



The Good Word Newsletter

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The First Congregational

Church of Natick

United Church
of Christ

An Open and Affirming
Congregation

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Over the years that I have served this church, I have often been amazed by the way that opportunities have a way of finding us. People, resources, connections, possibilities somehow appear at just the right time.

Another one of those unexpected opportunities will come our way on **Sunday, March 3rd** at 4:00 PM through a wonderful chain of connections. The chain began with a colleague of our former organist, Kurt Glacy. Cathy was impressed by the feel and acoustics of our sanctuary space when she and Kurt performed together in our space several years ago. In recent years, Cathy has been involved with a group that has created a new way to experience the Lord's Prayer – some of the most familiar words in the Christian tradition – by excavating its ancient roots. Cathy contacted me inquiring if we would be willing to host an interfaith event in our sanctuary and introduced me to Yosef Kottler.

Upon learning of the existence of an ancient Hebrew version of the Gospel of Matthew, Yosef Kottler, already an experienced composer of Jewish chant and liturgical music, was inspired to create a contemporary interpretation of The Lord's Prayer. The language of the Lord's Prayer has deep roots in the prayer practice of ancient Judaism. It echoes the vocabulary and imagery that would have been familiar to those first followers of Jesus. By exploring the nuanced meaning of the original Hebrew, Kottler has uncovered fresh insights into this devotional prayer while keeping it relevant to today's world and to people of all faiths.

On March 3rd at 4 PM, we will be joined by talented area musicians who will collaborate with members of our choir to turn First Church into a vessel for summoning the Spirit through an Interfaith Journey into Song and Spirit called *The Lord's Prayer Experience*.

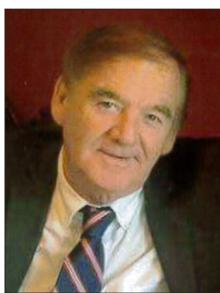
Kottler, who in addition to his work as a composer is also a trained spiritual director and the leader of "Drum Your Prayers" workshops, has gathered an impressive group. Belle Halpern is a song leader and has been called "Boston's premiere singing actor" by the Boston Herald. The Boston Globe has called her work "stunning, both as music and theatre." Walter Cooper is a vocalist and singer of spiritual music and founder of Gospel Love Tones. Steven Schatz is a psychotherapist and the founder of the Center for Music and Imagery. Cathy Meyer is the Minister of Music at South Church, UCC in Andover. And Marc Sarkady is a master drummer and leadership consultant.

As we pray the music through ancient Hebrew and Aramaic and English, we will affirm the power of Spirit and the power of love to make the world a better place. The Lord's Prayer Experience is a "transformance" – a way to heal and transform ourselves, our relationships with each other and our world.



Tree of Life

Our prayers surround Laura Gobron and her family. They gathered in Connecticut at the beginning of January to remember and celebrate the life of her aunt, Jean Mahard who died in December. Jean was the sister of Barbara Hayes, Laura's mother, who died just a few months before Jean in August.



The DeVincenzo family gathered in the sanctuary on January 24th to remember and celebrate the life of Ron DeVincenzo, who died at home on January 19th, which was where he wanted to be, after an eight-week ordeal of hospitalizations to treat an aggressive cancer. Ron was a big man with a big voice and a big heart and he will be greatly missed.

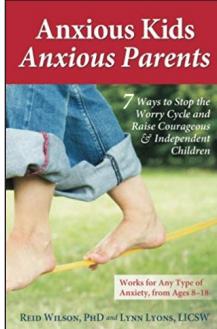
Our prayers hold the family and friends of Cathy Finucane, who died at her home in Maynard, MA on Nov. 23, 2018 after a courageous battle against ovarian cancer. Cathy was a dear friend of Suzanne Griffin.



Congratulations to Diana Porter, who was selected to be one of seven actors participating in a two-week Professional Acting Intensive at the Barrow Group taught by co-artistic directors, Seth Barrish and Lee Brock through script analysis, scene study, and film/tv on camera work!

New SPARK Kindness Program for 2019: Anxious Kids, Anxious Parents: Strategies to Interrupt the Worry Cycle!

Wednesday, March 20th with Lynn Lyons



Anxiety in many children has a generational link, with patterns of worry and anxiety being passed from parents to children. But what parents (and other adults) often intuitively do to help anxious children actually serves to strengthen these patterns. Lynn addresses these patterns head on, and equips families with an alternative approach that focuses on active engagement over avoidant behavior. Lynn is a licensed clinical social worker and psychotherapist in Concord, New Hampshire who has been in private practice for 28 years. She specializes in the treatment of anxiety disorders in adults and children.

Visit sparkkindness.org for more information and registration.

Let's Talk about "Being Mortal"



Tuesday evenings: April 30,
May 7th & 14th at 7:00 PM

*When it's over, I want to say all my life
I was a bride married to amazement.
I was the bridegroom, taking the world
into my arms.
When it's over, I don't want to wonder
if I have made of my life something particular, and real.
I don't want to find myself sighing and frightened,
or full of argument.
I don't want to end up simply having visited this world.*

~ Mary Oliver

We live in a death-denying culture and that denial has serious consequences for us and our loved ones - medically, personally, spiritually. Using a variety of resources including excerpts of the PBS documentary with Atul Gawande, the author of *Being Mortal: Medicine and What Matters in the End*, we will open up a conversation that too rarely takes place about how we want to live and the choices that we or others might have to make as we approach the end of life. Sign up in the vestry during coffeehour or contact the church office (508-653-0971 or admin@firstchurchnatick.org).

MACUCC Super Saturday registration is open!

Saturday, March 16, 8:00 AM to 3:30 PM

Registration is now open for Super Saturday, taking place March 16 at Minnechaug Regional High School in Wilbraham, MA.

