



Epistle

SOUTH CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH

110 South Street
Pittsfield, MA 01201
(413)-442-7357

UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

sochurch@nycap.rr.com
www.southchurchpittsfield.org

January 2015

At the beginning of the Christmas Eve candlelight service, two weeks ago, I encountered a small problem. As we prepared to sing our opening carol I invited the smallest children to come and assist in placing figurines in the crèche. The problem was that ten children padded forward and I had a basket that contained only Mary, Joseph, the Christ Child, and an angel. As they gathered around expectantly, I responded by subtly removing shepherds and animals, one by one, with my left hand passing them to the children with my right. As a result everyone participated in gently placing the figures. But that was just the beginning. They looked to me for more figures to place. So, I kept removing figures as they kept placing figures--round and round we went till the carol ended. It was kind of silly. Yet the children were so gentle with the figurines and placed them so carefully—again and again. And their faces were filled with such wide-eyed wonder. They sensed they were touching the sacred. Who was I to stop them?

As this new year begins I have the thought that we are a bit like those children. The years go round and round as we read and re-read the sacred story of God's love over and over; and as we keep placing, removing, and re-placing the pieces of our existence as everything keeps changing around us but also keeps being the same. Do you ever have moments that you feel you're not really accomplishing very much as the years go by? I think we all do at times. But if we could have that sense of expectancy--of touching the sacred--that shone on the faces of those little ones Christmas Eve, then we might feel a bit differently about this journey of life. Children seem to be instinctively drawn to the sacred. As we grow older it takes more intentionality to keep that childlike spirit within us awake to the God who is at work in the midst of the flow of life. If we could approach this coming year with some of that wide-eyed wonder present on Christmas Eve, we might be surprised at how many glimpses of the holy we discover as life goes round.

On January 25 we come around again to our Annual Meeting as we gather to discern our way as people of faith, deciding on a budget, hearing reports, and electing lay leaders. Following our meeting the Berkshire Interfaith Founding Convention will take place at St. Mark's School (400 Columbus Avenue) from 1-3 p.m. After two years of planning and organizing, fourteen member faith groups--including Catholic and Protestant churches, synagogues, and regional religious judicatories--will kick off this founding event with food, music, prayer, election of officers, and sharing of strategies. This lively grassroots movement is a county-wide effort focusing for now on issues of food insecurity and mass transit needs in our county. Some of us have been involved with this organizing effort over the last two years. Having twenty South Church members attend this event—matching the numbers being sent by other congregations—to find out more about this effort to improve life in the Berkshires, would be great. Energized by our own Annual Meeting and the concerns we have for our wider community, we would then be joining with others who share the life of faith and hear the call to wider compassion. It could be a moment of wide-eyed wonder. There is a flyer in this Epistle about the event. Let me know if you would like to come.

EPISTLE

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Moderator Mary Rentz
Parish Nurse Sue Kaufman
Food Pantry Mary Wheat
May Mattoon Alice Gallup
Ladies Benevolent Marge Demary
Men's Forum John Anthony
Production and Mailing Paula Haskell

The next *Epistle* deadline is January 25th at 11 a.m.

OUR CHURCH FAMILY

Temporary Change of Address:

Geraldine Whiton
c/o Ernest Whiton
9 Tyler Lane
Middleton, MA 01949

Permanent address will be updated when Gerry locates her new apartment.

ANNUAL REPORTS

In preparation of our Annual Meeting, all Annual Reports for 2014 from Officers, Boards and Committees of South Church are due in the Church Office by Sunday, January 11th. They can be emailed to sochurch@nycap.rr.com. Thank you.

Paula



South Church Annual Meeting
January 24, 2015- after Worship Service
Come and help important decisions for
South Church!



Church School

The theme of our curriculum for advent was "Help us live in loving ways as we prepare to celebrate Jesus' birth." Hope,

Peace, Joy and Love were brought to the children and congregation through the weekly lighting of the advent wreath. The children were also given an advent calendar to take home to further enjoy the themes. In class we made ornaments and decorated a tree for display in Cooke Center. Thank you Samantha Sperlonga for bringing in the tree! The children made and colored a small book which illustrated Mary and Joseph's trip to Bethlehem, from when they arrive, their encounters with many people, and how they found a safe place to stay amongst the animals for Baby Jesus, where he was laid in a manger. During the children's time each week in Advent, the children added figures to a crèche that was set up in the sanctuary. They first started with just the animals and ended with the Baby Jesus during our Christmas Eve Candlelight Service.

