

# Cross Currents

January 2016 • Open Hearts & Open Minds & Open Doors



## From Pastor Andrea

Howard Thurman (1899-1981) was an influential American author, philosopher, theologian, educator and civil rights leader. He was Dean of the Chapel at Howard University and at Boston University for more than two decades, wrote 21 books, and mentored the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. In 1944, Dr. Thurman cofounded the Church for the Fellowship of All Peoples in San Francisco, the first interfaith religious congregation in the United States.

His famous and prophetic poem, "Now the Work of Christmas Begins" is below.

*When the song of the angels is stilled,  
when the star in the sky is gone,  
when the kings and princes are home,  
when the shepherds are back with their flocks,  
the work of Christmas begins:  
to find the lost,  
to heal the broken,  
to feed the hungry,  
to release the prisoner,  
to rebuild the nations,  
to bring peace among the people,  
to make music in the heart.*

This year, let's not revert. Let's not quietly, unconsciously, lazily, slip back into pre-Christmas behaviors and attitudes. Wouldn't that be great? Wouldn't it be wonderful to maintain the sense of hope, generosity, graciousness, love of peace, soft hearts, and ache for justice throughout the year?

## Highlights

visit us on line at: [haydenvillechurch.org](http://haydenvillechurch.org)

### Women Whose Words Have Disappeared

*"there's another player  
in this scene—Anna-- a  
prophetess who  
'worshipped night and  
day with fasting and  
prayer....'"*

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### God's Gift of a New Beginning

*" all I could see was a  
vast stream of creamy  
white milk, 80 gallons to  
be exact, flowing down  
the hill...."*

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### Peace and Justice Steering Committee has Been Very Busy

*"The Peace and Justice  
Steering Committee has  
been busy this fall."*

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I know that as a progressive Christian church that embraces a radical social gospel and extends an extravagant welcome, we do love peace, seek justice, hold on to hope.... I know. I know. We are good at those things throughout the year. But during Advent and Christmas we are more passionate about those values, more expressive, more demanding that the world live in harmony, that our planet be saved, that children be safe, and that justice prevail.

During Advent and Christmas, we get very specific and very articulate. We speak of the vision, we light candles, we sing songs about the splendor and safety of the world we envision.

Let's do that all year.

Let's drag the Christmas spirit into February, March, April, May even the dog days of summer.

Howard Thurman is right.

It is when the song of the angels is stilled, the star is gone, and the kings, princes, and shepherds have left that the work of Christmas begins.

Let's do the work of Christmas now through next Advent.

Thurman has given voice to the cry found in the Bible... the work that lays before us: to find the lost, to heal the broken, to feed the hungry, to release the prisoner, to rebuild nations, to bring peace among people, and to make music in the heart.

We could take scissors and cut Dr. Thurman's poem out of this newsletter, and have it laminated and carry it in our wallets, pockets, purses or backpacks. We could read it daily. We could memorize it. We could recite it in church. We could print it on a big banner. Most importantly, we could live it. That is the key, yes? We could live it.

Visionary and prophetic, Howard Thurman wrote the words we need to reflect on and write on our hearts. The work of Christmas begins now.



## Social Justice and Our Children

*"for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me."* ~ Matthew 25:35-36 (NRSV)

When I was searching for a new pastoral call and was attending local churches in 2012, one of the most important characteristics that drew me to Haydenville was the commitment to social justice causes - - and the courage and willingness to discuss them in the context of worship!

Though we could always do more, we are a congregation that combines the justice side of social justice with the hands-on action side: we show up at vigils, protests, and demonstrations, *and* we cook for Cathedral in the Night, and bring food for the pantry; we visit incarcerated folks, *and* advocate for prison reform and the end of capital punishment; we strive to provide a safe space for LGBTQ folks, *and* we advocate for antidiscrimination laws.

When I stood before you to preach my candidating sermon prior to the vote to call me as your Associate Pastor, I preached on one of my favorite passages from the Christian Scriptures. I consider Matthew 25:31-46 to be an essential part of the Christian's or Disciple's Job Description. It's all in there: when you care for and serve those who are on the margins or are considered "less" in society, that means you are caring for and serving Christ. I strive to follow this teaching myself, I hope to impress it upon my daughter, and I think it is important for the children and youth of our congregation to learn as well.

