



Epistle

SOUTH CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH

UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

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

sochurch@nycap.rr.com
www.southchurchpittsfield.org
facebook.com/SouthChurchPittsfield

March 2017

A few weeks ago a parishioner came to me and said a good friend of hers was terrified. The frightened woman was from El Salvador, an undocumented immigrant, who was fearful she and her sons would soon be sent back. She and her boys have been here a number of years. She had been an ESL student of our parishioner, learning English and finding her way. She had fled El Salvador when her young teenage sons had become the focus of a very violent international gang. The boys were told that it was time to join the gang or else their entire family would be murdered. To join the gang they would each need to kill someone. The protective mom scooped them up and fled the country, eventually arriving here in the Berkshires. They have been safe here. But because of our broken immigration system there is no simple path to seek asylum. If they come forward they will be deported. Our member asked, “What can we do?”

I wish I had a good answer, one that would keep vulnerable families safe and provide our country with its necessary level of security. What we need are wise leaders who can work with complex and tragic human realities to craft policies that provide pathways that lead to life for struggling families and to moral integrity for our diverse communities. Instead we have simplistic policies that demonize “illegals” and vastly expand search and seizure efforts throughout our country. Such policies will not keep any of us safe. How should we respond to these realities as those who follow Jesus who began his life as a refugee and died an outcast?

In our tradition there is a long history of providing sanctuary to the alien, outcast, and vulnerable. In Deuteronomy it says: “When you reap your harvest in your field and forget a sheaf in the field, you shall not go back to get it; it shall be left for the alien, the orphan, and the widow, so that the Lord your God may bless you in all your undertakings.” When we make room for those considered “outcast” we not only help them we also are blessed—Shalom is deepened. On Thursday, March 9, from 3 – 4:30 p.m. Berkshire Interfaith Organizing (BIO) is offering a workshop on how faith communities can support immigrants and learn about the modern “Sanctuary” movement. It will be held at the Lee Congregational Church. On Saturday, March 18, from 9 – 4 p.m. our wider UCC is holding a regional “Super Saturday” event in Wilbraham that will feature a keynote lecture and conversation on how in Christ we can work with people of all faiths for the common good. There will also be a host of workshops to enrich church life including how to support immigrants and the vulnerable. Contact the office if you would like to attend either event.

Finally, my Lenten study, exploring Henri Nouwen’s spiritual classic, “Reaching Out: The Three Movements of the Spiritual Life” includes a section on moving from ‘hostility to hospitality’. Nouwen writes that within each of us there’s an ongoing struggle between living a fearful, suspicious life and an open, hopeful life that welcomes others and our own deepest wisdom. Each day we find ourselves between these poles of hostility and hospitality. Can we center ourselves in God—daily--to discover the power to make wise choices? Join us for this exploration each Sunday following worship.

In this Lenten season with challenges all around us and also within us, may we follow the way of Love.

EPISTLE

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Staff

Editor Priscilla Anthony
Reporters Each of You
Features
Pastor Joel Huntington
Children/Youth Director Ann Roche
Moderator Jean Robertson
Parish Nurse Sue Kaufman
Peirson Intern Jim Day
May Mattoon Joyce Brown
Ladies Benevolent Marge Demary
Men's Forum Bob Skidmore/John Anthony
Production and Mailing Paula Haskell

The next *Epistle* deadline is March 26, at 11 am.



Epistle Subscriptions

You will notice the small, brown envelope tucked into this issue of *EPISTLE*. This \$4.00 subscription payment insures delivery of the monthly newsletter to your door, and assists in the cost of office machines, paper, ink cartridges for the computer, and the like.

Donations may be sent to South Church, attn. Pam Garrett, at 110 South Street, Pittsfield, MA 01201, or placed in the collection plate on Sunday mornings. Thank you for your assistance, and continue to *ENJOY the EPISTLE*.

Priscilla Anthony, Editor

MAY MATTOON

Our February 7th meeting was canceled due to a winter storm.

The next meeting will be held on Tuesday, March 7th at 12 noon with Robin Anish, columnist for the *Berkshire Eagle's* Food Section as our guest speaker.

Joyce Brown

"Just as you did to the one of least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me."

Matthew 25:40



One Great Hour of Sharing (OGHS) is the Lenten Offering of the United Church of Christ that supports disaster, refugee and development actions. Those who have been helped in the past by the OGHS offering, frequently comment that "you were here after the flood, the earthquake, or the fire" or "I can't believe the church showed up for me during my time of need." Some even say, "I have given to this offering, but never thought it would help me." Our gifts through the offering allow the church to show up and be there when people need it most. What's more OGHS works with congregations and organizations locally, those vested in the affected communities, so we can be present quickly, and help the people living in those communities rebuild their lives.

