



THE SPIRE

EDWARDS CHURCH *of* NORTHAMPTON
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

Vol. 34 No. 6

Summer of 2024

From the Senior Minister

Dear Edwards Church Community,

Approaching the end of our time together stirs a range of feelings, for me mostly gratitude and some sadness at leave taking. I am happy to be retiring and look forward to new ways of using my time enjoying family, travel and volunteer work. I will miss the privilege of knowing so many people in the different ways we connected: Sunday worship, serving together on a team or committee, in pastoral care or casual settings.

In any long-term relationship – and these days serving as a settled pastor for over a decade is long-term – when we get to see the end coming, it's natural to think about how it went and wonder how it will go with your interim minister and next settled pastor. Knowing the people of this congregation as I do, appreciating your talents and wisdom and the church's resources, I am very confident that you will find wonderful pastors, who will help you to refine your sense of shared vision and how to pursue it.



Looking back over the last 11 years, I see things I am proud of and things I wish I had done better or differently. It's a mixture of 20/20 hindsight and "coulda, shoulda, woulda" so I do not stew on it. Nothing major or recent is in that category, because I feel like I listened well to the congregation and the Spirit. Whenever I disappointed someone even when trying my best, I will trust them to let it go.

To support churches and pastors in having a way to celebrate and release each other, the United Church of Christ provides a liturgy, which we will say together in a Sunday service shortly before or on my final Sunday. That liturgy (which we said last year with Deb Moore) provides an opportunity for us as pastor and congregation to consider all the ways we are grateful for each other, as well as the needs we might have to forgive each other and release each other to pursue our diverging paths.

We cannot know how long it will take for ECM to engage an interim. It could happen quickly, in which case I will leave in the early fall. And it may take longer. Meanwhile, know that I will be silently offering this blessing for you now and in the days to come.



*May the road rise up to meet you.
May the wind be always at your back.
May the sun shine warm upon your face;
the rains fall soft upon your fields and
until we meet again, may God hold you
in the palm of God's hand.*

In faith, with hope, for love,
Michael

Music Director

Dear Edwards Church community,

It is hard to believe that it has been a year since I've started as Music Director at Edwards Church. And what a year it's been! Since September of 2023, the choir has sung over forty choral anthems, including music-packed Christmas and Easter services. Multiple guest musicians and ensembles helped enrich our worship during other special services and Holy Week. I'm thrilled to be gearing up for my second year as Music Director!

As you have likely heard through the grapevine, my wife Sophie and I are expecting our very first child (a daughter) this September! We are overjoyed to be welcoming a new member to our family. Leadership at Edwards Church has been incredibly supportive of my family in this time, and we've worked out a plan for me to take ample parental leave this fall without completely disappearing for months (something I personally did not want to do).

We'll be welcoming a few different folks to lead music and work with the choir during my leave; Jeff Olmsted (interim music director at Edwards before my arrival), Kimaya Diggs (our very own soprano staff singer), and a friend and colleague of mine, Greg Hayes.

Here's an outline of the schedule from the start of September through Thanksgiving:

9/1: Adam Simon - communion Sunday	10/13: Jeff Olmsted
9/8: (Adam or Jeff Olmsted - TBD given proximity to baby due date, 9/10)	10/20: Kimaya Diggs
9/15: Jeff Olmsted	10/27: Greg Hayes
9/22: Kimaya Diggs	11/3: Adam Simon - communion Sunday
9/29: Greg Hayes	11/10: Kimaya Diggs
10/6: Adam Simon - communion Sunday	11/17: Adam Simon
	11/24: Jeff Olmsted

After Thanksgiving, I will return to my customary weekly role with the first Sunday of Advent on December 1, 2024.

Adam

ECM Meeting Minutes

August 12, 2024

Attending: Rev. Michael McSherry, Mark Dion, Jack Hjelt, Jeff Prince

Absent: Sandi Coyne-Gilbert

Guests: Floyd Cheung, Leon Drzewianowski

Jeff started the meeting with a devotional at 7:00pm. Mark served as meeting facilitator.

Interim Minister Search: Members of ECM along with Floyd and Leon discussed key features of the Profile for Interim Minister including the three competencies and five key tasks of potential Interim ministers. Among the key competencies, ECM hopes for candidates that are (i) skilled facilitators, (ii) experimenters and (iii) fluent digitally. Among important tasks the ECM expects of the Interim Minister are (i) leading congregation in discussion on future plans (where we want to be), (ii) reaching out to “wanderers”—those who have left the congregation in recent years but may consider returning, (iii) maintaining strong music program, (iv) maintain open and affirming posture and (v) increase membership. Floyd agreed to take first stab at crafting the Interim Minister Profile. Leon agreed to work with the finance committee to recommend a compensation package for ECM approval.

Floyd and Leon were excused following the Interim Minister Profile discussion.

Minutes of July 8 and July 23 ECM Meetings were approved.

Youth Activity Coordinator Position. This is a new position that is intended to fill some of the responsibilities of the now vacant Minister of Faith Formation position, particularly as it relates to the youngest members of the congregation (but with hopes to engage all ages). ECM received and approved the job posting drafted by Laura Frogameni. The position will be 16-25 hours per month at \$25/hour. ECM approved the posting.

