

The Trinitarian Times

Trinitarian Congregational Church, UCC
72 Elm St. North Andover, MA
978-686-4445
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May 2019

Dear Church,

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. (Romans 1:7b)

With our building comes great responsibility! Keeping all who enter our buildings as safe as possible is a difficult task, but one in which God requires us to undertake. The Bible is replete with mandates to care for those who are vulnerable and so we approach the task to the best of our ability.

When we stepped into the twenty first century, we also stepped into a new and changing landscape when it comes to keeping ourselves and our loved ones safe. Churches and places of business began to set new policies or review old ones that define how we conduct our behavior in ways that are safe for all. Originally, our churches began to set Safe Church Policies that were mainly put in place to build a safety net around children so abuse couldn't happen. Our current policy specifically addresses only Sunday School.

Over time, increasing reports of sexual harassment and other incidents propelled us to learn where our policies needed increased parameters in order that every person, not only children, felt safe inside our buildings. I first wrote a Safe Church Policy with a group of people for a church in Lexington and later in Chelmsford. It addressed not only safety for children and sexual harassment, but policies regarding the security of the building, the consumption of alcohol and illegal substances, online safety and the protection of written information.

In the absence of this information in TCC's policy, I drafted another that could work for our faith community. The Trustees are reviewing the policy before it goes to Church Council to look over so that any necessary changes can be made before we adopt it.

When people come to our building, one of the many things they will assess is whether they feel safe. Although these policies cannot completely rule out issues, they go a long way in helping us know how to keep one another safe and how to handle a case that needs to be addressed. Once the policy is adopted, it will be readily available for everyone and given to each person who signs out for a key to the building. I hope you take a look at it because we are all in this together. A Safe Church Policy is one of those important documents to have, but one you hope you never really have to refer to.

Pastor Debra

Church Office hours : Monday through Wednesday, 9 to 12:30, Thursday 12:30-4, Friday 9-12:30

On April 28th, Pastor Debra took a Sunday off and Sarah Dunlap and Pam Foote spoke to the congregation about their experiences at Super Saturday in March. The following are the inspiring presentations they made.

Lessons from Super Saturday: The Changing Church Landscape, by Sarah Dunlap

Look around. What do you see? The same familiar faces? Empty pews? No children? I hear it time and time again “what a shame it is that more people don’t come to church” “where has everyone gone?” “why are sports held on Sunday mornings? If you have said one of these statements you would be acknowledging the truth of our situation.

Here are some sobering statistics: in 1960 **95%** of all people attended church. By 2017 the number had dropped significantly to **8-15%**. Our church is not alone.

In our changing landscape some of the reasons why people do not attend church are that they feel churches are hypocritical, out of touch and boring.

At one church the board of deacons decided to interview church members who were once familiar faces but who hadn’t attended church in the past 6 months. The primary question was “what has

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Reaching Out: Who is Our Neighbor?, by Pam Foote

The scripture reading comes from Matthew, chapter 28, verses 18 through 20:

Then Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”

That’s a tall order from Jesus, “making disciples of all nations.” But it certainly gives us context for a more manageable goal: expanding our own reach in the community.

Building off of Sarah’s message, our “why” as a church must also include **who we reach** and **what they need**. Then all we have to do is match their needs to our strengths. Oh, it sounds so simple...

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TCC is a Scout Chartered Organization of the Year!

On May 1st, Pastor Debra accepted an award on behalf of the church from the Spirit of Adventure Council, BSA, naming the Trinitarian Congregational Church as the Chartered Organization of the Year for continuing support of the Scouting Program.

According to the nomination submitted, among the reasons Troop 87 felt we deserved the award are that the church has sponsored a troop since 1927, has added the chartering of three units that lost their sponsorship and has been “a significant factor in the success of scouting at all levels in North Andover.”

A copy of the award nomination is posted on our website, www.natrinitarian.org.



Sunday, May 19th— Music Sunday during 10 am worship!

