

THE SPIRE

EDWARDS CHURCH *of* NORTHAMPTON
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

Vol. 32 No. 8 October 2022

Dear Edwards Church Community,

It is October in the valley: time for apple cider, pumpkin bread, orange and red leaves, emptied fields and other signs of changes that are always underway but appear now in their seasonal expression. During the pandemic I became a more avid hiker, regularly walking around Fitzgerald Lake, Mineral Hills, Sugarloaf Mountain, trails of the Holyoke Range, or just around the streets of Florence center near my home.

On my neighborhood excursions I have acquired a deeper admiration for the gardeners whose work I regularly walk past. Some are precise with a clear design. Others cultivate a more natural look. But walking down the same streets year after year, one cannot help but appreciate the care – whatever its aesthetic – that goes into making things grow. I especially cheer for those who manage to have something in bloom all the time for months in a row.

The attention given to soil conditioning, composting, and other unglamorous aspects of gardening was eye-opening to me, when I first learned where all the colors get their life. How naïve I was, thinking that dirt was dirt, needing only a little fertilizer and water. Now when I see a well-kept garden, I have more appreciation for the patience and labor given to make the best conditions for healthy growth.



In seminary a chaplain from Dana Farber Cancer Institute shared a painting from his office. It showed a lush jungle setting of dense growth, complete with exotic flowering plants, tall leafy trees, and a few vines. Rays of sunlight penetrated the dense jungle canopy to illuminate the scene. Dedicated to caring for the most seriously ill cancer patients and their families, he kept this reminder in his office that the foundation of all the life in the picture was the life that had gone before, which had literally become the jungle floor.

In 1977, two years after his wife Katherine had died of cancer, E.B. White edited a collection of her columns about gardening and related matters. She had hired him 50 years earlier, when she was the first fiction editor at The New Yorker magazine and he an aspiring young writer. He wrote about her approach to life and to gardening. In both she had a commitment to being well ordered, even as she sat near the opened earth, well dressed but a bit wrinkled, with a helper holding an array of bulbs to be planted:

As the years went by and age overtook her, there was something comical yet touching in her bedraggled appearance on this awesome occasion – the small, hunched-over figure, her studied absorption in the implausible notion that there would be yet another spring, oblivious to the ending of her own days, which she knew perfectly well was near at hand, sitting there with her detailed chart under those dark skies in the dying October, calmly plotting the resurrection.”¹

The reality of the resurrection we celebrate at Easter is as present and enduring in October as it is every other day of the year. It is happening on Halloween, All Saints Day, Thanksgiving... Just as Christmas happens every time we open our hearts to the glorious reality of the incarnation, Immanuel, God with us. Whenever we recommit to letting the God we get to know through Jesus grow in influence over our lives, when we invite the same Spirit that was in him to be expressed in more of our choices, then it is Christmas all over again.



This October, may you engage in a little “plotting the resurrection,” looking for ways to enrich the soil of your life, being selective about what you choose to cultivate in the growing season to come.

In faith, with hope, for love,
Michael

1. E. B. White, “Introduction” in K. S. White, *Onward and Upward in the Garden*.

From the Minister of Faith Formation

Dear Beloved of God,

Ah, Autumn – that time of year when the air cools, birds migrate, landscapes are dotted with pumpkins, mums, asters, corn mazes, the foliage begins to turn, colorful leaves begin to blanket the earth, tree branches form open frames for views unseen when leaves covered them, and if we listen closely, we hear acorns falling to the ground. The light of day grows shorter and our circadian rhythm changes.

In their book *The Circle of Life: The Heart's Journey Through the Seasons*, the authors write: “Autumn is a wondrous metaphor for the transformation that takes place in the human heart each season. When we notice a subtle change of light outside our windows, we know the dark season is near. Everything is being prepared for winter. It is a season that evokes nostalgia and speaks of connection and yearning, wisdom and aging, transformation and surrender and most of all mystery. We are encouraged to let things flow on into some new life form just as the earth is modeling these changes for us.”¹

As Autumn calls us in from summer's playground, I invite your reflection on one or more of the following:

What are the leaves that must fall from your life in order for you to experience greater transformation?

What needs to be harvested in your spiritual life?

If you were to choose a scripture passage with an autumn theme, what text would it be?

