

The Visitor

Sundays

Second to None Café: 9:00 a.m.

Worship: 10:00 a.m.

Church School: 9:00 a.m.

Child Care: 9:00 a.m.

Fellowship Hour: 11:00 a.m.

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Second Church of Christ
and the Brethren
in Greenfield, MA

Our Staff

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Our Life Together:

September 2005 to September 2006

As we step into another September-to-September cycle, may the lectionary be our itinerary with its three Seasons of the Spirit – the Advent, Christmas and Epiphany Season of Light, the Lent, Easter and Ascension Season of Life, and the Pentecost Summer-and-Fall Season of Love.

Integration

How shall we fill this time together? The answer is to be found in the three essential dimensions of the Christian Life: prayer, study, and mission. My growth as a Christian and our growth as a church will always consist in the vital integration of these three dimensions.

To burn these three essential aspects of the Christian Way into our daily awareness, let us consider Christian growth as the integration of the three W's: Worship, Word, and Work, as in WWW.SecondChurch.Org. Our aim then is to organize church life around the three W's.

The first W comprises prayer, worship, and spiritual practices in home and sanctuary; the second W encompasses Christian Education – scriptural, doctrinal, moral, spiritual, and the third W embraces the areas of ministries and mission.

Co-operation

Besides this tri-dimensional integration of our lives, let's also emphasize and promote a broad-based co-operation with other UCC churches. Jamie and I have been talking with several UCC area ministers about joining efforts in putting together a comprehensive Christian Education

and Leadership Development Program that will enable all the churches to tap into an abundance of gifts and talents that exceed what any one church can supply. So let's think Integration and Co-operation as we play out this new and challenging September-to-September calendar.

Generation to Generation

As we work in the present we want of course to build for the future - which brings me to a very crucial generational consideration that must infuse everything that we do together. Adults and children and youth must walk hand in hand if our presence in the valley is to have significant impact. So let's grasp and hold on to the following principle:

It is only in the measure that adults and the parents in the church commit to grow in the three W's that we can begin to conceive of a Christian Education Program for the children and youth of the church.

Failure to live faithfully by this principle will inevitably leave us weakened, fragmented, and scattered, with no future to lift up our spirits and increase our energy. To live faithfully by this principle is to assure a rich harvest for many generations to come.

So let's summarize:

1. The lectionary is our itinerary through the three Seasons of the Spirit. The scriptural passages will be the strands that will bind all our days during our pilgrimage together. Let's read, ponder, and savor those texts. They will inspire!
2. The call before us is to deepen and integrate the three essential dimensions of the Christian faith, as in WWW.SecondChurch.Org.
3. Cooperation is the byword as we launch a Comprehensive Christian Education and Leadership Development Program
4. Adults, parents, children and youth must walk hand in hand if we are to walk onward and upward into the future.

I conclude with this beautiful passage from Deuteronomy 6:

Write these commandments that I've given you today on your hearts. Get them inside of you and then get them inside your children.

Let us pray as though everything depended on God and let us work as though everything depended on us!

Armand Proulx, Pastor

JOIN A PRAYER GROUP:

The Monday morning prayer group prays together and offers prayers for members of the congregation, friends and family in need. Please feel free to show up and join this group.

Tuesday morning and Thursday morning and afternoon prayer groups do 20 minutes of centering prayer and read and speak together about the lectionary for the next Sunday.

All Are Welcome!

From the Diaconate

G.I.F.T. Team Mission

We have talked a lot about greeting, welcoming and assimilating visitors and new members to Second Church. Now is the time to take action and follow through with exceptional and intentional hospitality. We welcome all members to attend the organizational session of our **Greeters, Inviters and Fellowship Team**. We will meet on **Sunday, September 11th** after church in the parish hall to formulate plans and establish teams for providing truly exceptional hospitality at Second Church. We need all of you to participate. You can volunteer to usher, greet, visit, welcome, introduce visitors at coffee hour, help with transportation to and from church... the opportunities are endless and there is a role for everyone. The more people who volunteer, the easier the time commitment will be for everyone. You do not need to be there every Sunday. We can work around your schedule. So come help us transform Second Church from a "friendly church" to a church where people can make friends. If you can not attend our first session, you can still participate by volunteering with a deacon or the church office. Share your gifts with the G.I.F.T. Team. It promises to be both fun and rewarding.

