

Cross Currents



April 2015 • Open Hearts & Open Minds & Open Doors

From Pastor Andrea

The joy, relief, renewal, celebration and sense of triumph that Easter brings is soon upon us! Rejoice!

If you are one of the people in our church who furrows their brow when you consider the resurrection...well, let's pause and think about that. Scripture tells us that after Jesus died, his body was placed in a tomb. Days later, several women found the tomb empty, and many of his followers experienced him as right there with them...present to him...

The resurrection has been written about as either a physical, bodily resurrection or a spiritual resurrection and I am unsure if the distinction matters. What I know is that Jesus' followers, those who loved him dearly, experienced him with them after he was dead. That is all that matters to me.

Do I believe in the resurrection? Yes. Because I have also experienced Jesus right there with me, and he has been gone for more than 2000 years. Like many other people of faith, like many of YOU, I sense that Jesus is close by my side...often. Do I believe in the resurrection? Without question. But I do not think the resurrection was a one-time event. I think it is an ongoing experience that continues to happen over and over again.

Jesus is resurrected again each time we have a sense that he is right there in the room with us when someone is ill; each time we know he is walking with us in the stillness of a winter hike; each time we wake in the night troubled and afraid and we feel him touch our fevered head; each time we feel overwhelmed by life's many challenges, ask for help, and feel his hand slip into ours. The resurrection is not something that happened once, long ago and far away, it is something happening again and again and again when Jesus comes very close and speaks to us, walks with us, or seems to touch us in a loving and reassuring way.

I also believe that the idea of resurrection—being brought back to life once again—can apply to an entire community. We are a resurrected Church. Our Church, in 2005, consisted of a congregation of fifteen people and a building in

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profound disrepair. By seeking God's guidance, help and direction, and investing considerable sweat equity into the building, we were able to bring a community that was close to death back to life.

We asked the Holy Spirit to gust through the place, to open our doors, our minds, our hearts and to help us rebuild, renew, and rejuvenate a dying Church community.

Our congregation is now alive and well—large, growing, full of energy, vision, wisdom and excitement. Our Children's Church is buzzing with activity and love, and is a safe home for families of all kinds.

Our recent Visioning Day together (March 7th) amazed me, yet again, although it should not have. Almost fifty people gathered to think through who we are, where we have been, and what God is calling us to do and be in the future. I sat there with such strong feelings of gratitude that we are a resurrected people and a resurrected Church.

Lent is coming to a close, Easter will soon be upon us. Resurrection is a symbol of hope and rebirth, and reminder that as people of faith we know that death does not have the last word.

Rejoice people of faith! Rejoice that you are part of the resurrection...as you individually experience the living Christ in your midst, and as you worship with a Church community brought back to life by the Holy Spirit! Rejoice!

With love,



True But Not Literally True

"The Bible can be true without being literally true" writes Marcus Borg in his book *Convictions* that our book group has been reading. Borg goes on to say that the Bible is the Word of God but not every word is the Word. The Bible is the Word of God in the words of women and men and therefore is a human document that can make mistakes. And that happens in the Gospel of Matthew's story of Palm Sunday, because Jesus didn't ride into Jerusalem on 2 donkeys, as implied, but only on one, and that can be very threatening to Biblical literalists.

The Gospel of Matthew says in chapter 21:5 "Behold, your king is coming to you, humble, and mounted on a donkey, AND on a colt, the foal of a donkey." Matthew is using a quote here from Hebrew Scripture, Zechariah 9:9, to prove that Jesus is the Messiah. And by using the word AND he suggests Jesus is riding on two animals. But this quote says, "Behold, your king is coming, humble and mounted on a donkey, on a colt the foal of a donkey." Notice the comma! Zechariah uses a comma to qualify what the donkey is. It is a colt, the foal of a donkey: in other words, just a young colt. Matthew wants to use this quote from Zechariah to prove Jesus is the Messiah as foretold by Zechariah. But Matthew got the quote wrong. Only the Gospels of Mark and Luke get it right: Jesus rides into Jerusalem on just one colt.

But the story in Matthew's Gospel is true. Jesus did come to Jerusalem that year during Passover. Jesus did come into the city to confront Roman imperial power and religious collaboration with it. Riding on his donkey like a King, he did challenge Herod who was king. The crowd passing out palms and singing "Hosanna, blessed be the one who comes in the name of the Lord," did kindle hopes in the crowd for an end to Roman rule. And when he came to the Mount of Olives just outside the city, Jesus risks his whole ministry, and his life, when he asks his two disciples to go into a village nearby and find a donkey and say to the owner, "The Lord has need of you."

