

Cross Currents



May 2014 • Open Hearts & Open Minds & Open Doors

From Pastor Andrea

As Lent draws to a close and we approach Easter, I find myself reflecting on the COVENANT TO PRAY AND TO ACT that I promised myself (and indirectly all of you) that I would observe as my Lenten practice this year. Having long been extremely distressed about the plight of so many poor people locally, regionally, nationally and globally and grieving the gap between rich and poor in this country (and around the world), I decided that my Lenten discipline this year would be the following: I would do something to combat poverty every day for 40 days, AND I would pray for and with poor people every day also.

Lent is not over (I am writing this on Palm Sunday) but I have been true to my word thus far...since Ash Wednesday I have prayed for poor people and an end to poverty every single day AND I have done something that has to do with poverty and poor people every single day.

Let me share with you some reflections. I have learned a great deal, so this short essay will somewhat skim the surface, but I will summarize a few reflections/reactions at this time.

The thing that stands out for me more than anything else is the conversations I have had with very poor and homeless people in downtown Northampton over the last month. I have heard about where they are sleeping, what they eat in the course of a day, getting into the shelter before 9:30 PM when the doors are locked for the night (one guy told me about arriving at 9:35, being locked out and sleeping on the bike path that night). I have heard about the best places to buy cheap hot soup, the restaurants that will occasionally hand a homeless person a meal, and the poignant division some homeless people make between "those who are sober and those who are still using."

I have also felt how easy it was (and what an escape it was) to simply stay home and write/mail checks to antipoverty programs. I let myself write checks for the first two weeks on the days when I could not think of anything else to do, but then I made myself stop and pushed myself to find new ways to engage with the whole issue of poverty.

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I have had my eyes opened reading a great deal about poverty and the gap between rich and poor in various magazines and journals—some religious ones that I had put aside to read during Lent and others that just arrived in our mailbox that happened to have articles about poverty and the growing gap between rich and poor.

I have also done reading online. I have devoured blogs written by poor people and heard the anguish, anger, and courage of poor people who have written about their childhoods, their perceptions of middle class and rich people, their daily “sacrifices” and choices, their spending patterns when they do have money, their mind-set about hiding and “passing,” and their ambivalence about speaking out and drawing attention to themselves as poor people—knowing they need to express what they experience but also hating being visible, exposed and feeling more vulnerable than they already feel.

I have also read a lot of poetry by poor people—some of which is deeply touching and illuminating. And I have read about “outsider art,” which taught me a lot.

I have given away many baskets-full of warm socks, oranges, protein bars, boxes of raisins, and bags of nuts. I have handed out \$1, \$5, and \$10 bills to people in need. I have learned names, shaken hands, heard stories, shared sandwiches and even prayed with people downtown, and I feel blessed by it all.

What I have done during Lent has been insignificant I know. But I have learned and felt much. I have had my heart broken open. My friend Jenny has been saying for weeks that her guess is I won't stop my Covenant to Pray and to Act when Lent is over. And I have come to believe she is right. Miguel is real to me now, Christina is my friend, Raymond has many needs, and Steve calls out “Andrea! Andrea!” when I am on the other side of the street.

Poverty has a face, a name, poetic images and heartbreaking stories. I have received far more than I have given. I have learned much, and for that I am grateful. And it has changed me. The witness and the prayers will not end.



“It Just Ain’t In There!”

“I warn everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: if anyone adds to them, God will add to that person the plagues described in this book...”

~ Revelation 22:18a

I’ve spent the past few days poring over scripture - - I know, that might not sound so surprising since I’m a pastor and all. Recently, someone asked me to find a scripture verse to match a writing piece she was working on. “I know just the place to look!” I thought, and headed to my trusty study Bible loaded with notes and commentary. Her topic resonated with a certain line of scripture that I just *knew* I had read, prayed over, studied, and even quoted in paraphrase. This one would be easy. Well, it’s not in Romans. Or Corinthians - - First or Second. Galatians? Nope. Thessalonians? Not there, either.

I decided to “crowd source” the search and posted the question to my clergy colleagues on Facebook. All responses came up short - - some got at the spirit of what I was thinking, but none led me to where I wanted to be. At last I came to a realization: It just ain’t in there! Despite the convincing mental image I had of those words on the page, that specific Bible verse the way *I* had remembered it was just not in there! And just like that, I had done something that I despise: I replaced what is actually in the Bible with what I *wish* was in the Bible!

