

# THE SPIRE

EDWARDS CHURCH *of* NORTHAMPTON  
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

Vol. 31 No. 1 January 2021

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year, Edwards Church Community!

*“To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven.” -Eccl. 3:1*

As we move through our celebrations of Christmas and the coming New Year, I am more than ever struck by the way in which meaning comes to life in the dance between individual participants and their perception, on the one hand, and groups of individuals and their shared values and understandings, on the other. To the extent I value or believe in something, I will subordinate other things to it, I will sacrifice for it. How I make adjustments, even rearrange priorities under changing conditions, reveals how much I value one person, group, idea, or thing in relation to others. And how any group I belong to makes similar adjustments under changing circumstances will reveal what it values, what meaning it finds or makes along the way.



This year, for the first time in our history, Edwards Church (like many other congregations) opted to have our Christmas pageant online. We found a way to keep telling a story that is important to us through an event important to us, and in the interest of community health we adapted how to do it. Jim Stokes-Buckles recruited church school families to record scenes in their separate homes, Dan and Michelle Prindle directed the children's choir, and Dan edited it all together to bring us a complete pageant. You can see it on the church web site: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Mf9LEdZva\\_4&feature=youtu.be](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Mf9LEdZva_4&feature=youtu.be). The pageant begins at 17:48 into the service.

In this year's incarnation of the Christmas story, the Word is made flesh and dwells among us in the retelling. It is both timeless and timely. All the main characters – Jesus, Mary and Joseph, the angels, the high kicking chorus of sheep and their shepherds – are there to bring the essence of the story to life. And it is “spoken” in the 2021 language of Edwards Church of Northampton. This is how the gospel lives, handed down from generation to generation, enacted inter-generationally. Our annual festival of Lessons and Carols plays a similar role, with an emphasis on music and scripture, and an appeal geared more to an older audience.

In 1960, I imagine most of the people who received my parents' Christmas card (shown above) found it very faith and family centered, and it was. My Catholic parents immersed their children in their faith, hoping we might share it and carry it forward. I am sure they did not foresee one son becoming a UCC pastor and another a lay leader in his UU congregation, any more than they could foresee daughters belonging to Catholics for Choice, a non-profit organization of Roman Catholics who support family planning, safe, legal access to abortion, and science-based sex education. Of course, 1960 was also the year the FDA approved the first birth control pill, and Roe v. Wade was not decided until 1973, so the Christian churches had not yet had to evaluate and adapt to those developments in medical science or culture.



The constitution of the UCC “affirms the responsibility of the Church in each generation to make [the Christian] faith its own in reality of worship, in honesty of thought and expression, and in purity of heart before God.” This is the work of the church in every generation and every facet of its operation. Anything that is not about that should be focused on supporting it.

Since last March we have been engaged in individual and shared struggles to avoid the virus that causes COVID-19. Now we have reached a milestone in that struggle: vaccines have been authorized for emergency use and will eventually be rolled out to the general population. If all goes according to plan, by the middle of 2021 we could reach another milestone in our pandemic struggle – herd immunity as a nation.

I hope the year just ending will be remembered not only as the year of the coronavirus pandemic, but also as the year our nation started – however haltingly – to finally come to terms with the white supremacy virus, the racism pandemic. This is a challenge that we have tried to outgrow as a nation primarily through law and politics, but it is more a challenge of unlearning certain biases and having the courage to create the society our moral vision calls us to create. It is the ongoing dance of people in community with shared values.

Pete Seeger's song “Turn, Turn, Turn” uses eight verses from Ecclesiastes as its text and closes with the line: “A time of love, and a time of hate; a time of war, and a time of peace, I swear it's not too late.” May 2021 be the year we achieve herd immunity in more than one sphere.

With blessing of hope, joy, peace, and love,  
*Michael*

## *From the Minister of Faith Formation*

Dear Beloved of God,

This past week, I found two devotions both by Howard Thurman and offered by Church of the Savior's daily devotional Inward/Outward particularly thought provoking. The first from December 14:

I Will Light Candles  
Candles of joy, despite all sadness,  
Candles of hope where despair keeps watch.  
Candles of courage for fears ever present,  
Candles of peace for tempest-tossed days,  
Candles of grace to ease heavy burdens,  
Candles of love to inspire all my living,  
Candles that will burn all the year long.