There will be special music and special guests as well as the usual fine performances from the Handbell Choir, the Choir and musical director and organist Chris Wood.

Sunday, May 19th— Mission Trip Meal and Presentation, 4 pm

Join those who went on last year's trip to Wilmington, Delaware as they share with the congregation what they did and what they expect on this year's mission trip to Erie, Pennsylvania. Enjoy a meal with this great group!

Sunday, June 2— Graduation Sunday

This is a wonderful opportunity to acknowledge the graduating Seniors from TCC.

Sunday, June 9th—Rummikub Returns!

If you didn't join in the fun the last time, no excuses this time! The weather should be better, and the folks who like to get their Rummikub on should have a great time. Or, come and play another game. Right after worship, and there will be food!

Bread and Roses—Live. Love. Laugh, stand-up comedy night **Friday, June 7th, 6 to 10 pm** at the Merrimack Valley Golf Club, 210 Howe St., Methuen. Tickets are \$25, to order by check send to Bread & Roses, 58 Newbury St., Lawrence, MA 01840 and note it is for Live.Love.Laugh.

Introducing the Etchells Conference Room!

We've re-purposed the room formerly know as the 'crib room' to be a meeting space. We'll leave tables and chairs set up and have the DVD player and a white board available. This is a great place to meet and not have to climb the stairs! Don't forget to schedule all your meetings with the office.



Coffee Hour: We only have 8 more Sundays until July. As of the first Sunday in July Hazel and I will be supplying the punch and cookies for coffee hour. The coffee is made and the cream and punch are supplied. Some individuals have signed up to host between now and then BUT we need more volunteers. Coffee hour is a great time for fellowship. Please consider signing up. *-Sarah*

The Pastor-Parish Relations Committee met on May 2. Members are Glen Ayer, Sarah Dunlap, Emily Thompson, and Karen Urquhart. The goal of the committee is to support Pastor Debra, and to help her and the congregation serve the needs of the mission of our church.

Yoga for Everyone The wonderful instructors and the great group at TCC's Friday Night Yoga class will help you achieve stress relief and help you strengthen your body. You might be surprised just how easy yoga is! Drop in any **Friday at 5:30 pm, bring a mat and \$10. No contract required.**

Block Party Wrap-Up!

Thank you to everyone who participated in our Machine Shop Village Block Party. Whether you dropped off food or drink, helped set up and take down, cooked, cleaned, greeted, photographed, publicized, printed signs and flyers, provided music, staffed games, decorated, or welcomed - all of your efforts were so much appreciated.

It was a great day with at least 40 neighbors in attendance along with a healthy crew of TCCers. Neighbors were very excited to see each other after years and have a reason to be re-connecting. Mission (both in the church sense and in the task sense) accomplished!

A special thank you to the five teams and scouts who helped to make sure the distribution of jobs worked well so that no one person felt overburdened. We had fun, met new people, and served our community. Thank you so much! Let's do it again next year!

- Emily Thompson



The United Church of Christ is issuing an emergency \$200,000 appeal to increase the International Disaster Relief Fund that responds to disasters around the world, including two deadly tropical cyclones that recently ripped through India and the Southern Hemisphere of Africa (Mozambique, Zimbabwe, and Malawi).

“Cyclone Kenneth destroyed everything that was left after Cyclone Idai hit,” said the Rev. Lucas Amosse, President of the United Church of Christ in Mozambique. “We do not know how we shall survive. Only God knows.”

Please give today. Your gift boosts our ability to help more than 500,000 people who are now displaced because of the devastation to their homes and communities.

If you prefer to donate by mail, **make checks payable to the United Church of Christ, with "International Emergency Relief Fund" in the memo..** Mail to: United Church of Christ c/o Financial Services, 700 Prospect Ave E, Cleveland OH 44115-1100. You may also make a donation online:

https://transactions.ucc.org/CampaignForm/UCChrist/international_emergency_relief_fund

100% of funds to the United Church of Christ designated for disaster relief or refugee emergencies are used for disaster relief and rehabilitation programming or for providing humanitarian assistance for refugee resettlement/ immigration emergencies.

