

# THE SPIRE

EDWARDS CHURCH *of* NORTHAMPTON  
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

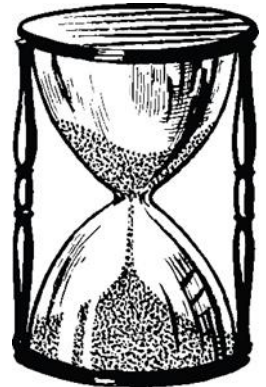
Vol. 31 No. 7

September 2021

Dear Edwards Church Community,

“How long, O Lord, how long?” Psalm 13:1

I wish that I could say with confidence when the pandemic would end. Knowing that approximately 60% of eligible people in our area are fully vaccinated is reassuring about life in the Valley. Knowing that most of the church community and all of my family is fully vaccinated is also reassuring. Knowing that I rarely leave the house without a mask in my pocket and that I still wash my hands more often and for longer that I used to – all this gives me confidence that I am doing all I can to stop the virus and protect myself and those I love. What more can one person do to make this end?



Of course, it feels to many of us like we were encouraged to think of the pandemic as over just two months ago when the CDC encouraged the fully vaccinated to dispense with face masks. And it felt like the virus was in retreat when the Governor declared almost all restrictions over at the end of May. But that was then.

Now we have Delta, and as long as large pockets of population remain unvaccinated anywhere on the planet, Covid-19 will continue to adapt to the changing conditions it faces and generate new variants. That is, quite literally, how life goes on.



Some of us are angry, and some are sad. Some feel the accumulated grief of all that has already been lost because of Covid. We want our old lives back. We want things the way they were, and asking us to let go, asking us to accept that an invisible virus has effectively taken away life as we knew it, is simply something we are unwilling or unable to accept. Each of us, in our own way, will adapt (or not). We will find ways to live with it (or not), because that is, and always will be, part of life -- adapting.

(Continued on the next page...)

For my part, I find it helpful to acknowledge – if only to myself and God, on walks in the cool early morning air or the gathering shadows of dusk – what I am really feeling. The anger and sadness, the confusion, the struggling to reconcile recycling moods of hope and despair – my version of “Covid fatigue” in its various forms. Then I take comfort in dinner, sleep and doing it all over again. “So I decided there is nothing better than to enjoy food and drink and to find satisfaction in work. Then I realized that these pleasures are from the hand of God.” Ecclesiastes 2:24



Whether we like it or not, the background to our lives now includes Covid-19. After all, the virus that drives the annual flu season – which we tend to greet like a change in the weather – is a recycling remnant of the virus that ravaged the world in 1918. The annual flu shots most of us get are modern medicine’s best estimate of what the dominant variants of the annual flu virus will look like that year. Whack-a-mole, meet public health.

I might let myself stew in my own foul juices over some of this, but then I remember that we – those of us with ready access to vaccines, food, clothing and shelter – have little to complain about in the grand scheme. We have our daily struggles. Some face life threatening illnesses or other conditions made worse by the pandemic. But that was all true before Covid. It only got harder.

And then I remember that we have each other. None of us is truly alone, however down we may get from time to time. However much we may miss the way it used to be. Life reinvents itself, and we are a Christian church asking God to show us a new way.

Psalm 13 ends: “But I trust in your unfailing love; my heart rejoices in your salvation. I will sing God’s praise, for she has been good to me.” As is so often the case with the psalms, we are not told how. But we have each other to along the way, to help each other sort that out. And we will. Because that is life together.

In faith, with hope, for love,  
*Michael*

## *From the Minister of Faith Formation*

Dear Beloved of God,

I pray that during the summer, with its extreme and fluctuating weather, you and your loved ones experienced periods of rest, renewal, the holy around you, and fun. Elsewhere in this Spire you will see photos (with credits) submitted in response to the invitation extended in the bulletin announcements and the weekly message for the last several weeks to take a picture or offer a written reflection of where the Divine was experienced. With that in mind, I would like to invite you to engage in the spiritual practice of *visio divina* as you look at the photos that have been submitted.

*Visio divina*, from the Latin meaning “divine seeing,” is a spiritual practice that shares roots with the ancient practice of *lectio divina* or “divine reading.” *Visio divina* invites one to encounter the divine through images. Steps include:

- prayerful gazing on a photograph, icon, piece of art or other visual representation
- noticing a place on the image where your eye is invited to rest
- responding to an invitation emerging within (perhaps connected to a piece of scripture, a song, a story, your own experience of the Divine)
- resting in the experience of stillness and being in the presence of God

Danny Shanahan offers this reflection on the photo he submitted:

Mill River Poem  
There is a river of light  
running through the woodlands  
of the soul  
The path to this place is narrow  
but do not be concerned  
On the shore there is a boat  
born of the breath of God  
All we have to do  
is step in and let  
the holy currents of this holy song  
carry us home

The invitation to email photos and or a reflection of where you experienced the Divine around you and email them to me ([ffminister@edwardschurchnorthampton.org](mailto:ffminister@edwardschurchnorthampton.org)) continues. \*\* For a compilation of pictures from our Edwards Church community please see attachment \*\*

*Blessing of backpacks and devices* – this annual blessing will take place during our hybrid worship service on September 12. All those headed off to any level of education are invited to bring their backpacks or devices to worship – either in the sanctuary or your home worship space for the blessing.

