



# Epistle

**SOUTH CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH**

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**UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST**

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Summer 2015

At Church Council last night an intriguing topic came up. Don Roche had been listening to a program on NPR about faith. In recent years a new category has emerged into prominence—the “nones”. A growing percentage of Americans check “none” when asked about participation in a faith community. Another category are the “dones”. People who once participated but now are “done” with faith communities. These are folk, apparently, who have grown frustrated with faith communities that block creativity, stymie growing edges, and sink into passivity. With the mission/outreach/service orientation of South Church—read on in this Epistle to catch glimpses of that energy—we thought some of the “dones” might eventually find their way to faith communities like ours and add to the “holy ferment” that is here. But the larger question of the “nones” is very real. The sense that many feel “they just don’t have time in their busy lives for Sunday mornings in church” was voiced around the table. How is it that we make time for Sunday morning? And why do we? I was brought up in a time when church was an obligation—as a Catholic I was taught that to miss Mass was a mortal sin. Today that sense of obligation has disappeared from almost all faith traditions. Will churches just die out? Or will the loss of external obligation gradually allow the deeper, inner, purposes of being part of a faith tradition to slowly begin to shine?

After church on Sunday Tora and I drove to Washington D.C. to bring Meg and her stuff home after her four year sojourn in our nation’s capital. Meg will begin law school in Berkeley, California in September. This morning Tora, Meg, and Tora’s sister, Margaret, left Pittsfield to drive to Philly to pick up Lia and proceed on to Columbus, Ohio, to spend time with my father-in-law, Will Fernald, who at age 91 is dealing with major health issues. This is our unique situation at the moment and yet it fits a pattern of how rushed our lives can quickly become. As I drove along I-95 stunned by seeing so many speeding drivers changing lanes constantly, it seemed a good metaphor for life in 21<sup>st</sup> century America. Everything goes so fast and constantly changes lanes, this way and that. How do we find our center so we don’t just crash into everything nor end up someplace we don’t want to be? On the highway I do my deep relaxation breaths, lift up the situation in prayer—and at times slip into a bit of venting! But the first two responses are the ones that really work. By remembering to breathe and entrusting life into God’s hands I am able to find my exits and maintain my sanity in stressful situations. I learned these “tools” in church by worshiping, singing, praying, and listening together. I have learned other “tools” in my faith community that enables me to not just survive this crazy world but to thrive as I make intentional choices that nurture me, my family, and my community. Not all my choices are great—but that’s another “tool” I’ve received in church, the word of forgiveness that empowers new adventures and insight into my heart and life.

What “tools” have you received for your life by being part of this faith community? If we could learn to share some of this wisdom that has nourished and strengthened our lives then some of the “nones” and “dones” might get curious about this strange thing we call “church”. Thoughts for summer reflection.

## EPISTLE

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The next *Epistle* deadline is August 30<sup>th</sup> at 11 a.m.

During July and August there is only one edition of the *Epistle*. Please go to our webpage for updates at [www.southchurchpittsfield.org](http://www.southchurchpittsfield.org) and watch for our weekly Worshipful Thoughts in your email.

## OUR CHURCH FAMILY

### In Memoriam

Priscilla Bailey

June 2, 2015

### Graduations

Valerie Pease graduated from Holyoke Community College on May 30, 2015 with honors, as a member of the Phi Theta Kappa Society. Bob & Dorothy Stowe are Valerie's proud parents.

Tabitha Walker graduated from Berkshire Community College as a Registered Nurse, Phi Beta Kappa. She was a recipient of the Elizabeth Kassel Award. Tabitha is married to Andrew Walker, Mary Wheat's grandson.

## Children's Book Corner

If you're going to any book or tag sales this summer, remember the Book Corner and pick up something for the kids who visit our Food Pantry. Thanks again!

*Sandie Smith*



## May Mattoon

On the evening of June 8<sup>th</sup>, May Mattoon Class had a potluck supper. Hostesses for the occasion were Karen Allender, Lois Moore and Pat Nixon. Beautiful small pots of flowers decorated the tables. The natural beauty of these flowers made one realize how privileged we are to be able to assemble and enjoy the beauty of our surroundings inside and out. The food table was unbelievable! There were 22 attendees each bringing a potluck dish and no two alike, but equally delicious.

Our July gathering will be at Tanglewood on the 12<sup>th</sup>, a Sunday at 2:30 p.m. Rain date will be on the 19<sup>th</sup> of July at 2:30. Bring a snack, a drink and lawn chair. We will meet just inside the gate to the left under the shade of the trees.

