

Cross Currents



February 2015 • Open Hearts & Open Minds & Open Doors

From Pastor Andrea

My dear Church sisters and brothers, Lent is soon upon us—the forty days during which we “walk with Jesus” to Jerusalem and the cross. Lent is often a solemn, introspective time—a six-week period for us to prepare with Jesus for the ending of his earthly life. It is a time to reinvigorate our spiritual practices and connect even more closely with God.

On the first Sunday of Lent this year, February 22nd, we are again going to make our “rock and shell cross” as I call out the litany of things you may want to let go of or heal during Lent in order that you may deepen your spiritual life and walk closely with Jesus to Jerusalem. We have made our rock and shell cross on the carpet in the Sanctuary during the first Sunday in Lent for eight years. It has always been a meaningful, Spirit-filled, and often weepy experience for us all.

This year when we make our cross out of rocks and shells on the Sanctuary carpet we are going to do something different. This year I invite you, if you wish, to bring an object with you that symbolizes something you wish to lay down or heal during Lent. There will be a special time for you to go forward and lay down on the cross the object you have brought with you—the object that symbolizes something you wish to let go of or heal during your Lenten Journey. Examples of objects you might want to bring to lay on the cross are: a childhood photo, a small empty bottle, a cut-out heart, a cut-up credit card, a cigarette, a selfie, an AA medallion, a photo of someone, a coin, or whatever is symbolic for you.

Rocks and shells will of course still be available for you to place on the cross during the litany—just as in years past. But you can also come forward (as many times as you want) to place something you brought with you, something that has special and private meaning for you, to leave on the cross as you step away from that pain, that addiction, that memory, that source of suffering. This is your loving invitation, from me to you, to begin to think about what you might bring with you to Church on February 22nd.

Just as Ash Wednesday, February 18th, is the beginning of Lent and February 22nd is the first Sunday in Lent, we want to think ahead to the entire forty days of Lent and make some commitments and plans so that all of us have experiences that help us engage in the traditional activities associated with a Lenten Journey: prayer; acts of kindness and generosity; reading of devotional books and Bible study; and acts of service. With that in mind, I have made a little list of things you could do during Lent that would be in keeping with the traditions of praying, giving, serving, and studying.

- Give away something every day during the forty days of Lent: a sweater, a dollar, a pair of shoes, a blanket, a Stop & Shop gift card, a book of poetry

Highlights

Sometimes I Grow Weary
“... I just respond to the gravity and pull of the moon and the ebb and flow of God.”

Page 3

Uh-Oh, It's That Time of Year Again—Lent
“It seems cruel to think about giving anything up when the whole experience of winter is basically—giving things up....”

Page 4

The “Pronoun Project”
“... I prayed and noticed that I was praying to this masculine perception....”

Page 4

February Featured Climate Actions
“This month's suggested climate actions are perfect for the cold winter days and evenings this month.”

Page 6

February Birthdays • 3
Calendar • 7
Church Leadership • 12

- Write letters to people you love and admire and tell them how you feel about them, and why
- Go each Sunday during Lent to Cathedral in the Night, the outdoor worship service for low-income people Sunday evenings in Northampton
- Get down and pray on your knees
- Write love poems or love haikus to God
- Write a Letter to the Editor as a person of faith about a social issue you care about
- Read the four Gospels: Matthew, Mark, Luke and John
- Borrow a key to the Church, go when no one else is in the building, and sit alone in the Sanctuary
- Learn a Psalm by heart
- Visit shut-ins
- Volunteer at the Cot Shelter on Center Street in Northampton or any shelter in the area
- Volunteer at the Food Bank
- Volunteer at a local school tutoring or reading with children
- Hide dollar bills in half-hidden places while you go about your ordinary day
- Learn the name of every homeless person on Main Street in downtown Northampton
- Don't shop for anything except the barest necessities for the entire forty days
- Keep a dream journal and watch for subtle appearances of the Divine
- Walk around a hospital handing out to nurses cut-out hearts that say "thank you"

I am sure you can and will think of other and better ideas for your spiritual practice during Lent. It does not matter what you do as long as you commit to doing something... either daily or often. A new practice will focus your mind on the presence of God and will help you to experience Jesus as near to you.

