

Cross Currents



December 2015 • Open Hearts & Open Minds & Open Doors

The Christmas Story

We are told that the angel Gabriel came to Mary
a poor, young, frightened girl
and revealed a dangerous secret

*O God, bless all teenage mothers
may they feel your love and protection*

We are told that Joseph should have had
Mary stoned at the edge of the village for disgracing his honor

*O God, bless all men of courage
who choose what is right over what is expected*

We are told that the couple journeyed far from home
pregnant, in their hour of need, alone

• Continued on page 2

Continuing the Vision

Want to have a voice in the present
direction and future vision of Haydenville
Congregational Church?

Please join us for these ongoing visioning
sessions hosted by the Transition
Committee

Our December 5th session will be
co-facilitated by Rev. Kelly Gallagher,
Associate Conference Minister of the
Massachusetts Conference of the UCC
and Pastor Andrea

December 5th from 10:00 am to 12:30 pm
Child Care Available

Highlights

visit us on line at: haydenvillechurch.org

A Way Out of No Way

*"Elizabeth's life is
always a reminder that
no matter how barren
we feel, we live in the
presence of a God."*

Page 2

End of 2015 Treasurer's Report

*"While we haven't
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in fundraising!"*

Page 4

This Month In Children's, Youth & Family Ministries

*"During January and into
February, we will take a
break from our usual
Godly Play and Holy
Moly curricula to explore
Social Justice topics."*

Page 9

Photo Directory Update: Help Desk 2.0

*"Still need some
"Directory Assistance"
with the new online
photo directory? Stop by
the Help Desk during
Coffee Hour...."*

Page 11

December Birthdays • 5
Calendar • 7
Church Leadership • 12

*O God, bless all those who migrate and search
wander and roam, seeking and hoping, on their way*

We are told that there was no room in the inn
no lodging, no bed, no comfort

*O God, bless all those who sleep in doorways and on sidewalks
on heating grates and beneath bridges
lead them to shelter and safety*

We are told that the baby arrived
with Joseph to attend and animals to witness

*O God, bless all creatures great and small,
they are part of the web of life,
with their beauty and majesty*

We are told that the savior of the world was born in a manger
a lowly and modest beginning

*O God, bless all born in humble settings
may **we** see the greatness that **you** see in them*

We are told that the family fled to a foreign land
following the birth
fearing the violence that might befall them

*O God, bless all those who escape violence
under the cover of darkness, grant them safe passage,
stay near as they flee*

We are told that the baby named Jesus
grew to be a man who ushered in a revolution
of love and compassion,
nonviolence and mercy, healing and hope

*O God, renew our faith, restore our dreams,
strengthen our belief, and make us brave
for we long to continue the work that Jesus began*

We are told this story year after year

O God, help us leap from the manger and take up the cross

Amen.



A Way Out of No Way

My mother's name was Elizabeth. My mother's father and mother loved Biblical names so they named my mother Elizabeth after Elizabeth found in the first chapter of the Gospel of Luke. Tragically, my mother only lived until she was 47 years old. She died of a cerebral brain aneurism on the same day that President Kennedy was shot. My three brothers and I were only teenagers. It was a hard and very barren time for us. Years later, while attending Union Theological Seminary, I wanted to learn more about Elizabeth in the Gospel of Luke for whom my mother was named.

Elizabeth was of the family of Aaron, a priestly family. She was married, according to the Gospel of Luke, to Zechariah, who was from a priestly family too. But all was not well with Zechariah and Elizabeth because both were advanced in years and Elizabeth was barren. This word "barren" is also used by the Gospel of Luke to describe the times. Luke wanted us to know that not only was Elizabeth barren, but that this was a barren moment in history when life was hard, empty of meaning and empty of God. After all, it was a time when Rome ruled the world, when Roman soldiers ruled the people of Galilee and when Caesar inflicted harsh and heavy taxes upon them to keep Roman soldiers in Nazareth to prevent any form of rebellion.

