

THE SPIRE

EDWARDS CHURCH *of* NORTHAMPTON

UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

Vol. 33 No. 8

October 2023

From the Minister of Faith Formation

Dear Beloved of God,

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

Ecclesiastes 3:1-8

Ahh...welcome Autumn; one of my three favorite seasons, followed by winter and spring. The colors that we see in New England – varying hues of yellow, orange, red, brown, and purple leaves - adorn the trees and when driving in or through mountain areas look like tufted quilts blanketing the hills and mountain sides. As the trees begin to shed their leaves dropping them and depending on the tree, acorns as well, seeds of what will come make their way into the ground below. As we walk through or over them, the rustling, fallen leaves sing to me. Tree limbs, once covered, become window frames for that which was previously obscured from our view.



Winter, following Autumn, takes into her care and gestating nurture seeds her sister season (and perhaps some of us, gardeners, etc.) entrusted to her. Our chipmunk and squirrel friends have found refuge, birds and butterflies have migrated, bears will hibernate; perhaps many of us will do the same in varying degrees when the snow flies and temperatures drop.

Personally, I love a good snowfall and to go out and shovel in the quiet of night or early morning, especially when no one else is out. It is a form of meditation for me. It also brings smiles as I fondly remember shoveling before school growing up in Hanson, MA. In all honesty, I will admit I didn't think of shoveling as meditation in my school age years and I know my kids did not.

And then along comes Spring with budding leaves, greening grass emerging from the ground, the return of longer days and walks outdoors, open windows, the smell of newly turned earth, the return of nature's alarm clock as chirping birds join chorus in early morning, the emergence of those animals who had hibernated and budding leaves on trees. Crocuses, tulips, daisies, butterflies and so much more!



Dear Ones, following up on my letter of retirement shared with all of you on September 14th, I couldn't think of another way to share the transition I am about to enter except through seasons. We have entered Autumn. Personally, it is an autumnal season for me. Moving toward retirement at the end of December, open to the guidance of the Holy Spirit I expect there will be some shedding to do, some scattering seeds of what may come, sure to be nurtured by tears of sadness and joy.

Moving toward winter, I will sit with that which God has or may be gestating within me. I know that while I have some ideas, like spending more time with family, listening for and to what the Holy longs for me and each one of us is important in continued spiritual development.

Then with Spring, several months into retirement, I look forward to opening the doors of my heart, breathing in the newness of emerging growth, responding to the opening of buds that will emerge from seeds planted and how I, along with God, will faithfully nurture them and perhaps scatter more seeds.



Many of you have asked me about how ministry with members and friends of this congregation might look like upon my retirement on December 31. Between now and then, I will continue to serve each of you and God. I will be happy to meet with you, respond to your emails and phone calls, go for a walk or have a cup of tea with you. As of January 1, that will not be the case in order to allow the individual called to this ministry and all of you to form relationships with one another and perhaps plant some new seeds.

For everything there is a season and I have been blessed and am deeply grateful to have shared many seasons with all of you and look forward to our remaining time together.

*Blessings,
Deb*

From the Senior Minister

Dear Edwards Church Community,

Deb's announcement that she will retire at the end of this year sets in motion a number of things. First, all of us quickly realize how present she is in the life of this church and community, how quietly over time a strong attachment forms, and how much we will miss her. Roots seek life giving soil. Quietly and without ever explicitly acknowledging it, we can all assume someone will always be there. But we know better.

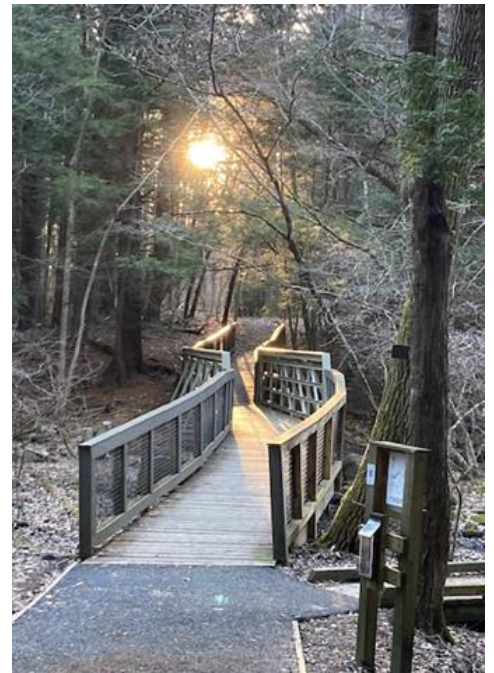
During December – it seems so far away, yet we know how fast time flies – we will have at least two special events, and they are special events we always have. Christmas Eve will fall on a Sunday. Deb will be with us for a final candle lit “Silent Night” as her last public event. The Sunday before that, December 17, will be Nativity Sunday, when we will celebrate with the Christmas pageant. You may assume that we can make a bit of a fuss over Deb during that Sunday. Stay tuned for details, and please contact me if you have an inspiration.