Blessings on your Lenten Journey. May it be all you want and need it to be. May you know peace, feel the closeness of God, and recognize the many blessings that have been showered on your beautiful head.

Love to each one of you,



A Forum on Death and Dying

"Listen, I will tell you a mystery! We will not all die, but we will all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed." ~ I Corinthians 15:51-52

I've long been fascinated by and with death. I know, that's pretty morbid. When I was in high school, I job-shadowed for a day at our local funeral home. Other students picked teaching, insurance, computers, retail - but I wanted to learn about casket sales, cremation, and embalming. This was parallel to my career ambitions to be a forensic pathologist or crime scene investigator. But it's not about a morbid curiosity or the taboo of death. There's a practical and spiritual intrigue, a real mystery to death. I want to understand death.

It seems that, as a culture, we spend so much time, effort, and especially money trying to avoid death - - not on trying to *live*, but *avoiding death*. I understand it, and I don't. I'm not concerned about my own death. I don't look forward to it, but I'm not concerned about it, except in one way: how it would affect my loved ones. It calls to mind an old blues song, "Fixin' to Die," by Bukka White, made popular by Bob Dylan: *"I'm feelin' funny in my eyes, Lord, I believe I'm fixin' to die. Well, I don't mind dyin' but I'd hate to leave my children cryin'."* That's the part that concerns me. And I'm a little anxious about that yet-unknown process of dying: when, how, why will it happen? It could be sudden, it could be drawn out, it could be painful, or it could just be that, one day, I simply don't wake up.

Several months ago, I spoke with the Shepherd Ministry Team about creating and hosting a Lenten series on end-of-life issues. There were some great ideas about the practicalities and logistics of these issues, mainly from the standpoint of caring for others. However, whenever it was discussed, bigger questions about our own death and death in general emerged - cremation, the function of a funeral, our thoughts on the afterlife and heaven. While there are numerous social service and medical professionals that can help one prepare for the practical side of death, it seems that the church has a role in helping people understand and spiritually prepare for death.

There are two sure things in life: change and death (taxes can be avoided). And there are two sure things in my newsletter articles: I'll quote a song, and I'll confess that I don't have everything figured out. I have my ideas,

experiences, and hopes when it comes to death and dying, but the only things I can say for certain is that (1) it will happen to everyone, and (2) I know what happens to the physical body.

My theology and philosophy of death has evolved and transformed in different ways as I have encountered it both personally and professionally. I have no concrete, inarguable answers - - but I do have thoughts and questions, and I'm willing to bet that you do, as well. For this reason, I have offered to lead **a forum on death and dying** on **Saturday, February 28th from 9:30-11:30 am** in the Church Dining Room as a part of our Lenten series. I hope to act as more of a facilitator, and encourage you to bring your thoughts, concerns, questions, and beliefs to share. Perhaps in our shared contemplation of the mystery of death, we can more deeply engage in the blessed mystery of life.

Peace & Blessings,

Sometimes I Grow Weary

Sometimes I get tired and grow weary from long days of hard work. Sometimes I get tired and grow weary worrying about people I love. Sometimes I get tired and grow weary from problems that seem so intractable in our world. That happened to the people of Israel in 586 B.C. But the prophet Isaiah spoke to them and said, *“Have you not known? Have you not heard? God gives power to the faint and to those who have no might God increases their strength. Even youth shall faint and grow weary and young men shall fall exhausted, but they who wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength, they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint.”* (Isaiah 40:28-31)

When a baby eagle first learns to fly it mounts up on the wings of its mother. The baby eagle is undergirded by her mother's wings. In the Bible, it is God who is like the mother eagle. It is God's love that undergirds us when we first try to fly and gives us all the support we need when we need it. But where does the strength come from?

