

July 4, 2010

The Church on the Green

From The First Church of Christ in Longmeadow, United Church of Christ



“Embraced by the love of God in Christ, our mission is to love and serve our world. We seek to grow in Christ’s family through our journey—inward toward faith and knowledge, outward toward love and justice—always rooted and nurtured in worship.”

A Future With Hope

“For surely I know the plans that I have for you, says the LORD, plans for your welfare and not for harm, to give you a future with hope.”

~Jeremiah 29:11

I love this part of Jeremiah. He’s telling those in exile to be patient, to build houses and start families even though they’re not in their own place. He’s reassuring them that God has good things in store for them, will give them “a future with hope.”

That is just what I hope to be able to do, very soon. You see, I’m starting a family via adoption from foster care.

I’ve always felt the call to motherhood, even longer and stronger than my call to ministry. Chance and circumstances are that I haven’t found the right person to join me in my life and journey to parenthood, so I’m taking the “road less travelled” and doing it on my own.

Adoption is a path I’ve planned on taking since I was in middle school, and I’ve always been particularly drawn to those children who are a little bit harder to place due to age, gender, race, special needs or whatever reason. Our state foster care system is full of kids just like that, kids who have seen and experienced things no child should, and who have been taken away from all that they knew, and who need a stable, loving home. These kids need to know that God’s plan for them is for their welfare, and not their harm, and that they have a future with hope.

If all goes well, I will be welcoming a child—or two siblings—into my life and home sometime this summer or early fall. I hope to share not only God’s plans, but my own intention to provide a future with hope.

Peace,

Beth Boisvert
Associate Pastor



Summer Movie Series

All movies begin at 7:30 p.m. in the air-conditioned Buxton Room on the first floor. Full descriptions of all movies can be found through the link on the First Church homepage: www.firstchurchlongmeadow.org.

July 8: Dogma

July 15: A Serious Man

July 22: Eat Drink Man Woman

July 29: Then She Found Me

Is it Safe Here?

by Associate Pastor Beth Boisvert



The first e-mail arrived some time in January. Just one line, no caps: “are lgbt [lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender] people welcome at your church?” I responded that while we have no official inclusive welcoming statement, we were in fact considering going through the process of deciding whether to create and adopt one, and were a very welcoming place. I think I received a thank you for my response.

The next e-mail arrived mid-February: “do you have a mid-week service?” I answered that normally we don’t, but because it was the beginning of Lent, we had two services that Wednesday, one in the morning and one in the evening. The e-mail I got in response made my breath catch and my heart sink:

“do you think my partner and i would be safe coming to the evening service?”

Safe. *Safe*. Two people who wanted to go to church, who wanted to engage in ancient ritual and holy time and begin the shadowy Lenten journey towards the light of Easter, hesitated not because of time constraints or distance or because it was school vacation week or any of the myriad of other reasons that kept most people home that night. No, they hesitated because they view church as potentially dangerous.

It’s hard to imagine, isn’t it? Us? Our innocuous white church on the Green? Dangerous? Seriously?

But for this couple, and for many, many LGBT folks, that is indeed how we might be perceived. The LGBT community has long been subject to discrimination, exclusion, and even violence by people and communities claiming to do so in the name of Christ. They have been told that God hates them, that they are an abomination, that who they are is sinful.

That’s not who we at First Church are. I know that. From the moment someone walks in the door, they are showered in welcome. But for this couple, and many in the LGBT community, the risk that comes with even walking through that door is too great. It’s for this very reason that the Open and Affirming (ONA) designation was created, to let people know that it’s ok to come in. By engaging in the ONA process, we as a church take time to learn, listen and discern whether God is calling this group of gathered faithful to make that welcoming statement.

I replied to that Ash Wednesday question by stating without a doubt that they would be safe in our church. They didn’t come. Maybe, for them, one pastor’s statement wasn’t enough to erase the feeling of danger.

An Update on the Open and Affirming Process by the ONA Committee

The “Open and Affirming” Committee began meeting on June 7. This group has been charged by the Church Council to plan a course of study for the congregation about what it would mean for our church to become officially “open and affirming” as defined by the United Church of Christ. On July 2, 1985, the General Synod of the UCC, informed by resolutions of the Massachusetts Conference and the Rocky Mountain Conference, adopted a resolution calling on all UCC churches to declare themselves open and affirming, intentionally welcoming lesbian, gay, and bisexual people into their communities of faith. More recently, transgender persons have also been included in these declarations. Since 1987 over 100 UCC churches in Massachusetts have become officially “ONA.” To see a list of these churches, or for more information, go to www.uccoalition.org. A member of the associate pastor search committee told the ONA committee that every single candidate who was interviewed asked if our church was open and affirming. This was usually the first question out of their mouths!

