

# THE TOWER

JANUARY 2012

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United Church of Christ  
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## A NOTE FROM THE MINISTER

“A Year of Celebration!”



“In the future, when your children ask you, ‘What do these stones mean to you?’ you should tell them . . . .” (Joshua 4:6-7). Park Congregational Church has collected a lot of “stones” over the past 125 years. And we will be celebrating them over the course of this year with special worship services, children’s sermons, programs, concerts, and an anniversary banquet in the fall.

When the church installed its first pastor, Rev. George S. Pelton, on February 24, 1887, Park Congregational Church became officially organized with a Statement of Doctrine and Standing Rules. Within a few years, the church became known as the “Children’s Church,” the first in America, organized to serve children who came to play in Elm Park. Despite constant financial challenges, Park Congregational Church was able to burn its mortgages in 1913 under the inspirational leadership of Rev. C. F. Hill Crathern, who became known as the “Children’s Pastor.”

Over the past 100 years or so, the church has experienced its ups and downs. During the difficult period of the 1920s and 1930s, the church considered merging with other Congregational churches, such as Union, Piedmont, and Plymouth churches. But Park Church decided that the most faithful decision was to stay by itself. Interestingly, those other congregations no longer exist. In 2004-2005, Park Church was in merger negotiations with Bethany Christian United Parish. This proposed union also failed to materialize as Bethany voted to close rather than to merge.

But Park Church had thriving times in its history as well. Under the leadership of Rev. Dr. Myron W. Fowell (1933-1942) and Rev. Joseph W. Beach (1948-1961), the church experienced tremendous growth and stature in the city of Worcester. I have met several clergy who, when they have found out that I am the pastor of Park Congregational Church, tell me wonderful stories about those two faithful pastors. Rev. Dr. Fowell was the first Executive Secretary of the Worcester County Ecumenical Council (then called the Worcester Council of Churches), whose office in the church doubled as the office of the Council. Park Church’s membership reached its zenith, over 500, under the pastoral leadership of Rev. Beach in the mid-1950s.

Our church also hosted services for which we became famous in Worcester and beyond, such as the Scottish Sundays, which became an annual tradition on the Sunday in January closest to the birthday of Robert Burns from the mid-1970s to the mid-1990s.

You will hear these stories and more in this new year as we revisit our church's history during our year-long celebration. We invite everyone to be a part of this celebration: long-time members, recent members, and those associated with our congregation in some way; adults, youth, and, of course, children as we seek to carry on the tradition of being the "Children's Church"; local politicians, fellow UCC clergy and friends, and the clergy of the greater Elm Park area with whom our congregation and I have ministered.

**OUR FIRST MAJOR EVENT OF THE YEAR WILL BE AN ANNIVERSARY WORSHIP SERVICE ON SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 26, AT 3:00PM IN THE SANCTUARY OF FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH. Circle this date on your calendar now and prepare to attend!**

Yes, 2012 will be a year of celebration for Park Congregational Church!

Blessings in Christ,

Pastor Gary

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**MOVIE MATINEE ON SUNDAY, JANUARY 22, PRESENTS *BOYS TOWN***

"There is no such thing as a bad boy." So says Father Flanagan, played by Spencer Tracy in an Academy Award-winning performance. Against all odds, Father Flanagan opens Boys Town and dedicates himself to helping troubled youth find the right path in life. Mickey Rooney also stars as one of the tough kids who becomes associated with the determined priest in this warmhearted and inspiring movie. Excellent performances and an intelligent script keep the film from becoming too sentimental. A good spiritual film for all ages. Boys Town, which opened in 1917 in Omaha, still exists today as a non-profit organization dedicated to caring for children, both boys and girls, usually between the ages of 10 and 17. It has today spread to 12 areas across the country. Don't forget to bring your lunch to the Roy Room as we will eat together following the worship service and proceed to watch the film about 11:30am.

