

Cross Currents



February 2016 • Open Hearts & Open Minds & Open Doors

From Pastor Andrea

Think of it as a gift.

Lent is forty days.

Think of it as a gift of forty days to do some things differently, some things in new ways—to drop some things you always do, to add some things you never do, to change some things you usually do.

Think of it as a gift.

Lent is forty days long—about one-tenth of a year. Think of Lent as giving yourself one-tenth of this year to focus on God, or love, or generosity, or forgiveness, or all of them together.

Think of it as a gift.

In her book *Breathing New Life into Lent*, Rev. Donna Schaper writes, “The spiritual goal for Lent is to admit our need for Lent. Just to admit our need. For Lent, the desert time, and for the promise contained in desert time.”

I am admitting my need.

I need Lent this year. I really need it. I need to shift some things in my life, I need to deepen my prayer practice, I need to give away more money, I need to forgive myself and others, I need Lent this year. I really do.

What do you need this year? How can Lent be a welcome and cherished forty-day spiritual gift to yourself?

I have hauled all my Lenten books, devotionals, and prayer journals off the shelf—where they were carefully stored one year ago—and I have been looking through them... quite a stack! In the pile, I found the Lenten Devotional from 2012 written by the UCC “*Stillspeaking Writers’ Group*.” That year’s devotional was called *Give It Up!*

Highlights

visit us online at: haydenvillechurch.org

How to Have a Large Life When it Feels Small

“In many ways, my life had physically shrunk. I could walk around the bedroom and adjoining study....”

Page 2

Put Out into the Deep

“When Jesus began his ministry in Galilee he walked along the seashore talking to the fishermen in their boats.”

Page 3

Peace & Justice Committee Exploring Interfaith Help for Syrian Refugees

“The agencies don’t choose who to resettle but are sent families by the federal government, which is required to resettle a certain number of refugees....”

Page 5

Crafternoon: What Our Kids Do, and You Can Too!

“The older kids in Children’s Church have been working on and off since September on a project we are calling “Church World Service Baby Kits”.

Page 10

February Birthdays • 3

Understanding Islam and Combating Anti-Muslim Rhetoric and Violence • 6

Calendar • 7

This Month In Children’s, Youth & Family Ministries • 9

Church Leadership • 12

There are forty devotional readings, one for each day of Lent, in the *Give It Up!* book. Here are some of the titles of the daily readings, suggesting some things one might give up: "Give Up Excuses," "Give Up Fooling Yourself," "Give Up Demanding," "Give Up Swearing," "Give Up Judging," "Give Up Craving," "Give Up Giving Up," "Give Up Despair," "Give Up Busyness," "Give Up Emptiness," "Give Up Discouragement," "Give Up Anxiety," "Give Up Loneliness," "Give Up Caution," "Give Up Underestimating Yourself," "Give Up Holy Smugness," "Give Up Revenge," "Give Up Self-Righteousness" and there are many more.

Maybe the gift you want to give yourself this Lent is giving things up. Like the *Give It Up!* devotional suggests!

Or maybe the gift you want to give yourself is more along the lines of Take It On! (I made that up.) Take on being more active in Church, take on giving more money to charities, take on volunteering at the Cot Shelter program, take on regular attendance at Cathedral in the Night, take on visiting shut-ins, take on participating in Peace and Justice Committee meetings, take on joining our Choir and singing your heart out, take it on.

Or maybe the gift you want to give yourself is deep rest, deep contemplation, and deep renewal. Try going snow-shoeing for a good long time then taking a good long nap. Try making cocoa and sitting by the fire WITHOUT a book. Try counting the first stars you see in the night sky. Try going to the evening Taizé service held at the Episcopal Church in downtown Northampton.

Whatever is right for you...is right for you.

This Lent think of the forty days as a gift.

You have the gift of forty new, fresh, beautiful days on which you can write your dreams, hopes, and prayers.

Savor each day.

Think of Lent as a holy gift.

Blessings and love,



Winter is in my head but spring is in my heart.
- Victor Hugo

How to Have a Large Life When it Feels Small

Having recently had two cancer surgeries back to back (oh, brave girl!), I've had to confront a recovery that's had some ups and downs. While certainly toddling towards health, I initially found that my life had shrunk to the borders of our bedroom, my study, and the bathroom—and constant talk about the state of my health. I occasionally dared the stairs to fetch something.

