

News from the Pews

First Congregational Church UCC
Ashfield, MA 01330

JULY 2018

UCC CONFERENCE JUNE 16, 2018 - JIM ANTAL ANNOUNCES HIS RESIGNATION

This was the address:

Let's Not Keep God Waiting

Jesus inspired people. He reminded everyone that each one of us is God's beloved. He awakened all who would listen to the reality that the Kingdom of God is NOW – that God is fully present in this... and in every moment. Jesus called people to follow, but not on their own. He sent out his disciples two by two. He insisted on truth – no substitutes. He stretched unity. They would have to hold each other accountable. They recognized that if they were going to awaken humanity to the glory of God, the gift of creation, and the portal to the eternal that each moment offers, they would need to confess, become vulnerable, and show one another the forgiveness and encouragement that God offers each one of us.

Our calling, as Church, is to be all of this and more. While Jesus didn't start the church, if the church is to be faithful, it must follow Jesus. This morning, we've done just that. - In a time when the world is falling apart, Jesus is calling us to come together. - In a time of suspicion, manipulation, corruption, and lies, Jesus is calling us to trust his witness - what his life and teachings have taught us. - And he is calling us to **TRUST one another** – to bind ourselves together in covenant so that we can wield our collective witness and repair the injustices of the world. The forces we are up against are enormous. Their quest for power knows no limit. It is nothing to them... to disregard the cries of the poor, to separate children from their parents; to instill fear in of every person of color; to deny the rights and freedoms of GLBTQ; to reverse Genesis as they destroy God's creation in order to line their pockets. But we can learn from the courageous saints who came before us. In 1962 Nelson Mandela was imprisoned. Four years later, while visiting

South Africa, Robert F. Kennedy delivered one of history's most inspiring speeches. In it, he quotes the proverb, "**May you live in interesting times.**" Looking into the desperate eyes of his African audience, Robert Kennedy declares that before them lies enormous **opportunity**. It was an unexpected yet truly inspiring message – one that shaped the determination of the students in Capetown over the next 23 years until Mandela was freed. Our generation has been given a similar opportunity. Truth itself is on the scaffold and all of creation is now in dire straits. Robert Kennedy was right – our generation has been given **the greatest opportunity in history** to make a difference – **to bend the moral arch of universe towards justice. Facing the horror of the Nazi rise to power, in 1938 Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel offered a courageous reflection to a group of Quaker leaders in Frankfurt, Germany. What Heschel had to say about his own times applies just as well to our situation today. Facing the horror of the Nazi rise to power, in 1938 Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel offered a courageous reflection to a group of Quaker leaders in Frankfurt, Germany. What Heschel had to say about his own times applies just as well to our situation today.** "There has never been more reason for [humanity] to be ashamed than now. We have bartered holiness for convenience, loyalty for success, love for power, wisdom for information, tradition for fashion. Let the blasphemy of our time not become an eternal scandal. Let future generations not loathe us for having failed to preserve what prophets and saints, martyrs and scholars have created in thousands of years. God is waiting for us to redeem the world. /// "

Continued on Page 4...



"Thank you for your faithfulness. Thank you for engaging the opportunities that my colleagues and I have sought to make available to you over the past twelve years. Thank you for making Super Saturday a trademark of the Massachusetts Conference! Thank you for undertaking racial justice training as an essential step towards justice. Thank you for being vulnerable enough to bear the wounds of your congregation and for being alert enough to seek the guidance of your Conference staff. Thank you for the times you've called a halt to the status quo – and for courageously seeking a new way to be church together. Thank you for all the times you've praised your pastor, or your church moderator, or one of my Conference staff colleagues – never forget that we're in this world to make each other better. And thank you for extending to me and to my staff and Board colleagues your confidence and trust." **Jim Antal**

From the Trustees

Removal of the Organ

Starting Monday, June 25, work will begin on documenting and removing the organ in the sanctuary. At noon, Friday, June 29, work will be suspended so that Village Harmony can rehearse prior to their concert that evening. Organ removal will resume on Monday, July 2, and be completed by the end of the day on Tuesday, July 10.

