



THE SPIRE

EDWARDS CHURCH *of* NORTHAMPTON
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

Vol. 35 No. 3

March 2025

From the Interim Minister

Lent & Worship

Fast to Feast

Opening Space for God

The season of Lent is 46 days spanning from Ash Wednesday to Easter. Lent literally means lengthening, as the days lengthen during this time as we transition from winter into spring. Religiously, it is an intentional 40 days of extra devotion plus 6 Sundays. Traditionally Christians are invited to more time in prayer, Bible study and service, and more giving of resources in the support of others. To facilitate that extra devotion, folks are asked to give up other things, to fast, opening up space and resources for the Lenten devotion.

This year during Lent, our Sunday services will focus on opening space for God in our lives – to fast from something so that we might have space to feast on another. For these 6 Sundays we will utilize a different order of worship. Also, daily devotional booklets are available for your personal use. There will be other opportunities to engage in devotion that have not yet been solidified. Watch your weekly emails for more information.

Wednesday, March 5 – Ash Wednesday – 7 PM

Fast from Complaining; Feast on Appreciation

Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21

March 9

Fast from Fear; Feast on Faith

Psalm 91:1-2, 9-16; Luke 4:1-13

March 16

Fast from Pessimism; Feast on Optimism

Psalm 27; Luke 13:31-35

March 23

Fast from Self-pity; Feast on Joy

Psalm 63:1-8; Luke 13:1-9

March 30

Fast from Bitterness; Feast on Forgiveness

Psalm 32:1-5; Luke 15:1-3, 11b-32

April 6 – Communion

Fast from Selfishness; Feast on Service

Psalm 126; John 12:1-8

April 13 – Palm Sunday

Fast from Criticism; Feast on Praise

Psalm 118:1-2, 20-29; Luke 19:28-40



Let's Party on Sunday!!

Mardi Gras – Fat Tuesday – Shrove Tuesday

Pancake Supper

5:00 PM - March 2

Games, Food and Fun for all ages.

We'll gather in Addis Hall on **Sunday** to learn some of the traditions around the Tuesday before Lent. We'll have craft activities and play games in addition to enjoying a delicious supper of pancakes, sausage and fruit. The evening will end with the burning of last year's palms in preparation for the Ash Wednesday service.



Gather in the Sanctuary for a time of centering, confession, and the imposition of ashes. We use the symbol of ashes to remind us of our mortality and dependence on God. Ritually, we engage in confession as a spiritual washing in preparation for our devotion during lent. This service is appropriate for elementary age through adult.

Become a Member of Edwards Church

New members will be received during worship on Palm Sunday, April 13, 2025. In preparation we will have a couple information meetings for those seeking more information about joining. The first session is tentatively set for Tuesday, March 18 but can move if that doesn't work for participants. Please let Rev. Geary know if you are interested and if the 18th works for you.

ECM Meeting Minutes

Attendees: Jeff Prince, Jennifer Geary, Leon Drzewianowski, Sandi Coyne-Gilbert, Ron Korza, Mark Dion

Absent: Adam Simon

Facilitator: Leon

The meeting was called to order at 6:43 pm

Opening Devotional: Jeff offered thoughts on “beginnings.” What is God calling us to do next?

Minutes approved by all

Welcome to Ron, who is serving on ECM, and to Jennifer, our interim minister. We are grateful for both of their commitments.

Outreach: Grace Delvecchio has joined Outreach, and we hope the committee will continue to grow. Outreach intended to meet last week, but the storm kept them from meeting. Hopefully, they will meet in a couple of weeks. Looking forward to a boost of energy and help from the congregation.

Music Team: Jennifer was contacted by Avery Sharp, who is looking for a place to perform in the fall. She will share this with Mark and Adam to ensure we have considered this request. There is a Crossroads concert on Feb 28. David Dickinson will join the music team. An invitation was received to see one of the premier jazz performers. More to come. Work is taking place on equipment.