There's no question that I was somewhat babied by friends, relatives, and my dear husband who trucked food up and down our steep staircase without complaint. "White food," I might add; given that I had a bowel resection I was limited in what I could eat. But I was so happy to be back home that I didn't really mind the food restrictions.

In many ways, my life had physically shrunk. I could walk around the bedroom and adjoining study to regain muscle strength, which I did, but I also spent a lot of time lying on the bed reading and scrolling through my iPhone. So how did I regain a sense of being embedded in a wider, more generous life right now, while still respecting some restrictions?

1) I decided to reach out first through charitable giving. I'm would donate money to www.Nothingbutnets.com to aid this marvelous program which, for \$10 per net, sends a mosquito net overseas, usually to Africa, with safe chemicals in it to repel mosquitoes. We forget what a scourge malaria still is in many parts of the world.

2) I decided to try and be more in touch with my church community, even though I won't be attending services for another couple of weeks. I would read the weekly sermon which comes onto my iPad; I'd email people I know and find out what's happening through the "church grapevine." I would try and call some people during the day. (Initially, due to post-surgery fatigue, I could just about manage one phone conversation per day.)

3) I followed the Advent Meditations which came over the internet, reminding me that I was actually still in Advent and awaiting the birth of my favorite carpenter. I will continue to practice gratitude—for the doctors finding the second tumor; for coming through the surgery so well; for our rich circle of loving friends and family.

4) I also began outlining an idea for a short story I got while on the 6th-floor surgical recovery unit at Baystate Hospital. I saw two women walking down the corridor, both somewhat buxom, both healthy-looking and wearing

identical blue sweatshirts. “Hmmm,” my imagination scratched its imaginary forehead. “What about a story about two women who visit folks in the hospital who don’t seem to have visitors? They could claim to be relatives, people from church, or whatever.” Then I had to construct a back story for this, about how the older woman’s husband had died on this very ward, and in visiting patients she kept his memory alive. I’m not sure that this at all works—it can’t be sappy. More on this later. But here’s the thing: getting back to work, finding out that one’s brain still mostly works, is very therapeutic. And sitting up at a desk is far better than lying prone on the bed.

5) I plan on taking up a discarded hobby which once gave me pleasure, and that would be—art. I used to create primitive folk-art paintings which I loved doing. I’m not ready to delve into paint right now, but getting out a small sketchbook and my hard pencils might be just the thing. It will occupy my mind, and hands, and make me feel I’m not just wasting time.

Ok, that’s it for today. Oh, I forgot: on the advice of my doctor—who seemed lamentably unimpressed by my courage and heroism in undergoing two cancer surgeries within two days—I am going to set goals for myself of more steps per day using my Fitbit to track them. Here is my fistful of ideas for a wider life: charitable giving, connecting to my church community, calling actual physical people on a phone, observing Advent, beginning a new story, and setting exercise goals.

And, oh yeah—getting back to my blog!

- Annie Turner

Put Out into the Deep

Years ago, in 1975, Jenny and I returned to this country from Scotland with our two little girls, Liza and Jen. We had no place to live and only \$300.00 in our pocket, but my brother Bobby and his wife Ruth invited us to live with them in their little cottage on an island off the coast of Maine. So off we went to Round Pond to our new home on Loud’s Island, two miles away. Round Pond was a small fishing village and early in the morning you could hear lobster boats heading out from the harbor towards the Pemaquid Lighthouse; and then passing the lighthouse they went further and further out into the ocean to fish.

And that scene still reminds me of Jesus first meeting his disciples in the Gospel of Luke 5:1-11. When Jesus began his ministry in Galilee he walked along the seashore talking to the fishermen in their boats. And getting into one of the boats, which was Simon’s, he asked him to put out a little from the land, and he sat down and taught the people from a boat. And when he had ceased speaking he said to Simon, “Put out into the depth and let down your nets for a catch.” And then later he said to them, “Put out into the depth and let down your nets for soon you will be catching women and men.” And these disciples left everything and followed him.

Paul Tillich of Union Theological Seminary, one of America’s greatest theologians, based his whole theology on the word “depth.” He said, “It is comfortable to live on the surface, but it is vital to put out into the depths if we are to discover God in our lives.” Many people live with a childlike image of God as the bearded old man who lives high up in the sky. But that image of God high up in the heavens is causing many people to become agnostics or atheists because they can no longer believe in a God who is just a person out there somewhere in the sky. We must use the word “depth” in relationship to our God, if God is to be God to us as in Psalm 130: “Out of the depths I cry to thee, O Lord.”

