

February 2012



Church Family News

Acton Congregational Church

United Church of Christ

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From the Pastor:

PRAY, PRAY, PRAY

Reasons have varied greatly as people have approached God in prayer. Church liturgies and different worship settings generally reflect a corporate expression of a congregations wishes. When people have sensed a particular individual need, whether for healing in their lives or for the sake of others in pain, intense expressions of concern have been expressed to God. Then there are the moments when blessings and goodness have come upon us and/or our family and friends and joyous words are channeled to God.

Another form of prayer appropriate for our consideration at this time in the life our church is for the ability to sense God's intentions for the ministry we share in this community. May all in the church offer their prayers for openness to new avenues and directions God has in store for this congregation. Certainly there are aspects in the life of the church to be preserved. However, in our ever changing world the church must rise to each challenge with new approaches in communicating the message of God's love.

As we have sensed many answers to our prayers in the past, so now, may we live confidently as our prayers for our church are offered by all of us.

Gordon



Food for Thought

If you don't like the way the cookie crumbles, try the Bread of Life.

Church Council meeting February 16th 7pm.



MODERATOR'S MEMO

There's an air of excitement in Acton Congregational Church! After twenty-seven months of preparing and searching and praying, if all goes as planned, we will have a new settled pastor starting April 1.

We have been blessed with a truly remarkable Search Committee. They have fulfilled their duties in complete accordance with U.C.C. guidelines. They took all the right preparatory steps. They developed a thorough and accurate profile of our church. They perused numerous profiles of ministers who might have an interest in coming here. They interviewed, either in person or by Skype, those that seemed to be a possible fit for our church. Some they rejected; some rejected us. Despite nudging from some members of the congregation, they held to the level of confidentiality expected of them

As the months passed and as the "normal" search time of two years approached, it might have been tempting to lower their expectations and settle for an "okay" candidate. They did not. With admirable patience, they held to the standard they had set with faith that God had someone special in mind for Acton Congregational Church.

Above all, they were a praying committee. They believe, and those of us who know her believe, that AbbyLynn Haskell is the answer to their prayers. As we continue the process of becoming acquainted with AbbyLynn and working out all the details of her call, won't you add your prayers to those of the Search Committee and the Church Council members that together we will perfectly discern God's will for us and for AbbyLynn?

And, please, take a moment to thank each of the members of the Search Committee who have dedicated untold hours to their task over the last two years plus. We are indebted to them for their diligence and faithfulness. They are: Maxine Crouch, Chair, Bruce Folsom, Joy Gilkey, Suzanne Rickard, Bill Shields, and Sue Walsh.



THE WOMEN'S FELLOWSHIP will meet at Johnson's Restaurant in North Berwick for "lunch with the bunch" at noon on Wednesday, February 8.

ANNUAL PLANNING RETREAT

All church officers and committee members are urged to attend the annual planning retreat on Saturday, February 4 in the Fellowship Hall. We are at the beginning of a new era at Acton Congregational Church and it is crucial that we be prepared. The retreat will start at 9:00 and end no later than 3:00 p.m. Lunch will be provided.

The Prayer Shawl ministry, which is part of the Circle of Hope is in need of prayer shawls. If you knit, crochet or quilt, we could use your talent.



Birthdays

Melanie Brow
Blynn Roberts
Nikolas Lutz
Katarina Lutz
Gunnar Lutz

Beth Martin
Olga Rawson
Mary Dumas
Bernard Yeaton



Anniversaries

Cliff & Joyce Cunningham	February 6
Jason & Melanie Brow	9
Gary & Beth Martin	28

Church Law & Tax Report

YOUR CHARITABLE CONTRIBUTIONS:

7 Things Every Church Member Needs to Know

By Richard Hammar, J.D., LL.M., CPA

1. If I make a contribution in early January 2012, can I claim it on my 2011 taxes? No. Charitable contributions must be claimed in the year in which they are delivered.

Example: Mary writes a check to her church on December 31, 2011, and deposits it in the church offering on Sunday, January 1, 2012. Her check is not deductible on her 2011 taxes. She can claim it on her 2012 tax return.

2. If I mail my contribution in December 2011, but it doesn't reach my church until January 2012, for which year should I claim it? On your 2011 tax return. A check that is mailed to a charity is deductible in the year the check is mailed (and postmarked), even if it is received early in the next year.