Sunday Flower Arrangements: The cost of flower arrangements for Sunday morning has gone up this year to \$45. This price includes delivery. Contact the office at 978-686-4445 or offices@natrinitarian.org if you would like to give flowers on any Sunday. Or, if you would rather pick up your own flowers, arrange to drop them off.

The Changing Church Landscape

Continued from page 2

changed in your life or in the church since you last attended that may have affected your sense of connection?" No one was invited or "pressured" into returning to church. The question was solely designed to find out why people had disconnected from church.

The answers may or may not surprise you. Some of the responses were "we were so much more connected when the kids were in the youth program" or "somehow we got out of the habit of attending church when my husband retired and we started to travel more" and "we were really excited about church until the former pastor left to take another call." You will note the key phrases in the question they posed are "change in your life"; "change in the church" and a key word **connection**.

Each new generation is less likely to affiliate with an institutional religion though they may be spiritual. Even though people are leaving institutional religion, god is still active in our world. Churches that are thriving today have more focus on imagination rather than memories of how it used to be. People seem to be drawn to meaningful and moving rituals, or to a community in which all are authentically included regardless of creed, orientation, socioeconomic status, abilities and race. They are seeking **connection**.

On March 16th, Pastor Debra, Pam and I attended Super Saturday which is a day long series of workshops focusing on the church of today and tomorrow. It is sponsored by the MA, CT and RI conferences of the UCC.

I attended a workshop called, "Weird Church" led by Rev. Don Remick, who is the transitional interim conference minister for the Massachusetts conference. The session was based on a book of the same name, authored by Beth Ann Estock and Paul Nixon. It outlines how churches must adapt and change in order to survive. It is not a comfortable subject. The workshop was 2 and a ½ hours long so what I am speaking to is merely a snapshot of the subject.

Pastor Don explained that the exercise necessary to generate change is to identify **our why** and **our how**, which will help lead us to the **results** we seek. Let me walk you through these steps. Before I do, I would like to share another concept from "Weird Church". The model of seeking our why and our how are driven by the congregation. The pastor alone does not grow the church. It is not the sole responsibility of the pastor to put people in the pews and pledges in the collection plate. We are all part of the process.

The **why**. This is our cause, our God given identity and purpose. What do we believe? What awakens our life-giving passion and excitement? If you remember Pastor Debra introduced the concept of finding our why at the Annual Meeting in January.

The **how**. Once we know our **why** these are the actions we take to communicate our cause, our enthusiasm. It is the way we decide to reach out to the community around us. How we step outside the box.

For example, **our why** could be that we are passionate about and want to reach out to the less fortunate in our neighborhood. **Our how** could be offering a free meal once a week with a spiritual focus or opening a thrift shop right here at TCC. It would be a new way of demonstrating who we are to the neighborhood and community.....**and also give us a focal point as a congregation.**

The results would be the proof of the process or how our actions worked. They would be measured by how many people hear about us and want to help out. We would be attracting people who may be spiritual but not religious, people who believe in some greater power but not necessarily the institution of church.

Our success would also be measured by our impact in the community. Not necessarily by more bodies in the pews. Pastor Don emphasized that people feel connected when they are actively involved in making a difference, particularly a hands-on approach that cares for peace, poverty, planet and people.

I told you that this process would take us out of our comfort zone. **People do not mind change as much as loss.** Church as we know it is dying a slow death. It is time for us to make the transition from maintenance to missional.

I know you are thinking that we are already a mission oriented church. But giving money for special collections and donating socks, diapers and canned goods does not speak directly to our community or our neighborhood. It does not attract those around us.

The concepts are solid. They do, however, leave many questions. "what about the budget?" "what about tradition?" Rev. Don does not dismiss tradition nor the weekly Sunday service. It is just a question of stepping outside the box and looking around and developing stronger connections.

