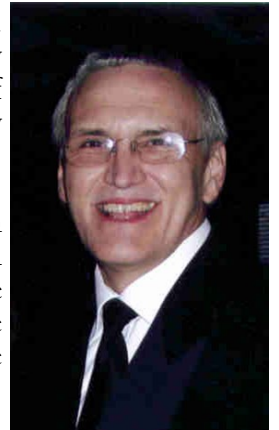




MUSINGS

Our “indivisible” nation is testing the limits of what it means to be one nation with many facets. Our pledge to ensure “liberty and justice for all” is sometimes more platitude than reality. New movements, both local and nationally, are organizing in a desperate attempt to recapture some of indivisibleness that has escaped us, and redefining the meaning of “all” when it comes to liberty and justice.

In such times, the church in general, and New England Church in particular, plays a key role in keeping the discussion and the responses civil and focused. The teachings of Jesus and the Biblical prophets to welcome the stranger, provide for the refugee, and otherwise care for those who are the least of the least are at the heart of our belief system. And though politics and religion are sometimes strange bedfellows, both are about the welfare of people, which means we should all be involved.



Historically, this church has been vitally involved in social issues. In 1858, when the church was organized, I noted in my book *Through These Doors* that New England Church, “building on the foundation of earlier years of advocacy for equal right of slaves, laid the cornerstone of a spiritual endeavor whose doorways would open upon the struggle for human rights in the future. The church’s vow to take up the cause of human dignity when it clashed with the laws, creeds, or theologies that were deemed to be out of step with the intended purpose of the Gospel, would influence the church into the 21st century.” So here we are, the product of our ancestors advocating for human dignity once again when we thought that the equal rights for people of all races, creeds, and gender had already been fought and won. But the reality of life is that nothing ever stays won.

On Saturday, March 2, 1861, two years before the Emancipation Proclamation of January 1, 1863, our NECC forebears drafted a preamble and resolution that was unanimously adopted. The whole of the document is recorded in my book on pages 16-17, but in part it says:

We as Christian men & women solemnly protest in the name of our holy religion against any compromise or concession that shall add to our responsibility for or complicity with the stupendous wrong of American Slavery...We hereby express our approval of the firmness manifested by the representation from this second congressional district, Hon. J. F. Farnsworth and his colleagues...and shall continue devoutly to pray that they may be able to withstand in this evil day, and have done all, to stand.

It is a sad commentary on humanity and society that we are still fighting the battle of prejudice, hatred, and social class. But we are. Evil rears its ugly head again through people with power and money who do what they can to squash and otherwise render to the sidelines people they don’t like. Much of this is fueled by fearmongering and some in unbridled greed and power. All of it needs to be countered in the strongest most loving way possible. Working for human rights wherever they are violated is our most important mission. Jesus, who died because he opposed the political and religious systems that enslaved people, is our model.

Commitment to such causes is not easy, as our ancestors will attest, as they risked their lives to engage in the illegal activity of harboring slaves. As Christians we can do nothing less than embrace our indivisibility in the pursuit of liberty and justice for all.

Gary



Thanks to Jodee Grometer and Deb Pendell for organizing the annual meeting luncheon.

The festive room and the delicious food set the right tone for our meeting.

And thanks to all who helped in setting up and cleaning up.

Remember to set your clocks 1 hour ahead the evening of Saturday, March 11.



From the Moderator ~

Thanks, again, to those of you that have already met our “challenge” of increasing your amount of your pledge by \$25 per month (\$300 per year) to offset our budget deficit. To date, we have received commitments totaling over \$14,000! If you have already taken part in this challenge and have signed one of the “pledge notes” handed out at the Annual Meeting, we need you to take one of the following steps to finalize your increase:

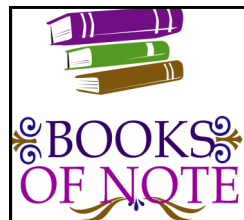
- If you are signed up for automatic withdrawal for your pledge, and you have entered the information YOURSELF through the church’s website, we need you to enter the NEW amount that should be withdrawn from your checking account. Likewise, if you have placed your pledge on your charge account, please make the necessary change to reflect this increase.
- If you have had the OFFICE create your account for automatic withdrawal, please contact Shelley in the office to authorize her to make the change in your account. Once again, if your pledge was charged (and the office handled the transaction for you), let Shelley know that you would like your account charged with the additional donation.
- Or, if you prefer, please feel free to write a check for the full amount (\$300) at any time during the year if you prefer to leave your pledged amount as is.