Sunday December 21st, the children participated in a Christmas pageant put on during the service. The Christmas Story was narrated and acted, then ended with the song "Away in a Manger." A special thanks to Sarah Adams for narrating and to all the children for participating as Mary, Joseph, angels and shepherds. It was a fun event for all and afterwards we had a birthday cake and ice cream for Jesus.

The youth group also had an exciting event for Christmas and the New Year. The collaborative Youth group is a group of all the downtown churches. St. Stephens Diocese sponsored a trip to North Carolina called "Winter Light." Sixteen youth from the Berkshires attended. It included skiing, Bible studies, and a dance to ring in the New Year! The group flew down December 26th and returned January 1st. Samantha Sperlonga and Pamela Pixley attended from South Church. Thank you May Mattoon for your generous support!

As we move on into January, we will be resuming our monthly mission event "Can Sunday." The 3rd Sunday of each month the students will be collecting a specific can of food to help stock the South Church food pantry. This month on January 19th we will be collecting cans of corn. The students will count, collect and put the cans on the shelves in Barrett Hall.

December birthdays: Molly Isham-Morten, AJ

Blessings to all! May the love and peace of Jesus' birth be close in your hearts throughout the year.

Ann Roche

MODERATOR'S MUSINGS

It has been two years since I assumed the role of Moderator, following Scott Haskell's compassionate, capable and steady leadership. So often in the past two years, I have found that despite our best efforts to blaze a straight path forward with Church Council and our committees, something unexpected would happen. Sudden obstacles would block the way. Then, the light of grace would reveal other paths leading to hilltops with wide horizons and valleys with open fields. Grace surely was present in our joyful Capital Campaign, "Stretching for God's future," and the theme seems to me a true reflection of the remarkable journey that South Church is on.

Grace has come in so many forms. I carry in my heart many members whose fragile presence among us was closed with final peace – dear friends whose gifts and spirits continue to enrich and inspire us. I cherish our pastor, Joel, urging us on with gentle humor and practical faith to an ever-deeper relationship with God and a more expansive view of our mission. Grace must have a sense of humor for Bob Blafield's wonderful musicianship is laced with a twinkle. Ann Roche's ministry with our children and youth is growing as we see more children and families again in our midst. I think of our remarkable staff, who provide the strong backbone of our daily church routine - Paula, Sado, Tom and Larry - and the Peirson Interns, who each in her own way challenged us to think deeply and welcome generously. Our "staff" is graced with Priscilla Anthony, who this month celebrates 30 years as editor of our *Epistle*. Thank you, Priscilla.

I am inspired by the will in this church to provide for our neighbors. In November we celebrated John Moore's 25 years of thoughtful, caring leadership of the St. Joe's Kitchen Wednesday supper ministry. I think "Grace" has become a permanent member of our Mission Board, which this year has increased its outreach to community organizations far beyond their hopes with coffee house music, food and fun. We are blessed with our other Boards, Committees and many church groups who study, consider, plan, and do so much with energy and enthusiasm. Who could predict that our little thrift shop could recycle so many clothes and provide so much community

goodwill? Our restored steeple pointing high above South Street seems a fitting symbol for our church and our city.

With the expansive growth of the ecumenical Food Pantry, we have experienced Mary Wheat's determination to provide so much more than staples - most especially, warmth, compassion, and respect - for our workers as well as the guests. Upon Pam Garrett's initiative, Mary Pope Osborne and the Pittsfield Promise filled the church one spring afternoon to encourage local children to read and read and read. Jean Bousquet and Sandi Smith continue that effort with their Food Pantry book corner. So many people contribute to the welcoming atmosphere in Barrett Hall each Wednesday and Thursday morning! And then there were the "Thanksgiving Angels" who provided almost 5,000 local people with Thanksgiving Dinner. We have all been "called to care."

