

# THE SPIRE

EDWARDS CHURCH *of* NORTHAMPTON  
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

**Vol. 34 No. 1**

**January 2024**

## **From the Senior Minister**

*There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under the heavens ....*

*Ecclesiastes 3:1*

Dear Edwards Church Community,

Happy New Year! As a community we are in transition. Of course, everything that lives is always adapting to keep thriving amidst changing circumstances. The transition underway for Edwards Church may involve more than simply hiring a new person into an established role, which we first called Minister of Education and then Minister of Faith Formation. Further change may require that we slow down our thinking and attend to our faith community, its identity and values, and how it engages with the world at its doorstep and beyond.

This week Rev. Marguerite Sheehan begins her service as Bridge Associate Minister, a deliberately temporary “bridge” role that she describes later in this Spire. Since it was clear she would become our bridge associate minister, Marguerite has been in close communication with Deb Moore to provide for the smoothest possible hand off. Her job at Edwards is three-quarters of full-time, so already there is one change from which we will learn. Another is that Marguerite, an experienced preacher, will preach at least once per month, and I will sometimes be with the children when they leave the sanctuary.



During the four to six months Marguerite will be with us, the Search Team will gather information, consider how the second minister position supports fulfilling our mission and vision as a church, and then prepare a profile to describe the role to possible candidates. We expect that will be a profile for a Designated Term Associate Pastor. Calling the role an Associate Pastor would be slightly different – but not as much as you might think – from our recent past. Deb Moore was called to Edwards because of her specialization in faith formation, then over time functioned as an associate pastor with responsibility for faith formation. But then, as one member of the Search Team quipped, “Isn’t faith formation every minister’s responsibility?” to which I could only reply, “Yes, and every church member is a minister of the church!”

When any church does the work required to say farewell to one long-serving minister and prepares to search for another, it needs to check its assumptions. That process revealed some surprises during the search for a new Director of Music, which brought us Adam Simon. So much has changed since the role we are now reconsidering was created that we need a good process to follow. We will follow the search and call process used by the United Church of Christ, which provides all UCC churches with a strong level of assurance. To be in that system, every potential candidate must be an authorized minister in good standing and have a current background check. The system also allows churches to access a national talent pool.

Soon after Deb announced her retirement, I shared with the ECM a number of resources about the search and call process. Essentially, they describe the choices available to us, the first of which is to choose between engaging an Interim Minister or a Designated Term (DT) Minister (which typically entails a short term Bridge Minister while we prepare to search for a DT). It is all laid out on the SNEUCC conference website ( <https://www.sneucc.org/the-search-and-call-journey> ). On request, by sending the most relevant items I can spare anyone who wants to learn more a lot of unnecessary reading.

We decided to hire a Bridge Minister and then call a DT to take advantage of the features of DT ministry. It provides an opportunity for church leaders, including me, to focus with the DT on specific questions or developmental challenges during the designated term, and it gives the DT and the church an option to convert the relationship to a permanent one at the end of the designated term.

A traditional interim minister would usually be hired by the ECM and serve for 1.5 to 2 years while we search for a permanent second minister. An interim minister is not allowed to become a permanent minister at the church. DT ministers are called by the whole church for a fixed term between 3 to 5 years (we plan for 3), rather than hired by the ECM. At the end of the term, if both the church and the DT want to make the relationship permanent, they can. Those differences are seen by potential candidates as making DT ministry sufficiently more attractive to increase the talent pool in a meaningful way.

Ultimately, we need a staff well suited to help our church fulfill the mission and vision that we are called to pursue. Over sixteen years ago, the congregation determined that it needed or at least deeply desired a seminary trained person on staff with specialized knowledge about faith formation. Experience also indicates that we are not a community whose culture supports moving quickly. That could change, but making the change constructively will require its own time.

Granting ourselves the opportunity to call a Designated Term Associate Minister has seemed fitting to the ECM and Search Team. I look forward to supporting that effort as we go forward through the search process and the coming year.

