

WINNERS

A Word from our Pastor

“Rejoice always, pray, without ceasing! Give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God, in Christ Jesus, for you.” [Thess 5: 15 – 18]

We sometimes make praying harder than it needs to be. I have had people tell me that they don't know how to pray. Folks have shared that they find it hard to sit in silence and pray because their minds won't settle down and relax, they find themselves writing “to do” lists or thinking of what they need to do when they stop praying, and it feels like making lists of things to do is not what praying is about at all. Well, maybe sometimes, it is!

When you find yourself praying “to do” lists, why not imagine your list and then imagine handing it to God. Ask God to bless the tasks that lay ahead and to give you strength for the tasks of the day. Ask



God for the patience and energy to do your tasks with good humor and love. There is no reason to think that the things we have on our “to do” lists are somehow separate from God. If God is present with us in all things, then that includes each task we have carefully planned for the day, as well as all the unplanned events, twists, and turns, that are inevitably going to crop up!

Include God in your daily plans. Open yourself to God's presence in the midst of all you do. Feel God's hand on your back; Jesus' arm around your shoulder; and the presence of the Spirit up ahead clearing the way.

Prayer shapes and molds us, turning our attention, even if only for a moment, towards our Creator. Prayer is good for our soul. It reminds us we are connected to something greater than ourselves, greater than our problems, greater than our daily

Carol Steinbrecher
scuffles with life and with each other. Prayer is for us to keep in touch with all that connects us as one body, as one human family, and as brothers and sisters made in God's spiritual image.

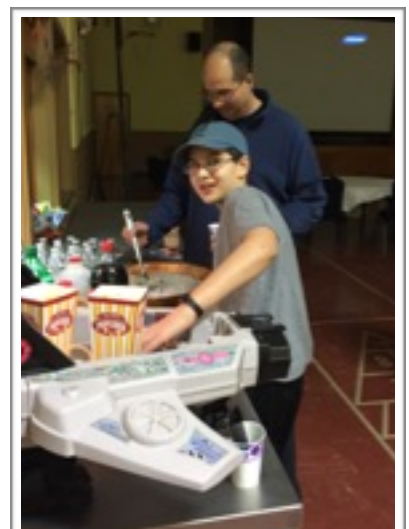
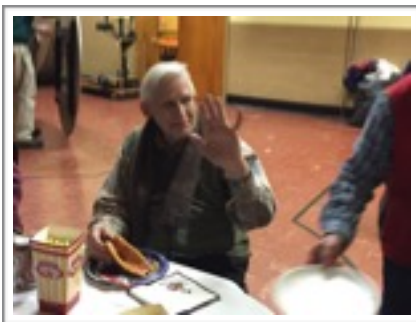
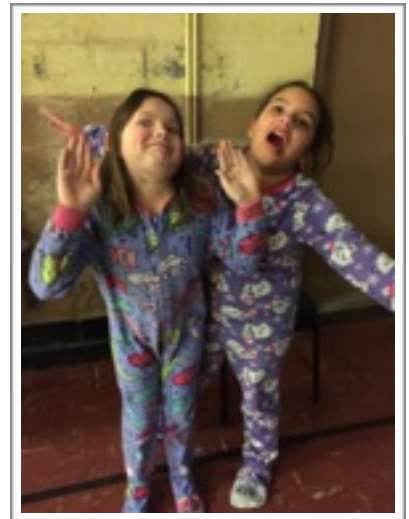
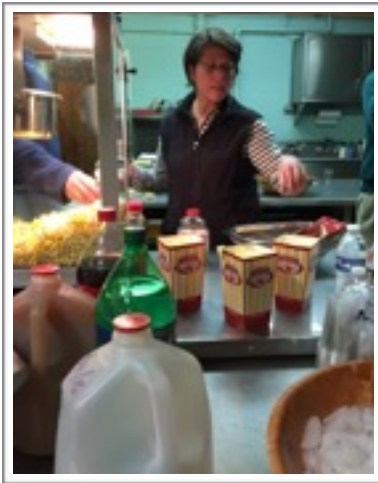
Anne Lamott says, “Prayer can be motion and stillness and energy – all at the same time. It begins with stopping in our tracks, or with our backs against the wall, or when we are going under the waves., or when we are just so sick and tired of being psychically sick and tired that we surrender, or at least we finally stop running away and at long last walk or lurch or crawl toward something. Or maybe, miraculously, we just release our grip slightly...My three prayers are variations on Help, Thanks, Wow. That's all I ever need.”

