



THE SPIRE

EDWARDS CHURCH *of* NORTHAMPTON
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

Vol. 34 No. 7

October 2024

From the Senior Minister

Dear Edwards Church Community,

Further into this edition of the Spire is an item titled “Should we or shouldn’t we?” It deals with the pictures of former pastors of this church hanging in the sloped hallway and the deep cleaning of storage space accomplished this summer. Sandra Rossi, Deb Dietrich, Janet Tucker and, joining them for the Edwards Room kitchenette, Grace del Vecchio and Debbie Davis, have done fantastic work decluttering and reorganizing precious storage space.



We also have another Spire item about possibly donating the Coolidge family pew to the presidential museum at Forbes Library. These two matters came up at the same time quite by coincidence, but their coming up now says something to me about institutional housekeeping and my individual retirement.

Housekeeping – Inertia is a force in organizational behavior: in churches, businesses, and non-profits. We humans will keep doing something long after we forget why we started doing it. As part of the celebration of the 150th anniversary of our founding, in 1983 this church put up a display of photographs of former pastors and then left it up for 40 years due more to inertia than choice. I am happy to be the pastor in place when the congregation decides to clear the way for the future.

Offering the Coolidge family pew to the museum housed at Forbes can also be thought of as an opportunity to redirect energy from preservation of the past to discerning your future as a spiritual community. Just as local gardeners have recently been clearing away the leftover, dried out material from a season of growth now ended, making way for the next cycle of new life, we can choose to treat this housekeeping as making ourselves (I mean *yourselves*) ready to focus on preparing for the future.

My Retirement - There are some things we started, as a partnership of pastor and church, and did not get to finish as fully as we might. My decision to retire stem in part from a persistent realization that I no longer have the reserves of energy in the late afternoon that I did five years ago. I do believe that some other “retirement age” person could effectively lead a church. But I can also honestly say that *this* 69 year-old man has realized he can no longer do the job in the way he feels is needed. A fresh pastoral leader with a fresh perspective will help a lot.

The relationship between pastors and congregations can become very personal. Alice, an older, life-long member of my first church in Boston, knew I was enrolled for training as an interim minister when I was preparing to leave that church. “I just can’t see you as an interim,” she said. “You get too attached to people.” I do get attached, as any caring human would. I also appreciate the value of objective assessments of what might be holding a local church back from their full potential, and that sort of objectivity gets harder to achieve or share the longer one is “part of the tribe.”

My sense of vocation – my calling and my sense of the church’s – tells me this church will be better off in the long run by taking the time now, in the long arc of its life, to do the work a church does best with an interim. I think I know what the challenges are. All of us have an idea about that. But none of us can see them at arm’s length. A good interim will help you do that. Then you will discern where to focus your energy and what sort of pastor will best help you grow toward the 200th anniversary in 2033.

I understand the profile for the Interim minister search has been approved and will be posted soon to the UCC national website. Meanwhile, as the ECM conducts the search, I will keep doing my best as your pastor and senior minister.

In faith, with hope, for love,

Michael

Should We or Shouldn’t We? Keep where it is? No? Store it? Ok, where?

These were all questions used when cleaning out storage spaces at church this past summer. And what about those photos of previous ministers in the foyer hall? They were put up in 1983 when we were celebrating the 150th anniversary of our Edwards Church founding. The display was not intended to be permanent, though more recent ministers’ photos were added. Some have now started to fade, and many are in need of care. Therefore, for their best preservation, the photos are to be taken down, removed from their frames, stored in acid-free boxes and made available to all in our historical collection. Please contact Sandra Rossi if you would like to have historical information about any of our former ministers who have served us and with us.

ECM Meeting Minutes

September 9, 2024

Attendees: Sandi Coyne-Gilbert, Mark Dion, Leon Drzewianowski, Jeff Prince
Absent: Rev Michael McSherry, Jack Hjelt

The meeting called to order 8:02 pm

Opening Devotional: Sandi Coyne-Gilbert

Moderator: Mark Dion (filling in for Jack Hjelt)

Minutes from the previous meeting were approved. Thank you Jeff!

Mark brought up the draft for the Interim Minister Proposal. We are grateful for the contributions of the draft team, specifically Floyd and Leon. The members of ECM are comfortable with the majority but a couple of questions were presented: and brief changes were made to the draft.

Jeff made a motion to accept the draft and Leon seconded this. The final proposal will be sent to Rev. Terry September 10.

