



FIRST CHURCH CHATTER

October, 2020

This is another edition of our church newsletter. We thank those members and friends who have contributed stories, biographies, reflections, letters, poems and encourage any who wish to contribute to our church newsletter. As you can read in this edition, we have many talented friends and church members. We would like to get to know all of you better and encourage you to send your thoughts, poems, stories to us to publish. Thanks so much.

The newsletter will be printed at the beginning of each month and be sent via email to church members and friends, be sent by mail to those who would prefer a written copy and be available in the foyer for all to pick up when the church is reopened. In the meantime, we will deliver the Chatter to those who would prefer paper copy or don't receive email.

We are always looking for stories, poems, thoughts to contribute. If you have notices about upcoming events which you would like published, please let Anne or Jody know and we will try to include. We try to publish by the beginning but realistically often it is sent out by the 10th or so. Many thanks to John Green for digitally assembling the Chatter.

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Eternal Spirit

Based on Matthew 10:16-31, September 13, 2020
Rev. Mark Seifried online for First Church
Williamstown

“What in the world have I gotten myself into?”

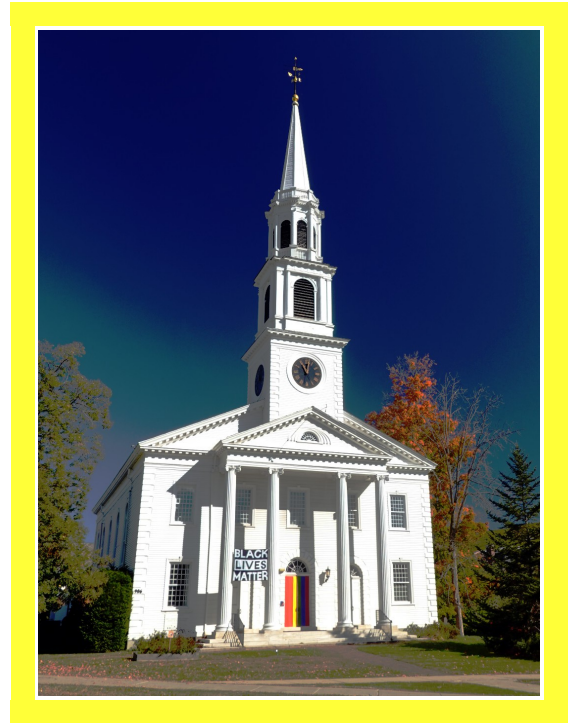
That’s what I was wondered when I was invited to lie in the middle of the classroom floor with students all around me. I felt like a nude model in a figure drawing class, except I was fully clothed ... and it was a Sunday evening, multi-generational, religious education class at the church where I was ordained.

The leader was helping students explore what it meant to be spiritual beings. She said that we can tell a lot about people’s spirits by the energy that they emit. So, she asked me to lie on the floor. She held these two rigid metal wires that looked something like wire hangers, over my body, one in each hand. And they danced, especially over my chest and my head. She then went onto explain chakras, the energy centers in our bodies. She explained that people have different vibrations that they give off. She said that we store spiritual energy in different parts of their bodies. She went onto talk about her Reiki and massage practices that help open our chakras for greater mind-body-spirit connections and a sense of well-being. She also spoke about meditation helping to keep our spiritual energy in balance.

Have you ever spent time with someone who just barely touched you and you felt an immediate connection and an unexpected calm wash over you? Have you ever been in the same space with someone and felt fear? Have you been with someone who could drain the energy from the room? I’m sure you have experienced being able to sense people’s spirit without knowing anything about them. We all have different energy because we all have different spirits. I say “spirit.” My friend Nancy says, “soul,” as in, “He is soulful.” Or when someone is unable to control their anger, we say, “That poor soul.”

For a long time, the mainline church, of which we are a part, had a really awkward relationship with the human spirit. We were committed to science and highbrow theology so we avoided matters of the soul. We talked about avoiding sin, but we never really talked about how to stay spiritually healthy. And the Holy Spirit scared the daylight out of us. The Holy Spirit/Ghost was for Pentecostals who speak in tongues and snake-handling primitive Baptists. In order for us

to be whole and balanced spirit people, we have to reclaim the connection with the human spirit and the Holy Spirit of God that we lost with the Enlightenment and institutionalism of the church.



