

News from the Pews

First Congregational Church/UCC
Ashfield, MA 01330

MAY 2018

MINISTER'S MOMENT

*“People with *crazy faith know that the world and its work belong to God and understand that they are vessels of that vision. People with crazy faith know that God can do anything. They see mountains and either climb them or move them. They hear problems and pray through them, around them, and out of them. Sometimes they wobble, but they allow God to give them strength. Sometimes they stumble, but they lean on God. Sometimes they fall down, but God helps them get up.”*

- Susan K. Williams Smith*

Susan Williams Smith defines “crazy faith” as “knowing that God can and will do the most incredible things in the most impossible situations.” (Crazy Faith; Ordinary People, Extraordinary Lives. (Judson, 2009)

Over the course of the past several weeks, we have been immersed in some fairly difficult conversations about the challenges of working together in a time of transition. Varieties of reaction at all levels of church life have made it harder to believe things are moving along in positive directions; there are calls for more clarity and direction. Allow me to reflect on our journeying thus far:

We have taken time from March ‘till our present month of May, to focus on three areas of opportunity and challenge for our church: Outreach & Belonging, Stewardship & Resource Management, and Faith Formation (Learning in the life of the Church). This has brought together three deeply committed working groups of people to explore the possibilities which will be offered as findings during our May 6th Envisioning meeting. I hope as many of us as possible can plan on being present for this exciting moment. New collections of information and findings will be posted in Friendship Hall with hardcopies also made available.

Then moving forward into May, your chance to share individual perspectives through an all-church survey and a series of meals to be hosted in area homes, will provide additional information for the writing of a Church Profile which is one of the steps to complete before the search for a new settled minister can begin. I find that in times when the way gets harder and things seem discouraging, it’s helpful to rediscover to our rootedness in a God who calls us to have what writer Susan Williams Smith calls “crazy faith:” This is a faith that knows the world and its work belong to God and that we are vessels for God’s holy vision working through us. It’s faith that God can do anything. Faith that mountains can be scaled or moved and that problems will fade in the face of prayer. Faith that the strength and energy God supplies will make a way forward. Even when there seem to be so few signposts out there pointing toward a suitable path. May God’s grace stay close to each of us as Spring’s marvels unfolds...

Pastor Nada

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May Choir News 2018

May 13, Mother's Day - also Choir Sunday - is the last Sunday of regular Choir at First Congregational Church. Even after many weeks of extended winter, it seems like the Choir season has gone by very quickly! Choir members rehearse together almost two hours on Wednesday evenings, and for forty-five minutes on Sunday mornings. Three glorious potluck dinners are held each year! The Choir community is a group of close friends, hard workers, and music lovers who stay in touch, both at church and beyond. During the summer months, Choir will sing for the Sanderson reunion weekend on Sunday, July 15, and singers are invited to gather informally the first Sunday of every month under the direction of Amy Roberts-Crawford, Organist and Choir Accompanist. Anyone generally interested in Choir, Youth Choir, or summer singing should call Margery Heins, Choir Director, at 625-8461 for more information.

Sun. May 6: The Choir sings music from Taizé as well as sections of Schubert's lovely *German Mass* for this Communion Sunday.

Sun. May 13: The Choir presents music from Mendelssohn's *Elijah* with soloists from the Choir, as well as other anthems, hymns with descants, and voices of children.

ABOUT OUR CHURCH

Interim Pastor: Rev. Nada Sellers: church 628-4470. Sunday Morning Worship is at 10am.. 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 (978-502-9166), 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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May 2018 Choir Schedule

Weds. May 2 - 7:15 Rehearsal

Sun. May 6 - 9:00 Rehearsal; 10:00 Service

Weds. May 9 - 7:15 Rehearsal

Sun. May 13 - 9:00 Rehearsal; 10:00 Service

Youth Choir TBA

Margery Heins

Capital Campaign News

First Congregational Church is still anticipating the removal of its 1903 George W. Reed tracker organ for restoration at the Northampton workshop of organ builder William F. Czelusniak. This long-awaited process has been scheduled to begin May 21, and will continue through the week - and probably into the following week. Onlookers are welcome to view the work. when the dust settles, it will be a year-plus before the organ is back. A large temporary curtain will cover the entire area where we now see façade pipes, keyboard, and stops. It will take some getting used to, but it's only temporary!