I’ve been keeping a mental list of this kind of para-biblical phenomena - - phrases, maxims that sound so convincingly biblical that one could be forgiven for believing they are a part of our sacred text. [As a side note: there’s a half-written sermon on this very topic kicking around in my head, so don’t be surprised if this comes up again. Think of this article as a preview!] Despite our post-modern inclination for distrust of established authority and our desire to create our own sacred texts, it seems we still have an equal desire to validate our own actions or make meaning of mystery by claiming ancient origins.

Now, on a scale of pseudo-biblical egregiousness, my particular transgression was a misdemeanor. But there are other examples that not only do harm, but seem to betray the very Gospel message they attempt to proclaim. Chief among these is the motto for every campaign to defund public assistance and welfare: “God helps those who help themselves.” This is the rallying cry for the “bootstrap” mentality that one has earned and deserved their socio-economic lot in life, and can only come out of that rut by

ceasing laziness, and, as one politician recently said, “deciding not to be poor.” It just ain’t in there. While I can agree that individuals must take personal responsibility and work toward change for themselves, I do not believe that God is simply waiting for us to do so before God unleashes a wealth of blessings upon us. Also, there’s that whole thing about “care for the poor” in the Pentateuch, the Prophets, the Gospels, and in Paul’s letters. And then there’s systematic oppression, and the idea of equating God’s blessing with wealth, but that’s a whole other article.

The second offender does spiritual damage in another way. Faced with the mystery and trauma of death - - especially untimely death - - some well-meaning faithful people will counsel the bereaved that, “God needed another angel.” No. Nope. Again, I understand the sentiment: the goal is to bring comfort, to assure that a loved one is now in God’s care. Those are kind, compassionate impulses, and totally appropriate. But this phrase conveys the message that God takes people from our lives because God needs them more than we do - - as if God is recruiting ringers for some sort of heavenly basketball team. Responding to someone in grief with words of comfort and assurance of God’s presence? Absolutely a perfect faith response to suffering, with biblical text to boot. Saying that a child is dead because God needed her up in heaven? It just ain’t in there.

Biblical interpretation is good and necessary - - we must seek to understand scripture and apply it to our context. Biblical literacy for one who seeks to be a disciple is arguably essential - - if only to have a handle on what is actually in there! And what is in there is beautiful, strange, sometimes contradictory, and challenging.

So why do we add more? Is it simply a symptom of biblical illiteracy or bad interpretation? Maybe so. Maybe it’s because we “see what we want to see” and look to the validation of ancient authority for our beliefs and actions. Maybe it’s because mere existence is often complex, confusing, traumatic, and mysterious, and we need guidance, hope, comfort, grace, and answers. And guess what? Those things are in there.

Blessings & Peace



What's in a Name?

Several weeks ago Annie Turner wrote me a letter asking why Mary Magdalene was called Mary Magdalene. For years I have been struck by the fact that in all four Gospels: Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, the writers use the name Mary Magdalene. That alone is amazing. Most of the women in the Gospels, like the woman who anointed Jesus’ head with oil on his way to Jerusalem, are given no names at all. When they *are* named it is only with their first name, like: Mary the mother of James. But Mary Magdalene is different. Now it is true that it might just mean that she came from the town of Magdala, the town on the western shore of the Sea of Galilee. But clearly more is intended by the prominence of the name Mary Magdalene.

The answer, I believe, can be found in the Gospel of John. In the early morning of Easter day, she is alone in the Garden, except for someone else whom she takes to be the gardener and who says to her, “Woman, why are you weeping?” Unfortunately, Mary is weeping so much that she cannot see through the tears in her eyes. But then it happens! The so-called gardener who she hasn’t recognized calls to her and says “Mary.” And she turns and says “Rabboni.” Mary is the first to see her Risen Lord.

As such Mary is the first Apostle, the first witness to the Resurrection; the word “apostle” meaning witness. Mary emerges as the leader of the disciples in all four Gospels. She is the leader because at this moment she is the Apostle to the apostles. And that is why she is given the prominence in all four Gospels of being called Mary Magdalene. She is the first to proclaim the good news that Jesus is alive, that Jesus lives, that Jesus is risen.

Soon thereafter the men take over the leadership responsibilities and say that the Church must be built on the shoulders of Peter, because Peter was the Rock. It was, after all, a patriarchal society. But the name Mary Magdalene will always be a reminder that the Church could have been built upon the shoulders of Mary; and we can only speculate what kind of Church that might have been 2,000 years ago. But that is why the prominence of the name Mary Magdalene is so important to honor. It stands as a reminder of how radical Jesus’ ministry was then, and how radical it still needs to be today.