For you “snowbirds” that had already flown south for the winter before the Annual Meeting, don’t feel left out! It’s not too late to join the challenge. You can do this by increasing your pledge by only \$25 per month - far less than the price of a round of golf in your warm locale!

We appreciate the great response we have already received to our plea. We will be keeping you apprised of our progress as the year continues.

Cheryl Vonhoff

BOOKS OF NOTE



On March 21, Books of Note will be sharing impressions of the book “Mornings on Horseback: The Story of an Extraordinary Family, a Vanished Way of Life and the Unique Child Who Became Theodore Roosevelt.” Come participate in the discussion of this National Book Award-winning biography that tells the story of how young Teddy Roosevelt transformed himself from a sickly boy into the vigorous man who would become a war hero and ultimately president of the United States, told by master historian David McCullough. We will be meeting in the parlor at 7:00 pm. Come join us!

'Conversations With Gary & Mike'



'Conversations with Gary & Mike'-Join us at Ballydoyle Irish Pub in downtown Aurora for conversations on the subjects you wish to discuss. Everyone buys their own food and drink.

LUNCHTIME at 11:30 am

Monday, March 6

Wednesday, March 22

Tuesday, March 14

Thursday, March 30

Gary will lead a discussion during the Lenten season using the book *The Greatest Prayer; Rediscovering the Revolutionary Message of The Lord's Prayer* by John Dominic Crossan. The Midwest Book Review says that this book "provides a satisfying blend of history, scholarship, and theology, in researching the moral responsibilities that come with living a Godly life." Because this will be more discussion than lecture, please read the chapters in advance of the discussion. This will be a five-week series, each one-hour session being held on Sundays at 11:15 am and repeated on Thursdays at 7:00 pm. The Sunday and Thursday discussions will be identical. Session 1: March 5 and 9; Session 2: March 12 & 16; Session 3: March 19 & 23; Session 4: March 26 & 30; Session 5: April 2 & 6. Please read in advance of the discussion:

March 5 & 9: Prologue and Chapter 1

March 12 & 16: Chapters 2 & 3

March 19 & 23: Chapters 4 & 5

March 26 & 30: Chapters 6 & 7

April 2 & 6: Chapter 8 and Epilogue

Everyone is invited, even if you can't read the book. Books are for sale in the church office for \$10.



Spring Clean Up!
Gardeners and outdoor enthusiasts save Saturday, April 8 for a work day around the church campus.

Details next month.



To Deena Sherman & Dave Mertz for organizing our annual Chocolate Festival.



EASTER LILIES ORDER DEADLINE: April 9, 2017

I would like to order Easter flowers to be used as a chancel decoration on Easter Sunday. Anyone who donated a plant, may take it home after the 10:00 am service.

PLEASE PRINT

Lily _____ x \$12.00 each = _____

I have enclosed my check or cash for \$ _____

To Remember _____

Name _____



This year's
Christian Service
Awards went to
Jim Hopp and
Deb Pendell.
We appreciate all
you do for
New England
Congregational
Church.



Gary Hurt
534 Rockwell Rd
Aurora, IL. 60506

Jennifer Kubik
5476 Uinta Way
Denver, CO. 80238

OUTDOOR MINISTRIES 2017 EVENTS



OUTDOOR MINISTRIES ASSOCIATION
United Church of Christ

Go to www.il-outdoorministries.org to register for fantastic camps such as "Grandparents & Me Camp," "Sports Camp," "Worship & Wonder," "Spirit Camp," "Illinois Conference Women's Retreat," "HUG Camp," "Godstock," and "Autumn Adult Retreat." Outdoor Ministries of the Illinois Conference has two first rate camps & retreat centers within 2 hours of Aurora. Pilgrim Park is located in Princeton, IL and Tower Hill Camp is in Sawyer, MI near the Warren State Park Dunes along Lake Michigan. These camps can also accommodate families or groups for overnight stays anytime. Please contact Tara at the ODM office at 815-447-2390 or Mike Daly (mike@newenglandchurch.org) for more information.

FILM SERIES



March 10: Into the West (1992)

Impoverished in Dublin, two youngsters live with their widowed father (Gabriel Byrne), who drowns his grief in drink. Their existence is uplifted by the arrival of their grandfather, who has brought with him a magical horse from legend – Tir na nOg. Presenter: Gary McCann

WOMEN'S FELLOWSHIP

Ladies, it is Scrabble time again! Please join us on Saturday, March 11 at 9:30 am in Friendship Hall for breakfast, followed by our Scrabble tournament. All women of the church are invited, from beginners to experts! We always have fun & hope you will join us; please sign up in the church office.

