



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



June 2015

PASTOR'S PAGE

Important Dates

- June 4th & 18th- Common Ground
- June 7th- Confirmation Sunday
- June 13th- Bonfire (See pg 2)
- June 14th Annual Meeting
- June 21st Children's Sunday

Looking For....

- Sunday School..... Pg 2
- Art & Soul..... Pg 3
- Common Ground..... Pg 4
- Organ Fund..... Pg 5
- Calendar..... Pg 6

When you think about the future, what do you feel - hope or despair? I grew up watching *The Jetsons*, *Star Trek* and the Apollo moon landing, all filling me with optimism about human possibility. I was also taught to put my math book over my head to protect myself from atomic attack, and I had nightmares about *Planet of the Apes* and *Soylent Green*. My mother had a copy of Buckminster Fuller's *Utopia or Oblivion?* on the shelf. Yup, that sums my childhood confusion. It's difficult to make predictions, especially about the future.

I've lived long enough the future is here already and I still don't know who is right. My iPhone seems like James T. Kirk's communicator device, though Siri gets a little sarcastic. I may soon have a Roomba to clean our floors Jetson-style. But I am concerned about polar bears on the ice flow, California's drought and Hollywood has done a remake of Mad Max's *Road Warrior*. That can't be good. There are things happening I can't even figure out if it is good or bad. Take this for example:

"Uber, the world's largest taxi company, owns no vehicles. Facebook, the world's most popular media owner, creates no content. Alibaba, the most valuable retailer, has no inventory. And Airbnb, the world's largest accommodation provider, owns no real estate. Something interesting is happening." [Full article](#)

Interesting? Isn't that an ancient Chinese curse?

Here is what I know. If the church is going to have a future, we need to adapt and discern the future. I say this with hope and optimism in my heart. I always buck the trend. I chose optimism because if I am a pessimist and I'm right, it's still bad. I know there is much hand-wringing about the latest Pew Research on church decline,

but I think it simply signals the end of casual Christianity. Forget trends, let's do what God calls us to do. "Thy Kingdom come..." That's our prayer, right?!

As we approach our Annual Meeting on June 14, I am encouraging First Churches' members to embrace a visioning and re-structuring process. Let's make sure our vision, mission and our governance and committee structure are aligned with God's vision for humanity and our earth. I invite you to come and hear more on June 14.

~ Pastor Todd



NEWS FROM CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

June 7th ~ Confirmation Sunday

Join us for worship as we celebrate our confirmandi, Claire and Carolyn Jordan, Asa Geller and Christian Hodgson for completing Confirmation and welcome them as full members into the church.



June 13th ~ 6-9pm Bonfire

for all youth 11 and up @ the home of Penny Johnson
5 Hatfield Rd, Haydenville. We hope all the youth will come out for our last event of the school year: a **giant bonfire** on June 13th from 6-9 with hotdogs, s'mores, music, kick the can, and whiffle ball. We'll meet at 5 Hatfield Rd, Haydenville. Don't forget your bug spray and sunscreen and an instrument like guitar or drums if you play one. This promises to be a great event, so bring a friend. Please RSVP by June 8th.

June 21st ~ Children's Sunday

Join us for Sunday Worship as we thank our teachers celebrate all the ways we have learned and grown in our faith this past year.

Vacation Bible School

Monday August 10 - Friday August 14
9:00-1:00 at St. John's Episcopal Church, Northampton
Children ages 3-11 are invited to join in this wonderful opportunity to wander through the parables with stories, songs, snacks, sports, and crafts. Kids 12 and up are welcome to help as junior leaders. Enrollment costs \$40 for the week.
Please contact Olivia Leone to register oliviamckee@yahoo.com

Intern

Please welcome to First Churches, **Ana Nazir**. Ana will be serving as our summer intern. Ana and Pastor Sarah will continue to lead Sunday school together through June for ages 0-8 and then Ana will take over for July and August. Stop by and say hello and welcome her to the First Churches family.

~ Pastor Sarah



PRAYER SHAWL MINISTRY

Our Prayer Shawl Knitting Group meets the third Tuesday of the month, at 6:30 pm, at the home of Jeanne Fenton. All are welcome. No knitting proficiency required. (Others will help you! That's part of the beauty of getting together.) Call Jeanne Fenton or the Church office if you're interested in joining this ministry of mutual support.



