



WINNERS

A Word from our Pastor

Carol Steinbrecher

"Sitting in Darkness"

Even though I know the days are getting longer, it doesn't feel like it. As soon as the sun goes down, my solar batteries quit and I want to be done for the day! Matthew says, "***the people who sat in darkness have seen a great light***" and I started thinking about how rarely we actually sit in darkness.



I wonder what it was like to be in darkness in the times before electricity? Before flashlights, night-lights, street lights, city lights, stadium lights, and car lights? Before glowsticks and light sabers!

I think that the darkness that Matthew is talking about is dark in a way that we in our modern, electrified world are not quite able to fully appreciate.

A few years ago, I was working downstairs in our basement doing a big cleaning. I had furniture pushed into the middle of the room and there were piles of clothes and books and boxes all over the floor.

It was night, and Melanie and Fisher were upstairs watching TV. They were maybe three and seven at the time.

All of a sudden, in the middle of this cleaning frenzy, the lights went out. I didn't know it at the time, but

our entire town had blacked out. It was so dark, I could not see my hand in front of my face.

And then, Fisher began to cry, and Melanie joined in, both bawling in fear! I realized they had never been in total darkness before! I was filled with a great urgency to find my way through the suddenly

unfamiliar landscape of my own basement. I wanted to run upstairs but because everything was out of place, I couldn't find my way.

I could only move slowly, one step at a time, sliding my feet to shove obstacles out of the way. I reached out my hands to grope for the door that I knew should be right there...but wasn't! I felt I was straining all my senses to find my way in that sudden and unexpected darkness. All my landmarks were gone. There was no clear path.

Of course I did find my way! Melanie and Fisher clung to my shirt while I felt my way to a candle and then groped through drawers for matches. The brightness of that single candle in the pitch dark, blazed with the light of one thousand suns! Both kids sat staring at it with smiles of relief on their tear-stained faces. For the longest time, Fisher referred to that event as, "the night that darkness

covered us." Isn't it true that sometimes we can feel darkness enveloping us, almost like a living presence?

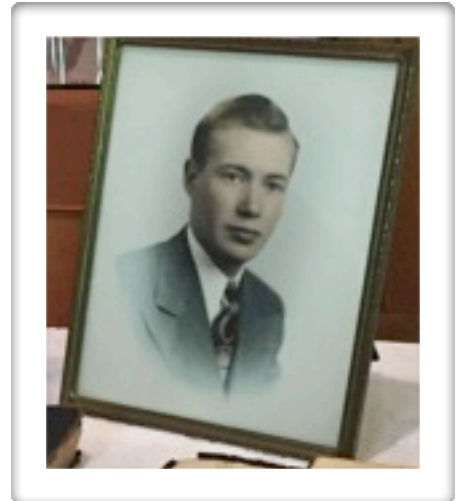
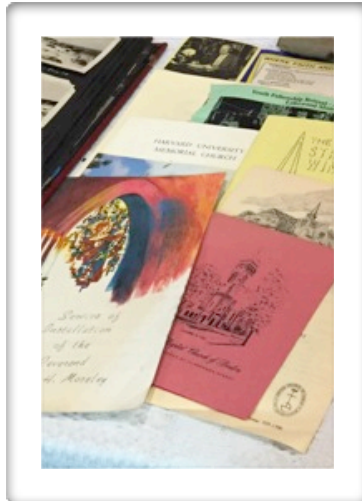
Sometimes the dark can be like a comforting blanket that we can wrap ourselves in and rest. Sometimes, the dark can be a burden, a gloom, a pall, suffocating and oppressive. And it is from that darkness we cry, "Where are you God?"

How do we find our way through dark times? We find our way together. We join hands and strain all our senses as we make our way through a suddenly unfamiliar landscape. We use our hearts to feel for God's presence and guiding hand in our lives.

Right now, our church has many things out of place, it has become an unfamiliar landscape covered with the darkness of uncertainty. We are feeling our way, one step at a time. The Good News is that we are doing this together. The Good news is that the Spirit is present with us, nudging us along, clearing the path with each step, leading us into our future together.

