



First Churches Northampton

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



May 2014

Pastor's Page

Important Dates

May 3rd- Hamp Pride

May 4th- 2014/15
Budget Asking Meeting

May 9th- Bernie Sanders

May 10th- PDA

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Eastertide 2014

I know what to do with most seasons of the Christian year. During Advent, we light candles and watch and wait, preparing the way in our hearts to celebrate Jesus's birth. When Lent rolls around, we give something up to and join Jesus for 40 days in the wilderness, a time of self-examination and reflection. During Holy Week we have long traditions like the Maundy Thursday Tenebrae Service and the flower cross at Easter. So what do we do after Easter? We are in Eastertide, a 40-day liturgical cycle between Easter Sunday and Christ's Ascension (May 29), and leading to Pentecost (June 8), but we don't have such clear traditions to guide us.

When I look at the scripture readings in the Lectionary for Eastertide, the disciples were in a muddle at the beginning of Eastertide as well. It takes them awhile to believe Christ is raised. Mary can't see him for her tears, Thomas won't believe till he sees and touches the wounds. But gradually Jesus makes the rounds and appears first to the women closest to him, then to Thomas, he breaks bread with two disciples on the road to Emmaus, meets with the disciples in Galilee, cooks fish for them, forgives and restores Peter, and later confronts Saul of Tarsus in a vision. There is a movement here in the Eastertide story. It is movement from confusion and fear back towards faith and trust. It is a season of recovering hope and believing that the Risen Christ will meet us where we are. Eastertide is a time where we see Jesus again, risen and alive, in a multitude of ways.

So it makes sense to me that our spiritual practices of Eastertide should focus on watching for moments when we sense Christ is present, alive in acts of compassion and justice, raised in the body of the church. How does the resurrection continue to happen within us and among us?

Last Sunday (April 27 after the wonderful Cantata) I asked everyone to write down their hopes for the church (see list on page 8). Read and pray over them. Feel free to add to them, either with more cards on Sundays of Eastertide, or on a Facebook post I will start on the church page.



In peace, Pastor Todd

🕯 Birthdays 🕯

5/3 Lise Gray

5/7 Todd Emrick

5/18 Christie Moulton

5/24 Sandy Hoover

5/24 Jaden Geller

5/25 Ann Rasmussen

Call to Meeting, Hear Ye! Hear Ye!

All members are invited to attend the All Church Meeting on **May 4th at 11:30am** in Lyman Hall, directly following service. To expressly consider and vote on asking budget for 2014/2015. **June 1st** Annual Meeting... for the purpose of adoption of the 2015 budget and the election of officers and members of boards and committees...

From Missions

CROP Walk: Thank you for your generous support of this mission project! We had thirty-five walkers (in spite of the drizzle) and raised more than \$3100.00 for hunger relief! We appreciate everyone who pledged, walked, drove our “chase” vehicle, prepared food, helped us to clean up, and those who sent good thoughts our way! Your contributions will help fight food insecurity around the world as well as locally though the Hampshire Interfaith Help Fund.

Northampton Survival Center: Thank you for supporting the Northampton Survival Center with food and monetary offerings. The Northampton Survival Center, located on 265 Prospect Street, strives to improve the quality of life for low-income individuals and families in Hampshire County and providing food and other resources with dignity and respect. The Center runs two pantries – one in Northampton and one in Goshen, distributing approximately 650,000 pounds of food each year. The Kids’ Summer Food Program helps bridge the summer nutrition gap by distributing free food packages to eligible children who rely on subsidized school breakfast and lunch programs during the school year. The program now serves tens of thousands of pounds of food to approximately 600 children during the course of the summer. The Survival Center is always looking for donations of hot and cold cereals, pasta, pasta sauce, tuna and other canned meats, canned vegetables, soups, stews, diapers, and hygiene products. We collect and deliver these products each week. We will also have a “Noisy Offering” on Communion Sunday in June for those who would prefer to make a monetary donation.



Suitcase Project: Thank you all for your generous contributions to the Suitcase Project. We will be collecting donations through May 25th. Only new materials may be accepted. Thank you all for your support of this greatly needed project.