So, during January and into February, the **Children's Church and Youth Fellowship will be learning about Social Justice issues from both perspectives: advocacy and action.** While some of the topics have been selected, I am eager to hear from those of you with areas of particular expertise or passion! We will discuss racial justice, LGBTQ and gender issues, food insecurity and homelessness, and brainstorm about how we can take action in our daily lives and in our corner of the world to serve others and serve Christ.

Additionally, I am compiling a resource list of child-and-family-friendly service opportunities to hand out at the end of our Social Justice rotation. If you have some great ideas for young people, please pass them along! They can be for individuals or groups, organized, improvised, or guerrilla acts of service, low cost or no cost, ongoing or one-time.

Haydenville Congregational Church has a wealth of knowledge and experience to pass on to our children when it comes to Social Justice. We need you to be a part of passing the torch!

Peace & Blessings



Peace is not the product of terror or fear.  
 Peace is not the silence of cemeteries.  
 Peace is not the silent revolt of violent repression.  
 Peace is the generous, tranquil contribution of all to the good of all.  
 Peace is dynamism. Peace is generosity.  
 It is right and it is duty.

- Bishop Oscar Romero

## Women Whose Words Have Disappeared

The daily readings for both Sunday December 27th and Monday, December 28th, are about the Holy Family. They, of course, have just been on an emotional roller coaster the likes of which we can scarcely imagine: Mary—visited by Gabriel and invited to be the mother of God; Joseph, cautioned in a dream by an angel that he can take Mary as his wife; the two of them obeying Caesar’s decree and trotting over the dusty roads to Bethlehem 90 miles away. I cannot imagine being pregnant and riding a donkey so far: I found riding in a van to Cooley Dick just about more than I could bear.

Mary, in labor, looks with Joseph for a place to birth this miraculous son. Some sources say it happened in a stable or an outbuilding of an inn; other sources say it occurred in a cave outside Bethlehem, surely as different from the birthing room at my hospital as could be. For one thing, there were no Picasso reproductions on the wall, no nurses, and no fetal monitors.

The Shepherds come in all their fragrant glory, then the Magi, swaying on camelback and descending with gifts of unimaginable wealth and cost. What must Mary or Joseph have made of this? *I know, let’s re-gift the myrrh and the frankincense, Mary, but keep the gold. It might come in handy one day.*

Following Judaic law, the parents took Jesus to the temple in Jerusalem to present him to a priest and sacrifice two doves. This is when the elderly Simeon appears, limping—I imagine him so—towards the couple and holding out his arms to the baby Jesus. What a sigh of gladness he must have given once Jesus was in his arms! He cried, “Lord, now let your servant go in peace, your word has been fulfilled: my own eyes have seen the salvation which you prepared in the sight of every people...” He recognizes Jesus as savior and also tells Mary that a sword will “pierce her heart,” foretelling her own sadness and grief at her son’s death 33 years hence.

But there’s another player in this scene—Anna-- a prophetess who “worshipped night and day with fasting and prayer” in the temple. She also thanked God and spoke about Jesus to the people in the room, but nobody recorded *her* words. My question is this:

*What did she say?*

She was a prophet and possibly had also been waiting to see the coming savior of Israel and the wider world. Did she go up to Mary, place one hand reassuringly on her shoulder (after all, predictions of swords piercing one’s heart are somewhat disconcerting), and comfort her in some way? Did she tell her that Jesus would be left behind in the temple when he was 12, and that she and Joseph

## January Birthdays!

- 2 Charles Arlo Hooper-Lindros
- 3 Wilson Molano  
Douglas Renick
- 7 Debra Edwards
- 9 Sue Carbin
- 10 Allen Warner  
Sandy Blackmon
- 11 Diane Bushee
- 12 Eliza Warner  
Rev. Phillip Hall
- 14 Karin McGowan
- 16 Haley McElligott  
Laine Wilder
- 17 Emily Dines
- 19 Francesca Piantedosi
- 20 Julia Guiel
- 21 Nev Capron
- 22 Jose Newcomb-Gerken
- 23 Lynne Wallace
- 26 Shirley Warner  
MaryEllen McQueston
- 27 Bill Loomis  
Carol Boyer  
Mesfin Daniel McManamy  
Maureen Ricksgers
- 31 Adriana Piantedosi  
Aidan Chappuis



would be frantic with worry? Did Anna tell Mary that Jesus would open the hearts of many, heal lepers, raise the dead, cast out demons, and cure the deaf, the blind, and the mute?

