

THE SPIRE

EDWARDS CHURCH *of* NORTHAMPTON
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

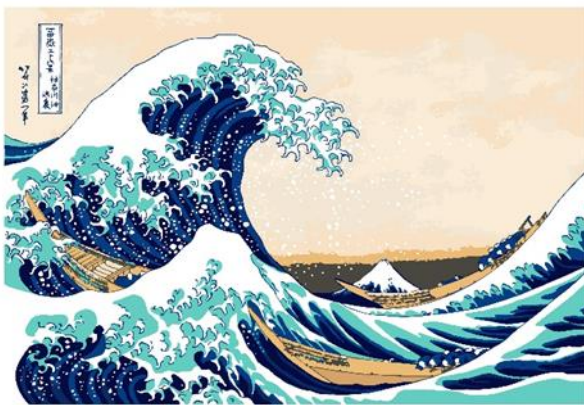
Vol. 33 No. 1 January 2023

Dear Edwards Church Community,

This plaque with the Breton fisherman's prayer ("O God, thy sea is so great and my boat is so small") was given by Admiral Hyman Rickover, then in command of the U.S. nuclear submarine fleet, to President John F. Kennedy. Rickover knew that Kennedy survived his small boat, the PT-109, being sunk in combat in the South Pacific during WWII. Kennedy also sailed yachts off Cape Cod before and after his time in the Navy. The prayer had special significance for him; he had experienced both the uplifting beauty and the frightening vulnerability of life in a small boat.



And isn't that true for all of us? Our journey through life consists in large part of trying to get safely from one place to another, interacting with the forces of nature and human society, hoping all the while to discover, latch onto, or construct meaning and maybe even contribute to something with greater meaning than our individual mortal selves, something we can expect to survive into the future.



For many of us, that greater meaning is family of one form or another. It is a primal bond associated with shared survival and shared experiences that weave people together with shared meaning over time. For many, the church family is a big part of that. Careers and other creative outlets can also be powerful sources of meaning, connecting people in shared experiences and providing a framework in which to grow, contribute and be appreciated over time.

The Great Wave by [Katsushika Hokusai](#)

Think of Noah and the ark in Genesis, *The Old Man and the Sea* by Ernest Hemingway or, even better, the first disciples of Christ in a small boat in a storm. Think of navigating the medical system with a seriously ill family member, or launching a new business or a new, untested career direction in your previously stable life. “O God, thy sea is so great, and my boat is so small.”

Ideally, our families – whether family of origin, chosen family, or church family – and our creative pursuits both provide a healthy mix of support and challenge. They provide support in the form of personal relationships with people who know us over time and care about us. They provide challenge in the form of supporting our forward progress by helping us to do better with honest, carefully considered observations about how we use our talents and other resources. Depending on the setting, we are more or less required to take these observations seriously and consider changing course.

Early in the pandemic, I wrote in a Spire letter that crises like the one we were facing (and are still navigating) tended to reveal flaws in any structure. Since then, many have commented extensively about the racial, economic and other flaws in our society, which were put into sharp relief by the pandemic. Doubtless we have all felt stress and shown its effects in our private and work lives too.



We have been through a major storm and it has taken a toll. And we will keep sailing. Indeed, remnants of the pandemic storm linger, but it now feels safe to say it is fading. There may be gusts, but it is fading. We have a very sound ship, and we have a bright star to steer by in our sense of shared purpose. As we enter a new year, may God grant us all fair winds and deeper connections to each other in that shared purpose.

With faith, in hope, for love,
Michael

SAVE THE DATE

The Annual Meeting has been scheduled for
11 AM on Sunday, January 29, immediately after worship.
Participation can be by Zoom or in-person, in the sanctuary.



From the Minister of Faith Formation

Dear Beloved of God,

The Twelve Days of Christmas culminate on January 6 – Epiphany. Derived from the Greek word *epiphanēia* which means “manifestation” or “appearance,” Epiphany celebrates the arrival of the Wise Men or Magi, having been guided by a star, at the home of the Christ Child and the presentation of their gifts to him.

The second chapter in the Gospel of Matthew provides the only accounts of:

- the visit of the Magi, their presentation of gifts to the Christ child, and their departure by another route (2:1-12)
- the message of the angel to Joseph telling him to flee with Mary and Jesus to Egypt as King Herod intended to kill the child (2:13-15)
- the massacre of the infants (2:16-18)
- the return of the Holy Family to Nazareth (2:19-23)

In reading the Matthean account, we don't know for sure how many Magi there were or where exactly their journey started...only that “wise men came from the east.” We are told that they brought gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. While we have adopted the names of Balthazar, Casper, and Melchior, the author of the Gospel of Mark does not name them.

