

FROM REV. JOHN...

Dear Friends,

As I sit here in my office writing to you, people have been coming in and out of the office all day to drop off their donations of menstrual products for our **Period Party**, coming up **Sunday, February 9 @ noon**, and some have even been asking how they can be part of the packaging that day. For almost all of these folks, it's the very first time they have been in our church. (Many more are sending their donations directly via our Amazon wishlist.) But they've seen the banner outside or on the NeedhamMA Facebook group, and they've been moved by the need itself and our unashamed embrace of real life, which sadly is not something they necessarily associate with church. But we believe in a God who comes and shares our fleshly lives with us, right down to our toes. And these are ALL reasons why we're doing it. THANK YOU for taking the risk to do something new (and your enthusiastic participation, too.)



As we head into the year, **Mardi Gras Sunday (February 23)**, complete with dixieland jazz band), **Ash Wednesday (February 26)** and **Lent** are just around the corner. (We'll send out a separate Focus newsletter just for Lent, Holy Week, and Easter later this month.) Lent is a season of reflection, renewal, and recommitment in our relationships with God, our neighbors, and ourselves, and in that spirit we want to give you a heads-up about two special opportunities.



The first is a **"Spiritual Spa Day" on Saturday, February 29 @ 9am-Noon**. What's that, you ask? Our spiritual spa day will be a chance to slow down and spend some intentional time tending to your heart, mind, body, and spirit. Over the course of the morning, we'll be offering three scheduled, more structured activities: yoga, meditation, and communion. In and around those, there will be stations for you to enjoy visual arts and music, spiritual drawing, prayerful origami, and our beautiful indoor labyrinth, among others, all at your own pace. You can come for the whole time or as much as you can make. You decide what you need to help ground your larger experience of Lent this year.

lots of opinions, but we all agreed that the next and most necessary step for us is to get to know one another again, all the members of this church right now, longtime, first-in-a-longtime and brand new. And there's no better way to do that than to eat together – and not just with the folks we already know. So we'll propose several dates and times spread over the season and ask you to sign up for one without knowing who might be sharing that table with you. We'll organize the dinners for 8-12 people each and have deacons on hand the night of to help spark conversation. We hope you will take advantage of this opportunity to re/connect with our wider congregation, to re/discover who we are now. Keep an eye out for sign-ups coming soon!

I am so looking forward to moving into this new season with you, both in the church year and in the life of our congregation and in our journey together. You make wonderful traveling companions.

Peace,
Rev. John MacIver Gage



Guatemala Delegation Leaving for Santa María Tzejá

The church's 65th delegation to our church's partner village of Santa María Tzejá leaves on February 12th. The delegation includes 8 adults and one youth:



Co-leaders Brenda Metzler and Fred Moder; Jerry Durbin, MD; Jeff Clausen and daughter Jenna; Sarah Noble; Sunny Robinson; and optometrist Scott Pike and wife Joene from Oregon. It will be a special delegation for Jeff, Sarah, and interpreter Ali Durbin, since they all grew up in our church and have been friends ever since! We'll be delivering your partner-family and scholarship letters, school and medical supplies, and toothbrushes for the schools donated by a Needham dentist.

As Santa María Tzejá celebrates the 50th anniversary of its founding this year, Jeff Clausen is preparing a historical photo exhibit to share with the community, developed from Clark Taylor's early slides. This will no doubt be a hit, since today's



youth and the families who lived in refugee camps in Mexico for 12 years have never seen what the village looked like during that time. The delegation looks forward to joining families for meals in their homes, visiting and teaching in the schools, swimming in the Tzejá River, meeting with the Scholarship Committee and other community groups, and attending a weaving workshop.

Delegation Send-Off on Tuesday, February 11th, 7:00 pm, at the Durbin's (301 Nehoiden St., Needham)

Please join us in sending the delegation off with your hopes and best wishes for a safe and meaningful trip! (Park in the Durbin's circular driveway or on a side street.)

February Delegation ReportBack, Sunday, March 15th, 11:30 am. Save the date!

