



First Churches Northampton

God is still speaking,
**UNITED CHURCH
OF CHRIST**



October 2013

IMPORTANT DATES

Spider in a Tree Book Launch

October 2nd

World Communion & Shelter Sunday

October 6th

Arts Night Out with PVPA's Wofa Drum and Dance Company

October 11th

New Member Sunday

October 20th

Birthdays

Keirnan Murphy ☩ October 8th

Anna Murphy ☩ October 13th

Wendy Williams ☩ October 13th

I have never preached on First Kings, chapter six. I checked the lectionary and the passage never appears as a Sunday morning reading. Unless you are an architect, you are probably grateful for not hearing it read, because it goes on and on about the features of Solomon's Temple- how many cubits the length, width and height each chamber, the carved olive wooden cherubs over the doors, where the stone came from and even that the stone was carved at the quarry so no sound of banging hammers would be heard in the Temple. (Apparently there was a zoning commission in 700 BCE.) It reads like many of the reports from the last annual meeting on September 22. There was a budget to review, reports on the repair needs of our stained-glass windows, issues regarding insuring the windows, the nature of an offer from a museum in Chicago on our Tiffany window, and a projection of the impact of mortgage payments on the endowment (free copies are available at the church office.!)

Most of you do not come to church to read charts, graphs and spreadsheets. Many of you would point out that you are here for the community and its values, not the building. And enough already, let's focus on the mission of the church and less on the business of the church. Solomon spent seven years building the First Temple, which is about the length of time from the beginning of the capital campaign to last Sunday where we celebrated getting a new furnace, finished replacing the light bulbs and added snow guards to the chapel roof.

Many pastors in churches with big buildings like ours have been labeled as having an "edifice complex," and beautiful sanctuaries and capital campaigns become tangible reminders of success and power. There is a temptation to such tangible things when trying to live with a mysterious God, as if we could capture the Creator between four walls. Since this is the fourth church I have served with neo-Gothic architecture, and Tiffany stained-glass windows, there must be some of this in me.

I want to make a case that sacred space has spiritual value. It is not all important, but it does have the power to call us deeper into a relationship with a creating God. Whether our sacred space is a garden, a sanctuary or a corner in a room that makes us feel secure, certain spaces help us make a connection with God. I once knew a mystical organist who stood in the



middle of the sanctuary and said that she could feel the decades of prayers, the hymns sung, the children baptized, and she felt a warm and embracing energy of God from the things that happened in that space. Many people ask to come into our sanctuary to pray. A young man asked to be in the sanctuary a few weeks ago. He thanked us as he left an hour later. Someone told me later that those few moments helped him make an important decision to move forward with his life.

I look at our whole church building as sacred space (yes, even the boilers!). Our building calls us to deeper places, to remember who we are and enhances our mission. One spinoff of looking at all these reports and spreadsheets is that we are embracing some new skills in dialog and transparency. I saw our Moderator, Donna O'Meally, working hard to make sure everyone is heard and not interrupted while they are talking. We presented all this information in response to questions, so that everyone in the congregation has the opportunity to participate in the decision. Our Baptist and Congregational theological heritage is that every member plays a role in discerning God's will for our community. (So we cannot delegate the spreadsheets to a Vestry or Board of Elders!) Strange as it sounds, all these reports represent a privilege to be heard, in a world that does not often listen to the voice of the people.



Sometimes the cost and time spent on the building seems like a burden, but I also see these challenges as strengthening our calling to the Great Commission, to make disciples and share the good news. Our building will not allow us to stay the way we are and be complacent. We know we have to grow to survive as a congregation. So this leads us on a journey to our neighbors and neighborhoods, seeking new ways to communicate the Gospel. People will certainly not join us for the purpose of preserving our building, they will come only if they find God's holy presence in the community. Would we be so diligent in reaching out if we

were not also feeling some pressure to grow?

My point is that the work we are doing now can be an opportunity to go deeper into our relationship with God and hear the calling to be the church God calls us to be. Budgets, bricks and mortar are not ends in themselves, but budgets are moral documents, and financial decisions clarify our values. So stick with us as we finish this work. It is certainly not all we are doing. As of today 38 people have signed up for our home book study groups to read and discuss "Speaking Christian" by Marcus Borg (see page 5). It warms my heart to see such passion for theological sharing.

