

Cross Currents



March 2016 • Open Hearts & Open Minds & Open Doors

From Pastor Andrea

Seven Stanzas at Easter

Make no mistake: if He rose at all
it was as His body;
if the cells' dissolution did not reverse, the molecules
reknit, the amino acids rekindle,
the Church will fall.

It was not as the flowers,
each soft Spring recurrent;
it was not as His Spirit in the mouths and fuddled
eyes of the eleven apostles;
it was as His flesh: ours.

The same hinged thumbs and toes,
the same valved heart
that—pierced—died, withered, paused, and then
regathered out of the enduring Might
new strength to enclose.

Let us not mock God with metaphor,
analogy, sidestepping, transcendence;
making of the event a parable, a sign painted in the
faded credulity of earlier ages:
let us walk through the door.

The stone is rolled back, not papier-mache,
not a stone in a story,
but the vast rock of materiality that in the slow
grinding of time will eclipse for each of us
the wide light of day.

And if we will have an angel at the tomb,
make it a real angel,
weighty with Max Planck's quanta, vivid with hair,
opaque in the dawn light, robed in real linen
spun on a definite loom.

Let us not seek to make it less monstrous,
for our own convenience, our own sense of beauty,
lest, awakened in one unthinkable hour, we are
embarrassed by the miracle,
and crushed by remonstrance.

- John Updike

I have talked about, preached about, written about, and
prayed on the meaning of Easter for decades. And yet,
when I found this poem by John Updike in the book *Bread
and Wine: Readings for Lent and Easter*, I was stopped
short. My first thought was: how did I miss this poem for so

Highlights

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"the average person
wastes \$30 worth of
food per month. Go
ahead and multiply that
last amount by the
number of people in
your house, then
annualize it!"

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"....Lent feels more like
an extended rainy
season--full of
deprivation,
uncomfortable, with rain
dripping down the back
of my coat, and no
fireplace or hot tea in
sight."

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to hunker down, keep
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nothing was wrong, even
when help was readily
available."

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before me and hang their
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long? I have referred to the *Bread and Wine* book during Lent for years. My second thought was: Oh no. This one poem is going to make me rethink the resurrection. Do I want to do that? Can I do that? Oh no.

Maybe I *had* read the poem during Lent in former years but was not ready to take it in. Maybe I had read and dismissed the poem thinking: I have described the resurrection in metaphorical terms for years and I am not stopping now. Maybe I had read the poem and been threatened: Updike refers to calling the resurrection metaphor, analogy and sidestepping as mocking God. "Let us not mock God with metaphor, analogy, sidestepping, transcendence; making of the event a parable..."

Maybe when I read the poem in Lents past, I closed the book too afraid to think I had mocked God—in prayer, in preaching, in my heart.

The poem has stirred and disturbed me. Maybe it took a poem with its powerful imagery—molecules reknit, amino acids rekindled, hinged thumbs and toes, valved heart—to bypass my know-it-all brain and touch my vulnerable heart. This Lent, my heart feels less protected. My Lenten practice is **increased prayer** so I am more raw, more sensitive, more available to the movement of the Spirit inside me. Maybe with my defenses down, I could read the poem, actually hear the message, and stop in my tracks knowing something important was happening.

I am rethinking the resurrection. I have always said that Jesus "seemed to appear" to the eleven. And made the analogy that Jesus seems to appear to me...on Mt. Tom, on the Camino in Spain, in the Garden of Gethsemane, in church, by the Oxbow. Jesus "seems" to be there. But maybe Updike is right. Maybe it was like Max Planck's quantum theory explains, Jesus was there, real atoms with weight and, as Updike says, real hair.

Maybe I have been wrong and smug for years. Maybe the resurrection was a real body "that—pierced—died, withered, paused, and then regathered out of enduring Might..."

Me, who has "sidestepped" the issue of a bodily resurrection just as Updike accuses, is reconsidering the whole resurrection story. He cautions us "Let us not seek to make it less monstrous, for our own convenience, our own sense of beauty, lest, awakened in one unthinkable hour, we are embarrassed by the miracle..."