We value Deb not only for the person she is, but the many ways she helps us to form and reform our faith, with engaging, enlightening, and occasionally challenging activities for every age and stage of life. Those are big shoes to fill.

To fill them, ECM has formed a search team for a transitional faith formation minister. That team is Sheri Cheung, Carolyn Dion, Laura Frogameni, and Melissa Mattison. We have contacted the Southern New England Conference of the UCC to engage their support for the search for someone to serve temporarily as the minister or director of faith formation. There will be lots of things to work through, and we will keep you informed along the way. From now through Christmas, let the focus be on enjoying the present with the presence of Deb.

In faith, with hope, for love,

Michael



More From Deb...Upcoming Events you may be interested in:

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. She is organizing a team with members and friends of 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, with every donation making a difference in supporting the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention's Massachusetts Chapter in research, education, resources and more for mental health and suicide preventions.

Kristin's goal for the team is to raise \$3,000.00. As of September 20, \$900.00 has been raised. The Outreach Grants Team will match the next \$1,000 donated, so your contributions could be doubled.

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

To join the team, reach out to Kristin at krivers2723@gmail.com.

October 3 ~ 2:00 - 3:00 p.m. ~ Dementia Friendly Congregations - 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_wiDmgEcgAmyS22ylfPUFg#registration.

October 5 ~ 11:00 a.m. - noon - Faith Formation Round Table: Intergenerational Worship Topics include: Theology of Inclusion, Paperless Singing, and Embodied Prayer. To register go to: <https://sneucc-reg.brapp.com/FFRTintergen1023>. *I would love to have those interested and available join me in attending. Interested but can't attend? To be sure, I will share information that I take away.*

November 2 ~ 12:00 - 1:30 Becoming W.I.S.E: Breaking the Silence about Mental Illness in our Churches and community with Rev.Dr. Sarah Lund. Sponsored by the Health and Wellness Ministry and the SNEUCC's W.I.S.E Task Force. Participants will learn what it means to be a **W** (welcoming). **I** (inclusive) **S** (supportive) and **E** (Engaged) congregation.

The SNEC Health and Wellness Ministry Team is in the process of preparing for the SNEUCC to become a W.I.S.E. Conference. For more information and to register go to: www.sneucc.org/eventdetail/177455790

Quilt Team Happenings – October 2023



During the September 24th Sunday worship service, the quilt team displayed five scrap quilts that we created for clients of the Friends of Children FOCUS program. The recipients are youth who have aged out of foster care and are starting new lives on their own. Susan Swift, Development Director at Friends of Children and Edwards Church member, took the quilts to their King Street office for distribution to youth in the FOCUS program. In 2022 and 2023 we donated 17 baby, twin or full size quilts to this program and we look forward to continuing our support. To hear personal experiences with FOCUS, go to the Friends of Children website - [Friends of Children FOCUS program](#)



Local Social Hour

By Justin Clifford

(our attentive sexton)

Development for Friends of Children

To the Edwards Church Community,

My name is Susan Swift and I am both a member of Edwards Church and the Director of Development for Friends of Children (an organization that advocates for children and young adults in and aging out of the foster care system). On Sunday, September 24th, the young adults (FOCUS program) of Friends of Children were doubly blessed. Thank you.

Glorious quilts were displayed and then given to us by the quilt committee as part of an ongoing project that we have been so fortunate to be on the receiving end of. These quilts have been gratefully received and treasured by our FOCUS young adults. And Sandra Rossi's poem attached to each of them was just stunning.

It was also announced that the Outreach Committee made a grant of \$2,500 to our FOCUS Financial Fitness Matching Grant series. We are raising \$10,000 to match the savings of FOCUS young adults as they create their own savings through working on our Financial Fitness series. This is two-year three-part program helps our young adults:

- become financially secure,
- practice smart money management and
- become knowledgeable about budgeting, smart saving and investment strategies.