Each participant attending Super Saturday can take part in morning worship, two workshops, an optional lunch activity, continental breakfast, lunch, marketplace and closing worship.

The main speaker will be Rebekah Anderson, who has presented on disability theology at the National Church Leadership Institute, Eastern Regional Youth Event, and Super Saturday. She is an alum of the Thinking About Working for God Apprenticeship of the Connecticut Conference, and the Young Adult Service Communities program of the UCC. She is in her first year at Union Theological Seminary.

For details and to register, visit macucc.org.

Lent 2018

“Finding Beauty in a Broken World”



In 1937, the Basque town of Guernica was devastated when the Nazi forces conducted bombing practice during the Spanish Civil War using this town as their target. When Pablo Picasso learned of what had happened in his country of origin, he shifted his attention from a mural on which he was working for the Paris Exhibition to create this powerful painting. Guernica has become an icon of modern art the way that DaVinci’s Mona Lisa is an icon of the Renaissance. Instead of DaVinci’s ideal of balance and serenity, Guernica captures the vulnerability of individual lives up against the overwhelming forces of war and political corruption.

Guernica will be our guiding image as we journey through Lent in search of beauty in a broken world. The painting reveals both human vulnerability and culpability. While Picasso was living in Nazi-occupied Paris during World War II, one German officer allegedly asked him, upon seeing the photo of Guernica in his apartment, “Did you do that?” Picasso responded, “No, you did!”

Lent begins with Ash Wednesday on March 6th. We hope that you will join us and find companions for your spiritual journey through some of the worship and small group opportunities available in March and April.

A Different Kind of Ash Wednesday

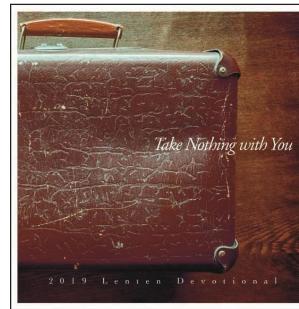
7:00 PM on March 6th in the sanctuary



Our journey this year through Lent will be a journey in search of beauty in our broken world. On Ash Wednesday, we will begin our journey with the interplay between light and darkness through a form of

prayer created in Taizé, France at the end of the second World War by an ecumenical community of brothers. We will gather for our Taizé service in our candlelit sanctuary. The service will be about 45 minutes long and will include music, prayer, chant, silence and communion in the round. We will light candles as a symbol of our prayers, and we will conclude with an opportunity to receive ashes — that curious symbol that reminds us of the great circle of life. Join us for this moving service.

“Take Nothing with You” 2019 Lenten Devotional



When we enter the spiritual journey of Lent, we often take things with us: our past experiences, our interpretations of Scripture, our questions about the world, our struggles in faith. What does an unencumbered journey look like? Let’s find out together.

From the Stillspeaking Writers’ Group and the Daily Devotional contributors comes this year’s Lenten devotional, with a biblical text, reflection, and prayer for each day from Ash Wednesday to Easter Sunday. From the writers of the popular online Daily Devotional.

Available soon! Pick up your copy in coffeehour or from the church office. Suggested donation is \$5.

Lenten Spiritual Spa & Mosaic Workshop 2019

“Finding Beauty in a Broken World”

Saturday, March 9th, 9:00 AM ~ 3:00 PM
with Liz Hanna and Carol Krentzman



We don't have to look far to see brokenness - from the personal to the national and international. Broken trust, broken institutions, broken relationships, broken hopes and dreams. Brokenness is easy to find, but what about beauty? What does it mean to be human in this era of physical and spiritual fragmentation? During Lent, we will explore this question, inspired by a book by Terry Templeton Williams. Williams begins her book in Ravenna, Italy, learning how to create mosaics.

Mosaics, by definition, transform broken pieces into something of beauty. Williams discovers in the process of crafting her own designs and studying the amazing mosaics that adorn the sanctuaries of holy places that mosaic is not just an art form, but a form of integration. It is possible in a broken world to create something out of what is broken through a narrative of hopeful acts.

Our Lenten Spiritual Spa Day will follow Williams' lead. We will be joined by mosaic artist, Carol Krentzman who will guide us in making together a mosaic creation that will hang in our sanctuary. We will also be joined by ecologist, theologian and musician, Liz Hanna who will help us listen for our narrative and integrate between head and heart, between the personal and the global. Our hope is that we will emerge better able to notice beauty in places and moments we might not have noticed it before.

If you feel like so much has happened that you are running on empty, consider the unthinkable – step back for a moment from the urgent concerns that impel you to be the change that you seek for the world and let the Spirit fill you back up with passion and commitment and clarity and love.

Sign-up during coffeehour in the vestry or contact the church office (508-653-0971 or admin@firstchurchnatick.org) to make your reservation by March 1st. The cost is \$30 to cover supplies and lunch. Scholarships are available. Contact Vicky or Sarallyn for more info on the program or about a scholarship.

Lenten Soul Sabbatical: “Let Me Ask You a Question”

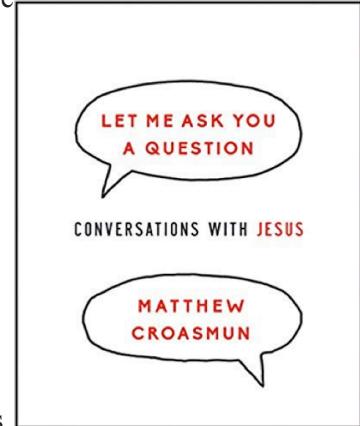
Four-week small group series

Tuesday or Wednesday evenings,
from 7:00 to 8:30 PM in the parlor, beginning
the week of March 10th

Maybe you are someone who would like to find a group of loving, hopeful, real people with whom you can talk honestly about faith and the complicated times in which we live. Maybe you would like to try out prayer practices that have been transforming people of faith for generations, but you don't quite know how to get started on your own. Maybe you are looking for a sense of community and connection that goes deeper than coffeehour on Sunday morning. If so, Soul Sabbatical 2019 is for you! The topic is *Let Me Ask You a Question: Conversations with Jesus*.