Down in the Blue Ridge Mountains there is a marvelous archway two hundred and forty feet high above a little body of water called Cedar Creek. Cedar Creek isn't very impressive at first sight. If you asked Cedar Creek how could such a small stream create such a large archway, the it would probably say to you, “My friend, I used to be way up high but I started cutting this arch thousands of years ago. I just kept moving back and forth, back and forth, like a cross-cut-saw as I cut my way through the mountain in response to the ebb and flow of the James River. That's where I get my strength!” And if you asked the James River, where do you get your strength it would say, from the Chesapeake Bay. And if you asked the Chesapeake Bay where do you get your strength it would say, from the Atlantic Ocean moving back and forth across a quarter of the earth's surface, giving strength to the Chesapeake Bay and the James River and Cedar Creek. And if you asked the Atlantic Ocean, where does your strength come from, it would say, “I just respond to the gravity and pull of the moon and the ebb and flow of God. It is God's baton that directs me!

Well, we are all like Cedar Creek. We can all overcome great obstacles and hurdles. But we do it only because God's love works through us in the same way that God's ebb and flow moves the Atlantic Ocean and the Atlantic Ocean moves the Chesapeake Bay and the Chesapeake Bay moves the James River and the James

River moves Cedar Creek as it cuts its way through the Blue Ridge Mountains creating that magnificent arch. God can lift you up. God can raise you up on eagle's wings; bear you on the breath of dawn and make you shine like the sun. And that can happen to us every Sunday here at our Church. Like Duke Ellington's song “Come Sunday” says: “Lord, dear Lord of love, God Almighty, God above, please look down and see my people through. I believe that God put sun and moon up in the sky. When the day is bright I know its clouds are passing by. You give peace and comfort to every troubled mind. Come Sunday, O Come Sunday, that's the day.”

- Rev. Peter Ives, Theologian-In-Residence

February Birthdays!

- 1 Mark Sheehan
- 2 Dawn Orluske
- 8 Val Hooper-Lindros
- 9 Judy Haigler
- 12 Parker Durrant-West
- 14 Cate Wilson
- 15 Matilda Cantwell
- 16 Sarah Molano
- 21 Mason Wallace-Pagliaro
- 23 Barbara Estes
- 24 June May
- 26 Diane Scott



Please notify Margie if your February birthday is missing.

Uh-Oh, It's That Time of Year Again—Lent!

For many of us who profess to be Christians (a dangerous journey), Lent looms in mid-winter this year before anything green has sprung above the ice and snow that grips my fields and gardens. It seems cruel to think about giving anything up when the whole experience of winter is basically—giving things up: being warm, going for long walks with your dog, sitting on your deck sipping wine with friends, all of those things which make being human such a festive occasion.

Instead, 5 pounds fatter than I was in October, possibly drinking two glasses of wine per night instead of just one, and inhabiting a snarky, cranky space with one's spouse which is NOT good for my soul, Ash Wednesday is upon me. Like a car going up an already rocky road, suddenly I hit the pothole that is Lent. The car shudders, and I shudder with it.

"Give something up? You must be kidding?" Shouldn't we be checking into a Day Spa, sending out for gourmet take-out, and having people come for in-house massages? What happened to a religion which professed THAT as a spiritual practice? I could really worship at that altar.

Instead, I am faced with the idea of sacrifice—be it chocolate, books from Amazon.com, criticizing my friends, gossip, indulging in retail therapy, whatever is my particular drug of choice to get through winter. So I have taken on a rather large deprivation for the next 6 (six, my mind screams) weeks—no wine drinking. Period. Take the money I spend per week on wine and give it to the Survival Center. Sounds good, right?