Members of our committee are: Pastor Beth Boisvert, Anne Keyser, Nancy Yesu, Karen Glick, Dave Pyers, Carrie Larsen, and Mary Friedman. The committee is hoping to also have some youth members. We are planning to have a series of meetings in the fall, probably beginning in October, with a movie night, smaller group sessions available during the week at different times, guest speakers, and perhaps a panel discussion. Our committee welcomes input from anyone in the congregation at any time as we seek to learn from each other and discern God’s will for us as a church. Questions, comments, and suggestions are very welcome! Stay tuned for updates!

July 4 - July 31

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
4 10 a.m. Worship**	5	6	7 1:00 p.m. Praying the Scriptures 6:30 p.m. Youth Ministries	8 8:45 a.m. Men's DCF 4:30 p.m. Praying the Scriptures 7:30 p.m. Movie "Dogma"	9	10 2nd Saturdays
11 10 a.m. Worship *+ 1:00 p.m. Tanglewood (call Ardie McEathron for details: 596-6662)	12	13 6:30 p.m. Youth Ministries	14 1:00 p.m. Praying the Scriptures	15 8:45 a.m. Men's DCF 4:30 p.m. Praying the Scriptures 7:30 p.m. Summer Movie Series "A Serious Man"	16	17
18 10 a.m. Outdoor Worship *+ (Weather Permitting)	19	20	21 1:00 p.m. Praying the Scriptures 7:00 p.m. Trustees	22 8:45 a.m. Men's DCF 4:30 p.m. Praying the Scriptures 7:30 p.m. Summer Movie Series "Eat Drink Man Woman"	23	24
25 10 a.m. Worship *+	26	27 7:00 pm. Deacons	28 1:00 p.m. Praying the Scriptures	29 8:45 a.m. Men's DCF 4:30 p.m. Praying the Scriptures 7:30 p.m. Summer Movie Series "Then She Found Me"	30	31

* Childcare for Infants & Toddlers + Summer Fun Church School grades 1-6 ** Communion Sunday - bring a canned or packaged food for Open Pantry

The First Church of Christ in Longmeadow
United Church of Christ
763 Longmeadow Street
Longmeadow, MA 01106

Contact Us

413-567-6287

admin@firstchurchlongmeadow.org

www.firstchurchlongmeadow.org

Staff

Senior Pastor The Reverend Michael Bennett

Associate Pastor The Reverend Beth Boisvert

Director of Music John Gerry-Karajanes

Director of Children's Ministries Nancy Yesu

Assistant Director of Children's Ministries Deb Garrity

Program Director Gay Wesson

Administrator Maura Stevens

Director of Communication Deb Garrity

Next deadline: July 15

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RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

Rev. Patrick Bentrott to Visit First Church

Rev. Patrick Bentrott, UCC Missionary to Haiti, will return to Longmeadow and will preach at our outdoor church service on Sunday, July 18. Patrick and his wife, Dr. Kim Bentrott, are the current UCC missionaries to CONASPEH in Haiti. They narrowly escaped injury in the January 12 earthquake and returned afterwards to be with family and friends in the Midwest. The adoption of their two Haitian children, Solomon and Valancia, became official on June 15, and they are cautiously optimistic that they will be able to return to Haiti within the next few months to complete their four year commitment to CONASPEH. Following the church service on Sunday, July 18, there will be an opportunity to meet with Patrick, to see his pictures, and to hear first hand of their experiences and plans for the future.

A second opportunity for the congregation and others to meet and talk with Patrick will be on Friday, July 16 at 7:30 p.m. at the home of Mark and Julie Pohlman, 165 Converse Street, Unit #9. Please bring a dessert, hors d'oeuvre, or drinks to share. It would be helpful to let the church office (567-6287) know if you plan to attend the Friday meeting, in case the meeting has to be moved to the Church.

Also during Patrick's visit, he will be meeting with nursing directors from AIC and the ELMS, interested clergy in the area, and the Haiti Committee members. On Saturday, July 17, he will spend the day with members of First Churches in Northampton who have been involved with CONASPEH.

Those of you who have been following their blog site (www.kimandpatrick.blogspot.com) know that they are an inspiring and wonderful family. We are fortunate that Global Ministries granted Patrick's request to be sent to see old and new friends in Longmeadow and Northampton.