So he said to his students these words, “The name of this infinite and inexhaustible depth and ground of all being is God.” The depth is what the word God means. And if that word has not much meaning for you, translate it, and speak of the depths of our life, of the source of your being, of your ultimate concern, of what you take seriously without any reservation. Perhaps, in order to do so, you must forget everything traditional that you have learned about God, perhaps even that word itself. For if you know that God means depth you know much about God. You cannot then call yourself an atheist or an unbeliever. For you cannot think of saying: “Life has no depth! Life itself is shallow! Being itself is surface only!” If you could say this

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.

in complete seriousness you would be an atheist; but otherwise you are not. Those who know about depth, know about God.

Paul Tillich went on to say that this is the way we also receive our own calling from God. "Deep calls to deep" he would say, quoting from Psalm 42:7. We ask ourselves, "What should I be doing with my life? What is God wanting me to do in the world. What should I be doing right now to experience God direction for me?" And the answer Tillich gave us was to listen to where Deep is calling to deep inside of you; that point where the depth and ground of All Being touches the depth and ground of your being. And it is at this moment when you will hear your calling from Jesus saying: "Will you leave your nets and become one of my disciples today?"

- Rev. Peter Ives, Theologian-in-Residence

Hope begins in the dark, the stubborn hope that if you just show up and try to do the right thing, the dawn will come.

- Anne Lamott

Children's Church Needs You!

We are *always* looking new folks to join our Children's Church teacher roster or to volunteer their time, talents, or treasures in other ways. Teachers can work with our younger or older children as a Head Teacher or Support Teacher, committing to a couple of Sundays or an entire multi-week rotation. All volunteers are required to sign our Safe Church policy and have a satisfactory CORI check. Please contact Pastor Chris for more information!

Specific Children's Church Needs:

- Support Teachers for each Sunday in February
- Head and Support Teachers for March through June
- Snack donations (nut- and peanut-free, please)

We Don't Have a Clue

"She took of its fruit and ate; and she also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate."

- Genesis 3:6

I get rattled when people seem to know Jesus as well as they know their multiplication tables.

To know something completely is to control it, to command it. Any time humanity masters an object we subject it to our own ends. From the secrets of the atom to the most efficient way to farm a chicken, we take existence, squeeze the mystery from it, and wreak havoc in the process; even though havoc is rarely our intention. Imagine the horror that humanity would unleash were we able to really know God.

Maybe God made Adam and Eve so stupid as to eat the apple because their brilliance contained such danger. And so they fell. And so we are born with an inability to achieve or even receive absolute knowledge of the Divine.

Indeed, the only gods humanity can know inside out and backwards are pretenders to the throne that we bend to our image and then send on our bloody errands. It is no accident that those who are certain of their religious convictions are always the first to bless our world's wars.

This is why the United Church of Christ is so sorely needed. The world needs a church audacious enough to gather in the name of Christ, yet humble enough to say we don't quite know what we're talking about.

I admit that "God Is Still Speaking" sounds a lot better than "We Don't Have a Clue." But, there is great good to be found in our cluelessness, in our humility, in embracing the hard-won knowledge that we don't know much at all.

Prayer

The world needs a church audacious enough to gather in the name of Christ, yet humble enough to say we don't quite know what we're talking about.

- Matt Fitzgerald is the Senior Pastor of St. Paul's United Church of Christ in Chicago.

Ash Wednesday Worship Service

February 10, 2016 at 7:00 pm in the Sanctuary • Mark the start of Lent with this contemplative time of confession and reflection, led collaboratively by your pastors, the Evensong Worship Team, and the Shepherd Ministry Team. You will have the opportunity to lift prayers, request a blessing, and receive ashes. All are welcome.



Photo by Opeyemi

We are flying Trans Pride flags, both out front and in the Sanctuary!

I am convinced that the women of the world, united without any regard for national or racial dimensions, can become a most powerful force for international peace and brotherhood.

--Coretta Scott King

Peace & Justice Committee Exploring Interfaith Help for Syrian Refugees

Andrea and I attended an interfaith meeting at B'nai Israel on January 9 to learn about congregations joining to sponsor a Syrian refugee family. Representatives of Jewish Family Services and Acentria (formerly Lutheran Family Services) spoke and answered questions. These two agencies are contracted with the federal government to resettle refugees in western Massachusetts. The agencies don't choose who to resettle but are sent families by the federal government, which is required to resettle a certain number of refugees as part of our foreign policy commitments.

