

# SEPTEMBER 2017

First Churches of Northampton, UCC/ABC

## PASTOR'S PAGE

### Important Dates

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- Sept 3 - Blessing of the Bikes
- Sept 5 - Annual Reports Due
- Sept 7 - Common Ground
- Sept 10 - Homecoming Sunday
- Sept 17 - Membership Info Meeting
- Sept 19 - McGovern Town Hall
- Sept 19 - Nakba Tour
- Sept 21 - Annual Harvest Dinner
- Sept 24 - Annual Meeting
- Sept 30 - All Church Planning Retreat

### Looking For...

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### Birthdays

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-  9/2 Alexis Silva-Cassidy
-  9/3 Liliana Hernandez
-  9/4 Noah Martin
-  9/5 Morgan Montalvo-Greene
-  9/9 Carol Murphy
-  9/16 Heather Williams
-  9/30 Gabe Kushin

## September is "Make a Difference" Month

Reflect for a moment about why you participate in church life. Some of our reasons relate to "enlightened self-interest." Church is a place where we find friendship, community, meaning, hope, and a sense of well-being. We may be moved by the beauty of music, enjoy the educational opportunities for ourselves and our children, or meeting like-minded people. The inward journey is an essential part of our faith.

Surveys also show that people join organizations because they want to make a difference in the world. People gravitate to institutions that have clear purpose and ways to make a concrete difference. Church is also a place where we organize to feed people, to visit sick and troubled people, to protect human dignity, and advocate for justice. A balanced faith needs an outward journey.

All of this takes organization, coordination, and management. (Did you know that Paul labels administration a gift of the spirit, right up there with faith, love and preaching?) It takes volunteers to make community work. We all have many different gifts and abilities, working to sustain the inward, outward and administrative life of the church. Our new church organizational structure, approved at our June All-Church meeting, is built around these three mutually complementary parts of church life.

OK, so you are now prepared for a month of hearing about volunteer opportunities, and you are already really busy. I take the word volunteer seriously – it means we freely give of ourselves to do something that matters to us. If we are compelled or our arm is twisted, it isn't really volunteering, is it?

I encourage you to do at least one thing in the life of the church, not just because we need you, but because giving back out of gratitude is good for you. And it is only good for you if it is work with clear purpose, boundaries, resources and time commitments that fit your life. The job of our leadership team is to provide these essentials and find the right match for you.

What happens now? The first stage of our new organization has been to recruit our main leaders and coordinators for each of our three ministries. Now our work is to fill in our working teams with people who are interested in specific work. From three Sundays in September, we will have volunteer opportunities to share after church, and leaders of each ministry team will speak during the “Be the Change” moments. During coffee hour, you will have time to meet with the

team leaders and coordinators to find out more about where you may fit. We will share more each week, and stay tuned to our new Friday emails. Aaron is listing volunteer opportunities each week on SignUp Genius, where you can go directly to get involved. You can also get on the list by calling or emailing Aaron at [admin@firstchurches.org](mailto:admin@firstchurches.org).

Finally, thank you for all that you do in the life of the church. It is a joy and privilege to work with all of you in sustaining this community.

~ Pastor Todd

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## **How Community Can Change Your Life**

September Sermon Series from Pastor Todd

**September 10**

*Why You Will Never Succeed at Community Unless You do This*

Matthew 18: 15-20

**September 17**

*What Would the World Be Like Without Forgiveness?*

Matthew 18:21-35

**September 24**

*The Insider's Guide to Volunteering*

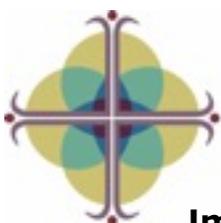
Matthew 20:1-16

## Noon Bible Study Begins on September 11

Our scriptures are a living resource for our spiritual lives. Even though the words may be from centuries past, the Bible speaks afresh to each new generation as we reflect together and listen for God's still speaking voice. You are invited to study the texts we use on Sunday mornings, to get a preview of the week ahead. (For example, our first meeting on September 11 will explore the lessons for Sunday, September 17, seen in the chart below.)

Weekly Bible Study meets every Monday at noon, except on major holidays. We meet for 60 minutes and you are welcome to bring your lunch. Bibles are provided or you can bring your own. You don't need to sign up, just drop in.