- Rev. Peter Ives, Theologian-in-Residence

Pastrix Book Discussion Group

Thursday, May 8, 6:30-8:00 pm, HCC dining room

Have you read *Pastrix: The Cranky, Beautiful Faith of a Sinner and Saint* by Nadia Bolz-Weber? Want to or need to talk about it? Let's get together and share our reflections, provocations, and ideas from this quirky spiritual autobiography that has resonated with and challenged more than a few of us. If you have not yet read it, seek out a copy and join us for this semi-structured discussion led by Pastor Chris. For a primer, please reference Pastor Chris's article in the January *CrossCurrents*.

Following are excerpts from Pastor Chris's January *CrossCurrents* article in case you didn't save it. ED.

"When something is suggested to me more than a few times, I take it as an indication that maybe I should drop my preconceived notions about that thing and give it my attention. Such was the case recently with a new book, *Pastrix: The Cranky, Beautiful Faith of a Sinner and Saint*, by Lutheran pastor Nadia Bolz-Weber (Jericho Books, 2013).

Here's the deal: When the book came out, I had seen articles about Rev. Bolz-Weber, always accompanied by her picture. She is heavily tattooed, wears her hair short, has thick-framed glasses, dresses in that sort of thrift store hipness that now sells for big bucks at clothing stores. In short, she looks like someone in my circle of friends. Book reviews and publicity blurbs reference her heavily-inked arms, her profanity-laden sermons, and her rough-but-authentic edge.

While I'm willing to bet that Rev. Nadia Bolz-Weber and I might disagree on a number of things, her words delivered dose after dose of much-needed truth for me, sometimes truths that stung a bit. But that's OK because, just as Bolz-Weber quotes the late author David Foster Wallace, "The truth will set you free... but not before it's done with you."

Pastrix is not a book to read if you're trying to fall asleep. It's not a book to read if you're looking to remain comfortable and be affirmed that you're doing everything right with no need to change. It's an accessible book in terms of language and readability, but a challenging book in every other way. Pick it up for someone you love who might need to be shaken up a bit - - perhaps that someone is you...."

- Pastor Chris

Second Quarter Fellowship Gatherings

Friday, May 16, 5:30-7:30pm at the Solis Residence

Coming Out As Christian*: Do your friends and co-workers know that you attend church or have some sort of faith life? If so, how have they responded? If not, is it something that you hide, that embarrasses you, or simply something that's far too personal? Many of us struggle with the idea of "outing" ourselves as a person of faith - - not wanting the possible stigma or misconceptions that go along with that. Yet, we have some good news to share about our faith community. So, how do we tackle "Coming Out As Christian?"

* Or simply as someone who is on a faith journey.

Who: Anyone aged 20+ who considers themselves to be in the "Second Quarter" of life

What: Food & Fellowship! Let's have a cookout! Bring along something to grill, a side dish, dessert, or beverage to share, or a few bucks to chip in.

Where: The Solis Residence (15 Torrey St, Easthampton)

Also: Childcare will be provided, with any contribution toward this greatly appreciated.

Our Second Quarter Fellowship is a still-forming ministry for and by folks who consider themselves to be in the "second quarter" of life. Anyone who identifies with this description - - whether by chronological or experienced age - - is welcome to attend. For more information, contact Toby Davis, Maggie Solis, Sarah Icklan, or Pastor Chris. Your RSVP to Pastor Chris (revcjm@gmail.com) will help us plan.

May Birthdays!

- 1 Mary Vaughan
- Dr. John Warner
- 3 Vicki Hicks
- 4 Jessica Morgan
- James Morin
- Karla Hathaway
- 6 Alice Pannoni
- 11 Jane Hall
- Ann Vanderburgh
- 12 Eleanor Warnock
- Katie Hull
- 14 Richard Loomis
- Chip Roughton
- 15 Susan Molano
- Kayla Gilman-Solomon
- Alexander Bertuch-Wallace
- Andrew Geery
- 19 Mary Gerkin-Newcomb
- Patricia James
- Jennifer Miller-Antill
- 25 Kathy Bonnet
- Pete Solis
- Coni Gilman-Solomon
- 28 Gina Ayvazian
- Nicole Loughnane
- 29 Velma Garcia
- 30 Tina Marini
- 31 Micaela Newcomb-Gerken



Irene Sicurello's love for all her children and support of the LGBT Community lives on in every Pride March!

