

News from the Pews

First Congregational Church/UCC
Ashfield, MA 01330

JANUARY 2018

MINISTER'S MOMENT

Faith is taking the first step even when you can't see the whole staircase."

- Martin Luther King Jr.

There's something amiss in our part of the world... the confusion of non-vetted tax reforms, absentee leadership, mistrust sown on purpose to divide and distract. These absurd and damaging realities make it really hard to know where to focus our energies and attention alongside life's other cares and responsibilities. But here's a thought:



First Church enters the new year, 2018, with the fantastic intention to explore what God has in store for our church. Starting with **Sunday, January 7th**, following worship, and continuing with each First Sunday of the month, we will bring together our hopes and fears in order to learn more about ourselves, our community and the dynamics of our congregation. With a hearty potluck and your participation, plus a commitment to travel with the Spirit - whether as in a whisper or a shout - I am excited about helping to guide the nitty-gritty work of the interim, which we are calling "**Envisioning 2018.**"

There are a couple of essential ingredients we need to keep in mind:

- First, continue to pray for our church and the Envisioning 2018 process. We'll be including specific prayers in our Sunday sharing times.
- Next, show up for each and every event you can muster yourself and your household for. It makes such a difference to have everyone involved, because each perspective and experience matters.
- Third, be on the look-out for increased communication and forward calendaring. We will need to stay in conversation and preserve space and energy for this important work. You'll notice new efforts which may seem helpful to some, and peculiar to others; please extend patience and curiosity whenever possible as your leadership looks to find the best ways to move us through the Interim period. Remember, this means gathering information, engaging your thoughts and questions in a variety of ways, and finally, creating a Search Committee that has the right information to help shape the congregation's Profile for use in finding a Settled Minister.
- Finally, remember that this is a time-sensitive process that *takes time!* Envisioning 2018 will develop a rhythm that YOU will help to establish. Come on and join the dance! Let's be a part of "taking the first step" even if the whole staircase has yet to appear.

Peace and happiness as this New Year unfolds,

Pastor Nada

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ABOUT OUR CHURCH

Interim Pastor: Rev Nada Sellers: church 628-4470. Sunday morning Worship is at 10:00am. Children and Sunday School are concurrent with Worship. The governing body of the church is its members, who traditionally gather the second Sunday of March, June, September and December at 11:30 am for the Monthly Congregational Meeting. Call or email the church clerk, Wendy Pree (628-3875), wendypree@gmail.com; or the church moderator, Keith Obert (625-0022), obert@aol.com) with any issues/concerns you wish to include on the agenda by the Wednesday preceding the meeting.

FRIENDS AND MEMBERS ARE WARMLY WELCOMED!

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Victoria Nelson at nelsonvictoria173@gmail.com

January Choir News 2018



Choir is on break from Christmas to January 10, when interested singers will gather at 7:15 to file Fall and Christmas music in the Choir library - and enjoy a winter evening together!

On the Martin Luther King, Jr. holiday weekend, there will be a *Come and Sing* at 9:00 a.m. on **Sunday, January 14**. This is for the Choir, but is also open to anyone else who would like to sing with the Choir for the Sunday service - no previous rehearsal necessary! On **Monday, January 15**, the Choir and Youth Choir are invited to sing for the annual Martin Luther King celebration at Greenfield Community College. Rehearsal begins at 11:00 in Sloan Theater, followed by lunch and the performance from noon to 12:30 in the GCC Dining Commons. On **Sunday, January 28**, Annual Meeting Sunday, the Choir will provide special music at the 10:00 service, and will be joined by trumpet players Ted Murray and Andy Wells.

Margery Heins is Choir Director, and **Amy Roberts-Crawford** accompanies the Choir and is Organist. For information about joining either Adult Choir or Youth Choir, or about singing at GCC on January 15, please call Margery Heins at 625-8461.

Choir Schedule

Weds. **Jan. 10**: Music filing

Sun. **Jan. 14**: 9:00 *Come and Sing* Rehearsal for MLK Sunday; 10:00 Service

Mon. **Jan. 15**: 11:00 Rehearsal at GCC; 12:00 performance and lunch (see details above.)

