

THE SPIRE

EDWARDS CHURCH *of* NORTHAMPTON

UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

Vol. 33 No. 9

November 2023

From the Minister of Faith Formation

Dear Beloved of God,

When you do things from your soul,
you feel a river moving in you –
a joy. *Rumi*

November, a harvest month during which we will celebrate All Saints Day, celebrate the baptism of the youngest in our church family, and turn our clocks back an hour. Leaves of various shapes and colors, and pine needles will continue to fall blanketing lawns and walk ways, farmlands and landscapes will be readied for winter months, many will celebrate Thanksgiving with family and friends or by making and serving meals to others, and we will pause and offer words of heartfelt gratitude for the many blessings we have been gifted with. As this season of harvest gives way to December, we will prepare our hearts and minds for Advent and the themes of hope, peace, joy, and love.

For the past couple of months, I have spent quite a bit of time ruminating about mantles. Not the type in our living spaces upon which we place items, the mantles we pick up and put on as well as the fabric they are made of.



As a scriptural metaphor, a mantle is a calling, ministry, and anointing of the Holy Spirit whom God graciously gives to all. In the Hebrew scriptures, prophets wore physical mantles as a symbol of their calling from God. (1Kings 19:13, 2Kings 2:8, 1Samuel 15:27, Joshua 7:21, Ezra

9:5, Hebrews 1:12). The prophet Elijah passed his mantle to his student Elisha. In the Christian scriptures, we learn that Jesus' mantle was passed to him at his baptism, and one he eventually passed to his disciples.

Spiritual mantles are similarly described as a calling, gift, passion or ability. Like many of you, I have worn several mantles throughout my personal and vocational life. Oldest child, friend, church school teacher, seminary student, wife, mother, minister of faith formation, spiritual companion, volunteer chaplain, and now grandmother are a few. Some were heavy, some not so much, some passed on, and many picked up with anticipation, joy and love. Reflecting further and wondering about the mantle of retirement, I was asked recently what the fabric, the substance of that symbolic mantle might be. In Colossians 3:12-14 we read that we are to clothe ourselves with:

humility
gentleness
kindness patience
forgiveness
compassion

As I am learning to sit with unknowing how all will unfold, I pray that each of those qualities will make up the fabric of the mantle of retirement I will put on while encompassing and being open to new pathways, possibilities, explorations previously put on hold, and more importantly that which God may be longing for me. I pray that the words and charges of Micah 6:8 “to do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with God” will be stitched into the fabric of the mantle. I pray that they will be stitched into the mantles that each of you as individuals and as a faith community will wear. In addition to the fabric of our mantles, they are important components in the discernment process of the various and multiple mantles we all take and pass on throughout our lives.

A chant I often sing when walking meditatively, from the refrain of a hymn familiar to many of you (with one slight adaptation), is:

“Great is your faithfulness, great is your faithfulness!
Morning by morning new mercies I see;
All I have needed your love has provided, Great is your faithfulness God, unto me.”
God is, God does, and God will. Thanks be to God!

Blessings,
Deb

Early Notice & Heads Up - Nativity Sunday Will Be December 17

Jim Stokes-Buckles will co-direct this annual offering. The Bos family will represent the Holy Family; Keira and Maren have all ready indicated their participation. Roles for shepherds, angels, animals around the manger, an innkeeper and narrators are available. Please let me know about your family’s interest: ffminister@edwardschurchnorthampton.org.

From the Senior Minister

Dear Edwards Church Community,

In her letter, Deb develops the image of the mantle, and I am reminded of the mantle of her office, her role in the life of this church. The stoles that we wear on Sundays are, in fact, current forms of mantles signifying that we are what the United Church of Christ (UCC) calls “authorized ministers,” individuals who have the required education and training, and have been through a process of discernment and vetting conducted by groups of UCC churches to confirm our sense of call and our fitness for ministry.



Once admitted to authorized ministry, we agree to abide by the Ministerial Code of Ethics and the covenantal expectations of the ministries for which we are authorized. One aspect of those ethics and expectations is maintaining professional boundaries. For ministers in a parish setting, this means that when we leave a church, we commit to avoiding contact with people in the church we are leaving until at least a year after the next “permanent” person in that role has begun their service. This requirement is designed to serve several purposes.