Maybe I have been embarrassed by the miracle. Afraid of the "monstrous" power of the whole story if it is literally true. Maybe this Lent, having chosen "more prayer" as my

Lenten practice, I am finally soft and still enough to let in this new possibility.

Today my meditation is simple: Oh God, I am listening. And open. Show me. Teach me. Revelations are welcome. I am more ready. Amen.



"Waste Not!"

When they were satisfied, he told his disciples, "Gather up the fragments left over, so that nothing may be lost." So they gathered them up, and from the fragments of the five barley loaves, left by those who had eaten, they filled twelve baskets. - John 6:12-13

I had one of those interesting coincidences happen today. I was in a waiting room and picked up a practically-ancient copy of a National Geographic that was on the table. The issue focused on food - - food security, cultural and faith traditions around food, emotional and physical research on food. One article talked about a fact I had heard of before: that famine and hunger are not about a lack of food production, but are instead a human-made phenomenon due to access, politics, and economics. According to the statistics, there is enough food produced around the world to adequately provide each person - - approximately 7 billion people - - with over 2,000 calories of food per day, which is the World Health Organization's recommended guideline. Yet, people starve on city streets and in rural towns in our country and throughout the world. I thought about not only my own food consumption, but especially my food waste.

Then on the way home, I heard an interview with Dana Gunders, author and scientist at the Natural Resources Defense Council. Publicizing her new book, she shared her passion for addressing, reducing, and eliminating food waste - - starting with our own refrigerators and stovetops. Again, her statistics were startling: 40% of food in the U.S. goes

to waste; 25% of the water used for food production goes toward food that is never eaten; the U.S. has increased food waste 50% since the 1970's; the average person wastes \$30 worth of food per month. Go ahead and multiply that last amount by the number of people in your house, then annualize it! And again, I was called to not only consider my own food consumption, but especially my food waste.

You may know that I love to cook. I try to plan out my meals for a few days, buy just what I need, and make sure I cook it on time. But sometimes the recipe is a flop, or the leftovers are unappealing, or my appetite changes and I simply don't want to eat what I've planned. If I don't eat the veggies in time, they go in the compost. If I don't put the meat in the freezer in time, it goes in the trash. Having a kid in the house and also enjoying convenience for myself, I have some prepared foods: deli meats, cheese, dips. Sometimes I forget about them or don't want them. Into the trash they go.

The interesting thing about throwing away meats and some veggies is that you can see what you paid for them. The price sticker from the scale is right on the package. As they fall into the trash, I picture myself throwing out that amount of money, and try to remember that image on my next grocery shopping trip: "Stop buying turkey at the deli, Chris! You and Izzy aren't eating it!"

All of this leads me to my Lenten practice. As I write this, today is Ash Wednesday. As you read this, we are right in the middle of Lent. In addition to one other self-care related practice, I have decided that I will track my food waste during Lent. I will keep a chart by my trashcan and compost bucket, and will mark the food and approximate amount and value each time I toss something that should've been eaten into the trash. I imagine this will be both sobering and embarrassing.

How is this a Lenten practice? Primarily, it calls me to acknowledge and reflect on my position in the world and how the things I take for granted are desperately lacking for others. My waste of these resources is a sin, and disconnects me from my fellow Children of God. Now, this is largely indirect. Just like how the

parental admonition that a child's uneaten food is an affront to children in foreign countries never actually resulted in parents packaging up leftovers and shipping them overseas, this is instead a reminder for me to both examine my privilege and consider the needs of and injustice toward others.

It also calls me to consider Jesus's message of abundance, balanced with the portrayal of the early Christian community described in Acts, where members gave what they could and were supplied with what they needed - - no more and no less (Acts 2, Acts 4). Am I taking more than my share of the abundance? Am I leaving others with less than they need? Again, this is indirect, but I am certain that this practice will impact my consumer habits and choices, and could possibly lead me to greater advocacy and action concerning food security and food justice - - just as several of our church members and friends already do.

