

News from the Pews

First Congregational Church/UCC
Ashfield, MA 01330

MARCH 2018

MINISTER'S MOMENT

The season of Lent opens up before us during a time when the natural world in Western MA is slowly awakening. And while there seems to be a storm involving some sort of precipitation nearly every week, things are thawing and melting and little by little, the signs of (dare we say it!) Spring are encouraging! Have you noticed the bird sounds in the early morning?

“Lent,” that is, the *word* “lent” comes from an Anglo Saxon word – *lencten* - which means “spring,” and so, our pilgrimage of “spring” follows this 40 day cycle from Ash Weds. to the Saturday before Easter (not counting Sundays). How are you preparing for Easter this year? These 40 days (matching Christ’s temptation in the wilderness) beckon us to make our way through the wilds of our lives, and to find a path of return to God. Here at First Congregational Church, there are Lent at Lunch gatherings and a special service planned with West County church partners on March 13th, which you’ll want to place on your calendar. See below for more information, as well as our church website: www.ashfielducc.org

Worship during Lent gives us a chance to reflect on critical aspects of transitional time: the relationships we have, the choices we make and the resources we steward shape our personal households and yet, at church, where are we going and how will we get there? Some have asked why can’t we just get together and make some choices. It certainly might seem like we’re out wandering in “the wilderness,” but there are some very good reasons for doing so. Rev. Kelly Gallagher helped to guide our second “Envisioning 2018” event on Sunday Feb. 4th, reminding us that interim time is not like other “time.” Rather, we intentionally narrow our focus on the “why’s” of being a spiritual community, setting aside the “what” questions which so often overcome our ability to develop new vitality and growth. **NEXT Sunday**, March 4th we return for a third discussion in our series, establishing some paths in the wilderness for work on the three major issues before us as a congregation: Learning for all Ages; Growth and Outreach; and Finance & Stewardship. Don’t miss it! We need all of us to help this happen.



It’s the relationships formed by “covenant” which offer a window into why we come together in love and community. The recent farewell Sunday we shared with Rev. Sarah Pirtle on Feb. 11th, offered us a close-up of why covenants matter; we look forward to a continuing new partnership with Sarah as the future unfolds. My sermon series on Covenant during Lent has begun as a way to illuminate the connections we have with one another and our world because of God’s promises to us. Yes, the March calendar groans with many, many events and activities! Just be sure to come on out and be a part of this great thaw that is “lent!”

Rev Nada Sellers

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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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be emailed to the editor,
Victoria Nelson at

nelsonvictoria173@gmail.com

March Choir News 2018



March is a busy month for the Choir at First Congregational Church. If anyone would like to sing on Easter Sunday, please call Margery Heins, Choir Director, at 625-8461. (Anyone generally interested in Choir or Youth Choir should call Margery for more information.)

March Sundays will include Lenten anthems and special music for Palm Sunday. This month the Choir will also prepare for Easter (April 1), which will include music for trumpets, as well as choir and organ. Easter will be the last Sunday with the organ, which is scheduled to be removed during the first week of April for many months of restoration by William Czelusnaik's Northampton organ building firm. Stay tuned for a date when the organ will return! A dedication recital will follow.

Sun. March 4: Renaissance music for choir by Palestrina and Hassler

Sun. March 11: Lenten "chestnuts." Stainer - God So Loved the World, and Mozart - Ave Verum Corpus

Sun. March 25: Music of Praeotrius, Carissimi, and Gluck for Palm/Passion Sunday

March 2018 Choir Schedule

Sun. March 4 - 9:00 rehearsal; 10:00 Service

Weds. March 7 - 7:15 Rehearsal

Sat. night March 10 - **Set clocks ahead one hour!**

Sun. March 11 - 9:00 Rehearsal; 10:00 Service

Weds. March 14 - 7:15 Palm Sun./Easter Work-ahead Rehearsal

Sun. March 18 - No Choir

Weds. March 21 - 7:15 Rehearsal

Sun. March 25 - 9:00 Rehearsal; 10:00 Palm Sunday Service

Weds. March 28 - 7:15 Rehearsal

Youth Choir TBA

Sun. April 1 - 9:00 rehearsal; 10:00 Easter Sunday Service

Weds. Apr. 4/Sun. Apr. 8 - No Choir

GCC CHORUS CONCERTS: **THINK SPRING!**

Margery Heins, Conductor

Marilyn Berthelette, Accompanist

Friday, March 9, 12:15 - 12:45 p.m. Preview Concert/Sloan Theater, GCC

Friday, April 6, 7:30 p.m. Full Performance/The Episcopal Church of

Saints James and Andrew, 8 Church St., Greenfield

Free Concerts - COME RELAX AND ENJOY THE MUSIC!

