

ATHOL CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH

STEEPLE NEWS

MARCH 2024

Dear Church Family,

The other day, my son, Billy, was home for a visit and he was telling me the story of a particular place along the border where immigrants were crossing so boldly and regularly that 60 Minutes filmed a segment on it. Now I know that the politics on both sides of this issue are so toxic that it is nearly impossible to have a rational conversation about it, but Rev. Michael Piazza recently offered up a third point of view that may help us address this issue as people of faith.

What Mike says is that, as he looked at the faces of people seeking asylum, he found himself moved with compassion and a desire to simply bless these people. “That isn’t a political position;” he writes, “it is an expression of my sudden awareness that they, too, are God’s beloved. My job as a follower of Jesus isn’t to judge or evaluate them, but to bless them.”

And maybe this is a perspective that could unite many of us around a number of issues. Our job, as faithful people, is to extend our blessing and to help those in need. We may not agree on the way to “solve” any particular situation, but we do agree that us being God’s hands and feet in the world is the most important thing.

In this election year, Mike continues, “it may be important for us to remember we are not political beings, but spiritual beings.” And if we can not only remember this, but also put it into action, we may be able to be examples to others of how it IS possible to disagree and yet still be kind and loving.

Over the next few months, as a congregation, let us focus on remembering who we are as a people of faith and acting so that others can tell we are!

Journeying together in faith,

Rev. Candi Ashenden

Please collect Can Tabs for the Shriner's Hospitals in Springfield and Boston. Can tabs can be found on fruit cans, soups, V-8, and soda cans. Removing the can tab from soda cans does not affect the return price. Please drop them off at the Church Office during office hours or bring them to Church and place them in a large glass container on the table outside the sanctuary. The Shriners collect these and melt them down to get money to serve children who need their services free of charge to the family. We can do our small part in helping this mission.



Many thanks.

Pat Darby



Dear Church Family,

If our church were a person, who would we be?

Interesting question to ponder, isn't it? Would you say we were Mother Theresa? Martin Luther King, Jr.? Jesus himself? Or perhaps ACC would be another sort of famous person... Taylor Swift, or Queen Elizabeth, or LeBron James?

What if I told you that if our church were a person it would look very much like Melanie Thibeault, or Cheryl L'Ecuyer, or Al Benjamin? Or maybe if our church were a person it would resemble little 3 year old Wyatt Rieth, or Ginny Thayer, or Bob Ray?

Far too often we hold up society's "Spiritual Heroes" as the penultimate individuals who God uses to change our world, and far too seldom we fail to look around us at the everyday, ordinary people we all are and see the enormous impact we can each make in the lives of others through small acts of grace and goodness. In fact, it might just let us all "off the hook" if only very special people can be the ones who are instruments of God's change in the world, because we all know we can't hold a candle to Mother Theresa, right??

Wrong.

The most amazing thing about God is that God's work gets done through totally unremarkable people like you and me. In fact, far more actually gets accomplished across the globe by the "Average Joe" than by our Spiritual Heroes.

As winter wanes, let's hold one another's feet to the fire, shall we? Let's not wait for the next version of MLK to show up and force the changes that we are reluctant to bring about in our community. Let's let goodness and grace spill out all over Athol in each and every interaction we have with others!

Warmly,
Rev. Cindy



COFFEE HOUR FELLOWSHIP TEAM SCHEDULE FOR MARCH

March 3 Jan Noyes, Cindy Jack & Christine Phelps
March 10 Melinda Jack, Vera Breault & Rebecca King
March 17 Ruth Quinlan, Jen Rieth & Sherrill Modzeleski
March 24 Jan Doody, Joyce Phinney & Bonnie Hodgdon
March 31

At this time most Sundays have people assigned to them, however we are currently looking for volunteers to help on the third Sunday of each month.

If you are interested in helping with the coffee hour snacks on the third Sunday of each month and/or overseeing the program, please contact Cindy Jack at 508-517-2851 or speak with her after worship on Sunday.