WE WELCOME INTO OUR CHURCH MEMBERSHIP  
PAUL LAVALLEE, JENNIFER NODELMAN, AND DENNIS PELKEY

Paul is the husband of Ann and has been a regular fixture at Park Church for many years in Sunday services, Bible Study, and serving as head usher. Jennifer also has been a familiar face at the church for many years, singing in the Cantatas at Christmas and Easter, and frequently offering solos with her beautiful voice. Dennis is Kimberly Toney's companion and is consistently seen on Sunday mornings sitting next to her, serves as a greeter/usher, and loves to attend Game Night. We thank God for the commitment which these persons have made and ask for God's blessings upon them.



Heartfelt Thanks TO OUR PARK CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH FAMILY FOR THE GENEROUS CHRISTMAS GIFT THAT WE RECEIVED DURING THE CHRISTMAS EVE SERVICE. We thank all who contributed and our prayer for our church family and friends is for a New Year filled with God's continued blessings upon each and every one of you. The love expressed in your gift to us was overwhelming. Many, many thanks.

Pastor Gary and Linda

**Thank You to . . .**

**PARK CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH FOR YOUR GENEROUS CONTRIBUTION TO THE MONSON TORNADO RELIEF FUND.** Donations such as yours have allowed us to help the many victims of the tornado. You are, and continue to be, a light of hope. On behalf of The First Church of Monson, the Town of Monson, and the survivors of the June 1, 2011, tornado, please accept our heartfelt gratitude and thankfulness.

The First Church of Monson, Congregational, United Church of Christ

**ALL WHO DONATED TO PARK CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH'S THANKSGIVING PROJECT.** With your generous donations, several families were given gift cards to Shaw's Supermarket to help them enjoy a bountiful Thanksgiving! Our "Thanks" goes out to all of you.

Ann Lavallee and Christine Wilson, Thanksgiving Project Coordinators

**PARK CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH FOR YOUR GENEROUS SUPPORT IN 2011 FOR WORCESTER FELLOWSHIP.** Churches have provided 120 meals every Sunday as well as umbrellas, socks, palm fronds, gloves, hats, toiletry kits, bus passes, and more. We couldn't do this ministry without you. I love you all and miss seeing you!

Rev. Liz Magill, Executive Director, Worcester Fellowship

**PARK CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH FOR THE THOUGHTS AND PRAYERS FOR HASKELL AND GENEVA MORIN.** Haskell went to be with God, but Geneva has survived to see the birth of two great-grandchildren and the new year, amazing her doctors. The Pierce and Morin families wish to express their deep appreciation to the congregation.

Joan Pierce

**REV. DR. SHAHINIAN AND PARK CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH FOR YOUR KIND CONTRIBUTION OF HAND KNITTED WINTER HATS.** Since our inception, Veterans, Inc., has assisted tens of thousands of veterans and their families. Each year we continue to advance our mission of eradicating homelessness among veterans. On behalf of our Board of Directors, our staff, and, most importantly, the veterans we serve, please accept our sincere appreciation for your kind contribution.

Marie Krawchuk, Donations Coordinator, Veterans, Inc.

**. . . AND THANK YOU TO LINDA ELBE (SHIRLEY'S DAUGHTER-IN-LAW) AND STELLA BARTEAU FOR KNITTING THESE HATS AND GIVING THEM TO PARK CHURCH SO THAT WE COULD PASS THEM ON TO THOSE IN NEED.**

**OUR PARK CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH CHOIR** for their Annual Christmas Cantata. The beauty of the choir in chorus as well as in solo was outstanding! Thank you, David Rose, for producing such a lovely musical presentation.

**SANTA CLAUS AND ALL HIS ELVES** (some "secret ones" also) who planned and presented the wonderful Sunday School/All Church Family Christmas Party. A wonderful afternoon was enjoyed by all!

**ALL WHO PURCHASED CHRISTMAS PRESENTS FOR THE CHILDREN AND YOUTH OF Y.O.U., INC.,** making Christmas brighter for many children because of YOU!

