



THE SPIRE

THE SECOND CHURCH IN NEWTON
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

Sharing life's journey in Christian faith, love, and service.



60 Highland St. West Newton, MA • www.2ndchurch.org • (617) 244-2690

My Bailiwick

Some years ago, I accompanied Dartmouth students, along with Rabbi Ed Boraz to Belarus to restore a Jewish cemetery that had been abandoned when Jews in that community were "disappeared" in the Holocaust. In preparation for the trip, and since I was on sabbatical, I dove deep into study of the Holocaust. Two subjects captured my mind and heart – the way the Christian Church reacted (badly, mostly) to Hitler's rise to power and the genocide that resulted, and the stories of survival of the few who managed to hide, some in plain sight. I imagine you know the story of Anne Frank, of course – how she and her family hid in an attic in Amsterdam. Did you know they hid in that attic for **25 months** before they were finally discovered and arrested?

Like you, I am tired of the restrictions under which we must live to avoid becoming infected by this terrible virus. My son Joe and I have become quite adept at speed grocery shopping, but we were both in a bad mood last time we went. It was quiet in the car, until Joe said "I just want to go to a movie". I know exactly what he meant. We are watching movies at home, along with baseball games and women's basketball, and he is playing "animal crossing", which Warren and I have avoided, and we have adopted two adorable kittens, and we are doing jigsaw puzzles, and I am knitting and sewing and making candles, but, we all want to be able to go out and just do something without thinking about whether we should or whether it's safe.

And that applies to church, too. I just want to hug some of you. I want to lean back in my preacher's chair and listen to the choir sing. I want to go downstairs and look in on the toddlers playing in the Nursery School. I want to smell the brownies the Clearway cooking class bakes. I want to stand over Barbara's shoulder to proofread the bulletin with her. I want to watch you as you worship, as you sing and pray and absorb (or not) my sermon. But it's not safe to do those things. It really just is not safe.

Which brings me back to thinking about how, for more than two years, Anne Frank and her family lived quietly hidden in an attic. They didn't have the many things to occupy their attention we have available to us while we are waiting for safety. Generally speaking, it doesn't make me feel better to know that others have suffered worse than we, that others have had to endure greater hardships, but it does offer a little perspective, and that is what seems to be in short supply just now – perspective. So I urge you, as I remind myself, keep perspective. We'll be ok, by and by. The leaves will turn some gorgeous colors soon. The air will get bright and crisp. The election will come and go. We'll be able to gather again – just not yet.

Love to you all, Carla

cbailey@2ndchurch.org

Autumn 2020



Preparing Our Church Building for Safety

From our **Reopening Task Force**: Sally Anderson, Jeff Davis, Kathy Lucey, Frank Neal, Ced Paine, Bubba Soho, and Carla Bailey

Our church building is home for a number of schools and groups, and they have been looking for guidance from the state of Massachusetts and from us about the safety protocols that allow them to come back into the building safely. Our Reopening Task Force has been meeting weekly to review safety procedures and plans for their safety and ours. These plans will go into effect on September 8th, the day after Labor Day.

Second Church Nursery School: The Nursery School is set to open on September 14th. Following the protocols from Massachusetts Early Childhood Educators, parents will not be allowed into the building when dropping their children off. Children will be in cohorts and will not mingle with children from other cohorts. There will be no food served, though children may bring their own snacks. **The Chestnut Street door into the church is reserved for the exclusive use of the Nursery School.** No one else may enter the building through that door. Additionally, we are building a "quarantine room", a small isolation area in a corner of Room 111 for when a child comes down with Covid-19 symptoms and is waiting to be picked up. No one other than Nursery School staff or children may use Room 111 at any time, as long as these Covid-19 restrictions are in place. The Nursery School won't be using the church kitchen.

Clearway School: Clearway students and staff are following state guidelines for Massachusetts Public Schools. Their programming will be restricted to the second floor of the building and outdoor tents. We have removed the church-owned furnishings from the library and **Clearway will have exclusive use of the library as long as Covid-19 restrictions are in place.** There will be no cooking classes in the kitchen and Clearway will not be using Fellowship Hall or Room 111. Clearway students and staff may enter the building through the main parking lot door off Highland Street.

