



THE SPIRE

EDWARDS CHURCH *of* NORTHAMPTON
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

Vol. 35 No. 2

February 2025

From the Senior Minister

Dear Edwards Church Community,

The stoles that ministers wear when preaching or otherwise engaged in leading worship are ancient symbols of our office. We are what the United Church of Christ (UCC) calls “authorized ministers,” individuals who have the required education and training to faithfully fulfill a role that requires people to trust and confide in us. We have been through a process of discernment and vetting conducted by groups of churches called associations, who confirm our sense of call and our fitness for this ministry.



Once admitted to authorized ministry, we agree to abide by the Ministerial Code of Ethics and the covenantal expectations of the ministries for which we are trained. One aspect of those ethics and expectations is maintaining professional boundaries. In a parish setting, this means that when we leave a church, we commit to avoiding contact with people in the church we are leaving until at least a year after the next “permanent” pastor has started at the church. This serves several purposes.



First, members of the congregation will often become attached to the retiring or relocating minister and want to continue their relationship. However, it is also important for the church and its members to form the same sort of relationship with a newly arriving minister. Accordingly, when a minister no longer serves in a setting, they remove themselves from it to give space for new relationships to form.

Second, the departing minister is departing for a reason, in my case retirement. I care deeply for this community and its members. I have done my best for you. I also have a family and friends, who I need to spend more time with at this point in my life. They are in Boston and scattered across the country. I will also explore some new forms of service to use my time and talents for God and neighbor. I have dabbled in them while directing full-time energy to the needs of this church and its people. Now I need the freedom to pursue those other causes.

The apostle Paul wrote to people he loved to clarify the roles he and another pastoral leader played in the life of their church: “I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the growth.” (1 Cor. 3:6) All of the former and current pastors of Edwards have planted and watered here. We have done so not to draw you closer to us (though that often happens naturally) , but to God and each other, in order to do God’s work in the world. With that focus, God will take care of all of us, as we care for each other and the wider community, wherever we are. And now, another pastor will tend this garden.



In faith, with hope, for love,
Michael

From the Interim Minister

Greetings from your new interim pastor. First and foremost, I ask God’s blessings upon this congregation – parishioners, staff, and pastor during this time of endings and saying good-bye. May God’s Spirit minister to you as you celebrate and mourn. May you extend grace to one another as change affects each in unique ways.

You might be wondering, what happens next. The month of February can be a difficult time for many affected by the season of winter so I suggest we proceed slowly. For the month of February, we will worship, pray, and familiarize ourselves with each other. During March, we will worship, pray, and plan. As spring arrives we will together create the process we hope to utilize as the congregation assesses who and what it is at this moment, who its neighbors are and what God is calling this congregation to do and be in the future. Once that plan is in place we will worship, pray, and intentionally engage in the process of calling a new settled pastor while continuing to serve God in this place and time as you are so ably doing now.

Beginning on February 3, you will be able to reach me by using the minister’s email address and phone extension. Michael will be turning those over to me that day. I look forward to companioning you as you move through this time of transition.

Grace,
Rev. Jennifer Geary

ECM Meeting Minutes

January 6, 2024

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

The meeting started at 7:06 pm.

Leon kicked off the meeting with the approved minutes.

Mark provided an insightful and thoughtful opening devotional.

Personnel Handbook:

The personnel handbook was discussed. ECM approved the handbook appropriately. Copies will be provided to all current employees.

Bylaws: will be presented at the Annual Meeting, and copies will be distributed.

ECM members extended their thanks to Jeff, Laura and Janet for their diligence and hard work.

Outreach Update: Discussion about the New Way grants. Does this mean that the organization or program applying must be “new,” or can we provide funds to more organizations that might have received funds from us before? The ECM feels that needs are serious, and we want to give Outreach the approval to do what they believe to be the best use of the funds. This will be put in front of the church for a final report.

The following wording will be included in materials to enable the church membership to vote on the Outreach monies:

“Resolved that the congregation of Edwards Church generally places excellent trust and confidence in its board, committees, and teams and is grateful for their service.

Further Resolved, the Outreach Grants team is hereby authorized to make grants from the New Way funds allocated to Outreach Grants without regard to whether the entity, program, or activity to be funded is new or an expansion of a preexisting entity, program, or activity. “

Annual Meeting: The report is being completed, and we anticipate that all committee reports will be completed and presented by Thursday, January 11. Mark mentioned that the vote for ECM members was not included in the original report from ECM.