Alternative Gifting Update
Proceeds from the Alternative Gifting program and calendar sales netted \$560 to support education in Santa María Tzejá. A big thank you to all for your participation and generosity.

August 2020 Delegation: Sign-ups Open

Bill Garrett and Caryl Johnson invite you to join the August 2020 delegation to Guatemala. Youth and adult travelers are welcome.

Trip dates are August 5-16, 2020. In addition to visiting the village of Santa María Tzejá for a week, recent travelers have visited world-class museums on Guatemalan and Mayan history, studied the causes and effects of migration from the perspective of a developing country, met with leading human rights organizations, and experienced Mayan social and religious traditions. Total trip cost is approximately \$1,500 per person including airfare. Sign-up is open until early April or when the delegation is full. Don't miss this unique experience. Please contact Bill Garrett (wgarrett@mit.edu) or Caryl Johnson (caryljohnson@gmail.com) with your interest or questions.



FOCUS

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

March issue deadline: February 21st

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The Deacons
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Pastoral Relations Committee
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To provide feedback about any aspect of the church, email feedback@needhamucc.org

A MESSAGE FROM THE MODERATOR: JUDITH STEWART

Thank you to all the members who attended the Annual Meeting on January 26. The minutes from last year's meeting were approved as well as the slate of candidates for the boards and committees. We took a moment to appreciate those who are stepping into new roles as well as those who have served faithfully. We thanked Jackie Allen for serving for four years as our Moderator and Chairperson of the Board of Directors. I was elected as your new Moderator and Chairperson of the Board. I have been a member of this church for over forty years and I am honored to serve in this role.

The third article on the warrant was the budget for 2020 as proposed and approved by the Board of Directors. Jim Conroy of the Finance team provided a detailed explanation, including assumptions regarding the sale of 1180 Great Plain Avenue. The sale of 1180 was approved by all the Town of Needham boards, but one of our neighbors has filed an appeal of the ZBA decision in the courts. The buyer is currently negotiating with the neighbor.

The budget was approved including two amendments. First, a line item of \$1000 for Fellowship expenses, as approved by the Deacons, was added. Second, the Outreach portion of the budget was amended to allocate \$6000 to the Guatemala Partnership and decrease the miscellaneous Outreach spending such that overall Outreach spending remains at \$25,000. Members offered many comments regarding the new line item approach to Outreach spending in the budget.

The meeting was a wonderful display of the vitality and passion in our congregation and I look forward to an exciting year as we further Christ's ministry together.

A Message from the Deacons

The Board of Deacons would like to welcome Kathie Carpenter, Jodie Kuhlman, Bill Haynes, Bob Boyd, and David Libby as new Deacons. Jim Ruetenik will be the chair and Nancy Lane will be the co-chair.

We would like to thank Sue Cotton for leading the Board in the past year. We'd like to thank Scott Stewart, Paul Brown, Kevin Blume, and Lucy Slosser for their dedicated work over the past 3 years

SERVING COMMUNITY LUNCH AT PILGRIM CHURCH

Come along on our next trip to Pilgrim Church in Dorchester on **Saturday, March 14th**. You'll not only have fun working together preparing a meal in the kitchen, but you'll be able to meet and serve people from the surrounding community. We'll leave from the church parking lot at 9am sharp, and will return by 3pm. Please contact Tom Mollerus at tom@mollerus.net to let us know you'd like to come along.

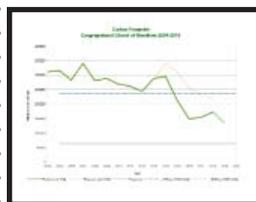


ENVIRONMENTAL MINISTRIES TEAM NEWS ...EARTH STEWARDSHIP FOR OUR LIVES TODAY...

- Happy New Year!
- As we start the new year, EMT is looking forward to adding to the Church Covenant.
- In preparation for that, we will be hosting a table at coffee hour to share with you our thoughts on what we would like to add. We also want to share with everyone all the contributions EMT has made in an effort to make our church and our world more environmentally friendly. There are over 85 activities, improvements and contributions that the EMT as participated in.