Thank you for your belief that ALL children deserve the opportunity for a healthy life and that these children and young adults deserve to have us in their corner!

Gratefully,
Susan Swift

To read more about this program, please email me: susan@friendsofchildren.org

If you would like to learn more about the FOCUS program, hear from our young adults, and/or explore the possibility of becoming a mentor, please [click here](#).

To make your own donation, please [click here](#).

From your Open and Affirming Ministry Team

Why highlight a bathroom? It's an important improvement in our church facilities and a big step forward in living out our covenant to be an open and affirming congregation. We have the Buildings and Grounds Ministry Team to thank for making our new all-gender restroom a reality.



Why does Edwards Church need an all-gender restroom?

Our welcome to LGBTQ+ folks must extend beyond the threshold in tangible, visible, affirming ways. Transgender and gender non-conforming people often experience harassment, refusal of access, and even violence when trying to use public restrooms. Our all-gender restroom is a clear statement that Edwards Church is a safe space where everyone is welcomed, respected and affirmed for who they are.

Members of the wider community have begun to take notice of our new bathroom. When staff from Northampton's new Division of Community Care stopped by to introduce themselves to Michael and Deb recently, a member of the team commented that having a clearly identified all-gender bathroom is great. And, we're getting the word out by listing our restroom on the Refuge Restrooms app, which you can use to locate safe restrooms near your location. <https://www.refugerestrooms.org/>

How do I know which bathroom I should direct visitors to?

Everyone should be allowed to decide for themselves which bathroom fits their identity. So, tell visitors where all of the restrooms are so they can make an informed choice. "There's an all-gender bathroom at the end of the front hall by the Edwards Room and there are women's and men's restrooms down the other hallway toward the back of the building."

Please don't tell visitors which bathroom you think they should use. Some transgender people desire gender neutral bathroom space; some identify as women and men and should not be pressured or forced out of women's or men's rooms.

Many people will find the all-gender bathroom a welcome option including:

Parents accompanying their child to the bathroom

Those who want to avoid the wait for a gender-specific bathroom that is in use

People meeting in the Edwards Room who don't want to run all the way down the hall!

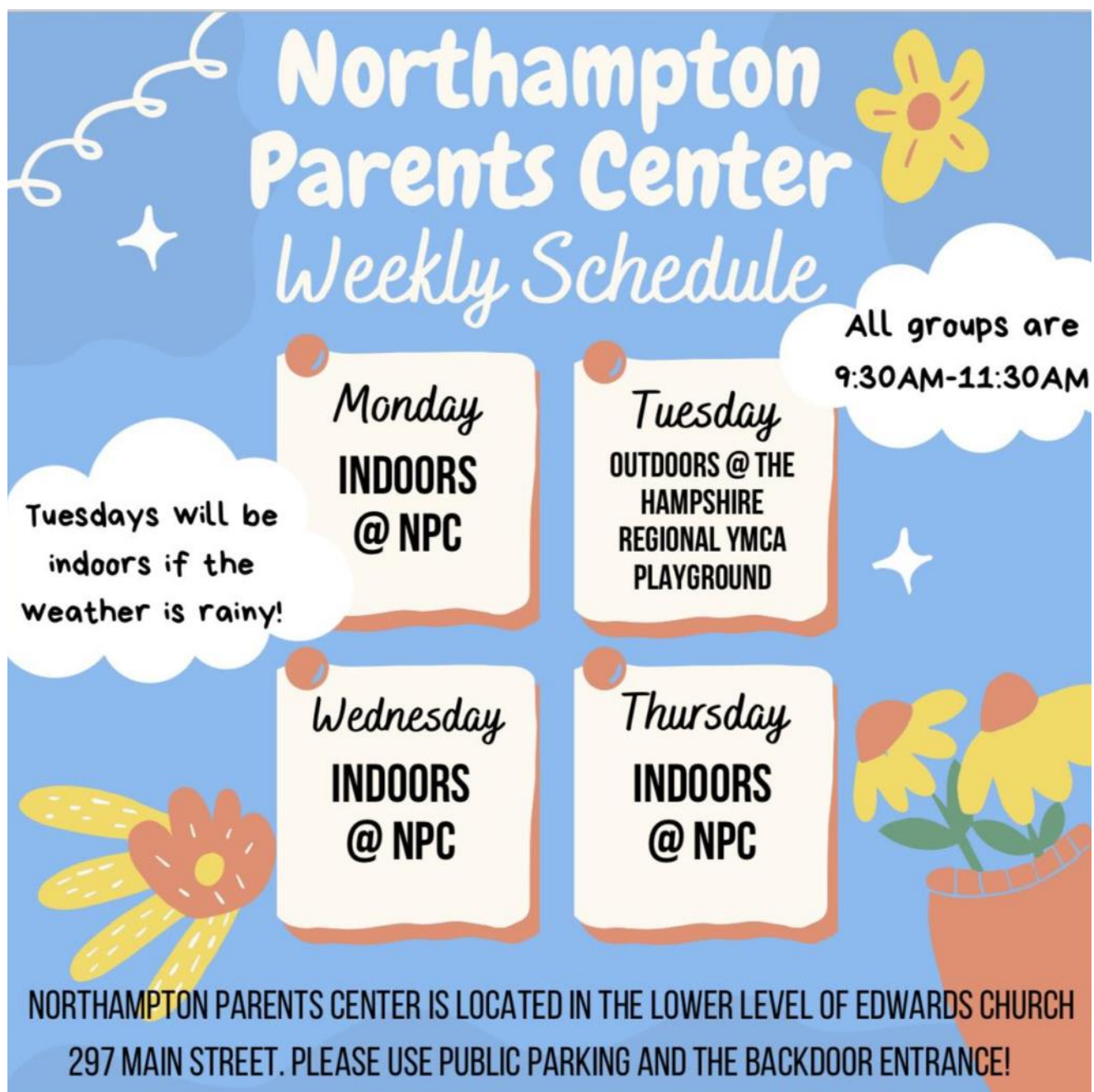
Thanks to the Building and Grounds Ministry Team and everyone in our congregation for helping us be truly welcoming to everyone!