But by untying myself from this attachment to delicious white wines (sigh), I think and hope to tie myself more closely to the God I worship. I hope that with this effort to peel away something inessential in order to give to those in need, I will be following The Way. Just a little.

And so that I don't just get stuck in the idea of sacrifice, I shall also take on the spiritual practice of Centering Prayer. I definitely need more silence at the core of my life, and I think this will help fill that hole which wine used to fill.

I'll let you know how this goes. I am a tad fearful. I truly love my wine, which is probably why it's a good thing to put it aside for Lent. But at the end of 6 weeks (six weeks!), I shall be thinner, purer, closer to God, and almost certainly crankier.

- Annie Turner

The "Pronoun Project"

For about a year now, I have been going through my books and changing the pronouns. Every time I see a 'him' or a 'he', I cross it out and write in 'her' or 'she'. I used to be annoyed by people who did this kind of thing. After all, I thought, it's just a grammatical convention. Why do they have to make language so awkward? Everybody knows we're including women even though we don't say so, except when we're not, and it's not always clear which is which. With God though I insisted that the masculine pronoun was only a grammatical convention, and I needed God too badly to quibble over details. Then I encountered Hinduism. I got to experience what it actually feels like to worship an actual female deity. It felt different. It felt better. It felt more like me. It made me feel better about myself. It made me feel holy.

It was only in coming back to Christianity that I began to notice that my perception of the supreme God was in fact male. It was nothing I could put my finger on. He didn't have a body or a deep voice. But there was a subtle masculine energy I couldn't deny, and was no longer okay with. So whenever I prayed and noticed that I was praying to this masculine perception, I would stop and consciously change the character of the God I wanted to worship. The same God I had claimed to believe in the whole time. Hence, the Pronoun Project.

I started with the Bhagavad Gita. I would read through a passage changing all the masculine pronouns, then read it over to see if it felt different. It did. If it was a positive passage I felt more included. More like Krishna was speaking to me personally. If it was a negative passage I felt more picked on. (Hey! Why are they saying that about women?! Oh, wait. They're talking to everyone...) Now that I've been doing this practice for about a year I've decided to soften a little and just listen. If the God I experience has a masculine energy, it may be time to let that aspect of God back in. I made this change yesterday. It's scary but I think it's working. As I was meditating and feeling the presence of God I decided to let it in no matter what form it came in. It started out with a masculine energy but then veered off in a more androgynous direction. I felt a rush of love. I'm getting somewhere. The pronoun project has become a permanent practice for me. I now change every male pronoun I see. I feel like my link to God is more direct without the masculine filter. I'm ready for the Pronoun Project part 2 - "they, them".

- Amy Andrew

Five New Members!

The names of Jenny Fleming-Ives, Dana Gillette, Jennifer Miller-Antill, Beverlee Orluske and Gary Orluske 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

New Church-Wide Email Service!

Very soon you will begin to see a new kind of email coming from the church. Through a service called Constant Contact, we will be sending church-wide emails on a weekly basis. If you subscribe to e-newsletters from other organizations, you might already be familiar with this service. This email is designed to replace the multiple emails that we send throughout the week, and will include links to our website, updated event information, and a few other features. Please give us (the Media Team) both your patience and your feedback as we launch this new endeavor! The e-newsletter will come from hccannouncements@gmail.com. While the use of Constant Contact should decrease the likelihood of these emails being labeled "junk" or "spam," please do check to see if our email has landed there.

Please look for this new and improved e-newsletter, as well as upgrades to our website, coming soon!

- Pastor Chris

Fridays @ 4:00 Name and Meeting Time has Changed!

Fridays @ 4:00 Writing Group is changing its name to **Haydenville Writers' Group**. Starting in February the meetings will be at 2:30-4:00 on the second and fourth Thursdays of the month. The meetings are open to all interested Church members at all levels, beginner to professional writers. Drop-ins are always welcome!