We often think of Jesus as someone with all the answers. But over and over in scripture, he asks questions, seeking to engage with people and genuinely interested in their responses.

This Lent we will a resource called *Let Me Ask You a Question: Conversations with Jesus* by Matthew Croasmun. The book is an experiment to enter into conversation with Jesus by answering the questions Jesus asks in scripture. The goal is not to come up with what we think are the right answers but to respond honestly to Jesus' questions.



Each week offers five brief readings focused on a question of Jesus with a short reflection designed to help you engage with Jesus' question as he asked it in the Gospels and as he asks it of you now. The reflection is followed by an invitation to continue the conversation with Jesus.

In addition to the daily reflections we will gather four times in facilitated small groups to share conversation and connections. Soul Sabbatical is an opportunity to go deeper in your faith journey with others and to create space for Spirit to move in your life.

Cost for the book is \$10. You can sign up in the vestry on Sundays or contact the church office with the session that works best for you (508-653-0971 or admin@firstchurchnatick.org).

Mental Health First Aid Training

Saturday, February 23 @ 8:30 AM -5:00 PM
with Devin Shmueli



Anyone, anywhere can be the one to make a difference in the life of someone with a mental health or substance use challenge – if they know what to do and what to say.

Just as CPR helps you assist an individual having a heart attack, Mental Health First Aid helps you assist someone experiencing a mental health or substance use-related crisis. In the Mental Health First Aid course, you learn risk factors and warning signs for mental health and addiction concerns, strategies for how to help someone in both crisis and non-crisis situations, and where to turn for help.

The course will cover depression and mood disorders, anxiety disorders, trauma, psychosis and substance use disorders. Mental Health First Aid teaches about recovery and resiliency – the belief that individuals experiencing these challenges can and do get better, and use their strengths to stay well.

Sign-up in the vestry during coffeehour or contact the church office to make your reservation (admin@firstchurchnatick.org or 508-653-0971). The cost is \$25 to cover materials and lunch. Scholarship are available. Please contact Vicky or Sarallyn for more information on the program or scholarships.

Join our Progressive Dinner on Saturday, April 27th @ 5:30 PM

Our Progressive Dinner – a movable feast where each course of the meal takes place at a different location – is always one of the favorite adult-only events at First Church! We meet at the church and travel to other locations over the evening to enjoy each course. That means you have the opportunity to enjoy the company of many people in different configurations.

The cost of the event is \$10. Everyone is invited to bring either an appetizer or a dessert to share.

We would love to know if you might be able to host a course, so that we can begin planning in earnest. You can sign up in the vestry during coffeehour or contact the church office (admin@firstchurchnatick.org or 508-653-0971) to volunteer to host or to sign up as a guest. The Welcome Team would also love a few volunteers who might be willing to assist with logistics.

Coffeehour hosts urgently needed for our new season together!

Coffee hour is a wonderful time in the week to connect and it is a great way for newcomers to get acquainted with our congregation. But we can't make it happen each week without YOU!

All you have to do is roll out the cart full of supplies of non-perishable snack and gluten-free snacks from the kitchen to set up. The coffee is ready to pour into pitchers. Juice and creamer are in the fridge. **You can leave worship on the last hymn and have plenty of time to set things up on the table.** Of course, you are always welcome to bring special goodies to share, but the most important thing you have to share is your time and your smile. Set up, serve, clean up, and in an hour you will be back on the road and made some new friends in the process.

Available upcoming dates are all Sundays in 2019, except April 14th, 21st & 28th. You can sign up in one of three ways:

- During Coffeehour: Look for the familiar signup clipboard on the coffeehour table.
- Online at FirstChurchNatick.org.
- Contact the church office (admin@firstchurchnatick.org; 508-653-0971).

Hayes Parlor Bible Study

Thursday, February 14th and March 7th @ 2 PM

"If I speak in the tongues of mortals and angels but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal." In January, our study of I Corinthians focused on some of the most popular words for wedding celebrations. And because those words are so familiar, we took a different approach by reading them in a variety of translations. For those for whom fluency in other languages is limited, comparative translations are an excellent way to get sense of some of the nuances that can often be overlooked. They can also give us new ears to hear a passage in unexpected ways.

Maybe you might hear something unexpected if you join us for the last session in our "Listen Up" Stillspeaking Bible Study on I Corinthians as the topic shifts from love to resurrection!

We meet in the church parlor on the second floor on the first Thursday of the month. No preparation is required. We will have all the materials on hand. If you need transportation, contact the church office and we will arrange to pick you up (508-653-0971 or admin@firstchurchnatick.org).

Environmental Action Sundays

Signs of Changing Nature Around Natick

with Joy Marzolf, Educator and naturalist at
Broadmoor Wildlife Sanctuary

February 24th at noon in the vestry

Natick has changed much since in the last 400 years: from forest to farm to town and now suburb. Now, more recently, we are seeing rapid changes going on in the nature around us. From weather extremes like wetter springs and spells of drought to extensive heat, torrential downpours and tornado warnings. How are these and other changes affecting our area wildlife and us? Come find out!

Sign up in the vestry during coffehour or contact the church office to reserve your seat (508-653-0971 or admin@firstchurchnatick.org. A light luncheon will be served.

