

# FIRST CHURCH NOTES

September 2017

First Congregational Church  
United Church of Christ  
P.O. Box 155  
Gray, ME 04039

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### Videos of Sunday Services on GCTV Cable Channel 2

Sunday: 10:00 a.m., 3:00 p.m.  
Monday-Friday: 2:30 p.m.  
Saturday: 9:30 a.m., 2:30 p.m.

### Office Hours:

**Tuesday & Friday 9:00 – 3:00**  
*Office hours subject to change.  
Please call ahead.*

## On the Spread of the Gospel from the Old World to the New

In this little part of New England called the First Congregational Church of Gray, we stand on the shoulders of giants. It is a mighty tradition to which we are heir, a tradition that begins, of course with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob; Sarah, Rebecca and Rachel; Moses, Jesus and the Biblical heroes; and also with the heroes of the Reformation, people like John Knox and Oliver Cromwell in Great Britain, with the Puritans and Pilgrims of the Massachusetts Bay Colony, people like Cotton Mather and Jonathan Edwards, and continues through the Transcendentalists like Henry David Thoreau, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Harriet Beecher Stowe and other geniuses of the great revolutionary experiment called the United States of America. In the 20<sup>th</sup> Century just past and now in our own century, there are too many geniuses to count.

To help us understand where we are as a congregation in this tradition this summer, I have focused on the travels of Saint Paul in the Book of Acts and supplemented his story and preaching with selections from a variety of American poets. I will continue to do so throughout the fall until we begin Advent, when I will focus on the traditional Messianic prophecies. I hope everyone is enjoying following the movement of the Gospel from Asia to Europe and from Europe to America as much as I am.

In order to savor this journey just a little bit more, allow me to introduce one of my favorite historians, Perry Miller, who taught at Harvard in the 1950s and 60s. He re-introduced Americans to the Puritans and argued that their theological thought – and there was a lot of it – was still important for understanding ourselves today. While still in mid-career he wrote about what fired him to study American history, namely his experience as a young man in the Army in 1926:

“It was given to me,” he wrote, “... disconsolate on the edge of a jungle of central Africa, **to have thrust upon me the mission of expounding what I took to be the innermost propulsion of the United States**, while supervising, in that barbaric tropic, the unloading of drums of case oil flowing out of the inexhaustible wilderness of America. ...

*Richard's Column is continued on page 5*

## Lectionary Readings for September 2017

### September 3, 2017

- Exodus 3:1-15
- Psalm 105:1-6, 23-26
- Romans 12:9-21
- Matthew 16:21-28

### September 10, 2017

- Exodus 12:1-14
- Psalm 149
- Romans 13:8-14
- Matthew 18:15-20

### September 17, 2017

- Exodus 14:19-31
- Psalm 114
- Romans 14:1-12
- Matthew 18:21-35

### September 24, 2017

- Exodus 16:2-15
- Psalm 105:1-6, 37-45
- Philippians 1:12-30
- Matthew 20:1-16

## Monthly Financial Report July 2017 Income and Expenses

Expenses for the month of July totaled \$7833.23. To meet the budget for 2017, our monthly income should be \$9,609.92.

Pledges	\$6,005.00
Loose Offering	\$ 293.00
Orphan Bills	\$ 101.30
Rental of Parsonage	\$1,450.00
Supper (July)	\$ 921.00
Coin Jar	\$ 29.25
Donation from Food Pantry	\$ 100.00
Misc.	\$ 104.05
UCC Dues	\$ 24.00