Finally, in this everchanging landscape Sundays are no longer a sacred time in our culture, we need to do more than offer a Sunday service. We must move outside our walls and connect with our neighbors, so they can connect with us. Do justice, love, be kind and walk humbly with your god.

Amen

- Sarah Dunlap, Moderator

Continuing Trinitarian Congregational Church's Partnership with Communities Together

I have been a delegate representative from TCC to Communities Together for over 15 years. At the last Annual meeting of Communities Together I was asked if I would serve on its Board of Directors. I gladly said yes!!!

On May 6th the Board met, and many things were discussed. **Undies Sunday, which was a drive held during the Lenten season was very successful this year. Over 17,000 diapers, wipes and underwear were collected. This is up over 1,000 from 2018.** They will be distributed to six agencies in the Greater Lawrence area.

Vacation Bible school will be fast approaching. They expect 850 children to participate. The cost for one child to attend is \$20. Our Missions and Outreach committee supports Vacation Bible School but it would be wonderful if individuals in the TCC community were able to make individual donations to this venture.

On Sunday May 19th CT will be doing a fundraiser @ Chipotle at the Loop in Methuen. It is from 4-8 pm. CT will receive 33% of the proceeds sold during this time period to people who show a flyer or tell the cashier that they are supporting the cause. Flyers are available from Sarah Dunlap or Dorothy Taylor.

Lastly, please save the date for the **Annual Prayer Shawl tea, which is held here at TCC; it will be on September 17, 2019.** I will need people to bake, bake and bake some more and serve the tea. I will be forming a committee sometime in August.

Thank You. Sarah Dunlap



**SAVE THE DATE FOR THE ANNUAL
FALL FLEA MARKET WHICH WILL BE
HELD ON OCTOBER 26TH.**

MORE TO COME IN THE FOLLOWING MONTHS!!!!!!

Help Support James Custer's Eagle Scout Project!

James Custer is currently a Life Scout with Troop 87 and a member of the church and he needs help to fund his Eagle Scout Project. He has chosen to create a raised garden box for the Bradstreet Early Childhood Center because the old one is falling apart and is too small for the newly finished and expanded school. A scout needs to complete a community service project in order to earn the rank of Eagle. You can learn more about his project and donate at his Go Fund Me page:

<https://www.gofundme.com/james-cster-na-ecc-eagle-scout-project>

Message from Missions

The food pantry items for **May is TUNA**, which will be delivered to Neighbors in Need.

Thanks to all who donated to the **Lenten Underwear Drive**. We delivered 1,438 (!) diapers, 732 wipes, and 53 pairs of undies to Communities Together for this important ministry. Thank you again to all who donated!

Our **One Great Hour of Sharing** collection brought in \$476.

We will be collecting loose change for the **Heifer Project in June**. Last year, we collected enough to buy a whole goat, helped fund the Women's Self Help Group and still had some left for the General Fund! The change in your pocket can make a huge difference to a struggling family.

Please see the notice on page 4 about the UCC International Disaster Relief Fund's recent appeal for donations.

Thank you for your continued support of our outreach to the local and global communities.

Your Missions Board

Who is Our Neighbor? *Continued from page 2*

At Super Saturday, Pastor Debra and I attended a workshop called, “Who is My Neighbor?” It was led by Pastor Liz Magill, the very engaging minister of Ashburnham Community Church. Pastor Liz suggested that to create a mission-focused church, you should have three objectives:

First, meet people who have a need

Then, put them in charge

Finally, add worship or some sort of spiritual element into all activities you undertake together

So, how do we find people and learn their needs? It sounds scary to many of us, but Pastor Liz recommends that we actually sit down and talk to people *in person* to gather this important information. For such a long-term market research effort, she divides the prospects into five concentric circles, starting in the middle with

The Inner Circle

Then The Circle of Mission

Followed by The Circle of Strength

The Circle of Outreach

and The Competition Circle

The Inner Circle is **us**, those who attend every week, or once or twice a month, or even the folks we saw last Sunday and probably won't see again until Christmas. This part of the process should be easy and comfortable. This is the group we must use to practice our interviewing skills. And these are the kinds of questions we should ask each other:

What do you personally need, or wish was available?