Young @ Heart Benefit Concert for the Northampton Survival Center

November 2, 2013; 8pm; \$15.00 @ Academy of Music

A celebratory fundraiser for the Northampton Survival Center featuring the internationally-acclaimed *Young @ Heart Chorus*. Join us for a fun, festive event for all ages, with special guests the Dire Honeys and Whole Children's Joyful Chorus

Tickets available @ the Academy Box office or www.academyofmusictheatre.com



News from the Missions Board.....

October Mission

Offerings:

October marks the month when the American Baptist

Church receives the World Mission Offering and the United Church of Christ receives the Neighbors in Need Offering. This year, the Missions Board will make a donation to each denomination on behalf of First Churches, but we wanted you to know why these offerings are such an important part of denominational support.

American Baptist Foreign Missionary Society (operating as International Ministries) began its pioneer mission work in 1814 in Burma and today works in Asia, Africa, Europe, the Middle East and the Americas serving more than 1,800 long-term and short-term missionaries in more than 70 countries. In 2013, 6.2 million dollars of the World Mission Offering will be spent on seven areas of ministry focus: evangelism, theological education, human trafficking, health, economic development, education, and peace and refuge. This vital work is supported solely through the generosity of churches and individuals.

Neighbors in Need (NIN) is a special mission offering of the United Church of Christ (UCC) that supports ministries of justice and compassion throughout the United States. One-third of NIN funds support the Council for American Indian Ministry (CAIM). Two-thirds of the offering is used by the UCC's Justice and Witness Ministries to support a variety of justice initiatives, advocacy efforts, and direct services projects through grants. If you would like to make a personal offering to either of these missions, please feel free to make a donation to First Churches and add the name of the ministry to the notes section.

We will submit our offerings at the end of October.

Volunteer Needed:

Various local churches prepare meals nightly at the Interfaith Cot Shelter from November through April. Our church supplies the meal once a month. We are seeking a volunteer Coordinator to recruit volunteers to prepare and serve that meal for approximately 25 people. We have a list of volunteers who are willing to continue working with this ministry, and mission support is available to cover the cost of food items, but we need a coordinator before the meals begin during the first week of November. If you are interested in this ministry, please contact Anna Murphy-Williams or a member of the Missions Board.

Offerings Taken on Communion Sunday:

After conversation with several members of the congregation, we are planning to rotate the offerings we accept on Communion Sunday:

October: Offering taken for the Hampshire Interfaith Help Fund (used to help residents of many towns in Hampshire county address emergency food, heating, and transportation needs).

November: Offering taken for the Northampton Survival Center. Several members of our congregation have asked that we designate dates during the year when cash offerings could be accepted for the Survival Center in lieu of food offerings. The children of the Sunday School will help us by taking a "Noisy Offering" with decorated coffee cans. Please help us involve the children of the congregation with a meaningful way to battle food insufficiency in our own neighbors.

December: Offering taken for the Pastor's Family Fund (used to assist members of the First Churches congregation)

Thank you SO MUCH for your continuing support and commitment to our ministries at First Churches!

\$43,500

Does this number look impressive? It should because that is the amount of money that members of the Church spent to purchase Stop & Shop, Big Y, River Valley Market and Atkins grocery cards from July 2012 through June 2013.

These stores sell the grocery cards to non-profits at a reduced price...5% off for most. As a result, this painless fundraiser netted the church a profit of **\$2280.25** (very close to the \$2500 budgeted for in the 2013 operating budget).



As we move into our very busy 2014 Church Year...the G.C.T. (Grocery Card Team) is again ready to offer this fundraising activity. These grocery cards can be used to purchase anything that the stores sell...food, drugs, flowers, gas...you name it ...if they sell it...it can be purchased with a gift card. So...buy your cards...buy your red hot cards...at First Churches' coffee hour.

Peg, Carol, Kim, Martha (the G.C.T.)