- Submitted by Shirley Sicurello and Barbara Dreyer

Gay Pride March

S a t u r d a y , M a y 3

We will gather at 11:00 am on Hampton Ave, behind Thorne's Marketplace garage. We'll be holding a place in the parade line-up, meet us there. Look for purple balloons--that way you'll know it is us!

Wheelchairs, strollers, tricycles all up front by the banner.

Wear your I AM THE CHURCH t-shirts!

Our Amazing Passover Seder!

Almost fifty people turned out to hear the story of the Exodus brought to life by the children and youth of Haydenville Congregational! The kids once again gave meaning to the harrowing story of the Israelites and their struggle for freedom. Moses led her people to freedom after the many plagues, and we were treated to Passover songs by musician Felicia Sloin. The music was interactive and perfectly integrated into the story. The Gilman-Solomon family graciously led the Seder and asked the four questions that were answered by various guests. The Seder plate held the reminders of all the trials the Israelites endured. We had an incredible feast (who knew you could make so many recipes with matzoh?) of roasted chicken, salads, and lots of grape juice and macaroons. Kayla Gilman-Solomon let it be known that "there are no slaves at this Seder!" and with that everyone sprang into action for a massive clean-up. Thanks to everyone who came – it was a memorable evening! Big thanks to the Gilman-Solomon family for making it all possible for a third year. We are blessed to celebrate this ritual of remembrance with you.

- Dawn Orluske, Director of Children's Church



photo taken by Joanne Morgan

Oliver Meditates too!

I just read Pastor Chris's article about meditating in the April newsletter and feel like I need to share this story with you. Each morning Mary Kate meditates in our spare bedroom next to the altar. Oliver usually joins her during her morning routine. Yesterday afternoon I was having a particularly rough day filled with increased pain. I awoke from a nap and didn't know where Oliver was (he's usually on his bed next to my bed). I checked his bed in the living room, our bedroom, and then I walked into the spare bedroom and found him there - at the altar - where he seemed to be meditating. I thought it was very sweet.

- Rebecca (Becky) Farley-Dimino



The Robert H. Life Scholarship

The Rev Robert H. Life was the pastor of the Haydenville Church from 1904-1934. He was a man of firm faith and was an inspiration to his congregation. In his will he set up a trust fund to assist the members of his beloved church. The income from this trust fund is used to provide scholarships for any Williamsburg resident who is furthering his or her education and is an active church member or child of an active church member. Each person applying for the Robert H. Life scholarship fund must write a request asking to be considered. The deadline for applying is May 25, 2014. Please see or email Sarah Icklan for an application (skicklan@gmail.com).

Haydenville Christians for Hope

The Haydenville Congregational Church will be participating again in the Hampshire County Relay for Life on Friday, June 13th – Saturday, June 14th at Look Park in Northampton. We are *Haydenville Christians for Hope!* Team Captains Karen Guiel, Lexi Fappiano-Whalen, and Joanne Morgan invite everyone to participate on our team!

The Relay starts on Friday afternoon and continues through the night until Saturday afternoon. Team members take turns walking laps around the track – in the big field at Look Park – while also enjoying games and activities set up by our team and other teams, eating good food, browsing the many baskets at the basket raffle, and participating in themed laps throughout the event. Some team members brave the night at Look Park in tents (with earplugs this year!), while others join us for Friday afternoon/evening and again on Saturday morning.

The Relay for Life is a fundraising event for the American Cancer Society, and team members can engage in individual fundraising, asking family and friends to contribute, and/or participate in our team fundraisers. We will have a car wash in May to benefit our team, as well as a can/bottle drive, and a few other fundraisers that are still in the works. We welcome everyone to join our Relay team!

Please see Joanne Morgan, Karen Guiel, or Lexi Fappiano-Whalen for more information, or to sign up!

- Joanne Morgan

W I D E N I N G T H E

Welcome

Did you know that our Accessible to All committee is part of a UCC-wide organization called Disabilities Ministries? This group posts wonderful reflections and resources on their website about everything from how to interact with people with different disabilities to prayers and Bible study around issues of disability.

Check them out at <http://www.uccdm.org/>



Calendar for May

Please check the online church calendar to confirm meeting dates, times and locations.