<b>Proper 19 (24)</b> Fifteenth Sunday after Pentecost September 17, 2017	Exodus 14:19-31 Psalm 114	Genesis 50:15-21 Psalm 103:(1-7), 8-13	Romans 14:1-12	Matthew 18:21-35
<b>Proper 20 (25)</b> Sixteenth Sunday after Pentecost September 24, 2017	Exodus 16:2-15 Psalm 105:1-6, 37-45	Jonah 3:10-4:11 Psalm 145:1-8	Philippians 1:21-30	Matthew 20:1-16
<b>Proper 21 (26)</b> Seventeenth Sunday after Pentecost October 1, 2017	Exodus 17:1-7 Psalm 78:1-4, 12-16	Ezekiel 18:1-4, 25-32 Psalm 25:1-9	Philippians 2:1-13	Matthew 21:23-32



## COMMON GROUND

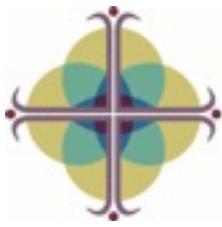
### Important Dates (details below)

Sept 7 - Worship and Dinner at Lyman Hall  
 5pm to help set up; 6pm for worship

Sept 21 - Annual Harvest Dinner at Florence Community Garden  
 5:15 to help set up; 6pm worship

Sept 22 - Missional Retreat at Florence Community Garden  
 9am-2pm; drop-ins welcome





# COMMON GROUND



## September 7

Explore the difference between empathy and sympathy as we continue deepening our ability to truly listen to one another.

Come at 5:00 to help cook and set up.  
Come at 6:00 for dinner and worship.  
come cultivate a peace.

## September 21 Annual Harvest Dinner

You are cordially invited to join us for one of the most beautiful Common Grounds of the year which just happens to fall on the equinox this year. Our annual harvest potluck dinner will take place right alongside our plots at the Grow Food Northampton Community garden:  
140 Meadow Street, Florence.



At 5:15pm, we'll need a small team of strong people to gather the picnic tables from around the gardens. We'll string these together to make one long banqueting table right by our plot. We'll plan to start worship around 6:00. Children can enjoy the little playground on site and child care will be available.

I'll make sure there's ample bread from the Hungry Ghost and local apple cider for this sacred meal. **Please bring an autumn inspired dish to share as well as a cup, plate, and whatever utensils you think you'll need.** If you need a ride to the garden - which is located at 140 Meadow St in Florence - let me know and I'll work on coordinating rides. In the event of rain, we'll meet instead at our usual place at First Churches.

And last but not least, please invite a friend. If not to this Common Ground, invite someone to the next. I know what a blessing this community is to those of you who come. Let's be open to sharing it with others.

And speaking of the garden...  
Two things:

1. If you haven't been to the garden in awhile, I encourage you to come on out on a **Wednesday or Sunday evening between 4-5pm**. It is one of the loveliest most peaceful places on earth; a great place to unwind after a long day at work or center yourself before the week ahead. And at this time of year there is almost always food you can take home with you, especially if you like Kale ; ).



2. We'll be hosting a half day missional retreat with the American Baptist Church called, "**Sow, Water, Wonder, Weed: Growing in Spirit and Truth in God's Garden,**" **on September 22 from 9am-2pm**, in our garden at 140 Meadow St. You're welcome to drop by for some or part of the day, talk to people about Common Ground, eat, worship, weed, and hang out with us. I'd love to see you there.

~ Pastor Sarah

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## FROM THE CHOIR LOFT

We are looking forward to including two new members in our choir this fall, and, if there are any more of you out there who are interested in singing with us, please know that we would love to have you!! **Our choir season begins on Friday, September 8, with a light supper at 6:00 p.m. and rehearsal from 7-8:30.** We rehearse regularly on Friday nights and also on Sunday mornings at 9:00 a.m.

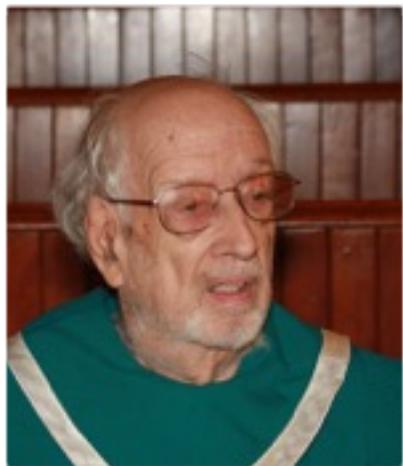
You are welcome to be with us on a short-term basis or to make arrangements for whatever might fit your schedule. The choir is a warm, friendly group, and we invite you to join us!!

This month I would like to introduce you to one of our longest-serving choir members, Jeff Bubar, who is celebrating his 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary with the First Churches' choir in September, 2017. Jeff sings bass in our choir and is an expert on all things related to our Skinner organ. Here are his responses to our interview questions.