Planting a Pollinator Garden

Sunday, April 28 @ noon with Sarallyn Keller

Pollinators need native plants for food and habitat, and plants need pollinators. Without both, the entire food system is at risk. And right now, the birds, bats, bees, moths, and butterflies that pollinate plants are in crisis worldwide. The New England Wildflower Society has great resources and information on how to plant diverse, systemic pesticide-free native plants that support a wide variety of pollinators throughout their life cycles. Maybe you will be inspired to plant a pollinator garden yourself this spring? This is a great way to celebrate Earth Day this year! A light lunch will be provided.



Exciting Spring Piano Concert! Mozart for 4 Hands with Tom Foster and Sam Partyka

Sunday, March 31 at 4:00 PM

in the sanctuary; reception to follow in the vestry



One piano plus two performers equals more than double the fun in any century!

"Piano Four Hands" is a type of piano duet in which two players perform on a single instrument. This style of composition, used by such musical giants as Schubert and Brahms and Mozart, increases the variety and power in performance than might be possible with a single instrumentalist.

Join us to celebrate the beginning of spring with this special concert on March 31st. Even if it is still looking far too much like winter outside, listening to the radiant music of Mozart by the afternoon light in the sanctuary will transport you beyond the winter doldrums to another era

Mozart's music for four hands never fails to entertain. First Church Natick's Minister of Music, Tom Foster will team up with Sam Partyka to present a concert of some of Mozart's finest works in this genre.



2019 Community MLK Celebration Overflows with Energy!



It may have been in the single digits outside but those inside Wilson Middle School who gathered for the 2019 Community MLK Celebration were charged up to be the change that they wanted to see in the world.

From the enthusiasm of the Johnson Peacemakers, to the inaugural MLK performance of the new high school Varsity Dance Team, to the spoken word poem composed and presented by the Peer Advocates, to the rousing charge of our keynote speaker, Jamele Adams, Dean of Students at Brandeis University, to shout the words of Natick High's Peer Advocates, "We are the love that hate can't stop," out loud enough to hear the hope all the way to Dunkin Donuts, the capacity crowd carried the energy into the "after-party" in the gymnasium to link up with a variety of community organizations committed to making a difference year-round.

- More than 500 guests attended the event. The auditorium which seats 435 was overflowing with standing room only!
- More than 150 performers - dancers, poets and writers, vocalists and musicians - and program participants took the stage!
- 24 community organizations and groups participated in our Welcoming Fair, including student groups from NHS - Peer Advocates and InterFem - and 4th graders from Ben Hem!
- 3 local business provided food and drink. (Thanks to Panera, Roche Bros and Wegmans!)
- Many recycle buddy bins were made to help Keep Natick Beautiful (and trash free!)
- Hundreds of students and families donated thousands of non-perishable lunch and snack items for our first town-wide service project!
- And many helping hands of all ages assembled more than 1,000 lunch and snack bags to be distributed to students in need over school vacations.

Natick High's MLK essay winner, Pierre Damien Dushime captured the hope that was generated by the gathering in the words of his poem, *The Love that Hate Cannot Conquer*:

"...I won't ask you to blow out candles
At your birthday but instead, I will ask you
To light them up.
Because this will teach you that
You are born when you light candles
Chasing darkness inside you,"



First Church Natick youth to reach out in Boston through City Reach

Some members of our senior youth group, accompanied by several adults, will travel into Boston and participate in the CityReach program on **March 29th & 30th**. The program begins on Friday evening and runs through Saturday afternoon. This program is hosted by Ecclesia Ministries, the entity that operates Common Cathedral, a ministry to the street people of Boston. Our youth, joined by other church groups, will meet people living on the streets of Boston, get to know them, and walk the city with them. We will see and better understand the many ways that people need to adapt to the environmental and social challenges of living on the streets. On Saturday morning, our group will offer hospitality, food and clothing both inside the church and outside as part of a street outreach team, to people who live on the street, including some we met the night before. The items we will offer are free to our guests, thanks to the support from local churches like ours, and provide those who live on the streets with clean, or even new, clothes.

Our youth will be collecting items for their work of providing clothing and food for those living on the streets of Boston during the shop and outreach time on Saturday morning. They will need your help!

Some of the important items that are needed include:

All kinds of carrying cases – used and in good condition (backpacks, tote bags, fanny packs and/or small suitcases with wheels)

Sleeping bags & blankets (clean & in good condition)

Travel size toiletries (soap, shampoo, deodorant, lotion, toothpaste, disposable razors, tampons)

New white socks

New underwear (especially needed - large men's)

Rugged, outdoor clothing (clean and in good condition. Think comfortable, rugged clothing, such as what you would wear for hiking or camping) including:

- winter jackets / ponchos / raincoats
- hooded sweatshirts
- t-shirts
- jeans
- comfortable shoes / waterproof boots
- belts

***** City Reach has no use for children's clothes, dress clothes, slippers, bathrobes or pajamas. *****

Please leave your donations on the church stage March 10 - 27. Let's show our youth our support in this important ministry! Any items you can provide, in good, clean condition, will be helpful and important!

First Event Trans Youth & Family Summit

Thursday, January 30 - Sunday, February 3rd
@ Best Western Plaza Hotel & Conference Center in Marlborough



JANUARY 30 → FEBRUARY 3 | 2019

FIRST EVENT CONFERENCE

BEST WESTERN ROYAL PLAZA HOTEL | MARLBOROUGH, MA

First Event is one of the longest running conferences in the U.S. for transgender and gender expansive people and those who love and support them. The conference is January 30 through February 3, 2019 at the Best Western Royal Plaza hotel in the Boston area. First Event is hosted by Trans Club of New England (TCNE). GBPFLAG is proud that its parents are leading the planning for the Youth and Family track. Learn more at firstevent.org.

Join Family Promise MetroWest on Saturday, April 6th for the 10th Annual Walk to End Homelessness!



Registration is now open for FPM's 10th Annual Walk to End Homelessness. We are looking forward to our biggest and best walk yet to mark our tenth walkathon and honor our decade in service to families in the metrowest region.