FIRST CHURCHES ON TV!



As many of you know, on Cantata Sunday, our Worship service was filmed to be broadcast on Northampton Public Television.

The service will be aired on June 7th in the morning, so if you would like to record it while you are at Church to watch later, or if you don't have that capability, they will replay the service in the evening too. When I find out a specific time I will let you all know. But I hope that you are able to find a way to view the incredibly musical service from April 19th.

~ Vanessa Keillor, Church Administrator



HAMPSHIRE ASSOCIATION ANNUAL MEETING!!

The Hampshire Association Executive Committee, UCC would like to invite everyone from your church to be a part of the Annual Meeting to be held at Look Park on **Sunday June 7, 2015 from 1-4 PM** at the Dow Pavillion. There will be a potluck lunch at 1 PM and we encourage you to bring a dish to share. We will provide beverages, dishes and cutlery. There will be worship and singing followed by a short business meeting at 2:30 PM. If you are not a delegate you may go off and enjoy the park during the business meeting. We encourage family participation as there are activities for children as well. If any questions, contact Judy Stone at [413-320-3339](tel:413-320-3339) or jstone9074@aol.com

The Art & Soul Summer Series, 2015: Art making with a purpose Create...reflect...share

Friday Afternoon Art Wind Down
June 19, 26, July 10, 17, 24, 31, August 7, 14, 21,

Friday afternoons, 3-5pm

First Churches Rec Room, 129 Main Street, Northampton (come in through door on Center Street)

“Art washes away from the soul the dust of everyday life.” (Pablo Picasso) Relax. Wind down your week. Wash away the dust. Eat snacks. Make art. Each week will be a new art-making form and focused around a particular theme. Come for one session or them all.

Suggested Donation per session: \$10-20, but pay what you can.

June, 2015

Northampton Arts Night Out:

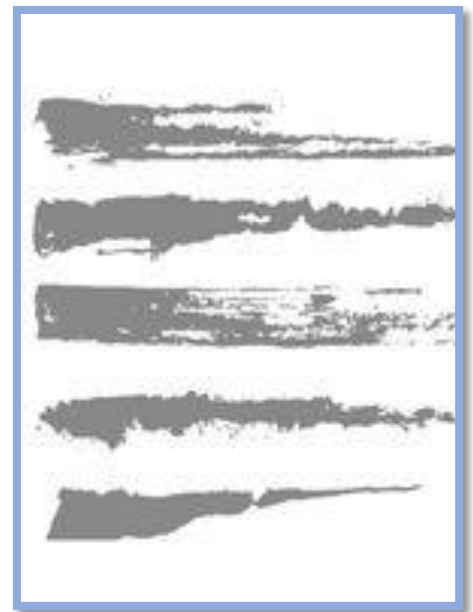
Friday, June 12, 5-8pm,

Front lawn of First Churches, 129 Main Street, Northampton

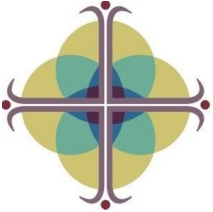
Community Art: Making a Communal Box of Lament ...Come

help create and decorate a giant “Box of Lament” that will be used in a future art installation. These are challenging days, so feel free to contribute your own lament to the Box.

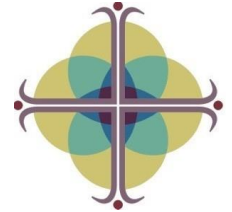
If raining, we will be inside the church.



Click the picture for more information on Art and Soul



COMMON GROUND



JUNE 4TH ~ We will hear from Gabe Kushin, one of our members who has been part of the Air and

National Guard for many years. Gabe has just completed his M.Div. at Yale with the hope of becoming a military chaplain. He will share some of his journey, talk about the tensions between being a Christian and being a member of the military, and invite us into a discussion about how we can observe Memorial Day and support service men and women in a way that recognizes the horrors of wars without either vilifying or lionizing those who fight in them.



JUNE 18TH ~ I know all of our hearts have been torn by the images of devastation coming out of Nepal.

