



THE SPIRE

EDWARDS CHURCH *of* NORTHAMPTON
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

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January 2025

From the Senior Minister

Dear Edwards Church Community,

Happy New Year! I wish all of you the best in this New Year and in all the years to come. It has been deeply gratifying to serve as your pastor, and as the first one to be officially the senior minister and head of staff.

I am now away from Edwards until Monday, January 6. Accompanied by our children and grandchildren, Frances and I are celebrating the day 40 years ago when we promised to be together and support each other, 'til death do us part. It has been 14 years – 11 and a half here and two and a half serving in Centerville on Cape Cod – since we maintained the same address seven days a week. Among my Christmas presents are a couple of “healthy” cookbooks, a gym membership, and the sweet anticipation of setting into a new shared rhythm.



On February 2, I will be retiring and a wonderful interim minister, Rev. Jennifer Geary, will start as you begin a new phase of your journey, while mine continues along a different road. What brought us together will remain: a shared commitment to living in the Way that Jesus taught. I hope that will remain a defining feature of this community.

In his first letter to the church in Corinth, the apostle Paul wrote about his ministry there: “I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth.” (1 Cor. 3:6) Paul was one of the pastors of the community in Corinth, and Apollos was another after him. Both served God within and through the local church, each in their own time.

For the last 11 years, I have been focused on helping you deepen your faith and the church’s ties to the wider community, not just so Edwards could be recognized for serving the wider community, but so that people who are not part of this church might see evidence that following Jesus means loving your neighbor. When we have gathered on Sundays or other days, it has always been a major part of my purpose to deepen our roots and become even more grounded in God, so that we can be fed for the work of loving, whether that loving is person to person or supporting something programmatic.

That work will never be finished, but the mere act of doing it with some consistency and seeing progress over time is fulfilling. Leaving when there is work unfinished is bittersweet. Bitter because I do care deeply about you as individuals and as a community, and I will miss you. Sweet because even with occasional challenges, I think we were good for each other. We stretched each other and supported each other in growing, as together we followed the Way of Jesus. Like any good partnership, we called on each other to grow in ways we anticipated and in ways required by our shared commitments when unforeseen events occurred.

On Christmas Eve, I spoke about Howard Thurman's poem "The Growing Edge," in which he urges all of us to find renewed hope and the will to carry on when we become discouraged, because "roots are silently at work in the darkness of the earth." You could, with Thurman's blessing, think of that darkness of the earth as the ground of God and those roots as you reaching out for the same Spirit that was in Jesus. My role has provided me with the privileged perspective of knowing you in your Sunday morning best, and sometimes in the messier parts of personal and congregational life. That access helps me appreciate how much can happen here, because you are already rooted and grounded deep in the Spirit.

I have abiding confidence that your growth will be helped greatly by Rev. Geary, but it will not be her alone. It will also need to be helped along by your willingness to try new things, to trust each other, and be ready to fail and try again. More than anything, I believe it will depend on how much you are willing to work – within reasonable limits – like it depends on you, and then rest and play together, knowing that it also depends on God. "I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth." May it be so, and may it be soon enough to see the fruits of your labor.

In faith, with hope, for love,
Michael

Reminder

The Annual Meeting of the congregation of Edwards Church of Northampton is expected to take place **immediately after the worship service on Sunday, January 26th**. Attendance will be both in person and via Zoom. **In person participants will gather in Addis Hall** for a light lunch and the in-person portion of the meeting.

ECM Meeting Minutes

December 10, 2024

Attendees: Mark Dion, Leon Drzewianowski, Michael McSherry, Sandi Coyne-Gilbert
Adam Simon, Jeff Prince

Absent: all present

Meeting called to order 7:06 pm

Moderator: Mark Dion

Opening Devotional: Michael

Approval of last minutes from October meeting: approved (Thank you, Jeff!)

