



UPDATE FROM THE MODERATOR

The Annual Meeting was held on January 27 following worship. The three articles set forth in the Warrant for the Annual Meeting were approved. The first was to receive and act on the reports of the Standing Committees, Special Committees and Officers of the Church, which were made available at worship for the last couple of weeks. The second was to elect Officers and Committees for 2019. Kristin Mollerus, Board of Directors member who also led the Nominations Team, answered questions about the nominating slate. To those who have agreed to serve, and to those whose terms have just expired, thank you for committing your time and talent to the church. The third article was to adopt a budget for Fiscal Year 2019. Jim Conroy, member of the Board of Directors and of the Finance Team, shared information about income and expenses from the past year, an explanation of this year's budget, the status of the endowment, and trends in expenses, congregational giving and use of endowment over the past ten years. Following discussion from the congregation, the budget was adopted as proposed. Thank you to all those who attended and shared their views, which is so important in our life as a faith community.

By way of update on the status of the sale of the 1180 building, the sale remains in the works and is in the permitting phase. An extension of the proposed closing date, not unusual given the circumstances and the time typically required for obtaining the necessary permits which the buyer seeks, recently was agreed to. During this time period, the buyer will continue to make payments to the church to offset the church's carrying costs for the 1180 building.

As a congregation, we look forward to working with Rev John and Rev Maddie to explore the ways in which we can best be the church in the coming year.

Blessings,
Jackie Allen, Moderator

A MESSAGE FROM REV. JOHN GAGE

Thank you all for the warm, warm welcome I've received in my first month here you as your senior minister. I am delighted that so many of you are introducing yourselves, stopping by the office to say hello, and scheduling time to talk, whether at church or over coffee over even over a meal. I can't promise I'll remember all your names right away (HINT: PLEASE use your name tag every Sunday!) but I'm honored and glad to begin learning your stories and the stories of this congregation and sharing some of my own, as well.

I want to share again the following, which I wrote for this year's annual report to explain a bit about how I work and why I work that way. It's important enough, I think, particularly here at the beginning of our time together, that it bears repeating in this wider forum:

Just because we pastors all have the same job doesn't mean we all do it the same way. Over the years, I've had opportunities to reflect on just how it is that I tend to go about my work as a pastor, and I've discovered that I am an "external processor." That means I like and want and need to work things out in conversation. That also means the first thing out of my mouth may not be what I end up thinking when we're done, because I really do value (like, want, need) your input – not just feedback, but actual input into the process – to help us arrive at the best answer for us. And I'll give the same back to you.

Which I recognize may feel a bit awkward or blunt or even confrontational in practice, especially if you're more on the introverted side yourself or are used to a pastor with a more directive approach. That is not my intent, but I apologize for that ahead of time, or if you've already encountered it. (And if you have or do, PLEASE come talk to me about it. I really do want to hear it from you and not end up getting stuck in a triangle of indirect miscommunication).

This is how I work best, in active back and forth, give and take, where, if I ask your opinion, I really do want to know, because I believe you have a piece of this divine puzzle that I don't. I hope to get to know how you work best, too, so we can work together well for the glory of God in the transformation of the world.

Peace,
Rev. John MacIver Gage

FELLOWSHIP & ADULT ED

COMMUNITY DINNERS

6-7pm, Feb. 5, March 5, April 2

Dinners coincide with monthly Baby Basics Diaper distribution. Volunteers are invited to join in our effort to provide a healthy dinner for our guests and members of the church.

Volunteers are welcome to help with set up, cooking, serving, visiting, eating and cleaning up with our Baby Basics families. Please contact Diana Conroy (conroyjd@rcn.com) if you are interested in helping out.

THURSDAY LUNCHES

Noon -1pm, Feb. 7, Mar. 7, Apr. 4

Our monthly luncheons will be held on first Thursdays of every month at 12 noon in the Library. All are welcome – bring your friends and neighbors!