CHRISTIAN EDUCATION REPORT- March 2024

Attendance: No services on 1/7/24 and 1/28/24 due to snow. Average attendance for 2 weeks of January and 1 week of February (at this writing) was 8 Sunday School, 1.5 Youth Group and 5 Adults. We had 1 nursery staff one week and no nursery children during this time frame. Nine families (16 children) have registered for Church School and Nursery.

Regular classes end: March 17th. No classes on Palm Sunday and Easter Sunday. We will have an adult craft/game leader each non-holiday Sunday until Fall due to historically low attendance after Easter. We will start upstairs and move to the craft room after the Children's Message. Recruitment will be starting.

Y-Arms Club: Bonnie B and I continue to meet with students twice a month and Bonnie has agreed to host the other two Thursdays to help the YMCA with fulfilling their programming. We are in a holding pattern until the Ymca decides which clubs are going to continue. Their formatting has changed and the amount of students participating in our group has diminished significantly.

Teachers Needed: *2/25 Cooking; 3/3 Cooking and 3/10 Games.*

Youth Group Room: The current youth room is going to be used for the Village Project and we've been asked to relocate due to sensitivity of materials being kept there. The Bible story/map room has been repainted and will be ready for class on 2/18/24. The couch from the nursery has been moved into there for seating.

Sunday School Pizza & Movie Event: Sunday 2/25 after worship. Free event. Pizza, drinks, popcorn & a movie. Pizza in Fellowship Hall after worship. Movie will be in the gathering room.

ANNUAL LOVE A CHILD CHRISTIAN ED FUNDRAISER

For the month of February, CE will be collecting donations of any amount to help with the cost of CE events (ie VBS), breakfast/food and mission projects. This is the only fundraiser CE will do for the year. Envelopes will be on the table in the Narthex and downstairs outside the CE office. Donations can be put in with offerings or in the donation box outside the CE office. If writing a check, please put "Love a Child Fundraiser" on the memo line.

Thank you to everyone who has donated so far!

Mission Update

Community Meals – Our March Meal is sponsored by Cornerstone Insurance in memory of Jim Hebert. Jim was a long time employee and a member of our church. Thank you to Cornerstone Insurance for supporting this community project so generously!

The meal in March is baked stuffed chicken, mashed potatoes, green beans and a yummy dessert of course. !! Last month we served about 190 meals! Lester and Myra were ‘sang for their supper ‘ with delightful tunes!!! This month “Sweet Euphoria “ will return as our musical guests!

Community – Together!

Check out the new pictures in Fellowship Hall! Caprice and Bonnie have been working with YARMS after school program! The kids make cookies, frosted them and decided what groups in the community could use a special “Thank You”! Reaching out is what we do!

One Great Hour of Sharing

Please consider your donation of any amount on March 10.

One Great Hour of Sharing® is a pillar among the United Church of Christ's special mission offerings. This Lenten offering provides crucial support to the disaster, refugee, and development ministries within Love of Neighbor ministries. Your gifts toward this offering are welcome. With your support now and throughout the year, the UCC is ready for the disaster and refugee aide right away. Our network is one of the very first on the scene. Send your gift to Athol Congregational Church with OGHS in the memo line. You can also include it in a labeled envelope on Sunday morning or into the drop box at Church. Thank you for your gift of any size!





Bruce Banks, Kathy Bennett (Cheryl L'Ecuyer's sister-in-law), Rita Bombard, Charles Brown, Roger Carter, Florence Copeland, the family of Duncan Gordon, Greyson Johnson, Diane Myntti, Don Risatti, Sheila St. Laurent, Alice Woessner, Donald Ziminski and our sister church in Vichuquen. We also pray for Joe Badgley, Sean Spaulding, and others in the Armed Forces and in harm's way.

Remember our homebound friends with a card, and especially your prayers . .