Youth Activity Leaders Update: The children and parents are comfortable with our activity leaders. Zoe will be leaving for Christmas break on December 15. Michael will speak with people about potentially covering for Zoe. Sandi shared about how wonderful both leaders are with the children. She shared how Zoe offered to help with her grand-daughters without asking. Both are committed to the kids and are easy to work with.

Liz Finn information: Michael corresponded with Dr. Bosse to put more into asking Liz about more permanent housing. The situation was presented to Liz, and changes have been made to the housing placement, which might be better for her. Unfortunately, Liz is not moving on the idea of staying outside. More to follow.

Coolidge Pew and Gift: Mark presented to the woman in charge of the museum. The Coolidge Foundation wants the pew, but a tape measure must be submitted to determine its specifics. After the first of the year, plans will be firmed up. There is an RFP for the museum so companies can assist in the development of the building, and this will include the pew. The size of the pew will be figured into the construction of what the museum will look like. Michael will measure and report to Mark to share with the museum.

Pulpit coverage: Michael has arranged a schedule of ministers to cover while he is out of town. Marguerite Sheehan will be preaching on Dec 22 and Julia Kahn will preach on Dec 29. All were comfortable with this action. Michael was thanked for being so proactive.

Personnel Handbook Update: Thank you, Jeff and your colleagues, for the work on this project. Mark offered a couple of small edits for the draft. Leon offered small changes to the handbook in terms of titles, such as Executive Committee is ECM, and Kyla's title shows as Operations Manager at this time.

Bylaws: A question about the bylaws and titles was raised. The bylaws in their current state will be presented at the annual meeting for the community's review. "A vote on the handbook will be emailed within the next week."

Outreach Update: A significant gift was made to World Central Kitchen for its work in North Carolina. There is approximately \$1,600 in the budget left and a determination of who to give the remaining money will be made shortly. The Community Action Fuel Assistance Fund will most likely get the most significant amount, and other organizations will be selected.

Staffing for First Night: We are trying to re-recruit people from previous years. Justin will come at 9pm and stay until the end. The last act will go on at 9. Music will stop an hour earlier than it had. Past years, Michael has left at 12:30 or 1. Hopefully, Justin will be leaving earlier. He is being paid for this time at the church. All agreed. Mark has agreed to handle the scheduling, and so Michael will work with Mark to take this over.

Annual Reports: must be available by Dec 27. Mark is working on drafts of reports. ECM has agreed Mark does not need to share but simply prepare and send it to Kyla. The booklet must be available on January 12 so church members can access it before the annual meeting. Assignments will be set up among ECM members for the meeting.

Music Team: We are looking for new members of this committee. Chris Hjelt has left, and we need someone to take over. Next Friday (Dec 13), “Tiny Glass Tavern,” there will be a ticketed concert with different styles event, not a Crossroads event. Two Crossroads events are scheduled for next year, one in February and one in May. Attempts were made to create a holiday event, but it did not come to pass.

Other Business: Leon mentioned the budget was sent to ECM members. Mention was made that pledges were held tight. Sabra has suggested responses have been strong but with people moving away and also retiring, we might find some drop in the pledged amounts. The 5% trailing average came in at \$421,000, and the amount we are moving into the budget is \$339,238 for additional monies for next year. New Way Inreach had \$15,000, ECM had \$27,000, and Outreach had \$97,000, which had not been used. Concern was expressed about monies that have not been used since 2023. Shall we give more money to the committees? The budget will be sent to the Finance Committee and presented at the meeting.

Leon also mentioned that we need more ECM members and invite more potential members to get involved in the upcoming years. We will discuss this in our upcoming meeting.

Michael has been invited to do an exit interview with the Committee on Church and Ministry of the Hampshire Organization of the Church of Christ.

January 7th, 645pm to 715pm. He believes a church member should be there.

Closing Devotional: Leon

Next Meeting Date: January 6, 7 pm

Assignments:

Agenda: Jeff

Facilitator: Leon

Opening Devotional: Mark

Minutes: Sandi

Closing Devotional: Michael

The meeting closed at 8:30 pm.