During Advent we lighted the candles of Hope, Peace, Joy, and Love. This certainly has been an unprecedented Advent and many throughout our world, no matter what age, have experienced despair, fear, tempest-tossed days, and heavy burdens. Many throughout our world, not matter what age, have also experienced moments of joy, witnessed hope, persevered with courage, sought to be instruments of God's peace and love, and have been recipients of and extended grace.

On Christmas Eve and during Epiphany we will light the Christ Candle. The star prevalent on Epiphany symbolizes the star the Magi followed on their journey to the Christ child. We who follow Jesus, are asked to let the light of Christ shine through us to the rest of the world. Always wondering, I wonder what candle(s) God would have me/us light that will burn brightly all year long or even at intervals throughout our faith journeys in the coming year.

The second from December 15:

I Will Sing a New Song

The old song of my spirit has wearied itself out.  
It has long ago been learned by heart;  
It repeats itself over and over,  
Bringing no added joy to my  
days or lift to my spirit.  
I will sing a new song.  
I must learn the new song for the new needs.  
I must fashion new words born of all the new growth of my life-  
of my mind – of my spirit.  
I must prepare for new melodies that have never been mine before,  
That all that is within me may lift my voice to God.  
Therefore, I shall rejoice with each new day  
And delight my spirit in each fresh unfolding.  
I will sing, this day, a new song unto the Lord.

To say that the year 2020 has been unprecedented for so many of us would be an understatement. Many of the songs that have lifted our spirits or brought us hope no longer worked. Many of our patterns of being and doing no longer worked and we have had to find new songs to sing and new ways of being - many of which have been unexpected blessings. I invite us to reflect on the new songs we have learned to sing during the last nine months.

I am humbled by Howard Thurman's words, particularly "preparing for new melodies that have never been mine before." Many are the melodies I cannot own (or even relate to) and yet need to listen deeply and prayerfully to them for new growth in journeying with others who would like to be accompanied; for faithful witnessing and responding justly to needs that are helpful and supportive for others in their life and faith journeys; melodies that were birthed into the world over 2000 years ago still waiting to be sung, lived and realized.

Looking forward to lighting candles and singing new songs as one year gives way to another.

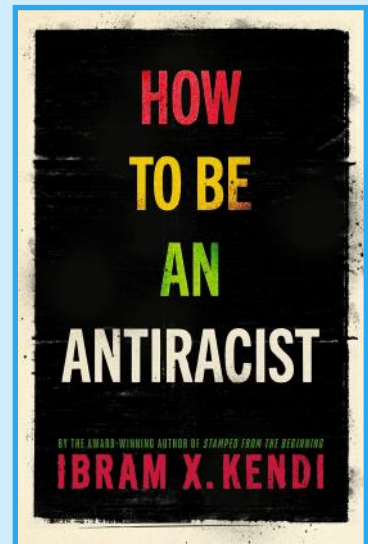
*The blessings of a wonder-filled Christmas and a hope-filled New Year to you and your families,*  
*Deb*

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1. Howard Thurman, *The Mood of Christmas & Other Celebrations*.
  2. Ibid.

## **Book Discussion Group Forming: How To Be An Antiracist**

Mr. Kendi is a New York Times bestselling author. Ibram is the Director and Founder of the Center for Antiracist Research at Boston University and Andrew W. Mellon Professor in Humanities at BU.

Dates being offered for the discussion group(s) are:  
Sundays 1/17, 1/31, and 2/7 @ 5:00pm and Mondays 1/25, 2/8, and 2/22 @ 6:30pm. Books will be order on January 7.  
Please contact Deb Moore at [ffnminister@edwardschurchnorthampton.org](mailto:ffnminister@edwardschurchnorthampton.org) or 584.5500x303 if you are interested in participating. Please also include your scheduling preferential.

