



The First Congregational Church of Reading

UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST • AN OPEN AND AFFIRMING CONGREGATION

Produced by our Church Family

March 2017

Volume 2017, Issue 3



First ChurchNEWS

Statement of Purpose

We gather as a faith community to love and magnify God. Guided by the Holy Spirit, we will love our neighbors as ourselves, advocating for peace and justice. We will go out and share our faith in Christ, inviting others to join us. We will be nurturers of the spirit and teachers of the Word. We will welcome and provide sanctuary to all.

Welcome!

At FCCR, you will find joyful hearts, open minds and a caring community. If you are a long-time church member, seeking a new spiritual community, or brand new to the very idea of "church"...if you are young or have young children or are mature beyond your years...if you are single, married, partnered, divorced, widowed, or in transition...no matter who you are, at FCCR, you are welcome to join us in celebrating God's love, sharing warm welcome, and offering sanctuary for all.

March 1 – Ash Wednesday Simple Soup Supper and Worship Service

Ash Wednesday is March 1st we hope all members and friends of FCCR will join us for a Soup Supper that evening at 6:00 pm, followed by a simple Worship Service at 7:15 pm, all in the chapel. All are welcome! The Deacons will also providing a Soup Supper on Maundy Thursday.



Also on Ash Wednesday, from 7 to 9 am, the Chapel will be open for continuous prayers and imposition of ashes for those who wish to stop in and receive them early in the day.

March 12 – Stewardship Sunday



Stewardship Sunday

This year's stewardship campaign focuses on **Faith into Action** and how everything we do demonstrates our faith. During the campaign, we will reflect on what Faith into Action means to each of us individually, what it means as a church, and, finally, how the combination of our

March 19 – Pasta Brunch

Come to a pasta brunch with a free will donation to support a children's outing in Tennessee...*your faith in action!*

See details on page 3!



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Growing in Faith, Going Out to Serve

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Pastor's Ponderings – March 2017

March 2017

Dear Friends,

How are we to and how do we put our faith into action? This is a question I know we wrestle with as a church, and many of us do so individually, as well. That's why Faith into Action is our theme for this year's Annual Pledge Campaign from our Stewardship Team. But the question is more than just a passing campaign theme. It is the question at the heart of our church and on the top of our minds in these days. As we ask 'what's next?' at FCCR we have a new answer to share!

The first day of the month of March this year is also the first day of the Christian season of Lent. As has been our habit in recent years, at FCCR we will offer a simple Soup Supper, beginning at 6:00 pm, followed by an Ash Wednesday Service at 7:15 pm. Also as usual, the service will offer everyone an opportunity to have ashes placed on their hands, arms or foreheads, as a symbol of repentance and of resolve to live out our faith more fully. But this year, we will offer a choice of ashes. Yes, you read that right: we will offer a choice of ashes. People may choose between no ashes, traditional ashes, or "glitter ashes" which is new this year.

"Glitter ashes" comes to us from *Parity*, a New York-based advocacy group, which has invited Christians who favor LGBTQ (etc) equality to show their support by choosing these ashes instead of traditional ashes this year.

Here is an excellent explanation of the meaning of the glitter ashes from their website.

"Glitter+Ash exquisitely captures the relationship between death and new life. We do not live in fear of ash - of death - we place it on our foreheads for the world to see. We know that fear will rise, cramping our hearts. We also know that God specifically calls us not to project that fear onto the Other, the alien, the stranger in our midst. God insists that we look for the spark of life, of hope, in ourselves and one another. This Ash Wednesday, we will make that spark easier to see. We will stand witness to the gritty, glittery, scandalous hope that exists in the very marrow of our tradition."

In the season of Lent, we are invited to reflect deeply on what it means to live out what we believe about God and God's creation. It has become my tradition as a pastor to encourage folks to consider putting faith into action during the season, rather than 'giving something up'. This is echoed by many, including *Parity*, which is calling for each of us to "Lenten Action that promotes resurrection" and hope. Their invitation "to pledge to put energy into a cause that promotes life and health in the face of death-dealing forces in our world," is the invitation we will offer at FCCR as we encourage all our members and friends to put your faith into action.