At South Church we will be accepting this offering during our Worship Service on Sunday, March 19th. You may also go on line to learn more about OGHS and/or to make your donation directly at www.ucc.org/oghs.

Offering envelopes have been included in this addition of the Epistle if you are receiving it through the mail. Additional offering envelopes will be available at the church for those of you who receive your Epistle via email.

Board of Missions

CIVITAN CLUB OF PITTSFIELD

11th Annual Soup Fest

Friday, March 10, - Doors open at 5:30 pm

Crown Plaza, 1 West St., Pittsfield

Sample 20 varieties of soups

Music, appetizers, desserts, silent auction, raffles

\$25 donation per person

Proceeds benefit local Soup Kitchens
And Food Pantries

For info, call 413-822-3124

UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST RESOURCING
EVENT: SUPER SATURDAY,
SATURDAY, MARCH 18 9 – 4 P.M. AT THE
REGIONAL HIGH SCHOOL IN WILBRAHAM

Super Saturday is a full-day of skill building offering creative workshops, a keynote address, worship, a marketplace of vendors and ideas and an opportunity for everyone to network with one another. This spring's Super Saturday is being co-hosted by the Massachusetts, Connecticut and Rhode Island Conferences of the UCC and is featuring keynote speaker Brian McLaren, author, activist, and public theologian. A former college English teacher and pastor, he is a passionate advocate for "a new kind of Christianity" - just, generous, and working with people of all faiths for the common good. In his new book, *The Great Spiritual Migration: How the World's Largest Religion is Seeking a Better Way to be Christian*, Brian McLaren invites you to seize the moment and set out on the most significant spiritual pilgrimage of our time: to help Christianity become more Christian while joining in interfaith conversation about religious life in migration.

The morning and afternoon workshops will cover a host of topics including how to be a Sanctuary church, support people in loss, be a better Deacon, mental health awareness, stewardship, church school ministry, environmental and racial justice, and much more. Lunch is included in the registration. If we sign up a team of five or more by March 5 then the cost is reduced. Please speak to Rev. Huntington or call the church office if you are intrigued.



Be still and know that I am God
Be still and know that I am with
you.

Be still and know that I will
comfort you when you come to
Me in your hour of need.

Be still and know that I am God. Be still and know
that I am here for you.

And I will wipe your tears; you will be renewed.
Come unto me, my child, be still and know that I
give you rest.

I am present in your pain and I always I will remain
your comforter and friend.

My peace I leave with you; My peace I give unto you.
M. MacDonald

LENTEN STUDY
The Three Movements of the Spiritual Life

As a response to the times we are living through, Rev. Joel is beginning to plan a Lenten Study. We will be exploring Henri Nouwen's spiritual classic "*Reaching Out: The Three Movements of the Spiritual Life*". The three movements are from Loneliness to Solitude, Hostility to Hospitality, and Illusion to Prayer.

We live in a lonely, hyper-individualized society that makes us prone to fear and suspicion. We live at a time when we are very aware of threats and our vulnerability which makes us susceptible to hostility to others. We live in a time when many voices tell us that God is an illusion in a world defined by money, power, and status. Nouwen provides insights and wisdom that can help us move towards solitude (a centered heart), hospitality toward others, and a prayerful life. I invite you to get a copy of this small book and read it this month and we'll begin the group following worship on Sunday, February 26th.

The group will meet during the six weeks of Lent. Come for all or as many as you are able. Child care will be provided.

What is Sanctuary?

"Sanctuary" is an ancient practice of providing safety to those who are victims of unjust laws. The modern sanctuary movement is about providing safety to undocumented immigrants and their families during a time of rising deportations.

Some of our clients at the pantry and friends of our parishioners are living in fear of being rounded up and sent to countries they left years ago because of terror or sheer desperation. Can we at South better support these immigrants and help protect the moral integrity of our communities? Berkshire Interfaith Organizing (BIO) is offering a workshop on Thursday, March 9, from 3 – 4:30 p.m. at the Lee Congregational Church to help local congregations do just that. We will learn what it means to be a Sanctuary Congregation and the steps that need to be taken. We will hear about the campaigns to pass "Trust Act Policies" in Great Barrington and Pittsfield, and the successful passing of such an Act in Lawrence, MA. The training will be provided by two Organizers from BIO's Group Merrimack Valley Project. All are welcome and encouraged to come.



LECTIONARY FOR MARCH 2017

Sunday, March 5 – First Sunday in Lent with Worship returning to the Sanctuary

Genesis 2:15-17, 3:1-7
Psalm 32
Romans 5:12-19
Matthew 4:1-11

Sunday, March 12 – Second Sunday in Lent

Genesis 12:1-4a
Psalm 121
Romans 4:1-5, 13-17
John 3:1-17

Sunday, March 19 – Third Sunday in Lent

Exodus 17:1-7
Psalm 95
Romans 5:1-11
John 4:5-42

Sunday, March 26 – Fourth Sunday in Lent

1 Samuel 16:1-13
Psalm 23
Ephesians 5:8-14
John 9:1-41

HABITAT FOR HUMANITY WORK DAY, MARCH 18, 8 - 3 (approx.)