Personally, I have been feeling the strong desire to harvest/cultivate a deeper relationship with God. Having been accepted, in November I will begin an eight-month virtual program through the Shalem Institute titled Heart Longings: An Invitation to the Contemplative Path. The program consists of monthly Saturday gatherings in small groups, readings, a couple of papers and spiritual direction. The monthly gatherings are book ended by weekend retreats. I am sure some aspects of this spiritual journey will weave its way into my ministry with all of you.

One of the many things realized by those of us engaged in faith formation in our churches during the last two and a half years of Covid is that some of the “leaves” of church school need to fall for the journey of faith to be transformative. To be sure, we will still have church school, it just may look a bit different.

“Who Am I? Who is God? Who is Jesus? Who Is the Holy Spirit? What Is the Church? What is Prayer? What Is a Saint? How Do Care for Each Other, for Creation?” These are just a sampling of questions in a curriculum titled *New Directions for Holy Questions*. Each question, itself a chapter, consists of the retelling of a Bible story, a spiritual practice, and a justice related story. The intergenerational possibilities in church school, worship, youth group, confirmation, and home settings are exciting. Michael, Jeff, Melissa Mattison, Jim Stokes-Buckles, Sandra Rossi, and I are exploring how we might “harvest” this curriculum to deepen and even transform our faith and spiritual journeys as well as our relationships with one another. Imagine having conversations around some these questions and accepting that there may not be a “right” answer. *Do I sound excited? Have I piqued your interest? I would love to hear your thoughts! If you are interested in looking at a copy of the curriculum, please give me a call!*

An important note: Church School and Youth Group will begin October 9 with the question:
Who Am I?

*Blessings of this harvest season to you all,
Deb*



1. Rupp, Joyce & Wiederkehr, Macrina. *The Circle of Life: The Heart's Journey Through the Seasons*. Sorin Books, IN 2005. Pg. 168 & 169.

From the Transitional Director of Music

Dear friends,

As Transitional Music Director, I'll be making music at your church while the Music Team organizes a search for a more permanent music director. A little about myself: I have been making music in worship since 1990. I founded and directed the Interfaith Fellowship Choir in NYC, and the Dayton (OH) Peace Choir. For ten years, I was the choir director at the Haydenville UCC. Currently, I direct Valley Jazz Voices and two acappella groups-the Wise Guys and On That Note. My wife Julie is a UCC pastor, and we have two grown-up kids, Wiley and Grace.

Here are a few thoughts about what you might expect in the near musical future. First, stylistic variety: on a Sunday morning, you may hear a favorite hymn or a rock and roll song. A chant or a classical piece, an acappella group or a jazz trio, the mighty organ or a banjo.

I encourage congregational singing in a couple of contexts. First, we sing some traditional hymns, with particular attention to what the texts are saying, and a willingness to creatively engage with problems that arise from gendered and domination-based language.

Also, we will sing spirituals and gospel songs-again, we want to creatively engage the issue of appropriation of African-American tradition by (mostly) white people. Here's how I think about it: there is almost NO American music that is not also African-American, so profound is the influence of Black culture in the lives of all Americans. So, because we are Americans, this rich and deep tradition, rooted in the suffering of enslaved people, belongs in some sense to all of us. With respect, we need that music, because we are that music.

Third, we will do a lot of chanting; that is, repetitive singing, especially to open and close worship. Next month, I'll say more about that!

Please let me know your thoughts, responses, and wishes concerning the music program. See you in church!

Jeff Olmsted
Transitional Director of Music
Edwards Church, Northampton

Volunteer opportunities at Edwards Church – get involved in your community!

Want to get to know folks within the Edwards Church community better? Interested in putting your skills to work or learning new skills to serve God's will within the church and broader community? There are many different ministry teams at Edwards Church. Please contact Debbie Davis (debradavis1217@gmail.com or 413.626.5117) or Laura Frogameni (laurafrogameni@gmail.com or text/call 413-270-0287) to learn more about ways to volunteer that meet your interests. Listed below are a couple specific opportunities ...