**THE SUNDAY SCHOOL AND YOUTH GROUP FOR THE LOVING AND THOUGHTFUL CHRISTMAS GIFT.** I have it hanging in my office. Come and see if you can find where it is!

Pastor Gary



The story of Christmas was beautifully displayed on the altar table in our chapel because of a gift from Francis and Ann Najarian. The Holy Family along with shepherds, sheep, magi, and the angel Gabriel adorned the altar as large glorious gold embossed figurines. These wonderful friends of Pastor Gary and Linda lovingly offered the Nativity Scene to our church in the hopes that we might enjoy their beauty. Without a doubt, this gift told “The Story of Christmas” without a single spoken word. Many thanks and bless you, Fran and Ann, for your kindness.



In keeping with their goals, the Youth Group helped the Sunday School present their Nativity Scene to the congregation on December 18. As the youth narrated the Christmas Story from the Gospels of Matthew and Luke, the Sunday School children processed down the aisle, each carrying a manger character and placing the beautiful figurine on the altar table.

Our youth continue their weekly meetings and fundraisers, and are making plans to participate in the church’s upcoming 125<sup>th</sup> Anniversary celebrations!

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**NEW ADDRESS:**

Kimberly Toney and Dennis Pelkey  
5 Peters Avenue  
Rutland MA 01543

**PLEASE REMEMBER OUR SHUT-INS:**

Liz Cape  
Holden Nursing Home  
32 Mayo Drive, Room #27B  
Holden MA 01520

Wayne Newlands  
Millbury Health Care Center  
312 Millbury Avenue, Room #147  
Millbury MA 01527

## THE CHILDREN'S TOWER

January 2012



Dear Children,

I just cannot believe what I see! My goodness, it seems impossible but I know that it is true!

Little Ceaira, and Ashley; Jacob, Laura, Sarah, and David. How can it be? But I know that it is true! Jessica, Justin, Joshua, Connor, Samantha, Arianna, Kiley, Scott, and Julie. It seems impossible but I know it's true! Brittany, Jannelle, Matthew, James, and Josep. You would think that THEY might shed a bit of belief to my eyes, but NO!! Yet, I still know that IT IS TRUE!!

Well, I say, this is the 21<sup>st</sup> century, and as our world is full of wonders, maybe it just *seems* like . . . oh, no!!! IT IS TRUE! There is absolutely no doubt that we as the Sunday School and Park Congregational Church Family are ready to PARTY, PARTY, PARTY!! Get your celebrating shoes on and let's tell the world that even though it's hard to believe, YOU are 125 years old come next month!!!! YOU, because YOU are Park Congregational Church! Yes, you and all of our wonderful Church Family! It was 125 years ago that the FIRST CHILDREN'S CHURCH in the country was established at our Park Congregational Church! The beautiful carved plaque in our chapel tells of children and youth, just like you who, all those years ago, gathered for worship just as you do today.

In the months ahead of 2012, our church family will be celebrating 125 years of answering God's call to His people to serve Him with loving-kindness and joy! Serve Him with trust and faith in His promises. Serve Him with voice and song! Serve Him with leadership and tithe. Serve Him with devotion and celebration!! Hard to believe but TRUE . . . YOU, as a glorious part of Park Congregational Church are 125 years old! Praise be to God as we get ready to party like never before in the joy and happiness of our church and our God!

*Your friend . . . Linda*

## JANUARY BIRTHDAYS



- 6 Jennifer Jordan
- 6 Jaquilyn Bohn
- 10 Mark Dorsey
- 13 Betty Connor
- 14 Jessica Baronas
- 16 Shirley Elbe
- 16 Jocelyn Bohn
- 17 Priscilla Rea
- 22 Julie Rumrill
- 23 Brittany Fisher
- 24 Carl Jorgensen
- 29 David Benoit



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