Fran Britt - Baldwinville Nursing Home



| | | | | | |
|---|-------------------|----|------------------|----|-----------------------|
| 2 | Frank Magrone | 9 | Sophia Apteker | 21 | Karen Hastings |
| 3 | Rohan Puntambekar | 9 | Jeff Cooke | 21 | Elli Knight |
| 4 | Vera Breault | 10 | Sarah Lewis | 21 | Ann Phinney |
| 4 | Florence Copeland | 11 | Bride Johnson | 22 | Ryleigh Bushee |
| 5 | Edgar Bingham | 12 | Jared L'Ecuyer | 23 | Harper Young |
| 5 | Sylvia Mayo | 12 | Anthony McIntosh | 24 | Sadie Taylor |
| 6 | Anita Lehman | 13 | Natasha Ciampa | 24 | Michael Thomas |
| 6 | Chad Ray | 13 | Morgan LeGrand | 25 | Jan Doody |
| 7 | Timothy King | 13 | Deborah White | 26 | Mallory Elwood |
| 7 | Emma LeGrand | 15 | Charles Brown | 26 | Zayden Streeter- |
| 7 | Michael Peters | 15 | Thomas LeClaire | | Wornham |
| 7 | Joan Taylor | 16 | Julia Nelson | 26 | Zoeybeth Streeter- |
| 7 | Katrina Wheeler | 19 | David Harris | | Wornham |
| 8 | Wayne Grimes | 20 | Duncan Gordon | 27 | Aiden Jack |
| 8 | Jim Steve | 20 | Sarah Jaillet | 30 | Sheila St. Laurent |
| | | | | 31 | Melissa Ricker-Horton |



| | | |
|----|-----------------------|----------|
| 13 | Tracy & Marc Johnson | 15 years |
| 27 | Jean & Kevin Fountain | 25 years |



CHURCH INFORMATION:

Office Hours: Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday 10:00 am – 3:00 pm

Church Telephone: 978-249-6202

Church E-mail address: accuccoffice@gmail.com

Rev. Dr. Candi Ashenden: revcandi@gmail.com

Rev. Candi's schedule: Tuesday and Wednesday in the office

Website: www.atholcongregationalucc.org

ONLINE WORSHIP SERVICES under Sermons on the website or

Find us on Facebook (Athol Congregational Videos)

for 10:00 am live streamed worship

& www.youtube.com (Athol Congregational Church for services)

Also, on Sunday mornings on AOTV channel 1301 at 10:00 AM (one week delay)

*Don't forget - **Newsletter Deadline** is the **15th** of the month.*

Articles submitted after the deadline may not be included.

Deacons are: Doc Arsenault, Vicki Baker, Susan Bowdridge, Marlene Chaisson, Joy Cutter, Tom Doody, Jan Doody, Marjorie Holmes, Cindy Jack, and Michael Thomas.

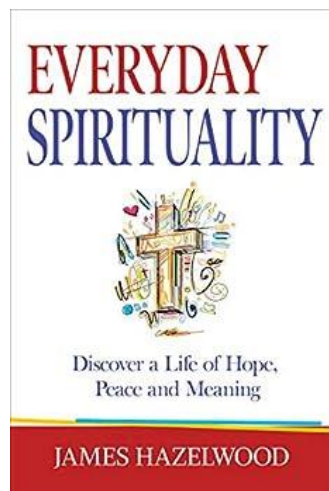


2023-2024 ACC Book Discussions

Join Rev. Cindy and Rev. Candi on Zoom for lively and interesting conversations as we reflect on and discuss three faith-oriented books this year! This is a great opportunity for fellowship and to get to know others in our congregation on a deeper level as we build our "faith muscle" and gain insights from terrific authors! If you haven't had time to read our selection don't let that stop you! Our discussions are oriented

so that anyone can hop on and share their thoughts about the topics the books bring to the forefront.

Books can be borrowed from the library or purchased used or new on Amazon. Individuals are responsible for obtaining their own copy, but if you need assistance, please let Rev. Cindy know and she will happily help.



April 14 & 21, 2024, 6:30 pm – 8:00 pm

Everyday Spirituality, James Hazelwood

- Are you longing for a spiritual connection, but too busy?
- Do you seek more peace in your life?
- Is God important to you, but this fragmented world is distracting you?