Moderator's Greeting

Happy Spring Everyone,

On the heels of a joyous Easter season, I remain buoyed by a sense of rebirth & hope that surrounds me - outdoors & within First Churches as we look forward to several important initiatives. This Saturday morning May 3rd, First Churches will once again march (with our beautiful banner!) in Northampton's Pride parade - please join us! Contact the church office for info, 584-9392. The next day, Sunday May 4th, we will meet as a congregation for the presentation of the asking budget for the upcoming fiscal year - please plan to join us in Lyman Hall following services for this meeting, where we will discuss and set our priorities for ministry for the coming year (childcare will be available). The Tiffany Window team has begun their important work regarding our sanctuary window, following our collective decision to initiate a sale process. Our annual Stewardship campaign has begun & I encourage each of us to continue our generous pledges of support for First Churches. And our Nominating Committee has begun their important work to match openings on First Churches committees with new members, as other members complete their terms and cycle-off. I remain so proud of the work we've all done collectively so far this season! And I look forward to continuing our progress together, as we discern our future and become the church God is calling us to be.

Blessings,

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

Let The Nominations Begin!

Spring is here, and the Nominating Committee is beginning its search for people to fill vacancies for **July 1, 2014-June 30, 2015**. So be an early bird and take this opportunity to nominate willing candidates- either yourself, or friends within the congregation!

Selected names will be voted upon at the All Church Meeting on Sunday, June 1st

We have particular needs on the Board of Deacons, Board of Trustees and Christian Education Committees.

Speak to the heads of the committees you are interested in, or contact members of the Nominating Committee: Carolyn Benson), Sandy Hoover), Denise Karuth) and Priscilla Pike.

We will also be making calls and hope that you will consider any requests prayerfully as you consider ways to be useful in moving together as a community to address our growing needs and Christian concerns.

Many Thanks,
The Nominating Committee

Make \$ for Your Church by Buying Groceries!

At all of our Coffee Hours, we sell Gift Cards to River Valley Market, Big Y and Stop & Shop. You purchase a \$50 gift card for \$50, *for example*, so there is no cost to you. BUT, the grocery stores sell us the cards at a 5% or 6% discount and that is how we make money for our congregation.



We raise over \$2000 per year with NO cost to any of us! But we could make MORE with your help.

Won't you please consider bringing your checkbook to church and purchasing gift cards? Look for us at a table in the back of Lyman Hall.

Thank You for Supporting this painless Fundraiser

Peg Whitham, Kim Gerould, Martha Jamieson and Carol Judd

FIRST CHURCHES CALL TO: STEWARDSHIP STEWARDSHIP STEWARDSHIP

Tis that time of year. It's time for each one of us to consider what we are able to commit financially toward the daily operations of First Churches. And so, the July 2014-June 2015 asking budget will be presented at the All Church Business Meeting on **May 4**.

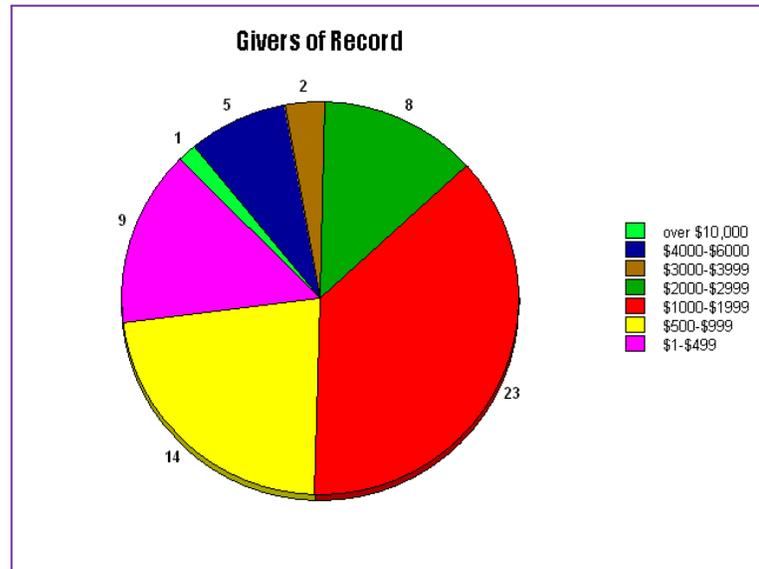
In preparation for this, Stewardship Moments will be presented during the service in May. They will enable us to explore how our spiritual life and mission are deepening. These Moments will focus on:

- Feeding the hungry
- Supporting peace and justice for all
- Spiritual growth and community care.

