



First Churches Northampton

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



June 2014

Pastor's Page

Important Dates

- June 1.. Annual Budget Meeting
- June 8.. Pentecost, See pg. 7
- June 13..Last choir rehearsal/Potluck
- June 15.. Children's Sunday .. Music at the Meeting House

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I thank everyone who came out to our May Council meeting and stayed till after 9 PM to talk about the Associate Pastor proposal (about 20 people). This is has been a fast and unusual process and I appreciate the spiritual maturity, careful discernment and openness that people have expressed. Here are a few of my impressions after the meeting. *(See newsprint notes on the discussion on page 6)*

First, I hear a great openness to move forward as a church to something new, that we are not content to stay as we are, and that we are not done with our mission and purpose as a church. We are pregnant with something new. While this proposal is sudden and did not come about through an internal process as a congregation, I think people have embraced the opportunity for reflection and are open to moving in a new direction. The direction may or may not be Common Ground and calling Sarah Buteux as an Associate Pastor, but there is positive direction and movement within our congregation. That is good regardless of outcome. Whatever people may vote on this proposal, I do not hear opposition to change and moving forward as a church.

Second, I share many of the concerns people have shared with me. The concerns boil down to this 1) Can we afford to expand our staff this dramatically? 2) Will there be a common purpose and community between people worshipping at two different times? 3) Will this really bring new people into the church as long-term members? If we move forward on this proposal, how we answer these questions and work on them together will determine whether this succeeds or not. We can only speculate about the outcomes now, but we can do something to address these concerns as we move forward. The good news here is that First Churches members feel that they have something to offer a new worshipping community in terms of culture, values and mission. We are open to their gifts, but we do not need "saved." We believe that we are good soil for a new seed to fall upon.

Third, my concern as a pastor is steering between two sets of risks. On one side there is the risk of spending down our endowment and reducing our long-term viability. We are heavily dependent on the endowment right now, and since I asked for projections for (Continued..)



the future from our financial advisor, Mark Teed, during the Tiffany Window discussions, I'm fully aware of where we stand. On the other side is the risk of what will happen to our pledge base over the next decade due to the age of our members. We may lose between 50-70% of our current pledge income. That is a known risk. If we do not solve this issue, it will not matter what the endowment does in producing investment income. Staying as we are is a choice to retire and phase out the life of the church. Working a little harder, or trying a few new ideas around the edges will not solve this problem. We will need bold decisions and actions that will probably feel risky and will push our comfort zone.

Offering this proposal to call Rev. Sarah Buteux as Associate Pastor, to be our Christian Educator and develop Common Ground, is my attempt to offer an opportunity for the future. As one member put it on Wednesday night, "We did not plan on the roof falling in 2007, but we dealt with that. Sometimes opportunities come from things we can't control." If the congregation determines to do this, I will give it my best efforts. If not, I will suggest the next process to lead to a major new initiative coming from within the congregation. I felt the need to seize this moment of opportunity and put it before you. I put my trust in your wisdom and resiliency. I thank the congregation for their time and the mature and thoughtful way of handling a proposal that is both sudden and large of scope. I could not ask for more.

Respectfully submitted,

Pastor Todd

Greetings First Churches!

It's hard to imagine that we are at the end of another program year, yet our Annual Meeting is indeed this Sunday, June 1st - please, plan to join us. The main item of business will be to vote on the 2014-15 fiscal year budget, with an amendment coming from the Christian Education Board to call an Associate Pastor and welcome a new ministry called *Common Ground*.

In preparation for this important decision, I hope you've taken an opportunity to learn more about this proposal - by hearing Sarah Buteau preach at First Churches recently, and attending her post-sermon Q&A, the Common Ground worship service dinner on Memorial Day, and / or this month's Council Meeting discussion. To help each of us discern, a host of resources have been made available, on the First Churches website at www.firstchurches.org/growingministry or from Vanessa in the church office - including the budget, the Associate Pastor Job description, Pastor Todd's *State of the Church* Sermon, hopes / concerns / questions raised during Council meeting's small group discussions, Sarah Buteux's resume and much more. It is my hope that by Sunday morning, we each will have taken time with these materials and with our decision regarding our future ministry.