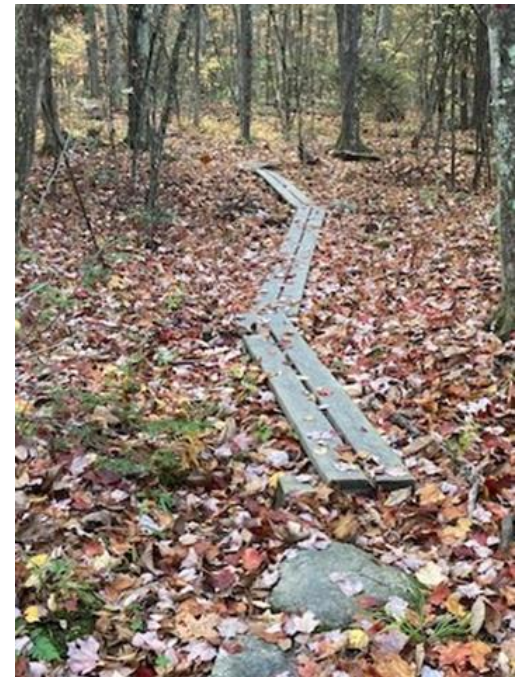
First, the congregation of the church will often become attached to the retiring or relocating minister and want to continue their relationship, especially with a minister as personable as Deb. However, it is also important for the church and its members to form relationships with a newly arriving minister. Accordingly, when a minister no longer serves in a setting, they remove themselves from it to give space for new relationships to form.

Second, the departing minister is departing for a reason, in Deb’s case retirement. She has devoted many years to ministry. Her siblings, children, and granddaughter are all in southeast Massachusetts. She has decided to move closer and spend more of her time with them. She will also explore what new forms her service to God and neighbor might take, other than parish ministry. I would not be surprised to see her serving as a faith formation resource advising other UCC churches, as a spiritual companion, or as a hospice/hospital volunteer.



In this season of harvest, we can and should celebrate the sowing and cultivation Deb has done at Edwards since 2011. All of us, even if we are not directly aware of it, have benefitted from her example, her patient teaching, her leadership in worship, and her persistent advocacy for all who might be left on the margins, especially children and youth, but really people of every age. Edwards will be harvesting from her ministry here for years to come.

In this season of falling leaves, we can also be reminded to allow the seasons to occur within the church. An individual minister has served for you and among you, or as she might say, *for* God and *among* you, and I'd agree. As leaves let go and are let go from the trees they served, they fall to the ground and give of themselves to the next generation. What they leave behind keeps feeding the life of the tree and its environment into the future. Ministers come and go in congregations, and when we do our work well, we support the growth that God encourages in and from all of us.



The apostle Paul wrote to people he loved in Corinth, regarding the relative roles he and another pastoral leader played in their lives, "I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the growth." (1 Cor. 3:6) Deb has both planted and watered at Edwards. When she retires, one of our gifts to her should be giving her the space to savor retirement. God will take care of us, as we care for each other and the wider community.

In faith, with hope, for love,

Michael

Walk for Suicide Prevention

Congratulations to Kristin Rivers and team members from Edwards and First Churches, many of whom walked on a rainy Saturday, October 21, raising \$5,280 dollars for the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention's Massachusetts Chapter. Money raised will support research, education, resources and more for mental health and suicide preventions.

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

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

Becoming W.I.S.E: Breaking the Silence about Mental Illness in our Churches and Communities

November 2 ~ noon - 1:30 p.m. via Zoom. Rev.Dr. Sarah Lund, DMin,MSW,MDiv, will talk about the need to reduce stigma and shame in order to care for one another with love and compassion. 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.

Translating Gender: A Community Workshop

Nov 5 from 11:30 a.m. - 1:30p.m. at the Unitarian Society of Northampton and Florence. Join our friends from Translate Gender and our community to deepen our practice of creating inclusive and welcoming spiritual spaces for our trans, nonbinary, and gender expansive community members. Many people have good intentions of being an ally, but don't know how to turn these intentions into action. This workshop will support our ongoing community learning related to gender (expression, identity, and perception), experiences related to coming out, health, navigating relationships and community, connection to spirituality, and the impact of our current political and social climate. Workshop attendees will have an opportunity to practice inclusive language, learn about community resources, and help continue to create affirming spaces within our congregation and beyond.

March 16, 2024

Super Saturday returns...watch for details.

Call for Nominations for ECM

The heartbeat of the church is its members sharing their energy, skills, faith and other resources to address needs within the church and the wider community. This sharing breathes life into all we do.

