
January & February 2009 North Star
A publication of North Congregational Church, UCC

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Web Address: www.north-church.org

Sunday Worship: 10:00 a.m.

An Open and Affirming Congregation

North Congregational Church
North Congregational Church, UCC
PO Box 9613
North Amherst, MA 01059-9613

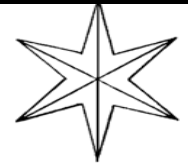
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North Star

North Church – UCC News

January & February 2009

Unconditionally Welcoming, Decidedly Christian



In Our Thoughts...

Editor's Note: *This edition of "In Our Thoughts" begins with excerpts from Pastor Nada's sermon on January 4th, 2009, and finishes with her brief comments. Full text of this sermon is available on the church website at: www.north-church.org*

"The State of Our Union"

Texts: 1 Corinthians 4:14-20 (Matt. 9:16-17)

Most of us are familiar with the special speech that the President of the United States gives each year in January, which is called "The State of the Union." This annual message, given to a joint session of Congress, is mandated by Article 11, Section 3 of the U.S. Constitution, wherein: "The President shall from time to time give the Congress information of the State of the Union and recommend to their Consideration such measures as he shall judge necessary and expedient..." ...No matter what you call it, the purpose [*of this speech*] is still very much the same: to provide updates and information, to make recommendations, and to communicate priorities or important considerations for the coming year. And so this morning, let's try this out. Let's suppose that the constitution of North Congregational Church reads as follows: "The Pastor shall from time to time give the Congregation information of the State of the Union and recommend to their consideration such measures as she or he shall judge necessary and expedient."

Madame Moderator, Executive leaders, members and friends of North Church, and distinguished guests, I bring greetings at the beginning of the fifth year in which Pat and I have shared a co-pastorate here in this congregation! There have been a whole range of changes, some of which began just before we arrived to begin our service as interim ministers. Other changes have been implemented as a result of things determined during interim discussions, and since the events of October, 2007, when we were installed to the settled pastorate. I could briefly note the rearrangement of the organizational structures of the congregation, the initiation of new pathways for communication and decision-making, a reformatted budget that matches the new determination of this congregation to focus on a mission that is invitational, biblically-grounded, and Spirit-filled. I could also more specifically notice changes in worship leadership and participation, the growth of weekday gatherings for discussion and relationship-building, and changes to our physical spaces. We might even notice that we have added 11 soon to be 12 new members, and lately, some regular attendees, praise God!

(Continued on next page...)

But none of this really gets at the heart of what I want to address today, and that has to do with where we find ourselves and what we need to be about in the next year. You may or may not be aware that the basis for our relationship as pastors and members of this congregation is set down in writing each year as a covenant, that is, as a sacred commitment in which each party – the congregation and the pastors – agrees to for the following year. As pastors, we are charged to: “Offer guidance and discerning leadership that encourages the congregation to be attuned to the Spirit and attentive to the church’s vision,” (item #2 in list) a vision which includes priorities for growth and outreach, as well as, attention to Spirit-filled purposes in service as Christian disciples on local and global levels. This morning I want to share our thoughts in keeping with this charge.

We have made some progress in developing outreach events and connections with our neighbors in pursuit of these goals. We have also made some steps in the right direction as far as clarifying the framework by which this congregation takes up discussion, shares in decision-making, and takes action. But if I step back and take a hard look, there are ways in which we are not following-through with our stated purposes as a church:

We have not increased our participation in many aspects of the life of this congregation – there is a core group of people who continue to work very, very hard on our behalf, while others are only sporadically present, and if present, fairly detached or non-committal when it comes to the nitty-gritty of making plans, following-through and building together in mutual ministry. All of us are called and given gifts for the building up of the body of Christ, according to the Apostle Paul, not just a few of us who have accepted named leadership roles.

