

# Cross Currents



January 2015 • Open Hearts & Open Minds & Open Doors

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## From Pastor Andrea

Very often at the close of our Sunday worship service, I bless you with the same Benediction I say over and over—I love this Benediction so much that I use it a couple of times a month.

I think some of you know it by heart. Here it is again!

*You are loved.*

*You belong.*

*You have a purpose.*

*You are not alone.*

*You are a child of God, born perfect and whole.*

*Go from this place renewed in hope,*

*strengthened in faith,*

*restored in love,*

*and eager to share the gifts of life.*

*And know as you go, that the extravagant love of God,*

*the amazing grace of Jesus,*

*and the transforming presence of the Holy Spirit*

*are with you this day and all your days. Amen.*

Now we find ourselves at the beginning of a fresh New Year that stretches out ahead of us like a meadow that no one has walked through. It is a bright and beautiful New Year.

But beware...conventional wisdom and cultural norms will tug at you...tug and pull and yank you around. You will feel that you need to make New Year's Resolutions. Several. And they may involve your weight, or your gym membership or non-membership, or your cluttered home office, or something about you that needs fixing or tidying up or whatever.

## Highlights

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But here's a radical idea. Why not buck the tide? Why not NOT agree with prevailing norms that haunt you saying: you are not enough, you are inadequate, you are not okay, GET BUSY and make some resolutions—get your act together! Get ready, get set, improve!

What if you did not agree with or conform to societal norms and instead of making a tedious list of New Year's Resolutions you will break before the ink is dry on the page, you actually read the words of the Benediction I say so often, and you tried this year, for once, to believe it.

Imagine that.

Imagine believing the words of the Benediction.

Imagine believing that you were born perfect and whole.

Imagine believing that you are loved with an unconditional love that God sends forth daily that you do not have to ask for, work for, prove you deserve, or earn.

Imagine remembering that you belong. To God. And to a faith community that loves you. A church that will stand by you. A church working to channel God's love your way.

Imagine believing that you are not alone, that your life has a purpose, and that you are ready and equipped to serve God and the world with your gifts and talents.

Imagine believing this Benediction.

You do not need to beat yourself up creating a litany of the ways you have failed or are not adequate and make lists of improvements you must tackle. You were born perfect and whole and you just need to return to that state by remembering who you are and feeling how blessed and loved you are.

And the Benediction gives you some support on this journey to reclaim the state of being "perfect and whole." You have your church that helps renew your sense of hope and possibility, and helps to strengthen your faith. You have your prayer life to help you restore that sense of being loved.

The Benediction can remind you that you are surrounded by the extravagant love of God, the amazing grace of Jesus, and the transforming presence of the Holy Spirit. And you cannot hide from them or shake them off.

This year, try to see you as God sees you and love yourself as God does.

This year, notice each day that God is near and rejoicing in the beauty and miracle that is YOU.

This year, memorize the Benediction you receive as a blessing so often at the close of worship and say it to

yourself once, twice, ten times a day. AND remember the little song we sing to our children when we send them off to Children's Church—it is simple but profound. After you recite the Benediction to yourself, sing our little song and believe both the Benediction and the little song and watch your life change!

*"Wherever you go, God is with you. Wherever you go, God is there.*

*Wherever you go, whatever you do, you are in God's care."*



## Media Team Update

*"Let anyone with ears to hear listen!" ~ Mark 4:9 (New Revised Standard Version)*

One of the things I've been most excited about over the past few months is the convening of a Media Team at Haydenville. Perhaps you've read the announcements about this group or even gave us some feedback on our website and email newsletters. Now, I'd like to give you a brief update on where we are in our work and an idea of where we might be headed.

In the early fall, I invited church members with a degree of expertise in communications, print, and digital media to come together to assess our current publications, social media, and overall communication practices. These are folks who in their professional or "hobbyist" life currently have or have had experience in the areas of journalism, graphic design, web development, and communication. It's a fantastic and highly skilled group of people: Jen Matias, Richard Spencer, Jim Foudy, Laura Garcia, Toby Davis, Stephanie Arvai, Maggie Solis, and me. Of the group members, my expertise and experience is sorely lacking in comparison!

