



Maple Street Congregational Church
United Church of Christ
Danvers, Massachusetts, 01923
www.maplestreetchurch.org
June 2009

The Spire

Dear Friends,

As we enter into June we are moving into a shift of seasons. From my perspective we are entering into the “glory of summer”. Summer is my favorite season. Much of this probably comes from childhood, when for a number of years the rhythm of each day included the playing of sandlot baseball. I could play baseball outdoors in the sun forever. With the celebration of Pentecost Sunday, we are also moving into a shift of church seasons, from Easter to the “Season after Pentecost” or “Ordinary Time”. Neither of these ways of describing this new season is nearly as evocative as the word “summer” is for describing the change from spring to fall. Perhaps if we make use of the emerging “tree of ministries” song, it will help to give definition to this new church season in a way that is inspiring. The first half of this season June-August can be seen as a “Season of Covenant and Spirit” of living out the third and fourth lines of the song:

Supporting our covenant, with gifts we will grow,
Rooted in the Spirit, oh let it flow, oh let it flow!

With the celebration of Confirmation on Pentecost, we are reminded that to become a member of the church is to enter into covenant. Our church covenant says that “we do, therefore, in the sight of God and invoking his blessing, solemnly covenant and agree with Him and with each other to associate ourselves as a church of the Lord Jesus Christ”. In terms of the visual of the “tree of ministries” we see “supporting our covenant” as part of the trunk. The trunks of trees are not the most exciting part, only rarely do people speak about the trunk when describing trees, but they are important support structure. Trees with small and weak trunks cannot support much growth.

During June – August, as the “**Season of Covenant and Spirit**”, we are called to be faithful in fulfilling “**the responsibilities of membership in our Church**” which are “**to uphold its By-Laws; to support it financially, with our presence at worship, with our talents, our prayers; and to live together in brotherly love.**” Though we may be away for much of the summer, at summer homes and visiting friends and family, we do not forget our covenant, but seek to fulfill it “as best we are able”. This enables our trunk to remain strong, so that in the fall we are ready for new growth of the branches.

One of my major emphases in the summer is going to be upon visiting. On Fridays, I will continue my pattern of visiting shut-ins with Communion. Each Wednesday, beginning June 24th, I plan to begin bicycle touring the neighborhoods in which our church members live. I will let you know several weeks ahead of time when I will be coming to your neighborhood, what times are available in the afternoon and evening of that day, and how you can let me know if you are interested in a visit.

With the celebration of the coming of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost, we are also reminded that to live in covenant with God is to be “rooted in the Spirit”. Our church covenant says **“responding to the love of God as revealed in Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior; accepting the Scriptures as our guide for faith and practice; and recognizing both the privileges and duties of uniting ourselves in the Christian fellowship for public worship of God”**. For many people our “re-rooting” in the Spirit during June – August comes from being outdoors in nature, responding to the love of God that reaches us through creation. This re-rooting can also occur through joining in smaller gatherings for worship, such as our Sunday morning worship in the chapel beginning in July. These gatherings help us reconnect with worship as an experience of prayer from the heart, “in the flow of the Spirit”. We will also offer a weekly Service of Morning Prayer in Taize style beginning that same week of June 24th. Let us know if you are interested, and what day of the week would work best.

Grace and peace,

Steve

LOOKING AHEAD TO SEPTEMBER – Elsa Marshall

In September with the beginning of a new church school year, the Christian Education Committee has voted to return to prior church school hours. Church school classes will be offered each week following a Scripture Time for Children in worship until 11:15 AM. Parents will again be asked to pick up their children in their classrooms at the end of each class. It has proven insufficient to have classroom time average about a half hour each week. It has not provided adequate time for the curriculum to be used and explored nor for faith to be cultivated. This decision to return to church school ending at 11:15 AM is a significant decision because childhood is the place where spiritual journeys begin and healthy lives are nurtured and sustained. The Search Institute of Minneapolis survey reports that “children who spend more than an hour each week in religious services and spiritual activities” are less likely to engage in unhealthy behaviors or avoid such behaviors.

FRANK PICKERING MEMORIAL

To date a number of donations in memory of Frank Pickering have been received, which will be used to purchase new furniture for the reception room. The generosity of donors has already fully funded the couch, the coffee table, one side chair, and the oval end table. These items have been ordered so that the new furniture can be placed in the room as soon as possible. If you have been considering a donation to help purchase the rest of the furniture, please send your gift to the church office as soon as possible. It would be wonderful to have the room fully furnished before the end of the summer!

