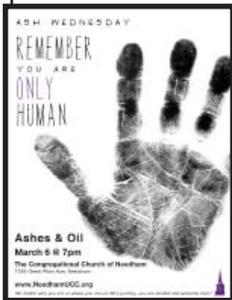


A MESSAGE FROM REV. JOHN MACIVER GAGE

“SO I HEAR LENT BEGINS MARCH 6TH... WHAT’S LENT AGAIN?”

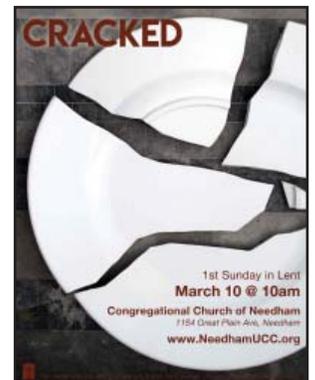
Lent is one of the oldest seasons in the church calendar. The name, “Lent” comes from the Old English word from which we get our word “lengthen,” reflecting the growing springtime daylight in the Northern Hemisphere. Originally, Lent was a season of preparation for the high holy days of Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, and Easter Sunday and contemplation of the power of God’s love at work in Jesus’ life, death, and resurrection. Somewhere along the way, preparation and contemplation got misinterpreted through the lens of guilt and shame, leading some to associate the Lent with obligation, self-denial, even punishment.

But—surprise!—that isn’t the only way to look at Lent. Lent can be a gift, an annual reminder that “we are only human,” that while, God knows, we can’t do everything, we can try to do more to live out the purposes of God in our everyday lives. It can be a season of centering and self-reflection, of prayer and yes, preparation and contemplation of the mysteries of God’s self-giving love. If we discover unhelpful or unhealthy or sinful habits in ourselves, we can practice giving them up for the duration. But we can also “take things on” – try on new spiritual practices, new habits of heart and walk around in them a while to see how they suit us.



We enter Lent through the door of Ash Wednesday, which this year is March 6 @ 7pm. Join us for a simple, contemplative service suitable for all ages, which will include both the imposition of ashes (“Remember that you are only human”) and anointing with oil (“Remember that you are loved by God”). Our theme for Lent this year will be “Cracked,” taking inspiration from the Apostle Paul’s 2 Corinthians 4:7, “we have this treasure in clay jars, so that it may be made clear that this extraordinary power belongs to God and does not come from us” and Leonard Cohen’s “Anthem,” “there’s a crack in everything, that’s how the light gets in.”

If you are looking for a spiritual practice to “take on” for Lent, we have a couple of options for you. Our Environmental Ministry Team has a challenge for you to imagine living plastics-free (see EMT’s article on page 3). I will also be offering a class called “In This Together: 5 Films on Loving Our Way Forward.” Join me for this short film and discussion series after church on Sunday March 17, 24, 31 and April 7 and 14 in Linden Hall or as part of our Lenten soup luncheons at noon on Thursday March 7, 14, 21, 28, and April 5 and 12 in the church library. Here’s more about it:



This series is coming forward at a time when coming together is so, uh, 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.

And there will be other, special Lenten offerings on our Facebook and Twitter feeds, as well. Keep an eye out for those.

Whether you’ve ever done so before or not, I hope this year you might consider observing this Lenten season of spiritual growth in some way that challenges you, comforts you, and feeds your soul. It’s not just about giving up things you like, like chocolate, because going without is good on its own. It’s about taking a good long look in the spiritual mirror and setting some goals that we hope will bring us closer to participating in the reign of God as individuals and a community of faith.

DEACON'S UPDATE

The Deacons are looking forward to 2019 with many great ideas and opportunities for everyone; Adult Education, Membership, and social gatherings. The Board of Deacons is excited to be working with Rev. John.



Deacon Ministry

The committee welcomed Nancy Lane, Dave Johnson, Rob Dunleavy, Sue Turner and Gretchen Lanka Allen. We said good-bye to Jean Veigas, Dibby Moder, Rick Devereux, and Carol Miller. We appreciate all their hard work these past 3 years. And the saying is "once a Deacon, always a Deacon..."

The Deacons and the Board held a joint retreat on February 9, 2019 which was well attended, and many things were shared. All left energized for the coming year.

If you would like to share any ideas with the Deacons, the meetings are the 2nd Wednesday of the month at 7:00 in the library. Feel free to contact any of us in person or through email - emaildeacons@needhamucc.org.

