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'I am the vine, you are the branches."

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Wilbraham United Church 500 Main St. Wilbraham, MA 01095 www.WilbrahamUnited Church.org

A note from Tastor Chip

Dear Church Family:

As we prepare to enter Spring, the snow is still on the ground and there is a chill in the air. Every vear at this time, we begin to think about the warmer weather and better days ahead in a different way. They suddenly seem so much closer, with the flipping of the calendar from February to March. If you are at all like me, as the days lengthen, you get a bit of a spring in your step and perhaps a little quicker with a smile.

This year, of all years, we have reason to hope for better things to come. It has been nearly a full year since we gathered in person in our sanctuary, in response to the coronavirus pandemic. As vaccination rates climb and infection rates fall, we can be cautiously optimistic that we will find ourselves in those once-familiar pews again. We can look forward to worshipping in our sanctuary again, if not exactly as we did before.

Because there is still so much that is unknown. and so much that is contingent, I am not comfortable announcing a date that we will reopen our doors. But please know that our new Church Council continues to monitor the numbers, our staff is constantly thinking about the practical procedures and precautions that we'll need to take, pitched in to ensure that our church community and we will be back together as soon as we believe we can accommodate people safely, with our customary extravagant welcome.

Until that time, we will continue to meet on Facebook Live and offer alternative ways of fellowship and community. On March 7th, we will have a virtual coffee hour on Zoom. It's never too late to join Tuesday night's Bible Study Happy Hour, as we learn about the Sermon on the Mount. I will continue holding office hours from 10-2 on

Wednesday and Thursday, while Paul offers his on Tuesday from 3:30-5 and Thursday from 5-7. Our Drive-by Drive on March 27th will not only be an occasion to drop off items for others, but a chance to pick up a palm for the next morning's Palm Sunday service.

For Holy Week, we will be offering two weeknight services on Facebook Live: Maundy Thursday and Good Friday, both at 7PM. On Holy Saturday, we would like to hold an Easter Vigil of sorts in the sanctuary, allowing one person at a time to sit and pray and reflect. If you would like to be a part of that, please email me. I need to gauge the interest in order to best plan for how we might make it work.

On April 4th, Easter Sunday, we invite you to a celebration of the resurrection, a worship service of Word and Sacrament, at 10AM on our front lawn. Again, details will be forthcoming, but it is our intent and our hope to welcome everyone to outdoor worship as we remember that Christ is Risen! Please stay tuned to your email for further updates and information as the date draws nearer.

Finally, my gratitude and my love to all who have has stated connected, and able to practice compassion, faith and love during this time of separation and isolation. We have learned so much about ourselves and the communities of which we are a part, and I hope that all of you feel as blessed as I feel by being a part of Wilbraham United Church.

Peace.

Pastor Chip

Baked Potatoes and Cooked Carrots versus Dirty Snow and Mud



My mother, God rest her soul, was not among the world's greatest cooks and did not have a good meatloaf recipe. Also, every time we had this bad meatloaf, it was served with baked potatoes and cooked carrots that we all cooked for a very-long-time. Well, not only did I not like the meatloaf, I learned to dislike baked potatoes and cooked carrots. It took me a long time before I realized that cooked carrots and baked potatoes were not evil.

I think my love/hate relationship with the season of Lent has also been shaded by association. No, not with baked potatoes and cooked carrots but with dirty snow, mud, cold and trees that look dead. I have always thought that time period of late February and March was just dreadful. It took me awhile to realize that this was merely the calm before the spring and new life would come forth again.

One way to participate in that new life is to repent, not in sackcloth and ashes per se, but to repent from what keeps us from recognizing ourselves as one of God's beloved, much in the same way that God announced his love for the Son. Do we realize that WE are also God's beloved in whom God is well-pleased? Do we have some "dirty snow and mud" that keeps us from this part of a special relationship with God?

Dirty snow and mud become beautiful lawns and fields; dead trees come to life and mark the arrival of warmer weather. Our call to repent allows us to be transformed into better followers of Jesus who seek that new life that was promised in the Resurrection. I encourage all of us to take this time to repent and be transformed. It has been a long winter and even longer pandemic. Aren't we all ready to live fully again?