Book Discussion Reflection on “What Makes You Come Alive, A Spiritual Walk with Howard Thurman” by Lerita Coleman Brown:

In the last chapter of her book Ms. Brown wrote: “For him, much of Christian dogma corrupted the true message of Jesus.” Just one sentence in a book with many thought provoking sentences for reflection. There it is in the last chapter but what a starting point it could provide for any congregation looking at itself from the outside in to assess where it stands and where it might venture seeking “what makes one come alive” – most especially at this moment in world time when wisdom is so vitally sought. Reading and discussing Ms. Brown’s book introduced me to a man of spirit who mentored many and who’s wisdom continues to feed.

Thank you, Deb, for your leadership.

Sandra C. Rossi



A colorful graphic titled "Northampton Parents Center Weekly Schedule" with a blue background, white clouds, and yellow stars. The schedule is presented on four white cards with orange borders, each pinned with a red pushpin. The cards list the days of the week and the location of the groups. A cloud on the left contains a note about rainy weather. A cloud on the right specifies the time for all groups. Decorative elements include a yellow flower in the top right and a potted plant in the bottom right.

Northampton Parents Center Weekly Schedule

All groups are 9:30AM-11:30AM

Day	Location
Monday	INDOORS @ NPC
Tuesday	OUTDOORS @ THE HAMPSHIRE REGIONAL YMCA PLAYGROUND
Wednesday	INDOORS @ NPC
Thursday	INDOORS @ NPC

Tuesdays will be indoors if the weather is rainy!

NORTHAMPTON PARENTS CENTER IS LOCATED IN THE LOWER LEVEL OF EDWARDS CHURCH 297 MAIN STREET. PLEASE USE PUBLIC PARKING AND THE BACKDOOR ENTRANCE!

Edwards Church

FREE CONCERT



Presents

Abigail Stauffer and Dave the Cellist



Abigail Stauffer and Dave the Cellist blend soulful pop vocals with the rare and distinct sound of jazz cello. Dave's fluid mastery over his instrument lays down a foundation over which Abigail effortlessly jumps between registers, revealing her astounding vocal control and tone palate. Every song is a captivating showcase of confidence and vulnerability, crafting a balance of pain, hope, and joy. Their show evokes so much emotion, it's hard to believe each song isn't specifically about you.

This a free concert to benefit **Center for New Americans**
Donations will be collected in the sanctuary.