- Sally Lemaire

Bloody Good

"My flesh is true food and my blood is true drink." - John 6:55

It's all fine and good to have Thanksgiving dinner at your mother's Unitarian Universalist church as long as you are not outed as a Christian minister.

At that point you might be made to defend the faith, as I was (on my day off mind you), against an onslaught of pointed questions about our barbaric theology of the cross, the distraction of heaven, original sin and the general judgyness of Christians. Especially those Catholics.

Jesus got a few pointed questions that day after the feeding of the 5,000 when he started in with the hard to swallow "eat my flesh" and "drink my blood" talk. If you listen closely you might hear the crowd muttering "He'll never get anywhere talking like that! We come to worship to be comforted not offended."

In her book, *Amazing Grace: A Vocabulary of Faith*, Kathleen Norris shares a time when she received a pointed comment from a skeptic: "I don't understand how you can get so much comfort from a religion whose language does so much harm."

Norris understood. Upon her return to the church after a 20-year hiatus she was wary of words like repentance, salvation, blood and antichrist. She answered, "This religion has saved my life, my husband's life, and our marriage. So it's not comfort that I'm talking about but salvation."

We all want comfort (I'm a fan), but comfort is not what Jesus wants most for us. He wants to feed us, to free us and save us, even if it kills him.

Prayer Lord, help me not to turn away from you and those you love today, even when I'm turned off.

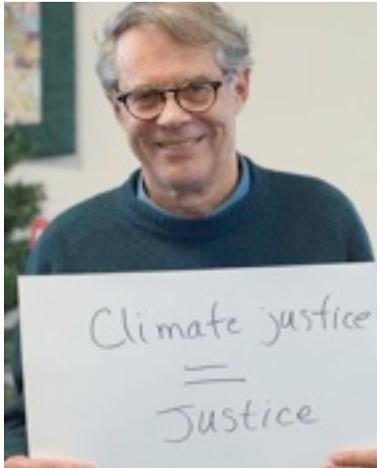
- Matt Laney, Senior Minister of Asylum Hill Congregational Church, UCC, in Hartford, Connecticut.

**In separateness lies the world's great misery,
in compassion lies the world's true strength.**

- Albert Schweitzer

“Virtual Vigil”

On Sunday 7th December 2014, Haydenville Congregation Church joined faith communities around the world in vigils for climate justice, focusing on the United Nations climate negotiations in Lima, Peru. In our “Virtual Vigil” participants were photographed holding signs in support of creating an internationally binding climate agreement. These were posted to the church’s Facebook page. Light for Lima vigils were held on four continents in 13 countries in 40-plus cities. For more information, check out Our Voices, an international multi-faith group seeking to increase the religious voice in global discussions on climate change.



The “Mitten Tree” Mission

I took three boxes and two bags of mittens, gloves, hats and scarves from our Christmas “Mitten Tree” to a local school. I used to go in to this school as a substitute LPN and they still knew me. They welcomed me warmly and all said "Hi Beth"; everyone was very glad to see me and very grateful for the gift. The teachers will distribute the mittens, gloves, hats and scarves to children who don't have any or have lost theirs. If the children are going outside without any mittens or gloves the teachers will now be able to give them a pair so that their students won't be outside in this cold weather without gloves to keep their hands warm.

Thank you to everyone who donated. I think that the church did a great service. We are very giving and kind.

- Beth Howland

February Featured Climate Actions

This month’s suggested climate actions are perfect for the cold winter days and evenings this month. These 4-tiered featured actions are brought to you by the Climate Action Group of the Unitarian Society of Northampton and Florence.

Personal: Get out in nature! Yes, even in the cold and snow! Especially in the snow! Breathe in the cold air and feel how exhilarating it is. Notice how the snow sparkles with colored glints of light. Look for animal tracks that clue you in to another way of existing on this planet. Experience the peaceful silence of a gray day.