I wish someone had taken down Anna's words. We have Simeon's. In Evening Prayer in the Catholic Church, his words - the Benedictus - always end the night's prayers. But what about Anna? Why don't we end our night time prayers with *her* words? Perhaps they went something like this:

*I have waited for you all my life.  
I was told of your coming,  
That you would bring us back to God,  
That you would be the new temple  
Anyone could enter and be healed.  
I see that your heart will be open  
To all peoples for all time.*

"Let me hold him." I imagine her stretching out her hands to baby Jesus, and once Mary placed the baby in her old, wise arms, Anna sighed and said,

"Now I can go in peace." And perhaps she snuggled with that little baby, inhaling the special fragrance of newborns, thinking that she held the world in her arms.

- Annie Turner

## God's Gift of a New Beginning

When I was sixteen I worked for a summer on a farm in Monterey. In addition to milking cows and baling hay, I delivered milk every morning in the village. One day I was given the assignment to take two eighty-gallon cans of milk to two summer camps nearby. When I arrived at the first camp, I drove my truck down a steep hill to the dining room down below. I stopped the truck, unfastened the tailgate and carried the first eighty gallon can into the kitchen. Then I got back into my truck, but I forgot to latch the tailgate in the back. When I stepped hard on the gas pedal to go up the steep hill, I suddenly heard a loud clang, clang, clang in the back of my truck and when I looked in the rear view mirror, all I could see was a vast stream of creamy white milk, 80 gallons to be exact, flowing down the hill behind me.

I was very upset, as you can imagine. I was terrified when I began to realize what I was going to have to tell the farmer, Dick Tryon. I assumed he'd be angry for those 80

gallons represented a good deal of money for his farm and whole family. I contemplated running away from the farm and never coming back. But I knew in my heart that I had to summon up my courage to confess what I had done to Dick. So I went to him and said, "Dick, I have just spilled 80 gallons of your precious milk on the steep driveway of the summer camp." Then I took a deep breath, as tears streamed down from my eyes, and waited for my punishment. Instead, Dick came over to me and put his hand on my shoulder. "Peter," he said, "accidents happen, even one as bad as this one, but trust me, one day you're going to be a good farmer."

As a young boy this was one of my first lessons in forgiveness. I expected the farmer to be angry. Instead, with the warmth of his touch, he released me from the fear welling up deep inside me. The farmer not only forgave me, he gave me a second chance. He made it possible for me to begin again without the weight of my mistake hanging round my shoulder forever. And what the farmer did reminds me of the counter-intuitive wisdom of Jesus. When Peter said to Jesus, "Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me and I forgive him, seven times? Jesus surprised him and said to Peter, "I do not just say to you seven times, but seventy times seven." Forgiveness is embedded in God's unconditional love for us. But first, we must be willing to acknowledge the pain we have caused and the hurt we have done before we can be forgiven. Blacks in South African were asked to forgive their white prosecutors for the sins of apartheid, but only after their prosecutors confessed their heart felt sorrow for what they had done.

Years ago an ex-convict was traveling by train in West Virginia. He had just been released from prison for a crime he had committed six years ago. Before leaving prison he wrote his wife and children a letter asking for forgiveness. "I am coming by train tomorrow, and if you want me to come home, just hang a yellow ribbon on a branch of the old oak tree where the train rounds the track. If there is no ribbon, I will just keep going and not get off." Well, as the train rounded the corner coming down the tracks to his home town, he asked a friend to look out the window for him for that ribbon. Suddenly his friend started shouting. "Come quick, come quick and take a look." The ex-con looked out the window and there before his eyes he saw the old oak tree with ribbons tied to every single branch. It was the beginning of a new beginning. May this new year of 2016 be God's new beginning for you too.

- Rev. Peter Ives, Theologian-in-Residence

## Christmas Pageant - 2015



photos by Laine Wilder

## Is Nothing Sacred?

*"Don't be flip with the sacred." - Matthew 7:6 (The Message)*

One Sunday at a church I was visiting in New England, the time had come in the worship service for "Joys and Concerns." People stood up one by one to request prayers for successful outcomes to minor surgeries and a few serious life situations.

