

News from the Pews

"the voice of the congregation"

First Congregational Church UCC

Ashfield, MA 01330

MAY 2019

Iceland Mandates Mental Health Warnings On All Bibles

"We need to make sure our citizens are aware of the dangers implicit in reading the Bible and taking it seriously."^{*}

Fewer than one in four Americans (24%) now believe the Bible is "the actual word of God, and is to be taken literally, word for word." - Gallup poll 2017.

Apparently not very many Americans look to the Bible for guidance on selling their daughters any more. *"If a man sells his daughter as a servant, she is not to go free [after six years] as male servants do."* Exodus 20:7 The fact that some Bible translations use "concubine" instead of "servant" demonstrates the difficulties in interpretation for even the most conservative of us. The legal questions about taxes and depreciation of selling daughter vs son would be a tax code quagmire for eras to come. Sex trade notwithstanding.

All this obviousness aside, how do we read the Bible? Or do we even read it? Skip over the parts we don't like? Or wrestle with them?

More than one person has asked why politicians often insist on putting the Ten Commandments on public walls. Why not The Beatitudes? What a difference it would make to walk into a courtroom and see "Blessed are the merciful " ?

How do we choose among biblical teachings to guide our way? How do we understand the Bible as a 21st Century Church (including believers, questioners, questioning believers)?

Interest in a Bible study group is growing at our church. Aside from logistics, the church needs to come up with a format, who would lead, what the focus would be, approach to translations. Should we form a class with St. John's? Should we wait for new pastor? The Deacons and the Missions & Social Justice Committee both have this task in their purview. And any member of the congregation can get the ball rolling. This letter is just to say that we hear the need and will keep it in plans.

Alice Barrett

^{*} Fake news courtesy of Andrew Hall, "Laughing in Disbelief" at patheos.com

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May Choir News

May 12, Mother's Day, will be the last Sunday of the current Choir season! We hope everyone will want to attend this spring music-filled service! Special music for the day features "Prayer of St. Francis," a 1966 work by American composer Allen Pote, with long-time Choir member Bonnie Coleman, soprano soloist.

Also in May, Holocaust Remembrance (May 2) will be commemorated by the Choir with Hebrew anthem selections on Sunday, May 5.

The Choir returns in July for Sanderson Reunion Sunday. Even though Choir is winding down now, those interested in Choir and Youth Choir should contact Margery Heins, Director, at church or at 625-8461.

Interested singers are also invited to join in with the "Ashtones" on the first Sunday of each summer month, with Amy Roberts-Crawford directing.



May Choir Schedule

Weds. May 1 - 7:15 Rehearsal
Sun. May 5 - 9:00 Rehearsal; 10:00 Service
Weds. May 8 - 7:15 Rehearsal
Sun. May 12 - 9:00 Rehearsal; 10:00 Service



RECITAL CHORUS 23rd ANNUAL SPRING CONCERT!!

Friday, May 17th, 7p.m.

The voice students of Margery Heins present choruses, small vocal ensembles, and solos for the season with madrigals, songs from musical theatre, folk songs, and music by Hassler, Caldara, Schubert, Mendelssohn, and Clifton Noble.

Trinity Church, Shelburne Falls



ABOUT OUR CHURCH

Ministry - Interims and the Congregation 628-4470

Sunday morning Worship is at 10:00 am. 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
News from the Pews is published monthly by the Ashfield Parish, First Congregational Church, United Church of Christ. P.O.Box 515, Main Street, Ashfield, MA 01330, 413-628-4470.

Deadline for copy is the 24th day of the month and may be emailed to the editor, Victoria Nelson at nelsonvictoria173@gmail.com

Ah 'tis spring!

Hello all you gardeners out there, this is your Plant Sale Committee contacting you. This will be our third year doing the Plant Sale and the only reason we can think of for that is that there's more than six months between the end of the sale (mid-May) and when Wendy comes looking for volunteers at the Annual Meeting, more than enough time to forget our vow of "never again!"

One thing we also remember is that at the end of the 2018 sale, it became clear to us that the pathway to making the sale worth while financially is to get contributions from people's gardens. Last year, because of the way Spring rolled in, gardeners did not have as much time to get out there and divide before the sale was upon us. However, this year is delightfully different - the earth is sprouting all around us so please, go out there and divide and get your most delicious, prized plants ready for our May 18th sale!

