



THE SPIRE

EDWARDS CHURCH *of* NORTHAMPTON
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

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March 2024

From the Senior Minister

Dear Edwards Church Community,

Truly I tell you, unless a grain of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains by itself. But if it dies, it produces much fruit. - John 12:24

Jesus spoke these words to make abundantly clear that self-sacrifice, a deeper level of self-awareness and self-control than we often think of, is an unavoidable part of following him. It is not his whole message, but it is intrinsic that to follow him will at times require letting go of our self-interest, our agenda, and our need for control. It will require trusting a power greater than ourselves, and it is a practice that takes a life time to master.

The more success we have experienced in life, the harder this can become, because once we have tasted any measure of success, conventional signs of that success tend to convince us of our own merit. But as spiritual beings, when we consider where to place our ultimate trust, where to look for a standard of “success,” we should look to values deeper and more durable than the normal social standards like recognition, power, or material success. When asked how to live most “successfully,” Jesus answered with the Greatest Command-

ment, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself.” Luke 10:25-28



And yet, Jesus did not profess to have all the answers. When James and John, two of his closest followers, asked to be recognized for their merit and to have positions of honor in heaven, his response was two-fold. First, he said that as his followers they would need to face the same rejection and accept the same self-sacrifice as he did. So much for recognition in one’s lifetime! Second, he said it was not up to him, but to the one he served, to determine who would have any recognition in the long run. Mark 10:35-45.

Part of preparing the way for resurrection – not just on Easter, but in the seeding, cultivating, and sprouting of new life within our own lives as we live them – is about doing good works, about giving to others and caring for others. This is why Lenten traditions include giving alms and increased attention to the needs of others. The harder part is about taming ourselves, our appetites for what we consume, for control over others or recognition by others.

Steve Garnaas-Holmes put it this way in a daily meditation on his website <https://unfoldinglight.net/>:

Prayer for Presence

Loving One,
free me from my self-enclosure,
to trust I am fully loved and heard,
so I can love and hear others.
Help me to be fully present, to be aware of myself,
my reactions, my wounds and fears and filters,
and to mindfully, lightly, hold them aside,
so I can be fully present for others,
truly listening, opening a space in me
for them to be safe, to be true, to be free.
May I be a spacious and welcoming presence,
to offer people the precious gift of being heard,
being seen, being witnessed.

If we all gave each other a little more of that presence, there would be new life popping up all over the place. I know that many of you are doing this. And I celebrate the new life I see growing in this community as a result.

In faith, with hope, for love,

Michael

From the Bridge Associate Minister

Dear Faithful Friends,

I am hoping that by the time that you get this letter that springy sounds will be in air. Did you know that the season of Lent is related to the word “springtime?” As the book that we are using for Sunday Friends (Twas the Season of Lent) says “Look outside your window. Maybe it doesn’t look like spring yet. Perhaps the ground is covered with a white blanket of snow; the skies above might be gray, and the trees may be bare. That’s because springtime is a waiting time. The bulbs planted deep in the dark soil will be waking up soon. The buds on the trees are quietly waiting to burst into bloom. We know that all the earth is getting ready to grow and to change. Lent is a waiting time too. For forty days we wait for Easter to come. And as we wait, we get ready...”

As a congregation of all ages, we are getting ready for spring, for Easter, and for the new designated associate minister to emerge and be chosen. We are getting ready for whatever is around the corner even while we do not know what is getting ready for us!

One way that we get ready is practicing ways of stilling our restless or anxious minds and hearts, so we are tuned to listen to what God has to say to us. And so, surprise, surprise, this Lent we are focusing some of our waiting time on practicing listening for sounds and sights of Spirit.

We have already begun practicing through Lent. Some of us attended the St John’s Church Taizé service last month. Some of us attended our own church’s Ash Wednesday service. And some of us, by the time you get this, will have gathered to listen to the heart of the book *An Altar in the World*. Others will have walked the labyrinth together or sat with our own prayer shawl and quilt teams to hear how they, and maybe we, use our hands to still our restless minds and activate our caring hearts.

All this is a bit like looking out the window of our homes and hearts and the big Edwards Church window to see what is hard to see; the still mostly hidden seed of faith that is growing in the dark and slowly reaching the almost warming earth. The heart of our church – faithful friending the world - one person, one small connection, one hand reaching to another.