Weds. **Jan. 24**: 7:15 - 9:00 Rehearsal

Sun. **Jan. 28**: 9:00 Rehearsal; 10:00 Service

Weds. **Jan. 31**: 7:15 - 9:00 Rehearsal

Interfaith Sanctuary Network

On **Sunday January 28th, 2018**, at 4 pm the Leverett Chorus, directed by Anne Louise White, will perform a benefit concert, "*VOICES FOR SANCTUARY*", in collaboration with the First Church Amherst's Immigrant Sanctuary Fund, at the Jewish Community of Amherst, 742 Main Street, Amherst, MA.

This concert is a benefit to support the family of Lucio Perez who is in Sanctuary at First Church Amherst.

In addition to raising much needed funds for Lucio's family, struggling economically without Lucio's income, the concert will celebrate through song, the loving, generous, strong community that continues to grow in support for Lucio, immigrant justice and resistance to cruel deportation policies.

Suggested \$10 donation (or more if inclined) at the door. Donations will go to the First Church Amherst's Immigrant Sanctuary Fund, are tax deductible, and will go to Lucio's family.

Additional donations can also be made online at

<https://tinyurl.com/lmSanctuaryFund> .

From the Trustees

Church Awarded Grant for Resurfacing Public Spaces

On December 8, the Trustees learned that the Community Foundation of Western Massachusetts would award the church \$15,800 toward the project of paving the driveways and parking lot. The grant is being funded by the Franklin Fund of the Foundation.

We are working with the Hilltown Food Pantry to discuss their needs. The Pantry has resided in the church since 1985, and every two weeks it serves 100 people from 11 towns in Franklin County who support between 450 and 500 individuals. The public safety of their clients (as well as our members) was top on our minds when we submitted the proposal.

A committee of four (Ted Murray, Gordy Van Guilder, Richard Prée, and Annie Cheatham) is following up with the original four bidders (Barlow, Duffy Willard, Warner Brothers, and Lane Construction) to determine final costs. It is clear already that the project expenses will exceed \$15,800. Over the next several months, the Trustees will explore ways to meet the full cost of this important project, perhaps using some funds from our recent capital campaign. We will also pursue other funding sources. We will have reports from time to time of our progress, so stay tuned!

Painting Project Update

Painters from the Franklin County House of Corrections worked hard in late October and early November to paint the front of the church and to scrape and prime other sections. Then early winter weather moved in and we had to stop work for the season. The sheriff's office has told us that we will be their first spring project in 2018, and everything is in order to finish the job at that time.

Tree Removal Likely

The Trustees have been advised that the two maple trees in our front yard are hollow and dangerous and should be taken down. We have learned that responsibility for this task is the state's since the trees are on the right-of-way of Rt. 116. We cannot predict when the trees will be cut, but we will plan on planting two young, healthy trees in the spring.

Annie Cheatham

First Congregational Church of Ashfield Hosts the Hilltown Variety Show 2018! in the Newly Renovated Sanctuary

If you can wiggle your ears, do dog tricks (or have a dog that can), sing, dance, do bird calls, perform magic, play an instrument or something that makes a sound, have a puppet act, read poetry or... (you get the idea), the First Congregational Church of Ashfield invites you to be a part of the fun and community and light up the newly renovated sanctuary and performance space. The show will happen Saturday Feb 10 at 7pm. To participate, come show us what you've got (aka audition) on either Saturday Jan 13, 3-5pm or Wednesday Jan 17th, 6-8pm. Call Jeannine Haas (one of the organizers) for a time slot to audition or if you cannot work up your nerve until last minute, just show up during one of the audition times and we will fit you in. We will have one required rehearsal on Friday evening Feb 9 (one night before the show).

The First Congregational Church of Ashfield has been the home base for Pauline Productions Theatre Company for the last 10 years and many choral groups, such as Village Harmony, have performed there over the years. The church believes this to be a wonderful use of this historic, comfortable, and acoustically excellent space and wishes it to continue to grow as a sanctuary for the arts as well as worship. New renovations have opened up the chancel area making it more viable as a venue for performance and other community events such as panel discussions and presentations. Also a new sound system has been added and new lighting is in the works. Come check it out. And better yet, be a part of the show.

WHAT: 1st Annual Hilltown Variety Show hosted by the First Congregational Church of Ashfield in the newly renovated sanctuary

WHEN: Auditions: Sat. Jan. 13, 3-5pm and Wed. Jan 17, 6-8pm.