The Elected Core Ministry (ECM) is elected by the congregation at the annual meeting to serve as the group of lay leaders who make decisions on behalf of the whole congregation between annual or special meetings. Those decisions range from specific policy questions posed by ministry teams (the Outreach Grants, Open and Affirming, Building and Grounds, Music and other ministry teams have all brought questions) to providing guidance in decision making with other issues as they arise.

The ECM also appoints the members of Finance, Investments, Personnel and Pastor Congregation Relations, which are the committees that look after institutional care and maintenance. In short, ECM acts as the church “board,” much like the church council in the past. In the spirit of congregationalism, all ECM meetings open and close with a prayerful pause, to keep our focus on why we gather and what will serve the mission and vision of the church over time.

When we decided as a congregation in January 2020 to pilot this approach to church governance, we had in mind two-year terms and routine refreshment of the ECM as a group. Originally, the recommendation was for a group of at least six, with two or more being replaced each year. We have had individual ECM members leave at year end and new members come on. This coming January, the ECM will have three of its six current members pass the baton. Two have served for four years, and one for a single two-year term. We need at least three new members.

If you are interested in volunteering or would like to suggest another person as a good candidate to serve on the ECM, please contact any of the following current members: Heather Bell, Sheri Cheung, Mark Dion, Leon Drzewniowski, Jack Hjelt or Margaret Allen.

ECM Meeting Minutes

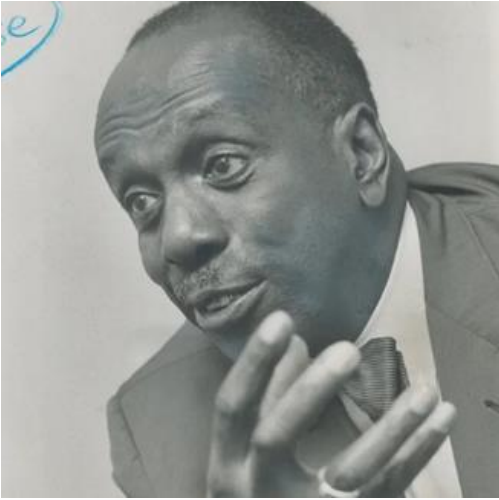
10/18/2023

7:15 pm – 8:30 pm

- Facilitator: Leon
- Minutes: Sheri
- Opening Devotional: Jack
 - prayer of unity, impact, wisdom, collaboration, inclusion, innovation, inspiration, integrity
- Approval of previous minutes
 - approved without adjustment
- A/V Upgrade update: Mark
 - upgrade completed! B&G had some questions about the installation, and will discuss how to address those with Sean
 - ways to protect the projector is a point of discussion, could be bumped into easily. Mark will be talking to Sean about ways to protect it.
 - some circuitry issues, waste of electricity, which B&G will also ask about.
 - Adam would like to be informed about Addis hall technology use at some point
- Music Team update: Mark
 - meeting last week
 - both upcoming Music at the Crossroads events confirmed; 10/28 and 12/8! advertising/media is being worked on
 - 10 different media outlets that are advertising our concerts now, thanks Ruth Griggs for your help!
 - we are trying to increase attendance for these concerts: flyers, announcements, social media, spire, etc.
 - music budget discussed at length, great ideas being worked on, updates to follow soon
 - grant being applied for from the Arts Council by Alan
 - future programs: some robust ideas coming up! stay tuned!
 - lighting: Adam looking into making the lighting more subdued/attractive as needed. one set of spotlights isn't working, and some of the lights are potentially able to move angles which would be helpful for different venues. ? who maintains the lighting, changes out lights, etc. we could add dimming and color-select lighting theoretically also.

- Finance Team update: Leon
 - meeting tomorrow
 - working on budget for 2024
 - new way fund current availability: inreach has 16,000 dollars, outreach has 80,000 the part of that is committed to cathedral in the night for next year and other allocations that are ongoing yearly commitments, so probably outreach has around 22,000 left, and ECM has 24,000 available
 - New way funds for this coming year: will be discussed tomorrow at the finance meeting
 - investment fund value: as of 8/31 was 7.7 million.
- ECM Nominations
 - start considering/actively thinking, email suggested people to group
 - hoping for at least 3 new people as 2 people stepping down from the team after the first of the year
 - Michael has some ideas and will email them around, and others are encouraged to do the same.
 - we can also reach out to the congregation as an invitation to talk with any of us if any interest in joining ECM, and also inviting to join other teams; in bulletin and in spire and part of the weekly email. Michael will write something up that is a general call for nominations and volunteers.
- Staff Compensation: Propose an increase in wages prior to the annual meeting
 - just want to keep on the radar so we have a plan in place
 - finance team will do a draft budget first; and then next ECM meeting we could discuss percentages based on Michael's recommendations; will depend somewhat on pledges which are a low currently
- Thriving Congregation Update: Sheri/Deb
 - October 28th event with our coach is upcoming to go over value survey compilations from those who completed them
 - Breaking bread groups doing well
 - Heather, Mark, and Jack from ECM also are hoping to join on 10/28
 - input/insights will hopefully help move congregation forward and contribute to the discussion of our values as a congregation
- Outreach update: Jack
 - looking for members!
 - agriculture farms and resilience are some issues being looked into for financial support
 - outreach isn't just about money!

