

FEDERATED COMMUNITY CHURCH
590 Main St.
PO Box 246
Hampden, MA 01036

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Federated Community Church
590 Main Street
Hampden, MA 01036

E-mail: hampdenfederated@gmail.com
www.hampdenfederatedchurch.org
Tel. (413) 566-3711 Fax (413) 566-5324

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January 2023

From the Pastor's Desk

Forget the former things; do not dwell on the past.

See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it? I am making a way in the wilderness and streams in the wasteland.

ISAIAH 43:18-19

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!

2 CORINTHIANS 5:17

Greetings of Grace and Peace!

I love when the New Year comes around. We get to hang up new calendars, all clear and clean. There are no scheduled dates or appointments filling the space. We are given a new slate. Of course, it doesn't take very long before the days begin to have items filling them in.

The new calendar is a beautiful metaphor for our relationship with Christ. When we accept the gift of Jesus, we are given a new slate, allowed to begin anew: *The old has gone, the new is here!*

Unhealthy habits can be let go of and new resolutions taken up. We choose what we fill in our calendar with. We can absent-mindedly put in the old ways, just because we have always done

them that way, or we can take the challenge to allow God to lead us in a newer, perhaps healthier, more productive, joyful way.

Many times, I hear folks long for the “Good Ol’ Days.” They ask why are we doing something a different way? Or they make statements such as, “We have always done “it” (you can fill in the blank) this way, why are we changing it? While we want to remain stagnant, that is not God’s way. *See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it?* God’s Presence is always constant, but God moves us along.

I think about how happy Mary and Joseph must have been after the birth of their child, Jesus. They must have wanted to share this new life with their families. But God instructs Joseph to take his family to Egypt. Uggghh! They could have responded, “But I don’t want to go to Egypt. I want to go home to Nazareth. After all, that is what good families do. They stay near their relatives and raise their children.” Thank goodness, Joseph was open to the direction of God. It literally saved the family’s lives. God still offers direction towards abundant life to all who believe in Christ, listen, and follow.

God can make a way in the wilderness of whatever difficult or new situation we find ourselves in. Choose to walk in faith. Look for signs of God’s Presence as you are led forward. Hold God’s hand, pray, read scripture, and move forward, believing: God is with us; leading us into a future filled with hope and promise.

May it be so, Amen!

Blessings for a Healthy, Joyous New Year!

Pastor Pat

From the Deacons' Bench

SOME REASONS WHY I LIKE CHRISTIANITY.....

.....I like the lessons Jesus taught and lived....stuff like showing respect for others, forgiveness, faith in humanity and a recognition of the divinity within each of us, finding just solutions, fair play, mercy, seeking peace in chaos, helping others. These were revolutionary teachings back then, but oh so enduring over all these years. The skeptic in me reasons that if these lessons have remained valid throughout the ages then perhaps they have merit.....real merit. Yet in spite of their age, how brand new they all seem when we discover them for the first time.

.....I like to associate with others who share these values. Their living example strengthens me while at the same time perhaps my association strengthen them. Two of my four children were baptized here in Hampden. As parents and godparents, we pledged our support for these children, but how surprised and overwhelmed we were when the congregation standing pledged their support too. That assurance sure feels good.

.....I like too the inclusiveness of the Jesus' message. Part of his DNA abides within each of us regardless of where we live, the language we speak, the color of our skin, who we love, our cultural differences, how old we are, and even if we're not aware of His message. How comforting is realization that a ribbon of the Divine Spirit connects us all. Among us some ribbon widths are wider, some more narrow, but I love the notion that ribbon widths can stretch with a little practice and a bit of support from others. A little kid named Elliot wrote the following note: "Dear God, I think about you sometimes even when I'm not praying. Elliot" Beautiful. Sometimes I think the ribbon widths of children are just about perfect.



See ya in Church.....Dave Spencer.



January Birthdays

Birthday Greetings to the following members of our church who celebrate birthdays in January.



Gail Banning	01/03
Richard Ritz	01/03
Albert Jones	01/06
Geraldine Spear	01/06
Lisa Wyman	01/10
Steven Safford	01/13
Madison Regnier	01/13
Marilyn Connor	01/18
Dennis Connor	01/18
Nicholas Hummel	01/19
Susan Quill	01/20
John Panek	01/20
Joan Harris	01/24
Richard Nelson	01/24
Richard Taylor	01/27
Paul Willoughby	01/30
Rosemary DiSimoni	01/31

Wedding Anniversaries

Carmel & Richard Grant	01/19
Richard & Elizabeth Taylor	01/24

Congratulations



Prayer Corner



Bonnie
Phyllis
Evie Meacham
Gail Banning
Linda & Winnie
Jeffrey
Josh G & Family
Fran Brown
Lois Pixley
Rollyn Hatch
Kimberly Ayers
Ruth
Doreen
Adam
Nancy
Doyle Family
Ellie G.
Melinda
Ann

