

THE SPIRE

EDWARDS CHURCH *of* NORTHAMPTON
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

Vol. 28 No. 2 February 2018

Dear Edwards Church Community,

A guest at our annual meeting on Sunday spoke to me afterwards about what he experienced as the palpable goodwill and mutual respect in evidence, even as folks shared different perspectives on the proposal put forth by Council. Our guest noticed that although strong feelings were evident, members of this community seem to care for and about each other at least as much as we want to win an argument or get our way.

He even had the opportunity to observe how, on any given day, some folks may change how they feel or think about an issue once they hear from others, while others will remain convinced of their initial position. And that's OK. Some days you might change in response to me, some days I might change in response to you, and some days we'll both learn something we did not expect when we started.

In the coming year we will be addressing several matters that have the potential to stretch and grow this muscle we have for processing potentially sensitive issues together. The proposal from Council ("For 2018, individuals can be elected or appointed to a board or committee without being a member of Edwards Church, and will have full voting privileges on that board or committee.") was eventually approved, even though not unanimously, and that's OK too!

In connection with that one-year experiment, a group of interested lay leaders (in consultation with Council) will explore ways we might alter our governance structure to do the work of the church more effectively. If that were not enough, in the coming year we will also (i) take a look at how we honor all forms of stewardship and talk about money and (ii) explore the meaning of church membership.

To help with all of this, in a way that we expect to insure that the process remains consistent with our vision, Deb Moore and I will offer occasional workshops on an approach to dialog that focuses more on developing mutual understanding than pushing to arrive at agreements or solutions. "Knowing that the road is long, we chose to walk together. Finding strength in our diversity, we call on all our talents to worship and serve."

For an easy introduction to this approach, please watch this video ("Beyond Them and Us"): <https://www.whatisessential.org/resource/beyond-them-and-us-practice-and-power-reflective-structured-dialogue> If finding this with Google, use the search terms "Essential Partners Resources Beyond Them and Us". The web site may ask you to set up a free log in account. Essential Partners is a reputable non-profit. But if you would rather just come and learn by doing, by all means do that, whether you watch the video or not.

Blessings,
Michael

P.S. Even though Feb. 14 is used for other things, we will observe Ash Wednesday.

Edwards Church is an Open and Affirming Congregation:

*We embrace Christ's command to love God with all our hearts and our neighbors as ourselves. Therefore, we welcome **everyone** regardless of ethnic background, economic circumstance, sexual orientation, family configuration, or difference in ability.*

All who seek the love of Christ are welcome to Edwards Church and to share fully in its life and ministry. In response to the Spirit of Christ in our midst, we glorify God and rejoice in the inherent worth, dignity, and gifts of every person as a child of God.

From the Minister of Faith Formation

Dear Beloved of God,

Lent is early this year as Ash Wednesday falls on Valentine's Day. It's a bit ironic that these two days – one a consumeristic holiday the other a somber holy day – coincide. And yet love is at the heart of both. The Love that was birthed into the world on Christmas - God's steadfast and eternal love is forever written on our hearts and is a love we are meant to share with God, one another, and all of creation.

The following reflection, used with permission, is from the publishers of the Church School curriculum we are presently using:

Lent...A journey of Love¹

Lent is an opportunity for spiritual and personal examination, a time to study our relationship with God and others, a time to improve those relationships and make them more meaningful. But our desire for a deeper connection to God, one another, and all of God's creation has to compete with the rest of life. Our spiritual practices go up against our everyday lives, busy schedules, work and family demands, emotional trials and more.

We might feel our wheels spinning, that we are in the same place we were last year, as if our lives were one ongoing circle. If we pay attention, it is something else. We are never in the same place as we were last year or any other year. We have, perhaps moved a little further into the mystery of our existence and, at the same time, perhaps a little further out into the mystery of the world.

This season, as we explore the lectionary texts that are our focus, we move into the mysterious heart of our individual and communal relationship with God. Many of our texts begin with huge promises. The promise made to Noah and the promise to Abraham and Sarah are big for them and their families but they are also promises for the whole world. Neither of these stories simply ends with the giving of the universal promise. Each of the promise hearers must become, on the journey into their own lives, promise receivers. And each of them struggled to understand, as we do in this season, what it means to inhabit and live out of these world-changing promises.

