



# THE SPIRE

EDWARDS CHURCH of NORTHAMPTON  
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

Vol. 34 No. 10

December 2024

## From the Senior Minister

Dear Edwards Church Community,

Howard Thurman (1899 – 1981) was the Dean of Marsh Chapel at Boston University, professor at a number of other colleges, theologian, minister and mentor to Civil Rights leaders and countless others. He grew up in Jim Crow Florida, was drawn to nature and mystical insights, and cultivated a commitment to non-violence. An excerpt from his essay “The Singing of Angels” in *The Mood of Christmas* (1973):



*Stripped bare of art forms and liturgy, the literal substance of the story remains, Jesus Christ was born in a stable, he was born of humble parentage in the surroundings that are the common lot of those who earn their living by the sweat of their brows. Nothing can rob the common man of this heritage -- when he beholds Jesus, he sees in him the possibilities of life even for the humblest and a dramatic resolution of the meaning of God.*

*If the theme of the angels' song is to find fulfillment in the world, it will be through the common man's becoming aware of his true worthfulness and asserting his generic prerogatives as a child of God.*

It demonstrates how deeply and matter of fact-ly Thurman viewed these truths that he could comment almost casually that via the manner in which God enters our world – incarnation as a vulnerable baby of poor parents – we are given “a dramatic resolution of the meaning of God”.



In another book that Martin Luther King, Jr. consulted repeatedly, *Jesus and the Disinherited* (1949), Thurman wrote of how it is central to the meaning of Jesus that he was born, lived and died as a member of an exploited underclass who chose to resist accepting his identity as anything other than an equal child of God. Jesus refused to accept being treated as “less than” others, chose to speak the truth regardless of the audience, and responded to violence by turning the other cheek and loving all his neighbors – even those who sought to harm him – not in order to be harmed, but to expose evil rather than meeting evil with evil, even if it meant accepting a violent death.

That is “a dramatic resolution of the meaning of God” and a large part of why my favorite benediction stresses that God is love.

Christmas is a time to gather and celebrate the love we know, however it has been made real to us. For many that will be with their families of origin, or their family of choice, or both. For some, that will be with a close circle of friends, or one friend (which may be a furry friend). Two of the saints of the Edwards Church community, the late Shauneen Kroll and her good friend Jan Hemminger, were known to look for Smith students and others who were stranded in Northampton with nowhere to go, no local family or friends with whom to share the holiday. And they would open their homes, make a place at the table, and welcome the stranger as a child of God.

This Advent and Christmas, amidst the homemade cookies, the tree trimming, the gift wrapping and unwrapping, give yourself and those you love this gift: set aside moments to notice the ways in which your loved ones, and a stranger or two, really are beloved children of God.

In faith, with hope, for love,

*Michael*

## DECEMBER BIRTHDAYS

Pamela Lamlein	Katherine B. Cook
Shannon Small	Hazel Waller
Jensen Kroll	Diane Roeder
Sheri Cheung	Susan Voss
Alex Koester	Wendy Zadworny
Sarah Pease	Greg Boucher
Caroline Prince	Jared Koester

**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!

## Update from ECM

Last summer, ECM held two listening sessions to gather input from the congregation about the qualities we seek in an interim minister. On September 30, we published the profile describing our church and where we want to focus with an interim minister. You can read the full profile here: <https://opportunities.ucc.org/CustomerFTP/6395/Attachments/EdwardsNorthamptonINProfile2024.pdf>

During the last two months, we have considered many interim applications. We have completed initial interviews and are currently holding second interviews. We expect to finalize our decision very soon and will keep you informed as circumstances allow.

At this time we expect to hold the annual meeting of the congregation on January 26, 2025 and to celebrate Rev. McSherry's retirement and say farewell on February 2, 2025. For now, please know that as we enter Advent – a season of expectant waiting and preparation – we are grateful for what has been, and we look forward to what God has in store for us. “Gathering at the crossroads of ancient faith and contemporary culture, we are a Christian church asking God to open us to a new way.”

## Edwards Church Scholarship Application

A scholarship application form is now available. For more information contact Michael at [minister@edwardschurchnorthampton.org](mailto:minister@edwardschurchnorthampton.org). To request an application email Kyla: [info@edwardschurchnorthampton.org](mailto:info@edwardschurchnorthampton.org). **The new deadline to submit an application is December 31.**

## Need For Volunteers

To adequately staff our existing commitments, the following teams or committees need at least one or more new members:

**ECM** - with the move by Chris and Jack Hjelt to North Carolina, Jack is leaving ECM, so it is down to 4 members. For more info, contact one of the current members of ECM: Mark Dion, Jeff Prince, Leon Drzewianowski, or Sandi Coyne-Gilbert.

