The Spirit of Christmas

A collection of stories revealing the true Spirit of Christmas in word and deed

THE KINDNESS OF STRANGERS IN FULL FORCE

Plus stories that will leave you to wonder, “How could that possibly have happened that way?”

By Jim Ash
Publisher

There is something mysterious and magical taking place right now somewhere close by. Today, tomorrow, and especially throughout this Christmas season, there is more giving, more caring and more joy to go around.

“Where exactly?” you ask.
“How is that possible?” you may wonder. Inside the pages of this special Christmas magazine produced by the Main Street Journal, we hope you find the answer.

The idea was conceived several weeks ago when a group of people gathered to discuss what might be possible if we produced a publication that revealed the Christmas Spirit in action, directly, miraculously, tangibly, undeniably in people’s lives. What if we also invited some writers to share their personal Christmas reflections? The end result, we imagined, would be an uplifting publication of healthy “food” to nourish the soul.

As we looked more deeply into what is going on in our community, we found the kindness of strangers has been on display in full force in a variety of ways as people in need have been blessed by others who were willing to lend a hand. One volunteer summed it up best prior to a community outreach event, “We who are in this room are here to bring people hope.”

As it turns out, heightened interest in community service is typical of the Spirit that makes Christmas a most special time of year, but caring is not something that fits neatly into a particular spot on the calendar. Time and time again, there has been a faithful subculture in Marlborough that has continually demonstrated, “If you need them, they will come.” This month, next month, whenever you need them, they are ready to serve. You will see numerous examples as you read on, but there is more.

Our search for Christmas content has also led us to several unusual stories, deeply personal accounts of lives changed, even saved, in miraculous ways, stories that may leave you to ask, “How could that have happened that way?”

As you read and consider the pages that follow, your thoughts about Christmas may well be challenged, your awareness of the workings of the Christmas Spirit will surely be expanded, and for those trapped in Christmas frenzy or mired in seasonal grief, hopefully you will find something that helps you experience the true joy of the season in its fullness.

There is no doubt the Christmas Spirit is alive in Marlborough and it is with great pleasure that we share real local stories of the Spirit in action among your friends and neighbors. We are mindful that we have only scratched the surface and hope to be telling many more such stories in the months and years ahead.

Girl Scouts have been busy at work serving the community.

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Her birth was the first in a series of astounding events.

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On death’s doorstep twice until “Someone” stepped in.

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Good will toward men - When people respond to the Christmas Spirit, good naturally follows. See inside for details.
Let us draw near to God with a sincere heart and with the full assurance that faith brings. Let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing.

Hebrews 10: 22, 24-25

Church of the Nativity
508-393-3146
www.churchofthenativity.org
45 Howard St., Northborough, MA 01532
ordinary people...Extraordinary Life
Weekly Worship:
Saturday Contemporary Mass - 5:00 PM
Sunday Traditional Eucharist - 7:45 AM
Renewal-Praise Eucharist - 10:00 AM
Christmas Eve:
Family Service - 4:00 PM
Candlelight Service - 8:00 PM
Midnight Service - 11:00 PM
Christmas Day:
Christmas Service - 10:00 AM

ConnectingPoint Church
508-596-1121
www.connectingpointchurch.org
Marlborough Middle School
25 Union St., Marlborough, MA
Gospel. Community. Mission
Weekly Worship:
Sunday (except December 23) - 10:00 AM
Christmas Eve:
Family Service - 5:30 PM
Christmas Day:
Caroling at nursing home

Grace Baptist Church
978-562-8550
www.gracehudson.org
353 River Rd., Hudson, MA 01749
Contemporary, Christ-centered Worship
Weekly Worship:
Sunday - 9:00 AM and 10:45 AM
Christmas Eve:
Family "Glow Stick" Service - 5:00 PM
Fellowship with refreshments - 6:00 PM
Candlelight Service - 7:00 PM

New Hope Community Church
508-485-7023
www.nhccag.org
204 Main St. (P.O. Box 204), Marlborough, MA 01752
A Contemporary, Spirit filled, Lively, Bible centered Church
Weekly Worship:
Sunday - 10:15 AM
Christmas Eve:
Candlelight Service - 12:00 Noon
WHAT IS THE SPIRIT OF CHRISTMAS?
Suppose you could experience it any day, even all year long

By Jim Ash
Publisher

Most of us can recall our younger years when we sensed there was something magical about Christmas. The experience changed when we became adults, but it can be every bit as wonderful if we avoid the modern-day frenzy. In fact, if we could capture the Spirit and put it into a bottle, most would be eager to consume it every day if we could.

During a random survey recently, I found that people were unanimous in agreeing the Christmas Spirit is real. But when asked to explain it, no two people answered the same. In general, the term “Christmas Spirit” is used to describe the kind deeds and positive emotions we feel during the Christmas season. But what if it’s none of those things? What if it is something else? Now, imagine you could experience it any day, even all year long, not merely at Christmas.

Would it be worth knowing how?

First, we must dispel the myth that the Christmas Spirit is a human creation produced by things we do. If that were true, it would be able to deliver it on demand. Clearly, we cannot. It makes much more sense to view the Spirit as something that comes upon us, and when it touches willing people, good things, even surprising things, naturally flow forth.

There are many who will find this conclusion difficult to accept. If the good things we do are the by-product of something that came upon us, then we deserve no special credit for our acts. If all along you fancied yourself as the conductor, you may not easily accept the notion that you were merely an instrument.

Yes, you have a role. You can choose to ignore or act on its leading, but the Christmas Spirit certainly does not begin and end with you. As it turns out, there is a simple explanation for this mystery and it comes from the Bible, the very book given to us by our Creator to instruct us about life.

In the Gospel of Luke, we learn about a young girl named Mary who was visited by an angel who told her she would be giving birth to Jesus, the Son of God. “How can this be?” she asked incredulously. The angel replied, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you and the power of the Most High will overshadow you.” Luke explains that God did not merely come down to Earth in the form of a man named Jesus, he has also unleashed his Spirit to guide, uplift and empower those who hear and obey.

And so, a broken relationship is unexpectedly mended at Christmas. A woman in despair receives gifts from a stranger. A drug addict is brought to tears of remorse. On and on it goes. Like the wind, we cannot see the Spirit, but its presence and power is undeniable. Yet, it will have no effect on you unless you hoist your anchor and open your sails.

Does it not make perfect sense that we seem to be more able to hear the Spirit and more willing to obey during the season that marks the birth of the very Son of God? In fact, the apparent heightened presence of the Holy Spirit as the holiday approaches actually confirms the authenticity of the Christmas story. Maybe life on Earth is a little more like life in heaven during this time of year to reveal what is waiting for us some day if we decide now to embrace the Son who God sent.

Many have doubts when presented with this simple and logical explanation for the unusual things that take place at Christmas. Angels? Holy Spirit? Son of God? Heaven? Could they be real? Consider the awesome complexity of the universe and imagine who could have made it. Certainly, for the God who created all things, the magical Christmas story and the transforming power of the Holy Spirit would be no big thing for him.

Despite the plethora of available facts, spiritual truths are not always obvious truths. In the case of the Holy Spirit, it seems we must first approach our Creator with humility and a willingness to believe before we can begin to see clearly, before we can start to understand.

Some 2,000-plus years ago, a baby was born in a stable under a bright shining star. As he grew up, the Bible records he had no stately majesty, no attributes or appearance to cause others to look at him in awe. Yet our very calendar is measured by his life, and the world has never been the same since. That is powerful enough that Jesus was no mere man. Likewise, the transformational power we have witnessed or read about, especially at Christmas, is strong testimony that God’s Holy Spirit is real and active in the world.

The stories and reflections contained in this publication offer examples of people operating under the influence of the Spirit — reaching out to lend a hand; giving generously; sacrificial love; lives in transformation; forgiveness and reconciliation; people hoisting anchor and lifting their sails to allow the Spirit to work, but it is not merely a December thing. In fact, the Bible teaches that the Holy Spirit will literally come to live inside all who believe in Jesus, and some stories published here confirm that fact.

If there is one message to take from the Christmas season, it is not Santa Claus, shopping malls, or parties, nice though they all may be. God, himself, has revealed His love through Jesus, and has declared that new life is possible today for anyone who will turn to him in faith. You have experienced the Spirit and you know it is good. Why would you settle for anything less, during this season or any other time of year?

Jim Ash is the founder and president of the Main Street Journal, msjnews.com, and several specialty publications including “The Spirit of Christmas.”

STAKE YOUR CLAIM
You are invited to join the family

By Dane Burke
Guest Columnist

Christmas is first and foremost a time rich with family. So many of our early memories are formed around this special season in the context of family. Even now, people are planning, arranging, and buying plane tickets to be with extended family. There is no joy like family joy, and no pain like family pain. Families know what buttons to push, what glitches to make to get each other going. Families have so much emotional power over us as our very personalities were formed with them. Our laughs, walks, intonations and habits were all influenced by family.

As I reflect on Christmas, I wonder, “Was Jesus any different?” For a time, I merely thought of Jesus as the Bible proclaims, God in human form, just waiting to be unleashed, with Mary and Joseph no more than diaper changers and feeders of the Savior. I think differently now.

Though Jesus certainly is the central figure of Christmas, the Christmas story, as told by the Gospel writers, is more about family than him. We see how God picked a poor, but devoted girl named Mary who was engaged to a righteous man named Joseph. He picked them to raise his son, to teach him values and manners, and to show him the world. Can you imagine being chosen by God to raise his only son?

As Luke records in his Gospel, Jesus grew in wisdom, and stature, and favor while under the care of Mary and Joseph. He seems to have matured like other boys. And thus, the influence of his parents had to be much greater than I ever imagined. Grandparents, uncles, aunts, cousins may all have had a role in shaping and forming Jesus.

Since Mary was pregnant before marriage, Joseph was called by God to forsake his reputation in society as a “righteous” man to marry and care for a pregnant teen, accused of sexual sin. His obedience in the face of a difficult assignment earned him the identity as the Earthly father of God. Jesus’ mother lost her reputation by carrying God’s child. Yet she did not complain. She praised God that she was counted worthy to deliver his son.