This story in the Gospel of Matthew is true because Jesus needed all of his friends and disciples when he said: "The Lord has need of you." He needed their support as he entered into the very heart of Jerusalem, much like Martin Luther King needed support entering into the very heart of Memphis, just days before he was killed. And all of this was true. Jesus needed them all to stay with him, to support him, to assist him and to go all the way with him, even to the Cross.

And that story is true because this is what Jesus needs from us this Palm Sunday too. He needs all of us to stay with him now, to support him now, to assist him now and he needs all of us to understand why he did what he did for us when he risked his life and ministry in Jerusalem. Why the Roman soldiers did what they did when they took his life on the Cross. Why God did what God did on Easter Sunday morn that changed everything for us giving us the possibility of a new life, and a new beginning and the fullness of everlasting life through him.

- Rev. Peter Ives, *Theologian-in-Residence*

Mary Magdalene Remembers:

When I came to the tomb—my hands holding the burial spices—I looked within and the darkness hummed with absence. I began to cry, and perhaps that is why I did not recognize the man in the garden. I begged him to tell me where they had taken my Lord, and softly he spoke my name, “Mary.” Then I saw and tried to touch him. My hand seemed full of grief and hope. But *Rabboni* told me not to cling or hang onto him as he had not gone to his Father yet. I raced back to tell the others what I had seen, but they did not believe me at first. They cast my words aside.

Now he is gone, I have so much to remember him by. I have his words, which we share during the day but especially at night as we sit around a rough table, breaking bread and drinking wine in remembrance of him, as he told us to do. We share the words like coins passed from hand to hand, as if we could hold them up to the lamplight and watch the glint from the coins. We tell the stories because that is what we do, what we are called to do. And whenever we tell them my heart feels like a flame inside.

But still, I miss him. I miss his physical body being in the same room with us, walking ahead of us on the path or beside us. I miss being in a boat with him on the Sea of Galilee, although that time when the storm came up was terrifying. Even when he calmed the sea—with a gesture to the waves like a parent scolding a child into obedience—my heart still hammered inside. It refused to be still until my feet touched ground again, and I vowed not to take any more trips across the Sea of Galilee, even with my beloved *Rabboni*.

The other night the grief of his passing was so great that my body bent over, like a warrior hiding a killing blow. I fell to the ground with it, holding onto the linen purse I wear inside my robe. That is for taking out in the darkness of night or for looking into in the faint light of dawn, before the rest are awake. Here is what I take out, touch gently, and think about:

A stone. Unremarkable, to be carrying a stone, but this one is special. It came from the time a few years ago when a woman was caught in adultery, and the men circled her like mad dogs, ready to tear her to pieces for her sin. And Jesus crouched in the dust, writing something with his finger. I never saw what the words were, only his infinite patience as he waited. Then he said, “He who is without sin let him be the first to throw a stone.” They all drifted away like leaves before the wind, one by one, then in a quick rush all at once. This is my *stone of mercy*.

My fingers search for a dusty, brown thread. It feels unremarkable, but it is from the fringe of *Rabboni’s* shawl, the one he wore that day walking with the crowd. Everyone wanted him to cure their diseases and madness. A woman darted forward, face determined, and touched the edge of his shawl. Light bloomed on her face, she sighed, and I knew she was healed. *Rabboni* turned and asked “Who touched me?”, and the disciples

were baffled he could sense this amidst the crowd. But the healed woman knew and knelt to thank him. This is my *thread of healing*.

My fingers touch the other things very softly, as they are fragile and might crumble to dust. There is a nubbin of hard bread from the day Jesus taught the thousands who slept on the grass, unwilling to miss one word. Fearing they might faint from hunger, *Rabboni* lifted a loaf of bread, blessed, and broke it. The people sat in small groups, and baskets went around the crowd with no one grabbing, all sharing. He fed thousands with his words and his hands. This is the *bread which satisfies all hunger*.

The last thing in my linen pouch is a fragment of worn rope from the demoniac who lived like a wild animal among the tombs at Gerasene. Nothing could hold or tie him down, not even a thick rope or chain. People feared him. But not *Rabboni*, who beckoned the naked man to come to him—a short, decisive gesture—and the man crept over the tombs. His hair hid his face, and his bloody skin was pierced by thorns and briars. *Rabboni* touched his face, whispered some words, and the man was still as if what had tormented him had flown away into the hot sky. Someone claimed a herd of pigs rushed madly down into the sea. The now-calm man sat, pushed back his hair so he could see, and his eyes were clear. This is the *remnant of madness banished*.