Presently, much of our work is centering on the digital aspect of communications (website, social media, and email), having had more recent overhauls to our weekly bulletin and announcements and the *CrossCurrents* newsletter - all thanks to our publisher, Richard Spencer. What has surfaced during our conversation are some broader communication needs, some areas where

essential information might not be as clear or accessible as we might have thought.

Like so many other aspects of our congregation, where we have been, are now, and where we need to go has everything to do with the changing shape of our congregation. Years ago, Toby Davis upgraded our website from something very basic to what we have today. Laura, Maggie, and Toby have volunteered many hours to update the site. Since that initial launch, our needs have changed - and so have people's expectations of what purposes a church website should serve. To that end, we are looking at our site from top to bottom, striving to overhaul not only the appearance, but the usability of the site.

We have two distinct audiences for our website, but with some overlapping areas. We need the site to be attractive and informative for potential visitors, and so we ask ourselves if all the necessary information is available to them. Worship times, accessibility, who's welcome - no really, who's actually welcome - contact information, directions, and a bit about what we believe and our congregational culture. At the same time (and this overlaps with visitors), our membership needs up-to-date information about events, the church calendar, opportunities to get involved, access education, and serve.

This is a big task, and one that has been and will be largely undertaken by volunteers - the same folks who have been chipping away at this work for years; the ones who take some of their precious spare time after their jobs to make a few quick changes. And so this work will take some time and patience - but it will happen.

The second explicit focus is our weekly email updates. How can we best inform, remind, and update people during the week in such a fashion that is efficient, useful, attractive, and not cluttering your inbox? We will be presenting a proposal to the Council for us to use an email service that allows us to send a uniform, attractive, informative email newsletter that will keep folks up to date on all that is happening in our church community. The weekly email would also provide links to expanded information about events on our (updated) website. With a host of other technical and practical benefits, this could be an excellent modification to our communication efforts.

I think this work is important because I truly believe that if more people knew about our unique congregation, they could find a place for themselves among our community, just as so many of us already have. We have a message of Good News that needs to be shared.

Keep a look out for these possible new changes in the coming months, and please do let me know what you think!

Peace & blessings,

## Conversation on Race

My roommate at Union Theological Seminary remembered the day when as young boy he was told that black people were the descendants of Ham. It's in the Bible he was told: "They are the people of Canaan. They have been cursed by God. That is why they are black and why they were slaves. And you are the descendant of Shem because you are white, and blacks will be your slaves."

The tragedy for our country has been that many Christian churches in America let this story from the Book of Genesis be interpreted to support slavery and racism. How could American Christians have let this story about the people of Canaan be interpreted this way? For example there were other stories in the Bible that portrayed the people of Canaan in a very different light.

We read in the Gospel of Matthew that one day a mother from Canaan asked Jesus to heal her Canaanite daughter, but Jesus refuses, saying "it is not fair to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs" (the word "dogs" being the

### January Birthdays!

- 2 Charles Arlo Hooper-Lindros
- 3 Wilson Molano  
Douglas Renick  
Jil Blake
- 6 Kim Couture
- 7 Cindy McQueston  
Debra Edwards
- 9 Sue Carbin
- 10 Gloria Ayvazian  
Allen Warner
- 11 Diane Bushee
- 12 Eliza Warner  
Rev. Phillip Hall
- 14 Karin McGowan
- 16 Haley McElligott  
Laine Wilder
- 17 Emily Dines
- 18 Myanna Carbin-O'Brien
- 19 Francesca Piantedosi
- 20 Julia Guiel
- 21 Nev Capron  
Christina Sample
- 22 Jose Newcomb-Gerken
- 23 Lynne Wallace
- 24 Cait Scudder
- 26 Shirley Warner  
MaryEllen McQueston
- 27 Bill Loomis  
Carol Boyer  
Mesfin Daniel McManamy  
Maureen Ricksgers
- 31 Adriana Piantedosi  
Aidan Chappuis