We can imagine Jesus following Joseph’s footsteps into carpentry, learning under him, becoming the kind of guy that loves others first and is willing to risk reputation for identity, to put reputation on the line, to do the right thing. We can imagine Jesus living in the lower economic strata, but counting his relationship with God and family as his greatest riches.

No doubt Jesus’ laugh mimicked that of Mary or Joseph, and perhaps his walk was also similar to one of his parents. He grew up within the context of a family experience just like we do.

The Christmas story reminds those of us who are parents of our solemn duty to nurture our children with the best of care, from conception into adulthood. In so doing, we offer our children a Christmas experience that is especially rich because it comes within the context of a loving family.

But what of those who have no such experience? What if the thought of family does not produce fond memories or a loving experience today? There is good news in the midst of that struggle.

The Bible teaches that those who place their faith in Jesus become adopted children, sons and daughters in God’s own family. Here on Earth, that family is found in those churches where men and women are following Jesus and are obedient to his command to love God and love one another. May you find that family this Christmas season and claim your place as an adopted child of God.

Dane Burke is pastor of youth ministries at Grace Baptist Church in Hudson
STARLING QUESTION

I had never given the matter serious thought

By Paul Hale
Guest Columnist

Watching the PBS special titled “The Dust Bowl” by Ken Burns recently has been mesmerizing and humbling. In the late 1930s people faced enormous challenges and fears: a great depression, environmental collapse, and preludes to a second world war. It caused me to reflect personally on the tumultuous times of the late 1960s as a young man struggling with the Vietnam War, civil rights battles, and tremendous social upheaval.

Today we stand on the “fiscal cliff.” The blue and red United States are really not so united. Our politicians and news media have to be “fact checked” for everything. Families are being decimated. Meanwhile our creative minds are producing ever more “mature” and violent video games and the “R” rated movies that degrade and demean rather than inspire and uplift.

More than 2,000 years ago, the city of Bethlehem was living under the occupation of the Roman Empire. The Jewish people living there were angry about having to submit to such a powerful authority and at the same time small due to the stress of daily life. In their hearts that God had warned them of this judgment. They did not listen to God or his warnings. Much like we do today, they went their own way and suffered consequence as a natural result.

Throughout all of recorded history there is a cry of the human heart that aches for meaning, righteousness, truth, and to live in the “real.” When confronted, however, by the reality of life, the struggles and the evils, Dust Bowls, wars, and hatred, we struggle to know what to do. How do we rise up from this?

This was certainly true for me as an 18-year young man. Being faced with the crushing pressures of the late 1960s, I decided there could not be a God in the universe of this mess, and lived the next 18 years of my life in the reckless abandon of satisfying myself.

But then a strange thing happened - my 7-year-old son came to me and asked whether Jesus Christ was real. Up to that point, I can’t say I ever gave the matter any serious thought. Lest I lead my son astray, I realized I had an obligation, as all dads do, to look closely, study carefully, and determine what was the truth about this Jesus my son asked about.

God opened the door for me to study the Bible with a group of other engineers who knew Jesus and were willing to help me see the love of my Savior for me. It was one of the most challenging, heart wrenching, and rewarding times of my life.

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By Paul Hale
Guest Columnist

HOLIDAYS OR HORROR-DAYS?
For some, there are real challenges to face during Christmas

By Len Cowan
Guest Columnist

Though the season ahead is supposed to be the “hap-hap-happiest time of the year,” for many people, “the holidays” can seem like “the horror days.” We are drawn to the Thanksgiving and Christmas stories, with their narrative of life abundant and life eternal, but the stress sometimes overwhelms us.

Though we are expected to get together with family at this season, this can present unique challenges, either from our past history with them or from our present tensions with family members. We are encouraged to purchase meaningful gifts for those we love, but the prospect of the credit card bills in the New Year can set us on edge. Though we enjoy being with those we truly love at this time of the year, we also come in touch with grief about the loved ones we have lost.

Thankfully, Jesus of Nazareth experienced all of these challenges. The Bible tells us that he was tested in every way as we are, not only through moral temptation, but also through the stresses of daily life as a carpenter’s apprentice, and ultimately in his three-year ministry before he died.

He experienced stress with his family; he knew what it was like to live with very limited financial resources; and he experienced real grief. So it would seem that looking to his example could teach us how to deal with the stresses we experience during the holidays.

Jesus’ family wasn’t always supportive or understanding of his life or ministry. When he was twelve-years-old, and remained in the Jerusalem temple to discuss the Bible after his family went home, his parents thought he was treating them badly, rather than following the call of his heavenly Father. Later, when he was so engrossed in the demands of his ministry that he did not find time to eat, his family thought he had gone insane, and sought to bring him back home by force.

What was Jesus’ response to family struggles? Though he continued to love his parents and siblings, he knew what it was like to live with very limited financial resources; and he experienced real grief. So it would seem that looking to his example could teach us how to deal with the stresses we experience during the holidays.

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Jesus considered how the people of his own capital city would not respond to the love that he was bringing from God, he wept. In fact, the Bible describes Jesus as being very acquainted with grief. And yet, the Bible also describes him, not just as a baby in a manger, nor just a man on a mission, nor even a servant of God dying on a cross. The Bible shows him as God in the flesh who conquered death, rose from the grave, now fully alive in heaven, and offering new and eternal life for all who will trust in him.

As we consider our loved ones who have departed, or those with whom we are no longer in touch, we need not be afraid of our grief. Because of who Jesus is and what he has done, we may grieve, but not like those who have no hope. Instead we have the real hope of God compensating for our losses, and, ultimately, reuniting us one day with all those who follow Jesus.

As we grasp the true meaning of Christmas and consider the great reality of Jesus alive with us in the Spirit today, this can be a season of great joy. Like those simple shepherds who first got the news of his birth, we, too, can both receive and carry the Good News of great joy, that on this Earth which we inhabit, it God himself has come among us to live and die as one of us, so that we may have our sins forgiven and be born again into new life. So, joy to the world! The Lord is here!

Len Cowan is pastor of Church of the Nativity in Northborough

The Spirit of Christmas

“The Spirit of Christmas” was produced by the Main Street Journal in partnership with members of several local churches in an effort to deliver uplifting and inspired stories that reflect the true Spirit of Christmas.

An online version of this publication is available at msjnews.com. For more information or to participate in future editions of this type, contact Main Street Journal publisher Jim Ash at 508-460-1166.
STARK CONTRAST IN CULTURES
Seemingly worthless items but able to lift a child’s heart

By Eric Sahlberg
Guest Columnist

Christmas has always been a special time for me, certainly when I was young and no less today, now that I am grown. As the season approaches this year, I was reminded of a day several years ago when I learned how something with no apparent value to one person could become a wonderful symbol of hope in the eyes of someone else. First some background.

During my childhood in New England, I loved going out to get a real Christmas tree. I remember, like it was yesterday, my family’s annual pilgrimage in the woods to cut down a real tree. My brother, my dad, and I would debate over which tree looked the best. Some years, we would bring home a gorgeous blue spruce. Other years, when money was tight, we settled for a Charlie Brown tree. The scent of a freshly cut evergreen standing in our living room marked the start of the Christmas season for my family. A real tree was a great start to the Christmas season.

Maybe your tradition is different. Your memories look more like this. You journeyed up to your attic to dust off the perfect pine, an artificial tree. You’d drag the tree down the attic ladder. Maybe you tried to re-create nature’s scent by going to the mall to purchase a festive fragrance from Yankee Candle. You enjoy a tree that looks great and doesn’t require water and does not drop thousands of pine needles on your floor.

Perhaps you think, “There is something special about an artificial tree.” Maybe you’re right. Maybe there is something special about an artificial tree, or so I learned about four years ago, when I helped move my neighbor Charles Sakpani and his family from seminary in Saint Louis, Missouri to Togo, West Africa.

On a hot Saint Louis Saturday, I helped my friend load up his twenty-foot container destined for the seaside city of Lome, Togo. Before filling the container, Charles told me that we needed to put the valuable stuff away from the door. He went on to explain that pastors were the only ones with Christmas trees in Togo. Artificial and feeble they may be, at least in our eyes, but those trees were special to the children there. “The trees give the pastors the opportunity to tell little children about the Christmas story,” he said. “The real Christmas story about the birth of Jesus in Bethlehem”.

I stopped in my tracks and stared at those fake trees. I wondered, what else do we discard or take for granted that would be a treasure to someone else? At that moment I learned a lot about the African heart for Christmas.

I also fell in love with the fake Christmas tree. In fact, this year we are putting up an artificial tree in my home. Some days, I wish I could ship a container load of fake trees to Togo.

Charles, a pastor in Togo, said to me that day, “Christmas is about Jesus who loves you.”

My wish to those reading this is for a blessed Christmas season. May your hearts be open like Jesus who loves you. Stuffed toyes and fake trees? Charles replied, “I know these trees don’t seem like much to you, but to the people in Togo they are valuable.”

I loaded up various sizes from three to six-feet. Fake tree after fake tree was loaded into the container. At some point, it crossed my mind to ask Charles a question. “Hey, what’s up with all the fake Christmas trees?”

He went on to explain that pastors were the only ones with Christmas trees in Togo. Artificial and feeble they may be, at least in our eyes, but those trees were special to the children there. “The trees give the pastors the opportunity to tell little children about the Christmas story,” he said. “The real Christmas story about the birth of Jesus in Bethlehem”.

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Friends, Christmas is not about a real tree or a fake tree. It is not about what is under the tree or who is gathered around the tree. Like pastor Charles said to me that day, “Christmas is about Jesus who loves you.”

My wish to those reading this is for a blessed Christmas season. May your hearts be open like those children in Togo to simple things to teach you, or remind you, that God sent his son down to Earth to reveal his love for you.

Eric Sahlberg is pastor of ConnectingPoint Church in Marlborough

BLESSINGS AWAIT
Don’t be robbed of Christmas season joy

By Tim Bishop
Guest Columnist

It’s here again. The colder weather, shorter days, and distractions in the air say so, as do longer lines of traffic and the aroma of evergreen. And in case any doubt remains, be on the lookout at the mall. Rattling tambourines, tinkling bells, and clinking coins in small red pails will confirm it.

