

THE SPIRE

EDWARDS CHURCH *of* NORTHAMPTON
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

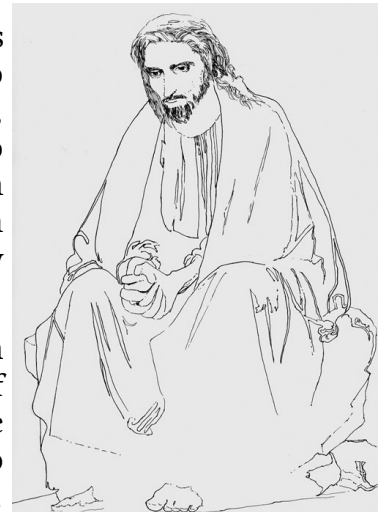
Vol. 30 No. 3 March 2020

Dear Edwards Church Community,

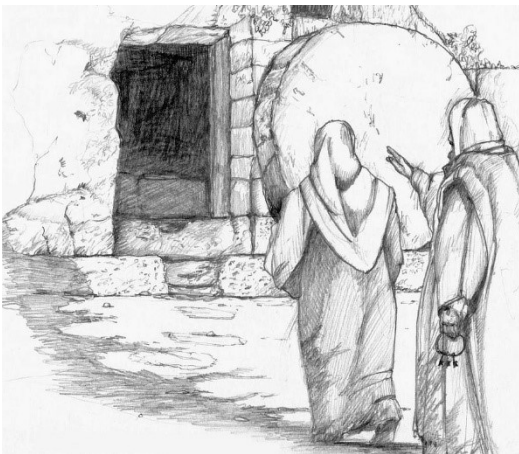
“Do not be afraid.”

The season of Lent is limited to 40 days over six and one-half weeks (minus the Sundays), but the reason for Lent and our need for Lent are not so limited. The 40 days commemorate the 40 days Jesus spent in the wilderness, facing his demons and preparing for his coming ministry. Those 40 days echo the 40 years the Israelites spent in the wilderness, finding their way from captivity in Egypt to a new life in a home promised by God. But the reason for Lent is not a number; it is time set aside to prepare ourselves to allow something to die, so that new life may grow in its place.

Repeatedly in the gospel, the voice of God speaks through angels or through Jesus, saying “Do not be afraid.” An angel says it to Zechariah, father of John the Baptist, when he is serving in the Temple and learns that his wife Elizabeth, though already old, will have a baby. The angel Gabriel says it to Mary when he tells her she will give birth to the son of God. Both are afraid, and both are reassured.



When the first followers of Jesus worry about how they will provide for their basic needs, Jesus tells them to worry less about their meals and wardrobe and more about their role in the unfolding of God’s realm. When frightened disciples wake Jesus from sleeping because they fear their boat will sink in a storm, he chastises them (gently, of course), “You of little faith, why are you so afraid?”



Even on Easter morning, those who have been told what to expect still struggle to accept that it has, because they are overcome with fear. The angel at the empty tomb in Matthew greets the women with “Do not be afraid.” In John’s gospel the risen Jesus reassures Mary Magdalene first by asking her “Why are you crying” and then by speaking her name, which helps her to recognize him, risen in new life. In Luke, the faithful are brought to moments of recognition that Christ has risen, each as soon as they are able to see, feel, and accept it as real. Just like those events at the empty tomb and on the road to Emmaus, God knows what we need and gives us reasons to believe, as soon as we are able to accept them.

It could take 40 days, 40 years, or a lifetime. And once that moment of recognition occurs, it may fade but it never fully leaves you. Take the time this Lent to face your demons. God will be with you, whispering “Do not be afraid.” Prepare for new life.

Blessings,

Michael

From the Minister of Faith Formation

Dear Beloved of God,

Each of the synoptic Gospels record Jesus, following his baptism by John, being led by the Spirit into the wilderness for 40 days and 40 nights. Definitions for wilderness include “a barren place, a lonely place, a journey through grief, addiction, illness, gender identity, and loss of what has been.” For Jesus, it was also a place where his faith in God sustained him through the temptations he was presented with. It was a place where his identity and ministry became clear to him.

Like many of you, I have experienced wilderness times. Upon reflection, it was my faith and knowing that God desired my wholeness and would accompany me through the wilderness that sustained me. Wilderness time can also be a time of fermentation, of incubation – a time to let percolate that which God may be up to in our lives.