And it's always nice to have some explanation of what the plant is, what it likes, where it should live, etc., if at all possible.
Gratefully, **Rene and Shirley**

PLANT SALE MAY 18th

WHAT'S UP IN PALESTINE?

This will be an occasional column endorsed by the Missions and Social Justice Committee to update the congregation on the situation in Palestine. Because we as a church have voted to endorse two major resolutions by the National UCC, one in 2015 and again in 2017, in response to cries for help from both Palestinian civil society and their multi-religion coalition, we think there is interest in knowing what is happening day to day in Palestine. We thank Sherrill Hogen for providing this information from her multiple contacts in Palestine's West Bank and news sources she regularly consults.

March 30 is Land Day in Palestine because it marks a time (1976) when some Palestinian citizens of Israel were killed by the army when they protested their land being taken from them. Last year on Land Day the citizens of Gaza started the Great March for Return which became a weekly demonstration that continues until today. Israel's response to the Great March has been to shoot the demonstrators, killing over 200 of them, and wounding over 29,000 more. This is one of the stories that cannot be told in just a few words, but is important to know about if you want to know what is happening in Palestine.

Unemployment in Gaza is now up to 52% according to the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics. 85% live under the poverty line, and the daily average income is \$2.00.

Most of the news from Palestine is sad, tragic or infuriating, but behind the scenes that make the media, good things happen too. "My family" in the city of Nablus, that I met on my first trip to Palestine in 2002, is celebrating the advent of 5 new grandchildren this year. Thus life goes on even under military occupation.

In March I read that a 19 year old Palestinian killed a 19 year old Israeli soldier. Their ages seem to highlight the tragic effects of the occupation. A young soldier, barely out of high school killed by a youth desperate to be free. The shooter's entire family will be punished for his crime. The Israeli army will bulldoze their home, a form of collective punishment, illegal under international law.

Next June our friend Mohammed Sawalha, Director of the Palestinian House of Friendship that our church donates to, will be here in person. We will honor him with a potluck on **Sunday, June 16** and get his first hand account of conditions in his city of Nablus and in the West Bank.

The UCC has produced a new video for us to see: "How are the Children? Palestinian Children in Israeli Military Detention." This is the outcome of a years-long UCC campaign highlighting the suffering of Palestinian children with the goal of ending U.S. funding of the Israeli occupation. We are looking for space in the church calendar for a showing of this informative documentary.

Sherrill Hogen

Here are some selected verses from
a favorite poem by Wendell Berry,
called *Manifesto: The Mad Farmer Liberation Front*. —

...So, friends, every day do something
that won't compute. Love the Lord.
Love the world. Work for nothing.
Take all that you have and be poor.
...Give your approval to all you cannot
understand.

Invest in the millennium. Plant sequoias.

Put your faith in the two inches of humus
That will build under the trees
Every thousand years...
Expect the end of the world. Laugh.
Laughter is immeasurable. Be joyful
though you have considered all the facts....

Practice resurrection.

We can't think of a better practice for this Easter
season than to be joyful, though you have considered
all the facts. And to practice resurrection. We talked
and sang about Resurrection on Easter Sunday, and
celebrated the central story of our religion. But Easter
Sunday was followed by Easter Monday, and that's
when we need to kick into gear—in the days
following, and the days to come.

Practice Resurrection. Never heard better spiritual
advice!

Blessings of the Easter season to each one of you,

Ann and Nancy

From the Trustees...

IMPORTANT PROPOSALS FOR MAY 5

For the past several months, we have been discussing various ways in which we might allocate “overage” funds from our capital campaign. These are monies over and above our original goal of \$300,000.

Including a \$20,000 grant specifically for restoration of the organ, we raised approximately \$365,000. Two major projects we were able to accomplish so far were paving our church driveways and parking lot (\$25,000) and painting the exterior of the church (\$18,000). This leaves us with an estimated \$20,000 of projected funds left over, subject to our staying on budget with respect to the organ’s restoration and our chancel lighting work (both ongoing), as well as receiving the balance of pledges still outstanding.