Women's Circle of Friends



MISSION FAIR



The Board of Missions invites the congregation to celebrate our mission outreach during the Mission Fair to be held Sunday, March 19, in Friendship Hall following the 10:00 am service. Come and see the many programs our members support individually and collectively. Many of these including AAIFP, Giving Bus, Angel Tree, and Mutual Ground are familiar. But how much to you know about Kids Hope? Or the Mini-grant project? Find out the mission activities in which individual members of the congregation are involved. Come add your name and mission involvement to the Mission Writing Wall. There will be refreshments for everyone and special activities for the children. Come join us in this special celebration.



MATCHING GIFTS PROGRAM

Sponsored by the Mission Board of New England Church

“Special Lenten Donation Opportunity”

The NECC Mission Board, through the generous gift of the Dorothy White bequest, is pleased to present a matching gifts program to support our church's mission efforts.

New England Church members, including youth and children, are invited to make a financial donation to an organization NECC currently supports.

A gift of \$1 becomes \$2! A gift of \$25 becomes \$50!
Maximum amount matched per individual is \$200;
Total member donations will be matched up to \$6000
for a goal total of \$12,000+!

Ways to return this form (please include your donation with form):

Mail it to NECC (406 W. Galena Blvd., Aurora, IL 60506)

Drop-off anytime in the church office (leave in Mike Daly's office mailbox)

Drop-off on Sunday morning in the donation stand in the narthex

Bring to the Mission Fair on March 19th in Friendship Hall

Checks made out to NECC, note on the memo line which donation you are contributing to, “Hesed House”, “Mutual Ground” etc.

*Forms need to be in by April 16th, and remember your portion is tax-deductible
 Your name will be submitted to the organizations you support (NECC will record the donation)*

Name: _____

Address: _____

Email or Phone _____

\$_____ **The Aurora Area Interfaith Food Pantry**

\$_____ **Mutual Ground**

\$_____ **Hesed House**

\$_____ **NECC's Teacher Mini-Grants Program**

\$_____ **Feed My Starving Children**

\$_____ **Emmanuel House**

\$_____ **Our Church's Wider Mission, United Church of Christ**

\$_____ **Total gift**

March, 2017
Vol. 3

Tiny Tidings

CHURCH SCHOOL CALENDAR

MARCH 5TH	Emergency Evacuation- Practice
MARCH 12TH	Bible Sunday (3rd Graders receive their own Bible)
MARCH 19TH	Exploring the Bible (Books of the Bible presented by 5th & 6th)
MARCH 26TH	Caring for Others (Life Lesson)-Collect and package donations for Hesus House)

EMERGENCY EVACUATION DRILL



On March 5th, all of the church school children (Pre-school- 4th grade) will practice running through our emergency drills to ensure they all understand the protocol in the event of an actual emergency here at church. The children will review where to go if there was a tornado and where to go in the event of a fire. Please share with your children that this practice is not to scare them but to help them be prepared for an emergency here at church.

BIBLE SUNDAY

On March 12th, our 3rd graders, along with some 4th and 5th graders will be receiving Bibles during the early part of the worship service. Each of the participants have been sent a letter inviting them to the service and to the luncheon following in Friendship Hall. If you have received the letter, please RSVP your confirmation or regrets for lunch and the exact name you want printed on the Bible to Mike Daly, mike@newenglandchurch.org.



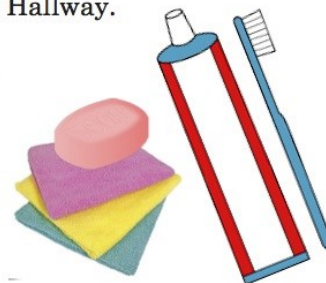
THE ART OF GIVING

Over the past couple of years , the Church School has been incorporating a "Life Lesson" into the curriculum. These lessons help the children make real world connections on how they can live the way Jesus would like us to live. Last year, the church school children donated, collected and packaged 79 care packages for Hesus House. These care packages consisted of various toiletry items for those less fortunate. Since this event resulted in such an amazing donation to Hesus House, we are repeating this act of service again this year. The church school is aiming to reach a new goal of 90 care packages and the church school is asking families and members of the congregation to donate supplies again for this "giving" event. All donations can be dropped off to Audra Darche or in the basket located in the Church School Hallway.

