



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



# First Churches Northampton

April 2013 Messenger

## APRIL EVENTS

### Third Dialog

with Margaret Keyser  
April 6 from 9 AM to 1 PM

### INSTALLATION

Rev. Todd Weir

April 14 @ 3:00 PM

### Church Budget Meeting

April 21 after Worship

### CROP WALK

April 28

## CHRIST IS RISEN!



## LIVING AFTER THE EMPTY TOMB

You will be reading this newsletter after Easter, but I am writing it on the threshold of Holy Week. While my prayer life and preaching preparation is walking with Jesus through the Last Supper and Garden of Gethsemane, I must be thinking ahead to the Post-Easter good news of the Resurrection in my planning. It is hard for me fully embrace the hopeful new reality when my heart hasn't moved there yet.

That is nature of Easter. The Good News of the presence of Christ comes unexpectedly, a certainly before we are ready. Actually, we don't expect it at all. Tombs are not supposed to be empty, heavy stones don't move, and lives do not give way to easy change. That is the typical way of things.

If you look up "typical" in a thesaurus, the adjectives include: *usual, normal, standard, average conventional, predictable, regular, nothing out of the ordinary.* I cannot find biblical references for any of these words used to describe Jesus. How often are these words used to describe the life of the church?

The antonyms of this word set are: *extraordinary, remarkable, odd, curious, strange, rare, bizarre, scarce.* Do these words better describe Easter and the life of Jesus? And if you answer "yes," how do you feel about it? I don't mind being seen as extraordinary or even with curiosity, but I would rather not be seen as odd, strange or bizarre. But I am not sure it is easy to separate the remarkable from the odd. Truth is stranger than fiction, and great truth is strange indeed.

So as I my heart slowly moves to discover the empty tomb, here is my prayer for Eastertide: "God, do not let me be typical! Help me embrace the odd and curious ways of faith, even if some think me strange. Whether my actions become extraordinary, or are just odd, help me stay on the remarkable path towards the truth that will set me free. Help me live into the proclamation: "Christ is risen indeed!"

## Greetings from your Moderator

Warm greeting to all, and *Happy Spring!* It's been a wonderfully productive winter at First Churches, and I look forward to warmer weather gracing our our equally-busy April. Here's a few highlights of recent happening & things to come:

The first two Listening Sessions with Margaret Keyser were held on Saturday 3/9 & 3/23, each attended by about 30 people. These discussions focus on where we are as a congregation, what God is calling us to be, and processes we can use to ensure that we all have a positive voice as we move forward together. Please considering joining us for the final session on Saturday April 6th - snacks provided; childcare available; sign up with me or Todd. We look forward to sharing a summary of the program with all, following its conclusion.

This month, we look forward to two big events at First Churches - Pastor Todd's official Installation Service on Sunday April 14th (3pm service, no morning worship), and the all-church Asking Budget Meeting on Sunday April 21st, following morning worship. Childcare is available for both of these events.

As always, I welcome your comments & questions - please feel free to contact me. It's only with your feedback that we can work together to discern our future!

Donna O'Meally  
First Churches Moderator  
(413) 584-9392  
[donnaomeally@gmail.com](mailto:donnaomeally@gmail.com)

## **HAMPSHIRE ASSOCIATION ANNUAL MEETING**

Date: Sunday, April 28, 2013  
Time: 2PM

The Annual Meeting of the Hampshire Association of MACUCC churches is scheduled for Sunday, April 28th at 2 PM at the West Cummington Congregational Church. Come see the newly rebuilt West Cummington church. She has risen in sublime glory from the ashes of a devastating fire. Hear about the exciting Cathedral of the Night ministry, the greening of South Congregational Church in South Amherst, and meet the youth of the joint youth ministry, Compass, formed between four association churches.

Come for Worship, Sharing, Learning, and Socializing!

### **LOCATION / ADDRESS**

West Cummington Congregational Church, UCC, Cummington  
27 West Main Street  
Cummington, MA 01026-0148

## Updates from Christian Education

### Confirmation is Coming!

Greetings families! This spring, we will begin a new cycle for confirmation at the church. Confirmation provides older children an opportunity to explore the bible, critically reflect on their faith, and grow as citizens of the church and of the world.