Interfaith Emergency Shelter - this team is an informal group of folks who like to cook, bake or shop. Their volunteer efforts provide the once a month, third Friday night meal at the Shelter, November - April. Please contact Laura to be added to the contact list. You'll receive an email inviting you to provide part of the meal or to complete the shopping. November is already covered by the Youth of our church! Next call for help will be in December. 413-270-0287 laurafrogameni@gmail.com

Open and Affirming Ministry Team – works on how we as a congregation express our welcome and affirmation of LGBTQ+ people within the church and our broader community. This team is always learning and planning or implementing our next project – or all three at once! We'd love to welcome you to contribute your voice and ideas to our team! Contact Debbie Davis at debradavis1217@gmail.com for more info.

Cathedral in the Night Ministry Team – this team partners with Cathedral in the Night, a church that serves many folks who are homeless and/or food insecure with an outdoor worship service and meal every Sunday evening in downtown Northampton. Our Edwards team connects with Cathedral in the Night once every other month to provide a hot meal, sandwiches and desserts to accompany Cathedral's worship service. If you can make a sandwich, create a dessert, or want to help prep a hot meal with other volunteers, offer a musical talent or just your presence during the worship service, this is the team for you! Contact Debbie Davis at debradavis1217@gmail.com for more info.

Additional members would also be quite welcome by these and other teams: Care & Visitation, Church school Teachers and Youth Group Helpers, Music, and Outreach Grants.

Rainbow Contra of Western Mass

The next dance is October 1st, 7-10 pm at First Churches of Northampton (enter on Center St.). Caller with live band. \$10-15; Students \$5-10; cash or VENMO. Proof of vax, booster, and N95, KN95, or KF94 mask required. These gender-role free dances for the LGBTIQA community are open to all friends & allies. No partner or experience is necessary. Please bring soft-soled, clean shoes to protect the wooden dance floor and refrain from wearing highly scented products. All dances are smoke, drug, and alcohol free. All future dances will be the first Saturday of each month.

Affiliated with Lavender Country and Folk Dancers (LCFD) <https://www.lcfd.org/> and Country Dance and Song Society <https://www.cdss.org/about-us/history>

Music at the Crossroads Series Presents:

Wistaria String Quartet

Friday, October 7th at 7:30 pm Wistaria String Quartet

The Wistaria String Quartet formed in 2013 to perform George Crumb's "Black Angels" and Steve Reich's "Different Trains" as part of Amherst College's Copeland Colloquium. Since their inception, they have maintained strong ties to Amherst College, where they frequently perform new works by faculty, students, and alumni.

As local musicians living in the Pioneer Valley, the members of the Quartet — violinists Sarah Briggs and Kaila Graef, violist Gregory Diehl and cellist Wayne Smith — share a deeply-rooted commitment to this area's communities and people. The Quartet has appeared at venues ranging from Amherst College's Buckley Recital Hall and the Northampton Academy of Music to less traditional locations such as the Wistariahurst Museum in Holyoke, Greenfield's Pushkin Gallery, the Montague Bookmill, the Hampshire County Jail, and Northampton's Interfaith Cot Shelter for the homeless. For this performance, our cellist is Karl Knapp who has recently served as Principal Cellist with Fairbanks Symphony Orchestra, Arctic Chamber Orchestra, and Juneau Symphony.

Donations will go to Cathedral in the Night.: <http://www.cathedralinthenight.org/>



GROUP

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

Here is our upcoming schedule:

October 9 – meeting in Addis Hall at 11:30

Parents and siblings welcome as we plan our year

October 23 – 11:30am – 3:00pm ~ Gleaning for Rachel’s Table

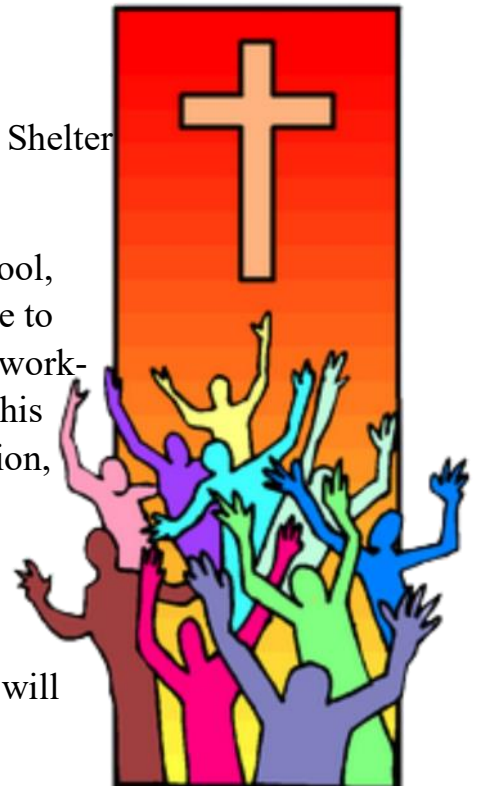
November 18 – 5:45 Provide meal at the Interfaith Cot Shelter