Then one lady stood up and said, "When will the shutters be put back up?" The exterior of the church had just been painted, and the shutters hadn't been put back up yet. "I have no idea!" replied the minister brightly before moving on to the next Concern like a politician taking a reporter's question.

*When will the shutters be put back up?* She could have asked about this pretty much any hour of any other day of the week. But she chose now, the supposedly sacred hour.

Whatever happened to the sacred? People seem suspicious of it. It's not accessible, or transparent. It thinks it's better than, well, everything: it's elitist. It asks us to treat it with humility and reverence, and some of us have too much self-esteem for that. It expects us to put all else aside and prepare our hearts to encounter it. And sometimes I just don't feel like it. I have too many Concerns.

A friend of mine used to dread taking his mother to church because she always complained about the Mexicans filling up the pews where once it was all Italians. Finally one Sunday he said to her, "For Christ's sake, Ma, this is a *church!* It's not the Sons of Italy!"

One of the purposes of the sacred is to relieve us—if only for an hour—of our petty concerns and prejudices, our obsessions with trivia and things we're going to forget about soon anyway. I'm pretty sure those shutters went back up eventually, and my friend's mother got used to sitting in church with Mexicans, as if it didn't even matter.

### Prayer

The shutters, the disappearing Italians, the fact that I think the pastor should get rid of that ridiculous mustache—take my mind off all of it, please! Remind me where I am, and what this hour is for.

*- Christina Villa is the Director of the Publishing, Identity, and Communications Ministry of the United Church of Christ in Cleveland, Ohio.*

## Bridging the Divide: Cross Cultural Communication and Micro-aggressions Workshop

**Saturday, January 16, 9:00 am - 2:00 pm**  
**Church Dining Room**

This workshop opens your eyes to how your own and other's communications style is rooted in cultural experience. Exploring diverse styles fosters deeper awareness of difference in a new and more compassionate light. Then we examine micro-aggressions - the subtle, usually unconscious or unintentional comments or actions that target and stereotype people based on their marginalized status.

**Facilitators:** Jen Matias and Pat James

## 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 12oz 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!

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

*- J. Robert Oppenheimer -*

# Calendar for January

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

Thank you "Daily Bread" for providing the coffee hour goodies during January.

Date	Time	Event	Location
Sun. Jan. 3	10:00 am	Worship Service with Communion	Sanctuary
	6:00 pm	Youth Fellowship	Children's Church
Mon. Jan. 4	6:30 pm	Diaconate Meeting	Dining Room
Tues. Jan. 5	5:30 pm	A2A Meeting	Dining Room
Wed. Jan. 6	12:45 pm	Book Study Group with Peter Ives	Dining Room
	6:00 pm	Confirmation Class, Family Potluck Dinner	Dining Room
	7:00 pm	Choir Practice	Sanctuary
Thurs. Jan. 7	9:30 am	Café Office Hours @ Sunrise Over Florence	Florence
Fri. Jan. 8	12:30 pm	HCC Writers' Group	Dining Room
Sun. Jan. 10	10:00 am	Worship Service	Sanctuary
	12:00 noon	Council Meeting	Sanctuary
Tues. Jan. 12	7:00 pm	Men's Fellowship Meeting	Dining Room
Wed. Jan. 13	7:00 pm	Choir Practice	Sanctuary
Thurs. Jan. 14	9:30 am	Café Office Hours @ Sunrise Over Florence	Florence
	5:30 pm	Trustee Meeting	Dining Room
	6:00 pm	Family Ministries Meeting	Children's Church
Sat. Jan. 16	9:00 am	Cross Cultural Communication	Dining Room
Sun. Jan. 17		<b>Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Sunday</b>	
	10:00 am	Worship Service	Sanctuary
	6:00 pm	Youth Fellowship	Children's Church
Mon. Jan. 18	6:00 pm	Peace and Justice Meeting	Dining Room
Tues. Jan 19		Active Hope, Inspiring Change	Dining Room
Wed. Jan. 20	6:00 pm	Shepherds' Meeting	Dining Room
	7:00 pm	Choir Practice	Sanctuary
Thurs. Jan. 21	9:30 am	Café Office Hours @ Sunrise Over Florence	Florence
	1:00 pm	Ladies Aid	Dining Room