We discussed the Clerk position, and Sandi agreed to take it on for the upcoming period. Leon will take over the Moderator. Thanks were also extended to Mark for his dedication to his role over the past year.

Annual Meeting announcement: The announcement will be made next Sunday, and the Sunday following from the pulpit will be on January 12 and January 19. Jeff revised the announcement from last year for guidance in providing the announcement.

Leon will work with Kyla to get food for the annual meeting. Members of the congregation will provide sandwiches, salads, and desserts.

Pledge Update: We received \$60,000 in pledges, but we budgeted \$70,000. We anticipate that we might receive some late pledges. This is significantly lower than where we were six years ago.

Music Report: Adam and Mark are trying to get the rest of the music team involved. We could use another member or two. The Crossroads Event is coming up

New business: no topics presented.

Closing Prayer: Michael, his last with ECM. You shall be missed Michael!

Next Meeting: February 13, 2025. The meeting is to begin at 6:30 pm. Jennifer should be joining us.

Roles assigned for next meeting:

Opening Devotional: Leon

Closing Devotional: Jennifer

Minutes: Sandi

Facilitator: Mark

Agenda: Jeff

Respectfully Submitted,
Sandi Coyne-Gilbert

What to do about Lent?

The season of Lent will begin on March 5th. What practices would you like to see offered for those 6 weeks as we prepare for Easter? Additional worship? Book discussions? Service projects? Movie time? If you have ideas or suggestions, please share them with Rev. Geary soon so planning can be timely.

Two New Initiatives Receive Support at the Annual Meeting

Members gathered for the annual meeting considered two items of new business. Both received support and all are welcome to engage in:

1. That Edwards Church members would like to be represented on the Northampton Interfaith Reparations Roundtable. This is a meeting of representatives from neighboring faith communities to consider their own histories and that of our Northampton community through the lens of racial harm and community repair. The first meeting will be held Monday, February 10 from 4:30-6 pm at a Northampton house of worship.

2. That Edwards Church members welcome opportunities to engage in the City of Northampton's Racialized Harm and Reparative Action (RHRA) community outreach month. This is a short term engagement project that during the month of February will include opportunities to share community engagement events notices on our social media, opportunities for members to host community conversations and conduct outreach to increase engagement with the public surveys RHRA will be conducting. Below are some events the Commission has planned.

Community Engagement Events (so far)

Thurs: January 16th Slavery & Hamp; Northampton Lecture Series will be starting up. Betty along with Ousmane Power-Greene and Dylan Gaffney will be discussing the Slavery Research Project findings

(Zoom Registration link below)

<https://www.historicnorthampton.org/upcoming-programs.html>

Mon. Jan. 20 11:30 - 12:30 Martin Luther King Jr. Day: Where Do We Go From Here? Freedom Dreaming and Reparative Action in Age of Trump (First Churches) Organized by Commissioner Power-Greene

Sat. Feb. 8 5:30 - 7:00 pm "A Covenant with Evil" Racist Covenants and the Legacy of White Supremacy in the North: A Roundtable discussion about the history of racial covenants and their use in Northampton.

(Edwards Church) Organized by Commissioner Newman

Sat Feb. 15 5:30 - 6:30 pm "Finding your Roots" A workshop for African American community members to learn how to do genealogical research (location TBA) Organized by Commissioner Montgomery-Tamakloe

Tues Feb. 18: "Slavery and Freedom in Northampton and in the Colonial North" with Dr. Jennifer DeClue: Lecture 3 Historic Northampton (location TBA) in partnership with Historic Northampton

Sat. February 22 6:00 - 9:00 pm The Art of Repair: Reparations as a Creative Expression (this will be an art installation from local artists of color about how their work engages racial harm and community repair (location TBA) Organized by Commissioner Lundquist

Fri. Feb. 28 Where Do We Go From Here? Freedom Dreaming and Reparative Action in the Age of Trump Part II (location TBA) Organized by Commissioner Power-Greene

More information will be posted in our church's Weekly Messages. Contact for these two initiatives of our congregation is Laura Frogameni. You can reach her at text/call 413-270-0287 and laurafrogameni@gmail.com

MUSIC AT THE CROSSROADS

presents



BLUE HERON

a more subtle art

the late 14th-century Ars subtilior

A new program featuring the head-spinningly complex music of the generation after Machaut – stories of mythological characters and deities set to jazzy, intoxicating polyphony.