Paving Project

Plans are now being made to pave the driveways and back parking lot during the week of July 9-13. Preparatory grading will most likely take place the latter part of the prior week. *As a result, the church driveways and parking lot will not be usable from Thursday, July 5, through Friday, July 13.* Please make other arrangements for parking during that period.

Church Security

Working with Ashfield's Police Chief, Beth Bezio, we have initiated a review of security and emergency procedures for the church. We are looking into ways we can better handle any medical, fire, or other emergencies should they occur. Though plans are still incomplete, we may hold a few educational sessions at future congregational meetings.

Ted Murray

July Choir News

Music Scheduled for

10:00 Sunday services in

July

July 1: Informal music for the annual Lakeside Service will be presented by the Ashtones. Any interested singers should gather at 9:30 with Nancy Hoff at the barbeque/picnic area (above the tennis courts.)

July 8: Vy Walker of Greenfield will play classics on her saw with Amy Roberts-Crawford at the piano. You will certainly want to catch this if you missed Vy at the February variety show!

July 15: Choir returns for a day! Anyone interested in singing with the Choir should call Margery Heins, Director, at 625-8461. Rehearsals for Sanderson Sunday will be Weds. eve., **July 11** at 7:15 p.m., and Sunday morning at 9 a.m.

Wednesday evening's rehearsal is preceded by the Annual Summer Choir Potluck (5:30-7:00) at the home of Shirley Scott and Joe Giard, Orcutt Hill Rd., Buckland. Youth Choir singers are welcome at these events.

July 22: Margery Heins, Choir Director, and friends will provide solos and small vocal ensembles.

July 29: Amy Roberts-Crawford, Organist, will give a Sermon in Music with support from in-house church instrumentalists.

Margery Heins

Quarterly Meeting Committees Approved

Search and Call Coordinating Committee

consisting of Nada Sellers, Leslie Fraser, Ted Murray, John Cordes, Bruce Bennett and Wendy Pree - with the goal of helping the Profile Committee, Search Committee, and the congregation as we continue through this Interim process - as we prepare to call a new minister.

Profile Committee (to write up the church profile) consisting of Hetty Startup, Berkeley McChesney, Honey Boyden, Ann Gibson, and Ted Murray.

Search Committee

We will be mailing out information regarding how to consider and nominate people to be on our Search Committee, with nominations due to the clerk by Sun. July 1.

Faith Formation

In addition, we approved for the Faith Formation to continue working on developing a job description for a new **Sunday School Coordinator**, with the hope to hire someone in this position by the fall.

Wendy Pree, Clerk

Search & Call Status

Our congregation has been talking, and writing, and discussing, and thinking about our future. Small working groups and whole congregational meetings have been going on since January, and we just completed an online survey in which 43% of the congregation participated. We've been focusing on these (and other) questions: "Who are we now?", "Who is our neighbor?", "What is God calling us to become?", and "What qualities do we want in a settled pastor?"

Next steps? Following the United Church of Christ's guidelines, we will write a profile of our church that will become our official job posting. On June 10, five individuals were chosen as members of the **Profile Committee**: Hetty Startup, Helen Boyden, Ted Murray, Ann Gibson, and Berkeley McChesney. Several others volunteered to help them: Caroline Mack, Rochelle Nahmias, and Stein Feick. The committee will work through the summer, and after a number of drafts to be shared with the congregation, they hope to submit the final profile to the congregation on September 10. We hope that the UCC will post our job opening within a few weeks of that date.

A **Search Committee** will review resumes and interview possible candidates. Their work will begin in earnest in

September once the Profile is posted. The people who will serve on this committee are being nominated in June and will be elected **on July 29** at a **Special Congregational Meeting**. Nomination forms are available in the Green Room in an envelope on a bulletin board by the door. Deadline for nominations is July 1 to Wendy Pree.