In faith, with hope, for love,

*Michael*

## From the Bridge Associate Minister

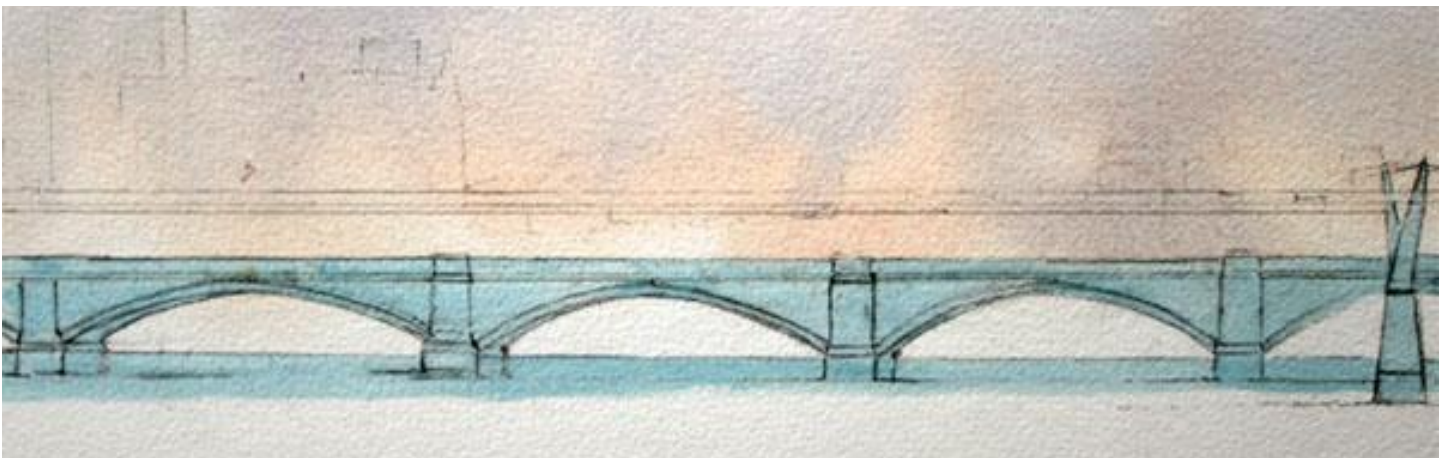


Happy New Year Edwards Church! I am so glad to be able to introduce myself as your new Bridge Associate Minister! I look forward to meeting each of you during the 4-6 months that I will be serving your church here in Northampton. I live just over the river in Amherst with my wife Dorrie and our active 2.5 year old standard poodle Penny. We are “back in the valley” after a 10 year sojourn in Shelburne Falls, where I served as the minister of Trinity Church.

A “bridge” is a particular kind of ministry; one that “spans” this next part of your church history. One side of the bridge being your recent past with Deb Moore as your Minister of Faith Formation and the other side of the bridge being your yet to be discovered and called new Associate Pastor. A Bridge Ministry is intended to provide and nurture a firm and solid passage, a “non-anxious presence” in times of transition, and a joyful and perhaps even playful experiment in Walking in the Way of Jesus who spans the generations and holds us firmly in love and care.

I love that I am coming to be with you now, in this season of Epiphany, when Christians continue to ponder about how the living presence of Jesus speaks to each of us, to our churches and the suffering and beautiful world. I look forward to worshipping together into the season of Lent and on into the Easter season! I will do my best to get to know you, your church traditions, hopes and visions. Speaking of hope, I fervently hope that you will dust off your name tags and wear them. There is just one of me to get to know and many of you!

Grace and Peace, Reverend Marguerite Sheehan (Please feel free to call me Marguerite!)

