

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,

I am conditioned by my childhood to greet the beginning of summer as cause for celebration. I grew up in a small city, which was the county seat of a largely agricultural area. Memorial Day and June meant the three month celebration of summer was about to begin, announced by the flowers and strawberries (we did not have much local asparagus like Hadley). This was the season when all the hard work of planting and protecting during growth would yield corn, tomatoes, peaches and every other fruit and vegetable grown in western Maryland – and there were many.

This year the sweet anticipation of summer's bounty is disturbed by the growing fear that we have waited too long to respond adequately to climate change. The increased number and intensity of extreme weather events, the see-saw temperature swings, the steady drift north of plant hardiness zones, and the forecast for a highly active hurricane season all make it impossible to deny, much less ignore.

In a recent survey¹ of scientists whose work feeds into the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, 80% of the respondents (and about half of the over 840 surveyed did respond) believed global warming would shoot past the agreed upon goal of no more than a 1.5 degree Celsius rise and go to at least a 2.5 C rise in this century. The scientists, whose work has been warning of these outcomes for decades, are now seeing them unfold in real time. Increasing droughts and floods, wildfires and hurricanes, the loss of habitat and entire species -- these are not good signs.

Some despair; some still find hope. Interpretations vary, even among the scientists, who agree that whatever the specifics, the general trend is ominous. What we do know is that our choices matter.

For generations human beings developed technologies and businesses with no awareness (at least no scientifically informed awareness, even if there was an instinct) of the cost of burning carbon in terms of the environment and human life. For at least 40 years in the global North, we have allowed (if not encouraged, by our silence) business and political decision makers to slow walk the scale of response needed. Now it is clear that nothing short of full mobilization will suffice.

As with our national policy on guns, the children often lead. This spring three high school friends in North Carolina decided to take action to dull the impact of climate change. After learning that “orphaned” oil wells – which had been drilled, pumped until they were no longer economically productive, and then abandoned by prior owners – were a huge contributor to climate change, they decided to raise the money required to sponsor capping one. These abandoned wells leak tons of methane, which is far more damaging to the atmosphere than CO₂.

These three high school students raised \$11,000, which was their share of the total cost borne by the Well Done Foundation, a non-profit formed by a former oil industry executive who considers it shameful the way oil companies exploited the resource but walked away from the cost of capping wells. (Regulations now require that the cost to cap be set aside at the beginning.) The students capped only one of the millions of abandoned wells, but they have announced their intent to do it more. ²

As one of the IPCC scientists notes, reducing the extent to which human activity warms the atmosphere by even one-tenth of a degree will save many lives and shorten the time needed for the planet to recover, assuming humanity as a whole can change its behavior soon enough to avoid complete self-destruction.

None of us is called to do it all, but all of us are called to do all we can. The Talmud, that collection of ancient Jewish wisdom, states: "*Do not be daunted by the enormity of the world's grief. Do justly now, love mercy now, walk humbly now. You are not obligated to complete the work, but neither are you free to abandon it.*" The increase of anxiety and depression among adolescents during Covid is well documented, and it was already high before then. Climate change is a major component of that increase. And yet, three teens came together to repair the world, one capped well at a time.

Most of the present members of our church will not be alive to see the worst that is in store for the generations after us. But many of us have families, other humans we love dearly and not just because it is our moral duty. Jesus said, “I have come that they may have life and have it abundantly.” The great Bengali poet and philosopher Rabindranath Tagore wrote: “The one who plants trees, knowing that he will never sit in their shade, has at least started to understand the meaning of life.” As we prepare to enjoy the coming summer, may we consider more fully how to live so that others may live more fully.

In faith, with hope, for love,

Michael

1. “The Guardian approached every contactable lead author or review editor of IPCC reports since 2018. Almost half replied, 380 of 843.” <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/article/2024/may/08/world-scientists-climate-failure-survey-global-temperature>
2. <https://www.nytimes.com/2024/05/24/climate/orphan-wells-capping-methane-leaks.html>

From the Bridge Associate Minister

Dear Faithful Friends of All Ages,

Grace and Peace be with all of you. I am writing my last “faithful friends” letter to you in the final days of May, just as we lean into June, which is for us, by the end of month, the completion of our “bridge moment.” I am so grateful for this opportunity to have become a “friend” with all of you and to see how in so many ways you are, and I imagine you will always be, great friends of the greater community where you find yourself on Main Street.

