

THE SPIRE

EDWARDS CHURCH *of* NORTHAMPTON
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

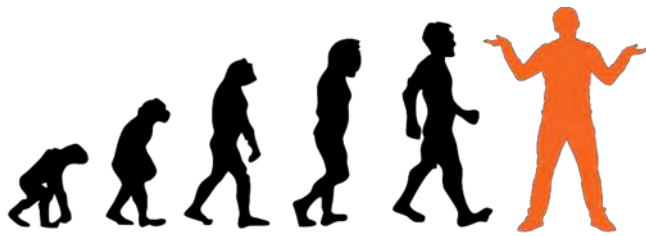
Vol. 32 No. 1 January 2022

Plus ca change, plus c'est la meme chose.

Dear Edwards Church Community,

The French saying means “The more things change, the more they stay the same,” and has an English equivalent: “Everything old is new again.” The book of Ecclesiastes in the Hebrew Bible, which predates both by centuries, declares: “What has been will be again, what has been done will be done again; there is nothing new under the sun.”

While these statements describe some truth, i.e., that there is a lot of repetition in life, they do not capture the whole truth. In nature and in human history, life that extends across generations must necessarily adapt and change to keep living. For what has been to continue to be, it must have both continuity and change. Biology shows this perhaps most clearly, but the same holds true in the life of the church.



The United Church of Christ declares in the preamble to its constitution: The UCC “claims as its own the faith of the historic Church expressed in the ancient creeds and reclaimed in the basic insights of the Protestant Reformers. It affirms *the responsibility of the Church in each generation to make this faith its own in reality of worship, in honesty of thought and expression, and in purity of heart before God*” Plus ca change, plus c'est la meme chose.

Our local church declares in its bylaws: “The purpose of this Church, in all its programs and activities, shall be to bind together followers of Jesus Christ for sharing in the praise and worship of God and in seeking and serving God. As Christians, it is our mission to respond to all God’s creation with the love Christ directs, through collective and individual worship, prayer, support, and action.” We bind together followers of Jesus to share in praise and worship and in seeking and serving God.

I deliberately leave out “Christ” in that restatement to leave room for those who struggle with the theological claim that the historical Jesus was all the Christian tradition says, because the UCC welcomes all who are otherwise engaged in worship, praise, seeking and serving. As our Vision Statement says, “Gathering at the crossroads of ancient faith and contemporary culture, we are a Christian church asking God to open us to a new way.”



For much of the past two years, the crossroads of our lives has been littered with the wreckage of Covid-19. For many, the patterns of life have been first shattered, then forcibly adapted. The ways we worship have begun to evolve. We cannot say the change will ever stop, and we cannot yet say if we are changing fast enough to do more than survive – but to thrive – and what that will look like.

If we believe our thriving depends on our cleverness, we are already lost. Our cleverness will be helpful. If we remember that our life as a church and all our thriving ultimately depends on the grace of God, to which we can make ourselves available but which we can never control, we will do more than just survive. We will thrive.

In faith, with hope, for love,
Michael



Northampton Parents Center

Warm Winter Wishes from Northampton Parents Center!

We are back indoors in our wonderful space twice a week now, as well as keeping outdoor and online programs for families with young children during these continuing pandemic times. Here is a link to our winter program preregistration form, updated weekly, with details and health and safety measures:

<https://forms.gle/hwaEzVhDT9G9E7hd6>

All of our programs are offered free for families. If you would like to donate to help sustain NPC's free programs here is the link:

<http://www.northamptonparentscenter.org/donate/>



Thank you to the Edwards Church Community and Happy New Year!
-Northampton Parents Center

From the Minister of Faith Formation

Dear Beloved of God,

On entering the house, they saw the child with Mary, his mother;
and they knelt down and paid him homage.
Then, opening their treasure chests, they offered him gifts of
gold, frankincense, and myrrh.
Matthew 2:11 (NRSV)

“Epiphany” comes from the Greek word *Epiphaneia*, which means ‘manifestation’ or ‘appearance’. Celebrated on January 6 it is also called the twelfth night as it falls twelve days after Christmas, the season goes to Ash Wednesday. The festival of Epiphany dates back to the 4th century and celebrates the arrival of the Magi (Greek for wise men) also referred to as kings, or astrologers at the home where Jesus lived (he was about 2 years by then) and the presentation of their gifts to him.