With love and blessings,

Lisa

PS – In addition to our evening Soup Supper and Service on Ash Wednesday, our chapel will be open on the morning of Ash Wednesday, from 7 to 9 am, when I will be offering continuous prayers and imposition of ashes (especially Glitter Ashes) for those who wish to stop in and receive them early in the day. We will also be distributing small explanation cards for those who may want to share information with others about Glitter Ashes.

Worship at FCCR UCC in March

March 1 – 6 pm – Simple Soup Supper 7:15 pm – Ash Wednesday Service

March 5 – CWF Sunday on the First Sunday of Lent - Worship with Communion

(a screen free Sunday with alternate seating arrangement)

Preacher: Rev. Lisa

Prayers: Renee M.

Music: Orchestra, Chancel Choir & Kim

Nursery Care & Church School

Coffee & Fellowship in the Chapel

Worship at FCCR UCC in March (continued)

March 12 – Second Sunday of Lent - Worship with Annual Pledge Campaign Dedication

Preacher: Rev. Lisa
Children's Message: Renee M.
Prayers: Renee M.
Music: Handbells & Kim
Nursery Care & Church School
Coffee & Fellowship in the Chapel

March 19 – Third Sunday of Lent – Celtic Worship with Baptism

Special Note: Celtic music & liturgy
Preacher : Rev. Lisa
Music: Chancel Choir & Kim
Prayers: Renee M.
Children's Message: Renee M.
Nursery Care and Church School
Coffee & Fellowship in the Chapel

March 26 – Fourth Sunday of Lent – Worship with Heifer Marketplace

Preacher: Renee Manning
Music: Chancel Choir & Kim
Prayers: Rev. Lisa
Nursery Care and Church School
Coffee & Heifer Marketplace

April 2 – Fifth Sunday of Lent - Worship with Communion & Healing Prayers

(a screen free Sunday w alternate seating arrangement)
Preacher: Rev. Lisa
Prayers: Renee M.
Music: Chancel Choir & Kim
Nursery Care & Church School
Coffee & Fellowship in the Chapel

Join us SUNDAY March 19 for PASTA BRUNCH immediately after church

Meatballs	Sausages	Sauce/Vegetarian
Pasta (regular and gluten free)	Sour dough Bread	Salad
Finger goodies (cookies & bars)		



If you can't attend and still want to contribute, just mark your donation for Pasta Brunch.

Free Will
DONATION

Do you know a 5th grader or have you ever been a 5th grader...???....

This Brunch is in the tradition of reaching out beyond our suburban world to assist the 5th grade class of SOUTHPARK Elementary school in Memphis Tennessee.

(You may not believe the name but it in fact exists <http://www.scsk12.org/schools/southpark.es/site/activities.shtml>)

There are around 90 5th graders who are raising funds for an end of year celebration as they finish elementary school before they move on to Middle school. One of their teachers, Zuzana Armstrong reached out to her family, friends and neighbors for help as there may be up to 60 kids in the class who might not be able to raise the \$115 per kid to participate social class trip, so she and the other 2 teachers are trying to raise "scholarship funds". If you are interested in learning more, talk to Connie Corey or call [781-942-1483](tel:781-942-1483) or email ccoorey22761@yahoo.com.



Learning Ministry News

Church School in March

March is Heifer planning time! The children's participation in the planning activities is essential to make the Heifer Market Place a success. Church school classes will meet 3/5, 3/12, and 3/19 to prepare items and activities for Heifer. Children should report to Guild Hall on 3/26 at 10:00 am to meet with their classes and set-up their booths during church.



Service Opportunities for Youth

FCCR youth and confirmands are invited to join us on Heifer Sunday at 10:00 am. It's always a busy morning and we can use additional hands to set-up and run the booths. We are also looking for help setting up the tables in Guild Hall on Saturday, March 25th at 2:00 pm. Please contact Lesley Kerr at Lesley.kerr@comcast.net or Melissa Carpenter at mjcarpenterot@gmail.com if you are interested in helping.

Heifer Market Place

Heifers and chickens and bees, oh my!!! Please join us after church on Sunday, March 26th for our annual Heifer Market Place. The classes have selected their animals and will be busy working on their projects and preparations over the next few weeks. The church school and our knitting group friends are excited to share their hand-made crafts and yummy treats with you and raise money for a great cause!