There is no right or wrong way to pray. We don't need to pray for God to be present with us. Praying is to help us remember that God is always with us, now in this moment, today, tomorrow, and until the end of time! Ready? Set? How about it? Let us pray....

STAR WARS MOVIE NIGHT

Our Deacon sponsored pizza and movie night was a great success! We had around 60 kids of all ages join us for the original Star Wars movie on the big screen. It was great to see so many invited guests and friends of the church joining us to kick-off school vacation week.

The Deacons are already thinking of what movie to show next!!! Many thanks to Darren, Joyce, Linda D., Lynn B., and Tom for all their efforts in making this a very enjoyable evening for all!



WE ARE THE CHURCH WHEN WE SHARE ONE ANOTHER'S

Lynn Bublely asked prayers for her niece Krystle, and Krystle's two daughters, Avry and Kenley, as they go through a tough family time.

Prayers for Glenn's sister, Deb, diagnosed with breast cancer.

Prayers for Ethel Young, and her family, one of our Sophia Snow friends who passed peacefully in her sleep at the end of February. She faithfully attended our Communion service every month and she will be missed by her friends and neighbors. A Memorial service will be held for Ethyl at Sophia Snow, on Monday, March 7, at 10:00 am. All are welcome to attend.

Prayers for Linda Denekamp's friend, Michael, who has had an aortic re-section which will require a lengthy recovery.

Prayers for June Finlayson during a difficult time of transition.

We pray for Nadia and her family on the passing of her father, Sam Tammo.

We pray for Ross Vance after the loss of his good friend, Donny Hamlin.

Prayers for Paula's friend Arthur O'Malley.

Sung-Yun asked prayers for her childhood friends, Michael Cohen and Steven Sharon, and their mother Jackie Sharon, who lost their brother and son, Michael Sharon, at the age of 57 to cancer.

We pray for Tom Parla's sister, Colleen Kelly and her family as they are going through some difficult times.

Prayers for the family of Jimmy Cook, a good friend of Darren Tedesco's father who passed away suddenly.

Prayers for Bob Penman still recovering from a knee injury.

Sung-Yun asked prayers for her friend and colleague, Kerry, who died in her sleep this week. Kerry was only 41.

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

Last year, for the beginning of Lent, we were meeting at Gormley's because of the snow and ice. We celebrate we are in our church for Lent!

We celebrated that Jeanne's daughter Beth, and Rolfe Voltaire's daughter, Julie, came to join us for worship and fellowship! We love when family and friends come an visit!

We celebrated Lynn Bublely's mother's 90th birthday!

We celebrate that all the members of the 402nd Forward Surgical Unit, Michael's unit in Afghanistan, have returned home safely.

Ilya and Eri share the joyous news that they are going to be parents! Congratulations!

Trevor Drury, our tenor soloist, let us know that he will be moving back to California to be

near family. His last Sunday with us will be March 13. We are thankful for his time with us and the enthusiastic and beautiful sharing of his musical talents with us. We wish him all the best during this time of transition. Please make sure to wish Trevor well!

Linda D. let us know that her nurse, Michael, had successful surgery and is now on the road to recovery. He really appreciated the prayer shawl that she brought him.

Darra shared the good news that Greta is the only 7th grader to make the 8th grade basketball team!

Judy celebrated all the support and excitement in town about our Food Pantry ministry! We also celebrate the generous contribution of food from the Roslindale food pantry to help get us started!