On Sunday, May 13, Mother's Day, also Choir Sunday, First Congregational Church will bless the departing organ as part of this annual musical service. Special music by the Choir will be a major part of the 10:00 a.m. worship service.

In the near future, several additional Capital Campaign projects will take place, including renovation of the organ chamber, preparing new and improved chancel lighting, paving the church driveway, and a series of meetings by the Façade Pipe Decor Study Group under the leadership of Liz Van Guilder.

The church's Capital Campaign *Make a Joyful Noise* continues to be exceedingly grateful to all!

Margery Heins

From the Trustees

Spring Clean Up

Be sure to come this **SUNDAY, APRIL 29**, for our annual **SPRING CLEAN UP**. People of all ages are welcome to join the Trustees and others *immediately following morning church services* for our annual rite of spring. Wear comfortable clothes and bring work gloves, rakes, shovels, tarps, and other gear so that you can join us for a JOYFUL hour or two of fun, frolic, and fellowship as we spruce up our church for the coming of warm summer days. As is customary, we will celebrate our good works with a FREE lunch of pizza and drinks (when the work is done). See you all on **APRIL 29!**

Paving Project

We've now received competitive final bids from three different contractors, and have chosen to work with Warner Brothers. It is expected that, with some advisory and technical assistance from the town, we will schedule grading and paving operations for mid-July or sometime in August. In the meantime, the Food Pantry will be running an electric line from our church to the shed in our parking lot. When completed, the electricity will operate freezers in the shed and provide much needed additional lighting for our parking area.

Exterior Painting of the Church

With the return of warm weather we expect the work crew provided by the sheriff's office to return for completion of the painting of the exterior of our church. Already, Chris Haddad has repaired and replaced the sills and clapboards near the back kitchen door in readiness for that area to be primed and painted. Thank you, Chris!

Please Turn Down the Heat and Lock the Doors

Recently, on two separate occasions, when the church was not in use, we found the front doors unlocked and the heat still turned up to above 70 degrees. As a reminder for the last person leaving the building, *please check to ensure that the heat is turned down and doors are locked.*

Thank you.

Ted Murray

"For the Interim Time"

*When near the end of the day, life has drained
Out of light, and it is too soon
For the mind of night to have darkened things,*

*No place look like itself, loss of outline
Makes everything look strangely in-between,
Unsure of what has been, or what might come.*

*In this wan light, even trees seem groundless.
In a while it will be night, but nothing
Here seems to believe the relief of dark.*

*You are in this time of interim
Where everything seems withheld.*

*The path you took to get here has washed out;
The way forward is still concealed from you.*

*"The old is not old enough to have died away;
The new is still too new to be born."*

*You cannot lay claim to anything;
In this place of dusk,
Your eyes are burred;
And there is no mirror.*

*Everyone else has lost sight of your heart
And you can see nowhere to put your trust;
You know you have to make your own way
through.*

*As far as you can, hold your confidence.
Do not allow your confusion to squander
This call which is loosening
Your roots in false ground,
That you might come free
From all you have outgrown.*

*What is being transfigured here is your mind.
And it is difficult and slow to become new.
The more faithfully you can endure here,
The more refined your heart will become
for your arrival in the new dawn.*

From To Bless the Space Between Us, a Book of Blessings

written by John O'Donohue

Submitted by Caroline Mack

shared at Bubble Up on April 17, 2018

DIRECTORY UPDATES May 2018

Bruce Bennett's email is bennettb1792@gmail.com

Gladys Cranmore lives at 42 Highland Village (not 42C)

Ann Gibson and Annie Cheatham no longer have a landline

Ann's cell: 413-320-5567

Annie's cell: 413-522-5020

They live at 292 Thompson Rd.