The arrival of the Magi is often conflated with the Nativity story; however, Jesus was probably between 1 ½ and 2 years old when the Magi arrived with their gifts. (Personal note: all magi and camels in my nativity scenes are placed in different rooms and move closer each day to the nativity scene and Holy Family).

Epiphany is often referred to as “Universal Christmas” as it recalls the disclosure of the Christ child for all people. In Syria and Lebanon, Epiphany Eve is known as the Night of Destiny, when trees bowed down in remembrance of the night the trees bent down to show the Magi the path away from the violence Herod would inflict.

The liturgical color for Epiphany is white and the color for the four – six weeks (depending upon the liturgical calendar) after Epiphany is green. Much happens during the season after Epiphany: through scripture we learn that Jesus is baptized, tempted in the wilderness, begins his ministry, call his first disciples, teaches, heals and is transfigured.

What follows are some activities and/or links you and your family members might engage in during Epiphany:

- <https://buildfaith.org/guiding-stars-an-epiphany-activity-at-home> perhaps consider a theme, a longing you would like to be guided by in the coming year.
- Take a faith walk after dark. Look for the brightest star in the sky. When you find one, retell or remember the story of the Magi presenting their gifts to the Christ child (Matthew 2: 1-12)
- Bake and decorate star cookies to share
- Make a three king's cake to celebrate the day. There are many recipes on the internet.

The following books for the young and older are available in my office and may be shared in church school:

- *They Followed a Bright Star* based on a poem by Joan Alavedra, and illustrated by Ulises Wendell. A story of shepherds and kings and others who may have seen the star.
- *The Christmas Star* by Marcus Pfister. Shepherds, kings and all the animals of the forest follow the guiding star to where the Holy Child lays.
- *The Legend of Old Befana* by Tomi DePaulo. The story of an elderly woman who, legend says, was visited by the Magi on their way to find the Christ Child

Epiphany, manifestation...I wonder how we as a congregation and as individuals will make manifest the Christ in our lives and the world as we enter yet another new year... our God is surely with us in doing so.

*Blessings,
Deb*



Edwards Church Scholarship Recipients

Congratulations to the following young adults who were presented with a scholarship on Sunday, December 18, 2022:

Stone Cornelius is a sophomore at the Manhattan School of Music in NYC pursuing an undergraduate degree in Music performance.

Elena Frogameni is pursuing a Master of Science in Global Governance and Diplomacy at the University of Oxford where she is a Rhodes Scholar.

Remy Gutterman is a freshman at UMASS Amherst where she is enrolled as a Dance major pursuing a Bachelor of Fine Arts Degree.

Christian Kroll is attending Savannah College of Art and Design in Georgia where he is pursuing a Bachelor of Fine Arts in Game Design and Interactive Media.

Jensen Kroll is a freshman at the University of Maine in Orono where he is pursuing a degree in Ecology and Environmental Sciences.

Rose McCollough is a freshman at Smith College majoring in Biology.

Max Schneider is a freshman at UMASS Amherst majoring in Sociology.

Gwenn Swift is pursuing her doctorate degree in couple and family therapy at Drexel University in Philadelphia, PA.

Gabriella Wilkerson is a junior at Wesleyan University in CT where she is pursuing a Bachelor of Arts in Physics and Dance.

These scholarships are made possible through the New Way Inreach Fund of Edwards Church.

The invitation to the scholarship application reads: The term education can be interpreted broadly to include any process of training and developing the knowledge, skills, mind, and character of an individual by formal or informal means. It includes attending schools, such as high schools, vocational schools, or colleges or universities. The education may be just for one course or for a degree program. Examples of informal education might include attending education workshops, religious conferences, workcamp or internships.

For more information about this ministerial inreach offering email Deb Moore:

ffminister@edwardschurchnorthampton.org. Members of the Scholarship Team include Sandi Coyne-Gilbert, Pam Lamlein, Melissa Mattison, and Deb Moore.



