



**Come this Sunday, Sept. 3, to welcome Adam Simon**, our new Director of Music. Enjoy Adam's music, bring your voice to the choir for the day (rehearsing at 9 AM), or simply savor singing the hymns with gusto. **It will be a joyful celebration!**

Dear Edwards Church Community,

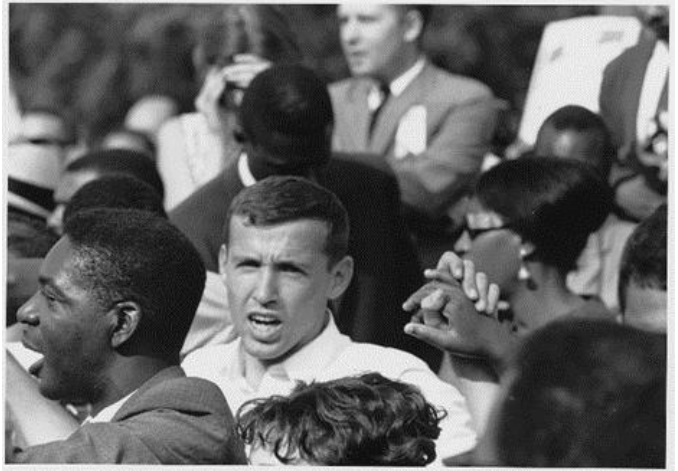
“For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven ....”

Different people relate to church in different ways, depending on an array of factors: their prior experience, if any, in being part of a church; the size of the congregation; the style of worship; the approach to church governance; the energy directed to social justice; the degree to which “ordinary people” (and not just paid staff) are involved in caring for each other as members of the community; and other factors. All of those factors and even more influence how we experience church at a given time.



Sometimes, church can and should feel like family. We often get to know well a small group within the larger community. We might work in the kitchen together, for church events or for a community service meal. We might volunteer to greet people or help organize the refreshments on Sunday morning and end up making new friends. Over time we make new connections that deepen and, even though we may never have met that person outside of church, they become someone we care about. Like family, sometimes there are even disagreements, but we do our best to work it out. Like any healthy family, we try to communicate and grow together.

When it is really humming, church can also feel like a movement – a group of people who converge around a shared value or cause, one to which you would gladly give your time and your creative energy, even risk some of your hard-earned security. For a newly formed church, that excitement comes from starting something new and watching it take flight. For a church that has already become a mature organization, it comes from new programs or other big changes. Adam Simon's arrival and his approach to leading music have that energy for me and others who have met and worked with him.



*Singing Together at the  
1963 March on Washington*



Church is not only an interpersonal gathering and a movement. It is also an institution. A church like ours, which has been a local institution for almost 200 years, has a history. We are blessed to have a community of caring, faithful people, a modern physical plant that is well maintained, and inherited wealth sufficient to protect us (and to sink us if we rely too much on it).

We are also blessed with leaders who appreciate all the dimensions of being church together. They know that appropriate attention to the institutional dimension will serve the long-term health of the interpersonal and movement dimensions. Toward that end, a team consisting of Laura Frogameni, Jeff Prince, and Janet Tucker will be developing proposed amendments to our bylaws for your consideration at the annual meeting in January. Those amendments will, at a minimum, seek to incorporate what we have learned from experience with the new way of organizing lay leadership in our church, approved as a pilot project in January 2020 and reauthorized each year since.

We have been through a difficult three years. Everyone in the world endured the pandemic. Depending on your circumstances, it has been at least scary, if not traumatic. We, as a church, also endured the added stress of controversy surrounding the dismissal of a long serving, well liked employee. Lingering feelings from those challenges can obscure the good news. Although we have experienced some of the same losses as many mainline churches from the pandemic, and we lost 10-15 members due to controversy, we are still here, still devoted to following the leading of the Spirit and midwifing the unfolding kin-dom of God.

Our people care for and about each other. We respond to the needs in our community and the demands of justice near and far. We are in touch with the people and other institutions around us. Our Sunday service continues to feed our spirits and attract return visitors. In short, we are in good shape, all things considered, and looking forward to new growth. I'm glad to be part of it and even happier that you are!



In faith, with hope, for love,  
*Michael*

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## ONA

### **You're Invited! Check Out Our Edwards Church Open and Affirming Ministry Team!**

Folks in the Edwards Church congregation (whether they are official members or not!) serve on a variety of ministry teams whose focus is everything from serving as ushers and fellowship hosts to awarding grants for social justice causes, to creating quilts and shawls to be given to those in need, and much more. The Open and Affirming Ministry Team's mission is to lead our congregation in welcoming people who identify as LGBTQ+ into the life of the church and living out that welcome in inclusive, meaningful ways. We'd love to welcome more people to share in this ministry with us!