CANCER SUPPORT GROUP

Mondays 9:00-10:30am

Cancer Support Group meets on Monday mornings at 9am in the Reception Room. We meet every

Monday except on holiday Mondays or school vacations. Come, if you need an extra hug or prayer said for yourself or a family member.

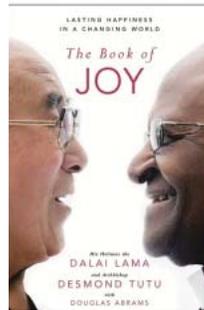
MINDFULNESS

BOOK GROUP

**7:30pm, Feb. 11,
Mar. 11, April 8.**

The Mediation Mindfulness group will again be meeting to discuss a relevant book.

This year we will be reading and discussing “The Book of Joy” by the Dalai Lama and Archbishop Desmond Tutu. Our first meetings will be 2/11 & 3/11 at 7:30pm. Open to all!



MEDITATION GROUP

11:30am, Jan. 13 & 27

The meditation/mindfulness group will meet twice each month after Worship. The group is open to everyone and will explore various types of meditation practice, including mindfulness. If you have any questions, feel free to call or email Sue Findlay, 781-455-8056; sgfindlay1@gmail.com

FOCUS

Contributions are welcome. Please submit materials by e-mail to office@needhamucc.org.

**March issue
deadline:
Wed., Feb. 20th**

Rev. John MacIver Gage
Senior Minister
revjohn@needhamucc.org

Rev. Maddie Foster
CE & Youth Director
revmaddie@needhamucc.org

Valerie Becker
Music Director
musicdirector@needhamucc.org

Danielle Jurdan
Administrator
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Cindy Sullivan
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Rev. Dr. Paul Clayton
Pastor Emeritus

The Church Board
board@needhamucc.org

Jackie Allen, Moderator
moderator@needhamucc.org

The Deacons
Sue Cotton, Chair
emaildeacons@needhamucc.org

Pastoral Relations
Committee
prc@needhamucc.org

To provide feedback about any aspect of the church, email feedback@needhamucc.org

FAMILY PROMISE METROWEST



Our upcoming Support Week is just around the corner, February 3-9. Please join us by preparing a dish and/or sharing a meal with families. Please signup through Cervis if you are on our Family Promise Constant Contact email list or contact Susan Kirk 781-363-1810, susanckirk@comcast.net to learn how you can get involved with this outstanding local organization that does so much to

end homelessness in Metrowest. Visits to tour the New FP Day Center in downtown Natick and opportunities for volunteer trainings are being planned for February and March for our Support Week March 24-30.

Save the Date-the beloved Walkathon will be held the morning of Saturday, April 6. Grab your sneaker, strollers and leashes and join us in helping Family Promise raise funds to end Family Homelessness in Metrowest. We've had a wonderful church team with regulars and new folks joining each year, and we've been a top fundraising team year after year! The new start location will be at Natick High School, with ample parking and lots of room for vendors, photos, music, food, and fun! It's a great day as we walk about 3 miles through treelined, historic Natick Center and past Dug Pond with friends old and new, young, not so young, and in between. <https://www.familypromisemetrowest.org> to learn about Family Promise Metrowest and register with our 'Needham Congregational Church' team.

LOOKING AHEAD... TO LENT WITH REV. JOHN



I am looking forward to sharing a Lenten educational and devotional series with you in the season of Lent, which begins with Ash Wednesday on March 6. (Easter is VERY late this year, April 21.) On Sunday mornings in Lent, we'll gather after worship for a short film and discussion series framed by

the good folks at The Work of the People, a progressive ministry resource online, called "In This Together." Here's what they have to say about it:

This series is coming forward at a time when coming together is so important, to say the least. These five films point to areas of fracture with ideas of how we can come together regardless of race, nationality, faith, sexual orientation, as one humanity for the healing of the world. In the films, Brian McLaren talks about how followers of Christ can grow into taking a healing versus hostile posture in the world for the greater good; Miroslav Volf explains a revelation he had about how regardless of opposition we are called to honor everyone; Bishop Man Rimalshah helps us lean into being led by the compulsion of our Love; Lisa Sharon Harper helps us remember the Way towards the very good news is connection; and Father Gregory Boyle reminds us that we are all one and that sometimes Love calls us to cross or reach through our perceptions to stand for kinship, us-ness.