We'll be teaming up with volunteers from First Church to work at Hall Place. Tasks will include hanging drywall, painting, and carpentry. If you'd like to learn more about this opportunity, see Will Garrison, or call him at 443-0164.

LORD AND TAILOR NEWS

It's that time again-time to clean out your closets and attics for our Spring Tag Sale. It will be held Saturday, March 11, from 9-3. We will be setting up beginning Thursday March 9 in the afternoon. Many volunteers will be needed and the sign-up sheets are in the parlor. We appreciate any time you can give us, no matter how long.

The shop will be open during the sale (but closed on Friday). For Saturday, EVERYTHING in the Shop will be HALF PRICE. We hope for a

Continued next column

The Food Pantry continues to serve many hungry families. The vacation week brings many children to the Pantry. They all love the books, clothes and food, especially the apples. The blankets and quilts that have been donated are very much in demand as some of the children sleep on the floor or on couches. Thank you.

We are once again looking for donations of toilet paper during the month of March. Since we have young families coming in to pick up diapers provided by the Berkshire Community Diaper Project we have also noticed a need for baby food. Thanks for your continued support. Mary Wheat

Note:

Hello South Church,

Thank you for your note.

My parents are happy that I have returned and they even like that I brought Lulu with me. Jobs are scarce here, but I work a few days a week grooming dogs in a nearby county.

I miss South Church, the Pantry and all of the volunteers. I know that Joey is doing a good job and every day he is praised and told he is doing a much better job than old many Steve!

Thank you for the great time I had working at South Church, many blessings in 2017!

Love, Steve & Lulu

good turnout for the sale, as we usually do. This is one of our biggest money makers of the year, and enables us to give a pretty large contribution to the church. We welcome all your donations. If you could bring them to church before Friday, the 10th, that would be great. Any donations prior to Thursday the 9th should be put up on the 3rd floor in the Bashara Room.

Thanks to everyone who pitches in and/or donates. We can't do it without you. Please call Nancy at 442-5195 with any questions. {See Tag Sale flyer on separate page of *Epistle*].

Nancy deForest, Audra Kinner



CHURCH SCHOOL NEWS

The lessons we have been reading are from Matthew's "Sermon on the Mount." We explore Jesus' interpretation of God's law to his followers. Jesus encourages his followers not only to love their neighbor but also to love their enemies. In class we encourage the children to understand that living in God's world means choosing between right and wrong. Everyone, children included, are asked to live a generously loving life.

On Saturday, March 4th, we will take a trip to Price Rite in Pittsfield. This trip is to purchase food and paper products for our South Church Food Pantry. Funds were raised during our "Souper Bowl" mission project in February. Any parent or church member is welcome to join us as we will have \$700. worth of products to transport and put on our pantry shelves! Please see me if you can help. Also, thank you to all who contributed to this important mission project.

In March the Diaconate will offer a Junior Diaconate program to any children who are interested. The program will be headed by Donna Turner and will be offered to children of all ages. The program is structured in tiers based on age and abilities. This is a great way for our young people to learn the structure and symbolisms that are a part of weekly worship. Look for sign-up sheets in mid-March. Any questions feel free to contact Donna or myself.

Music comes back to our program! Bev Krol will rejoin us in march with her guitar and wonderful song writing. Bev has a warm and loving heart. She works beautifully with all our children.

Blessings to all, Ann Roche



Musical Opportunities in Lent: Choir and Handbells

Our music program at South Church invites you to consider two opportunities for participation.

The first is our Chancel Choir. Anyone who loves to sing is welcome to join us on Sundays at 9:00 a.m. to rehearse and at 10:00 to help lead our worship. We sing a wide variety of anthems and service music from all periods and all spiritual traditions. No specific musical background is required: just your enthusiasm and willingness to join us in exploring music new and old. Our dedicated, joyful group would love to have you join us.

The second is our Handbell Ringers. We have a beautiful set of Schulmerich hand bells – three full octaves, plus hand chimes. These have been sitting safely stowed in their plush, padded boxes, waiting for you! Each beautifully crafted bell sings with its unique voice, from the deepest mellow low C to the highest silver-toned high C. With a bit of rhythmic sense and a good dose of teamwork, anyone can join in this satisfying way to make music. Interested? Just come to the Choir Room at 10:00 a.m. on Saturday, March 11 and we'll show you how to give them a try.