In anticipation of having as much as \$20,000 in such “overage” funds, we have been talking primarily about these four projects:

1. Custom finishing the organ’s façade pipes beyond the stock finish specified in our current contract
2. Continuing to become more energy efficient by installing new windows and doors in Friendship Hall
3. Installing lighting and controls in the sanctuary in support of theatrical, musical, and other performances
4. Remodeling parts of the kitchen to increase usable space

The Trustees strongly believe that we should not make any commitments about items #2 - #4 until after we’ve collected all outstanding pledges and ascertained all costs of ongoing projects. This will not occur before the end of this calendar year, and may extend into the second quarter of 2020. By then we will be sure of what monies we have left over before embarking on one or more of those projects.

In the meantime, IF we decide to undertake project #1 above, our organ restoration company (Czelusniak et Dugal) wants to know this by late spring or early summer because they need to schedule any special preparation of the pipes.

To help the congregation give further consideration to these issues, we held two after-church sessions on April 7 and April 28, where people could hear more about the recommendation of our Façade Pipe Study Group.

We also held a “Listening and Sharing” session attended by 20-25 people after church services on Sunday, April 14. Several people spoke, and though many said they had been skeptical at first, they wanted to see the organ finished in a way that would show it off well and beautifully.

A number of people said they were coming around to the recommendation of the Study Group, i.e., painting the pipes with pastel colors, polishing the mouths, and adding simple banding. At the same time, it was noted that some people thought to be non-supporters of decorating the pipes were not present, and concern was expressed about trying to make this as inclusive a decision as possible. Nevertheless, the conversation was generally very supportive of a modest increase in funding to ensure we properly finish the restoration by adding some level of decoration to the pipes.

At our next Congregational Meeting on May 5 we have important decisions to make: 1) Do we want to decorate the pipes differently from what is already agreed in our contract? and 2) If so, how do we want to decorate them?

(For a brief review of the options and costs outlined by Bill Czelusniak, please see below, at the end of this article. Please note that Option C-2 is the recommendation of the Façade Pipe Study Group.)

At this meeting, we will hold two votes for each proposal below, as needed. The first vote will be of the entire congregation present to serve as a way to include non-members. This is a non-binding vote. The second vote will be of church members only and will be a binding vote.

Proposal #1: *That we agree to finish our organ façade pipes with a custom décor instead of the stock gold finish currently specified in our contract.*

Proposal #2: *That we authorize the Trustees to complete the organ’s restoration by finishing the facade pipes with pastel colors and simple banding per the Façade Pipe Study Group’s recommendation (i.e., Option C-2 for \$19,000). This would also:*

- *Authorize the Trustees to direct the Façade Pipe Study Group in its solicitation of \$10,000 for the facade pipes’ restoration, and*
- *Authorize the Trustees to expend up to \$9,000 of available overage funds toward the facade pipes’ restoration, provided that the Façade Pipe Study Group first secures \$10,000 in additional written pledges for that purpose.*

OPTIONS FOR RESTORING THE ORGAN FAÇADE PIPES

Option A-1: Gold paint—Basic (Cost: \$0, already factored into the contract)

Czelusniak will clean, sand, fill, smooth, and prime, then repaint them gold.

Option A-2: Gold paint—Enhanced (Cost: \$12,000)

Pipes will be finished with a bronze-colored metallic powder in a lacquer medium, a better product than Option A-1.

Option B-1: Strip paint and leave pipes in natural state (Cost: \$0, already factored into the contract)

Strip the pipes to their natural zinc material and wax them for a low-luster appearance. "Ghosting" of the original décor will be visible. This means that we'll be able to see the original designs on the pipes. The original decorative paint made an impression in the metal over the years, and will still be slightly visible.

Option B-2: Strip paint and polish "lips" of pipes (Cost: \$1,900)

Strip off old paint to natural zinc appearance, then polish the upper and lower lips of all 33 pipe mouths to a bright finish, and apply a clear lacquer finish with a gloss to the pipes. [On April 14, it was asked if this could be done for a few pipes as an intermediate step to see the result before considering other options, but Bill Czelusniak said NO: "There is no budget for such experimentation; and, if we strip and prepare a sample of ANY type, then there is NO going back. The facade is committed to one process or another."]

Option C-1: Paint pipes a pastel color (Cost: \$14,800)

Strip the pipes back to base metal, paint the pipe bodies with primer, then finish with a solid coat of a low-luster, pastel color. Also polish the "lips."

Option C-2: Pastel paint with bands (Cost: \$19,000) – RECOMMENDED BY THE FAÇADE PIPE STUDY GROUP

Embellish the solid-colored pastel pipes with simple straight bands at the tops of the façade pipes. This would enhance the uniform appearance of the solid body of color.