Date	Time	Event	Location
Fri. May 2	3:30 pm	Fridays @ 4:00 Writing Group	Dining Room
	5:30 pm	Trustees Meeting	Dining Room
Sat. May 3	11:00 am	Northampton Gay Pride Parade, <i>see details page 5</i>	Northampton
Sun. May 4	10:00 am	Worship Service, Communion Sunday	Sanctuary
	4:00 pm	Youth Group Meeting	Dining Room
Mon. May 5	6:00 pm	Diaconate Meeting	Dining Room
Tues. May 6	5:30 pm	A2A Meeting	Dining Room
Wed. May 7	5:30 pm	Soup, Salad, Peace and Justice/Walk for MA Children, <i>see page 11 for details</i>	Dining Room
	7:00 pm	Choir Practice	Sanctuary
Thurs. May 8	6:30 pm	Book Group discussing "Pastrix: The Cranky, Beautiful Faith of a Sinner & Saint" <i>see details page 4</i>	Dining Room
Fri. May 9	3:30 pm	Fridays @ 4:00 Writing Group	Dining Room
Sat. May 10	10:00 pm	DVD Series, Living the Questions: The Wisdom of Progressive Christianity 2	Dining Room
Sun. May 11	10:00 am	Worship Service	Sanctuary
Tues. May 13	7:00 pm	Men's Fellowship Meeting	Dining Room
Wed. May 14	7:00 pm	Choir Practice	Sanctuary
Thurs. May 15	1:00 pm	Ladies Aid Meeting	Dining Room
	5:30 pm	Pastor Andrea's Staff Meeting	Dining Room
Fri. May 16	3:30 pm	Fridays @ 4:00 Writing Group	Dining Room
	6:00 pm	Youth Group Families Potluck & Year End Slide	Dining Room
Sun. May 18	10:00 am	Worship Service	Sanctuary
	12:00 noon	Council Meeting	Sanctuary
Mon. May 19	5:30 pm	Peace and Justice Meeting	Dining Room
Wed. May 21	6:00 pm	Family Ministries Meeting	Children's Church



Date	Time	Event	Location
Wed. May 21	6:00 pm	Shepherd's Meeting	Dining Room
	7:00 pm	Choir Practice	Sanctuary
Fri. May 23	3:30 pm	Fridays @ 4:00 Writing Group	Dining Room
Sun. May 25	10:00 pm	Worship Service	Sanctuary
Wed. May 28	7:00 pm	Choir Practice	Sanctuary
Fri. May 30	3:30 pm	Fridays @ 4:00 Writing Group	Dining Room



Church Picnic!

Outdoor Pool,
Cotton Candy Machine,
Bounce House, Sno-cones,
and a Popcorn Machine!

This year's all-church picnic
has a *Carnival* theme!

Mark your calendars now!

June 29 after our worship
service, in Jil, Christine and
Sayla's backyard in
Haydenville.

*More information and
details soon!*

**Mercy is the willingness
to enter into another's chaos.**

- James Keenan, S.J.

A note from the Designer/Editor:

I have made some design changes to this issue of *CrossCurrents* in an effort to deal with some printing problems, to control *CrossCurrents* escalating page count and to reduce our printing and distribution costs.

Most significantly I have replaced the typeface used in the body of the newsletter with Optima, described by Fonts.com as: "... a clear and precise font.... inspired by classical Roman inscriptions and distinguished by its flared terminals – the ends of letters. The curves and straights of the Optima fonts vary minutely in thickness to provide a graceful and clear impression to the eye."

Optima was designed by Hermann Zaph in the 50's; one of it's most memorable uses is on the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington.

I hope you like the new look.

The next issue of *CrossCurentns* will be a combined June/July issue. If you are planning to write an article, or list an event in the calendar, please submit your contribution by May 15.
Thanks. Ed.

Fourteen New Members!

The names of Carole Bull, Christopher Daehne, Barbara Dreyer, Jim Foudy, Vicki Hicks, Janice Mazzallo, Alton H. Neal, Susan Riley, Ed Salners, Carol Shaw, Cate Shaw, Julie Salzman, Mark Sheehan and Lori Wallace have been presented for membership in the Haydenville Congregational Church. These people have found nurture and support in the midst of our Church family. Through prayer and study they have been led by God to claim in our presence their covenantal relationship with the members and friends of the Haydenville Congregational Church. They are here for service to God, using the gifts that God has given them.

- Pastor Andrea

Help!

Sally Lemaire needs help with transportation to church. She requires someone who can lift a manual wheelchair into their car. She would like to have a number of volunteers so no one has to drive more than once every five or six weeks. From her home in Agawam it's a forty-minute drive to the church.

Thanks also to everyone who has helped Sally get to church this past winter.