The process for resettlement can be long. Initially, a refugee must be displaced from their home, and register with the UNHCR (United Nations High Commission on Refugees). To be designated a refugee, they have to show that they cannot return home because of well-founded fear of persecution due to political, religious, racial, ethnic or other affiliations.

Once a person has refugee designation, the UNHCR will try to help them to: **1)** Return home if the danger has passed, **2)** Settle in the country where they are a refugee, or **3)** Resettle them in another country. Of the 66 million refugees worldwide, only one percent will be resettled in another country. Those eligible for resettlement may have to wait in a refugee camp for as long as 20 years.

After the UNHCR determines they are to be resettled, a location is chosen, often because there are family or friends in that region. Once a family is referred to the US for resettlement, there is a process of vetting them which takes up to two years. Then the local agency is notified they are coming. The agency may have two weeks, but sometimes as little as four days, to arrange for pickup at the airport, housing, etc.

The agencies are required to provide specific services for refugees on a strict timetable. They must find housing that is affordable given the small stipends the families get from the federal government. Housing must be furnished with furniture, dishes, clothes and everything needed. The government requires that family members be taken to medical appointments, given cultural orientation to US society, children must be enrolled in school, and adults assisted to find work, with the goal of making the family self-sufficient.

The local agency is only funded by the government for three months of assistance, even though it is understood that refugee families need support for at least five years. However, the agencies continue to provide services for as long as needed, (funded by separate grants and donations), including mental health counseling, English as a second language classes, job counseling, etc.

So it is uncertain whether our interfaith group of faith communities will be able to sponsor a Syrian family, unless one happens to be assigned to western Massachusetts in the future. However, because of the plight of the Syrian refugees, there has been an increase in interest in volunteering with these agencies, which is wonderful. Community support has always been critical to helping refugees resettle.

I called Jewish Family Services and asked what they would like volunteers to do and they replied: "JFS is open to talking with anyone who would like to support our work. Some of the structured ways that folks might like to help right now include: Preparing Welcome Kits for arriving families; Donating gently used household items; Tutoring in English; and Mentoring a family."

Details are available on their website:

<http://jfswm.org/healing-world/how-you-can-help>

<http://jfswm.org/node/186>

- Lisa Hall

Climb the mountains and get their good tidings. Nature's peace will flow into you as sunshine flows into trees. The winds will blow their own freshness into you, and the storms their energy, while cares will drop off like autumn leaves.

- John Muir

Youth Fundraiser with Elbow Room Coffee!

Check out our new supplier! Support the Youth Fellowship and a great local business while you drink your coffee! Thanks to the suggestion of a few folks, we are going to purchase our fundraising coffee through the Williamsburg-based Elbow Room Café and Roasters. This woman-owned business is super local and uses Fair Trade and organic beans.

You can order your coffee in 12-oz. foil bags for \$12, with your choice of regular or decaf, medium or dark roast, ground or whole bean. We'll be taking orders on **February 7th** and **14th** during Coffee Hour, with orders arriving on February 21st. Payment (check or cash) at the time of ordering is greatly appreciated.

Thank you for your support!

Understanding Islam and Combating Anti-Muslim Rhetoric and Violence

- **Saturday, February 13** • 9:30 to 12:30 pm

Understanding Islam

Film "*Muhammad: Legacy of a Prophet*" and Discussion

Refreshments provided

Sponsored by the Men's Fellowship

- **Thursday, February 18** • 5:30 pm

Who Is My Neighbor?

A Conversation with Imam Anthony Francis

Soup and Salad Supper

Dawn Orluske, Facilitator

Sponsored by Peace and Justice Committee

- **Tuesday, March 8** • 7:00 pm

The Abrahamic Traditions

Panel Discussion with Naz Mohamed, Norbert Goldfield and Peter Ives

Refreshments provided

Sponsored by the Deacons

- **Sunday, April 10** • 10:00 am

Special Worship Service

Dr. Ali Hazraii preaching • Reading from the Koran
Special Coffee Hour following Worship

- **Saturday, May 7** • 10:00 to noon

The Roots and Nature of Islamophobia

With Special Guest: TBD

Refreshments Provided

Sponsored by the Men's Fellowship

- **Saturday, June 4** • 10:00 to noon

Being Allies:

Combating Anti-Muslim Rhetoric and Violence
What Can We Do?