Rainbow Contra of Western Mass

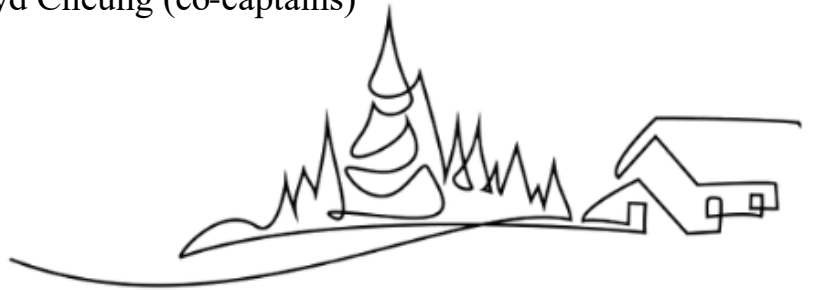
The first Rainbow Contra Dance of 2023 will be January 7th, 7-10 pm at First Churches of Northampton (enter on Center St.). Admission: \$10-15; Students \$5-10; cash or VENMO. Proof of vax, booster, and N95, KN95, or KF94 mask required. Caller: Rich Sbardella. Band: Dogtown, Becky Miller on fiddle, Avi Randall on keyboard, Norb Spencer on accordion. Rainbow Contra is a participating member of Lavender Country and Folk Dancers (lcfid.org) and is committed to creating an environment that's fun and inclusive of all members of the LGBTQI community, friends, and allies. No partner or experience is necessary. Dances are taught. 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.



Thank You, Hot Chocolate Run Participants

Thank you to the many donors, runners, walkers, and others who supported Team Edwards Church in the Hot Chocolate Run on December 4. Together we raised \$3760 to aid survivors of domestic abuse.

- Melissa Mattison, Jeff Prince, and Floyd Cheung (co-captains)



Weekly Volunteer Opportunities

Each week when we gather for worship, there are three recurring roles for a church member to serve that do not yet have stable staffing. They are Greeter (welcomes people in the lobby), Counter (counts the cash donations in the offering after the service with another volunteer), and Host (sets out snacks and sets out beverages from the fridge in the Edwards Room, tidy up after fellowship). Sign up sheets are in the Lobby. Please take a turn. This is how our church works!

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 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
- Recognize and challenge privilege and oppression in our church and local community
- Use inclusive language in our Sunday services, written literature and everyday speech



Cathedral in the Night Mission Team News - January 2023

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!**

On the first Sunday of February, April, June, August, October and December during the past year many folks in our congregation made sandwiches, desserts, or personal cleansing kits, or collected donations of the same, or worked with others in the Edwards Church kitchen to create 100 servings of taco salad or lasagna, or participated in and served food at the Cathedral in the Night worship service.

It is a true gift to serve with the generous, loving people on the Edwards Cathedral in the Night Team. This past year, Cathedral in the Night ministers Pastor Steph and Pastor Dawn expanded their work by partnering with Manna Community Center to meet the challenges of the growing number of people in Northampton who are homeless and/or food insecure. The resources and support we shared with the Cathedral in the Night community were sorely needed. Edwards Church, through the provision of food, caring volunteers, and financial donations (thanks Edwards Church Outreach Mission Team!) is an important component in the network of churches and other organizations that provide support for the Cathedral in the Night congregation.

Thank you again to the Edwards volunteers listed below who shared their time and talents to support Cathedral in the Night in 2022!

Sue Anderson	Linda Fortun	Michele McHale
Carla Bee & Danny Shanahan	Jim Green	Michael McSherry
Heather Bell	Sally Griggs	Deb Moore
Marisa & Peter Brown- Ludwig	Beth Henneman	Ann Parker
Cheung Family	Chris & Jack Hjelt	Sandra Rossi
Sandi Coyne & Gaston Gilbert	Dianne Hobbs	Ella Stocker
Debbie Davis & Grace Del Vecchio	Lynda Kamik	Janie Thurber
Deb Dietrich	Kathy Korza	Linda Vincent &
Susan & Leon Drzewianowski	Shauneen Kroll	Tom Derr
Nancy Flickinger	Melissa Mattison	Hazel Waller
		Carla Wirzberger

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

Offer prayers 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

Purchase items on Cathedral in the Night's Amazon wish list at: https://www.amazon.com/hz/wishlist/ls/3OT8121EJGJVQ?ref_=wl_share

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

YOUTH 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:

