

OUR STAFF & CHURCH OFFICERS

Visit us on the
web
at
www.newenglandchurch.org

New England
Congregational Church
UCC

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*A Caring Church for
Thinking People*

**“God
Is Still
Speaking”**

Senior Minister: Brandon Perrine
Office Administrator: Shelley Lund
Director of Education Ministries: Desiree Guzman
6th-7th Grade Jr. Youth Group: Kathy Kokkinos
8th-12th Grade Youth Group: Lesley Myers
Chancel Choir Director: Paul Laprade
Organist: Marsha Foxgrover
Assistant Organist: Marilyn Parolini
Handbell Director: Cathy Canfield-Jepson
Director of Community Life: Kimberly Adams
Wedding Coordinator: Nancy Richmond
Nursery Director: Jenni Moses
Nursery Attendant: Charlotte Adams
Custodian: John Hett
Building Maintenance: Todd Jones

Moderator: Josh Ream
Moderator-elect: Heather Azem
Treasurer: Andy Sprau
Clerk: Ida Dunham

New England
Congregational Church
UCC
Aurora, Illinois



TIDINGS

Volume 94, Number 5

May 1, 2023

MUSINGS



Dear Friends,

It's hard to believe that we've been together for two years now! How the time flies! And what a joy it was to celebrate resurrection with a full sanctuary, handbells, brass, choir, organ, and flowers. Spring is a time of resurrection and newness, and it feels good to share that together.

The Strategic Visioning Steering Committee has been hard at work and is excited to share something else that's new, our newly adopted strategic vision. Here it is:

We are New England Congregational Church—a diverse, intergenerational community that is redefining how people see church through active participation in making positive change.

We are:

Forward Thinking: With a rich tradition of inclusivity and diversity, we welcome all people—regardless of age, ethnicity, religion, socioeconomic status, mental or physical ability, gender identity or expression, sexual orientation, family/marital status, or political perspective—to create community with us. Rooted in the life and teachings of Jesus, we are not based on any specific creed and take pride in both our traditional setting and our progressive spirit.

Spiritually Nurturing: By meeting people where they are at every stage of life, we facilitate opportunities for lifelong learning, spiritual enrichment, and fellowship. We cultivate positivity; outside-the-box thinking; an appreciation for diverse perspectives; a love of the arts; and honest, authentic community.

Community Leading: We are committed to outreach and passionate about social justice. By listening, adapting, and responding, we partner proactively with our diverse neighborhood and changing downtown to serve those who need it most.

After serving with you for two years and listening to the myriad voices that came together for our listening sessions, this statement seems to beautifully capture the spirit we wish to embody as a community. With new direction for our future, the Steering Committee and Cabinet are working to create an action plan which will help us to live into and embody our new strategic vision.

With newness, spring, and resurrection all around us, it's an exciting time to be a part of this rich and wonderful community!

Blessings and peace,

Brandon Perrine
Senior Minister



Join us for
"Uke Can Do
It!" (part 2)

The Women's
Circle of Friends
will meet at New
England Church for
breakfast in
Friendship Hall on
May 13. After a
shared meal, Meg
Papadolias will step
to the podium to
teach us all how to
play the ukulele.

So invite your
friends and come
enjoy a morning of
music and fun.
Please sign up
online or in the
office.
Come join the band!



The "Actual"
Easter Egg
(tell us you've found
the Easter Egg for
your chance to win a
prize)

CHANGES COMING TO OUR EDUCATION PROGRAM

The last few ministry years have been challenging for churches around the country. Our New England Education team has had to be very flexible and creative to keep things going through the pandemic and to restart our in-person programs in the aftermath of all that uncertainty. We are so grateful to Desiree Guzman, Lesley Myers, Kathy Kokkinos, and Jenni Moses for their leadership this year (and for many previous years of service.)

Though momentum is building again post-pandemic, we still have not returned to the giving levels or attendance that we were used to in the past. In light of the nearly \$77,000 deficit in this year's budget and with the goal of better reflecting our current and future needs, some staffing changes will be made beginning on June 1st of 2023. Desiree's position of Director of Education Ministries will transition from $\frac{3}{4}$ time to $\frac{1}{2}$ time and the scope of her work will shift from overseeing children and youth of all ages, to working specifically with infants – 5th grade. The title for this position will also change to Director of Children's Ministries. The positions of our two Youth Sunday School Teachers, currently filled by Lesley & Kathy, will be eliminated. As will the position of Nursery Director that Jenni Moses holds. The nursery will continue to be staffed by paid hourly attendants. Scheduling of attendants and volunteers will now be handled by our Director of Children's Ministry.