Sponsored by the Peace and Justice Committee

Thank you "Loaves & Dishes" for providing the coffee hour goodies during February.

Calendar for February

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

Date	Time	Event	Location
Mon. Feb. 1	6:30 pm	Diaconate Meeting	Dining Room
Tues. Feb. 2	5:30 pm	A2A Meeting	Dining Room
Wed. Feb. 3	12:45 pm	Book Study Group with Peter Ives	Dining Room
	7:00 pm	Choir Practice	Sanctuary
Thurs. Feb. 4	9:30 am	Café Office Hours @ Sunrise Over Florence	Florence
	2:00 - 6:15 pm	Writing Group	Children's Church
Sun. Feb. 7	10:00 am	Worship Service with Communion	Sanctuary
	After Worship	Annual Meeting	Sanctuary
	6:00 pm	Youth Fellowship	Children's Church
Tues. Feb. 9	7:00 pm	Men's Fellowship Meeting	Dining Room
Wed. Feb. 10	7:00 pm	Ash Wednesday Service, <i>see page 4</i>	Sanctuary
Thurs. Feb. 11	9:30 am	Café Office Hours @ Sunrise Over Florence	Florence
	2:00 - 6:15 pm	Writing Group	Children's Church
	5:30 pm	Trustee Meeting	Dining Room
	6:00 pm	Family Ministries Meeting	Children's Church
Fri. Feb. 12	12:30 pm	HCC Writers' Group	Dining Room
Sat. Feb. 13	9:30 - 12:30 pm	"Understanding Islam" Series: Understanding Islam, Film "Muhammad: Legacy of a Prophet" and Discussion, <i>see page 6</i>	Dining Room
Sun. Feb. 14	10:00 am	Worship Service	Sanctuary
	12:00 pm	Council Meeting	Sanctuary
Mon. Feb. 15	6:00 pm	Peace and Justice Meeting	Check with Doug Renick
Wed. Feb. 17	6:00 pm	Shepherds' Meeting	Dining Room
	7:00 pm	Choir Practice	Sanctuary
Thurs. Feb. 18	9:30 am	Café Office Hours @ Sunrise Over Florence	Florence
	1:00 pm	Ladies Aid	Dining Room
	2:00 - 6:15 pm	Writing Group	Children's Church

Date	Time	Event	Location
Thurs. Feb. 18	5:30 pm	“Understanding Islam” Series: Who Is My Neighbor? A Conversation with Imam Anthony Francis <i>Soup and Salad Supper, see page 6</i>	Dining Room
Sat. Feb. 20	2:00 pm	Internet Safety Workshop, <i>see below</i>	Dining Room
Sun. Feb. 21	10:00 am	Worship Service	Sanctuary
	After Worship	Exploring Membership, Class #1	Pastor Andrea’s Office
	6:00 pm	Youth Fellowship	Children’s Church
Wed. Feb. 24	7:00 pm	Choir Practice	Sanctuary
Thurs. Feb. 25	9:30 am	Café Office Hours @ Sunrise Over Florence	Florence
	2:00 - 6:15 pm	Writing Group	Children’s Church
	6:30 pm	World Café-Visioning	Dining Room
Fri. Feb. 26	12:30 pm	HCC Writers’ Group	Dining Room
Sat. Feb. 27	2:00 pm	“Crafternoon” for Church World Service, <i>see page 10</i>	Kitchen and Dining Room
Sun. Feb. 28	10:00 am	Worship Service	Sanctuary
	After Worship	Exploring Membership, Class #2	Pastor Andrea’s Office
	5:00 pm	Cathedral in the Night	Northampton

Give us Your Love Seats, Your Armchairs, Your Couches Yearning to Breathe Free!

Do you have some gently used, stain-and-rip-free, upholstered seating that you’d like to donate to the Children’s Church classroom? Pastor Chris is looking for a couple of items of furniture for our second classroom. Contact him to make your tax deductible donation! Thank you!