Our confirmation classes will meet every other week starting in May, and will also include retreats to the Silver lake Conference Center in Connecticut. We are hoping to recruit upper middle/high school students.

We will be holding an informational meeting on April 21st at 9:15 in the parlor. We hope to see you there!



### Mission 4/1 Earth

How many trees could you plant in 50 days?

What if you had the entire national UCC church as your work crew?

### What is Mission 4/1 Earth?

Mission 4/1 Earth is an initiative by the national conference of the UCC to actively work to fight climate change, excess waste, and other environmental tragedies. The mission takes place during the 50 days after Easter before Pentecost. One United Church on a shared resurrection witness for Planet Earth during 50 great days of greening up, powering down and shouting out for the environment! That's Mission 4/1 Earth!



It is an opportunity to live out our faith — in unity, as one church — for the sake of our fragile planet Earth. Launching on Easter Monday, April 1, 2013, and continuing through the 50 days of Eastertide, United Church of Christ congregations, colleges, seminaries, camps and outdoor ministries, and health and human service agencies will join together in a shared mission campaign to:

- Collectively offer more than ONE MILLION HOURS of engaged earth care, including cleanup, advocacy, education, and behavioral changes that will impact the environment.
- Collectively plant more than 100,000 TREES locally and globally in partnership with the National Arbor Day Foundation and the UCC's denominational partners around the world.
- Collectively write/send more than 100,000 ADVOCACY LETTERS on environmental concerns to elected officials and local and national newspapers.

Mission 4/1 Earth links together four significant events — Easter (March 31), Earth Day (April 22), Arbor Day (April 26) and Pentecost (May 19) — for a sustained, aggressive and collective mission opportunity for the entire United Church of Christ.

For more information go to <http://www.ucc.org/earth>

## From the Choir Loft

Many people who attended the Memorial Service for Bea Fitts last month enjoyed hearing the set of hand chimes which Bea gave to our church. They were played for the first time at her memorial.



Bea's gift enabled us to purchase an octave and a half of chimes. When some of the members of the Bell Choir realized how much fun it was to play the chimes (and how lovely they sounded), they decided they would like to purchase an add-on set which would give us many more options. We would then have a full two-octaves of chimes as well as the necessary sharps and flats! The chimes are light and easy to ring, which makes it possible for all of the generations in our congregation to use them. The entire set of chimes would then be given in memory of Bea, who was one of the original members of our Bell Choir, and of Dot Swain, who was also a longtime bell ringer.

If there are any of you who would like to join us in honoring Bea and Dot, you are invited to contribute to the Chime Fund. Checks can be sent to the office. They should be made out to "The First Church of Christ." Please indicate on the memo line that the money is intended for the *Chime Fund*.

Thanks to all of you who choose to participate—all donations (large or small) will be welcomed and appreciated.

## First Church of Christ Silver at Historic Deerfield

This past year Trustees collaborated with Historic Deerfield to review, reappraise and renew the loan of the First Church of Christ silver. Twelve pieces of Church silver, a tablespoon, baptismal font and ten cans (cups), have been on loan to Historic Deerfield since 2000. These pieces are on display at Historic Deerfield's Silver Museum, and visitors enjoy them for both their history and beauty.



As a courtesy, Historic Deerfield has also provided the Church with four complimentary passes for church members who would like to view the silver on display. Andrea Marion has agreed to be the coordinator for these passes (we had received 2 passes years ago and they have summarily disappeared) so that they can continue to be accessible for church members. She has numbered the passes and created a sign-out sheet in order to keep track of the passes. She is the person members should approach to sign out the passes.

Peg Whitham, Board of Trustees

## Cathedral in the Night

Every Sunday evening at 5 pm, year round, a short worship service is celebrated on the sidewalk in front of First Churches of Northampton.

At 5:30 pm, a meal is served to about 70 people. This meal is one of several free meals offered around downtown Northampton every week and provides a solid meal to those in need.