Come join us! – Tom Damrosch, Director of Music

LENT

"Lent is a time to renew wherever we are in that process that I call the divine therapy. It's a time to look at what our instinctual needs are, look at what the dynamics of our unconscious are." Thomas Keatin



**GIANT
TAG SALE**

Lord & Tailor's Gift and Thrift Shop

GIANT TAG SALE

Saturday, March 11, 2017

9 a.m. – 3 p.m.

Barrett Hall

South Congregational Church

110 South Street, Pittsfield

ST. PATRICK'S DAY

SOBER DANCE PARTY!

Spend St. Patty's night
with New England's
premiere retro dance band –
License to Groove!



HITS OF THE 70s & 80s!



**Friday, March 17
7:00-10:00pm**

Admission by donation


Irish stew, soda bread & desserts
available for purchase!

Barrett Hall
South Congregational Church
110 South Street, Pittsfield
413.442.7357
southchurchpittsfield.org

Check out licensetogroove.com

A fundraiser for the **COMMUNITY FOOD PANTRY**

March 2017

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
			1 Ash Wednesday Food Pantry 7:30 – 11 am St. Joe's Dinner 5 pm Ecumenical Ash Wednesday. Service at St. Stephen's 7 pm Food Pantry 5:30	2 Food Pantry 7:30-11 am Quilting-Ladies Benevolent 9:30 am UCC Clergy 12 noon	3 Lord & Tailor 10 am-4 pm Bridge 12 – 4 pm AA 6:15 pm	4 AA 10:15 am Music Together Lord & Tailor 12-4 pm AI-Anon 7 pm
	5 FIRST SUNDAY IN LENT Choir Rehearsal 9 am Worship 10 am in the Sanctuary with Communion Lenten Study	6 Bridge 12 – 4 pm Yarn Spinners 7 pm NA-There is Hope Group 7 pm	7 May Mattoon Luncheon 12 noon Men's Forum 12 noon <i>Square Dancing 7 pm</i>	8 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 pm Trustees 6 pm	9 Food Pantry 7:30-11 am Music Together Quilting-Ladies Benevolent 9:30 am Pantry Steering Committee 12 noon Sanctuary Meeting in Lee 3 – 4:30 pm	10 Lord & Tailor 10 am-4 pm Bridge 12 – 4 pm AA 6:15 pm
12 Daylight Savings Time Begins SECOND SUNDAY IN LENT Choir Rehearsal 9 am Worship 10 am in the Sanctuary Lenten Study	13 Bridge 12 – 4 pm Yarn Spinners 7 pm NA-There is Hope Group 7 pm	14 Men's Forum 12 noon <i>Square Dancing 7 pm</i> <i>Diaconate 7 pm</i>	15 Food Pantry 7:30 – 11 am Music Together Berkshire Place 10:45 am Bridge 12 – 4 pm St. Joe's Dinner 5 pm Food Pantry 5:30 – 6 pm	16 Food Pantry 7:30-11 am Music Together Quilting-Ladies Benevolent 9:30 am	17 Lord & Tailor 10 am-4 pm Bridge 12 – 4 pm AA 6:15 pm St Patrick's Day Dance 7 pm	18 Habitat Work Day 8 am – 3 pm UCC Super Saturday Event 9 am – 4 pm AA 10:15 am Lord & Tailor 12 noon – 4 pm AI-Anon 7 pm
19 THIRD SUNDAY IN LENT Choir Rehearsal 9 am Worship 10 am <i>Coffee Hour</i> <i>Collections for the</i> <i>Language Project</i> Lenten Study	20 Bridge 12 – 4 pm Yarn Spinners 7 pm NA-There is Hope Group 7 pm	21 Men's Forum 12 noon <i>Square Dancing 7</i> <i>pm</i> Mission Board 7 pm	22 Food Pantry 7:30 – 11 am Bridge 12 – 4 pm St. Joe's Dinner 5 pm Food Pantry 5:30 – 6 pm	23 Food Pantry 7:30-11 am Quilting-Ladies Benevolent 9:30 am	24 Lord & Tailor 10 am-4 pm Bridge 12 – 4 pm AA 6:15 pm	25 AA 10:15 am Lord & Tailor 12-4 pm AI-Anon 7 pm
26 FOURTH SUNDAY IN LENT Choir Rehearsal 9 am Worship 10 am Lenten Study Epistle Deadline 11am	27 Bridge 12 – 4 pm Yarn Spinners 7 pm NA-There is Hope Group 7 pm	28 Men's Forum 12 noon <i>Square Dancing 7 pm</i> Church Council 7 pm	29 Food Pantry 7:30 – 11 am Bridge 12 – 4 pm St. Joe's Dinner 5 pm Food Pantry 5:30	30 Food Pantry 7:30-11 am Quilting-Ladies Benevolent 9:30 am	31 Lord & Tailor 10 am-4 pm Bridge 12 – 4 pm AA 6:15 pm	April 1 AA 10:15 am Lord & Tailor 12-4 pm AI-Anon 7 pm