Center for New Americans

A Community-Based Education and Resource Center for
Immigrants and Refugees in Western Massachusetts

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:

October (date TBD) - Gleaning for Rachel's Table

Church School

Here is what we will be exploring in September:

October 1 - Communion Sunday. All church worship.

October 8 - Who is God? - part 1

October 15 - Who is God? - part 2

October 22- Who is Jesus? - part 1

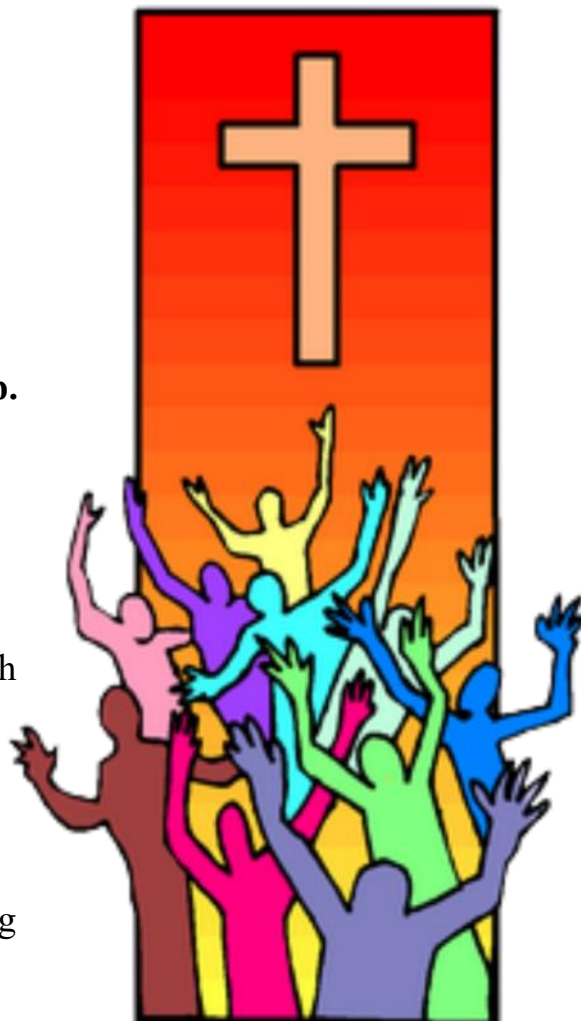
October 29- Who is Jesus? - part 2

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

ffminister@edwardschurchnorthampton.org

Young Adults

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

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.



OCTOBER BIRTHDAYS

Sidney Letendre

Fumiko Brown

Charles McCullagh

Sid Montague

Floyd Cheung

Susan Swift

Robert Saalfrank

Nancy Flickinger

Judith Almeida

Daisy Letendre

Alenna Shapleigh

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 enjoy meeting in person. There need not be a special reason to meet. 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 2023

NPC = Northampton Parent's Center
 RVS = River Valley Sangha
 FoH = Friends of the Homeless
 B&G = Building & Grounds
 M@C=Music at the Crossroads
 TGT = Tiny Glass Tavern
 PCR = Pastor Congregation Relations

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1 10 Worship 1 Young Adults	2 9:30 NPC 6 RVS	3 7 Gamblers Anon.	4 9:30 NPC 12 Bible Study	5 9:30 NPC 7 Dancing w/ History (George Lakey)	6 11:30 MANNA	7 11 Memorial Service
8 10 Worship 11 Youth Group	9 9:30 NPC 7 ECM	10 3 Prayer Shawl 7 Gamblers Anon.	11 9:30 NPC 12 Bible Study 5:30 FoH	12 9:30 NPC	13 9 Chalk Art Festival 11:30 MANNA	14 10 Macbeth Rehearsal 11:30 MANNA
15 10 Worship 1 Macbeth Rehearsal	16 9:30 NPC	17 6:30 FF COP 7 Gamblers Anon.	18 9:30 NPC 12 Bible Study	19 9:30 NPC 4 Care & Visitation	20 11:30 MANNA	21 11:30 MANNA
22 10 Worship 11:30 PCR	23 9:30 NPC	24 3 Prayer Shawl 7 Gamblers Anon.	25 9:30 NPC 12 Bible Study	26 9:30 NPC 7 Poetry Reading	27 11:30 MANNA	28 11:30 MANNA 5 M@C
29 10 Worship	30 9:30 NPC 10 TGT Rehearsal	31 10 TGT				