Tis that time of year. And so, soon you will be receiving a letter and narrative budget. Please consider these materials prayerfully and thoughtfully while making your pledge for 2015. **First Churches needs your financial support.**

With gratitude,

Peggy Anderson, Merrilyn Holcomb, George Naughton, Peg Whitham
The Stewardship Committee



[A Pastoral Letter from Rev. Jim Antal, MACUCC](#)

Dear Friends in Christ,

Imagine that you are a pastor and one day, a couple comes to you and asks you to marry them. You counsel with them and agree. The next day, another couple comes to you and asks the same of you, and state law prohibits you from agreeing to conduct their religious ceremony. Why should the state control a minister's pastoral decisions?

Or imagine that you are a minister making an emergency pastoral visit in a hospital. You arrive at the ER and learn that one member of this couple is dying due to injuries from an accident. His fiancé asks you to perform the marriage that was planned for two months hence. She pleads with you. Your pastoral heart and your conscience move you to offer this pastoral service. However, state law not only prohibits you from conducting the marriage service without a license, but it will also impose on you potentially large fines and a jail sentence of up to 120 days if you do.

In North Carolina, this is the reality for clergy. State laws have infringed deeply on the free exercise of religion. A pastor who chooses to perform a religious marriage for an elderly couple who does not want the state involved in their relationship at this stage of life-but want the affirmation of God and the Church-is prohibited from doing so. A pastor who is asked by members of his or her church to perform a same-gender religious marriage service will suffer retribution from the state.

Today, the United Church of Christ (as authorized by the United Church of Christ Board acting as General Synod ad interim) filed suit in federal court in Charlotte, North Carolina contesting the constitutionality of that state's laws on marriage. These laws prohibit a clergy person (Continued) from performing a marriage without having a license issued by the county in which the ceremony is to be performed. The basis for the suit is that these laws constitute an infringement of our constitutional rights of freedom of religion.

For us, as one of the founding religious traditions of this nation, the principle of free exercise of religion is a paramount value. Because we are not a hierarchical church, the freedom of every clergy person to conduct the rites and sacraments of the Church according to the dictates of conscience is essential to our identity and our faith practice. These laws mean that a pastor cannot perform a service of religious marriage under the circumstances described above.

No matter what one believes about urgent or elder religious marriage or same gender religious marriage, the fundamental breach of free exercise of religion is what is at stake here. We cannot afford to allow this travesty of law to stand. We do so not only because it affects our clergy in North Carolina so profoundly, but because we will always defend the free exercise of religion - anyone's religion.

I believe this is an important step for the UCC to take in defense of the freedoms we hold dear. As far as we know, this is the first time a religious entity has sued on the grounds that these laws violate First Amendment rights.

I encourage you to visit <http://www.ucc.org/ido/> to learn more about this lawsuit and the reasons for it. It is important that we all understand both the basis in law for this suit, and its basis in conscience.

In Christ,

The Rev. Dr. Jim Antal, Conference Minister and President

"Rooted in the grace of God, the mission of the Massachusetts Conference United Church of Christ is to nurture local church vitality and the covenant among our churches to make God's love and justice real!"



Thank You!!!

On April 19th the Expandable Brass Band performed a fundraiser for First Churches. Initiated by them from the back and forth articles in the paper, they felt that they should participate in supporting the Church and the Congregation. During their two hour gig on the Church steps they were able to raise **\$243.90!** We are grateful for their support.

Expandable Brass Band,
would be happy to have you



thank you very much, we
back anytime!

