

THE SPIRE

EDWARDS CHURCH *of* NORTHAMPTON
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

Vol. 29 No. 2 February 2019

Dear Edwards Church Community,

In a time of hyper-partisan politics, opportunities for division are everywhere. So it came as no surprise when, over the MLK weekend, a controversy erupted regarding a confrontation at the Lincoln Memorial among young men from a Catholic high school, a group of African American men calling themselves the Hebrew Israelites, and a Native American veteran. There have been many dissections of the facts, as they come to light, and many analyses by commentators determined to outdo each other.



As of today, the most interesting tidbit to emerge – at least to me – is the report that the House Intelligence Committee has requested information from Twitter about how the first video to be posted went viral so fast. The Twitter account that stoked the controversy was apparently owned by a U.S. citizen – a California Bay Area teacher – who used the picture of a Brazilian media celebrity next to her account name. The account has been suspended.



Lawmakers are investigating the speed with which the controversy escalated online, with a view to preventing the sort of hijacking of the national discourse that took place during the 2016 election. There is no accusation directed at the teacher, but concern about the vulnerability of social media to manipulation.



Fortunately, there are also people like Deeyah Khan, a Muslim American activist and film-maker, who works to promote what Lincoln called “the better angels of our nature.” In a Jan. 14 article on Vox.com¹, Khan describes the process that led her to make two documentary films based on interviews she did with White supremacists (*White Right: Meeting the Enemy*) and jihadists (*Jihad: A Story of the Others*) to try to understand what really motivates members of those extremist groups:

“I’ve been an anti-racist campaigner pretty much most of my life, having experienced racism from childhood. It’s personal to me, and I’ve responded in all sorts of ways — being angry at racists, shouting at them, confronting them, protesting against them, self-righteously shunning them. I’ve done all that, and I’m not sure what difference it made.”

So I wanted to do something I've never done before, which is try to see if I could sit down with people who hold views like that and see if it is possible for us to move somewhere from that point, from sitting face to face.



Sitting face-to-face with people who were sure they hated her and all she stood for, Deeyah Kahn found that many white supremacists and jihadist fighters – especially younger recruits – were not nearly as interested in the ideology of those causes as they were in finding a sense of belonging and a source of meaning for their lives. Once they had an experience of being seen and heard – especially by someone they regarded as “the enemy” –



they realized their real needs could be fulfilled other ways. They could even be friends with those different looking people!

Kahn is careful to emphasize that this did not happen with all the white supremacists or jihadists she interviewed. She also does not believe it is the responsibility of oppressed people to liberate or “awaken” those who oppress them. Some people are not open to change and will not accept an invitation to understand another human being they consider “the enemy.” Committed extremists in hate groups still need to be peacefully opposed and politically defeated.

But if our goal is building a multi-cultural society that values diversity, then we must also foster a sincere curiosity about each other and strive to cultivate personal connections among individuals with real differences. We need to get out of our bubbles, and be open to learn from and about people different from us. There are vested interests that benefit from emphasizing and exaggerating differences. We have a larger and enlarging interest: “Longing to find the holy in ourselves and others, we listen for God’s still-speaking voice.”

Blessings,
Michael

1. www.vox.com/world/2019/1/14/18151799/extremism-white-supremacy-jihadism-deeyah-khan

Have you've ever wanted to be a rock star?

Now is your chance! On Saturday February 23, from 2-5 PM, the Unitarian Society of Northampton and Florence will be holding a fund raiser for its Sanctuary Fund. Tony Lechner, the Music Director of Rock Voices, America's Community Rock Chorus will teach participants to sing “Lean On Me” (by Bill Withers) in multi-part harmony. At the end of the afternoon we will perform the song for our own enjoyment and inspiration. The fund raising comes from the people singing in the chorus as there will be a requested donation of \$10 per person or \$15 for two (it is always better to sing with a friend).

This "one afternoon" group singing event is based on a model used by Choir!Choir!Choir! (check them out on UTube to see what magic can happen in 3 hours). The Great Hall at the Unitarian Society (220 Main Street in Northampton) can hold lots of people and we want to fill it up - can you imagine how amazing a choir of 100+ would sound singing Lean on Me. And the miracle of a large chorus is that not everyone needs to be Adele or Placido for the chorus to sound magnificent. But we need you so please join us.