- Rewriting By-Laws update
 - team is working diligently.
- Review of the Minister: Exec. Session
 - discussed next steps
 -
- Other Business?
 - interim education minister: discussed this vs designated term person, and decided that a designated term person would be better, and we can use the expertise and knowledge of Deb and Michael to help us develop the specific questions/concerns we would like to work on in the next 3-5 years. we may also consider having the position be $\frac{3}{4}$ time potentially. the interim search committee team is meeting with the UCC team on 10/31 and we'd like to have developed our specific concerns we'd like the designated faith formation leader to address prior to that meeting. Sheri and Michael will talk.
- Next Meetings date and time
 - November: Monday 11/13 7:30 pm
 - December: Wednesday 12/13 7:15 pm
- Task assignments for November meeting
 - Leon agenda
 - Mark facilitator
 - Sheri opening prayer
 - Heather minutes
 - Jack closing prayer
- Closing Prayer: Heather
 - prayer of thanks, blessing, continuation of learning



Getting to Know Howard Thurman

Howard Thurman may be one of the giants of the Civil Rights movement that you don't know. He never marched, never spoke at the gatherings on the Mall. But he inspired and supported King, Jackson, Lewis and many others. Thurman calls all of us to deepen our spiritual roots and find what really makes us come alive before we take to the streets.

Thurman was born in 1899 in Florida and credits his formerly enslaved Grandmother, who was a midwife and laundress, as being his inspiration and guide. She believed in the power of education and helped Howard build the skills and inner qualities he needed to transcend the degradations of racism that could have left him embittered. She helped Howard to see himself as a holy child of God.

During his early life, Thurman excelled in academics and was deeply committed to the racial struggles of his people. But a professor in Seminary urged him to use his presence and his intellect to connect others with God by using spiritual practices such as silence, solitude and contact with Nature. Thanks to involvement with Gandhi and Quaker thinker Rufus Jones, he developed a strong mystical connection with the Divine that both supported his struggle for civil rights and the establishment of the Church for the Fellowship of all Peoples in San Francisco in 1944. This church continues to be vital today as a church that speaks to all races, ethnicities and denominations.

So how do the tenants of Howard Thurman's life connect to me? First of all he calls me to commit to a spiritual practice that helps to link me directly to the Divine. For Thurman this resulted in a deep mystical sense of oneness with God. For me, this feels like an impossible standard. But I do believe that my spiritual practice can open me to hear God's voice in more subtle ways that help me build inner spiritual resilience and greater wholeness. Thurman also believed that we are all called to mentor others on our shared spiritual journeys. Again, Thurman mentored Martin Luther King, a standard too high for me. But he calls me to be open to the needs of others. To listen to others with more patience and depth. To be willing to share some of the pain and the joy that others experience as we journey thru life together.

Want to find out more about Howard Thurman? Check our local library for a CD—*The Living Wisdom of Howard Thurman* or check out his seminal book *Jesus and the Disinherited*. You can also hear him preach, deliver a lecture or engage in conversation on You Tube. Get to know Howard Thurman; it might change your life.

Chris Hjelt, who continues to learn so much from Deb Moore's leadership and from the other members of our book group.

A NEW GROUP IS COMING TO
NORTHAMPTON PARENTS CENTER!

EARLY BIRD INFANT GROUP

THURSDAYS AT 8:30AM

JOIN NPC PROGRAM ASSISTANT
LINDSEY KING FOR A FREE WEEKLY
DROP-IN GROUP FOR INFANTS AND
THEIR CAREGIVERS!

EMAIL QUESTIONS TO
LINDSEYNPCASSISTANT@GMAIL.COM



Announcements
from the
Parent's Center

Hope you can
make it!