In this conversational, thoughtful and at times humorous book, James Hazelwood helps you discover that much of your everyday, so-called ordinary life, is actually quite spiritual. You'll finish this book with a whole new perspective on life, and a lot less guilt about what you should be doing.

In this book, you'll discover:

- Life is full of sacred moments, and they are found in daily life, not in monasteries or with gurus.
- A way to be a graceful person in a hectic life.

- Humorous stories of everyday people just like you discovering a meaning-filled life.
- A glimpse of an open accepting and broadly inclusive expression of the Christian faith, one that embraces other religions, philosophers, literature, and psychology.

Everyday Spirituality presents 27 easy to read short chapters making it the kind of book you can digest in short reading sessions. Keep it in your car when you've got five minutes waiting to pick up the kids at school, or during a lunch break at work. Then talk about it with your friends over pizza.

Everyday Spirituality is for people who have left the church, never went, or are still hanging on. What they all have in common is, the old way just isn't working. Not because it's wasn't of value, instead because, well, life got crazy, work took over, and who has time to sit and pray and read a devotional every day for an hour?

Instead, what if your life was the prayer. Your walk in the mall, your dinner with friends, your questions, your travels, even your time at the gym...what if you saw all that as a connection to that which is timeless, eternal and holy. Would your life be different, better, filled with hope? You bet it would.

72nd Annual Country Fair!
Saturday, June 1, 2024

9:00 AM – 2:00 PM



Good news! March is right around the corner, which means it's time to start planning our 72nd Annual Country Fair! Mark your calendars for Saturday, June 1 and plan to spend the day with us working, eating, shopping, visiting with your neighbors and having fun! As always, it will be a wonderful day of celebrating our community and our church family. And eating fudge and strawberry shortcake! Planning is underway to make this year's fair one of the best yet. We will be looking for lots of help whether you can chair a booth, work the day of the fair or

help us with set up and break down – the funnest part! Of course, we also are looking for people who can make baked goodies, candies and home preserves, make crafts, donate plants, emporium items, jewelry, and books. Stay tuned for information about when and where to make donations. There will also be lots of wonderful entertainment, great food, raffles, games for the kids and a Cake Walk!

We will hold our first fair meeting of the year in March. Stay tuned for details! In the meantime, think spring and think FAIR!!!

Please speak to Jan Doody or Jerry Noyes if you have any questions or would like to volunteer.

See you at the fair!!!

Yours in Christ – Jan Doody



Our church has a special ministry called Helping Hands. We have several people who are willing to cook and deliver meals to people in our church family who are in need for a short time, usually two weeks. Right now we need more cooks to help out. If you are interested in learning how this works or signing up, please contact Vicki Baker at 978-852-0442 or vbaker1018@yahoo.com.

EASTER LILIES

The church will be having lilies in the church on Easter Sunday. If you would like to place an order for lilies please fill out the form below. (Deadline to order is March 25, 2024)

EASTER LILY ORDER FORM

Name _____

I would like to order _____ Lilies at \$13.50 each. My Check is enclosed.

In memory of _____

I will pick up my Easter lily after worship.

Soup & Song

To benefit

North Quabbin Citizen Advocacy



\$10
per person

FRIDAY, MARCH 15

5:30-7:30 PM

BOILER BAR & GRILLE BANQUET HALL

245 Tully Rd., Orange (Reminder: Pinedale Rd. Bridge is Closed)

Please park in lower parking lot if possible

Entertainment by:

John DeWitt & The Tectonics • The Terryriffics



"Disney for the Young and Young at Heart"

April 21

If you would like to sing a Disney song, please contact Pat Darby at patdarby6@yahoo.com. Information needed is the name of the song, and the accompaniment you will use – on tape or live and the name of your accompanist. You are welcome to sing several songs. Also looking for someone to put a picture on the screen about the song.

Reminisce Orchestra

May 19

A dance band with all of your favorites from the Swing Era. This will get your toes to tapping!!!

Ethan Bremner and a Soprano

June 23

Hear the stories of the famous Operas and catchy familiar melodies.

All concerts begin at 4 pm followed by dinner.