And yet, it is precisely in the midst of these barren conditions, says Luke, that an angel of the Lord came to Mary and said to her, "*Hail, O favored One, the Lord is with you; do not be afraid Mary, for you have found favor with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son and you shall call his name Jesus, Son of God. And behold, your kinswoman, Elizabeth, in her old age, has also conceived a son, and this is the sixth month with her who was barren. For with God nothing will be impossible.*" (Luke 1: 36-37)

And so Elizabeth's life is always a reminder that no matter how barren we feel, we live in the presence of a God for whom nothing is

impossible. Her life points to the reality that even when our lives are barren, devoid of love and hope, we live in the presence of a God who can make all things possible, a God who is always able to help us find a way, even when we feel there is no way. Elizabeth stands for all those people who have discovered God's love at the end of their rope, when all hope seemed crushed, doors closed, lights out, solutions unworkable, and roads dead ends. She stands for all of us who have discovered for ourselves that with God all things are possible.

My life felt barren in 1963 after my mother died the same day President Kennedy was shot. But years later, while I was living in Scotland with my wife Jenny, something new happened that made all the difference. In the city of Edinburgh, Jenny gave birth to our first child. And when it came time to give her a name, we chose a name that had become very special. We called her Elizabeth, after my mother, and with the Advent belief that with God all things are possible.

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

At the end of the day it's not about what you have accomplished... it's about who you've lifted up, who you've made better.

- Denzel Washington

Flunking Advent - A Lament

OK, I should be able to do this, I tell myself in a nervous, bossy manner without a hint of Advent spirituality which should be about peace, cheer, and goodwill towards people.

I thought I was prepared for Advent this year. I bought a cute, not too expensive cluster of fake greens and shiny bobbles at Michael's to put on our front door. (It truly is not ghastly). I got out my old Advent booklets - one by my favorite Joyce Rupp, another by Daniel Harrigan S.J., another by some writer whose name eludes me. But holy. Surely.

I dusted off my kneeler, prepared to spend mega amounts of time praying on my knees (at least, until they seized up). My "yes" to God would be like Mary's "yes" to God over

2000 years ago, except that my assent did not include: an unexpected pregnancy with a rather frightening father; an uncomfortable journey on a donkey; giving birth in a cave with a multitude of spiders and weird animals; and - oh, yes - fleeing with Joseph and baby to avoid the insane Herod. (Historical evidence tends to support that he truly was insane, besides being cruel.)

I put out the Advent wreath with its three purple candles (no animals were killed in the making of them), and one pink for Gaudete Sunday (representing joy). I've subscribed to numerous Christmassy blogs, Pinterest Festive boards, papers, etc., etc. I've even started making cookies, using my grandmother's antique tin cookie cutters shaped as stars, camels, and more.

Except - except - my ADD brain WANTS to be holy and observant, but that ain't how it works. Here's what I am truly waiting for:

- How is Tom Brady going to show all those *schadenfreude* losers that he is the best, simply the best QB the world has ever known?
- How is Bill Belichick going to show us that he is the BEST, simply the best football coach we've ever seen? So what if he never smiles....
- Are my son, Ben, and his dear wife, Amy, going to be part of a Football Betting pool this year? They won significant cash last year, and this must please Dick, my own dad in heaven, who during the Depression earned his way through Yale by hustling rich kids at bridge.
- Is that expensive sweater I ordered from the famous online store going to arrive in time for Christmas Eve? It

December Birthdays!

- 2 Laurie Priest
Karen Browne
- 3 Margie Pierce
- 4 Eleanor Cresson
- 5 Tarra Chenoa-Neff
- 6 Gretchen Courage
Maureen Mathers
- 9 Cathy Strader
- 10 Ann Turner
Lynn Goodhue
- 12 Jerry Roberge
- 13 Talya Gilman-Solomon
- 14 Anna Morin
- 14 Nate McElligott
- 15 Renae Terry
- 17 Judy Swanson
- 18 Carol Wolfram
- 20 Ben Rose
- 20 Jennifer Griswold
- 21 Grace Molano
- 27 Bob Anderson
Mary Kate Farley-Dimino
Regina Kaufman
- 28 Ellen Tobiassen
- 30 Jennifer Matias



could be close. Perhaps I should bribe the UPS man, who, dear soul, is darned tired of driving up our 45 degree shattered driveway?

- I am waiting to find out which family members will grace our house for the holiday this year. Will they all get along? Is there any way to assure this? Perhaps sprinkling Holy Water from my new Holy Water Font over the living room would help? Maybe a case of Prosecco could smooth the rough edges?