We can train our souls, you know. Buddhists align their spirits through the practices of acting with loving kindness and compassion toward all things. The idea is that, even if you are not naturally empathic, you can work on improving your natural energy to have a more balanced soulful existence.

So that you know what I am talking about, I want to practice something with you for a couple of moments. This practice is the Buddhist form of meditation called *maître*. The philosophy behind this practice is that the quality of loving kindness is already within each person. It is that energy which God used to birth and sustain creation. I say practice the same way I would say that Ed practices the playing the organ for proficiency or the way Ann practices yoga or the way the Red Sox practice baseball. If you don’t practice tapping into the richness of your spirit regularly and intentionally, it is unlikely that a year from now you will be any more peaceful or closer to God.

This is similar to what we know about exercise and the human body. Move it or lose it. Some folks experience this with the mind. If you want to stay sharp, engage the mind in deep thought, puzzles, games and other kinds of mental enrichment.

So, let's do a little soul practice. I invite you to begin by finding the place of loving kindness inside your being (Christians call this the indwelling Spirit). Just breathe and drink in the spirit of contentment knowing that you are a beloved child of God. If that doesn't come easily, you might think about a happy memory or a special place that makes you feel one with Creation. Just take a minute to breathe and let love take over your breath and your being. You are one with the Spirit of God.

Drawing upon this source of love, bring to mind someone about whom you deeply care, and send loving kindness toward them.

Now direct this love toward a casual friend or colleague, someone just beyond your inner circle. Continue drawing from your inner source of loving kindness and let it flow toward someone about whom you feel neutral or indifferent, a stranger.

Remember someone who has hurt you. Bless them. Send them loving kindness, which is the love of God that they need for their healing and for yours. Gather all these people, the folks who are with us in worship, and yourself into the stream of love and hold them here for a few moments.

Finally, let the flow of loving kindness widen to encompass all beings in the universe. I invite you back into our worship with an open heart, open eyes, and an open mind. As your pastor, I care deeply about your spiritual wellness. Because of that concern, I encourage you to have a daily spiritual practice, tapping into the serenity that God offers every moment of every day.



I'm not sure you have ever been told this, but the first place to begin healing a lagging spirit is by forgiving yourself, forgiving those with whom you are upset or estranged, even forgiving the world for all its cruelty. You don't need an apology to forgive someone. Jesus taught more about forgiveness than anything else, so I cannot emphasize forgiveness enough. Your

spiritual wellness is a matter of self-will. Clean your heart daily. Clean it. Forgive, forgive, forgive. Offer apologies. Be kind, remain kind. Think well of others, once, twice, again and again. If someone tells you something bad about someone, send the energy of loving kindness to both the one sharing the news and the one about whom they are speaking. Clean your heart.

Remember Jesus' admonition: "Do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul; rather fear the one who can destroy both soul and body." In other words, you are the only one who has control over your body, mind, and soul. You have control over your own soul unless you relinquish control to someone else. Jesus' invitation is to focus on love because where there is love, God also is there.

The spiritualist, Jeff Foster put it this way: 1 When you love absolutely, when you recognize yourself in the other in the most profound way, time and space are absolutely irrelevant, for there is no separate 'you' who loves or does not love. Even when the body ceases to function, even when breathing stops, even upon what we call 'death', this love beyond time never changes, never disappears, never weakens... What do we mean by the word 'love', then?

Is love a thought, a feeling, a sensation, a temporary pleasant state or fleeting experience? Well, all of those appearances come and go, and whatever the word 'love' points to, does not come and go, does not disappear, and does not appear to you as form. Love is another word for the consciousness that you are prior to form – who you truly are in essence, beyond your story, beyond time and space... In the recognition that I AM what you are, the understanding follows that neither time nor space can come 'between' us, for in truth, there is no 'us' at all, and no 'between' – and the remaining reality is too intimate to even speak about...

The human spirit is both a wonderful thing and a thing of mystery. A couple of weeks ago, I met with Adrian Dunn. She handed me a piece of paper and said, "This is a gift for you." She told me that her sister had written the poem that was on the paper. She told me that she is living in northern California. She has been forced to keep her house closed up because of all the smoke from the wildfires, magnifying health issues and the struggles of social distancing, not to mention the fear of the fire spreading and consuming her home.

Adrian's sister is named Colleen West. She is a psychotherapist in the San Francisco Bay Area, specializing in treating trauma and she is a writer.