Add: **Rob Crawford**, 182 Main St., Whately MA
413-397-9848

Add: **Deborah Dill**
275A Phillips Rd. Shelburne Falls, MA 01370
deedah31@aol.com

Kristen Elmes & Lucy Let live at 1333 Hawley Rd.

Carl Doerner's new address: 2864 Garland Hill Rd.
Barnet VT 05821

Patricia Donohue lives at 39 Upper St., Buckland
New email: padonahue4@gmail.com
New phone: 625-6873

Peter Gabriel's new address:
317 Bassett Brook Dr. Apt. 317
Easthampton, MA 01027
413-203-1366

Ardath Garfield no long has a PO Box

Linsey Hindley's new email is starshinedahlia@gmail.com

Brady Hoff, 81 Baptist Corner Rd, Ashfield
Phone 628-4504
Email: bradyhhoff@gmail.com

Judi Isabella no longer has a PO Box

add **Lillian Jackman**,
351 S. Shirkshire Rd. Conway, MA 01341
413-625-9446

Kate Kerivan now lives on Bronson Ave.

Gisele Litalien's new email: glitalien@gmail.com

Keith Obert now lives in Williamsburg

Cell: 978-502-9166

Kathy Poissant and Cathy Stone's email:
Cjstone1254@gmail.com

Pam and Robert Poissant no longer has a landline

Pam's cell: 413-325-1126

Rob's cell: 413-325-1607

Email: puissant@valinet.com

(moving so address may not be valid)

Amy Roberts-Crawford new email:
maplenut15@gmail.com

Bev LaBelle & Janet Rogers new mail address:
PO Box 282, Ashfield, MA 01330

Joanie Schwartz's new address:
39 Highland Ave., Greenfield, MA 01301
no landline, cell phone: 413-348-2348

Nada Sellers, 52 Springfield Rd, Belchertown, 01007
Cell: 413-896-5901 (best)
Landline: 413-213-0574
Wife: Pat Daughter: Mika

Hetty Startup's new address: 32 Nutting Rd., Amherst,
01002 Kappa Kappa Gamma# 413-549-7719

Wendy Swan's email: swanw@verizon.net

add: **Dan Trenholm**, 13 Trenholm Way, Gill, MA
phone: 413-522-5764
daniel.trenholm@state.ma.us

Andy Wells' shop phone: 625-9401

Add: **Dorie Wojeck**
860-989-5449
dwojo1221@me.com
(lives in Goshen in Summer, CT in winter)

add: **Steve & Victoria Worth**, 457 Steady Lane,
Ashfield

phone: 628-3221

email: vkworth@gmail.com

daughter: Charlotte

Deletions:

Dexter Dong (moved away)

Pete and Elise Lodi (moved away)

Jean Keyes (died)

Mariel Kinsey (died)

Ann Lilly (died)

Bob Parati (died)

POOR PEOPLES CAMPAIGN: A Call For Moral Revival

As we continue our transitional journey, we also keep in mind that there is a world of need beyond our walls. For this we exist - to serve one another and the wider community. For this I got involved in the Poor Peoples Campaign: a Call for Moral Revival, and found that the UCC is already an endorser and participant! For now I am happy to keep our church up to date on preparations for the campaign's launch on May 14, the Monday after Mothers Day.

This Campaign (PPC) is a continuation of the one initiated by Dr. Martin Luther King right before he was assassinated. Absent his leadership, it could not keep going for long, but it has been given new life by the Rev. Dr. William Barber of North Carolina, another charismatic, humble, brave and brilliant leader. (Watch him on u-tube and you will see what I mean.)