If you are unfamiliar with the sanctuary project at the Unitarian Society, Irida Kakhitranova, the sole breadwinner for her family of five, moved into our building on April 6 to avoid deportation while her litigation to remain with her family in the United States continues. While Irida has worked diligently during the more than nine months she has been in sanctuary to support her family, this and other fund raisers are necessary to cover her family's expenses, including her legal fees. For more information, contact David Wick at wick.david@yahoo.com.

From the Minister of Faith Formation

Dear Beloved of God,

The Board of Faith Formation is excitedly embarking on a Faith Journey Story Project utilizing Vision Initiative Funds in our budget. We began talking with Susan Creighton and Pat MacPherson over a year ago regarding the scope of such a project. Our hope is to create an archive of faith stories from interested members and friends who would like to participate.

Interviews will be about one hour and take place in the Edwards Room. Participants will be asked to share some biographical information and proceed to sharing stories around their faith journey or something specific the story teller would like to share. Pat and Susan will follow the story tellers lead. A sampling of questions may be: What does God look like to you? What does faith mean to you? How did you find your way to Edwards Church and what keeps you here? What is a memorable moment for you here at Edwards Church? What is your favorite Bible story.

About their approach to this project Pat and Susan state: “We believe that the act of sharing a part of your life through your personal stories is an important and meaningful task. We believe that every person has a story worth telling. We recognize that not all stories are easy to tell. As such, we take our role as the receiver of stories very seriously.”

After the conversation Pat and Susan will create an audio file, a transcription and a paper copy of the interview, and deliver whatever combination of audio, electronic document or paper copy the storyteller has chosen.

The first two interviews are scheduled for February 10th from 11:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. If you and/or a family member(s) are interested in participating in this Faith Journey Story Project, please let me know via email at:

education_minister@edwardschurchnorthampton.org. If you have questions and are curious about this project Sheri Cheung, Melissa Mattison, and Jim Stokes-Buckles are also available to talk with you.

*Blessings,
Deb*

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.

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!



Confirmation Class

On February 17th our topic is: *How the Bible came to be; we will explore themes of the Bible; and how do we understand Scripture.*



Here's what is coming up:

February 10 ~ 11:30 – 1:00

We will meet in the Heritage Room

February 24 ~ 11:30 – 1:00

We will meet in the Edwards Room

Church School

As we continue in the Season after Epiphany scriptures and corresponding themes for the month of February are:

February 3 ~ Communion Sunday ~ Intergenerational Worship

February 10 ~ Luke 5:1-11 ~ Being Surprised

February 17 ~ Luke 6 17-16 ~ Being Blessed

February 24 ~ Luke 6:27-38 ~ Be Holy



Deep appreciation to the following who accompanied our children and youth along their faith journey in January:

Jim Stokes-Buckles, Melissa Mattison, Sarah Briggs, Darleen Buttrick, Carolyn Dion, and Kristen Deschene.

Gratitude as well to those who nurtured the youngest among us in the Nursery:

Kelly St. Martin, Emily Smith, Rachel Frogameni, and Jack Mattison-Gulotta.

Summer Camps

It is not too early to start thinking about Summer Camps, we all know how fast our calendars fill up. The UCC offers many faith and fun based camping experiences. To view the camps in New England go to www.uccnecamps.org. There will also be postings on the Faith Formation bulletin board.



Reflections on the Confirmation Class Retreat

"It was cool to be with lots of other kids who also go to church and are trying to figure out what they believe about God. I really enjoyed walking the labyrinth and listening to the birds outside."

~ Gabriella Wilkerson

"I made it through my first UCC confirmation retreat! Actually, I more that made it through - I felt blessed to spend a night and day with four of our church's youth, exploring their faith and what it means to be confirmed in the UCC. A highlight for me, as an adult chaperone, was getting to know other faith formation leaders in our region."

~ Jim Stokes-Buckles

"What an honor and privilege to be on retreat with youth and Jim from Edwards as well as youth and leaders from South Congregational Church in Providence, Rhode Island, Chilmark Congregational Church in Martha's Vineyard, and the UCC church in Duxbury, MA. We sang, worshipped, shared communion, looked inside ourselves as we wrote about who we are as individual children of God, what it means to be the church, and what confirmation is about Oh, and the walk on the beach was a blessing."