It is in the darkness that the light of Christ shines most brightly; just like that single candle that blazed with the brightness of a thousand suns. "Jesus" is God's answer to our question, "Where are you?" Jesus, Emmanuel, God with Us. God, in the flesh, alive in the world, at work in our lives. Jesus is the candle of Hope that God holds up for us to show us the way and to lead us through the darkness into the light.

WE SAID A FOND FAREWELL TO STELLA AND GEORGE MOSELEY



UPCOMING EVENTS AT CHURCH

Lent Is COMING!

Please plan on joining us on February 10 for our Ash Wednesday Service at 7:00 pm. We will gather for a time of music, prayer, scripture, and meditation to clear our hearts and minds for our Lenten journey together. Come in out of the wilderness and rest awhile in God's love & peace.

Friday, Feb. 12th, 6:30: Pizza & Star Wars Night!

Your valiant Deacons have accepted the mission of fighting off the dark side of winter by offering a showing of the original Star Wars movie on our large screen in Memorial Hall! We will also have pizza, popcorn, and assorted movie treats. Come in costume as your favorite Star Wars character or come in your jammies...whatever you choose to wear, just come!! Bring sleeping bags and blankets and we will all curl up and journey together to a galaxy far, far away. May the force of fellowship be with you!

Confirmation Class Begins Again!

Confirmation class will be starting on Tuesday, February 16th for all students 7th grade and up! Pastor Carol is scheduling a retreat at Grotonwood for Friday, April 8 – Sunday, April 10. Students do not need to attend class to join us for the retreat! Guests are welcome at class and to come on the retreat. For more information, please contact Pastor Carol.

Improving Accessibility in our building

The Stewards are investigating what options might be available to us for improving accessibility from the Sanctuary to the West Hall. It looks as if we might be able to install a "Limited Lift/Wheelchair Lift." This would be a lift with a closed shaft that would allow someone in a wheelchair, or someone on crutches, or someone who no longer wants to traverse our endless stairs, to travel directly down to the West Hall from the Sanctuary. We are talking to three local companies about what such an installation would entail but it seems more doable than we thought, and for less cost than we expected. One of the companies will be providing us with some local churches where they have done other installations so that we can go and take a look. We will keep you posted!



STATE OF THE CHURCH

JANUARY MEETING

One year ago, we decided to participate in the Crossroads: New Beginnings program. We decided to embark on a journey of faithful exploration, not quite sure where we are going or where we are going to end up. The promise and hope of success is keeping us pressing onward. Each day we offer our gifts, our time, our talents, and our tithes, and we push on doing what we can do to make a difference in our community.

The Council is working on developing a plan for how we can streamline our budgeting process and how we can restructure to best utilize our human resources and prioritize our most important projects and ministries. We are working on new website that will be more interactive and up-to-date. We are exploring

opening a food pantry to replace the one in West Roxbury that closed in August. We are investigating how to improve accessibility in our building.

The Stewards have been making progress on many priority building projects. The Deacons have been faithfully meeting to enhance our worship and fellowship. The Council has been discussing how we can expand toward a discipleship model of being together where our shared mission and ministry help us to prioritize how we utilize our resources. We can't do all that we used to do, but there is still plenty of meaningful work and service to be done!

If you would like to see the slideshow, "State of the Church, Council presentation" it can be found at this link: [here](#)

Food Pantry Update

The Food Pantry team has been meeting to put together a project plan for what needs to happen for us to open a food pantry here at The Stratford Street United Church. Our target date is to open in April/May.

We have met with several people who work in other local pantries who have been a wealth of knowledge, advice, and guidance for us in this process. As things are shaping up now, we think we will open two days a month for food distribution. We will coordinate our hours of operation around the local bus schedule. Most of the people we will serve will be using public transportation to get here.

We are reviewing our space to see how we can accommodate the storage of food and add a fridge and freezer for produce, dairy, and meat. We are looking at the coat room area by Memorial Hall for our food storage, new fridge, and freezer. We would move food into Memorial Hall on our days of distribution.

We are reviewing the space and food safety requirements of the Greater Boston Food Bank [GBFB] which would be providing the majority of the food.