As part of the discussion, Rev. McSherry agreed to work with Kyla to ensure all members with interaction with church youth will be re-CORI'd.

Filos/New Tenant: The new owners of Filos restaurant have made structural changes to the restaurant space without first consulting with the church, as is required by the lease. It has been communicated that this action has not gone unnoticed and a meeting is scheduled to discuss renovation plans with the new owners as well as remind them of their obligation to consult under the term of the lease.

Outreach: It was reported that Karen Pohlman has agreed to join Outreach. ECM thanks Karen for her willingness to serve.

Music: May or may not have a concert on October 4 (Jan Henson). Working with Northampton for a different date. Also, reached out to Danni Shannahan for Nov/Dec timeframe. Finally, discussion around upgrade to speakers in Sanctuary to accommodate music performances. More to come on that topic.

Bylaws: Jeff presented proposed bylaw changes, which ECM agreed to present to the congregation at the next Special Business Meeting. ECM thanks Laura Frogameni, Janet Tucker and Jeff Prince for their effort in updating the bylaws.

Other Business: It was reported that Leon Drzewianowski is willing to join ECM. ECM thanks Leon for his willingness to serve and appointed him as a member by unanimous vote. Note: Under the church bylaws, ECM is able to appoint committee replacements. Heather Bell resigned earlier in the year.

Next Meeting: Sept 8 at 2pm or Sept 9 at 8pm, depending on what works best for Sandi

Facilitator: Jack Hjelt

Opening Devotional: Rev. McSherry

Agenda: Jeff Prince

Closing Devotional: Mark Dion

Minutes: Sandi Coyne-Gilbert

Rev. McSherry ended the meeting with a prayer. The meeting ended at 8:40pm.

ECM Meeting Minutes

July 23, 2024

In attendance: Rev. Michael McSherry, Mark Dion, Jack Hjelt, Jeff Prince, Sandi Coyne-Gilbert

Guest: Laura Frogameni, Leon Drzewianowski

Michael started the meeting with a devotional at 7:10pm.

Laura presented a youth coordinator position. This position would be someone who would offer care to our youngest members. Activities would be designed to occupy children and allow adults to stay in service. Laura also presented that this position would begin working on multigenerational activities. The pay would be \$625.00 per month. Discussion centered around the status of this person: employee? Contractor? At the conclusion of the discussion, all members of the ECM voted in favor of this proposal.

Points were made about doing CORIs on all people who work with children including church members as urged by Safe Congregations. Kyla will process all CORIs as determined by the church. A CORI was requested for Laura, Carolyn Dion and others to be named.

The conversation began about our upcoming transition in terms of ministers. Mark presented on behalf of the music team Adam's request to have contact with prospective ministers to gauge his ability to work effectively with the chosen individual. ECM thanked Mark for his sharing of Adam's message, and it was decided to table this request until we get further into the process.

ECM will review all applications with Kyla working to assist in this process.

The need for the profile was presented. Michael asked what his role should be with the Draft team. After discussion, ECM voted Michael should be a consultant, offering his expertise in the framing of the profile. Sheri Cheung was also presented as a consultant. ECM also voted on the

The Team who will draft this proposal will be Leon D, Floyd Cheung, and Sandi Coyne-Gilbert with Michael and Sheri Cheung operating as consultants. Primarily they will be responsible for reviewing and editing the profile.

Preparation for drafting the profile began with consideration of the five factors as the conference presented.

1. Heritage: past and patterns are to be discussed to help foster the proper development of our profile
2. Mission: discussion of identity, purpose and vision
3. Leadership: ministers roles and also efforts by lay leaders
4. Connections: offer insights, best practices, partnerships, network and building community
5. Future: coordination and development of the successful partnership with the incoming permanent minister.

Michael mentioned three questions we should focus on: who are we? Who is our neighbor and what should we be doing? He also shared that he was the first minister to be set up as the head of staff and lay leaders.

How do we grow our church? We need to draft this profile with a focus on developing a vibrant, lively, multigenerational church.

We discussed that the church does not appear to be talking about Michael's retirement. The lack of commentary by church community members is of concern to ECM. The worship at First Churches does not offer us an opportunity to delve into the topic of change with our community members. Michael is going to speak with Adam about the possibility of moving the service back to Edwards to promote a conversation with community members.

Final idea: have two opportunities for church to come together and discuss Michael's departure. This coming Sunday July 28 a shorter coffee hour will be offered welcoming First Church congregants and then Edwards Church Members will be asked to go downstairs for lunch. Similarly, one of the Sundays in August we will meet at Edwards again without First Church Members to "listen" to our community members. Michael will not attend these sessions.

The question of the Faith Formation Interim Minister was discussed as well. Questions centered on the hiring and the problems we are going to have as the number of applicants appears to be quite low. Leon D mentioned that he is working with finance to increase compensation to make our efforts more competitive.

Jack offered a closing devotional. The meeting ended at 8:48pm.