I hope you'll plan to set aside some time during this special intentional season of spiritual reflection and growth to join us.



**PICK UP
SUPER
BOWL
SUBS
AND CHILI
IN
FELLOWSHIP
HALL
BY THE
STAGE ON
FEBRUARY
3RD
STARTING
AT 11AM!**

ENVIRONMENTAL MINISTRIES TEAM NEWS

...EARTH STEWARDSHIP FOR OUR LIVES TODAY...



New Energy Star Freezer in the Main Kitchen

If you have not had a chance to visit the kitchen recently, here is a great reason to do it: we have a shiny new freezer! Environmental Ministries Team (EMT) and Property Team worked together with Rev Heike in 2018 to apply for a Green Needham Collaborative grant which was offered to Houses of

Worship for a carbon footprint-reducing project. Our request for \$600 to replace the old upright freezer dating from the early 1990s, which had an ozone-depleting refrigerant and was very inefficient compared to current models, was approved last October. The old freezer also used more energy than each of the two residential refrigerators that were in the kitchen at the time. The new freezer, a Whirlpool, was expected to reduced energy

consumption by 48%.

Danielle ordered the freezer and it arrived late November. After the Christmas concert, EMT members were thrilled to install it in the kitchen and remove the old one, which was recycled with Mass Save for a \$50 rebate, again with Danielle's help. (The older residential refrigerator was recycled at the same time for a second rebate). We then measured the energy usage of the new freezer with



a Kill-A-Watt meter that is available on loan at the Needham Public Library. The result was even better than expected: the new one runs on only a third of the energy the old one used!

This reduced energy usage is a small chip off our building carbon footprint, a measure of our fossil fuel pollution, but a chip nonetheless. We are grateful for

the good relationship we have with Green Needham Collaborative and for the grant opportunity to help us be good trustees of God's Creation.



Last Chance! Partner-family letters and scholarship letters should already be in Dave Johnson's hands, but if you haven't submitted yours yet, please do TODAY, to make sure your family (or scholarship student) is not disappointed by not hearing from you! Your letters mean more than you can imagine. E-mail: davebjohnson77@gmail.com.

February Delegation Leaving for Santa María Tzejá. The church's 63rd delegation to Santa María Tzejá leaves



on February 13th and is anticipating a full schedule of activities in the village - from eating meals with families, to visiting and teaching in the schools, to meeting with community groups, and even making chocolate from scratch.

The delegation includes 8 adults and one youth: Co-leaders Brenda Metzler and Fred Moder; Jerry Durbin, MD; Jeff Clausen and daughter Jenna; Darcy Wolcott, MD; and 3 travelers from Oregon: optometrist Scott Pike and wife Joene; and Catherine Potter. Ali Durbin and Randall Shea will be our interpreters. The village will be delighted to receive your partner-family and scholarship letters, school and medical supplies, and donated toothbrushes for the schools.

Delegation Send-Off, Tuesday, February 12th, from 7-8 pm at Jerry and Kirsten Durbin's (301 Nehoiden St., Needham). Please join us in sending the delegation off with your hopes and best wishes! (Note: new venue; it's best to park on a side street or in the Durbin's circular driveway.)

save THE DATE!

Save the Date: Sun., March 10, 11:30 am: Feb. Delegation ReportBack, Linden Hall, with light refreshments.

The travelers will share their experiences and insights from the trip, with photos and

reports on our activities and adventures. Note: Attending this presentation is the best way to get an idea of the delegation experience and of Santa María Tzejá itself. Your next chance to go is the August delegation (7/31 - 8/10), co-led by Caryl Johnson and Alan Clayton-Matthews.

save THE DATE!