same kind of word in ancient time as “nigger”). But the Canaanite mother asks Jesus to look at her daughter in a different light, to see her skin color differently. “Yes Lord,” she says to Jesus, “but even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their master’s table,” meaning that even the dogs are part of the family; the same family as those sitting at the table. In other words, this mother is challenging Jesus to recognize that just because her daughter is a Canaanite and of darker skin, she is still a child of God and a member of God’s family. And at this moment Jesus listens, and changes his mind and he heals her daughter saying, “Woman your faith is great, let it be done for you as you wish.”

When I was growing up as a young boy I lived in a town called Middlebury, and Middlebury was very white. In fact, the one color everyone associated with Middlebury was white. The homes were white, the churches were white and skin color was 100% white. Even the bread was white. Then something happened that changed my life. My parents adopted two African American teenagers named Gloria and Beulah. They were the first African Americans to live in Middlebury and they were living in a room next to me.

Middlebury had no high school so Gloria and Beulah went to a large city high school in Waterbury that had many students of color. But Gloria and Beulah didn’t do well. They were placed in lower tracks. They had no homework assignments. Few students went on to college. One year later, by vote of our town meeting, I was bused to a white suburb where 95% of students went to college. And every night at home Gloria, Beulah and I would talk, and I began to learn about from them what racism, institutional racism and white privilege looked like. For me, Gloria and Beulah were like that Canaanite mother who helped Jesus to see his own prejudices. And they taught me “black is beautiful, as beautiful as the canvas of the dark sky that holds the gentle pinpricked sun lights of millions of heavenly stars, and even heaven is black and we are each rays of light which shine through the peep holes of the night.”

Now I have a grandson named Sydney, a child of an African American father and a white mother. Three days a week I pick him up from school. Will he experience the pain of prejudice growing up? Will he be deeply hurt by institutional racism...? If Jesus can change, can’t we as individuals and as a country? This is my hope for the new year of 2015.

- Rev. Peter Ives, Theologian-in-Residence

## Fear of Being Without Books

I have to look up the Latin for this so I can sound more learned than I really am. Since I have the marvelous app “Translate” on my iPhone (Don’t those Roman dudes wish they’d had iPhone back in the day? Just think how they could have plotted during Senate meetings or perhaps while using the 6-holer marble latrine.), I found the words for my new disorder—“fear of being without books.”

*Timor exsisto sine liber!*

How did this all come up,? I was recently asked to be part of our local paper’s Hampshire Life ID where once a week they feature a person, interviewing him or her about: likes and dislikes, favorite go-to restaurant, who lives under the same roof, what’s your education, and more.

But here’s the thing: One of the questions was “Tell which five items you cannot live without.” Most people answer; “My iPhone, MacBook Air, hiking boots, ergonomic chair, my Prius.” I started to answer in the same vein, but then realized that I could completely live without any of those devices. They simply are not essential to my life.

My revised list included, and this will not surprise those of you who know me: “My family, God, nature, my faith community, and books.” Perhaps you are wondering how “God” can be on the same continuum as “books.” But think about it.

As a writer and a person of faith, I spend what some might call a ridiculous amount of time reading: stacking books by my chair; downloading samples of Kindle books, then buying them with a happy cry; studying theology; devouring English mysteries; and also sampling racy Regency romances. I shall save that latter bit for Confession.

Here’s a family story which substantiates my view of how essential books are to life. About eight years ago I got a call from our local Meals on Wheels that my step-mother, Athena, who lived five minutes away, was not responding to their knocks on the door. The woman said Athena always called if she planned on being out when the meal would be delivered. Would I please check on her?