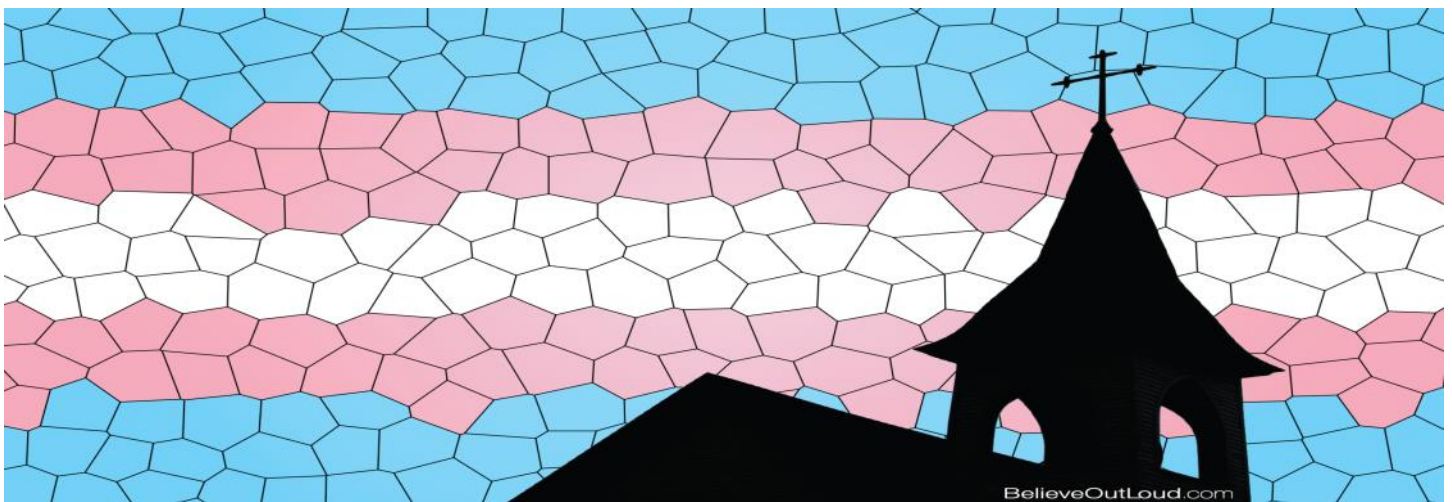


## Transgender Christians

*For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known. (I Corinthians 13.12 KJV)*

This passage from the Bible has been much on my mind lately. Last month Austen Hartke conducted a Webinar to help us begin to really see Transgender Christians and how their lives can reflect the scriptures and add depth and clarity to our worshiping communities. It is interesting. Just a few weeks ago, I could tell you that I knew two transgender individuals. I knew a bit of their lives and their transitions. I knew them as people of faith who were integral parts of their respective congregations. But then Austen came along, and my understanding of Trans folk and gender variable people began to grow. And as is so often the case, the synchronicities followed. The same week end of the workshop, the *Daily Gazette* had a story about Jan Morris who as her birth name, James, had been a famous war correspondent during WWII and who had scaled Everest with Sir Edmond Hillary. In 1972, she transitioned to her true gender and became Jan, continuing to be an exceptional writer including one of the first books about gender transitions. On Monday, during my daily worship time with Quakers on Zoom, Abigail, a British Quaker who often speaks deeply during our worship time, shared her journey as a Trans person—moving from the shame imposed on her in childhood to wholeness and healing. On Tuesday, an Email from an old friend shared that the little boy I knew as Will is now Violet. I think Trans people have always been in my life known by different names and different circumstances. But the Webinar and our study group reading *Transforming: The Bible and the Lives of Transgender Christians* have now made them more visible to me. "...but then shall I know even as also I am known." Thanks be to God. *Chris Hjelt*

Want to find out more? Check out Austen Hartke's website [www.http:AustenHartke.com](http://www.http:AustenHartke.com) or watch the 17 minute YouTube conversation with Austen at Riverside Church, [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CA3\\_cRg4sis](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CA3_cRg4sis) . The full Webinar with Austen hosted by Edwards Church is also available by request until the end of January. Contact Khalil Power at [info@edwardschurchnorthampton.org](mailto:info@edwardschurchnorthampton.org) for a link.