Community: Join the Valley Time Trade. VTT is an organized exchange system through which members earn hours (time credits) for time spent helping other members. One hour of service earns one hour of someone else’s time, no matter what the service. It’s a wonderful way to build community with people in the valley, and be able to exchange useful services with each other. To join, go to <https://valleytimetrade.wordpress.com/>

State/National/Global: Write a letter to the editor of your local newspaper expressing your opinion about a climate-related issue. If you want to get the attention of your senator or representative, mention them by name in your letter, and that letter will be very likely to make it to their desk, as well as informing the public about your views.

Inform yourself: Watch the 9-part documentary series on climate change *Years of Living Dangerously*, aired on Showtime TV in 2014, and now available on DVD. As described in Wikipedia: “The weekly episodes feature celebrity investigators, who each have a history of environmental activism, and well-known journalists, each of whom have a background in environmental reportage. These ‘correspondents’ travel to areas around the world and throughout the U.S. affected by global warming to interview experts and ordinary people affected by, and seeking solutions to, the impacts of climate change.” It has received excellent reviews on Amazon and is available to purchase there for \$38. After you’ve viewed the series, donate it to your local library. CW-MARS has only 1 copy in its system!

- Molly Hale

**Teach us to give
and not to count the cost.**

- Ignatius Loyola

Calendar for February

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

Date	Time	Event	Location
Sun. Feb. 1	8:45 - 9:30 am 10:00 am	Adult Faith Formation Worship Service with Communion	Dining Room Sanctuary
Mon. Feb. 2	6:00 pm	Diaconate Meeting	Dining Room
Tues. Feb. 3	5:30 pm	A2A Meeting	Dining Room
Wed. Feb. 4	12:45 pm	Church Book Group	Watson Room, Forbes Library
	7:00 pm	Choir Practice	Sanctuary
Sun. Feb. 8	10:00 am 12:00 noon	Worship Service Church Annual Meeting	Sanctuary Sanctuary
Tues. Feb. 10	7:00 pm	Men's Fellowship Meeting	Dining Room
Wed. Feb. 11	7:00 pm	Choir Practice	Sanctuary
Thurs, Feb. 12	2:30 pm	Haydenville Writers' Group	Dining Room
	5:30 pm	Trustee Meeting	Dining Room
Sat. Feb. 14	10:00 am	Living the Questions 2	Dining Room
Sun. Feb. 15	8:45 - 9:30 am 10:00 am	Adult Faith Formation Worship Service	Dining Room Sanctuary
Mon. Feb. 16	5:30 pm	Peace and Justice Meeting	Dining Room
Wed. Feb. 18	7:00 pm	Ash Wednesday Worship Service	Sanctuary
Thurs. Feb. 19	1:00 pm	Ladies Aid Meeting	Dining Room
Sat. Feb. 21	9:30 - 11:30 am	Lenten Workshop: Making Blessing Boxes with Sarah Bellows Meister	Dining Room
Sun. Feb. 22	10:00 pm	Worship Service including making Rock and Shell cross	Sanctuary
Wed. Feb. 25	7:00 pm	Choir Practice	Sanctuary
Thurs. Feb. 26	2:30 pm	Haydenville Writers' Group	Dining Room
	5:30 pm	Family Ministries Meeting	Dining Room
Sat. Feb. 28	9:30 - 11:30 am	Lenten Gathering to Talk and Pray on Death and Dying with Pastor Chris	Dining Room

Lent 2015: Haydenville Congregational Church

• **Ash Wednesday Service**~February 18, 2015 at 7:00 PM

• **Lenten Workshop~Making Blessing Boxes with Sarah Bellows Meister** • Saturday, February 21, 2015~9:30 to 11:30 am • Church Dining Room • Intern Sarah invites any and all to join a spiritual craft-making workshop! We will engage play and creativity while decorating small boxes that hold messages of blessing and uplift! Supplies are provided. Please bring your favorite poem, quote, passage, or verse to place in your box!