Jennifer's transition: She has many questions, including how to handle a funeral service in March. She was asked if we have a group in the church that does the receptions after funeral services. We do not have a group that does receptions. Local vendors were discussed, and Jennifer is pulling together a list of local vendors for anyone who might need it.

The duties of the ECM were discussed. If questions arise related to decisions with committees, some are made in committees, but most must come through the ECM. Jennifer will bring any questions to our attention to ensure consistency first and then we can decide where we go from there.

Jennifer was contacted by someone who wanted to join the church. Jennifer will offer a potential member gathering in the near future. She is looking for folks who are long-time and newer members who would like to share information with potential members.

Who is in charge of worship? Jennifer would like to make some changes to worship during Lent. ECM is involved. Emmy Clausing sets up Communion Sundays. She does a great job. There is a worship group but it is not very active. Mark will look through his information from past years and email it to everyone so the worship committee can be activated to work with Jennifer.

Jennifer will have sign-up clipboards to pass among the pews on Sunday morning to give folks an opportunity to volunteer for Sunday morning positions. Sandi mentioned she has read, and there are several other people who have read in the past. Leon asked Sandi to put together a list of people who were readers in the past. Sandi will contact Kyla send out an email to readers that have read in the past and ask them to contact Jennifer.

Policy on snow cancellations: Jennifer spoke with Kyla and Adam. If we decide not to worship in person, we can still do Zoom. We need to have time when the decision is made. Also, clarify what Kyla is asked to do outside regular work hours to inform church members about service cancellations. Mark explained his work and that the decision was made two days before people could decide. The two-day time frame did not feel right to all members, but we did agree that we needed a policy. We are now on Channel 22 and 40 for cancellations. Questions about whether the church closes or not were discussed. Jennifer pointed out that the Spire (weekly bulletin) comes out on Friday, whereas most churches send it on Saturday. Leon asked Jennifer to put a short paragraph together about a snow policy. Jennifer already has something written, including a note from Kyla that is going out on Saturday at noon regarding any cancellation of services. This will contain a Zoom link.

Policy: The church moderator and Head of Staff will decide on Saturday morning whether to cancel live service. By noon, an email will be sent to everyone on our mailing list stating either cancellation of service or Zoom only. Information will also be made on Channel 22 and Channel 40, as well as on Facebook.

Jennifer suggested a team of five people to guide the transition to begin the process of finding a settled minister. She feels this can help the congregation discern where we go from here and what staffing model to use before we begin looking for a settled minister. There is a great deal of discernment that needs to happen. This is the goal of the transition team, not the search committee. The transition team will help with the profile. Some of the transition committee members may serve on the search committee. Jennifer will send a description of the transition team and the suggestions of the members who should be on (people who have served on such a committee before, new people who are still settling into the church, etc.)

Leon proposed that we have a special meeting to discuss the transition to be scheduled before the next ECM meeting. We will hold a special meeting about the transition on March 2 right after church. In the Heritage Room. (note: after this meeting it was determined that two members could not make the March 2 meeting. A new date will be picked as we hope to have this meeting before the next ECM meeting.

Jonathan Edwards: Mark shared Floyd Cheung's email regarding Jonathan Edwards's marker, which will be modified to mention his owning slaves. No amount of money was noted regarding modifying the marker in front of First Churches. Wording and cost will be discussed later.

Marketing: Discussed social media and our website. We are going to have to spend some time working for growth. Sandi mentioned purging the name tags in front of the church. We have the opportunity to use Violet and Zoe in our campaign given their age and their involvement in the community. Sandi suggested a year-long campaign beginning with website development and social media assistance.

There is a webmaster we have an agreement with: Ryan Askew. We may use our connection with him to redo our website. Leon will check on how things are going with him and then we can determine how to move forward from this point.

Other business: Pledges are down, and in the past, we have sent out letters to all who have pledged in the past, but we have not received their pledge this year. Leon will send a letter to the people who have not returned their pledge cards. Jennifer noted that when she attended worship in January and wanted to put cash in the offering plate there were no envelopes to put it in. She suggested that we have envelopes, pencils and visitor information cards in the pews.