~ Deb Moore



Annual Meeting Update

The soups, salads and desserts served at our Annual Meeting on Sunday, January 27th, were delicious. Thanks to all who made the meal and the meeting so satisfying. You are a gracious bunch of people.

In addition to the approval of customary reports, the members participating voted to approve two motions. The text of the first has not been formally reviewed, but we believe the text below, which is the result of friendly amendments, is accurate. The second was approved as submitted.

1. "A motion is made to suspend the Edwards Church Bylaws, Article 10, Sections 1-14, as they relate to committees, their structure, size and frequency of meetings for a period of one year so as to allow a process review of how the needs of the church could be managed by a smaller and more efficient committee structure; provided that the Executive Committee's structure is not impacted. The committees and boards are empowered as they explore their structure to fulfill their responsibilities in new ways."
2. "The New Way Process outlined in the report of the New Way Committee included in the 2018 Annual Meeting booklet is hereby adopted, and the Council (or its successor as the body that makes decisions on behalf of the whole congregation between congregational meetings) shall determine what adjustments to the process are appropriate from time to time."

Copies of Annual Report booklets are available from the office.



HOUSE MUSIC

treble a cappella jam

Saturday, Feb 9, 7:00 PM

Helen Hills Hills*Chapel
Smith College, Elm St, Northampton

Admission by Donation

www.hamphomeless.org



all proceeds will help build a group home for homeless young adults



Communion Table Flowers

The gift of flowers for the communion table in our sanctuary is a wonderful way to express your love for the church and for each other. You may select from the following Sunday dates in February 10, 17, or 24 . Please call or email Janet Hemminger at (413) 584-1635 or chuck.hemminger@gmail.com to select a date.

Many thanks,
Janet Hemminger

Save the Date: Super Saturday

March 16, 2019

8:00 am - 3:45 pm

Minnechaug Regional High School, Wilbraham, MA

Over 50 workshops are offered at this spring's Super Saturday. Offerings include church structure, mission and outreach, justice and witness, the environment, racial justice, faith formation, planning for retirement, youth, worship and many more. New lunch activities have been added and the market place is always wonderful. The Keynote Speaker is Rebekah Anderson, Seminarian and Disability Activist and Writer. Booklets are available in the counter in the Narthex and at www.macucc.org/ssmar2019. Registration deadline is March 2. If interested, let Deb Moore or Michael McSherry know as car pooling can be arranged.

Fellowship Time is Busy!

Hello Edwards Church! Here's another friendly reminder about the after-church fellowship hour, which has been well-attended this spring. 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 3 - Last names with A-D

February 10 - Last names with E-K

February 17 - Last names with L-P

February 24 - Last names with R-Z



DRAFT Edwards Church Council Minutes
January 9, 2019

Council Members Attending: Leon Drzewianowski (Moderator), Mark Dion (Pastor Congregations), Janet Tucker (Deacons), Nancy Flickinger (Music), Carl Erickson (At-Large), Jon Dietrich (Trustees), Jeanne Kocsis (Outreach), Debbie Davis (Stewardship), Sheri Cheung (Faith Formation),

Staff Attending: Deb Moore (Commissioned Minister of Faith Formation), Michael McSherry (Senior Minister), David Kidwell (Minister of Music), Marc Waller (Treasurer)

Leon called the meeting to order at 7:03 pm

Michael led an opening prayer.

Minutes of the last meeting were accepted without correction.

Joys and concerns “All Joys”

- Leon mentioned the beautiful music David performed during communion.
- Faith Formation to develop goals
- Michael spoke to a male visitor who attended our worship because he was late to get to Florence Congregational Church. He enjoyed himself. A future member? “The lord works in mysterious ways”

Committee Minutes

- Deb is excited about “The Faith Journey Story Project” that Faith Formation is pursuing. This is a pilot program being run by two people who are looking to interview folks about their story of faith. We will have seven interviews that will be given to us in the form of audios and transcripts.
- Michael encouraged all members of the Council finish reading “Mobilizing Congregations”. First Churches is reading the same book and we could possibly work together with them to achieve our goals. Books were made available.
- Leon asked that Heather Dandy have a handout regarding the structural changes for 2019 ready for the annual meeting.
- Rev. Don Remick will be our guest preacher on 1/20/19. Following worship Rev. Remick will hold a Q & A session with interests in our vision, how things are going, church vitality, generational issues, etc.