While it is a multi-year campaign, and not a one-off march on Washington, it will bring attention to itself by 40 days of nation-wide actions, starting **May 14** and ending in D.C. on **June 23rd**. Everyone is invited to participate, for this is an all-inclusive movement; change will only occur if we are all on board! So, how do you sign up? Go to the website first.

www.poorpeoplescampaign.org

Then you will get updates on what is happening in Massachusetts and across the country, simultaneously, in 30 states and Washington, D.C..

In every state there will be weekly rallies at the State Houses, always on Mondays and always followed by acts of nonviolent civil disobedience by those who decide in advance to participate in that way. Of course, the bigger the rally the more attention we will get. And the more people who risk arrest, the stronger the message of how important it is to change the narrative in our country from blaming the poor to blaming the systems that create poverty.

“We are rooted in a moral analysis based on our deepest religious and constitutional values that demand justice for all. Moral revival is necessary to save the heart and soul of our democracy.”

(From the *Fundamental Principles* of the PPC).

Sherrill Hogen



PLANT SALE MAY 12th

9:00 to 12:00

Shirley Scott would love to
have some volunteer help.

Call 625-9854



DINNERS IN MAY

As we travel through this Interim time, we are planning get-togethers in people's homes during the month of May. These are meant to be a time for socializing, feasting, and exploring a few important questions about our church: *Who are we now? Who is our Neighbor? What is God calling us to do?* These answers will, in turn, help us write a church profile which will then be used in our search for a Settled Pastor. At this point, we have two folks who have offered their homes, and we need at least 2 more. Please let me know ASAP if you can offer your home for a church potluck meal, which dates would work, and how many people you'd like to host. The plan is to start signing people up for specific dinners **May 6**. Thanks so much.

Wendy Pree
(413) 628-3875

The Lion Roars Keith's Wonderful Sermon - Sunday, April 22, 2018

We therapists have noticed an increase in two things Since the last presidential election. The first thing is the number of people reporting anxiety. I don't have to be Freud to explain that. The other thing that people have been reporting is a marked increase in loneliness. This was such a big problem that the British government appointed as secretary of loneliness. Reports of loneliness rose dramatically where ever there was significant political disagreement like Brexit or here. This caught the eye of the brilliant researcher Brene Brown. She is someone that notices interesting trends and then researches the cause of them to advance our understanding of human behavior.

She writes in her new book "into the wilderness" that when she began her research she thought that belonging and fitting in where the same thing but by the time she was done she saw that they were complete opposite's.

Fitting in means that you find a group and change who you are to be like them so you can fit in. To belong is to be one's self, and have that be excepted by the group. Think about that for minute.

The political landscape polarized people. People were able to voice points of view that they felt uncomfortable giving voice to before, but now had a kinship with others that gave them courage to speak up. When they did so they were often attacked by the opposition. This caused them to double down and dig in their heels and seek kinship to support their position. People began to surround themselves with like thinking people. Now you might think that that would create a sense of connection but what was surprising is how much it did not. In fact it did just the opposite. People are often more complex than simply being all red or all blue many people were purple. Being purple wasn't as comfortable as it used to be however. And so people feel compelled to move outside of their comfort zone in order to find a group to fit in with. This made them feel phony. This also gave them the idea that if they were to be their true self that they would be rejected. This made them feel lonely.

So the question is how do we find a group where we belong?

Do we look for our tribe? No, we create it. Some of us discovered this place that was open and affirming by luck. Some of us were here before it was open and affirming and made it so. Now it's an ongoing work in progress where we both discover it and make it so. This is good because if we just rely on luck, we make our fate a hostage to fortune as the poet says. That's not good enough for us.

Metaphors are powerful things. They are so powerful that we often come to believe them as truth. A common metaphor for congregations is that they are like a flock of sheep, And that our leader is like a shepherd. The shepherd guides us and feeds us and protects us. We all enjoy some of that from time to time. But, the metaphor for the congregation being lambs does not fit us. No, We are not lambs, we are LIONS. We are leaders, Activists, creative thinkers, artists, poets, musicians, craftspeople, Builders, teachers and farmers. We try to make the world a better place through ac tion. We are not that great at being followers, being herded, being guided.

