

The Spire

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

Dear friends,

About four years ago, on a particularly lonely Sunday morning in our church, a day when only fourteen people gathered to worship God, one of our field education students asked me a question. "How do you preach to only fourteen people?" I thought about it and replied, "I preach as if the house were full!" That was and still is my vision for our church, to be filled with people who want to worship God in community with other believers. Yes, our congregation has grown a lot over these years, but we have yet to break one hundred members. We seem to be stalled at ninety-one adult members, and lately, I have been wondering what is going to make our church grow in membership?



This question led me to go searching on the Internet and ask the question, "Why don't people go to church?" I was amazed to see how many other people are asking the same question. Lists of reasons sprung forth with one study reporting the number one reason people don't come to church is because they find it boring. (Perth's Edith Cowan University and National Church Life Survey Research NCLS.)

The top ten reasons are signs of the times, and offer challenges for all of us. Among those attendees and non-attendees of church, John Bellamy's study reported the following reasons. They find church boring; they don't agree with the church's beliefs or moral views; they don't feel any need for church; they prefer to do other things; they feel that their beliefs are too weak; they don't like the way churches are organized; they have other commitments; they have had bad experiences among church people; and they don't have enough time because of work. (John Bellamy, *Why People Don't Go to Church*, Open Book Publishers, Adelaide, 1998).

From his Australian study group of 8,500 people, Bellamy reports, "One of the things we noted was that there are now less than half, something like about a third, of current primary school-aged children who had some kind of frequent church involvement, so that's a real shift (down) from even 20 years ago."

On a more optimistic note, however, Bellamy also lists some of the successful ways to attract new members to church. He says that begins with you! "There is a strong relationship between the presence of newcomers and attendees inviting others." We know this from Jim Griffith's "elbow theory" to bring someone to church on your elbow.

As we prepare for RALLY DAY, the day when our congregation re-gathers after the weeks of summer, I want to encourage you to do this inviting, and to ask yourselves which of your family, your friends, and your neighbors do you want to share what you have found in our church? Wouldn't it be wonderful to fill this church with people who want God in their lives and who want a community to worship with, who want their children to understand the love of Jesus Christ? Can you see it? I still can.

Blessings and peace,

Family Fun Night News

It's going to be an old-fashioned **Neighborhood Block Party** in September!

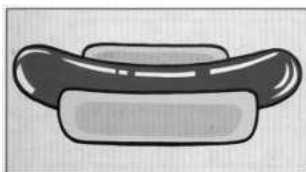


Join us on Friday, September 18th beginning at 6:00 PM for music (D.J.), games, food and surprises – all happening outside on Winthrop Street – on the blocked-off portion directly in front of our Church.




We will kick-off the new Sunday School year with a party to celebrate friends, family and neighbors.

A hot dog and bag of chips will cost only \$1. Other complimentary light refreshments will also be served.



It will be a Rain or Shine event, and children must be accompanied by an adult..

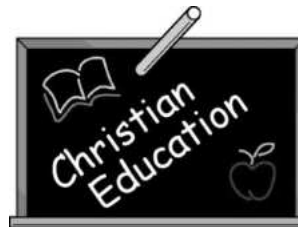


WollyCong Youth Make Honor Roll

Three WollyCong youth have achieved honor roll status!

- Jessica Ketner, *High Honors*
- Abby Egan, *Honor Roll*
- Ryan Ketner, *Honor Roll*

Source: The Patriot Ledger, June 31, 2009



Rally Day – the beginning of the new Sunday School year – is on September 13th ... and what a fun and inspiring year this is going to be!

During the summer, the Christian Education Team met twice to learn about the Fall's new exciting curriculum, **“Rock Solid – Building a Heart of Faith”**. All of the Sunday School lessons will focus on Bible stories and Bible verses.

In September, the children will hear about Joseph, his beautiful coat, his relationship with his brothers and God, and how Joseph's family was reunited. The lessons will include discussions and activities on getting along with each other, sibling rivalry, forgiveness, and related themes. Children and adults will learn the importance of treating other people the way we want to be treated.

Sunday School registration is happening now for nursery-age children through confirmation-age students. Children in our nursery are cared for by an exceptional staff, including a Registered Nurse.

On-line registration is accessible at www.wollycong.org - select Youth from the upper-right-hand corner and then select Sunday School. You'll see the link for the on-line registration. Registration forms are also available at the Church Office.

Rally Day begins at 10:00 AM during our Worship Service on September 13th with a Blessing of the Backpacks. We look forward to having your children in Sunday School this year.



Bible Incomplete

Fill in the missing letters to complete the passage. Solution on next page.

The _oma_ sai_h un_o hi_, I kn_w th_t Me_sia_ com_th, w_ich _s ca_led _hri_t: wh_n he _s co_e, he _ill _ell _s al_ thi_gs. J_sus _ait_ unt_ her, _ tha_ spe_k un_o th_e am _e.