Sooner than we think, and maybe sooner than we are ready, Easter will arrive and we will greet the Risen Christ but not before we go through the suffering that arises when we do practice listening to Spirit because as we know, Spirit wants to help us lean into the world that we inhabit. The world that is both beautiful and terrible and that is the place that we call home.

Thank you, faithful friends, for practicing waiting, trusting and reaching out as a church. I am glad to be here in this Lenten and soon Eastertide seasons. What a joy! Marguerite

ECM Meeting Minutes

January 10, 2024

7:15-8:45 PM

- Facilitator: Jack
- Minutes: Heather
- Opening Devotional: Michael
- Welcome Sandi and Jeff!
 - attendees: Michael, Heather, Jack, Mark, Sandi, Adam
 - absent: Jeff, Marguerite
 - We thank Marguerite for her monthly reports! They are helpful!
 - Welcome, welcome to Sandi and Jeff!!
 - We are looking for more ECM members, or they can join Outreach, or any other church team :-)
- Approval of previous minutes: All
 - Approved
- Music Team update: Mark/Adam
 - Fliers are in the church for the next Music at the Crossroads on March 1, Kimaya Diggs Duo performance at 7:30 pm, suggested donation \$10-30 to Cancer Connection; media pieces are out on websites; Kyla will handle posting media to the church's FB page
 - March 8 concert with Adam Simon singing. It is a ticketed concert in the sanctuary.
 - May 21 may be a spring Music at the Crossroads concert
 - Alan Schneider would like the church to consider a benefit concert for Jane Hanson on June 22 or 23. He will be reaching out to Michael.
 - Adam feels the current budget is adequate for what he and the Team would like to accomplish this year. There is also a special discretionary music fund should they need additional support.
 - Lighting in the sanctuary: An estimate is being generated so the lights can be dimmed in different areas of the sanctuary and adjusted without making noise. The Building and grounds Team is helping with this.
- Finance Team update: Michael
 - Team will meet this coming Thursday, Feb 22. No update this month.
- Outreach update: Michael/Jack
 - Summary Rob presented at Annual meeting is current. They will be proceeding with regular annual grants.
 - Outreach may be inviting others to talk with them about how to be more creative as they move through the year.
- Bridge Associate Minister: Marguerite
 - Reports related to Marguerite's first two months have been well received and appreciated

- Annual Meeting update: Michael, others
 - Generally the minutes look good with a few typos corrected. ECM may make additional comments in the next few days before minutes are published
 - People generally felt the meeting went well
 - A/V system worked well and we learned two things: 1) we need to be thoughtful about only speaking one at a time. If multiple people speak at once the audio going to those attending via video becomes muddy. 2) we need to work on making sure that we can use a mic in the room and still have those attending via video hear the audio
- By-laws Team update (emailed by Jeff)
- Awareness of our Surrounding Environment while at Church
 - We need to talk about, as a church, what it means to be both welcoming and secure at church.
 - We likely need more regular training of ushers, annually or twice a year. Training may include outside security professionals
 - ECM would like to see ushers be uniform in how they are performing their duties and ECM members will talk with Marc Waller so he can work with the Usher Team
- Other Business
 - Search team for Designated Term Minister is meeting Feb 21 to craft position description and a description of the church. We are anticipating posting the position around Easter and making a decision about a person in June.
 - Item to consider for a future agenda: Reviewing various photos that are hanging in the church
- Next Meeting Date: March 13 or 20 at 7:15pm, Agenda: Sandi, Facilitator: Jack, Opening Devotional: Mark, Minutes: Heather, and Closing Prayer: Jeff
- Closing Prayer: Michael

Choir member Victoria penned this beautiful poem during the service on February 11th.

Passion and Purpose
 Presence of Peace
 Help Us to Recognize
 And to Release
 When All that is Holding Us Onto the Truth
 Is All that Reminds Us of Our Hopeful Youth
 Blessings and Beauty
 Abundance of Being
 Help Us to Realize
 The Wisdom to Glean
 When All that is Given to the Glory of Love
 Is All that is Shining From Heaven Above

- Victoria Camille Hubbs

Holy Week Schedule

Palm Sunday – 3/24 at 9:45 AM - We gather with folks from First Churches and St. John's Episcopal across the street in Pulaski Park for a brief liturgy of palms and, while singing, process at the end back to our churches. Come relive with Jesus and all those in the crowds his entrance into Jerusalem, when he was greeted with great fanfare. Regular worship at 10.