Sherry & Family
Beverly
Denise & family
Naomi
Barbara
Jim
Scott
Ken
Kenain
John
Frank
Dennis
Addison
Kelsey
Usa
Emerson
Lisa
Yvette

For the people of Ukraine
For those traveling
For those affected by floods and fires
For victims & families of mass shootings
For World Peace
For those battling cancer
For those struggling with addiction or mental illness
For those that grieve the loss of loved ones
For those working on the COVID vaccines
For those who do not have access to COVID vaccines
For first responders & health care workers
For the people Afghanistan
For the people of Iran
For the people of Haiti
For those impacted by weather disasters
For the changing climate
For our country
For all world leaders
For shut-ins and those who are isolated
For the homeless
For Asian & Black people & all who are persecuted for simply being how God created them



Sympathy to...

Family & friends of **Edith Casey**, who passed away
on December 29th.

Condolences may be sent to Mark & Linda
Casey at 303 Main Street in Hampden.

Missions



Aside from our usual donations of food and warm hats, mittens and scarves for the Survival Center and the Springfield Rescue Mission, we were flooded with your generosity of Christmas gifts for 4 children in our community. Thank you for making Christmas special for them. You are a blessing.

For the month of January we are going to collect items for a “White Out Blizzard” for the Springfield Rescue Mission. Collections will begin on January 2nd through the entire month of January 2023. The items will be delivered the first week of February. White goods include the following items:

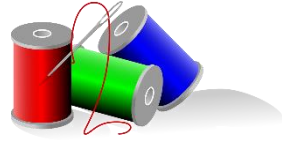
Men's, Women's, Children's
underwear
undershirts
socks
Bar soap
Shampoo
Toothpaste/ toothbrushes
Disposable razors
Deoderant

Toilet paper
Paper towels
Kotex /Pantliners
Hand cream
Band-aids
Antibiotic cream
Diapers/pull-ups
Skin moisturizers/lotions

All donations may be deposited on the side of the front of the altar where hats, mittens and scarves are also collected. Pastor Pat can bless them before they are delivered.

Learn to Quilt!

We will now have basic quilting instruction during our regularly scheduled Knit, Stitch, Pray meetings. Instruction is free and materials will be provided. We will be making quilts to be donated to the homeless through the Springfield Rescue Mission. Join us on the 2nd & 4th Wednesday of the month at 1:00 PM.



No Wednesday Worship in Jan/Feb

Please note that there will be no Wednesday luncheon and Worship in January or February.

All Church Meeting

On December 18th, following worship we held a short church business meeting. Three important votes were discussed and voted on:

1. First, the current church bills will continue to be paid at the same 2022 budgeted rates until we have our All-Church Business Meeting for 2023. Hopefully, we will hold that meeting in March. This vote passed unanimously.
2. We voted to officially declare FCC as an inclusive church. The following statement was discussed, edited, and voted by members affirmingly:

"We, the members of the Federated Community Church of Hampden, MA, declare that as followers of Jesus, we love and embrace all children of God, welcoming and affirming people of every age, race, color, ethnicity, gender identity, gender expression and sexual orientation, physical and mental ability, level of education, and family structure, and of every economic, immigration, marital and social status, and so much more. We celebrate God's gift of diversity and value the wholeness made possible in community which is equally shared and shepherded by all."

3. The BOD notified the membership that Pastor Pat will be retiring effective June 30, 2023. The church discussed various options moving forward: full or part-time, UCC or Methodist

Denominations, etc. Membership voted to continue with a full-time pastor, recognizing that a concerted effort will need to be made to support the new pastor and in serving the church. A majority vote was taken in support of asking The United Methodist Church to appoint the next pastor to FCC, effective July 1, 2023.

Many of the members who have diligently served over the last years are tired and burning out. It is imperative that all members serve and support where they are able. As Christians, we have a story to tell others about a loving and generous God who came in the flesh of Jesus and modeled how to live a life of Loving God with heart, soul, mind, and might and loving one's neighbor as oneself. This is not simply a story but through the gift and power of the Holy Spirit, can revive, refresh, and offer abundant life. This is a God worth offering to a world that is hurting.