COFFEE HOUR

If one is present at the Coffee Hour following the Sunday service, one can only notice what a hubbub of fellowship and activity it reflects. The Coffee Hour offers a time and place when members and friends of all ages can reconnect or meet and greet new people; in other words, can gather for the important act of community building.

Coffee Hour is not a complicated or extreme event to master. What is really needed are members/friends who are willing to give a part of their Sunday worship schedule to this endeavor

This is what it is:

A time before and after the service to prepare (coffee, tea, and food if available)...and clean up...

- All the prep steps are posted on the Coffee Hour fridge...
- Basically ½ and ½ and juice are needed on a weekly basis...food is optional....
- Coffee Hour has a limited budget so donations of food/juice/fair trade coffee/small change are always appreciated...
- There are members who willingly help clear up after Coffee hour.

This is what it is not:

- Coffee Hour does not “do” functions...
- Funerals, weddings, etc. are catered affairs...
- Coffee Hour is not the Fellowship Committee (Continued on next page)



The ideal situation would be teams of 2 or 3 that would either choose one week a month (as in the third Sunday) or who would willingly sign up not necessarily on a weekly but on a **regular basis**. The two month sign-up sheet hangs on the kitchen door.

There have been members who have consistently given of their time in order to be able to offer this coffee hour experience...but they cannot continue and it would not be fair to expect them to...it is time for others to see if they are willing to step up and offer to participate in the Coffee Hour!

If you are willing to serve in this capacity, you can contact me or Pastor Todd (who passes on all pertinent information).

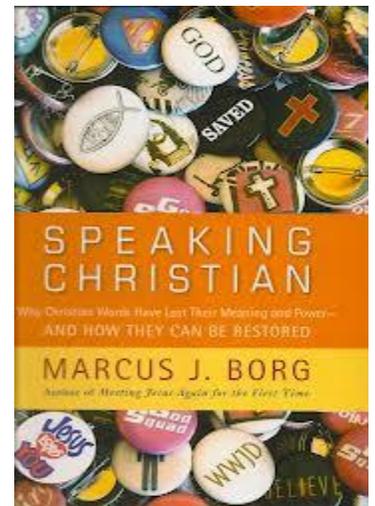
Reflecting on the scripture reading from 1 Corinthians 12:1-12...we all bring diversities of gifts to the Church...and it is in these diverse gifts that we are One. "For as the body is one, and has many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ."

Peg Whitham

HOUSE CHURCHES

The First Churches Peace and Justice Committee has helped organize four house churches for the study of Marcus Borg's Speaking Christian. These small groups provide an opportunity to meet other church members informally and study and discuss an inspiring book. The house churches are meeting Sunday after church in the parlor and Monday, Tuesday, and Thursday evenings in the houses of individual hosts throughout October and the first two weeks of November. Each group has a trained moderator to facilitate discussion. Anyone is welcome to join in when they are able. Please call the church office for house church times and places. Speaking Christian can be purchased at Broadside Books.

Marcus Borg is a well-known American theologian and the author of nineteen books. According to the New York Times he is a leading figure in his generation of Jesus scholars. One reviewer of Speaking Christian, Borg's nineteenth and most recent book, wrote, "Borg provides a primer to help correct misunderstanding and help those unfamiliar with Christian language to become fluent. . . An important figure on topics from the historical Jesus to religion and culture, he challenges Christians to live for God's justice in the world and not just focus on the next world."



Cathedral in the Night

On **Sunday, OCTOBER 20th** we prepare and serve dinner for Cathedral in the Night for the last time this year.

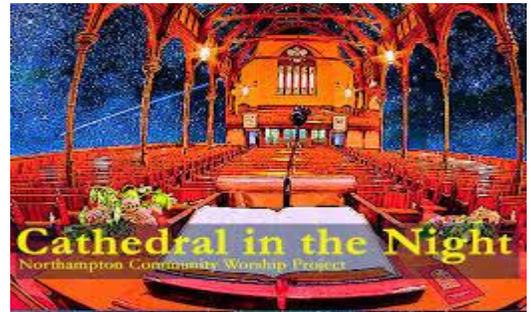
College students will be preparing all of the sandwiches and all of the desserts!