I have indeed been blessed to serve as your Moderator. Thank you.

Mary Rentz

TRUSTEE REPORT

Our new sexton Larry Russell has been working hard to get acclimated to his new job since coming on board in November. He is learning the rhythms and flows of people and groups that make our church a center of activity. He is also discovering all the nooks and crannies of our buildings and the challenges of keeping things clean and operational.



At one time we had a set of basic tools available to the sexton to use for minor repairs that might present themselves. That set has disappeared over the years. To try and build a new set the Trustees are asking for your help. If you have any unused household tools (hammers, screw drivers, wrenches, pliers, etc.) that you no longer use, consider donating one or more to the church. If you have a tool you can part with, talk to a Trustee.

John Robertson, Chair



MAY MATTOON

On Monday, December 8th at 6 pm, May Mattoon met for their Christmas party potluck supper. It was well attended despite the frigid weather. The beautiful table

setting as well as the decorations made it known that Christmas was just around the corner. A sight to behold was the food table with its hot dish casseroles, fruit and garden salads, fresh veggie dishes and dips. Most diets got dismissed upon seeing such delights. Dessert consisted of a multi-layered cake with cream topping served by hostesses for the evening, Marge Demary, Sharon Mercier and Pam Garrett.

During the business meeting it was voted to give the Judie Grady Memorial Christian Education Fund the sum of \$25, as well as \$25 in memory of Jeanne Sheely and Karen Methven. Mattoon Class also voted to present Paula Haskell \$50 in appreciation for her secretarial help and other requests. \$25 dollars each was given to Sato, our Sexton Emeritus, Larry our new Sexton, and Tom who recently resigned as Sexton. Merry Christmas!

Two poinsettias were purchased. Following their use decorating the Christmas service, one each was passed on to Jerry Whiton and Shirley Guidetti.

Donations were received from the Bill McNutt, Art Bell, and Larry Borden families in appreciation for memorial service lunches put on by our group.

A youth group from St. Stephens is traveling to North Carolina on a mission trip project. Pam and "Sammie" from our church will be traveling with the group. It was voted to give each of them the sum of \$50 for spending money.

May Mattoon members agreed to provide volunteers to fill Christmas Pantry bags with group-donated toilet articles. These bags were distributed along with the regular Food Pantry bags.

Please pass along any program suggestions for 2015 to our group officers.

Our Christmas party ended with a "Yankee Swap" exchange – although I saw no gifts change hands. The evening was not quite as hilarious as the previous year when a much-desired piggy bank was sought after by all. Seems we were well satisfied with what we had or just too full to pursue a different gift. In any event, it was happy and pleasant evening.

Our first meeting for the New Year will be held on January 6th at noon. We will elect officers for 2015. Hostesses are Ruth Austin, Karen Allender and Jeannine Rontowski.

Happy New Year to all.

Alice Gallup

THE FOOD PANTRY

Thank you for your caring support for the clients at the Food Pantry. They were very grateful and appreciated the laundry detergent and toiletry bags received at Christmas.

Because of rents, electricity, heat, medicines and gas most of our clients don't have money to spend on food, other than what food stamps will purchase at the grocery store. As I am writing this article somebody called on behalf of her brother. She went to visit him and all he had was a bottle of soda and a half package of cream cheese.

Earlier someone else had asked about food for her sister's family. The sister had just been let go from her work and her husband's hours were cut. All the money from his pay had to go for rent.

I feel very fortunate that I don't know the panicky feeling of wondering where and when my food is coming from, or my medicine, or gas for my car.

Thank you for your continued support. Also, a special thank you to Pat R. and Sherrie for cleaning the kitchen, especially the stove. It looks beautiful!

January will be peanut butter month.

Mary Wheat



Lord & Tailor Gift And Thrift Shop

At the Annual Meeting in January, 2014 we were surprised to hear that the Shop was in the church budget's income for \$7000 this year (up from \$5000 the year before). After a very snowy and cold January, then February, we were even more worried that we certainly wouldn't make that goal.

