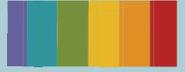


THE SPIRE

THE SECOND CHURCH IN NEWTON
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

Sharing life's journey in Christian faith, love, and service.



60 Highland St. West Newton, MA • www.2ndchurch.org • (617) 244-2690

Calendar Highlights:

Worship and Church School each Sunday morning, 10 o'clock, followed by Coffee Hour

9/3 Sunday – Agape Feast shared with Eliot in Fellowship Hall, 10 a.m.

9/10 Sunday – Welcome Back Sunday

9/10 Sunday – Youth Group, 4 p.m.

9/13 Wednesday – Dinner Church Service, Fellowship Hall, 6 p.m.

9/17 Sunday – Youth Group, 4 p.m.

9/24 Sunday – Youth Group, 4 p.m.

9/30 Saturday – Rachel Sheridan Memorial Service/Collation, 10:30 a.m.

10/1 Sunday – Intergenerational World Communion Sunday; Forum, 11:30 a.m.

Rev. Mark Seifried, Interim Minister

Andrus Madsen, Minister of Music

Barbara Cancellieri, Secretary

Mary Ayotte, Bookkeeper

Pat Bonnet and Alan Bubba Soho, Co-moderators

Susan Benes, Nursery School Director

Rev. Leah Rumsey, Director of Faith Formation

Molly Doris-Pierce, Youth Group and Sunday School Leader

Gillian Hurst, Youth Music Director

Charlie and Henry Loftus, Sunday Sextons

Frank Neal, Property Manager

Next Spire Deadline: September 18, 10 a.m.

Next Spire Mailing: September 27, 9 a.m.

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Building Faith

Reflections from Pastor Mark

Faithless is (s)he that says farewell when the road darkens.
— J.R.R. Tolkien, *The Fellowship of the Ring*

Because Charles Schulz lived and wrote the “Peanuts” comic strip and subsequent television specials in a time when the Christian story was more mainstream, many people know the birth narrative of Jesus from Luke’s gospel as well as any piece of Christian scripture. Church folks know these passages very well, which begin with the following:

In those days a decree went out from Emperor Augustus that all the world should be registered... All went to their own towns to be registered. Joseph also went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to the city of David called Bethlehem...

Most people do not know the entire second chapter, the parts after Jesus is born, which include the stories of Jesus’ circumcision, the encounter and prophecy of Simeon upon meeting the young Jesus, and Jesus ditching Mary and Joseph in Jerusalem so that he could hang out at the Temple and interact with the priests and other devout Jews.

Chapter Two ends with the following sentence:

And Jesus increased in wisdom and in years, and in divine and human favor.
(Luke 2:52)

It is amazing that Luke would make such a statement considering the fact that he is building a case for the divinity of Jesus. He asserts that Jesus increased in wisdom! It’s shocking to think that God wouldn’t be perfectly wise and socially adept from the get-go. And yet, this makes sense!

In Jesus, the fully human savior, we are supposed to be shocked at each turn. We are to be shocked that he expands his mission beyond Jews. We are to be shocked by his relentless pursuit of justice by going to those whom society most marginalizes and offering compassionate healing and fellowship. We are to be shocked by the way he treats women as whole and holy people. We are to be shocked that he edits out of his teachings the more draconian ideas of the Hebrew Bible. We are to be shocked that Jesus grew in wisdom and stature, not in spite of all those audacious acts, but because of them.

I try not to be sentimental about Jesus, but rather I seek from Jesus a model for my own life that includes guidance, and grace. And that is what I find when I follow him. When I go to the margins of my social sphere, my thinking is transformed. My prejudices and fears melt. And I grow in wisdom. When I question social norms and customs, I expect blowback, but I also expect that my questions will lead others to question those very norms and customs. Through our questions, we grow in wisdom.

(Continued)

We are beginning a new program year. We have a dynamic new Director of Faith Formation in Leah Rumsey and we have revamped some models for ministry. We are questioning previously held “tried and true” premises of faith formation and pursuing different paths for Christian Education.

The Pastoral Search Committee is up and running, asking God, “What kind of leader shall we call to help lead the church in the new directions Jesus is guiding us?” We will be reviewing and revamping the church bylaws along with the structure and policies that support them this fall. And we will continue to discern the specific purpose and mission to which the church is being called.

This will be difficult work, but it will be some of the most important work the church has done in decades. Some, we might expect, will protest as we breach the status quo. Some will become anxious as we experiment and leave behind some once-hallowed traditions. Some will find excitement and fulfillment. If the church is to survive another 20 years, we must do this work and we must go beyond the edges of our comfort zones.

My read on the life to which Jesus is calling us is that we will find wisdom on the edges, wisdom we have been seeking for years - back to the time when the church first began the Crossroads process. That Luke could say Jesus increased in human and divine wisdom is also a promise for us. Let us continue to build upon the foundation that has been laid for us, a resilient faith for renewed ministries and a refreshed congregation known as The Second Church in Newton, United Church of Christ. And may we increase in human and divine wisdom in our journey together.