Aerodynamically the bumblebee shouldn’t be able to fly, but the bumblebee doesn’t know that, so it goes on flying anyway.
- Mary Kay Ash

Internet Safety Workshop

February 20 • What are the risks our children face on the Internet, and what can we do to guide them toward safe and responsible use of technology? In this interactive workshop, I’ll give a brief overview of the types of risks and the technologies that facilitate them, and aim to set some minds at ease along the way. I’ll also talk about what parents and children can do to mitigate these risks, both in their own families and in their schools and communities. Along the way I hope we’ll have some great questions, answers, and discussion.

- Marc Liberatore

It is in the shelter of each other that people live.
- Irish Proverb

This Month In Children's, Youth & Family Ministries

This month in Children's, Youth, and Family Ministries

Our Social Justice Rotation Continues!

February 7: (All Ages) Food Justice + Communion with Sam Icklan; Youth Fellowship at 6:00 pm

February 14: (All Ages) LGBTQ/Gender with Steffi Davis

February 21: (All Ages) Environmentalism/Creation Care with Doug Renick; Youth Fellowship at 6:00pm

February 28: (All Ages) Ableism and Disability with Steffi Davis

Youth Fellowship will continue to meet on our regular pattern of the **1st and 3rd Sundays of the month from 6:00 to 7:30pm** at the Church. All youth in 6th through 12th grade are invited to attend. Keep a look out for other activities and service opportunities in the new year!

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.

Rev. Chris Mereschuk, Associate Pastor and Director of Children's, Youth, and Family Ministries
Andrew Geery, Chair of the Children's and Family Ministries Committee

New First Aid Kit!

A new First Aid kit has been purchased! We hope you never have need of it, but if you do it is located in the Church kitchen on a shelf by the hall entrance. You will find a good supply of non-latex gloves there as well.

Remember the important numbers to call are **9-1-1** in case of any emergency. We have been told that people often wait too long to call for emergency personnel so call first, and then attend to the emergency at hand.

We have many nurses and other medical people in our congregation, and several people currently certified in CPR. These folks can help! Lisa Hall, RN; Kate Kelly, RN; Karla Hathaway, RN; Trish LaFreniere, RN, retired; Deb Edwards, LPN; Gloria Lampron, RN, retired; Katie Hull, PA; Heidi Zahara Overtree, RN; and Melissa Brown, Karin McGowan and Pat James, all certified to perform CPR.

-Maureen Ricksgers

WIDENING THE

Welcome

A Parking Reminder: 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, so let's lend an arm if you've got one available 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!

Depression

"As he approached Jericho, a blind man was sitting by the roadside begging. When he heard a crowd going by, he asked what was happening. They told him, 'Jesus of Nazareth is passing by.' Then he shouted, 'Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!' Those who were in front sternly ordered him to be quiet; but he shouted even more loudly, Son of David, have mercy on me!"

Sometimes, Depression sends a postcard ahead of his visits. On one side, in fat and deceptively friendly script, the words, "Wish You Were Here." On the other side, scrawled in his recognizable handwriting the simple words, "I'll be there soon."

Other times, Depression just lets himself in unannounced. I find him one morning on the couch. "Sit down," he croons, "I brought chips. And there's a Star Trek marathon on."

Sometimes I think he must be right. Surely there's no better way to spend this day or this week or this month than couch, junk food, familiar television.

This time, though, I hear sounds outside. Instead of settling, I stand. I stick my head out the window to see what is going on.

Jesus is here. Right now. Passing by.

"Jesus, have mercy." I say it out loud and Depression turns his head, shushes me.

"Jesus! Have mercy!" I say it louder this time, open the door so I can really see them going by – a parade of hopeful, grieving, joyous, broken, kind-hearted people.

They are singing and dancing and they all have their eyes on the Healer who shines like a light in their midst, who is holding a hand out to me. Then, they are all holding out their hands, and I take one step toward them and then another and then another.

I leave the door open behind me, so Depression can let himself out.

Prayer

Brother Christ, when we feel isolated by illness or grief, bring the healing presence of Your loving community right to us. Amen.

- Jennifer Garrison Brownell is the Senior Pastor at Hillsdale Community Church -- United Church of Christ in Portland, OR and the author of Swim, Ride, Run, Breathe: How I Lost a Triathlon and Caught My Breath.

Crafternoon: What Our Kids Do, and You Can Too!

The older kids in Children's Church have been working on and off since September on a project we are calling "Church World Service Baby Kits". We received a UCC-sponsored matching grant of \$250 in September for this project. Church World Service is composed of many denominations, including the United Church of Christ.