If you're interested in learning more, please contact Debbie Davis ([debradavis1217@gmail.com](mailto:debradavis1217@gmail.com)) and/or sit in on our next meeting to check it out! We'll meet on September 10 at 11:30 AM in the Edwards Room of the church. Our agenda will include mapping out activities we'd like to do over the next several months, including how our church will observe National Coming Out Day in October.

## From the Minister of Faith Formation

*Dear Beloved of God,*

*“One generation commends your works to another,  
they tell of your mighty acts.  
They speak of the glorious splendor of your majesty-  
and I will meditate on your wonderful works.  
They tell of the power of your awesome works-  
and I will proclaim your great deeds.  
They celebrate your abundant goodness  
and joyfully sing of your righteousness.”  
Psalm 145: 5-7 (NIV)*

Nicholas Wolterstorff in his book Until Justice and Peace Embrace, defines shalom as “the human being dwelling at peace in all his or her relationships: with God, with self, with fellow, with nature.” Fleshing this out for his readers, Wolterstorff goes on to say “shalom incorporates right, harmonious relationships to God and delight in God’s service; right, harmonious relationships to other human beings and delight in human community; right, harmonious relationships to nature and delight in our physical surroundings.”

Paul Hammer writes that as a biblical term “shalom stands with other major biblical terms such as justice, truth, love, righteousness, and salvation. In fact, we cannot understand shalom without them.”

So, began the introduction to a final paper/project for a directed study I was engaged in at then Andover Newton Theological Seminary. It was titled - perhaps not surprising to some of you -Educating for Shalom. The words and concepts of both authors and multiple others, as well as the significant biblical mandate of shalom in the Hebrew and Christian scriptures were helpful in forming my personal working definition of shalom – a quality of life resulting in a transformation of the way people live and relate to God, to one another, to self, and creation.

The word *salem* in the Hebrew scriptures is used to express the concept of peace. A derivative salem, *salom*, literally translated means to be safe, uninjured, whole or sound. In Zechariah 8:16-17 salom is joined with *mispas* (justice). In Micah 6:8 we read that God’s people are to “do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with our God.” This is life long work requiring practice and intentionality.

Our Vision Statement (2015) appearing on the walls in our sanctuary and our Values Statement (2015) each speak in some way to the concept of shalom as does our new Welcoming Statement (2023) and to be sure there are ways we live it out. I have been wondering about how we might practice shalom, and living out Micah 6:8 *intergenerationally*, so....

When **Church School** resumes on September 10, those present will be introduced to the concept of shalom and Micah 6:8. We will spend time in the following weeks envisioning ways to live it out in our lives, with one another, with God, and with creation. In the Psalm referenced above, the author speaks of one generation commending to another in action verbs *tell, proclaim, celebrate, sing* the mighty acts, the glorious splendor, great deeds, abundant goodness and righteousness of God. As always, it would be wonderful to have some adults join us in our exploration. Our life long faith journeys will be richer for it. Please let me know if you would like to be part of this.

**Youth Group** – open to all in Grades 6-12 - will resume on September 10 at 11:30 in Addis Hall. Parents and younger siblings are invited. I am thrilled to share that Ella Stocker will be joining in the leadership of this group! During our time together, we will share a meal and do some planning through December. Some things to think about in advance: the timing of our gatherings, your hopes for the group, meeting with other youth groups and anything else on your mind.

On another note, in the July issue of Sojourners, colleague Debbie Gline Allen and the SNEUCC's minister for faith formation was quoted along with two others in an article titled The Case for Ending Children's Church, by Bekah McNeel. While you have heard me express much of the same, I thought I would share the link to the article. As always, I would love to hear your thoughts and ideas: <https://sojo.net/articles/case-ending-children-s-church>.

*Blessings and Shalom,*  
*Deb*

- 1) Wolterstoff, Nicholas, Until Justice and Peace Embrace, (Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1983), 69.
- 2) Ibid., 70.
- 3) Hammer, Paul, The Gift of Shalom. (Philadelphia: United Church Press, 1976), 12.

## From Our New Director of Music

Greetings Edwards Church!