There are more “waitings,” of course; there always are in human life. But I had a sudden insight: while I am waiting for my life to show up, for wounds to be repaired, for all to be right, God is *waiting* for me. God is patiently standing at my right shoulder (unseen so far...) looking to see how I am going to spread and share the largesse and abundance of my privileged life. A donation to Catholic Relief Services could be in order; send some money to Grove Street Inn; make some Christmassy food and bring to the Northampton Survival Center; call and visit someone who needs support. Try and pay better attention to people in church who want to engage in conversation, but because I am such a failed ADD dame, I often walk right by, not seeing them. (Please, forgive me - all 2000 of you.)

God is patient. I am not. Herod was not. The Wise Men were. Joseph was. Simeon and Anna the prophetess in the Jerusalem Temple were. I am going to ponder this seriously and take some spiritual Ritalin so I can join the crowd of folks who know how to possess their souls in patience. And, then - who knows? Maybe *then* I'll be ready for Christmas.

- Annie Turner

End of 2015 Treasurer's Report

We are almost through the 2015 year and it has been a while since I wrote to let you know how the fiscal health of the church is doing. Soon, we'll be having our annual meeting and you'll see all the details, so for now I'm just going to provide a quick summary, but before I do I owe you an apology. I learned just a few days ago that many, perhaps even most of you have not received the quarterly financial reports I have sent out. I think you have received your quarterly individual contribution statements, but not the reports sent a few weeks later showing all income and expenses through the most recent quarter. By the time you read this, I hope to have this problem fixed!

So, where are we anyway? We are in good financial standing at the moment. While we haven't brought in quite as much as we may have hoped in stewardship and Sunday collections, we have done very well in one-time and memorial gifts, rent and in fundraising! The Gala, in particular brought in more than expected. It is funding Children's Church this year and next as well as providing some funding for other church programs.

On the expense side of things, we have done incredibly well. Every committee has been extremely frugal and most are coming in under budget. While operating funds do not carry over into the next year, we will not cut a committee's budget just because they did not spend their entire budget in 2015.

Another area in which we are seeing great savings this year is fuel. Since we prepaid most of our January and February fuel usage in 2014 and did not prepay this year for next, we are not spending what was budgeted for fuel in 2015. We will carry that savings over to 2016 to pay for fuel as we go through the year. The Trustees agreed that the lower fuel prices made it more sensible to not pre-buy for the coming year.

The budget committee is busy preparing a budget for the 2016 year, and expects to present you with a balanced, maintainable plan.

As your Treasurer, I would like to take the opportunity to thank all of you for your financial contributions in all forms to this church. You make my job easy and fun. You make this church community work. You make it possible for us to provide appropriately for our staff!

Thank you!

Sincerely,

Jo Cannon, Treasurer

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: **Please Note our Publication Deadlines:** :
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- 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.
 - Contributions to *CrossCurrents* are due to Richard Spencer spencer-richard@comcast.net by the 15th of the month.
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Toward a Theology of Coffee Hour

"Then they told what had happened on the road, and how Jesus had been made known to them in the breaking of the bread." - Luke 24-35

I was standing by the food table after church with Nathan, a 13-year-old confirmand. He clutched a cupcake in one fist and one of those crustless triangular sandwiches in the other. He said, quite audibly, but to no one in particular, "I don't know if I believe in God, but I believe in coffee hour!"

It's a good place to start, for sharing food is the most tangible symbol of community. Wherever Jesus turned up there always seemed to be a meal: beside a lake, in people's homes, in public places with sinners, and in an upper room the night before he died.

The thing that strikes me most about Luke's account of the risen Jesus with those two men on the road to Emmaus is that, even after he pretty much told them who he was, they still didn't get it. Finally, they invited him to share a meal with them and, when he broke the bread, they knew him.

Coffee hour is more than cupcakes and sandwiches. It's about hospitality and fellowship and the grace that sharing food makes real. It reminds us that too many go without the food they need, it invites us to widen our circle of sharing, and it points us to the one called "the bread of life."