"Baby Kits" are a package appropriately wrapped in a baby blanket and closed tight with diaper pins. These kits are delivered to refugees, natural disaster areas and to other emergency situations both in the US and internationally when need arises. Enclosed in the kit are basic items a baby would need to be clothed and cared for at birth.

The kids were excited by this project but had a few reservations. ("I don't want to make diapers!" was one comment I remember.)

After reassuring them that this was not in the plans, enthusiasm took over when the quilting fabrics, cutting mats and sharp rotary cutters(!) were brought out. We started with baby quilts. First the kids cut out fabric strips, using a rotary cutter, which is basically a pizza wheel for fabric. Then I brought the strips home and sewed them together during the week in my free time. The next Sunday I brought the completed ones back and we worked together to plan how it would look best. Masking tape held the quilt tops together so I would know how the kids wanted it to look in the end.

Now here is how you can join in and have some fun too! Let's call it "CRAFTERNOON."

Join us to continue working on this project "CRAFTERNOON", Saturday, February 27, 2016 in the HCC dining room. From 2:00 to 4:00 pm we will be assembling, sewing, pinning, ironing, etc. Can't sew? We need an online buyer too, to order bulk diapers so the kids don't have to make them. And diaper pins! I know they don't sell diaper pins at Target. We need tie dye-ers to tie dye baby t-shirts, crocheters and knitters to make a baby blanket, poets and musicians welcome to read and sing to us and inspire us. Warm and cozy refreshments provided. When is the last time YOU tie dyed? It's like riding a bike... you will remember how! And I will help you! Any questions, call me! Maureen Ricksgers, 586-3481 or email me at felinedvm@yahoo.com

Here is a list of what each Baby Kit contains. Please note what is listed in the kits is very specific and does NOT allow for any hats, booties or Onesies. You can feel free to donate any item on this list.

IN EACH BABY KIT: 1 receiving blanket, 1 blanket (knitted or crocheted or small blanket quilt), 2 t-shirts, 2 sleepers, 2 diaper pins, 6 cloth diapers, 2 washcloths, one jacket or sweatshirt (can be knitted or crocheted)

- Maureen Ricksgers

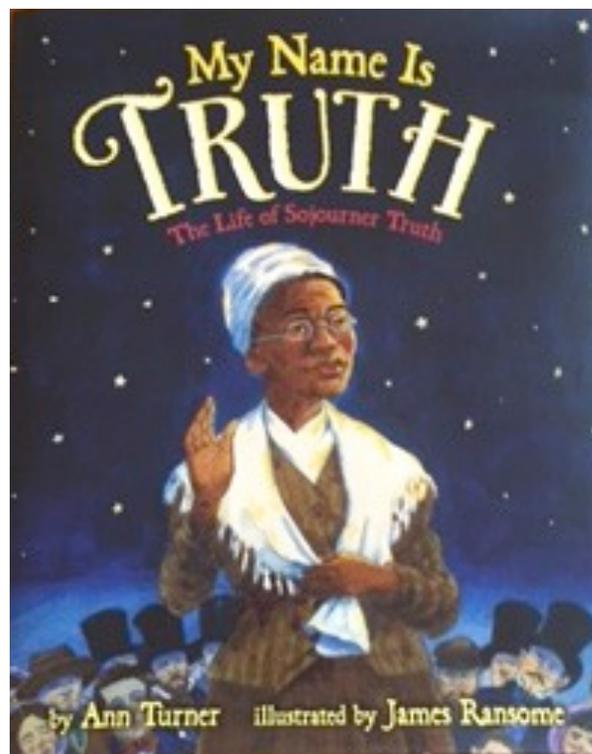
When We Live Without Listening

"When we live without listening to the timing of things...we are on war time, mobilized for battle. Yes, we are strong capable people, we can work without stopping, faster and faster... But remember, no living thing lives like this. There are greater rhythms that govern how life grows: circadian rhythms, seasons and hormonal cycles and sunsets and moonrises and great movements of seas and stars. We are part of the creation story, subject to all its laws and rhythms... To surrender to the rhythms of seasons and flowerings and dormancies is to savor the secret of life itself... The commandment to remember the Sabbath is not a burdensome requirement from some law-giving deity, but rather a remembrance of a law that is firmly embedded in the fabric of nature. It is a reminder of how things really are, the rhythmic dance to which we unavoidably belong."