THE CHURCH MOUSE

Congratulations to Chuck and Kathy Gross on the birth of their grandson Maddox Jaesun to Leanne and Jon Heller and to John and Carolyn Skelton on the birth of their twin grandchildren Iain William Stevens and Elizabeth Julia Ella to Anne and Alex Thomson . . . Our sympathy goes to the families of Russ Larrabee, Dot Birnie and Mary Prah! upon their recent deaths . . . The Maple Eves will meet at Judy Manuel's home for an End of the Year Get-Together on Wednesday, June 10 at 6:00 PM – shine or rain. . .

PLEASE CALL ME

If you have been an usher or greeter this past year (October to June) and find that you can no longer perform that role, please call me to be removed from the list.

If you are not now an usher or a greeter and would like to be, please call me also. (It's a great way to become acquainted.)

Norma Gates, 978 774-0274
norma.gates@verizon.net

DO YOU EAT BY YOURSELF?

If you would be interested in joining a startup group that gets together for lunch or dinner - occasionally (?) - once a week? - more often (?) - please call the church office at 978 774-4510.

FROM THE CHURCH MANAGEMENT SOFTWARE/TECHNOLOGY SUB-COMMITTEE

As you're likely aware, the Church Growth Committee has been hosting all-church potluck suppers to encourage communication between the Committees of Maple Street Church. At the first pot-luck, our members clearly requested a single source of reliable information containing who our members are, how to best contact each other, and what we are each willing to do for the church.

Most churches accomplish this task through church management software (CMS), so Church Growth created a sub-committee to select CMS for Maple Street. The sub-committee members include Cheryl Ward, Lew Hathaway, Sheila and Dick Crotts, and Jonell Glass.

The steps to implementing church management software include

- Identifying exactly what Maple Street Church needs the software to do for us
- Finding the software that can complete those tasks
- Creating policies to manage, maintain, access, and protect the data tracked by the software
- Acquiring the software itself and any hardware to run it
- And then, finally, installing and populating the software.

The most critical of these steps is the first. Only by getting everyone's input can we ensure the best match of software for our church. Please be a part of identifying what we need this software to do for us. Every committee has been given a survey to fill out, but we also want individual opinions of our church members.

You can voice your opinions, needs, and desires by filling out our survey. You can find printed copies of the survey in the narthex and on the wall outside the church office. You can fill out the survey electronically by clicking on the link "Survey for Church Management Software" on the main page of the church web site at www.maplestreetchurch.org. You may also give any thoughts or comments you have to any members of the Church Growth Committee or Church Management Software Sub-Committee. Thank you for helping us grow.

SUMMER ACTIVITIES -Elsa Marshall

Keeping up the frenetic pace that our lives often require can cause our minds to race and our spirits to falter. When we find ourselves spinning from all the activity, slowing down and stepping back can help us quiet our thoughts and open our souls to God's calming presence. "Whenever your mind becomes scattered, use your breath as the means to take hold of your minds again." (Thich Nhat Hanh) Try to slow your racing mind by taking a time out with God. When we are open to the presence of God in all the moments and through all the people of our lives, we will find that we feel God's presence and hear God's voice. Here is a spiritual practice to try: take a few moments each day to sit in a quiet place. Close your eyes and try to feel God's presence around you. Take some time to tell God what is on your heart. Speak to God like you would your most intimate friend. After you have said all you need to say, sit in stillness again, and let God speak to you.



This year's Youth Leadership Team's annual summer retreat will be August 14-16th. With next year's theme being *Faith Stories*, we are fortunate to have Anne Fuerher, consultant from the Maine Conference of the UCC joining us for part of the retreat to teach the leadership team "Faith-Booking" as a spiritual practice.



LIGHT – *Praying All Ways* is this year's summer church school program. Prayer is talking with God. There are many ways to talk with God and many different kinds of prayers. Jesus taught his disciples to pray and gave them an example that we still use today. We call this example the Lord's Prayer. During the summer we will offer a one-room schoolhouse program for children 4-years and older. Each week will be a complete lesson, so children are invited to come as their schedules permit. Our time together will include games, music, arts and crafts, videos, stories, and snacks. Children can come dressed in casual summer attire. (The classrooms are not air-conditioned.) I love our summer church school each year and am grateful that I am able to be a facilitator/teacher during the summer. I am also deeply grateful to the other members of the summer church school program for their dedication and gifts of ministry to our children during the summer. *LIGHT – Praying All Ways* will meet every week (with the exception of July 5) beginning on June 28th with August 16th being the closing session. **LIGHT** is an acronym for **L**earning in **G**od's **H**ouse **T**ogether.