Example: Mary mails (and postmarks) her check in December 2011. Her church doesn't receive the check until January 2012. The check is deductible on Mary's 2011 tax return.

3. Can I deduct the value of volunteer work I did for the church? No. The value of personal services is never deductible as a charitable contribution. However, unreimbursed expenses you incur in performing services on behalf of a church or other charity may be. For 2012, you can use a "standard mileage rate" of 14 cents to compute a deduction for any miles you drive in performing services for your church. Be sure to maintain accurate records.

Example: John is an electrician. He donates 10 hours of time to his church's construction

Example: Your \$100 gift designating the church benevolence fund is deductible. However, if you specify that your contribution be applied to a named individual, then no deduction is allowed—unless the church exercises full administrative and accounting control over the donated funds.

Example: You donate \$200 to the church and instruct the church treasurer to give the \$200 to a specified needy family in the church. This contribution is not tax-deductible.

Contributions to a church or missions agency that designate a particular missionary may be tax-deductible if the church or missions agency exercises full administrative control over the contributions and ensures that they are spent in furtherance of the church's tax-exempt purposes.

Example: You donate \$75 to a denominational missionary agency and specify a particular missionary as the recipient. This contribution is tax-deductible, even though it names a missionary, so long as the missions agency has full administrative and accounting control over the funds.

7. What kind of records do I need in order to prove I made a contribution?

For individual cash contributions of under \$250: You must have a bank record (such as a cancelled check) or a receipt from the church containing the church's name, and the date and amount of each cash contribution.

For individual contributions (cash or property) of \$250 or more: You must receive a written receipt from your church that includes the church's name, the date and amount of each contribution, and states whether you received goods or services for your contributions (and if so, a description and good faith estimate of the value of the

goods or services received). If you received no goods or services for the contributions, then the receipt must say so or indicate that only "intangible religious benefits" were received. If you've made individual contributions of \$250 or more, don't file your federal income tax return until you receive a contribution statement from your church that satisfies these requirements. Otherwise, your contributions may not be deductible. Canceled checks cannot be used to substitute cash contributions of \$250 or more.

For non-cash property valued at \$500 or more: Other rules apply (see the instructions to IRS Form 8283). If the value is more than \$5,000, you must obtain a qualified appraisal of the property and attach an "appraisal summary" (IRS Form 8283) to the tax return on which the contribution is claimed. Some exceptions apply.

For contributions of cars, boats, or planes: If a church sells the donated property without significant use, the donor's contribution deduction is limited to the sales proceeds. In addition, the church must provide the donor, and the IRS, with a written acknowledgment (use IRS Form 1098-C) by the deadline prescribed by law. If the church significantly uses the property, the donor can deduct the market value. However, the church must still provide Form 1098-C to the donor and the IRS. Qualified appraisal and appraisal summary requirements apply if deduction exceeds \$5,000 (see instructions to Form 8283).

About the Author: Richard Hammar, a graduate of Harvard Law School, is an attorney and certified public accountant specializing in legal and tax issues for churches and clergy.



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January 26, 2012

Acton Congregational Church
United Church of Christ
P.O. Box 28, Acton, Maine 04001-0028

Dear Members and Friends:

Twenty-seven months ago, the members of this church entrusted the Search Committee with the responsibility of prayerfully selecting a candidate for your approval. We gathered “input” from many of you with the questionnaires, as we assembled our Local Church Profile. We carefully reviewed the UCC Ministerial Profiles of many candidates; after checking references, we interviewed six candidates. Following second interviews with two candidates, we unanimously selected—through prayer and mutual consent—The Rev. AbbyLynn Haskell as our candidate for the ministry of our church.

Abby resides in Wells with her two boys, ages 6 and 11. Rev. Haskell will bring many gifts to our church. She is caring, compassionate, mature, and a strong preacher as well as a creative worship leader.

Her experience with leading groups and events, program development for adults, her creative preaching style, her strong faith and integrity, and love of all people, are some of the many attributes she will bring to our church. One referral, when asked where she would rate Rev. Haskell on a scale of 1-10, replied, “I would rate her 12,” with no hesitation. Several of the references said “what you see is what you get,” meaning that she is a genuine person.

Some of her hobbies and interests are cooking soups, stews and breads; supply preaching off the coast of Maine through the Maine Seacoast Mission, working at Pilgrim Lodge on the Outdoors Ministry committee and as worship leader for grandparent 1, counselor for middler camp and dean for senior high camp; and creating labyrinths in her back yard and teaching others to make them.