Join us for a

PANCAKE BREAKFAST!



Sunday, March 3 After church in Linden Hall

\$10 per person

(Children under age 8 are free)

Enjoy a delicious breakfast of pancakes, eggs, breakfast meat, and fruit prepared by our youth.

This is a fundraiser for our Youth Ministries service work!

HOW DO I KNOW IF THE CHURCH IS OPEN WHEN IT SNOWS?

During the week, if the Needham Public School are closed our church offices will be closed.

On Sundays and for Saturday events we will post weather-related decisions (either way!)

Rev. John, in conjunction with church leaders, will monitor the weather closely. They will make a decision, generally, by 7:30am and the information about whether we will have church or our event will be posted in a few places;



- the church phone line (781) 444-2510 press 7 for weather info
- [the church's Facebook page](#)
- [the church's Instagram account](#)
- [the church's twitter feed](#)

Thank you!



Village Fair News

The Village Fair Team is pleased to announce our final results from the 2018 Village Fair. Thanks to the hard work of many people, the Fair netted over \$10,000 this year. Of that money, \$1,000 will be kept in reserve for seed money for the Village Fair/ Alternative fundraiser* for 2019.

With the rest, the Team has decided that we will invest in the purchase of new carpet for the upstairs hallway from Fellowship Hall to the Sanctuary, including the entrance stairs from the parking lot. The Village Fair funds will not cover the full amount, so it may take some more fundraising to complete this.

*The Village Fair, as we know it, is struggling. It becomes harder and harder to recruit help, and the job of running the Fair is a lot for one person to take on. In terms of Fundraising and Fellowship, it is a wonderful event, but we can't compel people to help more than they have time. It is felt by the Team that it might be appropriate for a "Time Out" for the Village Fair, and to come up with an alternative fundraiser that is less labor intensive. We will be meeting on Sunday, March 18 after church to discuss ideas for a new event. ALL are welcome to attend. If you have an idea for something new and bold or similar and safe please do plan to attend. The best results usually come from brainstorming! All that we ask is that if you come with an idea, please also be willing to help with the implementation. Looking forward to seeing some new faces on the 18th as well as the faithful who have already given so much to the Fair.

Respectfully,
Diana Conroy, 2018 Village Fair Chair



ONA Update

ONA Anniversary Sunday - 19 Years

Prepare to celebrate our Open and Affirming church on Sunday, February 10, when we will mark the 19th anniversary of the adoption of our ONA Covenant. In February 2000, our church voted and promised to BE THE CHURCH for everyone - to welcome, embrace and affirm all people in their full humanity. Be sure to come celebrate that Sunday, when we will have special music, ONA swag and anniversary yummys. Invite your friends.

ONA Sermon

Rev. John will preach a sermon entitled "Deep Water Gospel," based on Luke 5:1-11. It will charge us to keep at the work, to keep fishing, doing Jesus' work. Widely-cast nets expand us and can lead to finding great and beautiful things.

Making Our Covenant Fully Inclusive

As a long-overdue project for this anniversary, the ONA Ministry Team will lead the church in a revision of our 19-year old covenant. There is one particular area that we know needs clarification and expansion: the addition of gender identity and gender expression, to make our ONA Covenant fully transgender inclusive. In a larger sense, we will also address how the words we use to express our welcome and affirmation are understood and received by people in the church and the community.



Black History Month

February is Black History Month. In the next few weeks, the ONA Team will provide information about book groups and courses on white privilege, racism, and racial justice. Our team will connect with Mass Conference and national UCC personnel and resources to offer experiences. If you are interested in taking a course or joining a book group on these topics, please contact the ONA Team (kacarp@comcast.net). We will arrange courses and sessions based on your responses.

*"There is no thing as a single-issue struggle because we do not live single-issue lives."
— Audre Lorde, self-described "black-lesbian feminist mother lover poet"*