So as I once again clean out my fridge to prepare for the weekly trash day, and simultaneously create my shopping list based on my fridge inventory, I'll also mark down what I've wasted - - and I'll confess and repent.

Bon appétit and amen.

Peace & Blessings,



March Birthdays!

- 2 Melissa Brown
Jessica LaCroix
- 3 Gary Orluske
- 6 Kathleen Kent
- 7 Amy McElligott
- 8 Bonnie Atkins
- 10 Susan Farrell
Olivia Schiaffo
- 11 Jacob Carbin-O'Brien
- 12 Jonathan Roberge
- 16 Hannah Karpman-Hull
Laura Paul
- 17 Kenneth Nichols
Gabriel Fournier
- 18 Shirley Sicurello
- 19 Sally Lemaire
- 20 Shelby McQueston
- 26 Robert Davis
- 28 Barbara Stowe
Hannah Durrant
- 30 Maureen Bourbeau



Lent for the Woebegone

I admit I am not “woebegone,” but isn’t it a marvelous title? As a writer, I continue to be captivated by titles, odd combinations of words, and sounds that bounce off of one another. But this is serious, and I want to talk about how I experience Lent—as a Lent failure (another good title)—and how I am doing it differently this year.

First, a bit of background: Over the years that I have been a Christian (approximately 38 and 13 as a Catholic), Lent feels more like an extended rainy season--full of deprivation, uncomfortable, with rain dripping down the back of my coat, and no fireplace or hot tea in sight. I have struggled mightily and unsuccessfully with the idea of “giving up something” so as to align myself more closely with Jesus’ suffering.

Really? In mid-winter? Who invented this? Were they completely insane?

I finally have figured out what the catch is for me with this whole Lenty business: sexually abused as a very young child (not by a family member, thank God), and the victim of an accidental gunshot wound, also when young, the prospect of giving something up absolutely triggers my crap. I feel rebellious, saddened, and wounded by the whole shebang. Probably about another two centuries of therapy might cure me, but maybe not, and besides I hear that therapy is not very successful with dead people. So I am taking control of this Lenty thing (and isn’t control the whole issue when you have been abused?), and writing my own script.

Nope, to the giving up wine.

Nope, to giving up chocolate.

Nope to giving up bagels, sex, hot tubs, trashy romances, pizza, and Amazon.com. I am going to focus on *giving out* this year, which many pastors now recommend. Let this be a *season of abundance* instead of a *season of deprivation* which will also mirror God’s abundance in sending Jesus to us semi-crazed humans.

So, with that in mind, here are some of the things I have decided to do:

1 Give several packages of disposable diapers to the Survival Center each Friday. It’s my Lenty Friday thing. (No, I will not give up meat either!) Diapers are required by Day Care centers who watch the children of working women, often poor. Some wise communities have even set up Diaper Banks to deal with this situation, and as you

may know, Food Stamps (going down in Massachusetts!) do not cover disposable diapers.

2 As a practice of gratitude and abundance, I will write one note per day during Lent to thank people for being a part of my life. This might be an old school friend from High School who saved my life by being a good friend and convincing me I was a good person, even though I was a commie-pinko atheist at the time.

3 I will find a family or person to visit each week from church who needs some outside cheer.

And that is it for the Lenty thing. Just the idea of bullet points, numbers, and lists makes the hair on the back of my neck rise up. It is hard being such a rebellious, snarky dame, but I have to live with this and find ways to mirror God’s abundance that do not make me feel crazy or needy. I’ll let you know how it goes.

-Annie Turner

All Shall Be Well

At this time of year I long for the coming of spring and can’t wait to see the yellow of the daffodils. I love walking up the hill by Wright Hall at Smith College on the way towards the Student Center. There is a large area right near the top that is barren most of the winter. But if you keep walking up that hill early in March, all of a sudden, you will see the budding of the daffodils. And when I see those daffodils I am reminded of Sydney Carter’s song, “Love like the yellow daffodil is coming through the snow, love like the yellow daffodil is Lord of all I know. Ring out Bells of Norwich, let the winter come and go. All shall be well again I know.”