Maundy Thursday – 3/28 at 7 PM – Adam, Marguerite and Michael are crafting a unique worship experience of music, texts and a quiet communion. Adam, his wife Sophie Michaux, and her ensemble Tiny Glass Tavern will provide music. Reception to follow in the Edwards Room.

Good Friday – 3/29 at 7:00 PM - We witness through a service of Tenebrae (Latin for shadows) the fading of the light as Jesus is arrested, tortured, and crucified. Over the course of the service we sing, read scripture telling the story, and extinguish candles as we go.

Easter Sunday – 3/31 at 9:55 AM – Christ is Risen, Indeed! Celebrate the resurrection as it happened then and happens all around us and even within us!

“Sunday Friends Time” from your Bridge Minister

Thank you everyone for joining in on “birthing” the Sunday Friends Time – the reincarnation of Sunday School with the special focus on friending children and youth with adults in the church.

During March we will be using the book *Twas the Season of Lent* as our foundation for the Message for All Ages every Sunday and for our Sunday Friends Time. It is a wonderful book written by Glenys Nelist and is illustrated by Elana Selivanova. The book uses stories and prayers, pictures and poems to companion all ages through Lent and on to Easter.

This Lent I created Lent in a Bag as take-home bags for families so that they can find child/youth friendly ways of talking about this season while keeping that home and church connection strong. I look forward to ways of celebrating Palm Sunday and soon, Easter as well. Ideas are welcome!

Please do consider being the “2nd adult” in Sunday Friends Time. On the one Sunday a month that I am not at church (in March that will be March 17) we need someone to be the “1st adult” as well. Fear not, there will be curricula waiting for you if you can help. Remember, the most important thing about Sunday Friends Time is the friending that happens. Our goal is to have children and youth feel solidly connected with adults at church and this is one way of “bridging the gap” between ages. And besides, it is fun to spend time together!

Questions? Concerns? Contact Marguerite at ffminister@edwardschurchnorthampton.org or on her cell phone 413-687-1418 or search her out at church!

Chancelcape Flowers

You may have noticed flowers on the communion (chancel) table Sunday (February 4th).

The Chancelcape Team thought it might be nice to have one Sunday, specifically the first Sunday of each month, to have flowers on the Chancel Table. We are hoping this will give folks from our church community the opportunity to dedicate a bouquet, bouquets, or plant in memory or in honor of someone and have it placed on the table on that day.

If you would like to have flowers or a plant placed on the table the first Sunday some month please contact Deb Dietrich and we can chat about the details of ordering and what you would like to have as a message in the Sunday bulletin.

We hope you all will enjoy renewing this old tradition and bring some joy and beauty to the sanctuary.

You can reach me by phone 413-586-0655 or email deb1d@comcast.net or reach out to someone on the team who will let me know.

Thanks for considering this opportunity.

Deb Dietrich for the Chancelcape Team

The Team

Sandra Rossi, Janet Tucker, Trudy Bertram, Carla Wurzburger, Nancy Flickinger, Debbie Davis, Grace DelVecchio and Chris Hjelt

Easter Flowers

On Easter Sunday we would once again like to decorate the Chancel and Sanctuary with Spring plants. If you would like to donate a spring plant for that purpose, please fill out the Easter Flower Form or call the office to place your request with Kyla.

At the same time you may make a dedication for the plant to be printed in the Easter bulletin.

Easter flower prices:

Lilies (\$15.00) Daffodils (\$14.50) Tulips (\$13.50) Hyacinths (\$13.50)

Thanks for helping us bring new life and the wonders of Spring into the Sanctuary as we celebrate Easter.

Deb Dietrich for the Chancelcape Team

TIME TO ORDER EASTER FLOWERS

Lilies and other Easter flowers will decorate our chancel on Easter Sunday, March 31. If you wish to place an order, please fill out the form below and return it with your payment to the church office by **Monday, March 11, 2024.**

Make checks payable to Edwards Church and write "Easter flowers" on the memo line.