Prayer: Lord Jesus, be among us at every table, for those who look to you for bread will find their souls are daily fed
- Richard L. Floyd is Pastor Emeritus of First Church of Christ (UCC) in Pittsfield, MA, and author of [A Course In Basic Christianity](#) and [When I Survey the Wondrous Cross: Reflections on the Atonement](#).

Six Fabulous Books

The Deacons donated six fabulous books to the Church library in Gloria's name.

Small Victories - Anne Lamott

Loving This Planet - Helen Caldicott

God Help the Child - Toni Morrison

The Rebellious Life Of Mrs. Rosa Parks - Jeanne Theoharis

Living with a Wild God - Barbara Ehrenreich

A Path Appears - Nicholas D. Kristof and Sheryl WuDunn

Boldness, Genius, Power and Magic

"Whatever you can do, or dream you can do, begin it. Boldness has genius, power, and magic in it. Begin it now."

— William Hutchison Murray

The magic has begun! On a Saturday morning in November new and longtime members, young adults and elders, gathered to build a vision of where Haydenville Congregational Church can be in the next few years. During two hours of interactive exercises, lively discussion, laughter and prayer, we talked about children's church, pews, preaching, money, social action, and so much more. This is one of several visioning sessions scheduled over the next few months and open to all members of the church community. These sessions are coordinated by the Transition Team, who will aggregate the ideas generated at these sessions and tease out shared and unique themes worth developing.

- Pat James

Internet Security: A Workshop for Families and Individuals

How much personal information about ourselves and our children should go on-line? How much presence should young people have on the internet? Kate Kelly and Marc Liberatore are organizing a workshop for our church family to discuss these and other questions. They would like to know what **you** would like to have addressed, what questions **you** may have, what worries **you** are wrestling with. To help them prepare for the workshop, please let them know what you would like to have covered. They want to hear from you so they can shape the workshop to meet your needs. Thank you.

"To understand
is to stand under
which is to look up to
which is a good way to understand"

- Corita Kent (1918-1986)

Worn Down

"One generation shall laud Your works to another, and shall declare Your mighty acts." - Psalm 145:1-9

I believe the world is full of "thin places," places where the boundary between heaven and earth is permeable and the presence of God is almost palpable. I believe in them because I've been to some. There is a mountaintop in New Mexico where the stars almost drip from the sky, a church in rural Sierra Leone where calls to dawn prayer in three faiths make harmony, and the sanctuary at Old South Church in Boston.

Understand, our sanctuary is beautiful, very beautiful in fact. There is hand-crafted stained glass and stencil-painted walls and shining organ pipes and intricately carved finials topping each row of pews. But beauty is not what makes it a thin place.

It is a thin place because whenever I sit in a pew and pray, I can feel beneath my feet that the wood of the floorboards is worn down a fraction of an inch. The cherry wood is soft and concave, light and thin, holy and worn down by the feet of the faithful worshipping God for generations. Every time we sidle into pews from the aisle, every time we roll a wheelchair into place, every time we pray and preach and praise, we wear down the walls that stand between the world as it is and the world God has promised.

It's not just Old South. In every sanctuary, past generations pray with us and we pray alongside those yet unborn. Sanctuaries are places where the membrane dividing heaven and earth is being worn down by the faith of the faithful: thin places through which God's Spirit flows like fresh air.

Prayer God bless our worship, even more.

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

Marcia Gomes and Friends "Living the Dream" Concert With Special Guests: Samirah Evans and Evelyn Harris



Saturday December 5th, 2015 at 7 pm
Haydenville Congregational Church
143 Main Street | Haydenville, MA

Also Featuring:
Susan Farrell
Jeff Olmsted & The Wise Guys
Franz W. Robert II-pianist

A Concert to benefit the
Haydenville Congregational Church
Tickets: \$25—\$50
haydenville.brownpapertickets.com
857.919.4045

Calendar for December

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

Thank you "What Chai is This?" for providing the coffee hour goodies during December.

