



FOCUS

February 2016 | Vol. 39 Issue 2

A Message from Rev. Heike Werder

Welcome to February! This month, during our worship services, I would like to take you on a journey, exploring Who We Are – as a church, as a community, as, at one point, strangers who gathered together because of faith in Christ.

If you were to tell a colleague or friend about our/your church, what would you say? How would you describe us, this place? Would you share what drew you to this community? What is meaningful to you? Where you think this church is going?



The Congregational Church of Needham has been around since 1857, and has seen many changes and overcome many challenges. Each generation of members, ministers, and staff leave their imprint on who this community is and what it is about. In the next year we get to talk about where we want to go as a church and community of faith. But before we look into the future, we need to remind ourselves who we are right now so we can build upon our strengths and passions, and develop plans and strategies to make changes where we think changes are necessary.

I believe this is a good exercise for us to take stock. Therefore I will attempt to preach on four topics of “Who we are.” Here are the themes I will preach on:

- Feb. 7 – A church that cares about the Environment
- Feb. 14 – A church that cares about being Open and Affirming
- Feb. 21 – A church that cares about Education
- Feb. 28 – A church that cares about Outreach

Come and join us for worship as we take this journey of exploration together!

Blessings,
Heike

**save
THE DATES!**

Sunday, Feb. 21st & 28th 11:30am - Lunch & Learn

On Feb. 21st at 11:30, join us in Linden Hall for a discussion on “Christianity in Japan”, presented by Yuzo Dort. All are welcome and Lunch will be provided.

On Feb. 28, 2016 at 11:30 in Linden Hall, the Outreach Committee is offering a “Lunch and Learn” opportunity. They have invited a number of Needham Town organizations for a panel discussion to share with us the work they are doing. Each year we support these local agencies through our Outreach funds. What better way than to hear about their work, and what they might need, and how we can get involved with them? Lunch of course, will be served.

Music Ministry News by Valerie Becker, Director of Music

I wanted to take a moment this month to say thank you to our youth choirs. They work very diligently each week and it is such a joy to be able to work on new music with them! If you walk by our music room you can hear joyous sounds of music along with lots laughter! The students all work so well with one another and feel safe and comfortable being themselves and doing what they love to do - SING! If you child wishes to participate please have them come to a rehearsal. I think that they will enjoy it. To quote Martin Luther - "Next to the Word of God, the noble art of music is the greatest treasure in the world!"



Hoping that you stay cozy and warm this winter,
Valerie



WELCOME TO OUR NEW ORGANIST/ ACCOMPANIST SANGYOUNG KIM!

On February 7, 2016 our new organist and accompanist Sangyoung Kim will begin her music ministry among us. Please welcome her warmly to our community. We will provide you with a detailed biography in next month's FOCUS.

FOCUS

Focus is published monthly. Contributions from members and friends of the Church are invited. Please submit materials by e-mail to office@needhamucc.org.

March issue deadline:
Thursday, February 18.

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February Delegation Send-Off, Feb. 9th: All are invited to join family, friends, and partnership supporters for a brief Delegation Send-Off gathering on Tuesday, February 9th, from 7-8 pm at Dave and Caryl Johnson's, 505 Great Plain Avenue. The travelers leave early the next morning and will return on February 21st. They look forward to a joyous (and warm!) time with friends in our partner village of 28 years.



Delegation Report-Back to the Congregation: On Sunday, March 6, at 11:30 am in Linden Hall, please plan to join the travelers for a presentation of their experiences and an update on life in the village. Light refreshments will be served.

Spring Concert/Silent Auction: SAVE THE DATE of Saturday, March 19, 4-6 pm for this fun, family-friendly event. More details to follow in the March Focus and Church bulletins.

August Delegation to Santa María Tzeja: It's not too early to sign up for the August delegation to our partner village. The dates are August 3-14, 2016. Please contact co-leaders Caryl Johnson (caryljohnson@gmail.com) or Alan Clayton-Matthews (a.clayton-matthews@neu.edu) with your questions or interest. Youth are especially encouraged to take advantage of this late summer opportunity before the start of school commitments.