Bring your family, friends, and pooches for this 5K stroll through Natick Center, beginning and ending at the Natick High School parking lot. There will be tents and tables set up with food, raffles, games, and giveaways, and music will be playing thanks to LBF and the Street Gang of 105.7 WROR.

You can register as an individual, family, or team, customize your fundraising page with stories and photos, and start making an impact on family homelessness right away. We can't wait to see you there!

Register at familypromisemetrowest.org or by scanning this QR code.



Silent Movie Night!

“The Gold Rush” with Charlie Chaplin

Saturday, March 2nd @ 7:00 PM



In this classic silent comedy, the Little Tramp (Charles Chaplin) heads north to join in the Klondike gold rush. Trapped in a small cabin by a blizzard, the Tramp is forced to share close quarters with a successful prospector and a fugitive. Eventually able to leave the cabin, he falls for a lovely barmaid, trying valiantly to win her affections. When the prospector needs help locating his claim, it appears the Tramp's fortunes may change.

Accompanying the movie on our grand piano in the sanctuary will be the amazing Rob Humpreville who improvises the movie's "soundtrack" on the spot as the plot unfolds. Join us for Charlie Chaplin in *The Gold Rush* and experience the time before the "talkies." It is a great family night out! A freewill donation is suggested to offset expenses.

A reception will follow in the vestry.

Want to contribute to
First Church Natick
from your mobile device?

1. Go to the App Store
2. Download the “GIVE+” app
3. Launch the App
4. Enter our zip (01760)
5. Select “First Congregational Church of Natick”
6. We recommend you “Create Account”
7. Or you can give anonymously by selecting “Give Now”
8. Complete your donation

FCC 2019/2020 Scholarship Applications

Scholarship applications for the 2019 /2020 academic year are available on the table in the ground-level elevator lobby.

All applications must be submitted by May 12th.
No applications will be accepted after this date.



March 23, 2019: Mark your calendars now for 46th Annual Heritage Craft Fair

Keefe Tech High School, Framingham
Saturday, 10 AM - 4 PM



As it has in the past, the 2019 Heritage Fair will offer a wonderful variety of hand-crafted items, featuring such treats as glassware, clothing, toys, jewelry, woodworking, leather goods, quilts, metalwork, paintings, photography, delicious fudge, jams, and specialty oils and vinegars. Each year there's a more impressive variety of exceptional items than ever before. Plus, visitors can bring home something sweet and delicious from the Bake Sale and enjoy lunch at the Food Court, where there are subs by the inch, hot dogs, snacks, muffins, donuts, coffee, tea, and soft drinks throughout the day.

Registration open for Single Dad's Group

6-week series beginning February 25



After receiving rave reviews from last year's participants, SPARK is thrilled to announce the return of its Single Dads Group for the 2nd year! This program is led by Jon Mattleman, a trained therapist and Chris Minidis, a divorced dad – trained through experience. Reasons to join the program:

- It is FREE and for single dads only
- Dinner and free babysitting provided
- Each week we will discuss a different topic that's important to you
- Dates are February 25, March 4, 11, 18, 25 and April 1.

Register at sparkkindness.org.

Greening Up! Sunday, March 17th @ noon



Many things have been happening since First Church Natick received its Level 2 Green Congregation Award at the Annual Meeting of the Massachusetts Conference of the United Church of Christ last June.

We hope you can join in the conversation on March 17th following worship at noon to learn more about what has been happening with our plans for energy and envelope upgrades at the church, and what has been happening in town with Renewable Natick's resolution to move to net zero emissions by 2050. Learn about an electricity aggregation program developed by our Natick's Sustainability Team that will create an option to draw 19% of your electricity from local renewable sources even if you don't have solar panels. And explore new directions for our congregation's green initiatives suggested in Jim Antal's new book *Climate Church, Climate World*.

Here's a sneak preview of an exciting new program that will be rolling out this spring.

Renewable Natick, the Council on Aging and the Natick Sustainability Office are collaborating to launch a new program, **Natick Senior Energy Grants**. Together, they are working to help seniors participate in the MassSave energy efficiency program by providing financial assistance and volunteers to help seniors at every step on their journey to save energy and money. Their goal is to launch this spring and they need to recruit folks to serve as Volunteer Energy Concierges.

A Volunteer Energy Concierge's main role is to help seniors navigate the MassSave process by joining them for their home energy audit, reviewing recommended home energy improvement projects, and helping the senior oversee any contracted work, such as the addition of attic insulation or the replacement of old appliances. They anticipate these tasks will only require a 10 hour commitment over the course of 6-9 months per senior (that's less than 2 hours a month, on average!), and can be matched to the volunteer's schedule.

Hope you will plan on joining us on March 17th to hear more about these and other opportunities! Sign-up in the vestry during coffeehour or contact the church office (508-653-0971 or admin@firstchurchnatick.org).

Welcoming immigrants

Thanks to a group of folks from First Church Natick, First Church Walpole, Eliot Church and Temple Beth Elohim in Wellesley, we were able to bring a family from Honduras to Framingham via Arizona so that they can seek asylum. They have already begun the process; now it's just getting the paper work, finding the money and waiting for the case to be heard.

This family consisting of a mom, teenager, 3-year-old and baby, left Honduras to escape extreme violence on a number of levels. It is hard for us to understand what it must be like to need to leave in order to feel safe; to walk for days, and even months with few possessions relying on strangers for water and food and shelter.