An AV Equipment Update!

Thanks to Robert Davis we now have a pair of computer speakers for use with our church projector during slide presentations. Also thanks to Robert we might soon have a screen as well! Jo and Robert are willing to instruct others in how to use the new AV equipment. Robert and Jo suggest that each committee should select someone for training on our computer projection equipment.

Thanks Robert for your generous contribution!

"Doubt is the ants in the pants of faith. It keeps it alive and moving."

- Frederick Buechner

Hampshire Association Jamboree

• JUNE 1, 2014 •

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

Dow Pavilion at Look Park,
Northampton, MA

Schedule of Events:

12:30 pm - Picnic

Menu: hamburgers, veggie burgers,
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

Fun & Games for all ages throughout the day!

Volleyball, Cribbage, Chess, Ball Games
and more....

Please contact Yohah at 413-586-3071 to register

Summer Camp at Silver Lake Conference Center!

It's not too early to make plans for the summer! Silver Lake has all sorts of weeklong conferences for young people entering 4th through 12th grade, in addition to half-week family and off-site mission work camps. Whether you are artistic or musical, like sports and games, want to challenge the high ropes course or take a dip in the lake, Silver Lake has a conference for you! Nestled in the Northwest Hills of Sharon, CT, Silver Lake is the year-round Outdoor Ministry site owned and operated by the Connecticut Conference of the United Church of Christ.

Registration is going on now! To register and for more information, visit silverlakeect.org. Financial assistance ("Camperships") is available through Silver Lake and the Massachusetts UCC, and are always confidential.

See Pastor Chris (a long time Silver Laker!) for more information.

Easter Bonnet Workshop a Success

In preparation for Easter morning a dozen or so people joined Alice Barber and Susannah Crolius to create colorful and festive Easter bonnets. Artificial flowers, satin ribbons, yellow “Peeps,” bits of lace, three glue guns and several starter hats were waiting to be embellished. By the end of the evening many plain hats had been transformed into Easter bonnets.



Art & Soul....

Creative engagement at the intersection of the arts, spirituality, community-building and social justice

It is Good Friday as I write this article. Today is the day when Jesus will utter these words: Forgive. Forgive them for they know not what they do.

Forgiveness. It is one of those words, I think, that is tossed around so much, like its cousins “closure” and “healing,” that it is in danger of being easily dismissed. Another “buzzword” spoken in our cultural discomfort at not knowing how to be with our own or someone else’s vulnerability or suffering. A platitude offered, meant to circumvent conflict, truth-telling or the long, frightening, painful road of anger and grief. So often we say: “You have to forgive him. You should forgive her. Everyone makes mistakes.”

Today is also the day when Jesus cries out the words of deepest human anguish, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” reminding us that forgiveness is not some easy platitude but can be a terrifying, gut-wrenching wrestling with God.

And as I dive deeply into this subject of forgiveness, there are several things I am finding out along the way as I talk with people and research it: **1)** It is, at the very least, an uncomfortable subject for people to talk about and most often painful, which is why we don’t talk very often about it with each other in any meaningful way, **2)** It is a subject virtually everyone has or is struggling with. When I explain to people that Art & Soul’s project is on forgiveness, people across the board from all life circumstances say emphatically what an important and necessary subject it is, **3)** People have assumptions about what is meant by the word “forgiveness” or else, there is confusion about it. What is it? What does it look like? How do I know when it happens? Should I always forgive? **4)** The emotion of anger is very challenging for most people, particularly for women. It surfaces a lot of confusion and mixed feelings, and **5)** the subject of Forgiveness is much more complex than I thought.

Art & Soul is embarking on The Forgiveness Project, a multi-month, multi-venue, multi-arts exploration on the theme of Forgiveness. The Forgiveness Project has three parts: Community conversations on the subject through the reading of a new book and a film series, a public participative art installation, and stations set up in various places in different towns where people can share their

thoughts and ideas about forgiveness and a final arts show/performance and ritual.

Archbishop Desmond Tutu and his daughter have just released a new book called *"The Book of Forgiving."* If there is anyone who is qualified to speak about forgiveness, he is. I have read the book, and it is very, very good. He does not gloss over or dismiss or offer easy God-filled words. This book is the jumping off place for the beginning of our community conversations on forgiveness. I am in conversation with several area libraries to host "community-reads" of this book with a follow up discussion open to the wider community. It will be very powerful if many people around the Pioneer Valley in different communities are reflecting on the theme of forgiveness together. The Forbes Library in Northampton is already on board. We will be reading the book in June. And I am pinning down a site for a 4-week film series showing films that have forgiveness as a focus.