Interested in learning more about Heifer International? Visit their website at www.heifer.org.

Spiritual Stewardship Opportunities

We are looking for assistants in the Nursery and the Elementary Church School class. No preparation is required. Please help us fill the write space and sign-up for a week on the Spiritual Stewardship sign-up chart outside the office! Contact Lesley Kerr at Lesley.kerr@comcast.net or Melissa Carpenter at mjcarpenterot@gmail.com with any questions.

Getting Involved in the Learning Ministry

The purpose of the Learning Ministry is to provide opportunities for people of all ages, with a focus on children and youth, to learn about God, Jesus Christ, and the Bible; develop personal beliefs; and put faith into action. We usually meet the 2nd Monday of the month at 7:00 pm during the program year to plan programs to support this purpose and would love your input.

FCCR Confirmation

Our Confirmation Mini-Retreat was 50% highly successful – we were having an excellent adventure when we had to stop due to snow! In March, Confirmation is scheduled to meet on March 12th from 5-7 pm. We will also be looking for times to make up some of our missed retreat and to engage in a few other activities. Please watch enews and email for further details.

The Buckets are Coming!!!!



The Mission and Social Justice Ministry is once again sponsoring a collection of cleaning supplies to fill 5 gallon Emergency Clean-Up buckets for Church World Service. Their supply is depleted again. (Two circles from CWF are filling one bucket each.) An urgent appeal has been sent out for more buckets as so many areas of our country are hurting as a result of flooding, tornadoes and other disasters. This collection will take place from April 2nd to April 26th. Details will follow in the April Newsletter.

Mission and Social Action Ministry Financial Statement FY 2016-2017 Planned Income and Distributions¹

Planned Income	
Benevolence Pledging	\$23,802.00
2015-16 Carryover	\$1,394.85
Expenses July-October ²	- \$162.51
To Distribute	\$25,034.34

Planned Distributions	
MACUCC - Our Church's Wider Mission	\$20,000.00
City Mission Society	2,000.00
Andover Newton Theological - Books	500.00 ³
BU School of Theology - Books	500.00 ⁴
Habitat for Humanity of Greater Lowell	500.00
Emmaus House	500.00 ⁵
Reading Food Pantry	500.00
Ecclesia Ministry	500.00 ⁶
Gaza Hospital	300.00
Holy Joe's	200.00
Hispanic Ministries in the UCC	300.00
Total	\$25,800.00

**An Invitation to all Women of the Church -
CWF Sunday, March 5**

You are welcome to join CWF as we celebrate the ministries of our group on CWF Sunday with breakfast, followed by worship at the 10:00 service. As formulated at a Mission Ministry gathering on Oct. 30, 2016, in the Library. If you are in a Circle, please bring something to share. Otherwise, please just come and enjoy the fellowship. Coffee and tea will be served. Worship will include well-loved hymns, ending with Sarah's Circle. We hope that you will join us for fellowship and to have any questions answered.

Our Ministry

THANK YOU for supporting our ministry so we can continue to do God's work in this Church community, the Reading community and in the World. Here are some of the activities you have supported:

- ~\$1000 to the Church
- ~\$198 to support the College Care Packages
- ~\$143 raised in the Cookie Walk, used in the past to support Youth Mission Trips.

- ~\$212 from the Plant Swap available through our Kitchen Fund to purchase things as the need arises (but not cleaning supplies, paper or Coffee Hour supplies).
- Altar flowers given in memory of deceased members.
- ~Circles contribute completed buckets to the Emergency Clean-Up Bucket for Church World Services.
- ~Circles contribute items to fill the Christmas Bags for homebound parishioners.
- ~\$290 from sales of "Soup in a Jar."

For Your Information:

~We will not have a Plant Swap this year. Look for it next May.

~We have discovered about 10 more new CWF Cookbooks!

If you would like to buy one for \$10, email Mary Ann Higgins at mahiggins5@gmail.com. Do the same if you would like to purchase on of the remaining Soup in a Jar.

Book Group **Becoming Wise: An Inquiry into the Mystery and Art of Living** by Krista Tippett.