Option D: Reproduction of décor using some of the original 1903 designs (Cost: \$36,200 - \$42,200)

Contract with Mary Lou Davis to hand paint 33 façade pipes

**Council on Aging
May 2
Lunch at the Ashfield Lake House
Ordering from the menu
RSVP Charlotte Clement 625-6270**

**NOHO Pride 2019:
Sooner Than You Might
Think!**

The **Northampton PRIDE Parade** is again the same day as Ashfield Town Meeting: **Saturday, May 4**. That is why we are appealing to everyone in our church family who is not a registered voter in Ashfield, or of another town which is having its annual meeting that same day, to **BE A PART OF OUR PILGRIMAGE TO NORTHAMPTON**. [By the way, last year, I had time to march, help out at the rally afterwards, and still get back to Ashfield in time to vote for an important resolution at town meeting!]

Our church will be sending a delegation of marchers as we do every year. We will march along with lots of other area UCC churches, and other faith groups, and dozens and dozens of schools, health facilities, businesses, community groups, musical groups, dancers, and lots of imaginative floats.

Help represent our church proudly at this great event! We march in support of the rights of, and in celebration with, all gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, and gender-nonconforming people, throughout the world. Our love and support are needed and appreciated. As we march, it's clear how much it means both to onlookers and participants to have this parade every year!

We will be cheered on by big, warm, supportive crowds of onlookers along the parade route from our starting point behind the downtown parking garage and all the way to our destination at the Three-County Fairgrounds, about 1.1 miles.

Last year for the first time, the parade started at 11:00 a.m., **ONE HOUR EARLIER** than it had started for many years before. Same thing this year – we start marching at 11:00 a.m. Sharp!

We are asked to assemble in our marching units by 10:30 a.m. SHARP. The parade starts

at 11:00 a.m. SHARP, finishing around noon to 12:30pm.

If you wish to stay at the fairgrounds for the afternoon entertainment, food, vendors, etc, that would be an added treat, but you could call it a day after the march too, as there is plenty of free parking at the fairgrounds, so you could leave your vehicle there during the event. **Carpooling is a possibility with prior planning. Please contact me if you'd like to carpool, or if questions!**
Thanks!

Bruce Bennett 628-4523(h)
bennettb1792@gmail.com
P.S.: Mark your calendars also for the 3rd Annual **Franklin County PRIDE Parade & Rally, Sat., June 15th**, from Greenfield Middle School to Greenfield Energy Park. We'll be marching there too! Activities all day! Details to follow in June.

Bruce Bennett

“And then a miracle happens...”

Remember that cartoon where the mathematician with the long white coat and heavy black-framed eyeglasses is at the big chalkboard and he's writing out this complex, inscrutable formula that goes on and on for three panels, and, on the fourth panel, he writes, “and then a miracle happens”? :-)

No, I'm not talking about the miracle of the loaves and the fishes. :-) I'm talking about the miracle of the loaves and the PB & J, and the ham & cheese, and the turkey & cheese, and the bologna & cheese.

Those are the prescribed fillings for the sixty or more sandwiches that we are being asked to prepare again for the meal which will follow the **May 19th** service of the **Cathedral of the Light**, outdoors on the Common in the center of Greenfield. Our friends at St. John's will be providing hot food, beverages, and supplies.

This will be the fifth time the Ashfield churches have joined to provide meals for the Cathedral in the Light [CITL], the others having been on 8/19/18, 12/10/17, 4/23/17, and 10/2/16. (The very first CITL service was 9/11/16.)

Cathedral in the Light (2 p.m.) services are modeled somewhat on those of Cathedral in the Night (5 p.m.) services in Northampton, which started about five years

“Walking the Path with Mariel”

Mariel Kinsey departed this life in 2018, but she left a legacy of reflections in her book *Where is This Music Coming From? Musings of a Failed Hermit*. As part of our commitment to work more closely with St. John's Episcopal Church in Ashfield, we are planning a joint event on **Saturday, June 1**, from 2:00-4:00 pm, for members and friends of our two congregations.

Mariel was a member of St. John's and a frequent visitor to our church. As such, she is a good bridge person as we begin to explore ways our two congregations can worship and study together.