Mary Wheat will be setting up tables on the front church lawn on the Fourth of July. There will be provisions for both breakfast and lunch. Proceeds from the sale of these items will be used to benefit the Food Pantry. Mary would appreciate donations of hamburgers, bacon, rolls, and eggs for sandwiches. Also needed are soda cans, bottled water, potato chips and condiments.

It was announced that Dot Walchenback is back at home. Good news!

We would like to note that we need people to sign up for Coffee Hour so that the task doesn't always fall on the same people. So pick a partner and please sign up.

Mary Rentz shared the good news about the kitchen renovations – stoves, sinks, dishwasher – should make life easier for those preparing suppers, craft fair luncheons, or whatever the occasion.

Our next meeting at the church will be held on Monday evening, September 14<sup>th</sup> – a potluck supper. Mary Rentz will present the program. The subject will be about aprons from the past. Looking forward to this program. My mom was always wearing an apron when at home. I'm sure everyone shares this memory.

May you summer be pleasant and enjoyable.

*Alice Gallup*

## Church School News

During the months of June, July and August a summer Christian Education Program is taking place. The focus and logo for the summer session is "Tell me the stories of Jesus." Themes such as opening your heart, trust and faith in God, compassion and healing will be explored in July's lessons. Interactive learning through art, music and dramatic play will be used to deepen the learning experience.



Also, I plan on spending as much time as possible (weather permitting) having lessons take place outside. Here at South Church we have a beautiful front yard with shade trees and green grass! The students and I have discussed using it to the fullest! I hope you can make our program part of your summer plans. We will meet each Sunday from 10 a.m. – 11 a.m. during the regular church service.

I would like to thank the members of the Congregation for their strong and steady support of the Christian Education Program here at South Church. Thanks also to all those who volunteered their time and talent during the 2014-2015 year. A special thank you, as well, to Samantha Sperlonga, Rachael Roche and Anna Dermody. With your support the program ran strongly and smoothly. You are truly the heart of the program's success!

Blessings to all,  
*Ann Roche*

## Food Pantry Notice

We are collecting toilet tissue for our food pantry guests for the months of July and August. Thanks for your continuing support.

*Mary Wheat*

## 2015 BERKSHIRE DIABETES WALK – ROGER' TEAM for support of the Patient Needs Fund

Saturday, May 30 was a beautiful spring day for the Berkshire Diabetes Walk. Due to the efforts of BMC, its Diabetic Education department, Brian Cogswell of Lenox High school and many others, there were more than 110 people walking and supporting the effort. It was a highly successful event, our best ever. Roger's Team raised \$ 3200, exceeding our goal. The other teams and BMC also made their goal. So the total was more than expected. Most importantly we had a great time.

We thank all of you for your contributions and encouragement. Many from the church walked with us.

Special thanks are due to Sara Adams, Pat Nixon, Bing Honig and Nancy de Forest for their exceptional support. Thanks to all.

*Audra Kinner, Captain of Roger's Team*

## Thrift Shop News

Summer is well under way, and the shop has never looked better. Lots of new, cool summer clothes are around. We also have a rack of suits and suit jackets, which are half price.

We have gotten many compliments on the new carpet. We feel it really sets off the clothes better.

We will be closed for the 4<sup>th</sup> of July parade and the yummy concession planned for the front of the church, but we will be open on July 3.

This month we will be giving the church \$400.

Thank you, as always for your support.

HAPPY SUMMER!

Nancy deForest & Audra Kinner

## From the Food Pantry

Thank you for your caring, diligent work at the Food Pantry. Without you we could not help so many people with kind words, food, books, and clothing. You contribute so much to the people that come. As many tell us, they could not feed their families and pay their bills without the food pantries and meals throughout Pittsfield.

Our Food Pantry continues to be a very busy place. Produce is beginning to come in and everyone is very excited. If any of you have extra produce from your gardens, etc. please bring it in.

On Saturday, July 4<sup>th</sup>, during there will be muffins, cookies, brownies, drinks, egg-bacon-cheese sandwiches and hot dogs cooked on the front lawn of the church. Please stop by for some refreshments and have a snack while watching the race and the parade. All profits will go towards buying eggs for the Food Pantry.

I would also like to thank everyone for supporting me at City Hall when I received my "Unsung Heroine Award" and for bringing delicious refreshments to the reception at Trisha Farley-Bouvier's office.

Have a blessed summer!  
*Mary Wheat*



**“The highest form of wisdom  
is kindness.”**

*-The Talmud*

## Epistle Mailing Lists

*(If you read this notice last month last month,  
but forgot to let us know . . .  
here is another reminder.)*

In the past many of you have mentioned that you would prefer to receive only an email version of our monthly newsletter, the *Epistle*. If you fall into this category, please send us an e-mail and let us know.