**Totals** **\$9,027.60**

Respectfully submitted,

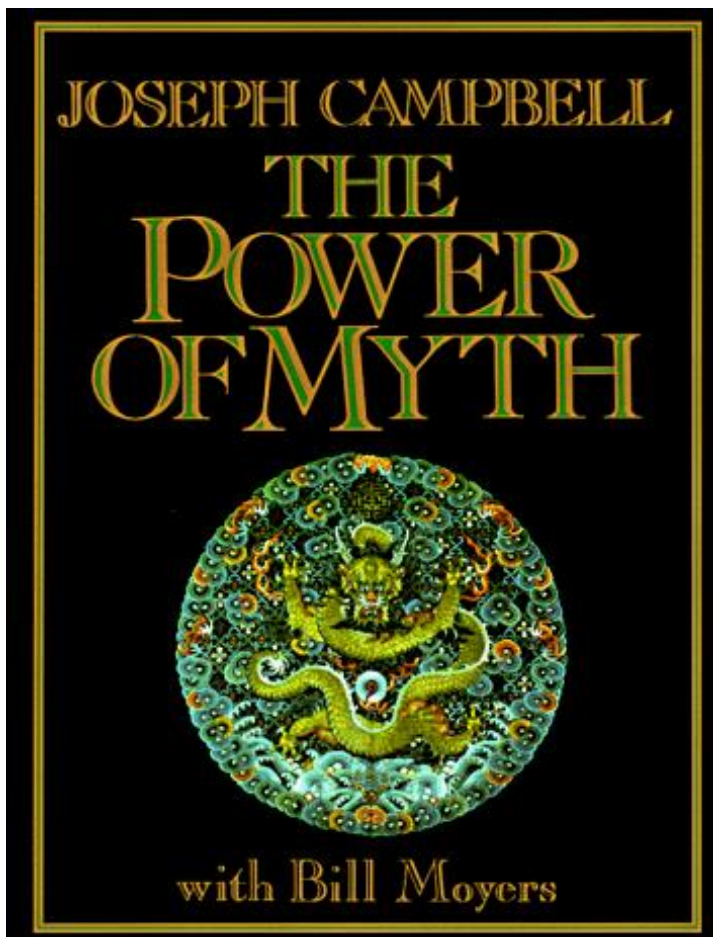
*Fran Hutchings*

## Fall Education Series in the Making

You may remember that we gathered on five different evenings last winter to watch Bill Moyers interview Huston Smith. Another such evening is in the planning stages, this time to watch Bill Moyers interview Joseph Campbell. Once we get that underway, we will start to add more of the personages interviewed by Bill Moyers. We are thinking of contemporary world religion authority Karen Armstrong, American Buddhist teacher Pema Chodron, essayist Wendell Berry, and some others outside the Moyers fold like theologian Tim Keller and American religion scholar Diana Butler Bass. Suggestions welcome. For the first couple of weeks, we will go with the tried and true. I know that the Joseph Campbell interviews are very good and I am familiar with his writing. I also met him and heard him speak at Esalen.

We are thinking of beginning Sunday, October 15th at Sally Johnston's house at 6 p.m..

~ Pastor Richard



## TOUCH A TRUCK

The planning for this year's major fundraiser, Touch A Truck, is well under way. This year the event is sponsored by Gray Shop 'n Save and Cook's Ace Hardware.

Melissa, John, and Chris have great plans for this year's family event, to be even bigger and better than previous years. The event will be in the Shop 'n Save Plaza on Sept 23 from 11 AM to 2 PM.

Of course there will be all the vehicles, a bake sale, chances on local business offerings and events, face painting, lunch, and much much more. If you are interested in volunteering to help man one of the tables, please contact JAN by email and I will put you on the list. Inowins1@maine.rr.com. (the first letter of the email address is L).

Mark your calendars for this event. We have put in an order for excellent weather. Not only is this a family event, come one and come all and watch the look on the kids faces as they see all the trucks, and listen to the horns blowing. Bring your grandkids.

~ Donna Rand, Food Pantry Coordinator



## Women's Fellowship

We will resume our monthly meetings on Monday, September 11th at 6:30 p.m. at the Parish House.

If you are not already a member, please consider joining us.

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**Choir Rehearsal** starts Wednesday, September 6<sup>th</sup> at 6:59 p.m. sharp in the Supper Room!

## Summer Music Ministry Schedule of Guests for September 2017

September 3 <sup>rd</sup>	RoJean Tulk & Alice Lewis
September 10 <sup>th</sup>	Dotty Foster & Michael Mills
September 17 <sup>th</sup>	Carol West
September 24 <sup>th</sup>	Gene Humphrey



## Survey Says!

The Pastoral Relations Committee and Church Council thank you. As of this writing, the PRC have received over forty survey responses and are in the process of putting all the many comments into a report for the Church Council and for Pastor Richard. There have been many good suggestions, dealing not only with our worship service, but also with the specific ministry of the church. These comments will be an EXCELLENT starting point for discussion and planning as we prepare to take our church into the future.

Please remember, if you ever have any suggestions regarding ANY aspect of our church you may either put a note in the suggestion box located in the vestry or contact any member of the PRC or Council.

Together in the service of Christ and your church:

PRC Committee  
Ed & Bev Doughty  
Sally Johnston  
Dotti Barton  
Michael Mills

Council at Large  
Dotti Barton  
Michael Mills

## Vacation Bible School 2017

VBS was held the week of July 17th. Like every July the days were really warm. Ok, really hot. But we survived.

We had 19 children attend. The kids had music, stories, bible lessons, crafts, games, skits and snacks. All of this was done in 3 hours each day. We didn't have a lot of down time. We did have many, many hugs and laughs. The kids made sock heroes, bible animal window clings, played water balloon basketball, danced, listened to and participated in bible stories, put on a new skit each day, had a yoga lesson, ate everything in sight every day and went to a pool party. It was absolutely wonderful! Kids have my heart. I taught preschool for a long time, volunteer in the Russell school kindergarten, play basketball, soccer, baseball... with my grandkids and enjoy every second of it. Kids are honest with their feelings and their words. They are amazing people!

I want to take this time to thank everyone who volunteered their time to make this week such a success. Please, if I forget anyone, let me know. I think my memory is 100 years older than I am.