- As the church prepares to bring the stewardship of God's creation into our covenant; the team has compiled a list of Educational, Worship, Green Initiatives, Building improvements to reduce our carbon footprint, and Advocacy achievements in this document. Join us in embracing God's remarkable creation at our doorstep.



FELLOWSHIP & ADULT ED

PERIOD PARTY

Noon, February 9th

All are welcome! We'll gather in the Fellowship hall for our "Period Party" and break down and repackage your donations into bags for Generic Ministry to hand out to those who need them. We hope to put together 1000 such bags in about an hour, and we can, with your help!



COMMUNITY DINNERS

6-7pm, Feb 4, March 3, April 7

Dinners coincide with monthly Baby Basics Diaper distribution. 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 SOUP LUNCH

Noon -1pm, Feb. 6, Feb. 27, March 5, 12, 19, 26, April 2

Monthly Soup luncheons are on the first Thursday of the month at 12 noon in our Library. All are welcome - bring your friends and neighbors!

Lent Soup lunches begin the Thursday after Ash Wednesday and continue until the Thursday before Palm Sunday.

CANCER SUPPORT GROUP

Thursdays 9:15am

Our Cancer Support Group will meet Thursday mornings. You can contact Rev. Maddie (revmaddie@needhamucc.org) for more information. Come, if you need an extra hug or prayer said for yourself or a family member.

PRAYER GROUP

Noon, Feb. 13, 20, 27, March 5, 12, 19, 29, April 2, 9

The Prayer and Care Team will meet for a weekly prayer group on Thursdays at noon (joining the Thursday/Lent Soup Lunches) You are invited to bring a bag lunch, or partake in the soup on soup lunch days; we will eat together, and then pray. It will be an opportunity to pray for our country, our world, our community, individuals asking for prayer - to come together to share with God what is in our hearts.

PASTOR'S COFFEE HOURS

Tuesdays, 10am-Noon

@ Volante Farms, Needham

Rev. John holds regular coffee office hours in the café section of Volante Farms at 292 Forest Street. If you've a moment free, drop by for some informal conversation and fellowship in a relaxed setting. (For private pastoral conversations, just email or call Rev. John at 781-444-2510 to set up an appointment.)



MEN'S FELLOWSHIP BREAKFAST

Sunday, Feb. 16, March 15, April 19

The Men's Fellowship Breakfast brings men of all ages together in the Library on the 3rd Sunday of the month before worship in honest and lively discussion touching our faith and our lives in today's complex world. Arrive at 8:15 AM for fellowship and breakfast or by 9:00 AM for the discussion. Contact: John Baldwin (jsbaldwin@comcast.net) or Rob Dunlavey (rob@robd.com) for more information.

MEDITATION GROUP

11:30am, Feb. 9 & 23, March 8 & 22

The meditation/mindfulness group meets twice each month after the church service. The group is open to everyone, no prior experience needed. We 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

BIBLE STUDY

Sundays at 11:30am - Small Conference Room

Would you like to learn more about the Bible but feel that you don't know where to start? Please join us for Bible Study after church. We will be reading sections from Exodus and Joshua this fall, about the founding of Israel. No preparation needed! We read a few chapters together and reflect on how God is still speaking to us today through His word.

FELLOWSHIP EVENTS THROUGH MARCH 2020 MARK YOUR CALENDARS!

- February 9th - Period Party
- February 23rd- Pancake Breakfast
- February 29th - Spiritual Spa Day
- March 14th - Serving Community Lunch at Pilgrim Church
- March 22nd - 10,000 Meals Packing Event

save the Date!

Join us for a

**PANCAKE
BREAKFAST!**



Sunday, Feb. 23
After church in Linden Hall

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

Donations accepted! This is a fundraiser for our Youth Ministries service work.

WELCOME TO THE CHOIR!

We would like to welcome our new soprano section leader Maria Whitcomb. Maria received her Bachelor of Music in Voice Performance from Syracuse University and will receive her Master of Music in Opera from Longy School of Music of Bard College this spring. While in college she worked at a UCC Congregational Church in Syracuse and is looking forward to being part of our community. Please join us in welcoming Maria.