I could not bear to take anything from the last day—no thorn from the evil crown; no shard of wood from the cross; none of the blood which fell to the ground beneath.

*April Birthdays!

- 2 Michael Estes
- 4 Johanna Newcomb-Gerken
- 5 Karen Guiel
- 6 Sasha Klare-Ayvazian
- 7 Deb Luekens
- 10 Barbara Dreyer
- 11 Beth Howland
Danny Hathaway
- 12 Darien Gardner
- 15 Will Demarais
- 18 Elianna Chappuis
- 19 Lisa Ellingsen
- 22 Norma Kellogg
- 27 Carol Prior
- 29 Mary Meg Elias-Gillette



No human love could stand to hold such things. But at night I touch the remnants of the man I knew: *the stone of mercy, the thread of healing, the bread that satisfies, and madness banished*. I remember sitting beside *Rabboni* at table and sharing wine. A warmth enters me like a flame within—I remember, I love, and I believe.

-Annie Turner

Evensong is Coming Back!

For those who love the beauty of a quiet meditative service, Evensong will take place on Thursday, June 4th at 7 pm in the Church Sanctuary. Come join us for a communal service of quiet music, hymns and readings with intervals of silence for healing, respite and spiritual renewal. If you are interested in helping to create an Evensong service, contact Susan Farrell @ 268-9298 or

Farrellsings@comcast.net

Want to read Scripture during worship?

How about lead the Invitation to the Offering?

Sunday, May 3rd, 11:45 - 12:30 pm in the Sanctuary. Pastor Chris and Chip Roughton (our Scripture Reader coordinator) will be leading a brief introductory workshop on how to be a liturgist (fancy word for reader) in our worship service. No experience necessary - just a willingness to give it a try! We want *you* to join our Worship Leader team! Questions? Contact Pastor Chris or Chip.

Read this Book!

On March 4th the Church Book Group met to discuss the book *Convictions: How I Learned What Matters Most* by the late Marcus Borg. It is the consensus of the group that this very personal account of a spiritual journey by a renowned Protestant theologian is a remarkable and important book. It contains a thorough discussion of the divisions within American Christianity today and why many of today's beliefs fail to guide Christians on a path of transformation and renewal. As members of a church that embraces progressive Christianity, you are strongly encouraged to read this book. The next meeting will be April 1, see *CrossCurrents* calendar for details.

- submitted by Ross Basset for the Church Book Group

Dean's Beans Coffee Sale

Since January, 2014, the Youth Group has been selling Dean's Beans Coffee as an ongoing fundraiser. Dean's Beans sells 100% Organic Fair Trade coffee. Dean's Beans says it best:

Why drink Fair Trade coffee?

Because it ensures a living wage to keep food on the table and children in school, plus we give profit sharing and needed development assistance to our farmers.

Why drink Organic coffee?

No chemicals and sustainable practices guarantee the health of farm families and their ecosystems while preventing long-term health impacts on the consumer.

Every pound of coffee we sell brings \$3.50 profit to the Youth Group. Thanks to the generous support of our congregation, the Youth Group has taken in a remarkable \$524.47 since starting our fundraiser! We have spent some of this money, including \$48.98 toward the Bounce House rented for last year's church picnic in June, a \$50 donation to Church World Service during the CROP Walk in October, \$75 to help support youth and adults attending the Youth Group Winter Retreat in January to Silver Lake, and \$100 toward a youth group trip to the Central Rock Gym in Hadley in February.

We are extremely grateful to Ladies' Aid, which has bought coffee from us regularly since the start of our sale, as well as to the many people in our congregation who have supported our fundraiser so generously! Thank you from the very bottom of our youthful hearts! I am also especially grateful to the people who work during each sale to keep the fundraiser running so smoothly: to Sylvia Fappiano, Cheryl Whalen, or Lexi Fappiano-Whalen for taking charge of the coffee ordering; to Regina Kaufman, and Margaret, Aidan, and Ellie Chappuis for receiving and organizing the purchased coffee; and to Jo Cannon and Margie Pierce for managing our sales and profits. We would not have been as successful without your consistent support. Thank you!

If you are interested in ordering Dean's Beans coffee, our next sale will be Sunday, April 12th. Place your order with Sylvia Fappiano, Cheryl Whalen, or Lexi Fappiano-Whalen during Coffee Hour; the coffee typically arrives by the following Sunday. The coffee costs \$11-12/pound, and there are other treats available as well, including hot chocolate and chocolate-covered espresso beans. Thank you!