BUT, we still need:

- 2 people to make a green salad or vegetable
- 1 person to make 2 dozen hard boiled eggs
- 3 people to cook a main dish
- People to serve and clean up

Financial reimbursement is available for your expenses, thanks to generous donations from our congregation and the Board of Missions.

If interested, please contact the Church office at 413-584-9392



The church fair steering committee has been busy since August making plans for this year's fair on **SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 23, 9:30- 3:00**. Even the best of traditions can use a freshening up now and then to keep them interesting and enjoyable. With that in mind, we wanted to give everyone an update now in the hopes that you can begin to plan your contribution to the fair.

Remember: A successful fair is vital to the church as it is our biggest fund raiser of the year!

Raffle: The raffle display will be along the wall in Lyman Hall under the windows where the bake and deli table has been for many years. Celeste Ortega is busy obtaining raffle items from various businesses in town. We already have several donations from several generous donors including Smith College, First Night, Clarion Hotel and Joe's Pizza. We are looking for gift certificates to local businesses for goods or services in order to have a nice variety

of items to raffle. So, if you know of anyone who might be interested in making a donation to the raffle, please let Celeste know. Also, we hope to sell raffle tickets at a table in front of the church on November 2nd, 9th and 16th before the fair.

Needed for this table: People to sell tickets the few weeks before the fair either in front of the church or to take with them to sell to friends/family/co-workers. And, if anyone would consider taking the responsibility to arrange for the selling of raffle tickets on these Saturdays before the fair, it would be much appreciated.

Craft Table: This table will be moved to the center of Lyman Hall. It is being chaired by Sandi Pirello and Dori McCracken. They have been busy sponsoring several crafting sessions at church after coffee hour to create items for this table. More are planned so if you are interested in making something, stay tuned because more sessions are planned soon! Don't have any ideas? Not feeling particularly talented? Well, there will be projects, directions and support ready and waiting for you. Have a particular craft that you enjoy? Well, bring it along to a crafting session and enjoy some time with friends, new and old. Would you rather just create something on your own for this table? Please just let Dori or Sandi know what you are planning so that they can include it as they arrange their table.

Christmas Table: This table will be in Lyman Hall. Sue Massey was planning on chairing this table. But, due to illness, will not be able to this year. Is there anyone who would be interested? It is a fun table displaying "gently used" Christmas items including decorations and a few holiday related crafts. We could also use a few more folks to help staff

this table. And, we will need you to take a look in your attics and closets! Would you have anything to donate to this table? If you can help out here in anyway, just let one of us know!

Luncheon: Will be in its usual place, hopefully with more seating this year. Margie Riddle and Carol Judd are chairing this effort and would appreciate several “elves” to help out especially during the “lunch rush”. Are you up for this? Your fellow fair workers will thank you!

Apple Pies: Dorynee Pederzani and Sue Norton have graciously agreed to spearhead this effort again this year. Want to learn to bake a pie? Here is your chance as cooking lessons are provided! Pies will be baked at the church on days preceding the fair and will be sold at a table in Lyman Hall and also in front of the church during the fair. Help is needed with this as well.

Jewelry table: Will be in the parlor in front of the windows. If you’d like to help out here, please contact Priscilla Pike. Donations are gratefully accepted so please search thru your jewelry boxes and dresser drawers for any items you haven’t used in awhile and wouldn’t mind giving away for a good cause.

Bake table: Laura Judd has agreed to chair this table. This year we are narrowing the focus and asking folks to bake only cookies and quick (aka tea) breads or homemade candy. We hope that this approach will make this table more profitable and allow us to sell more of our items without a severe mark-down which often happens. Please help Laura make this a success by labeling your items with what they are and any pertinent ingredients (as in nuts) and also packaging them in smaller packages (4 or 6 to a pack for example), preferably in plastic wrap. If you can manage an attractive bow or ribbon in red or green, that would be much appreciated. This table will be placed in front of the fireplace in the Parlor.

Attic Treasures: This table will be chaired again by Gregory Wilson and located in the Parlor. Please talk to Gregory if you have any items you would like to donate. This is a popular table with our customers and is another opportunity to give away a “treasure” you haven’t used in awhile to support a good cause.

