

The Messenger

Fisk Memorial United Methodist Church - 106 Walnut St., Natick, MA 01760

December 2014

Reflections from Pastor Xia

Dear family and friends of Fisk Memorial UMC;

Holiday greetings from your church home! As I am writing this, I realize that Advent is upon us, and another Thanksgiving is just around the corner. I am now sitting in my study, doing my morning routine—reading the Bible and meditating on the Scripture verses of the day. The passage Luke 17:11-19 just came to my mind. Jesus healed ten lepers. In my mind's eye, I can see the lepers walking, hobbling, scooting; joy filled their souls. Their faith in the faithful God saved them and made them clean. At the time, there was one, one out of ten, stopped, "came back, praising God in a loud voice. He threw himself at Jesus' feet, and thanked him."

To that one Jesus said "Your faith has made you well." The Greek word used here for "well" also means "whole." While the other nine were "healed," this one was made complete and whole. The same Greek word is used in the story of Zaccheaus for "to be saved." By having faith in Jesus Christ, all of them were healed of their leprosy. By returning to give thanks to Jesus, the one was made whole.

When thankfulness becomes an integral part of our life, our attitude toward life changes. We become more positive, loving, and humble. Now, I admit, it is difficult to thank God when the alarm goes off at 5:00am on a cold winter morning and I know I have to get up. It is difficult to thank God when your carefully planned weekend of relaxation dissolves into a mass of catch up chores. It is difficult to thank God when you, or someone you love, is hurting, either physically or spiritually. Yet, without thankfulness in our lives, we have no way to see positive things, joy, peace, love and hope.

Thankfulness. What an amazing word. In our prayer, we always begin with the word, "God, we thank you for ..."

Thankfulness is more than an act of good manners. It is a major component of our lives. So, what are you thankful for today? Whom do you give thanks to?

I ask you, this Thanksgiving, and throughout the Advent season, as you gather around your table, full of so many good things, to remember and to prepare— to remember not only the good gifts that God has granted you throughout this year, but to remember the God who has been with us through good times and bad, who has been constant in His faithfulness and mercy, who has given us the gift of clean water, fresh food, loving family and friends. And before we pass the turkey and pumpkin pie, stop for a moment and remember from whose hand we receive such things. And give Him thanks.

Meister Eckhart once said, "If the only prayer you ever say in your whole life is 'thank you,' that would suffice." I am thankful for YOU. With a prayerful and thankful heart, let us prepare the way for peace and expect a brand new church year.

Advent and Christmas Blessings to all!

Pastor Xia Jiao-Chur

Staff of Fisk Memorial United Methodist Church

Pastor:	Rev. Xia Jiao-Chur
Admin. / Newsletter Editor:	Judy Bortolotti
Youth Minister:	Rev. Marcus Hill
Deacon:	Rev. Cheryln Gates
Choir Director /Organist:	Eric Mazonson

How to reach us:

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Church/Judy's Email: fiskoffice@fiskumc.org
Marcus' Email: Fiskyouth@gmail.com
Cheryln's Email: deacongates@gmail.com
Eric's Email: amazonson@verizon.net

Church Website: www.fiskumc.org

January Messenger Deadline is December 26th @ 8:00am

Worship Service Participants for December

Greeters

Dec 7- Bingxin Xu & Tian Zhang
Dec 14 – Diane & Jennifer French
Dec 21- Gary & Marcia Hoyt
Dec 28- TBA

Usher for the month of December - Gary Hoyt



Lighting the Advent Wreath

Nov 30- The French Family
Dec 7 – The Gates Family
Dec 14- Terry Ames & family
Dec 21- Bingxin Xu and Tian Zhang
Dec 24 – The Altar Guild “sisters”

Hanging Chrismon Ornament on the Tree

Nov 30 – Marcus Hill & Youth Group
Dec 7- Harvey Family
Dec 14 – Mayo family
Dec 21- Hernandez Family
Dec 24- Parikh Family



Acolytes

Dec 7- Rose
Dec 14 – Becca
Dec 21- Kelli
Dec 28- Sarah



Liturgists

Dec 7- Rev. Cheryl Gates
Dec 14 – Zachary Gates
Dec 21- Sherry Culver
Dec 28- Barbara Beekman

Communion Servers

Dec 7- Thom Townsend & Barb Beekman



\$\$ Finance Update – December 2014

We must report that we continue to find ourselves behind in Pledge support as of October 31st. The faithful support of you the congregation continues to be a blessing, but our ministries are in need.

Our position is:

Support and other income	\$ 194,678
Expenses of ministry	\$ 197,187
Deficit (10 months)	\$ (2,509)

As a result we are spending wisely, and carefully managing our resources:

- Your financial support remains 10% below Budget, through October,
- We are spending less than our budgeted expenses to compensate, but expenses continue, and we may not be able to fully fund our valued ministries at our current rates,
- We continue to pray for improvements in our financial position.