Epiphany is often called “Universal Christmas” as it retells the disclosure of Jesus to the Gentiles. In the Hebrew scriptures, God seemed mainly concerned with the Hebrew people; now in the gift of God’s only Son, the angel proclaimed God’s love for all people. “Do not be afraid; for see – I am bringing you good new of great joy for all the people: to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord. (Luke 2:10)

On Christmas Eve we lit the Christ candle and will continue to do so during Epiphany a reminder that as we walk together in a world where darkness - an overarching metaphor for the many ways in life that are difficult and how human experiences can shut out joy, light will endure.

In the opening verses of the Gospel of John we read that John the Baptizer came into the world to testify that the true light which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world and that his life was the light for all people. This light shines in darkness and the darkness did not, will not overcome it.

In their book, *The Circle of Life: The Heart’s Journey Through the Seasons* Joyce Rupp and Macrina Wiederkehr, write: “The Christian season of Advent has as its central theme the coming of the Christ-Star into the world. It is a time to remember how God’s Beloved came to restore harmony to a fractured world, to dispel whatever keeps love from shining through all beings.”¹ We are reminded that we are reflections of God and the light Jesus brought into a world not so unlike our world today.

“Just as a star led the Magi to the Christ Child, so we are meant to be stars leading others to the Divine Love. Others are also stars for us, leading us to Divine Love. In each of us the manifestation of Divine Love is a magnificent gift of hope and encouragement.”²

While we will still have COVID and its variants with us along with the pandemics of racism, environmental crisis, immigration crisis, white supremacy, etc., as we begin a new year, I pray that we will be as stars shining brightly for one another and that the reflection of God's Divine and Radiant love in each of us continues to shine brightly through our various ministries, our discipleship, our daily living. I pray that we will let others be as stars for us shining and reflecting God's Divine and Radiant love within them.

*Blessings God's Divine and Radiant and love,
Deb*

1. Taken from *The Circle of Life 2005* by Joyce Rupp Macrina Wiederkehr. Used by permission of Ava Maria Press. All rights reserved.
2. Ibid.

Annual Meeting Jan 30th

The Annual Meeting of Edwards Church will be held immediately after worship on Sunday, January 30th. Annual reports are due in the office on or before January 3rd. Assuming they are delivered on time, annual report booklets will be available no later than Sunday, January 16th.

Re-imagining Church School – Save the Date – January 9, 2022

After talking with several families, there is indeed interest in an intergenerational event on a Sunday afternoon. On the afternoon of January 9 – exact time to be determined (probably 3:00 – 5:00p.m.) An Epiphany Celebration will be held in Addis Hall. It will feature a Bible story – the magi arriving at the home of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph; two or three activities; and a dramatic retelling of the Bible story. If there is interest, we will conclude with a pot luck or order pizza.

Please let Deb Moore, Melissa Mattison, or Jim Stokes-Buckles know if you are interested in helping with this event.

Congratulations to our Scholarship Recipients!

Stone Cornelius - Stone is in his first year at the Manhattan School of Music where he is pursuing his passion for creating and sharing music and his dream to become a professional player and teacher.

Elena Frogameni – Elena is in her senior year at Mt. Holyoke where she has been majoring in French and Politics with a nexus in Journalism, Media and Public Discourse. She was recently named a Rhodes Scholar.

Gwenn Swift – Gwenn, having received her master’s degree last June is a doctoral candidate in couple and family therapy as it relates to substance abuse treatment and approaches at Drexel University in Philadelphia.

Gabriella Wilkerson – Gabriella is in her second year at Wesleyan University where she is continuing to pursue a bachelor’s degree in physics and dance. She hopes to do research in material studies which could be applied to future improvements in solar panel design.

Looking for a Faith Based Camp or Retreat Center?

Check these out and know that scholarships are available.

Edwards House Meeting & Retreat Center, Framingham, MA

<https://www.edwardshouseframingham.org>

Irons Homestead Camp & Retreat, Glocester, RI

<https://www.sneucc.org/ironhomestead>

Pilgrim Day Camp, Framingham, MA

<https://www.pilgrimdaycamp>

Silver Lake Conference Center, Sharon, CT

<https://www.silverlakeect.org>

The Horton Center, Gorham, NH

<https://www.hortoncenter.org>

Pilgrim Pines, Swanzey, NH

<https://www.pilgrimpines.org>

Star Island, coast of NH & ME

<https://www.starisland.org>

Craigville Retreat Center, Centerville, MA

<https://www.uccr.org>

For information about scholarships, contact a member of the Scholarship Team: Melissa Mattison, Sandi Coyne-Gilbert, Pam Lamlein, Deb Moore.

