

THE SPIRE

EDWARDS CHURCH *of* NORTHAMPTON
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

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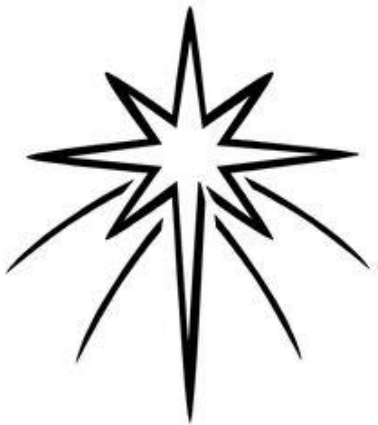
February 2022

Dear Edwards Church Community,

February gets a bad rap as a boring, cold incubator of cabin fever. Except for winter sports and daily walks we are pretty much stuck inside, windows closed, maybe with heat retaining drapes, waiting out the winter. But there is more going on.



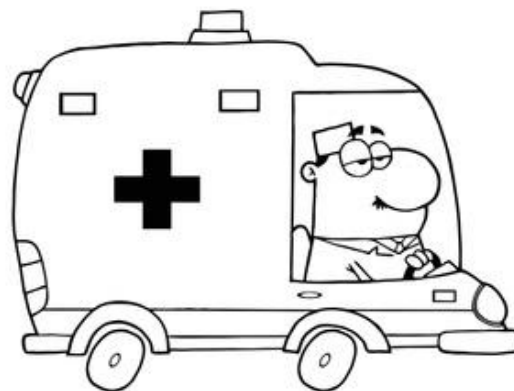
This February starts with a new moon and a dark sky overnight, perfect for star gazing. If you can tolerate the cold, go out for a few minutes on a clear sky night in the first week and soak up the starlight. Then as the days and nights pass you may notice how the moon grows full at midmonth and fades again to dark by March. Fewer visible stars midmonth but more opportunities for moonlit snowscapes. Life is change.



The season after Epiphany in the cycle of the church year moves from celebrating the arrival and presence of Emmanuel, God-with-us, to the stories of Jesus recruiting disciples and engaging them in his ministries of love and justice. The stories convey the caring, healing, teaching and training involved. As we know – at least those of us who have become familiar with these stories – Jesus draws people to himself because he loves them and needs them to take over the work he began, and to keep at it until he returns, which could be forever. It is a calling no one can fulfill alone; it is both an individual and communal calling; and it is one we can never complete.

So it is a calling that would exhaust anyone who has not learned to live within their limits. As soon as I can get to it, I intend to read *Four Thousand Weeks: Time Management for Mortals*. There is deep irony there, as the author Oliver Burkeman's major point is that our modern obsession with productivity, efficiency, and time management is at bottom a refusal to accept our own mortality. I was gradually but overwhelmingly sold on his observations during an interview on Krista Tippett's podcast *On Being*: <https://onbeing.org/programs/oliver-burkeman-time-management-for-mortals/>

This discipline is connected to the spiritual practice of saying yes and saying no. As Burkeman says, whatever we choose to give our attention to is what will define our lives: work or family, healthy habits or seconds on comfort food, scrolling social media or talking to a friend. We cannot do it all, either individually or collectively, and when we do not plan to live within our limits, they will find ways to remind us they are there.



“God is with us, even in this mess” I put on the sign out front, referring to the current (and, God willing, now fading) Covid surge. But it could refer as well to life on Earth, with all its beauty and its messiness. God does not call the perfect, the already equipped, but God does equip the called. We have been given much to work with, our collective time, talent and treasure – much, but not without limits. How we use it will define us and our contribution to God's unfolding realm.

In faith, with hope, for love,

Michael

Northampton Parent's Center

Happy New Year from Northampton Parents Center (NPC)!

We are back to having our programs for families with young children **outdoors** and online, temporarily. We look forward to when we can be back inside.

Here is a link to our winter program preregistration form, updated weekly, with details and health and safety measures: <https://forms.gle/hwaEzVhDT9G9E7hd6>

NPC sends a huge "Thank You!" to Janet Tucker and the entire Buildings and Grounds Committee for their hard work, and for the new floors and new furniture in the downstairs classrooms! Thank you to the Edwards Church Community!