We are investigating many avenues of funding from local grants, support from corporations such as BJ's, and support from our local businesses, and other local churches. We are also hoping for volunteer help from local schools, churches, and community organizations to unload and put away food and to get food out and set-up on distribution days.

We are going to create a paid, part-time position for administration of the pantry, including data entry and preparation of the necessary monthly reports to GBFB, monthly food ordering, and coordination of volunteers.

If you have any questions or suggestions, please talk to one of the Food Pantry Team members: Judy Jose-Roddy, Glenn and Lynn, Nancy and Joyce, Darra, Caryl, John, Linda D., Maurice, and Pastor Carol.



Flowers and Coffee Hour Sign-up Sheets

If you would like to sign up to donate altar flowers or to host coffee hour, the sheets are in the West Room. You can also contact Fran in the church office. Flowers are \$25. Joyce Eng is the point person for flowers and has envelopes available for payment.

Kim Augusta's Newsletter

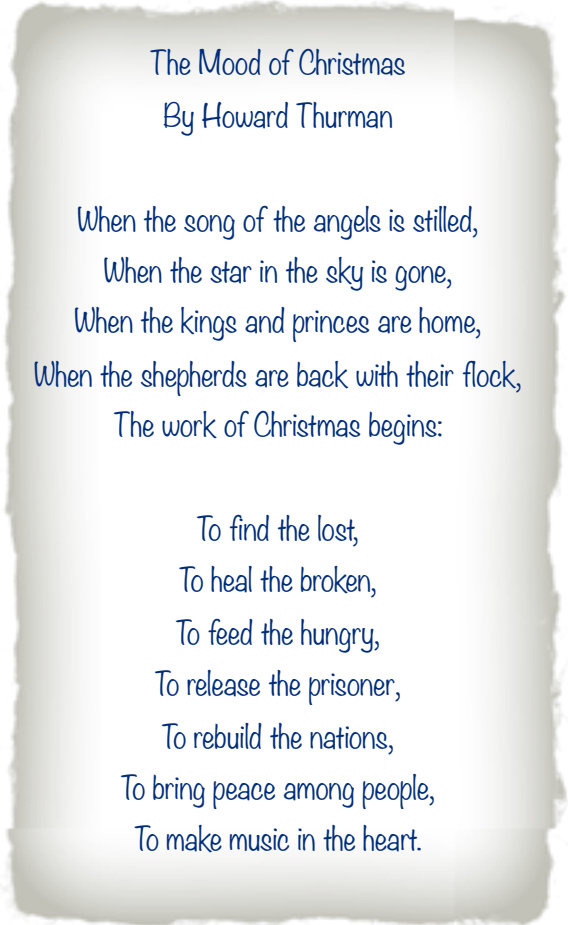
You may have noticed Kim and her daughter, Eleanor, joining us in worship this fall. Kim grew up in the church and has many happy memories of her time here. She is a local real estate agent and she writes a bi-weekly Newsletter that you can subscribe to. There are a lot of helpful household hints, such as "*5 ways to make your home more appealing*;" and "*Is there a downside to pre-paying your mortgage?*" and "*How to grow an indoor garden.*" Every other week is something new. Feel free to sign up and receive some useful information! <http://join.homeactions.net/signup/KimAugusta>

Check us out on Facebook

to see photos of recent events, articles, local news notes, upcoming events, and Pastor Carol's sermons!

You can also read Pastor Carol's sermons and reflections on her blog at:

<https://pastorcarol22.wordpress.com>



February Birthdays	
4th	Dan Buzard
8th	June Finlayson
22th	Paloma Ortiz
24th	Jeanne Gavrilles
26th	Barbara Firth-Currie
29th	Wes Currie

WE ARE THE CHURCH WHEN WE SHARE ONE ANOTHER'S CONCERNS



Keep in your Prayers:

Diana McNamara who is struggling with the UCCs decision to take a political stand and boycott Israel .

Sung-Yun asked us to renew our prayers for the brothers, Steven and Michael Sharon. Steven's health has been improving and we pray for his continued healing. Michael sadly passed and so we pray for him and his family in the face of this difficult time.