ONA NEWS



ONA Anniversary Sunday

We will have a lot to celebrate on Valentine's Day, February 14. It will be ONA Sunday, when we mark the 16th anniversary of the adoption of our ONA Covenant. Our ONA covenant (actually adopted

on February 13, 2000) signifies our congregation's promise to be the church for everyone, to welcome, embrace and affirm all people. Be sure to come celebrate that Sunday, when we will have special music in worship, an inspirational sermon, a visual retrospective of ONA in Needham, and anniversary goodies for coffee hour.

Challenge - How Wide Is Our ONA Welcome?

In the months following the ONA anniversary, the ONA Ministry Team would like our church to discuss how our welcome is understood and expressed in words. An ONA welcome is not limited to people of all sexual orientations and gender identities, but includes God's children, no matter their ethnicity, color, economic circumstance, age, ability, and other characteristics. Our ONA covenant, written 16 years ago, refers to "gender" but not "gender identity and expression." It would be appropriate and productive to consider how we may be leaving out parts of people's identities and life situations that also need to be named and honored. Such areas that appear in other churches' ONA covenant and which we might consider including are "faith background" and "immigration status."

In the next few months, we will have programs which will widen our understanding of gender identity and the transgender experience, as well as hear from people who have been saved by the LGBT Asylum Task Force at Hadwen Park Congregational Church in Worcester.

Look for Out MetroWest/WAGLY Event Coming in March

Last March, eight people from our church had a great time as a Trivia Team at the WAGLY Auction Fund-raiser at the Plymouth Church UCC in Framingham. Plans are underway for the second annual event this March. We want more of the congregation to share this experience. We especially need youth who will fill in the missing trivia knowledge we were lacking last year! Information and date will be available soon.

FYI: Transgender Rights

There is currently a state-wide campaign to urge lawmakers to pass legislation giving access to and protections in places of public accommodations to transgender and gender variant people in Massachusetts. This bill is supported by a huge number of prominent businesses in the state, led by Harvard Pilgrim, Google and Eastern Bank. Other supporters include educational and municipal groups and, most recently, all of the professional sports teams in Boston. The ONA Ministry Team and a number of church members have responded by writing their lawmakers to encourage them to support this legislation. For information or to help by contacting your lawmakers, please go to <http://action.freedomma.org/page/speakout/cyl>

ENVIRONMENTAL MINISTRIES TEAM NEWS

...EARTH STEWARDSHIP FOR OUR LIVES TODAY...

Ecumenical Lenten Carbon Fast

As people of faith, it is our responsibility to be wise stewards of God's Creation. These actions will reduce your production of climate changing pollution and help to preserve God's gift of the earth for future generations.

Here are some examples of what you can do each week before Lent. See the EMT bulletin board for more ideas.

Home

1. Turn down your thermostat by at least one degree. Aim for 60oF at night and be sure to turn down the heat when you leave your home.

2. Conserve water by installing a low-flow faucet, toilet, or rain barrel. Put a bucket in the shower and use that water for watering plants or to flush the toilet.

3. Check windows and doors for leaks with a feather or ribbon. Use caulk, weather stripping, or a "draft dodger" to reduce the leaks.

4. If you're going to be away from your computer, game console, or TV for more than an hour, turn it off or set the sleep cycle to go on automatically.

5. Take a shower rather than a bath, or take a shorter shower than usual. Turn down your hot-water heater by one setting (or two in the summer). Use watersaver shower heads.

Food

1. Be a vegetarian for two days a week (ask church members for their favorite recipes. Isabell Wells has a great veggie chili recipe)

Youth News

@ the Congregational Church of Needham

Maddie Downer, CE & Youth Director

Feb. 2016

WHY TEACHING SUNDAY SCHOOL MATTERS!

Our faith is passed on, as it has been from the first followers of our dear Jesus, from generation to generation through the retelling of God's great and continuing story. **Teachers are needed from all corners of the congregation** - whether your children have aged out of the program or your children are beginning their faith journey now with us; if you don't have kids, if every child is your kid, or if you're still not sure how you feel about some ages but you think other ages are pretty cool -- there is a place for you to engage with our congregation's students! You don't need to have any special training to share with our kids the love that God has shown you -- **all you need is a willing heart that wants to pass on the story of God's unending love.**

If you are wildly outgoing, sign up to teach a workshop! Be silly and bright and crazy with our kids. If you are a quieter soul, sign up to shepherd and be a loving, calming presence. If you like to talk about big concepts, join us for BV6:8 and let's talk about where we find God in the midst of life's ups and downs and signs of God's love poured out on all of Creation. If you want to have fun and explore God through games of charades or rock climbing, volunteer to chaperone Youth Group. **There is a place in our Christian Education and Youth Ministries for all types; come and find your space with us!**

If you've taught Sunday School for years on end, **thank you for sharing a part of yourself with our kids!** If you've never done it, give it a try! Give it a few tries with different age groups - you never know where God might be waiting to light a fire in your soul. And those fires God lights, well they're the best source of energy and renewal, so why not try it out and see?