Also, due to lower summer attendance, there will be no church school or nursery care offered this summer. Instead we will focus our time, energy, and budget on planning a strong ministry year beginning in the fall. Desiree will provide new and improved activity folders and bags for children to use during indoor summer worship services, and a bin of fun activities available during our outdoor services. These reductions in cost will allow us to create a new 10 hours/week position for a Director of Youth Ministries. This person will work with youth (6th-12th grade) and their families, and will be responsible for Sunday morning Youth Group, Confirmation, and additional programming outside of Sunday mornings.

Even with the new position, these changes will result in an annual savings of approximately \$18,000. Further, they better align with the goals identified by our strategic visioning process, and will open the door to creating this position with a sole focus on youth programming – something that we believe to be vital for us to be a healthy and vibrant church moving forward.

Though change can sometimes be painful, it is also the way we grow. These changes are not about giving up because of the financial pressures of the moment. They are about investing in a stronger, brighter, more sustainable future.



May, 2023

YOUTH CALENDAR

- | | |
|----------------------------|--|
| MAY 7TH | Confirmation Sunday
Intergenerational Worship
Joy Ringers. |
| MAY 14TH | Youth Group - Mother's Day Gift
Project |
| MAY 21ST | Last Youth Group of the Year
5th Grade Move-up Day |



Confirmation Sunday is designed for everyone. Confirmation Sunday is an opportunity for people of every age to support and encourage our Confirmands. Even if you don't have a personal connection with one of our confirmands, this Sunday is an important one in the life of our whole congregation. So whether your student(s) is not yet Confirmation age, is getting confirmed this year, or was already confirmed, we really hope you can join us for this important Sunday!

HELP US WELCOME NEW YOUTH GROUP MEMBERS:

On the last week of Church School, Sunday May 21st, all 5th graders will be invited to move-up to the youth room so they can get acquainted with our 6th-12th grade group before the fall. May gets busy, but it's really important that as many of our youth group members as possible are present to greet these new members and make them feel welcome. Thanks in advance for your help!



AN AMAZING YEAR FOR JOY RINGERS YOUTH BELL CHOIR:

What an amazing year of music from our Youth Bell Choir the Joy Ringers! Thank you to all the students who participated, all the parents who supported them, and especially to our Bells Director, Cathy Canfield Jepson. You built a great amount of momentum and enthusiasm this year and we can't wait to see what you do next!

2023 HIGH SCHOOL OR COLLEGE GRADUATES:

If you have a student in your family who is graduating from high school or college in 2023 and you would like them recognized in the Tidings and in a New England Church bulletin in June, please send your student's name and any basic info about their future plans that you'd like to be included to desiree@newenglandchurch.org



NO SERVICE TRIP THIS SUMMER, BUT STAY TUNED:

Based on the responses we got back from our Summer Service Trip Survey, at this time we don't have enough students available during the two possible weeks we were targeting to get a service trip off the ground. HOWEVER, there was a lot of interest in participating in a trip like this at some point, so please stay tuned. We are committed to offering an opportunity like this some time in the future. Also, watch your email for communications about other possible summer activities.

From the Students of the Beloved Community Committee

Aurora history starts with the McCarty brothers' two mills in the 1830's. By 1850 Black folks had begun to arrive. Yet it wasn't until 2005 that Dennis Buck would publish the first chronicle of our city's Black history, *From Slavery to Glory*. You can get a copy at the Historical Society store, 20 E. Downer Pl. They also offer a startling book, just out in 2022, *Blackface: Minstrelsy in Aurora, Illinois*, by Alejandro Benavides. Did you know minstrel shows were the rock concerts of their time? If you prefer an upbeat book about Black Aurora, check out *Gentle Spirit*, a book about the life of Marie Wilkinson. You can order or buy it at the Marie Wilkinson Food Pantry at 834 N Highland Ave.



Aurora was often a microcosm of what was happening in the nation, both for good and ill. You might say our current era is focused on learning what in past eras our culture failed to see. That is the learning we Students of the Beloved Community are doing and inviting you to do.

The turnout for April's field trip to the "The Negro Tourist Green Book" Exhibit was one of our biggest attendances. New England is clearly on board in this journey of understanding. Next will be our annual attendance at the Juneteenth celebration on June 17 at Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Park, 42 N. Farnsworth Ave. We will go as a group. It will be a fun chance to experience our Black neighbors in their world, not ours. Save the date.



The Orion Ensemble will conclude the celebration of its 30th season with an exciting all-Schubert program on Sunday, May 14, at 7:00 pm in the NECC sanctuary. This is an event not to be missed!