June is the season of blooms. As I write this in the sweet corner office that has been my Edwards Church home since January, the roses are going at it to beat the band. Tall purple allium flowers are reaching to the sun and the magnolia tree is in full leaf. What a joy it is to see what was for so many months a cold and often snowy courtyard become a blooming place for rest and recreation. The celestial and church seasons remind us of every other changing time and place that we have already walked through and that is waiting ahead.

Today I am thinking about the beautiful (if a bit chilly) Pentecost Sunday that many of us spent together at Look Park. There was so much in that day, from the “We’re Getting Ready” anthem, to the quilted together messages in song and word and textile beauty, to pinwheel and cupcake making and more, that is lodged in my heart. One of the precious moments was seeing elder Jack and little Ellie standing almost reverently at the cupcake table and then, hand in hand walking to and from the climbing structure. They were, to me, a powerful witness to the essence of “Sunday Friends.”

I am grateful beyond measure to have seen them together, surrounded by other Sunday friends who make up this congregation. As your Bridge Associate Minister, I am smiling now.

Over these months I have heard several church members talk about your dreams, often expressed as a perceived *need* for Edwards Church to become a church alive with children and youth and young families. Some of this sense of need comes from looking back to the history of this congregation including your own participation over the years. Some of this sense of need comes from a felt sense of something/someone missing in our midst. And some comes from anxious fears about the future of this congregation. As with every other need, wondering, hope, and dream that you have expressed to me, I hold this all in compassion and deep love.

As we begin to end our time together, I want to offer a different dream for you to add to the ones that you have expressed. I trust that it is not Edwards Church's *need* for children and youth and families that is the point at all. The point, or focus, for the life of this church is your clear and shining *love* for the children and youth and families themselves. In this turning point in time, it may help to envision Jesus looking outside himself and outside the structures of his religion to see the present and future generations not in *his* need but in *their time of need*.

Maybe the point of Christian witness is not to "bring the children and families" to Jesus or to us so that we do not fade away. Can we look toward the generations coming up all around us and ask how we can, as faithful friends, in lively ways, join with others in our communities who are also deeply committed to loving and caring for children and youth and families wherever they are – in churches, in classrooms, in family centers, shelters and on the street. No one wants to be someone's need, but most folks want to be someone who is loved beyond measure.

That wider vision may go a long way to keeping Edwards Church *faithful* to what God wants and needs, which are expansive communities of abundant and surprising love.

Thank you everyone for inviting me to walk this Way with you on the bridge between Deb's ministry with you and the near future. I am moved to laughter and tears thinking about all the ways I see you loving each other and the people and community around you. You are on a sweet spirited journey together. There is nothing to fear. Only more to love.

In the Spirit of the Season, Marguerite

(some of this reflection came to me while listening to Brian McLaren speaking online in the Rethinking Children and Youth Ministry Summit. Thank you for giving me the time to listen deeply to new and old ways of ministering to and with people of all ages.)

Edwards Church at Northampton Pride



(Left to right)
Laura Frogameni
Debbie Davis
Marguerite Sheehan
Carla Wirzburger
Grace Del Vecchio

For the Common Good Begins “At Home”



In the fashion of the early Apostles who were committed to pooling all their resources and caring for the greater community (check out Acts 4: 32-37) our church youth group is organizing an intergenerational church wide food drive for the Northampton Survival Center. We are calling this collection **“For the Common Good!”** We will start receiving foods (the list is below) on Sunday June 2 and will end the drive on June 16. We hope that our baskets will overflow with these gifts for the community. Your participation is wanted and needed!

- Baked beans
- Canned chicken
- Canned fruit in juice
- Canned tomatoes
- Canned vegetables
- Cereal
- Condiments
- Cooking oil (canola, olive, vegetable)
- Crackers
- Flour
- Granola
- Granola bars
- Hearty soups
- Macaroni & cheese
- Oatmeal
- Oats
- Pasta (all kinds, including gluten-free)
- Peanut butter
- Pigeon peas/gandules
- Rice (brown, white)
- Spaghetti sauce
- Sugar
- Unopened spices
- Vegetarian soups

ECM Meeting Minutes

May 13, 2024

Attendees: Michael McSherry, Jack Hjelt, Marguerite Sheehan, Adam Simon, Mark Dion, Jeff Prince

Excused: Heather Bell

Facilitator: Jack

Opening Devotional: Michael

Approval of Minutes: All parties approved minutes

Music Team Update: Mark/Adam

Recent Crossroads/took in around \$950.00 and 87 views online with \$10.00 online

Some checks might be still coming. We were going to have a benefit in June but it won't happen until the fall.