If you cannot make the meeting, please feel free to email a paragraph to either Pastor Todd at pastor@firstchurches.org or to myself at donnaomeally@gmail.com, with your thoughts regarding the budget amendment.

We will not use absentee ballots for this vote, so we definitely want to hear from you if you cannot attend. Your comments will be shared at the meeting if you desire. (Continued...)

I look forward to seeing everyone this Sunday June 1st, for worship services and our Annual Meeting at 11:15 - and to continuing our walk together, towards becoming the church God is calling us to be.

Peace,

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

🎂 Birthdays 🎂

🕯 June 5 Barbara Parsons

🕯 June 16 April Bent

🕯 June 18 Marti Catuogno

🕯 June 22 Jeanne Fenton

🕯 June 26 Ruth Geller

Church Fair Meeting

Last June, 2013, a meeting was held for planning for the November Church Fair. This was a success in that important ideas and comments were shared at the time and a fair steering committee was formed.



We would like to plan on meeting again on June 15 in the parlor shortly after the onset of coffee hour. This is also the date for Children's Sunday but Todd assures us that all activities planned for that day will work together.

It is important to share your thoughts and suggestions especially as (based on the June input) last November the steering committee tried some new approaches while eliminating some of the old. It is so helpful to hear if these changes were positive or what else could be done to make improvements (always room for improvements, isn't there?).

So please try to be available for this important discussion on the 15th, and if that is going to be challenging, perhaps there is a way that your information/ideas/feedback can still be shared at that time.

Barbara Parsons, Ginny Wahl, Peg Whitham, Celeste Ortega

THE HAITI CONSULTATION

First Churches has had a long and rewarding relationship with CONASPEH (National Spiritual Council of Churches of Haiti). On June 8, I will have the privilege of traveling to Haiti with Mark Pohlman and Mary Friedman of First Church of Longmeadow to attend a consultation organized by Global Ministries and CONASPEH. The goals of the three day meeting are:



1. To learn about the context of the Caribbean and the context of Haiti before, during and after the 2010 earthquake.
2. To learn about the present challenges of Haiti, as seen from the eyes of CONASPEH and Ecumenical Foundation for Peace and Justice (another Global Ministries partner in Haiti which runs the House of Hope).
3. To learn from CONASPEH about the philosophy, history, nature, vision and mission of CONASPEH as a grass root liberation theology church organization, including its organizational chart, constitution and bylaws.

4. To receive an update on programs and projects that have been in place for the last five years.
5. To receive from CONASPEH the goals, objectives, programs and projects for the next five years.
6. To celebrate the companionship in mission with CONASPEH and House of Hope, and the mutual learning and understanding of mission today based on mutual accompaniment.

Attending the consultation will be representatives from CONASPEH, Global Ministries, and churches that support the work of CONASPEH. I am excited to be part of this conference and hope to learn more about how we can all work together to further the mission of CONASPEH. I am also looking forward to seeing Miguelson, whom I last saw in January 2013. He will just have finished his exams for his second year of college. Upon my return, I will report to the congregation on all my adventures! – Pauline Bassett

Hampshire Association Jamboree

June 1st, 2014, Dow Pavilion at Look Park

Come meet your UCC friends from neighboring Churches! Reconnect with your wider community in a beautiful setting!

Schedule of Events:

12:30 pm - Picnic

Menu: Hamburgers, veggie burgers, hotdogs, beans, salad, dessert
Bring a side dish to share, if you wish

2:00 pm - Worship Sing-a-Long
led by Jeff Olmsted

Annual Business Meeting to Follow,
optional for everyone, but delegates.

Fun & Games for all ages throughout the day! Volleyball, Cribbage, Chess, Ball Games, and more....