Nor have most of us been willing to accept that welcoming God’s increase and being people of extravagant welcome, means sacrificial giving of ourselves and our gifts for ministry in this place – that means all of who we are and what we have. It means, as brothers and sisters, we not only share in the ups and downs, but we are all responsible for inviting, attending, bearing witness, walking the walk as well as talking the talk, and being willing to lend our support in new directions, regardless of convenience or comfort-levels. The efforts that have been made to encourage the practices of hospitality, sharing our faith with others, and moving from the discussion and reflection stages into real, live behavior have mostly been treated with benign neglect. There is very little continuity in our lives together, and it has become harder and harder to mobilize the advance commitment needed to become involved in larger projects with more partners...

Over the next 6 months, North Church has some tough decisions to make about continuing to move forward as the body of Christ. Three new focus groups are now being mobilized around the most critical aspects of our ministry together – WORSHIP PLANNING, GUEST OUTREACH and VISITATION.
(Continued on next page...)

Each person in the congregation will be asked to get involved in one of these areas and by so doing, to be a part of overcoming the inertia that threatens our ability to be a church together. We will be holding monthly potlucks and focused worship services on many of these issues. We will gather on January 25th for follow-up discussions after a shared meal, and I’m looking forward to hearing your thoughts.

Peace, Pastor Nada

Spiritual Care & Nurture

“... every prayer makes a difference.”

Please keep the following in your prayers:

Margaret Bates, Dottie Jenks, Lucile Sevoian, Norm Clarke, the Giard family, Lucille Benda, Jeannette Serwa, Julia Evans, Violet Brown, Nada’s & Jenna’s cousin Carson, Jeff Boudreau, Neal, Samme, the Maslanka family, the Bousel family, the Fowler family, the Murfin family, the Gouvan family, the Parent family, and Mika & her Moms.

Pray that God will remain close to each person & situation mentioned.

- Offer a prayer for peace that the people of the world might embrace each other’s similarities instead of focusing on their differences.
- Pray for the leadership of North Church and for God’s blessing on the commitments & energies invested in God’s service.
- Lift up the emerging interest of North Church to reach out to its student community in new, energizing ways. Pray that the church might begin to make wise choices and open itself to fresh winds of the Spirit!

If you have any prayer concerns please contact the Pastors at 413-323-0377 or Ginger Fowler, Ministry Commission Coordinator at 413-658-5654.

This newsletter is produced by NCC with special help from Barbara Jenkins, Bill Wiley and Nada Sellers.; layout and final copy by Lee Steventon. Your submissions are welcome, subject to review and possible editing. Questions? Please contact us at nccadmin@crocker.com.

FYI

Jan 17th: “Dancing for Victory” Survival Center Benefit at the Red Barn
8:00 – 12:00, tickets are \$10 (or \$5 for students) & available at the door

Jan 18th: Worship to be held in Parish Hall at 10AM as Sanctuary ceiling repairs will occupy the pews. Come and enjoy a discussion-based service focusing on themes from our Women Building Bridges project with Amherst Survival Center.

Jan 25th: Service of Remembering – sharing our losses of the recent past, and celebrating our healing as the new year begins. Potluck to follow (we’d love your help with food items – check with Chris or Ginger); plan on staying and bringing a friend!

Jan 25th: Hadley Village Music Series featuring Evelyn Harris singing “Live the Dream: From King to Obama” at 3PM, North Hadley Church. Concert is free, donations welcome and reception to follow.

Jan 27th: Empty Bowls Fund-Raising Meal (with Live Music and a Silent Auction) to benefit the Amherst Survival Center from 5 – 9PM at the Pub. Take home a hand-crafted bowl. Tickets are available at the Amherst Survival Center, Hastings, & The Pub (\$25 in advance, \$30 at the door).

Jan 31st: IMPORTANT EVENT: Workshop #2 in *Women Building Bridges* project, starting at 9:30AM at Hadley Church. Theme is “Faith and Class.” For more info, check with Pastor Nada. Lunch will be included.

Feb. 1st: Communion and Membership Service for Carrie Pinheiro
(postponed due to weather on 1-11-09)

Feb 1st: ALL reports due for Annual Report, including budgets

Feb 2nd: Executive Council Meeting @ 7PM

Feb 4th: Next Bible Study group meeting in Easthampton @ 7PM

Feb. 8th: 10AM Sunday Worship - Focus: WWJD? (What Would Jesus Do?)