At some point, we talked with the Trustees, through John Robertson, to report that their estimate was too high and that we might not make that amount. However, after two successful Tag Sales and a superb Craft Fair, plus good regular business, we were more hopeful. We even had to admit to John we were wrong and that he and the Trustees were right. So now, we have been able to contribute another \$500 this month for a total of \$7400 this year. No one is more surprised and pleased than we are.

Without your constant encouragement and support; your donations; and our volunteers' consistent and enthusiastic involvement, none of this would be possible.

Wishing all of you a Happy and Healthy New Year !

Audra Kinner and Nancy deForest



Lectionary for January

Sunday, January 4 – Second Sunday after Christmas

Jeremiah 31:7-14
Psalm 147:12-20
Ephesians 1:3-14
John 1:(1-9), 10-18

Sunday, January 11 – First Sunday after Epiphany

Genesis 1:1-5
Psalm 29
Acts 19:1-7
Mark 1:4-11

Sunday, January 18 – Second Sunday after Epiphany/Receiving of New Members

1 Samuel 3:1-10
Psalm 139:1-6, 13-18
1 Corinthians 7:29-31
John 1:43-51

Sunday, January 25 – Third Sunday after Epiphany & South Church 164th Annual Meeting following worship

Jonah 3:1-5, 10
Psalm 62:5-12
1 Corinthians 7:29-31
Mark 1:14-20

GOD SAID NO

I asked God to take away my habit.
God said, No.
It is not for me to take away,
but for you to give it up.

I asked God to make my handicapped child whole.
God said, No.
his spirit is whole,
his body in only temporary.

I asked God to grant me patience.
God said, No.
Patience is a byproduct of tribulations;
it isn't granted, it is learned.

I asked God to give me happiness
God said, No.
I give you blessings;
happiness is up to you.

I asked God to spare me pain.
God said, No.
Suffering draws you apart from worldly cares
and brings you closer to me.

I asked God to make my spirit grow.
God said, No.
You must grow on your own,
but I will prune you to make you fruitful.

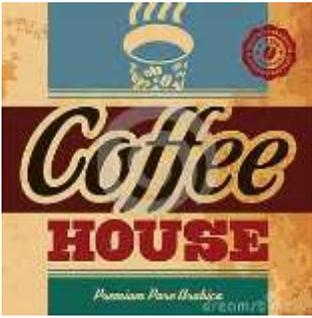
I asked God for all things that I might enjoy life.
God said, No.
I will give you life,
so that you may enjoy all things.

I asked God to help me LOVE others
as much as He loves me.
God said...
Ahhhh, finally you have the idea.