At some point in my life, I learned to really like cooked carrots, baked potatoes (I prefer mashed) and even meatloaf. I have realized that dirty snow and mud mean that spring is right around the corner. I continue to grow in appreciation of Lent as a time to repent, renew and transform to grow my relationship with God.

Peace and love,

Paul

PLEDGE INCOME REPORT

This message is usually a pledge income report. This time, we need to talk about pledges.

As you know from the 2021 Budget presentation emailed to you and reviewed at annual meeting, we have an expense budget that exceeds expected income by about \$68,000, a troublesome deficit. To balance the budget, we would need \$264,056 of pledge income. Having analyzed 2020 pledge giving to estimate 2021 pledge income, we expect \$196,000 in pledge income. To date, we have \$171,315 pledged from 71 pledgers. The good news is that 12 of these pledgers have prepaid \$49,179 of the \$55,854 they pledged, providing early cash flow to pay expenses. The disturbing news is that nearly half of our member households do not pledge.

Deb Trimble, who has been working so artistically and diligently with Chip, Paul, Mark and Aimee to keep us connected, shared the following thoughts after she saw the data and offered to share them with all of us. We had 6 less pledges at that time.

"128 of you with your families consider yourselves to be members of the congregation. But only 65 of you are pledging. The rest of that number is 63 individuals or families. If each of those gave \$1000 for the year (that's less than \$20 per week) it would go a very long way to reducing the budget deficit. That would amount to \$63,000!!! With a deficit of \$68000 that leaves only \$5000!!! That's so much more doable than \$68,000.

Obviously, not everyone can afford \$20 a week. And some folks can afford more than that. We all need to do our part. It's important for everyone to pledge – even if it's \$5 a week. You'll find that once you start pledging it's easy to continue, and it also becomes easier to adjust that amount once you see how little it might impact your finances and how much you receive in return. It's particularly easy if you use online pledging. It becomes a regular expense that you don't have to worry about anymore, and the church benefits from having that steady stream of income, even if folks can't make it inside the building.

And for all those 'same as last year' folks – we need to remind them that the church's expenses aren't the same every year. Can they see it in their hearts to keep up with at least the same percentage that we used for staff salary increases? This year it is 1.3%, so if previously you gave \$1000 maybe now you give \$1013 (see how little that is!!!). Given that staff salaries are the largest part of our expenses and we want to reward the good work our staff is doing and continue to support them, we need to keep our pledging at least up to date with the cost of living. It's the right thing to do."

Thank you, Deb, and thank you to all who are pledging and giving.

Your Operations Trustees

WUC reaching out to the community



Many thanks to everyone who volunteered, donated items, time and trucks to our monthly drive to benefit the Community Survival Center





Thank you to everyone who donated a warm coat to help out the MHA men's shelter program.



To Our Friends at United Church:

On behalf of the people served by the Mental Health Association (MHA), I am writing to express my thanks for your generous donations made recently to MHA. In particular, donations of winter coats are making this cold season warmer for individuals and families who are served through two MHA programs.

Our Tenancy Preservation Program (TPP) enables MHA to prevent evictions and homelessness, which is more important than ever in the extremely difficult environment created by the COVID-19 pandemic. Through TPP, MHA provides intensive case management, in consultation with the Housing Courts, to assess reasons for eviction, identify service needs, and develop plans to preserve housing and avoid homelessness.

Our GRIT Ridgewood program helps young men who are learning to stay sober, feel well and live their best life. Ridgewood is MHA's newest Residential Rehabilitation Services program for young men ages 18 to 26 with a co-occurring mental health and substance use diagnosis. There are 26 residential recovery programs in Massachusetts, but Ridgewood is the *only* one designed specifically for this underserved population. Our staff provide 16 young men who live here with the guidance, support and connections they need to move forward confidently in their lives.

Your kind and generous hearts are helping to make this important work this possible and keep the folks we serve warm through the winter. I just wanted to share how much we appreciate you. Thank you!

