
July & August 2009 North Star
A publication of North Congregational Church, UCC

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Web Address: www.north-church.org

Sunday Worship: 10:30 a.m.

An Open and Affirming Congregation

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

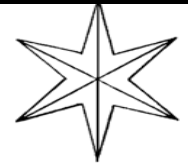
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North Star

North Church – UCC News

July & August 2009

Unconditionally Welcoming, Decidedly Christian



In Our Thoughts... "The Rhythm of Sabbath"

"All life requires a rhythm of rest. There is a rhythm in our waking activity and the body's need for sleep. There is a rhythm in the way the day dissolves into night, and night into morning. There is a rhythm as the active growth of spring and summer is quieted by the necessary dormancy of fall and winter. There is a tidal rhythm, a deep, eternal conversation between the land and the great sea. In our bodies, the heart perceptibly rests after each life-giving beat; the lungs rest between the exhale and the inhale. We have lost this essential rhythm..."

So begins the introduction of Wayne Muller's book, *Sabbath; Finding Rest, Renewal, and Delight in our Busy Lives*. Muller's thesis is that in today's world, with its relentless emphasis on success and productivity, we have lost our life rhythms. Constantly striving, we feel exhausted and deprived in the midst of great abundance; we long for time with friends and family, we long for a moment to ourselves. As people of faith, maybe it's time to relearn the ancient tradition of Sabbath, which "created an oasis of sacred time within a life of unceasing love." Sabbath is both a specific practice and a larger metaphor, "a starting point to invoke conversation about the need for rest." Muller explains, "Sabbath is time for sacred rest; it may be a holy day, the seventh day of the week, as in the Jewish tradition, or the first day of the week, as for Christians. But Sabbath time may also be a Sabbath afternoon, a Sabbath hour, a Sabbath walk – indeed, anything that preserves a visceral experience of life-giving nourishment and rest." (pp 7-8)

During the month of August, North Church is preparing to enter a period of communal Sabbath. For the first four weeks of the month, all work will cease... There will be no regular worship services; no rehearsals, planning, or meetings; no outreach events, no potlucks, service days or other shared community events. Instead, for the period of 30 days, we will devote ourselves to a variety of Sabbath practices and activities, offered in order to help us find the balance point that restores the rhythms of activity and rest, work and play, laughter and focus. Rather than just the absence of work or our usual rushing to prepare for and participate in church activities, "Sabbath gives us permission; it commands us to stop. It doesn't require us to leave home, change jobs, go on retreat, or leave the world of ordinary life... We only need to remember."

(continued on the next page...)

Preparations for our communal Sabbath will include *two Sundays of worship* – the 19th and 28th of July – in which we will explore this vast topic during our Sunday Sabbath time, including a *pre-worship adult discussion group*. On the final Sunday of July, each of us will receive a *packet of materials* designed to assist with nurturing personal Sabbath time over the next 30 days. Using stories, poems, music suggestions, Scripture readings, varieties of prayers and activities, I urge you to dip deeply into the richness of Sabbath, which is designed to restore us, to gift us with the time in which our cares and concerns can fall away and we can draw closer to the One of whom the psalmist writes: “[God] makes me lie down in green pastures; [God] leads me beside still waters; [God] restores my soul.” (23:2-3) Then finally, on August 30th, the last Sunday of our Sabbath month, we will return to *joint Sabbath worship at 10:30am* in North Amherst, to share from our experiences and to celebrate God’s activity in our midst.

One word about our *tithes and offerings* during this time: we will make a variety of suggested methods available to you so that you may continue keeping your financial commitments coming to North Church, whether by mail or envelopes or a lump sum or as you prefer. Be on the look-out for this conversation and for the materials you will receive for this purpose. And thank you!

Make time in your lives to be a part of this new experiment; be a part of this worshipping community, as we pray to deepen our spiritual lives and grow in our faith. We have been given a precious commandment, to *remember the Sabbath, and keep it holy*, and together, we hope for fresh experiences of the Spirit in our resting.
Peace,

Pastor Nada

Spiritual Care & Nurture

“... every prayer makes a difference.”

- ✦ Please keep the following in your prayers:
Margaret Bates & family, Diane Caracci, Norm Clarke, Deb Efford’s sister Amy, Julia Evans, Schuyler Evans, Bruce Fowler, Dottie Giard & family, Dottie Jenks & family, the Maslanka family, the Normandin family, the Parent family, Jeanette Serwa, Lucile Sevoian & family, Lester Sottile, and Felice Yeskel.
- ✦ Pray for those who are dealing with cancer, and for their family and friends.
- ✦ Remember Nazita Gamini (our Sunday child care giver) and her family back in Iran; pray for safety, and a resolution to political tensions.
- ✦ Offer prayers of joy and encouragement for students recently graduating from high school and college, as a new chapter in their lives begins for them.