With my husband and teen-aged daughter in tow, I sped down to my stepmother’s house, prepared for something dire. We knocked on the door—no response. We tried calling her number—no answer. Decidedly nervous, we went up to the living room window and my husband announced, “I’ll just vise it open and we can climb in to see if Grandma is ok.”\*

"Ok" to me meant not dead on the floor or in the midst of some ghastly end-of-life attack. My daughter suddenly gave us a horrified look and said, "Wait, wait, don't open the window yet! I have to go back to the car and get a book. What if Grandma's dead? We'll be here for ages waiting for an ambulance and I need something to read."

*I need something to read. Or, Timor exsisto sine liber.*  
That's my girl, I thought. I have the same need for a book at all times and sometimes even experience mild panic if there is no volume in sight. When I imagine the end of my life, preparing to go through that dark tunnel to the light beyond, I will probably turn back and tell my husband, "Wait, wait, give me a book! I don't have anything to read!"

\*Grandma was at a doctor's appointment after all and was perfectly fine.

- Annie Turner

## Are you on the Churchwide email list?

**Have you been receiving emails?** On occasion, we find that our churchwide emails (newsletter, weekly reminders, financial updates) have "bounced back" or get trapped in junk/spam filters.

Take a minute to add [office@haydenvillechurch.org](mailto:office@haydenvillechurch.org) and [treasurer@haydenvillechurch.org](mailto:treasurer@haydenvillechurch.org) to your approved email list!

Thanks for checking - we want to keep you informed!

## Church Book Group

You are invited to join us! Our January meeting will be held on January 7th from 12:45 to 2 PM in the Watson Room, Forbes Library, Northampton. Our book for that session is *Sermons: Biblical Wisdom for Daily Living* by Peter J. Gomes. Each month we discuss a new book, and our best sessions are when we don't all agree! Please feel welcome to join us, we would love to have you with us. Questions? Group Leaders Rev. Peter Ives and Pastor Andrea would be happy to give you more information or respond to any questions you might have.

## Isn't That Our Horse?

*The disciples who were sent to Bethany departed and found the colt just as Jesus had told them. As they were untying the colt, its owners asked them, "Why are you untying the colt?" They said, "The Lord needs it." - Luke 19:28-40*

These have got to be the politest horse-theft victims in history.

"Yes, hi, excuse me, could you please explain why you are stealing our horse?"

Rules like "don't work on the Sabbath" or "don't touch people who are unclean" start changing with Jesus around. Jesus had a different set of rules, rules like "love God" and "love your neighbor" and "go get me that horse." With Jesus around, we have to decide what rules really matter, and which ones to give up.

The disciples are used to this sort of thing by now. But for these folks from Bethany, Jesus' coming along and changing the rules was tough. They were out one perfectly good horse—they hadn't even ridden it yet! Zero miles on the horse-dometer!

With Jesus around, churches have to decide which rules matter. You might need to break the endowment spending rule, refit the kitchen and start a food ministry. You might need to change the set-in-stone, eternal-ever-since-1985, worship start time to accommodate the Spanish-speaking congregation outgrowing your church basement. You might need to designate gender-neutral bathrooms for trans-teens because using the bathroom should always be safe and never an ordeal. With Jesus around, rules start changing, and great things happen.

So if you're tempted to grumble about how the rules have always worked fine, remember those folks from Bethany. Imagine them opening Monday's Jerusalem Times and wondering, "hey...isn't that our horse"?

**Prayer** • God, take what we have, shake it up, and use it for something great

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

Pastor Andrea lent her copy of her (favorite) book *REAL GOOD CHURCH* by Molly Baskette to someone in the church and cannot remember who and would love to have the book back. Is it you?



**A Ton of Work** • In November, the Youth Group spent a Saturday morning sorting food at the Food Bank of Western MA. We had a great time, learned a lot about the work of the Food Bank, and sorted 2,000 pounds of food! We plan to go again in March for another morning of volunteering. In the photo: Karen, Joanne, Meg, Sarah, Ellie, Ali, Lexi, Aidan, and Gabe.