I am approaching this Lenten season as a time to deliberately pay attention to that which God may be cultivating – increasingly or perhaps anew - within me. To hold myself accountable, a spiritual discipline I plan to practice is to journal, either with words or photos, throughout these 40 days (excluding Sundays) where I experience the Holy, what the temptations are that get in the way, and what paying attention to that which God may be cultivating within me might require of me. Lead on Holy Spirit.

*Blessings to all of you on your journey through Lent,
Deb*

Church School

The following are the scriptures and themes (all from the Gospel of John) that members of the church school and their teachers will be exploring this month:

March 1 – Communion Sunday –
Intergenerational Worship

March 8 – John 3:1-17 – Blessed to be a Blessing

March 15 – John 4:4-52 – The Well of Living
Water

March 22 – John 9:1-41 – I Am Because We Are

March 29 – John 11: 1-45 – Conversations that
Unbind Us



Thank you to those who helped nurture the faith of our children and youth during the month of February: Melissa Mattison, Kristen Deschene, Mariana Haughey, Jim Stokes-Buckles, Michelle Prindle, Sarah Briggs and to our child care providers: Kelly St. Martin, Jack Mattison-Gulotta, Diane Roeder, and Madeline Gorman. What a gift each one of you are!

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.

The Gospel of Mark Alive! – A Lenten Offering
March 22 - 4:00pm in the Edwards Church Sanctuary
Free and open to the public!

Come and hear Rev. Bert Marshall recite the Gospel of Mark from memory. Rev. Marshall committed this Gospel to memory while on sabbatical in 2003. He presently serves as Interim Minister at Barre Congregational Church.

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 is our March and April schedule:

March 8 – 11:30 - 1 Meeting in the Edwards Room

March 27 – 8:00 p.m to March 28 – 8:00 am. Overnight in the church

April 5 Annual Pancake Breakfast – arrive at 7:45 a.m.

April 26 – 11:30 - 1:00 meeting in the Edwards Room



Narratus – Edwards Church Faith Journey Project...to resume!

After a brief hiatus, our Faith Journey Story Project will be resuming in the very near future.

Pat McPherson, a retired book editor, and Susan Creighton, an Archivist at Westfield, MA Library and Athenaeum, and at the Vermont Folklife Center, invite members and friends to participate in this exciting venture to archive their faith journeys. Pat and Susan conduct interviews with questions such as:

did you have a religious life as a child?

how did your spiritual life develop as you got older?

how do you view God?

what drew you to this church in particular and what keeps you here?

what part of the Vision Statement speaks to you?

The interviews last an hour and take place in the Edwards Room.

Participants will receive an audio file and a transcript of their interview. A copy will be archived at Edwards Church.

Pat and Susan will make a brief presentation after church on March 29th.

Interested in participating? Please let Deb Moore, Jim Stokes-Buckles, Melissa Mattison or Sheri Cheung know.

Super Saturday – March 14, 2020

Minnechaug Regional High School

8:00am – 3:45pm

Rabbi Elan Babchuck, theologian, writer, and advocate fascinated by the intersections of faith, justice and identity will lead us in worship and present a workshop titled *Bright Spots – Why Institutional Transformation Starts with Strengths*. Forty-eight workshops are offered in addition to worship, a market place, and lunch. There are several brochures on the counter in the Narthex; it can also be viewed at www.sneucc.org/supersatreg. If you are interested in attending, please let Michael McSherry or Deb Moore know. Carpooling can be arranged.

The registration deadline is February 29.



The GOSPEL of MARK

Live Spoken Word Performance

Rev. Bert Marshall
Edwards Church
Northampton, MA

SUNDAY March 22 4:00 pm
The whole Gospel of Mark from memory!



