

The Spire



The Newsletter of the Wollaston Congregational Church, United Church of Christ

About This Edition

Leanne S. Walt, **Sabbatical Minister**

August 2010

Dear Friends,

Though with the culmination of the church school year and folks heading off to vacation spots life at Wollaston Congregational seems to have quieted down a bit since June. However, the building has certainly been aflutter with activity beyond Sunday morning worship and September to June programming and events. Youth groups from across the country have set up camp in the social hall for weeks at a time, members of the church have donated time and resources to have Mary Lou's office painted, carpeted, and refurnished, and your Stewards have been continuing to meet regularly to discuss kitchen improvements, financial planning for the coming year, and hiring on a new building supervisor for the fall. Peter and the Stewards of Building and Resources have also been in conversation with our new daycare provider tenant about building improvements.



Caring for God's house is certainly a lot of work! I often wonder what God thinks about our old New England buildings with water damaged ceilings, rotting stones, and tall steeples. Did God intend His house to be *this high maintenance*? I'm not sure, but I do know that along with preserving a community's history, these old buildings serve as glue within the present, holding God's people together working toward a common goal and purpose. In this work of caring for our house of God, we grow with and learn from one another about how to be Jesus' disciples. We have conversations with one another, with neighbors and city leaders, about how to best serve God and our wider community.

When God spoke through King David and appointed David's son, Solomon, to build the Temple in Jerusalem, I imagine that the young and inexperienced Solomon was quite overwhelmed with the elaborate plans that were laid out for him. Knowing this, David offered the following words of comfort and encouragement to his son:

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“Be strong and of good courage, and act. Do not be afraid or dismayed for the Lord God, my God, is with you. He will not fail you or forsake you, until all the work for the service of the house of the Lord is finished. Here are the divisions of the priests and the Levites for all the service of the house of God; and with you in all the work will be every volunteer who has skill for any kind of service; also the officers and all the people will be wholly at your command.”

~ 1 Chronicles 28:20-21

May we also find comfort and encouragement in David’s words because through them we are reminded that we are not called to care for God’s house alone. Rather, our stewardship of the building occurs in the multiplicity of community, drawing on the support of volunteers and officers. Reach out to one another in this time of thoughtful deliberation, decision-making, turnover, and change. Thanks be to God that we have one another to bear the load, bound together in Christ!

Pastor’s Study Gets Facelift

During Mary Lou’s sabbatical, we have been working to redecorate the pastor’s study. It’s the last of the offices to be improved, and we estimate that it’s been about 20 years since the space last painted and carpeted.

To begin with, a youth group from Elgin, IL came and carefully boxed the contents of the office, moved it and all of the furniture to the front office, and washed the woodwork.

Over the long Independence Day weekend, Chris Ford volunteered his time and painted the walls and trim in gray and white tones.

David Abbott of L. G. Henley came in and installed new carpeting. Finally, an anonymous donor has agreed to re-furnish the study. What a great way to welcome Pastor Mary Lou home from her sabbatical!





Capital Campaign Continues...

We hope you're enjoying reading this special building edition of the Spire. Our aim is to inform the members and friends of the church about the building and its goings on.

We also ask that you consider a gift to our capital campaign or that you make a plan to fulfill your commitment to the campaign.

If you'd like more information, please contact Marian Channon, Moderator.

Groundskeeping

**East Side, West Side, all Around the
Grounds.**

Over the course of the summer, volunteers have taken up various gardening tools and kept our grounds neat and tidy.

Many thanks to Russell Clements for mowing the lawn, to Ellie Cleveland and Fran Guida for pulling weeds and trimming the shrubbery, and to Farmer Bill Doherty for looking after the pumpkin patch.

Special thanks go to Jonna Sundberg for repainting the sign on the corner of Lincoln and Winthrop Avenues.

A New Preschool

Towards the end of the school year, Peter Johnston and Marge Schwendenman met with a couple of prospective daycare agencies who would like to use the education wing beginning in September, 2010.

After these spaces were renovated in 2004, we had a great experience with Step One, an early childhood intervention program, part of South Shore Mental Health, which occupied the space for five years before it purchased its own building. After many conversations, which included the Stewards of Resources, Moderator and Staff, it was decided to extend an offer to Lovely Daycare.

We expect that the school will be using the nursery, the blue room, and part of the driveway, which will be converted into a playground. It will be nice to have children in the building during the day again.



At the Boiling Point

At a recent congregational meeting, the Stewards of Resources were charged with soliciting bids and selecting a company to replace the boiler. The current boiler was installed in 1964, and served us well, finally dying on a cold Sunday in February.

Through prayers, bubble gum and bailing wire, we were able to limp along, running the boiler for a few hours per day, until the end of the heating season. In June, we began interviewing heating contractors to replace the boiler.