Date	Time	Event	Location
Fri. Jan. 22	12:30 pm	HCC Writers' Group	Dining Room
Sun. Jan. 24	10:00 am	Worship Service	Sanctuary
Wed. Jan 27	7:00 pm	Choir Practice	Sanctuary
Thurs. Jan 28	9:30 am	Café Office Hours @ Sunrise Over Florence	Florence
Sun. Jan. 31	10:00 am	Worship Service	Sanctuary
	5:00 pm	Cathedral in the Night	Northampton

## Nine New Members!

The names of Jen Cebik, Jennie Davis, Olivia Ilano Davis, Theresa Dwyer, John Kremensky, Susan Langer, Yohah Ralph, Katie Rose, and Susan Smith have been presented for membership in the Haydenville Congregational Church. These people have found nurture and support in the midst of our Church family. Through prayer and study they have been led by God to claim in our presence their covenantal relationship with the members and friends of the Haydenville Congregational Church. They are here for service to God, using the gifts that God has given them.

- Pastor Andrea

## The Prayer of Protection

The Light of God surrounds you.  
 The Love of God enfolds you.  
 The power of God protects you.  
 The Presence of God watches over you.  
 The Mind of God guides you.  
 The Life of God flows through you.  
 The Laws of God direct you.  
 The Peace of God abides within you.  
 The Joy of God uplifts you.  
 The Strength of God renews you.  
 The Beauty of God inspires you.  
 Wherever you are, God is!  
 And all is well. Amen.

- James Dillet Freeman

## Pain Tolerance

*(Aaron to Moses) "They said to me, 'Make us gods, who shall go before us; as for this Moses, the man who brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we do not know what has become of him.'" - 1 Exodus 32: 23-35*

The Israelites were feeling some pain. They were anxious. Moses was gone, off on the top of some mountain with God. So the people came to Aaron and said, "Do something." Take away our anxiety. Take away our pain. Make us a golden god.

Are there times in life when it's best to tolerate a little pain, to live with a little discomfort?

Sometimes in congregations we become so committed to the rhetoric of care and compassion that we seem to think that if anyone is feeling uncomfortable it must be fixed or alleviated right this minute. Perhaps not? Maybe sometimes life is just uncomfortable? Maybe at times what we're dealing with, or need to deal with, is difficult and painful? Being too quick to fix or take away the pain may mean that the real issues are avoided and real healing is not ever experienced.

Good leaders don't always take away people's pain or discomfort. They do help people to bear the pain of life's challenges and to grow. They help people not to panic when things get scary. Faithful leaders encourage people to persevere when it's hard going and then to make progress.

**Prayer** God of Exodus, you didn't make the journey so that we don't have to. You promise to make the journey with us. Grant us your presence so that we might make the journey forward with courage. Amen.

- Talitha Arnold is Senior Minister of the United Church of Santa Fe (UCC), Santa Fe, New Mexico.



## This Month In Children's, Youth & Family Ministries

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

**January 3:** (All ages) Social Justice introduction; Communion served; Youth Fellowship at 6:00pm

**January 10:** (All ages) Social Justice topic TBD

**January 17:** (All ages) Racism and civil rights; Youth Fellowship at 6:00pm

**January 24:** (All ages) Food insecurity and homelessness

**January 31:** All ages help with Cathedral in the Night food prep; Youth Fellowship returns from retreat; Youth Fellowship at Cathedral in the Night at 5:00pm

### 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 hard copy 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. While some of the lessons and exact topics have been chosen, we are still 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.

**Sock Collection for Cathedral in the Night • January 24th and 31st •** Clean, dry socks are an important item of clothing during the winter. Many of our siblings who

experience homelessness do not have socks good to wear! In preparation for our class session on homelessness and our help with Cathedral in the Night (CitN), we are asking children and youth to bring in a pack of new socks to give away at CitN. Any above-the-ankle sock will do. This small act of generosity will go a long way. Thank you!

**Children's Church needs you! •** We are **always** looking for 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!

**Confirmation Class Registration and Potluck • January 6th 6:00-7:30pm •** Confirmation is the means by which a young person takes on 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. Our first meeting will be a family potluck dinner, followed by monthly meetings on the first Wednesdays from 6:00-7:30pm. For more information or to register for Confirmation, please contact Pastor Chris.