Healing Ministry Begins



Dr. Phil Stoddard left a very generous gift to the Federated Community Church in his estate. The Board of Directors voted to give a portion of the gift to establish a Healing Ministry in Dr. Phil's name and memory. There are eight members who have been trained in *Healing Touch Spiritual Ministry*. Beginning January 18th, and ongoing Wednesday evenings, between 7:00 – 8: 00 PM, we will offer sessions. It will be first come, first served, and will have a free will donation. Please share this opportunity with family and friends. If you have questions, please speak with a trained member:

Elaine DeGray, Laura Lillibridge, Ellie Soucy, Penny Dibble, Beth Algie, Janet Modlish, Joyce Brooks, and Pastor Pat

Introducing Volunteer Accelerator

FCC has been working with **Ministry Architects** over the past two years. They have been very instructive in helping the church to develop a solid framework as we strive to grow our church. We are pleased to announce that we will be introducing a new program from Ministry Architects called *Volunteer Accelerator*. The program offers a set of questions and matches your talents to a position/job within the church. It will take only a short five minutes or so to answer the questions, but through those important five minutes, the program will help to identify a position that fits well with your talents. Using your talents makes accomplishing the job easy, and less like “work.” So please sign up to take part in this short survey. Following is a website where you can take the survey:

<https://volunteeraccelerator.ministryarchitects.com/FCC/survey.html>

For those of you who do not have access to a computer, paper questionnaires are available. Please speak with Kristen (in the office) or Ellie Soucy. Return the questionnaires to the same person and Kristen will input your answers into the computer.

Stewardship Time

A gentle reminder that we would like to receive everyone's 2023 pledge card soon so that we can finalize our budget for 2023. If you would like envelopes and have not received them, please speak with Janet Libby. If you would like to set up a regular bill-pay program with your bank - just send the payments to:

Federated Community Church
P.O. Box 246
Hampden MA 01036.

With a thankful heart, we look forward to 2023!



**thank
you!**

Centering/Meditation/Quiet Praying Time

Have you ever wanted to learn how to meditate, listen in prayer? Join us for four Sundays and learn various ways to sit before God, listen, and absorb. Each week, you will be expected to spend a few minutes each day practicing what we have learned. Join us in the Prayer room, beginning January 22nd at 1: 30PM.



WINTER WALK WESTERN MA

ENDING HOMELESSNESS IS WITHIN OUR REACH



About the Winter Walk

The Winter Walk is an initiative that believes ending homelessness is within our reach. Our mission is to raise awareness and funds towards that goal in order to support organizations that are working on prevention, support, and care for our homeless community.

Our year-round efforts provide resources, education, and awareness around homelessness that culminate in a walk in February. Our walk is held outside during the coldest month of the year, shoulder-to-shoulder as a housed and homeless community. We will not only host to our live event in Boston on February 12, 2023, but also launch our inaugural Western Massachusetts event in Springfield on Sunday February 5, 2023.

We are thrilled to expand to Western MA in the hope we can:

- Unite with city government, both for the mission and the logistics of our public event
- Create strong partnerships with service providers, CoCs, and production networks around homelessness
- Build relationships with those with lived experience of homelessness, which is key to this work
- Engage the community we serve, including business, school, youth, faith, and civic groups to join us in our efforts to raise awareness and funds
- Uplift voices while breaking down stigma through our partnerships with local providers and those with lived experience

2023 Partners

In 2023, 100% of funds raised by participants will benefit 5 exceptional homeless service providers:



Providence Ministries





January 2023



Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1 10:00 AM Worship	2 10:30 AM Line Dancing	3 6:00 PM Bells 6:00 PM AA	4 10:30 AM Bible Study	5	6 6:00 PM Game Night	7
8 10:00 AM Worship	9 10:30 AM Line Dancing 6:00 PM "Wild Mercy" Study	10 6:00 PM Bells 6:00 PM AA 7:00 PM Finance	11 10:30 AM Bible Study 12:15 PM Missions 1:00 PM Knit, Stitch, Pray	12	13 7:30 PM AA	14 11:00 AM Celebration of Life for Edith Casey
15 10:00 AM Worship	16 10:30 AM Line Dancing MLK Jr. Day	17 6:00 PM Bells 6:00 PM AA 7:00 PM BOD	18 10:30 AM Bible Study 7:00 PM Spiritual Healing Touch	19	20 7:30 PM AA	21
22 10:00 AM Worship 1:30 PM Centering Prayer/ Meditation	23 10:30 AM Line Dancing 6:00 PM "Wild Mercy" Study	24 6:00 PM Bells 6:00 PM AA	25 10:30 AM Bible Study 1:00 PM Knit, Stitch, Pray 7:00 PM Spiritual Healing Touch	26	27 7:30 PM AA	28 8:00 AM Men's Breakfast
29 10:00 AM Worship 1:30 PM Centering Prayer/ Meditation	30 10:30 AM Line Dancing	31 6:00 PM Bells 6:00 PM AA			NO Wednesday luncheon on January 18th	