- Joanne Morgan

The Pronoun Project, Part 2

I recently attended a workshop for transgender allies. One of the leaders was a transgender person who uses the pronouns *they* and *them*. I know that it is important to get the pronouns right. Right before kindergarten my Mom cut my hair short. I looked like a boy. And I was too shy to correct people. So I know it can be painful when people get your gender wrong and I've started training myself to use the pronouns *they* and *them* in the singular. Our language has been through this change before when *thou* was replaced with the formerly only plural *you* so I know that our language can make the switch. But can our culture? To train myself I started going through the Bible changing every gendered pronoun to *they* or *them*. I also changed father to parent, son to child, etc. I wanted to know if I could see people's genders as beside the point. When I did my he to she project I included only God. I kept the people's gender as is. Now I'm changing everyone's pronouns to *they*. It's helping me get used to using that pronoun in the singular and it's also causing me to let go of defining people in terms of their gender.

But I do define myself partially in terms of my gender. It is important to me to be acknowledged as a woman. Maybe because I want credit for the life I live and have lived. Maybe I want people to know that I've been squashed, threatened, and overlooked. But maybe I wouldn't have had the same experiences if we weren't pigeon-holed into sex roles by our language. What if gender was just a fashion statement?

What if we used *they* all the time for everyone? Would we be able to maintain our gender role stereotypes? When I describe my friends who fall outside the gender binary of masculine and feminine, people almost always ask something along the lines of, "but what are they really?" People want to know what gender they were assigned at birth or what gender they're leaning towards but they insist on assigning gender. Why is it so important to people that they be able to categorize people as male or female? In most cases we are not interested in people's genitals. We want to know how to relate to them, and, for most of us, how we relate to a person depends on their gender. None of us (at least at HCC) does this purposefully but we do it all the same. What happens if we take that away?

By letting go of our insistence on assigning gender we will allow people more freedom of expression whether they are male, female, neither, or both. If we use *they* and *them* more and *he* and *she* less it will seep into our subconscious

and loosen our grip on our need to define people by their gender.

What would happen to societal views of women if Eve suddenly became transgender? How different would the world be if Adam and Eve were a couple whose genders we don't know? Maybe women wouldn't have been characterized by the church as naïve and conniving temptresses. Would we be able to maintain the same level of sexism if our stories didn't specify gender? I don't think so. I think that by using the pronouns *they* and *them* we can make real changes not only in the way we speak but in the way we think.

Clinging to gender enforces the assignment of roles by sex. When we're able to move past defining people in terms of gender we will dislodge patriarchy. Our transgender siblings have presented us with an opportunity to address our own sexism. Let's rip it out by the roots.

- Amy Andrews

~ 100 Years ~

Gathering to Remember the Centennial of the Armenian Genocide

Stand with us on Martyrs' Day

Friday, April 24, 2015 • 5:00 pm

In front of Memorial Hall
downtown Northampton

~ Vigiling ~ Witnessing ~ Reception ~

"Tar2f: A Musical Comedy About Religious Delusion"

"Tar2f: A Musical Comedy About Religious Delusion" will have a staged reading at the UU Church in Northampton on Saturday, April 25 at 7:30 pm.

Book, music and lyrics by Jeff Olmsted!

Please come and support this project!

Requested donation \$10 ~ no one turned away!

Barb and Mike get Married

Barbara Holroyd first met Michael Estes on the bus when he was in 8th grade at Williamsburg High School and she was in 7th. Barb had gone to elementary school in Williamsburg while Mike went to school in Haydenville. Mike graduated in June of 1968 and that September he went into the Marine Corps. All too soon he was shipped to Vietnam where he was stationed for one year. He brought home PTSD.

Seventeen years later, in 1986, Mike and Barb happened to meet again at the bridge near Adair's Store in Haydenville. Barb recalls that she was going to pick up the *Gazette* for her dad and was wearing her burgundy raincoat. Mike had been splitting wood for Roger Graves and needed to hurry back, hands full of cans of soda and an ice cream cone. They only talked for a few minutes.

On Sundays, Barb took her dad to the 8 o'clock service at the Episcopal Church, then went home to fix him a quick breakfast. She would meet Michael for a later service at the College Church, which was across the street from Mike's apartment. Barb met many of Mike's friends there, like Brownie and his wife Jackie.

On April 12th, 1986 Mike and Barb were married at St. John's Episcopal Church. The church was packed. Roger Graves had decorated the undercroft with chrysanthemums from the Smith College greenhouses. Ann and Joe Graves were the kitchen crew for the reception. The menu included chicken and it took so long to cook that Barb's brother-in-law Doug couldn't wait and headed to McDonalds!