Meanwhile, they are new residents in an area that is very unfamiliar to them. We take for granted our food, our built-in systems, our cultural norms, our rules and on and on. Think every day of all the things you know how to do, then ask yourself, would you know what to do in a different country with little or no language skills? Could you register for school, find a grocery store, cook with food that is totally unfamiliar to you, get medical care? These are all the things that we are helping with as the family gets acclimated and begins to navigate New England. And then there's snow and cold. Many of you met them the first weekend in January when they attended church with us. They felt very welcome and enjoyed the church, cookie making, and talking through an interpreter, but have found a Spanish Church which is easier for them to navigate. Just one more area of our culture that we take for granted.

Things are going well. The teenager is happily attending Framingham High School, where they have an outstanding program. The three-year-old is playing and learning and cuddling his host "grand pa." And the baby is cooing and trying to walk and pretty unaware of the fact that he is a United States Citizen, which gives him rights the others don't have. Mom begins an ELL class at the Workers Center in Framingham. Meanwhile, we communicate through Google Translate, and human translators.

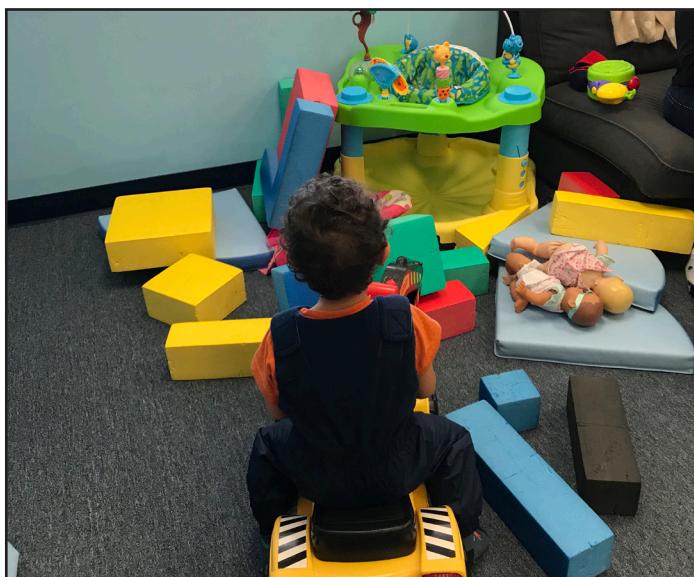
Much of what we need now is monetary: Money to get children into daycare; money for law fees; money for food and daily necessities. Because an Asylum seeker cannot work for a given amount of days (about 5 months), there is no income, so families rely on our support.

We would love to have you as part of the team. If you would like to offer rides and companionship, (no Spanish needed), that would be great. If you feel that you can contribute to this family's financial needs, that is also welcome. If you go to the First Church Natick website (FirstChurchNatick.org) and click on "donate," you will see a line item for Family Fund. That money will be reserved for the family we have sponsored. Please support us with prayers for the C family and for all of those who

continue to struggle with violence in their home countries and confusion in their new.

I am happy to talk with anyone about this family and other work that is being done for families in this area. Please email me: MargeRoberson@gmail.com.

Blessings to you all for opening your hearts.



Lunch Bunch: The cure for cabin fever!

Friday, February 15th and March 15th
beginning at 12:30 PM



The weather cooperated in January and the tables were full in the vestry for Lunch Bunch! Our former student minister, Tiffany Spigarolo even stopped in to join in the conversation adding some of her homemade cookies to the treats on the table.

Winter is long and it can feel like forever that we have been cooped indoors. Here's hoping we picked the right dates to skirt around winter weather systems so that we can warm up in the company of great people and good conversation.

Everybody is welcome at "Lunch Bunch!" Just bring along a brown bag lunch, but leave some space for treats because there are always some tasty goodies to share. Even if you can't linger, stop by and say hello. If you need transportation, contact the church office and we would be glad to arrange to pick you up (508-653-0971 or admin@firstchurchnatick.org).

The Language of God

a reflection by David L. Coulter

According to Islam, the Koran is the received word of God just as it was heard by Muhammad. God said it, Muhammad heard it and wrote it down in the Arabic language of his time. So does God speak Arabic? If there is only one God for all people, why would God choose to speak in a language that not all people could understand? Or does God speak in a unique divine language known only to God but which can be understood by all people within their own human language? Maybe it is somewhat like the old Hindu story of the six blind men and the elephant, in which each blind man felt a different part of the elephant and had a different opinion about what an elephant is. But there is only one elephant which can appear to each according to his or her own perception. Similarly, perhaps there is only one universal Word of God which each of us receives and understands based on our own human perception. The great physicist Werner Heisenberg once said, "We have to remember that what we observe is not nature in itself, but nature exposed to our method of questioning." Perhaps we could paraphrase this to say, "We have to remember that what we hear is not God him/herself, but God speaking through our method of understanding."

This suggests that perhaps God spoke to Muhammad in the language of God, which Muhammad understood in his own language and wrote down in Arabic. This is probably also the way God spoke to the Biblical prophets, who wrote down what they heard in Aramaic. In 1 Samuel 3: 8-10, young Samuel heard God calling his name and speaking to him in his own language which Samuel could understand. The Pentecostal story also reflects this concept. God comes to each of the apostles as a "tongue of fire." Note that it is a tongue of fire, not a column of fire or a burning bush. God is speaking to the apostles through the tongues of fire using the language of God. Peter then goes out and speaks to the crowd and everyone in the crowd understands what Peter is saying, each in his/her own language. Once again, perhaps God gave Peter the tongue of divine fire so that he could speak with the language of God and so that all of the people in the crowd could understand him and understand God's Word.

Today in the Congregational Church, we believe that "God is still speaking." But God is not speaking to us in English, Arabic or any other human language. God is speaking through the language of God, which has no human dictionary. God is present and speaks to us through the silence that surrounds the center of stillness in our lives when we are ready to listen to God's voice, which we each understand in our own language. Perhaps this is also like what the neurosurgeon Eben Alexander described when during his near-death experience he went to Heaven and could understand the other souls there without having

to speak a word. Maybe in heaven souls also speak the language of God.