Why did we choose oil? There has been a concerted effort to make the church a greener place, so oil may seem an odd choice for the church's heating plant. One major consideration was the cost of converting the building to gas. This would have entailed bringing extra gas lines into the building from the street, and installing a gas meter on the outside of the building.

This would have posed a problem, as the gas company (or the electric company which owns the gas company) stated that they couldn't affix a meter on the outside of the building, as we are a historic structure. Financial incentives from the gas company were paltry in comparison to the overall cost of converting the building.

Additionally there was an issue of having to line the chimney because gas burns cooler than oil, and that the resulting condensation would damage the chimney as is.



Another consideration was the original radiators and the pneumatic control systems which are working well since we replaced all of the traps in the radiators and many of the thermostats in the building. Estimates range from a 10% - 30% cost savings in oil consumption.

Finally, there was the overall cost of the gas conversion project which was more than three times the cost of installing an efficient oil burner to heat the building.

At the spring church meeting, the congregation recommended staying with oil heat and to empower the Stewards of Resources to seek bids from oil heating contractors and to make a recommendation to the congregation regarding the options.

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Working off of a 2008 report from Brad White, an independent heating consultant, we were able to furnish contractors with precise measurements of the building, and the information to correctly size the boiler. We have asked Brad to review the 3 bids, and make a recommendation to the Stewards on the best company to complete the work. Our goal is to have the boiler installed, and ready to run as of September 1.



Oil Tank - One of the interesting things that we learned while investigating the boiler was about our 2,500 gallon oil tank, which is buried in a concrete bunker under the building. The Environmental Protection Agency has ruled that these underground tanks are potentially hazardous to the environment, as they have been known to leak. Ideally this tank should be removed, but because the removal of the tank would disturb the structural integrity of the foundation, we now need to install new tanks in the boiler room, and are seeking a variance from the Fire Chief to simply empty the old tank if its oil and to fill it with concrete.

New Building Supervisor

We are pleased to introduce Brendon Collins as our new Building Supervisor!

Brendon has extensive experience in property management, and will be a valuable addition to our church staff.



This position was created when Peter Johnston announced his intention to enroll in the Boston University School of Theology, and seek ordination into the Christian Ministry. Peter will continue his responsibilities as Minister of Music and Administrator of the Pastoral Residency Program, but will no longer manage the building as he has for the past three years.

Brendon will be responsible for the overall operation of the plant, including managing building rentals, maintaining the building calendar, supervising the sextons, and overseeing building improvements. He will be on hand most Sunday mornings, and will work an additional two evenings per week.

Brendon holds a Bachelor of Science in Business Administration from Bryant College, and is a volunteer for the Boys and Girls Clubs of Boston. He resides in Boston with his wife Shannon, and they are expecting their first child in January.

Again, Welcome Brendon!



Youth Mission Groups

This year, we were pleased to host many youth groups from across the country. In June, through City Mission Society's Boston Urban Outreach Program, we hosted groups from San Francisco and a large group; 52 people, from South Congregational in Glastonbury, CT.

Additionally, we were a work site for the Regional Youth Event and a group from Elgin, IL. During the month of July, we hosted a group from Firestone Park Presbyterian Church from Aakron, OH.

In August, we will be home to a group from Syracuse, NY. In addition to their presence in the building, these groups volunteer their time in soup kitchens, building sites, and children's programs in the Boston and Quincy area.

Our thanks to Carl McDonald of City Mission Society for making these arrangements, and to Peter Johnston for acting as host to the groups.



Youth visitors from South Congregational Church, United Church of Christ, in Glastonbury, CT make camp in the social hall. 51 visitors stayed for 6 nights one week at the end of June.



Youth visitors preparing dinner in the kitchen

Kitchen News

Extreme Takeover, Kitchen Edition... Things are cooking along in the kitchen over the course of the summer. Marge Schwendenman has been raising funds and organizing work teams for the kitchen improvement project. Plans are underway to paint the kitchen, replace countertops, add curtains, clear the clutter, and replace the refrigerator.

Our thanks to Marge for her leadership, to Kate Wylie and Jonathan Hill for the gift of the refrigerator, Dave Abbott for his assistance with the countertops, and to the many hands who have donated funds and will make light work of this long overdue project.

If you can volunteer some time, or can contribute to the project, please speak with Marge Schwendenman.



New Prayer Mosaic

At our family worship service on Sunday, July 18, we created a prayer mosaic. During our prayer time, people in the congregation were asked to come forward and place pieces of colored glass around a central cross as they prayed.

During the sermon time, Lisa Hellmuth, Amanda Hellmuth and Simon and Hannah Ford continued gluing and arranging, and finished this beautiful piece of liturgical art.

This will hang a window in the worship space in the Green Room, where the children have prayer time during church school.