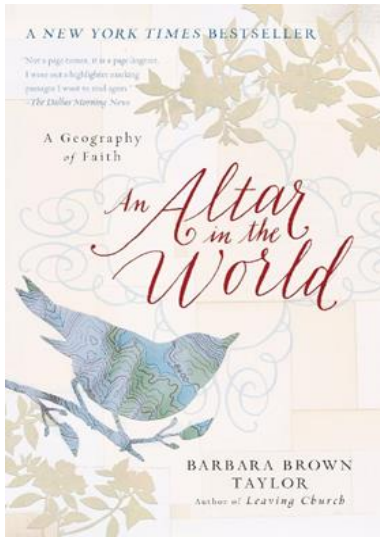


## Annual Meeting - January 28

The Annual Meeting of the Church will be scheduled for Sunday, January 28, 2024, immediately after worship. For the first time since 2020, we will meet in Addis Hal and there will be a light lunch served. A formal notice of meeting will follow.

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### A Lenten Book Study!



It is hard to believe that we are coming up close to Lent! Ash Wednesday is on Valentine's Day this year and then we are “off and running” for our Lenten activities. I would love to hold a book study on Barbara Brown Taylor’s book “An Altar in the World: A Geography of Faith.” A book review has this to say about it. “With the honesty of Elizabeth Gilbert (Eat, Pray, Love) and the spiritual depth of Anne Lamott (Grace, Eventually), Taylor shares how she learned to find God beyond the church walls by embracing the sacred as a natural part of everyday life. In An Altar in the World, Taylor shows us how to discover altars everywhere we go and in nearly everything we do as we learn to live with purpose, pay attention, slow down, and revere the world we live in.” What a great Lenten focus!

So, here is the book. Would you like to join me in this reading/reflecting? Is lunchtime best, or an evening? In person would be lovely but Zoom is also a possibility. Reach out and give me your suggestions for a good time/day of the week and when we have numbers of folks who want to join us we can order the books from a local bookstore. You can reach me at the church or by email. [ffminister@edwardschurchnorthampton.org](mailto:ffminister@edwardschurchnorthampton.org)

In peace and grace, Marguerite

# Bylaws Update

News from your “Updating the Bylaws” Team

Members: Janet Tucker, Jeff Prince & Laura Frogameni

We have been working since August 2023 on a review of the 2015 Bylaws. You may recall that just before the pandemic we voted to shift to a new Circle Ministry organizational restructure from the old hierarchical top-down committee structure. We voted to suspend the Church Bylaws and live into the new model before making any changes to the written document.

Just six weeks after we did that the pandemic shutdowns began and right away the new Teams model proved prescient. A Virtual Church Tech Team was quickly formed then, after that an Ad Hoc Reopening Team. Those are just two examples of Circle Ministry Teams that formed to support a particular need and have dissolved once the need was met. There are other groups - like the Building and Grounds Team - that have steady ongoing work.

It's time now to make the changes to our Church Bylaws that will reflect how our church now functions. There will be a proposal in the Annual Meeting booklet that we've prepared that does a couple of key things:

Update our Terms & Install the Changes to the Organizational Structure: For example, we used to have a Council made up of a chair from each committee. We now have shifted to electing folks to serve directly on the Elected Core Ministry (ECM).

Eliminate Anything that No Longer Exists: There are certain funds and or positions that have dissolved or are not needed at this time. We need to take those “off the books”.

Those are just a few examples of the changes you will have an opportunity to review prior to the Annual Meeting. We'll provide a fuller accounting of our proposed edits as well as the actual 2015 Bylaws with tracked changes. Keep an eye out for your Annual Meeting booklet and please feel welcome to talk with us too!

-Janet Tucker, Jeff Prince, & Laura Frogameni





Photo credit: Beth Henneman

### ***Thank you Cathedral in the Night Ministry Team!***

Much like the old U.S. Post Office motto, the Cathedral in the Night\* Team delivers! Neither snow nor rain nor heat nor gloom of night stays these sandwich, cookie, dessert, salad, lasagna and taco salad making volunteers from the swift completion, delivery and serving of their delicious food and warm fellowship!