I'm absolutely thrilled to be joining Edwards Church as your new Director of Music! Music has an uncanny ability to enhance and deepen just about any experience, and I'm honored to be adding my voice to yours to help enrich worship at Edwards. Given the wonderful and vibrant community I've been hearing about, the passionate and talented musicians already in your midst, and the stunning and resonant sanctuary and Austin organ, I think we've got a pretty good set-up! I'm looking forward to growing the choir, which will sing choral music at Sunday services, and help the whole congregation in confident and robust hymn-singing – one of my favorite activities.

My wife Sophie and I moved from Boston to Conway MA just over two years ago, and we couldn't be happier to be in the valley. We're both free-lance musicians and it's been so invigorating to be part of western MA's distinctive and rich music scene.

If you, or anyone you know, wants to sing in the choir, please reach out to me! As the Zimbabwean proverb says, "If you can talk you can sing, and if you can walk you can dance". Don't worry, I won't make you dance (yet).

My email is [music\\_director@edwardschurchnorthampton.org](mailto:music_director@edwardschurchnorthampton.org) and if you ever have any questions or ideas, feel free to stop by my office any time. I look forward to meeting many of you in person on September 3rd!

Adam Simon

P.S. Some of my recent musical happenings: I've just gotten back from a week-long festival of Classical and Folk music called Beethoven & Banjos in the Upper Peninsula, MI, and a week teaching in a singing workshop on Gambier Island in British Columbia! As a composer, I have enjoyed many recent performances and commissions from nationally acclaimed ensembles, including: A Far Cry, Cantus, Lorelei Ensemble, Ruckus, Conspirare, Seraphic Fire, Palaver Strings and WordSong Boston. I am an avid folk music singer as well, performing frequently with the world folk ensemble Culomba, and VT based vocal ensemble Northern Harmony, traveling throughout Europe, South Africa and the US. Alongside Sophie Michaux, I co-direct and accompany the new hill-town community chorus, the *South River Singers*. Before coming to Edwards, I was Director of Music at Haydenville Congregational Church for just over a year, and before that I was a staff singer at Trinity Church Boston for seven years. I have a Master's degree in composition from Tufts University in Medford MA and a UD in composition and piano performance at the Longy School of Music in Cambridge MA.

# ECM Meeting Notes

*June 20, 2023*

Present: Mark Dion, Jack Hjelt, Sheri Cheung, Michael McSherry

Absent: Margaret Allen, Leon Drzewianowski, Heather Bell, Deb Moore

Facilitator: Mark

Minutes: Sheri

Opening Devotional: Michael  
By Steve Garnaas-Holmes: Cheap Motel

Approval of previous meetings minutes Everyone  
Approved

A/V Addis Hall Status Mark  
Mark has been corresponding; there are 2 radar-type microphones that are back-ordered, all else is ready. Should we wait for their arrival or stop and start the project? Building and Grounds team will chime in with an opinion

Finance Team update: Leon  
On hold til next meeting as Leon not present

Elim Zoom for Sunday Services - YouTube only All  
No update

Music Search Committee: Mark  
All set! Adam to start 9/1  
Jeff sent a nice thank you to the team and is willing to continue on through July and August as needed

Website membership Mark  
Figuring out who to send emails to for minister evaluation; Kyla helping us with email list

Music Team  
Friday 6/23 performance is all set for volunteers  
Consider other outreach agencies that we could donate the Music At the Crossroads offering to

Status of Extra Pews B& G email All  
Marc Waller is aware of the status, and the back of the sanctuary looks great! He still has 3 pews at his house for temporary storage, they are looking into maybe the courthouse using them  
consider brass ringlets on a couple pews in the back to hang ropes from to encourage people to sit closer to the front

Thriving Congregation: Update                      Sheri/Deb  
Breaking Bread groups have been formed and are being scheduled

Rewriting By-Laws Update                      All  
Consider bringing in the Reach team and others to talk about the process with ECM  
to converse about what's working, what isn't working well, and how have the  
assumptions we've made in creating the design no longer hold  
Is the new process working well enough to warrant rewriting the by-laws, deserves  
discussion first; pause the rewrite to gather opinions on this

Valley Interfaith Refugee Action Group?                      Deb  
Deb sent an email about this; describes program  
No space at church required as it will be a zoom meeting. We should promote it  
though!