These words, of course, weren’t just Sydney Carter’s words. They were the words of Julian of Norwich. Julian was born in Norwich, England in 1343. Sister Julian was an anchoress. She chose to live in a small cell called an anchorage that was attached to the walls of the St. Julian Church of Norwich, England. Her cell had three windows. The first window opened into the sanctuary so she could hear the Mass and receive communion. The second window opened up onto an inner court near the kitchen so that the cooks could bring her food each day. The third window opened out onto the street so that the people of Norwich could come and speak to her which they did in

great numbers. They came from all around the city to share with her their deepest hopes and fears, to confess their sins, to grieve their losses and reveal the traumas of their lives. Here at the window, Julian would counsel them, while all around on the outside the yellow daffodils shined in full bloom.

She would talk about the love of God that like the sun was shining upon them. She called each of them God's beloved. She wanted them to know God's love was working through them. And then she would say to them after they had shared their doubts and fears, "All shall be well, all manner of things shall be well, and all shall be well again." Sister Julian was not naïve when she said, "All shall be well again." She knew that outside her abbey in Norwich life was not easy for the people who came to pray with her and seek advice. She knew that for them life was cold and hard. She knew that many of them felt the absence of God's love in their lives and in their world. It was the time of the Black Plague. The people of Norwich had very little food to eat, very little water to drink, and the plague was taking the lives of their children every day. But what she was able to do during these counseling sessions was remarkable. She shared with them her deepest conviction that no matter what happened, the power of God's love could still transform their lives, and in this love of God they would have everlasting life. In her book *Revelations of Divine Love*, the first book in English written by a woman, she says, "Deeds are done which appear so evil to us and people suffer such terrible evils that it does not seem as though any good will ever come of them. But when our soul sits in God in true repose and our soul stands in God's true strength and our soul is rooted in God in endless love, all shall be well, and all manner of things shall be well."

So go out this spring and look for the daffodils in your back yard. Or walk over to Wright Hall at Smith College and look for the daffodils there. "For love like a yellow daffodil is coming through the snow, love like the yellow Daffodil is Lord of all I know. Ring out bells of Norwich, let the winter come and go, all shall be well again, I know."

- Rev. Peter B. Ives, Theologian-in-Resident

The Receiving End

I was raised to be much more comfortable being on the giving end rather than the receiving end of help. My parents thought that needing help was a bit shameful. Family crises were times to hunker down, keep quiet, and pretend nothing was wrong, even when help was readily available. Being ill meant being stoic and keeping your misery to yourself.

I think our fear of being in need of help was linked to our white middle class privilege of believing that we got where we were, and we had what we had, through individual merit, hard work, and rugged independence. In other words, we earned it. Needing help, therefore, was evidence that we'd failed to live up to this impossible standard. So we didn't deserve help. We were not worthy.

Recently I had the opportunity to experience needing help in a whole new way. For two weeks in January, Karin and I were both flat out sick, too sick to cook, and too sick to

care. One morning we joked that we needed a mommy. That afternoon the first delivery of soup appeared at our front door. Two days later, there was more soup and some bread. A few days after that, more soup, and then even more soup a few days later. Along with the soup came cards, texts and emails. And love, so much love, all from our HCC family!

For those of us who tend to resist help, it's worth reexamining the stories we tell ourselves about what accepting help means. Karin and I felt cared for. We felt watched over. We felt connected. And we felt worthy. At HCC we refer to all these caregivers as Angels, but for now I prefer to think of you as mommies. It was wonderful, and healing, and tasty to be on the receiving end of all that care. Thank you!

- Pat James

Our greatest responsibility is to be good ancestors.