Pre K - Grade 1 teachers –  
Maya Hutchings and Hannah  
Grades 2 - 6 - Fran Hutchings, Janey Miles,  
Zeke Dufraines, Lexi Hutchings, and  
Gretchen Hutchings  
Grades 4-6 - Cathy Grannell and Sally Johnston

We ended up with all boys and 1 girl in the 2 - 4 class and all girls and one boy in the older class. We swapped the girl and boy to be with their peers. When I asked the kids about switching they were both very happy. That's why the middle group say grades 2 - 6.

Music, singing and dancing - RoJean Tulk  
Audio tech - Janet Farrington  
Stories - Beverly Doughty  
Snacks - Marcie Whidden  
-- Continued top of next column →

Professional photographer - Janey Miles  
Pool party hostess - Cristy Dill  
Snack donation - Ruth Pierce  
Set up and take down - Richard Wood

In addition to doing the job I listed most of these people pitched in wherever they were needed. While a class was at craft those teachers pitched in and helped. When the kids went out to games their teachers went with them. I didn't have to ask even once for them to help in another area, they just did it. That makes my job so much easier.

Ladies and gentlemen I thank each of you from the bottom of my heart! Vacation Bible School is fun but it's also a lot of work. These people made the week possible for all of those kids.

Last but certainly not least I want to tell everyone how proud I am of the young people who volunteered a week of their summer vacation volunteering at VBS. I feel blessed that after attending themselves for years, they come back to be councilors. If you see any of these people, please thank them. Please thank the adults too.

Youth councilors: Maya, Hannah J., Zeke, Emma H., Thomas, Emma D., Hannah B.

Bless you all for providing a safe, happy, loving, learning environment for the VBS kids for the week.

*Love, Miss Pat*

### Message from the Bylaws Committee:

A Bylaws Committee has been formed to undertake the five-year review of the Church's Bylaws. At this time, each Committee of the Church is asked to review the Bylaws pertaining to them to see if any changes should be made. We would like to hear from each Committee by October 1st. If you have any questions, please see a member of the Bylaws Committee: Bruce Foshay, Don Hutchings or Sue Pollard.

## Looking Backwards .....

We're hearing a lot about the upcoming eclipse lately even though it will be only partial in this part of the country. I guess I'm one of the few who can remember a total eclipse that was actually visible in Gray. I was maybe eight or ten at the time and then as now the news was full of the prospect -- what to look for, how animals, domestic and wild might react, how to protect your eyes, etc. etc.

I think even back then some enterprising entrepreneur was making and selling special viewing spectacles but that sort of luxury wasn't on our horizon. Our eye protection was home-made and consisted of a piece of window glass -- probably from a broken window -- held over a smokey candle flame until it was thoroughly blackened. (This wasn't as easy as it sounds -- you had to keep it moving or it would shatter from the uneven heat.)

The alternative was one or more overexposed black and white photo negatives -- remember them? -- if one wasn't dark enough layer them. (If any oculist is reading this don't have a heart attack; I'm 94 and can still see to read!)

Then as now we had been alerted to watch for waves of light and shadow as the moon's mountains slid across the edge of the sun's disc, to look for "Bailey's beads" and the corona. The total phase was supposed to last a minute or two but it seemed like only a few seconds. Then the show was about over and as the light returned the roosters greeted the dawn for the second time that day.

~ *Miriam Bisbee*

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### **Pastor Richard – Continued From Pg 1**

What I believe caught my imagination, among the fuel drums, was a realization of the uniqueness of the American experience; even then I could dimly make out the portent for the future of the world, **looking upon these tangible symbols of**

**the republic's appalling power.** I could see no way of coping with the problem except by going to the beginning. ... The beginning I sought was inevitably -- being located in the 17<sup>th</sup> century -- theological."

What was the result of Perry Miller's quest? What provided and still provides the innermost propulsion of these United States? I believe the answer in brief is one word, much meditated upon by Paul, Luther, Calvin and the Reformers, and ultimately Abraham Lincoln and every living American: freedom. The quest for freedom is what America has been about from the very beginning, Christianity also.

I will admit that Jesus did not mention freedom very much. He used the word in just two passages, one in Matthew and one in John, for five uses of the Greek word for freedom, "eleutheros," altogether. "Eleutheros" has become a botanical term which reveals the meaning of this word: It means, simply, "wild," as in "eleuthero ginseng," wild ginseng, which you can get at the health food store and grows all over the northeastern United States. It's the best ginseng root in the world, I might add.

But it is no exaggeration to say that freedom was of utmost import for Paul. Paul uses the word "freedom" in his writings over twenty times and it is a key concept in his letters to the Romans, Corinthians and Galatians. In Paul's understanding Jesus sets us free from sin, free from the fear of death, free from fear itself, free from death itself. If Paul were here to be questioned on the matter he might say that Jesus did not talk about freedom much, but He WAS freedom, and love, and a lot of other qualities besides. Jesus Christ embodied freedom and love and made it possible for us to exercise both.

We will continue our journey with Paul as this summer draws to a close. We will continue to ponder the meaning of his message, particularly his understanding of freedom, as we Americans struggle with what it means to be a free people in a time of deep political division.

- *Rev. Dr. Richard Allen Hyde*