Feb 8th: Hadley Village Music Series featuring the Western Massachusetts Sacred Harp Community’s demonstration of shape note singing, at 3PM, North Hadley Church. The Concert is free (donations are welcome), with a reception to follow.

Feb 10th: Book Group regroups to read Take This Bread (to be ordered)

Feb 15th: 10AM Sunday Worship – Focus: Worshipping with All Our Senses

Feb 22nd: 10AM Sunday Worship – Focus: Service of Healing followed by 2009 Annual Meeting and potluck in the Parish Hall

Feb 24th: Fat Tuesday (*Mardi Gras!*) – pancakes anyone?

Feb 25th: Ash Weds. – services TBA

Feb 28th: Women Building Bridges workshop at Haydenville UCC – all invited to attend! Lunch included.

March 1: First Sunday of Lent – Communion Service

Birthdays in January & February

| | | | |
|---------|-----------------------------------|----------|-----------------------------------|
| January | 15 th – Mary Jane Laus | February | 15 th – Thomas Simpson |
| | | | 21 st – Mika Sellers |
| | | | 28 th – Lee Steventon |

We would like to have the birthdays of everyone at North Church, so please reply to nccadmin@crocker.com with yours, if you have not done so in the past 2 or 3 months. Thanks.

Newsletter Deadline

The deadline for our March-April Newsletter will be February 16th. Please send all Newsletter submissions to me at nccadmin@crocker.com. I am more than happy to receive anyone’s entries any time before the deadline. Let me know that the email is specifically for the Newsletter by putting ‘Newsletter’ somewhere in the subject line. Thank you! Lee Steventon

North Church Helps During 2008

Produces *The Ha-Ha Sisterhood* performance and raises \$1,187 for the *Amherst Survival Center*

Participates in *American Cancer Society's Relay for Life*

Gathers school supplies for *Margaret C. Ells School* in Springfield

Raises \$1,000 in three *UCC Special Collections* over the year

Collects blankets at Christmas time for *Amherst Survival Center*

Participates in *Shelter Sunday* and raises \$530 for local agencies supporting people who need shelter and food

Collects Campbell's labels for school supplies at *Elon Homes for Children*, historically a UCC-related agency

Organizes *The Alternative Holiday Gift Fair* that raises \$3,320 for participating organizations, including North Church-supported *Foundation Honor for Haiti* and *UCC Global Ministries*

Participates in *North Amherst Harvest Festival* with a pumpkin painting booth

Collects Box Tops for Education to use for school supplies at *Ells School*

Develops *FIN (Friends in Need)* fund for use by members, friends and neighbors in emergencies

Marches in *Northampton Pride Parade* and has booth sharing information about North Church

Collects food for the *Amherst Survival Center* all year long

Participates in the *UCC Our Church's Wider Mission*

Joins with three other churches and the *Amherst Survival Center* on *Class Action's Women Building Bridges* project

Members of the North Church family have committed to giving more help to our local and wider community in 2008. We are thankful that we have been able to do so and look forward to even more opportunities in 2009.

Empty Bowls Dinner to benefit the Amherst Survival Center

1st Annual Empty Bowls Dinner
Addressing Hunger in Our Community

When: Tuesday, January 27th, from 5:00 to 9:00 PM (Snow Date: January 29th)

Where: "The Pub", 15 East Pleasant Street, Amherst, MA 01002

What: A meal of soup, salad, and freshly baked bread served in a ceramic bowl donated by local potters

Admission: \$25 in advance; \$30 at the door
Take-out Available!



Local celebrities, including state Sen. Stan Rosenberg, state Rep. Ellen Story and Amherst Town Manager Larry Shaffer, among others, will be serving a hearty meal of soup in an original, handcrafted ceramic bowl donated by a local potter.

And the best part is you get to take the bowl home as a reminder of how you helped fight hunger in your local community!

This event comes at a critical time for the Survival Center. Demand for services has risen by nearly 30% in the last year as the global economy tanked and forced the state to cut some of its funding to the center.

Despite the cutbacks, the Survival Center is expanding its food pantry, meal service, health clinic and other programs to meet the region's growing needs.