**Team HCC Youth Group** • Youth Group families teamed up for the Hot Chocolate 3K Walk and 5K Walk for Safe Passage in December. We saw many other HCC folks volunteering, walking, and running that morning! In the photo: Margaret, Regina, Aidan, Cutler, and Joanne (back row); Anna, Miles, Judy, Ellie, Aidan and Maureen (front).

## Calendar for January

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

<b>Date</b>	<b>Time</b>	<b>Event</b>	<b>Location</b>
Fri. Jan. 2	3:30 pm	Fridays @ 4:00 Writing Group	Dining Room
Sun. Jan. 4	8:45 am 10:00 am	Adult Faith Formation Worship Service with Communion	Dining Room Sanctuary
Mon. Jan. 5	6:00 pm	Diaconate Meeting	Dining Room
Tues. Jan. 6	5:30 pm	A2A Meeting	Dining Room
Wed. Jan. 7	12:45 pm	Church Book Group	Forbes Library
	7:00 pm	Choir Practice	Sanctuary
Thurs. Jan. 8	5:30 pm	Trustees' Meeting	Dining Room
Fri. Jan. 9	3:30 pm	Fridays @ 4:00 Writing Group	Dining Room
Sat. Jan 10	10:00 pm	Living the Questions 2	Dining Room
Sun. Jan. 11	10:00 am 12:00 noon	Worship Service, Ceremony to Welcome New Members Council Meeting	Sanctuary Sanctuary
Tues. Jan. 13	7:00 pm	Men's Fellowship Meeting	Dining Room
Wed. Jan. 14	7:00 pm	Choir Practice	Sanctuary
Thurs. Jan. 15	1:00 pm	Ladies Aid Meeting	Dining Room
Fri. Jan. 16	3:30 pm	Fridays @ 4:00 Writing Group	Dining Room
Sat. Jan. 17	9:00 am	Dismantling Racism: The Role of Allies as Agents of Change	Dining Room
Sun. Jan. 18	8:45 am 10:00 am	Adult Faith Formation Worship Service	Dining Room Sanctuary
Mon. Jan. 19		Martin Luther King Jr . Day	
Tues. Jan. 20	5:30 pm	Soup Salad, Peace and Social Justice	Dining Room
Wed. Jan. 21	6:00 pm	Shepherds' Meeting	Dining Room
	7:00 pm	Choir Practice	Dining Room
Thurs. Jan. 22	5:30 pm	Family Ministries Meeting	Dining Room
	3:30 pm	Fridays @ 4:00 Writing Group	Dining Room
Sun. Jan. 25	10:00 pm	Worship Service	Sanctuary

Date	Time	Event	Location
Mon. Jan. 26	6:00 pm	Media Group Meeting	Dining Room
Wed. Jan. 28	7:00 pm	Choir Practice	Sanctuary
Fri. Jan. 30	3:30 pm	Fridays @ 4:00 Writing Group	Dining Room

## Dismantling Racism: The Role of Allies as Agents of Change

You are invited to participate in a workshop to strengthen your antiracism efforts at the church and in the wider world. Although we will warmly welcome and be delighted to include people of color at this workshop, the primary focus will be on the role of white people as sensitive and effective allies to people of color. We will discuss white privilege, personal, cultural and institutional racism, and what we can do to create change. We will keep the words of the prophet Micah in our minds and on our hearts throughout the workshop: “God has told you, O mortal, what is good: and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God.” Guided by those prophetic words, the workshop will include some analysis but will emphasize *doing* justice, *acting* with courage, and *being* an ally. All questions welcome, full participation in this very participatory workshop is encouraged, and concrete steps to create change will flow from our discussions. All are welcome.

Workshop Leader: Pastor Andrea

Saturday, January 17th, from 9 AM until 1 PM

Haydenville Church Dining Room

Pre-registration is strongly encouraged (by contacting Pastor Andrea)

(Please do not sign up for the workshop unless you can stay for the entire four hours.)