# Ministry Team News

Congratulations and Thank You Ministry Teams! You've made a huge, positive difference in the life of Edwards Church and in our wider community this year!

The teams listed below have been actively carrying out their missions throughout the pandemic. Our belief in and commitment to living and spreading God's word as we minister both within our church and through outreach is inspiring! If you are interested in more information on these teams and/or joining in the work, please contact Debbie Davis or Laura Frogameni, co-leaders of the Volunteer Coordination Ministry Team at [Volunteers@edwardschurchnorthampton.org](mailto:Volunteers@edwardschurchnorthampton.org)



## Congregational Life Ministry Teams

Buildings and Grounds Ministry Team  
Garden Ministry Team  
Reopening Ministry Team  
Thriving Congregation Ministry

Care and Visitation Ministry Team  
New Way Inreach Ministry Team  
Scholarship Program Ministry Team  
Team Volunteer Coordination Ministry Team

## Justice and Outreach Ministry Teams

Cathedral in the Night Ministry Team  
Justice Education Ministry Team  
Open and Affirming Ministry Team  
Prayer Shawl Ministry Team  
Transgender Asylum Seeker Ministry Team

College Fellowship Ministry Team  
Music Ministry Team  
Outreach Grants Ministry Team  
Quilt Ministry Team  
Youth Group Ministry Team

## Worship and Spirituality Ministry Teams

Bible Study Ministry Team  
Church School Ministry Team  
Prayer Leader/Reader Ministry Team

Choir Ministry Team  
Meditation Ministry Team  
Worship Planning Ministry Team



Rachel Frogameni picking up dessert from Maureen Sturman's home.

Shauneen Kroll with her dessert contribution.



Chris & Jack Hjelt greeting the Frogamenis with their dessert contribution from a safe distance.

Kathy Korza with handing Off dessert for Cathedral in the Night.



## Cathedral in the Night Mission Team

Thank you to those who served on the Cathedral in the Night Mission Team in 2020! Working together we provided 100 hot meals as well as 8 dozen sandwiches and 8 dozen servings of dessert to our friends in the Cathedral in the Night (CITN) congregation 6 times during 2020. When the pandemic hit, we got creative and found new ways to safely help our neighbors in need and provide them with extra supplies like hand-made masks, protein bars and toilet paper. We look forward to continuing this important work in 2021 by partnering with CITN on the first Sundays of February, April, June, August, October and December. Interested in learning how to get involved in the CITN Mission Team's work? Please email Debbie at [debradavis1217@gmail.com](mailto:debradavis1217@gmail.com). Here are photos of a few of the team members who prepared food for CITN on December 6, 2020. Their food creations were collected by the Frogameni family who, during the pandemic, have taken on the role of driving through 5 towns to collect sandwiches and desserts from our volunteers' homes to deliver to CITN.

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### **Congratulations from the Scholarship Ministry Team!**

Members of the Scholarship Ministry Team on behalf of the Edwards Church community congratulate Elena Frogameni, Gwenn Swift, and Gabrilla Wilkerson each awarded a \$2000.00 scholarship. Continued well wishes and prayers as you each continue to pursue your education goals.