Safe Church/Safe Conduct Policy Update                      Deb  
We will hold off until Deb is here; no meeting has been held yet

Review of the Minister                      All  
we will be in email contact to see if we are ready to send letters out or if we should  
wait til the congregational survey is ready as well

Other Business?                      All  
New signs about masks being optional: they're all up, thank you Mark!  
Canopy for the courtyard has been purchased; it's pretty heavy so ? if we can just  
leave it up; trial run put it up 7/1 and just secure frame and take the top off and on  
so plants can get sun  
Need to recruit a new team to prepare communion and help clean up as right now  
Michael and Deb are doing it all, and also streamline process a bit, no need to use  
separate paper cups for each piece of bread. Michael will put something in the  
Wednesday statement.  
Consider an ECM retreat, possibly some Sunday in the summer? Some relaxation  
and spirituality and food and fun. Michael will send an email/Doodle poll to  
search for a date

Next Meeting: let's email and plan for September meeting; Sheri will send out an email  
with potential dates

Assignments:  
Agenda: Sheri  
Facilitator: Leon  
Opening Devotional: Michael  
Minutes: Heather  
Closing Prayer: Deb

Closing Prayer:                      Jack



## **More From Deb...Upcoming Events you may be interested in**

**SNEUCC 2023 Justice Summit – Trans and Nonbinary in the Church** – virtually and in-person (Old South Church, Boston, MA) October 7 from 10:00 – 5:00.

Four morning workshops and two afternoon workshops as well as five affinity groups, opening and closing worship are featured. Registration deadline is September 16th. For more details and to register go to <https://sneucc.org/#events/>. Please be sure to give/send Deb Moore a copy of your registration receipt for reimbursement.

## **Mental Health Awareness**

### **Walk for Suicide Prevention**

Kristin Rivers will be participating in the 2023 Greater Springfield Out of the Darkness Community Walk on October 21 at 10:00 a.m. at School Street Park in Agawam in support of suicide prevention! Also, she is organizing a team with members and friends from Edwards Church and First Churches for the walk. As teams are limited to 9 walkers, members and friends are invited to donate however they like: big or small, every donation will make a difference in supporting the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention's Massachusetts Chapter in research, education, resources and more for mental health and suicide prevention.

Kristin hopes to raise \$3,000 in recognition of her 30<sup>th</sup> birthday this year and to go big with a bold goal as she kicks off her 30s and a new decade.

As of August 1, \$350 has been raised.

To join the team, reach out to Kristin at [krivers2723@gmail.com](mailto:krivers2723@gmail.com).

To learn more about the team and donate, visit <https://supporting.afsp.org/index.cfm?fuseaction=donorDrive.team&teamID=318521>

**November 2 12:00 – 1:30 Becoming Wise: Breaking the Silence about Mental Illness** with Rev. Dr. Sarah Lund. Sponsored by the Health & Wellness Ministry and SNEUCC W.I.S.E Task Force. More details to come.

**Dementia Friendly Congregations** - October 3 ~ 2:00 - 3:00p.m. This free - to members of the SNEUCC - webinar is sponsored by Practical Resources for Churches (PRC).

For more information and to register go to: [https://us06web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN\\_wiDmgEcgSAmyS22ylfPUFg#/registration](https://us06web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_wiDmgEcgSAmyS22ylfPUFg#/registration).

# Updated Welcoming Statement

## Updated Welcome Statement Approved by Congregational Vote

This past April, our congregation approved our newly updated Welcoming Statement by congregational vote. Thanks to all who faithfully helped the Open and Affirming Ministry Team by offering your ideas, questions, research and prayers throughout this project. The Open and Affirming Team is immensely grateful for your dedication as we sought the best way to describe our commitment to being a welcome and inclusive faith community. We will occasionally include the Welcoming Statement here in the Spire and the weekly bulletin as a reminder of our promise to each other and to those with whom we seek to share Christ's love.

### Edwards Church Welcoming Statement, April 2023

Welcome to Edwards Church. United in Christ's love, we are committed to creating a just and loving world where all feel valued and free to be themselves.

Wherever you are on your journey of faith, 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, economic, educational, immigration status, and unique perspective.

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

Thank you Edwards Cathedral in the Night Team!

Thanks to all the Cathedral in the Night Team volunteers who made sandwiches and desserts, helped collect & organize food donations, cooked 100 servings of our famous layered taco salad, loaded food into cars, participated in the Cathedral worship service and shared a meal with our Cathedral in the Night congregation on Sunday, August 6th.

Here's a photo of some of our volunteers who helped cook, collect, organize, deliver and serve meals to over 50 of our neighbors. Oh - and we also washed lots of dishes and had lots of fun, fellowship and laughs along the way! Our next partnership date with Cathedral in the Night is Sunday, October 1st. If you'd like to learn more about being part of this ministry, please email Debbie Davis at [debradavis1217@gmail.com](mailto:debradavis1217@gmail.com)



Pictured from left to right: Carla Wirzburger, Marisa Brown-Ludwig, Sandra Rossi, Jim Green, Emily Schmalzer, Grace Del Vecchio, Susan Anderson



# SOAPY CLEAN-UP PARTY!!

YOU ARE INVITED TO JOIN US AS WE PREPARE THE  
NPC FOR OUR OPENING MORNING!

