

## *The Messenger ~ March 2010*

*Someone will say, "You have faith and I have works." Show me your faith apart from your works, and I by my works will show you my faith.*

*James 2:18*



One of the great debates in Christianity has been over faith and works. Martin Luther found reason to believe that faith is what saves us; faith is what gives us access to God's grace. The other view was that we need to do things to receive God's grace; if we do the right things, then we will be okay with God.

This same view has played out in recent history. Some Christians focus solely on faith in Jesus Christ, while others wish to follow Jesus by doing mission work. The reality is that both are needed to have a full relationship to Christ.

We have seen in recent weeks the outpouring of assistance to Haiti. The earthquake has inspired many to reach out. That is as it should be. We should be moved to help others in need. Jesus said "when you do this to the least of these you do it also to me." We need to remember that Jesus also said "believe in God, believe also in Me." Hopefully those who reach out in Haiti will find a deeper connection to God, and people of faith will be moved to share the love that grows from their faith with others.

This debate has played out over and over again throughout Christian history. We need to rest on faith. We must do good deeds. The reality is that they inform each other. If we believe, then we will reach out with the love that God first gave to us. And, if we reach out in love, we can be moved to have faith in God, the source of all love.

During Lent we can strive to go deeper in our faith, to renew our connection to God, and to give of ourselves. How can your faith be stronger, and how can you live your faith more fully?

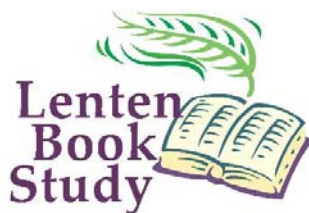
See you in church,  
Bob



The next **Greet and Eat** dinner will on Saturday, March 20<sup>th</sup>, the first day of Spring! Celebrate the vernal equinox, the return of more daylight and warmer temperatures. Our Lenten season menu is

Vegetable lasagna  
Tossed salad  
Italian bread  
Dessert and beverages

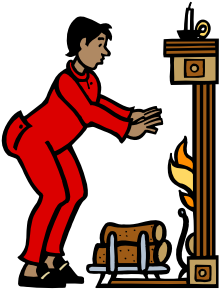
The price remains the same - \$7 for adults, \$4 for children 6 - 12 years, and \$20 for a family. Reservations would be appreciated; please contact the Church Office at 267-3312 or [firstchurch@samnet.net](mailto:firstchurch@samnet.net) . Tickets are available Sundays after worship in the Fellowship Room.



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All members and friends of First Church are invited to attend a Lenten study led by Pastor Bob on Wednesday evenings beginning at 6:30 pm. Using the book *The Shack* by William P. Young, you will find out how a note from God changed a family's life. This will move you to a greater understanding of God's unfailing love for all of us!

## Fuel for the Body, Fuel for the Soul



The Warm Souls Group offers a light lunch in fellowship the first Sunday of the month, October through May. All ingredients are donated; 100% of the money collected goes to the church operating budget.

The soup for March 7<sup>th</sup> will be **Hearty Chicken Noodle Soup**. Lunch consists of a bowl of homemade soup, bread or crackers, and dessert for \$4. We also have take-home containers if you prefer. Look for us in the Fellowship Room following the church service! The Warm Souls Group consists of Carrie, Corinne, and Kristi.

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**One Great Hour of Sharing (OGHS)**, as part of Our Church's Wider Mission, is the special mission offering of the United Church of Christ that carries God's message of love and hope to people in more than eighty countries.

The UCC works with international partners to provide sources of clean water and food, education and health care, small business micro-credit, emergency relief, and advocacy and resettlement for refugees and displaced persons. OGHS also supports domestic and international ministries for disaster preparedness and response.

OGHS is a Lenten Offering, most often received the fourth Sunday of Lent, but may be taken at different times. The 2010 suggested Dedication Day is March 14, 2010. Thank you for your generous support!

## Will you be 1 of 100 members??



Will you be 1 of 100 members who is willing to pay your own Fellowship Dues? As a member church of the *Massachusetts Conference of the United Church of Christ*, First Church agrees to pay Fellowship Dues to support the programs and services of the MACUCC and Hampden Association. This program dates back to the 1840s. Annual dues for 2010 are **\$17.55 for each member.**

Last year, 52 members paid their dues and stewardship allotted the same number in this year's budget. We're hoping we can come closer to the 100 member mark this year! Any dues received will go back into our general operating budget and help fund additional programs this year!

If you are able, and would like to participate by paying your own *UCC Fellowship Dues*, you may send a check to the Church Office or place a check in the offering plate for \$17.55 per member – made out to **First Church of Monson** with "UCC Fellowship Dues" noted on the memo line.