Buildings and Grounds: great minutes and we appreciate the work of this committee! Leon mentioned a \$12,000 bill being forgotten for the damage to the sanctuary. The heating company was supposed to pay this bill. Building and Grounds wants ECM to send a letter to the company regarding the damage caused by the heating company. The statement still shows the \$12,000. Jeff asked about the letter and explained the costs we incurred in terms of volunteer labor and damage to the building could help get the heating company to resolve this issue.

Youth Activity Coordinator. Laura and a team of volunteers are interviewing two candidates tomorrow. We have a good number of applicants. We look forward to this position being filled.

Tenant issue: Despite a rough start with the new tenants, there have been discussions about the contract and the new tenants do seem to understand the limits to their decision-making without first checking with the Church.

Elizabeth Finn no trespass order delivered. Mark has checked all properties, and she has not been seen since the order was received. Previously, Elizabeth Finn was assisted by both Deb and Michael. Despite efforts to help find her more permanent housing, she remains on the street.

Exit conversation with Michael. ECM and the Personnel Committee will meet with Michael to have a conversation before he leaves to get his insights on how we can better use our relationship with lay leaders and our pastor to move our agenda forward.

Bylaws. Bylaws modifications will be presented at the next business meeting.

Personnel Update: Jeff stated that we had hoped to have the changes to employee handbook done before Adam's leave, but we can't get it done now. Despite this, Adam's leave was approved as we had discussed. Members of the ECM look forward to gaining access to the finished employee handbook.

Outreach update: Karen Pohlman will join the outreach. This is great news.

Music update: A benefit will be held at the Church on October 4. This event is not a Crossroads Event and is the responsibility of the people who are handling it. More details to come on this event.

Christmas Crossroads might be a Dan Kane event. Adam has a group scheduled for the third week of October and it will be a pay to use the facilities event. The music committee is not sure about Danny's event in December. As we get closer to the holidays we will try to firm this up.

A purchase of new speakers for the church has been made. This will save us money, better sound quality for the feed and also is available for anyone who has an event at the church.

We discussed Adam and Sophie's party and how important similar events are for the health of our church community.

Next meeting date: Tuesday, October 8 at 7 pm.

Mark provided the closing prayer.

The meeting closed at 8:58 pm

The following assignments are made for the next meeting:

Agenda: Jeff

Minutes: Sandi

Facilitator: Leon

Opening Devotional: Jeff

Closing Devotional: Mark

Respectfully submitted

Sandi Coyne-Gilbert

Team Edwards/First Churches is back and seeking team members!

After raising over \$5,000 for suicide prevention last year, Kristin has officially launched this year's Team Edwards/First Churches Team Page! This year's goal is \$2,024 to represent the year 2024.

\$1,000 has already been raised after the Outreach and Grants Team's match from 2023 was allocated to this year's fundraising, so we are off to a strong start!

To get ready for Walk Day, Kristin is currently seeking team members from both Edwards and First Churches to join her to continue the work of fostering conversations around mental health and suicide prevention in religious communities.

Additionally, this year's team will have a hashtag: #DoNotWeaponizeMentalHealthStruggles.

This year's Greater Springfield Out of the Darkness Community Walk takes place on Saturday, October 26, at 10 a.m. at School Street Park in Agawam, rain or shine.

If you're interested in joining this year's team or wanting to learn more about how you can lend your support, email Kristin at krivers2723@gmail.com or chat with her after worship on Sundays.

The team page link is: supporting.afsp.org/team/340060.

Thank you to everyone for your continued support!

The Coolidge Family Pew

After graduating from Amherst College, Calvin Coolidge lived and worked in Northampton and attended Edwards Church, other than during his time as President. A few of our current members will recognize the pew shown below as coming from the building we replaced when the current building was completed in 1958.



For many years archives of President Coolidge's time in Northampton have been maintained at The Calvin Coolidge Presidential Library & Museum within the Forbes Library. The library is now planning to redesign the museum for the future, which gave rise to this question within ECM: Might this be the time to offer the Coolidge pew to the museum for its collection? <https://forbeslibrary.org/blog/2024/08/27/keeping-coolidge-cool-calvin-coolidge-presidential-library-museum-launches-public-fundraising-effort/>

The pew, which has a commemorative plaque in the center, is currently stored against the State Street wall in the back of the sanctuary. It is taped off to prevent use because it is difficult to secure to the floor or wall and unsafe for sitting when not secured.



Please email the Elected Core ministry at ECM@edwardschurchnorthampton.org or speak to any member of ECM to share your perspective. ECM members are: Mark Dion, Sandi Coyne-Gilbert, Leon Drzewianowski, Jack Hjelt and Jeff Prince.