UPCOMING AND ONGOING EVENTS

Food Pantry Collection

A reminder to all to bring non-perishable goods on the 4th Sunday of every month - Any type of canned goods and dried foods of all sorts. This month's collection date is March 20th.

Lenten Weekly Prayer Meditation

It can be difficult sometimes to calm our minds when we sit in silence to pray. Our worries and to do lists can come rushing in and keep our minds hopping and dancing in distraction. Meditative prayer using a focal image can help settle our minds and allow us to pray more deeply and peacefully.

Each Sunday in Lent, we will have a prayer image to use as a focus for praying. Each sermon will end with a short guided meditation centering on the image for the day.

As an additional prayer aid, each week you will receive a token you can hold to help you recall and bring to mind each week's image. By the end of Lent, you will have 5 objects in your prayer bag that can help you with more focused praying. Check for objects from previous weeks when you come to church on Sundays and pick up a prayer bag if you haven't already gotten one.

Special Church Meeting and Luncheon

We will be having an all church meeting and luncheon on May 15th. Some agenda items will include an update on building improvements, proposals for improving building accessibility, the Food Pantry, and a proposed budget for next year and vote on that budget.

Let's Keep Our Kids Safe!

We would like to ask all parents to make sure that their children are supervised when they are playing in Memorial Hall. Sometimes things get a little out of hand, or children get curious and explore in areas where they can get hurt. Maybe all adults could take turns during coffee hour spending a few minutes in Memorial Hall keeping an eye on our active and beloved children!

The Ants are Marching!

We have had an infestation of ants in the kitchen. Joyce Eng has provided two blue plastic bins for storing all open food items or please store food in the refrigerator. Any open food not stored in the blue bins will be thrown out. Please let us all be extra careful and thoughtful about open food!

Thinking "Walk for Hunger"

Fast approaching is Project Bread's "Walk for Hunger" on May 1st 2016. There is an all new route this year, changed to 10 miles instead of 20. Also, they have added a 5K run. There is also an exciting new event at the finish line.. Bud will be volunteering again this year at the "Heart and Sole" tent at Boston Common. Anyone interested in making a contribution, may do so by signing Bud's pledge sheets in the West Room.



Church Directory update!



New Phone number for Rolfe Voltaire

Rolfe Voltaire's daughter, Julie, gave us Rolfe's new phone number. He can be reached at 781-769-1836. This phone is in his room and Julie said the best times to reach him are before 11:00 or after 3:00 as that is when he is most likely in his room. If he doesn't answer right away, please wait a few minutes and try again. He can't always make it to the phone in time, and he will go to the phone and wait, hoping the caller will try again. A card or call means a great deal to our friends, who are no longer able to join us at church!

"All Things Bright and Beautiful!"

Hopefully, you have had a chance to see what a difference a new coat of paint can make in the Memorial Hall entrance! Norman and Darren have been hard at work finishing up the risograph room, the office, and the Memorial Hall entry way. The bright, crisp, white, blue, and cream, colors will make you smile and feel like you are floating in clouds!

Half of the pew nearest to the ramp entrance has been removed to create a space for people in wheelchairs so they don't need to sit in the aisles, and to provide ample room for caskets being brought in during Memorial services. A new ramp door is in the works as the current one is damaged and deteriorating. Rotting window frames are being replaced, broken windows are being fixed, and the Memorial entrance door windows, are going to be replaced with tempered glass panes.

Norman has come up with a brilliant solution for the broken floor tiles and you will soon notice patches that will fill in the unsightly and dangerous broken areas. The patches will be light colored at first, but will be stained to as close a match to the existing floor as possible. Even if they can't be stained, the patches will make the floors smooth and even and will prevent further breaking and chipping.

The Stewards have also found a slate roofer who will be doing the much-needed maintenance and replacement of missing and broken tiles. Norman and Darren have also had several construction specialists come by to help determine the best course for reducing the smell, mold, and dampness in the music room and adjoining class room.

Please thank your Stewards for their amazing efforts and all the work that is getting done!!

**REMEMBERING WEST ROXBURY CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH**

The longtime, well-known beautiful structure on the corner of Centre St and Mount Vernon St. I remember it well!