Linda D. asked prayers for her friend, Karen Legere, who's mother is sick and who's father died suddenly over Christmas.

Pastor Carol asks prayers for her brother-in-law, Phil Sharkey, who is suffering from back surgery complications. And prayers for the Sullivan family for the loss of Mom, Cheryl, on Christmas Eve.

Prayers for Darra's step-dad, Duane, recovering from spinal surgery. and her Dad who is suffering severe back pain.

We continue to pray for Gussie who was in the Norwood Hospital but is back home.

Prayers for Bob Penman who injured his knee and will not attend church for a few weeks.

We pray for June Finlayson as she adjusts to moving into the assisted living side of Sophia Snow. We are sure she would enjoy a call or visit.

We pray for Sam Tammo, Nadia Rosskothens father, who has been in and out of the hospital the last few weeks.

We pray for our church during this time of discerning God's will for us. We pray for the Council as they put their hearts and minds into steering our course, following Christ's light.

WE ARE THE CHURCH WHEN WE SHARE ONE ANOTHER'S JOYS

In January:

Michael Yaffe thanked everyone for their prayers and let us know his Uncle Fred is continuing to slowly recover. He asks continued prayers for healing. Michael also celebrated that he will not be redeployed to Afghanistan in April as he originally had been told.

Norman is grateful that Nadia, Evie, and her friends were not seriously hurt in a very bad car accident this weekend. They were shaken up, and the car was badly damaged, but they are thankful it was not worse, and everyone is safe.

Evie did suffer a concussion and had to spend some time on bedrest.

We celebrated that Judy's sister-in-law, Ginny, is back home although she still has a blood clot in her arm. We pray it is reabsorbed without further incident.

Diana Faust shared the good news that her daughter, Melanie, has found a job doing acute rehab in Fall River!

We celebrated Leah Abercrombie's successful mission trip to Ireland!



SEND A CARD

February is a long cold month, a warm cheery note could really brighten someone's day!



If you need to reach Pastor Carol for any reason, her cell is: 508-873-2279 and her email is: pastorcarol@thumbdamp.com.

If you need to reach Fran, our Office Manager call 617-323-4950.

Please submit any articles or notices for the Newsletter by the 23rd of the month. Notices should be sent to Darra at darraslagle@mac.com or to Fran at ssuc@verizon.net in the church office.

Thank you to this month's contributor's: Linda Denekamp, Joyce Eng, Kim Augusta, and of course Pastor Carol.

HELP-A-CHILD NEWS

A number of years ago Help-A-Child made the switch to primarily helping children in their native family environment instead of encouraging placement in an orphanage. As a result, sponsorships of individual children are often of shorter duration, due to a family's move or improvement of family's financial improvement.



In September, we said goodbye to Charulatha and Dhanush. They have, however, written us lovely notes letting us know how they are doing and a picture sending us love (see inset picture). Please keep their continued successes in your prayers and see their lovely new heartfelt letters in the West Room.

TOP TEN THINGS TO TRY FOR THE LENTEN SEASON:

10. Try an electronic fast. Give up TV, Facebook, texting, tweeting, e-mail and all things electronic for everyday of Lent! Use the time to read & pray.
9. Start a prayer rhythm each day of Lent & pray for someone.
8. Read the Bible.
7. Forgive someone who doesn't deserve it (maybe even yourself.)
6. Give up soft drinks, fast food, tea or coffee as a way to grow closer to God. Give the money you save to help folks in need.
5. Create a daily quiet time. Spend 10 minutes in silence & prayer.
4. Cultivate a life of gratitude. Write someone a thank you letter each week and be aware of how many have helped you!
3. Participate in a Lent Photo-a-Day practice or Journal-a-day and pray each day with your camera or journal in your hand.
2. Volunteer one hour or more each week with a local shelter, tutoring program, nursing home, or other ministry.
1. Pray for others you see as you walk to and from places or drive to and from work.

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Mark Your Calendars for Holy Week!

Easter is as early as it can be!