The Amherst Survival Center is at the forefront of fighting hunger in our community. With your help, we can all make sure that the Amherst Survival Center continues to provide the services that this community so urgently needs, especially in these times of economic trouble.

To purchase your tickets, visit www.amherstsurvival.org or call 413.658.8465. Tickets can also be purchased at Hastings or at The Pub.

Mission Moment 2009

A new year always gives us an opportunity to reflect back on the accomplishments and difficulties of the previous year. North Church has been BUSY!!! Through all of our events, hard work, and fun (!!) we think ahead to planning future events – and the time is NOW. We are beginning 2009 focusing on a few initiatives and would love for you to reflect on these areas and see where your gifts might be most useful and your spirit most drawn.

A team committed to helping Marky Jean-Pierre move forward with the Haiti foundation will be formed. There are many ways to be involved with this mission from planning an informational event to helping with inventory of donations.

Our neighbor, the Amherst Survival Center, continues to need donations of food, clothing and TIME. Daily meals are served, two free health clinics are held weekly, and occasional special events help to bring people together and meet many needs. Also, help with tax preparation, legal advocacy, rides, and more will be needed in the year ahead. Think about how you might become involved across the street.

We have many other opportunities on the horizon for 2009 and welcome the involvement of everyone. Please let me know how you would like to be involved in the mission of North Church through these service projects. You can contact me at 586-4867 or email hallnorm@comcast.net. Together we can accomplish so much more.

Peace,
Chris Normandin

Women Building Bridges Project Update

The second Workshop in the *Women Building Bridges* project which is our partnership with Amherst Survival Center, Class Action, and sister UCC churches, will be offered at Hadley Church on Sat., January 31st, starting at 9:30AM. Folks from Hadley and NCC will be using a variety of media in order to focus on the theme “Faith and Classism.” A free lunch will be offered directly after the workshop, at 12:30PM and everyone is urged to attend. Those of you who have been asked to consider lending your support to a leadership team are especially encouraged to participate in the lunch. For more info, check with Pastor Nada.

Getting to Know Carrie Pinheiro

our newest member (January 11, 2009)

I grew up in Acton, Massachusetts with my parents and two sisters. Our family attended Acton Congregational Church for many years, before my parents moved to Vermont in 2007. My husband, Michael, and I moved to North Amherst in 2006, a few months after we got married. I am very grateful that Michael is supportive of my faith journey. I received my Bachelor of Arts degree in Anthropology from UMass Amherst in 2008. Since graduation, I have been working as a Project Assistant at Pearson Education in Hadley. I am supporting my husband as he pursues a degree in Music from Holyoke Community College.

I came to North Church because I was looking to reconnect with my spiritual life. During college, I stopped going to church with any frequency. The time away made me realize how much my faith means to me. I missed church for many reasons, many of which I can't put into words. I just knew that I wanted to find a church. North Church is down the street from where I live. I drive past it on my way to work. The banner “God is still speaking” really captured my attention. One summer Sunday, I decided to attend worship. I was blown away by how friendly and welcoming everyone was! I really enjoyed the service and the people.

So far, I have participated in Book Group and Bible Study. In the year ahead, I would like to continue to be a part of these groups. Additionally, I would like to assist with worship. Generally speaking, I would like to get more familiar with the Bible. I am always inspired and challenged when I read the Bible, and I know there is so much I have yet to explore and think about.

We are so happy to have you with us, Carrie!

Martin Luther King

*"If you want to be important -- wonderful.
If you want to be recognized -- wonderful.
If you want to be great -- wonderful. But, recognize that
he [sic] who is greatest among you shall be your servant.
That's a new definition of greatness.*



And this morning, the thing that I like about it: by giving that definition of greatness, it means that everybody can be great, because everybody can serve. You don't have to have a college degree to serve. You don't have to make your subject and your verb agree to serve. You don't have to know about Plato and Aristotle to serve. You don't have to know Einstein's theory of relativity to serve. You don't have to know the second theory of thermodynamics in physics to serve. You only need a heart full of grace, a soul generated by love."