So to summarize, "In other words, perhaps the Word has no words."

But maybe it is not so clear. One could raise a Thomistic objection. If everyone can hear God "still speaking" to them using the language of God and then repeats it in their own human language, how can we be sure that what they heard and shared with us is truly based on the language of God? How easy it would be for someone to say, "God told me all Africans should be slaves" or "God told me to kill all Jewish people." Or even, "God said to conquer the world in the name of Allah and kill anyone who does not convert to Islam." When Joseph Smith was visited by the angel Moroni and led to the golden plates, were the plates written in the language of God? How can we be sure that the voice we hear in the "silence that surrounds the center of stillness in our lives" is really the voice of God?

I would argue that the language of God is contained within the Golden Rule, "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you." The universality of this Rule might suggest that it comes close to a general rule such as can also be found in natural law theory. According to the Wikipedia article,

"The idea (of the Golden Rule) dates at least to the early Confucian times (551–479 BC). The concept appears prominently in Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Judaism, Taoism, Zoroastrianism, and the rest of the world's major religions. The concept of the Golden Rule is codified in the Code of Hammurabi stele and tablets, 1754–1790 BC. 143 leaders encompassing the world's major faiths endorsed the Golden Rule as part of the 1993 "Declaration Toward a Global Ethic", including the Baha'i Faith, Brahmanism, Brahma Kumaris, Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Indigenous, Interfaith, Islam, Jainism, Judaism, Native American, Neo-Pagan, Sikhism, Taoism, Theosophist, Unitarian Universalist and Zoroastrian. According to Greg M. Epstein, "'do unto others' ... is a concept that essentially no religion misses entirely," but belief in God is not necessary to endorse it. Simon Blackburn also states that the Golden Rule can be "found in some form in almost every ethical tradition".

So perhaps the test of whether the voice someone hears is really speaking the language of God is whether the message is consistent with the Golden Rule. This interpretation suggests that the language of God does not have any words for hate, cruelty, domination or destruction of other human beings. Rather, like the Inuits who have so many words to describe snow, perhaps the language of God has an infinite number of words to describe love, respect and care for others. Listening to those words would then be the test of whether what we are hearing is authentic and genuine.

Join the worship or greeter team!

You know the old saying: Many hands make light work. Each Sunday we put that old saying into practice with a team of people who make sure that everything is ready for action at 10:30 AM! We want to roll out the proverbial “red carpet” for our visitors and create a welcome that lets everyone feel at home.

Neither rocket science nor brain surgery is involved. Team members rotate responsibility of preparing the sanctuary for worship on Sunday – assisting newcomers, reading Scripture, collecting the offering and serving communion. We pair veterans and newbies. You always have buddies! You can pick the Sundays that work for your schedule. All you need to do is arrive approximately 30 minutes ahead to set-up and then remain about 15 minutes to close up.

If that feels too complicated for the beginning of your week, perhaps you would be able to be a greeter?

Greeters arrive about 20 minutes before worship to welcome members and friends and visitors as they enter the church through side parking lot/office entrance or the front (East Central Street) doors. Walking into a strange church can be a little intimidating and there is nothing better to banish stress of the unfamiliar than a smile and a handshake and some suggestions on where to hang your coat or find your way upstairs. It is a great way to meet some of the folks before worship even begins. It's really that simple to make a difference. You pick the Sunday that works for you. You aren't adding anything on to your to-do list, because you are coming to worship anyway!

Sign-up on line at <http://bit.ly/WorshipHelper2019Winter>. Or contact the church office (admin@ffirstchurchnatick.org; 508-653-0971) and choose a Sunday that works for you!

First Church Prayer Shawl Ministry

Do you like to work with your hands? Maybe the Prayer Shawl Ministry is for you! The Prayer Shawl ministry combines the care and love of knitting or crocheting into a prayerful ministry that reaches out to those in need of comfort and solace. We have distributed countless prayer shawls in the past year to people in our community or their loved ones, and our stock is currently very low, so we are seeking people who can help us build up a supply so when we learn of someone in need of comfort, we can respond quickly with the meaningful gift of a prayer shawl. You can join us at our monthly knitting meet-ups at the church on the last Monday of the month at 7pm or you can create a prayer shawl at home. We have easy patterns to follow or you can be creative – won’t you try your hand at this caring ministry?

Contact Sarallyn for more info (508/653-0971 or sarallyn@ffirstchurchnatick.org).

Maple Magic Day

Saturday, March 2nd, 8:00 AM

@ Natick Community Organic Farm



Pancake Breakfast:

8:00 AM - 11:00 AM at the Memorial School, right next to the Farm

- Gluten free pancakes available
- Dixieland jazz band
- agricultural demos
- raffle prizes

Admission:

Members \$10, kids 10 and under \$5

Nonmembers \$12, kids 10 and under \$6

Maple Sugaring Past & Present: 9:00 AM to 2:00 PM

- maple sugaring tours every half hour
- Native American, Colonial and Modern sugaring demos
- sugar shack visits
- lunch & snacks for sale

Admission:

\$8 per person

Current NCOF members receive 3 free tour tickets

“On the Courthouse Lawn: Confronting the Legacy of Lynching”

Sunday, February 10th, at noon in the vestry



If we want a more hopeful future, less burdened by bigotry and discrimination, it is important to confront not only our nation’s history but also the silence that followed in its wake. It is time to change the narrative and acknowledge the brutality and cruelty of the past, so we can move forward to become a healthier society. Slavery did not end at the end of the Civil War, it evolved through a series of dehumanizing narratives including, Convict Leasing, to Jim Crow, to Terror Lynchings, to Racially Biased Criminal Justice, to Mass Incarceration. If we want to end this cycle of bigotry and discrimination, we need to enter into a process of truth telling and reconciliation.