Art & Soul needs your help. We want to hear your thoughts, questions, experiences, challenges on the subject of Forgiveness, whatever you wish to say or share. You can share personal stories or you can just share what you think when you hear the word "forgiveness." We would be glad to listen confidentially and/or if you are comfortable, we would like to either videotape or record these sessions so we can use them as part of the upcoming art installation. We can meet after church on Sunday. I can come to your home or meet you wherever you are comfortable. You can talk for 5 minutes or for an hour. This project is, after all, an exploration on the theme. There are no right or wrong answers. Art & Soul is about people sharing their experiences of being human together. I look forward to talking with you. I can be reached at 413-348-2385 or scrolius@gmail.com.

In gratitude, *Susannah*

Soup, Salad, Peace and Justice

On Wednesday May 7 at 5:30 PM, Soup, Salad, Peace and Justice will host Susan and Tim Crane, who are walking across Massachusetts to bring awareness to the needs of children. Sue and Tim, who will be on day 7 of their 135-mile walk, will share stories of the road, talk about their own journey to activism, and introduce us to local organizations needing volunteers. Check out their website at www.walkformachildren.org.

"How Long O Lord?!"

"So then, putting away falsehood, let all of us speak truth to our neighbors, for we are members of one another...Let no evil talk come out of your mouths, but only what is useful for building up." - Ephesians 4:25-32

In every church, there are bound to be deeply-held disagreements between people. There are bound to be people whose contributions in Bible study make us wonder if they had woken up intending to go to a different church entirely. There are bound to be people who, when we see their name on the agenda for Church Council, our initial instinct is to cry out "How long O Lord?!"

But the great thing about church—the thing church does better than any institution I know—is that the church does not allow us the exclusive company of those we find agreeable and charming.

To be a member of a church means worshipping alongside people we would not think to invite to a dinner party. To be a member of a church means serving on committees with people whose politics we find abhorrent. To be a member of a church means living in beloved community with people who drive us up a wall.

Be honest with one another, but only if it builds people up? When we earnestly disagree with someone, that is a tough balancing act to pull off. It's balance-an-egg-on-the-skinny-end tough. But even so, it is a critical part of Christian discipleship. Because if I tear someone down just because they disagree with me—even if what I said was true—it is nothing more than evil talk.

Prayer God help me to speak the truth in love every day. Because You know, O God, that I must annoy the dickens out of some people myself.

- John Edgerton Associate Pastor at Old South Church in Boston, Massachusetts

A revision* to the 2013-2014 Directory

Sally Lemaire's new address and phone number are:
50 Cardinal Dr., Apt. 127, Agawam, MA 01001
413-786-0157

