

THE SPIRE

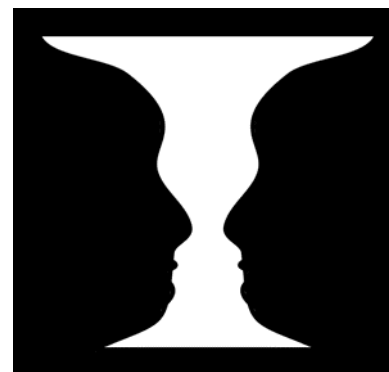
EDWARDS CHURCH *of* NORTHAMPTON

UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

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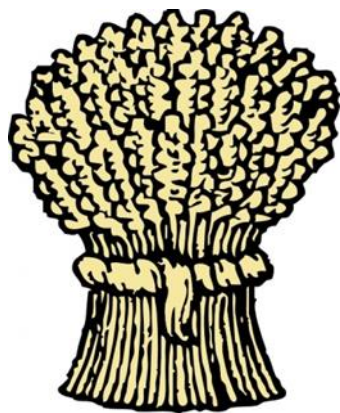
Dear Edwards Church Community,

Being grateful can mean being able to give thanks from a hospital bed, because you recognize how lucky you are to be in a place where people make it their job to help you heal. Being grateful can mean being able to recognize that you remain blessed even when the circumstances are painfully difficult. This is not wishful thinking, but the resilience of spiritual “muscle memory,” a capacity to see the light even in shadows.



In her letter, Deb shares with us wonderful resources on the nature and benefits of gratitude, including how to cultivate our capacity to practice gratitude. They are all good resources. I want to focus on the third observation from Brene’ Brown about patterns in stories of how folks experience gratitude and joy: “People were quick to point out the differences between happiness and joy as the difference between a human emotion that’s connected to circumstances and a spiritual way of engaging with the world that’s connected to practicing gratitude.”

For the fruit of all creation, thanks be to God. For God’s gifts to every nation, thanks be to God. For the plowing, sowing, reaping, silent growth while we are sleeping, / Future needs in earth’s safe keeping, thanks be to God.¹



Theologian Michael J. Himes distinguishes joy from happiness this way: Joy is a sense of delight and deep satisfaction in the enduring nature and importance of that to which we truly give ourselves. It might be the work we do and why we do it, or the relationships we form and what they make possible. Happiness is transitory and conditional. Joy endures because it grows out of our connection to what we sense as larger than ourselves. The plowing, sowing and reaping we do – in our vocations and relationships – connects us to the silent growth taking place unseen.

*In the just reward of labor, God's will is done. In the help we give our neighbor,
God's will is done. In our worldwide tasks of caring for the hungry and despairing,
In the harvests we are sharing, God's will is done.*

The work to which we give ourselves – our time, talent and treasure – might make us happy, if it provides just compensation, the satisfaction of a job well done and the appreciation of those for whom it was done. It might even bring us joy, if it serves an even greater good, what we sometimes call God's will. It might even do both.

In this season of change, we might easily feel the fatigue of entering a third fall and winter with the pandemic – please, God – finally transitioning to endemic conditions. We can easily feel the uncertainty in the economy, environment, and so much else that makes it hard to hang in there. With all that challenges our faith, if we make a habit of practicing gratitude in good times and bad, it can help us remember and reconnect with what has really sustained us all along.

*For the harvests of the Spirit, thanks be to God. For the good we all inherit, thanks
be to God. For the wonders that astound us, for the truths that still confound us, /
Most of all that love has found us, thank be to God.*

As we prepare for the season of Thanksgiving and all it entails, may we also take the time we need to practice even more gratitude. Make it a habit, a spiritual practice, and it will bring you joy.

Grateful for all of you,
Michael

1. Lyrics are all from For the Fruit of All Creation, hymn number 425 in The New Century Hymnal, © 1995 The Pilgrim Press. Permission is granted for this one-time use.

Save the Dates



Sunday, Nov. 27 – First Sunday of Advent

Saturday, Dec. 3 – 4 PM – Special Weekly Worship in the late afternoon. On Sunday AM the Hot Chocolate Run for Safe Passage will make getting to and from the church difficult.

Sunday, Dec. 11 – a Jazz inflected Advent Service

Sunday, Dec. 18 – our beloved Christmas pageant on Nativity Sunday

Saturday, Dec. 24 – Christmas Eve

Sunday, Dec. 25 – No Service



From the Minister of Faith Formation

*“The root of joy is gratefulness.
It is not joy that makes us grateful, it is gratitude that makes us joyful.”
Brother David Steindl-Rast*

Dear Beloved of God,

“Gratitude is a positive emotion that involves being thankful and appreciative and is associated with several mental and physical health benefits. When we experience gratitude, we feel grateful for something or someone in our life and respond with feelings of kindness, warmth, and other forms of generosity.”¹

While religious scholars and philosophers have been interested in gratitude since ancient times and the Hebrew and Christian scriptures are filled with passages about giving thanks, research on the topic has grown rapidly in recent decades especially around the health benefits - for all ages. Some of them are improved sleep patterns, improved and strengthened immune systems, decreased stress, less anxiety and depression, stronger relationships, and engagement in other health-promoting behaviors.