Jason McStoots



Sophie Michaux



Aaron Sheehan



Orfi Harmelin



Scott Metcalfe



Debra Nagy

FRIDAY FEBRUARY 28TH • 7PM

EDWARDS CHURCH

297 MAIN STREET NORTHAMPTON

NO TICKET REQUIRED

SUGGESTED DONATION: \$10 - \$30

100% OF DONATIONS BENEFIT

COMMUNITY ACTION PIONEER VALLEY



Edwards Church produces and fully funds the Music at the Crossroads series to benefit local non-profit organizations.

BLUEHERON.ORG

NURTURING DADS NETWORK

SUPPORT GROUP FOR FATHERS



Being a dad in 2025 is not easy!

Come join our online peer support group for dads as we help each other on our journeys to become the best fathers we can be.

We maintain an inclusive definition of fatherhood: anyone who identifies as a dad is welcome.

Co-facilitated by Aaron Kagan and Gabriel Reif, with a combined 12+ years leading workshops and dads' support groups, plus extensive experience in the fields of education and coaching.

Questions? Email aaronkagancoach@gmail.com

Biweekly Virtual Meetings

Begins February 12th

8 sessions

**Wednesdays
7:30 – 9pm**

**Sliding scale
\$35 - \$50 / session**

Additional financial support available upon request.
Commitment to accessibility.



INTERESTED?

JOIN US!



<https://tinyurl.com/529asnm>

Northampton Parents Center

Save *the date* **FAMILY FUN SUNDAY**

FEB. 9

**3-6 [AT] NPC
MUSIC & PUPPETS
WITH TOM KNIGHT
[AT] 4:30!**

**FREE!
COME ANYTIME
OPTIONAL POTLUCK**



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!

FEBRUARY BIRTHDAYS

Marc Abel, Ruby Smith, Sandra Rossi, Dan Shanahan, Deanna O'Connor, Kimberly Schlichting, Margaret Allen, Tracy Teague, Marc Waller, Brian Swift, Ana 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

I am a stranger to all of you, which could make it difficult for you to reach out to me when you need pastoral care. My hope is to casually connect with as many of you as possible over the next few months to make reaching out in troubling times a little easier. Please stop in the office or contact me to set up a visit. I will have quite a bit of flexible time during February: (413) 584-5500 x2 or minister@edwardschurchnorthampton.org

I have tentatively set the following times for open office hours: Tuesdays 5-7 PM; Wednesdays 1-3 PM. I look forward to getting to know you.

February 2015

NPC = Northampton Parent's Center
 HSA = Hampshire Support Alliance
 M@C = Music at the Crossroads

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
						1 8:30 YWCA 11:30 MANNA
2 10 Worship 11 Michael's Goodbye Party	3 9:30 NPC	4 9:30 NPC 7 Gamblers Anon.	5 9:30 NPC 11 Bible Study	6 9:30 NPC 6:30 AA	7 11:30 MANNA 5 YWCA 7 AA	8 8:30 YWCA 11:30 MANNA
9 10 Worship 3 NPC Family Fun	10 9:30 NPC	11 9:30 NPC 3 Prayer Shawl 7 Gamblers Anon.	12 9:30 NPC 11 Bible Study 5:30 HSA	13 9:30 NPC 4 Care & Visitation 6:30 ECM 6:30 AA	14 11:30 MANNA 5 YWCA 7 AA	15 8:30 YWCA 11:30 MANNA 7 Kimaya Diggs Concert
16 10 Worship	17 9:30 NPC	18 9:30 NPC 7 Gamblers Anon.	19 9:30 NPC 11 Bible Study 6 Investment	20 9:30 NPC 6:30 AA	21 11:30 MANNA 5 YWCA 7 AA	22 8:30 YWCA 11:30 MANNA
23 10 Worship 1 CITN	24 9:30 NPC	25 9:30 NPC 3 Prayer Shawl 7 Gamblers Anon.	26 9:30 NPC 11 Bible Study	27 9:30 NPC 6:30 AA	28 11:30 MANNA 5 YWCA 7:30 M@C 7 AA	