Some questions for reflection:

- Lent is traditionally a time of giving something up as an act of reflection and devotion. What unhelpful attitude or way of thinking would you like to give up during this season?
- In this season of rainbow promises, be on the lookout for signs of God in the midst.
- How would you like to feel and think differently about yourself and the world by Easter?

I pray that your journey through Lent will be a journey of love leading to a deeper relationship with the God who loves all.

Deb

¹ Seasons of the Spirit, SeasonsFusion Lent-Easter 2018. Woodlake Publishing Inc. Canada.

Church School

During the Season of Lent, the focus passages children, youth, and the adults who nurture them will be from the Hebrew Scriptures with one exception; on March 25 – Palm Sunday – the focus passage will be from the Gospel of Mark. We will explore promises, blessings, the nature of God's love and Jesus' entry into Jerusalem. Please let Deb Moore know if you are interested in exploring these passages...relearning the stories...with members of the church school.

Intergenerational Offering – Holy Week



After worship on March 18, all are invited to Addis Hall to experience the events of Holy Week through multiple media at different stations. Lunch will be provided by the Board of Faith Formation. Stay tuned for more information.

Annual Pancake Breakfast – Sponsored by the Youth Group with support from interested adults



Save the Date – March 25th, Palm Sunday

Menu includes: Blueberry,
chocolate chip, plain and gluten
free pancakes
Meat and veggie sausages
Hard boiled eggs
Coffee, tea, and juice

YOUTH GROUP

Edwards Church Youth Group's ministry is open to those in Grades 6 -12. We generally meet on the second and fourth Sunday of the month from 11:30-1:00, with a few exceptions. Youth are always welcome to bring a friend!



Here's what is coming up::

February 11 – 11:30 – 1:00 meeting in the Edwards Room.

February 25 – 11:30 – 1:00 meeting in the Edwards Room.
Bring your favorite board game.

March 11 – 1:00 – 2:20 Ice skating at the Mullins Center
with other youth groups.

Thank You



Thank you... to those who have served to nurture our children and youth along their faith journey this past month: Darleen Buttrick, Melissa Mattison, Jim Stokes-Buckles, Harriet Smith, Sandra Rossi, Kimela Webb, and Carolyn Dion. And to those who have nurtured the youngest among us: Chelsea Marchetti, Liz Stiles-Neumann, Paula Mattison, and Diane Roeder.

SUPER SATURDAY – Workshops, Networking, Fellowship

March 17, 2018

8:00 a.m. – 3:45 p.m.

Minnechaug Regional High School, Wilbraham, MA

Worship & Keynote Speaker: Rev. Dr. Jacqui Lewis

Twenty-seven workshops are offered in the morning and twenty-six workshops are offered in the afternoon. Topics offered include: whole church evaluations, care and wellness, church vitality, the environment, faith formation, justice and witness, leadership, open and affirming, racial justice, stewardship, worship, youth and family, spiritual practices and safe conduct/safe church policies. Network with others from the Massachusetts, Connecticut, and Rhode Island conferences at the marketplace and during lunch.

Registration Deadline – March 3, 2018

Brochures and registration packets are available on the shelf in the Narthex and online at

www.macucc.org

Please let Deb Moore or Michael McSherry know if you would like to attend.



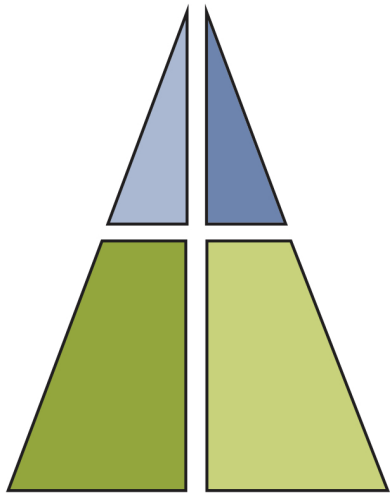
Registration is underway for the Fortieth UCC Women's Celebration! Early registration deadline is 2/25; final registration is 3/26/2018. For more information regarding schedules, keynote speakers, workshops, and more go to: <http://www.uccwomenscelebration.org/>

Prayer Shawl Ministry ... did you know?

