

Epistle

SOUTH CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH

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UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

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April 2017

As March opens into April and winter releases its grip into days of subtle warmth and lengthening sunlight, this is a fresh opportunity to renew our commitment to open our hearts to the love of God streaming into our world. But in this world of ours with its many, harsh winds and deep hostilities, opening our hearts is not easy. Henry Nouwen—whose book “Reaching Out: The Three Movements of the Spiritual Life” we’ve been studying after church this Lent—says it this way: *“The movement from hostility to hospitality is hard and full of difficulties. Our society seems to be increasingly full of fearful, defensive, aggressive people anxiously clinging to their property and inclined to look at their surrounding world with suspicion, always expecting an enemy to suddenly appear, intrude and do harm.”* He wrote those words in 1975, but in our time of rising deportations, anti-Semitism, and racial hostility, Nouwen’s reflections are needed more than ever. He says this about the spiritual vocation of hospitality: *“Looking at hospitality as the creation of a free and friendly space where we can reach out to strangers and invite them to become our friends, it is clear that this can take place on many levels and in many relationships.”* For Nouwen, creating “free and friendly spaces” for those around us—in ever-enlarging circles—is at the heart of our vocation to follow Jesus.

Looked at this way moving towards hospitality begins with creating free and friendly spaces for those closest to us: listening to our children, being tender with our spouse, calling a friend, doing a small act of kindness, being patient with our own weaknesses. When we gather together on Sundays for worship we are invited into a free and friendly space for the sharing of our lives in the presence of the divine. When we serve at the Pantry, St. Joe’s Kitchen, Lord and Tailor Thrift Shop, or in other projects these can be moments of deep hospitality as we share our hearts as well as important tasks. When Mary Ellen Puntin and I took communion to Sam Sammet and John Anthony last week we were connecting with two faithful souls who can’t get to church at the moment—and enlarging the circle of hospitality. Whenever we are able to overcome our resistances—our hostilities—and open ourselves to the ‘stranger’ who stands before us—even if we’ve known them for decades—light shines and we move toward hospitality.

As we contemplate other ways of enlarging sanctuary and safety for those who are being targeted in this fearful, suspicious time, we are also aware of our own fears and the hostilities that get into us. As Nouwen tells us: *“It is realistic to realize that although we hope to move toward hospitality, life is too complex to expect a one-way direction.”* Such awareness prepares us for entering Holy Week which arrives this month. We seek to follow Jesus as faithful disciples. Yet Jesus’ own disciples failed him. Fear and anxiety caused them to flee when the hostilities of the people and the unjust laws of the land led to crucifixion. On Maundy Thursday we enter into the darkness that overcame the disciples so that we can respond differently. On Good Friday we will have an ecumenical service at 3 p.m. in the Parlor, including a dramatic reading of John 18:1 -19:42, with reflections from a number of local clergy. We will listen as the hostility of the world led to Jesus’ death. In this way we open our hearts to the pain of the world and to the love of God that overcomes even the power of deadly hostility. Join us as we move into God’s light and love this season.

EPISTLE

Published monthly at Pittsfield, Mass. in the interest of members and friends of South Congregational Church.

Subscription: \$4.00

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The next Epistle deadline is April 30th, at 11 am.

5 Things to Think About before It's Too Late

Real life stories that teach you many things in life. These are based on true incidences both wonderful and inspirational.

1. I interviewed my grandmother for part of a research paper for my Psychology class. When I asked her to define success in her own words, she said, "Success is when you look back at your life and the memories make you smile."
2. Recently I asked my mentor - a very successful business man in his 70s-what his top 3 tips are for success. He smiled and said, "Read something no one else is reading, think something no one else is thinking, and do something no one else is doing."
3. Today, after a 72- hour shift at the fire station, a woman ran up to me at the grocery store and gave me a hug. When I tensed up, she realized I didn't recognize her. She let go with tears of joy in her eyes and the most sincere smile and said, "On 9-11-2001, you carried me out of the World Trade Center."
4. I watched my dog get run over by a car, I sat on the side of the road holding him and crying. And just before he died, he licked the tears off my face.
5. Today I woke up feeling ill, but decided I needed the money, so I went to work. At 3pm I got laid off. On my drive home I got a flat tire. When I looked in the trunk for the spare, it was flat too. A man in a BMW pulled over, gave me a ride, we chatted, and then he offered me a job. I start tomorrow.

Submitted by Bob Skidmore

CHURCH SCHOOL NEWS

On Sunday mornings we have been reading stories that center around conversations with God or Jesus: Adam and Eve in the garden, Nicodemus and Jesus,

Jesus and the Samaritan woman at the well, and Jesus, Mary and Martha. We are reminded that whenever two or more are gathered in Christ's name, Christ hears us.