**Outreach Grants** - This team decides how to administer our annual budget of grants to area non-profits. In addition, it evaluates grant applications from organizations and individuals seeking a grant from the Outreach portion of the New Way Fund.

**Scheduler of Liturgists and Scripture Readers** - During the Covid close down period, Rev. McSherry started recruiting liturgists and scripture readers. It will not be fair to the Interim Minister to expect them to do it. Rev. McSherry will happily show you the ropes.

**First Night Greeters** - Our church serves as a venue for performances that are part of the First Night celebration. We need folks who can work at least two hours between 12 noon and 11 PM on Dec. 31st. You will receive a free button to get entrance to all other venues for the part of the day you are not volunteering at Edwards. Contact Rev. McSherry by Dec 23.

## The Advent Party is Coming!



### Save Saturday, Dec. 7 for one of our favorite Edwards Church traditions!

**What:** A beloved Edwards Church tradition to celebrate Advent together! Worship service, tree trimming, carol singing, and a scrumptious light dinner.

**When:** Saturday, December 7 at 4 pm. Our worship service will immediately be followed by trimming the tree & carol singing at the sanctuary, and a light supper served buffet-style in the Edwards Room.

**Why on Saturday?** Downtown Northampton will be the site of the Hot Chocolate Run, a fundraiser for Safe Passages, on Sunday morning, Dec. 8. Due to road closures and parking at a premium for this event, we'll hold our worship service and Advent Party on Saturday.

**What should I bring?** Bring friends & family to share in the fun! You're also invited to bring cookies or some other sweet to share for dessert - preferably something that doesn't require utensils because folks won't be eating at tables. Desserts can be homemade or store-bought, your choice!

**What's for dinner?** Assorted finger sandwiches, chips, cheese and crackers, and beverages – things that are easy to eat while standing or transitioning back & forth between caroling, tree trimming and enjoying refreshments. Gluten-free sandwich, snack & dessert options will be provided.

If you're interested in helping with decorating and/or food set-up or clean-up, please call or email Debbie Davis: [debradavis1217@gmail.com](mailto:debradavis1217@gmail.com) or 413-626-5117.

*This event has been a favorite Edwards Church tradition for many years and you won't want to miss it! Mark Saturday, December 7th on your calendar now!*

## 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 him at the church office (413) 584-5500 or on his cell phone.

Michael                      [minister@edwardschurchnorthampton.org](mailto:minister@edwardschurchnorthampton.org)      cell: 413-531-9729

COME AND CHECK OUT THE  
NORTHAMPTON PARENT'S  
CENTER'S FALL SCHEDULE!

# 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!**

OR JOIN THE NORTHAMPTON  
PARENT'S CENTER FOR THEIR  
GIVING TUESDAY!



**Giving Tuesday is 12/3!  
You can make a  
donation online anytime  
starting now!**



**YOU can make a difference for  
Northampton Parents Center!**

Thanks to generous matching grants  
your GIVING TUESDAY donations will be doubled!

Every donation counts no matter how large or small and  
keeps our programs running for free! Please help us support families  
for many years to come by making any sized donation today!



<http://givingtuesday.mightycause.com/story/npc2024>

# December 2024

NPC = Northampton Parent's Center  
HSA = Hampshire Support Alliance

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1 10 Worship 12 CITN	2 9:30 NPC	3 9:30 NPC 7 B&G 7 Gamblers Anon.	4 12 Bible Study	5 9:30 NPC 6:30 AA	6 11:30 MANNA 7 AA	7 11:30 MANNA 4 Advent Worship 5 Advent Supper
8	9 9:30 NPC	10 9:30 NPC 7 ECM 7 Gamblers Anon.	11 12 Bible Study 5:30 HSA	12 9:30 NPC 4 Care & Visitation 6:30 AA	13 11:30 MANNA 7 AA 7 Tiny Glass Tavern	14 11:30 MANNA
15 10 Worship	16 9:30 NPC	17 9:30 NPC 7 Gamblers Anon.	18 12 Bible Study	19 9:30 NPC 6:30 AA	20 11:30 MANNA 7 AA	21 11:30 MANNA
22 10 Worship	23	24 7 Christmas Eve Service	25	26 6:30 AA	27 11:30 MANNA 7 AA	28 11:30 MANNA
29 10 Worship	30	31 7 Gamblers Anon.				