Sarallyn Keller will recount her visit to the Legacy Museum and National Memorial for Peace and Justice in Montgomery, Alabama. A light lunch will be served. Please sign up during coffeehour.

New Service Offering by Mary Ann Morse Healthcare!

Mary Ann Morse is pleased to announce, as of January 15, 2019, they are offering Mary Ann Morse Homecare – private-duty homecare.

This new homecare service will help to meet the needs of those patients in our community who may just need some additional assistance to stay at home.

Mary Ann Morse Homecare will be providing the following services:

- Bathing and dressing assistance
- Walking assistance
- Meal preparation
- Shopping & errands
- Medication reminders
- Companionship
- Respite care
- Visits from 1 hour to 24 hours
- Other care needs upon request

Now, in your own home we can provide the quality care you would expect from Mary Ann Morse Healthcare. All their compassionate caregivers are thoroughly screened, trained, certified, and insured.

They will listen to you and your family carefully so that we can create a plan that will meet your specific needs.

This is Private Duty Homecare and is covered by some long-term care insurances and some VA benefits.

For more information, rates, and coverage, call Susan Dutton at 508-433-4479 or email Susan @ sdutton@maryannmorse.org.

Workshop: Make an Old-Fashioned Valentine

Saturday, February 2nd, 2:00 PM 3:30 PM @ Natick Historical Society, 207 Union St., lower level of Bacon Free Library



Please join us for a valentine-making workshop. Valentines of a century ago were lacy, layered, and elaborate. Yours will be, too!

We'll talk briefly about Valentine's Day in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and each participant will learn to make an old-fashioned, ribbon-tied valentine. Everyone from ages 5 to 105 is welcome.

Cost of the workshop is \$5 per person. All materials will be provided. Space is limited, so please reserve your spot online at natickhistoricalociety.org, by emailing events@natickhistoricalociety.org or calling (508) 655-0729. Cash and check will be accepted at the door for participants with reservations only.

Pub Theology

Thursday, February 27th, 7:30 PM @ the Morse Tavern

Join us for the February edition of Pub Theology!

C. S. Lewis wrote "No man knows how bad he is till he has tried very hard to be good. That is why bad people know very little about badness. They have lived a sheltered life by always giving in. We never find out the strength of the evil impulse inside us until we try to fight it."

In the Christian tradition, the season of Lent has traditionally been a time to strengthen our resolve to become the people we want to be by engaging in some spiritual practice that helps us refocus on what really matters to us. What do you think about Lent? Is it a time set apart for you? Does it seem entirely too morose with its focus on repentance and ashes and mortality? Can deprivation move us closer to the holy? Has your understanding of Lent changed over the years? What day of Holy Week is the day that speaks most to your spirit?

We are talking about Lent, but it isn't Lent yet so prepare to come and enjoy some great snacks and a cold beverage. The cost is \$10 to cover your libations and munchies. Please sign-up in the vestry or contact the church office to reserve your seat (508-653-0971 or admin@firstchurchnatick.org).

SAVE THE DATE FOR

Climate Change, Extreme Weather, and Vulnerability: An Interfaith Summit on How to Respond

With Communities Responding to Extreme Weather (CREW)

March 10, 2019 | 2 PM - 6 PM | Old South Church, Boston

RSVP AT CLIMATECREW.ORG/SUMMIT

Epiphany!

Three Wise Travelers visited us on Epiphany Sunday and we enjoyed a festive celebration during coffee hour with cookie decorating, star making and a special photo booth - we have some "Holy Families" and "Magi" in our midst for sure!



Reconnect, Refresh, Renew @ Brookwoods Retreat!



Make time to relax and engage with each other this winter at the beautiful Brookwoods Conference Center, located at the southern end of Lake Winnipesaukee. We return to Brookwoods on March 22-24 for a cozy fireside retreat. The comfortable lodging and delicious meals will be sure to make this a memorable retreat for all. We hope everyone considers joining us on this all-church retreat! There are a variety of accommodations available, including a limited number of private rooms. The cost will be \$135/adult, \$120/ 12-16yrs, \$100/6-11yrs, under age 6 is free. There is an additional fee of \$36 for a private room.

Retreats, as time and space set apart from the everyday demands of life, offer the possibility of renewing ourselves and renewing our relationships with God and others. This retreat promises participants a time and space to be fully present; to do work that is hard to accomplish, or to partake in reflection that eludes us in the regular rhythm of our lives. Throughout the Gospels, we find Jesus retreating for prayer in the midst of his preaching, teaching and healing. Let's follow his lead and get away from the chaos of life for a few hours to reconnect with each other and our own selves.

Contact Sarallyn Keller to express interest in the retreat.
(sarallyn@firstchurchnatick.org / 508-653-0971)

**First Congregational Church of Natick
2 East Central Street
Natick, Massachusetts 01760**

Showcase your talent at First Church Natick's talent show!



Coffeehouse on the Common 2019, an evening of live, homegrown entertainment, is open to all ages, single acts, group acts, etc. – and it is open to any kind of act – singing, musical instruments, comedy, poetry, dance, magic acts, etc. We will be showcasing talent from both our FCC church family and the broader Natick community – so invite your friends and family to come with you! Past year's talent shows included bands, dramatic readings, comedy routines, ballet, hip-hop, Irish step dance, family performances, solo performances – and even home-grown video productions!

All proceeds from ticket sales will benefit the Youth Pilgrimage Fund. Proceeds from the sale of food will benefit West Virginia Work Camp.

**Questions? Information?
Want to sign up?**

Contact Jeannine and Nate Keedy (nkeedy@rcn.com; 508-655-2641) or the church office (admin@fcc1651.org; 508-653-0971). All talent is welcome!

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