Sincerel Kim Lee

VP Resource Development & Branding for MHA



Church School 2021 Lent-Easter-Pentecost 2020-2021



DATE	TOPIC/SCRIPTURE	ZOOM/NO ZOOM
2/28	Abraham and Sarah's Visi- tors Genesis 17:1-7, 15-16	ZOOM
3/7	The Ten Commandments Exodus 20:1-17	ZOOM
3/14	The Light of the World John 3:14-21	ZOOM
3/21	Serve and Follow John 12:20-33	ZOOM
3/28	Holy Week	ZOOM
4/4 (Easter Sunday)	Easter Mark 16:1-8	NO Zoom
4/11	Doubting Thomas John 20:19-31	ZOOM
4/18 (April Vacation)	The Great Commission Luke 24:36b-48	No Zoom (April Vacation)
4/25	The Good Shepherd John 10:11-18	ZOOM
5/2	Philip and the Ethiopian Acts 8:26-40	ZOOM
5/9 (Mother's Day)	The Holy Spirit Comes Down Acts 10:44-48	ZOOM
5/16	Matthias the Apostle Acts 1:15-17, 21-26	ZOOM
5/23 (Pentecost)	The Holy Spirit Acts 2:1-21	ZOOM
5/30 (Memorial Day Week- end)		NO Zoom
6/6	Isaiah's Call and Wrap-up Isaiah 6:1-8	ZOOM
6/13	Celebration Sunday	Hopefully in person!!

ZOOM TIMES Pre-K/K/1 8:45-9:00 Grades 2-3 9:00-9:15 Grades 4-5 9:15-9:30 Grades 6-8 9:30-9:45 Sunday Worship 10:00 (Facebook Live/Live Stream)

Videos and Family Pages will be sent each week, even when we don't have class! Emails with ZOOM links will be sent on the Saturday before class.

WUC helping the community



I.ATS Underwear Gloves Socks

"HUGS" for the homeless February 27, 2021 from 9:30 AM to 12:00 Willbraham United Church

We're collecting winter hats, underwear, glu to be donated to the Springfiel













Tuesdays at 7:15 p.m. Join Wilber the Chicken and Rev. Paul on Facebook LIVE!

Our Bedtime Bible Stories will coordinate with our Church School Classes each week. Be sure to "like" Wilbraham United Church on Facebook.





Reaching our Community!

Thank you for joining us for our Ash Wednesday service!

Our Zoom Annual meeting was a success! Thank you to all who helped to keep us all informed!





Are you looking for another way to serve your church, God, and community?

Consider supporting Loaves and Fishes!

Every third Thursday of the month at 11 am volunteers from this worthwhile ministry gather to deliver dinners and desserts to the South Congregational Church in Spfld. Stuart Johnsen makes casseroles while additional volunteers make cakes and transport the food. In usual circumstances, the food is served by members of this mission to those in the community who are underserved and unhoused. Currently due to the Coronavirus pandemic, our volunteers are not serving the food.

If you are interested in baking casseroles or in a larger role in Loaves and Fishes, please contact Stuart Johnsen. Please contact Judy Hoffman if you are interested in baking or Nancy Peck to assist with transporting food. If you are interested in making a donation, please send to

WUC with Loaves and Fishes on the envelope.



Judy - Email: <u>imjrhoffman@hotmail.com</u>, Phone: 413-596-8353 Nancy – Phone: 413-596-6952



One Great Hour of Sharing March 14, 2021 "Let Love Flow"

In order to help bring about that more just, abundant vision for humanity, One Great Hour of Sharing supports projects around the world that create opportunity and empower communities. Through global partnerships, your offerings promote food security; enable health and wellness programs; support education and vocational training; and of course—provide access to clean, safe water. Water, after all, is life. To support this ministry: please use the link below https://givingtools.com/give/182/3040





Looking for a way to support our Outreach Missions?