- Jonas Salk

The reality is that you will grieve forever. You will not 'get over' the loss of a loved one; you will learn to live with it. You will heal and you will rebuild yourself around the loss you have suffered. You will be whole again but you will never be the same. Nor should you be the same, nor would you want to.

- Elizabeth Kubler-Ross

One Great Hour of Sharing (OGHS)

This special UCC offering will be collected on March 6th during our worship service. The UCC says OGHS “gives hope and life,” and supports partners in more than 70 countries with ministries that fund development projects, feed the victims of famine, provide services for displaced people, and respond to natural disasters. We will be happily accepting gifts of cash or checks (made payable to the Haydenville Congregational Church with OGHS in the memo field). We are a “5 for 5” congregation, meaning that we consistently give to the 5 UCC special offerings - - let’s keep it up! We thank you in advance for your generosity.

 Church Picnic

Sunday, June 26th after church
at Velma and Laura Garcia's house
80 South Street, Williamsburg
More details to come

Save the date!

“Refugees Are Welcome Here”

The Peace & Justice Steering Committee put up the “Refugees Are Welcome Here” posters on the doors of the church, in the sanctuary and dining room on Sunday, February 21. P&J will also be preparing a proposal for how our church can respond to the refugee crisis. So we need to hear from you, our church community! What are your concerns? Questions? What do you feel moved to do about refugees coming to our area?

- Come to a Listening Session after church on Sunday, March 6.
- Or, email Doug Renick (renick.rinehart@comcast.net).

After hearing your thoughts, P&J will prepare a proposal for action by the end of March.

- Lisa Hall

Understanding Islam and Combating Anti-Muslim Rhetoric and Violence

- **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 Hazratji preaching • Reading from the Koran
Special Coffee Hour following Worship

- **Saturday, May 14** • 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

Instant Choir

Want to join the choir for one day? Come to practice at 9:00 am on March 13 and sing with us in worship at 10:00. No experience necessary! No commitment required!

- Jeff Olmsted, Minister of Music

If you're planting a tree and the end of the world comes, you finish planting the tree.

- Muhammad

Calendar for March

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

Thank you "Grateful Bread" for providing the coffee hour goodies during March.

Date	Time	Event	Location
Wed. March 2	12:45 pm	Book Study Group with Peter Ives	Dining Room
	7:00 pm	Choir Practice	Sanctuary
Thurs. March 3	9:30 am	Café Office Hours @ Pine Street Café (formerly called Sunrise over Florence Café)	Florence
	2:00 - 6:15 pm	Writing Group	Children's Church
	6:30 pm	Diaconate Meeting	Dining Room
Fri. March 4	7:00 pm	Mt. McKinley Presentation	Dining Room
Sun. March 6	10:00 am	Worship Service with Communion/ OGHS, <i>see page 6</i>	Sanctuary
	After Worship	Exploring Membership, Class #3	Pastor Andrea's Office
	After Worship	"Refugees Are Welcome Here" Listening Session	Sanctuary
	6:00 pm	Youth Fellowship	Children's Church
Tues. March 8	7:00 pm	The Abrahamic Traditions, <i>see page 6</i>	Dining Room
Wed. March 9	7:00 pm	Choir Practice	Sanctuary
Thurs. March 10	9:30 am	Café Office Hours @ Pine Street Café	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. March 11	12:30 pm	HCC Writers' Group	Dining Room
Sat. March 12	5:00 - 6:30 pm	Family Game Night!	Dining Room
Sun. March 13	10:00 am	Worship Service with Instant Choir, <i>see page 6</i>	Sanctuary
	After Service	Exploring Membership, Class #4	Pastor Andrea's Office
	12:00 pm	Council Meeting	Sanctuary
Tues. March 15	7:00 pm	Men's Fellowship Meeting	Dining Room
Wed. March 16	7:00 pm	Choir Practice	Sanctuary
Thurs. March 17	9:30 am	Café Office Hours @ Pine Street Café	Florence
	6:00 pm	Journey: Support Group	Children's Church
Sat. March 19	7:00 pm	Church Bingo	Dining Room