~Dana

**1. Please tell us about your background.**

*Hi! I am Jeffrey N. Bubar. I've been a choir member for 50 years. I was born 78 years ago on August 27, 1939, to Henry and Evelyn Bubar. I grew up in*



*Monticello, Maine, until I was 8, and then moved to Houlton, Maine, until 1964. I started to go to the First Congregational Church in Houlton when I was 4½ years old, and old enough to behave. Back then one was forbidden to bring babies and unruly two-*

*year-olds to church!*

*At an early age I grew to love some of the old hymns: "Jesus Loves Me," "Just As I Am" "Crown Him with Many Crowns," etc. I was confirmed as a church member on Easter, 1955. After my church burned in 1956, we became non-members for 8 years because my church joined with the Unitarians. I graduated from Houlton, Maine, High School in 1957 and the now-closed Ricker College in 1961. Dad got a teaching position in Hadley, MA, and we moved from Maine in 1964.*

**2. What brought you to First Churches?**

*After Dad retired from teaching and we were living in Northampton, we tried the First Church(es), and we were impressed.*

**3. When and how did you happen to join the choir?**

*Janet Dahlberg welcomed me into the choir in 1967. Janet worked with me over the next 20 years and made me the singer I am today. Her rule, "Don't push and force the tone," makes me the singer I am today, and one who dislikes gospel and pop singers because they screech!*

**4. What do you like to do when you are not at choir rehearsal?**

*When I'm home, I like to listen to classical and organ music.*

**5. Name three musicians from any era that you would like to have dinner with.**

*I would like to have dinner with Bach, Holst, and Smith College's Grant Moss.*

**6. If you could join any past or current music group, which would it be?**

*If I were younger, I would like to join the Hampshire Choral Society.*

**7. What does your perfect day look like?**

*My perfect day would be one free of President Trump's meddling with my health insurance, because I have a pre-existing condition.*

**8. Just for fun: Would you rather be an eagle or a whale, and why?**

*I would rather be an eagle, the Nation's symbol.*

**9. Parting comment:**

*I am an avowed socialist, (notice I did not say dictator), based on Luke 1:52-53, "Elevate them of low degree and send the rich empty away." If we are to live with a loving Father God is to work for social and economic justice.*

**If you are interested in joining for the new choir season, please contact**

**Dana at 413-727-8677 or [music@firstchurches.org](mailto:music@firstchurches.org).**



# Save the date!

Coming up at First Churches...

## AllChurch Planning Retreat September 30 :: 9:00am - noon

Everyone is invited to our retreat in Lyman Hall on Saturday, September 30. Here is an outline of our agenda for the morning (coffee and bagels are available at 8:30 AM.)

1. We will look at the year-long church calendar. It's a great time to get important events like the church fair, Hot Chocolate Run, Pride March and Easter on your calendar.
2. We will share together about how to build a culture and mission that flows out of our Church Vision Statement we approved at the June All-Church Meeting. How do we achieve our hopes of being a church that invites all people, listens together for God, and makes God's love and justice real?
3. We will have some time for our various ministry teams to share with each other and do whatever they need to clarify purpose, set meeting times and first priorities.

## First Churches Annual Meeting After worship on September 24

The annual meeting is a time to share and celebrates the accomplishments of the past year, as we start a new year. At the meeting we will receive reports on the church budget and from major working groups in the life of the church.

We will meet in Lyman Hall after church for about 20 to 30 minutes.



## Town Hall Meeting with Congressman Jim McGovern

First Churches will host a town hall meeting with Congressman Jim McGovern the evening of

**September 19 from 5:30-7:30pm**, in the Sanctuary.

## Nakba Tour September 19 :: 7:30pm



Palestinian refugees, Khawala Hammad (84) and Amena Elashkar (23), of the Nakba Tour, will be sharing their stories of living in exile, September 19 at 7:30pm, at First Churches in Lyman Hall.



Visit [www.nakbatour.com](http://www.nakbatour.com) for more on this event.

## Sunday School Registration

**September 10 and 17**

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## Membership Information Meeting

### September 17 after church

Maybe you have been thinking about joining First Churches, but you have some hesitations. *"I don't have a strong enough understanding of my faith to join."* Welcome to the club! Every Sunday we say we are a church for believers, questioners and questioning believers. Membership is the first step, not the last. *"Will I be asked to join a team?"* While we hope that every member finds at least one way to share their time and talents with the community, teams are not the only way to be involved.

Becoming a part of community is an ongoing process of getting to know people, the culture and how things work. First Churches is a busy place, and many long-term members find it hard to keep up, so its not just you! To assist you in getting to know the church better we have two opportunities. On **September 17** we will have an orientation meeting where you can find out more about the

theology and history of First Churches and our parent denominations, the United Church of Christ and American Baptists.