Date	Time	Event	Location
Tues. Dec. 1	5:30 pm	A2A Meeting	Dining Room
Wed. Dec. 2	12:45 pm	Book Study Group with Peter Ives	Dining Room
	7:00 pm	Choir Practice	Sanctuary
Thurs. Dec. 3	9:30 am	Café Office Hours @ Sunrise Over Florence	Florence
	10:00 am	Writing Class (Rental)	Children's Church
Sat. Dec. 5	9:00 am	Writing Workshop (Rental)	Children's Church
	10:00 am	Continuing the Visioning <i>see page 1</i>	Dining Room
	7:00 pm	Marcia Gomes and Friends Concert <i>see page 6</i>	Sanctuary
Sun. Dec. 6		Second Sunday of Advent	
	10:00 am	Worship Service with Communion	Sanctuary
	6:00 pm	Youth Fellowship	Children's Church
Mon. Dec. 7	6:00 pm	Diaconate Meeting	Dining Room
Tues. Dec 8	7:00 pm	Men's Fellowship Meeting	Dining Room
Wed. Dec. 9	7:00 pm	Choir Practice	Sanctuary
Thurs. Dec. 10	9:30 am	Café Office Hours @ Sunrise Over Florence	Florence
	10:00 am	Writing Class (Rental)	Children's Church
	1:00 pm	Ladies Aid	Dining Room
	5:30 pm	Trustee Meeting	Dining Room
	6:00 pm	Children's and Family Ministries Committee Meeting	Children's Church
Fri. Dec. 11	12:30 pm	HCC Writer's Group	Dining Room
Sat. Dec. 12	9:00 am	Writing Workshop (Rental)	Children's Church
	1:00 pm	Piano Party	Dining Room
Sun. Dec. 13		Third Sunday of Advent	
	10:00 am	Worship Service, Christmas Pageant	Sanctuary
	12:00 noon	Council Meeting	Sanctuary
Tues. Dec 15	5:30 pm	Soup and Salad	Dining Room

Date	Time	Event	Location
Wed. Dec. 16	6:00 pm	Shepherds' Meeting	Dining Room
	7:00 pm	Choir Practice	Sanctuary
Thurs. Dec. 17	9:30 am	Café Office Hours @ Sunrise Over Florence	Florence
	10:00 am	Writing Class (Rental)	Children's Church
Sun. Dec. 20		Fourth Sunday of Advent	
	10:00 am	Worship Service	Sanctuary
	12:30 pm	Black Lives Matter	Sanctuary
	6:00 pm	Youth Fellowship	Children's Church
Mon. Dec. 21	6:00 pm	Peace and Justice Meeting	Dining Room
	7:00 pm	Longest Night/Blue Christmas Service	Sanctuary
Wed. Dec. 23	7:00 pm	Choir Practice	Sanctuary
Thurs. Dec. 24		Christmas Eve	
	7:00 pm	Candlelight Service	Sanctuary
Fri. Dec. 25		Christmas	
Sun. Dec. 27	10:00 am	Worship Service	Sanctuary
Wed. Dec. 30	7:00 pm	Choir Practice	Sanctuary
Thurs. Dec. 31	9:30 am	Café Office Hours @ Sunrise Over Florence	Florence

Hi Mom

when I see something that might be near death
the earthworm crossing the road in the meadows
too slowly
the moth battering our porch light
a big V of geese flying south
the trip too far for all to endure
I stop and speak to them
tell my mother I say hello
- Pastor Andrea

*Take on big jobs worth doing -- jobs like the
spread of love, peace, and justice. That
means refusing to be seduced by our cultural
obsession with being effective as measured
by short-term results.*
- Parker Palmer

Let us prepare for winter.

Dear God,
Let us prepare for winter.
The sun has turned away from us
and the nest of summer hangs broken in a tree.
Life slips through our fingers and,
as darkness gathers,
our hands grow cold.
It is time to go inside.
It is time for reflection and resonance.
It is time for contemplation.
Let us go inside.
Amen
- a prayer by Michael Leunig

This Month In Children's, Youth & Family Ministries

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

December 6: Group 1: Advent; Group 2: Mary & Elizabeth; Communion served; Youth Fellowship at 6:00 pm

December 13: Instant Christmas Pageant! (Everyone in the Sanctuary)

December 20: Group 1: Advent; Group 2: Jesus is Born; Youth Fellowship Christmas Party at 6:00pm

December 27: No Children's Church

Instant Christmas Pageant • Sunday, December 13th at

10:00 am • All people of all ages are invited to take on a role in our Christmas Pageant - - just by attending worship! ***Come dressed up as a shepherd, wise person, animal, angel, or a member of the Holy Family.*** Some extra costumes will be available. We will use the brilliant script written by Rev. Julie Olmsted, with our costumed actors and the whole congregation jumping into action throughout the pageant. Everyone can play a part in this rollicking retelling of the nativity story. Contact Pastor Chris if you'd like to help organize the Pageant.