- March 20th - Palm Sunday
- March 24th - 7PM - Maundy Thursday Service
- March 25th - 12PM - 3PM - Good Friday Vigil
- March 27th - EASTER

Why does Easter happen at a different time each year?

According to Wikipedia, "In 325CE, the Council of Nicaea established that Easter would be held on the first Sunday after the first full moon occurring on or after the vernal (Spring) equinox. From that point forward, the Easter date depended on the ecclesiastical approximation of March 21 for the vernal equinox. Easter is delayed by 1 week if the full moon is on Sunday, which decreases the chances of it falling on the same day as the Jewish Passover." Ash Wednesday is scheduled for 46 days before Easter. 40 days of fasting with 6 Sunday feast days.



UPDATE ON THE PIPELINE

courtesy of Linda Denekamp gleaned from Rickie Harvey's communications:

On January 28, The Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) finally issued their denial of the multiple Requests for Rehearing of the AIM certificate (of which the West Roxbury Lateral Pipeline is part).

The denial document simply states that the FERC disagree with all of the arguments made by the Intervenors in their Requests for Rehearing. ***The importance of finally getting a denial is that now the door is open for any and all Intervenors to appeal the denial of the Requests for Rehearing in federal court.***

It is by no means too late to do this, even as it would have been preferable to have been able to pursue this avenue last spring. As you may know, Mayor Walsh and Congressman Lynch and the other elected officials who make up the "Boston Delegation" of Intervenors have on numerous occasions stated they would fight the location of the WRL by all means possible. They now are able to do this since this ruling.

It is important for all who are against the West Roxbury Pipeline, especially the location of the transfer station, for health and safety reasons to urge their elected official to promptly appeal the ruling. Elected officials need to appeal the denial of the Request for Rehearing in federal court. The transfer station for the pipeline is being located in a densely settled residential neighborhood near the intersections' of Center and Grove streets. It is very near to the Kilmer School as well. It is adjacent to a very active quarry whose blasts can be felt in homes throughout west Roxbury.

Calendar

February 8th, 2016

7PM Coffee & Conversation with our Neighbors

February 10th, 2016

7PM Ash Wednesday Service

February 12th, 2016

6:30PM Pizza & STAR WARS MOVIE Night

February 14th, 2016

Valentine's Day

February 15th, 2016

President's Day

School Vacation Begins

February 16th, 2016

5 - 6:30PM Confirmation Class Begins

February 23rd, 2016

7:30PM Open Council meeting.

All who are interested in current projects please attend and participate.

February 29th, 2016

Leap Year

Mayor Walsh:

617-635-4500 mayor@boston.gov

Congressman Lynch via Dan Lynch:

617-428-2000 dan.lynych@mail.house.gov

Jerome Smith:

617-635-4316 jerome.smith@boston.gov

Chris Rusk:

617-635-4818 christopher.rusk@boston.gov



Church Directory update!



We received a card from Elaine Vinton, saying hello on behalf of her Mom, Dot. They have moved to Florida and are enjoying their new, spacious home. Their new address is: 24 Farnell Lane, Palm Coast, FL 32137.



The Bubleys (Glenn and Lynn) have also relocated but are still nearby! Their new address is: 7 March Avenue, West Roxbury, MA 02132

The Shortest Month



February is generally the shortest month of the year. However, every four years is a leap year and this year we are blessed with an extra day. This is good news for this February is jammed with events. Lent begins early on the 10th with our Ash Wednesday Service at 7pm, followed by the Star Wars Movie Night on the 12th, then

Valentines Day, President's Day, Washington's Birthday and School Vacation Week, and the month ends with the 29th day immortalized in the Opera Pirates of Penzance.

Take time this busy February to have fun. Attend the Star Wars Movie Night and send Valentines to friends or loved ones.

Yet remember during this busy time to stop and to reflect on the meaning of Lent. Daily prayer can relieve your stress and help you re-focus your life.

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President's Day / School Vacation Begins

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5 - 6:30PM Confirmation Class Begins

February 23rd, 2016

7:30PM Open Council meeting. All welcome.

February 29th, 2016

Leap Year