As we continue to live into the ever changing dynamics of the coronavirus with variants and protocols, I pray that each of you and your loved ones will stay safe and well.

*Blessings,*  
*Deb*

# Church Leaders Adopt Conflicts of Interest Policy

Several months ago, a lay leader with awareness of the possibility for conflicts of interest coming up in the course of their work for the church, due to their job outside the church, asked me if Edwards has a policy addressing such matters. They wanted to know if resigning from one or more volunteer roles would be required or advisable. Our conversation surfaced the desirability of having a written policy for the whole church. During the late spring and early summer, with direction from the Personnel Committee and the Elected Core Ministry (ECM), we prepared a draft policy which the ECM approved in July. It is printed below.

If you have any questions, please feel free to talk with members of the ECM (Margaret Allen, Sheri Cheung, Mark Dion, Leon Drzewianowski, Laura Frogameni, and Ella Stocker), the Personnel Committee (Al Griggs, Chuck McCullagh, Jeff Prince), or Senior Minister Michael McSherry.

## Edwards Church

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### **CONFLICT OF INTEREST POLICY** (as adopted by the Elected Core Ministry 7-20-21)

#### **Purpose:**

It is the policy of Edwards Church that every member of the teams, committees, and other lay leadership groups listed on Exhibit 1 and every employee of the church shall abstain from involvement in a decision or other activity of the church, whether

by voting,

by otherwise participating in a decision-making process to determine what, if any, action to take, or

by participating in any activity of the church

when such member of a lay leadership group or employee has or may have a conflict of interest regarding such vote, decision-making, or other activity.

#### **A conflict of interest exists where:**

The person(s) has a substantive economic or personal interest, whether direct or indirect, in the matter at hand or the other party(ies) involved and such interest arises outside their relationship to it through their role in the church;

The person(s) is either a director, officer or employee of the other party(ies) involved; or  
The person(s)'s spouse, partner, child, parent, sibling or other family member is the other party involved or is in a substantive economic or personal relationship with the other party(ies) involved.

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In those situations where a conflict of interest does exist or has the potential to exist, any member of a lay leader group listed on Exhibit 1 or any employee shall notify the Senior Minister and the Elected Core Ministry Group.

Because members of the lay leadership groups listed on Exhibit 1 and employees of the church may not always be fully aware of all relationship(s) of the church of a substantive economic or personal nature, they should inform the Senior Minister and ECM of any intentions to participate in any activity that could potentially give rise to a conflict of interest.

Each member of the lay leader groups listed on Exhibit 1 and all employees: will review this policy and sign a copy: (a) promptly after it is first adopted by the ECM in 2021; (b) whenever facts arise that constitute or have the potential to constitute a conflict of interest; and (c) at least once per year promptly after the annual meeting of the church when they join or continue as a member of the team or committee listed on Exhibit 1 or continue as an employee.

I have read the Conflict of Interest Policy, I understand and I agree to abide by the terms. I have no Conflicts of Interest or I have disclosed any conflict or potential conflict as required by the policy.

\_\_\_\_\_

Name

\_\_\_\_\_

Signature

\_\_\_\_\_

Date

### **Exhibit 1 – List of Lay Leader Groups Subject to the Conflict of Interest Policy**

- Elected Core Ministry (ECM)
- Finance Team,
- Investment Committee
- Buildings & Grounds Team
- Outreach Grants Ministry Team
- Inreach Ministry Team
- Personnel Committee

All Employees, including but not limited to Senior Minister, Minister or Director of Faith Formation, Minister or Director of Music, and Treasurer.

## OUTREACH GRANTS MINISTRY TEAM

The Outreach Grants Ministry Team has awarded \$15,000 from New Way funds to the United Congregational Church, the UCC church in Conway. The congregation's building was destroyed by a tornado in 2017, and since then services have been held elsewhere. Replacement plans, upended by the pandemic, have resumed. An estimated \$30,000 is needed in addition to the insurance payment. With \$15,000 already raised by a campaign in the community and among area churches, our donation will enable this small but very active and dedicated congregation to go forward with building their new home.