What does our town need?

What are the strengths and gifts that you bring – or could bring – to the town's needs?

Who else should I meet and talk to?

Once we get some practice at this interviewing, we move on to the Circle of Mission. This is anyone who uses our buildings and property; in our case, it's the Boy Scouts, the Come to Believe Narcotics Anonymous group, and our yoga instructor. They regularly spend time in our facilities, but do we really know them? And do they really know us? It's time to sit down with them and ask the same questions we've asked each other.

Next, the Circle of Strength contains those people who are connected to the areas in which we excel. If our music ministry is a strength, then we meet with school and private music teachers. If we're good at feeding the homeless, then we sit down and interview homeless people and administrators at homeless shelters about their needs and those of the community. It may be more difficult to get time with these people, but they will be drawing from real experiences about what our community is lacking and who could step up to help.

The Circle of Outreach is the toughest one...which is why we don't start with it. This is when we begin to talk to STRANGERS, people from perhaps 100 households within a one-mile radius of our church. How do we find these people? We visit the coffee shops, ice cream shops, pizza places...do you detect a food theme here? This is when we say we're doing some research and ask if they'd be willing to answer a few questions about our town. Or perhaps we find our neighbors at the laundromat, a nail or hair salon or barbershop, or even the local pub? Approaching a total stranger is one of **the** toughest things to do, unless you're a natural born salesperson. And this is New England, so it might really freak people out! However, Pastor Liz says we can't be discouraged by refusals, and should try to gather information from as many locals as possible – maybe even those we run into at the playground or the library. To supplement our in-person conversations, we could attach postage-paid flyers with the questions to our neighbors' doors, asking residents to respond either in writing or anonymously online. If you're feeling **really** brave at next Saturday's block party, try asking our neighbors some of these questions...

When it comes to the fifth group, our Competition Circle, we have Pastor Debra's connections to other local clergy to help us make those contacts, and better understand what they believe our residents and our town are missing. She already may have discussed the community's needs with some of them.

Have you noticed what we did NOT ask any of these people:

Do you attend a church? If so, which one?

What do you think of our church?

Would you like to come to our church?

Can you help our church solve its problems?

In today's environment, these kinds of questions almost immediately turn people off! People want to be heard, and served, not pressured. By finding out what they think Machine Shop Village and the surrounding area need, and what skills or talents they or their neighbors might have to meet those needs, we can determine the niche that is best for us to engage.

Maybe people will tell us they want more services and events for singles. Perhaps retired people will say they need better transportation, or more daytime events, or new ways to stretch their dollars further. We certainly can't solve everyone's problems...but we can get a much better idea of the most pressing needs in our community and then match them to our strengths.

And here's where our research pays off: if we begin to better meet people's needs, they just might want to become one of us, and help other people in the same way.

TCC hasn't yet decided to implement anything that Sarah and I have described. We'd definitely have our work cut out for us...but there seems to be very little downside in giving it a try. By welcoming everyone, but marketing to a **specific** group of people, we might indeed over time return to our roots as an active community church flourishing in the heart of this village.

Thankfully, we always have divine help. As the scripture said, “*And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.*”
Amen.

Pam Foote, Deacon

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**May and June
Happenings**
May 19th: Music Sunday
May 19th: Mission Trip Dinner
June 2nd: Graduation Sunday
June 9th: Rummikub

Pastor, Rev. Debra Adams
Music Director, Christopher Wood
Administrative Secretary, Dorothy Taylor

Moderator, Sarah Dunlap
Handbell Choir Director, Bev Valle
Sexton, Doug Beach