Please consider donating to any of our current missions:

- Parish Assistance
- Loaves and Fishes
 - Open Pantry
- Community Survival Center
 - Emergency Fuel Fund
 - CRUDEM
 - Neighbors in Need

Knit, Stitch, Pray

Knit, Stitch, Pray will continue throughout the winter months on Saturday mornings from 10-noon.

If you are interested in joining please contact:

Karen Gatchell at <u>Gatchell@charter.net</u> for the Zoom invitation.

No experience is necessary, no knitting or stitching is necessary.

Come along for a morning of laughter and friendship!





Alleluia People Video Project

We, at Wilbraham United Church, are Alleluia People. What does it mean to be an Alleluia People? Alleluia People are those who through faith in Jesus Christ live lives filled with gratefulness, joyfulness and fearlessness. We are Alleluia People, not by luck of fate, but because we have been chosen by God to be so.

Easter is coming, and we have the opportunity to celebrate the Alleluia; to recognize that we live Alleluia lives.

To reveal our 'Alleluia' we ask you to take out your cellphone or video cameras and share your Alleluia with the church family. We will be putting these short clips together to be revealed Easter Sunday morning in a WUC Alleluia video!

You are welcome to be as concise and creative as you wish. A simple "Alleluia" or something more involved and creative are both fine. There are no "points" for complexity! This is an opportunity to share your face with your church family. We all miss each other!

Videos (or pictures are fine too) should be sent to <u>thedebtrimble@gmail.com</u> by March 26th.

Shopping Card Updates

Currently we have Amazon, Big Y, Stop&Shop, and Walgreens. They range in denominations of \$25-\$100.

Shopping cards can also be ordered online or picked up during office hours with Pastor Chip or Rev. Paul.

Information about online ordering can be found on our website at :

https://wilbrahamunitedchurch.org/gift-card-ministry/

including information about the new Smart Phone App – RaiseRight to shop with Scrip.

Dear Friends,

For the past 15 years (if not longer) Connie Stiefel has been a member of the shopping card team. For the past 5 years or so, she has served as the team leader. Recently, Connie has decided it was time for her to step back. We thank Connie for her many years of devoted and selfless service to the shopping card ministry, especially in the past year during the pandemic. Connie will graciously continue to help us as we learn the ropes of the shopping card world. Again, many thanks to Connie!!!

Shopping cards are now available at the church during any office hour or by appointment. (Please do not contact Connie. If you forget, she will simply direct you to us.) Please continue to help us as we continue to minister to the people of God in Wilbraham and beyond.



Many thanks, Pastor Chip Rev. Paul

Lent 2021 VISIT US ONLINE wilbrahamunitedchurch.org

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WUP Fundraiser For more info visit

www.wilbrahamunitedplayers.org. Or <u>https://radafundraising.com?</u> <u>rfsn=4710429.72ab4d</u>



How do I stay connected?

Worship with us On Facebook Live!

* Wednesday Evening at 7:15 p.m.

* Sunday a.m. at 10:00 a.m.

Visit with Us!

(safely with masks and appt) In Zeckhausen Rm

Pastor Chip's Office hours: Wed. and Thurs: 10 a.m. –2 p.m.

> Rev. Paul's Office hours: Tues: 3:30– 5 p.m. Thurs: 5:30-7 p.m. Sat: 11 a.m.-1 p.m.

Assist Us!

- Help with our monthly drives
- Sew masks
- Purchase gift cards
- Reach out to a church member by phone, email or snail mail
- Loaves and Fishes
- Outreach missions

Connect with Us!

*Facebook Live *Branchline newsletters *WUC website *Email or phone

Vaccine Help

Do you need help making an appt. for the Covid vaccine? Contact us and we will be happy to help you with the online appt. system. You will need an ID and copy of your Ins. card. Email or stop by during office hours!

In addition, if you need help with transportation or any other assistance, please reach out to us! Please email or stop by our office hours!





Our Thrift Shop continues to be closed and is not accepting donations until further notice

We look forward to when we can be together again.

onna and Nancy

Do you love reading the Branchline?