The next one is coming up next Tuesday May 21 An eclectic mix of choral music spanning four continents and six centuries. Directed by Sophie Michaux and Adam Simon. Suggested Donation: \$10-30 100% of donation benefit the Música Franklin.

Mark spoke with Danny Shanahan offering his group the ability to do a holiday show. Waiting to hear his answer.

Note from Melissa Mattison about a fundraiser sounds like something we would do. Melissa's group will do the marketing for the event. We have charged others for Justin's cleaning but should we charge her or not? Michael mentioned that Justin cleans on Saturdays. Justin will have to clean later if the event is Saturday. June 29 or 30 are the dates mentioned for this event. Sunday would be better, but we would allow Saturday. Mark will get in touch with Melissa and follow up.

Scholarship: Sandi mentioned the scholarship for Cole G. He is going on a special trip and currently the family pays monthly on the balance due. Sandi suggested \$1000 be given to Cole now as opposed to fall. The committee agreed. There was a single question about the time frame for scholarships, are people who have not graduated from high school eligible? Sandi explained that we have granted more latitude including camperships to enable people to take advantage of opportunities. ECM members approved the payment.

Bylaws Jeff presented to that as a member of the Bylaws committee work continues on the bylaws. Bylaws are expected shortly. There are a few items that need to be clarified. Jeff will keep us posted as we move forward.

Personnel Committee: Jeff presented the personnel committee's work on employee leave. He presented a range of benefits that are being considered. This along with other employee elements would be reviewed by an attorney.

Finance Meeting: Michael

Beginning next month ECM members will receive all the reports including Sabra's notes from the finance team. Sharp increase in the amount in early April received. Sabra thought that this might be because of the quarterly statements being mailed to all . We are more than solvent at this time.

Outreach Update: Jack suggested we need some more members of the outreach committee. Diverse representation is what is hoped for. Any suggestions for members let Rob, Jack or Michael know. Difficulties getting meetings scheduled and we need to get the meetings scheduled regularly to make sure we do not miss timely requests.

Marguerite's report:

Marguerite mentioned her report was sent to all ECM members. She reminded ECM members that that she is the Associate Bridge Minister for 4-6 months and anticipates leaving in June 30, 2024. ECM members shared their gratitude for her efforts.

Status of the Search for an Associate Minister: Michael

Michael shared the first candidate was met this evening and the next candidate is coming in tomorrow night. Michael is very encouraged.

Security Issue response: Mark

Mark contacted the Northampton Division of Community Care. Anna Ganote and Carlos McBride from the NDCC are the people who will come and talk with us about what we need. Mark left it with them that we are interested, and dates will be given to them. This will not be the training first but rather a determination of what our specific needs are. Mark will get back to them with dates after contacting the ECM, the Ushers, Michael, Marguerite, Adam, Kyla, and Justin. The decided upon date will be forwarded to this group after it is set.

Other Business: Edwards Church Name

The question has arise if the church should carry the name of Jonathan Edwards due to his enthusiastic support of chattel slavery and slaves in his household. If we decide to change the name of the church, we must frame out the issues carefully to ensure the decision is made with a strong approach. This is a 2-3 year process. Requires commitment from the body of the church.

Marketing as an issue was brought up by Sandi. She suggested based on her marketing experience that we begin a process to help our church to grow and prosper. We want to become more diverse, including more younger families. The idea of changing the church's name is a powerful opportunity to invite people with DEIB (diversity, equity, inclusivity and belonging) background who if they saw our care might be interested in joining. Sandi suggested we consider checking with the Conference for marketing help or begin a campaign on our own to position our community going forward. More to be discussed on this topic.