The words Colleen penned are surprisingly buoyant given the conditions in which she is living. Even though she is frightened and ill at ease, her words speak to the core of who she is – specifically her loving, grateful and graceful spirit. Her spirit, not her mind, offers the universe praise instead of the frustration and fury that one might expect. Listen now to “Praise Blue Breathable Sky as Wildfires Burn,” By Colleen West:

Just for today, or for this hour—
praise this deep breath,
praise it down to the soles of my feet
praise both my capable feet,
may they keep trudging onward
through these dark and fetid days



Praise my resilience—
may I always come up,
after going down
as a full breath of air
can float you back to the surface
ready to inhale again

Praise human connection—
through text, phone, skype, even zoom
praise the human voices
of my friends my sisters my kids
praise the jerky facetime call with the grandkids
demonstrating the hula hoop

Praise the beleaguered garden outside my door—
praise the roots reaching down into dry soil
praise pale leaves struggling skyward
praise the scarlet hibiscus that smiles at me

with unmistakable hope



Praise love—
that of new shoots loving the sun
that of my cells absorbing clean air
that of your temperate eyes reaching for mine,
filled with fear
the love of your phone call connecting with mine,
and your tears loving my open heart

Praise be the thread that somehow
connects us—
across states, across time zones,
across oceans, across smoky skies
praise this blue blue pen
and this precious lung of blue air

Praise God! Praise God for Colleen's beautiful
sou! Praise God for the soul that is you! Praise the
Spirit for the bonds of faith that unite us! Praise the
love that fashions and sustains the universe!

As you move through the world, beloved, may
you accept the invitation from God to find ways of
extending loving kindness to yourself and others in
practical ways. Send praise kindness into the
universe with heart-filled intention. It will, in turn
both carry you to the heart of God, and it will come
back to you as grace to strengthen your spirit.
Remember that love is the very foundation of the
universe. You are simply a conduit for the inflow
and outflow of love that is Eternal Spirit.

Amen.

Chatter team thought that you might be interested in knowing the members of each of our volunteer teams and a little information about what they are working on each month.

Stewardship meets once a month

Susan Yates*
Julie MacDonald*
Steve Chick
Terry Plumb-Clark
Allen Rork
Mae Burris-Wells

Delegate Representative

Katherine Myers

Nominating Committee and team members are:

Magnus Bernhardsson
Liz Costley

Education Ministry meets once a month

Dick Steege*
Leon Aalbert
Lyn Rork
Mac Bellner

Personnel Committee and the team members are:

Marilyn Faulkner
Liz Costley
Katherine Myers

Outreach Ministry meets once a month and the team members are:

Monica Mackey
Sylvia Logan
Teague Murphy
Hugh Guilderson
Anne Short
Mark Robertson*

Deacon Ministry meet once a month and the team members are:

Carrie Waara
Margaret Oxtoby
Sam Smith
Margaret McComish*
Jinx Tong
Lynne DeLay
Dick Markham

Fellowship Task Force meet as needed to have conversations about upcoming events.

Those involved are:

Carolyn Behr
Susan Briggs
Barbara Hadden

Stewardship church chatter, October 2020

The stewardship team has a plan to temporarily cover the louvers in the steeple to prevent water and snow infiltration. The steeple has been leaking significant water over time. The damage can be seen at the back wall of the sanctuary and front foyer. The plan is to have work done before winter.

The town building inspector and fire chief met with Susan Yates and Kevin Racek (architect from Centerline architects). The Church was able to delay the completion of the fire suppression system until now, but consistent with the agreement made with the town 5 years ago, we need to begin completion of the fire suppression system now. Stewardship plans to use the remainder of the meetinghouse campaign funds together with our 2020 budget to begin the project. Next year's budget requests will include the funds to complete the sprinkler system. The sprinkler plans are being finalized this week so a contract can be signed. An engineering study was done to evaluate the sanctuary heating system. The current system circulates air from the sanctuary into the basement where it is heated and returned to the sanctuary. Our current type of closed system does not adequately remove viruses/bacteria from the air. Fortunately, improved filters can be placed in the duct-work as well as an UV light that will eliminate greater than 90% of infectious particles. Costs and timing of installation are under evaluation.