Rejoice!

You are invited to the Ordination of

Theresa Stirling

Sunday, September 27 at 3:00 p.m. at
Old South Union Church
25 Columbian Street in Weymouth

Theresa has been called to the
Gorham Congregational Church
United Church of Christ in Gorham, NH
as Pastor & Teacher

From Marian....

The Moderator is on sick leave and wishes to thank everyone for prayers, thoughts, wishes, emails. Hope to return soon with more energy and commitment for all the work the church needs to be doing this fall.



Dear Friends,

On behalf of the volunteers and customers of The Pantry Shelf, I would like to thank you for your generous donation. Together we are able to work together to alleviate hunger and help our neighbors in need. We appreciate your continued support.

Sincerely, Bettyanne Lang, Interfaith Social Services



The Spire is a monthly publication of the Wollaston Congregational Church, United Church of Christ. Copies are available in the narthex.

The deadline for the October newsletter is September 20 at noon. Submissions should be e-mailed to wollastonadmin@comcast.net, or delivered to Peter Johnston in the church office. Articles may be edited for content and length.



Views from the Pews

Periodically we ask members of the congregation to submit articles for inclusion in **The Spire**.

These might include poetry, thoughts on faith, a child's perspective, etc. If you would like to submit an piece for consideration, please e-mail Peter Johnston at wollastonadmin@comcast.net or contact him through the church office.



Pastoral Residency For Turnaround Ministry Established!

After two years of seeking funding to develop a residency program in our church to teach new pastors how to engage in the art of turnaround church ministry, we have been granted funding to call our first resident. This is such good news for all of us!

After interviewing a number of candidates, we have called Leanne Sterio, a 2009 seminary graduate of Harvard Divinity School, to be our first pastoral resident. She will begin her year of the residency with us on September 13th, on our church's Rally Day. She will work for the church thirty hours a week in all areas of ministry.

As our resident, she will be studying, leading, and learning with us by focusing on the areas of worship, education, administration, community, mission, and pastoral care as related to the turnaround church.

Leanne will be married on September 5th, so by the time you meet her, her name will be Leanne Sterio Walt. I know you will all be very happy to meet her and to welcome her to our church. This is the only program of this kind and we are blessed to begin it right here at Wollaston Congregational Church!

Solution to Bible Incomplete:
The woman saith unto him, I know that Messiah cometh, which is called Christ: when he is come, he will tell us all things. Jesus saith unto her, I that speak unto thee am he. John 4:25-26



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Wollaston Congregational Church
United Church of Christ
48 Winthrop Avenue
Wollaston, MA 02170

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Rev. Dr. Mary Louise Gifford, *Pastor*
Peter Johnston, *Minister of Music*
& *Business Administrator*
Carolyn Gray, *Church Secretary*
Tim Ryan, *Sexton*
Marian Channon, *Moderator*
Chuck Wiot, *Treasurer & Historian*
Lisa Hellmuth, *Recording Clerk*
Carolyn Gray, *Membership Clerk*
Kim Kroeger & Marian Channon
Stewards of Spirit
Linda Perry & Susan Sweetser
Stewards of Mission & Outreach
Annie Channon & Chris Ford
Stewards of Resources

September Worship Sundays at 10:00 A.M.

<p>Sunday, September 6 10:00 a.m. 14th Sunday after Pentecost</p> <p>Psalm 146 Isa. 35: 4-7 Mark 7: 24-37</p> <p>Dr. Gifford, Preaching Peter Johnston, Musician</p> <p>Ellie Cleveland and Mark Gifford Deacons</p> <p>Coffee Hour following Worship</p>	<p>Sunday, September 13 10:00 a.m. 15th Sunday after Pentecost</p> <p>Psalm 19 Proverbs 1: 20-30 James 3: 1-12</p> <p>Dr. Gifford, Preaching Peter Johnston, Musician</p> <p>Rally Day Church School Registration Blessing of the Backpacks Russell Clements, Deacon</p> <p>Coffee Hour following Worship</p>	<p>Sunday, September 20 10:00 a.m. 16th Sunday after Pentecost</p> <p>Psalm 54 Proverbs 31: 10-31 Mark 9: 30-37</p> <p>Leanne Walt, Preaching Peter Johnston, Musician</p> <p>John Ketner, Deacon</p> <p>Coffee Hour following Worship</p>	<p>Sunday, September 27 10:00 a.m. 17th Sunday after Pentecost</p> <p>Psalm 124 Numbers 11: selected James 5: 13-20</p> <p>Dr. Gifford, Preaching Peter Johnston, Musician</p> <p>Kim Kroeger, Deacon</p> <p>Coffee Hour following Worship</p>
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