### HELP IS NEEDED!

First Churches is scheduled to provide the meal on these dates in 2013:

- March 17<sup>th</sup>
- June 16<sup>th</sup>
- August 18<sup>th</sup>
- October 20<sup>th</sup>

### Food We Provide

Soup (optional, but appreciated in cold weather.)  
3 or 4 dozen hard boiled eggs. (breakfast for the next day)  
70 individually wrapped sandwiches. (lunch for the next day)  
Individually wrapped cookies or bars.  
Water and/or other beverages.  
Coffee, when the weather is cold, and cream or milk.  
A hot dish to feed 70 people, some of which must be vegetarian.



### What Can I Do to Help?

Prepare food.  
Pick up hot dishes (some heavy) at the homes of cooks and bring them to church.  
Serve food.  
Assist with clean up.  
Return dishes to cooks.  
Donate money.

### SIGN UP!

Please contact:

Carol Judd @ 584-9641 or [cmcc55@gmail.com](mailto:cmcc55@gmail.com)

Judy Sherman @ 533-5655 or [jhs12@comcast.net](mailto:jhs12@comcast.net)

COOKING and SERVING 70 people is a project!  
Many hands make light work...  
And lots more fun!  
Thank you, in advance, for your contributions.

## **"Pray without Ceasing"...even on Tuesdays!**

Every Tuesday at noon a small circle of between four and eight folks gather for prayer and discussion in the sanctuary. We pray for the conversion of the consciences of the President and his advisors that they may cease the immoral and illegal practice of drone warfare and assassinations. We pray for our nation and its diverse communities, which the scourge of gun violence end.

But, most of all, we pray for the grace to not turn aside. We pray for the strength of the Good Samaritan who did not pass by the beaten and bleeding stranger. A stranger whose people were considered enemies. We pray because we try to follow the man from Nazareth who preached the outlandish Gospel of loving one's enemy We pray because in a world grown as small as our computer screens, we cannot avoid the truth that there is no one who is not our neighbor. And we pray because that fact is simply overwhelming. Or, it could be. And so we pray for God's grace and tender mercies that each of us, as we are able, will do what we can to mend our broken creation. And we pray together, because that same man from Nazareth once said, "Whenever two or more is gathered in my name, there also am I."

This is why we pray and why we meet. Come, join us, or simply pause at noon on Tuesdays and be in prayer. Thank you.

The Tuesday Prayer Vigilers

## **FROM THE PERSONNEL COMMITTEE**

The Personnel Committee requests that we take note of the current open office hours which are Monday through Friday 10AM-2PM. You may of course contact the office by phone at any time. If there is no answer, messages left on the answering machine will be returned.

Also note that requests for meeting space must be done in advance. A request for meeting space can be made at the church website [www.firstchurches.org](http://www.firstchurches.org) or by phone 584-9392 for those without internet access. The requests are processed every Friday.

Our church office is a hub for the many activities of our congregation and our community. In addition to our usual support, there are volunteer opportunities available for any members with a couple of hours to help out with paperwork and filing in the office. If you are able to help, please contact our Church Administrator Andrea Marion at 584-9392.

Thank you from the church staff and members of the Personnel Committee for your consideration.

# **FROM YOUR CHRISTIAN EDUCATION BOARD**

## **New Rainbow Room Staffer**

Last month we said goodbye to Eleanor Pullan, one of our 2 Rainbow Room Childcare staffers during Sunday worship. Eleanor was a wonderful addition to our program & we wish her all the best with her busy spring schedule! We are now very pleased to introduce Bernadette Marian to the Rainbow Room! Bernadette started in mid-March and has already met several of our Rainbow Room "regulars". She will be working alongside Jackie Baron for the remainder of the RR program year. Bernadette comes to us with lots of early-childhood & primary care experience, & we are so pleased to have her with us. If you haven't met Bernadette yet, please feel free to stop by the Rainbow Room before service to welcome her!