Cathedral in the Night Mission Team News - January 2022

One of the ways church happens is when we live the Gospel by **creating community** with others **to be of service to the broader community**. **Thank you, Cathedral in the Night Ministry Team volunteers, for being one of those created communities!**

Do you remember what you were doing on the first Sunday of February, April, June, August, October and December during the past year? The answer for many folks in our congregation is that they were making sandwiches, desserts, masks, or personal cleansing kits, or collecting donations of the same, or working with others in the Edwards Church kitchen to create 100 servings of taco salad or lasagna, or helping put food in to-go containers, or worshipping and serving food at Cathedral in the Night.

It is a true gift to serve with the generous, loving people on the Edwards Cathedral in the Night Team. More than ever this year, the resources and support we shared with Pastor Steph, Pastor Dawn and the volunteers of Cathedral in the Night community were sorely needed. Growing numbers of folks in greater Northampton found themselves homeless, food insecure, or both – many for the first time in their lives. Pastors Steph and Dawn struggled to provide support and information about resources to their growing congregation. Edwards Church, through the provision of food, caring volunteers, and financial donations (thanks Edwards Church Outreach Mission Team!) was an important component in the network of churches and other organizations providing support for the Cathedral in the Night congregation this year.

Thank you to the Edwards volunteers listed below who shared their time and talents to support Cathedral in the Night on the first Sundays of February, April, June, August, October and December!

Jen & Edie Adams	Beth Henneman	Sandra Rossi
Sue Anderson	Chris & Jack Hjelt	Jenna Sellers
Carla Bee & Danny	Dianne Hobbs	Cynthia Stanton
Shanahan	Lynda Kamik	Stokes-Buckles Family
Heather Bell	Jeanne Kocsis	Ella Stocker
Fumiko Brown	Kathy Korza	Maureen Sturman
Cheung Family	Shauneen Kroll	Marj Tauer
Sandi Coyne & Gaston Gilbert	Melissa Mattison	Janie Thurber
Debbie Davis & Grace Del Vecchio	Michele McHale	Janet Tucker
Nancy Flickinger	Michael McSherry	Linda Vincent & Tom Derr
Frogameni Family	Deb Moore	Hazel Waller
Jim Green	Ann Parker	Carla Wirzberger

(more on the following page)

Want to help support Cathedral in the Night? Here's how ...

Offer up prayer for the Cathedral congregation and ministers

Contact Debbie Davis (debradavis1217@gmail.com) to volunteer on the Edwards team

Send a tax-deductible donation to Cathedral in the Night:

Cathedral in the Night

867 N. Pleasant St., Amherst, MA. 01002

Collect gently used clothes, blankets, coats, boots, shoes, hats & gloves from family & friends and email Pastor Steph at pastorstephsmith@gmail.com to arrange drop off or pick up



CITN & Edwards Church volunteers serving dinner on December 5t



Giving offering at Dec., 5th Cathedral in the Night worship service



Pastor Dawn's sermon at December 5th Cathedral worship service

Come Sing with the Choir!

The Edwards Church Choir continues to rehearse at 7pm on Thursday evenings, recording anthems for use in worship. New choir members are always welcome! You don't need to audition, and it's not necessary to make a long-term commitment; drop in as your schedule allows.

All choir members must be fully vaccinated, and social distancing and KN95 masks (provided) are required at rehearsals.

If you have questions, please visit the [Join the Choir](#) page on the church website, or email Minister of Music David Kidwell at music_minister@edwardschurchnorthampton.org

Justice Education

Welcome to 2022! As the Justice Education Team kicks off the new year, we want to understand your thoughts and desires surrounding Edward's justice education. Please [click on this link](#) to participate in a VERY short survey. All responses will be anonymous. Thank you for helping us shape the upcoming year!

Our team's mission is: Acknowledging the many injustices in our community both past and present, we come together to educate ourselves and others, and to inspire reflection based on our Christian values and a commitment to faith-based action.

In Person Pastoral Care

We have enjoyed meeting in person with many folks in the community since getting vaccinated last spring and our booster shots in November, and we hope to see each of you soon. As is always true, if there is a special reason to meet, we want to do that, but need you to let us know.

We can sit inside or walk outdoors. 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 cell: 413-531-9729

Deb ffminister@edwardschurchnorthampton.org cell: 413-275-5507



GROUP

All youth in Grades 6-12 are welcome to be part of the Edwards Church Youth Group and to invite a friend.

Our January schedule:

January 9 - we will meet via Zoom at 11:30. Part of our time will be devoted to planning the Interfaith Shelter meal

January 21 - we will deliver the meal for guests at the Interfaith Shelter in Northampton.



Guided Meditation Offering

This popular offering meets on the first Thursday of the month via Zoom from 9:55 – 10:30 a.m. Please email Linda Vincent

(lcvincent56@gmail.com) and Deb Moore

(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 via Zoom promptly at 9:55 to avoid disrupting the meditation.