Yes, the Christmas season is upon us. Are you looking forward to a joyous occasion, or fearing the dreaded rat race and holiday shopping frenzy? If the Spirit of Christmas seems to be passing you by, there is still hope, still time to capture the blessing.

We all deal with our own type of Christmas fog. Some of us just spend too much time in it. Others, tragically, will spend the rest of their lives there. A few years ago, I was getting caught in a trap that stretched well beyond the Christmas season, but was indicative of a similar lack of vision. Monotony had dropped by uninvited and, like a company that overstates its welcome, refused to leave, stealing away passion, discovery, and growth. What once was fresh, stimulating, and exciting had faded away. My surroundings and my routine had begun to define my reality. I was beginning to miss out on life.

Monotony is that late-night guest who you sometimes need to forcibly remove from your home before he takes over. He tries to tell you to sleep and steal the blessings that are awaiting your call.

Sometimes, we need a healthy nudge to spur us to action, to help us change course, reinvigorate life, and reawaken what we have to bring to the world around us. Those lost in the yuletide flurry have a similar uninvited guest, one whose activity creates the same type of paralysis in its powerless victims.

Wake-up calls can be unwelcome, if not abrupt. At first, you may resent them, but later realize they were acting in your best interests.

My wake-up calls have come in the form of a loss, the loss of a job or the loss of a relationship. I guess I’m just a real sound sleeper who needs a loud alarm on the other side of the bedroom.

These calls have prompted me toward change, which initially seemed like a clumsy, heavy-footed dance partner, unless, of course, those were my feet. But, as our steps synchronized in waltzed enlightenment with a renewed perspective, exciting experiences took center stage and I began to grow again.

What would taking the dance floor with Christmas time be like? Would it be to embrace a love so divine that you would be swept off your feet? Would it be to reflect on the wonder of the Son of God entering the world as a baby in a manger? What would it be like to embrace this baby—an unusual gift of love designed to free the captive, to heal the broken, and to empower a life of abundance, grace, and passion? This love is nothing like the holiday trappings that pay homage to it. This love promises reduced stress and performance-free living.

This love promises a true renaissance.

So, honestly, consider the question. Is the Spirit of Christmas passing you by? Don’t continue sleeping while monotony—or activity—robs the house blind. And don’t wait for a jolt from life to begin your transition to more Spirit-filled living. Take the initiative to reawaken your own life, to unwrap the presents locked inside. You’ll find the keys stowed in a manger in Bethlehem.

Meet this challenge on your own terms while you still can. You will discover life afresh. There is more to experience, more to learn, more to do, more to become. And with this redemption comes untold blessing, joy, and fulfillment. So, unwrap the gift, and then go enjoy it. Do it for you… and do it for those around you!

Tim Bishop is a Marlborough resident with over thirty years of experience in business. In addition to writing, he consults for small businesses and serves as a Hope Coach for TheHopeLine, a nonprofit organization that seeks to reach, rescue, and restore hurting teens and young adults. Tim and his wife, Debbie, have co-authored “Two Are Better: Midlife Newfounds Bicycle Coast to Coast,” due out later this month. The couple blog at www.openroadpress.com.
By Joan F. Simoneau
Contributing Writer

Being a Girl Scout means helping the community where there is a need and at Christmas time Marlborough Girl Scouts are extending themselves in a variety of ways.

The annual “Cookies for a Cause” drive started on December 7th and will run for several weeks. People are asked to buy cookies that will either be donated to the local food pantry – the Marlborough Community Cupboard - or sent in care packages to service men and women overseas. Several are adopting children or families through the Hope for the Holidays Program conducted by the United Way.

The scouts are also participating in the “Collecting Coats for Kids” program that is sponsored by the local Fire Academy, which they learned about when they toured the facility several months ago.

One of the scouts’ favorite holiday programs is to go Christmas caroling at the Jo-Len Mobile Home Park and to senior housing units throughout the city.

A special project this year is the donation of an International Girl Scout Tree to the Festival of Trees sponsored by the Historical Society.

Although much of their activity serves as opportunities to earn various badges, Bonny Goldberg, Co-Service Unit Coordinator for the local Girl Scouts, said, “Some will do community service because they know it is the right thing to do and we provide a Participation Patch as a thank you to them.”

Many troops find the needs within the community and create service projects on their own. Some have planted flowers at the Senior Center and others have done food collections for the pantry or collected dog and cat food and donated them to animal shelters.

There are about twenty troops in the city, serving kids ranging in age from kindergarten to high school. At Thanksgiving time, many scouts served Thanksgiving dinners to senior residents throughout the city. They also made cards and presented them to the appreciative men and women.

SCOUTS SHOW THEIR SERVING SPIRIT

Girls in Marlborough troops have been busy in a variety of ways.
Community generosity

Many Marlborough residents, school children, parents and teachers are offering aid for Roland’s House, the Marlborough-Hudson homeless shelter, by filling donation boxes placed in the Early Childhood Center, Jaworek, Kane, and Richer Elementary Schools and the Whitcomb School, as well as at Marlborough Savings Bank and Sovereign Bank.

The boxes will remain in place through December 21st and additional contributions will be greatly appreciated. Items requested include soap, toothbrushes, toothpaste, razors, sharing cream, deodorant, shampoo, and new socks.

Shown in picture are students and staff from the Richer School standing with the donation box with Richer’s giving tree in back to the right. In front (l-r) are Bryan Vega, Shuhi Fusagawa, Asha Seemungal, Elyssa Mitragas, Soraya Pierre and Ronit Kapoor. In back are Adjustment Counselor Karen Rivera, Assistant Principal R.J. Skaza and Principal Maria Silletti.

Giving partners

Marlborough Savings Bank and Champion Cleaners of Marlborough united as giving partners recently to support the local Food Pantry.

Bank employees organized a coat drive and also held a “denim day” to collect an additional $320 to be donated to the Food Pantry.

Champion Cleaners volunteered to clean fifteen coats free of charge, saving $185 that was used by the Food Pantry to purchase turkeys for local families at Thanksgiving.

Shown in picture (l-r) are Ginger Lino and Antonietta Goguen of Marlborough Savings Bank, with Jennifer Johnston and Jim Higgins of Champion Cleaners.
Shown (l-r) after a collection day at Stop and Shop in Hudson are Marcus Fletcher, Project Coordinator for FIRST Robotics, Nicole and Tyler Chaulk, Randy Zomar, and Darren Chaulk.

SUCCESSFUL COLLECTION DRIVE
Assabet volunteers solicit donations and work to make wishes come true

“The generosity we witnessed today just amazes me,” commented Sarah Sheldon, organizer of the Assabet Valley Regional Technical High’s FIRST Robotics team community service event. Students spent a day at a supermarket seeking donations of non-perishable food items for the Food Pantry and toys for the Toys for Tots program.

The group stood at the Hudson Stop and Shop on Sunday morning, December 2nd, and approached shoppers as they headed into the store. “So many people came back out of the store with items to give us, or they just walked over and donated cash,” exclaimed Marcus Fletcher, Project Coordinator for the robotics program at Assabet. “It sure gives you a good feeling. I don’t know whether it was because the economy is improving, or because people are more aware that there are others in the community who are less fortunate, but the outpouring from everyone was very heartening.”

Fletcher is already thinking ahead to next year. “We may add in a booth at the school’s Exhibit/Admissions Night, and advertise in advance, so that people coming over to visit Assabet can bring something to contribute at our robotics booth,” he said.

After loading nine carriages and boxes of groceries and toys, and adding up $400 in cash donations, the team moved the items to the school to store for delivery to the Food Pantry and Toys for Tots program.

Sheldon reflected on a particular encounter that touched her heart. “One of the highlights of the morning was when one gentleman stopped and explained to his two young sons that charitable giving is so important to help those who may not have as much,” Sheldon recalled. “When they came back out of the store, the oldest son proudly handed us a bag of groceries. That was the best moment of the day.”

Students at Assabet are engaged annually in charitable causes. As another example, the Aztec Wishes holiday gift drive is underway to benefit local children and families. Last year the school’s staff and students adopted over 150 children in need of a brighter holiday season. As part of the program, individuals or organizations are urged to help make local children’s wishes come true by either “adopting” a child or a family for the holidays and providing them with gifts and/or grocery gift cards, or by making donations to the program for the students to use for the wish lists.
New Horizons contributes $111,000 to local organizations

Given its not-for-profit status, New Horizons at Marlborough is no stranger to philanthropy. Thanks to a new program by its sponsor, however, the independent and assisted living community is participating in an unusual holiday giving initiative this year. Through the Staff Giving on Thanksgiving program, full-time employees with ten or more years of seniority with Woburn-based Cummings Properties or any of its affiliated organizations, including New Horizons, were each invited to choose a locally based not-for-profit to receive a $1,000 donation.

Having received an enthusiastic response to this inaugural program, Cummings Properties distributed a total of $111,000 during the week of Thanksgiving. The Boys and Girls Clubs of MetroWest and Marlborough Public Schools Music Association will collectively receive $5,000.

Ginger Ryan, marketing director of New Horizons, stated, “As a Marlborough resident, I am aware of the positive reputation the Boys and Girls Clubs of MetroWest has built within the community. I am very happy to recommend it to receive a donation.”

Cummings Properties president and CEO Dennis Clarke said, “Cummings Properties has always been extremely active in local philanthropy. This year, the company is delighted to do something extra special by involving more than one-hundred staff members in a new donation program. It is truly our pleasure to support such deserving local charities during the holiday season, especially knowing that they are so meaningful to our most senior colleagues.”

Home to more than 450 senior citizens, New Horizons was established in 1994 on the site formerly occupied by Madonna Hall School for Girls. Shown in picture (l-r) New Horizons employees Sandy Aker, Lynn Marie Lange, Ginger Ryan, and Tom Manell.

Perfect way to usher in the Christmas season

Immaculate Conception’s parish choir will be joined by the children’s choir for the church’s annual presentation of “A Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols,” Sunday afternoon, December 16th, 2:00 PM at Immaculate Conception Church, 11 Prospect Street, Marlborough.