## **Donations Needed for Rainbow Room**

Several months ago, we purged old, incomplete & broken items from our Rainbow Room to ensure a safe experience for our children. Now, we are in need of some specific donations, to supplement toys & supplies without straining the budget. If any of the items below are taking up space in your closet, storeroom or attic, please consider donating to the Rainbow Room! Our specific needs include:

- 5 large Rubbermaid storage bins w/ lid
- Fisher Price "Little People" toy figures, cars & complete play sets
- Small storage wicker baskets or plastic bowls
- Play food, pots & pans, etc. for play kitchen
- Large (non-battery powered) cars & trucks
- Tissues!
- Cleaning supplies (cleaning wipes, sanitizing spray)
- Diapering supplies (diapers, wipes, disposable underpads)
- Vacuum cleaner & bags (canister or upright, our RR staffers will use for weekly cleaning after kids are picked up)

## **Spring Events**

Stay tuned for details on a few upcoming events - including:

- End of the Year Sunday School picnic
- Spring Children's Pageant
- Spring Cleaning & Painting Party (to complete the spruce-up of our basement children's spaces & create an office for Eric, our CE Director!)

## **Graduation Breakfast**

### **Sunday May 19th, Lyman Hall - 8:30am**

The Christian Education Board is planning a Graduation Breakfast for students of all ages! Children & adults within the First Churches community who will be graduating from schools ranging from Pre-K to Post-Graduate this season will be recognized by the CE Board at a special breakfast for them & their families, before worship on Sunday May 19th. Please inform a member of the Christian Ed Board if your family includes a soon-to-be graduate, so we can be sure to send you an invitation! We hope to honor the achievements of all our graduates on May 19th - contact Ann Rasmussen, Judy Sherman, Lora Wondolowski or Becky Lockwood to RSVP with your graduate, to volunteer to help or with any questions.

## LOOK AT THE NEW FIRSTCHURCHES.ORG!

We have been re-tooling the church website to make it more informative and easy to use. You will see new sections and content, such as recent sermons, events and sections for all of our ministries. While some parts are still under construction, Ann Rasmussen is busy working on new content in each section. Thanks to Nancy McNamara of Academic Webpages, for her work in designing our website.

## WHY FACEBOOK?

Facebook is rapidly becoming an essential organizational tool for communications. We are using it more for announcements and reports on things that are happening. While many things are now going on our church website as well, Facebook allows for more interaction and sharing. For example, pictures of our Palm Sunday blessing in Pulaski Park had over 800 separate viewers! Every time one of our members clicks on a picture or story, it goes to all their friends as well. It is a great way to share what is happening with First Churches to a much wider network. Find us on Facebook at [First Churches of Northampton, Massachusetts](#)



NoHo Parade and Pride Day will be held on Saturday, May 4, 2013 in Northampton, MA. All ONA churches will march together to make a statement about the UCC's message of inclusion and affirmation. Groups will meet at 11:00 AM in the parking lot behind Thrones Market (150 Main

Street). The parade ends at the 3 County Fairgrounds (54 Fair Street), where the fun and celebration will continue.

The events will be held rain or shine. Parking and admission are free!

## SAVE THE DATE

### MAY

May 19	Stewardship Sunday
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### JUNE

June 2	Annual Congregational Meeting
June 14-15	Massachusetts Conference Annual Meeting
June 23	Children's Sunday

# APRIL 2013

Sun.	Mon.	Tue.	Wed.	Thu.	Fri.	Sat.
	1	2	3	4	5	6
		7:00 Book Study with Ron Story	7:00 Deacons			9:00 am to 1:00 pm All- Church dialog with Margaret Keyser
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
8:45 Adult Ed 10:00 Worship & Sunday school 5:00 Cathedral in the Night	7:00 Couplehood Group	7:00 Peace & Justice	7:00 Missions			
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
No Adult Ed No AM Worship & Sunday school 3:00 Installation for Rev. Todd Weir 5:00 Cathedral in the Night	7:00 Couplehood Group	7:00 Book Study with Ron Story	7:00 Council			
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
8:45 Adult Ed 9:15 Confirmation Meeting 10:00 Worship & Sunday school 11:30 All Church Business Meeting 5:00 Cathedral in						
28	29	30				
8:45 Adult Ed 10:00 Worship & Sunday school 11:30 CROP WALK 2:00 Hampshire Association Meeting 5:00 Cathedral in <b>the Night</b>		7:00 Book Study with Ron Story				