Adults: \$10 for Concert
\$12 for Dinner
\$20 for Concert and Dinner

Special price for children at the Disney Concert

Ages 5-11: \$5 for Concert
\$5 for Dinner

These Concerts are fundraisers for the Athol Congregational Church so please write down these dates and plan to join us for enjoyable times.

March 2024

| Sun | Mon | Tue | Wed | Thu | Fri | Sat |
|---|-------------------------------|--|--|--|---|--------------------------------|
| | | | | | 1 Community Meal – 5:30 in house and 4:00-4:30 takeout/ delivery Call to reserve by Wednesday 978-249-7921 | 3 |
| 3 10 am – Worship 6:30 pm – 7:30 pm Rob Bell on Zoom | 4 | 5 | 6 11am – 12 pm Donuts with the Duo Bells 5:30 Choir 6:30 | 7 6:30-8:00 Boy Scouts, Fellowship Hall 4:00 pm Teach Us - Gathering Room | 8 | 9 |
| 10 10 am – Worship One Great Hour of Sharing 11 am – Healing Service | 11 6:30 Mom's Group | 12 4:45 pm Staff Meeting 6:30 pm Deacons on Zoom 6:30 pm Missions, at church | 13 Bells 5:30 Choir 6:30 | 14 6:30-8:00 Boy Scouts, Fellowship Hall 4:00 pm Teach Us - Gathering Room | 15 | 16 |
| 17 10 am – Worship | 18 | 19 6:00 Leadership | 20 11 am – 12 pm Donuts with the Duo Bells 5:30 Choir 6:30 | 21 6:30 – 8:00 pm Boy Scouts 4:00 pm Teach Us - Gathering Room | 22 | 23 |
| 24 10 am – Worship | 25 6:00 pm Christian Ed | 26 | 27 Bells 5:30 Choir 6:30 | 28 6:30 – 8:00 pm Boy Scouts 4:00 pm Teach Us - Gathering Room 7 pm Building & Personnel on Zoom | 29 | 30 7am – 10 am Breakfast |
| 31 10 am - Worship | | | | | | |



Daily Lectionary Scripture References – March 2024 (Year B)

Friday., Mar. 1

Psalm 19
Exodus 19:9b-15
Acts 7:30-40

Sat., Mar. 2

Psalm 19
Exodus 19:16-25
Mark 9:2-8

Sun., Mar. 3

Third Sunday in Lent
Exodus 20:1-17
Psalm 19
1 Corinthians 1:18-25
John 2:13-22

Mon., Mar. 4

Psalm 84
1 Kings 6:1-4, 21-22
1 Corinthians 3:10-23

Tues., Mar. 5

Psalm 84
2 Chronicles 29:1-11, 16-19
Hebrews 9:23-28

Wed., Mar. 6

Psalm 84
Ezra 6:1-16
Acts 15:36-41

Thurs., Mar. 7

Psalm 107:1-3, 17-22
Genesis 9:8-17
Ephesians 1:3-6

Fri., Mar. 8

Psalm 107:1-3, 17-22
Daniel 12:5-13
Ephesians 1:7-14

Sat., Mar. 9

Psalm 107:1-3, 17-22
Numbers 20:22-29
John 3:1-13

Sun., Mar. 10

Fourth Sunday in Lent
Numbers 21:4-9
Psalm 107:1-3, 17-22
Ephesians 2:1-10
John 3:14-21

Mon., Mar. 11

Psalm 107:1-16
Exodus 15:22-27
Hebrews 3:1-6

Tues., Mar. 12

Psalm 107:1-16
Numbers 20:1-13
1 Corinthians 10:6-13

Wed., Mar. 13

Psalm 107:1-16
Isaiah 60:15-22
John 8:12-20

Thurs., Mar. 14

Psalm 51:1-12
Isaiah 30:15-18
Hebrews 4:1-13

Fri., Mar. 15

Psalm 51:1-12
Exodus 30:1-10
Hebrews 4:14–5:4

Sat., Mar. 16

Psalm 51:1-12
Habakkuk 3:2-13
John 12:1-11

Sun., Mar. 17

Fifth Sunday in Lent
Jeremiah 31:31-34
Psalm 51:1-12 *or* Psalm
119:9-16; Hebrews 5:5-10
John 12:20-33