Showtime: Saturday Feb. 10, 7pm

WHERE: First Congregational Church of Ashfield. 429 Main Street (Route 116 across the street from Town Hall)

HOW: Reserve an audition slot: **Jeannine Haas** (one of organizers) [413-268-3850](tel:413-268-3850), PaulineLive@gmail.com

Capital Campaign Monthly News - January 2018 First Congregational Church UCC of Ashfield

A year ago First Congregational Church of Ashfield was in discussion about whether to go forward with a Capital Campaign to raise funds to restore the church's historic George W. Reed tracker organ as well as complete a variety of other important projects. Fast forward to January 2018. For those who don't know, the Campaign was voted in, and more than the \$300,000 goal was pledged, thanks to church members and many generous donors from the wider community from about a fifty mile radius. Some of the projects have already been completed: the new pew cushions, the reconfiguration of the chancel, and the new sound system. Everyone is enjoying these positive changes.

Still to come will be donations to missions, improved lighting, reconditioning of the organ chamber - a necessary part of restoring the organ, and, of course, the organ restoration itself. William Czelusniak's Northampton organ building firm is scheduled to remove the entire organ and begin work right after Easter.

It is in the hands of the Trustees, with input from the congregation, to determine how to spend the approximately \$48,000 that exceeds the Campaign goal. Projects originally thought to be beyond the church's means are now being considered. These include: painting the exterior of the church, selectively repairing/replacing siding on the church, building an additional storage shed in the parking lot, replacing windows in Fellowship Hall, paving the driveway and parking lot, and restoring the organ's facade pipe stenciling.

In addition, since the Campaign goal was met, two grants have also been awarded. On December 8, the church, which houses the Hilltown Churches Food Pantry, received a generous grant of \$15,000 from the Community Foundation of Western Massachusetts toward paving the driveway and parking lot. The grant is funded by the Franklin Fund division of the Foundation. "This is a huge deal for our church," said Richard Prée, one of the Trustees. "We have had this on our wish list for

over a decade, and this grant will hopefully propel us forward to the finish line of this important infrastructure project." As part of the proposed paving the Trustees are working with the Food Pantry to discuss needs. The Pantry has resided in the church since 1985, and every two weeks it serves one hundred individuals from eleven towns in Franklin County who, in turn, take food to almost five hundred adults and children in need. "The public safety of their clients, as well as members of our church, was top on our minds when we submitted the proposal," said Prée. "We are in partnership with this important community service and we will be working with them to make sure everyone benefits from this collaboration." A committee from the church is following up with with bidders. "The Trustees will explore ways to meet the full cost of this important project," said committee member and Trustee Ted Murray, who also said the Trustees are hopeful the cost can be met through the Foundation grant and pledges to the Capital Campaign beyond the original goal.

Earlier in the fall another grant for \$10,000, from the Bradley Charitable Foundation in Pennsylvania, was received to be applied to the cost of restoring the organ.

The Capital Campaign covers every aspect of organ restoration except facade pipe decoration. The forward facing surfaces of the pipes were covered with gold paint long ago. But much of the original 1903 stenciled color and design have remained on the reverse sides of the pipes, and are visible today. There will be an opportunity for everyone from the congregation and wider community to attend an information session about pipe decoration after the 10:00 a.m. church service on Sunday, Feb. 11, 2018. The session will be led by Marilou Davis of Connecticut, a highly respected historic conservator. Her presentation is expected to be interesting, informative, and enjoyable.

The second year of the three-year Capital Campaign at First Congregational Church of Ashfield begins after the church's annual meeting on January 28. It has been an eventful, exciting, and successful year! Many thanks to all!

Margery Heins and Susannah Lee, Campaign Publicity
Annie Cheatham, Co-Chair, Capital Campaign
December 23, 2017

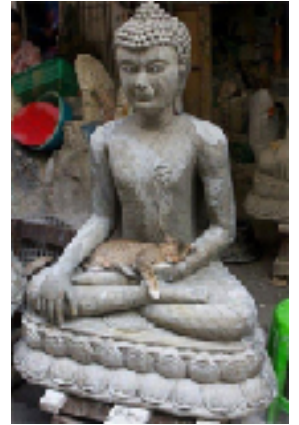
COUNCIL ON AGING Thursday, January 4th

Soup and bread served

Beverages and dessert will be provided

My cat knows how to pray.
He comes to my cushion
where I sit and curls up in
the hollow between my
crossed legs.
He purrs.
When he is finished praying
he goes to sleep in praise of
God.