“Brilliant!” “A sacramental experience” “Unforgettable”
“You blew the doors off the place!”

www.gospelofmarkalive.com

Dear Edwards Community,

Copied below is an email and picture from Kelly Rhyne, who is based in Atlanta and will be attending Smith School of Social Work starting this coming summer. She would love to find a room to rent for the summer in Northampton for herself and her two small dogs, who stay in crates when she is not home. I have spoken with her, so feel free to contact me if you may have a lead. - Michael

My name is Kelly Rhyne and I am beyond excited to become part of the Northampton community for the next three summers as I embark on my Master in Social Work at Smith College. I am a Member in Discernment with the UCC Southeast Conference where I serve as the Communications Minister and a Worship Leader at Kirkwood UCC in Atlanta, GA and am a graduate of Candler School of Theology at Emory University. I am hoping that the grace of God blesses me with someone in the Northampton community that would be willing to open their home to me and my two small dogs for the summer. We are all very well trained and clean. Additionally, my dogs, Snickers and Bear, are crate trained and will never be unsupervised. They are also great with other animals and children. I got them when I was a youth director and brought them to the church all the time. So, they are extremely well socialized and love to make new friends. We don't need much, just a room and bathroom. A kitchen and place to do laundry is a bonus. If that person is you or you know someone who may be a good fit, you can contact me at krhyne@smith.edu or call me at 717-725-2015. I look forward to worshipping with you very soon and sharing my gifts with your community!



Register now for Summer Camping Opportunities!

Silver Lake Conference Center in Connecticut: <https://www.silverlakect.org>

Open House May 17 from 1:00 to 5:00 p.m.; RSVP to slcc@ctuucc.org by May 12

Star Island off the coast of New Hampshire: <https://starisland.org>

Pilgrim Lodge on Lake Umbagog in Maine: <https://www.pilgrimlodge.org>

Open House April 16 from 1:00 to 3:00 p.m.; <https://www.pilgrimlodge.org/camps/open-house>

Horton Center in the White Mountains of New Hampshire: <https://hortoncenter.org>

Open House June 6, 2019; <https://hortoncenter.org/camps/open-house/>

Living the Seasons at Home – Lent through Easter a supplement of the curriculum we are presently using in the church school will be available on the table in the back of the sanctuary. This supplement is for individuals and families and provides a reflection based on the scripture for each Sunday during the season as well as ideas for connecting during Lent.

You are invited...

to a showing of the documentary *Call Me Malcolm* produced by Filmworks, Inc. and the United Church of Christ on **Sunday, March 15 at 4:00pm in the Edwards Room**. This 90-minute documentary is Not Rated and is a film about the journey of discovery. "The film begins with Malcolm's final year of seminary. He is unemployed, uncertain about his future as a minister, unrecognized as "Malcolm" by his parents and without a love in his life. He leaves the environment of seminary and sets out on a road trip." Please let Deb Moore know if you plan to attend as we want to be sure we have enough seating.

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



- March 1** - Last names with A-D
- March 8** - Last names with E-K
- March 15** - Last names with L-P
- March 22** - Last names with R-Z
- March 29** - Deacons & Council

Save the Dates - Holy Week in April

Palm Sunday, April 5 – will be festive. We start with the **Pancake Breakfast, hosted by the youth group** from 8:30 - 9:30 in Addis Hall. (Volunteers to help are welcome.) At 9:40 there is an **ecumenical Liturgy of Palms** across Main Street in Pulaski Park. Our Palm Sunday worship will be an intergenerational opportunity to experience Lent and share the sacrament of communion in a series of prayer stations. Don't miss it!

Maundy Thursday, April 9 - 6:00 pm Potluck Supper/ Feast of Love (Addis Hall)

Good Friday – 7:00 pm Service of Tenabrae

Easter Sunday – 10:00 am Easter Sunday Celebration

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: March 8, 15, 22, or 29. Please call or email Janet Hemminger at (413) 584-1635 or chuck.hemminger@gmail.com to select a date.

Many thanks, Janet Hemminger



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.



The CBI Tikkun Olam Committee Presents :
**Resisting White Supremacy: Uniting
Against Anti-Semitism and Racism in an
Age of Extremism**

***Speaker:* Lecia Brooks of the Southern Poverty Law Center**

Ms. Brooks' talk will focus on the rise of antisemitism and racism in the United States. She will suggest actions to strengthen alliances among diverse communities to stand together against hate.



**Rabbi Justin David of Congregation
B'nai Israel will moderate.
Free and open to the public.**

Lecia Brooks is the chief workplace transformation officer for the SPLC. She has a wealth of experience in diversity advocacy training for corporations and non profit organizations, and has a degree in political science from Loyola Marymount University.