Each week during Lent the children are introduced to a story through a Lenten conversation book. Students are working on creating a booklet that can be taken home after the sixth Sunday of Lent. We will also be learning about Lenten symbols, such ashes, rope, pretzels, and palms. Most importantly, we teach that Lent is an opportunity to slow down and take time to think about things in life that we often neglect.

Important Dates to Remember:

April 2nd – Seder meal after Worship

April 16th - Easter Sunday Easter Egg Hunt

in the courtyard. All are welcome to join in the fun and celebration immediately after Worship. Please meet us in the red-carpet area to line up for the hunt. **Hope You Can Come!**



Blessings to all,

Ann Roche

WORDS TO REMEMBER

Children are great imitators. It is up to us to give them something great to imitate. Unknown

These words reveal the child's inner needs: "Help me do it alone." Unknown

Children will remember you not for the material things you provided, but for the feeling that you cherished them.

Richard Evans



Join us for Lenten and Holy Week services as we look forward to Easter on April 16.

***South Church Seder/Meal of Remembrance
Sunday, April 2, following worship***

Our Seder celebration helps us to remember the spiritual roots of Holy Week. Using a shortened haggadah, we partake of karpas, matzah, marror, pesah, harosat, and hard boiled eggs to remember the story of the Jewish Passover. Not sure what any of that is? Come find out! A simple lunch of soup and bread will follow the Seder meal. A freewill offering will be collected to defray costs. Please sign up in the Parlor or call the church office. The program takes place in Barrett Hall.

Palm Sunday

Sunday, April 9 at 10 am

We wave palms and sing triumphant hymns as Jesus makes his way into Jerusalem and as we find our way into Holy Week.

Maundy Thursday Service

Thursday, April 13 at 7:30 pm

Through communion, lessons, hymns, anthems, and the gradual extinguishing of lights, we remember the Last Supper and the abandonment of Jesus by the disciples. This moving service of "shadows" prepares us for the joy of Easter.

Good Friday Ecumenical Service

Friday, April 14, at 3 pm - South Church Parlor

We reflect on the meaning of Good Friday in an intimate service that weaves together Scripture readings, reflections, music, and silence. Several Pittsfield clergy have collaborated to create this meaningful ecumenical experience.

Cindy Dickinson

LECTIONARY FOR APRIL

Sunday, April 2 – Fifth Sunday in Lent

Ezekiel 37:1-14
Psalm 130
Romans 8:6-11
John 11:1-45

Sunday, April 9 – Palm/Passion Sunday

Psalm 118:1-2, 19-29
Matthew 21:1-11
Isaiah 50:4-9a
Matthew 27:11-54

Thursday, April 13 – Maundy Thursday 7:30 p.m.

Psalm 116, 1-2, 12-19
First Corinthians 11:23-26
John 13:1-17, 31b-35

Friday, April 14 – Good Friday Ecumenical Service, 3:00 p.m.

A dramatic narration of John 18:1-19:42 with brief reflections from local clergy, hymns, silence and prayers

Sunday, April 16 – Easter Sunday

Acts 10:34-43
Jeremiah 31:1-6
Psalm 118:1-2, 14-24
Matthew 28:1-10

Sunday, April 23 – Second Sunday of Easter

Guest Preacher, Rev. David Hurst

Acts 2:14a, 22-32
Psalm 16
1 Peter 1:3-9
John 20:19-31

Sunday, April 30 – Third Sunday of Easter

with singer songwriter Linda Worster

Acts 2:14a, 36-41
Psalm 116:1-4, 12-19
1 Peter 1:17-23
Luke 24:13-35





FOOD PANTRY

A huge thank you to Darlene Berryman, Pam Garrett, Mary Rentz, Sue and Art Kaufman, Joyce Brown, the Networking Committee and the Mission Board for organizing a very successful St. Patrick's Day Sober Dance. The food was delicious and the band was great! Everyone had a wonderful time.

Our pantry at South Church continues to grow as more people become food insecure. In December of 2016, the pantry provided food for 5719 individuals. In December 2014, we served 3691 individuals and back in December 2012, 2750 individuals were served. This is an increase of 2830, more than double the number in just 4 years.

We try to have available nutritious foods such as produce, eggs, dairy and meats. Sometimes it is difficult to obtain enough food. For example, once a month our pantry receives 15 cases of eggs, each case has 15 dozen eggs which adds up to 225 dozen. In order to share them with more clients, we cut the cartons in half so that we'll have 450 1/2 dozen packages to distribute. The other 3 weeks of the month we do not have eggs to distribute.