Maple Fest and Pancake Breakfast

Saturday March 10, 8am-1pm

Spring is on its way and that means it's time to enjoy Maple Syrup! Our church is holding its annual Maple Fest and Pancake Breakfast Saturday March 10 from 8 am - 1 pm. This is an "All you can eat" event so come hungry and bring the neighborhood. Along with fresh maple syrup you may choose regular, blueberry, or gluten-free pancakes. We also serve local pork (or vegetarian) sausage, scrambled eggs, orange juice and coffee/tea, which adds up to a delicious Rite of Spring breakfast. \$10/adult. Children 10 and under \$5. (No charge for wee ones.)

And, we will also be holding our annual Spring Fling Drawing, which features numerous gifts from the wider community. *Betty Lesure has promised to return as the Drawing (Raffle) Lady. This alone is worth the price of admission.*

And lastly, we will be selling fresh maple products from South Face Farm, baked goods featuring maple syrup, Fair Trade Coffee and chocolate covered espresso beans, locally made cards, Rada cutlery, and more.

Thanks so much in advance for supporting this fund-raiser.



From the Trustees

Capital Campaign Authorizations

As Trustees, we are monitoring the expenditure of Capital Campaign funds to stay as close to budget as possible. At our February meeting, we agreed to authorize up to another \$2,500 in funding even though it takes us somewhat beyond what we originally envisaged for the chancel work.

Our budget was \$44,700, and to date we've spent or budgeted the following:

\$15,056 pew cushions
\$17,260 chancel modifications, including stage extensions
\$ 6,039 sound system
\$ 5,000 organ chamber refurbishing (estimated cost, yet to be done)

\$43,355 Total spent (or reserved)

\$ 1,345 Balance available

The additional \$2,500 will give us up to \$3,845 for any finishing work, including new chancel lighting, and we believe that will suffice.

We still have to fund the restoration of the organ (with installment payments to begin after the organ is removed in early April), and we also voted up to \$25,000 for the paving project. Therefore, until these agreed-upon projects are nearer completion and we have assurance of anticipated income from Capital Campaign pledges, the Trustees will suspend further spending. Once we have determined that our "overage" of Capital Campaign funds will permit it, we will again consider and seek approval from the congregation for new initiatives such as theater lighting and stenciling the organ's façade pipes. Other initiatives may also be proposed, but we will be sure to discuss them all in open forums so that the congregation has an opportunity to express its priorities.

Trees in Front of Church

As many may have noticed, the two grand old maple trees flanking our church's front walk are in serious decline. In fact, late last year a large branch fell to the ground near our eastern driveway, and it caused us to have both trees trimmed of dead wood in an effort to ensure public safety. Now closer inspection has shown just how vulnerable the trees are, and the Trustees have decided to take them down before someone gets injured. Our plan is to have the remaining stumps ground out so we can plant replacement trees. But in the meantime (and for a number of years), our church will have a relatively spare looking front yard, until it again will be graced with some magnificent large trees.

WOMEN'S FELLOWSHIP

Walls closing in? Cabin fever?

Join us for lunch and/or coffee at Elmer's.

Thursday, February 22nd, at 1:00 p.m. Call

Diana Bennett for info. 628-4523.

Sending Hope to Women and Children in Syria

NuDay Syria is a project started by Nadia Alawa, a woman of Syrian heritage who lives in NH with her Syrian husband and their 7 children. The goal of this organization is "empowerment and aid with dignity for Syrian mothers and children." This is a humanitarian effort, not a political one. The Interfaith Council of Franklin County has joined with **NuDay Syria** in collecting items to send over to the besieged areas, and our church has chosen to help. This organization focuses on aid to women and children because they are the most vulnerable population, and as such, need more help with food, shelter, and clothing, as well as educational and medical supplies. **NuDay** has set up schools, orphanages, and medical centers, in addition to assisting with everyday needs.