Date	Time	Event	Location
Sun. March 20		Palm Sunday	
	10:00 am	Worship Service	Sanctuary
	6:00 pm	Youth Fellowship	Children's Church
Mon. March 21	6:00 pm	Peace and Justice Meeting	Location TBA
Wed. March 23	7:00 pm	Choir Practice	Sanctuary
Thurs. March 24	9:30 am	Café Office Hours @ Pine Street Café	Florence
	7:00 pm	Maundy Thursday Service	Sanctuary
Fri. March 25	12:00 - 3:00 pm	Good Friday	Sanctuary Open
	12:30 pm	HCC Writers' Group	Dining Room
Sun. March 27		Easter Sunday	
	10:00 am	Worship Service	Sanctuary
Wed. March 30	7:00 pm	Choir Practice	Sanctuary
Thurs. March 31	9:30 am	Café Office Hours @ Pine Street Café	Florence

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!

Specific Children's Church Needs:

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

If we have no peace, it is because we have forgotten that we belong to each other

-- Mother Theresa

HCC Activities are Sometimes Photographed

Worship services, church events, and HCC activities in the community are sometimes photographed and videotaped to document the vibrant life of our church. If you do not wish to be included, or do not wish to have your photo appearing in church publications or on our web site, please tell one of the pastors.

As a part of annual registration for children and youth programs, parents and guardians are asked to sign a photo release for their children. These releases are held by the Director of Children's, Youth, and Family Ministries, who will communicate any photo release restrictions to the webmaster and publications editor. Your permission for photo releases can be modified or revoked at any time by contacting one of the pastors.

"I am no longer accepting things I can not change. I am changing things I can not accept."

- Angela Davis

This Month In Children's, Youth & Family Ministries

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

March 6: (All ages) Lent; Youth Fellowship at 6:00 pm

March 12: Family Game Night at 5:00 pm

March 13: (All ages) Lent

March 20: (All ages) Palm Sunday; Youth Fellowship at 6:00 pm

March 27: Easter (No Children's Church)

Youth Fellowship will continue to meet on our regular pattern of the **1st and 3rd Sundays of the month from 6:00 to 7:30 pm** at the Church. All youth in 6th through 12th grade are invited to attend. We have been invited to join the youth groups of First Churches of Northampton and St. John's Episcopal Church on **Saturday, April 2nd, at 1:30-3:15 pm for ice skating at The Mullins Center!** Please let Pastor Chris know if you'd like to attend, and keep a look out for other activities and service opportunities in the spring!

Family Game Night! Saturday, March 12th from 5:00-6:30 pm in the Church Dining Room • Join us for our first Family Game Night of the year! Pizza and beverages will be provided, and please bring a salad or dessert along with a favorite board game if you can. This event is open to families of all configurations and individuals of all ages. Contact Pastor Chris for more information.

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.

Social Justice Rotation Wrap-Up and Follow-Up: Education and Service Opportunities with Young Children

• Our two-month Social Justice rotation in Children's Church has now wrapped up - - but the education and service continue! The kids learned about peace and non-violence, Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and Civil Rights, food access and food security, homelessness and community, LGBTQ and gender identity issues, environmental justice, and ability/disability. We are extremely grateful to Rev. Matilda Cantwell, Dawn Orluske, Jen Matias, Rev. Stephanie Smith, Sam Icklan, Steffi Davis, and Doug Renick for leading these lessons!

One of the goals of these lessons was to brainstorm about conversations and actions children could undertake with their adults. Pastor Chris and the Children's and Family Ministries Committee are compiling a resource for families with young children which will include possible social justice discussion topics, direct service ideas (working directly with the people involved), and remote service ideas (collection of money or items, meal prep without serving, cards and letters). These service opportunities could be done by one family or in a group.

Do you have experiences with or ideas for service opportunities? How about approaches for discussing social justice issues? Would you like to help us compile this list? Contact Pastor Chris!