-- Martin Luther King, Jr.

Boy Scout Trip to Mt. Washington State Forest

On Saturday-Sunday, Nov. 15-16, the Boy Scouts went on a beginning backpacking trip at Mt. Washington State Forest, in southwestern, MA. They backpacked their equipment 1.5 miles in to a campsite, which isn't a long hike, but is plenty for those just learning how much stuff is too much to carry. After setting up camp, they hiked up Alander Mountain, which is 2239 feet above sea level. They enjoyed a great view of New York, Connecticut, and Massachusetts. They purified stream water for drinking. Despite torrential rain on Saturday night, they all stayed pretty dry.

Greg Mathieu, the Senior Patrol Leader, relates his experience:

Mt. Washington state forest was a very interesting and exciting experience for our troop. The 40-50 mph winds at the top of the mountain were exciting and at the same time extremely fun. Our troop had excellent meals capped off by pineapple upside down cakes made by our scoutmaster. Although it rained early in the night it was still a good day. The next Sunday we had a short religious ceremony and then hiked out of the forest on a beautiful autumn morning. We then went to Bash Bish falls where there was a miraculous waterfall that was roaring after the rain the night before. Overall, the whole troop had fun and it was a great experience.

- Submitted by Mary Jane Laus, Scout Liaison for NCC

Wish List

Editor's note: We will be posting a wish list of items needed here at church. Items do not need to be brand-new; they do, however, need to be in good condition. Donated items not found to be suitable will be taken to the Amherst Transfer Station's Trash to Treasure.

- Good quality framed pictures/posters suitable for hanging on wall for display
- Comfortable chairs for seating groups
- "new" energy efficient light bulbs (have 4 sets installed at present)

New Office Hours for Spring

Beginning January 19th, the hours for the Church Office will be changed to:
 Mon. 9:30AM – 12 noon, Wed. 9:30AM – 12 noon, Thu. 11:30AM – 4:30PM

Worship Participation – First Quarter - 2009

| January | 1-4-09 | 1-11-09 | 1-18-09 | 1-25-09 | |
|---------------------|-----------------|----------------|----------------|--------------------|--|
| S & P | Malissa | Sheryl | Ginger | Patti | |
| Communion | Bill & MJ | | | | |
| Reader | Ginger | Steve | Carrie | Jenna | |
| Greeters & Offering | Patti & Barbara | Ginger & Chris | Barbara & Bill | Mary Jane & Carrie | |
| Singers | JE, SS, AS | JE, SS, AS | SS, AS | JE, SS, AS | |
| Flowers | | <i>Special</i> | Steve | Steve | |
| Refreshments | | Chris | Ginger | Carrie | |

| February | 2-1-09 | 2-8-09 | 2-15-09 | 2-22-09 | |
|---------------------|--------------------|------------------|-------------------|------------------|--|
| S & P | Bill | Sheryl | Ginger | Malissa | |
| Communion | PR & JS | | | | |
| Reader | Steve | Chris | Bill | Ginger | |
| Greeters & Offering | Ginger & Mary Jane | Barbara & Carrie | Malissa & Barbara | Bill & Mary Jane | |
| Singers | JE, SS | JE, SS | JE, SS | JE, SS | |
| Flowers | ? | Bill | Mary Jane | Steve | |
| Refreshments | Barbara | Carrie | Steve | Bill | |

| March | 3-1-09 | 3-8-09 | 3-15-09 | 3-22-09 | 3-29-09 |
|---------------------|-----------------|-------------------|---------------|----------------|--------------|
| S & P | Ginger | Sheryl | Patti | Bill | Malissa |
| Communion | Bill & MJ | | | | |
| Reader | Jenna | Carrie | Jenna | Barbara | Bill |
| Greeters & Offering | Patti & Barbara | Mary Jane & Chris | Carrie & Bill | Carrie & Patti | Patti & Bill |
| Singers | | | | | |
| Flowers | ? | ? | Mary Jane | Steve | Jenna |
| Refreshments | Ginger | Mary Jane | Barbara | Carrie | Jenna |

FYI: The first Sunday of Lent is March 1, 2009.