounds upside down. Thank God that he has come down to rescue us! Thanks to all who helped make camp Berea a success!



The Gospel Project: The God Who Saves

I'd invite you again and encourage you to invite friends to join us Sunday mornings for our Sunday school hour together with Tom Griffith and me. This is an informal time in which we catch up, pray together and study the Bible together and answer questions. We have been using the *Gospel Project* curriculum to study our Lord as the God who Saves us. What is salvation? What are we saved from? What are we saved into? Come and find out!

Then on Sunday nights we gather for our youth group time in the Church's fellowship hall downstairs. Come join us and invite your friends for food and games and discussion about issues facing us as young adults in today's world.

Spring and Summer activities

As spring and summer approach, we get excited thinking about the activities and events to hold as a youth group. Calendar updates will be sent out via e-mail and if you'd like to join the youth group's list please email me: andy.sutton318@gmail.com, and I will add you!

As always, we are open to suggestions and wishes from you students and families!

God bless you,

Andy

PAX: The Center for Christian Spiritual Formation

Spiritual Formation

PEACE

**"Submit to
God and be at
peace with
him..."**

Job 22:21

As I write, I am aware of how PAX can still be a bit confusing for us here at FCCOE. What is it? How is it a part of our ministry here? Can anybody attend what is offered? And so at the risk of repetition, I would offer what I hope are some helpful responses.

If you replace the name FCCOE for PAX, then you have named the spiritual formation ministry, or program, here at our church. Our FCCOE family is welcome to attend any and all of what PAX offers. The reason the spiritual formation ministry is offered as a separate entity called PAX is because the offerings are also open to churches in the greater Boston and New England community. So often, we have a number of different churches represented in those that attend what PAX offers. This brings us to the fees that you sometimes see. The ministry of PAX is supported by the fees that are paid by those outside of FCCOE. For FCCOE folks, there is no fee. The only exception to this, are the nine month programs offered by PAX, and in that case, FCCOE members attend for a reduced fee.

It has been a great joy for me to offer these spiritual formation ministries in and through our church. Lisa Clark has joined me in the role of administrator, and is helping to keep you aware of what is being offered through PAX. It is because of Lisa's great attention that you see updated flyers around the church and bulletin inserts on Sunday morning announcing what is being offered each month.

Hope this was helpful. I look forward to seeing you at PAX events as we seek to be formed ever increasingly into the heart of Christ.
—Peace, Rama Ziegenhals (ramapax@gmail.com or www.paxcenter.org)

Family Promise

This past fall Family Promise hosted the **1st Annual Walk to End Homelessness**, a wonderful event to help raise awareness and funds to support the North Shore Family Promise. Their next fundraiser is **The Taste of Promise** being held at the Danvers Yacht Club Wednesday May 20th 6—8 p.m. Join the celebration and taste samples from the top restaurants on the North Shore. The fun includes an auction, raffles, cash bar and live entertainment. Help us help homeless families in our community. Go to “Taste the Promise” Facebook page for tickets and more information.

We at FCCOE are proud to have been a part of Family Promise since it's start in May, 2013. Your dedication to the program and families is so appreciated. We have witnessed many families leaving the program and finding housing and jobs and we will continue to welcome those who come to us in need. Two families we hosted around New Years have moved on, one has been in and out of housing due to the apartments failing inspections, so they are still with us. This coming week 3/8—15, we will be hosting 4 families, 3 new families we are excited to meet. We will be using all of our classrooms and the basement to accommodate these families.

Of course a program like this could not be possible without the volunteers of our church and other Essex churches, so we would like to take this opportunity to give a big “Thank You” to all who have volunteered. We would also like to extend an invitation to those who would like to be a part of this wonderful ministry. Our upcoming dates for the remainder of the year are **March 8—15, Aug. 16—23 & Oct. 11—18**. Please contact Susan Zwart at susan@foodpantry.org. if you would like to help during any of these weeks with; set-up, take-down, making or serving meals, socializing with families or sleeping over.



Open Door

Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms.
1 Peter 4:10

We serve the *Open Door* quarterly and monthly to satisfy a 30yr. tradition and to learn how to prepare, serve & clean as a team.