This time-honored program began in 1918 in King’s College Chapel in Cambridge, England, on Christmas Eve. It is now broadcast throughout the entire world from that same chapel every Christmas Eve. It has been duplicated by scores of churches and choirs throughout Christendom as an annual Christmas concert that tells the story of salvation through the birth of Christ.

This candle-lit service illuminates the prophecy of Christ’s coming and birth through scripture and song. There will be scripture readings, anthems by the choir and carols to be sung by the congregation. It’s a free event perfect for the Christmas season.

The program will be followed by a reception in the lower church. For more information, call Immaculate Conception Parish Office at 508-483-0016.

Outside Living Nativity followed by reception

An outside Living Nativity, a live reenactment of the birth of Christ, will be organized under the direction of Bill and Sally Wilkins. This new tradition will begin in the late afternoon and continue during a reception in the lower church.

Continued on next page
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Panera Bread supports Boys and Girls Clubs

Panera Bread in Marlborough recently presented a check for $4,550 to the Boys and Girls Clubs of MetroWest. The money, raised through Panera’s Operation Dough-Nation® program, will be used to further the organization’s mission to enhance the development of children and prepare young adults to be responsible, productive members of the community through social, educational, physical and cultural programming for boys and girls in the MetroWest area.

The Marlborough bakery-cafe originally collected $2,275 from customers through in-store Operation Dough-Nation® canisters, which are displayed near the registers in each Panera store. Panera Bread then matched its customer donations dollar-for-dollar, bringing the donation total to $4,550.

Shown in picture (l-r) are Caroline Cooke, Community Development Associate at the Boys and Girls Clubs of MetroWest, receives a check from Panera Bread General Manager Sofie Segers-Sunderland.

Outside Living Nativity followed by reception

Continued from previous page

Jesus, will be presented at 6:30 PM on Saturday, December 15th, on the front lawn of the Church of the Nativity, 45 Howard Street, Northborough. Live animals will be in the production and will be available for petting before and after the presentation. The Nativity Youth Spirit Singers and other musicians will perform, and familiar Christmas carols will be sung by all. Guests are invited to bring a gift for a needy child, to be put in the Nativity manger at the conclusion of the 45-minute presentation.

A reception with entertainment and refreshments will follow in the church hall. The event is open to the public without charge, and guests are encouraged to dress warmly. The rain/snow date is Sunday, December 16th at 6:30 PM. For more information contact the church at www.churchofthenativity.org, or 508-393-4136.

“Tree of Light” at the hospital

Marlborough Hospital will light the hospital’s “Tree of Light” at 5:00 PM on Thursday, December 13th. Guests will gather in the hospital’s Leahy Conference Center, 157 Union Street, for holiday refreshments and festive holiday songs will be performed by local school children.

The Tree of Light will be decorated with angels, shining stars, snowflakes and twinkling lights. The lights and decorations are gifts from patients, family members, employees and friends of the hospital.

This year, Kathy Denio, a former Marlborough Hospital employee will light the tree. For more information about purchasing an ornament or to learn more about the 12th Annual Tree of Light, contact Ellen Carlucci, vice president of development at Marlborough Hospital at 508-486-5807.
Gestures of kindness

Marlborough Early Childhood Center paraeducator Jennifer Vittum went home from work recently and told her daughters about a co-worker’s efforts to help victims of Hurricane Sandy. Vittum’s daughters told their friends, and one week later, nine handmade fleece blankets were contributed to the district’s relief effort.

Compassion for the people who were victimized by the storm’s devastation has been evident throughout city schools and at the district office. “We wanted to do some type of community service,” said Whitcomb School seventh-grader Erin Doherty. “We heard about the disaster and wanted to help.”

Doherty and friends, Ana and Merideth Vittum, Kirsten LaCroix, Heidi DiPersio, Sarah Zagzoug, Marissa Caissie and Catherine Duross picked out the fleece themselves and spent several hours together making the blankets. They tagged each blanket with a card bearing the following message, “A small gesture of kindness, from our hearts to yours. Love, seventh grade friends from Marlborough, MA.”

Shown in top picture Early Childhood Center paraeducator Kristy Nasuti crawls into the back of Ellen Barbosa’s car to help her pile in the donations. In lower picture are Kirsten LaCroix, Erin Doherty, Heidi DiPersio, Sarah Zagzoug, Ana Vittum and Marissa Caissie with their blankets.
The birth of this little girl in April of 2009 proved to be the catalyst in a series of amazing events that would forever change the lives of her mother and father, and the foster family that cared for her.

GOD’S FINGERPRINTS EVERYWHERE?

Astounding sequence of events seemingly orchestrated from above

By Bill Burger
Contributing Writer

When Chenelle LeDay was born in April of 2009, there was neither fanfare nor a large contingent of family on hand to greet her birth. She was just one of several children born in the area that day. No one could have known that Chenelle’s arrival would signal a chain of astounding, even miraculous events that would literally transform the lives of her parents, while deeply and forever touching the lives of others in the process.

All those involved are convinced that God’s fingerprints are found throughout this saga, with some events inexplicable apart from his direct intervention and each key player being influenced dramatically but in different ways. Chenelle’s mother, Charlene Owens, always had a simple desire to feel loved and accepted in her own family, a desire that went unfulfilled. For twenty years, she tried to satisfy that yearning with drugs and alcohol and men. Today, she has been clean for three years and is in a committed relationship with Chenelle’s dad, Jerry LeDay. Together the couple is raising their little girl in a loving home. Most remarkably, Charlene, Jerry and Chenelle are supported by an extended family, including a couple they perceived as enemies only a few years ago. Charlene said, “God blessed me with the family that I always wanted.”

In her childhood family, Charlene did not feel loved or accepted, nor did she receive much parental discipline and instruction. She was born in 1971 in Worcester, Massachusetts, and lived with her father who provided a stable home despite being a functional alcoholic and marijuana user.

When Charlene was nine-years-old, her father was murdered. Charlene’s mother was raising her younger sister in another home at the time of the murder, but placed Charlene in an orphanage instead of taking her in. Her mother changed her mind only after learning that she would inherit tens of thousands of dollars for accepting Charlene into her home. Charlene’s mother had a lifelong addiction to cigarettes, alcohol, and drugs. She burned through the inheritance money feeding her addiction, and never did provide an emotionally or financially stable home for her daughters. She passed away, alone, in a local hospital last year. Charlene remembers now with tears, “I always wanted mom to love me.”

Charlene turned to alcohol and drugs as a teenager, repeating the substance abuse of both her parents. She alternated between periods of drug use and sobriety, with time spent in jail and various treatment programs, always followed by a drug abuse relapse. She used relationships with men to seek comfort, and gave birth to children...
who were taken away by the state when she failed drug tests.

In August 2003, Charlene gave birth to a baby boy, Julius, and as a result, met a family who would be instrumental in her eventual recovery. At the time, she was married to Julius’ father and was being monitored with drug testing due to her previous drug use and loss of children to foster care. Eventually, her husband left her and Charlene failed a drug test, and Julius was taken away when he was fifteen-months-old.

She was despondent over losing Julius, continued her downward spiral of living, and was eventually arrested and sentenced to prison where she served five months before being paroled and sent to the Spectrum residential drug treatment center in Westborough. Soon after Charlene’s sentencing, her husband was arrested for a variety of offenses and is still incarcerated today.

Meanwhile, Julius had passed through six foster homes in the nine months since leaving Charlene. In July 2005, Julius arrived at his final foster home with Jim and Linda Ash who had a biological son, David, age five, and were seeking to adopt a child. As the adoption process proceeded, social workers took Julius on monthly visits to Charlene in prison. During one of the visits, Charlene asked if she could meet Linda. Linda was somewhat apprehensive but consented. Charlene was impressed and grateful that Linda cared enough to visit. Reluctant as she was at first, Linda said she “felt there would be a special bond” between her and Charlene, and that God was calling her family to love and support Charlene.

Jim’s and Linda’s adoption of Julius became official in November 2006, with the adoption agreement specifying that Charlene would have two visits per year with Julius. Jim and Linda told Charlene they were open to building a relationship with her as long as she was not using drugs. However, Charlene had infrequent contact with the Ashes for the next three years.

Charlene left the Spectrum rehabilitation program and resumed her drug use. She moved to Worcester and lived in a series of apartments and shared homes with Jerry, whom Charlene had first met years before. Their relationship, at that time, was based primarily on getting high together.

Charlene tried to kick her heroine addiction by starting a methadone treatment program. While on the program, she became pregnant with Chenelle. Jerry continued his drug use, and about halfway through the pregnancy, Charlene started using again. She felt guilty about endangering her unborn child and repeating the behavior that caused her to lose her previous children, but the power of addiction had a stranglehold on her.

Chenelle was born in April 2009. Her arrival would bring Jim and Linda back into the picture when the state called, first to ask them to consider foster care, then eventually asked them to consider adoption.

The Ashes had previously agreed that they were beyond the age of adopting a baby or very young child, though they were reluctantly open to short term foster care. They consented to caring for Chenelle until a permanent home could be found. For the Ashes, there was nothing further to discuss or consider, or so it seemed.

Linda was excited about the prospect of caring for the baby. Jim was apprehensive. Chenelle was born with drugs in her system, and the early time of caring for her was very difficult, especially for Linda who shouldered the load almost every night. Jim recalled, “Linda’s caring and love for Chenelle was amazing.” Jim and Linda’s church family, Grace Baptist Church, offered tremendous support in a variety of ways to help with the transition process.

Several weeks after Chenelle was born, the state inquired about permanent adoption. Linda was exhausted. Jim agonized over the decision. They discussed his myriad of concerns about adopting an infant at this point in their life - his age (52), their family financial situation and potential effects on their children David and Julius. All seemed clear indicators to Jim that they were not well suited for adoption.

Reflecting back on that time, Jim said, “I was dead-set against adopting and was very angry that I even had to consider an issue I thought we had resolved earlier.” On the other hand, the prospect of letting Chenelle go was difficult to fathom now that she was part of the family. Nevertheless, his conflicted emotions were tempered by the belief Chenelle would be better off with a younger couple.