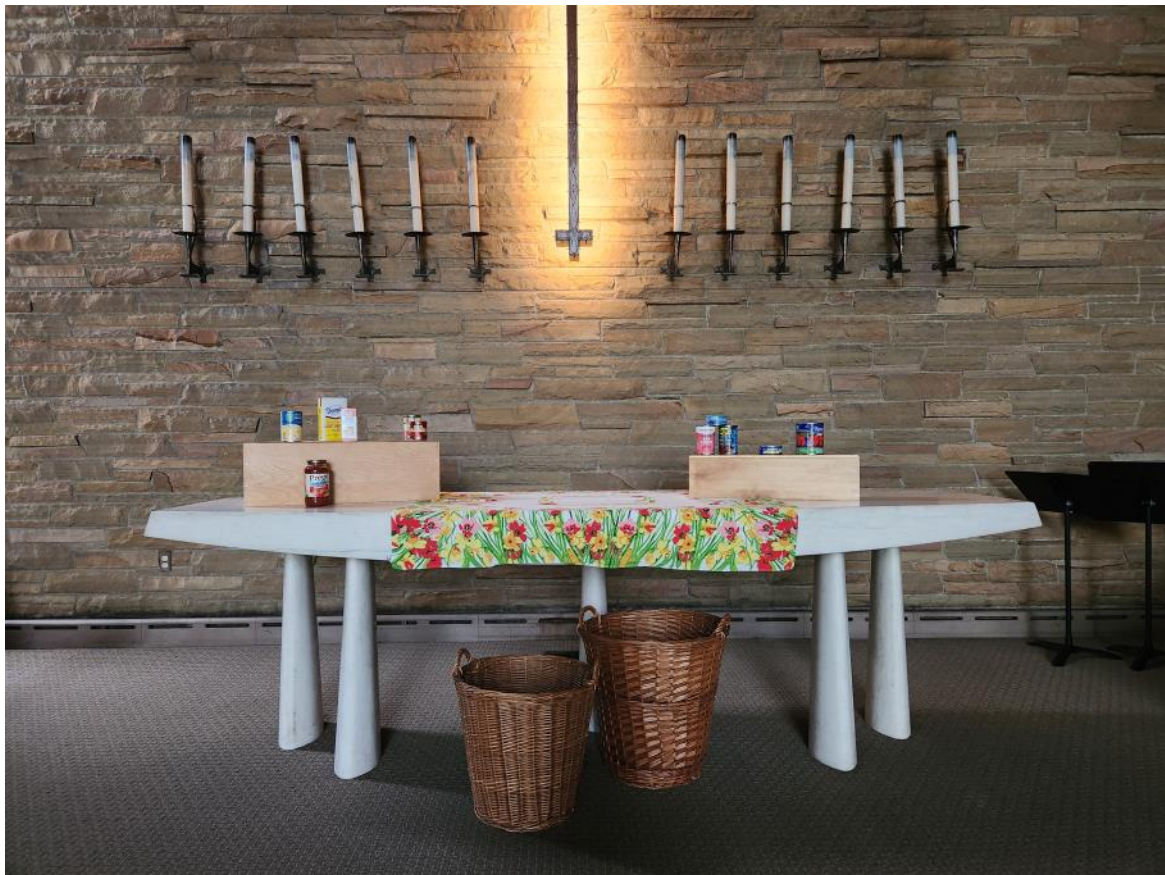
Lawyer for Employee Handbook review

Michael brought up the lawyer engagement letter and we need to have a lawyer to help with Employee handbook and potentially other issues. We do not know how much it will cost but we need to do it. We have not had the handbook looked at for several years. The lawyer asked about our bylaws and their edited status. The lawyer wants to be sure the personnel committee will be consistent, and the employee handbook will not be handled separately. We are being asked to engage lawyers to assess the handbook. This expense not budgeted could be \$2,500 or more. ECM is in agreement that this is a necessity and we approved this.

Next Meeting Monday June 10

Assignments: Facilitator: Jack , Agenda: Michael, Minutes: Sandi, Opening Devotional: Jeff , Closing Devotional: Mark

Closing Prayer: Marguerite



So much gratitude and appreciation for every donation . Thank you.