I wish to thank all the people who helped to decorate our "mitten tree" this holiday season. The mittens, gloves, hats and scarves that adorned the tree have been distributed between the Monson Open Pantry and the Springfield Loaves & Fishes soup kitchen. Your continued generosity is heartwarming (and hand warming!). Cindy



The Dorcas Society H. Leonora Stiles Thomas Educational Trust is offering scholarships to members or affiliates of the First Church of Monson who meet the following qualifications:

1. Member of a current high school graduating class who has been accepted at a school of higher learning,
2. Member or affiliate of The First Church of Monson who has provided some type of meaningful service to the programs of The First Church of Monson.

All applications must be completed and in the hands of Dorcas Society Trustees by **11:00 am on the second Sunday of April**. Scholarship payments will be made in two equal parts. Part one will be paid upon receipt of student's first semester college grades and part two will be paid upon receipt of student's second semester grades.

Applications may be obtained from a Dorcas Trustee; please contact the Church Office at 267-3312 or [firstchurch@samnet.net](mailto:firstchurch@samnet.net) for the names and telephone numbers of the Dorcas Trustees.

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Daylight-Saving Time begins at 2 am on Sunday, March 14<sup>th</sup>! Be sure to turn your clocks ahead one hour that night.

Church World  
small packages of  
world of difference



Service (**CWS**) kits are  
supplies that can make a  
when disasters strike.

There are four kinds of kits: school, hygiene, baby care, and clean-up. Members of Hearts Willing Club recently assembled 74 Hygiene Kits in response to a request from CWS following the earthquake in Haiti.

The Journey of a CWS Kit begins with the loving hands of volunteers collecting and assembling the contents for each kit, following specific guidelines. CWS has carefully researched and selected the contents to make the kits as useful as possible, wherever and whenever they are sent.

The journey continues as the kits are shipped to the Brethren Service Center in Maryland, where volunteers sort, check, and pack the kits into larger cartons, ready for immediate shipment when a need occurs.

The journey could end anywhere in the world! In response to the recent earthquake in Haiti, CWS emptied its warehouse, providing thousands of Hygiene Kits, Baby Care Kits and CWS blankets, along with tents, food, and medicine.

Hearts Willing Club thanks all who donated contents for the Hygiene Kits and/or money toward shipping. Also, Massachusetts Conference Minister & President Jim Antal recently announced that **The Friends of the MA Conference UCC donated \$1000** to Church World Service in order to cover the \$2 expense for 500 kits assembled by MACUCC churches which cannot afford this additional expense.

**Hearts Willing Club**  
**March 24, 2010**  
**7 pm**



Reminder: Gift bags for homebound members and friends will be assembled (postponed from February).

Location of Annual Banquet will be announced.

All women affiliated with First Church are invited.

## March Sermon Titles & Sunday Scripture Readings



March 7, 2010 ~ Sermon: Finding Figs  
Isaiah 55:1-9, Luke 13:1-9

March 14, 2010 ~ Sermon: Planting Seeds  
Isaiah 5:9-12, Luke 15:1-3, 11b-32

March 21, 2010 ~ Sermon: A Pharisee Meets the Savior  
John 3:1-17, John 19: 30-42

March 28, 2010 ~ Sermon: Celebration and Pain  
John 12:12-16, Isaiah 50:4-9a



During the April school vacation, the First Church Christian Education ministry will host an afternoon of theater, music, dance, and art for families. Come make a sock puppet, put on a puppet show, sing with the karaoke machine, and paint with Pastor Bob.

The highlight of the day will be a variety show, put on by YOU! Come ready to sing, dance, read poetry, or play an instrument. All ages are welcome, and it's free. Stay tuned for the date and time. Spread the word - all are welcome.

If you could help with this activity, please see a member of the Christian Education Ministry Team or leave a message with the Church Office by telephone at 267-3312 or email [firstchurch@samnet.net](mailto:firstchurch@samnet.net) .

## **“Thanksgiving in April”**



**Saturday, April 17<sup>th</sup>  
6:00 pm**

Adults - \$12.00, Children (12 and under) - \$6.00

Come and enjoy good food and fellowship!

### Menu

Turkey, Mashed Potatoes, and Stuffing  
Butternut Squash and Green Beans  
Cranberry Relish and Cranberry Sauce  
Homemade Desserts  
Coffee, Tea, or Milk

This is our annual fundraiser for the church budget. Hearts Willing Club could use your help. If you would like to make a food or dessert donation, there will be a sign-up sheet in the Fellowship Hall. If you would like to help in the kitchen (it was a fun experience last year), call the Church Office at 267-3312 or email [firstchurch@samnet.net](mailto:firstchurch@samnet.net)

This event was sold out last year so get your tickets early. Takeouts will be available but you need to buy a ticket beforehand.