Who You Are and What You Do

With Church School Sunday approaching and Graduation Sunday just past, I am reminded of something I always share with those in my Confirmation Class: What you do is far less important than who you are.

As much as we try to put faith first in our lives, it is a significant challenge to not buy into the idea that success has to do with your income and your lifestyle. What I tell our Confirmands is to try to imagine a world without religion or faith of any kind. How would things be different?

Actually, it doesn’t take too much effort to do this because there are countless people who are living their lives in the absence of faith right now. And you can tell. I am convinced that this is why there are a whole lot of people in this world who are very “successful”, but who are also very empty inside.

Again, who you are should inform what you do—not the other way around.

One of the great benefits of our church is that we teach this kind of values-clarification. It is a very powerful thing to learn that you don’t have to earn God’s love. God’s love is a requisite aspect of who you already are. It is because of that love that we are to shape ourselves into those who care for all of God’s children and God’s creation—not to be worthy of that love, but to share what is already here.

In this way, “success” is redefined. For example, a person in a nursing home can be a perfectly successful person. And I don’t just mean by looking back on the things they accomplished earlier in life. I mean in the here and now. I mean in the way they choose to approach today and tomorrow and the day after that. I mean a willingness to choose positivity instead of negativity and to make that the bedrock of their interactions. That is “success”; certainly from a Christian perspective.

Are you successful in such a way? Does your faith inform your choices and your interactions? In what ways does your discipleship come first?
SUNDAY SCHOOL
This week we celebrate our wonderful year of Sunday School with Church School Sunday. The service will feature the children leading key parts of the Worship service, and sharing with the congregation the stories and lessons they most enjoyed during Sunday School this year. Please join us!

Children in kindergarten through grade 5 are asked to arrive by 9:45 am. Our K-2 children need to be in place as greeters prior to the start of service. Children in grades 3-5 will be meeting briefly with Kris Carbonneau to review their roles. Thank you for your help and support!

WARRANT FOR THE SPRING CONGREGATIONAL MEETING OF THE FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH in MELROSE, UCC

To the Members of the First Congregational Church in Melrose, United Church of Christ:

In accordance with the by-laws, the 168th Spring Meeting of the First Congregational Church in Melrose, UCC is called to be held in the church on Sunday, June 12, 2016 at 11:15 am. This meeting is called by the Deacons and Trustees to act upon the following Articles:

Article 1: To receive and act upon the reports of staff members;

Article 2: To receive and act upon the reports of the Deacons and Trustees;

Article 3: To receive and act upon the reports of other committees and affiliated boards;

Article 4: To receive and act upon the reports of the Deacons and Trustees acting as a Nominating Committee and to elect Deacons and Trustees for terms beginning July 1, 2016.

Article 5: To transact such other business as may legally come before the meeting.

Becky Fuentes and Darby Drafts, Co-Trustees of Congregational Records / Clerk

Bread of Life – New Day and Location!
This month starts our new day and location to provide volunteers for the Bread of Life Evening Meals Program. Next Thursday, June 16, is our evening to cook and serve dinner at Bread of Life. The meals are now being served at the American Legion Post 69 at 368 Pleasant Street (Rt. 60) in Malden. The site is handicap-accessible and has onsite parking. If you are interested in being a part of this mission or want more information, contact Sallie Klemm at shklemm@verizon.net

Rachael Wolley graduated in December 2015 from U Mass Amherst with a Bachelor of Arts degree in Communications. Rachael is the daughter of Chris and Peggy Wolley and granddaughter of Rachael Hayward.

Congratulations to this year’s High School graduates:
Will Brincheiro
Madeline Carbonneau
Ariane Faro
Lydia Gyurina
Brendan Taranowski
Trey Durant
Evan Darwin
Jake Lynch
Naomi Ngassa
Liana Garrett
Ben Fiesel
Alex Venuti
Lauren Webster
On May 22nd we celebrated with our 50+ year members. We are still profiling some of them in the Messenger for a few more weeks.

Robert Hughes
Like his church classmate Emelie, Bob Hughes was baptized and grew up in our church, joining the church as a confirmand in 1952. Bob's mother had come to this country from Scotland when she was 20, and Bob's grandfather had been a baker in a bakery on Main Street where Papa Gino's now stands. Bob remembers having Fred Spollett as a Sunday School teacher, and good times in the Christian Endeavor and Pilgrim Fellowship youth groups.

Bob recalls an ecumenical gathering in Memorial Hall for the country's bicentennial celebration, that was such a success that it led to the establishment of summer union services in town, so the churches would have more opportunities to gather together in worship across denominational lines.

Another project the church took on that Bob looks back on with pride was our church's adoption of a Vietnamese family in 1967. Nam Tran and his family came over from Vietnam, and the church helped them get established in this country. Parishioners volunteered to drive them to appointments, classes and job interviews; they were housed and fed and tutored and cared for by members of the church. Nam was employed as the church sexton, and although the family eventually moved to the west coast and became successfully self-supporting, many in the church maintain ties with the family, and there are strong bonds of love and gratitude on both sides.

In his many years in the church Bob has served on the Fellowship Commission (for decades), as well as on the Education Commission. He remembers fondly some of the fun events the Fellowship Commission used to put on for the church - afternoon teas, men's nights, picnics, birthday parties, Irish nights, Lenten pot luck suppers, and almost every other church event that involved food (don't they all?). And in keeping with the "food" theme, Bob was a regular volunteer at our church's Bread of Life monthly meal preparation ministry.

And anyone who sits on the left side of church will surely recognize Bob from his monthly usher duties, which he has carried out for as long as anyone can remember, almost always ushering on the left side.

Bob spent his career in banking at State Street Bank. Now in retirement, he can sit in his living room across the street from the church and gaze out his patio doors at the beautifully lit steeple in the evening and recall a whole lifetime's worth of wonderful church memories.
End of Year Cookout

END-OF-YEAR COOKOUT ON JUNE 26TH!

The end of June will see a very popular event at First Congregational - the End-of-Year Cookout!

For those who haven’t been at church for this yet - this cookout is a celebration of all of us together as a church, at the end of our program year. The cookout takes place right after our outdoor worship service, and it is a potluck lunch that is always spectacular! Hamburgers, hot dogs, and veggie burgers, and rolls and condiments are provided, as are ice water and lemonade.

The cookout is also a great time to meet new friends, catch up with "old" friends, and maybe talk about vacation plans. There will be a signup board in the Narthex - please take a moment to sign up and indicate what kind of contribution you’d like to make to the buffet. There are lots of categories, something for everyone.

See you there!
Donna and Ron Miner

We Need CHANGE!
It’s time for Change! We need CHANGE NOW!

To be more precise, we need YOUR CHANGE, from your sofa cushions, that jar in your bedroom, the one in the laundry room, the little tray in your car, the coins that seem to weigh down your pockets and purse.

We will be collecting change in the Narthex every Sunday in June to raise money to send our youth and chaperones to the UCC National Youth event in July.

Won’t it feel great to finally put that old coin collection to good use?

SUMMER NEWSLETTER DEADLINE

MESSENGER DEADLINE for items to go in the last Messenger for the season is Friday, June 17th. That Messenger will be sent out June 22nd.

We are looking forward to seeing summer items and also previews of upcoming fall events. Please think ahead to your activities that will take place this summer and in the fall and give us information to publicize those activities.

5th Annual Church Pool Party on Fathers’ Day, June 19th, 1 PM until 4 PM at the Oosterman’s, 54 Ellis Farm Lane, Melrose
Lawn games, pool toys and snacks provided. Feel free to bring your own picnic, blanket, games, snacks, floatation devices, etc.