Submitted by Dick Kinner

~~~~~  
***LITTLE BOY SAYING HIS PRAYERS:***

Our Father who art in Heaven  
How did you know my name?



## ***South Church Coffee House Dinner and Concert***

***To Benefit the Emergency Fuel Fund of the Pittsfield Area  
Council of Congregations***

***Dinner 6:00 pm – Concert 7:00 pm***

110 South Street, Pittsfield

Friday, January 16, 2015

Tickets may be purchased from any of the Mission Board members.

Reservations needed for dinner may be made with the church office or with the Mission Board members:  
(Jean Robertson, Kerry Sullivan, Pat Politis, Sue Kaufman, Lynn Reynolds, Shirley Vickery).

### ***Menu***

\*Beef Stroganoff served with egg noodles,  
Vegetable and dessert - \$15.00

\*Vegetarian option available.

### ***Concert will feature***

***LINDA WORSTER, DAVID GROVER and PUGGY DEMARY***

If you can attend the concert only, no reservations are necessary.



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### ***CHURCH FAIR SUCCESS!!!***

The Church Fair on November 8<sup>th</sup> was a great success. We had an extremely dedicated group helping out this year and so many of you had a hand in that success, please accept my belated THANK YOU. For those of you who donated raffle items, luncheon items, baked goods, cookies for our new “cookie walk,” or your time, talent and treasure so generously--we truly couldn't have done it without you.

The lucky winners of our Raffle Items were,

Quilt: Elaine Scussel;

Painting Sharon Mercier

Money Tree: Paula Evangeliste

Calendar: Ginny McCormack

Congratulations to all the winners and I look forward to working with you all soon as we start preparations for the 2015 Harvest Crafts Fair.

Kerry Sullivan

## GRANDMA'S APRON

Do kids today know what an apron is?

The principal use of Grandma's apron was to protect the dress underneath, but along with that,  
It served as potholder for removing hot pans from the oven  
It was wonderful for drying children's tears.  
And on occasion was even used for cleaning out dirty ears.  
From the chicken coop, the apron was used for carrying eggs, fussy chicks, and half-hatched eggs to be finished in the warming oven.



When company came those aprons were ideal hiding places for shy kids.  
And when the weather was cold, Grandma wrapped it around her arms.  
Those big old aprons wiped many a perspiring brow, bent over the hot wood stove.  
Chips and kindling wood were brought into the kitchen in that apron.

From the garden, it carried all sorts of vegetables. After the peas had been shelled, it carried out the hulls.

In the fall, the apron was used to bring in apples that had fallen from the trees.

When unexpected company drove up the road, it was surprising how much furniture that old apron could dust in a matter of seconds.

When dinner was ready, Grandma walked out onto the porch, waved her apron, and the men knew it was time to come in from the fields to dinner.

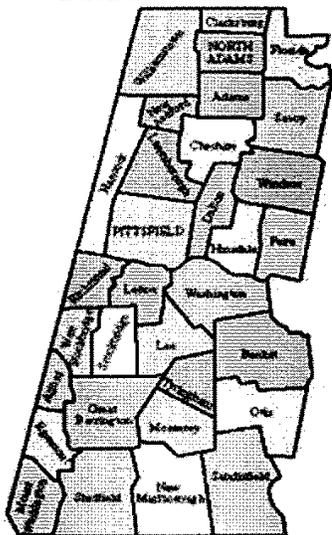
It will be a long time before someone invents something that will replace that "old-time apron" that served so many purposes.

Submitted by Judy Quackenbush



May all our troubles last as long  
as our New Year resolutions.

**Berkshire Organizing Project  
cordially invites you to the  
FOUNDING CONVENTION of  
Berkshire Interfaith Organizing (BIO)**



**SUNDAY, January 25, 2015**

**1 pm – 3 pm**

**St. Mark School  
400 Columbus Ave. Pittsfield**

**In the event of snow:  
Monday, 1/26, 5:30 – 7:30 pm**

We are an interfaith group of clergy, their congregations and regional affiliates who, together, grounded in faith seek to make justice real in our community. Come join us as we:

- **Celebrate the birth of an organization:** Clergy and lay leaders have been working for more than two years to create this faith and values-based, multi-issue organization in the Berkshires. Our stories have given shape to concerns that run deep in our community.
- **Commit to making change on issues of hunger/food insecurity and transportation:** Our Research Teams have met with our five state legislators, who will be present to commit to working with one another and us to win substantial changes on these issues.
- **Take steps together as a powerful Berkshire congregation-based organization:** Our Research Teams continue moving into taking ACTION with YOU on board!

**Please Join Us!**

**For more information and to RSVP, please contact Wendy Krom,  
Lead Organizer at 413-464-1804, [berkshire.organizing@gmail.com](mailto:berkshire.organizing@gmail.com).**

**South Congregational Church  
United Church of Christ  
Pittsfield, Massachusetts**

**Berkshire S. S.**

**To the Members of South Congregational Church:**

**The 164<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting of South Church will be held following the Parlor worship service on January 25, 2015.**

**The purpose of the meeting:**

**To hear the reports of the pastor, elected officials, and boards and committees.**

**To elect new officers and new members for boards and committees.**

**To approve a budget for 2015.**

**To discuss any additional business brought by the members.**

**Respectfully submitted,**

**John Anthony  
Clerk**