--from *Sabbath: Finding Rest, Renewal, and Delight in Our Busy Lives*, by Wayne Muller

Robert H. Life Scholarship Application

Rev. Robert H. Life was the Pastor of the Haydenville Church from 1904-1934. He was a man of firm faith and was an inspiration to his congregation. In his will, he set up a Trust Fund to assist the members of his beloved church. The income from this Trust Fund is used to provide scholarships for any Williamsburg resident who is furthering their education and is an active church member or child of an active church member. Each person applying for the Robert H. Life scholarship fund must write a letter requesting to be considered. The deadline for applying is February 22. Please see or email Jen Matias or Pat James for more information.



Ann Turner's book "*My Name Is Truth: The Life of Sojourner Truth*" is on the Amelia Bloomer List of "well-written and well-illustrated books with significant feminist content," as well as a "Mighty Girl" 'girl-empowering book for children and teens.' There is a copy of the book in the HCC Children's Church Library.

W I D E N I N G T H E

Welcome

Peanut Allergen Alert!

We recently had an incident at coffee hour with one of our members who has a serious allergy to peanuts. Thankfully she did not have an extreme reaction. As our church is concerned with everyone's safety we have decided to enact a **no peanuts** policy at coffee hour. No peanuts, and no peanut products are to be served.

If you are providing food for coffee hour please list all ingredients on a card with each dish.

Church Leadership

Rev. Dr. Andrea Ayvazian
Senior Pastor

Rev. Chris Mereschuk
Associate Pastor;
Director of Children's,
Youth, and Family
Ministries

Jeff Olmsted
Minister of Music

Jan Varnon
Moderator

Lynn Fogg
Vice Moderator

TBD
Clerk

Jo Cannon
Treasurer

Margie Serkin
Bookkeeper/Office
Administrator

Karen Guiel
Diaconate, Chair

Alice Barber
Trustees, Chair

Rev. Dr. Peter Ives
Theologian-
in-Residence

**Minister of Outreach,
Advocacy and Pastoral
Care**
Yohah Ralph

Rev. Chris Mereschuk
Shepherds, Chair
860 966-8055

Kathy O'Connor
Church Sexton

Jackie Cloonan
Ladies Aid, President

Andrew Geery
Children's and
Family Ministries
Committee, Chair

Jennifer Clarson
Angel Take-out,
Coordinator

Nancy Winninger
Angel Wings,
Coordinator

Jackie Cloonan
Snow Angels, Green
Angels, Coordinator

Doug Renick
Peace and Justice
Steering Committee,
Chair

Maggie Solis
Stewardship
Committee, Chair

Carolyn DuBois
Music Committee,
Chair

Sue Carbin
Church Scheduler
scarbin1973@aol.com

Linda Zeigenbein
Interfaith Cot Shelter
Meal, Coordinator

Chip Roughton
Scripture Reader,
Coordinator

Laura Paul
Librarian

Shirley Sicurello
Welcome Ministry,
Chair

**Sharon Grace
Julie Salzman**
Head Ushers

**Jennifer Miller-Antill
Jennie Davis**
Head Greeters

Laura Garcia
Webmaster

Richard Spencer
CrossCurrents

Laine Wilder
Accessible to All
(A2A), Chair

Jim Foudy
Men's Fellowship,
Chair

**Bev Orluske
Nancy Winninger**
Keepers of the Keys

**Mary Gerken-
Newcomb**
Haydenville Church
Writers' Group,
Facilitator

Lay Delegates
Ross Bassett
Jan Varnon
Bob Varnon

**Keepers
of the Covenant**
Rev. Dr. Peter Ives
Pat James
Raquel Manzanares
Jen Matias

Trustees (by Seniority)
Alice Barber
Karin McGowan
Laura Garcia
Jo Cannon, *Treasurer*.
Sylvia Fappiano, *LA Rep*.
Richard Spencer

Deacons (by Seniority)
Karen Guiel
Mary Sheehan
Maureen Bourbeau
Karla Hathaway
Jen Matias
Amy Andrew
Pat James
Paula Spencer
Shirley Sicurello
Carolyn DuBois
Fred Goodhue
Tobias Davis

Shepherds
Ross Bassett
Carole Bull
Robert Davis
Rev. Chris Mereschuk
Mary Sheehan
Ellen Tobiassen
Nancy Winninger
Beverlee Orluske

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

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