They spent their honeymoon at the Autumn Inn in Northampton. When they opened the cards they had received they had over \$1000, the exact amount they had recently spent on a cherry bed from Landry's Furniture!



Have something to share with the church?

Please note our publication deadlines:

- *CrossCurrents* newsletter material is due to Richard Spencer spencer-richard@comcast.net by the 15th of the month.
- Weekly Sunday announcements are due to Pastor Chris revcjm@gmail.com by Tuesday at 5:00 pm.
- Weekly e-newsletter announcements are due to our Office Administrator, Margie Serkin office@haydenvillechurch.org, by Tuesday at 5:00 pm.

Thank you!

“Death and Dying” Continuing the Conversation

Tuesday, April 28th, 6:30-8:00 pm in the Church Dining Room In response to multiple requests, Pastor Chris will be holding another conversation on death and dying to follow up on the Lenten workshop that he led. While the first workshop was split between lecture and discussion, this gathering will be simply guided and free-form conversation. All are welcome regardless of previous workshop attendance.

Hampshire Association UCC Annual Meeting

The Hampshire Association Executive Committee, UCC, would like to invite everyone from Haydenville Congregational Church to be a part of the UCC Annual Meeting to be held at Look Park on **Sunday June 7, 2015 from 1-4 pm** at the Dow Pavillion. There will be a potluck lunch at 1 pm so please bring a dish to share if you can. The HAEC will provide beverages, dishes and cutlery. There will be worship and singing followed by a short business meeting at 2:30 pm. If you are not a delegate you may go off and enjoy the park during the business meeting. We encourage family participation as there are activities for children as well. Last years members who attended the meeting parked for free at JFK Middle School and walked to Look Park. If you have any questions, contact Judy Stone at 413-320-3339 or jstone9074@aol.com

Calendar for April

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

Date	Time	Event	Location
Wed. April 1	12:45 pm	Church Book Group	Watson Room, Forbes Library
	7:00 pm	Choir Practice	Sanctuary
Thurs. April 2	9:30 am	Café Hours @ Sunrise Over Florence	Florence
	7:00 pm	Maunder Thursday Worship	Sanctuary
Fri. April 3	12:00 - 3:00 pm	Good Friday Sanctuary open for prayer and reflection	Sanctuary
Sun. April 5	10:00 am	Easter Sunday Worship Service with Communion	Sanctuary
Mon. April 6	6:00 pm	Diaconate Meeting	Dining Room
Tues. April 7	5:30 pm	A2A Meeting	Dining Room
Wed. April 8	7:00 pm	Choir Practice	Sanctuary
Thurs. April 9	9:30 am	Café Hours @ Sunrise Over Florence	Florence
	2:30 pm	Haydenville Church Writers' Group	Dining Room
	5:30 pm	Trustees' Meeting	Dining Room
Sat. April 10	5:30 pm	Children & Family Ministries Games Night, <i>see page 8 for details</i>	Dining Room
Sun. April 12	10:00 am	Worship Service	Sanctuary
Tues. April 14	7:00 pm	Men's Fellowship Group	Dining Room
Wed. April 15		Yom HaShoah, Holocaust Remembrance Day	
	6:00 pm	Shepherds' Meeting	Children's Church
	7:00 pm	Choir Practice	Sanctuary
Thurs. April 16	9:30 am	Café Hours @ Sunrise Over Florence	Florence
	1:00 pm	Ladies Aid Meeting	Dining Room
	7:00 pm	Family Ministries Meeting	Children's Church
Sun. April 19	8:45 am	Adult Faith Formation	Dining Room
	10:00 am	Worship Service	Sanctuary
Mon. April 20	4:00 pm	Baking for Cookie Walk, <i>see page 8</i>	Church Kitchen
Tues. April 21	4:00 pm	Baking for Cookie Walk, <i>see page 8</i>	Church Kitchen
Wed. April 22	10:00 am	Baking for Cookie Walk, <i>see page 8</i>	Church Kitchen