NuDay Syria has sent over 250 shipping containers (now costing \$5,800 each to ship) full of needed supplies since it started in 2013, and has a proven track record of getting these items to the people in need.

Our church has elected to collect the following requested items, and to do so during the month of March.

warm coats for adults and children in very good condition;
fabric;
socks, hats, mittens, gloves;
letters of Hope and Love;
cash - checks made out to Interfaith Council of Franklin County (with **NuDay Syria** in the memo).
diapers, new layettes, unisex clothing for infants under 2 yr. old;
new blankets, sleeping bags.

Clean and in very good condition or new items may be brought to the church during March and put upstairs in the Infant Care Room. The Mission Committee will take care of bringing them to the next drop off area so they can get on their way to NH and ultimately Syria.

For further information, talk with Wendy Prée or members of the Mission Committee. You can also find out more information from

www.nudaysyria.org
info@nudaysyria.org

Wendy Prée

COUNCIL ON AGING

MARCH 1, 2018

Blood Pressure Screening and questions for student nurses

12 noon- PIZZA and salad, dessert and drinks provided

After lunch, Select Board member Ron Coler will speak

RSVP to Charlotte Clement 625-6270

Team ACT is hosting a benefit for the American Cancer Society's Relay for Life

TOUR
“SPELLEBRATE FOR A GOOD CAUSE”

SCRABBLE®

TOURNAMENT

Saturday, March 17
 1 p.m. - 4 p.m.
First Congregational Church in Ashfield
 Pre-registration suggested
 call: 413-387-9085

Three half-hour SCRABBLE® games will be played with approx. 15-minute intervals between games.

Suggested donation is \$10.
Door Prizes! Snacks!

The Benefit Scrabble Tournament is looking for donations of food for snacks --- home-made or store-bought. Please let Stein know what you'll be donating. Contact her at stein_feick@hotmail.com or call (413) 387-9085 and leave a message. Label the food if it is gluten-free or has nuts, please.

Share the Warmth News

We have just completed another winter season of winter clothing distributions. We thank everyone who donated clothing to Share the Warmth. These donations are gratefully accepted and happily chosen by many people throughout the winter. We also thank the church for letting us use the space every other Tuesday, and for allowing us to store our boxes throughout the winter. Many thanks!
 Caroline Murray, Holly Westcott, and Jamie Young

“May God...who reached out in love and surprised you with gifts of unending help and confidence, put a fresh heart in you...”

2 Thessalonians 2:16-17 (The Message)

What is Missions and Social Justice Up To? Come Find Out!

Who can serve on the Missions and Social Justice Committee? You can. You don't have to be a member of the church, you just need to want the church to fulfill its "mission" to serve the needs of its community both here and afar.

What do we actually do? We think about what our communities need - everything from enjoyment to food. For example having a family games night and starting the food pantry. We look beyond Ashfield and donate from our annual budget to support other causes such as hurricane relief, refugee support, children under occupation in Palestine, women's shelters and urban anti-poverty efforts.

While the Trustees look after our physical plant, and the Deacons attend to the spiritual needs of the congregation, Missions and Social Justice, which we often just call "Missions" for short, looks at whether our actions reflect the teachings of Jesus to "feed the hungry, clothe the poor and free the captives from jail." It was a radical message then and continues to be today. Hence, we need as many voices as possible to discern where we are called to help.

We meet once a month, and usually start with a light potluck supper that takes care of our own need for food and fellowship. If you are wondering who you will meet, should you decide to check us out, our current regulars are Diana and Bruce Bennett, Wendy and Richard Pree, Robin Cole, Hetty Startup, Sherrill Hogen, and Daria Fiske. It is O.K. to just come when you can or drop in to see what is going on without making any commitments.

Missions and Social Justice meets the 2nd Thursday of every month in Fellowship Hall, with potluck at 6:00 and meeting 7:00-8:30. Welcome!

**HELEN (JILLSON) HODGES
 EXHIBIT AT ELMER'S STORE
 MAIN ST., ASHFIELD, MA.**

MARCH 29 TO APRIL 25, 2018

OPENING RECEPTION MARCH 31

3 TO 5 P.M.

Helen has been a local artist in Ashfield for 40 years. The exhibit will showcase many local scenes that Helen has delighted in

March 2018 Capital Campaign News



On Sunday, Feb. 11, a presentation on historic organ pipe decoration was given at First Congregational Church of Ashfield by Mary Lou Davis of Woodstock CT. Ms Davis is a well known historic conservator whose work includes restoration of

historic painted and wallpapered surfaces. Also on hand was William F. Czelusniak, who has been contracted by the church to restore the organ starting in April.