ECM Meeting Minutes

July 8, 2024

In attendance: Jack Hjelt, Mark Dion, Michael McSherry, Sandi Coyne-Gilbert, Jeff Prince

Absent: Adam Simon (on vacation)

The meeting was called to order at 7:35 pm

Opening Devotional provided by Jack

Approval of previous minutes: unanimously

Outreach update: Jack reported that we need a new outreach member to replace Jean who has given notice. Jack would love to do something to recognize her work on the committee.

Tenant in Annex update: Michael presented that our tenant and the church agreed on consignment of the lease which is the same as the original lease. We closed on this relationship on July 1. Work has been done on the tenant space including signage. They did not ask for these renovations. Signs can't be changed without city permission.

Security Issue: Mark presented we have not met with Carlos due to issues. He will reschedule with us shortly.

Music Team Update: Mark presented about the rescheduled June fundraiser will take place in October (4th). Details to follow. Concert ideas are being considered for the fall. Danny has not responded to Mark regarding the holiday concert. Laura is reaching out to the Northampton Music Center regarding listing any of our events. They have worked with us before. Jason Trotta is the person Laura is reaching out to for the fundraiser in the fall.

The music team is looking for speakers for our musical events. When more is available in terms of details, we can discuss it further.

By-Laws Update: Jeff presented some issues that have arisen with the by-laws. The Bylaws are done but the way they are currently drafted, committee members for the finance committee and other committee members would be presented to the church community to approve all committee members as part of a slate. Should we recommend committee members presented as a slate or ECM appoint committee members?

In between annual meetings, ECM will appoint any people to join. Michael presented documentation from the 2020 annual meeting stating ECM appoints members for finance, personnel, and investments.

Employee Handbook Update: no update

Other Business: marketing will be put off for the immediate future. Sandi will prepare a full plan with a colleague when the time is right.

Article about the church in Gazette, Edwards Church Wayfinders investment. Great article

Closing Devotional: Michael

Next Meeting: Monday August 12

Assignments:

Agenda: Mark

Moderator: Jack

Minutes: Sandi

Opening Devotional Jeff

Closing Devotional Michael

Meeting concluded 8:23pm

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!



**Join us to celebrate Karuna's first 30 years
of empowering communities to build peace!**

SATURDAY, SEPT. 14

3:00 – 5:00 PM

**AMHERST WOMAN'S CLUB
35 TRIANGLE STREET • AMHERST, MA**

Free and open to the public • light refreshments

With special guest Rosette Sebasoni, documentary clips, and more, we will explore the far-reaching effects of community-based peacebuilding — and find inspiration for the future!



For details, to RSVP, or to make a donation:

karunacenter.org/events

RSVPs are helpful but not required



**Rosette Sebasoni will join us to talk about
Reconciliation after the Rwandan Genocide:
Making the Impossible Possible**

*Ms. Sebasoni was in-country program manager for Karuna's 2016-2019 **Healing Our Communities** program in Rwanda. In that role, she drew upon a wealth of lived experience to coordinate approaches to social healing that engaged whole communities, across generations, bridging deep post-genocide divides.*

For the past year, Ms. Sebasoni – herself a survivor of the 1994 Genocide Against the Tutsi in Rwanda – has been working with Karuna to collect stories of reconciliation between ex-perpetrators and the families they harmed. These stories will be previewed at this event and published as a book in 2025, co-edited by Karuna's former director Olivia Stokes Dreier.



SEPTEMBER BIRTHDAYS

Carolyn Gray

Kathleen Korza

Pamela Cook

Eli Hutchison

Elena Frogameni

James Young

William Hogan, Jr.

Elizabeth Prince

Mariana Haughey

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

September 2014

NPC = Northampton Parent's Center
 HAS = Hampshire Support Alliance
 M@C = Music at the Crossroads
 B&G = Building & Grounds

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1 10 Worship	2	3 7 Gamblers Anon.	4 9:30 NPC 12 Bible Study	5 9:30 NPC 6:30 AA	6 11:30 MANNA 7 AA	7 11:30 MANNA
8 10 Worship	9 9:30 NPC 8 ECM	10 3 Prayer Shawl 7 Gamblers Anon.	11 9:30 NPC 12 Bible Study 5:30 FHSA 7 B&G	12 9:30 NPC 4 Care & Visitation 6:30 AA	13 11:30 MANNA 7 AA	14 11:30 MANNA
15 10 Worship 3 NPC Book Reading	16 9:30 NPC	17 7 Gamblers Anon.	18 9:30 NPC 12 Bible Study	19 9:30 NPC 6:30 AA	20 11:30 MANNA 7 AA	21 11:30 MANNA 7 M@C
22 10 Worship	23 9:30 NPC	24 3 Prayer Shawl 7 Gamblers Anon.	25 9:30 NPC 12 Bible Study 7 B&G	26 9:30 NPC 6:30 AA	27 11:30 MANNA 7 AA	28 11:30 MANNA
29 10 Worship 3 VIRAG Program	30 9:30 NPC	1	2	3	4	5