Would you, a family member or friend like to receive this newsletter by mail? If so, please contact admin@wilbrahamunitedchurch.org or call Aimee Walat at 413-596-2511 ext. 100.

We would be happy to send along a copy of the Branchline and share all the great happenings here at Wilbraham United Church!

Coming up in April's Branchline...

- . Easter Celebrations!
- Pictures of our lovely congregation
- Riveting news articles
- . Adorable clip art
- And more Wilber sightings!





Wilbraham United Church

March 2021

Sunday	Webuch	Tuesday	Wodnoeday	Thursday	Eriday	Caturday
	INUIUAY			i i i day		Jaidi day
31	-	2	3	4	5	9
8:45 am – Church School 10 am - Worship – FB Live		3:30 – Office Hours with Rev. Paul	10:00 am – Office Hours with Pastor Chip	10:00 am – Office Hours with Pastor Chip	9:30 am - Thrift Shop – Closed	9:30 am - Thrift Shop – Closed 10 am – Knit Stitch Prav -
		7:15 pm – Bedtime Bible Stories – FB Live 7:30 – Bible Study w/Pastor Chip - Zoom	7:15 pm – Evening Prayer Service – FB Live	5:30 am – Office Hours with Rev. Paul		To am - ruit Stront - ray - Zoom 11 am – Office Hours with Rev. Paul
2	œ	6	10	1	12	13
8:45 am – Church School		3:30 – Office Hours with Rev. Paul	10:00 am – Office Hours with Pastor Chip	10:00 am – Office Hours with Pastor Chip	9:30 am - Thrift Shop – Closed	9:30 am - Thrift Shop – Closed
10 am - Worship – FB Live		7:15 pm – Bedtime Bible Stories – FB Live 7:30 – Bible Study w/Pastor	7:15 pm – Evening Prayer Service – FB Live	5:30 am – Office Hours with Rev. Paul		10 am – Knit Stitch Pray - Zoom 11 am – Office Hours with
		Chip - Zoom		7pm – Church Council - Zoom		Rev. Paul
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
8:45 am – Church School	7 pm – Finance Commission	3:30 – Office Hours with Rev. Paul	10:00 am – Office Hours with Pastor Chip	9:15 am – Loaves and Fishes	9:30 am - Thrift Shop – Closed	9:30 am - Thrift Shop – Closed
10 am - Worship – FB Live	- Libr	7:15 pm – Bedtime Bible Stories – FB I ive	7:15 pm –Evening Prayer Service – FB I ive	10:00 am – Office Hours with Bastor Chin		10 am – Knit Stitch Pray – Zoom
		7:30 – Bible Study w/Pastor Chip - Zoom		5:30 am – Office Hours with Rev. Paul		11 am – Office Hours with Rev. Paul
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
8:45 am – Church School		3:30 – Office Hours with	10:00 am – Office Hours with	10:00 am – Office Hours	9:30 am - Thrift Shop – Closed	9:30 am - Thrift Shop – Closed
10 am - Worship – FB Live		7:15 pm – Bedtime Bible	7:15 pm – Evening Prayer	5:30 am - Office Hours with		10 am – Knit Stitch Pray – Zoom
12 pm – Church without Walls		Stories – FB Live 7:30 – Bible Study w/Pastor Chip - Zoom	Service – FB Live	Rev. Paul		11 am – Office Hours with Rev. Paul
28	-	2	3	4	5	9
8:45 am – Church School		3:30 – Office Hours with Rev. Paul	10:00 am – Office Hours with Pastor Chin	10:00 am – Office Hours with Pastor Chin	9:30 am - Thrift Shop – Closed	9:30 am - Thrift Shop – Closed
10 am - Worship – FB Live		7:15 pm – Bedtime Bible Stories – FB Live 7:30 – Bible Study w/Pastor	7:15 pm – Evening Prayer Service – FB Live			11 am – Office Hours with Rev. Paul
		Chip - Zoom				



Daily Lectionary Scripture References -March 2021 (Year B)