Mon., Mar. 18

Psalm 119:9-16
Isaiah 43:8-13
2 Corinthians 3:4-11

Tues., Mar. 19

Psalm 119:9-16
Isaiah 44:1-8; Acts 2:14-24

Wed., Mar. 20

Psalm 119:9-16
Haggai 2:1-9, 20-23
John 12:34-50

Thurs., Mar. 21

Psalm 118:1-2, 19-29
Deuteronomy 16:1-8
Philippians 2:1-11

Fri., Mar. 22

Psalm 118:1-2, 19-29
Jeremiah 33:1-9
Philippians 2:12-18

Sat., Mar. 23

Psalm 118:1-2, 19-29
Jeremiah 33:10-16
Mark 10:32-34, 46-52

Sun., Mar. 24

Sixth Sunday in Lent
Passion Sunday or
Palm Sunday

Palms:

Psalm 118:1-2, 19-29
Mark 11:1-11 *or* John 12:12-16

Passion:

Isaiah 50:4-9a; Psalm 31:9-16; Philippians 2:5-11
Mark 14:1–15:47 *or* Mark
15:1-39 [40-47]

Mon., Mar. 25

Isaiah 42:1-9
Psalm 36:5-11
Hebrews 9:11-15
John 12:1-11

Tues., Mar. 26

Isaiah 49:1-7;
Psalm 71:1-14
1 Corinthians 1:31
John 12:20-36

Wed., Mar. 27

Isaiah 50:4-9a; Psalm 70
Hebrews 12:1-3
John 13:21-32

Thurs., Mar. 28

Maundy Thursday
Exodus 12:1-4 [5-10] 11-14
Psalm 116:1-2, 12-19
1 Corinthians 11:23-26
John 13:1-17, 31b-35

Fri., Mar. 29

Good Friday
Isaiah 52:13–53:12; Psalm
22; Hebrews 10:16-25 *or*
Hebrews 4:14-16; 5:7-9
John 18:1–19:42

Sat., Mar. 30

Holy Saturday
Job 14:1-14 *or* Lamentations
3:1-9, 19-24; Psalm 31:1-4,
15-16; 1 Peter 4:1-8;
Exodus 19:1-9a; Matthew
27:57-66 *or* John 19:38-42

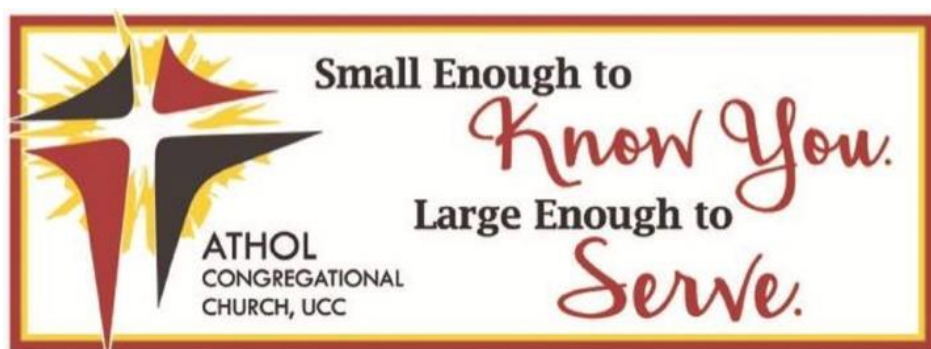
Sun., Mar. 31

Easter

Acts 10:34-43 *or*
Isaiah 25:6-9
Psalm 118:1-2, 14-24
1 Corinthians 15:1-11 *or* Acts
10:34-43
John 20:1-18 *or* Mark 16:1-8

.Athol Congregational Church, UCC
1225 Chestnut Street
Athol, MA 01331

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED



STEEPLE NEWS

MISSION STATEMENT

We are a community of faith, gathered by God's grace, following and modeling the way of Christ, as we celebrate, serve, worship and grow.