From Your Christian Education Board

Happy Spring First Churches! We're looking forward to another busy month in our Children's Church and Rainbow Room programs.

- On Saturday May 3rd, join First Churches and march in the Northampton Pride



Parade! It's a great time, and a powerful way to show our kids and our community how our Open & Affirming congregation honors all people and families. Contact the church office at 584-9392 for info.

- Our Annual Graduation / End of Season Breakfast is 9am this Sunday May 4th. Join us in Lyman Hall as we enjoy time together reflecting on the program year and how far our kids have come! RSVPs & food contributions to Ann Rasmussen, 413-427-3734.

- Also on Sunday May 4th, there will be extended

Childcare in both the Children's Church and Rainbow Room during the asking budget meeting (in Lyman Hall, immediately following services). Please pick up your children promptly following the meeting.

- We're planning more spruce-up in our children's rooms - please help! This spring & summer we want to spend some time making all of our children's spaces refreshed, clean & ready to welcome families known & new... Consider volunteering your time, on your own or with a team - there's wall painting, wall murals, creating a new "Mother's Corner", general cleaning, organizing & more :-). Contact Ann Rasmussen at ajabu@charter.net for more info.

Thanks as always for your support of our children's programs - contact any member of the CE Board with comments, questions or to volunteer. All the best for a joyous spring,

Ann Rasmussen
Angie Montalvo-Greene

Lora Wondolowski
Judy Sherman

Becky Lockwood

From the Director of Christian Education

After a long, dreary winter, we are finally getting some Springtime sun! Several families and friends of First Churches traveled to the Heifer Farm in Rutland, Ma on April 12 to meet some of the new baby animals that have been born so far this year. Our group was shown how to turn raw wool into yarn, how to milk a goat, and got to learn about Heifer International's global mission to end poverty and hunger.



The children have been hard at work learning and growing in their knowledge of the Bible and what it needs to be a Christian. We are looking forward to planning their spring community project, as well as getting ready for Children's Sunday!

June 15th will be our Children's Sunday. As with last year, the kids will be writing and performing the service....Lisa and I are looking forward to what they have to share!

Best Wishes,

Eric and Lisa

Heartfelt Thanks from Denise Karuth

My time as a Field Education student at First Churches is drawing to a close. I offer each one of you my deepest thanks for the opportunity to serve our congregation, which I love so dearly, in new ways.

The past months have helped me immeasurably as I prepare to be a pastor. I delighted in spending dozens of hours visiting old friends who are confined to their homes or nursing homes, getting to know them better and praying with them. I hope to continue to make visits even though my Field Education responsibilities are completed. I enjoyed opportunities to write and lead liturgy as well as preach, both at First Churches and at North Hadley Congregational Church. I faithfully represented First Churches at Cathedral in the Night, deepening my relationships with the men and women who worship each week in the shadow of our steeple. Learning how to work with church committees is an important part of my training. In early April, I discussed

options for the Maundy Thursday service with the Deacons. Figuring out in advance how to present these options without tipping my hand as to my preferences or opinions so that the Deacons could speak freely without having been led in a particular direction was very helpful to me.

I especially thank Todd Weir for being a fabulous mentor and role model. He offered sage advice such as, "It's best not to make the same mistake twice," along with tremendous support and encouragement.

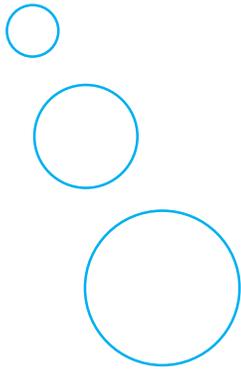
Thank you again for making it possible for me to complete Field Education at First Churches. Serving you in a pastoral role is something I really wanted to do to say "Thank you" for all the ways that you have supported me and nurtured my call to ordained ministry. May the love that you have shown to me and others return a thousand-fold and may you feel God's love and my love surrounding you always.

¿ Ever Wonder ?