Warmly,
-Northampton Parents Center

From the Minister of Faith Formation

Dear Beloved of God,

brink:

” the edge of a cliff or other high area, or the point at which something good or bad will happen”

(Cambridge Dictionary Online)

Parker Palmer is an author, speaker, and activist who focuses on issues in education, community, leadership, social change, spirituality, compassion, and forgiveness. He is the founder of the Center for Courage & Renewal.

Carrie Newcomer is a gifted songwriter, recording artist, performer, and educator. She has been described by the Boston Globe as a “prairie mystic.”

Both have been repeated guests on Krista Tippett’s *On Being*, and in recent years they have collaborated on several projects including the Growing Edge Podcast. Spirituality and Health Magazine in 2018 listed them in the “top 10 spiritual leaders” for the next 20 years. Palmer’s most recent book, *On the Brink of Everything*, a series of essays, includes three of Carrie’s downloadable songs, one of which is titled “The Brink of Everything.”

Parker states that he likes “being on the brink of everything” because it gives him new perspectives on his past, present, and future, and new insights into the inner dynamics that shape and drive his life.

I found myself reflecting on the last two years, the brink of the pandemic, the brink of the Delta variant, the brink of Omicron and how all lives around the world as well as the life and ministries of Edwards Church have been affected. As members of the Thriving Congregation Team listened to many of you and compiled responses to losses experienced, that which is longed for, changes hoped for, and spiritual practices engaged in, we were gifted with your perspectives and are grateful. We have learned, and some of us still are learning, new ways of being with technology - worshipping, working, and meeting in hybrid formats, finding creative ways to be in community, to grow spiritually and faithfully in a welcoming manner, sharing our gifts in this community and beyond, and striving to promote God’s vision of Shalom for all people and creation.

I think about Jesus who lived his life on the brink of everything. I think about the first disciples who lived their lives on the brink of everything along with Jesus. I think about those we call modern day prophets: Ghandi, Dorothy Day, John Lewis, Martin Luther King, Jr., Archbishop Desmond Tutu, Harriot Tubman, Sojourner Truth, Greta Thunberg and others living their lives on the brink of everything. I think of all the first responders, medical workers, educators, postal carriers, and all those whose interdependence we have come to realize during this time. I think of each of us - children, youth and adults - how every day we live our lives on what Parker Palmer calls the brink of everything and that brink is not always a negative. There are graces in the mix and we can be sure that our steadfast, faithful, and loving God is on the brink with us guiding us, even nudging us as we continue to live into the Great Commandment, our Vision Statement, and our humanness.

Blessings,
Deb

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.

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 boosted, 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



GROUP

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

Our February schedule:

February 13 & 27 - we will meet via Zoom at 11:30.



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.



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.



Young Adults

Ministry with our college students 20 somethings– we will meet via Zoom on February 6th at 1:00 pm.

FEBRUARY BIRTHDAYS

Marc Abel

Ruby Smith

Sandra Rossi

Dan Shanahan

Deanna O'Connor

Kimberly Schlichting

Luke Longstreeth

Margaret Allen

Tracy Teague

Marc Waller

Brian Swift

Note: In an effort to protect the digital identities of our community members, we will no longer publish dates of birth in the newsletter. 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!

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

February 2011

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
		1	2 12 Bible Study	3 9:55 Guided Meditation 7 Choir Rehearsal	4	5
6 <i>Communion Sunday</i> 10 Worship 1 Young Adults	7	8 3 Prayer Shawl 7 ECM	9 12 Bible Study 7 Building & Grounds	10 7 Choir Rehearsal	11	12
13 10 Worship 11:30 Youth Group	14 5:30 ONA	15 7 Ad Hoc SPIRE Submissions Due	16 12 Bible Study 6:30 Justice Education 7 Finance	17 4 Care & Visitation 7 Choir Rehearsal	18 Interfaith Emergency Shelter Meal	19
20 10 Worship	21	22 3 Prayer Shawl 6:30 FF Community of Practice	23 12 Bible Study 7 Building & Grounds	24 7 Choir Rehearsal	25	26
27 10 Worship 11:30 Youth Group	28					