Despite an entire week of icy weather, the session was very well attended by church members, friends, and guests, including Helen Boyle, great-great granddaughter of the organ builder, who is passionate about the restoration project at First Congregational Church. Everyone was fascinated, many asked questions, and enthusiasm about the issue grew throughout the session. Everyone enjoyed learning more about the 1903 George W. Reed organ, originally built for the rear balcony at Holy Trinity Church, Main St. Greenfield, and moved to Ashfield in 1932.

Ms Davis has discerned that there are two generations of original decor on the thirty-three façade pipes. The reverse sides of the uniformly painted gold pipes, dull with age, expose traces of original patterns and painted colors. The instrument was built in an era when gold leaf, bands of color, and stenciled designs such as fleurs de lys and quatrefoils, were in fashion. Ms Davis also noted that at First Congregational Church almost every surface of the sanctuary is decorated in some form.



It was interesting to learn that late nineteenth and early twentieth century organ builders decorated pipes as a means of creating balance when expensive and substantial wood cabinets were not available or affordable. Since the Ashfield George Reed organ has relatively sparse wood structure between the pipes, it is not surprising to learn that so much decoration once existed.

If desirable, Ms Davis's firm can be hired to dig into history and forensically discover specifically what the two original sets of decorations looked like. If the forensic work were to be completed, the pipes would need to be stripped carefully and re-decorated. But to conserve original decor in this manner would make this option prohibitively expensive.

Mr. Czelusniak showed a sample pipe painted gold as another option for all the façade pipes. However, many in attendance felt the brilliance would be overbearing.



Another option involves synthesis of many ideas, and is considered by Ms Davis to be the most feasible. Instead of a forensic documentation of original decor, a simple photo record would be made. The pipes would be stripped. Simple designs, some banding, and contrasting pipe mouth paint would be applied - all completely in the spirit of 1903. Ms. Davis also proposed that much of this work could be done by about five interested church members and friends, under her guidance, making the entire plan affordable. This proposal generated much interest.

Ms Davis, speaking from experience, felt that if the church does not embark on this project now, as the entire organ is being restored, it won't happen for many years, or not at all. Mr. Czelusniak acknowledged the decision is up to the church, but gently suggested it would be a shame to go with solid color pipes in light of everything we know. In essence he was saying the restoration would not be complete without at least some façade pipe decoration.

It will ultimately be up to the Trustees of First Congregational Church, with input from the congregation, to decide whether to make use of Capital Campaign funds for organ pipe decor.

Margery Heins
Capital Campaign Publicity

**Registration is now open for the
second Tri-Conference Annual
Meeting, to be held June 15 & 16
at the Mass Mutual Center in
Springfield, MA.
see Bruce Bennett for details**

Tiffany Vail

"Inside My Heart"

Inside my heart, I hold what matters.
Inside my heart the bright light gathers.
Inside my heart, I send a greeting.
Inside my heart, God is still speaking.

Sarah Pirtle

Living an Alternative Life!

West County Mid- Lenten Worship Service

Living an Alternative Life!

Tuesday March 13, 2018

Trinity Church

17 Severance Street Shelburne Falls

Time: 6-8 p.m.

Silent Prayer and Meditation at 6:00

Soup and Bread 6:30 – 7:00

Program 7:00-8:00



Image by Rev Cara Hochhalter


The world seems to be bent on dividing us apart.

Thomas Merton said, "*One protests best by living an alternative life.*"

This is a time, mid-way through Lent, to celebrate the ways that we are connected, even in our diversity.