Mindful of the need there, we have asked Elizabeth Woosley to join us on June 18th. Elizabeth has worked with Heifer project for years, and has worked on the ground in Nepal. She'll be bringing slides to share of her experience there in order to help us understand how we can help. And she'll tell us more about how Heifer can make a difference, not just at a time like this when immediate aid is so crucial, but over the long haul as the people of Nepal begin to rebuild

JUNE SUNDAY SECOND HOURS

June 7 ~ Church Fair Informational Meeting

After Celebrating with our confirmandi, all are welcomed to the church parlor to share comments on the 2014 Fair and offer suggestions for this November's fair. We need new ideas and new planning committee members. You are important to the fair. The fair is vital to the church and the committee needs more assistance than it has had in the past. Come be part of the action!

June 14 ~ Annual Meeting Sunday

After worship we will gather in Lyman Hall for the purpose of approving the Final Budget for FY 2016. We will also share more about beginning a visioning and restructuring process.

June 21 ~ Sunday School Celebration

Join us for Sunday Worship as we thank our teachers celebrate all the ways we have learned and grown in our faith this past year



GROCERY CARD SCHEDULE FOR JUNE 2015

Sales of grocery cards will continue through the month of June... here is the schedule of dates when they will be offered at coffee hour:

- Sunday June 7 ...look for Peg Whitham directly after service in Lyman Hall or at the Fair meeting in the parlor.
- Sunday June 14...grocery cards will be available before the annual meeting... Peg Whitham will be selling that day
- Sunday June 21
- Sunday June 28.

If for some reason you might want to purchase grocery cards at other times during the month of June... Peg Whitham can be reached at 586-2531 and arrangements can be made for purchase of the cards.

Thank you all for your support of this “painless” fundraiser!!!

Organ Fund Committee Update

Work continues on the construction of *The Sydenham Parsons Memorial Organ* brochure. Lucky for us, hard hats are not necessary for our meetings! We have made the momentous decisions regarding photos and text....now we face the challenge of just the right arrangement of both for the brochure. “Construction” is on schedule and the goal is to have the brochure ready in time for the concert presented by the Organ Historical Society on July 2.

This past month the organ fund has grown with the addition of \$2400: Trustees designated the annual distribution from the Paul and Doris Charitable Trust of \$1740 to the Organ Fund and three additional donations were given. This brings the **current total to \$15,725**. To close out the end of the fiscal year in June, the money in the Organ Fund will be applied to defray the cost of the organ repairs (\$26,220). AND...there still will be the opportunity to donate to the organ repairs during the fiscal year 2016 (July 2015 – June 2016), as all donations will offset the draw down on the line of credit (part of the church’s loan negotiation with NUVO Bank) needed to fund these repairs.

Again...

For those who have given...thank you...

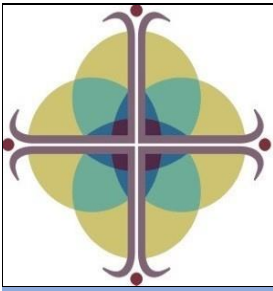
For those who plan to give...thank you for your intentions...

Quietly at work...

Dana, Dick, Marcia, Peg

MISSIONS

Thank you all so much for responding to the disaster relief for the Nepal earthquake. **\$687** was sent to Church World Service, with staff in Nepal quickly aiding the thousands of people needing fresh water, food, shelter, and medical care.