The ECM then went into executive session to discuss matters related to staff appreciation and the search for an interim.

Respectfully submitted,
Sandi Coyne-Gilbert

Thank you Fellowship Hosting Team!



Thank you, thank you, thank you to all who served on the Fellowship Hosting Team in 2024! Working in teams of two to three, these volunteers arrive early every Sunday to make sure that tasty beverages and snacks are available to complement our post-worship fellowship time. Our experience as members of the Edwards Church faith community is enhanced when we have the opportunity to mingle after worship to chat about the service, share news, concerns, or a laugh or two, and enjoy each other's company. ***The next time you see one of the volunteers listed below, please thank them for the time and talent they share in making our fellowship time together possible!***

And, if you'd like to get involved in the life of the church as a member of this team, please see Grace Del Vecchio or Debbie Davis at church or contact Debbie at debradavis1217@gmail.com or 413-626-5117. We'd be happy to team you up with another volunteer so you can co-host together.

Our wonderful Fellowship Hosting Team volunteers are ...

Sue Anderson	Melissa Mattison
Sarah Briggs	Susan & Brian Swift
Emmy Clausing	Sandra Rossi
Carolyn Dion	Ella Stocker
Laura Frogameni	Kelly Tice
Ruth Griggs	Michele Whiting
Kathy & Ron Korza	

Submitted with gratitude by
Grace Del Vecchio & Debbie Davis, Fellowship Hosting Team Coordinators

Christmas Pageant Update

We broke away from the traditional Christmas pageant this year – no costumes and no rehearsals needed. A new nativity set was purchased and as people arrived for the service, they were asked to choose a figurine to be brought up during the birth story. Thank you to Ella Stocker for her beautiful reading of the words of Desmond Tutu and to Adam Simon for his music during which the “shepherds, kings, sheep, and more” each made their way to the stable under the star. And a round of applause to each of you who helped make the pageant a success.





Thanks Cathedral in the Night Team!

Six times a year a crew of dedicated, caring Edwards Church volunteers gather to create good food for and be in community with the Cathedral in the Night congregation. *We'd like to express our deep appreciation for all the folks listed below who served on the team in 2024, the thirteenth year of our partnership with Cathedral. By giving of themselves, these folks are living out the gospel in a tangible way that directly serves people in our community who are housing- and food-insecure.*

Edwards Church is one of many faith communities who partner with Cathedral in the Night, an outdoor Christian community that creates a safe place for all people: the homeless, the housed, the church-less, and the church-ed, to build community, experience spiritual enrichment, and enjoy hot meals together. Cathedral's worship service and meal takes place outdoors on the sidewalk in front of First Churches Northampton every Sunday evening – no matter what the weather. Through our every-other-month partnership, Edwards volunteers have built strong ties with each other and with our Cathedral friends.

Those who serve on the Cathedral in the Night Ministry Team can do so whether they know how to cook or not, prefer working on their own or with others, or have just an hour or the better part of an entire day to give of their time and talents. Some volunteers participate once or twice a year and many help out every time we have a partnership "date" with our Cathedral friends. New volunteers are always welcome! Please contact one of the co-chairs listed below if you'd like to learn more!

Cathedral in the Night Ministry Team, for living out God's word through your loving service.

Sue Anderson
 Carla Bee & Danny Shanahan
 Marisa Brown Ludwig &
 Peter Ludwig
 Sheri & Floyd Cheung
 Emmy Clausing
 First Churches/St. John's
 Youth Group
 Sandi Coyne & Gaston
 Gilbert
 David Dickinson & Claudia
 Lyons

Deb & Jon Dietrich
 Susan & Leon Drzewianowski
 Nancy Flickinger
 Laura Frogameni
 Jim Green
 Sally & Al Griggs
 Beth Henneman
 Chris Hjelt
 Dianne Hobbs
 Lynda Kamik
 Kathy Korza
 Laura Kroll