**Office hours for Margie Serkin, our Church Bookkeeper/Office Administrator, are from 1- 6:00 pm, Monday, Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday.**

## January Featured Climate Actions

Make a resolution this year to step up your level of personal action around the climate crisis. We need to act on all four levels listed below, and each month we offer suggestions to focus your efforts. These featured actions are brought to you by the Climate Action Group of the Unitarian Society of Northampton and Florence and are now also circulated at the Haydenville Congregational Church, The Amherst Unitarian Society, the Co-op Power newsletter, and on the website of [Climate Action Now](#), where an archive of past monthly actions is also available.

**Personal:** Keep your upstairs cool (55-60 degrees). You will cut your heating costs dramatically and help prevent ice dams by having less heat escape through the roof.

**Community:** Now that the holidays are over, break up the winter by organizing a neighborhood potluck. The connections made will help lay the groundwork for future cooperative ventures that increase resiliency and connections.

**State/National/Global:** Attend a workshop to learn the tools of Faith-based Advocacy. The workshop will include an overview of the Massachusetts legislative process and how faith-based advocacy can be most effective. We will focus on four core issues for 2015-2016: environment/ climate action, economic justice, ending mass incarceration, and immigration rights. All Souls Unitarian Church in Greenfield, Sunday Jan. 11, 12:30-2:30 pm. Includes potluck lunch. Contact Pam Kelly for more information and to register: 413 475-3605

**Inform yourself:** Join the discussion group for Naomi Klein’s book *This Changes Everything*. This book explores how capitalism is at the root of the climate crisis. The group begins Wed. 1/14 at 7:00 pm (tent.) at the Unitarian Society of Northampton and continues on 1/28, 2/11 and 2/25. You are responsible for procuring your own book. Please pre-register with Sarah Metcalf at: [stewartia@gmail.com](mailto:stewartia@gmail.com).

## Reasonable, Rigorous and Real

*"As it is my eager expectation and hope that I will not be at all ashamed, but that with full courage now as always Christ will be honored in my body, whether by life or by death."* - Philippians 1:20

I want to make a case for a church that is reasonable, rigorous and real.

By reasonable, I mean that we should not demand that people believe things that seem preposterous to them. We should respect people's questions. We should not ask them to leave their brains out on the sidewalk. We should expect that we will land in different places, intellectually and experientially.

I want the church to be rigorous. You can be welcoming and open and still have standards and expectations. You can say that attending worship matters. You can ask people to share their money. You can expect people to follow through in their ministries and be of service. You can hold up the minimal standards of a sports team or a music teacher by saying that the more you practice, the better you will get at this.

I also want the church to be real. I want there to be room for the people who don't follow through, don't show up and who don't yet get what any of this is about. I want the church to admit that sex, drugs and rock and roll are a tempting trinity for a reason. I want mental illnesses to be listed in the prayer concerns as often as cancer treatments and surgeries.

And if it's all you can do to get out bed in the morning, I want you to come to church in your pajamas. Reasonable, rigorous and real. Bring your questions, your uncombed hair and your low expectations. Jesus can work with all that. And then he may even raise the bar.

**Prayer** • Loving Christ, expect more from your body here on earth. Use me to refine and shape your church. Loving Christ, expect more of me. Amen.

- Lillian Daniel, is the author of *When "Spiritual But Not Religious" is Not Enough*, and has a chapter in the new anthology, *What My Mother Gave Me: Thirty-one Women on the Gifts That Mattered Most*.

**We can only be said to be alive in those moments when our hearts are conscious of our treasures.**

- Thornton Wilder

## Adult Faith Formation with Pastor Chris

First and Third Sundays in the Dining Room, 8:45 am to 9:30 am.

Join us for this new version of Adult Sunday School as we deepen our understanding of our faith.

We will continue to look at Paul's letters to the Corinthian church, moving on to Second Corinthians with its theme of "power through weakness." Though each session builds on the previous one, you are more than welcome to "drop in" at any time and join us when you can.

We are also looking ahead to the end of these sessions and discussing where we'd like to go next with our study. Your input is essential! For more information, please contact Pastor Chris.