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

FYI

- June 30** Healing Group @ 7pm – for more info, contact Pastor Nada
- July 5 & 12** Joint Services at 10am with North Hadley congregation, at their campus in North Hadley. No services at our North Pleasant Street site. More to be announced.
- July 7** Book Group meeting at 7pm. Location to be confirmed.
- July 10** DVD movie “John Calvin, his Life and Legacy” showing at 10am in the Barker room (downstairs in the Robert Frost Library) on Amherst College campus.
- July 13** Executive meeting at 7:30pm, in the Dickinson Room (Parish Hall basement)
- July 18** Good Eats meets at 9:30am in Parish Hall kitchen for joint cooking with Amherst Survival Center folks. Everybody’s invited!
- July 19 & 26** Joint worship services held at 10:30am at NCC with North Hadley joining us, services to focus on Sabbath; plan to be there for adult discussion group before 10:30am worship as well, in preparation for this month of discovery.
- July 19** Save the date! All-church picnic in Easthampton at Jenna & Patti’s after worship.
- August 1 – 29** Communal sabbatical - no worship services or group meetings.
- August 30** Celebrating Our Sabbath Sunday – worship recommences with shared service of reflection and praise for Sabbath experiences. 10:30am at North Church.

Birthdays in July & August

July	9 th – Dottie Jenks	August	14 th – Barbara Jenkins
	10 th – Angie Sottile		15 th – Jack Stebbins
	19 th – Tim Manter		16 th – Rhys Evans
	20 th – Zach Jagla		26 th – Patti Richmond
	23 rd – Margaret Evans		

We would like to have the birthdays of everyone at North Church, so please reply to nccadmin@crocker.com with yours. Thanks! Lee Steventon

American Cancer Society - Relay for Life



The Relay for Life had a slogan this year, just four simple words, with a lot of meaning behind them. "Celebrate. Remember. Fight back." This rings true when looking back over this special weekend.

The Relay for Life that took place in Florence at Look Park, June 19th and 20th included the energies of many from North Church. The members of the North Church Prayer Walker team were all present at some point throughout the relay. We had new North Church friends join us early on in the relay and were very glad to see them return on the second day. We walked both to celebrate the lives of those we love and to remember those we lost. The North Church crew did an amazing job at manning the table where people of all ages donated to the cause. For their donations, fun lei necklaces, strings and beads for counting your laps and, of course, Bill's (now famous) design-your-own buttons were available.

Those that were there on Friday lost some precious hours of sleep, but at the time as I walked around the track with new and old friends, I have to say it felt like a celebration. We talked about people that had touched our lives -- that no matter what the outcome of a friendship, it changes you and adds to your life in ways you don't understand. Some people leave us unexpectedly like from this terrible disease the Relay for Life fights against. Others drift out of our lives for other reasons, but we would not be the persons we are without those moments in our life. The remembering did not end on Saturday either. We all got to know each other better a little better and just chatted away the hours as we took our laps. *(continued ...)*

Many people young and old stopped by the table to tell us that the buttons and lap beads were a great and unique idea. A mother and her two daughters brought a pink cancer ribbon with a charm on it over to the table and told Bill that our table and the beads had made the relay a more enjoyable and memorable experience, and they were giving out the charms to those tables that stood out the most in their minds. One other woman told me she had attended many Relays and her motivation would drag in the ending hours. She said that as her head, body and feet ached, her motivation to go around one more time again and again was strengthened by getting the next bead. She had been at the relay over night. She had lost a cousin to cancer, which was the main motivation, but having the physical beads there to show her the accomplishments she had completed throughout the night gave her a hopeful spirit in her eyes.

This year's Relay for Life fundraising went very well, even with the limited time frame that the walkers had. A great chunk of the money raised came in from the table donations, at a little under \$150. With all donations, fundraisers and contributions online as well as the 25 luminaries North Church members purchased, we raised almost \$900 for the American Cancer Society.

One type of donation can not have a price put on it. Alison got at least 9 inches of her hair cut off that will be made into a wig for a child. Happily Wigs for Kids surpassed their record number from last year of 39 bags of hair. This year 43 people of all ages gave up their locks to be made into wigs.