• **Lenten Gathering to Talk and Pray~On Death and Dying with Pastor Chris** • Saturday, February 28, 2015~9:30 to 11:30 am • Church Dining Room • “The day which we fear as our last is but the birthday of eternity.” ~ Lucius Annaeus Seneca • Death is the inevitable fate of all living creatures; it shows no partiality. Together, let’s explore Biblical, faith-based, and personal concepts and questions about dying, death, and the concept of life beyond death. Bring your questions, curiosities, and concerns about the topic.

• **Church Visioning Day~Where have we been? Where are we heading?** • Saturday, March 7, 2015~9:30 to 12:30 pm. All welcome to a gathering to think through how we continue to move from a pastoral to a program church. Breakfast goodies and coffee provided. Church Dining Room

• **Lenten Workshop~Writing As Contemplative Practice with Bonnie Atkins** • Saturday, March 14, 2015~9:30 to 11:30 am • Church Dining Room • Writer Bonnie Atkins will lead us with prompts and suggestions to develop a contemplative writing practice.

• **Lenten Workshop~Transforming the Cross with Pastor Andrea** • Saturday, March 21, 2015~9:30 to 11:30 am • Church Dining Room • Pastor Andrea welcomes anyone who wants to make a cross that will be raised and “turned” during our Easter Service. As in years past, we will “turn” or transform our crosses (for example, one side: LOST, other side FOUND) during our big Easter Service. All welcome who would like to make a cross and then be a part of our Easter Service. Materials will be supplied.

• **Lenten Workshop~Expressive Movement with Opeyemi Parham** • Saturday, March 28, 2015~9:30 to 11:30 am • Church Dining Room • Guided, sacred movement allowing our bodies to lead us toward the divine. All ages welcome.

- **Maundy Thursday Tenebrae Service**~April 2, 2015~7:00 pm
- **Good Friday**~April 3, 2015~Noon to 3:00 pm~Sanctuary open for prayer and meditation
- **Easter Service**~April 5, 2015~10:00 am followed by a special Coffee Hour

Child Care is available at any or all of the gatherings if you call Pastor Andrea and request it so we can make the arrangements. Just let us know.

Are you getting your monthly issue of CrossCurrents?

CrossCurrents comes electronically to everyone with a listed email address.

- If we don’t have your current email address please email it to Margie @ office@haydenvillechurch.org.
- If you have no email address you will receive your printed copy either at church or in the mail.
- Please print or clip this coupon, fill out and return ASAP to the address below if you need to receive your printed copy at home.

Yes, I would like to receive a printed copy of CrossCurrents.

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CrossCurrents
Haydenville Congregational Church
PO Box 257
Haydenville, MA 01039



Christmas Pageant 2014



All images by Laine 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.

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, overnight conferences for young people entering 4th through 12th grade, in addition to half-week family and off-site mission work camps. Whether you are the artsy or musical type, 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") are available through Silver Lake and the Massachusetts UCC, and are always confidential. See Pastor Chris (a long time Silver Laker!) for more information.

WIDENING THE *Welcome*

A Parking Reminder: Your Accessible to All (A2A) Committee reminds you to please park across the street if you are able-bodied and reserve the parking lot for those who have mobility needs or children. Also, it's icy out there, Haydenville, so let's lend an arm if we've got one to help each other in! Lastly, please remember that the parking spaces directly by the entrance to the dining hall are reserved for those with "disabled person" placards. Thank you, and stay safe!

Church Visioning Day~

Where have we been? Where are we heading?

Saturday, March 7 • 9:30 to 12:30 pm

All welcome to a gathering to think through together how we continue to move from a "pastoral" to a "program" church.

Breakfast goodies and coffee provided.

Church Dining Room



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) 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

Am I in the Right Church? YES!