Quarterly opportunity; there is a very devoted group who has been helping to prepare the meal of American chop suey for a very long time. Then there are those who step up when we need fill-ins. We can always use more people to cook. We usually need 9 (9x13) pans of chop suey and 3-4 cakes of any flavor. If cooking is not your specialty there are simple donations of milk, bread, butter, coffee, and salad bar items you can provide. These items can be brought to the church on Sunday before we serve. I always have to go shopping the day of service to pick up anything we may still need, therefore donations of cash help out in this way. And don't forget you can volunteer to help serve from 4 p.m. –6 p.m. Our next opportunities to serve for 2015 are **June 1st, Sept. 7th & Dec. 7th!**

Our church has been serving dinner at the *Open Door* for about 30 years. Our meal is one of their favorites. Our church is truly blessed to have a congregation that is so caring and generous. It always amazes me the amount of people who step up to the plate when a need arises. I want to say thank you to all the wonderful people who have helped to keep this mission going.

I can never thank you enough, Carolyn Knowlton

Monthly opportunity; I have committed our FCCOE committees and various small groups to serve the last Sunday of every month for another year. I know we can meet the challenge and it's a wonderful way to serve together as a team! We meet at 2pm to prepare, serve, and clean-up after our meal and finish by 5pm. I ask for a cash donation from those helping that day. If you can not help by being there a cash donation is welcome to defer costs not covered. I occasionally ask the kids during Service Sunday to help me with a dessert, which is always enjoyed by the diners!

Our 2015 schedule is : **March 29th**– individual helpers, **April 26th**– Youth Group, **May 31st**– Missions, **June-July-August** I need groups to help please, **September 27th**– CE, **October 25th**– Deacons and **November & December** I need groups to help please!

I really appreciate the support and help I have received over the past 2+ yrs. It is a pleasure cooking and serving with all of you and helping our neighbors in need! Kenn, the manager loves knowing he can count on us once a month, so many thanks to all!

Peace & prayers.....Lisa Clark

Missions' Update

During the winter months we have been blessed in having many Missions Moments. Amy Ketcham from the Rafiki Foundation came in November and spoke to us of her work as headmaster teaching at a private school in Ghana, Africa. Thanksgiving found us contributing to our local food shelter "Open Door" for those that were in need. Christmas time was a busy time for wrapping presents on Sandwich Sunday. Over 60 shoe boxes were filled and gaily wrapped for those children that were in such need, to be given out by Samaritan's Purse. There were also over 60 Christmas tree gifts given to our local Action group here in Gloucester. Our Christmas Eve "special" Christmas collection brought in enough contributions to give Family Promise a gift of over \$800 and the Kijabe Education Fund over \$800. Stephen and Stella Price came in December and spoke of their work in Wales and North Korea. Stella has written two books on the life of Robert Jermaine Thomas, a missionary who gave his life taking the bible into Korea. In January we had Seth and Melissa Rogati, "Young Life" in Saint Thomas come and visit. They are from Essex and had many friends and family with them including their new little daughter Beatrix.

The past month we were blessed by a visit from Craig and Lani Soderberg, Wycliffe Bible Translators, Southeast Asia. Craig and Margot Hammon and Dick Cairns have recently returned from their trip to Kenya and we look forward to hearing of their visit to the Kijabe school and orphanage.

Please keep all these missionaries in prayer that God's Word would be heard.

Jane Murphy, Missions Chairperson

VBS: Frozen Sneakpeak!



Have you had enough of the snow and cold yet? Just think of it as preparation for VBS 2015! This summer, July 19-23 (after this winter is a distant memory), we will take an Everest Expedition through the frozen terrain to learn about Conquering Challenges with God's Mighty Power. Join us as we meet new Bible Buddies; learn that God has the power to provide, comfort, heal, forgive, and love us forever; while playing "Glacial Games", creating crafts and conducting experiments, and watching stories each of us can relate to. We'll learn fun songs and dances, meet new friends and re-connect with old friends, and have an exciting time reaching the summit of Everest Expedition VBS 2015!! Mark your calendars and watch for more information to come. See you at Base Camp, July 19th!

