



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



FIRST CHURCHES

NORTHAMPTON

May 2013

IMPORTANT DATES

NOHO PRIDE MARCH

May 4 (see page 4)

DIALOG FINAL REPORT

May 19 after church

ANNUAL MEETING

June 2 after church

SUNDAY SCHOOL PICNIC

June 30

PASTOR'S MESSAGE

Our garden is begun, but it wasn't easy. First, I had to wait in line for an hour to get a 20' by 20' plot at the Hospital Hill Community Garden. Then we had to figure out what to plant. You might think because I grew up in Iowa, *and* because I am from farming people for several generations, *and* because I was once President of a chapter of Future Farmers of America, *therefore* I would know what I'm doing. You would be wrong. We attended the orientation session with a master gardener, and it was quickly apparent to me that cultivating a New England garden had little in common with planting vast acres of corn and soybeans. My mind was awash with factoids about nitrogen content, mulching, water retention, cold weather vs. warm weather seeds, layout and design issues so we don't pack the soil down or accidentally shade our own plants. I felt trapped in a 20 by 20 intelligence test that I was quickly failing.

Undaunted, Jeanne and I went to the Garden Center, a hopeful and happy time where we dreamed of peas and carrots, arugula, and rattlesnake pole beans. And then we tackled our square of dirt with nothing but a garden spade, hoe and rake as our tools. One man, and one woman, united to bend nature to our will to capture its bounty. I quickly remembered why I left the farm. It is very hard work. The next morning I was going to be so sore. I studied diligently in college to escape the farm. Jeanne said, after listening to a dissertation on dry rot and the proper way to crush beetle eggs under the tomato leaves, "This is heart-breaking isn't it?" Yes it is.

And yet, after two days of digging, hoeing and planting, we looked at our little patch, with the pride of the Creator God looking at creation on about day five, and said to each other, "It is good." We went home sore and happy. This is so much of what a spiritual journey is like. We all would like to be more spiritual and connected with God, but it is so hard to sit still and be quiet, to find the time in our busy lives, to understand words of scripture, it is so hard to wait for God to speak, and then wonder if we had heard correctly. It all seems so fragile, our prayers pop up like little sprouts, and you wonder how they will fare against storms and hungry rabbits. To



**PASTOR TODD AND JEANNE
WITH EASTER FLOWER CROSS**

pray and not be heard is like pounding barren dry soil for nothing. To pray and know that God is still speaking, is like pulling the ripe tomato from the vine and biting into it right there in the garden because you can't wait to take it home.

This is so much of what church is like. We desire what church is supposed to be, the place of community, love, inclusion and forgiveness. We look upon the holy moments singing "Silent Night" in candlelight on Christmas Eve, seeing our children baptized, carrying the flower cross at Easter. And then we are asked to serve on a committee, and find out that behind the organ music, preaching and sunlight coming through the stained glass, there are budget meetings, coffee hour procedures, and schedules for whose turn it is to wash the communion cups. We go to Wednesday night council meetings and find that just like a community garden, some people like their rows very straight and others would like to plant in a circle. Some believe in no-till farming and others want to hire a roto-tiller. But we like tomatoes, peas and carrots, so we talk and work it all out.

This is what Stewardship is like. When you walk into the Garden Center with your dream, you start to count the cost. Do I need the ergonomic shovel? What is a solid investment from year to year, costly up front but cheaper over the long haul? How much am I committed to this, what is the value to me? How many seeds do I really need?

We go through many seasons in the church, with Advent, Christmas, Lent, Easter and Pentecost following each other just like planting, tilling and harvest. It is important to note that every part of church life is sacred and an opportunity to grow closer to the God we know in Jesus Christ. Jesus is not just present in the great festivals and communion celebration. We may find the risen Christ in committees, coffee hour and budgets as well. The bloom is sweeter and the harvest more delicious when we know our hand was on the hoe. And by the grace, we find the love of God in every part.



Greetings from your Moderator

Warm greetings to all, as we usher in this wonderful spring weather! As you know, we've been busy this season. We recently completed the series of 3 Listening Sessions with Margaret Keyser. I'd like to take this opportunity to thank all who attended. These important discussions will provide us with tangible tools to ensure we can all have a positive voice in discussions regarding the future of our church, and who God is calling us to be. We look forward to sharing Margaret's written summary with everyone soon - in a variety of formats. Be looking for details regarding these important resources - and get involved!