Nominating Committee

- Carl is receiving who is still on committees from chairs. Committees are recruiting their own.
- Changes to come when By-Laws vote passes at annual meeting.

New Way Committee

- Draft survey is completed asking for ideas on what to financially support. A short synopsis will be written and ready to hand out with the annual meeting booklet.

Annual Meeting

- Council members will provide soups, and other hot entrees.
- People attending the meeting will be asked to bring a dessert or salad to share and bring their own bowls and utensils.
- Council will supply refreshments (coffee, tea, apple cider, water etc.)

Other Business

- The status of the rear entrance light. Marc Waller said an electrician checked it out when they were here for other work and have to return to repair it.
- Hampshire Property Management will be fixing the potholes at our end of Button Alley.
- The Handicapped spot is going to be moved to the end of the tenants parking. Signs will be moved but painting of the spot can't be done until it is warmer.

Next meeting: February 13, 2019

Closing Prayer provide by Deb

Meeting adjourned at 8:13 PM

Respectfully submitted,
Mark Dion

FEBRUARY BIRTHDAYS

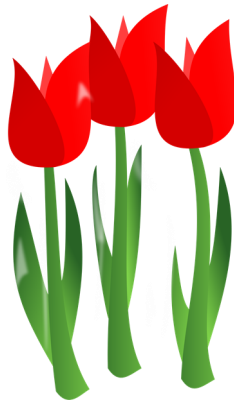
Dan Shanahan

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 that 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.



FEBRUARY 2019

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
Abbreviations: AA = Alcoholics Anonymous CoDA = Co-Dependents Anonymous NPC = Northampton Parents Center FF = Faith Formation	PVIRAG= Pioneer Valley Interfaith Refugee Action Group RVS= River Valley Sangha VMMSG = Valley Men's Support Group				1	2
3 9am Choir Rehearsal 10am Communion Worship 11:15 Fellowship (A-D) 11:30 Music Committee 5pm Women of Change 7pm CoDA	4 2pm PVIRAG 6pm RVS 7pm VMMSG	5 12pm Al-Anon 7pm Trustees Meeting	6 10am AA Women's Group 12 pm Bible Study 4:30pm Friends of the Homeless Mgmt. Comm. 6pm MANNA 6:30 Faith Formation Mtg.	7 6:30pm MANNA Board of Directors Mtg. 7pm Choir Rehearsal	8 12pm Al-Anon 6:30pm AA	9 11:30am MANNA 3pm Circle of Care
10 9am Choir Rehearsal 10am Worship 11:15 Fellowship (E-K) 11:30 Youth Group 11:30 Faith Journey Story Project 5pm Women of Change 7pm CoDa	11 6pm RVS 7pm VMMSG	12 12pm Al-Anon 4pm Prayer Shawl Ministry 6pm Investment Comm. 7pm VMMSG	13 10am AA Women's Group 12 pm Bible Study 6pm MANNA 7pm Council Meeting	Valentine's Day 14 7pm Choir Rehearsal	15 12pm Al-Anon 6:30pm AA	16 11:30am MANNA
17 9am Choir Rehearsal 10am Worship 11:15 Fellowship (L-P) 11:30 Confirmation Class 5pm Women of Change 7pm CoDA	President's Day 18 12pm MIDWIG 5:30pm Holyoke Civic Symphony Rehearsal 6pm RVS 7pm VMMSG	19 12pm Al-Anon 7pm CE Community of Practice	20 10am AA Women's Group 12 pm Bible Study 5pm Board of Friends of the Homeless 6pm MANNA	21 7pm Choir Rehearsal	22 12pm Al-Anon 6:30pm AA	23 11:30am MANNA
24 9am Choir Rehearsal 10am Worship 11:15 Fellowship (R-Z) 11:30 Youth Group 5pm Women of Change 7pm CoDA	25 6pm RVS 6:30 Deacons Mtg. 7pm VMMSG	26 12pm Al-Anon 4pm Prayer Shawl Ministry 7pm VMMSG	27 10am AA Women's Group 12 pm Bible Study 6pm MANNA 7pm Outreach Committee	28 7pm Choir Rehearsal		