JUNE 2015



Sun.	Mon.	Tue.	Wed.	Thu.	Fri.	Sat.
	1. 12:00 Bible Study	2. 12:00 Peace Vigil	3. 6:30 Bell Choir 7:00 Deacons	4. 6:00 Common Ground	5. 7:00 Choir Practice	6. † Barbara Parsons
7. 10:00 Worship & Sunday School Confirmation Sunday 11:30 Church Fair Meeting 5:00 Cathedral in The Night	8. 12:00 Bible Study 7:00 Peace & Justice	9. 12:00 Peace Vigil	10. 12:30 Finance 6:30 Trustees	11. 4:30 Missions 6:30 Bell Choir	12. 7:00 Choir Practice	13.
14. 10:00 Worship & Sunday School 11:30 Annual Meeting 5:00 CITN	15. 12:00 Bible Study	16. 12:00 Peace Vigil 6:30 Prayer Shawl Ministry at Jeanne Fenton's Home † April Bent	17. 5:00 Christian Ed 7:00 Council	18. 12:30 Dorcas Meeting @ Brewmaster's Tavern 6:00 Common Ground † Marti Catuogno	19. 7:00 Choir Practice	20.
21. 10:00 Worship & Sunday School Children's Sunday 5:00 CITN † Bentley Taylor	22. 12:00 Bible Study † Jeanne Fenton JULY/ AUGUST Messenger Items Due	23. 12:00 Peace Vigil	24. † Jaspur Ekwere	25.	26. † Ruth Geller	27. † Piper Russell Jones
28. 10:00 Worship & Sunday School 5:00 CITN	29. 12:00 Bible Study	30. 12:00 Peace Vigil				

FIRST CHURCH WELCOMES NEW MEMBERS

VICKY BLUNT

JACOB, RACHEL & MOIRA CHAPMAN ~ “WE MOVED TO AMHERST (FROM BOSTON) FIVE YEARS AGO. JACOB IS AN EMERGENCY ROOM PHYSICIAN AT FRANKLIN HOSPITAL IN GREENFIELD. I AM AN ARTIST AND ART TEACHER WITH A STUDIO IN FLORENCE. MOIRA IS FINISHING KINDERGARTEN AT THE FORT RIVER SCHOOL.”

ANDREW DOLE ~ “IS THE HUSBAND OF OUR ASSOCIATE PASTOR, SARAH BUTEUX, AND THE FATHER OF GEORGE AND GENEVIEVE. HE IS A PROFESSOR OF RELIGIOUS STUDIES AT AMHERST COLLEGE, AN AMATEUR ARCHITECT AND BUILDER (ASK HIM ABOUT HIS WOODSHED), AND NEVER HAPPIER THAN WHEN HE IS VACATIONING AT HIS FAMILY’S CAMP IN WAYNE, MAINE.”

GENE AND LUCIA PAGE ~ “HAVE BEEN MARRIED 45 YEARS AND MET AS VISTA VOLUNTEERS. THEY HAVE LIVED IN NORTHAMPTON FOR 43 YEARS AND ARE DELIGHTED TO FINALLY JOIN FIRST CHURCHES - LUCIA, AS A MEMBER OF THE UCC AND GENE AS AN AMERICAN BAPTIST. GENE IS AN AVID HISTORIAN, A LONGTIME FAN OF THE REV. SOLOMON STODDARD, AND CAN OFTEN BE FOUND IN OUR COMMUNITY GARDEN PLOT. LUCIA IS LOVING MATRIARCH, LOVES NEEDLEPOINT, AND IS MOST PROUD OF HER WORK HELPING CAMBODIAN REFUGEES RESETTLE IN OUR AREA. GENE WILL REPRESENT THEM BOTH TODAY, AS LUCIA IS CURRENTLY HOMEBOUND, BUT SHE HOPES ONE DAY TO JOIN US IN BODY EVEN AS SHE JOINS US TODAY IN SPIRIT.”

RON STORY ~ “I TAUGHT HISTORY AS UMASS FOR OVER 30 YEARS UNTIL MY RETIREMENT A FEW YEARS BACK. I WAS A MEMBER OF FIRST CHURCHES SOME TIME AGO BEFORE FAMILY AND RESIDENCE CHANGES, SERVING BRIEFLY AS A DEACON AND EVEN PREACHING ON A FEW OCCASIONS, MOSTLY ON JONATHAN EDWARDS, ON WHOM I’VE WRITTEN AND PUBLISHED QUITE A BIT. I WAS BORN IN 1940 IN EAST TEXAS, WHERE I WAS BAPTIZED A SOUTHERN BAPTIST IN A RURAL POND. I’VE COME A LONG WAY SINCE IN EVERY RESPECT, PROBABLY MOST OF ALL IN MY DEVOTION TO NEW ENGLAND CONGREGATIONALISM. THOUGH I NOW LIVE IN SOUTH DEERFIELD, BELONGING TO FIRST CHURCHES SEEMS WORTH THE TRIP.”