Celebrating our Graduates

On Sunday May 4th, Christian Education Director Eric Frary, Christian Education Assistant Lisa Rizzo, and members of the Christian Education Board welcomed all the graduates in our church community for a breakfast of celebration & conversation in Lyman Hall. CE Graduation / End of Season Breakfast celebrates everyone from pre-school to post-graduate who completed a program, received a degree or moved on to another school this season. This year the graduate list includes Lucy and Eleanor Pullan, Brittany Murphy-Williams, Liza Knapp, Denise Karuth, Marcus O'Meally, Abigail Stone to name a few. Thank you to all who attended, and to those who baked or offered breakfast items to share. And *Congratulations!* Blessings for the future to all our graduates - named & unnamed. We are so proud of your achievements, and of what incredible role models you are to all our children.



PEACE AND JUSTICE COMMITTEE UPDATE

The First Churches Peace and Justice Committee has continued to actively pursue a range of important issues this year. In December we met with many members of the Iglesia Bautista Quechua Nueva Vida, which meets in our Chapel, to hear their concerns. We were moved by the obstacles they face as immigrants to Northampton and voted to adopt as a priority working with them and Just Communities to seek improvements.

Members of our committee and Pastor Todd met with our state legislators to secure their support for state legislation that would allow undocumented immigrants to obtain Massachusetts drivers' licenses, enabling insurance coverage for their vehicles. This legislation has been referred to the Division of Motor Vehicles and has not yet passed. Much effort has gone into developing Northampton trust legislation to prevent local law enforcement from referring immigrants for deportation, unless they have been charged with a crime. A draft Trust ordinance will be introduced to the City Council on June 5. Members of the Committee have been meeting individually with City Councilors to seek their support. The ordinance will also limit impounding immigrant vehicles and increase language access to city agencies, especially law enforcement.

The Peace and Justice Committee has joined the Northampton Living Wage Coalition and Western Mass Jobs for Justice. Members have participated in demonstrations for peace, for effective closure of the Vernon, VT nuclear power plant, and a Jobs not Jails rally on the Boston Common. The Committee has continued the weekly anti-drone warfare and anti-violence vigil in the church sanctuary every Tuesday at noon. We have co-sponsored two Veterans Education Project events on "Unlearning the Legacy of Violence." The Committee has also petitioned the Attorney General of Guatemala to end human rights abuses against indigenous populations. Other actions of the Committee will be found in our annual report. The Committee welcomes the participation of all interested persons from First Churches.

Current members include, David Entin, Chair, Sharon Moulton, Sue and John Norton, Bill Ames, Marion Van Arsdell, Manny Eduardo, Harriet Wilson, Oonagh Doherty, Denise Karuth, and Isabelle Ortega.

Notes from Church Council - Wednesday, May 21, 2014

We had a lengthy and rich discussion about the proposal to hire and Associate Pastor. We moved into small groups and discussed things: what is exciting, what concerns do we have, what questions need to be answered? The following lists everything we put down on newsprint. At the end are a few reflections about the process.

Exciting

- New people, especially kids *
- Biblical Preaching
- Burst of energy
- + Pastor for us
- Alternative worship- mid week
- Qualified Christian Education director
- More men and more varied hair color (not grey)
- Innovation & Tradition both observed
- More human resources
- Programs beyond confirmation for youth
- Sarah has young children
- Non-Traditional process addresses needs

Concerns

- ** \$ Big Financial Risk
- Integrations & cross pollination: one church or two?
- Concern about “fast growth”
- Will we “Lose” our First Churches culture & identity?
- Will new folks feel connected to First Churches with time, Boards, \$?
- What if we don't do it?- Lost excitement, energy, \$
- Common Ground is not an established group
- Division as risk
- Would Common Ground worshipers be committed to the whole?
- Risks: Success  leave to form own church
- Process moving too fast-?
- Will this really help us grow?
- Don't know Sarah well enough?

Questions

1. Do we have more time?
2. How much is cost?
3. Can we negotiate?  Ex. 70% time
 - Starting salary to high?
 - Temp contract or 3 year project?(Concern re: trust)
4. Job description for Associate Pastor
5. Effect on Hadley Church
6. Can there be shared risk?
7. What commitment do we have to bond as one church?
8. Will Christian Ed role be given time & priority it needs, (we need)?