### HCC on EBay!

Not sure what to do with that very thoughtful, but not very "you" Christmas gift? Got a closet full of great stuff you haven't touched all year? Want to find a great new home for that precious item that no longer fits your life? Is it time to de-clutter? Donate your things to our year-round on-line tag sale!

We now have our own EBay store – **HCC-Tag-Sale** – and we are building up our stock of useful, beautiful, fun, collectible or quirky items donated by members and friends of our church. 100% of each sale benefits the church. If you want to visit our shop and see what's for sale, go to <http://www.ebay.com/usr/hcc-tag-sale>.

To donate items, please email me ([pat.james.gfn@gmail.com](mailto:pat.james.gfn@gmail.com)) or see me in church. I will accept all items that I think will sell on Ebay. Items must be new or good as new, clean, not broken, chipped, cracked, scratched, stained or damaged in any way. Items that don't sell will go into next year's Fall Festival tag sale.

- Pat James

## Widening the Welcome to Our Already Open and Affirming Church

On November 23 the A2A (Accessible to All) Committee led the worship service in an effort to not only widen the welcome to our already open and affirming Church, but to also broaden the definition of what “welcome” truly means according to Jesus.

As a group we wanted to create a service that went beyond the more practical accommodations such as fragrance-free, printing out scripture readings and gluten-free goodies at coffee hour. We wanted our first A2A-led service to be one that would feel as inclusive as possible to all those present.

We discussed what scriptures and hymns exemplified the message of embracing the poor and broken spirited as our sisters and brothers. We were a passionate group as we pored over our Bible, hymnal, worship service schedule and The UCC’s A2A guidelines. We Googled on our smart phones to find the lyrics to “Welcome Table” while others quickly flipped through the Hymnals. There was dissent about scriptures that spoke too much about lambs and sheep, careful discussion about the language used to describe disabilities, and how best to communicate our message of inclusion to our very youngest members.

Our Chair Toby asked who would be willing to be part of the Sermon - to give personal testimony of living with a disability, of parenting a child with a disability, or experiencing what it is like to not feel accepted or understood by those in your community.

I raised my hand to volunteer my experience of raising my now eighteen-year-old son Jed who has severe Autism. At first I approached this testimony solely from the perspective of being a mother with a very disabled son. But a small voice inside of me said and what about your disability? Tell some of your truth.” And honestly, there was another voice too. “You’ll never get a date.”

Most of my life I have lived with Complex PTSD which has impacted every aspect of my life. I wasn’t diagnosed with ADHD until I was 55 years old. Within 48 hours of taking my first dose of Adderall I felt as if a huge gray thunder cloud moved out of the way of my deeply challenged executive functioning. Writing things down and making lists also really helped. Organization is next to godliness for me.

I also shared in my sermon about the spiritual crisis I experienced when Jed and his twin sister Molly were 18 months old and our older son was about 12. We were living in New York at the time. My partner and the children’s parent at the time, had become severely clinically depressed just before Christmas. She had already been in bed for nearly two months when Jed was diagnosed with Autism by a neurologist who said “I’m sorry.” We were devastated. She went to bed and I went to work trying to hold our family together. Where was God? I would ask on my many solo runs in the minivan to Costco, buying the endless diapers, formula, and groceries for a family of five and three much-loved but unruly dogs. I reached out to a local woman pastor who I heard deliver a sermon one Christmas Eve. Despite attempts to speak to her in the Church office and after leaving two phone messages, no one ever called back. I felt that God surely was not listening to me.

We moved to Chesterfield nearly six years ago when I heard about the Haydenville Community Church. I became a member, went into seclusion for over a year, and recently returned for good with the realization that God has been listening all along. I know this in my heart and soul because I feel I belong here – with all of you.