The changes that you will see in our class structure are a reflection of the resources we currently have. As a community of Christians, we are asked to give our treasure, talents, and time. **In the Sunday School program, more than anything else, we need more of the community's time;** we need volunteers to answer the call to help our youngest pilgrims move forward in their own faith formation. And the amazing part is, when we guide others in faith, we find ourselves being formed and reformed again and again. We need teachers who, rooted in their own love of God and the experiences of their faith journey, can guide our

students in the simple but important lessons retelling God's story through art, cooking, science, games, theater, and story workshops.

Currently, our CE program is experiencing a resurrection of its very own; isn't it a little bit scary when that happens? It is. Change is, generally, not something we humans like. But God has been changing things since Genesis 1 when God said "I don't like all this chaos, let's move it around and make it a comfy home." The good news is that in times of resurrection, in times of change, God's love and power is almost tangible. We rely on faith that God has something new in store for us. **Let's ask ourselves, what new thing is God doing with our kids?** What opportunities, what new way of connecting, what new, transformative experiences can our children find here? And if you ask any of these questions and God stirs something in your heart, share that with the CE committee and let's nurture it!

The CE committee recently sent a letter to our Bible Village families explaining the changes we've made for this program year in more detail. They note that, while our attendance has dropped from past years, this year attendance is steady. We regularly have a group of students eager to learn about God's love - now we need the adults in our community to respond.

As we continue to discern where God is leading our children's programs, we have hope that we will flourish in new ways as our congregations responds to the needs of all of our kids.

Please let me or any of the CE committee members know if you have any questions or insights - we look forward to nurturing an ongoing conversation about our CE programs and where we feel God moving here at Needham UCC.

Sign up for Bible Village and BV 6:8: <http://www.signupgenius.com/go/10c0844a8aa23a2fd0-spring>

Club 3-4-5, Junior High, and Senior High: <http://www.signupgenius.com/go/10c0844a8aa23a2fd0-needham1>

Hold fast to what is good,
Maddie Downer, MDiv

CLUB 3-4-5

Club 3-4-5 will begin meeting this month! This youth group is open to students in grades 3-5 and will meet on most second and fourth Thursdays.

Why should your child join Club 3-4-5? To make friends, have fun, participate in community service activities, to move and dance and sing, to talk about the things that matter to them, and to learn more about God, Jesus, and how to be the very best version of themselves!

Youth News

@ the Congregational Church of Needham

Maddie Downer, CE & Youth Director

NEW CLASS STRUCTURE

At the end of January, we started to divide our Bible Village classes differently. Students will find their classmates by looking for these images on name tags and classroom doors:



Students in grades K, 1, & 2:
You are the SALT of the earth!

Students in grades 3, 4, & 5: You are the LIGHT of the world!



February	March
Thurs., Feb. 11: Valentine's Party Valentine's treats to share, games, and crafts. 6:30 - 7:30 PM - Stevenson Hall	Thurs., March 10: Pajama Party Wear your funnest, coolest, or silliest pajamas to our meeting! 6:30 - 7:30 PM
Thurs., Feb. 25: Superhero Night Wear a cape or costume if you have it! 6:30-7:30 PM - Stevenson Hall	

EASTER EGG HUNT: Now COLLECTING CANDY!

We need lots and lots of fun-size nut-free candies! Plastic Easter Eggs are also helpful. We will collect candy until after church on March 20 - please place any donations in our giant Easter basket in the narthex!