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. If you or someone you know would like a prayer shawl, please contact the church office at info@edwardschurchnorthampton.org to arrange a time for pick-up or delivery of a shawl.



Young Adults (Previously titled "College Students")

Ministry with our 20 somethings– we will meet via Zoom on January 2nd at 1:00 pm.

JANUARY BIRTHDAYS

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

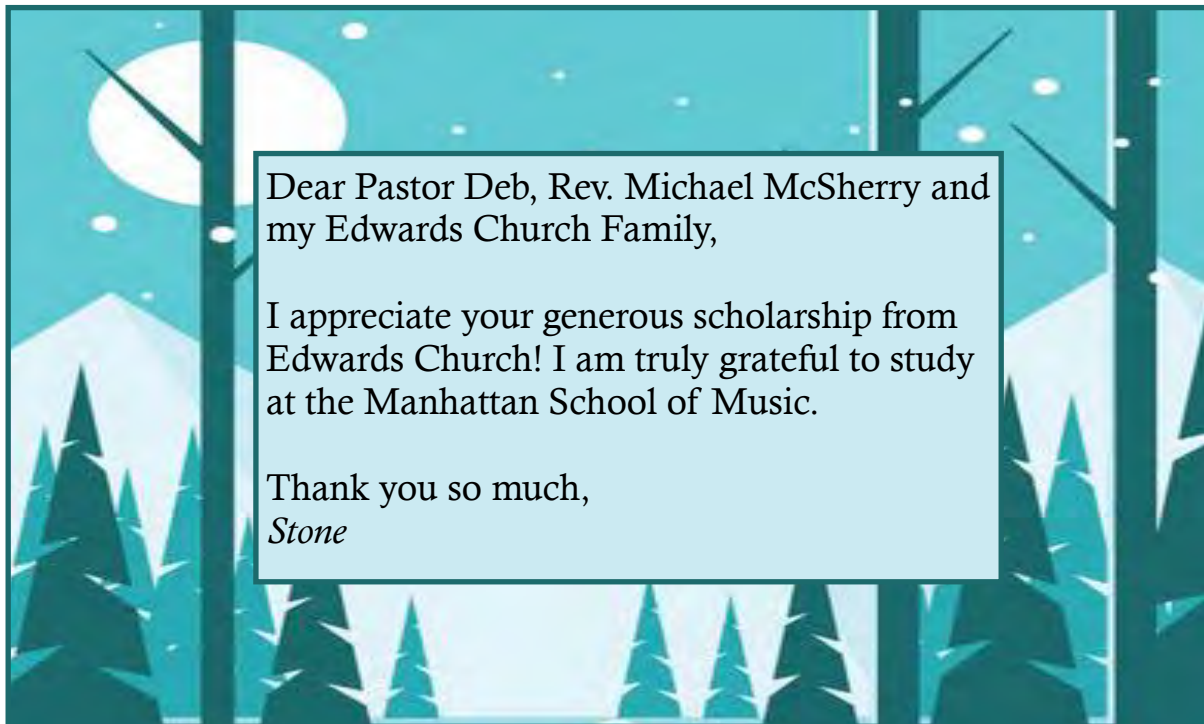


Gerald Krywicki
Linda Smith
Julie Abel
James Cope
Marjorie Tauer
Nathan Korza
Laura Frogameni



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!



Dear Pastor Deb, Rev. Michael McSherry and my Edwards Church Family,

I appreciate your generous scholarship from Edwards Church! I am truly grateful to study at the Manhattan School of Music.

Thank you so much,
Stone

January 2017

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
						1
2 10 Worship (on First Churches YouTube Channel) 1 Young Adults	3 <i>Annual Report Submission Deadline</i>	4 7 ECM	5 12 Bible Study 5:30 Thriving Congregations	6 10 Guided Meditation 7 Choir Rehearsal 7 Finance	7	8
9 10 Worship 11:30 Youth Group	10 5:30 ONA	11 3 Prayer Shawl	12 12 Bible Study 7 Building & Grounds 7 Investment Committee	13 7 Choir Rehearsal	14	15
16 10 Worship	17	18 12 Bible Study 5:30 Justice Education	19 5:45 Justice Education 7 Choir Rehearsal	20 Interfaith Emergency Shelter Meal	21	22
23 10 Worship 11 Youth Group	24 3 Prayer Shawl 6:30 FF COP	25 3 Prayer Shawl	26 12 Bible Study 7 Building & Grounds	27 7 Choir Rehearsal	28	29
30 10 Worship 11 Annual Meeting	31					