SUGGESTED DONATIONS:

Toothpaste, toothbrush, soap, washcloth, deodorant, mouthwash, and sunscreen

*Mini versions of the above products are encouraged as they are easier to assemble, package, and transport.



BIG
thank you!

On February 5th & 12th, the 1st & 2nd graders here at NECC, participated in a special Church School lesson on The Sacraments (Communion & Baptism). The children were provided with a "show and tell" of the elements along with the symbolism of each. Thank you to Suzy Daly for helping teach these important lessons to our children.



<<< 3RD & 4TH GRADERS
LEARNED TO PLAY BELLS.



DURING THE ANNUAL MEETING THE
CHILDREN MADE VALENTINES FOR SHUT-INS.



<<< SUZY DALY
TAUGHT THE
CHILDREN ABOUT
COMMUNION &
BAPTISM.

PRE K AND K
LEARNED ABOUT THE
GOLDEN RULE. >>>



YOUTH TIDINGS

MARCH, 2017

78TH EDITION

5TH & 6TH GRADE CLASS

- MARCH 5TH** Prep for Bible Sunday lessons - Bible Games
MARCH 12TH BIBLE SUNDAY - teaching 3rd & 4th grade class
MARCH 19TH Class
MARCH 26TH Class

QUOTE OF THE MONTH

We must develop and maintain the capacity to forgive. Those who are devoid of the power to forgive are devoid of the power to love.

MLK Jr.

CONFIRMATION

- MARCH 5TH** Jesus' Ministries
MARCH 12TH Stay in Church/Ushering
 Illinois Holocaust Museum visit (parents & mentors invited)
MARCH 19TH Interviewing Scientists
MARCH 26TH Science in Movies

MARK YOUTH CALENDAR,

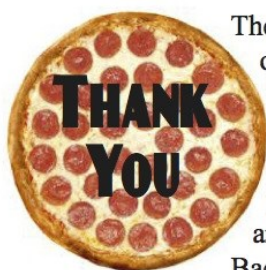
YOUTH HELPERS:

The annual children's Easter Egg Hunt is coming. April 15th here at church. The event starts at 11:00 a.m. We can use youth helpers starting at 10:00 a.m.



SENIOR HIGH FELLOWSHIP

- MARCH 5TH** Fellowship 11:15 to 1:00 at Chestnut House
MARCH 19TH Mission Fair after church
MARCH 26TH Youth Ushering 10:00 service



The youth pizza sale was an other "super" success! This fundraiser supports our summer youth work tour program. We made 130 pizzas and 55 lasagnas! We are ready and eager to get to Back Bay Mission!

FAITH PAPER WRITING

8TH GRADERS – Mark your calendars for the

FAITH PAPER WRITING

Saturday April 22nd at Chestnut House. We'll get back to you with specific time information.



Check out the Illinois Conference UCC summer camp schedule at www.il-outdoorministries.org

ASK ABOUT SPORTS CAMP!



for a March date - depends on the weather.





IT TAKES A LOT OF PEOPLE TO PREPARE AND PACKAGE THE PIZZAS.

THIS YEAR THE
YOUTH ALSO MADE
LASAGNA TO SELL.



H.S. YOUTH ENJOY A LOCK-IN AT CHESTNUT HOUSE.





New England Congregational Church
-UCC
406 W. Galena Blvd. Aurora, IL. 60506
Phone: 630.897.8721
Fax: 630.897.8744
Email: office@newenglandchurch.org
A Caring Church for Thinking People

Visit us on the web
at
www.newenglandchurch.org

Joys & Concerns

Hospitalized:
Lee Thurow, Rich Soltis, Kevin Brock,
Pat Myers



OUR STAFF & CHURCH OFFICERS

Senior Minister: Gary L. McCann
Assistant Minister: Joe Dunham
Minister of Education & Mission: Mike Daly
Office Administrator: Shelley Lund
Preschool Director: Jacquie May
Director of Children's Ministry: Audra Darché
Chancel Choir Director: Jon Warfel
Children's Choir Director: AnDréa James
Children's Choir Accompanist: Beth Ann Miller
Organists/Pianists: Marilyn Parolini, Arlene Thurow
Handbell Director: Cathy Canfield-Jepson
Wedding Coordinator: Nancy Richmond
Nursery Care: Jenni Moses, Susan Kleinwachter
Custodian: John Hett
Building Maintenance: Todd Jones

Moderator: Cheryl Vonhoff
Moderator-elect: Scott Voris
Treasurer: Andy Sprau
Clerk: Judy Lopez