In 2023, our twelfth year of serving as worship partners with Cathedral in the Night, we gathered six times with our Cathedral friends to share worship, fellowship, and break bread together.

Those who serve on this team can do so whether they know how to cook or not, prefer working on their own or with others, or have just an hour or the better part of an entire day to give of their time and talents. Some volunteers participate once or twice a year and many help out every time we have a partnership “date” with our Cathedral friends on the first Sundays of February, April, June, August, October and December. New volunteers are always welcome! Please contact one of the co-chairs listed below if you’d like to learn more!

**Thank you to the Cathedral in the Night Ministry Team volunteers listed below who opened themselves to giving and receiving God’s word through this ministry in 2023!**

Sue Anderson  
Carla Bee & Danny Shanahan  
Lucie Bodnar & Gregg Mancari  
Sheri & Floyd Cheung  
Emmy Clausing  
Sandi Coyne & Gaston Gilbert  
David Dickinson & Claudia Lyons  
Carolyn Dion  
Susan & Leon Drzewianowski  
Nancy Flickinger  
Linda Fortune  
Jim Green  
Mariana Haughey  
Beth Henneman  
Chris Hjelt  
Dianne Hobbs  
Lynda Kamik  
Kathy Korza

Shauneen Kroll  
Marisa Brown Ludwig & Peter Ludwig  
Mattison-Gulotta family  
Michael McSherry  
Deb Moore  
Prince-Firmin family  
Sandra Rossi  
Ella Stocker  
Stokes-Buckles family  
Susan & Brian Swift  
Janie & Karin Thurber  
Janet Tucker  
Hazel & Marc Waller  
Carla Wirzburger  
Alice Xing  
Grace Del Vecchio & Debbie Davis

Our team doesn't work alone! We thankfully acknowledge the support provided by two other Edwards Ministry Teams. Once again this year, the ***Music Ministry Team***, donated offerings collected during some of their *Music at the Crossroads* performances to Cathedral's operational budget. And without the ***Outreach Ministry Team*** our partnership with Cathedral just wouldn't be possible. They annually donate funds from their grant budget directly to the Cathedral in the Night organization (which is a 501©3 non-profit) to assist with their operational expenses. This year, the Outreach Team continued its generous "extra" grant to the Cathedral in the Night organization so they could increase their ministry staff hours and expand support services for those in our community who are unhoused and/or food insecure. The Outreach Team also provides our own Edwards Church Cathedral in the Night Team with funding to purchase the food and supplies to create 100 meals for each of our six annual partnership dates.

With thanks for all who participate in this ministry,  
Debbie Davis & Grace Del Vecchio, Co-Coordiators, Cathedral in the Night Ministry Team

*\*Cathedral in the Night is an outdoor Christian community that creates a safe place for all people: the homeless, the housed, the church-less, the churchd to explore, question and live out their spiritual beliefs and gather for a meal on the front steps of First Churches Northampton every Sunday evening year-round. Learn more at [www.cathedralinthenight.org](http://www.cathedralinthenight.org)*

## Church School

Every Sunday in January we will explore the themes of Epiphany, the revelation of God's presence in surprising ways such as stars and the Christ child, or the voice of God speaking to different people in the Bible:

**January 7** – Epiphany begins – Communion Sunday and Intergenerational worship

**January 14** – MLK Sunday – Rev. Sheehan preaching and Rev. McSherry with the Church School, both exploring how God speaks to young Samuel