The members of our committee look forward to talking with you about our joyful interactions with AbbyLynn. We hope you will make every effort to attend the Saturday night potluck supper where you will meet Abby, Ben and Keenan in a more informal setting, as well as the Sunday morning worship service and congregational meeting.

Saturday night, February 11, 5:00 p.m. All-church potluck. Children and youth are encouraged to participate in this opportunity to become acquainted with this wonderful family.

Sunday morning, February 12, 10:00 a.m. worship. Abby will conduct the worship service. Following the service, a congregational meeting will be held to hear a detailed report from the Search Committee, discuss the terms of the Call Agreement, and vote on the recommendation to call AbbyLynn Haskell as our new pastor. Assuming a positive vote, it is our hope that Abby will start with us on April 1.

We believe that God has led us to this exciting moment in our ministry...and so does AbbyLynn. We look forward to growing together as a faith community, serving others and proclaiming the good news of God’s love.

Thank you for the privilege you have given us.

Sincerely,
The Members of the Search Committee

Maxine Crouch, Chair
Bruce Folsom
Joy Gilkey
Suzanne Rickard
Bill Shields
Sue Walsh

Bio - *Rev. AbbyLynn Haskell*

I think one of the most beautiful descriptions of ministry came from theologian John Calvin who said that ministry is about the work of nurturing that seed of faith. I am so thankful for the many people who have taught, raised and nurtured my seed of faith in my life. I grew up in Brewer Maine and people at All Souls Congregational Church UCC and Pilgrim Lodge taught me of God's love in Word and deed. I attended the University of Maine in Orono and then Bangor Theological Seminary all the while stretching and deepening in my faith and hearing Jesus' call to love and serve in the Church.

After I graduated seminary my first call in 1999 was to serve as an associate pastor at First Parish Church UCC in Dover New Hampshire. I loved my work with youth and felt so thankful for the honor of sharing in their spiritual growth. To nurture their faith I created programs, went on mission and camping trips, preached, listened, counseled, prayed, loved and taught as many ways as possible, over and over, that each person is a beloved child of God.

While at Dover I had my first child (Ben) and have so treasured the unique ways that my work and church life has shaped his life and heart. When I became pregnant with my second child (Keenan) I felt I needed to honor my call to mothering full time and spent two wonderful years from 2005-2007 at home with my boys while attending and participating in the life of Alfred Congregational Church UCC.

When first a neighbor and then my father show me that Saco was looking for a part time Director of Program Development I became aware of the excitement of being called back to serve in the church. I have been so thankful for my time at Saco that has been so healthy, healing and nurturing of my faith.

Three years ago I was diagnosed with breast cancer. The incredible depths to which I experienced God's healing grace were profound and live with me as a sacred and beautiful joy of faith today. I came to know you, Acton Congregational Church then as you loved me through that time with cards and your prayers. I am so thankful to God for the way your prayers were a part of the miracle of God's healing love.

You entered my prayer life once again after I heard from Rev. Mercer and Rev. Morgan about your ongoing search for a settled pastor. I have loved my time serving at Saco and my heart is hearing God's call again to stretch, serve and grow in faith again.

Office hours~
Wednesday & Friday 9-noon
Thursday 10am-4pm

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We're on the web!!
See us at:
www.actonucc.org

Important Dates to Remember!!!

Council Meeting on February 16 ~ 7:00pm

Annual Planning Retreat on February 4; snow date
February 11, 9:00am ~ 3:00pm.

Potluck Supper for our Pastoral Candidate ~
February 11, 5:00pm

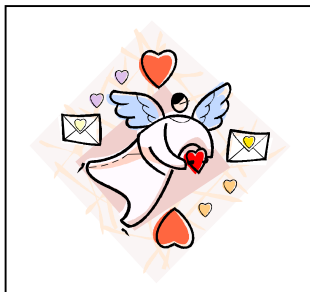
(Please bring your favorite main dish, salad or dessert to share.)

Worship & Special Meeting to vote for a settled Pastor ~ February 12, 10:00am & 11:00am



Peter and Ellie Mercer are proud grandparents of Eleonora Francesca, born January 20th. She weighed 8lbs. 4oz.

ACTON CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH
P.O. Box 28
Acton, ME 04001-0028



*“Love the Lord your God
with all your heart.”
Matthew 2:37*