Although the lion is powerful, King and queen of the jungle, it is not a solitary creature. It lives in a group, a Family, a pride.

I think the word pride is a good word for a group of lions and I think it's a good word to describe us. I don't mean pride in the sense of the sin of pride. I mean pride in the sense that we have done things to be proud of. These things are important to us, and they should be. We want to hold on to them with the ferocity of a lion. We're not afraid to change, evolve, learn new things. But we want to hold onto the things and the people, that are important to us. The Lion lives in a pride because it is safe and powerful. We need to recreate our Pride our place of safety and power. We don't find it out there. We find it in here! This is not a sheep pen, it's a Pride. This is your holy ground. You make it safe by your strength and for looking out for each other, not by being cared for by any one person.

Now these lions, these fierce and powerful creatures, sometimes they roar at each other. They roar at each other because they want something, they feel passionate about something. One of them might have a leg of an antelope and they want to keep it. Perfectly reasonable from their point of view. But then another lion comes along, and is hungry and wants a piece of that meat too, and that is perfectly reasonable to them. Now you have two perfectly reasonable perspectives that are at cross purposes. We sometimes find ourselves at cross purposes but we are still members of the same pride. After those lions resolve their issue they curl up together as the cool night air approaches. Belonging to the same pride.

It is time my brothers and sisters to find our pride once more. It's time for us to hunt like the lion for our truth and God's mission for us. Then, we can curl up together once more, the lion and the lamb as the cool night approaches.

Amen

Keith Obert



MAY CALENDAR 2018

Tues. May 1: Deacons Mtg. 7 p.m., Trustees Mtg. 7 p.m.

Wed. May 2: TaiChi 9:30 a.m. (a COA sponsored event). Choir rehearsal 7:15 p.m.

Thurs. May 3: COA lunch, 12 noon at the church. Kairos/Franklin Cty. Justice for Palestine Mtg. 7p.m., Charlemont Fed. Church

Sat. May 5: Ashfield Town Meeting Day. NoHo Pride Parade - talk with Bruce B., Nada S. for more information.

Sun. May 6: Choir 9 a.m. Taizé Music / Worship 10 a.m. Potluck and Envisioning Discussion after church.

Tues. May 8: Food Pantry distribution 3-6 p.m.

Wed. May 9: Choir rehearsal 7:15 p.m.

Thurs. May 10: Ladies' Lunch at Elmer's 1 p.m. Mission and Social Justice potluck 6 p.m., meeting 7 p.m.

Sat. May 12: **PLANT SALE** and an amazing Drawing! Event opens @ 9 a.m. (Cashiers and helpers needed. See Renee Rastorfer and/or Shirley Scott for more information.)

Sun. May 13: Choir Sunday. Choir's Blessing of the Organ. Children participating during the service.

Tues. May 15: Bubble Up Theology 7 p.m.

Thurs. May 17: Book Discussion "Walking to Listen" 7 p.m.

Sat. May 19: Funeral for our long time church member, Ann Lilly, 2 p.m.

Sun. May 20: Pentecost Sunday

Mon. May 21: Organ to be removed from Sanctuary

Tues. May 22: Food Pantry distribution 3-6 p.m.

Thurs. May 24: Ladies' Lunch at Elmer's

Thurs. May 31: *I Am My Own Wife* Pauline Productions 7 pm

Fri. June 1 : Performance at 8 pm

Sat. June 2 : Performance at 8 pm

Sun. June 3 : Performance at 4 pm

FYI: Our organ is scheduled to be dismantled during the week of May 21st. It will be brought to Czelusniak et Dugal Inc. in Northampton for a lengthy period of restoration.

And from Hazrat Inayat Khan, founder of the Sufi Order of the West:

I CAN, I WILL



END OF STORY