Northampton Parents Center Weekly Schedule

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

Monday
**INDOORS
@ NPC**

Tuesday
**OUTDOORS @ THE
HAMPSHIRE
REGIONAL YMCA
PLAYGROUND**

Tuesdays will be
indoors if the
weather is rainy!

Wednesday
**INDOORS
@ NPC**

Thursday
**INDOORS
@ NPC**

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

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:

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

Church School

Here is what we will be exploring in September:

November 5 - Communion Sunday ~ Intergenerational Worship

November 12 - Who is Jesus?

November 19 - What is Baptism?

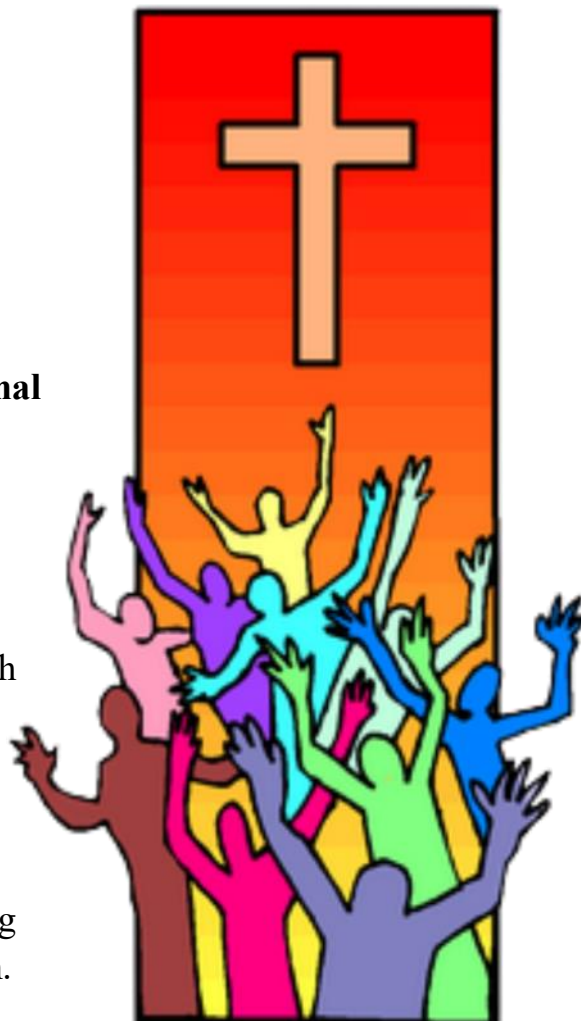
November 26 - What is Communion?

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 November 5th 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 2:00 – 3:00 p.m in the Edwards Room from . 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.



NOVEMBER BIRTHDAYS

Grace Lively	Claire Cheung
Elizabeth Young	Jody Kinner
Krisinda S. Semb	William Roeder
Elias Almeida	Lindsey Ann Wells
Jack Mattison-Gulotta	Susan Anderson
Heidi Kinner	Kai Hutchison
Susan Banas	Paul C. Gustavson
Samuel A. Grant	Louise P. Montague
	Mabel Cheung

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

November 2023

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

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
			1 9:30 NPC 12 Bible Study 6 TGT Rehearsal	2 8:30 IG NPC 9:30 NPC 7 Choir 7 B&G	3 11:30 MANNA	4 11:30 MANNA
5 10 Worship 1 Young Adults 3 NPC	6 9:30 NPC 6 RVS	7 Gamblers Anon.	8 9:30 NPC 12 Bible Study 5:30 FoH 7 Music	9 8:30 IG NPC 9:30 NPC 7 Choir	10 11:30 MANNA 7 Truth School	11 11:30 MANNA
12 10 Worship 11:30 Youth Group 11:30 ONA	13 9:30 NPC 7 ECM	14 2 Prayer Shawl 4 Book Reading 7 Gamblers Anon.	15 9:30 NPC 12 Bible Study 5 Truth School Mtg.	16 8:30 IG NPC 9:30 NPC 4 Care & Visitation 7 Choir	17 11:30 MANNA	18 11:30 MANNA
19 10 Worship	20 9:30 NPC	21 7 Gamblers Anon.	22 9:30 NPC 12 Bible Study	23 8:30 IG NPC 9:30 NPC 7 Choir	24 11:30 MANNA 7:30 PVC	25 11:30 MANNA
26 10 Worship	27 9:30 NPC	28 2 Prayer Shawl 6:30 FF COP 7 Gamblers Anon.	29 9:30 NPC 12 Bible Study	30 8:30 IG NPC 9:30 NPC 7 Choir		