Summer Worship

- June** -- Customary worship at Edwards, with some comings and goings of individuals in different weeks.
- June 16 – Marguerite leading worship while Michael visits his daughter and her family in Oakland, CA.
- June 23 – Valerie Tutson, storyteller extraordinaire, will be back to bless us with another one of her stories with a Juneteenth connection.
- June 30 – We say a fond farewell and thank you to Marguerite, as her bridge ministry here concludes and our search continues.
- July** – Edwards will host First Churches for joint worship as Rev. Sarah Buteux enjoys her summer vacation. Michael will be in worship each Sunday. Musical leadership will be shared by Adam Simon and Rebecca Phelps, his counterpart at Frist Churches.
- August** – First Churches will host Edwards for joint worship. Michael will away from Aug. 13 - 20 for his son's wedding in Chicago, then again for the Labor Day weekend, hosting an extended McSherry family celebration of that wedding in Maryland. Adam and Rebecca will share leading the music.

Summer Office Hours

A friendly reminder that every summer church office hours change. The office will be open Tuesdays-Thursday from 9:00 AM to 1:00 PM. On Mondays and Fridays Kyla will work remotely.

If you need building access on a Monday or Friday please let Kyla know in advance and that can be arranged.

Kyla can be reached at info@edwardschurchnorthampton.org or (413) 584-5500 ext. 1

Congratulations, Class of 2024!!

We celebrate these students on their graduations and we wish them continued flourishing as they keep learning, growing and sharing their talents with the world.

Madeline Gorman from Northampton High School

Jack Mattison-Gulotta from Northampton High School

Gabriella Wilkerson from Wesleyan University

Gwen Swift from Drexel University with DFCT (Doctorate in Family and Couples Therapy)

Ellie, Sandi Coyne's granddaughter, from kindergarten in Feeding Hills.

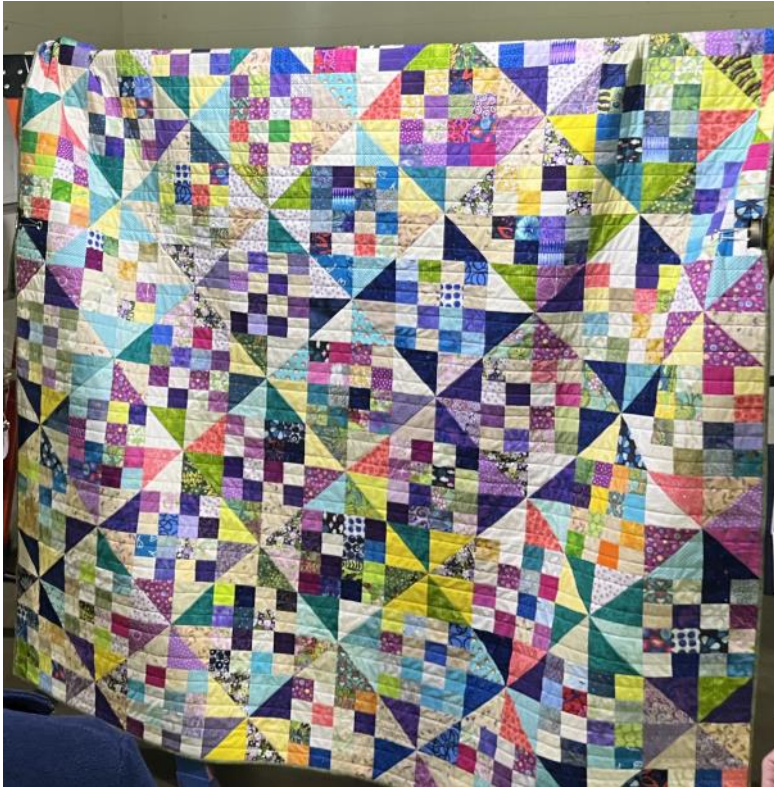
If you are aware of a graduate we overlooked, please contact the church office.

Thank you.

Pentecost Quilt

Our May 19th worship service was held at Look Park in Florence and the finished quilt was revealed! The nations (you) came together, we understood each other (even with the quilting language) to create 4 patches, added in the pinwheels for the rushing of the Spirit, and it all blended into a very colorful gift of comfort for someone.

- the quilt team, Janet, Sandra, Deb and Trudy



May 2, 2024

Reverend Michael McSherry
Edwards Church
297 Main Street
Northampton, MA 01060

Dear Reverend McSherry,

On behalf of Way Finders and our clients, I want to sincerely thank you and the congregation of Edwards Church for your generous support of our pre-development fund.