Edwards Church
297 Main Street
Northampton, MA 01060



Ordered by: _____ Phone: _____

Number of lilies (\$15.00): ____ Number of daffodils (\$14.50): ____ Total cost: _____

Number of tulips (\$13.50): ____ Number of hyacinths (\$13.50): ____ Total cost : _____

Please include payment with your order

In Memory Of:

OR

In Honor Of:

Given by (if different from "ordered by" name): _____

Please check one:

____ I will remove the plant(s) after worship on Easter Sunday.

____ Please deliver plant(s) to an "at home" member or friend.

From your Open and Affirming Ministry Team, What Is TDOV?

March 31st, International Transgender Day of Visibility, TDOV, was first celebrated in 2010 in response to the overwhelming number of media stories about violence directed at transgender people. Although society in general has become more accepting of trans people, with their increased visibility, there has been a growing backlash against them. In 2023 over 400 anti-LGBTQ bills were filed in the US, most of them anti-trans though they all impact the larger LGBTQ community. This is similar to the backlash against gays and lesbians as they came out and became more politically active and visible in the 80s during the AIDS crisis and 90s as they sought legal protections for their personal lives, jobs, housing, families— all rights to exist without hiding.

The intent of TDOV is to celebrate the lives and contributions of transgender people while drawing attention to the discrimination, violence, and poverty some face. It's an attempt to counter the negative media, misrepresentation, and stereotypes that have shaped the public's views and how people react to and treat trans people. Trans advocate, Rachel Crandall's hope in creating TDOV in 2010, was that it could be "a day where people could re-focus on celebrating the lives of transgender people, empowering them to live authentically, while still acknowledging that due to discrimination, not every trans person can or wants to be visible".

For more information about TDOV or transgender people:

<https://glaad.org/tdov/> source for the information above

<https://time.com/130734/transgender-celebrities-actors-athletes-in-america/> 25

Transgender People Who Influenced American Culture

<https://www.disclosurethemovie.com/about> *Disclosure*, a Netflix documentary about American media's depiction of the lives and experiences of transgender people with great footage from as early as 1914 to as recent as 2018. May now be available to stream from other sources. Excellent for obtaining perspective on how media has both created a false cultural bias as well as it's potential to elevate trans voices.



MARCH BIRTHDAYS

Courtney Aquadro, Michele Carroll, Martha McCullagh,
Taylor Cook, Lynda Erickson, Ruth Griggs, Alfred Griggs,
Elizabeth Henneman, Paula Mattison, Michael McSherry,
Eugene Sielski, James Stokes-Buckles, Gwenn Swift, Matthew
Buckley Wells

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. 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	minister@edwardschurchnorthampton.org	cell: 413-531-9729
Marguerite	ffminister@edwardschurchnorthampton.org	cell: 413-687-1418

March 2024

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

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
3 10 Worship 1 Young Adults 3 NPC First Aid	4 9:30 NPC 6 FF Search 6 RVS 7 VJV	5 9:30 NPC 6:30 Book Group 7 B&G 7 Gamblers Anon.	6 9:30 NPC 12 Bible Study 7 Pray As You Go	7 8:30 Infant NPC 9:30 NPC 6:30 AA 7 Choir	8 11:30 MANNA 7:30 M@C	9 11:30 MANNA
10 10 Worship 11 Youth Group	11 9:30 NPC 7 VJV	12 9:30 NPC 3 Prayer Shawl 6:30 Book Group 7 Gamblers Anon.	13 9:30 NPC 12 Bible Study 5:30 FoH 7 Centering Prayer	14 8:30 Infant NPC 9:30 NPC 4 Care & Visitation 6:30 AA 7 Choir 7 Finance	15 11:30 MANNA	16 11:30 MANNA
17 10 Worship	18 9:30 NPC 7 VJV	19 9:30 NPC 6:30 Book Group 7 Gamblers Anon.	20 9:30 NPC 12 Bible Study 7 Praying with Song	21 8:30 Infant NPC 9:30 NPC 6:30 AA 7 Choir	22 11:30 MANNA	23 11:30 MANNA
24 9:55 Palms in Pulaski Park 10 Palm Sunday Service 4 NPC Family Fun	25 9:30 NPC 7 VJV	26 9:30 NPC 3 Prayer Shawl 6:30 Book Group 7 Gamblers Anon.	27 9:30 NPC 12 Bible Study	28 8:30 Infant NPC 9:30 NPC 6:30 AA 7 Maundy Thursday Service	29 11:30 MANNA 7 Tenebrae / Good Friday Service	30 11:30 MANNA
31 10 Easter Sunday 10 Worship						