Time passed and the Ashes struggled over the decision until one day something astonishing happened. Jim had committed to spending an hour on Monday mornings in the prayer room at Grace Baptist. One Monday in early July, with the family being pressed by the state to make a decision, Jim began his time in the prayer room asking God for guidance.

His mind was filled with emotion and it was difficult to concentrate so he decided to read from Scripture to settle down. He had no particular place in mind to read until the Gospel of Mark, chapter ten, popped into his head. He had no recollection of what was in that chapter but it seemed as good as any place to read.

But just as he picked up his Bible to begin, Jim glanced over at a bookcase to his left and there among many traditional Bibles, sat a book called “The Way.” Bibles come in various translations, all pretty much similar, but Jim had never opened The Way translation before. He placed his own Bible on a table and commenced to read from Mark chapter ten in The Way.

Jim was a bit taken back when he came upon a passage in which Jesus talked about children. Just minutes earlier, Jim had been asking God for help in deciding whether to keep Chenelle or send her away. It seemed more than a coincidence that, among all the chapters he could have picked to read, he ended up in a chapter with specific instruction from Jesus about children. As translated in Mark, chapter ten, of The Way, Jesus said, “The kingdom of God belongs to such as these, DO NOT SEND THEM AWAY.”

The words jumped out at him like a bolt of lightning. Do not send the children away, as in, do not send Chenelle away? The shock had as much to do with the
God’s fingerprints everywhere?
Continued from previous page

words as it did with something else he noticed immediately.

As he was reading the text, and before he came to Jesus’ quote, Jim recognized the pas-
sage. It was a familiar story. The crowds were pressing in on Jesus and his disciples were pushing them back. Jesus was particular-
ly indignant at how his disciples were treating the children, but Jesus’ response as translated in Jim’s Bible was quite different from the quote as published in The Way. In Jim’s Bible, the pas-
 sage read, “Let the little children come to me and do not hinder them.”

To Jim, the distinction was huge. The phrase “do not hinder them” from coming to Jesus would have had little effect on Jim given the context of his pending decision about Chenelle. But Jesus saying, “Do not send (the children) away,” had very different meaning and he considered it to be a direct answer to prayer.

His sense that God was speaking to him directly was strength-
ened when he went online and could find no Bible that came close to translating that passage the same as The Way. Out of all the chapters in the Bible, he just “happened” to pick that chapter to read that morning, and just “happened” to pick up The Way for the first time in his life. The only Bible with that particular translation. Jim was sure it was no random coincidence.

As he drove away that morn-
ing, something else came to mind that for some reason had escaped him up until that point. It was back in April when mem-
bers of the church were asked to sign up for an hour a week in the prayer room beginning in May. Jim described the weeks and months that followed as the most blessed time of his life. Once he felt the clear call and embraced his unexpected role as an older-
than-average-dad, he said, “It was like pure joy, Chenelle was such a blessing in our lives. I cannot begin to describe what a wonderful time we had together as a family during those months,” a reality that made what happened later all the more painful.

The Ashes were unaware that shortly after Chenelle had come to live with them, a series of unexpected developments began to take place in Charlene’s life that would ultimately put them on a collision course. The first such development came while Charlene was in jail. A cellmate’s mother, a complete stranger, bailed her out after a few days and Charlene went back to Spectrum. She became fully engaged in her rehabilitation for the first time in her life. Her relations-
ship with Jerry also started to strengthen, as they shared a goal beyond their own short-term desires – reunification with Chenelle.

Meanwhile, Jim and Linda did not know that Charlene and Jerry intended to be reunited with Chenelle, and they did not have even the slightest thought that there was a real chance they might lose their little girl. But they were in the midst of an in between time, the period after a child is placed in a home but before the adoption is legally permanent. It can be a time marked by a roller coaster of emotions and events. One devel-
opment that took them by sur-
prise happened in July at Grace Baptist when Charlene arrived unexpectedly for a Sunday ser-
vice. Up to this point, Charlene did not know where the Ashes lived or where they attended church. She ended up at Grace Baptist

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The Spirit of Christmas

TRIP TO CHURCH SAVED HER LIFE

By Amanda O’Coin
Contributing Writer

People may go to church for varying reasons and have very dif-
ferent experiences depending on where they go, but for Linda Papile, her faithfulness in attending Sunday services literally saved her life.

Linda and her husband, Lou, were experiencing life to the full. Lou is a lifelong Marlborough resi-
dent and Linda moved to the area sometime in the early 1980s. After more than 26 years of marriage, four children, and one grandchild, they were living what most would consider the “American Dream” until one day two-plus years ago when the dream turned into a night-
mare.

On that fateful day, Linda Papile awoke with the Sunday sunrise just like any other day. At some point during her morning routine she started to notice that something wasn’t right.

She had started to feel sick with symptoms that were very similar to that of a heart attack including lockjaw and chest pain. Linda reg-
ularly attended Sunday services at the First United Methodist Church in Marlborough and, though she contemplated staying home, she decided to shrug it off, despite the objections of her sister who was living with her at the time.

Linda made it to church but not far into the service her condition worsened, and she decided to leave. She was almost out the door when the unthinkable happened – Linda collapsed. Nearby witnesses rushed to the scene to help in any way they could. One woman, Diane Woods, immediately started CPR on Linda while another franti-
cally dialed 911.

EMT’s arrived soon after Linda collapsed and managed to eventual-
ly get her stabilized enough to be able to transport her to Marlborough Hospital. In the

continued on next page

Linda and Lou Papile, shown at their Marlborough home, now with a greater appreciation for life.
She was on death’s doorstep  
Continued from previous page

meantime, Lou rushed to the church and was now in the ambulance seeking answers as to what had happened to his wife. He was told that Linda was rushed to the closest hospital where doctors performed a nerve block that completely crushed one of her arteries.

Not long after arriving at Marlborough Hospital, Linda was flown to UMASS Worcester where she was admitted into the Intensive Care Unit. When Lou inquired about his wife’s chance of survival, he was given a heartbreaking answer of about 30%.

The doctors made efforts but were clearly baffled about what to do. Hours turned into days that turned into weeks without progress as hope diminished. Nobody could figure out why she wasn’t responding to anything that the doctors were doing.

There was a fear that she had suffered brain damage that could be permanent. When Lou stood up and looked into his wife’s eyes, all he could see was emptiness. He felt overwhelmed and sometimes frustrated because nobody seemed to have any answers.

Just when all hope had seemed to be lost, a neurologist, Dr. Jane Morris, became involved in the case. Linda had been taken off of sedation so that her brain function could be examined, but her body began to spasm uncontrollably and an emergency call was placed to the Neurology Department for help. It was merely by chance that Dr. Morris responded to the call as she had no prior connection to the case. Had it been any other doctor, it appears likely Linda would not be alive today.

Upon observing Linda, Dr. Morris was not convinced that brain damage was the cause of her non-responsive condition. Based on prior research in a textbook, Dr. Morris believed she was seeing obvious signs of tetanus, a diagnosis that had never occurred to the many doctors who had been involved with the case up to that point.

Infection begins when the spores enter the body through an injury or wound. The spores release bacteria that spread and make a poison. This poison blocks nerve signals from the spinal cord to the muscles, causing severe muscle spasms. If Linda suffered from tetanus, it could explain why she had the heart attack. This new possible diagnosis gave the family some hope but, unfortunately, there was no specific test to properly diagnose tetanus.

So they searched Linda for cuts and scrapes but didn’t find any which came as no surprise because any cut dating back before the heart attack would have been healed by that point. It wasn’t until a friend of Linda’s who heard about the possibility of tetanus recalled that Linda had, in fact, been cut a few weeks before she collapsed.

With the new information of Linda’s cut, doctors had enough evidence to assume that she did in fact have tetanus. They wasted no time and started to administer the special series of injections. Within a few days, Linda’s eyes were open, and she could move her hands, fingers and toes, and soon, she was on the road to recovery.

Just one week after being diagnosed with tetanus, Linda was out of ICU and on her way to a rehab facility in Westborough, after a tearful (happy tears) departure with staff from the hospital. Once in rehab, Linda continued to get better every day and although the process of getting well would be a long one, Linda was thankful to be alive.

After having been in such a critical medical condition, she needed to re-learn how to do most everything - to walk, talk, eat, swallow – the everyday things that people so often take for granted. Linda was fortunate enough to have a wonderful support system and after four weeks in the rehab, she was finally able to go home.

Upon leaving the rehab, the Papile’s got a call from Dr. Morris. The neurologist had done some further research and reported to Linda that the United States has only 40-50 reported cases of tetanus per year, and that Linda was the first known case in Massachusetts since 1996. The Papiles also learned something else about tetanus: the vast majority of the cases are fatal and are not actually diagnosed until an autopsy is performed.

What are the odds that, by chance, Dr. Morris, would unexpectedly get called to Linda’s room when hope was fading fast, and would recall vividly something she had read in a text book some time earlier? Lou says he believes in God but is not necessarily the church going type like his wife, though he had been a member for some time earlier? He felt overwhelmed and sometimes frustrated because nobody seemed to have any answers.

Just when all hope had seemed to be lost, Lou inquired about Linda’s chance of survival, he was given a heartbreaking answer of about 30%. Lou then asked for a second opinion and was referred to the service. Charlene appreciated the unexpected opportunity and started praying that God would allow her to become part of that church community.

In November 2009, the Ashes were returned to Charlene, Jim and Linda greeted Charlene after the service. Charlene appreciated the unexpected opportunity and started praying that God would allow her to become part of that church community.

As for the unusual circumstances that saved Linda, it was determined to take whatever actions necessary to keep Charlene. When the December court date arrived, he was planning legal action to halt the process and even courtroom disobedience to turn the proceedings upside down if necessary. He was also poised to engage the media, any and all media that might take up what he believed to be an injustice in the making.

On the day of the court hearing, Jim found a place well away from the courtroom and waited alone, praying for God’s help to keep Chenele. Unaware of what Jim was planning, Charlene just happened to walk by and sat down beside him. An impromptu, private discussion in a courthouse between two adversaries in a custody case is highly unusual. In this case, it proved to be another seemingly God-ordained moment that altered the course of events to follow.