Date	Time	Event	Location
Wed. April 22	7:00 pm	Choir Practice	Sanctuary
Thurs. April 23	9:30 am	Café Hours @ Sunrise Over Florence	Florence
	10:00 am	Baking for Cookie Walk, <i>see below</i>	Church Kitchen
	2:30 pm	Haydenville Church Writers' Group	Dining Room
Fri. April 24	7:00 am	Baking for Cookie Walk, <i>see below</i>	Church Kitchen
	5:00 pm	Armenian Martyrs' Day Vigil to Witness and Remember	Memorial Hall Northampton
Sat. April 25	9:00 - 1:00 pm	<i>The Cookie Walk!</i>	Dining Room
Sun. April 26	10:00 am	Worship Service to honor members of the LBGTQI Community	Sanctuary
Mon. April 27	5:30 pm	Peace and Justice Meeting, <i>see page 10 for details</i>	Dining Room
Tues. April 28	6:30 pm	"Death and Dying" Workshop with Pastor Chris	Dining Room
Wed. April 29	7:00 pm	Choir Practice	Sanctuary
Thurs. April 30	9:30 am	Café Hours @ Sunrise Over Florence	Florence
	6:00 pm	All Staff Meeting	Sanctuary

You are invited to celebrate the renewal of the Haydenville Congregational Church and Andrea Ayvazian's Ten-Year Anniversary as Pastor



Sunday, May 31, 2015 • 5:00 to 7:00 pm
 R. Michelson Gallery • 132 Main Street, Northampton
 Delicious Hors d'oeuvres and Desserts ~
 Wonderful Music ~ Sparkling Conversation ~
 Celebratory Toasts

The Gala is a celebration and a fundraiser for the Haydenville Children's Church Program

We ask for your support



Ticket price: \$0 and up... Please give what you can \$100... for those who are able

Tickets available online at www.haydenvillechurch.org or at the door

Wheelchair Accessible

The Cookie Walk, Yum!

The Cookie Walk is coming on Saturday, April 25th from 9:00 am - 1:00 pm! Please lend your support to our major fundraiser by being a baker (see schedule in Calendar above), helper, or ingredient donor. Please sign up to bake or supply ingredients on the sign up sheets in the Dining Room starting Sunday, March 22nd.

Save The Date! Intergenerational Games Night, Friday, April 10!

Join Children and Family Ministries for an evening of board games, ping-pong and fellowship! Please bring a side dish or dessert that will complement a main course of chili. Bring your own games to share and play. We will begin at 5:30, so come hungry and ready to play. If you have questions please email Dawn Orluske at dorluske@ants.edu.

Our Exciting Visioning Morning

On Saturday, March 7th, almost 50 members of our HCC community came to the Visioning meeting. This is one step in our long process of transitioning from a pastoral church (with fewer than 120 members) to a program-sized church (with 200+ members). Our beloved church has been making this transition for several years, and the Transition Committee has been working to make the process unfold in the best way to keep all the wonderful things we loved about HCC when it was smaller, while we grow to include and serve a larger number of people.

The Rev. Kelly Gallagher from the MACUCC did a great job of facilitating the meeting. She began by talking about the three things congregations need to look at when visioning: 1) Who are we? 2) Who are our neighbors? and 3) What is God calling us to do/be? She showed us on a map the geographical location of all the members of HCC (one way of looking at who we are), and then showed us the demographic characteristics of people living in the same area (our neighbors). Kelly talked about what God is calling us to do in terms of following Jesus. Because Jesus was not content to preach just to his disciples; his ministry was all about reaching out to his neighbors.

Then we broke out into small groups to offer our thoughts on three questions: **1.** What is God calling us to be/ become/do at HCC? **2.** How do we want to make our Mission Statement a reality in the next 1 - 3 - 10 years? **3.** What does HCC uniquely have to offer our community, our region, and the world?

Each group wrote down their ideas, which were presented to everyone when we came back together. There were a number of ideas and themes that came up several times. Some of the thoughts they came up are:

As we grow, there is the likelihood for more conflicts to arise. It would be good to develop a conflict resolution strategy or committee, and possibly to offer conflict resolution trainings at HCC.

HCC has become a strong community where our members feel well supported. Now that we have this strong base, how can we reach out to our neighbors, especially our marginalized neighbors?

In looking to reach out to our neighbors, how can we strengthen our spiritual core, as individuals and as a community, so that we have the strongest center to come from in our outreach? Some ideas included having some quieter, more contemplative services at times; helping

people feel comfortable “coming out” as Christians and as members of HCC; possibly having workshops on how to talk about your Christian beliefs, about HCC, and/or how to offer prayers and blessings.

We are known for and proud of our enthusiastic welcome and our long-term efforts to be good allies to members of the LGBTQI community. How can we extend that same welcome and grow ourselves as allies to other marginalized communities? One idea was the possibility of finding a church in Holyoke or Springfield to build a sister relationship with. It seemed important to many people that HCC show up for other communities when there is an issue of importance to them, and build our presence as strong allies.