Scholarships

Edward 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, work-camp or internship. The due date for submitting an application this fall is October 31. If you are interested in receiving an application, please email me (ffminister@edwardschurchnorthampton.org).

Young Adults

This ministry with our college students and other young adults will meet via Zoom on October 2nd at 1:00pm.



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.

Note: we hope to begin meeting in person in October. Watch the Wednesday weekly message and Sunday bulletin for up to date information.

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.

Gendered & Gender-Neutral PRONOUNS

Gendered Pronouns

Gendered pronouns include he/him/his and she/her/hers. These are typically associated with men and women, respectively. Truly, a person with any identity could use these pronouns, and they also aren't the only pronouns that exist. Here are some examples:



My friend Nadiya is the coolest. She is from Brooklyn, and her special talent is winning board games. I think I have a game piece of hers at my house.

My neighbor Billy is so nice! He baked me a pie when I moved in, and I lent him my lawnmower this summer. I check his mail when he is out of town.

Gender-Neutral or Gender-Inclusive Pronouns

Many other pronouns exist. People can pick pronouns that work for them for any reason. The benefit of a gender-neutral or gender-inclusive pronoun is that it is not inherently associated with a binary gender. Here are some examples:



My coworker Sean is brilliant. They are in our finance division, I always think of them when I have a question. Their expertise blows me away!

My colleague Franny is so fashionable! Ze is wearing a yellow scarf today that zir cousin bought in Spain. Have you seen the purple brooch of zirs?

Pronounced: zee, zeer, zeers

My pal Ole is a great chef! Ae is always in the kitchen. I won a competition with aer polenta recipe -- but all the credit for the win is aers.

Pronounced: ay, air, airs

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THE UNIVERSITY SENATE DIVERSITY COMMITTEE
Learn more at: rainbowcenter.uconn.edu

How can I ask people for **PRONOUNS?**

Hi! I'm Nick. I use he/him/his pronouns. What are your name and pronouns?

Hi! I'm Nick (he/him/his). Nice to meet you!

I use he/him/his pronouns. Would you mind sharing yours?

I apologize, I know you shared your pronouns with me earlier. Can you remind me?



A Quick Tip:

Always remember to share your own pronouns, too! Asking someone for their pronouns without sharing your own can imply that you are singling someone out, and that you believe your pronouns should be obvious.

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Learn more at: rainbowcenter.uconn.edu



What if I mess up someone's **PRONOUNS?**

1. Apologize!

Apologizing is the best first step. Even if it was quick, and if you're not sure if anyone heard, apologize as soon as you can. Keep apologies appropriately brief and genuine.

2. Correct yourself.

Use the person's pronouns and name correctly right away.

3. Commit yourself to doing better.

Practice using the person's pronouns correctly. Use pronouns correctly in all situations -- not only when the person can hear you.

4. Keep growing.

Growth can be uncomfortable. If you feel awkward about using people's pronouns, or you have difficulty catching on, be kind to yourself and keep learning and practicing.

A Quick Tip:

Remember, apologies should be unequivocal and honest. If you feel compelled to explain yourself or give excuses during an apology, ask yourself: *Does this serve me or the person I'm trying to apologize to?*



BROUGHT TO YOU BY THE RAINBOW CENTER
Learn more at: rainbowcenter.uconn.edu



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THE CONFESSIONS OF MATTHEW STRONG