Date	JR High Youth Group	SR High Youth Group
Sun., February 7	SUPER BOWL SUB ASSEMBLY!! Assembly: 9:00am Pickups: 11-11:45am Please note start time is later! Youth gather to assemble the subs we've sold over the past weeks. Pickup and additional sales will occur after the church service. Doughnuts and hot cocoa/coffee will be on hand to fuel our sandwich making. No PM programming.	
*Sat., February 13	4:00 - 6:00pm -- JR High Youth Group Party at Plaster Funtime (RSVP required) Meet at Plaster Funtime, Needham St. in Newton. Pizza will be served. https://docs.google.com/document/d/1puS97qMQ6FLDH_eOTBuq5qQ2D2TanGGuMAjJfIY4v_M/edit?usp=sharing	No SR High Programming
Sun., February 14	No evening programming	
Sun., February 21	5:00 - 6:30pm -- JR High meets	7:00 - 8 :30pm -- SR High Meets
Sun., February 28	No JR High Programming	5:30pm -- Monster Mini Golf Trip (RSVP required) Norwood, MA Leave church at 5:30 pm
Sunday, March 6	5:00 - 6:30pm -- JR High Meets	7:00 - 8 :30pm -- SR High Meets
*Fri. March 11 - Sun. March 13	JR High Retreat to Camp Cody Cost: \$150 REGISTRATION FORMS DUE 2/14! Find the forms online at: https://docs.google.com/document/d/1k2Ird27wppU9RS0QBZ5cJSstddfz4B4o91hrjgtUc3E/edit?usp=sharing	No SR High Programming
Sun., March 20	JR & SR High Easter Egg Prep & Pizza Party 12:30-3:30 PM Stevenson Hall	
Sun., March 27	Easter Egg Hunt!	

Confirmation 2016

Confirmation 2016 begins on **February 8, 2016!** 14 young people have signed up to go through the Confirmation experience and 14 adult mentors have joined them on their journey. **Parents are invited to an informational meeting on Feb. 7, 2016 at 8:30 am in the chapel.** Classes start on Monday, Feb. 8, 2016 at 6 pm in Linden Hall.



Please keep us in your prayers as we embark together on this journey of faith discernment!

Ecumenical Lenten Carbon Carbon Fast Continued from page 3

2. Look to purchase locally-grown foods and be aware of where foods come from. Investigate the Needham Farmer's market or join a CSA (community supported agriculture). Grow your own in your yard or join the Needham Community farm to cultivate a plot of your own. Buy fair trade organic chocolate for Easter.
3. Bring reusable bags with you to all stores, not just the grocery store.
4. Be aware of how much food you discard during Lent. Start a composter in your back yard - a simple way to give back to the earth.
5. Bring a reusable mug to the coffee shop. Use plastic utensils when you're away from home and keep some with you in your purse/backpack/desk.

Travel

1. Make one of your journeys more environmentally friendly by carpooling, combining errands, walking/biking, or by taking public transportation.
2. Rethink flying on vacation and take a trip closer to home. Or, purchase carbon offsets to fund an environmental project. Donate to Paul Brown's One Penny Per Mile www.onepennypermile.org
3. Check your car's tire pressure or take it to a service station to check. Cars with low tire pressure get lower gas mileage.
4. Obey the speed limit. Every increase of ten mph decreases fuel efficiency by about four miles per gallon.
5. Minimize idle time by turning off your car if it is stationary for more than one minute.

Other

1. Speak to a neighbor/coworker about the changes you've made during Lent.
2. Pick up litter and dispose of it properly.
3. End junk mail. Stop unwanted catalogs (catalogchoice.org), credit card offers (1-888-5-OPTOUT) and other junk mail (DMAchoice.org). Make unsubscribing to unwanted mail easier by downloading the PaperKarma app to your smart phone.

4. Find a green organization to join or support (anything from our church's environmental ministries team to the Sierra Club).
5. Save paper by printing double sided or wrapping a gift in color comics or a reused gift bag.

On Easter, take some time to reflect on all of the changes you've made that bring you into greater harmony with the earth and all life. Make a personal pledge to continue living sustainably.

The Environmental Ministry Team has become a member of the MAICCA, MA Interfaith Coalition for Climate Action. Massachusetts congregations and faith organizations have come together to work for a clean and just energy future for our Commonwealth!