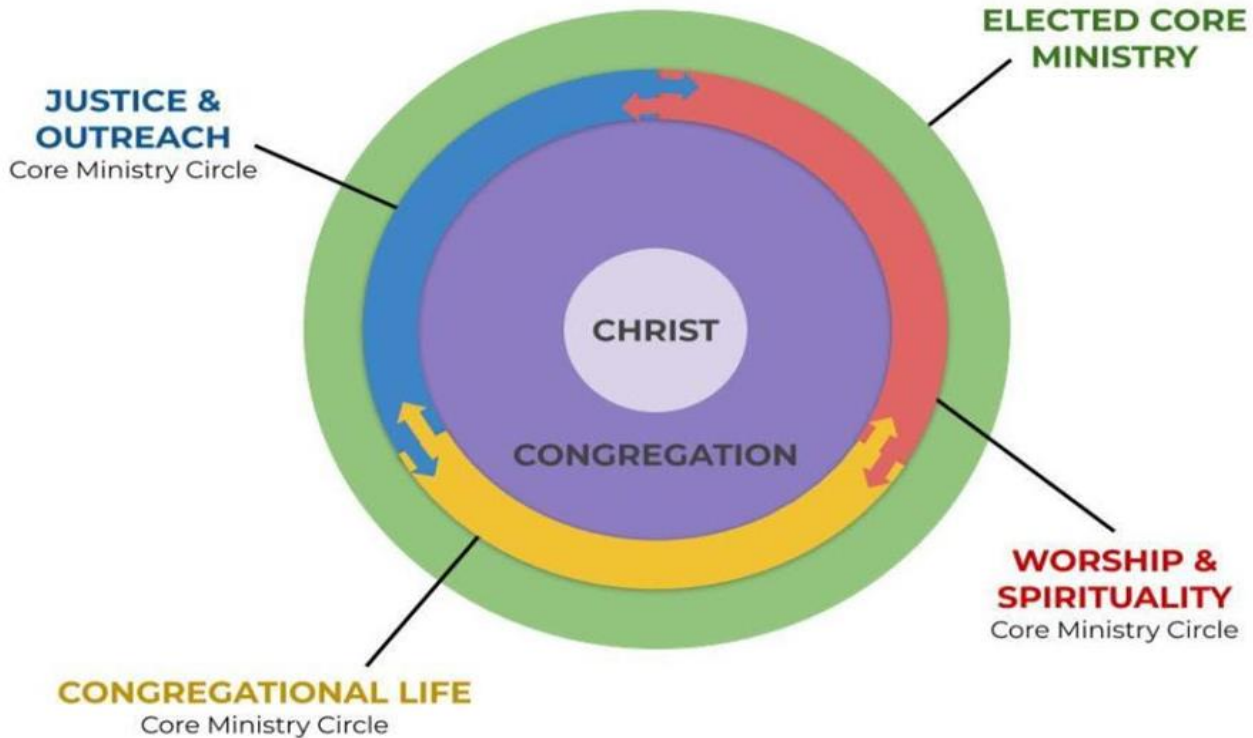
Sandi Coyne-Gilbert, Carl Erickson, Pam Lamlein, Melissa Mattison, Deb Moore

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### **Congratulations to Church School Members receiving Bibles!**

Congratulations to Maren J. Stoke-Buckles and Declan Lucas Prindle who received their personalized New Revised Standard Version (NRSV) of the Bible during worship on Sunday, December 13. May the stories of our faith within the pages of your Bible bring many wondering questions.

## Edwards Church Core Ministry Model



## Church School

Church School continues via Zoom on Sunday mornings from 9:00 – 9:30. We begin with an opening ritual, share a Bible story or appropriate related storybook, participate in an activity, share our joys and concerns, and conclude by praying together. Family pets welcome!



## Pastoral Care in the Pandemic

As we move through winter, we encourage you to try Zooming for visits. (And yes, we know some of us are Zoomed out.) There is nothing like being physically in the same place together. We miss it too! But to protect our own health and the health of others we will visit, we feel this is simply a matter of following public health advice by avoiding being inside with people outside one's household whenever possible.

Of course, we are still happy to talk on the phone, to walk outdoors, or even sit on your porch or patio – weather and warm coats permitting! Please email anytime or call us at the church office or on our cell phones.

Michael [minister@edwardschurchnorthampton.org](mailto:minister@edwardschurchnorthampton.org)

cell: 413-531-9729

Deb [ffminister@edwardschurchnorthampton.org](mailto:ffminister@edwardschurchnorthampton.org)

cell: 413-275-5507

May God bless and keep us all!