The featured work will be Franz Schubert's Octet in F Major. Joining Orion core artists Florentina Ramniceanu, violin; Kathryne Pirtle, clarinet; and Judy Stone, cello, will be guest musicians Mathias Tacke, previously violinist with the esteemed Vermeer Quartet; Robert Kassinger, bassist with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra; Gregory Flint, principal French horn with the Elgin Symphony Orchestra; and Andrei Muravev, bassoonist with the Chicago Sinfonetta. The violist will be Stephen Boe, a frequent guest with the Ensemble.

Orion core member, pianist Diana Schmuck, will open the program with Schubert's Songs, transcribed for solo piano by Franz Liszt.

Orion musicians will host a champagne reception for performers and concertgoers in the narthex following the concert. All are welcome.

Concert tickets will be available at the door or at www.orionensemble.org for \$30/adult, \$25/senior, \$15/student.



Some of the Fun
Pictures taken
at the
Easter
Photo Booth



Open House

The Joy Ringers youth bell choir will host an open house in Friendship Hall after church on May 21.

Please join our young ringers for coffee and treats, while they demonstrate how they make their beautiful music. They will even show anyone who is interested how to ring a bell!



Hymn Suggestions?

Do you miss singing a favorite hymn?

Send your recommendations to Brandon (brandon@newenglandchurch.org). He's always happy to accommodate special requests!

2023 AURORA PRIDE PARADE



March with our NECC Group in the 2023 Aurora Pride Parade!

The Parade is happening on Sunday, June 11. We will be gathering at church after worship service & walking down to the downtown area together. The Parade Step off time is at noon. We will be wearing colored custom NECC shirts; Sign up to join this fun group and order a shirt today in the

Marketplace or online at: <https://www.signupgenius.com/go/9040F4AABAD2BA75-auroral> T-shirt order deadline is May 23. Shirts will be handed out at church on June 4. If you have questions, contact Kimberly Adams (kimberly@newenglandchurch.org).

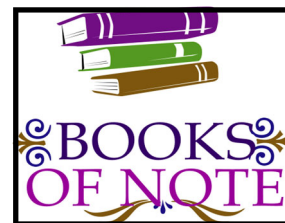
BOOKS OF NOTE

The Books of Note book discussion group is open to all. New members welcome at any time. Attend via Zoom on the third Tuesday of the month from 7:00- 8:00pm.

Read one book or all. It's up to you! Books are suggested by participants and voted on twice a year. Contact Sue Reimer to obtain a book and the Zoom link.

May 16: "Book Woman's Daughter" (The Book Woman of Troublesome Creek, 2) by Kim Michelle Richardson.

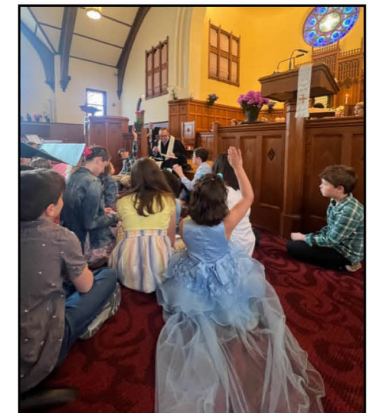
As the daughter of the blue-skinned, Troublesome Creek packhorse librarian, Honey and her family have been hiding from the law all her life. But when her mother and father are imprisoned, Honey realizes she must fight to stay free, or risk being sent away for good. Picking up her mother's old packhorse library route, Honey begins to deliver books to the remote hollers of Appalachia. Honey is looking to prove that she doesn't need anyone telling her how to survive. But the route can be treacherous, and some folks aren't as keen to let a woman pave her own way. If Honey wants to bring the freedom books provide to the families who need it most, she's going to have to fight for her place, and along the way, learn that the extraordinary women who run the hills and hollers can make all the difference in the world. 352 pages . Published 2022.



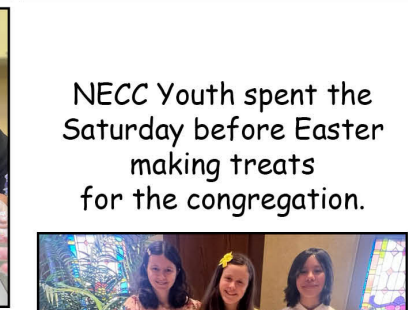
The current worship schedule will remain in place during the summer months.

The church office hours will be from 9:00 am-Noon, M-F, beginning Tuesday, May 30 through Friday, September 1.

Children's Time on Palm Sunday



Children's Time on Easter



NECC Youth spent the Saturday before Easter making treats for the congregation.