We are in the process of updating our mailing and e-mailing lists. Our e-mail at the church office is [sochurch@nycap.rr.com](mailto:sochurch@nycap.rr.com).

Thank you for your response.

## The Berkshire County Chapter of the NAACP

presents

### **GATHER-IN 2015**

**A Family Friendly Even for  
all Berkshire County**

**Activities Include:**

Entertainment • Food Booths • Music  
Girls & Boys Youth Basketball Tournament  
Face Painting • Bouncy House • Vendors • Games  
Celebrity Dunking Booth • Pony Rides

**Pitt Park on Columbus Ave**

**Saturday, July 25, 2015**

**12 noon – 6 p.m.**

**Special Note:** It is hard to step into the shoes (even for just a month) of our dedicated editor, Priscilla Anthony. However, I was not anticipating that little “gremlins” in my computer would cause so much commotion. After a couple of days of battle, Tim Hill was finally able to get me back on track. Thank you Tim! Hopefully now we will be able to get the newsletter out on time. (I miss you Priscilla!)

## Lectionary for July

Sunday, July 5 – Sixth Sunday after Pentecost

2 Samuel 5:1-5, 9-10  
Psalm 48  
2 Corinthians 12:2-10  
Mark 6:1-13

Sunday, July 12 - Seventh Sunday after Pentecost

2 Samuel 6:1-5, 12b-19  
Psalm 24  
Ephesians 1:3-14  
Mark 6:14-29

Sunday, July 19 – Eighth Sunday after Pentecost

2 Samuel 7:1-14a  
Psalm 89:20-37  
Ephesians 2:11-22  
Mark 6:30-34, 53-56

Sunday, July 26 – Ninth Sunday after Pentecost

*Rev. Lianne Finston, guest preacher*  
2 Samuel 11:1-5  
Psalm 14  
Ephesians 3:14-21  
John 6:1-21

## Lectionary for August

Sunday, August 2 – Tenth Sunday after Pentecost

*Rev. Lianne Finston, guest preacher officiating the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper*  
2 Samuel 11:26-12:13a  
Psalm 51:1-12  
Ephesians 4:1-16  
John 6:24-35

Sunday, August 9 – Eleventh Sunday after Pentecost

*Rev. John Messerschmitt, guest preacher*  
2 Samuel 18:4-8, 15, 31-22  
Psalm 130  
Ephesians 4:25-5:2  
John 6:35, 41-51

Sunday, August 16– Twelfth Sunday after Pentecost

*Rev. Robert Skidmore, guest preacher*  
1 Kings 2:10-12, 3:3-14  
Psalm 111  
Ephesians 5:15-20  
John 6:51-58

Sunday, August 23 – Thirteenth Sunday after Pentecost

1 Kings 8(1-6, 10-11) 22-30, 41-43  
Psalm 84  
Ephesians 6:10-20  
John 6:56-69

Sunday, August 30 –Fourteenth Sunday after Pentecost

Song of Solomon 2:8-13  
Psalm 45:1-2, 6-9  
James 1:17-27  
Mark 7:1-8, 14-15, 21-23

The trick is in what one emphasizes  
We either make ourselves miserable,  
or we make ourselves happy.  
The amount of work is the same.

*Carlos Castaneda*

## Stretching For God's Future Capital Fund Update



We are just about halfway through our 3 year Capital Fund Drive as summer arrives. To date we have received over \$170,000 of our pledge total of \$231,000. If you have lost track of where you are in fulfilling your pledge, please contact Pam Garret for an update of your status.

This summer we have contracted to have our Parish House roof repaired, followed by painting of the outside front of the sanctuary, sanctuary windows, and the Parish House facade. We currently are waiting for bids to come in on remodeling Barrett Hall's kitchen. Once those bids come in, the Trustees will decide on when, and at what level of renovation, can be done.

Thank you for your commitment and support at Stretching For God's Future.

*John Robertson*  
Trustees

## Berkshire Interfaith Organizing (BIO): An Update

South Church is one of sixteen faith organizations that comprise Berkshire Interfaith Organizing (BIO). Since its founding convention in January, BIO has been busy addressing two key issues related to poverty in our region: food insecurity and transportation.