### Re-imagining Church School

As we continue to live with the Coronavirus, the Delta variant, and vaccine availability for those under 12, I have begun and will continue to reach out to parents for thoughts, hopes, and longings pertaining to the faith formation of their children. Input will also be gleaned from the Adhoc and ECM Teams as we may pay attention to the protocols for local schools. It could be that for in person gatherings indoors we will require masks and physical distancing, something we have all become accustomed to and Addis Hall may be the best space for that. We might also pursue an outdoor setting weather permitting.

This summer I have been evaluating curriculums and am excited about *Follow Me: Biblical Practices of Faithful Living*. Based on practices that Jesus followed and, on the Belonging,-Behaving-Believing model which Phyllis Tickle, Diana Butler Bass and others have written about, it is intergenerational. More to come on that.

### Scholarships

The Edwards Church Scholarships are available for those in high school, vocational school, college or university. They are also available to those attending an educational workshop, religious conference, workcamp or internship. The Scholarship Ministry Team is in the process of reviewing our present application which will be available shortly. In the meantime, if you are interested in receiving an application, please email me ([ffminister@edwardschurchnorthampton.org](mailto:ffminister@edwardschurchnorthampton.org)).

## **Cathedral in the Night Team News:** **1,794 sandwiches and desserts! Oh, my!!!**

Great news! On Sunday, August 1<sup>st</sup> we were able to worship in person with our friends in the Cathedral in the Night congregation for the first time since February 2020. It was wonderful to be back out on Main Street in front of First Churches for the outdoor worship service!



Pastor Steph Smith shares a sermon on August 1, 2021  
(Yes, that's our own Danny Shanahan on Steph's left!)

As we greeted old friends and met new folks at Cathedral, we were very conscious of the momentous challenges and uncertainties many of them faced during the past 16 months. Through it all, the staff and volunteers of Cathedral remained a supportive constant by dispensing food, supplies and information about where and how to access resources. Thankfully, the Cathedral congregation's enduring community spirit and support for each other is intact.

*Thanks for all that so many of you have done over the last year and a half to keep our partnership with Cathedral in the Night responsive and strong. Since March of 2020, our Edwards Church Cathedral in the Night Mission Team made over 918 sandwiches, 876 servings of dessert, sewed over 200 masks, collected and delivered dozens of rolls of toilet paper, and prepared 900 servings of asagna and taco salad. Additionally, from April 2020 through April 2021, the Frogameni Family*

*trio of Laura, Rachel and Elena, as well as Jack and Chris Hjelt, drove all over the Valley on our partnership Sundays to collect the sandwiches and desserts that our volunteers made, making it easy for team members to help out while staying safely at home.*

In mid-July, Pastor Steph and her team were able to start offering a full worship service and dinner served buffet-style again. When we joined them on August 1<sup>st</sup>, we all enjoyed hearing and responding to Pastor Steph's sermon based on Old Testament scripture about the manna from heaven. When it was time to offer prayers during the worship service, one person gave an emotional thanks for all that Cathedral in the Night and its partners do to show that people really care about their neighbors who often don't sleep with a roof over their heads or know where their next meal will come from.

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These lines from our Edwards Church Vision Statement aptly describe our last year of serving as a partner with Cathedral in the night ... “Knowing that the road is long, we choose to walk together. Finding strength in our diversity, we call on all our talents to worship and serve.”  
***Thank you, everyone!***



Beth Henneman, Chris & Jack Hjelt and Grace Del Vecchio prepare to load cars with sandwiches, desserts and lots of taco salad for Cathedral In the Night on August 1<sup>st</sup>.

## Pastoral Care In Person

We are now fully vaccinated, and we hope to start seeing a lot more of you in person. We can sit inside or out, though who doesn't love the outdoors on a nice day?! If you are not vaccinated, we can still visit, but may need to take more precautions for your benefit.

Please email anytime or call us at the church office (413) 584-5500 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!

## Justice Education Resources

The Justice Education Team continues to gather resources to share with the Edwards Church community promoting an anti-racist bias as well as an awareness to systemic racist policies. Here are this month's recommended books (and short descriptions about them) for adults and youth. If you would like to borrow any of these recommended resources or are interested in learning what other books/DVD's we have on these topics, feel free to reach out to Deb Moore.

*Asians, Everyday* is a virtual exhibit featured on the [Eric Carle Museum](http://www.carlemuseum.org) website. A three-minute video introduction by Grace Lin is followed by a selection of children's literature featuring positive representation of Asian Americans celebrating our common humanity. The illustrations of 26 artists are featured along with their comments. To visit the virtual exhibit go to [www.carlemuseum.org](http://www.carlemuseum.org) and scroll to exhibits.