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

Showing Up

"So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are citizens with the saints and also members of the household of God, built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the cornerstone. In him the whole structure is joined together and grows into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are built together spiritually into a dwelling place for God." - Ephesians 2:19-21

I can't tell you how often people are absent from church for a while, then come back, and when they pass through the receiving line at church say sheepishly, "Sorry I haven't been here - I've been bad." They seem to expect disapproval or punishment.

In 16 years of ministry, I still haven't quite figured out what to say. I usually opt for the non-judgmental, compassionate cadence, "Of course not! We're not about guilt here! We'll be here whenever you need us!" But while this is true, there are a couple of problems with this response.

Maybe they need to be needed, and missed. Maybe they need to know there's something at stake in them not coming. That, if they are formal members, the promises they made to us mattered. And even if they are not formal members, they matter - that we notice when they are gone, and we are diminished by their absence.

Maybe they need to hear that if they do come more often, their life might just get better. I say might - churches are flawed institutions, and mine among them. But if you want to get wet, you have to get into the water. If you want grace, peace, hope, comfort, growth, you have to get into, or near, the people and places that have them.

What I want to say to people when they come before me and hang their heads is, "listen - you get out of it what you put into it." I can't say it, because it doesn't sound very pastoral, but really it's just a logic statement. You can't win if you don't play.

And God, though She rarely tells us this to our faces, needs us in church too. Some of us can only get the grace She wants to give us when we pass through that portal, into a

sweet, slightly dusty, hardworking, authentic faith community. It's not that grace is unavailable elsewhere; it's just that - we're tuned to the right frequency when we're there together. Church is the structure in which Jesus is joined together and grows into a holy temple in the Lord, where we ourselves can become God's crib.

They say that 80% of life is just showing up, right?

Prayer I love you. And we are different. And that's just how God made us to be. Amen.

- *Molly Baskette* *Is the author of Real Good Church and Standing Naked Before God: The Art of Public Confession.*

From the Deacons Bench

Hail and Farewell from the Deacons Bench • As new co-chairs of Deacons, Jen Matias and Pat James send heartfelt gratitude to Karen Guiel for your able leadership this past year. Farewell also to Karla Hathaway, Mary Sheehan, Fred Goodhue, and Maureen Bourbeau. We accomplished a lot of interesting and inspiring work, and feel blessed to be taking the reins of a group that is in great shape, and ready for more. Welcome to Karen Browne-Courage, Olivia Ilano Davis, Christine Foudy, Trish LaFreniere, and Cate Shaw! Thank you for your willingness to serve and for the particular gifts you each bring to this role.

Deacons are chosen from among members of the congregation who have demonstrated previous church leadership. Our role is to support the spiritual life of the Church community along with the pastors by promoting and embodying the mission, vision, and values of the Church; planning and preparing for worship services and offering the sacrament of holy communion; and welcoming and sponsoring new members. Meetings are the first Thursday of each month from 6:30-8:30. Meetings are open to all members of our church family, but we request that you let Pat or Jen know if you would like to attend.

- *Pat James, Deacon Co-chair*

If this world could speak,
what would it say?

- *A Strangeness in My Mind* - Orhan Pamuk

Cathedral in the Night, January 31, 2016

photo by Jessica LaCroix



Cathedral in the Night, January 31, 2016: Jessie, Eliza, Anna, Malie

At Cathedral in the Night on Sunday, January 31st, church members and non-church members helped serve and prepare food, along with worshipping there, too. Cathedral in the Night is an outdoor church in front of First Churches in Northampton, welcoming anyone and everyone to come worship and accepting everyone for their differences. After the worship there is a free meal, complete with a hot meal, sandwiches (made by Children's Church), desserts and drinks. Before Cathedral in the Night, people helped make

the shepherds pie and the desserts. A large number of Children's Church members came and some helped serve. The individuals at Cathedral included people experiencing homelessness, church members of Haydenville, First Churches, and many other people. The minister at Cathedral in the Night is Pastor Steph. The week before Cathedral, she had come to talk to Children's Church about people experiencing homelessness and Cathedral in the Night.