March 2017

Becoming Wise
An Inquiry into
the Mystery and
Art of Living
Krista Tippett



Join the Book Group in March for *Becoming Wise: An Inquiry into the Mystery and Art of Living* by Krista Tippett. You are encouraged to visit and join in one of our always thought-provoking discussions!

Join us on Tuesday, March 7, at 7:30 p.m. in the Parlor, when we'll be discussing this book as well as sharing ideas about what to read next!

Goodreads says:

Peabody Award-winning broadcaster and National Humanities Medalist Krista Tippett has interviewed the most extraordinary voices examining the great questions of meaning for our time. The heart of her work on her national public radio program and podcast, *On Being*, has been to shine a light on people whose insights kindle in us a sense of wonder and courage. Scientists in a variety of fields; theologians

from an array of faiths; poets, activists, and many others have all opened themselves up to Tippett's compassionate yet searching conversation.

*In *Becoming Wise*, Tippett distills the insights she has gleaned from this luminous conversation in its many dimensions into a coherent narrative journey, over time and from mind to mind. The book is a master class in living, curated by Tippett and accompanied by a delightfully ecumenical dream team of teaching faculty.*

The open questions and challenges of our time are intimate and civilizational all at once, Tippett says – definitions of when life begins and when death happens, of the meaning of community and family and identity, of our relationships to technology and through technology. The wisdom we seek emerges through the raw materials of the everyday. And the enduring question of what it means to be human has now become inextricable from the question of who we are to each other.

The Book Group meets on the first Tuesday of each month, October through June, usually at 7:30 pm in the Parlor. We enjoy reading and discussing books together – we learn from each other and many of us find this a meaningful way of deepening our faith and spirituality. The group attempts to balance its reading list with both non-fiction and fiction books having a spiritual connection, and whether we love a book or want to toss it into the landfill, our discussions are always lively. Guests and visitors are always welcome, and all participants help to bring ideas and join in selecting the books we read.

You don't even have to finish the book! We have great conversations – please do consider dropping in for one meeting or many! If you have questions, please contact Tom or Jane McCord at 781-942-1349, or tomandjanemccord@comcast.net.

An Invitation for Music, Music, Music!

Come and see Rev. Chad as he leads the BU School of Theology Seminary Singers in concert with composer Mark Miller on Tuesday, April 4 at 7PM in Marsh Chapel (735 Commonwealth Avenue, Boston). The concert is free. We have sung many of Mark's compositions as FCCR - so come and see him live with the Seminary Singers! All are welcome. There will be a free-will offering taken to support the Seminary Singers fund. Bring your friends and neighbors!!

Questions: email Chad at cwkidd@verizon.net

Tuesday, April 4; 7pm

Marsh Chapel @ BU

Join UMC Composer Mark Miller and the Seminary Singers for an evening of music focused on peace, justice, and inclusion!

A free-will offering will be taken to support the Seminary Singers Fund.

Every month, as part of my work as your pastor and teacher, I receive 100's of articles and/or links to articles about what's happening in the fields of religion, theology and church 'arts and sciences'. Some of all of these articles end up in what I call my monthly "Good Reads" collection. On occasion, I share and/or use some of these with different ministries, task forces and study groups, but I am also aware that there might be more general interest in some of the topics.

So, each month I present a few of my good reads, along with a link to the full article. I'm also be happy to provide print-outs of any particular article upon request, if you prefer to read from hard copy - just let me know! I hope some of these will be of interest!!

Will Organized Religion Find Its Political Voice? by Dan Hotchkiss

Congregations don't take sides in elections, but they can never be neutral about moral issues. Especially in times of sharp disagreement, clergy and lay leaders face a hard dilemma: How can we speak politically with a religious voice?

<http://www.congregationalconsulting.org/will-organized-religion-find-voice/>

Contemporary society is tired and stressed because we've abandoned two ancient traditions

Excerpt:

The extinction of darkness, along with the decline of Sabbath, represent structural losses to our ability to rest, rejuvenate, and return to our work refreshed. Humans have struggled to disengage from stress and work [for millennia](#). But it is relatively recent that we've turned our back on the daily, weekly and yearly safeguards that ensured we got at least a little rest.