Thank you also for a productive & positive Asking-Budget meeting last month... there's much to be done prior to our All-Church meeting in June, but we are off to a great start. As we look ahead to this year's Stewardship campaign and the end of the fiscal year, I am so proud of & grateful for all your support and enthusiasm! If you have any questions or feedback, please feel free to contact me.

Blessings,

Donna O'Meally
First Churches Moderator
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Rev. Catherine Munz, St. John's Episcopal Church, Northampton delivers a rousing charge to the congregation.



Rev. Weir receiving Congregation's gift made by Doryne Pederzani-Dinneen.



Rev. Todd Weir, thanking Peter Wells for his work during the search process. We all wish him well as he moves towards retirement in August.



Barbara Parsons reading her poem

The Search is Over!!
by Barbara Parsons

After many months of meetings
And working long and hard
The diligent group of searchers
Were led to Pastor Todd.

On a special Sunday in June
When Todd came to meet us all
Our congregation was united
And give him First Churches call.

And in the heat of July
To Northampton he and Jeanne came
And began a new ministry here
A new pastorship to claim.

Nine months have gone by
In Todd's messages we've heard
The wonder of an awesome God
New meanings to God's word.

We offer to Pastor Todd
On this Day of Installation
Our commitment and support
With our loving affirmation.

32nd Annual LGBT Parade and Pride Event, May 4, 2013



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! Lots of great LGBT educational information, food and retail vendors, fabulous entertainment and a children's area will be featured.

FIRST CHURCHES IS "ALL IN!" Please sign up to march with our group at Second Hour or on our Facebook page (First Churches of Northampton) or email us at admin@firstchurches.org.

IF CAN'T WALK AND WOULD LIKE TO WATCH you may bring a lawn chair to our front lawn. Space will be limited since Liz Ryan's 10-piece brass band will play for part of the parade from our front

THE Easiest FUNDRAISER in the WORLD!

Do you eat food and use other products purchased from a grocery store?

Did you know that when you use gift cards purchased at the church for purchases at **Stop & Shop** and **River Valley Market**, the church earns **5%** of your total purchase? **It's 6% at Big Y.** If you spend \$100 on groceries in a week, **YOU are giving the church over \$20 in a month!**

Please help us generate this easy income for our church. Gift cards are on sale in the back of Lyman Hall at all Coffee Hours. Look for your friendly salespeople: Kim Gerould, Martha Jamieson, Peg Whitham and Carol Judd.

This fundraiser typically earns about \$2500 annually. Please help us to reach this goal!

Thank you!

CONGRATULATIONS TO BECKY LOCKWOOD

Recipient of the 2013 Visionary Voice Award by NSVRC

The National Sexual Violence Resource Center (NSVRC) offers the Visionary Voice award, in conjunction with Sexual Assault Awareness Month (SAAM) each April, to recognize the creativity and hard work of individuals around the country who have demonstrated outstanding work to end sexual violence. Each year, state, territory, and tribal coalitions select an outstanding individual to nominate for the awards. Nominees may be partners from a local community or other outstanding individuals that have worked to end sexual violence.



Jane Doe Inc. nominated Becky for this award because she is a respected and recognized leader in the area of sexual violence intervention and prevention among her peers, in her community, and across the state. She is known as a risk taker – always looking for new opportunities to support survivors and prevent violence and being an advocate for marginalized communities. Her success has been in her ability to implement innovative support and prevention programs and establish relationships with key university, community, state and national stakeholders. Read our [nomination](#) for more details about Lockwood’s history in the movement to prevent and end sexual violence.

Mary R. Lauby, JDI’s Executive Director, said, “The process of nominating someone for a national award requires us to evaluate not only who has shown leadership and dedication to the work but also to identify what it is we value as a movement for social justice. Massachusetts is so fortunate to have someone with such compassion, clarity and fortitude advocating on behalf of ALL victims and survivors of sexual violence. Becky deserves our praise and our gratitude.”

