News and information for the May newsletter is due in the church office by **April 21**. You may leave information in the holder located on the wall in the kitchen.

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**From the Minister…**

**CHURCH MEMBERSHIP**

(Part Two)

Last month in this column, I mentioned that the bylaws committee was charged at the Annual Meeting (February 12th) to create appropriate wording for a “one membership list.” This new list would replace the present Active/Inactive membership list which has been the practice of our church for years; I would say probably since the founding (1698)!

**BACKGROUND**

Accurate record keeping has always been very important in Congregational churches; baptisms, weddings, funerals, and church membership. It still is! In the early days of our church, our building was called a “Meeting House.” It was a gathering place for the town’s people, where non-church meetings were held and important decisions decided. For years, the early church building was like a town hall. I find it interesting that after all these years people STILL come into the church office, seeking information about an ancestor; their baptismal date, where they are buried, when they joined the church, who they married, etc. If it were not for the accurate record keeping of our church clerks through the years, this information, sought by relatives, would be difficult to obtain.

**TODAY**

In an effort to make record keeping simple, and to be “nice,” and “not offend,” or “hurt the feelings” of members who have not been seen at worship for a long time (in some cases years), those who attended the Annual Meeting voted to explore the possibility of having a “one membership list.” Members will vote on accepting this new list at the 2014 Annual Meeting. The “one membership list” would make no distinction between active and inactive members. Everyone, regardless of whether or not they attend the services of the church would have the same status, MEMBER. Likewise, everyone would have the same privileges of membership, namely, to VOTE on important issues that may come before the church. To me, the thought of this idea is dangerous, and should be carefully considered before any new bylaw vote is taken. The present membership must think about the future church.

While I always want our church to be nice to everyone, I also want our church to do what is right and fair for the church we love – today, and especially in the years to come.

The bylaw committee has begun making “proposed” changes. We removed the word “active” from our bylaws, and when we did, we began to see how that one word can impact our church – and not always for the better.

Yes, I want us to be nice to everyone connected to our wonderful church, but I also want us to do what is right. Come to the meeting on April 14th, at Noon, and hear more!

What do you think? More next month…

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See you in church!

Rev. Stan
DURING THE MONTH OF MARCH...

WE WELCOMED into the Household of Christian Faith through the Sacrament of Baptism: Tristin Malone (Adult baptism). He is the son of Joanne MacDonald.

WE WELCOMED our sympathy to the family of Ernest Abrahamson who passed away on March 13th. Our thoughts are with his wife, Emma, and his children.

WE WELCOMED the following new members into the life of the church on Palm Sunday: Lisa Converse, Jamie Webster, John D. Nichols, and George & Wenona Tedeschi. Get to know these wonderful people. We’re glad you’re here!

+++ SCHOLARSHIP MONTH
We thank everyone who offered a monetary gift to the Helen Benjamin Scholarship Fund. We’re pleased to report that a total of $1,180 was raised during the month. It’s not too late to offer your contribution. Put your gift in an envelope marked “Scholarship Fund” and be sure to include the information (in memory of..., in honor of...) that you want included in the worship folder on Scholarship Sunday, June 9th. We have many deserving graduates who would greatly benefit from your support. Please give if you are able.

+++ CHURCH CLEAN UP
Thanks to everyone who helped get the church yard and parking lots in shape for Easter! We had a record-turnout of volunteers this year; especially young people. You were a huge help, and we appreciate what you did. It was nice to see so many families as well. All ages were present, and we were finished in about 2 hours!

+++ SEMI-ANNUAL MEETING
April 14, 2013
The April Semi-Annual Meeting of the Preston City Congregational Church will be held in Fellowship Hall starting at Noon for the following actions:
1. To hear the reports of Officers, Boards, Committees, and other church organizations.
2. To transact any other business that may be brought before the congregation.

--Barbara J. Perry, Clerk

Please note: All financial reports need to be received in the church office by Tuesday, April 9th, to prepare a booklet in time for the meeting.

STUDY GROUP
The Monday morning study group will continue to meet in April. We’re making our way through the book, Not A Fan. The discussions have been very interesting and informative. Consider attending a session, even if you haven’t read the book. Come and meet some wonderful people as well. The coffee pot will be on!

+++ LOOKING AHEAD...

IT’S APRIL and that means it’s time for the homemade “Chicken Pot Pie Supper.” Tickets are on sale during the coffee hours on Sunday mornings, or by calling the church office. The date of this very popular community supper is:

April 27, from 4 - 6:30 P.M.
Tickets:
$10 Adults and $5 Children (12 and under)

Don’t wait until the last minute to get your tickets! Help will be needed preparing for this supper the day before and the day of the supper. A sheet listing where your help is needed is posted on the Information Center bulletin board. Please lend a hand if you can!

+++ HELP OUR TROOPS
“Times are tough in Afghanistan”, says 1st SG Christopher Shetland who attended our church years ago. Food for the troops is not as plentiful as it once was – cutbacks! Throughout the month of April, we will collect food items for Chris and his fellow soldiers. At the end of the month, all items collected will be mailed. If you’d like to contribute, here is a list of items they would appreciate receiving: granola bars, pop tarts, instant oatmeal, breakfast bars, canned juices, maple syrup, pancake mix, (just add water), peanut butter, jelly, jam, cookies, crackers, cereal, instant coffee, sugar, powdered creamer, and honey. PLEASE leave your donations in the Elizabeth Allyn memorial box, located next to the table in the Information Center. DO NOT leave these items in the food pantry boxes in the entry ways. Thanks for helping and supporting our troops!

+++ PICTURE DAY
It’s time for a new church picture directory. It’s been 5 years since the last one was compiled, and many new faces have since found their way to the church. Sign up on line at: http://eastctportraitefx.brownbookit.com/schedules, or call the company directly to reserve a time for you and your family to have your picture taken (860.821.9090). Photo sessions are scheduled for April 22 - 26 and April 29 – May 4th. A free directory as well as a 10x13 photo will be given to each family. Please sign up TODAY!
THE JUNIOR PILGRIM FELLOWSHIP
(grades 6-8) has been busy and active! They went bowling on March 3rd. Many of them helped out with the church clean-up and painted birdhouses for Good Friday following that. They thank everyone who supported their bulb fundraiser in any way. The orders should be in soon.

ADULT MISSION TRIP FUNDRAISER
We’re selling perennials at the church yard sale on May 25th. We would welcome any and all donations of plants that you’re thinning out of your gardens this spring. The Adult Mission group is hoping to help “Super Storm Sandy” victims in New Jersey this fall and all monies raised will help defray some of the expenses. We’ll let everyone know once those plans are finalized. We’d love to have you travel with us! If you have a heart for missions, but obligations don’t allow you to travel with us for a week, this is one way you can be part of our team. Please speak with Laurie Bowers or Lori Hall if you have any questions.

TRIPS & TRAVELS…
New for 2014
South Africa. Brochures for this trip are available at the Information Center. This destination is open to the community. We can also arrange this trip for people throughout the country. Spread the word!