**Addresses and phone numbers of church members are only listed in the newsletter with permission.*

Church Leadership

Rev. Dr. Andrea Ayvazian
Senior Pastor

Rev. Chris Mereschuk
Associate Pastor

Diane Scott
Moderator

Jan Varnon
Vice Moderator

Jo Cannon
Treasurer

Margie Serkin
Bookkeeper

Jil Blake
Church Clerk

Sarah Icklan
Diaconate, Chair

Sue Carbin
Trustees, Chair

Dawn Orluske
Director of Children's
Church

Joanne Morgan
Youth Leader

Rev. Dr. Peter Ives
Theologian-in-
Residence

Rev. Susannah Crolius
Minister
of Creative Arts

Rev. Chris Mereschuk
Shepherds, Chair
860 966-8055

Jeff Olmsted
Choir Director

Ken Forfia
Church Organist

Kathy O'Connor
Church Sexton

Vicha Hajdamowicz
Administrative
Assistant

Jackie Cloonan
Ladies Aid,
President

Andrew Geery
Youth & Family
Ministries, Chair

Doug Renick
Peace and Justice
Steering Committee,
Chair

Maggie Solis
Bonnie Atkins
Stewardship
Committee, Co-Chairs

Carolyn DuBois
Music Committee,
Chair

Sue Carbin
Church Scheduler
scarbin1973@aol.com

Linda Zeigenbein
Interfaith Cot Shelter,
Meal Coordinator

Ruth Jacobson-Hardy
Scripture Reader,
Coordinator

**Jennifer Clarson &
Jessica LaCroix**
Angel Take-out

Laura Paul
Librarian

Darien Gardner
Head Usher

Jen Griswold
Head Greeter

Laura Garcia
Webmaster

Richard Spencer
Newsletter

Toby Davis
Accessible to All
(A2A) Chair

Jackie Cloonan
Grounds
Committee, Chair

Karin McGowan
Building
Maintenance, Chair

**Jeff Olmsted
& Darien Gardner**
Men's Fellowship,
Co-chairs

Lay Delegates
Ross Bassett
Shirley Sicurello
Jan Varnon
Bob Varnon

Trustees (by Seniority)
Sue Carbin
Richard Turner
Alice Barber
Karin McGowan*
Jo Cannon, *Treasurer*.
Sylvia Fappiano, *LA Rep*.
* Trustee of the Month

Deacons (by Seniority)
Sarah Icklan
Robert Davis
Bob Lampron
Karen Guiel
Mary Sheehan
Maureen Bourbeau
Karla Hathaway
Carolyn duBois*
Amy Andrew
Pat James*
Jen Matias
Paula Spencer
* Deacon of the Month

Shepherds
Ross Bassett
Robert Davis
Susan Farrell
Pat James
Tina Marini
Rev. Chris Mereschuk
Phyllis Muldoon
Mary Sheehan
Ellen Tobiassen

Church Council
Senior Pastor
Moderator
Vice Moderator
Clerk
Treasurer
Trustees, Chair
Diaconate, Chair
Stewardship, Chair
Music, Chair
Peace & Justice, Chair
Family Ministries,
Chair
A2A, Chair

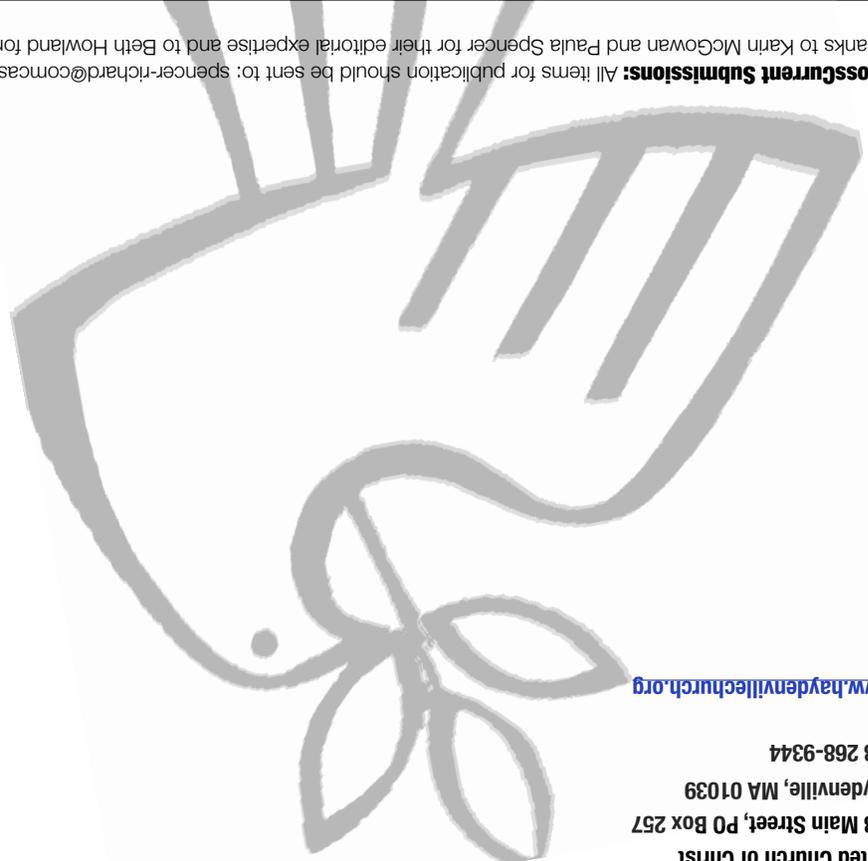
Crosscurrent Submissions: All items for publication should be sent to: spencer-richard@comcast.net by the 15th of the month. Thanks to Karin McGowan and Paula Spencer for their editorial expertise and to Beth Howland for labeling & mailing our newsletter.

Food, Glorious Food!
Our Church Family is so
great at bringing delicious
goodies for our FAMOUS
Coffee Hour. Here's the lineup
for May:

May 4: G, H, I, J, K
May 11: L, M
May 18: N, O, P, Q, R
May 25: S, T, U, V

When it is your week
please arrive early to help set
up and remember to help with
clean up too!





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