FOCUS

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

April issue deadline:
Fri., March 22nd

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
office@needhamucc.org

Cindy Sullivan
Office Assist & Bookkeeper
office2@needhamucc.org

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

**One Great
HOUR
OF SHARING**

Through our decades of intentional investment of time and resources in our relationship with the village of Santa Maria Tzeja in Guatemala, we in this congregation have come to know firsthand what a positive impact even our smallest gifts can make in the lives of neighbors around the world who struggle to find healthy food and clean water, to rebuild in the wake of natural disasters, and to make their voices heard in their local contexts. **One Great Hour of Sharing** is a special offering received across many Christian denominations like our United Church of Christ to support international programs in health, education and agricultural development, emergency relief, refugee ministries, and both international and domestic disaster response. We will receive this offering on **March 31 in worship**. Please consider participating with a contribution that is meaningful to you.

Quinobequin Quilters 2019 Auction

Join Quinobequin Quilters on March 12th for a fun evening of fund raising to benefit the New England Quilt Museum and the guild. There'll be quilts, wall hangings, kits, quilt tops, embellishments, and more. The event will also feature "Grab & Go" Tables with a large assortment of fabrics, books, patterns, tools, and craft related items for immediate sale. Come find quilting treasures and great gift ideas!

Free admission, Handicap accessible, Ample free parking

Date: Tuesday, March 12, 2019
Doors Open: 6:00 pm
Auction: 7:00 pm

Location: Congregational Church of Needham
1154 Great Plain Avenue, Needham, MA
More info: www.quinobequin.org/outreach/benefit-auction

ENVIRONMENTAL MINISTRIES TEAM NEWS

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

Lenten Plastic Challenge



The Environmental Ministry Team will be collecting and recycling plastic grocery bags, plastic bags used for home deliveries, and wrappings for packaged goods during Lent.

We would like to increase awareness of how much plastic is used in our daily lives and to promote the reduction of its use, so that less plastic winds up in our waterways and oceans. Please bring your plastics (no bottles) to church from March 10 - April 14 and place them in the bag in the Narthex. Check out this link for ways to reduce your use of plastics, myplasticfreelife.com/plasticfreeguide/.

Electricians converting light fixtures to LEDs over February vacation. The increased efficiency will reduce our carbon footprint!



FAMILY PROMISE

Our upcoming **Support Week** is March 24-30 at Fisk Methodist Church in Natick. Volunteer Trainings will be held on both March 5 and 21 in Natick prior to our Support Week at the end of March.

Please contact Susan Kirk susanckirk@comcast.net if you would like to get 'trained' to be a volunteer or to sign up for our March Support Week. Our Support Weeks after March will be at Fisk Methodist Natick June 16-22 and First Congregational Church Natick June 23-29.

Walk-A-Thon Spring is just around the corner and so is the 10th Annual Family Promise Walkathon. We've had a church team every year since the beginning and have been a top fundraising team for the past 5 years! Let's do it again this year but here's the challenge-Let's have our largest team ever! Calling all first time walkers and families young and not so young! What could better than enjoying a spring morning walking with church friends and family to raise funds for an outstanding local organization that does so much good for so many local families! susanckirk@comcast.net for more info or register through this link <https://familypromisemetrowest.salsalabs.org/10thannualwalktoendhomelessness2/index.html>.

Join us on Saturday, April 6th at Natick High School for the 10th Annual Walk to End Homelessness



Registration is now open for our 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.

Won't You Join Our Needham Congregational Church Team!

Register at <https://familypromisemetrowest.salsalabs.org/10thannualwalktoendhomelessness2/index.html>



Open and Affirming Ministry News

The Meaning of Open and Affirming - Are We Confused?

People have their own ideas of what Open and Affirming is. The shorthand title can be confusing. "Open and Affirming" is often shortened to "ONA," which is read O-N-A or O&A. It's helpful to use the full name "Open and Affirming" in conversation to make sure people know what you mean.

It's true that the ONA resolution (adopted by the UCC General Synod in 1985) was intended to affirm LGBTQ people in the church, but the meaning of ONA is no longer limited to those groups. God's welcome and the principles of full inclusion make sense only if applied to any person or group that is marginalized because of their identity, background,

experience or life circumstance.