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 6TH  
9AM-12NOON

Bring a change of clothing in case children  
get soapy and wet! We'll be sponging down  
the riding toys, washing the little toys, and  
enjoying seeing each other again!

**Please  
join  
the  
soapy  
clean-  
up  
party!**

**NPC  
is  
back!**

**WE'RE BACK!**

*(AND SO IS THE COFFEE)*

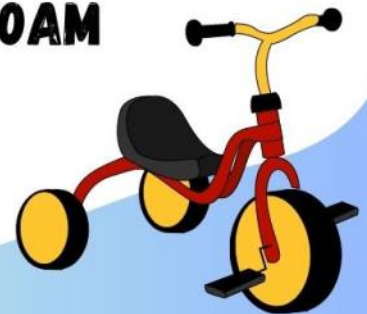


JOIN US FOR OPENING DAY AT THE  
NORTHAMPTON PARENTS CENTER!

**MONDAY SEPTEMBER 11TH**

**9:30AM-11:30AM**

ALL ARE  
*welcome!*





# 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:

**September 10th** we will meet in Addis Hall at 11:30 to share a meal, welcome Ella Stocker as another adult leader, and do some planning (parents and younger siblings are most welcome to attend).

## Church School

Here is what we will be exploring in September:

**September 10 - Shalom? What does this mean?**

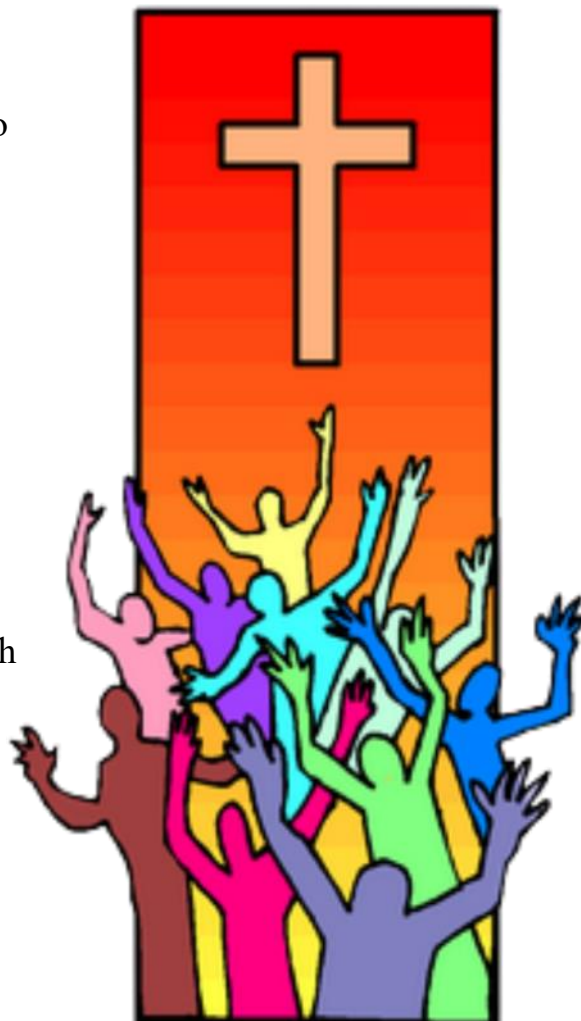
*We will meet in the Edwards Room*

Those interested in helping nurture our kids in their faith contact Deb Moore at

[ffminister@edwardschurchnorthampton.org](mailto:ffminister@edwardschurchnorthampton.org)

## Young Adults

This ministry with our college students and other young adults will meet via Zoom on September 3rd 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 [ffmininister@edwardschurchnorthampton.org](mailto:ffmininister@edwardschurchnorthampton.org).

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



## SEPTEMBER BIRTHDAYS

Carolyn Gray

Kathleen Korza

Shirley Atwood

Pamela Cook

Eli Hutchison

Elena Frogameni

Debra Moore

James Young

Phillip Cooper

William Hogan, Jr.

Elizabeth Prince

Mariana Haughey

**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!

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## 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

NPC = Northampton Parent's Center  
RVS = River Valley Sangha  
VJV = Valley Jazz Voices  
FoH = Friends of the Homeless  
B&G = Building & Grounds  
PVC = Pioneer Valley Cappella  
M@C=Music at the Crossroads

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