Retreat Opportunities

We have reserved the Warner Farm for two weekend retreats in September. The first spiritual retreat is for adults and will be held on Friday and Saturday, September 9 & 10. The second retreat is for families and will be held on September 16 & 17th. There will be time for story telling, contemplation, prayer, play and lots of fun and good fellowship. Both retreats will start with a pot luck supper on Friday night and end on Saturday afternoon. Breakfast and lunch will be provided on Saturday. The Farm sleeps 28 so reserve your spot early. We expect the cost to be about \$25 per person to cover food and farm use fees. Scholarships are available, so don't let the cost keep you away. There is room on the grounds for tents to house overflow guests as needed. Those who attended last year's retreat found it an exciting and energizing way to explore God's purpose and blessings on our church and its members. Come! Don't miss this opportunity for fellowship and worship.

Sunday Prayer Concerns

We would like to make it easier for everyone to include prayer concerns for morning worship and prayer groups. If you would like a prayer concern listed in the bulletin, please call Judy in the church office by Wednesday afternoon. Names will be printed in the bulletin for people to take home and remember during the week. It will also allow parishioners who are not present in church to include prayer requests. The prayer book will still be used on Sunday mornings for additions to the bulletin, but the calendar will allow more prayer requests to be heard. Prayer is powerful! Spread the word and the work. Barbara Fritz

WOMEN'S FELLOWSHIP

Even though you will be receiving the Women's Fellowship annual fall letter shortly, I wanted to share with you an exciting new ministry here at Second Church. At the June meeting of the Advisory Board, we decided to start a prayer circle during which time we would knit for Warm the Children. This will be a joint venture with our friends at Robbins Memorial Church. I have talked to Deb Corey from Robbins Church, and she is as excited about this as I am. Tentatively, we will meet on Wednesday afternoons starting in September. Yarn has been donated to us to get us started. We are thinking about knitting hats, scarves, and mittens. All other suggestions are welcome. If this ministry speaks to you please let me know.

Marilyn White

"Thank you so much!"

We would like to thank all of our church family for the many kindnesses extended to us on the occasion of our wedding August 28th. From the surprise dinner at the Stillwaters Restaurant in Charlemont, the beautiful Brandenburg print of our church in a lovely Lunt frame, the great song you all sang to us, the survival pail for our sailing trip, the wonderful goodies provided at our reception, and we could go on and on. You are all truly the best. Thank you! Dan and Terri Holmes

MISSION OUTREACH REPORT

SURVIVAL CENTER: Please continue your generous donations of non-perishable food &/or money donations to the Survival Center. Also, please remember that checks should be made out to the Survival Center, and the food should be non-perishable. Thanks!

CHURCH WORLD SERVICE'S CROP WALK will be headed this year by St Anne's Catholic Church of Turners Falls. I'm sure the people there will have an interesting walk laid out for the walkers. **CROP WALK** will take place Sunday, Oct 16 at 2PM from St. Anne's. So save the date and plan to walk and raise money to combat hunger locally and throughout the world through Church World Service. Let's have a large group of Second Church people and their family and friends walking this year!!

COMMUNITY MEAL: Weds, July 13 the Mission Outreach Committee prepared and served the Community Meal at Second Church with help and donations from several friends and family members. It was a successful event with the meal enjoyed by the guests and also us. If you are able, come and help at one of the meals. You will be rewarded, I'm sure, and blessed as we were.

UCC Action on Wal-Mart: Part of an e-mail received from the UCC is quoted as follows: "We hope you will join over 1,000 churches and faith-based organizations to help launch a **Wal-Mart week of action November 13-18**. Wal-Mart, the nation's largest private employer, has 600,000 employees with no healthcare benefits, and the company is leading a race to the bottom in our economy that is devastating our communities."