# January 2015

| Sunday                                                                                                                                                                                                  | Monday                                                                       | Tuesday                                                                                                                                                 | Wednesday                                                                                    | Thursday                                                                                                          | Friday                                                                                                                            | Saturday                                                                                       |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                                                                                                                        |                                                                              |                                                                                                                                                         |                                                                                              | 1<br><b>New Year's Day</b>                                                                                        | 2<br>Lord & Tailor<br>10 am-4 pm<br>AA 6:15 pm                                                                                    | 3<br>AA 10:15 am<br>Lord & Tailor<br>12-4 pm<br>Al-Anon<br>7 pm                                |
| 4<br>Worship<br>with Communion<br>Rev. Art<br>Kaufmann<br>10 am<br>Women's Book<br>Club 11:30 am                                                                                                        | 5<br>Yarn Spinners<br>7 pm                                                   | 6<br>May Mattoon<br>Annual<br>Meeting/Luncheon<br>12 noon<br>Men's Forum<br>12 noon<br>Trustees 6 pm<br>Church Council<br>7 pm<br>Mission Board<br>7 pm | 7<br>Food Pantry<br>7:30 – 11 am<br>UCC Clergy<br>12 noon<br>St. Joe's Dinner<br>5 pm        | 8<br>Food Pantry<br>7:30-11 am<br>Ladies Benevolent<br>9:30 am<br>Called To Care<br>1 pm<br>Chancel Choir<br>7 pm | 9<br>United<br>Way/Pittsfield<br>Promise 8 am<br>Lord & Tailor<br>10 am-4 pm<br>AA 6:15 pm                                        | 10<br>AA 10:15 am<br>Lord & Tailor<br>12-4 pm<br>Al-Anon<br>7 pm                               |
| 11<br>Parlor Worship<br>10 am<br>Diaconate<br>Meeting<br>with Prospective<br>Members<br>11:30 am<br>Annual Reports<br>Due                                                                               | 12<br>Western Mass<br>Food Bank<br>Training<br>9-12<br>Yarn Spinners<br>7 pm | 13<br>Spiritual Support<br>Group 10 am<br>Men's Forum<br>12 noon                                                                                        | 14<br>Food Pantry<br>7:30 – 11 am<br>St. Joe's Dinner<br>5 pm                                | 15<br>Food Pantry<br>7:30-11 am<br>Ladies Benevolent<br>Chancel Choir<br>7 pm                                     | 16<br><b>Coffee House<br/>Concert &amp;<br/>Dinner</b><br>Dinner 6 pm<br>Concert 7 pm<br>Lord & Tailor<br>10 am-4pm<br>AA 6:15 pm | 17<br>AA 10:15 am<br>Lord & Tailor<br>12-4 pm<br>Pittsfield<br>Squares 7 pm<br>Al-Anon<br>7 pm |
| 18<br>Parlor Worship<br>Receiving New<br>Members<br>10 am<br><br>Coffee Hour<br>Collections for<br>the Language<br>Project                                                                              | 19<br>Yarn Spinners<br>7 pm                                                  | 20<br>Spiritual Support<br>Group 10 am<br>Men's Forum<br>12 noon                                                                                        | 21<br>Food Pantry<br>7:30 – 11 am<br>Berkshire Place<br>10:45 am<br>St. Joe's Dinner<br>5 pm | 22<br>Food Pantry<br>7:30-11 am<br>Ladies Benevolent<br>9:30 am<br>Chancel Choir<br>7 pm                          | 23<br>Lord & Tailor<br>10 am-4pm<br>AA 6:15 pm                                                                                    | 24<br>AA 10:15 am<br>Lord & Tailor<br>12-4 pm<br>Al-Anon<br>7 pm                               |
| 25<br>Worship in the<br>Parlor 10 am<br>164 <sup>th</sup> Annual<br>Meeting<br>following worship<br>Founding<br>Convention of<br>Berkshire<br>Interfaith<br>Organizing<br>1-3 pm<br>Epistle<br>Deadline | 26<br>Yarn Spinners<br>7 pm                                                  | 27<br>Spiritual Support<br>Group 10 am<br>Men's Forum<br>12 noon                                                                                        | 28<br>Food Pantry<br>7:30 – 11 am<br>St. Joe's Dinner<br>5 pm                                | 29<br>Food Pantry<br>7:30-11 am<br>Ladies Benevolent<br>9:30 am<br>Chancel Choir<br>7 pm                          | 30<br>Lord & Tailor<br>10 am-4pm<br>AA 6:15 pm                                                                                    | 31<br>AA 10:15 am<br>Lord & Tailor<br>12-4 pm<br>Al-Anon<br>7 pm                               |