The grand total raised at the relay at Look Park was \$232,000. The strength of survivors inspires others to continue to fight. With the money raised this past weekend, the fight to the end of this terrible disease is more in our grasp, but until the cure is found, we will continue to remember our loved ones, fight for a cure and come to celebrate those that have been touched by cancer when we come together for the Relay for Life next year and for years to come.

-- Ginger Fowler

Education Express – Reminder

As September draws closer, once again, I would like to remind those who shop at Big Y to please consider signing up for Education Express points with Margaret C. Ells as your school of choice. For those who have already done so, please remember that you have to sign up anew each academic year to begin earning points again. For more information about this program, visit http://www.bigy.com/education/edexp_faq.php Thank you!



Celebrate North Amherst



Prouty, Charles, "Paper mill in North Amherst,"
in Digital Amherst, Item #763,
<http://www.digitalamherst.org/items/show/763>

Planning for the October **Celebrate North Amherst** exhibit in Parish Hall continues. Barbara Jenkins has met with Maggie Spiegel, the North Amherst librarian, and with Pat Holland, who wrote the history of the North Amherst library. Pat has done a tremendous amount of research about North Amherst in general, and her contributions and knowledge will be invaluable to the exhibition.

We continue to plan an opening reception on Sunday, October 4 from 1-3 p.m. The exhibit will then be open on Sundays in October from 1-3, and we also hope to have it open a couple of evenings.

We continue to look for photos and memorabilia from North Amherst to have on exhibition, so please let Barbara know if you have anything to copy or loan. Also, please let her know if you have suggestions of people to speak with. (253-2929, bbendaj@msn.com) Also, Barbara is eager to have help in talking to long-time North Amherst residents, visiting the Jones Library Special Collections, gathering items and organizing the exhibition. She reports that it's a fascinating way to get to know our neighborhood.

Change in Worship Start Time

As of June 7th, 2009, North Church has officially shifted to a 10:30am start time. In the near future, we look to include an adult forum group in the time slot prior to worship, offering opportunities for study, discussion and more. Hope to see you there!

North Church Finances

This report will serve as a basic mid-year report. Because of the newsletter deadline of June 15, we are not able to provide information as of the end of June, the actual mid-year point. The Stewardship portion is given as of Sunday, June 14 with two more Sundays in June to go. The Treasurer's and Trust Fund Reports are from the end of May. We felt it was important to give you as up-to-date information as possible, rather than wait until almost September to include the full second quarter. Individual exact mid-year giving statements will be sent to each pledger in July.

From a total pledged of \$27,460, we have as of June 14 received \$15,771, which is 57% of the total. This amount of \$15,771 includes one-time gifts totaling \$5,360 given at the beginning of the year and \$10,851 given in weekly or monthly pledges so far. The portion given in this second period to date has been \$5,174.

Income from weekly offerings (not pledged) during this period was \$961 for a total for the year so far of \$1,477.

Income reported for rental of facilities, both by regular tenants and one-time groups was \$2,075 this period for a total for the year so far of \$4,917.

Total income based on pledges, weekly offerings and rental of facilities for this period was \$8,210. Income from trust funds was \$2,197 (Dickinson & Hamlin) for a total income during this period of \$10,407.

Total income from the beginning of the year has been \$32,264, this includes Hamlin and Dickinson Trust Funds, realization of funds from rentals and pledges and loose offerings.

Expenses to date have been \$66,766 so we once again needed to go to reserves.

The mid-year report from the Trust Fund Committee shows that for the year to date, we have taken a total of \$45,000 from reserves to meet payroll and expenses. Currently, we have total liquid assets of \$168,926 remaining. Of that total, about 25% is in conservative stock mutual funds, 22% is in bond mutual funds, and the balance is in cash and cash equivalents. If the second half of the year is like the first half, we will need another \$45,000 from reserves to complete the year.

This report was compiled by Mary Jane Laus, Treasurer; Bill Wiley, Assistant Treasurer; Jonathan Evans, Trust Fund Treasurer and Barbara Jenkins, Stewardship Chairperson.

Community Preservation Grant Application

North Church, with the backing of the Amherst Historical Commission as well as the Community Preservation Committee, applied for funds from Town Meeting this spring for work on the southwest corner of the church roof. The contractors who worked on the church last year designated it as an area that could benefit from additional support, although they did not feel it absolutely required immediate attention. North Church asked for \$5,800 for the work based on an estimate from the contractor, and the town boards upped the request to \$7,000.