This spring, the BIO Food Insecurity Team played an important role in advocating for increased funding for the Massachusetts Emergency Food Assistance Program. The MEFAP provides a consistent supply of quality, nutrient-rich foods and locally grown fresh produce to citizens of the Commonwealth in need through the Food Bank Coalition of Massachusetts and their network of 845 food pantries, soup kitchens, and shelters. Through calls and contacts with state legislators and their constituents, members of BIO made the case for increased funding. In May, the Massachusetts Senate voted unanimously to increase MEFAP funding to \$17 million (up from \$16 million approved by the House). Senator Ben Downing sponsored this increase. BIO has also been a supporter of "Take Another Look," the photography exhibit that illuminates the South Church Food Pantry.

In June the BIO Transportation Team launched its Ride the Bus initiative to talk with Berkshire County residents who rely on public transportation. The team split into pairs and rode buses in the BRTA system, conducting one-on-one conversations with riders and making personal observations about the transportation process. The Transportation Team will continue the Ride the Bus initiative throughout the summer months.

BIO is funded in part by a grant from the Catholic Campaign for Human Development and in part by dues from member churches. The Executive Council meets monthly to discuss the work of the issues teams, to review the budget and fund-raising, and to provide support to Lead Organizer Wendy Krom. If you would like more information, please contact BIO at [berkshire.organizing@gmail.com](mailto:berkshire.organizing@gmail.com), visit BIO's Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/BerkshireInterfaithOrganizing>, or speak to Cindy Dickinson, South Church's representative to BIO's Executive Council.

*Here is the full text of what Rev. Joel wrote for the “Unsung Heroine” nomination of Mary Wheat. Some of these words appeared in the Berkshire Eagle this past week. He thought you might like to see all of them.*

Mary Wheat, a faithful member of South Congregational Church in downtown Pittsfield, is the volunteer site manager for our very large food pantry. Every week over four hundred families enter our church social hall to shop for groceries. After being checked in each guest receives a box and selects the items they need—meats, vegetables, fruits, canned goods, breads, desserts, and toiletry items. They depart with ten to twenty pounds of food to help their families cope for another week with the chronic food insecurity in our area. It was Mary’s vision and energy that transformed our small, emergency pantry—distributing a few dozen bags of groceries a week-- into what it has become today. Mary began by recruiting church members, our women’s groups, our youth group, and her own children and grandchildren to help expand this ministry to the wider community. We had food drives, made contacts with local stores, and joined with other faith communities in bringing together food resources. And then Mary really got down to work.

One day she came to me and said we needed to join the Western Massachusetts Food Bank so we could access larger quantities and wider variety. I told her this would mean dealing with larger systems, coping with more paperwork, developing our infrastructure, and doing more physical labor. Were we really up for all those additional tasks? She looked at me with her gentle, warm, and focused eyes and simply said, “Joel, we need to feed the poor people of Pittsfield. This is how to do it.” All my concerns melted away in the clarity and quiet depth of her passion. In a few days Mary returned with a stack of forms for me to sign and we joined the Food Bank. Since then we have become the largest food pantry in Berkshire County.

As the pantry grew Mary began recruiting help from our pantry guests. Whenever a sturdy looking individual went through the line Mary tapped them on the shoulder and asked if they would like to help stock shelves or unload trucks. Since most of our church volunteers are grandparent age these younger volunteers were a vital source of help. Many of these volunteers had complex backgrounds including struggles with addiction and times in the house of correction. Mary has had the skill, patience, and wisdom to help mentor these volunteers along with all of us in the church into becoming a diverse team that accomplishes remarkable things. For many of our younger volunteers helping at the pantry becomes a stepping stone back into community life. When they leave us for paying jobs Mary goes forth and taps new individuals inviting them into pathways of learning and service.

Mary has also been at the center of the deepening collaboration of the many food pantries in central Berkshire County. Because of Mary’s leadership in what is called “The Thanksgiving Angels” South Church has been the host over the past three years for the single Thanksgiving distribution. This past November fourteen hundred families proceeded through our social hall receiving a frozen turkey and shopping for all the ‘fixings’ that go with this holiday. Donations totaling in excess of \$25,000 were received from faith communities, businesses, civic organizations, and individuals. Local farmers and the “Giving Garden” of the Pittsfield Church of Christ provided tons of fresh produce. Volunteers came from all walks of life. This collaborative effort of uniting our food pantries is a growing edge of shared ministry that is at the heart of Mary’s vision for addressing local food insecurity.