This is where the money from the dance and donations is a huge help. Thank you for everything!

Remember, April is toilet paper month.

Thank you, Mary Wheat

To the Wonderful Women of South Congregational: Words cannot express my gratitude for the wonderful

shower you gave for my family and for me, as we anticipate the arrival of our baby boy. It was so lovely to share this time with you and in the joy of waiting for this long-awaited gift. I am especially grateful for the gift of a house cleaning. At such a transitional time, it gives me great joy (and relief) to know that I have help with what can sometimes feel like an overwhelming task – thank you!!

We look forward to introducing you to our son and sharing with you the joy of his arrival. In the meantime, please know of our deep and profound gratitude for the many gifts we have received in finding a home at South! Much Love & Gratitude, **Jenny**



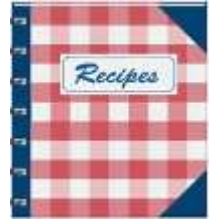
Spring is when you feel like whistling even with a shoe full of slush!



MAY MATTOON

May Mattoon met on Tuesday, March 7th at 12 noon in the Parlor. There were 20 members present as well as two guests – Helen Kimbel and Margaret Hintz, and Pastor Joel. Hostesses were Mary Wheat and Pam Garrett. The tables were decorated in a St. Patrick's theme.

Our guest speaker was Robin Anish, columnist for the *Berkshire Eagle* Food Section. She spoke about her background in cooking and how she became interested in the subject at an early age. Robin shared with us some of her favorite recipes from her extensive cookbook collection, many from churches and other organizations. She pointed out how women expanded their individuality through recipes, especially during the Women's Suffrage Movement with their own cookbook written after the Movement.



The next meeting will be held on Tuesday, April 4th at 12 noon in the Parlor.

Joyce Brown

LORD & TAILOR NEWS

What a tremendous tag sale on March 11!! There was quite a crowd.

We want to thank all the people involved with the set-up and the actual sale, as well as the people who worked in the shop. We also could not have done it without the help of Jim from the Food Pantry, who toted all the stuff from the 3rd floor to Barrett Hall. About \$1900 was realized and we're very pleased.

Once again, a call for more volunteers for the shop is needed. Two of our intrepid regulars cannot continue, and so the following times, Fridays 12-2 and 2-4; also Saturdays 12-2, need people. We do have substitutes, but it has been necessary to call the same people every week. Therefore, regular volunteers are needed.

Thanks, as usual, to all our wonderful volunteers who donate their time, and to those who donate items to sell.

HAPPY SPRING!

Nancy deForest, Audra Kinner

ST. JOSEPH'S KITCHEN NEWS

On April 12th, St. Joseph's Kitchen is sponsoring a Choke saver Class at 6 pm at the church after the Wednesday dinner. A nurse from the Berkshires County Boards of Health will be conducting the class. This class trains people in first response when someone is choking following the American Heart Association protocol. If you have had 1st Aid or CPR training, you are probably familiar with the Heimlich maneuver. This training will get you up to speed and give you valuable practice. If you are interested in participating, please let me know - marylrentz@gmail.com. We are hoping to get several people certified.

We welcome John Sandifer to our Wednesday cooking team. He has cooked to rave reviews. We are grateful to be able to call on John from time to time.

The last week of March, the Board of Realtors provided and prepared the food for the Wednesday night meal. They have been doing this for several years in March. We are grateful for the realtors' interest, participation and contribution to St. Joseph's Kitchen.

Tom Damrosch, our Director of Music, has been tinkling the ivories on Wednesday afternoons. His music helps create a pleasant, and welcoming atmosphere for the pre-dinner hour. Thank you, Tom!

One of our regular guests had a bike stolen at a recent meal. St. Stephens has started a fund to help replace the bike. We will gladly forward any contributions for a new bike to St. Stephens.

Finally, we can always use help serving our guests on Wednesday evening. No experience is necessary. Just come at 4:45 pm with a willing spirit and a friendly smile. You will be welcomed and put to work delivering plates of nutritious and delicious food to our guests.

Mary Rentz



The Lord gave us life that we may live it to the fullest



Friday April 21, 2017, 7 p.m.



Presents

Mark Kelso

Happy Birthday Mother Earth

Mark Kelso has been likened to John Lennon and Leonard Cohen. From Madison Square Garden to healing resorts and churches across North America, Mark has brought his gentle wildness to play music for many thousands of people.