# JANUARY BIRTHDAYS

Jean Koester  
Sharon Carlson  
Jillian Grant  
Todd Rossi  
Susan Canning  
Paul Voss  
Lawrence Mattison



Gerald Krywicki  
Linda Smith  
Julie Abel  
James Cope  
Marjorie Tauer  
Nathan Korza  
Laura Frogameni

**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!

## Sing Virtually with the Choir!

The Edwards Church choir will continue to make virtual anthems through the first half of 2021. New members are always welcome! And since everything is being done remotely, choir participation is not limited to geography.

The choir meets on Zoom once a month on a Thursday evening to rehearse the upcoming anthem. The Minister of Music and the section leaders make a guide video for other choir members to sing to. The only technological requirement is that you must have two devices: one to watch the guide video and one to record yourself. You can use any combination: two phones, phone and tablet, tablet and laptop, etc. It's a pretty easy process, and the end result is very rewarding and moving.

If you or someone you know would like to try virtual choir, please contact David Kidwell at [music\\_minister@edwardschurchnorthampton.org](mailto:music_minister@edwardschurchnorthampton.org). A long-term commitment is not necessary. Try it for a month and see how you like it!



# 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!*

In order to stay safe and healthy, *and per request of members of the youth group*, we will continue to meet via Zoom on the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Sundays of the month at 11:30 until further notice. Upcoming dates are:

1/10 & 1/24

2/14 & 2/28



## Prayer Shawl Ministry

We will meet via Zoom from 3:00 – 4:00 on the second and fourth Tuesdays of each month. We welcome all knitters, weavers, and crocheters. If you would like to join us, please email Deb Moore at [ffminister@edwardschurchnorthampton.org](mailto:ffminister@edwardschurchnorthampton.org)

*Recently, 9 prayer shawls were blessed during worship ensuring a good supply of shawls. If you or someone you know would like a prayer shawl, especially during this pandemic time, please contact the church office ([info@edwardschurchnorthampton.org](mailto:info@edwardschurchnorthampton.org)) and/or Deb Moore ([ffminister@edwardschurchnorthampton.org](mailto:ffminister@edwardschurchnorthampton.org)) and arrangements will be made for pick up or delivery.*

## College Students

Members will continue to meet via Zoom on the first Sunday of the month at 1:00 p.m.



## Guided Meditation Offering

By request, this ministry engaging the spiritual practice of guided meditation will continue via Zoom on the first Thursday of the month from 10:00-10:30 through May.

Please email Linda Vincent ([lcvincent56@gmail.com](mailto:lcvincent56@gmail.com)) and Deb Moore ([ffminister@edwardschurchnorthampton.org](mailto:ffminister@edwardschurchnorthampton.org)) to let us know if you would like to be part of this group and we will make sure you get a link to the offering. We also encourage those participating to join the Zoom gathering at 9:55 to avoid disrupting the meditation.

# January 2021

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
27	28	29	30	31	1	2 3:00 Circle of Care
3 9 Church School 9:55 Worship 1:00 College Students	4 5:00 Faith Formation	5	6 12:00 Bible Study	7 10:00 Guided Meditation 7:00 Choir Rehearsal 7:00 Buildings & Grounds	8	9
10 9 Church School 9:55 Worship 11:00 Draft Budget Presentation 11:30 Youth Group 2:00 Worship Team	11 5:00 ONA	12 3:00 Prayer Shawl Ministry 5:30 Justice & Education 7:00 Finance Team	13 12:00 Bible Study 4:00 Thriving Congregation 7:00 ECM	14 4:30 Care & Visitation	15 <b>SPIRE Deadline</b>	16
17 9 Church School 9:55 Worship	18 6:00 Thriving Congregations	19 6:30 CE Communi- ty of Practice	20 12:00 Bible Study	21	22	23
24 9 Church School 9:55 Worship 11:30 Youth Group	25	26 3:00 Prayer Shawl Ministry	27 12:00 Bible Study	28	29	30
31 9 Church School 9:55 Worship 11:00 Annual Meeting	1	2	3	4	5	6