**WEDNESDAY MARCH 25 , 2020 7 - 9 P. M.
NORTHAMPTON CENTER FOR THE ARTS
33 HAWLEY ST., NORTHAMPTON, MA 01060**

Co-Sponsorship By:

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ACLU of Massachusetts ,ARISE for Social Justice, Beit Avahav, Critical Connections, Edwards Church, First Congregational Church of Amherst, UCC , Goodwin Memorial AME Zion Church, Greater Springfield Campaign for Nonviolence, Hampshire Mosque, Jewish Activists for Immigration Justice of Western Mass., Jewish Community of Amherst Tikkun Olam Committee, Massachusetts Jobs with Justice, Northampton Friends Meeting, Paolo Freire Social Justice Charter School, Peace and Justice Team of First Churches, Northampton. Peace and Social Concerns Committee of Mt. Toby Friends, Peace Team of Treehouse, Easthampton, Pioneer Valley Immigrant and Refugee Action Group, Pioneer Valley Workers Center, Real Cost of Prisons Project, Sojourner Truth Memorial Committee, Sojourner Truth School for Social Change Leadership, Temple Israel, Greenfield, Traprock Center for Peace and Justice, Vote Truth, Unitarian Society of Northampton and Florence, Western Mass. Jewish Alliance for Law and Social Action, Western Mass. Showing up for Racial Justice (SURJ)



Mystical Experiences for Those of Us Living Ordinary Lives

Sunday, March 1, 2020, 4:00-5:30

A mystic is often regarded as a person who is special and different than the rest of us – someone who has an extraordinary capacity to experience God or the Divine. Centuries ago they lived in monasteries as monks or nuns or they lived alone in remote locations, in either case not taking part in usual day to day life.

More recently though there has been a recognition that there are “everyday mystics,” and further, some famous religious figures have asserted that every one of us is meant to be a mystic. Carmelite friar William McNamara wrote, “the mystic is not a special kind of person; each person is a special kind of mystic.”

You are invited to join a gathering to share your experience of God. Maybe you don't think of yourself as a mystic, but perhaps you remember some of those *unforgettable* times that you experienced something deep in your core that felt sacred or holy. Would you be willing to share these religious and/or spiritual awakenings? And to listen as others share?

Our group will have a time for sitting meditation, a reading, and sharing. Please let Linda Vincent or Deb Moore know if you are interested.

MARCH BIRTHDAYS

Thomas Bankman
Matthew Buckley Wells
Michele Carroll
Elizabeth Henneman
Alfred Griggs
Ruth Griggs
Gwenn Swift
Courtney Aquadro



Martha McCullagh
Taylor Cook
Paula Mattison
Ken Longstreeth
Eugene Sielski
Rev. Michael McSherry
Lynda Erickson
James Stokes-Buckles

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!

I'll Sing On

The first Music at the Crossroads concert of 2020 will take place on Sunday, April 19 at 3pm in the sanctuary. Minister of Music David Kidwell will accompany three outstanding local musicians with Edwards Church connections in a program entitled "I'll Sing On." The concert is free, but donations will go to the Grove Street Inn emergency homeless shelter.

Mezzo-soprano Justina Golden is a singer, choral conductor, and owner of the Profound Sound vocal studio in Florence. She is the former conductor of the Dessert Singers at the Northampton Community Music School, and she is a member of the music faculty at Smith College.

Tenor Peter Shea has been a vocal soloist in the Pioneer Valley for many years. Peter has researched and performed countless settings of the German poet Heinrich Heine and has also commissioned many composers to set Heine's poems to music.

French horn player Jean Jeffries teaches horn and chamber music at Amherst College and Mount Holyoke College, and she performs with many local orchestras. Jean is a passionate advocate of contemporary music and has commissioned many works for horn.

All three musicians have Edwards Church connections: Peter is a bass section leader in the choir, Justina is a substitute alto section leader, and Jean has been a frequent soloist for summer worship services. The varied and diverse program will feature music by contemporary composers, including David Kidwell and Jerry Noble.



Holyoke Civic Symphony Concert March 8

David Kidwell will conduct the Holyoke Civic Symphony in a free concert on Sunday, March 8 at 3pm at Holyoke Community College. The program will include Soon Hee Newbold's "Warrior Legacy," Sergei Rachmaninoff's Piano Concerto No. 2 with pianist Olga Shupyatskaya, and Ludwig van Beethoven's Symphony No. 8, in celebration of the 250th anniversary of the composer's birth. More information, including a podcast, program notes, and directions, can be found at www.holykecivicsymphony.org.