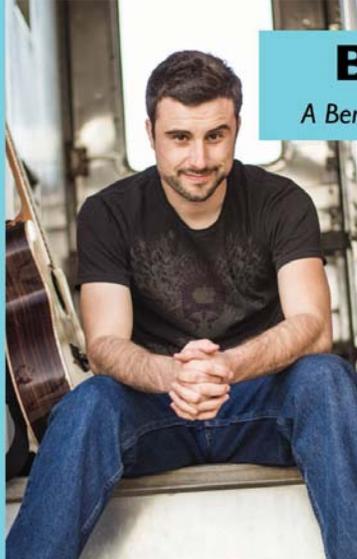
We are called to share the news of God's Extravagant Welcome. This means acknowledging the worth of people who come from places, speak languages, think, or have life experiences, opportunities and identities different from ourselves or from the majority. It means getting outside of our own experiences and privilege and hearing other stories.

It does not mean standing at the door and deciding that some of God's people deserve the welcome and others do not. It's God's welcome. Our call is to be vehicles to let that news shine.

Your Suggestions for Changes to the Open and Affirming Covenant

Our 19-year old covenant of welcome has served us well, but is no longer a wide enough or clear

(continued on page 5)

Bobby Jo Valentine
A Benefit Concert for the LGBT Asylum Task Force

2019 "Best Song" Winner
Next Level Songwriting Contest
"The love child of Gandhi and Stevie Nicks"
- The Gay Journal

Wednesday, March 20 @ 7pm
The Congregational Church of Needham UCC
1154 Great Plain Ave, Needham, MA

Tickets \$15, \$10 under 12 & seniors, family max \$40
for tickets & more info, www.NeedhamUCC.org

The Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Asylum Task Force is a ministry of Hadwen Park Church UCC in Worcester, MA and a community-based organization dedicated to supporting and empowering LGBTQ individuals seeking asylum in the United States.

Join us for a "Tiny Chapel Concert" with award-winning singer/songwriter Bobby Jo Valentine on Wednesday, March 20 @ 7pm. Bobby Jo is no stranger to our congregation, and this year our Outreach Committee is excited to partner with him to present this concert to benefit **The LGBT Asylum Task Force**, a ministry of our sibling congregation at Hadwen Park UCC in Worcester, who've received national notoriety recently for their grassroots ministry supporting and empowering LGBTQ individuals fleeing persecution in their home countries and seeking asylum in the United States. The Outreach Committee is using a portion of their funds from this year's budget to "plant the seed" for this concert and your generosity. EVERY DOLLAR WE TAKE IN at this concert will go directly to the LGBT Asylum Task Force. So we need you to come and we need your help to get as many folks there as possible. Let's pack the chapel for this really good cause... and to hear some wonderful music from Bobby Jo. "The love child of Gandhi and Stevie Nicks"... How much better can you get? ;-)



Guatemala Delegation ReportBack

Join the February travelers on Sunday, March 10, 11:30 am, Linden Hall for the reportback. The February delegation has returned from Guatemala, and the travelers are excited to share their experiences and insights from the trip. Please join us for a lively powerpoint presentation and hear what's going on in our sister village. Light refreshments will be served. Note: Attending this presentation is the best ways to get an idea of the delegation experience. Your next chance to go is the August delegation (July 31 - Aug. 10), coled by Caryl Johnson and Alan Clayton-Matthews.



Guatemala Serv-a-thon April 27

Mark Your calendars for the annual Guatemala Serv-a-thon on Saturday, April 27. This is one of our yearly fundraisers where we raise money while helping complete projects here at the church and in Needham. We look to church members to sponsor us for several hours of labor and we help at the community farm and around our church. The Partnership welcomes volunteers to join us if you feel able. Contact: Nancy Lane nrlane6@hotmail.com

Open and Affirming Ministry News

(continued from page 4)

enough message. We have plans to add “gender identity and expression,” replacing the limited term “gender,” to make our ONA Covenant fully transgender inclusive. Many people believe that we need to add to our covenant other groups or categories of people who are often not fully affirmed by the church. Since we asked for ideas on February 10, we have received suggestions of 12 categories which people felt were missing from our welcome. We ask you to email any suggestions to the ONA Team at kacarp@comcast.net. The ONA Team will field the suggestions and formulate a representative new draft covenant in the next couple of months for your consideration.