THOUGHTS FROM ELSA MARSHALL

Jesus said, "Let the little children come to me, and do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of heaven belongs." (Matthew 19:14)

Rabbi and famous children's book author Sandi Sasso says, "We want our children to be gracious and grateful, we want them to have courage in difficult times, we want them to have a sense of joy and purpose. That's what it means to nurture their spiritual life. The spiritual life begins not in abstractions, but in concrete everyday experiences. And children need our questions as much as our answers." As parents, we want to support this part of our children's natures. With other mundane aspects of parenting – like how to help them sleep, or how to feed them, or how to teach them to read – we know that we need help. We seek advice, books, and counselors. But when it comes to these personal, existential questions of meaning, we often feel that we should intuitively have the answers. This does not become easier when, at some point, our children become little theologians and philosophers. They begin to ask huge questions about life and the universe – basic questions about how we got here and where God lives and why people die and why people hurt each other and what it means to be good and to be happy. These questions are the building blocks of a life of faith, religion, and ethics. Each of us refines the answers and questions all of our lives, but at heart they remain the same. What changes is our ability to articulate and act on them.

Theologians and theorists in the field of religious education encourage us to begin with what we know, and also to let our children lead us on a new journey of questioning and learning. Understand that as parents, you are ancestors to the next generation, part of tradition's unfolding story.

Most of all, we all need to attend to our children's musings about life's wonders and injustices, their grief at the death of a pet or a loved one, their response to a homeless person encountered on the street. None of us have all the right answers for their moral and existential questions, and that is all. Remember that, unlike adults, children are not afraid of mystery. However, they do need help to develop vocabularies and ways of living to keep those questions alive and growing. They need to hear *our* questions and our stories as well as being allowed to articulate their own. Stories are the vocabulary of theology for children. Children also crave and will use ritual and routine, and we can gift them with these forming them from daily life, church life and commonplace experiences.

Again to quote Rabbi Sandy Sasso, "Children can make the essence of religion come alive. They may ultimately teach us far more than we teach them. Children open windows for us or can crawl through windows that we can't crawl through, and they open part of our life that maybe has been dormant for a long time." The rest is mystery, and children help us embrace that with openness and joy!

Have a renewing, refreshing, relaxing summer. -Elsa Marshall

COMMISSIONING SERVICE FOR MISSION POSSIBLE 2009

The commissioning service for the participants in this year's Mission Possible 2009 will occur during worship on June 21. This year's trip is an exciting opportunity for our young people to offer service work and to participate in the 52nd General Synod of the UCC. We will travel with other youth from the Mass. Conference and will meet other youth from across the United Church of Christ who are also participating in this unique experience. Please join us that morning to offer our youth and leaders your prayers and support.

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

Maple Street Church has joined in partnership with the Danvers Senior Center to aid senior citizens with small home repair jobs. The Senior Center receives calls for help with jobs like changing overhead lights, installing safety bars, installing/removing air conditioners, etc. If anyone would like to help with this endeavor, please contact Sally Shannon at 978 777-1097 for more details. This is one more way that Maple Street Church can reach out to the community.

THE DEACONS' BENCH -Janet Barnes

On each communion Sunday there are special envelopes in the pews for Deacon's Fund donations. This is an ongoing discretionary fund used to help those from the church and local community who are experiencing a financial emergency. (This money is usually given as a loan, with the expectation of repayment.) During this economic crisis, it is especially important that we have enough resources in the Deacon's Fund to meet a need within our own church community should one arise. Please consider contributing to the Deacon's Fund on communion Sunday, June 7.

Our lighted steeple is an important symbol of our presence in the community. Your contributions in memory of loved ones and friends or to commemorate a special event help keep the steeple lighted. If you would like to have the steeple lighted for one or more weeks, please fill out the form below and send it with \$10 per week to the church office.

I would like the steeple lighted in memory of: _____

(signed) _____

FROM THE WORLD SERVICE COMMITTEE -Sharron Rowland

On May 9, 2009, six of us World Service Comm. members and spouses served supper at Salem Mission: Mamie & Jack Delaney, Judy & Larry Drouin, Sandy Sears, and myself. We had great fun – the clients at the Mission enjoy the food and the laughs. However, if the dinners are going to continue, we need a greater all-church effort. World Service is about mission, but the whole church should be about mission as well. Thank you to everyone who helped with the Salem Mission dinners, the Heifer Project, and all the many causes we support. Special kudos to June Baser and the children – the Read to Feed project raised \$860.35 for Heifer International! Please don't forget the Danvers People to People Food Pantry over the summer – they need your help. Food that children enjoy is especially welcome in the summer juice boxes, cereals, tuna, peanut butter and jelly, fruit snacks, and mac and cheese. Thank you all, and have a great summer.