**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!

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

## HCC at the Climate Change Rally - Nov 29, 2015



photo by Shirley Sicurello

### **Give us Your Loveseats, 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!

### **The Sandcastle Girls**

Gloria Lampron is donating an autographed copy of *"The Sandcastle Girls"* by Chris Bohjalian to our Church Library. The novel is a deeply moving story about the Armenian Genocide during the first World War.

WIDENING THE

*Welcome*

"Faith is God's call to see his trace  
in the face of the Other."

- Rabbi Jonathan Sacks,  
Author of *NOT IN GOD'S NAME: Confronting  
Religious Violence*

It is my conviction that there is no  
way to peace - peace is the way.

- Thich Nhat Hahn

## The Peace and Justice Steering Committee Has Been Very Busy

The Peace and Justice Steering Committee has had a busy fall! We have changed the name of our Soup, Salad, Peace and Justice events to Active Hope, Inspiring Change.

In October we had Hattie Nestel talk with us about Stopping the Pipeline which, if built, will go through one Hampshire County town and eight Franklin County towns. There were nine of us present and we had a very rich and engaging conversation. Afterward Jo Cannon and Jackie Cloonan wrote:

*"We learned that not only will this pipeline not support MA residents in any way, but will cut a 100-foot wide swath of destruction through communities, protected wildlife refuges, waterways, and the CT River indiscriminately. That is without even considering the risks of any disaster caused by broken pipes, equipment failure or operator error. The large compression stations across the state, including one in Northfield, will produce enough noise and light with 24/7 operations to make the surrounding communities effectively uninhabitable."*

In November, thirteen of us heard from representatives, Deb Shriver and Sarah Weinberger, of the Valley Syrian Relief Committee about the current situation for Syrian refugees. About half of the eleven million Syrians are now displaced from their homes. Many are in neighboring countries—Turkey, Jordan and Lebanon—and many are migrating into Europe and the United States. Beautiful *Soup for Syria* cookbooks were for sale and the money raised will go to the Syrian-American Medical Society, which is providing badly needed health clinics on the ground in Syria. Another rich conversation left us more aware of the devastating effects of the war, which includes US bombs, both with the Syrian regime and ISIS. We discussed the issue of resettling Syrian refugees in our area and P&JSC will be exploring the possibility of co-sponsoring a Syrian refugee family as a project for our church community.

A November workshop on Cross Cultural Communications and Micro-Aggressions was cancelled because facilitators Jen Matias and Pat James were ill. It has been rescheduled for January 16, 9-2 pm, Church Dining Room. If HCC partners with an African American congregation to jointly engage in, e.g., social justice activities, then we need to be awake and alert to collaborating and interacting across boundaries.

On December 20th after the worship service P&JSC will lead a conversation in the sanctuary about the Black Lives Matter movement and lawn signs, one of which we have on our Church's lawn. Of course, all lives matter, so why this sign at this time? All are invited.

In February--Thursday, the 18th--Dawn Orluske will facilitate a discussion on the Quran and Islam based on work she is doing at Andover Newton Theological Seminary. This is very relevant to calls to register, monitor and shut out all Muslims!

And what shall we say and do about climate change given the Paris COP21 international accord? Our Church was well represented in the march and rally on Nov. 29th, urging world leaders to get serious about keeping world temperature increases below 2 degrees centigrade. They obviously responded to our urging! Stay tuned for next actions.

- Doug Renick

## "Respect Our Pronouns"

When trans people say "respect our pronouns" we are not just asking you to shift your language, we are asking you to shift an entire paradigm around sex, gender, and race. It's not enough to change one word when we are asking for the end of an entire worldview.

What we are saying is not just "this word makes me feel good," but rather I demand the right to narrate my body and my history on my own terms in a system that is predicated on categorizing, containing, and criminalizing me.

When we say "respect" what we mean is fight like hell for me. What we mean is we weren't just assigned this gender at birth, we are non-consensually gendered every day and what are you going to do about that?

This is not an opportunity to be politically correct, this is an opportunity to stop being incorrect.

- Alok Vaid-Menon, in *DarkMatter*  
submitted by Pat James

Dear Creator, You, the borderless sea of substance, we ask you to give to all the world that which we need most—Peace.

- Dr. Maya Angelou

## 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

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