Confirmation Class Forming • Confirmation is the means by which a young person takes on for themselves the promises made at their baptism, and becomes a member of the congregation. From January to May, Pastor Chris and Pastor Andrea will be leading a series of classes for anyone in 8th grade and above who wishes to pursue Confirmation. Requirements will include class attendance, service opportunities, worship attendance, and connection with a mentor. A detailed calendar and program description will be published in early January. For more information or to register for Confirmation, please contact Pastor Chris.

Fellowship Christmas Party: Christmas Olympics and

Gift Swap • Youth Fellowship will gather on December 20th from 6:00-7:30 pm for some Christmas games and a grab bag gift swap. Bring a friend, a snack to share, and a wrapped gift worth \$5 or under. All youth in 6th grade and up are invited.

Youth Fellowship Retreat at Silver Lake Conference

Center • Friday, January 29th to Sunday, January 31st Join us for a weekend of fun, food, fellowship, and faith formation on this Youth Fellowship retreat! Nestled in the northwest hills of Sharon, CT, Silver Lake Conference Center is the Outdoor Ministry site of the CT UCC. All youth in 6th through 12th grade are invited to attend. Permission slips will be available in hardcopy and on our website. ***Your registration fee of \$130*** includes all meals on Saturday plus Sunday brunch. ***Confidential financial assistance is available*** through Pastor Chris. No one will be turned away for financial reasons. ***Please register with Pastor Chris by January 3, 2016.***

Children's Church Social Justice Rotation • During January and into February, we will take a break from our usual Godly Play and Holy Moly curricula to explore Social Justice topics. The lessons and exact topics have yet to be chosen, and we are currently looking for folks with specific passions and expertise that might want to pitch an idea, point us toward resources, and/or teach a class session on Social Justice. If this sounds like you, please contact Pastor Chris.

Children's Church needs you! • We are always looking new folks to join our Children's Church teacher roster. 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!

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

Guilty

"Truly I tell you, people will be forgiven for their sins and whatever blasphemies they utter." - Mark 3:28

Not long ago, a young man I'd never seen before walked into our chapel before the start of our weekly jazz worship service with an electric guitar slung over his shoulder. When he introduced himself and it became clear that he was expecting to play, I welcomed him and explained that this wasn't a jam session, meaning that the musicians were people I knew and had hired in advance. He said he understood, and proceeded to unpack his guitar and plug in his amp. He took a seat about three feet from where I was set up and stared intently at me throughout the service, occasionally asking if he could play along as I counted off a song. At the end of the service, he approached and began to berate me, my lack of understanding of Christianity and the unwelcoming posture of the church. I did not respond well.

Since that day, I've replayed the details of that encounter countless times, identifying ways in which I might have handled the situation with more grace. He was, of course, responsible for some of the difficulties between us; but I'm older, should have been wiser, and can see in retrospect how I worsened matters. I've added this young man to the list of people I pray for whom I've wronged in my life, or who might see me as an enemy. I ask God to forgive me and bless these souls; yet, in every case, I continue to feel guilty, often many years after the fact.

It occurs to me that my guilt reflects my vanity and weak faith. How else to explain my refusal to believe that through God's grace, I am forgiven? Taking responsibility for one's actions is good; nagging guilt, however, is evidence of self-absorption, a turning away from God. Mature faith means letting go of self-importance, allowing God to cleanse us as only God's love can. Mature faith means believing that when God says we are forgiven, God means it, and God, not we, has the last word.

Prayer Gracious God, let me turn away from preoccupation with myself, and turn to you with a faith deep enough to accept your forgiveness and let go of guilt for my mistakes.

- Willie Sordillo is Administrator of the Pastoral Excellence Network and Music Director of Jazz Worship at Old South Church, Boston.

W I D E N I N G T H E

Welcome

Hints for Speaking into a Microphone

Using a microphone is straightforward. Use the same full voice you would normally use to be heard in conversation and you sound good. Don't try to be anyone else by putting on a special microphone voice. Put feeling and interest into your voice to engage people as you would without a mike.