**January 21** – Lay leaders with the Church School

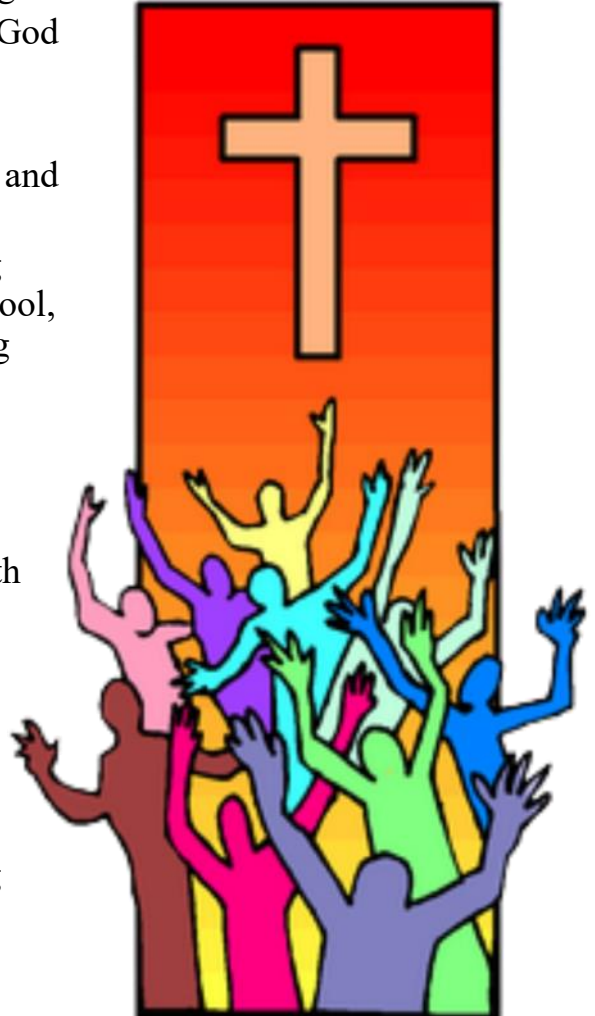
**January 28** – Marguerite with the Church School

Those interested in helping nurture our kids in their faith contact Marguerite Sheehan 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 January 7th 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 3:00 - 4:00 p.m in the Edwards Room from . If you would like to join us, please email Pam Lamlein at [pam@lamlein.com](mailto:pam@lamlein.com).

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.





## JANUARY BIRTHDAYS

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

**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. Marguerite and Michael 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	<a href="mailto:minister@edwardschurchnorthampton.org">minister@edwardschurchnorthampton.org</a>	cell: 413-531-9729
Marguerite	<a href="mailto:ffminister@edwardschurchnorthampton.org">ffminister@edwardschurchnorthampton.org</a>	cell: 413-687-1418

# January 2024

NPC = Northampton Parent's Center  
 RVS = River Valley Sangha  
 FoH = Friends of the Homeless  
 B&G = Building & Grounds

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
31 10 Worship 11:30 Youth Group	1 6 RVS	2 9 B&G 7 Gamblers Anon.	3 12 Bible Study	4 1 FoH 7 Choir	5 11:30 MANNA	6 11:30 MANNA
7 10 Worship 1 Young Adults	8 9:30 NPC	9 9:30 NPC 3 Prayer Shawl 7 Music 7 Gamblers Anon.	10 9:30 NPC 12 Bible Study 7:15 ECM	11 8:30 IG NPC 9:30 NPC 6:30 AA 7 Choir	12	13 11:30 MANNA
14 10 Worship 11:30 Youth Group	15 9:30 NPC	16 9:30 NPC 7 Gamblers Anon.	17 9:30 NPC 12 Bible Study	18 8:30 IG NPC 9:30 NPC 4 Care & Visita- tion 6:30 AA 7 Choir	19 11:30 MANNA	20 11:30 MANNA
21 10 Worship 11:30 ONA	22 9:30 NPC	23 9:30 NPC 3 Prayer Shawl 6:30 FF COP 7 Gamblers Anon.	24 9:30 NPC 12 Bible Study	25 8:30 IG NPC 9:30 NPC 6:30 AA 7 Choir	26 11:30 MANNA	27 11:30 MANNA
28 10 Worship 11 Annual Mtg. 4 NPC	29 9:30 NPC	30 9:30 NPC 7 Gamblers Anon.	31 9:30 NPC 12 Bible Study	1	2	3