Quilt Team News – September 2024

Over the summer, the team completed another three quilts to be donated to the Friends of Children FOCUS program. They were delivered to Susan Swift, Development Director at Friends of Children, (and member of Edwards Church) and Debi Belkin, Co-Executive Director who accepted the quilts at the King Street office. They told us that the quilts are given to new clients at the time of their intake into the FOCUS program. A tangible “hug” from the community.

Thank you to the Outreach team for their financial support of this ministry. And please continue to keep the young adults that receive the quilts in your prayers. <https://friendsofchildreninc.org/>

Janet, Sandra, Deb, Trudy and Edie



COME AND CHECK OUT ALL THE NORTHAMPTON PARENT'S CENTER HAS TO OFFER!



Northampton Parents Center

Fall Schedule

WEEKLY 9/9-12/19

Monday
INDOORS
@ NPC

Tuesday
INDOORS
@ NPC

PLAYGROUPS ARE
9:30AM-11:30AM

WEDNESDAYS WILL BE
INDOORS AT NPC IF THE
WEATHER IS RAINY!

Wednesday
OUTDOORS @ THE
HAMPSHIRE
REGIONAL YMCA
PLAYGROUND

Thursday
INDOORS
@ NPC

INFANT GROUP
STARTS AT 8:30!

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

WE ARE WHEELCHAIR ACCESSIBLE!

Northampton Parents Center

EARLY BIRD INFANT GROUP

Thursdays at 8:30AM - starting 9/12

Come anytime! There is no such thing as late, and you are always welcome to stay for our regular 9:30AM-11:30AM playgroup!

JOIN NPC DIRECTOR LINDSEY KING
FOR A FREE WEEKLY DROP-IN GROUP
FOR INFANTS AND THEIR CAREGIVERS
COFFEE AND TEA INCLUDED!
SIBLINGS WELCOME!

EMAIL QUESTIONS TO
NORTHAMPTONPARENTSCENTER@GMAIL.COM

Northampton Parents Center

SAVE THE DATE

PUTTIN' PUMPKINS 2024!! SATURDAY OCTOBER 26TH

"MORE DETAILS TO COME SOON"

A mini golf event @ Look Park
to benefit Northampton
Parents Center

IF YOU ARE A BUSINESS AND YOU WOULD LIKE TO BE A SPONSOR PLEASE EMAIL
NORTHAMPTONPARENTSCENTER@GMAIL.COM!





OCTOBER BIRTHDAYS

Sidney Letendre

Charles McCullagh

Floyd Cheung

Robert Saalfrank

Judith Almeida

Fumiko Brown

Sid Montague

Susan Swift

Nancy Flickinger

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. Michael enjoys 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 his cell phone.

Michael minister@edwardschurchnorthampton.org cell: 413-531-9729

October 2024

NPC = Northampton Parent's Center
 HAS = Hampshire Support Alliance
 CITN = Cathedral in the Night
 B&G = Building & Grounds

| Sunday | Monday | Tuesday | Wednesday | Thursday | Friday | Saturday |
|----------------------------|----------------|---|--|--|---------------------------|--|
| | | 1 9:30 NPC 7 Gamblers Anon. | 2 11 Bible Study 5:30 HSA 7 B&G | 3 9:30 NPC 12 Bible Study 6:30 AA | 4 11:30 MANNA 7 AA | 5 11:30 MANNA |
| 6 10 Worship 12 CITN | 7 9:30 NPC | 8 9:30 NPC 3 Prayer Shawl 7 ECM 7 Gamblers Anon. | 9 11 Bible Study 5:30 HSA 7 B&G | 10 9:30 NPC 4 Care & Visitation 6:30 AA | 11 11:30 MANNA 7 AA | 12 11:30 MANNA |
| 13 10 Worship | 14 9:30 NPC | 15 9:30 NPC 7 Gamblers Anon. | 16 11 Bible Study | 17 9:30 NPC 6:30 AA 7 In Stile Moderno | 18 11:30 MANNA 7 AA | 19 11:30 MANNA |
| 20 10 Worship | 21 9:30 NPC | 22 9:30 NPC 3 Prayer Shawl 7 Gamblers Anon. | 23 11 Bible Study | 24 9:30 NPC 6:30 AA | 25 11:30 MANNA 7 AA | 26 11:30 MANNA 7:30 Performance Project |
| 27 10 Worship | 28 9:30 NPC | 29 9:30 NPC 7 Gamblers Anon. | 30 11 Bible Study | 31 9:30 NPC 6:30 AA | | |

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