As you know, the most important way to address the affordable housing crisis is by building more homes, which we can do with adequate funding. Our pre-development fund is vital because it covers the large expenses tied to all the work needed before we put a shovel in the dirt. This includes architect fees, site preparation, permitting, and due diligence.

The affordable housing need is huge. The Pioneer Valley alone has an 11,000-unit housing shortage. The church's \$500,000 low interest loan allows us to consider and take on much-needed added projects.

In addition to extending our gratitude to you and the congregation, we want to single out your investment committee—Leon Drzewianowski, Ruth Griggs, and Michael Tucker—and your attorney, Ellen Freyman who were instrumental in completing the loan.

We look forward to keeping you up to date with our projects and the impact of your funding, and we are always available to meet.

Sincerely,



Keith Fairey
President & CEO



NORTHAMPTON PARENTS CENTER'S

END OF YEAR PICNIC & ALUMNI REUNION!

**SUNDAY 6/9
3-6PM
AT LOOK PARK!**

Alumni from any era, friends,
community members and all families
are welcome to join in celebrating
Swansea's 19 years at NPC!!

OPTIONAL
POTLUCK. BRING A
DISH TO SHARE OR
JUST BRING
YOURSELVES!

WE WILL BE AT
PICNIC SITES 67-
69. IF IT RAINS WE
WILL BE INDOORS
AT NPC!

FREE PARKING!
ALL WELCOME!
SPREAD THE WORD!

We hope you join
us at the picnic!

Please come by
our tag sale!

NORTHAMPTON PARENTS CENTER

ANNUAL TAG SALE FUNDRAISER!

JUNE 1ST, 2024

9:00AM-1:00PM

220 MAIN ST, NORTHAMPTON

Tag sale items are pay by donation!
Funds raised help NPC to continue to
offer programs free for all families

COLLECTING
DONATIONS UNTIL
THURSDAY 5/30

Tag sale items will be
free from 1pm-2pm!

Email npctagsale@gmail.com for information and guidelines
about dropping off your items!

RAINBOW CONTRA OF WESTERN MASS

Saturday, June 1, 7-10pm

Caller: Lisa Greenleaf

*Music: Van Kaynor, Ron Grosslein on fiddle,
Kate Barnes on piano*

First Churches of Northampton

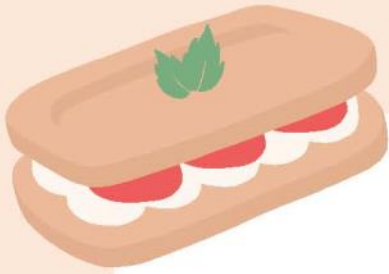
129 Main St. (enter on Center St.), Northampton, MA

\$15-20 • \$8-12 students

Mask (N95, KN95, KF94) required | Drug and alcohol free
No one turned away for lack of funds

lctd.org/rainbowcontra





**Hampshire Association
Annual Meeting & Dessert Buffet**
“Continuing Our Covenant Journey”
Sunday, June 2, 2024

1:30-3:30 pm

South Congregational Church UCC, Amherst
1066 South East Street, Amherst
In-Person & Zoom



Let's join together for a time of worship, business, and fellowship at the Hampshire Association Annual Meeting! We've heard your desire to get back to more fellowship and food, so this year we're going to have a dessert buffet! Please bring a dessert to share (please note ingredients and/or allergens), with 10-12 servings. Not the dessert type? Fruits and veggies are welcome as well. So that we can spend more time in worship and fellowship, please review the Annual Report ahead of time. Bring a lawn chair if the weather's nice!



Contact Chris Mereschuk (revcjm@gmail.com) for Zoom connection details or any questions. If you do not receive an Annual Report by mid-May, contact Judy Stone (jstone9074@aol.com).