Sherrill Hogen



ANNUAL MEETING

Sun. Jan. 28th, is the 257th Annual Meeting of our church. Following our 10 a.m. worship service we will gather in Friendship Hall for a delicious potluck meal, and, around 12:30 p.m., begin our Annual Mtg. At this meeting we will review what we've accomplished this past year, discuss and vote on our 2018 budget, and vote in our church officers/new committee members. (Please note: our Treas. Marie Fuller is retiring the end of June so we are in need of a new church Treas. Can you help?) We will then move on to discussing our future, with particular focus on this period of Interim Ministry. We encourage ALL to attend this meeting and discussion. Although only members may vote, the voices of our friends are extremely important. These discussions will help us develop our church profile and figure out what direction we'd like our church to go in the future. Please know that YOU are invited to this annual event. Thank you for being part of this church, for your help during this period of Interim, and your willingness to help with the process of searching for a Settled Pastor.

Wendy Prée, clerk

Announcement:

***All Annual Reports are due to the Clerk Sun. Jan. 14, 2018.**

January Calendar:

Tues. Jan. 2: Hilltown Churches' Food Pantry/Warm Clothing distribution 3-6 p.m.

Deacons Mtg. 7 p.m., Trustees Mtg. 7 p.m.

Thurs. Jan. 4; COA luncheon 12 noon. (Kairos Mtg. 7 p.m. at Charlemont Fed. Church)

Sun. Jan. 7: Worship 10 a.m.

Following worship: **All Church Mtg. to discuss our Interim Process**

Wed. Jan. 10: Music Filing 7:15 p.m.

Thurs. Jan. 11: Mission and Social Justice, Potluck 6 p.m., Mtg. 7 p.m.

Sat. Jan. 13: Citizens' Climate Lobby 12-2 p.m.

Sun. Jan. 14: Worship 10 a.m. (Come and Sing Choir rehearsal 9 a.m.)

Tues. Jan. 16: Bubble Up Theology 7 p.m.

Sat. Jan. 20: Hilltown Churches's Food Pantry Annual Mtg. and Potluck 12-3 p.m.

Sun. Jan. 21: Worship 10 a.m. ANTS Material Swap 1 p.m.

Wed. Jan. 24: Choir rehearsal 7:15 p.m.

Sun. Jan. 28: Worship 10 a.m. (Choir 9 a.m.)

followed by a Potluck and our 257th Annual Meeting

Tues. Jan. 30: Hilltown Churches Food Pantry/Warm Clothing distribution 3-6 p.m.

Wed. Jan. 31: Choir rehearsal 7:15 p.m.

First Congregational Church/UCC
 Box 519
 Ashfield, MA 01330



JANUARY 2018

| Sun. | Mon. | Tues. | Wed. | Thurs. | Fri. | Sat. |
|--|------|--|-------------------------------|--|------|---|
| | 1 | 2 3-Food Pantry Warm Clothing 7-Deacons and Trustees Mtg. | 3 | 4 COA Luncheon 7 - Kairos in Charlemont | 5 | 6 |
| 7 COMMUNION 10-WORSHIP All Church Mtg. | 8 | 9 | 10 7 - Music Filing | 11 6- Potluck 7- Mission & Social Justice | 12 | 13 12-2 Citizens' Climate Lobby |
| 14 10 -WORSHIP | | 16 3- Food Pantry and warm clothing 7 - Bubble Up | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 12-3 Food Pantry Annual Mtg and Potluck |
| 21 10 WORSHIP 1 - ANTS material swap | 22 | 23 | 24 7:15 Choir Rehearsal | 25 | 26 | 27 |
| 28 10- WORSHIP Potluck and ANNUAL MTG | 29 | 30 3- Food Pantry Warm Clothing | 31 7:15 Choir Rehearsal | | | |
| January 28th 257th ANNUAL MEETING | | | | | | |