### Ages 4-8:

*Bein' With You This Way*. By W. Nikola-Lisa. Illustrated by Michael Bryant. "To the beat of a playground wrap, the exuberant verse invites readers of all ages to join in this celebration of diversity."

*I Don't Have Your Eyes*. By Carrie A. Kitze. Illustrated by Rob Williams. "An exploration of outside difference, inside sameness for young children in preschool or early elementary. We don't look the same on the outside, but in our hearts, we are the same."

*Sister Anne's Hands*. By Marybeth Lorbiecki. Illustrated by K. Wendy Popp. "Based on one of the author's own childhood experiences, we learn how she dealt with an incident and the impact it had on her students – especially Anna's."

*Whoever You Are*. By Mem Fox. Illustrated by Leslie Staub. "A story that weaves its way around our earth, across cultures and generations, celebrating the bonds that unite us all."

### Young Adults & Adults:

*Long Time Coming: Reckoning With Race in America*. By Michael Eric Dyson. "A searing cry for racial justice from one of our nations's greatest thinkers and most compelling prophets." – Robin Diangelo, author of *White Fragility*.

*Never Caught: The Washington's Relentless Pursuit of the Runaway Slave Ona Judge*. By Erica Armstrong Dunbar. "Ona's story provides critical insights into the experiences of slaves and free black people in the antebellum period...an important read for anyone interested in American history." – Booklist

*How The Word Is Passed: A Reckoning With The History Of Slavery Across America*. By Clint Smith. "Sketches an impressive and deeply affecting human cartography of America's historical conscience...an extraordinary contribution to the way we understand ourselves." —New York Times Book Review



# YOUTH GROUP

*All youth in Grades 6-12* are welcome to be part of the Edwards Church Youth Group and to invite a friend. Our first gathering is scheduled via Zoom at **11:30 Sunday morning, September 12**. During our time together, we will determine the time and location of our future gatherings. Two members of the Thriving Congregation Team will join us.

On **October 24**, we will be *gleaning for Rachel's Table* along with youth and adults from St. John's Episcopal Church and First Churches – a yearly and favorite outreach.



## Prayer Shawl Ministry

All knitters, crocheters, and weavers are welcome to join this ministry team which meets on the second and fourth Tuesday of the month via Zoom from 3:00 – 4:00 p.m. If you would like to join us, please email Deb Moore at [ffminister@edwardschurchnorthampton.org](mailto:ffminister@edwardschurchnorthampton.org). If you or someone you know would like a prayer shawl, please contact the church office at [info@edwardschurchnorthampton.org](mailto:info@edwardschurchnorthampton.org) to arrange a time for pick-up or delivery of a shawl.



## Guided Meditation Offering

This popular offering will start back up on October 7, meeting via Zoom from 10:00 – 10:30 a.m. Please email Linda Vincent ([lcvincent56@gmail.com](mailto:lcvincent56@gmail.com)) and Deb Moore ([ffminister@edwardschurchnorthampton.org](mailto:ffminister@edwardschurchnorthampton.org)) 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.



## College Students

**Re-imagining ministry with our College Students – and those who have graduated** – we will resume meeting via Zoom on September 5 at 1:00p.m. This group will be open to Edwards Church and Smith College students. We will welcome back several of our recently graduated Edwards Church college students who have expressed an interest in continuing to gather with us.

# September Birthdays

Carolyn Gray

Kathleen Korza

Shirley Atwood

Pamela Cook

Debra Moore

James Young

Phillip Cooper

William Hogan, Jr.



**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!

**A Concert for the Homeless**

**SEPTEMBER 18, 2021 • 1-10 PM**  
Three County Fairgrounds, Northampton, MA

**Live Music, Crafts,  
Food Trucks & more!**

**OneRoofFestival.org**

# September 2021

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
			<b>1</b> 12 Bible Study 7 Building & Grounds	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b> 3 Circle of Care
<b>5</b> 10 Worship 1 College Students	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b> 6:30 Thriving Con- gregations	<b>8</b> 12 Bible Study	<b>9</b>	<b>10</b> 45,000 Quilt Project	<b>11</b> 45,000 Quilt Project
<b>12</b> 10 Worship 11:30 Youth Group 45,000 Quilt Project	<b>13</b> 45,000 Quilt Project	<b>14</b> 3 Prayer Shawl 45,000 Quilt Project	<b>15</b> 12 Bible Study 7 Building & Grounds 45,000 Quilt Project	<b>16</b> 45,000 Quilt Project	<b>17</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>19</b> 10 Worship	<b>20</b>	<b>21</b> 6:30 CE Community of Practice	<b>22</b> 12 Bible Study	<b>23</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>26</b> 10 Worship	<b>27</b>	<b>28</b> 3 Prayer Shawl	<b>29</b> 12 Bible Study 7 Building & Grounds	<b>30</b>		