Know your mike. Microphones come in many different types and styles, including:

Handheld. With this mike, keep the ball of the microphone below your mouth a few centimeters from your face and pointed toward your nose so that the air travels over the mike and not directly into it. Alternatively, touch the ball to your chin and keep it there.

Lavalier mike. This mike clips to your lapel or collar, and usually has a battery pack that you attach to your waistband. Speak normally as if speaking to a small group without a mike. The mike allows you to move about freely, but try not to turn your head too much. If you need to constantly turn to look at a screen, clip the mike to that side of your lapel.

Podium mike. Point this microphone at your mouth about two hand widths away, and speak across the mike, not into it. Don't turn right away from the mike. If you have to adjust the mike, bend the neck without touching the mike itself to avoid nasty feedback.

Don't get too close to the microphone, which distorts your voice. The microphone is designed to capture a voice that flows over or across it, not into it. If you get too close, the mike amplifies every breath, click, pop and hiss.

- Judy Apps, Part of the *Voice and Speaking Skills For Dummies Cheat Sheet* (UK Edition)

It is now becoming increasingly clear that the universe is more like a great thought than a great machine.
- J. Robert Oppenheimer -

Photo Directory Update: Help Desk 2.0

Still need some "Directory Assistance" with the new online photo directory? Stop by the Help Desk during Coffee Hour and see Cate Shaw (who has graciously agreed to field questions and offer assistance). Whether you want your photo included or not, we'd love for everyone to be included in our new directory. Hard copies will be made available on an individual basis once everyone who would like to be included is in the directory.

You can find helpful tips on setting up your listing in the 2016 Directory on page 6 of the November issue of *CrossCurrents*.

- Chip Roughton

New HCC website needs you

The HCC Media Team's new web site for the church is coming along well. It has lots of space for photos and we are asking everyone to help provide them.

We're looking for candid photos from coffee hour, workshops and programs, church committee meetings, fundraising events, choir, baptisms, the welcome of new members, and work in the community by church members. In other words, photos that show who we are and what we do. The more we have to choose from, the better. And if anyone has any historic photos, love to see those as well.

So bring your camera to church events, take candid, make sure the people you photograph are OK with appearing on our internet site, and make a note of the date, where it was taken, and names of people in the photo. You can email photos to myhccphotos@gmail.com. Our webmaster, Laura Garcia, will take it from there.

- Jim Foudy

There is no better way to heal yourself
than singing in a choir.... That is why
God made music.

- Nora Webster by Colm Toibin

Glorify

"Not to us, O Lord, not to us, but to your name give glory, for the sake of your steadfast love and your faithfulness." - Psalm 115:1

During the late 1990's, when the phrase "What would Jesus do?" was all the rage, a seminary professor I knew asked an alternative question: "Does it glorify God?"

I never knew how to answer the first question. I could usually guess at it, but I never was quite sure how Jesus would act in any given situation. In the end the whole thing felt like easy ethics and half-hearted speculation to me.

But that second question? That's the one that got to me. And that's the one I started to ask myself more regularly.

In the Westminster Catechism, a shared part of the heritage of both the Congregational and Evangelical and Reformed branches of the UCC, the first question asked is, "What is the chief end of (hu)mankind?" In other words, "What is our purpose in life?"

The answer is simply, "To enjoy God and glorify God forever."

Nearly 400 years later, I think that's the best one line synopsis of what it means to live a Christian life. In the end our choices should not be about what brings us glory. Instead, they should be about what glorifies God. And when we are faced with a difficult choice that one question can bring us clarity, cut through the excess, and make all the difference: Does it glorify God?

If the answer is "no," why do it? But if the answer is "yes," we can act boldly and in good faith. And, if the Westminster divines are right, we might even get a little enjoyment out of the whole thing to boot.

Prayer

God, sometimes we don't know exactly what Jesus would do, but we do know that whatever he did, it glorified you. Help us to give you the glory, that we may feel your joy. Amen.

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Office hours for Margie Serkin, our Church Bookkeeper/Office Administrator, are from 1- 6:00 pm, Mon., Wed., Thurs., and Fri.

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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.