Please do all you can to get your pledges in for 2014 so we can end on a positive note. If you have not given in the past, we would urge you to consider supporting our ministries. If you are current, we thank you, and ask that you consider increasing your support this year. We are currently “borrowing” from our long-term congregational assets in order to fund all of our planned ministries this year. We need your prayerful assistance.

The ministries of Fisk touch so many people in so many ways. As we enter the advent holiday period, we must prayerfully and purposefully work to grow our church spiritually...and our finances will follow.

Members of Finance Committee, which includes representatives from other committees at Fisk:

Michael Bruns (Chair), Pastor Xia, Dorothy Phillips (Lay Leader), Thom Townsend (Chair-Admin Board), David Cail (Treasurer), Sherry Culver (Financial Secretary), Geoff Del Sesto (Trustees), Tom Currie (SPRC), Larry Drolet, Frank Foss, Jen Garrant..

Ministry of Caring and Nurturing



You! Yeah, you! You are part of this church, this congregation, this community, this world. God's world. This world is full of need...sadness, illness, suffering, loneliness, hunger, pain. And every single thing (big and small) you have been doing to help other people get through their difficulties is working! God is super proud of you! God sees each and every wonderful thing you do to help others. And God thanks you!!

Keep your ears open to God's directions and to the opportunities He brings to you. Yes, they are meant for YOU! The opportunity to hug. The opportunity to smile. The opportunity to feed. The opportunity to heal. These opportunities are meant for YOU!

FISK wants to help you with all these opportunities to work for God. If you hear God asking you to help others, and you are not sure how to begin, call us. We have a list of those in need. We have creative ideas on how to help. We will support you. We will cheer you on!

Also, if you need God's loving hands to heal, uplift, and help YOU, call us!!!!!!! God needs you too! He needs you to feel His love and His healing. Take the opportunity for God's hands and feet to work in your life. Contact Sarah Gates anytime: 802-522-3163 or sarahgates4@gmail.com

Ministry of Caring Mission Statement

As we affirm faith in God through our ministries, we claim a sacred place where Christ's love unites us with compassion and the caring of others. In order to make the love of Christ a real presence in the life of each person we reach within our faith community, our ministries:

- Extends support during the trials of life and celebrate the joys
- Leads persons to resources appropriate to their needs
- Encourages all to explore and maximize their individual spiritual gifts for the work of the church and to the glory of God.

To help and participate in the Ministry of Caring, please contact Pastor Xia or Sarah Gates. Meal preparation, transportation, help with household cleaning and fix-it chores, praying, visitation and listening are some of the ways you can help.

New Small Group Options

Do you want to try something a little different in Bible Study, Book Study or Worship? I want to create a few new small groups of 6-8 people, to experiment with gathering on-line, using Google Hangouts. One of my interests is offering Night Prayer during the week. I am also prepared to teach a 6 week course, "Exploring the Bible" by the Mass Bible Society. Are you interested in studying something more spiritual like prayer practices? The small group hangouts could take place most any day of the week, mornings, afternoons or evenings depending on the needs and interests of those who want to try this. All you need is internet access, a computer or tablet with a camera for video, and a desire to learn a new thing and share with a group of friends. This is open to any and all men, women and youth of the church. If you have a non-church friend you think might be interested, I can think of no better way to introduce them to the kind of community we already share with one another. If you are interested, I will collect up names. No need to go out for a meeting, you can even do this from a distance if you are traveling and out of the area. Please email your questions and let me know your interests. I can't wait to hear from you. Rev. Gates - deacongates@gmail.com

United Methodist Men's Breakfast

UMM Breakfast
on December 14 8:00 am
Gourmet Decisions
followed by Communion at Fisk



Members of the Fisk community are invited to be Angels!

Beginning Sunday, November 30th, select an Angel from the tree at the back of the Sanctuary and purchase the gift listed, for a child or adult. Gifts will be given to those in need in the Natick community and also to Cooper Community Center in Boston.
Return your gift by Sunday December 14th so that it may be distributed in time for Christmas.

Christmas Eve Candlelight Service Wednesday, December 24th

Worship begins at 7:00pm



A VERY BIG THANK-YOU TO ALL

As chairperson for the UMW Country Fair I would like to extend a thank-you to all UMW women and church members who worked so hard to make our annual fair such a success. To date the fair raised \$4,600 to help with mission work to aid women and children.

I especially acknowledge the help of the UMM with the fair luncheon. Your hard work is very special and the lunch was delicious!

And to all of those who came to the fair I thank-you for your patronage and hope you had a good time. I hope you feel as I do that it is a very special day in the life of Fisk Memorial United Methodist Church.

-Janis Cail-

From the Financial Secretary ...