It was Memorial Day, May 28th, 1973 (43 years ago) when the church was destroyed in a tragic fire. Our church, The Stratford Street Baptist Church, at the time, has many fond memories of the West Roxbury Congregational Church. There was always a meaningful understanding between our two churches. We have always been very compatible. We use to worship together on many occasions. Our union service as well as other special events. The youth groups were always getting together.

The West Roxbury Congregational Church was founded in 1835. We held a special 150th Anniversary celebration in our church on June 11, 1985. I was the moderator at the time, Rev George Mosely was our pastor, Ann Davis was our Minister and Pat Greene was our secretary.

After the fire, the many faithful continued to worship for a time at the West Roxbury United Methodist Church on Park Street. Then in 1975 during the leadership of Rev Finley M Keech, we extended an invitation to the Congregational

church, This is when Dusty Rowell and Don Call got together and began informal meetings which resulted in shared worships and combined choirs. Our boards and committees as one.

The process of a possible federation was discussed, and on June 6, 1977, both congregations agreed to go forward with the unification of our two churches. On March 27, 1977, we adopted the name of The Stratford Street United Church. Our news issue "The Stratford News" was changed to the "Winners" from the Congregational Church. A "Forward Vision Committee" was set up.

It was a long process, many "ups" and "downs" with many meetings. The process continued into the ministries of Rev George Mosely and finally to Rev Paul Hanna. When we finally resulted in a unanimous yes vote on December 7, 1997 as the official The Stratford Street United Church. After all the legal entanglements were worked out, we topped it off with a "Gala Unification Celebration" on May 31, 1998 (25 years after the 1973 fire)

We are grateful for all the support of those who worked so hard through our union together.

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Remembering Continued...

Our hopes and prayers are that we will continue to be the strong Stratford Street United Church that we are today. We are pleased that we could open our doors to the West Roxbury Congregational Church.

Many of our members with us today are from the West Roxbury Congregational. Just to name a few ~ Linda Denekamp and her family, Judy Jose Roddy, the ever faithful Eng Family, the Ambiels, Diana Faust, June Finlayson, Marge Roundberg, Alice Ferrandi, Paula Our, Beverly Bower, and Kim Augusta was about 5 years old when she and her family came to us!

A few things worthy of noting: The beautiful Altar cross we use today was saved from the fire. The Baptist "Board of Trustees" was renamed the Board of Stewards" from the Congregational Church. The Congregational Covenant was adopted to replace the Baptist Covenant. The Congregational Church's land was donated to the City of Boston for an addition to the W.Rox. Library. Regarding the choirs coming together we inherited the services of the magnificent, beautiful soloist, Barbara Firth, who is with us today. (what an asset she has been to us!) We thank all who had a part in this long and successful process.

Courtesy of Bud Waite

JOURNEYING THROUGH LENT

"Be still and know that I am God"

It can be difficult sometimes to calm our minds when we sit in silence to pray. Our worries and "to do" lists can come rushing in and keep our minds hopping and dancing in distraction. Meditative prayer using a focal image can help settle our minds and allow us to pray more deeply and peacefully.

Each Sunday in Lent, we have a prayer image to use as a focus for praying. Each sermon ends with a short guided meditation centering on a daily image.

Our first prayer image was 'flower.' We considered some of the qualities of flowers: turning always towards the light; pushing up in unexpected places seeking the sun; offering beauty and endless variety. When we meditate on flower, we breath in flower, and breath out fresh. We breath in beauty, and breath out peace.

Our second prayer image was 'mountain.' We considered mountain qualities of vision, ruggedness, stability, solidness, and ancientness. When we meditate on mountain, we breath in mountain, and we

breath out strength. In the midst of life's chaos, we breath in mountain, and we breath out solidness.