<https://qz.com/907770/contemporary-society-is-tired-and-stressed-because-weve-abandoned-two-ancient-traditions/>

Dave Odom: For the future of congregations, we must discuss economics

Many congregations dream of being places of radical welcome, but that vision is not sustainable through tithing alone. It's time to think differently about how to accomplish such work, writes the executive director of Leadership Education at Duke Divinity.

Those of us who care about the future of congregations must have a sustained conversation about economics. We need to look at the ministries we most admire and work in partnership with them to explore their sustainability. As we find great ideas that are succeeding, we need to share the news with others, spreading a new way of thinking about how to accomplish our missions.

https://www.faithandleadership.com/dave-odom-future-congregations-we-must-discuss-economics?utm_source=NI_newsletter&utm_medium=content&utm_campaign=NI_feature

An Interview with UC Poet Laureate Juan Felipe Herrera "Do not let yourself think you cannot contribute"

The role of the U.S. poet laureate is to encourage Americans -- especially children -- to find their voices and express themselves, says the first Hispanic writer to serve in the position.

Excerpt:

It's a beautiful thing to have purpose, to have a sense of your spiritual life, to have a sense of how you actually are a part of a much larger world. And beyond that, to have a deep guide within you of a sense of where you're going, where you come from, and who you are and what you are, and how that can lift you up and lift others up, and how it's based on kindness and compassion and perhaps sacrifice.

https://www.faithandleadership.com/juan-felipe-herrera-do-not-let-yourself-think-you-cannotcontribute?utm_source=FL_newsletter&utm_medium=content&utm_campaign=FL_feature



Words cannot express my deep gratitude for all the overwhelming love, support, help and prayers received from the staff and members of the congregation during my recovery from a fractured shoulder in January.

Thank you Lisa, Chad, Martha, Renee, Kim Piper (my rock solid sub), the Deacons and the Choir for handling my unexpected absence without missing a beat. Thank you for your incredible support, allowing me the time necessary to heal before returning to the keyboard. Thank you to the Kingstons, my "go to people" during the past 25 years, who took my call the day of my fall and informed all who needed to know, including my family. Thank you Carol, Gay, and Jim providing me with rides to and from church and to my home as needed. Thanks to the many who have offered help, called, emailed, sent cards, surrounding me with acts of loving care.

I have been incredibly blessed to have been able to convalesce with my Winchester family who have been amazing caregivers.

As I write, I am ready to drive home and will head back to my work at the Stoneham Y on a limited basis. What a joy to worship with you the past several weeks. I hope to be back at the piano and organ soon!

Thank you for your faith and love in action in my life! Blessings and love!

Jill Lauterwasser

Dear Friends:

Dave and I want to thank all of the care ministry for their loving support. We have never needed medical transportation before December but thanks to Joan Kingston we were offered a ride home from the hospital. In January following Dave's spinal surgery we were treated to delicious meals delivered from your special group. Also, we loved the beautiful altar flowers Joan Kingston delivered and her nice visit. Keep up the great work--you are a vital part of our church!

Sincerely,

Shirley and Dave Osborne

Thank You!!!!

I want to thank everyone at FCCR for your prayers, cards and letters that I received during my recovery. I am convinced my healing was more tolerable and healing accelerated as a result of your prayers. I was inspired and touched by the amount of cards I received. Thank you for your steadfast support. My time here is rapidly passing by. I am so thrilled I am your student minister.

God Bless You, Renee

Dear friends at FCCR,

I want to thank you for my wonderful retirement get together, my very generous gift and all the cards. It was really touching to be able to share with all of you my retirement. I enjoyed working at FCCR which is obvious as I stayed so long. I will not miss my day to day duties but I will miss seeing you all. I value the friendships that I've made. I know it takes a lot of effort to organize any event and it was obvious that a lot of thought and work went into my party. Be sure to keep in touch!

With many thanks, as ever, Marilyn

Flowers for February were given:

January 29: In loving memory of Shirley E. and Horace W. Hylan by Gary and Christine Hylan and family.

February 5: In loving memory of Carl and Eva Hakanson by their family, grandchildren and great grandchildren.

February 12: In loving memory of Mildred Souza by Mark and Jennifer Souza.

February 19: In loving memory of my brother David by Mary Ann Higgins.