It's that time of year again! Offering Envelopes for 2015 will be available to pick up starting on Sunday, December 21st. If you do not see a set of envelopes for your name and you would like to use them, please contact me and I will assign you a set. Envelopes not picked up will be mailed to those who use envelopes.

For those of you who do not use offering envelopes – **Please note your giving number on your check.** This simple notation helps our Sunday morning tellers properly record your gifts to ministry. You may also have your gift mailed directly to Fisk from your bank using an on-line bill pay system. Just be sure to have the giving number added to the check.

Special Note about Year-End Giving:

Are you unsure about whether you have made your pledge? Do you want to know what you have given to ministry in 2014? If you'd like an up-to-date contribution statement for year-end gift planning, contact me and I'll send one along to you. And ... If you haven't made a pledge to ministry at Fisk, there is still time to do so. Call the church office and request a pledge card be mailed to you or let me know directly.

Thank you for your continued support of ministry at Fisk.

Sherry Culver, Financial Secretary
sherrycd@comcast.net or 508-651-1876



Everyone is invited by Fisk to have

Breakfast with Santa!

*Saturday, December 6
8:00am-10:00am*

***Pancakes and
pictures taken with Santa!***

Seniors \$8- Adults \$10 -Children \$5- Under 2 free



Advent is upon us!

JESUS IS THE REASON FOR THE SEASON !!!!!

Sunday, November 30 -1st Sunday of Advent.

THE HANGING OF THE GREENS

Come join us for a unique, meaningful service.

We will be learning about the symbols of Christmas through song and scripture, while decorating the Sanctuary.

Daily devotional booklets will be handed out.

If you're unable to attend this service, extra booklets will be available in the literature racks at both entrance doors.

Sunday, December 21 will be a service of Lessons and Carols. What a wonderful time it will be to hear the Christmas story and sing, sing, sing!



Christmas Eve, December 24, will be a candle light service at 7:00pm. It's a great opportunity to invite family, friends and neighbors

Do we have your current email address?

Be sure to let the church office know if it changes. We use email to send our monthly newsletter as well as other important messages to our faith community.

Charitable Giving and Taxes

Remember, all contributions to Fisk are tax deductible, and you may save as much 20-30% of your donation in taxes...to receive in your refund in February...or add back to your contribution!

The last opportunity for you make your 2014 tax-deductible contributions to Fisk will be Sunday, December 28, or by mailing your check to arrive before Tuesday, December 30. All contributions are required by the IRS to be paid by December 31st of each year.



COMMUNITY CHRISTMAS PAGEANT
SATURDAY – DECEMBER 13, 2014
6:00PM

Come one , come all and bring neighbors and friends !
There will be crafts for kids and light refreshments!

BUT

The big event of the evening is a 20-30 minute Christmas Pageant that we can all take part in ...we have costumes and there are no lines. Come be part of the cast, the audience, or the helpers.

See anyone on Council of Ministries or Susan Carney (susanjcarney@gmail.com) with questions , suggestions, or to help.

Bring folks to Christ through the simple, yet majestic story of his birth.

Come be blessed as we see the babe in a manger.

May God bless our efforts to celebrate the birth of His son ... Jesus.

SHOE DRIVE-FUNDRAISER CHALLENGE

December 29 is the last day to donate your unwanted shoes (sneakers, flip-flops, slippers, boots, Crocs etc.) to **Fisk** and help people in poverty-stricken countries improve their lives.



Shoes in **ANY** condition will be collected through our **shoe drive fundraiser** and will be used in developing nations by impoverished people to start, maintain, and grow a micro-enterprise. By donating used shoes to our church we will be able to provide basic necessities for families in need. Shoes gathered from this fundraiser are consolidated, and then shipped to on-the-ground business operators who then clean, repair, or melt down outsoles to make a new pair of shoes. **Shoes can be dropped off Monday-Friday in the hallway outside the church office – 7 a.m. to 6 p.m. or anytime into the container outside the entry doors by the nursery.** Grab a bag to fill **yourself**, and **challenge** your friends to help you!!

THANK YOU!

For more information:

508-653-1674

fiskoffice@fiskumc.org

www.fiskumc.org

or

Susan Carney - Michelle Drolet - Pat Price

The United Methodist Women
 invite you
 (all women connected to Fisk)
 to our
 Christmas Dinner Celebration
 December 2 at 7:00pm

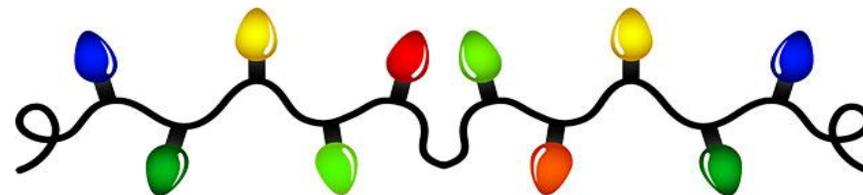


We will experience the Sights, Sounds and Tastes of Christmas while enjoying dinner together.