Jennifer asked if we have a way to donate online. Leon mentioned that he had even seen the QR codes used by other Churches Jennifer has seen where people who give online can throw a card that says, "I gave electronically," to be part of the in-church contribution. When it is automatic online, they rarely stop, but the pledge can go down if you only send it by mail or put it in the collection plate.

Mark mentioned that QR codes are used with Crossroads events to donate to the organization we are supporting.

Jennifer asked about Tee Shirts, but we have not done that recently. Jennifer is running in the St. Pat's Day run and she hoped to wearing an Edwards tee shirt.

Closing Devotional: Jennifer

Meeting closed at 8:38pm

The next ECM meeting is Monday, March 10th, at 7pm.

Next meeting Assignments.

Opening Devotional: Ron

Moderator: Leon

Agenda: Jeff

Minutes: Sandi

Closing Devotional: Mark

Respectfully Submitted,

Sandi Coyne-Gilbert

Women and Religious Leadership: New Herstories, New Perspectives

March 6-8, Smith College

Fifty years ago, virtually no women served as the primary religious leaders in congregations, synagogues, mosques, or temples in the US. Today, a handful of denominations (UCC and UUA) have gender parity, and even those who still exclude women leaders have grassroots advocacy groups agitating for change. This free symposium gathers fourteen scholars from across the country and reflects on these changes within contemporary Buddhist, Christian, Jewish, and Muslim communities. For more information click [this](#) link.

Stewardship for 2025

A huge thank you to everyone who has already pledged for 2025. If you would still like to make a pledge please know it's not too late. If you need a pledge card please reach out to Kyla at (413) 584-5500 ext. 1 or info@edwardschurchnorthampton.org.

Daylight Savings Time

A reminder that Daylight Savings Time begins Sunday, March 9th. Don't forget to change your clocks!



Michael's Farewell Benediction

“God is love. Those who abide in love abide in God, and God in them. Know this love of God, show this love of God, and go make peace.”

Thank you, thank you, thank you.

Dear Edwards Church Community, I know I started many prayers that way, but this time I'm not saying a prayer, but directly addressing you. In the past few weeks, since the fabulous send off you gave me, I have slept in, walked the dog, taken two trucks of furniture to donate, been to Austin, TX for a four-day weekend to help our son and his wife frame a new deck on their house, and walked the dog some more. Oh, and I have visited local churches in Boston and made many home cooked dinners for my hard working wife. Such is my first month of retirement!

Thank you for the many, many cards, emails and texts, your many gifts (tangible and others), the dear parting words, and especially for the 11 years of trust and faithful engagement in the life of the church. Pastors come and go. The church is the people, gathered in sharing the work of the vineyard, and you joined me in making it all it could be for the last 11 years. May God bless you and keep you. May God make God's face to shine upon you and be gracious unto you, and give you peace. Thank you, thank you, thank you.

In faith, with hope, for love,
Michael
2-27-25

Volunteers Needed at Manna Community Kitchen!

Manna is seeking volunteers on Wednesdays, Fridays, and Saturdays. Whether you're experienced or new, your help is greatly appreciated!

Ways to Help:

Meal prep

Serving meals

Cleaning up & Dish washing

Delivery on Thursdays

Every bit counts, and your support truly makes a difference. If you can assist, please sign up below.

https://mannanorthampton.org/volunteer_calendar/volunteer-signups/

Thank you for your generosity! Manna looks forward to seeing you soon!



Transitions, Transitions, Transitions.

Friends, We are following your transition to a new pastoral team from afar, and we are in the midst of our own transition to a new town, new community, new church. We are taking with us memories of your love and support over the past 8 years while we worshiped with you, sang with you, worked with you and grew with you. Your final blessing on our last Sunday was like a benediction sending us out. We will treasure our time together always.