And they all heard in their own language...

Pentecost 2014 – June 8 @ 6:00 PM

This year we can celebrate Pentecost in at least three languages – English, Quichua, and Spanish-gathering with Iglesia Bautista Quichua Nueva Vida in their chapel Sunday night. (10 AM services will still take place.) We will share in a bilingual service from 6:00-7:15 PM and dinner will follow in Lyman Hall. Join in for an evening of music, celebrative worship and great food! Please sign up or email admin@firstchurches.org so we can estimate numbers. If you would like to practice our hymn, the tune is here on Youtube: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rD5GW_7dlcU.

Dios de la esperanza, danos gozo y paz!
Al mundo en crisis, habla tu verdad.
Dios de las justicia, mandanos tu luz,
Luz y esperanza en las oscuridad.

Oremos por la paz.
Cantemos de tu amor.
Luchemos por la paz,
Fieles a Ti, Señor.

May the God of hope go with us ev'ry day,
Filling all our lives with love and joy and
peace.
May the God of justice speed us on our way,
Bringing light and hope to ev'ry land and
race.

Praying, let us work for peace,
Singing, share our joy with all,
Working for a world that's new,
Faithful when we hear Christ's call

♪ MUSIC ♪

June 13th will be the last choir practice of the season. Ringing and Singing Choirs are invited to enjoy an end of season potluck at MJ and Doreen's home. More information to follow, as well as sign-up sheets for the meal.

Music at the Meeting House is presenting Abigail Adams' Graduation Recital on **June 15th** at 4pm in First Churches' Sanctuary. Abigail will play violin accompanied by Lior David on piano. Please join us for the recital, followed by a reception in Lyman Hall.

Cathedral in the Night - A Growing Concern

Fifty-two Sunday nights a year people gather on the sidewalk in front of our church to join together in a communion service and a hot meal. The Cathedral in the Night has its own pastor, Stephanie Smith and unique congregation. It is an alternative to a Sunday morning service held inside the sanctuary of a church, and meets the needs of a diverse group of people whose faith is as palpable as are their vulnerabilities. Most of the congregants are down on their luck and homeless, some are struggling with the burdens of mental illness or developmental disabilities, while others battle addictions. Many of them know Jesus and seek solace in deep and meaningful prayer, and the shared communion. Following the service ALL of the participants seek the physical nourishment that is being offered to them by dozens of hands, either cooks or folks who help to set up, deliver, serve, and to clean up. First Churches is fortunate, for others do not have the benefit of serving from their very own church kitchen. Some come from as far away as Rhode Island.

The Missions Board of First Churches supports this viable and growing ministry, not only by offering physical space for the service, but by assisting Pastor Stephanie to provide a hot meal for her flock following the service. As a Mission project we at First churches join other denominations and parishes, Lutheran, Episcopal and UCC in Massachusetts, Connecticut and Rhode Island by taking a turn to offer hot food; a main dish, green vegetables, dessert, milk, water or coffee, along with a wholesome sandwich and egg to help carry folks into the next day. Of the 52

Sundays this practice takes place, First Churches is responsible for FOUR Sundays, scattered throughout the year..

How is this accomplished? Through the organizational talents of two members of our congregation who solicit donations, and on a wing and a prayer have encouraged a variety of people, members of our congregation, as well as some folks who are not members, to offer their help and talents. As we look to the future, we find that we need to widen the circle of people who are making the food, and particularly encourage people to help SERVE the food. During our recent May meal, there were a total of 11 people who did not cook, but served the food - and that was just about enough. As the congregation of CITN is growing, we are also finding that our food offerings just make it - the food is totally all gone. Pastor Stephanie joined the clean-up crew in the kitchen to share the news that fortunately or not, her congregation is growing - and in the past she planned on 40-60 participants, whereas the numbers now have grown to as many as 80-100.