Jesus prayed, and we do too, "that we would be one" living an *alternative life of togetherness.*

Calendar for March 2018

- 
- March 1** Thursday: COA luncheon, noon
- March 3** Saturday: Pete Seeger Sing-along concert 7 p.m. Free Will donations to “Carry It On” Fund.
- March 4** Sunday: Choir 9 a.m. Worship 10 a.m. Potluck / “Envisioning 2018” discussion 11:30 a.m.
- March 6** Tuesday: Deacons Mtg. 7 p.m. Trustees Mtg. 7 p.m.
- March 7** Wednesday: Choir rehearsal 7:15 p.m.
- March 8** Thursday: Women’s Cabin Fever Fellowship 1 p.m. at Elmer’s
- March 8** Thursday: Mission and Social Justice. Potluck 6 p.m. Mtg. 7 p.m.
- March 9** Friday: Set up for **Maple Fest** 3-5 p.m.
- March 10** Saturday: **Maple Fest** and Pancake Breakfast 8 a.m. - 1 p.m.
- March 10** Saturday: **midnight: Turn clocks AHEAD one hour**
- March 11** Sunday: Choir 9 a.m. Worship 10 a.m. Pancakes for Coffee Hour! **Quarterly Mtg. 11:30**
- March 13** Tuesday: Food Pantry distribution 3-6 p.m.
- March 13** Tuesday: **West Cty. Lenten Service.** Trinity Church, Shelburne Falls, 6 p.m. Soup, bread, worship.
- March 14** Wednesday: Choir rehearsal 7:15 p.m.
- March 17** Saturday: **ST PATRICK,S DAY**
- March 17** Saturday: **Scrabble Tournament** 1-4 p.m. with proceeds to benefit the American Cancer Society / Franklin Cty. Relay for Life. Contact Stein Feick (625-9383) to register.
- March 17** Saturday: **“Super Saturday”** - a gathering of UCC folks from across the region. To register: <https://www.macucc.org/supersaturday>
Held at Minnechaug Regional High School, Wilbraham, MA
- March 18** Sunday: Worship 10 a.m. (Scrabble Tournament snow date 1-4 p.m.)
- March 20** Tuesday: **FIRST DAY OF SPRING!**
- March 20** Tuesday: Bubble Up 7 p.m.
- March 21** Wednesday: Choir rehearsal 7:15 p.m.
- March 22** Thursday: Women’s Cabin Fever Fellowship, 1 p.m. at Elmers
- March 25** Sunday: Palm Sunday. Holy Week begins. Choir 9 a.m. Worship 10 a.m. 11:30 Pizza and presentation by Sarah Plrtle re: her trip to Costa Rica and joining with other interfaith leaders.
- March 27** Tuesday: Food Pantry distribution 3-6 p.m.
- March 28** Wednesday: Choir rehearsal 7:15 p.m.
- March 29** Friday: Maundy Thursday. Potluck 6 p.m. Service of Tenebrae 7:30 p.m.
- March 30** Friday: Good Friday. Sanctuary open for quiet reflection 3-6 p.m., short service 5:30 p.m.
- April 1** Sunday: **Easter!** Choir 9 a.m. Worship 10 a.m.

First Congregational Church/UCC
 Box 519
 Ashfield, MA 01330



MARCH 2018

Sun.	Mon.	Tues.	Wed.	Thurs.	Fri.	Sat.
				1 COA luncheon Meal provided	2	3 7:00 Pete Seeger
4 10 WORSHIP potluck Envision 2018	5	6 7 - Deacons Mtg 7 - Trustees Mtg	7 9:30 TaiChi 7:15 Choir Rehearsal	8 1-Cabin Fever 6 - Potluck 7 - Missions and Social Justice	9 3-5 Set Up for MAPLE FEST	10 8-12 MAPLE FEST Turn Clocks Back
11 10 WORSHIP Quarterly Mtg	12	13 3-6 Food Pantry 6-West County Lenten Service	14 9:30 TaiChi 7:15 Choir Reh	15	16	17 St Patrick's 1-4 SCRABBLE TOURNAMENT SUPER SATURDAY
18 10 WORSHIP	19	20 First Day of SPRING 7 - Bubble Up	21 9:30 TaiChi 7:15 Choir Rehearsal	22 Women's Cabin Fever Fellowship at Elmers 1pm	23	24
25 PALM SUNDAY 10 WORSHIP Sarah Pirtle Trip to Costa Rica	26	27 3-6 Food Pantry	28 9:30 TaiChi 7:15 Choir	29 <i>Maundy Thursday</i> 6 Pot Luck	30 <i>Good Friday</i> 3-6 Church Open 5:30 Short Service	
APRIL 1 EASTER SERVICE	MAPLE FEST & Pancake Breakfast March 10th					