Our third prayer image was 'water.' We considered water qualities of cleansing, refreshment, necessity, sustainability, calm, and mystery. We shared some of our favorite watery places: the shushing ocean, gurgling mountain streams, bubbling garden fountains, shooting the rapids, and canoeing on the Charles. When we meditate on water, we breath in the essence of water, and we breath out calm. When we face difficult obstacles, water can remind us to go with the flow.

As a prayer aid, each week everyone will receive a token you can hold to help you recall and bring to mind each week's image. By the end of Lent, you will have 5 objects in your prayer bag that can help you with more focused praying. Come and see what's next!

If you would like to see the Buddhist Prayer Meditation that inspired this Lenten series, check it out on Youtube: "The Pebble Meditation" on mindfulcloudPBCamara.org.



It's time to order your Easter Lilies!

Look for the order forms in Sunday bulletins or in the West Room.

If you want to order an Easter Lily and are unable to get to church.

Please contact Fran in the office SSUC@verizon.net or call 617-323-4950

CHURCH DISCUSSION

Conversations about Open and Affirming

The Council is planning to begin conversations in our faith community about the possibility of establishing an Open and Affirming policy for our church. The Council will be leading small discussion groups during fellowship on Sunday, March 13th, and Sunday, April 17th. The purpose of these discussions will be to answer questions about what having an Open and Affirming policy means for our church.

The Council will then have a written survey which will be distributed at the Special Church meeting on May 15th. This is not a policy that will be voted on. The responses from the survey will be reviewed by the Council and distributed to all church members and friends. Next steps in the ONA process will be determined by the survey responses.

If we do not have general consensus, we cannot call ourselves Open and Affirming. Saying that we are an ONA church means that this is a safe place for Gay, Lesbian, Bi-sexual, and Transgender people to come and fully participate in the life of our church without repercussion, discomfort, rejection, fear, humiliation, or hatred.

Please make an effort to attend one or both of these important conversations. We understand that for some people this is an uncomfortable conversation but Jesus calls us into uncomfortable places. It is important as a faith community that we be able to talk about challenging questions together. We want to hear all sides of this question. Come, let's talk!

NEWS FROM THE CHOIR

Wednesday March 2nd at 7:30 pm

Amanda Invites everyone to hear the New England Conservatory Concert Choir, Chamber Singers and Symphony Orchestra performing the Duruflé Requiem, as well as the Debussy Nocturnes.

The concert will be in Jordan Hall 290 Huntington Avenue in Back Bay. Free admission.

Saturday, March 5th at 8 pm

See Eric Viñas from the church quartet perform his recital at the beautiful New England Conservatory, Pierce hall, 241 St Botolph St, Boston, MA 02115.

A Baby on the way!

Ilya and Eri share the joyous news that they are going to be parents! Congratulations!



Say Goodbye

Trevor Drury is a recent Graduate of The Boston Conservatory where he studied Voice Performance.

Sadly for us, we have to say farewell to Trevor on March 13th. He is returning to his home state of California and we will miss him. Please be sure to say goodbye and wish him well .



March is the time of Lent. While we prepare for Easter, take time each day to pray and reflect... Read inside our newsletter for many different suggestions on how you can take the time to give thanks, reflect, ask for help and more.

Calendar

Tuesday, March 8:

6:30 Deacon's meeting

Sunday, March 13:

Soloist, Trevor Drury's last Sunday.
First conversation on ONA during fellowship.

Sunday, March 20:

Palm Sunday

Tuesday, March 22:

2:00 Sophia Snow Communion Service, all are welcome!

Thursday, March 24

7:00 pm Maundy Thursday: Service of Communion

Friday March 25

12:00pm – 3:00pm Good Friday Vigil, On each half hour, we will

read one of the seven last words of Christ, extinguish a candle, and ring the church bells. Stop by for a time of prayer, music, and meditation.

Sunday, March 27:

Easter!

Wednesday, March 30:

7:30 Council Meeting

Sunday, April 17

Second conversation on ONA during fellowship.

Sunday, May 15

Special Church meeting and luncheon

Tuesdays, March-April

Confirmation class meets every Tuesday from 5pm – 6:30pm at the church except for: 3/22 & 4/5