



FIRST CHURCH CHATTER

October 2023

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, photos, to us to publish. Thanks so much.

The newsletter is sent out during the month, and can be sent via email to church members and friends, and be sent by mail to those who would prefer a written copy.

We are always looking for stories, poems, photos, thoughts to contribute. If you have notices about upcoming events which you would like published, please let Carrie Waara or [Jody Green](#) know and we will try to include. Thanks.

In today's Chatter:

[Heard at Church Council, 8/29/23](#)

by Margy O'Connor

[Moses Yearns to Fall Asleep](#)

by Deborah Brown

[October and November Birthdays](#)

Heard at Church Council 8/29/23

By Margy O'Connor

Welcoming Students Back

- Council met in a space being filled with goods for the two week Giant Tag Sale which coincides with the start of the Williams College year. This major event for FCC is a way to interact with students as they furnish their rooms and gather school supplies from items donated by last year's students in June, plus other donations from our members.
- Council reviewed some sidewalk preliminaries such as the electric fan sale, and handing out bundles of closet hangers with FCC welcome cards "with our QR code." Carolyn Behr and Bridget Spann made 50 Goody Bags with the welcome cards for Williams' Community Resource Fair. Rev. Deanna and several members of Council were to host a table at the Resource Fair. Our Welcome Students banner is hanging out front.
- The Tag Sale was scheduled for six separate days this year, with International students, First Year and then First Generation students invited on separate days. Then came the entire college community, when droves more students sought the recycled tall mirrors, lamps, chairs, dorm decorations, bedding, etc. The last day of the Sale on 9/9 invites the wider community in search of the above plus kitchen and household furnishings and furniture, as well as the Parlor Sale of fine jewelry and decorative items.
- Items not sold are donated to the Salvation Army and Goodwill.
- Now organized by Hilary Green and the college Give It Up group, the Sale relies on significant volunteer hours from many members of our congregation. Thank You All!

Promoting Church Events

- Moderator Betsy Burris pointed out that our way of promoting Church-related events to the wider community, or of inviting volunteers and participants is "haphazard." We have the Friday Eblast for our congregation, but how to attract new folks? For instance, we need to really promote upcoming Second Hour events outside our doors.
- Earlier in the year the Church joined the Williamstown Chamber of Commerce which publishes a weekly email of local events on Thursdays. What are their guidelines, and who do we contact?
- Rev. Deanna urged making fuller use of social media. We have a website and a Facebook page, but we need to master press releases, look into Instagram and "put a QR code on everything." (Full disclosure: QR codes really intimidate me. But they could be an effective way to reach the younger generations we so sorely lack.)
- Council agreed, we need a P.R. or Communications Committee to find up-to-date best ways to promote what we have to offer. If you are versed in social media or know someone who is, volunteer to join with Betsy, Rev. Deanna, and Lynn Chick to get the word out about First Congo. We have lots to offer!

Sunday School Update:

- Four children from two families came to church in August! Leon Aalberts has been cheerfully greeting them and leading them off for Sunday School before the sermon, but it wasn't simple. The children were 3, 6, 9 and 12 yrs old, quite a spread of interests and needs! Another young couple has an infant. A delightful sight.
- We dream of young families and a thriving Sunday school, but where to start, and how to attract more young families back to the church? We hope to begin with just two Sunday school classrooms, for Readers and Non-Readers. Rev. Deanna is looking into the possibilities for Sunday School curricula.
- The Nursery is already set up, and just needs a suitable part-time caregiver. Then advertise that childcare is available!
- If a Sunday School and young families are next to your heart, please volunteer to work on the next steps. Meet and talk to the families to learn their wishes and ideas. And we all need to make them feel truly welcomed and valued here.

Angel Tree Giving:

- This invitation to give in the Christmas season has been managed for years by Marilyn Faulkner, with the annual Angel Tree set up in the front foyer. She is now retiring and we thank Marilyn for her inspired vision and years of service!
- The Salvation Army and Louison House are now mostly requesting money and gift cards rather than actual toys or clothing. Carrie Waara noted that the Angel Tree, decorated with tags reminding us of specific community needs, was a lovely prompt each Advent to give locally to others we don't know. Elizabeth Smith and the Outreach Team will create a new plan, maybe keeping the tree, and the helpful reminder tags.

Pastor's Update:

- Rev. Deanna has been meeting weekly with the church Moderator (Betsy), Treasurer (Lynne DeLay) and Clerk (Lynn Chick) learning our history and past practices. This team has been actively solving problems that have come to her attention. She also meets regularly with each staff member and has reviewed work schedules, job descriptions, tasks and responsibilities.
- Rev. Deanna urged us to take another look at our priorities for our space, given our church goals and mission. For instance, what is the minimum number of rooms needed if we want to restart a Sunday School? How do we consider who can rent the space and at what cost? Do we need stated policies about church usage and rental issues? Betsy, Sherwood (Chair of Stewardship) and Deanna will meet soon to clarify our existing rental policies and discuss any needed changes.
- She also hopes to gather a group of local clergy together, perhaps informally at first. (There used to be a Williamstown Ecumenical Council.)

Building Task Force News:

- I hope you read the **Exciting News from the Building Task Force** found near the end of the September 8 EBlast, from Susan Yates. Work on new roofing for the church may be able to start within the next few months, costing less than half of last year's estimate.
- More details will come at a congregational meeting, as an update from the Building Task Force when they have a concrete proposal to share with us. Stay tuned.

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MOSES YEARNS TO FALL ASLEEP

Deborah Brown

Moses yearns to fall asleep—
but the reddish sea is cold
and wide and deep,
and he must attend
to those he leads
who ask him what to do.

The throng are heard in stilted breath,
fearing the sea, expecting death.
They barely funnel through
the waves that crest,
yet pray their fate will lead them to
a life that keeps them true.

Hours and hours pass,
the waves, bristling cold and clear,
Moses, ever nodding against his rod.
At each swell and break,
is dashed awake
to count anew his stalwart crew.

Days and days repeat,
still no place to rest and wait
until a flicker on their watch
and everyone of Moses' crew
points and shouts at what they see:
familiar hills and fruited trees,
assuring victory.

Moses, sudden strong, alert, anew,
raises his arm to bless their lives,
till hearing the voice of God command:
Moses: Obey and Love My Word,
Praise your promised land and
Remain awake if you can.

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October

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

November

6 Terry Clark
8 Tenley Smith
13 Jean Donati
18 Anne Skinner
18 Anna Duhan
19 Doris McNabb
29 Ed Bianchi

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