Lend Me a Tenor

The Edwards Church choir is low on tenors! Currently we only have one, making it challenging to select music and balance voices. If you sing tenor (a high male voice, or even a very low female voice) or if you know of someone who does, please see our Minister of Music, David Kidwell. No audition is required. More information about singing in the choir can be found on the Join the Choir page of the church website.

MARCH 2020

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
1 9am Choir Rehearsal 10am Communion Worship 11:15 Fellowship (A-D) 4pm Mystical Experiences for Those of Us Living Ordinary Lives	2 2pm PVIRAG 6pm RVS	3 7pm SAA	4 10am AA Women's Group 4:30pm Friends of the Homeless Mgt. Comm. 6pm MANNA	5 6:30pm MANNA Board of Directors Meeting 7pm Choir Rehearsal	6 6:30pm AA	7 11:30am MANNA 3pm Circle of Care
8 9am Choir Rehearsal 10am Worship 11:15 Fellowship (E-K) 11:30 Youth Group 11:30 Pastor Congregation Relations Team	9 6pm RVS 7pm VMSG	10 3pm Prayer Shawl Ministry 7pm VMSG 7pm SAA	11 10am AA Women's Group 12 pm Bible Study 6pm MANNA	12 7pm Choir Rehearsal	13 6:30pm AA	14 11:30am MANNA
15 9am Choir Rehearsal 10am Worship 11:15 Fellowship (L-P) 11:30 Music Team 11:30 Pastor Congregation Relations Team	16 12pm MIDWIG 6pm RVS	17 6:30pm CE Community of Practice 7pm SAA 7pm Buildings & Grounds	18 10am AA Women's Group 12 pm Bible Study 5:30pm Board of Friends of the Homeless 6pm MANNA	19 7pm Choir Rehearsal	20 6pm Cot Shelter 6:30pm AA	21 11:30am MANNA
22 9am Choir Rehearsal 10am Worship 11:15 Fellowship (R-Z) 4pm Gospel of Mark	23 6pm RVS 7pm VMSG	24 3pm Prayer Shawl Ministry 7pm VMSG 7pm SAA	25 10am AA Women's Group 12 pm Bible Study 6pm MANNA	26	27 6:30pm AA 8pm Youth Group	28 11:30am MANNA
29 9am Choir Rehearsal 10am Worship 11:15 Fellowship (Deacons & Council) 2pm PVIRAG Event	30 6pm RVS	31 7pm SAA				
Abbreviations: AA = Alcoholics Anonymous NPC = Northampton Parents Center FF = Faith Formation PVIRAG = Pioneer Valley Interfaith Refugee Action Group RVS = River Valley Sangha SAA = Pioneer Sex Addicts Anonymous VMSG = Valley Men's Support Group						

Youth Led Mission Outreach during Lent

The Youth Group invites members and friends of Edwards Church to participate in a Lenten Mission Outreach to benefit Pioneer Valley Power Packs Inc. This 501(c)3 Non Profit based in Easthampton presently packs 53 backpacks with nutritious food and discreetly distributes them each Friday during the academic school year.

Donations of small, non-perishable food items such as: shelf stable milk, juice boxes, fruit cups, applesauce, breakfast bars, macaroni and cheese, small cereal boxes, and granola bars will be greatly appreciated. Donations can be placed on the banquet table at the back of the sanctuary.

Another Way of "Fasting" for Lent

In the spirit of gathering at the crossroads of ancient faith (religious practices like fasting) and contemporary culture (increased focus on shared ethical practices that reflect faith based values), it has been reported that Pope Francis recommends a variety of forms of fasting, which could be food for thought and spur new spiritual growth:

DO YOU WANT TO FAST THIS LENT?
In the words of Pope Francis

- Fast from hurting words and say kind words.
- Fast from sadness and be filled with gratitude.
- Fast from anger and be filled with patience.
- Fast from pessimism and be filled with hope.
- Fast from worries and have trust in God.
- Fast from complaints and contemplate simplicity.
- Fast from pressures and be prayerful.
- Fast from bitterness and fill your hearts with joy.
- Fast from selfishness and be compassionate to others.
- Fast from grudges and be reconciled.
- Fast from words and be silent so you can listen.

pietrafitness.com 