January 2018 marked the 6th anniversary of our Prayer Shawl Ministry. For 6 years knitters, weavers, and crocheters of differing ages and experience have been meeting on the second and fourth Tuesday of the month in the Edwards Room from 4:00-5:30p.m. to create, with love, shawls that are given or mailed to recipients. We are an ecumenical group and we have two "honorary" members who knit from the comfort of their home; one who lives in Easthampton and one who lives in Las Vegas. The shawls go to men, women, and children who live locally, out of state and/or outside of the US. The Chaplain from Cooley Dickinson Hospital likes to keep a good supply of our shawls on hand for patients who would like one. Shawls can be given for many reasons: hope, a journey through illness, a journey through pregnancy, celebrations of birth, marriage, embarking on a new job, etc. We are always happy to have new people join this ministry; if you are interested just come and join us on the second and/or fourth Tuesday of the month. If you would like a prayer shawl for someone, please contact Deb Moore at education_minister@edwardschurchnorthampton.org.



Outreach Committee Engaged in Comprehensive Review



EDWARDS
CHURCH *of*
NORTHAMPTON

Did you know that Edwards Church gives recurring gifts to 20 organizations each year? It's an amazing ministry on behalf of our congregation. In order to keep this outreach as effective and focused as possible, our committee has decided to spend 2018 carefully reviewing each of these recurring grants. We'll be looking "under the hood" of these organizations, and we'll be prayerfully considering if each of these grants represent the best use of our church's outreach giving.

This process will also be an opportunity for us to deepen our dialogue with some of our grant recipients. Recently our committee has received presentations from two potential new grant recipients. I for one have found these presentations to be an inspiring way to learn more about the good works being done in our community! And I believe that they show our partners that we are active, engaged, and willing to listen and potentially give more than just financial support.

Finally, a request: We'd love to hear from you! If you have a story about a long-standing grant recipient, or if you have an idea about how our outreach funds can be used more effectively, contact us through the church office, or leave a comment on our Outreach bulletin board right outside the sanctuary. Or catch me or Jeanne Kocsis around church.

Our current recurring grant recipients are:

A Positive Place
Andover Newton
Berkshire Children & Families (PAVE program)
Cathedral in the Night
Edward Church Circle of Care
Decisional Training Program
Friends of the Hampshire County Homeless
Fuel Assistance at Community Action
Girls Inc.
Grove Street Inn
Habitat for Humanity
Manna
Minister's Discretionary Fund
National Alliance for the Mentally Ill (NAMI)
Northwest Children's Advocacy Center
POLUS Center
Safe Passage
Northampton Survival Center
Valley Free Radio
Western Mass. Food Bank

With Thanks for Our Many Gifts,

Jim Stokes-Buckles

FEBRUARY BIRTHDAYS

Dan Shanahan
Luke Longstreeth
Ruby Smith
Deanna O'Connor
Brian Swift



Sandra Rossi
Marc Waller
Kimberly Schlichting
Marc Abel
Tracy Teague

Note: In an effort to protect the digital identities of our community members, we will no longer publish dates of birth in the newsletter. Please contact the church office directly if you would like to obtain this information.

Is your birthday missing? We'd like to include everyone, so please call the church office and let us know your birthday!



SNOW/INCLEMENT WEATHER POLICY

When storms of any kind occur it can raise the question whether we will be having our customary Sunday service or other events at church. In the absence of a cancellation announcement, one should assume that the service or other event is being held. Cancellation announcements would typically include listing the cancellation with local news outlets (e.g., ABC 40 / FOX 6 or WWLP), and posting to the church web site and Facebook page. When in doubt, try calling the church to ask. Concern for personal safety should always come first, so even if there is no cancellation announcement, please stay home if you have any doubt.

Fellowship Time is Busy!

Hello Edwards Church! Here's another friendly reminder about the after-church fellowship hour, which has been well-attended this fall. Everything is there: Good company, a watchful deacon, hot coffee and tea, and – well, usually tasty snacks. But not always. Once in a while we have a pretty lean Sunday, hence this appeal. Please, when you get that gentle reminder that your alphabet group comes up, consider bringing a little something. Lots of littles add up to a generous and welcoming table.