The next meal we serve will be a long time from the snow and cold of January, - scheduled for JUNE 22. Please, won't you help prepare a dish, or offer to help serve? It seems that the spreadsheet consistently shows the same people cooking and serving. We would appreciate offers of assistance from our entire congregation, taking turns to help another growing congregation of folks so worthy of our support. Please consider offering to help by signing up in Lyman Hall or getting in touch with Judy Sherman or Carol Judd to lend a hand.

The following openings are available for friends and family of First Churches, capable hands of ALL AGES!!! :

Serve the food - 11 people needed - this includes taking dishes back into kitchen and washing them up- many young hands are helping to this light work (time 4:45 - 6:30 PM)

Prepare a main dish (we need 5 people to prepare a main dish)

Prepare a Salad or veggie dish (2-3 people to prepare dishes)

(Continued...)

Offer to make 1-2 dozen sandwiches, we typically hand out 5 dozen - (3-4 people needed)
We give away 5 dozen hard boiled eggs (2-3 people prepare)

Desserts....cookies/ brownies/ individually wrapped - these are first to go.- (3 people to make 1-2 dozen)

Offer coffee, water, or milk...2-3 people

The Missions Board has a budget and reimburses the cost of paper plates and plastic utensils, napkins cups etc. They may also reimburse the cost of produce to feed a large group

One brave person to pick up the food from the cooks who are unable to deliver.

Let's get to know each other in new contexts. Please consider signing up!! It's fun! And it's intergenerational!!



Children's
Church is
Hosting Coffee
Hour on June
15th!

Join our Children's Church & Rainbow Room on the lower floor, for Coffee Hour after the Children's Service. Enjoy some light refreshments while you chat with your charming hosts, view the children's space (including a newly added room!), perhaps even volunteer for a spruce-up project? Seating will be available. Please contact Ann Rasmussen to offer a food item or sign up to help.

Financially Support Your Church at NO COST!

Too good to be true? NO! As a non-profit, First Churches buys Stop & Shop, Big Y, and River Valley gift cards at a discount. So when you buy them at full value, our church makes a profit!

The grocery gift card Fundraiser LIVES ON in the summer. Gift Cards will be sold at the church throughout June and Peg Whitham can be contacted in July and August for purchases. Thank you.



The Kids' Summer Food Program at the Northampton Survival Center

The Kids' Summer Food Program begins in the month of June. The program helps bridge the summer food nutrition gap by distributing food packages to eligible children who rely on subsidized school breakfast and lunch programs during the school year. Please consider making a child-friendly food donation to the Survival Center in the month of June: peanut butter, jelly or jam, juices, cereal, pudding cups (non-refrigerated), canned soup or canned pasta. The Northampton Survival Center will feed more than 600 children this summer. If you would prefer to make a monetary donation, we will receive a "noisy" offering for the Survival Center on June 8th. Thank you so much for your generosity!

JUNE 2014

Sun.	Mon.	Tue.	Wed.	Thu.	Fri.	Sat
1. 10:00 Worship & Sunday School 11:30 Annual Meeting 5:00 Cathedral in the Night	2.	3.	4. 7:00 Deacons	5.	6. 7:00 Choir Practice	7.
8. 10:00 Worship & Sunday School 11:30 CE Meeting 5:00 Cathedral in the Night 6:00 Day of the Pentecost Potluck with Iglesia Bautista	9. 7:00 Peace & Justice	10. 12:00 Peace Vigil	11. 12:30 Finance 6:30 Missions 6:30 Trustees	12.	13. 7:00 Choir Potluck	14.
15. 10:00 Worship & Sunday school CHILDREN'S SUNDAY 11:45 Church Fair Meeting 1:00 Piano Recital 4:00 Abby Adams' Graduate Recital 5:00 Cathedral in the Night	16.	17. 12:00 Peace Vigil	18.	19.	20.	21. 5:00 Markham Nathan Fund Fundraiser
22. 10:00 Worship & Sunday school 5:00 Cathedral in the Night	23. 4:00 Investment	24. 12:00 Peace Vigil July Messenger Submissions Deadline	25. 7:00 Church Council	26.	27.	28.
29. 10:00 Worship & Sunday school 5:00 Cathedral in the Night	30.					