January 8 – meeting in Addis Hall

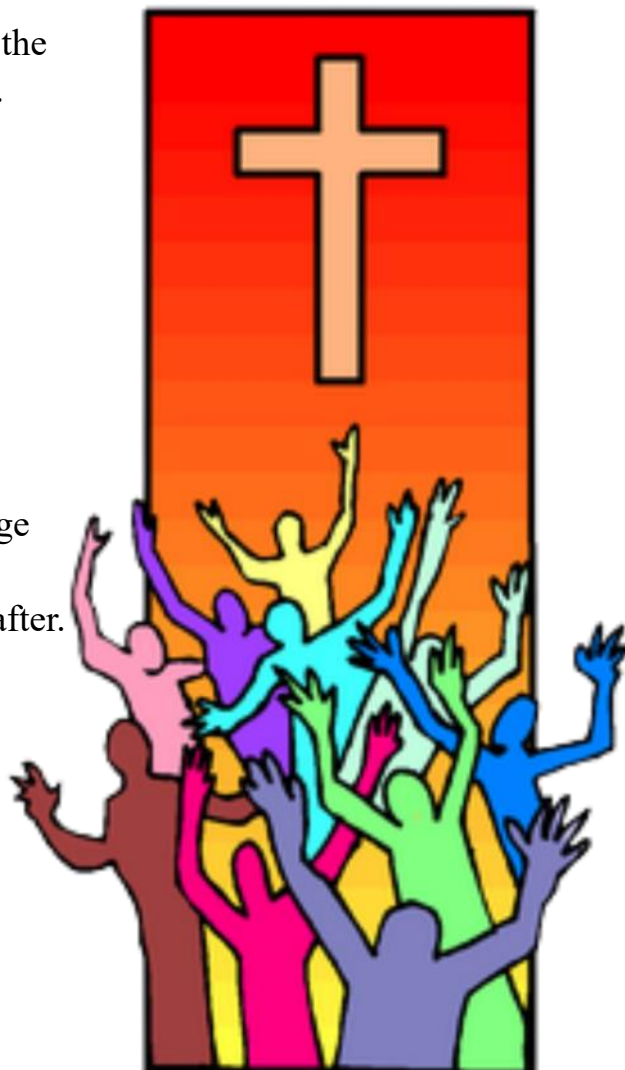
January 22 – meeting in Addis Hall

Church School

On January 8th we will resume meeting in the Heritage Room and we have some engaging Bible stories and activities planned through Epiphany and the season after.

Young Adults

This ministry with our college students and other young adults will meet via Zoom on January 1st 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.

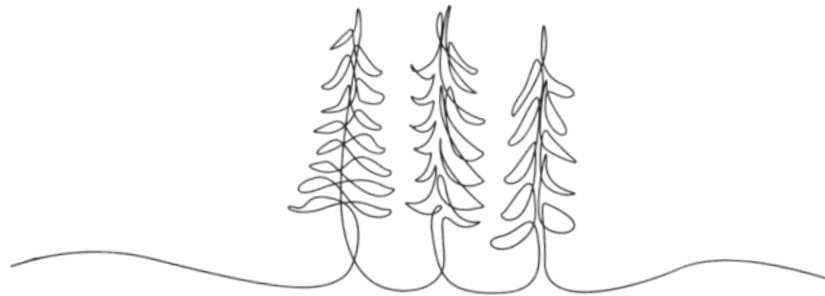


JANUARY BIRTHDAYS

Jean Koester	Gerald Krywicki
Sharon Carlson	Linda Smith
Jillian Grant	Julie Abel
Todd Rossi	Marjorie Tauer
Susan Canning	Nathan Korza
Paul Voss	Laura Frogameni
Lawrence Mattison	

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!



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

January 2013

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1 10 Worship 1 Young Adults 4 On That Note	2 7 ONA 7:30 Valley Jazz Voices	3 7 Building & Grounds 7 Gamblers Anon. 7 Wise Guys	4 12 Bible Study 6:30 Thriving Congregation	5 7 Sit & Sing	6	7
8 10 Worship 11:30 Youth Group 4 On That Note	9 7:30 Valley Jazz Voices	10 3 Prayer Shawl 6 Finance 7 Gamblers Anon. 7 Wise Guys	11 12 Bible Study 7 Search Team	12 7 Sit & Sing	13	14
15 10 Worship 4 On That Note SPIRE Deadline	16 12 MLK JR Event 7:30 Valley Jazz Voices	17 6:30 FF COP 7 Gamblers Anon. 7 Wise Guys 7:45 Outreach	18 12 Bible Study 5:30 Tracy Kid- der Reading	19 4 Care & Visita- tion 7 Sit & Sing	20	21
22 10 Worship 11:30 Youth Group 4 On That Note	23 7:30 Valley Jazz Voices	24 3 Prayer Shawl 7 Gamblers Anon. 7 Wise Guys	25 12 Bible Study	26 7 Sit & Sing	27	28
29 10 Worship 11 Annual Mtg 4 On That Note	30 7:30 Valley Jazz Voices	31 7 Gamblers Anon. 7 Wise Guys				