Tiny Tidings

MAY, 2023



CHURCH SCHOOL CALENDAR

- MAY 7TH** Intergenerational Worship
Confirmation Sunday - Joy
Ringers
- MAY 14TH** Mother's Day Craft Workshop
during Church School
- MAY 21ST** Last Week of Church School
5th Grade Move-up to Youth
Group

5TH GRADE MOVE-UP DAY

On the last week of Church School, Sunday May 21st, all 5th graders will be invited to move-up to the youth room so they can get acquainted with our 6th-12th grade group before the fall. Students in this age group begin in the youth room at 10:00, instead of starting in the sanctuary and being dismissed after Children's Time. Email reminders will be sent directly to all parents of 5th grade students. Welcome new youth group members!

CONFIRMATION SUNDAY IS DESIGNED FOR CHURCH SCHOOL KIDS TOO!

Confirmation Sunday is an important Sunday for younger kids to be in church. Watching our older students declare their intentions to live as contributing members of a faith community and sharing their faith projects can serve as a powerful example for younger kids. It's also an opportunity for people of every age to support and encourage our Confirmands. Even if you don't have a personal connection with one of our confirmands, this Sunday is an important one in the life of our whole congregation, so I really hope you can join us!



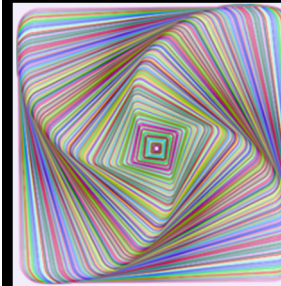
*Confirmation
Sunday*

NO WEEKLY SUMMER CHURCH SCHOOL THIS YEAR:

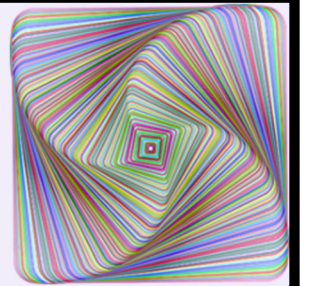
Because summer schedules are so busy and summer church school attendance is often low and unpredictable, we will not be holding weekly summer church school classes this year. We will instead be focusing our energy and our budget dollars on planning for a strong, dynamic program for the fall. We will provide updated activity bags that children can use during indoor services in the summer and also bins of outdoor activities to enjoy during outdoor worship. Watch your email for communication about other summer opportunities.

THANK YOU CHURCH SCHOOL VOLUNTEERS!

The following volunteers gave of their time through-out the 2022-23 school year to make our program possible: **Marie Wendt, Emily Morales, Jana Ream, Diane Ellis, and Robin Schmidt.** Thank you so much for your generous gift of time and energy to support our kids!



VOLUNTEER VORTEX



Sponsored by the Board of Community Outreach

We at NECC, who desire to make the world a better place, will post opportunities to volunteer in this section of the Tidings every month. In May, two of our strategic partners are asking for our participation as described below:



The Board of Community Outreach is holding our annual donation drive to benefit Mutual Ground Aurora. Mutual Ground is a non-profit local organization with the mission "to empower individuals, families, and communities thereby eliminating domestic and sexual violence through education, awareness, and life changing-services". The *new* household items collected through this donation drive will go directly to the women and children at Mutual Ground, who are receiving emergency residential assistance as they are seeking safety from domestic violence or sexual abuse. Stop by the Marketplace table to pick up a list of requested items. (or view the items via this link under the "wish list" tab <https://mutualground.org/inkind-donations>)

Financial contributions are always welcome. Your generosity helps us to serve those in need! Donations are due no later than June 4.

The Aurora Area Interfaith Food Pantry

The mission of the AAIFP is "to help end local hunger by ensuring everyone has enough access to nourishing food, thereby helping our overall community stay healthy and productive." They accomplish this through food distribution programs, where those in need select foods from the pantry or the pantry brings food to those who cannot come in person. There are opportunities to volunteer at the pantry or at off-site locations, called mobile pantries, or pop-up shops. Volunteers must be 14+ years old.

The needs facing our neighbors are growing. And while the AAIFP is meeting the needs of many in our community, they cannot do it alone. They depend greatly on volunteers to help achieve their mission! Volunteers are vital to ensure nutritious food reaches those facing hunger in our community.

The Aurora Area Interfaith Food Pantry is hosting 3 Garden Volunteer Orientations at the pantry this month:

Tuesday, May 2, 4:30 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.

Thursday, May 4, 4:30 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.

Saturday, May 13, 9:30 a.m. – 10 a.m.

In addition, AAIFP will host one New Volunteer Open House to help in the Pantry:

Monday, May 15, noon - 1 p.m.

Please RSVP with the date you can attend. Send an email to rdunnigan@aurorafoodpantry.org for the Garden Volunteer Orientations.

Send an RSVP to mrobles@aurorafoodpantry.org for the New Volunteer Open House.



Marcy Robles
Volunteer Coordinator
1110 Jericho Road, Aurora IL 60506
(630) 692-3056