~Kathy Archer, VBS Director

Deacons' Update

Guess who's coming to dinner?? You, I hope! The Deacons will be organizing "Dinners at 6:00" on Sat., April 18, 2015. If you sign up, you will have an opportunity to bring a salad or dessert and share a meal with 6-7 others who, perhaps, you don't know yet very well. Hopefully, most of our snow will have melted by then, and we can have a pleasant social evening getting to know each other better. If you're interested in hosting and providing a main course, please see Margot Hammon.

As we entered this Lenten season, the Deacons organized the annual Ash Wed. soup and ashes imposition last month. After we warmed up with a bowl of soup and a slice of bread, Steve Brown shared some of his spiritual journey with us: a thoughtful and helpful reminder of how God is always at work in our lives - often in spite of our own efforts!

We're currently reading N.T. Wright's *Simply Christianity*. Steve Brown is leading us in a discussion to start off every Deacon's meeting.

We've been reviewing with Tim the results of the Vision New England Natural Church Development surveys and focus groups that 30 of our congregants participated in. Results will be further analyzed and discussed with Church Council.

Plans are underway to join in a tri town (Hamilton - Wenham - Essex) volunteer program called "Friendship Works". This is a volunteer caregiver program that matches trained volunteers from church with elderly in town that have expressed an interest in the program. Jane Murphy will be our liaison.

Our retreat for Deacons and other Shepherds held in Nov. gave us opportunity to reflect on personal and congregational stages of spiritual growth, as well as to share ideas for more effective shepherding. This was time well spent as we grew together through discussion and reflection led by Tim. Our thanks to Lisa Reis for hosting us.

Of course, the deacons have the usual responsibilities of gathering readers, ushers, greeters, and "pray-ers" for Sunday morning. It's so helpful to see names on the sign up sheets on the vestry round table. Please consider offering your services: we'd love to have lots of participation. We also had a lot of fun helping to cook and serve at Open Door one Sun. last month. Lisa Clark can always use your help.

Margot Hammon & Steve Brown, Deacon Co-Chairs

The Women's Corner

Dear Friends,

Upon returning from our shortened stay in Florida this year, I was completely unprepared for the sight of massive snow banks, only to be increased by the storm that hit the day after we arrived in Essex. I was tempted to complain and become as depressed as certain friends had become. BUT....

When I was in Florida my sister loaned me a little book entitled "One Thousand Gifts". This small treasure was an eye opener. Each segment was a lesson in counting your blessings and the uplift to your entire outlook that thankfulness in EVERY situation can bring to your life.

With this fresh outlook in mind I began to look at the snowbanks with a new perspective, namely, enjoying the beauty of sparkling sunshine on a white landscape. The whole point of the book is: enjoy the beauty with a thankful eye, knowing that God has made us able to see beauty. And to take the thankfulness to the level that God has made us able to see at all.

Seeing every facet of life as a vehicle to inspire gratitude to a great God will transform us from being overwhelmed by the daily grind to a lightness of heart that buoy the spirit and quickens our steps.

On another note, I solicit any suggestions you could share re: activities for us women.

Only 20 more days until it's officially spring!! Caroline

Holiday Fair: 2014 Review

Thank you all for a successful 2014 fair. Best one yet! Our total was **\$5397**.

Silent Auction: \$2,231, Luncheon: \$957, White Elephant: \$943, Crafts: \$616, Bake Table: \$568, Gingerbread Creches: \$81

I'm sure you're asking yourself what you can do to help me do this again in 2015! I have the answer!

- * Save those glass pie plates you no longer need. We use them for the bake table.
- * Saving those White Elephant items, breaking \$1000 would be great.
- * Craft table is an area that is capable of producing more income. All ideas and donations are appreciated.
- * I am hoping to have more "greens" for sale in the fall. I will be in need of interesting baskets and containers.

Most importantly, I need someone who will help me with the fair. Someone who can brainstorm with me and someone who is able to help with small "stuff" before the fair. I have been "in charge" of the craft table and the Silent Auction. Both take a lot of time, and some help would be appreciated. (Pam Prichard 978-546-1099)



BellzUp!

North Shore Ringers

If you want to join, or if you know of a child who might be ideal for this ministry, now is the time. Already the **North Shore Ringers** have been confirmed for the 2015 Topsfield Fair (all ringers are given free admission!), and well as State Senator Bruce Tarr's annual toy drive next December. Right now, enrollment is down and we need ringers. If you know of a youngster who is in grade 1 through high school, we have a place ready and waiting! We meet every Sunday afternoon between 3 and 5:30. Exact times depend on the age of the prospective ringer.