As he exchanged conversation with Charlene, a deep sense of compassion for her came over Jim. He did not hear a voice but he clearly felt God was telling him, “Yes, I love Chenele, but I love Charlene also.” Jim felt God was telling him not to wage a war that might potentially destroy Charlene, in order to hold onto Chenele. In essence, he was hearing the same message his wife had heard – he still and do not fight.

About an hour later, they were all in court together. Neither Jim nor Linda said one word as the judge ruled that Chenele be returned to Charlene. “Sitting silent in that moment was maybe the hardest thing I have ever done in my life,” said Jim.

One month later, Chenele moved in with Charlene at Spectrum. Linda and Jim and their two boys were heartbroken. David, age nine, was despondent to a point that they kept him home from school for three days. Jim and Linda felt the grief of losing a child, and the added ongoing anguish of worrying Chenele might be at risk. But, they believed and told Charlene that they were called to support and love her and Chenele forever.

Charlene completed the Women’s and Children’s program at Spectrum and decided to continue her drug rehabilitation at the residential program at The Hart House in Tewksbury for four months. She later lived in Lowell for a time before moving to Worcester where she was reunited with Jerry.

During this first year after Chenele was returned to Charlene, Jim and Linda would always offer, and Charlene would sometimes accept, a ride on Sundays to services at Grace Baptist, regardless of where Charlene was living at the time. Slowly, Charlene was beginning to believe that Jim and Linda were genuine in their love for her and Chenele.

On Christmas Eve of 2010, Jim drove to Worcester to pick up Charlene and
Drinking on both sides of his love. There was a history of providing constant support and, in a large family, with his mother going alongside Charlene. That is part of a broader transformation that Jerry has undergone, unknown to state officials on her behalf. For Jerry, by working on the physical, mental, and emotional parts, the best of all Christmas gifts they could ever have received.

In early 2011, Charlene and Jerry lost the apartment in Worcester and became homeless. For several months, they lived in a shelter, which was a single room at a motel in Framingham. A state program was identified that would subsidize their rent, if they found an apartment. Tonya James from Grace Baptist made an apartment in Marlborough available and volunteers from the church helped clean, paint, and furnish the apartment.

Just before moving in, Charlene was told that the program had exhausted its funding and they could not move into their new home. Jim intervened by calling Tina Brooks, the state’s highest housing official, who told him the state could not help subsidize the apartment even though the government was already being billed more than four times as much to pay for the hotel room/shelter. Jim then stirred up a news-internet-social media-email frenzy that led to a sudden remedy to the problem with help from Senator Jamie Eldridge’s office. A few days after Brooks told Jim nothing could be done, Charlene, Jerry, and Chenelle moved into their new home.

Charlene could not believe that so many people had helped her, by working on the physical apartment and reaching out to state officials on her behalf. For Jerry, the move provided an additional blessing. Unknown to him before he moved, his two teenage daughters from a previous relationship lived right around the corner. Jerry now sees his daughters regularly and has a good relationship with them.

That is part of a broader transformation that Jerry has undergone alongside Charlene.

Jerry was raised in Louisiana in a large family, with his mother providing constant support and love. There was a history of drinking on both sides of his family, and Jerry lost several uncles to alcoholism-related deaths. Jerry’s father drank heavily, and Jerry started drinking as a teenager.

Every Sunday, Jerry’s mom would take the family, without Jerry’s father, to church. One Sunday when Jerry was sixteen-years-old, he remembers, “My father put on a suit and went to church with us for the first day in his life. Never drank again. He always told me that I could stop drinking also, just like him.”

Jerry joined the military and was stationed overseas, then moved to Massachusetts. He began abusing drugs as well as alcohol and was later convicted of robbery and served nine years in prison at Walpole. After his release, Jerry was clean for seven years, during which he held a good job, made a home with his girlfriend and started raising his two daughters. However, Jerry did not stay away from drugs, and alternated between time in jail and periods of sobriety. Even during the most difficult times, Jerry would frequently call his mother who would tell him, “You must give your life to God.”

When Jerry started living with Charlene in 2008, he was determined to show her that she deserved better treatment than she had received over the years. Jerry felt joy when Chenelle was born, however, that was overshadowed by guilt from influencing Charlene to use drugs while pregnant and sorrow at the damage the drug use had done to baby Chenelle. Jerry said, “I felt like a worthless person because I was not doing what I was supposed to do. My mom had taught me right from wrong, so I had no excuse.”

Jerry’s feelings and behavior started to change after he moved back with Charlene in late 2010, and they committed to raise Chenelle together, sober. Jerry joined Charlene in attending church with Jim and Linda, and going to their house afterward for lunch. After first seeing Jim as an enemy who was trying to take away his baby, Jerry began to spend time with Jim. They bicycled together and talked about faith, family, and the responsibilities of a husband and father, all of which reminded Jerry of the instruction he had received from his own father years before.
Work inside or outside

There are always a wide variety of Second Saturday projects to choose from each month, including tasks that are performed indoors and outside. Young children enjoy the craft-related projects, and in many cases, entire families take part.

Shown in top picture (l-r), Andrew Clark, Beth English and Dave Lovecchio crafting door hangers for seniors during the November outreach.

In lower picture (l-r), Carolyn Egan and Isaac Cherian are shown preparing food for soup kitchen meals. Second Saturday volunteers have prepared literally thousands of meals over the years for homeless people and others suffering from economic hardship.
God’s fingerprints everywhere?
Continued from page 16

In the spring of 2011, Jim invited Jerry to go with him to the men’s retreat organized by the church. Jerry’s experience there confirmed for him that he would never use drugs again. Jerry said, “I gave my life to God. Now, I put everything in his hands. I thank God every day for today and ask him how he can use me.” Jerry’s parents were excited to hear the news. “And I was happy that they did not have to worry about me anymore,” said Jerry.

When Jerry began looking for a regular job, Jim helped him put together his resume and began talking to business owners he knew with hopes of finding a willing employer. It seemed like a pretty tall order because Jerry has some serious holes in his resume.

Jim spoke to Sherry Bouffard during a business visit to Precision Auto Body one day, and inquired on Jerry’s behalf, literally as an afterthought. He did not think that Jerry’s skills matched with Sherry’s needs at the auto body shop and was already out the door on the way to his car when he suddenly felt compelled to turn around, walk back in and ask if Sherry was hiring. Sherry called Jerry immediately and he started work that week.

Sherry initially expected Jerry to work at Precision as a carpenter only for a short time to help remodel their shop. However, she soon realized that Jerry was “honest, and a very hard worker, who would do anything for us.” Jerry has now been employed for almost a year and a half with responsibilities for property maintenance, carpentry and work in the car detailing department.

Sherry commented, “Precision has hired other workers who have come through difficult life circumstances. We find they don’t stop when faced with problems at work, and are able to work through challenging issues here as well.”

As Jerry was settling into his job, Charlene was continuing to make positive strides in her recovery and gives much credit and thanks for that to Kathy Melkien who has been Charlene’s AA sponsor, friend and mentor for about three years. Kathy calls Charlene every day and accompanies her to AA meetings three times a week. Kathy has also rescued Charlene from dangerous situations and has been ready to talk when Charlene is struggling. “Kathy has helped change my life,” said Charlene. “God sent her to me.” Charlene relies on and supports the women in her AA group, meeting them for breakfast or coffee and being available anytime to talk if one of the women has a craving, temptation, or crisis. Now that Charlene has been clean for three years, she is able to counsel women as part of the Peer Communicating program at Spectrum in Worcester. This week, she began counseling a group of pregnant women who are at risk for drug abuse during their pregnancy. Charlene said, “It’s about giving back what was freely given to me.”

Charlene is also dedicated to becoming the best parent she can for Chenelle. Linda has been impressed by the love that Charlene shows Chenelle, and by the questions that Charlene asks in seeking information and guidance.

Reflecting back on the experiences of the last few years, the members of this unique family focused on different blessings, with each recognizing God’s hand in their remarkable story.

For Charlene, Kathy is more than her recovery sponsor and Jim and Linda are more than the foster parents who cared for baby Chenelle when she could not. Charlene loves all of them as part of her own special family, the family that she has always wanted.

Jerry said, “Jim and Linda, David and Julius have been such a blessing to us. I told Jim and Linda that they will always be part of Chenelle’s life. I want to see David, Julius, and Chenelle all grow up together, to see what they will become.”

Looking back at the past three years, Linda said she feels “an overwhelming sense of awe at God’s plan,” and added, “I am so very, very proud of Charlene.”

Jim commented, “I do not understand why God chooses to use people to do his work here on Earth because, quite frankly, we make a mess of it more often than not. But when you hear clearly and obey, even if the ‘instructions’ seem to make no sense, I’ve learned that you may well find yourself right smack in the middle of a miracle.”

Outreach serves people in need
Continued from page 16

dow washing. Speaking of the kindness she has received from people she did not know before they arrived at her doorstep, Carbone said, “Every one of them who came was wonderful. They were lovely. It has been a big help. I can’t say enough about them.”

During the fall of last year, Carbone said she was scheduled for a Second Saturday visit on a day that turned out to be miserable, rainy and cold. She assumed the visit would be cancelled but recalls, “They came anyway. I was so amazed. They are marvelous people and they do a lot of good.”

Mulvey was equally appreciative. “It’s so easy to get stuck in your own life and not realize how many people need help,” said Galvao. “Eliza Galvao, a senior at Algonquin High School, has been recalled painting a bathroom at a women’s shelter. It seemed like no big deal to her at first until she realized that a freshly painted room was a special thing for the women who lived there, as they were generally not accustomed to nice things that many take for granted.

The beauty of the Second Saturday effort is that it provides the infrastructure needed to effectively mobilize people willing to serve. People are busy and it is hard to find time for community service. Additionally, the “overhead” of volunteering, such as identifying manageable projects, attending organizational meetings, and committing large blocks of time, often discourages people from volunteer work. The Second Saturday program is a big success because it has effectively eliminated those volum-
The feeling is mutual

The common theme evident when volunteers and recipients are asked about Second Saturday is that the benefit is mutual. People in need are astounded at the care they receive and those who do the work sometimes find themselves making new friends while usually finishing each morning with lifted spirits.