There are a few other possibilities with details to be worked out. Stay tuned to the weekly bulletin, our Facebook page and website for regular updates. Please contact any member of the committee for any questions, to volunteer, make suggestions etc:

Contact the Church office for more info

Greetings Families of First Churches!

We are off to a great start this year, and have been really enjoying working with all of your kids. I am excited to update you on a few things:

- We will be hosting a training for volunteers at the beginning of each new session in the curriculum. We will provide food, materials, and all of the information you need to provide support for our program. Please see Eric or Ann if you are able to volunteer one or more weeks.
- We will have confirmation starting up in October, if anyone in 7th grade or above wants to join our cohort, please see Eric or Todd.
- Finally, thank you all for you kind words, volunteering and support that you give to help our children succeed.



Thank you all,
Eric Frary

FROM YOUR CHRISTIAN EDUCATION BOARD

Greetings First Churches, It is so gratifying to start another year of Children's programs. Thanks again to everyone who's helped make this possible - our CE staff (Eric Frary & Lisa Rizzo in the Children's Church program, or Bernadette Marion & Kimberly Parente in the Rainbow Room), parents & many other volunteers, and most of all - the children!

As you know, we now have the ability to create two age-based children's classes - which will help ensure a more balanced ratio between our adult teachers / volunteers & the children, and will also help us provide age-based instruction on a consistent basis. A few notes as we begin another year together:

- **For Parents:** If you have not had an opportunity to register your children for either the Rainbow Room or our Children's Church program, please feel free to contact any member of the CE Board or speak directly to a member of our CE staff. For both new & returning families, it's important that we have a current registration form on file. Please come downstairs to the Children's rooms to pick up your child immediately following services. For the safety of all involved, we cannot release them unsupervised to meet you upstairs. In the Rainbow Room, there is a sign in / out sheet, for the older children we simply request that you meet your child(ren) there, so they may accompany you to Coffee Hour or as you exit the building.
- **For Everyone:** We will now need two volunteers each week to assist with the Children's Church classes, so we can honor our Safe Church Policy. In the next few weeks, information regarding a training session will be released - for parents and others who are interested in volunteering to assist our CE instructors. We have such richness of experience within our church community! Our sincere hope is that many of our adult worshippers will consider sharing their extensive knowledge & creativity with our children. It's a great way to help honor the commitment we all make to support & nurture the youngest members of our church family. We encourage you to sign up - even one week per season can make a difference, and help ensure that we can continue to offer quality programs for the benefit of our children.
- **For the Children:** We are planning several fun events this season - details will be announced soon about field trips, community outreach & crafting projects - there's something for everyone!

On behalf of the CE Board, we thank you for your continued support.

Blessings,

Ann Rasmussen, Judy Sherman, Angie Montalvo-Greene
Lora Wondolowski & Becky Lockwood

OCTOBER 2013

Sun.	Mon.	Tue.	Wed.	Thu.	Fri.	Sat.
		1 12:00 Peace Vigil 7:00 Deacons	2 7:00 <i>Spider in a Tree</i> Book Launch	3	4 7:00 Choir Practice	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
8:45 Adult Ed 10:00 Worship & Sunday school Christian Ed Meeting 5:00 Cathedral in the Night World Communion/Shelter Sunday	7:00 Peace and Justice	12:00 Peace Vigil	6:30 Trustees 7:00 Missions		7:00 Choir Practice 5:30 Art's Night Out PVPA's Wofa drum and dance Co.	
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
8:45 Adult Ed 10:00 Worship & Sunday school 5:00 Cathedral in the Night		12:00 Peace Vigil	7:00 Council		7:00 Choir Practice	
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
8:45 Adult Ed 10:00 Worship & Sunday school 5:00 Cathedral in the Night New Member Sunday	Deadline for November Messenger Submissions	12:00 Peace Vigil			7:00 Choir Practice	
27	28	29	30	31		
8:45 Adult Ed 10:00 Worship & Sunday school 5:00 Cathedral in the Night		12:00 Peace Vigil		Halloween		