Thank you, from the Deacons,

Tom Derr



February 4 - Last names with A-D
February 11 - Last names with E-K
February 18 - Last names with L-P
February 25 - Last names with R-Z

Choir Welcomes New Bass Section Leader

The Edwards Church Choir welcomed its newest section leader, bass/baritone Ramsey Kurdi, to the church family in December.

Ramsey is an alumnus of the University of Massachusetts at Amherst, with a degree in Music Performance, and he holds a Master's degree in Music Education from the New England Conservatory of Music. He has been a choral music educator for the past 18 years and currently teaches high school music in Springfield.

Ramsey performed most recently in the ensemble of the 5 College Opera production of *The Scarlet Professor*, and he played Dancaire in Panopera's production of *Carmen*. This spring he will be performing the role of Masetto in *Don Giovanni* with Greater Worcester Opera.

Ramsey says he is "very excited to sing with the Edwards Church Choir!" His first solo at Edwards Church will be on February 4.



OPENINGS IN THE CHOIR

The Edwards Church Choir has openings for tenors and basses (high and low male voices). If you enjoy singing and can read music, you are welcome to come see how you like the choir. No audition is required.

Rehearsals are Thursday evenings from 7:00 to 8:00 in the sanctuary. The choir also meets at 9:00 on Sunday mornings to sing through the music for that day's worship service.

If you have questions, please check out the Join the Choir page on the Edwards Church website, or email David Kidwell at dkidwell22@gmail.com.

Edwards Church Council Minutes
January 10, 2018

Council Members Attending: Scott Anderson (Trustees), Tom Derr (Deacons), Leon Drzewianowski (Moderator), Carl Erikson (At Large), Jeanne Kocsis (Outreach), Jim Stokes-Buckles (Outreach), Linda Vincent (Music)

Staff Attending: David Kidwell (Minister of Music), Rev. Michael McSherry (Senior Minister), Deb Moore (Minister of Faith Formation)

Leon called the meeting to order at 7:00pm.

Tom shared an opening reflection, a poem by W.H. Auden.

Minutes of the last meeting were accepted without correction.

Joys and concerns:

- Carl shared that it is wonderful and amazing that our pledge drive exceeded its goal.
- Carl shared that it is sad to see Heather, chair of the Stewardship committee, going off of the committee.
- Leon appreciated the large crowd that gathered to take down the Christmas tree last Sunday, directed by Scott.
- Jim shared that the Christmas Eve service was meaningful and seemingly better attended than in recent years.
- The nativity service, Leon shared, was awesome and fascinating to his grandson.
- Michael found some joy in the small crowd at worship on 12/30, but also wondered why attendance was so low.
- Michael shared that a couple of families plan to join the church in February.

Committee Reports

- Deb has solicited feedback about the Advent family activity booklets and Jim shared that his family has particularly appreciated them.
- Head ushers are stepping out of the sanctuary during service to keep an eye on safety in the church building. This is something that will be addressed in the safe church policy as it is revised.
- Investments, Stewardship, and Trustees committees will be meeting together on Tuesday at 7pm to discuss the investment fund.

Budget for 2018: The Council reviewed a draft 2018 budget. There was some discussion about dividends vs. realized gain. A correction will be passed along to Marc Waller.

Church directory: Efforts have been made to get everyone signed up for a photo appointment.

Safe Church: There will be a meeting on 1/22 to continue to work on the safe church policy.

Annual Meeting & Luncheon: A preliminary list was developed for who will bring what to the luncheon:

- Mark Dion: soup
- Michael McSherry: turkey chili
- Fumiko Brown: corn chowder
- Jim Stokes-Buckles: soup (& bread??)
- Leon: corn chowder
- Deb Moore: mac & cheese
- Scott: beef & barley soup
- Jeanne: salad
- Darleen Buttrick: butternut squash soup (Leon will ask her to do this?)