There are so many social justice/peace issues, which seem more and more interconnected in these times -- economic justice, institutionalized prejudice, climate change and efforts to end war. How can we create a clear vision for HCC to reach out in supporting these interlocking concerns?

As far as what we uniquely have to offer, that list was long, from our extravagant welcome, to our pastors who preach social justice from the pulpit, to our unique coffee hour where people actually sit down and have conversations, and our sermon response time when the message of the sermon is extended and reflected on by members of the congregation. We realized with gratitude that we have much to offer to new members as we grow and to our neighbors.

Pastor Chris will be writing up each group's ideas and looking for the themes which stand out as priorities in the vision for HCC that was voiced in this meeting. You'll be hearing more about these priorities as we go along. If you have thoughts on these three questions, but couldn't make it to the March 7th Visioning Day, you can submit your thoughts to Pastor Chris.

The next step in the process of turning these visions into reality will come on May 16th, which will be a day-long Strategic Visioning Day with church leaders and emerging church leaders. We'll be facilitated by two lay leaders from the Somerville UCC church (the church in *Real Good Church* by Molly Bessette.) Their church has recently gone through the same transitional process we're in the midst of, and these two leaders (Heather May and Ian Tosh) facilitated their successful strategic visioning. We are very fortunate that they are now available to facilitate for us.

We'll be sure to keep you posted through the whole process!

- *Your Transition Committee: Ruth Jacobson-Hardy, Lisa Hall, Jan Varnon, Lynn Fogg, Rev. Andrea, Rev. Chris*

April Climate Actions of the Month

This is the month of Earth Day! Let's take this time to redouble our efforts to address climate change as we remember how precious this blue and green planet of ours is. These suggestions are brought to you by the Climate Action Group of the Unitarian Society of Northampton and Florence.

Personal: Cut your energy consumption by wearing clothes more than once before washing. Washing and drying laundry comprises a large proportion of household energy use. And even in winter you can air-dry your laundry on a rack or line. It WILL dry, it just takes longer. You'll know it's dry because it will no longer be stiff and frozen!

Community: Investigate starting a tool-lending library in your neighborhood. Reduce expense and consumption while building neighborhood cooperation by sharing tools. This [video](#) is a 1-hour webinar on how to start a tool library.

State/National/Global: Join some friends and support divestment from fossil fuels by the Massachusetts state pension fund (PRIM) by showing up on April 7 at PRIM (84 State St., #250) in Boston from 11-1. Bring signs and wear orange. Make an appointment with your legislator from 2-5 that same day to lobby for the divestment bill. This action will also be taking place May 19, June 4 and July 2. Contact Darcy Dumont for more info: dumont140@yahoo.com If you are a public school teacher, state worker or state retiree, sign this divestment [petition](#) and spread the word among your colleagues!

Inform Yourself: Here's an inspiring 10 minute video brought to my attention by Climate Action Now: "Indigenous communities are on the front lines of the fight against fossil fuel expansion. Watch this amazing video of the people of the [Unist'ot'en camp in British Columbia](#) putting themselves in the path of several pipelines that are proposed to cross their land."

- Molly Hale

Spring Cleaning?

Please remember Ladies Aid is having a tag sale in early June. Donations can be brought any Sunday after church and as we get closer we will have weekday drop offs. Please make sure items are in good condition. Any questions contact Cindy Drake. Thank you for your support.

Massachusetts Conference UCC Annual Meeting with Nadia Bolz-Weber!

The MACUCC Annual Meeting will be held on **June 12th - 13th at UMass Amherst**, and will feature keynote speaker Rev. Nadia Bolz-Weber, author of *Pastrix*. For the first time, visitors will have the option to attend only the keynote address on Saturday, instead of having to register for the entire event. Join with our sibling MACUCC congregations in this time of worship, work, and fellowship. Registration is now open, and is expected to fill quickly. For more information and to register, go to www.macucc.org and click on "events."

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. 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. Camperships (financial assistance) are available through Silver Lake and the Massachusetts UCC, and are always confidential. See Pastor Chris (a long time Silver Laker!) for more information.

Peace and Justice Committee Seeks New Members

P & J Steering Committee offers education to our community about issues of Peace and Justice AND we plan and participate in actions about these issues AND we would like you to join us on the Peace and Justice Committee. We know that these issues can be overwhelming, but within our Committee we're able to support each other and look at what we can do in our communities. Come to our next meeting on April 27th from 5:30 - 7:00 in the Church Dining Room and learn about what WE do and what YOU can do too.