Mary Wheat is at the church nearly every day organizing and guiding our ever-changing cadre of volunteers as they unload, sort, package, and distribute several tons of food each week of the year. This is a very labor intensive activity for someone who has already had her eightieth birthday. But Mary flows with an energy and ease that is a marvel to behold even to those who are much younger than she. She is a continuing source of deep, faithful energy. Mary raised five children and cared tenderly for her husband, Walter, as he lived through the many stages of Alzheimer’s. She has been very involved in the lives of her many grandchildren. She taught Sunday School here at the Church for many decades and did so with creativity and imagination. And she was an outstanding leader in the Western Massachusetts Girl Scouts, taking troops of girls to England, Alaska, and into many avenues of service to the community. It was after Walter’s death and other life changes that Mary began focusing more fully on food insecurity. Our pantry and much of the collaboration around food in the community is the result.

Throughout her life Mary has been quietly, passionately, and creatively serving her family, church, and community in wise and remarkable ways. She makes life better for us all and I am grateful to be able to sing the praises of this ‘unsung heroine’.

# July 2015

## South Congregational Church

<i>Sunday</i>	<i>Monday</i>	<i>Tuesday</i>	<i>Wednesday</i>	<i>Thursday</i>	<i>Friday</i>	<i>Saturday</i>
			1 Food Pantry 7:30 – 11 am UCC Clergy 12 noon St. Joe's Dinner 5 pm	2 Food Pantry 7:30-11 am Ladies Benevolent 9:30 am Chancel Choir 7 pm	3 Lord & Tailor 10 am-4 pm AA 6:15 pm	4 <b>INDEPENDENCE DAY</b> Parade Concession Stand AA 10:15 am Lord & Tailor CLOSED Al-Anon 7 pm
	5 10 am Worship with Communion Book Club 11:30 am	6 Yarn Spinners 7 pm	7 Spiritual Support Group - 10 am Summer Men's Forum - 12 noon	8 Food Pantry 7:30 – 11 am St. Joe's Dinner 5 pm Trustees 6 pm	9 Food Pantry 7:30-11 am Ladies Benevolent 9:30 am	10 Lord & Tailor 10 am-4 pm AA 6:15 pm
12 Worship 10 am May Mattoon at Tanglewood 2:30 p.m. Outdoor Cathedral 2 pm Rev. Huntington Preaching	13 Yarn Spinners 7 pm	14 Spiritual Support Group - 10 am Summer Men's Forum - 12 noon Diaconate 7 pm	15 Food Pantry 7:30 – 11 am Berkshire Place 10:45 am St. Joe's Dinner 5 pm	16 Food Pantry 7:30-11 am Ladies Benevolent 9:30 am	17 Lord & Tailor 10 am-4 pm AA 6:15 pm	18 AA 10:15 am Lord & Tailor 12 noon – 4 pm Al-Anon 7 pm
19 Worship 10 am  Coffee Hour Collections for the Language Project	20 Yarn Spinners 7 pm	21 Spiritual Support Group - 10 am Summer Men's Forum - 12 noon	22 Food Pantry 7:30 – 11 am St. Joe's Dinner 5 pm	23 Food Pantry 7:30-11 am Ladies Benevolent 9:30 am	24 Lord & Tailor 10 am-4pm AA 6:15 pm	25 AA 10:15 am Lord & Tailor 12 noon-4 pm Al-Anon 7 pm Gather-In at Pitt Park noon- 6 pm
26 Worship 10 am Guest Preacher Rev. Lisanne Finston	27 Yarn Spinners 7 pm	28 Spiritual Support Group - 10 am Summer Men's Forum - 12 noon	29 Food Pantry 7:30 – 11 am St. Joe's Dinner 5 pm	30 Food Pantry 7:30-11 am Ladies Benevolent 9:30 am	31 Lord & Tailor 10 am-4pm AA 6:15 pm	

# August 2015

## South Congregational Church

<i>Sunday</i>	<i>Monday</i>	<i>Tuesday</i>	<i>Wednesday</i>	<i>Thursday</i>	<i>Friday</i>	<i>Saturday</i>
						1 AA 10:15 am Lord & Tailor 12-4 pm Al-Anon 7 pm
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23 Worship 10 am	24 Yarn Spinners 7 pm	25 Spiritual Support Group - 10 am Summer Men's Forum - 12 noon <i>Church Council</i> 7 pm	26 Food Pantry 7:30 – 11 am St. Joe's Dinner 5 pm	27 Food Pantry 7:30-11 am Ladies Benevolent 9:30 am	28 Lord & Tailor 10 am-4pm AA 6:15 pm	29 AA 10:15 am Lord & Tailor 12-4 pm Al-Anon 7 pm
30 Worship 10 am  <b>Epistle            Deadline            11 am</b>	31 Yarn Spinners 7 pm					