Please email Pastor Todd at [pastortodd@firstchurches.org](mailto:pastortodd@firstchurches.org) or Pastor Sarah at [pastorsarah@firstchurches.org](mailto:pastorsarah@firstchurches.org) or call the church office if you want more info.

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## Children and Youth Ministries

### Sunday School

Sunday School begins again next Sunday, September 10<sup>th</sup>. Please bring your backpacks! We'll have a special blessing for them as we begin a new school year.

### Registration

We'll have registration forms for you to fill out after Sunday school on the 10th and 17th, while the kids are having a snack.

### Sunday School Classes

I am delighted to announce that we have a full roster of teachers to begin the school year. AJ and Sarah will continue on in the Rainbow Room. Rachel Chapman will be teaching K-3rd. Cole will be teaching 4-6. I will be leading confirmation and Anna is going to offer a discussion group for any teens who are done with confirmation but want to keep the conversation about faith going.

We can always use more adults to help out downstairs to keep us in compliance with our safe church policy. You don't need to prepare for this, just offer your time and be present.

## Children's Choir

Children's choir will begin September 17.

## Confirmation

Confirmation classes will resume on September 24, though confirmands are welcome to join us for the first 2 weeks of Sunday School as we all get re-acquainted.

## Youth Group

Our first big event of the season will be on September 24th. We'll gather with teens from Edwards and St. Johns, enjoy some pizza, and then head off to Park Orchard in Easthampton to pick apples and enjoy the art on display throughout the orchard. We can use some additional adult drivers. We'll go gleaning on October 1 and there will be a retreat in November on Cape Cod that you won't want to miss.

Many more details to follow friends, but for now, enjoy the rest of the summer and I'll see you all on September 10.

Peace,

Pastor Sarah



## Upcoming Events

### September 10

Sunday School Begins  
Registration during pick up  
Blessing of Backpacks in worship

### September 24

Confirmation and Youth Discussion classes begin  
Youth Pizza and Park Hill Orchard in Easthampton  
First Churches 11:45 -2:45

### October 1

Youth Gleaning with Rachel's Table  
Edwards Church  
11:45 -3:00

### November 3

Family Pizza and Movie Night  
Lyman Hall 6-8 pm

### November 9-11

Youth Retreat at Craigville on Cape Cod

### December 3

Hanging of the Greens Vespers Service

### December 17

Christmas Pageant

### December 24

Christmas Eve Candlelight Service of Lessons and Carols 7:00pm

### January 12

Teen Overnight location TBD

# September 2017 Calendar



**9/3 - 10am Blessing of the Bikes**

**5pm Cathedral in the Night**

9/4 - LABOR DAY

9/5 - Annual Reports Due

12pm Peace Vigil, Sanctuary

9/7 - 6pm Common Ground, Lyman Hall

9/8 - 1st Choir Rehearsal of the season

6pm light supper; 7:30-8pm rehearsal

Arts Night Out

Chalk Art & 6pm Prone to Mischief

8:30pm Dance Spree

**9/10 - 10am Homecoming Sunday**

**Sunday School Begins**

**5pm Cathedral in the Night**

9/11 - 12-1pm Bible Study, Parlor

9/12 - 12pm Peace Vigil, Sanctuary

9/15 - 7pm Choir Rehearsal, Parlor

8:30pm Dance Spree, Lyman Hall

**9/17 - 10am Worship**

**Membership Info Meeting**

**Church Fair Meeting, Parlor**

**5pm Cathedral in the Night**

9/18 - 12-1pm Bible Study, Parlor

9/19 - 12pm Peace Vigil, Sanctuary

5:30pm Jim McGovern Town Hall

7:30pm Nakba Tour

9/20 - 7pm Administrative Board Meeting

9/21 - 6pm Common Ground ::

Annual Harvest Dinner in the Gardens

9/22 - 9am-2pm Common Ground

Missional Retreat in the Gardens

7pm Choir Rehearsal, Parlor

8:30 Dance Spree, Lyman Hall

**9/24 - 10am Worship**

**Annual Church Meeting**

**Confirmation & Youth**

**Discussion Classes Begin**

**5pm Cathedral in the Night**

9/25 - 12-1pm Bible Study, Parlor

9/26 - 12pm Peace Vigil, Sanctuary

9/27 - 6:30-9pm Art + Soul, Lyman Hall

9/29 - 7pm Choir Rehearsal, Parlor

8:30pm Dance Spree, Lyman Hall

9/30 - 9am-12pm All Church Planning Retreat