Shown in top picture (l-r), Maddie Cecelya and Angela Bobe had fun piling leaves into bags at Dolores Mulvey’s home in Marlborough. “I couldn’t say enough nice things about the kids who helped,” said Mulvey.

In lower picture, John Dolan (left) and Bob Harvey had the leaf blowers working at Louise Carbone’s home last month. Harvey has participated in virtually every Second Saturday outreach since the program’s inception more than five years ago.

As Harvey noted when asked why he has faithfully invested his time every month, “It’s what God wants us to do and you feel his presence when you help people like this.”
Outreach serves people in need
Continued from page 18

teer hurdles. As a result, the program has attracted all kinds of people including many who have never done anything quite like it before.

Logistically speaking, however, the whole undertaking is far from simple and requires a huge amount of coordinating behind the scenes, someone to make the whole thing run. In this case, Marlborough’s Lynn Faust is the glue that holds the outreach together. Through her tireless efforts, projects are identified and scoped out before volunteers are given their marching orders on any given Saturday.

While Second Saturday is primarily fueled by individuals and families who offer a few hours of time each month, local companies have also helped out by either donating or discounting needed products and/or services. One such business is Stevie’s Eatery at 222 East Main Street, near Ocean State Job Lot.

Owner Steve Dembro, assisted in the kitchen by Becki Tilly, has donated considerable time and service in preparing meat for soup kitchens that are supported by the Second Saturday outreach. Last month, Dembro and Tilly prepared chicken for more than two-hundred meal servings.

Mulvey made a special point to offer gratitude for Dembro. After a recent hospital stay, she took advantage of Stevie’s “five for five” plan, five home-cooked meals for five dollars each. Mulvey was still weak and limited in her mobility so Dembro delivered her meals for free, straight into her kitchen refrigerator. “The meals were absolutely wonderful,” said Mulvey. “Steve was very low key. I was so impressed with him and what he does for people.”

Monnick Supply, also located in the same plaza as Stevie’s, is another local business that has offered special consideration and assistance for Second Saturday projects. Faust noted that Monnick has been a valued partner in helping with painting projects in particular.

With more than five years worth of Saturdays already in the books, the program shows no signs of slowing down and may actually turn up a notch in the months ahead. There has been some discussion recently among Second Saturday leaders to become more proactive in connecting area churches purposefully together in order to better serve the community. As Harvey noted when asked why he has faithfully invested his time every month, “It’s what God wants us to do and you feel his presence when you help people like this.”

Anyone with an interest in helping out can do so simply by showing up ready to work at Grace Baptist at 8:30 AM, December 8th, January 12th, or any Second Saturday thereafter. Those who may have a need or know of someone who could use help, should contact Faust by email to lynn.faust@verizon.net.

Raiano Gardens and Greenhouses

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- Wreaths
- Door Swags
- Cemetery Baskets

All Home Grown!

508-485-0943
280 South Street, Marlboro
Open 7 days a week
HER FAITH REVEALED AN UNEXPECTED PATH TO RECONCILIATION

By Jim Ash
Publisher

It was just after Christmas about seven years ago and Marjorie Carlson was out of a job and unsure about what would come next. At age 69, she felt her prospects for employment were not the best. She had no idea that the unwanted time off from work would prove to open the door of opportunity for what she believes was a God-ordained, miraculous family reconciliation she thought would never happen.

More than thirty years earlier, Marjorie had become involved in a dispute between the oldest of her three sisters, Eleanor, and her mother. Marjorie had hoped to serve as a peacemaking mediator to smooth over a family problem. Instead, her involvement led to a complete breakdown in her relationship with her mother.

To this day, Marjorie still does not understand how her attempt at intervention produced such a rift. She labored in different ways over many years to make amends but never with even the slightest bit of success until, as she says, “I turned it over to God.”

Marjorie had not regularly set foot into a church until her early 20s when she decided some type of church-going experience would be good for her children. Looking back in time, she considered herself to be a Christian, but there was no real depth to her faith. It was more of a superficial once-a-week thing. “I was a Christian on Sunday but I wasn’t really believing it,” she said.

She moved to Marlborough shortly after the rift with her mom began and has lived in the city ever since. She has been a regular attendee at the Church of the Nativity in Northborough for more than three decades where her understanding of Christianity and commitment to her faith has grown slowly over time. “Some people may have a defining moment or a mountaintop experience they can point to,” she observed, “but it was not that way for me.”

As she was growing in her faith and living normal life in Marlborough, the disconnect with her mom who lived in southeastern Massachusetts was like an open wound, a gaping hole that needed filling.

In the year that followed the initial conflict, Marjorie made attempts to bridge the divide but her mom was non-responsive and she had a particularly unpleasant Christmas visit to end the year. Marjorie’s daughter was married the following February and her mother was unwilling to participate in the wedding. Marjorie described that day as a “last straw” of sorts but she remained faithful in sending birthday, Mother’s Day and Christmas cards every year, always with the message, “I love you” to her mom, always without reply.

At one point, about fifteen years into the rift, Marjorie learned that her mother was going to be at a craft show in the Auburn Mall, so she dropped in for a visit and was stunned when her mom acted as if she did not know who she was.

During earlier visits to family events, it was always made clear to Marjorie that she was not welcome. The Auburn Mall encounter was worse. It was as if her mother said, “You are not my daughter.”

Later, as many, many years passed, and her Christian faith grew stronger, Marjorie began to realize that reconciliation is a work of God’s Holy Spirit and not something she could orchestrate by word or deed. “I rely on God totally in all my life now,” said Marjorie, “and I do try to listen and do try to be obedient. All the times I tried to reconcile, I was operating on my own strength. It was me doing what I thought I should do. I never consulted with God to seek his guidance or his help.”

And so, with the support of people from church, she began to pray for a God-ordained opportunity and eventually it came, shortly after she was laid off from her job seven years ago.

Marjorie learned that her mom was in rehab after a leg amputation due to diabetes and she felt God was leading her to go for a visit. Having been rebuffed so many times before, she was reluctant to risk rejection again.

Unwilling to go without a carefully thought out plan, she then spent considerable time rehearsing in her mind what to say and how to reply to comments she imagined her mom might make. Over and over again, she would think through the pending visit until she felt God clearly say to her, “I did not ask you to speak. I just told you to go.”

It was not an audible voice, just a clear message she was sure came from God who was reminding her that reconciliation is a work of his Spirit. Her carefully chosen words were not needed, nor would they be helpful. Clear as the message was, she still found it counter-intuitive and very difficult to follow God’s directive. “I don’t shut up very easily,” she said with a laugh. But she chose to obey anyway.

With her instructions firmly in hand, she stepped out in faith and went for the planned visit. Upon arriving, Marjorie simply said, “Hello,” to her mom then sat quietly at the end of her bed while other family members who were there engaged in ongoing conversation. After about a half hour, and no dialogue whatsoever with her mom, Marjorie approached and kissed her mother and said, “I’ll be back to visit in a couple of days. I love you, mom.”

As she turned to leave, her mom spoke three words Marjorie never thought she would ever hear. “I love you,” her mom replied.

More than thirty years had passed with countless hurtful moments, rejection upon rejection, and no hope. Then Marjorie turned to prayer and received the most unusual of instructions to go visit her mom and be silent. She obeyed in faith and her relationship with her mother was fully restored on the spot.

Looking back at circumstances of the past on that day or after, no rehearsing of the original conflict. From that day forward and every day since, it has been as if there was never a problem in the first place. No scars, no carryover pain, just the joy of reconciliation.

Marjorie has been asked how she could move on without at least some verbal review and resolution of the events that came between her and her mom. To this she replied, “I don’t need an answer and I don’t need an explanation. I feel God called me to reconcile and that is what happened.”

Because she had been laid off from her job, she had plenty of time to make the long drive and visit frequently. “We would sit there days on end, week after week, just the family talking and laughing,” she said.

Looking back at circumstances that she is convinced were orchestrated by a loving God, Marjorie reflected, “Sometimes you have to lose a job in order to be free to do what He wants you to do. It is a totally amazing thing what the Lord has done.”

Shown in picture are four generations reconnected through reconciliation, Constance in front with (1-r) Victoria, Judy, and Marjorie in back.
Christians and church attendance mean different things to different people, with many missing the full picture. To those who follow the Bible, Scripture clearly indicates God desires people to participate in an authentic faith community and practice real Christianity. The following excerpt from a sermon delivered by Grace Baptist Church Pastor Marc Pena serves to illustrate that point.

To those who are Christians what does faith look like in our lives? Is it more than just content though content is important. There are certain doctrinal truths that are central to our faith and essential to the Gospel.

We believe that Jesus is God come to the flesh. We believe he died on the cross and three days later he rose from the dead, giving us new life. He purchased the grace of God for us, forgiveness for our sins.

We believe the central tenets of our Christian faith but faith is more than just content, theological content. It also has to be conviction. In other words, what we believe in our heads and in our hearts should find expression in how we live our lives.

If faith is real, if it is genuine, if it is Biblical, it is going to find expression in every area of our life - how we speak to our children, how we speak to our spouses, how we work, how we live our lives.

The goal of this directory is to offer useful information to those people interested in partaking of the Christian experience. The intent is to develop profiles that fully reflect each church’s mission and goals. The information here was compiled from direct submissions to the Main Street Journal or obtained on church websites. To help in the process, churches are invited to submit change requests and updates by email to news@msjnews.com or call 508-460-1166.

Chapel of the Cross
Where Faith Meets Life
www.chapelofthecross.com
508-870-0001
160 Flanders Rd.
Westborough, MA 01581

Weekly Worship:
Sunday - 9:30 AM, 11:00 AM
Christmas Eve:
Worship: 4:30 PM, 6:00 PM

Church of the Nativity
ordinary people...Extraordinary Life
www.churchofthenativity.org
508-393-3146
45 Howard St.
Northborough, MA 01532

Nativity represents the three streams of classic Anglican Christianity: evangelical, focusing on the witness of the Scriptures to contemporary life and the importance of a deep commitment to Jesus Christ as crucified Savior and risen Lord; catholic, upholding the historic emphasis on the sacraments and the incarnation of Christ transforming the very nature of human life; and charismatic, recognizing the power of the Holy Spirit in the church, gathered and dispersed in worship and witness. Anglicanism at its core is generously orthodox, thoroughly biblical, and liturgically beautiful.