Brene’ Brown, Ph.D., L.M.S.W., in her research collecting stories about joy and gratitude found that three powerful patterns emerged:

- * Without exception, every person interviewed described living a joyful life or described themselves as joyful, actively practiced gratitude and attributed their joyfulness to their gratitude practice.
- * Both joy and gratitude were described as spiritual practices that were bound to a belief in human interconnectedness and a power greater than us.
- * People were quick to point out the difference between happiness and joy as the difference between a human emotion that’s connected to circumstances and a spiritual way of engaging with the world that’s connected to practicing gratitude.²

James Crews, a teaching artist with the Vermont Arts Council in his YouTube video on Mindful Journaling affirms that science shows that if we go through each day, and list three specific things we are grateful for and why, we will be a much happier and grateful people. He also suggests keeping a kindness journal to remind us that there are good people in the world and acts of kindness are happening around us and in the world.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wEhn0Q535u0>

Gratitude can be practiced individually, as a family, or with a group. We can use spoken, unspoken, written or sung words to express it. We can draw or dance gratitude. I often light a candle as part of my practice. It is often suggested that as we engage in this, and other spiritual practices, we pay attention to what we might be feeling in our bodies.

As people of faith, we express our gratitude in response to God's generosity, love, steadfast and abiding presence with us in all that we are experiencing and all that we are thankful for. In Ghana, a constant exchange in every conversation and in worship is:

Leader: God is good...

People: all the time.

Leader: All the time...

People: God is good

Traci Smith, an ordained pastor in the Presbyterian Church and author of *Faithful Families: Creating Sacred Moments At Home* and *Faithful Families: For Lent, Easter & Resurrection* (both of which have been gifted to church school families), has created a November 2022 Gratitude Every Day calendar which is included in this edition of the Spire. Members and friends are invited to participate in an online Gratitude Café practice for the month of November using this calendar. Additionally, Kyla will post the gratitude prompt in the calendar daily on our Facebook and Instagram sites. Everyone is invited to respond to the prompt by either emailing Kyla (info@edwardschurchnorthampton.org) or posting directly to one of those sites. Families and individuals might decide to set time aside to reflect on the prompt and offer a prayer of thanksgiving in response.

“If the only prayer you ever said was thank you, that would be enough.”

Meister Eckhart

During these extraordinary and anxious times in our personal lives, this faith community, our country, and the world may a spiritual practice of gratitude bring you peace and joy.

Blessings,

Deb

1. <https://www.verywellmin.com>
2. Brown, Brene'. The Gifts of Imperfection: Let Go of Who You Think You're Supposed to Be and Embrace Who You Are. Hazelden, MN. pg82.

NOVEMBER 2022 GRATITUDE EVERY DAY

MON

TUE

WED

THU

FRI

SAT

SUN

1

A color I am thankful for

2

A family member I am thankful for

3

A song I am thankful for

4

A memory I am thankful for

5

A food I am thankful for

6

A place I am thankful for

7

A book I am thankful for

8

A friend I am thankful for

9

An animal I am thankful for

10

A goal I am thankful for

11

A freedom I am thankful for

12

A dream I am thankful for

13

A teacher I am thankful for

14

A season I am thankful for

15

A treasure I am thankful for

16

A smell I am thankful for

17

A thing in nature I am thankful for

18

A possession I am thankful for

19

A promise I am thankful for

20

A time of day I am thankful for

21

An act of kindness I am thankful for

22

A piece of advice I am thankful for

23

A talent I am thankful for

24

A tradition I am thankful for

25

A memory from yesterday I am thankful for

26

A mystery I am thankful for

27

A word I am thankful for

28

A lesson I am thankful for

29

A game I am thankful for

30

An article of clothing I am thankful for

Use the prompts each day to think about what you're thankful for. Share your answers with someone else or write them in a journal.