- Laine Wilder

*The A2A Committee would like to express our deep appreciation and gratitude to the congregation for its overwhelmingly supportive and loving response to our November 23rd service. It is our hope that others will join the A2A Committee, consider contributing their personal story to our column in this newsletter, and to feel safe and supported in sharing their feelings and experiences with the congregation during our regular worship service.*

**Change does not roll in on the wheels of inevitability, but comes through continuous struggle. And so we must straighten our backs and work for our freedom.**

- Martin Luther King, Jr.



Making sandwiches for Cathedral in the Night

## Building Maintenance Committee

Karin McGowan has done a FABULOUS job as the Chair of our Building Maintenance Committee and we thank her for her energetic, tireless work. She truly did a fantastic job! Karin is stepping down at the end of December from her position as Chair and the Trustees are looking for a new person or persons to Chair or Co-chair the Building Maintenance Committee. If you are interested in learning more about this very necessary and somewhat not-glamorous committee Chair role, please see Pastor Andrea. In the meantime, until a new Building Maintenance Committee Chair is named, please bring all concerns about the building (anything you spot or are worried about) to the Trustee of the Month and they will be sure to have the problem looked into and fixed. Thank you!

- Pastor Andrea

**When we feel love and kindness toward others, it not only makes others feel loved and cared for, but it helps us also to develop inner happiness and peace.**

- The 14th Dalai Lama

## WIDENING THE *Welcome*

Please join the Accessible to All (A2A) Committee in our work to create a more accessible and inclusive congregation by committing to one or more of the following ideas:

- I will not wear perfume or scented lotions to church (mindful of chemical sensitivities)
- I will label the food ingredients of the food I bring to coffee hour (mindful of food allergies)
- I will speak clearly and use the microphone when possible (mindful of hearing loss or limitations)
- I will not park closest to the church if I am able to walk a greater distance (mindful of physical mobility challenges)
- When I see someone struggling, I will ask if they need my assistance and not assume they do (mindful of others personal space and independence needs)
- I will honor the uniqueness of each of my siblings in Christ and in myself with both my words and my actions. (mindful that we are ALL God's precious children!)

"I love you when you bow in your mosque, kneel in your temple, pray in your church. For you and I are sons of one religion, and it is the spirit."

- Khalil Gibran

## 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/Office  
Administrator

**Sam 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**  
Minister of Music

**Kathy O'Connor**  
Church Sexton

**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](mailto:scarbin1973@aol.com)

**Linda Zeigenbein**  
Interfaith Cot Shelter,  
Meal Coordinator

**Chip Roughton**  
Scripture Reader,  
Coordinator

**Jennifer Clarson**  
Angel Take-out

**Laura Paul**  
Librarian

**Shirley Sicurello**  
Welcome Ministry,  
Chair

**Sharon Grace**  
**Julie Salzman**  
Head Ushers

**Jen Griswold**  
Head Greeter

**Laura Garcia**  
Webmaster

**Richard Spencer**  
CrossCurrents

**Toby Davis**  
Accessible to All  
(A2A) Chair

**Jackie Cloonan**  
Grounds  
Committee, Chair

**Karin McGowan**  
Building  
Maintenance, Chair

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

**Mary Gerken-  
Newcomb**  
Fridays at Four,  
Facilitator

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

**Deacons (by Seniority)**  
Sam Icklan  
Robert Davis  
Carolyn DuBois  
Bob Lampron  
Karen Guiel  
Mary Sheehan  
Maureen Bourbeau  
Karla Hathaway  
Jen Matias  
Amy Andrew  
Pat James  
Paula Spencer

**Lay Delegates**  
Ross Bassett  
Shirley Sicurello  
Jan Varnon  
Bob Varnon

**Shepherds**  
Ross Bassett  
Robert Davis  
Susan Farrell  
Pat James  
Tina Marini  
Rev. Chris Mereschuk  
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](mailto: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.  
When it is your Coffee Klatch's  
month please arrive early with  
your food, help set up and  
remember to help with clean up  
tool!  
The "Pooch Bears" are providing  
the coffee hour goodies as well as  
the setting up and cleaning up  
during January.



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