A **Search and Call Coordinating Committee** will coordinate the work of these two committees and will communicate regularly with the congregation about their progress so that additional conversations can take place. People serving on this committee were previously on the Transition Team (Leslie Fraser and John Cordes) and the Communication Team (Wendy Pree and Ted Murray). Nada Sellers, our Interim Minister, and Bruce Bennett, Chair of the Deacons, complete this group of coordinators. Our next Envisioning session will take place following church services on Sunday, **July 8**. We will discuss our church's **Vision and Direction** to further define our church and its future as we prepare to search for a new settled pastor.

If you have any questions about the Search and Call steps and tasks, be in touch with one of the people named above. Stay tuned and become involved in whatever way suits you.

Search & Call Coordinating Committee

FRANKLIN COUNTY PRIDE PARADE: 2018 (2nd ANNUAL)*

It rained for part of the parade and it rained for part of the rally, but not hard, and I didn't hear anyone say or sing "Don't rain on my parade." We relished the rain.

Pride & joy were overflowing on the parade route down Federal, Main, & Miles Streets. The energy was *electric* at Energy Park. We were dangerous. And sweet.

This writer and his canine marching companion counted five additional folks from our Ashfield First Congregational Church community who paraded in antique motor vehicles.

Joining the two of us on foot were four friends from St. John's Church. The five or six of us (depending on whether one was species-specific) marched under our venerable handmade red & white felt "Ashfield Congregational" standard, held aloft by yours truly.

Sometimes Teagan's red leash was in the same hand, freeing my other hand to wave greetings to the crowd. Other times, it was in the opposite hand, when words would suffice.

At the entrance to the Greenfield Energy Park, we stopped to cheer on the marchers coming after us. Rev. Vicki Ix, the new Vicar from St. John's, was there to greet us.

If you check out the St. John's Church FaceBook Page, you will see two photos from that moment. The first is a group shot in which you can see all the St. John's people and our church standard, and only the lower half of me, bending down to pick up Teagan, calling out "wait, wait, so I can pick up the dog!"

The second photo is just Teagan and me, with the church standard. Ta-da. I couldn't figure out how to transfer it from FB to the NFTP. I just don't understand FB.

Next year maybe it won't rain at all. Will we see you there? St. John's will have a full contingent there next year. Imagine what you would be missing if you didn't go? There is a full day of activities for all ages and abilities. Be as active or as chill as you want. Any way you take part shows you are standing up, speaking up, showing up. And oh what a glow! And it means a lot.

Bruce Bennett

* We actually marched on the streets this year. Last year we were confined to the sidewalks. This was a real parade. Last year it was actually called a "walk."



Internet photo / see ours on Facebook

Continued from Page 1...

Let's not keep God waiting.

God is calling each and every one of us – as individuals, as congregations, and as the body of Christ – **to embrace a defiant hope**. God makes defiant hope available to anyone willing to reject all illusions, look reality in the face and **engage the redemptive work to which each of us is called**. This is not a call to be caretakers of diminishing institutions. It's a call to leverage our influence and use all of our assets – including the influence of our church in our community and in the Commonwealth – to stand up for justice; to protect the vulnerable; and to restore God's great gift of creation. /// Now I want to ask you to lift up your blessing hands. And as you do, I want to assure you **that you are in good hands**. Look around.... God has called you to be the church ... in this time... in this place... facing the enormous challenges now before our nation and our generation. Know that you are in good hands. Your pastors, your congregation's leaders, the staff and Board of this Conference along with the Connecticut and Rhode Island conferences, and the national staff of the United Church of Christ.... All have been called by God as leaders in this time... in this place... to face the challenges in our nation and our world. Look around. Extend your blessing to one another. And let your heart be filled with gratitude for the opportunity to have been called by God in such a time as this. Let us serve faithfully. Let us give each other courage. Let us be awash in gratitude for the gift of creation. And let us witness to the world the undying, defiant hope that inhabits our hearts. Amen. Jim Antal



Letter From A Friend

The following is a heartfelt expression from Erica Zoe, a faithful partner to our congregation:

I need our world family. I've never experienced people as separate from me. I am deeply connected to everyone.