White Privilege and Racial Justice Courses

It's been over a decade since we offered the courses on anti-racism and racial identity development here at the church. Now we have an opportunity with up to date courses designed for churches. We will offer one, maybe both of the following: a UCC course called “White Privilege - Let's Talk” and “Racial Justice Training”, a series offered by the Mass Conference UCC. Sign-ups started on ONA Sunday and 12 people have already indicated their interest in taking one or both of the courses. 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.

WHITE PRIVILEGE let's talk



Wednesday Witness

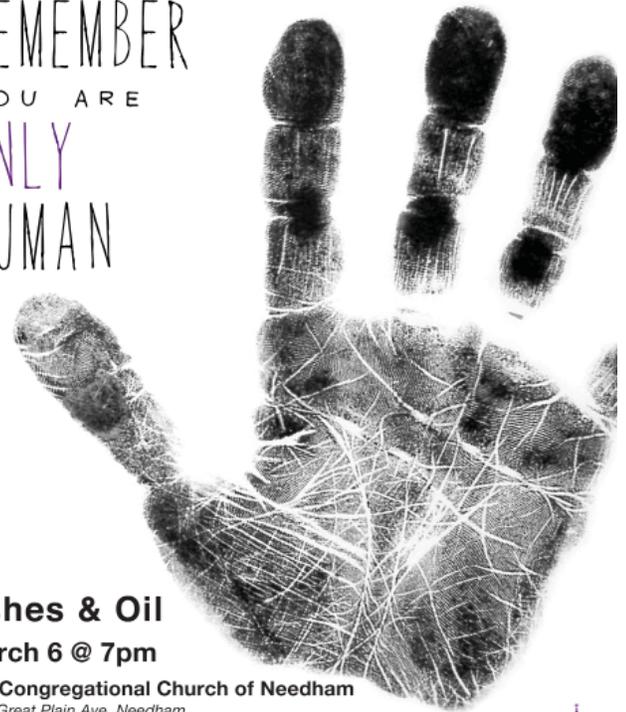
Since the summer of 2018, #WednesdayWitness has taken place in Needham. Georgina Arrieta-Ruetenik, herself an immigrant and naturalized citizen, organized weekly vigils on the Town Common in support of those families and children who had been separated by government policies. In addition to the public display of solidarity, the group has also written letters and cards to those people being detained and messages to legislators and official about the hardships facing these families. To sign up to receive information about family separation, general immigration issues and events, please contact Georgina Arrieta-Ruetenik geophoto1964@gmail.com.

ICE Detention Center Vigil

The next vigil in support of the persons being detained will be Sunday March 31st at 2 pm at the ICE Detention Center at the Suffolk County House of Correction, 20 Bradston Street in Boston. You may know that, in mid-February, a number of incarcerated immigrants staged a hunger strike

ASH WEDNESDAY

REMEMBER
YOU ARE
ONLY
HUMAN



Ashes & Oil

March 6 @ 7pm

The Congregational Church of Needham
1154 Great Plain Ave, Needham

www.NeedhamUCC.org

"No matter who you are or where you are on life's journey, you are invited and welcome here"



protesting conditions and treatment at the facility. For further information, please contact Val Kistler, valk228@gmail.com.

Do You Know about the Needham Area Immigration Justice Task Force

This interfaith group meets on the second Monday of the month, 7:15-9:00pm, in our church library and all are invited to come, share and learn. For further information about the Task Force or related events, please contact Cheryl Aglio-Girelli agirelli@rcn.com.



Resettle Together is a network of community partners committed to responding to the global refugee crisis and provides support to the International Institute of New England's (IINE) efforts to create connections to welcome newcomers.

Resettle Together: West Suburban Consortium, a local organization is under the umbrella of the Needham Area Immigration Justice Task Force and meets 6:15-7:15pm, at our church, prior to the Needham Area Immigration Justice Task Force. Meetings are open to all. For more information contact Jessica Day, jessicaday257@yahoo.com or Cheryl Aglio-Girelli, agirelli@rcn.com. To Receive IINE newsletters, sign up at iine.org.

FELLOWSHIP & ADULT ED

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.