From the beginning when I came to Haydenville Congregational Church I was convinced that I was in the right place. Recently I received more evidence of that. In August when we had at our all-church meeting (about the perilous state of our church finances, you remember) I saw the Covenant of Right Relationships for the first time. I was very moved by the ten statements drafted by the Deacons because it felt so incredibly right. Reading them confirmed for me that this was my spiritual home. The Deacons wrote (my numbering):

We further vow to: **1.** Respect the freedom and dignity of every human being **2.** Honor and welcome diverse viewpoints, life experiences and cultures, and recognize our growing diversity as a source of our strength **3.** Honor the legacy of our Church Saints while showing gratitude for the gifts of current members and recognizing the promise of new members **4.** Listen with an open heart and an open mind; **5.** Speak respectfully and compassionately of those present and not present **6.** Explore and accept responsibility in conflict through personal reflection, actively listening to understand others' perspectives, experiences, and feelings, suspending judgment, finding common ground, and seeking creative nonviolent solutions **7.** Forgive and accept forgiveness **8.** Ask for help when needed and give help as able **9.** Show gratitude **10.** Respect confidentiality, unless doing so would result in harm to self or others. (Inform pastors if this situation occurs.)

These are the words that affected me so much. They are beautiful because they describe love in action. Hearing them tells us what the behavior is that we aspire to as Christians. Like the North Star guiding sailors at night through stormy seas, they remind us again what we are aiming for.

Today, it can be hard for us to hear and feel across the great gulf in time, geography and culture between the world of the New Testament and the world we live in. But the Deacons' words reach across that gulf to express the spirit of love in right-now language that we can understand more easily. When we hear these words we not only understand what to do but we have the desire to do it. We feel good about giving it our very best effort. We are glad because the effort feels profoundly affirming.

I believe that the spirit of the ten statements is the same as the spirit that has guided Christianity from the very beginning when Jesus walked the shores of the Sea of

Galilee. As evidence for this I would like to cite in the ten statements six themes or qualities: diversity and inclusiveness, love and compassion, kindness, gratitude, forgiveness, peace and nonviolence. And see if they are also in Paul's letters.

DIVERSITY AND INCLUSIVENESS The Covenant values the qualities of diversity and inclusiveness, especially in #s 1 and 2. More than any other single person, Paul opened Christianity to non-Jews, i.e. everyone. As he says in his letter to the Galatians: *"There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus."* Galatians 3:28 NRSV

LOVE AND COMPASSION The Covenant values the qualities of love and compassion, especially in #s 1, 4, 5, and 6. Paul writes in his letter to the Colossians: *"As God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience. Bear with one another and, if anyone has a complaint against another, forgive each other; just as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in the one body. And be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly; teach and admonish one another in all wisdom; and with gratitude in your hearts sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs to God."* Colossians 3:12-16 NRSV

KINDNESS The Covenant values the quality of kindness, especially in #8. Paul lists kindness next to compassion in his letter to the Colossians.

GRATITUDE The Covenant values the quality of gratitude, especially in #s 3 and 9. Paul tells us to be thankful and have gratitude.

FORGIVENESS The Covenant values the quality of forgiveness, especially in #7. Paul says, *"forgive each other; just as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive."*

PEACE AND NONVIOLENCE The Covenant values the qualities of peace and nonviolence, especially in #s 1, 5, and 6. Paul says, *"And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in the one body."*

I feel blessed. I pray: loving God, thank You for your Spirit inside us, reminding us of all the good things Jesus taught us. Thank you for your love. Help us to share your love with the world. Amen

- Darien Gardner

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Food, Glorious Food!
Our Church Family is so great at
bringing delicious goodies for our
FAMOUS Coffee Hour.
When it is your Coffeeklatch's
month please arrive early with
your food, help set up and
remember to help with
clean up too!
"Daily Bread" Klatch is providing
the coffee hour goodies as well as
setting up and cleaning up
during February.

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