“Walking the Path with Mariel” will be facilitated by Mary Clare Powell, Greenfield poet who helped Mariel pull her book together, by Holly Wescott from our church, and by Mary Snow from St. John's. The two hours will include quiet prayer, reflection on Mariel's writings, shared thoughts, and silence.

We are not planning to advertise this event widely. It really is for our two congregations so that we can build more connections between us for study and “faith formation.” Please RSVP so we will have information about how many people will be attending. Thank you.

“Walking the Path with Mariel”

June 1, 2-4 pm

St. John's Corner House

For friends and members of St. John's and First Congregational churches of Ashfield

previously. Both are ecumenical, informal, open to all, intended for the homed and homeless, to offer a welcome to those who may or may not feel welcome inside the doors of a church building. They intend to bring the welcome of Jesus out into the street, as Jesus did in his time, to all people, without judgment or qualification. And they bring the intimacy of a shared meal, as Jesus did.

Would you like to help make the sandwiches for Sunday **August 19**?

Would you like to accompany the food to Greenfield and help serve the food to worshippers?

Would you like to shop for the fixings?

Usually we shop on the Friday and prepare them on Saturday evening in the St. John's Corner's kitchen, and store them overnight in their fridge. The service usually runs from 2:00 pm to 2:30 pm and the food is served right afterwards. Please contact Bruce Bennett if interested or if questions. bennettb1792@gmail.com Tel 628-4523 (h)



First Congregational Church of Ashfield, UCC

CALENDAR May 2019



MAY

- 1
- 2
- 3 Alice Barrett
- 4
- 5
- 6
- 7
- 8
- 9
- 10
- 11 Wayne
Wickland
Carina Lemire
- 12
- 13
- 14
- 15
- 16
- 17 Victoria Nelson
Gerard
McGovern
- 18
- 19
- 20
- 21
- 22
- 23 Nancy Hoff
- 24 Maryellen
Abbatiello
- 25
- 26 Cher Lemire
Shirley Scott
Skylar
Abbatiello
- 27 Ainsley Murray
- 28
- 19
- 30
- 31

Tues. April 30: *Medicare for All.* The 40 minute film “Fix-It” will be shown and a Panel discussion, including several of our local physicians, will follow, 6:30 p.m. Open to all.

Wed. May 1: TaiChi 9:30, a COA sponsored event. Choir rehearsal 7:15 p.m.

Thurs. May 2: Kairos/Franklin Cty. Justice for Palestine, 7 p.m. at Charlemont Fed. Church.

Sat. May 4: Town Meeting Day. Northampton’s **Gay Pride Parade:** Those who wish to participate with the church, meet in the parking lot (*yellow area*) across from N’ton Brewery, 10:30 a.m.

Sun. May 5: Choir 9 a.m. Worship 10 a.m. with Pastor Nancy Sykes preaching, Communion. **Congregational Meeting** to follow - vote on Capital Campaign *overage* spending / facade pipes.

Tues. May 7: Deacon Mtg. 7 p.m. Trustees Mtg. 7 p.m.

Wed. May 8: TaiChi 9:30, a COA sponsored event. Choir rehearsal 7:15 p.m.

Thurs. May 9: Mission and Social Justice Retreat, 3-8 p.m. at the Prée’s house. Potluck dinner.

Sat. May 11: Citizens’ Climate Lobby (CCL) to meet at the church, 12-2 p.m.

Sun. May 12: Choir 9 a.m. Worship 10 a.m. led by Rev. Ann Hallstein. Choir Sunday. **Mothers’ Day**

Wed. May 15: TaiChi 9:30 a.m., a COA sponsored event

Thurs. May 16: *Spill your Guts.* An evening of listening to and writing poetry, led by Alice Barrett. Pizza provided, 6-7:30 p.m.

Sat. May 18: Our **Annual Plant Sale** with oodles of perennials and annuals. Opens 9 a.m. sharp!

Sun. May 19: Worship 10 a.m.

Tues. May 21: Bubble Up Theology 7 p.m.

Wed. May 22: TaiChi 9:30 a.m., a COA sponsored event

Sun. May 26: Worship 10 a.m. led by Rev. Ann Hallstein.

Mon. May 27: MEMORIAL DAY

Fri. May 31: Village Harmony Concert at the church 7 p.m.

Sat. June 1: “Walking the Path with Mariel”, 2:00-4:00 p.m. St. John’s

**First Congregational Church UCC
Box 519
Ashfield, MA 01330**



MAY 27th