If you're bringing a soup please bring a ladle to serve it with
Scott will help set up after rehearsal and before the service
Scott will make an announcement from the pulpit on 1/14 and Leon on 1/21, including a request to bring own bowls and spoons and forks, and desserts if possible
Michael will have a bulletin announcement placed
Committee reports (perhaps missing one or two) will be available to distribute this Sunday 1/14

Nominating Committee and Support for Their Tasks: It takes between 70-90 people to fill all the slots on our boards and committees and the nominating committee is finding it difficult to fill all of the slots. At this point 8 or so remain vacant. One suggestion is to send an email listing the vacant positions. Major vacant positions are on Deacons, Faith Formation, Stewardship, as well as Vice-Moderator, Clerk, and Assistant Treasurer.

There was some discussion of changing or amending the bylaws regarding committee membership in order to include more

Scott moved, and Jim seconded, that this motion be put before the Annual Meeting for adoption by the congregation: "For 2018, individuals can be elected or appointed to a board or committee without being a member of Edwards Church, and will have full voting privileges on that board or committee." The motion was passed unanimously.

Annual Meeting will be held on 1/28.

The next council meeting will be held on February 13, 2018, at 7:00pm.

Rev. McSherry led the council in a closing prayer.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:45pm.

Respectfully Submitted,
Jim Stokes-Buckles

Communion Table Flowers

The gift of flowers for the communion table in our sanctuary is a revered custom. The flowers may be given to an ill or homebound member, or the donor may keep them and give to whomever they wish. The flowers may be of all kinds: wee plants from the grocery store, greens gathered on a woodland walk, cut flowers from the grocery or from a local florist.



Persons who receive flowers from our communion table are always so surprised, grateful, and appreciative. Please consider giving flowers as a wonderful way to express your love for the church and for each other.

Please call or email Janet Hemminger at (413) 584-1635 or chuck.hemminger@gmail.com to select a date in February.

Many thanks,

Janet Hemminger

FEBRUARY 2018

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
				1	2	3
				7pm Choir Rehearsal 7pm MANNA Board of Directors Mtg.	6:30pm AA	11:30am MANNA 3:30pm Circle of Care
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
9am Choir Rehearsal 10am Communion 11:15 Fellowship (A-D) 11:30 Music Committee 11:30 Faith Formation Mtg.	2pm PVIRAG 6pm RVS 6:30pm Deacons Mtg.	7pm AF 7pm Trustees Mtg.	10am AA Women's Group 12 pm Bible Study 4:30pm Friends of the Homeless Mgmt. Comm. 6pm MANNA	7pm Choir Rehearsal	6:30pm AA	11:30am MANNA
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
9am Choir Rehearsal 10am Worship 11:15 Fellowship (E-K) 11:30 Youth Group	6pm RVS 7pm VMSG	4pm Prayer Shawl Ministry 7pm AF 7pm VMSG 7pm Council Meeting	10am AA Women's Group 12 pm Bible Study 5pm Board of Friends of the Homeless 6pm MANNA	7pm Choir Rehearsal 6 pm Members in Discernment	6pm Cot Shelter 6:30pm AA	11:30am MANNA
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
9am Choir Rehearsal 9:30 Hymn Sing 10am Worship 11:15 Fellowship (L-P)	President's Day Church Office Closed 6pm Holyoke Civic Symphony Rehearsal 6pm RVS	7pm AF 7pm CE Community of Practice	10am AA Women's Group 12 pm Bible Study 6pm MANNA	7pm Choir Rehearsal	6:30pm AA	11:30am MANNA
25	26	27	28			
9am Choir Rehearsal 10am Worship 11:15 Fellowship (R-Z) 11:30 Youth Group	6pm RVS 7pm VMSG	1pm Valley Syrian Relief Committee 4pm Prayer Shawl Ministry 7pm AF 7pm VMSG	10am AA Women's Group 12 pm Bible Study 6pm MANNA 7pm Outreach Mtg.			
				Abbreviations: AA = Alcoholics Anonymous AF = Augustine Fellowship NPC = Northampton Parents Center FF = Faith Formation PVIRAG= Pioneer Valley Interfaith Refugee Action Group RVS= River Valley Sangha VMSG = Valley Men's Support Group		