EASTER MUSIC

The Chancel Choir is looking forward to preparing and singing some beautiful music for our Lenten Season as well as Easter morning. We will begin learning this music at the end of February. If you were ever tempted to sing, this might be the time to try the choir out. No long commitment needed... sing for the season.

Rehearsals are on Thursday evenings March 5, 19 and April 2 We practice at 8:30 to 9:40 on Sunday mornings, March 8, 15, 22 and 29, April 5 and April 11 (Easter), Choir also sings on Maundy Thursday April 9 for the 7 P.M. Service and then 8 - 9 PM to polish up Easter music.



OPEN AND AFFIRMING
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

ONA Team News

ONA Anniversary - 20 Years of Learning and Understanding

February 13 will mark the 20th anniversary of the adoption of our ONA Covenant. In 2000, our church adopted an ONA covenant, promising to BE THE CHURCH for everyone - to welcome, embrace and affirm all people in their full humanity. We have grown in our understanding of what that means every year. The ONA Team is grateful for the congregation's whole-hearted support of the revised Covenant. It is good thing to be entering our third decade of ONA with a clear and inclusive covenant.

Book Recommendations for Black History Month and Beyond

Adult Books

[The Bluest Eye](#), by Toni Morrison

[Race Matters](#), by Cornel West

[White Fragility: Why It's So Hard for White People to Talk About Racism](#), by Dr. Robin J. DiAngelo (presented by Cambridge Public Library on January 18, 2020)

[Anxious to Talk: Helping White Christians Talk Faithfully about Racism](#), by Rev. Carolyn B. Helsel (recommended by Rev. Walter Brueggemann)

[How to Be an Anti-racist](#), by Ibram X. Kendi

Children's Books

Recommended ages: 5 and up (selection and annotation by Erin Dower)

[The Other Side](#), by Jacqueline Woodson

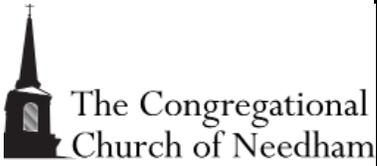
The fence behind Clover's house marks the town line that separates black people from white people. Clover's mother warns her that it isn't safe to cross the fence, but Clover is curious to meet Anna, the white girl who lives on the other side. The two girls work around the rules of segregation and form an unlikely friendship by sitting together on top of the fence.

[Moses: When Harriet Tubman Led Her People to Freedom](#), by Carole Boston Weatherford

Introduce children to Harriet Tubman, the champion of the Underground Railroad who earned the nickname "Moses" for leading hundreds of slaves to freedom. Spirited text and paintings portray how Tubman's compassion, courage, and deep religious faith helped her lead 19 trips from the south to the north in order to help fellow African-Americans.

[Tar Beach](#), by Faith Ringgold

It's 1939, and young Cassie Louise Lightfoot is picnicking with her family and friends on "tar beach" — the hot, black rooftop of her family's Harlem apartment. Cassie lays down and dreams that she is soaring above New York City — finding beauty in the views of the George Washington Bridge (which her father helped build) while also noting the signs of social injustice in the crowded city below.



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Restorative Justice: What it is and How it Can Work

Please join us for a Interfaith Potluck Conversation Dinner with the topic - **“Restorative Justice: What It Is, and How It Can Work,”** as part of the ongoing At My Neighbor’s Table Series. This event will take place on **Sunday, February 9, 2020, from 5:30 - 7:30 p.m., in the Community Room at Temple Beth Shalom (670 Highland Avenue, Needham).** The discussion will be led by Dr. Rachel King, Curry College, Title IX Coordinator Institutional Planning and Dr. Jennifer Balboni, Curry College, Professor of Criminal Justice. For any questions, please email Georgina Ruetenik (georgina@somaptandrehab.com). To RSVP: [restorativejusticeneedham.eventbrite.com](https://www.eventbrite.com)

address

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