Our new building manager, Keith Nogueira, has been busy improving our building and grounds. We have a battery-operated mower and hedge trimmer and he is maintaining the grounds. After a walk through of the property with Pastor Mark several areas were identified that needed repair including downspouts, bulkhead, and dead trees. The trees will be removed in the winter when the ground is frozen. Other repairs are either completed or scheduled to be done. Night lights were placed in the back hallway for safety.

The Annual Giving Campaign will be chaired by Julie MacDonald and planning is underway. An additional 200 masks were purchased from Berkshire Seamsters, a group of Latina women in Pittsfield who began sewing masks after being laid off because of the Covid epidemic. 100 of the masks have nose wires for glasses wearers and 100 are without. The masks are available at the back entrance by Elayne's office and are intended for use by people who arrive without a mask and need one to enter the building.

Education Team

The Education Team has been deliberating on just how to reach the young people in our congregation given the impossibility to getting together. Pastor Mark sent out a letter to parents inviting them for a brown bag lunch to discuss ideas for activities with little response.

In our talks we have decided to follow through with the Flying Deer program in part for any future programs for a Forest Sunday School. Anne O'Connor has been closely connected with the Flying Deer people to become familiar with their curriculum and considering ways to use them in our program.

Presently, we are looking forward to engaging youth through Zoom activities.

If you haven't already done so, take the picture book walk beginning at St John's and concluding at First Church. It is impressive and a wonderful experience for all ages.

Outreach Team Report

Over the summer, Outreach members worked with congregants and community partners to develop actions of solidarity in response to the killing of George Floyd. Those have included the organization of weekly Friday vigils in Field Park and the display of a new Black Lives Matter banner on the front of the church (courtesy of Elizabeth Smith), online prayer meetings with St. John's Episcopal, a parent discussion group on the book *Raising White Kids: Bringing Up Children in a Racially Unjust America*, and urging FCC members to sign the Not In Our County (NIOC) organizational pledge through Multicultural Bridge. This fall, we have continued that work, with Outreach joining others

involved in the NIOC implementation committee (led by Hugh Guilderson and Adrian Dunn) to consider short- and long-term church-wide actions to live up to our collective pledge to help create safer, more integrated communities for all residents in Berkshire County. Outreach has also maintained its focus on support for our immigrant neighbors through an operations grant to the Berkshire Immigrant Center, advocacy for the Driving Families Forward campaign in support of the Work & Family Mobility Act (which, while not passed in July, will remain on our radar), and direct support for six local immigrant families with connections to FCC. Finally, inspired by Rev. Mark, Outreach members have committed to a visioning process this fall to consider how we might refine the focus of the team's ministry to have a greater impact in the community. We look forward to moving through this discernment process with our fellow congregants.

The Williams Inn: Then and Now (continued)

by Gail Burns

Autumn, 2019

The Inn at Field Park

In December of 1971, the Town voted to rezone the seven acre DKE property as a Tourist Business District to allow the construction of a new Williams Inn there. However, the town did not endorse any specific design, or even the Treadway Companies as the developer. There followed a long battle over the design as the desire for architectural excellence competed with the need for corporate solvency, with at least three designs —variously described disparagingly as “modern,” “neo-Georgian,” “ordinary,” and “just another motel” — rejected by the college and the town even before the zoning was changed.

Williams students circulated a petition stating: “The three designs submitted to date have been disruptive to the community in their unimaginative and motel-like design and location on the site...” and urged the College trustees to demand “a more sophisticated design which reflects more of the value of the present Williams Inn (a gathering place for the community) and makes a positive rather than negative contribution to the architecture of Williamstown.”

In 1973 Berkshire Associates in partnership with the Treadway Companies signed a 25-year lease with the college and ground was broken in April of 1973, with L. G. Treadway turning over the first golden shovel-full of dirt. (The shovel was given to Eugene Kemp, the Inn's gardener of 35 years.) The final design was described as "essentially modern" while incorporating a white clap-board-style vinyl exterior and a portico.

The Inn at Field Park opened in the spring of 1974 and the exterior design was never popular. UpCountry, a magazine published by The Berkshire Eagle, "found the Inn's interior and conveniences tolerable for all the blandness of its exterior." The Eagle also ran the headline "Motel Replaces First Inn in Treadway Chain." The Sabin Mansion on the south side of Field Park, home to Pine Cobble School since 1943, had burned down in 1970 and was replaced with a very modern structure in 1973, so that the "entrance" to Williamstown changed substantially in less than five years.