- Malie Geery

Elbow Room Coffee Youth Fundraiser!

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 **April 3rd and 10th** 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!

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!

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

Lynn Fogg
Moderator

Sam Icklan
Vice Moderator

Lisa Hall
Clerk

Jo Cannon
Treasurer

Margie Serkin
Bookkeeper/Office
Administrator

Pat James
Jen Matias
Diaconate, Co-Chairs

Alice Barber
Trustees, Chair

Rev. Dr. Peter Ives
Theologian-
in-Residence

Yohah Ralph
Minister of
Outreach, Advocacy
and Pastoral Care

Kathy O'Connor
Church Sexton

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

Jim Foudy
Men's Fellowship,
Chair & Church
Communications

Bev Orluske
Nancy Winninger
Keepers of the Keys

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

Lay Delegates
Ross Bassett
Jan Varnon
Bob Varnon

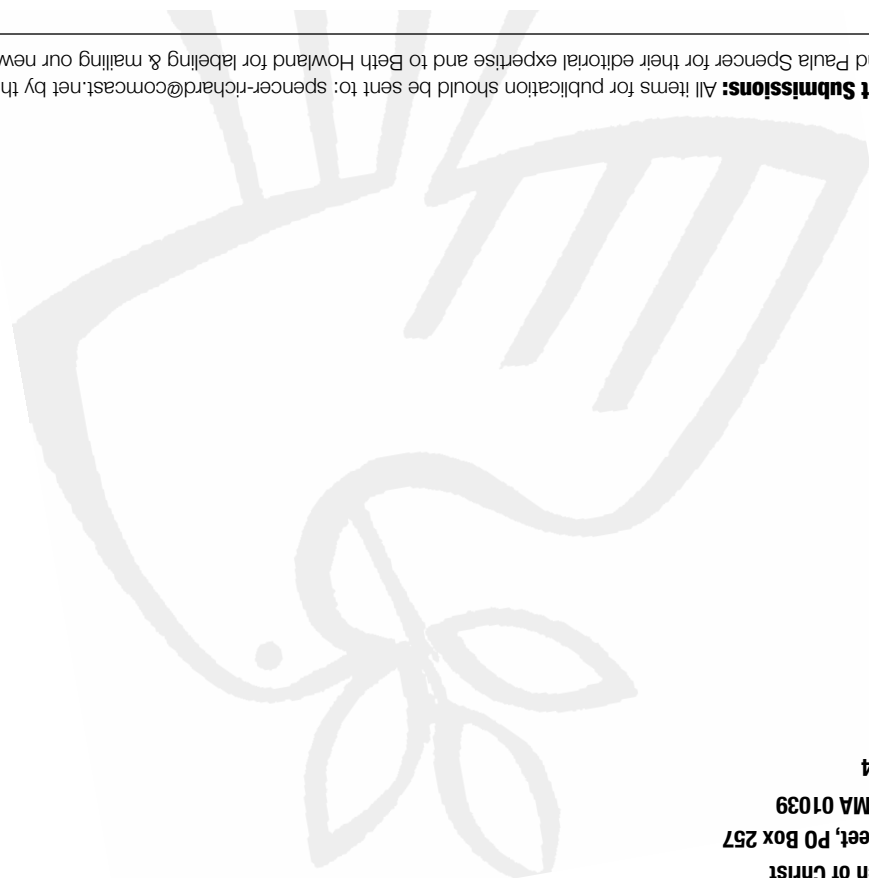
**Keepers
of the Covenant**
Rev. Dr. Peter Ives
Pat James
Raquel Manzanares
Jen Matias

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

Deacons (*by Seniority*)
Jen Matias
Amy Andrew
Pat James
Paula Spencer
Shirley Sicurello
Carolyn DuBois
Olivia Ilano Davis
Tobias Davis
Karen Browne-
Courage
Trish Lafreniere
Cate Shaw
Christine Foudy

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

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