The UCC is joined in this effort by Sojourners, National Organization of Women, Move On, Sierra Club, Interfaith Worker Justice, African American Ministers in Action and many others. Mission Outreach will be discussing what to do.
Alice Jurcik

BOOK GROUP: At our July meeting, the book group discussed **READING LOLITA IN TEHRAN** by Azar Nafisi, and we did meet again on Aug 5 and we discussed **READING LOLITA IN TEHRAN** again, as well as Henry James, **DAISY MILLER**. The group was so impressed by the extent of the reading by Azar Nafisi's students, that we are reading another of the classics, this time, Henry James, **THE WINGS OF THE DOVE**. I believe it will be a challenging, difficult read, but we're going for it! Please join us Monday September 12 at 10:30 a.m. if you can.
Alice Jurcik

Christian Education at the Crossroads

As Director of Family Ministries I have been trying for some time to discern and understand how to go about fashioning a comprehensive educational program that is truly inspired by God's spirit as reflected in the teachings and life of Jesus - a program that touches and engages adults, youth, and children in a way that really makes a difference.

I believe that we are at a crossroads at Second Church. For many years we have been struggling to build a church school by finding the "right curriculum" and the people to teach it. There are many curricula out there, some of them interesting, but none ever seem to quite match our needs. The attempt to find teachers always seems to be a difficult struggle. And the results of this are telling: too often our young people leave the church after confirmation. Something is missing from this picture.

The time has come to find a new way. We need to build an education program for children, youth, and adults that is "from the ground up." It must draw deeply upon the living waters of God's spirit as they well up in our own experience of prayer, worship, reflection, sharing, and living. It is time to push out into deep waters and take hold of our responsibility to teach our children and young people in matters of faith.

One thing is now clear: we can never have a vibrant education program unless we adults commit ourselves to grow in faith. No program, however well conceived, and no teacher, however energetic, can accomplish our educational mission.

From this we can express some basic principles that will guide us:

The heart of our educational mission is not primarily to learn about the Bible or doctrine or our tradition. It is to foster in ourselves and each other a direct experience of the living God. Bottom line!

Our work with children should prepare them to go up the mountain to receive Jesus' Great Commission to go out to serve and heal. It should lay the foundation for mature discipleship, not an exit.

The educational mission of the church is for all of us - not just the children. Education means "to lead or to be led out." God calls us to constantly go beyond the limitations and narrow horizons that our culture sets for us. God takes great delight in seeing us continue to grow throughout our lives.

Not only are we all the **recipients** of the educational mission, but we are all the **agents** of education as well. The educational mission of the church is the responsibility of the whole church, not just one person or a committee. In matters of faith, we are all teachers for each other by the quality of our relationships – our words, our body language, our actions. Our children are at times our best teachers.

The curriculum is not restricted to a weekly session. Just as everyone can be a teacher, any situation can be an opportunity to grow in faith. We need to expand our "classroom" to embrace the whole of our lives; all the simple everyday moments that so easily slip past unnoticed can, with training and practice, become opportunities to experience the living God.

We accomplish this, first of all, through prayer. We commit to some form of prayer or spiritual practice ourselves - and then we teach our children how to pray as well. "Write these commandments on your hearts. Get them inside you and then get them inside your children." (Deuteronomy 6) This is what we might call a contemplative approach to Christian education. Contemplative means learning to dwell in God's presence constantly so that every aspect of our lives is infused with God's loving spirit.

It follows that our educational programs will include retreats, encounters with nature, service projects, classroom sessions, workshops, training events, and spiritual practices that promote a contemplative approach to discipleship.

In a following piece I will describe a new way of imagining our educational mission that incorporates and gives some pizzazz to these principles. It centers on the experience of the old-style family circus! We are called to shape an educational vision that is big enough to include all of us and that, in the end, will give glory to God. Let's imagine creating a "Big Top" that is as vast as God's creation and filled with laughter, joy, and daring feats of faith!

To be continued...

Jamie Godfrey, Director of Family Ministries

Two Retreats in September

This month the church will sponsor two retreats on successive weekends at Warner Farm in Cummington. The first will be from Friday evening, September 9th to Saturday evening, the 10th. It will be open to any interested adult, and will build upon last year's retreat that inspired all who attended. We will share our faith stories and reflect together on how we can continue to nurture the "three W's" - worship (prayer), word (Christian education), and work (mission, service) - during the coming liturgical cycle.