COMMUNITY DINNERS 6-7pm, March 5, April 2, May 7

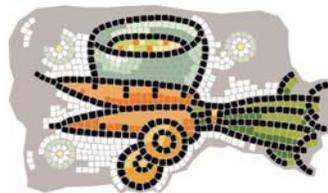


Dinners coincide with monthly Baby Basics Diaper distribution. Volunteers are invited to join in our effort to provide a healthy dinner for our guests and members of the church.

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.

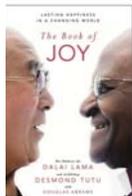
THURSDAY LENT LUNCHESES Noon -1pm, Mar. 7, 14, 21, 28, April 4 & 11

Lent begins with Ash Wednesday on March 6th so our Lenten Lunches will begin Thursday, March 7th. We are gathering once again for a weekly Lenten soup lunch on Thursdays at noon in the library. Everyone is welcome -church members and friends!



GUATEMALA REPORTBACK 11:30am, March 10

Join the February travelers in Linden Hall for the reportback. The February delegation has returned from Guatemala, and the travelers are excited to share their experiences and insights from the trip.



MINDFULNESS BOOK GROUP 7:30pm, March 11, April 8

The Meditation 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, March 24, April 11 & 25

The meditation/mindfulness group usually meets twice each month after Worship in the small conference room. We will only be meeting once in March but will get back to our schedule in April. 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

"IN THIS TOGETHER" -LENTEN ADULT ED WITH REV. JOHN GAGE 11:30am, Sun., March 17, 24, 31, April 7 & 14 & 1pm, Thurs. March 14, 21, 28, April 4 & 11

Rev. John is 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. 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." Rev. Gage will also be offering the same series on Thursday afternoons for those who have other commitments Sunday's after Worship.

Here's what they have to say about the "In This Together" program:

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.

TALKING WITH CHILDREN ABOUT GOD 11:30am, Sun., March 17

This program is part of a series offered by Rev. Maddie and is geared toward parents and family members with young children. We'll learn about ways to talk with children about important elements and beliefs in our Christian faith.

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

In cases of inclement weather we will post weather-related decisions 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!

PANCAKE BREAKFAST!



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 Mission Trip!**

This year's Summer Youth Mission Trip (YMT) will take us to a New England farm where we will learn about sustainability and earth stewardship along with immigration justice. Each day will consist of different needed work on the farm, worship, fellowship, and meals together.

Talking with Children: *Workshops for Grown-Ups!*



**Talking with Children About
GOD:
Sunday, March 17, 11:30 AM**

**Talking with Children About
JESUS:
Sunday, May 19, 11:30 AM**

This series of forums is geared toward parents and family members with young children. We'll learn about ways to talk with children about important elements and beliefs in our Christian faith. Each workshop will consist of a presentation from Rev. Maddie, a small-group activity to get our adult brains thinking creatively, and activities, prayers, and rituals to bring home to spark faithful conversation with kids.



FIRST FORMAL COMMUNION WORKSHOP & DINNER for Children in Grades 1 & 2 and their Families!

Wednesday, April 10; 6:00 - 7:30 PM

RSVP by Email to RevMaddie@Needhamucc.org

Students in First & Second Grade and their families are invited to learn more about Communion as we break bread and then make bread together. Dinner will be served. RSVPs required. Please email revmaddie@needhamucc.org if your family will be joining us!

This will supplement a Communion & Lord's Prayer curriculum taught in the K-1-2 classroom during Lent. First Formal Communion is Sunday, May 5.

WHAT'S HAPPENING THIS MONTH IN SUNDAY SCHOOL!

March 3-17 Sunday School Units: K-1-2: 12 Disciples and 3-4-5: Daniel & the Lion's Den

March 24 & 31 Sunday School Units: K-1-2 The Lord's Prayer and 3-4-5 All About The Bible

Sunday, March 3
10:00 AM Worship & Sunday School
Children begin in Worship, head to Sunday School during the Sermon and will re-join their families for Communion.

Sunday, March 10
10:00 AM Worship & Sunday School
Children begin in worship and are dismissed to Sunday School.
Lenten Family Devotional Challenge Begins!

Sunday, March 17
10:00 AM Worship & Sunday School
Children begin in worship and are dismissed to Sunday School.

Sunday, March 24
10:00 AM Worship & Sunday School
Children begin in worship and are dismissed to Sunday School.

Sunday, March 31
10:00 AM Worship & Sunday School
Children begin in worship and are dismissed to Sunday School.

**Youth Group
Lock-In
March 29-30**