Mattison-Gulotta family
 Michael McSherry
 Sandra Rossi
 Emily Schmalzer
 Marguerite Sheehan
 Cynthia Stanton
 Ella Stocker
 Susan & Brian Swift
 Janie Thurber
 Hazel & Marc Waller
 Michele Whiting
 Carla Wirzburger

With thanks for all who participate in this ministry,
 Debbie Davis & Grace Del Vecchio, Co-Coordinator, Cathedral in the Night Ministry Team
 Debbie's contact info: debradavis1217@gmail.com or 413-.626.5117

THE BRIDGING THE DIVIDE COALITION
AND FORBES LIBRARY INVITE YOU TO

THE WALL BETWEEN:

WHAT JEWS AND PALESTINIANS
DON'T WANT TO KNOW ABOUT
EACH OTHER

*Featuring authors Raja G. Khouri
and Jeffrey J. Wilkinson, PhD.*

The authors will share their collaboration on a ground-breaking work that seeks to bridge the divide between Jews and Palestinians in the diaspora.

A Jew and a Palestinian, they have listened deeply to each other's narratives to develop empathy for one another, an essential alternative to endless conflict.

A moderated Q&A will take place following the presentation.



**Thursday, January 16
from 7:00-8:30 pm on Zoom**

Free and open to the public.

REGISTER: tinyurl.com/TheWallBetween2025



The Bridging the Divide Coalition, largely composed of diverse local peace and justice activists, seeks to promote dialogue that fosters understanding. For more information, contact saraweinberger128@gmail.com



We thank our co-sponsors: Beit Ahavah Reform Synagogue of Greater Northampton, Congregation B'nai Israel Tikkun Olam Committee, Critical Connections, Edwards Church, Earth Action, Friends of Standing Together, Islamic Society of Western Massachusetts, Jewish Community of Amherst Tikkun Olam Committee, Karuna Center for Peace Building, Sojourner Truth School for Social Change Leadership, Traprock Center for Peace and Justice, and the Unitarian Society of Northampton and Florence.



JANUARY BIRTHDAYS

Jean Koester	Lawrence Mattison
Sharon Carlson	Linda Smith
Jillian Grant	Julie Abel
Todd Rossi	Marjorie Tauer
Susan Canning	Nathan Korza
Paul Voss	Laura Frogameni

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

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

January 2015

NPC = Northampton Parent's Center
 HSA = Hampshire Support Alliance
 VJV = Valley Jazz Voices
 B&G = Building & Grounds

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
			1 9:30 NPC	2 9:30 NPC 6:30 AA	3 11:30 MANNA 7 AA	4 11:30 MANNA
5 10 Worship	6 9:30 NPC 7 ECM 7 VJV	7 9:30 NPC 7 Gamblers Anon.	8 9:30 NPC 12 Bible Study 5:30 HSA	9 9:30 NPC 4 Care & Visitation 6:30 AA 7 B&G	10 11:30 MANNA 7 AA	11 11:30 MANNA 7 Kimaya Diggs Recital
12 10 Worship 4 VJV	13 9:30 NPC	14 9:30 NPC 3 Prayer Shawl 7 Gamblers Anon.	15 9:30 NPC 12 Bible Study 7 Finance	16 9:30 NPC 6:30 AA	17 11:30 MANNA 7 AA	18 11:30 MANNA 4 Culomba Concert
19 10 Worship	20 9:30 NPC	21 9:30 NPC 7 Gamblers Anon.	22 9:30 NPC 12 Bible Study	23 9:30 NPC 6:30 AA	24 11:30 MANNA 7 AA	25 11:30 MANNA
26 10 Worship 11 Annual Meeting	27 9:30 NPC	28 9:30 NPC 3 Prayer Shawl 7 Gamblers Anon.	29 9:30 NPC 12 Bible Study	30 9:30 NPC 6:30 AA	31 11:30 MANNA 7 Blue Heron Concert 7 AA	