At Town Meeting on May 11, the request was voted down with several arguments from the floor about the importance of separation of church and state. The Historical Commission representative presented the case that there was clear precedent throughout the Commonwealth for funding churches. At least two dozen church projects have been funded with CPA funds, including projects in Bridgewater, Dennis, Easton, Nahant, Nantucket, and North Andover.

The Massachusetts Community Preservation Coalition points out that churches played an integral role in the history of Massachusetts, and are also often local landmarks. They recognize that many houses of worship, like North Church, continue to serve broad community needs, providing space for public uses and activities. They note that CPA funds can be a critical factor in successfully preserving and restoring these important historic community assets. The majority of Town Meeting voters did not agree.

At press time, we are considering how to proceed. Concern in the wider Amherst community was evidenced this past week by a letter to the newspaper in support of North Church's application. There is discussion within the Interfaith Opportunities Network. We'll keep you posted!

The Amherst Survival Center needs Peanut Butter

Recent food drive donations have resulted in a lot of different canned goods (see our donated Parish Hall storage) but little peanut butter. In preparation for the start of school in the fall, **ASC invites our gifts of peanut butter though the summer months.** Please consider helping to restock the ASC pantry. Thank you!

Good Eats

Chop-chop.

Stir-stir.

Sizzle-sizzle.



Those are some of the sounds you would have heard if you'd been around the Parish Hall kitchen on Saturday morning, June 13 at the second monthly Good Eats meal preparation extravaganza. Good Eats is a collaborative effort between North Church and the Amherst Survival Center and is an outgrowth from the Building Bridges project.

At a planning meeting on May 13, North Church's Hanifah Murfin, Mary Jane Laus, Faye Hollender and Patience Bousel met with ASC representatives as well as the Building Bridges coordinator. Then on Saturday, May 16, Mary Jane, Faye and Patience joined together with the ASC folks to prepare a variation of Indian Biriani. Linda Brooks and Barb Johnston from the ASC had done the gathering of ingredients that covered all of the counter tops. The kitchen was a flurry of activity and conversation as everyone got to know one another. At the end of all the work, the women sat down to a delicious meal, after which portions were taken home as well as delivered to some folks who welcomed a tasty, nutritious meal.

At the June 13th event, North Church was represented by the same people, with the addition of Hanifah, Pastor Nada Sellers and Barbara Jenkins. Cheryl Zoll and her daughter, Marcie and her daughters, Linda, Barb and Kathy were there from the ASC, as was Joanne Sunshower from the Building Bridges project. The entrée was one suggested by Mary Jane – Mexican lasagna – and that was accompanied by salad, a rice dish and garlic bread. And – blueberry pies also were baked. That's a lot of action with great results for one morning – an enjoyable meal with conversation among the cooks and "meals-to-go" for others.

The next Good Eats event will be Saturday morning, July 18 when the group will make variations of pasta salad. If you would like to know more, please speak with any of the North Church people mentioned above. Lots of ideas are being generated for next steps – please join us and experience the joy of community developed through preparation of food and sharing it together.

Mexican Lasagna from the Rhode Island Cooks book (American Cancer Society)

1 ½ lbs ground turkey
1 envelope taco seasoning mix
1 cup water
2 8-ounce cans tomato sauce (reserve half for later)
4-ounce can chopped green chilies
1 egg

1 cup sour cream (or try Greek yogurt as a substitute)
1 cup low-fat ricotta cheese
4-ounce can sliced black olives
8 large flour tortillas
8-ounces Cheddar cheese, shredded
8-ounces Monterey Jack cheese, shredded

Brown turkey in skillet sprayed with nonstick cooking spray, stirring until crumbly. Stir in taco seasoning mix and water. Add 1 can (8-oz) tomato sauce and green chilies; mix well.

Simmer until thickened, stirring frequently. Beat egg in small bowl. Add sour cream and ricotta cheese; beat until smooth. Add olives.

Cut tortillas into halves or quarters. Spread 2nd can (8 oz) of tomato sauce in 9X13-inch baking dish. Arrange 1/3 of the tortillas in overlapping layer in prepared dish. Layer half the turkey mixture, half the sour cream mixture and 1/3 the shredded cheese in the dish.

Add half the remaining tortillas, remaining turkey mixture, remaining sour cream mixture and half the remaining cheese. Top with remaining tortillas and cheese.

Bake at 350 degrees for 30 min. Serve with shredded lettuce, chopped tomatoes, chopped avocado and salsa. May substitute ground beef for turkey.