I learned a year ago about my ancestry & blood line. I do not have family. I knew next to nothing about where I came from. My heart is of a tribal nature & for the 1st time why it is not only broken but shattered made sense for me. I am, Native American, Pacific Islander, African American, Scottish and more. I carry the world inside of me. In tribes we do not leave anyone. When 1 person is suffering we all hurt together.

(ed. Our church absentees are very upsetting to her)

I've grown up in a world where separation & division is expected. This has made me feel over & over again that my stork or angel was drunk-flying & dropped me off on the wrong continent or planet. This began w/ my own immediate family & as I grew up I saw it was a deep human influenza.

I do not listen to the news. What they choose as newsworthy makes me wish to get a divorce from this human race, I can not comprehend our blood line. I do not have the same kind of blood flowing thru me.

I wish to begin a new race using the stem cells from my heart & my brain. A race whose chests glow like coals from deep pride. A race who understand the concept of marriage, that they are wed to each & every individual; a race who understands the marriage between them & nature & the true spirit of where joy & tears rise & fall from. Our heart's beat as one & words are not needed much because we are sharing the same heart.

My name is,

Xoe'. Hello.

Council on Aging JULY 5th

Meal at noon

Pot Luck at Belding Memorial Park
Please bring your own chairs and
pray for sunny weather.

TaiChi

is a Council on Aging sponsored event
which meets here at 9:30am on
Tuesdays, July 11th, 18th, and 25th .
Check it out!



CHURCH CALENDAR JULY 2018

Throughout the first half of the month, the organ will be removed for complete restoration, and the driveway will be graded and paved. All this is possible due to the generosity of numerous donors to our recent Capital Campaign. The church is very grateful all who have donated time, talent, and money to help make these improvements possible.

July 1 Sun.: Worship at the Ashfield Lake! Come join us for our Annual Lakeside Service 10 a.m., led by Rev. Nada Sellers with the Ashtones singing.

Potluck and celebration of **Marie Fuller** (she's retiring from being our church treasurer) following the service.

In case of rain, the service, potluck, and celebration will be held at the church.

July 3 Tues.: Food Pantry distribution 3-6 p.m. Deacons Mtg. 7 p.m.

July 8 Sun.: Worship 10 a.m. led by Rev. Nada Sellers. Potluck and Envisioning 2018 to follow worship.

July 11 Wed.: TaiChi 9:30 a.m., a COA sponsored event. Choir potluck (and garden tour) at Shirley Scott's 5:45 p.m. Choir rehearsal at the church 7:15

July 12 Thurs.: Mission and Social Justice. Potluck 6 p.m., Mtg. 7 p.m.

July 15 Sun.: Sanderson Sunday. Worship 10 a.m. led by Rev. Nada Sellers.

July 17 Tues.: Food Pantry distribution 3-6 p.m. Bubble Up 7 p.m.

July 18 Wed: TaiChi 9:30 a.m., a COA sponsored event

July 22 Sun.: Worship 10 a.m. led by Rev. Nada Sellers

July 24 Tues.: Trustees Mtg. 7 p.m.

July 25 Wed.: TaiChi 9:30 a.m., a COA sponsored event

July 26 Thurs.-Sun. July 29 (and Aug. 1-4): *The Roommate*, a play written by Jan Silverman and brought to us by Pauline Productions/Jeannine Haas. See brownpapertickets.com for more information.

July 29 Sun.: Worship 10 a.m. followed by a Special Congregational Meeting to vote in members of our Settled Pastor Search Committee.

July 30 Mon.: Fall Festival Planning Mtg. at the Prée's. Garden tour 5:30 p.m., Potluck 6 p.m., Mtg. 7 p.m.

July 31 Tues.: Food Pantry distribution 3-6 p.m.

First Congregational Church UCC
BOX 519
Ashfield, MA 01330



July 26 Thurs.-Sun. **July 29** (and **Aug. 1-4**):

***The Roommate*, a play written by Jan Silverman and
brought to us by Pauline Productions/Jeannine Haas.**

See brownpapertickets.com for more information.