**Admission by
donation**

to benefit

**Housatonic
River Initiative**

a non-profit coalition of Berkshire County residents, formed in 1992 to work to reclaim the Housatonic River system from years of neglect and decades of toxic PCB contamination. The more we have learned, the more we have realized what a large task we have set for ourselves, and the wider our scope of activities has become. While we began advocating for a river, our tasks multiplied to include fighting for a comprehensive cleanup of the General Electric (GE) facility in Pittsfield, Massachusetts, the closure of GE's PCB burn facility, the removal of PCBs from contaminated residential homes, businesses, schoolyards, and playgrounds, and demanding public health studies for former GE workers and members of the public whose homes were built on or near PCB-contaminated fill.

**BREAD & ROSES COFFEE
HOUSE**

Parlor
South Congregational Church
110 South St, Pittsfield

Southchurchpittsfield.org

Visit

facebook.com/southchurchpittsfield
for upcoming performances.

April 21, 2017

7:00 p.m.

April 2017

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
						1 AA 10:15 am Handbell Rehearsal 11 an Lord & Tailor 12-4 pm Al-Anon 7 pm
2 FIFTH SUNDAY IN LENT Choir Rehearsal 9 am Worship 10 am with Communion Seder & Meal of Remembrance	3 Bridge 12 – 4 pm Yarn Spinners 7 pm NA-There is Hope Group 7 pm	4 May Mattoon Luncheon 12 noon Men's Forum 12 noon <i>Square Dancing 7 pm</i>	5 Food Pantry 7:30 – 11 am Music Together Bridge 12 – 4 pm Healthy Pittsfield 2 pm St. Joe's Dinner 5 pm Food Pantry 5:30	6 Food Pantry 7:30-11 am Quilting-Ladies Benevolent 9:30 am UCC Clergy 12 noon	7 Lord & Tailor 10 am-4 pm Bridge 12 – 4 pm AA 6:15 pm	8 AA 10:15 am Handbell Rehearsal 11 an Music Together Lord & Tailor 12-4 pm Al-Anon 7 pm
9 PALM/PASSION SUNDAY Choir Rehearsal 9 am Worship 10 am with Eco-Palms May Mattoon Spring Bake Sale Lenten Study	10 Bridge 12 – 4 pm Yarn Spinners 7 pm NA-There is Hope Group 7 pm	11 <i>Square Dancing 7 pm</i> Maundy Thursday Rehearsal 6 pm Diaconate 7 pm	12 Food Pantry 7:30 – 11 am Music Together Bridge 12 – 4 pm St. Joe's Dinner 5 pm Food Pantry 5:30 – 6 pm Trustees 6 pm	13 MAUNDAY THURSDAY Food Pantry 7:30-11 am Music Together Quilting-Ladies Benevolent 9:30 am Pantry Steering Committee 12 noon Tenebrae & Communion 7:30 pm	14 GOOD FRIDAY Lord & Tailor 10 am-4 pm Bridge 12 – 4 pm Good Friday Ecumenical Service 3 pm AA 6:15 pm	15 HOLY SATURDAY AA 10:15 am Music Together Lord & Tailor 12 noon – 4 pm Pittsfield Squares Dance 7 pm Al-Anon 7 pm
16 EASTER SUNDAY Worship 10 am Easter Egg Hunt <i>Coffee Hour Collections for the Language Project</i>	17 Bridge 12 – 4 pm Yarn Spinners 7 pm NA-There is Hope Group 7 pm	18 Men's Forum 12 noon <i>Square Dancing 7 pm</i>	19 Food Pantry 7:30 – 11 am Music Together Bridge 12 – 4 pm St. Joe's Dinner 5 pm Food Pantry 5:30	20 Food Pantry 7:30-11 am Music Together Quilting-Ladies Benevolent 9:30 am	21 m. Lord & Tailor 10 am-4 pm Bridge 12 – 4 pm AA 6:15 pm Coffee House 7 pm	22 AA 10:15 am Lord & Tailor 12-4 pm Al-Anon 7 pm
23 Worship 10 am with Rev. David Hurst Guest Organist Tom Tuthill	24 Yarn Spinners 7 pm NA-There is Hope Group 7 pm	25 Men's Forum 12 noon <i>Square Dancing 7 pm</i> Church Council 7 pm	26 Food Pantry 7:30 – 11 am Music Together Bridge 12 – 4 pm St. Joe's Dinner 5 pm Food Pantry 5:30 Missions 7pm	27 Food Pantry 7:30-11 am Music Together Quilting-Ladies Benevolent 9:30 am	28 Lord & Tailor 10 am-4 pm Bridge 12 – 4 pm AA 6:15 pm	29 AA 10:15 am Lord & Tailor 12-4 pm Al-Anon 7 pm
30 Worship 10 am Guest Musician Linda Worster						

May Epistle
Deadline 11