Yields 8 servings

Voice lessons with Eileen Ruby

Are you a choral singer, car crooner, shower chanteuse, or karaoke nut who's been longing for some guidance to give you the confidence to move out into the limelight? Perhaps you're a student, dancer, or actor who keeps almost getting the lead . . . and then ending up in the chorus. Voice lessons with Eileen can help take you where you want to go. Eileen has taught private and group voice at Smith College, Amherst College, and UMass, and she holds master and bachelor degrees in vocal performance from UMass. Eileen teaches in the North Church Parish Hall. Call (413) 774-7969 for more information.

Enchilada casserole (from the Taste of Home Healthy Cooking Magazine - March 2000)

1 lb lean ground beef (substitute additional black beans for a vegetarian dish)
1 large yellow onion, chopped
2 cups salsa
15-oz can black beans, rinsed, drained
¼ cup Italian salad dressing (can be reduced fat to cut calories)
2 tbs taco seasoning (substitute low sodium)
¼ tsp ground cumin
6 8-in flour tortillas
¾ cup sour cream (can substitute low fat or yogurt)
1 cup (4 oz) shredded Mexican cheese blend
1 cup shredded lettuce
1 medium tomato chopped
¼ cup minced cilantro (not finding cilantro, I used fresh dill)

Heat oven to 400 degrees. Coat 3-qt baking dish with cooking spray.

In a large skillet, sauté beef and onion. Drain the meat then stir in the salsa, beans, salad dressing, taco seasoning and cumin.

Arrange 3 tortillas in prepared baking dish. Spread half of the meat mixture over the tortillas, then top with half each of the sour cream and cheese. Top with the remaining tortillas then repeat the layering with remaining meat, sour cream and cheese.

Cover and bake for 25 minutes. Uncover and bake for another 5-10 minutes or until heated through. Let stand for 5 minutes before topping with lettuce, tomato and cilantro.

Yields 8 servings

Drum lessons with Gary Rzab

Gary is a professional drummer who has been teaching for over 20 years. Beginning student as well as advanced students are welcome. Instruction can be on a drum set or hand drums, and lessons are offered in Ashfield or in the basement of our own church's Parish Hall. Call Gary at (413) 634-0274 if interested.

Bloom Where You Are Planted

Daffodils, tulips, creeping phlox, bleeding hearts, forget-me-nots and a few of last year's pansies lit up the border on the side of Parish Hall early this spring. Spring bulbs (lots of daffodils for Amherst's 250th Birthday Celebration), lilies-of-the-valley, a forsythia bush, and pansies added some color around the church.

By the end of May, the pink flowers of several money plants were most prominent in the Parish Hall border. Also in bloom were some two-tone purple and yellow bearded iris (the only pre-existing plant in this border), some yellow and some deep blue Japanese irises, the purple flowers of the maroon leaved Ajuga, the pink balls of common chives and the countless shades of green and the various leaf and plant textures of those gems that have yet to bloom.

At press time (the second week in June), the mums have been pinched out several times and the irises' flower stems have been removed. New plants for summer color have been added to the large planting boxes of pansies on the front steps, and the honey suckle is sweetly scenting the air at the entrance to the church. A beautiful double pink peony blossomed for the first time this year in the Parish Hall border! Absolutely stunning!

Steve Brown



Worship Participation – June & July 2009

June	6-7-09	6-14-09	6-21-09	6-28-09	
S & P	Bill	Malissa	Ginger	Sheryl	
Communion	MJ & Steve				
Reader	Carrie	Faye	Steve	Ginger	
Greeters & Offering	Barbara & Carrie	Steve & Bill	Malissa & Barbara	Chris & Mary Jane	
Singers	JE & SS	JE & SS	JE & SS	JE & SS	
Flowers	Nada	Jenna	Mary Jane	Steve	
Refreshments	CN & SH	Faye	Jenna	POTLUCK	

July	7-5-09	7-12-09	7-19-09	7-26-09	
S & P	Service at North Hadley Congregational Church		Malissa	Ginger	
Communion					
Reader			Barbara	Bill	
Greeters & Offering			Bill & Mary Jane	Patti & Carrie	
Singers			JE & SS	JE & SS	
Flowers			Jenna	Steve	
Refreshments			Ginger	POTLUCK (?)	

If you can help with Worship Participation for August, September & October 2009, please send your availability to nccadmin@crocker.com. Thanks!
Lee Steventon

Newsletter Deadline

The deadline for our September – October newsletter will be August 17th. 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

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.