Mon. Mar. 1 Psalm 105:1-11, 37-45 Genesis 21:1-7 Hebrews 1:8-12

Tues., Mar. 2 Psalm 105:1-11, 37-45 Genesis 22:1-19 Hebrews 11:1-3, 13-19

Wed., Mar. 3 Psalm 105:1-11, 37-45 Jeremiah 30:12-22 John 12:36-43

Thurs., Mar. 4 Psalm 19 Exodus 19:1-9a 1 Peter 2:4-10

Fri., Mar. 5 Psalm 19 Exodus 19:9b-15 Acts 7:30-40

Sat., Mar. 6 Psalm 19 Exodus 19:16-25 Mark 9:2-8

Sun., Mar. 7 Third Sunday in Lent Exodus 20:1-17 Psalm 19 1 Corinthians 1:18-25 John 2:13-22

Mon., Mar. 8 Psalm 84 1 Kings 6:1-4, 21-22 1 Corinthians 3:10-23

Tues., Mar. 9 Psalm 84 2 Chronicles 29:1-11, 16-19 Hebrews 9:23-28

Wed., Mar. 10 Psalm 84 Ezra 6:1-16 Mark 11:15-19

Thurs., Mar. 11 Psalm 107:1-3, 17-22 Genesis 9:8-17 Ephesians 1:3-6 Fri., Mar. 12 Psalm 107:1-3, 17-22 Daniel 12:5-13 Ephesians 1:7-14

Sat. Mar. 13 Psalm 107:1-3, 17-22 Numbers 20:22-29 John 3:1-13

Sun., Mar. 14 *Fourth Sunday in Lent* Numbers 21:4-9 Psalm 107:1-3, 17-22 Ephesians 2:1-10 John 3:14-21

Mon., Mar. 15 Psalm 107:1-16 Exodus 15:22-27 Hebrews 3:1-6

Tues., Mar. 16 Psalm 107:1-16 Numbers 20:1-13 1 Corinthians 10:6-13

Wed., Mar. 17 Psalm 107:1-16 Isaiah 60:15-22 John 8:12-20

Thurs., Mar. 18 Psalm 51:1-12 Isaiah 30:15-18 Hebrews 4:1-13

Fri., Mar. 19 Psalm 51:1-12 Exodus 30:1-10 Hebrews 4:14-5:4

Sat., Mar. 20 Psalm 51:1-12 Habakkuk 3:2-13 John 12:1-11

Sun., Mar. 21 *Fifth Sunday in Lent* Jeremiah 31:31-34 Psalm 51:1-12 *or* Psalm 119:9-16 Hebrews 5:5-10 John 12:20-33 **Mon., Mar. 22** Psalm 119:9-16 Isaiah 43:8-13 2 Corinthians 3:4-11

Tues., Mar. 23 Psalm 119:9-16 Isaiah 44:1-8 Acts 2:14-24

Wed., Mar. 24 Psalm 119:9-16 Haggai 2:1-9, 20-23 John 12:34-50

Thurs., Mar. 25 Psalm 118:1-2, 19-29 Deuteronomy 16:1-8 Philippians 2:1-11

Fri., Mar. 26 Psalm 118:1-2, 19-29 Jeremiah 33:1-9 Philippians 2:12-18

Sat., Mar. 27 Psalm 118:1-2, 19-29 Jeremiah 33:10-16 Mark 10:32-34, 46-52

Sun., Mar. 28 Passion or Palm Sunday Palms: Psalm 118:1-2, 19-29 Mark 11:1-11 or John 12:12-16 Passion: Isaiah 50:4-9a; Psalm 31:9-16 Philippians 2:5-11; Mark 14:1-15:47 or Mark 15:1-39 [40-47]

Mon., Mar. 29 (Holy Week) Isaiah 42:1-9; Psalm 36:5-11 Hebrews 9:11-15; John 12:1-11

Tues., Mar. 30 (Holy Week) Isaiah 49:1-7; Psalm 71:1-14 1 Corinthians 1:18-31 John 12:20-36

Wed., Mar. 31 (Holy Week) Isaiah 50:4-9a; Psalm 70 Hebrews 12:1-3; John 13:21-32



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