Worship:
Saturday - 5:00 PM
Sunday - 7:45 AM, 10:00 AM
Christmas Eve:
Service - 4:00 PM
Candlelight Service - 8:00 PM
Midnight Service - 11:00 PM
Christmas Day:
Quiet Service 10:00 AM

ConnectingPoint Church
Gospel. Community. Mission
www.connectingpointchurch.org
508-396-1121
Sunday services held at
Marlborough Middle School
25 Union St.
Marlborough, MA

At ConnectingPoint, the center of our faith is the redemptive work Jesus did for us by dying on the cross for the sins of all human beings and rising from the dead in victory over sin, death and Satan. This is called the Gospel (good news). We believe that Jesus came to save all people (John 3:16). God freely offers his grace and forgiveness through faith in Jesus Christ (Ephesians 2:8-9). We believe that families should worship together. On Sundays, our children are involved in the praise and worship time. Your children will experience a fun, faithful kids message during the worship service that is connected to what they will learn Sunday morning.

Worship:
Sunday - 10:00 AM
Except December 23rd
Christmas Eve:
Worship service - 5:30 PM
Christmas Day:
Caroling at nursing home.
Call for time and location.

First Federated Church
Your Community Church
www.thefirstfederatedchurch.org
978-362-9207
200 Central St.
Hudson, MA 01749

As a Church of Jesus Christ, we will endeavor by example and effort to draw persons into a saving relationship with Christ and into the fellowship of His Church. We will continually seek to demonstrate our love for Christ through loving service to each other and to the world beyond our doors. Acknowledging Jesus Christ to be our Savior and Lord, and accepting the Holy Scriptures as our rule of faith and practice, we covenant with the Lord and with one another, and pledge ourselves in the presence of God to walk together in His holy ways.

Worship:
Sunday - 10:30 AM
Christmas Eve:
Candlelight Service - 7:00 PM

First Church Marlborough
www.firstchurchmarlborough.com
508-485-6297
37 High Street
Marlborough, MA 01752

The mission of First Church in Marlborough (Congregational) is to welcome all to a positive environment for personal and spiritual growth through the worship of God; to foster a caring, friendly and inviting ministry of people who are committed to knowing God, God’s will and the teachings of Jesus Christ; and to reach out to all with faith and love.

Worship:
Sunday - 10:00 AM
Christmas Eve:
Family Service - 6:00 PM
Lessons and Carols - 11:00 PM

First United Methodist Church
www.fumc.bizland.com
508-485-1980
52 Church Street
Marlborough, MA 01752
508-485-1980

It is the mission of First United Methodist Church of Marlborough to provide a place where people feel close to God; to give spiritual help and guidance through worship; to be part of a community of believers; to provide Christian Education for people of all ages; to provide a place for fellowship; to set an example for the community; to continue the word that Christ gave to his disciples; to preach the gospel; and to be disciples.

Worship:
Sunday - 11:00 AM

Grace Baptist Church
Contemporary, Christ-centered Worship
www.gracehudson.org
978-562-8550
353 River Rd.
Hudson, MA 01749

The purpose of Grace Baptist Church is to bring glory to God through Jesus Christ, by the power of the Holy Spirit, in fulfilling the Great Commission (Matthew 28:18-20). Grace Baptist Church seeks to benefit the people of the
Greater Hudson and Marlborough area by providing opportunities to discover God's love and His purpose for their lives.

Weekly Worship:
Sunday - 9:00 AM and 10:45 AM

Christmas Eve:
Family 'Glow Stick' Service - 5:00 PM
Fellowship with refreshments - 6:00 PM
Candlelight Service - 7:00 PM

Holy Trinity Anglican Church
www.holytrinitymarlborough.org
508-481-8493
52 Church Street
Marlborough, MA 01752

French Hill Chapel
469 Lincoln Street
Marlborough, MA 01752

At Holy Trinity and French Hill Chapel, our goals are: to call all persons to repentance and salvation by grace through faith in Jesus Christ; to proclaim, preach and teach, with authority and conviction, the Good News of Jesus Christ, the Gospel of life and salvation, leading persons into a living faith and trust in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior; to unite persons of faith to the life, ministry, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ through the saving waters of holy baptism and to continually nourish this new life through Spirit-filled ministry, Christian fellowship, preaching, teaching and worship, and above all, by partaking regularly of the body and blood of Jesus Christ in the Lord's Supper; and to enable persons, through Word and Sacrament, to become partakers in the very life of God: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

Services – French Hill Chapel:
Monday - 8:00 AM Mass
Tuesday - 6:40 PM prayer
Tuesday - 7:00 PM Mass
Wednesday – 8:00 AM Mass
Thursday – 8:00 AM Mass
Friday - 8:00 AM Mass
Saturday – 5:00 PM Mass

Services - Holy Trinity Chapel:
Sunday - 7:30 AM, 9:00 AM Masses
Sunday – 8:30 AM prayer

Greater Grace Christian Fellowship
www.ggcfmarlboro.org
508-460-1541
187 Pleasant St.
Marlborough MA 01752

Greater Grace Christian Fellowship is a non-denominational Christian church. Our desire is to bring the Good News of Jesus Christ to all people who are not familiar with its message of salvation. The teaching of the Bible, God’s Word, is a central activity of our church because we believe that the Bible brings real life to the human spirit. The vision of our church is to glorify Christ, our God and Savior, and to make His love known to others. We seek to practice and promote the Christian lifestyle within our sphere of influence.

Worship:
Sunday - 10:30 AM, 6:00 PM
Thursday - 7:30 PM

Immaculate Conception Catholic Parish
www.icmarlboro.org
508-485-0016
11 Prospect Street
Marlborough, MA 01752
508-485-0016

Mass:
Monday-Friday - 7:30 AM
Saturday - 7:30 AM, 4:30 PM
Sunday - 7:30 AM, 9 AM, 11 AM, 5 PM

Spanish Mass:
Sunday - 12:30 PM

Portuguese Mass:
Sunday - 7:00 PM

Metro Church
Dynamic, Relevant, Uplifting Worship
www.metro-church.net
508-229-8824
401 Elm St.
Marlborough, MA 01752

The mission of Metro Church is to provide a welcoming faith community where every person may explore, discover and develop faith in Christ, and friendships with others; to exalt Christ in worship and in word; to inspire excellence in Christian service; to assist believers in discovering and developing their spiritual gifts; to make disciples through teaching and baptizing those who come to faith in Jesus; to engender friendships which strengthen the faith community; to provide cutting-edge ministry to every age demographic; to provide practical aid to the less fortunate; to resource missions work to other parts of the world; to train and mentor leaders to advance the kingdom of God; to resource the ministries of Metro Church to accomplish Christ’s mission in our region and in our world through missions.

Worship:
Sunday - 9:22 AM, 11:22 AM

St. Matthias Catholic Church
www.stsaints.org
508-460-1514
187 Pleasant St.
Northborough, MA 01532

St. Stephen Lutheran Church
www.stsanargyroi.org
508-485-2575
9 Central Street
Marlborough, MA 01752

St. Matthias Catholic Church
www.stsaints.org
508-460-1514
187 Pleasant St.
Marlborough, MA 01752

St. Stephen Lutheran Church
www.ststephenlutheran.com
508-485-9585
537 Bolton Street
Marlborough, MA 01752

St. Stephen Lutheran Church is part of the Assemblies of God fellowship. Our purpose as a church is to make Christ the center of our lives. We believe in the Bible, God’s Word, as the central activity of our church because we believe that it brings real life to the human spirit. The vision of our church is to glorify Christ, our God and Savior, and to make His love known to others. We seek to practice and promote the Christian lifestyle within our sphere of influence.

Worship:
Sunday - 10:15 AM

Christmas Eve:
Candlelight Service - 12:00 Noon

Rice Memorial Baptist Church
A small church with a big God
www.ricebaptistchurch.org
508-393-3481
85 Lincoln St.
Northborough, MA 01532

Rice Memorial Baptist Church joyfully praises, honors and glorifies God through a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. As we build a foundation through God’s word, we nurture one another and love others through outreach and service to the community. We dedicate ourselves to the development of Christ-like character as we witness to the world.

Worship:
Sunday - 12:00 PM

St. Matthias Catholic Church
www.stsaints.org
508-460-1514
187 Pleasant St.
Marlborough, MA 01752

St. Stephen Lutheran Church
www.ststephenlutheran.com
508-485-9585
537 Bolton Street
Marlborough, MA 01752

St. Stephen Lutheran is a community of Jesus followers who love God, love people and make disciples.

Worship:
Sunday - 10:15 AM

Christmas Eve:
Candlelight Service - 12:00 Noon

Rice Memorial Baptist Church
A small church with a big God
www.ricebaptistchurch.org
508-393-3481
85 Lincoln St.
Northborough, MA 01532

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Worship:
Sunday - 11:00 AM

St. Matthias Catholic Church
www.stsaints.org
508-460-1514
187 Pleasant St.
Marlborough, MA 01752

St. Stephen Lutheran Church
www.ststephenlutheran.com
508-485-9585
537 Bolton Street
Marlborough, MA 01752

St. Stephen Lutheran is a community of Jesus followers who love God, love people and make disciples.

Worship:
Sunday - 10:15 AM

Christmas Eve:
Candlelight Service - 12:00 Noon
Join us in being safe in God’s Love, shaped in God’s Image, serving in God’s mission.

Outdoor Living Nativity
Reenactment of the birth of Jesus Saturday, December 15th, 6:30 PM
Rain/Snow date, December 16th
Indoor party following

Weekly Worship:
Saturday Contemporary Mass - 5:00 PM
Sunday Traditional Eucharist - 7:45 AM
Renewal-Praise Eucharist - 10:00 AM

Christmas Eve:
Family Service - 4:00 PM
Candlelight Service - 8:00 PM
Midnight Service - 11:00 PM

Christmas Day:
Christmas Service - 10:00 AM

508-393-3146 • www.churchofthenativity.org
45 Howard St., Northborough, MA 01532