July

Beth Firmin
Melissa Mattison
Christian Schmidt
Jon Dietrich
Phyllis Taylor
Ellyn McAllister Schmidt
Lyle Phipps
Carl Erickson
Ron Korza
Dorian Almeida

June

Mark Smith
Jonathon Tucker
Matthew Teague
Robert Daniels
Jennifer Korza
Mary Lyons
Sarah McCullagh
Maren Stokes-Buckles
Cole Mattison-Gulotta

August

Glenn Gulotta
Florence Howes Semb
Mark Dion
Carolyn Dion
Jeffrey Prince
Keira Stokes-Buckles
Benjamin Haughey

SUMMER BIRTHDAYS

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

June 2024

NPC = Northampton Parent's Center
 NMCC= Northampton Music Community Center
 FoH = Friends of the Homeless
 B&G = Building & Grounds

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
						1 11:30 MANNA
2 10 Worship 11:30 Pastor Congregation Relations 12 Cathedral in the Night	3 9:30 NPC 7 VJV	4 9:30 NPC 7 Gamblers Anon.	5 9:30 NPC 12 Bible Study 6 <u>HUB</u>	6 9:30 NPC 6:30 AA 7 Choir	7 11:30 MANNA 7 AA	8 11:30 MANNA
9 10 Worship 2 NPC Family Night	10 9:30 NPC 7 VJV 7:15 ECM	11 9:30 NPC 3 Prayer Shawl 7 Gamblers Anon.	12 9:30 NPC 12 Bible Study 5:30 FoH	13 9:30 NPC 4 Care & Visitation 6:30 AA 7 Choir	14 11:30 MANNA 6:30 Jam for Bread 7 AA	15 11:30 MANNA
16 10 Worship	17 9:30 NPC 7 VJV	18 9:30 NPC 7 Gamblers Anon.	19 9:30 NPC 12 Bible Study	20 9:30 NPC 6:30 AA 7 Choir	21 11:30 MANNA 7 AA	22 11:30 MANNA
23 10 Worship	24 7 VJV	25 3 Prayer Shawl 7 Gamblers Anon.	26 12 Bible Study	27 6:30 AA 7 Choir	28 11:30 MANNA 7 AA	29 11:30 MANNA
30 10 Worship						

July 2024

NPC = Northampton Parent's Center
 NMCC = Northampton Music Community Center
 FoH = Friends of the Homeless
 B&G = Building & Grounds

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	1 7 VJV	2 7 Gamblers Anon.	3 12 Bible Study	4 6:30 AA 7 Choir	5 11:30 MANNA 7 AA	6 11:30 MANNA
7 10 Worship	8 7 VJV	9 3 Prayer Shawl 7 Gamblers Anon.	10 12 Bible Study 5:30 FoH	11 6:30 AA 4 Care & Visitation 7 Choir	12 11:30 MANNA 7 AA	13 11:30 MANNA
14 10 Worship	15 7 VJV	16 7 Gamblers Anon.	17 12 Bible Study	18 6:30 AA 7 Choir	19 11:30 MANNA 7 AA	20 11:30 MANNA
21 10 Worship	22 7 VJV	23 3 Prayer Shawl 7 Gamblers Anon.	24 12 Bible Study	25 6:30 AA 7 Choir	26 11:30 MANNA 7 AA	27 11:30 MANNA
28 10 Worship	29 VJV	30 7 Gamblers Anon.	31 12 Bible Study			

August 2024

NPC = Northampton Parent's Center
 NMCC = Northampton Music
 Community Center
 FoH = Friends of the Homeless
 B&G = Building & Grounds

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
				1 6:30 AA 7 Choir	2 11:30 MANNA 7 AA	3 11:30 MANNA
4 10 Worship 12 Cathedral in the Night	5 7 VJV	6 7 Gamblers Anon.	7 12 Bible Study	8 4 Care & Visitation 6:30 AA 7 Choir	9 11:30 MANNA 7 AA	10 11:30 MANNA
11 10 Worship	12 7 VJV	13 3 Prayer Shawl 7 Gamblers Anon.	14 12 Bible Study 5:30 FoH	15 6:30 AA 7 Choir	16 11:30 MANNA 7 AA	17 11:30 MANNA
18 10 Worship	19 7 VJV	20 7 Gamblers Anon.	21 12 Bible Study	22 6:30 AA 7 Choir	23 11:30 MANNA 7 AA	24 11:30 MANNA
25 10 Worship	26 7 VJV	27 3 Prayer Shawl 7 Gamblers Anon.	28 12 Bible Study	29 6:30 AA 7 Choir	30 11:30 MANNA 7 AA	31 11:30 MANNA