Ever wonder about the Quichuan church that meets in the Chapel?
Well a wonderful opportunity has arisen to get to know the members of
Iglesias Bautista Quichua

On the day of awe and wonder, Pentecost, their congregation and our congregation will
gather for worship, fellowship, food and entertainment. Save this date Sunday, June 8th at
6:00pm. More details to come...

My Hope is For.....



- ✿ACCEPTANCE OF ALL
- ✿RESPECT, LOVE AND STEWARDSHIP FOR THE ENVIRONMENT
 - ✿GROWTH AS A SPIRITUAL COMMUNITY
 - ✿LARGER CHILDREN'S CHURCH AND CHOIR
 - ✿A WORLD WITHOUT HUNGER
 - ✿PEACE AND JUSTICE THROUGH EDUCATION
- ✿STRONGER BONDS AND COMMUNICATION WITH CHARITIES AND PEOPLE IN NEED
- ✿THAT MORE PEOPLE WILL FIND FAITH IN THEIR HEARTS AND LIVES

FROM THE CHOIR LOFT

I would like to offer a huge shout-out to the choir for all of their hard work and dedication this year!! We have just come through a season when we prepared special music for the celebration of the joining of our churches, for the March 2 extravaganza, for Palm Sunday, Maundy Thursday and Easter Sunday, and then for the cantata that we presented last week. Whew!!

Everyone cheerfully participated in long, additional rehearsals and worked on their music at home with the aid of CDs made by Dick Purrington. Several of our choir members regularly attended Wednesday night cantata rehearsals in Williamsburg, and some of the Williamsburg singers also came here on Friday nights.

Next month I hope to offer an estimate of the number of years that our members have sung in our choir. In the fall we will be celebrating Betty McKown's 50th anniversary as an alto, and Jeff Bubar and Dick Purrington are not far behind her! All of those years will really add up, I'm sure! We are so lucky to have all of these talented, faithful people in our choir loft each Sunday!

The Bell Choir members are equally dedicated—often coming for extra rehearsals and always willing to have fun practicing!

Many heartfelt thanks to each and every one of you who make my job so meaningful and who give so much to our church!

Love, Dana



- 1 can Italian-style diced tomatoes, undrained
- 2 Cups multi-grain penne pasta, uncooked
- 1 Cup Water
- 1 Package baby spinach leaves
- 1 Cup cheese (3 cheese blend works well)

☼ Set tomatoes, pasta and water to boil in large saucepan; stir. Cover; simmer on medium-low heat 10 minutes.

☼ Uncover; simmer 1 minute, or until pasta is tender

☼ Add half the spinach; simmer covered for 2 minutes or until wilted; Stir, repeat with remaining spinach

☼ Serve topped with cheese

Manja!

MAY 2014

Sun.	Mon.	Tue.	Wed.	Thu.	Fri.	Sat
				1.	2.	3.
					7:00 Choir Practice Hilltown Charter School Music Concert	11:00 Hamp Pride Parade
4.	5.	6.	7.	8.	9.	10.
8:45 Adult Ed 10:00 Worship & Sunday School 11:30 Budget Asking Meeting 5:00 Cathedral in the Night	1:00 Stewardship	12:00 Peace Vigil	7:00 Deacons		7:00 Choir Practice 7:00 Bernie Sanders	10:00 Progressive Democrats of America
11.	12.	13.	14.	15.	16.	17.
8:45 Adult Ed 10:00 Worship & Sunday school 11:30 CE Meeting 5:00 Cathedral in the Night	7:00 Peace & Justice	12:00 Peace Vigil	12:30 Finance 6:30 Missions 6:30 Trustees		7:00 Choir Practice	
18.	19.	20	21.	22.	23.	24.
8:45 Adult Ed 10:00 Worship & Sunday school <i>(Rev. Sarah Buteux Preaching)</i> 5:00 Cathedral in the Night		12:00 Peace Vigil	7:00 Church Council June Messenger Submissions Deadline		7:00 Choir Practice	
25.	26.	27.	28.	29.	30.	31.
8:45 Adult Ed 10:00 Worship & Sunday school 5:00 Cathedral in the Night		12:00 Peace Vigil			7:00 Choir Practice	