They want our legislators to live up to the commitment to reduce carbon emissions by 25% by 2020, as outlined in the Global Warming Solutions Act of 2008, and they want an energy transition that lifts and includes all our communities. They support the MA Power Forward agenda for an overall energy plan that relies on local renewable energy sources and energy efficiencies.

They have also identified five specific priorities that the interfaith coalition will champion as a necessary part of any future energy plan for Massachusetts.

These priorities underscore the important moral and social justice challenges that they believe must be addressed to ensure that all our communities have a share in a clean and just energy future.

1. Lift the caps on solar energy and expand community solar.
2. Invest in robust off-shore wind development.
3. Ensure that energy efficiency programs are serving all communities in MA.
4. Fix existing natural gas leaks.
5. Reject rate-payer funding for new natural gas pipelines.

For more information on the MAICCA priorities, see the Environmental Ministry Team bulletin board near fellowship hall.

FEBRUARY 2016

Sunday	Mon.	Tues.	Wed.	Thursday	Fri.	Sat.
	1 Cancer Support Group	2 Community Dinner	3	4 Faith Circle Book Club Lenten Lunch	5	6
7 Worship Bible Study	8 Cancer Support Group	9	10 Ash Wednesday Service	11 Faith Circle Book Club Lenten Lunch	12	13
14 Worship Bible Study	15 Church Offices Closed	16	17	18 Lenten Lunch	19	20
21 Men's Breakfast Worship Bible Study Lunch & Learn	22 Cancer Support Group	23	24	25 Faith Circle Book Club Lenten Lunch	26	27
28 Worship Bible Study Lunch & Learn	29 Cancer Support Group					

ASH WEDNESDAY SERVICE

Wednesday, February 10, 2016, 7pm

Rev. Heike and Maddie Downer are offering an Ash Wednesday worship experience in the chapel on February 10, 2016 at 7 pm. The service is open to all.

COMMUNITY DINNERS

6-7pm, February 2 & March 1 Linden Hall



Once a month we offer dinner for the families of Baby Basics and the volunteers involved in the program. Everyone is invited to join us for dinner, and/or if you are looking for a volunteer opportunity for your family, this is an opportunity for children and adults alike. Dinners are on the first Tuesday of the month.

Help is needed with shopping for food, meal preparation, eating with our guests, and clean up.

Please contact Rev. Heike or Diana Conroy if you are interested in participating in the service project.

LENTEN LUNCHEONS WITH REV. HEIKE

Noon-1pm, Feb. 4, 11, 18, 25, March 3, 10, & 17 1180 Great Plain Ave.

Join us for a weekly luncheon at 1180 Great Plain Ave. Embracing the season of Lent, we will meet every Thursday until the end of Lent - March 17th.

The cost for the lunch is \$ 3.00 per person, and we

have purchased take-out containers for take-away.

FAITH CIRCLE BOOK GROUP

Feb. 4, 11, 25, March 3, 17, & 24th 1154 GPA Reception Rom

If you have are interested and to find out what book we are reading contact Christine Weitzel at cweitzel@verizon.net

WOMEN'S RETREAT!

We have reserved a beautiful space at Craigville Conference Center. This year we have moved our traditional retreat date from Mother's Day weekend to the weekend of May 20-21st. We hope you can join us! Rev. Heike has some wonderful things planned and we will have plenty to share about in a wonderful setting by the ocean.

INTERESTED IN A BIKE RIDE THIS SUMMER?

After our Germany adventure I was asked "Where are we going next year?" Well, I have an idea: anyone interested in biking the Erie Canal bike path, from Buffalo to Albany around the end of June, beginning July? This 400 mile ride is an adventure for all levels of bikers. It is not quite as exotic as a trip to Europe but it can be great fun doing it together. Talk to Rev. Heike if you are interested.





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Men's Fellowship Breakfast, Sunday February 21st

On Sunday, 2/21, the Men's Fellowship Breakfast will welcome all church men to breakfast.

The Men's Breakfast brings men of all ages and persuasions together in the Library on the 3rd Sunday of the month before worship in honest and lively discussion touching our faith and our lives in today's complex world. We welcome men of all ages and accommodate those with scheduling challenges. Arrive at 8:15 AM for fellowship and breakfast or by 9:00 AM for the discussion.

Contact: John Baldwin (jsbaldwin@comcast.net) or Rob Dunlavey (rob@robd.com) for more information.

address

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