So what does our transition look like? We are beginning to feel settled. We recognize a lot of faces, know a number of names and are hopeful that we can actually put names and faces together soon. Finding a new church has been a challenge. You are a hard act to follow. The good news is that there are many UCC churches in our town. They mainly identify as their former denomination: First Reformed Church (UCC), First Christian Church (UCC) etc. They are also divided between energetic and lively African American and more sedate Anglo American congregations. But we were surprised that only two of these congregations identify as Open and Affirming, a distinction important to us. We visited both and are happy to have found a dynamic, intergenerational and progressive congregation with a strong music program. Here is a picture from the front of the church.



We were particularly interested in their welcome statement since this task was carefully and prayerfully undertaken while we were at Edwards.

We, the members of Elon Community Church United Church of Christ, believing that everyone is created by God and that we are called as Christians to be an inclusive fellowship, declare ourselves to be an Open and Affirming congregation. We are many members with the right of private judgment and the liberty of conscience, and we celebrate that we are one body in Christ. We believe that God's love, Christ's church, and the Holy Spirit's power are for all people, regardless of their color, gender, age, ability, economic situation, sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression - or any other distinction. We see these differences not as barriers, but as blessings, and we welcome all people into the full life and ministry of this church. We will, with God's help, live by this commitment in our action as a faithful congregation.

And so we all journey on, grounded by old connections and encouraged by the growing edges that await us all. Blessings on your beautiful heads.

Chris and Jack Hjelt

1880 Brookwood Ave Apt 301

Burlington, North Carolina 27215

336 570 8634 jchjelt@yahoo.com Stop by or a visit *if you are in our area.*



MARCH BIRTHDAYS

Courtney Aquadro, Michele Carroll, Martha McCullagh, Taylor Cook, Lynda Erickson, Bud Geary, Ruth Griggs, Alfred Griggs, Elizabeth Henneman, Paula Mattison, Michael McSherry, Eugene Sielski, James Stokes-Buckles, Gwenn Swift, Matthew Buckley Wells

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.

(413) 584-5500 x2 or minister@edwardschurchnorthampton.org

I have tentatively set the following times for open office hours:
Tuesdays 5-7 PM; Wednesdays 9:30-10:45 AM.

I look forward to getting to know you.

March 2015

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

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
2 10 Worship 11:15 Fellowship	3 9:30 NPC	4 9:30 NPC 5 Pastor Open Office Hours 7 Gamblers Anon.	5 9:30 NPC 9:30 Pastor Open Office Hours 11 Bible Study 6 Truth School Board Mtg.	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 11:15 Fellowship 11:15 ECM	10 9:30 NPC 7 ECM	11 9:30 NPC 5 Pastor Open Office Hours 7 Gamblers Anon.	12 9:30 NPC 9:30 Pastor Open Office Hours 11 Bible Study 5:30 HSA	13 9:30 NPC 4 Care & Visitation 6:30 AA	14 11:30 MANNA 5 YWCA 7 AA	15 8:30 YWCA 11:30 MANNA
16 10 Worship 11:15 Fellowship	17 9:30 NPC	18 9:30 NPC 5 Pastor Open Office Hours 7 Gamblers Anon.	19 9:30 NPC 9:30 Pastor Open Office Hours 11 Bible Study	20 9:30 NPC 6:30 AA 7 Finance	21 11:30 MANNA 5 YWCA 7 AA 7:30 Organ Concert	22 8:30 YWCA 10 Organ Workshop 11:30 MANNA 7 Chivalrous Crickets Concert
23 10 Worship 11:15 Fellowship	24 9:30 NPC	25 9:30 NPC 5 Pastor Open Office Hours 7 Gamblers Anon.	26 9:30 NPC 9:30 Pastor Open Office Hours 11 Bible Study	27 9:30 NPC 6:30 AA	28 11:30 MANNA 5 YWCA 7 AA	29 8:30 YWCA 11:30 MANNA
30 10 Worship 11:15 Fellowship	31 9:30 NPC					

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413-584-5500
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website: www.edwardschurchnorthampton.org
Rev. Jennifer Geary, *Interim Minister*
Adam Simon, *Director of Music*
Sabra Aquadro, *Treasurer*
Kyla Power, *Office Manager*

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