G. Treadway died in 1977, at the age of 93, and is buried in Westlawn Cemetery, probably aware that his flagship inn was rapidly sinking due to poor management. That same year Plymouth hoteliers Carl and Marilyn Faulkner came to the Berkshires to consider purchasing a different property. "As we were exploring the region we had a flat tire," Carl Faulkner recalled. "And after I'd fixed it we stopped at the Treadway Williams Inn so I could wash up. I came back out and said to Marilyn, 'Forget the other place, this place will go under in a year. We're going to buy the Williams Inn.'" The day before the Faulknors took possession in December of 1979, the Treadway Companies closed the Inn and dismissed the staff. "I couldn't hire anyone for two weeks or they would lose their unemployment insurance," Carl explained. "But staff from our inns in Plymouth came up to help me out so we could keep the Inn open and honor prior bookings because for every day you're closed you lose a month's worth of business."

Once the Faulknors had the Inn staffed again they focused fully on making the business a part of the community. The Faulknors focused on booking bus tours and conferences, bringing business to the town and region., Carl recalls, "One of the reasons Williamstown appealed to me was its location three hours west of Plymouth. That's about how long a bus tour will travel before the next stop, then the passengers will enjoy a meal, take in the sights, and stay the night before moving on."

Beginning in the late 1980s the Faulknors started considering building a new wing off the north side of the Inn. "We had 104 rooms, and an average bus tour would book 100," Carl explained. "We needed more rooms so we could book tours and have rooms left over for regular customers." That addition was finally built in 2003.

During the 35 years the Faulknors ran the Inn it returned to its reputation as a thriving business providing steady employment, as well as welcoming area non-profit organizations for a variety of functions. Carl and Marilyn were awarded the Good Citizen Award from the Williamstown Community Chest in 1998.

The Faulknors paid off the mortgage the Treadway Companies had taken with the college in the 1970s and eventually became the sole owners of the Williams Inn building. They sold off their other properties to focus on Williamstown.

In 2008 the college, which still owned the land at Field Park, approached the Faulknors about acquiring the Inn. After some years of negotiation, the Faulknors sold the Inn to Williams and retired in 2014.

101 Spring Street

By that time discussion of the college's constructing a "boutique hotel" at the south end of Spring Street was public. The college had employed Pinnacle, a hospitality management group, who concluded that there was a need for only 60-80 rooms in a new Williams Inn, as opposed to the 128 rooms at Field Park. Several different firms operated the Field Park location for the college from 2014 and 2019.

In a repeat of the early 1970s the college had to approach the town for approval to expand the Village Business District in order to build on the 8.5 acre lot adjacent to Weston Field. The existing inn was deemed too costly to renovate and the renovation would have affected many local jobs. The once "ideal" site on Field Park morphed into an area "on the outskirts" of the campus.



The Inn at Field Park closed its doors on July 31, 2019. Construction of the 64-room Inn on Spring Street which had started in 2016, was completed in 2019, at a cost of \$32 million in time for an opening on August 15, 2019. As it has for most of the Inn's history, the College owns the Inn and the land on which it sits. It is managed by the Waterford Hotel Group, which had assumed final management of the Inn at Field Park and handled the transition. The new Inn is designed in three sections: the main house, bunkhouse, and barn, each with public spaces on the ground floors and guest rooms upstairs. The sections are distinguished with different architectural styles and different siding, with red barnwood-style siding for the restaurant.

As of this writing, the furnishings of the Inn at Field Park have been sold at a community-wide tag sale to benefit local organizations. A November 7, 2019 article by Scott Stafford of The Berkshire Eagle reported, that, "demolition of the old structure could take place next summer, but the timing depends on the extent of hazardous material abatement needed at the site... Williams College spokesman Greg Shook said there has been no determination on how the site will be developed in the future, although one option that has been proposed is a new college art museum." Only time will tell!



October Birthdays

These folks have birthdays during October. If you see them wish them a Happy Birthday.

- 1st Bob Behr
- 2nd Anne O'Connor, Lynne DeLay
- 3rd David Langston
- 9th Monica Mackey
- 10th Mae Burris-Wells
- 15th Jonathan Vankin
- 20th Judy Wright
- 27th Susie Smith
- 31st Hugh Guilderson

Request from D.M.

Doris M. has a great many tree leaves in her yard, and requests that anyone needing leaves for mulch or ground cover give her a call.