Meditating on Music

Dear friends,

Here are a couple of things to keep in mind about repetitive singing (chanting), which we'll be doing most Sunday mornings (and Thursday evenings). This is a form of meditation, and you can expect your mind to wander. When it does, you can re-focus on any of four aspects:

1. Breathing/sensation: How am I using air? Can I sing the whole phrase on one breath? What are the physical sensations that arise while doing this?
2. Meaning: What am I saying/singing? Do I "believe" what I'm singing? How deep can I go into the idea being expressed?
3. Community: What do we sound like? What is my relationship to others present contributing to the sound and atmosphere in the room now?
4. Eternity: Especially when the text is scriptural, what is my relationship to those not present who have engaged (or will engage) with the text or idea over time?

Happy chanting,

Jeff Olmsted

Transitional Director of Music

Movement and the Sacred **Grace Church, Amherst in Parish Hall** **2:00 - 4:00 pm, Saturday, Nov. 19, 2022** **(ends at 3:30 pm, last 30 minutes are for refreshments)**

Our life of feeling expresses itself through movement. In this workshop, we will experience the way movement can enhance our sense of spirituality, wonder, and connection with the love that is at the heart of our lives. Using images from the psalms, we will explore natural movement qualities easily accessible to everyone, giving our bodies the opportunity to support and enhance our spiritual life. This workshop is for everyone, whatever your skills and capabilities.

Mary Hocken and Kell Julliard each have professional backgrounds in offering movement opportunities that are enjoyable and enlivening.

Important Information from your Open and Affirming Ministry Team

A congregational vote on a proposed update to our church's Welcome Statement will be held at the Edwards Church Annual Meeting in January 2023. Here's some background info to explain what it's all about!

The **Open and Affirming Ministry Team's** mission is to lead our congregation in welcoming people who identify as LGBTQ+ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, +) into the life of the church and living out that welcome in inclusive, meaningful ways within the church and the greater community by offering ourselves in friendship, fellowship, support and advocacy.

Enormous shifts in societal, cultural, political and legal landscapes toward people who identify as LGBTQ+ have occurred since 1998 when Edwards Church voted to become Open and Affirming. In recognition of this, **the ONA Ministry Team spent 2021 engaging in a deep learning, listening, and writing process to bring the Edwards Church welcome statement up to date. In 2022 we began sharing with the congregation how we are hearing God speaking to us about the importance of this covenant to welcome, support and advocate for our LGBTQ+ siblings, most notably through a special worship service held this past spring, and by including some of the language from the proposed statement in the welcome offered at our Sunday worship services.**

The proposed welcome statement, which is seen by the ONA Team as a necessary first step in defining *how* we as a congregation will live out our Open and Affirming covenant, is printed below. *Thank you* for taking a few minutes to review it in preparation for the congregational vote in January 2023.

We welcome questions, conversations, ideas and inspirations! Please feel free to chat with any of us after worship on Sundays or by emailing Debbie Davis at debradavis1217@gmail.com or Deb Moore at ffminister@edwardschurchnorthampton.org

Your Open and Affirming Ministry Team:

Carla Wirzburger, Chris Hjelt, Grace Del Vecchio, Jude Almeida, Debbie Davis, Samson Melendez, Deb Moore, Rev. Michael McSherry

Proposed Edwards Church LGBTQ+ Welcome Statement **Developed by the Open and Affirming Ministry Team**

Welcome to Edwards Church, a Christian community committed to creating a just and loving world where all feel valued and free to be themselves.

We welcome you to be a part of shaping this community as it continues to evolve. We invite you to bring all that you are to this church: your gender identity and expression, sexual orientation, family structure, race, color, ethnicity, culture, age, range of ability, and immigration status.

As a congregation, we will:

- Create a warm welcome for visitors and those new to Edwards Church
- Offer a variety of opportunities for every stage of life to grow spiritually in relationship with God and each other
- Provide care in times of need and celebration in times of joy
- Continue to recognize and dismantle privilege and oppression
- Use inclusive language in our Sunday services, written literature and everyday speech



The six-color striped rainbow flag, long recognized as the symbol of the LGBTQ+ community, was replaced in 2018 by a new flag emphasizing inclusion and progression. Designed by Daniel Quasar, it features a five-color chevron: black and brown stripes representing marginalized LGBTQ+ communities of color and the colors pink, light blue and white which are used on the Transgender Pride Flag. This flag flies on the front of Edwards Church as a sign of welcome to all.

Rainbow Contra of Western Mass

The next dance is November 5th, 7-10 pm at First Churches of Northampton (enter on Center St.). Admission: \$10-15; Students \$5-10; cash or VENMO. Proof of vax, booster, and N95, KN95, or KF94 mask required.

Caller: Chris Ricciotti. Band: Dead Sea Squirrels. These gender-role free dances for the LGBTIQ community are open to all friends & allies. No partner or experience is necessary. Please bring clean bottom shoes to protect the wooden dance floor and refrain from wearing highly scented products. All dances are smoke, drug, and alcohol free. The date for the December dance had to be changed to the second Saturday, Dec. 10th.