The second retreat will be from Friday evening, September 16th to Saturday evening, the 17th. It will be especially for families. We want to make a special effort to invite dads, single parents, and guardians - and children and youth of all ages - who are looking for support, connections, and inspiration in their lives. We will go out of our way to make it possible for parents to bring even young children and to have a chance to relax and share in a secure, supportive environment. The focus will be on situating our lives within God's "Great Story" of creation. We want to share simple concrete spiritual practices that can transform our homes and provide a solid foundation for a vital new education and Family Ministries program.

A Word about Warner Farm...

The Farm includes a rustic 1779 homestead, a barn and 120 acres of land with extensive hiking trails in Cummington. There is a roomy living room with fireplace, a dining room and sleeping area that accommodate 30 people in double rooms and dormitories. Those who wish may camp. A fully equipped kitchen shall be put to good use. There is a barn with a hardwood floor and lighting for special events.

and the Retreat Programs...

Both retreats will follow a similar format. Attendance on Friday evening is highly encouraged since it will set the stage for the rest of the weekend, but car pooling shall be arranged for those who do not desire to drive or stay over night. Child care shall be provided, and we will make every effort to accommodate people with special needs. The cost is twenty-five dollars per person, but cost should not deter anyone from attending. Please contact Judy at the office for assistance.

The agenda for the Family Retreat is as follows:

Friday (9/15/05)

Arrival and settling in at 5 p.m.
Pot Luck Supper
Opening session in barn - a ritual retelling of God's great "Universe Story" with our labyrinth, candlelight, music, narration, scripture, and prayer
Night walk followed by open heart story telling around a cozy camp fire

Saturday (9/16/05)

Dawn walk with Dena Briggs
Old fashioned community breakfast
Morning session: "Sharing our faith stories"
 Children and youth with Jamie Godfrey, Dena Briggs, and Becca King
 Adults with Armand Proulx
Community Lunch
Afternoon session: "Aligning our stories with God's Story: Creating a Family Covenant"
 Children and youth with Jamie Godfrey, Dena Briggs, and Becca King
 Adults with Armand Proulx
 Children and parents together
Worship service
Departure at 4 - 5 p.m.

The adult retreat will follow the same basic format.

Spreading the word...

We invite you to spread the word about the retreat to friends and acquaintances. If you have any questions please call or email Armand or Jamie at the church. Spaces at Warner Farm are limited, so please contact Judy at the church to sign up for one or both retreats. We hope to see you there!

Jamie Godfrey, Director of Family Ministries

Now's a good time to open yourself up to the bigger picture:

Please Visit the website of the Mass Conference UCC for the following great stuff:

A Calendar of MACUCC Fall events
Reports on the Mass Conference Annual Meeting
The President's report on the 2005 General Synod
And More! Go to:
<http://www.macucc.org/>

For National UCC events, news, and resources see: <http://www.ucc.org/>

READ MORE!

If you have run out of something to read and want to be challenged – Please visit the Library as it grows with more and better organized reading material, and ask Armand and Jamie for recommendations to read about exciting new ideas for worship, church organization and spiritual practices.

AND JOIN A PRAYER GROUP

9:15 a.m. The Monday morning group
7:00 a.m. Tuesday morning
7:00 a.m. Thursday morning
5:15 p.m. Thursday afternoon

TAKE ACTION

Join Justice and Peace network and receive weekly updates. Go to <http://www.ucctakeaction.org> And sign up to be part of the take action network.

Financial contributions may be made through a special offering in your congregation or by mail to P.O. Box 60642, Florence, MA 01062.

CURRENT PROJECTS

In Northampton we are building three two-family units on Westhampton Road. Two families have moved in and work is progressing on the homes of the other four.

In Turners Falls we are beginning the first of two single-family homes at the corner of 2nd and "L" Streets.

An affiliate of Habitat for Humanity
International



**PIONEER VALLEY
HABITAT
FOR HUMANITY**

Join congregations throughout the country on Sunday, September 18, 2005 in observing Habitat for Humanity's

Building on Faith Week and pray for Habitat's efforts locally and world-wide.

We have built affordable homes in partnership with 17 families in Hampshire and Franklin Counties.

Volunteers are always needed.

Go to www.pioneervalleyhabitat.org or call 586-5430 for further information and the construction schedule.