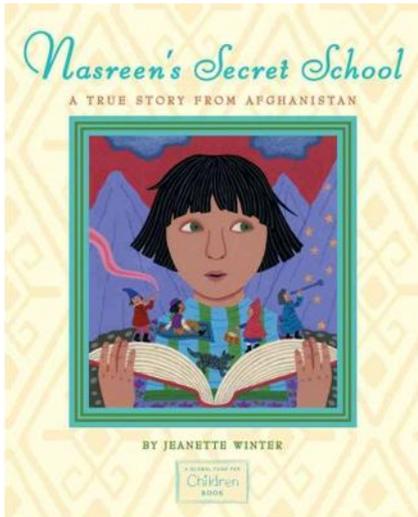
Among Becky’s key accomplishments are:

- Developed collaborative partnership with local police department and university police department to provide onsite Civilian Advocate who addresses sexual assault issues and works with sexual assault victims, as well as domestic violence survivors (applied for and received state and then federal funding to support this advocate)- now expanded to a third department: Northampton PD
- Coordinates the Hampshire County Sexual Assault Response Team (SART) which brings together staff from the Northwestern District Attorney’s Office, campus and municipal law enforcement, health care providers and SANE to discuss best practices in providing a victim-centered response to survivors of sexual assault.
- Participates in weekly meetings of the UMass Title IX Team: The Team reviews reports of sexual and domestic violence and stalking and assures that resources and responses for victims are coordinated across the University
- Co-Chaired the JDI statewide Sexual Assault Advisory Board for several years.

Reading for Peace

by Eric Frary

In the wake of the Boston tragedies, the children got to explore a less publicized tragedy during Children's Church. The kids discussed the racial profiling that occurred after the incidents, in which people of Islamic faith or of Middle Eastern descent were targeted as suspects, or had to endure hate speech from people who jumped to conclusions about their involvement.



The kids read aloud a poignant book called "Nasreen's Secret School", which tells the story of a young girl in Afghanistan who is not allowed to attend school after the Taliban take over in her country. She is sent to a secret school for girls by her grandmother, and finds solace in being able to learn and read.

Nasreen faced many struggles living in Afghanistan during this time. The loss of her family and ability to read and write resonated with

many of the children, and they were given new insights into the people of this part of the world, and shown that they, and their religion, are not so different from us.

To culminate the lesson, the children created a wonderful banner with says "salaam" (peace) in Arabic. The banner was copied onto vinyl so that it may be hung out side and its message read by all.



Your Church's Missions in Action! Spotlight on: The Survival Center

In 2012, our congregation brought 665 pounds of food to church on Sunday mornings! Our organist and Board of Missions member, Dana Pasquale, delivers the food to the Survival Center every Monday. In addition, First Churches donated \$300 to the Survival Center in fiscal year 2012.



is an emergency food pantry that provides low-income families and individuals with clothing, personal care items, and referrals for emergency assistance, in addition to free food. It distributes 690,000 pounds of food each year from its locations in Northampton and Goshen. Every weekday the Survival Center distributes 2,500 pounds of food in nutritionally-balanced food boxes.

THANK YOU for your GENEROUS SUPPORT!

MAY 2013

Sun.	Mon.	Tue.	Wed.	Thu.	Fri.	Sat.
			1 7:00 Deacons	2	3 7:00 Choir Practice	4 Noho Pride March
5 8:45 Adult Ed 10:00 Worship & Sunday school 5:00 Cathedral in the Night	6	7 12:00 Vigil for Non-Violence 6:30 Trustees 7:00 Peace & Justice	8 7:00 Missions	9	10 7:00 Choir Practice	11
12 8:45 Adult Ed 10:00 Worship & Sunday school 5:00 Cathedral in the Night	13	14 12:00 Vigil for Non-Violence	15 7:00 Council	16	17 7:00 Choir Practice	18
19 8:45 Adult Ed 10:00 Worship & Sunday school 11:30 Stewardship 5:00 Cathedral in the Night	20	21 12:00 Vigil for Non-Violence	22	23	24 7:00 Choir Practice	25
26 8:45 Adult Ed 10:00 Worship & Sunday school 5:00 Cathedral in the Night	27	28 12:00 Vigil for Non-Violence	29	30	31 7:00 Choir Practice	

The First Churches of Northampton

129 Main Street

Northampton, MA 01060



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We are a combined church of American Baptist
and United Church of Christ

Worship Service, Sundays at 10:00 A.M., with child care
Children's Sunday school at 10:00 A.M. Everyone is welcome!

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