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>



GROUP

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

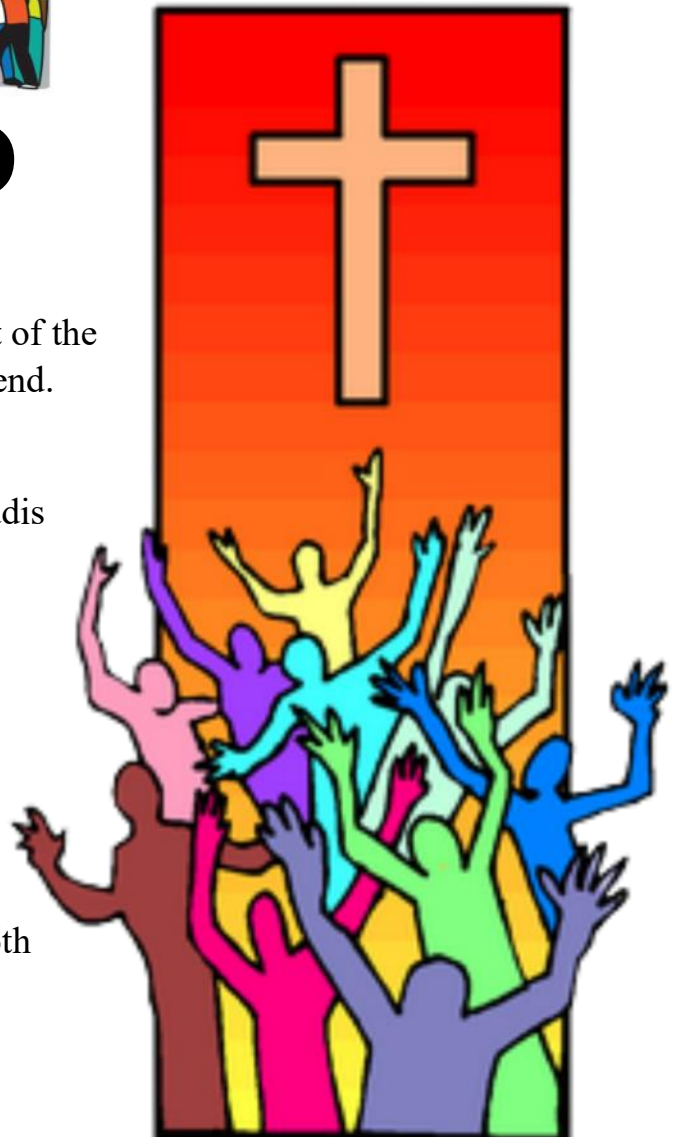
Here is our upcoming schedule:

November 13 – 11:30-1:00 meeting in Addis Hall

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

Young Adults

This ministry with our college students and other young adults will meet via Zoom on November 6th 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: 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.



NOVEMBER BIRTHDAYS

C. Rutherford Platt

Claire Cheung

Grace Lively

Jody Kinner

Elizabeth Young

William Roeder

Krisinda S. Semb

Lindsey Ann Wells

Elias Almeida

Susan Anderson

Jack Mattison-Gulotta

Kai Hutchison

Heidi Kinner

Paul C. Gustavson

Susan Banas

Louise P. Montague

Samuel A. Grant

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!

Special Birthday Announcement!

Louise Montague will turn 90 years 'young' on November 15, 2022.

If you wish to send a card, it can be sent to her at 292 North Rd., Westhampton, MA 01027.

- *Kim Montague, Louise's daughter*

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

November 2011

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
		1 7 Gamblers Anonymous	2 12 Bible Study	3 7 Sit and Sing	4	5
6 10 Worship 11 Pastor Congregation 1 Young Adults 4 On That Note	7 7:30 Valley Jazz Voices	8 3 Prayer Shawl 7 Gamblers Anonymous	9 12 Bible Study	10 7 Sit and Sing	11	12
13 10 Worship 11:30 Youth Group 4 On That Note	14 5:30 ONA 7:30 Valley Jazz Voices	15 6:30 FF COP 7 Gamblers Anonymous	16 10 Valley Syrian Relief 12 Bible Study 7 Investment	17 4 Care & Visitation 7 Sit and Sing	18 6:30 Pioneer Valley Cappella	19 1:30 Piano Party
20 10 Worship 4 On That Note	21 7:30 Valley Jazz Voices	22 3 Prayer Shawl 7 Gamblers Anonymous	23 12 Bible Study	24 7 Sit and Sing	25	26
27 10 Worship 11:30 Youth Group 4 On That Note	28 7:30 Valley Jazz Voices	29 7 Gamblers Anonymous	30 12 Bible Study			