Pastor Mark Seifried
MarkSeifried@icloud.com

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

As your moderators, we are seeking five (5) volunteers to work with us on the review and revision of the church bylaws. This is a task specified in the bylaws to be carried out every five years. In September each board, committee or office will be asked to submit to this bylaws committee, changes that pertain to their role in the church. All recommended changes will be due by mid-October. In October, the bylaws committee will prepare a draft of revised bylaws, taking into consideration all recommended changes and the bylaws as a whole. This draft will be made available to the congregation in November, as specified in the bylaws. A vote on the revised documents will take place at the February Annual Meeting.

Please consider volunteering for this important, short-term commitment. If more than five people step forward we will make every effort to select a representative group.

To volunteer please email Pat Bonnet pbonnet15@gmail.com, or Alan Bubba Soho sohoalan@gmail.com

Thank you.

Pat and Bubba, Co-moderators

Faith Formation

2017-18 Faith Formation Offerings

Elementary School Children (Grades K-5)

Worship and Sunday School

Each week, children are invited to begin worship in the sanctuary with their families. The first part of each service is designed to be accessible to young children who are not yet able to read or sit still for long periods of time. After the passing of the peace, children who wish to attend Sunday School should follow their teachers out of the sanctuary. Sunday School classes include a brief opening ritual and a craft, activity, or story. Occasionally, children will remain in the sanctuary for an intentionally intergenerational worship service (check church and Constant Contact announcements for the dates of these services), at which they will have age-appropriate leadership roles.

Religious Literacy Camp

In summer 2018, look for this exciting update on vacation Bible school. This camp is a week-long summer experience in which students learn basic religious literacy, visit various faith communities, and learn skills for peacemaking, social justice, and positive social skills. Children of all faith backgrounds and no faith background who are beginning first through fifth grade are welcome.

Middle School and High School Students (Grades 6-12)

Worship

Middle and high school students are invited to join the congregation in the sanctuary during worship. They are invited to provide leadership as musicians, scripture readers, or other ways. They are also invited (but not required) to use the provided reflection sheets to help connect the worship service with youth group gatherings. Students are encouraged to suggest ways in which they might like to engage worship or ways they might be leaders in the service. Students are also welcome to volunteer as Sunday school assistants. Students interested in doing this should contact Leah.

Confirmation

Confirmation classes are offered for students in grade 8 and above to prepare for full membership in the church. The confirmation program is offered during Lent (a total of six weeks) and requires a time commitment of one hour per week at the church and an additional hour of time for preparation and reflection. Confirmands will be received into the church at a special service during the season after Easter.

Youth Group

All students in grades 6-12 are invited to weekly youth group gatherings. Gatherings include “Dinner and Faith” discussions, interfaith or religious literacy events, service projects, and game nights.

(Continued)

Faith Formation

Summer Service Trip

Students beginning grades 9-12 are invited to a week-long service learning experience during which they will learn about religion in America, undertake serious spiritual and personal reflection, and learn about contemporary social justice issues. While this trip will use Christian language and interact with Christian communities, students of all faith backgrounds and no faith background are invited to attend.

College Students

With a student's permission, Leah will schedule a Skype or Facetime chat once a semester (or more frequently if a student desires). Students who leave a mailing address can also expect to receive occasional notes of support and encouragement from their church family.

All Ages

Worship

People of all ages are invited to worship on Sunday mornings at 10 a.m.

Coffee Shop Office Hours

All are welcome for conversation and prayer at Leah's weekly office hours at the Newtonville Starbucks (specific times for these hours will be shared soon). While all are welcome for a time of deep listening and reflection, youth and young adults are especially invited to take advantage of this opportunity. Leah has particular experience and expertise in ministry surrounding college and young adulthood, interreligious dialogue and relationships, and the relationship between faith and scholarship.

Dinner Church Service

All are welcome at this informal weekly service where we take communion to the next level by sharing a meal throughout the service. Jeans, wiggling kids, jokes, and deep questions are all welcome at this time of food, fun, and worship. Dinner church will happen Wednesdays at 6 p.m., beginning on September 13. This is NOT A POTLUCK and THERE IS NO EXPECTATION THAT YOU BRING A DISH TO PASS. That said; if you have a famous dish, a dish you really want to see, or some food you've been longing for, feel to bring it.

Adult Education and Faith Formation Opportunities

Look for a variety of opportunities for adult faith formation, focusing on everything from activism to Biblical literacy. Racial justice training with an MAUCC trainer is scheduled for the fall and other opportunities will be shared at church announcements and through Constant Contact.

Rev. Leah Rumsey
Director of Faith Formation
leahrumsey@g.harvard.edu
517-449-8145

Service Trip Helps Congregation See Our Hometown in a New Way

In June, a group of eight youth and adults spent a week in service in Boston, visiting local nonprofits and learning about issues of poverty and systemic injustice in our community. Organizations served included community meals, AIDS action groups, family shelters, and elder services. Members of our group hope to continue their relationships with these organizations in the year to come and to allow this experience to shape our programming and service. Be on the lookout for details about the summer 2018 trip and consider whether you may be called to join!