How to Welcome Transgender and Gender Nonconforming People

As you all know, I love finding ways we can be even more welcoming here at Haydenville and so I am going to tell you about how we can be more welcoming and more inclusive to transgender and gender nonconforming people. Like so many of us with queer identities, trans people like me are not welcome in a lot of other churches.

As you know, many transgender people are attacked and even killed because of their identities. We pray for them often. We believe that transgender and gender nonconforming people are our beloved siblings, fellow children of God.

We also know that God is more expansive than gender. We use different names for God all the time: Mother, Father, Creator. We use different pronouns for God all the time: "He, She," or just "God."

And we know that we are all created in the image of God. If God has expansive numbers of genders, then so do people. We are men and women and neither and both. So how can we welcome the divine gender in each of us?

I want to tell you about two simple actions that we can take to extend our radical welcome to transgender and gender nonconforming people. The best part is, you don't even need to know what transgender or gender nonconforming mean in order to perform these actions. It's really just basic manners, gender style.

These two easy steps are something we should really do with EVERYONE we meet, because just like you never know when you might be entertaining an angel, you never know when you might be talking to a transgender or gender nonconforming person. There's no way to tell.

So, back to my two steps. Here they are. Are you ready? Step one: ask everyone what their name and pronoun are. Step two: use them. Let me demo this with Pastor Chris:

Me: *Hi, my name is Toby and I use he/him pronouns. What's your name and pronoun?*

Pastor Chris: *Hi Toby! My name is Chris and my pronouns are he/him/his.*

Now I can use his name and pronoun: *This is Chris. He is a beloved member of my church. He has awesome tattoos.*

I used his name and his pronoun. I showed him that he is seen and heard and loved.

It seems simple, even silly. But to trans people it can make a world of difference. We are told every day that we do not

matter, that we are not fully human. By calling us by name you can make us feel seen and heard and loved.

But just using someone's correct name is not quite enough. Because we don't only talk about people using their names, right? We also use pronouns. So we need to ask people what pronouns they use. And then we need to use them.

This may feel strange. We are taught that pronouns are straightforward and easy. He, she. That's it. You can tell by looking.

But we here at Haydenville do not shy away from things that are a little bit more complicated than what we've been taught.

We know that God isn't just some old white guy with a beard. We know that Jesus isn't just some gentle shepherd meek and mild. We know that humans can't be stuffed into boxes. So I think deep down we know that *he* and *she* aren't quite enough options to reflect the beautiful gender diversity of gods creation.

So part of our job is to ask everyone, "what pronoun do you use?" Some people will say *he* or *she*. And some people say *they*, or *ze*, or *per*, or *ey*, or that they don't really like pronouns and prefer that people use their name. That can feel a little awkward if you've never done it before, I know. So if Chris had told me that his pronoun is *they*, I would say, "*This is Chris. They are a beloved member of my church. They have awesome tattoos.*"

Some of you may be tempted to say that grammatically that feels weird to you. That that's not what your English teacher taught you. Some of you may say that it just feels hard and awkward because it's new. Some of you may say that it's really hard to switch to a new name or pronoun.

It's ok to think that, just don't express it to the person.

And let me ask you, isn't it more important to us here at Haydenville to make someone feel seen and heard and loved than to adhere to some dusty grammar rule? Isn't it worth it to be a little uncomfortable if your discomfort can make someone who has NEVER felt seen or heard or loved feel welcome here?

It's certainly worth it to me. And so, I practice at home and in my head until I can get it right.

And yes, we will all mess up from time to time. That's normal. But when you do mess up, don't make a big deal about it. Correct yourself, apologize, and move on.

And just remember our two steps: **1:** ask people what their names and pronouns are, and **2:** use them.

- Toby Davis, adapted from his opening word from March 8

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Rev. Chris Mereschuk
Associate Pastor

Jan Varnon
Moderator

Lynn Fogg
Vice Moderator

Ann Loomis
Clerk

Jo Cannon
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Margie Serkin
Bookkeeper/Office
Administrator

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Dawn Orluske
Director of
Children's Church

Joanne Morgan
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Theologian-
in-Residence

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Rev. Chris Mereschuk
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860 966-8055

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

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Haydenville Church
Writers' Group,
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Peace & Justice, Chair
Family Ministries,
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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.
When it is your Coffeeklatch's
month please arrive early with
your food, help set up and
remember to help with
clean up too!
"The Grateful Bread" Klatch is
providing the coffee hour goodies
as well as setting up and cleaning
up during April.

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