One of the great aspects of being a member of the **North Shore Ringers** is that an ability to read and write music is not required. In fact, the teaching of music theory is included with the **North Shore Ringers**, and there is no charge to join. However, a certain level of commitment must be requested by the director for the ministry to flourish and prosper.

Paul Revere Ringers

The *Paul Revere Ringers* will be appearing on Easter Sunday with the FCCOE choir. If you wish to become involved with us, talk with Greg Naeger. With both ministries, an ability to read music is not required. In fact, this is a great way to be introduced to the world of music.

Contact: Greg Naeger @ (978)380-2250 **or** no.shoreyouthringers@comcast.net **or** prringers@comcast.net **or** "LIKE" us on Facebook!

Do You Know...

...**Shelly Ross**??? So let me introduce you to her through some questions Jess Webb asked.

Where did you grow up?

Sterling, VA

How many siblings?

Eight sisters and one brother

How many children do you have?

A two year old son, Chale, and one year old daughter, Luelle

Favorite family vacations or fun trips or memories?

My grandparents had a house on the Chesapeake bay in Eastern VA. We spent many summers there fishing, crabbing, boating, and exploring.

In high school and college I went on three, eight week long summer trips to China to teach English classes and engage with students on a spiritual level. Getting to go to the Great Wall of china was one of the most incredible things I've ever done.

College? Major? Favorite classes? Current work?

I went to James Madison university in Harrisonburg, Virginia. I got my bachelors of science in nursing. I worked as a pediatric nurse at a hospital in Virginia and as a school nurse at a high school before having kids. I'm staying home with kids now and may go back to work as a nurse when they are older.

When did you get married?

May 1, 2010

When did you start attending FCCOE?

November 2012

Funny stories associated with FCCOE experiences?

I went to a non denominational church growing up so when we first started at FCCOE the standing, sitting, and traditional prayers and songs intimidated me because I was afraid to do something wrong. After being here for a few years, I appreciate how the traditions are meaningful and how people are genuine and make me feel welcome.

Passions, hobbies, interests?

I love running and before my back surgeries used to run 13+ miles just for fun. I love cooking and trying new recipes. I love infomercials and could be suckered into buying almost anything after watching one.

Favorite quote? movie? song?

"The breaking of the alabaster box and the anointing of the Lord filled the house with the odour, with the sweetest odour. Everyone could smell it. Whenever you meet someone who has really suffered; been limited, gone through things for the Lord, willing to be imprisoned by the Lord, just being satisfied with Him and nothing else, immediately you scent the fragrance. There is a savour of the Lord. Something has been crushed, something has been broken, and there is a resulting odour. of sweetness." -Watchman Nee

Favorite thing about FCCOE?

I love that people are authentic. I'm honored to be a part of this church while we are here for seminary and am humbled by how intentional, loving, and generous the church has been to us in our short time there.

Anything else interesting about yourselves that you want to share?

I'm terrified of the dentist and I really want to ride in a hot air balloon before I die.



First Congregational Church of Essex

PO Box 275
39 Main Street
Essex, Massachusetts
Phone: (978)768-7855
E-mail: tim@fccoe.org
lisa@fccoe.org



"Relying on the grace of God, and the power of the Holy Spirit we seek to bring people into a relationship with Jesus Christ, gathering them together to worship him, helping them to live like him, and equipping them to serve him."

We're on the web...find us at: www.fccoe.org

We're on Facebook...**"Like"** us!

Tim & Rama's Secret Angels?

This Christmas we again made the journey to family in North Carolina. The "tradition" is to get up and out early Christmas morning with stockings in tow for car surprises. And...our treasured Secret Angel gifts! Over the years, we have made guesses as to who these angels might be, and have schemed at how we might catch them in the act. But increasingly we began to realize we don't want to know who you are! It is too much fun and now a Christmas "tradition" we indeed treasure! And so as always, our deepest thanks as each Christmas you love us with the joy of giving. The gifts at our door ring in the joy of Christmas each year and our gratitude for the gift of our loving community at FCCOE. Thank you so much!