Two Thank You Notes

Many thanks to the volunteers who covered office operations from 9 a.m. till 12 noon during vacation time. Your help kept things running smoothly and was much appreciated!

Thank You to My Second Church Family,

For the lovely flowers, cards, calls, visits, rides, and delicious meals during my recovery from surgery. Your support, thoughts and prayers went a long way towards my healing.

God's peace, Barbara Cancellieri

Deaths

Robert Bowhay Morrison died June 29, 2017. The funeral was at Second Church July 5.

Rachel Rice Sheridan died July 13, 2017. The memorial service will be September 30 at 10:30 a.m. A reception will follow. Please be in touch with Nancy Brown 617-527-6195 nlbrown161@gmail.com to donate food items.

Graduation

Bimini Horstmann who graduated from Newton South High School will be entering Davidson College in North Carolina this fall as a Henry David Thoreau Scholar. She is one of eight Massachusetts high school seniors to receive this annual scholarship award.

Volunteers Needed

Care Dimensions is looking for volunteers to help support our hospice patients and families. Come be a part of something truly extraordinary and help us in our mission to make each day a gift for our patients and their families. Whatever your skills, talents, or motivation, we have a volunteer opportunity for you! Our next Waltham training starts soon so please contact Volunteer Coordinator, Heather Merrill at 781-373-6509 or hmerrill@caresdimensions.org for more information.

From the Board of Mission and Advocacy

Moment for Mission

September 10: **Summer Service Trip** – Hear about the eight youth and adults who spent a week in service in Boston this summer, and how they hope to continue relationships with those organizations.

September 24: **Neighbors in Need** – See following article.

Neighbors in Need UCC Offering

The Neighbors in Need offering, which we will receive on October 1, supports the UCC's ministries of justice and compassion throughout the United States. Two-thirds of the offering is used by the UCC's Justice and Witness Ministries to fund a wide array of local and national justice initiatives, advocacy efforts, and direct service projects. Through ucc.org/justice, our national Justice and Witness Ministries office offers resources, news updates, and action alerts on a broad spectrum of justice issues. Working with members of the UCC Justice and Peace Action Network (a network of thousands of UCC justice and peace advocates), Justice and Witness continues its strong policy advocacy work on issues such as the federal budget, voting rights, immigration, health care, hate crimes, civil liberties, and environmental justice.

Neighbors in Need also supports our American Indian neighbors in the UCC. One third of the offering supports the UCC's Council for American Indian Ministries (CAIM). Historically, forebears of the UCC established churches and worked with Lakota, Dakota, Nakota, Mandan, Hidatsa, Arickara, and Hocak in North and South Dakota, Wisconsin, and northern Nebraska. Today there are 20 UCC congregations on reservations and one urban, multi-tribal UCC congregation in Minneapolis, Minnesota. These churches and their pastors are supported by CAIM. CAIM is also an invaluable resource for more than 1,000 individuals from dozens of other tribes and nations who are members of other UCC congregations in the U.S.

What does non-toxic charity look like? - Come find out at the Family Independence Initiative (FII) Forum on Sunday, October 1 at 11:30 am.

Our social welfare system has helped many families survive periods of crisis, but has done little to address the root causes of poverty and remove barriers to upward mobility. In fact, some services and resources may reinforce the perception that low-income families are powerless, broken, lazy and lacking in self-discipline. FII has been studying and working with families of low-income communities since 2001. Their approach is different.

From the FII website:

We trust and invest in low-income families as well as the solutions they discover on their own. We start with the knowledge that we have underestimated the potential and resourcefulness of low-income communities to improve their own financial and general well-being. We know there are systematic barriers that challenge families' ability to leverage their assets, strengths, and capacities. Our work is all about removing these barriers. We do away with the traditional top-down approach to fighting poverty by letting families themselves be the change agents.

FII brings families together so that they can learn from each other and from the accumulated experience of FII staff, many of whom come from low income communities. They track the progress of FII families and hold them to account for the promises they make. They use data to identify and invest in the solutions that are working for their member families, similarly to how Amazon and Google use technology to help people find a book or navigate traffic. This approach has been empowering for families and FII has seen the results! Join us for a chance to learn more about their impressive and innovative work.

The Second Church in Newton
60 Highland Street,
West Newton, MA 02465-2405

Agape Feast September 3

Our last Summer Worship Service on September 3 starts at 10 a.m. in Fellowship Hall. Please come in casual dress and feel free to invite friends. The theme is *Spirit-Led Living*. Communion will be served, as we share in a potluck brunch with folk from Eliot Church.

If your last name begins A-E, bring a Salad; Entrée: F-L; Side Dish: M-T; Dessert or pastry: T-Z
Feel free to swap with someone else if you prefer to bring a dish other than that which falls to you.

Volunteers Needed for Fall Project

We are looking for a few folks to work on a pictorial Second Church Directory in the fall to include the following:

Photographers

Editor

Data manager

Publisher and copier

Please let Pastor Mark know if you can help: markseifried@icloud.com