No cost...just come with the Christmas Spirit.

Rides provided if needed. Call Barb Beekman 508-647-4004

Reservations suggested. Call Marcia Hoyt 508-655-0077



Q-- Did you sign up for a FRESH HAND-MADE BALSAM WREATH?

A--**Thirty-seven people have signed up. Don't miss out.**

Q--Where do they come from?

A--**Western Mountains of Maine-United Methodist Economic Ministry**
 (this is where we send clothing throughout the year)

Q--Who is selling these wreaths?

A--**Fisk's United Methodist Men**

Q--What else are the United Methodist Men selling?

A--**Cheese from Vermont and Maple Syrup from Maine**



Wreaths	\$15.00
Cheese	\$5.00
(About 1 pound pieces retails for \$10/pound)	
Maple syrup	\$10/pint and \$15/quart

All available on November 30

at Fisk! To get yours, see a United Methodist Man: Ken Reynolds, Gary Hoyt, or David Cail



Church-wide Leadership Retreat and Pre-Retreat Survey

Planners: Visioning Team

Dorothy Phillips, Lay Leader

Please mark your calendars!! The Leadership Retreat for Fisk Memorial United Methodist Church is being planned for Saturday, January 31, 2015. **All church members are invited to attend.** (more details to follow about time and location). During the retreat, we will evaluate the current strategic plan and prioritize our activities and programs. Thus, we will develop our draft church calendar for 2015. The day will start with devotion to be led by God and His plans for Fisk Memorial United Methodist Church.

In preparation for the retreat, the Visioning Team will conduct a survey in which we hope most church members will participate. There will be two surveys; one for all church members and a second one for those currently in leadership roles. The survey will ask what our church has accomplished well and in what areas our church should focus, welcoming new ideas. Leaders will be asked about their committee's or team's accomplishments and areas of strategic plan that needs more focus or could be more effective.

Please plan to complete the survey during the Time of Fellowship in December 2014 or January 2015. We need your input. Then come to the retreat on January 31st to help Fisk become a healthy church.

If you have any questions, please ask a member of the Visioning Team: *Marcia Hoyt, Michael Burns, Pastor Xia, Deborah Hernandez, Thom Townsend and Zackary Gates.*



Young children are invited to our FREE Music and Movement class! We have musical instruments, guitar music, parades, singing with active movements. Everyone has a great time! The children and the parents love this time together on Saturday mornings.

This is geared for toddlers through grade two.

Saturday's December 6 & 20
11:00am -12:00pm

Youth Group News

There will be no Youth Group December 7.

The Nutcracker Play Saturday, December 13
7:00pm to 9:00pm

Youth Christmas Party
Sunday, December 21 - noon to 1:30pm

Stewardship Reminder, and Update

You have received a personal letter from a member of the Stewardship team, sharing their personal thoughts on stewardship. Have you taken the opportunity to prayerfully consider your stewardship and your Commitment of Giving with our Lord and Savior?

Each one should give what he/she has decided in his or her heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work." –
2 Corinthians 9:7-8

We have received 54% of last year's commitments as of press time on November 21. Remember, all Commitments of Giving are treated with the utmost confidentiality, and not individually shared with any committee. Thank you, and God bless.



Order Poinsettias for the Christmas Altar Now

Place your order now with The Altar Guild for one or more red or white poinsettias at \$9 each to be placed In Honor of or In Memory of those you wish to remember in this special way at Christmas.

The poinsettias will be arranged on the altar for the Christmas Service on Sunday, December 21st and for Christmas Eve service on Wednesday, December 24th. Please take your plant after one of those services. If you leave your plant at the church after December 24th, it will be delivered to someone on our prayer list.

Members of the Altar Guild will be collecting orders and money in Whipple Hall following worship, **November 30, December 7th and December 14th**, or you may mail or deliver your check and order in an envelope to the church office marked to the attention of: The Altar Guild.

The total order must be to the Florist by December 15th

(Please clip and return this form with your order)

I/We would like to place a red or white poinsettia on the Christmas Altar

_____ In Honor of

_____ In Memory of

By _____

Please word exactly as you wish it to appear in the bulletin.

Thank you!

**Linnea Fisher, Blanche Ciccarelli, Lois Potter & Nancy Swan
Altar Guild**



An Evening of Operetta
Wellesley Congregational Church
2 Central St.
Wellesley MA

Selections from The Merry Widow,
Rose-Marie and Show Boat

November 29, 2014 at 7:00pm
Suggested Donation is \$25.00

to support Family Promise Metrowest.
Reception to follow

*(Family Promise Metrowest offers safe, transitional housing
for families who are homeless)*