By Ousmane K. Power-Greene

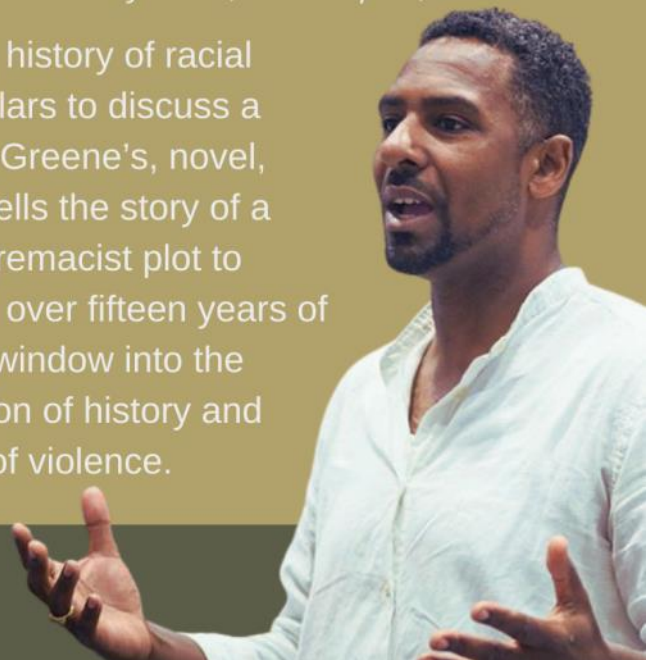
Writing Wrongs: A Community Conversation

With *Ousmane K. Power-Greene*

WEDNESDAY / OCTOBER 26 / 6:30-8:00 PM

NORTHAMPTON CENTER FOR THE ARTS 33 Hawley Street, Northampton, MA

Can literature help communities confront the history of racial violence and genocide? Join a panel of scholars to discuss a variety of ways to interpret Ousmane Power-Greene's, novel, *The Confessions of Matthew Strong*, which tells the story of a black philosopher who uncovers a white supremacist plot to incite an insurrection in the South. Rooted in over fifteen years of research, Power-Greene's novel provides a window into the modern white power movement's manipulation of history and Christianity to recruit people to commit acts of violence.



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Education



AMHERST SURVIVAL CENTER'S
3RD ANNUAL
HIKE FOR HUNGER
OCTOBER 1-31, 2022

- ✓ Register as an individual or team
- ✓ Raise money to support hunger relief
- ✓ Hit the trails in October – anywhere, any distance
- ✓ Earn great prizes!

Register today! www.amherstsurvival.org/hikeforhunger

**Join us for the kick-off on
Saturday, October 1
North Hadley Sugar Shack, Rt. 47**

10:00-11:00 Light breakfast, t-shirt pick-up, prizes
11:00 Optional hike at Mount Warner



OCTOBER BIRTHDAYS

Sidney Letendre	Floyd Cheung	Fumiko Brown	Nancy Flickinger
Thomas Bernardin	Robert Saalfrank	Sid Montague	Daisy Letendre
Charles McCullagh	Judith Almeida	Susan Swift	Alenna Shapleigh
Henry C. Atwood			

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!

MANNA Featured in MassLive

MANNA Community Kitchen, which runs partially out of the basement of Edwards Church, was recently featured in MassLive for the work they do feeding the community for free. MANNA provides meals six days a week, twice from Edwards Church. They have been a great community asset and we are glad to be able to support their mission.

To read the full article click [here](#).

Pastoral Care

There is no substitute for personal contact. We have enjoyed meeting in person with many folks in the community. There need not be a special reason to meet. We appreciate simply staying in touch. We can sit inside or out, take a walk, whatever is comfortable. 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

October 2011

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
						1
2 Communion Sunday 10 Worship 11:30 Youth 1 Young Adults	3 7:30 Valley Jazz Voices	4 7 Gamblers Anon	5 12 Bible Study	6	7 7:30 Music at the Crossroads	8
9 10 Worship 11:30 Youth Group	10 4 ONA 7:30 Valley Jazz Voices	11 3 Prayer Shawl 6:30 FF COP 7 Gamblers Anon	12 12 Bible Study 5 Friends of the Homeless Board Mtg	13	14	15 SPIRE submission deadline
16 10 Worship	17 7:30 Valley Jazz Voices	18 7 Gamblers Anon	19 12 Bible Study	20 4 Care & Visitation	21	22
23 10 Worship 11:30 Youth Group	24 7:30 Valley Jazz Voices	25 3 Prayer Shawl 7 Gamblers Anon	26 12 Bible Study	27	28	29
30 10 Worship	31 7:30 Valley Jazz Voices					