Dorshei Tzedek: Like Second Church, Dorshei is continuing to meet and worship remotely. Though their staff members are occasionally working in the building, there are no planned gatherings of more than 2-3 persons for the foreseeable future. For very small meetings (2-3 persons), they will use the Living Room.

Twelve-Step Groups: We host a number of 12-step recovery groups, most of which have been meeting remotely. After September 8th, these groups may return to meetings at the church, but only in Fellowship Hall. Groups will not use the kitchen. They will not sit at tables, and they will be told to wear masks and maintain 6ft. distance from one another.

As for Second Church activities: staff members may use their offices and the kitchen. All meetings will be on-line, usually via Zoom. We will resume recording worship services on Thursdays to be available for viewing beginning Sunday mornings at 8 AM. **We will not be worshipping together in our sanctuary this fall, at least until Thanksgiving.** The Reopening Task Force will continue to monitor and evaluate safety protocols through the fall and will report any changes, including any Covid infections among any of the groups that use the building. There will be stations with both hand sanitizer and masks throughout the common areas, and everyone who comes into the building will be required to wear masks and maintain appropriate physical distance. Andrus will occasionally use the sanctuary for recording with musician colleagues and he will clean those areas.

We know this is disappointing information, but our highest priority is the health and safety of all who come into our wonderful building!

From Leah Rumsey, Minister of Faith Formation

Dear Second Church Compatriots,

I had so hoped that we would be able to gather in person before it was time to write another letter for the Spire. But it is not so.

My big news since last writing is that Mohamed and I have moved to Central Mass, about 45 minutes west of Second Church. This is my last year of teaching at Harvard and, when it became clear that all classes would be remote for the year, we took advantage of this unexpected flexibility to sell our tiny condo in Waltham and buy a house in Westminster that is surrounded by woods but in need of some love. So we are now engaged in laying new flooring, fixing decking, and beating back weeds. We are looking forward to acquiring some chickens and goats in the spring, but for the moment we are content with the flock of turkeys living in the woods behind us and the family of gigantic Daddy Longlegs spiders that lives in the basement.

In Second Church news, we are thinking (along with every other religious leader, faith community, public and private educator, and so many others) about how to foster spiritual and educational community within the limits of what's possible over Zoom. In the fall we'll continue to offer our regular faith formation gatherings remotely. Specifically, you'll see following:

- **Weekly children's stories** will continue to be available on YouTube and the weekly digital Bible study with related coloring and activity will continue to come out each week by email. During the summer, these have been coming out on the weekend, but once we've returned to recorded worship in the sanctuary they'll be posted each Thursday so they can be available in advance of Sunday's service. Weekly stories are available to everyone on the Second Church YouTube page – no password, sign up, etc. is required. You can view every story posted since April any time you'd like and you can watch them as many times as you wish. Coloring and additional materials are sent out weekly by email. If you'd like to be added to this list, please let me know.
- Our small groups of **middle school students** and **2030's folks** will continue. These are limited to those in a particular age range and specifics are shared via email. If you (or someone you know) would like to be part of either of these groups, please connect with me via email.
- **Dinner Church** will take continue to happen live over Zoom each Wednesday at 6:00 pm. You can access it any Wednesday using this link: <https://harvard.zoom.us/j/663590344>. The meeting uses a waiting room, so no password is necessary.
- **One-time adult faith formation** opportunities over Zoom will be happening throughout the fall. Keep an eye out for more information about these in the weekly email updates.

I know that we are in a historical moment that is neither fun nor easy, but (as with similar moments from the early church to the World Wars of the 20th-century), the church is still here and Christians are still praying, protesting, worshipping, reading scripture, asking theological questions, checking on each other, providing emergency care and services, and doing all the other things that make church church. And, even as this gives me comfort, I also miss you deeply.

~ Leah

From Andrus Madsen, Minister of Music

Here we are - time for Welcome Back Sunday, and our return to services in the sanctuary, well, sort of. It has been quite the adventure making music for the services since we began broadcasting a prerecorded service last spring. In February of 2020, I had no experience at all in video and audio editing. By April it was necessary that I be able to cobble together anthems and congregational hymns from efforts where I was recording at the church, and all of the choir members were recording from their living rooms. Who would have seen this coming a year ago? Over the summer, I decided to upgrade my recording technology, and did a little research to find some options that would work both for now, and also work later for live-streaming, and when I finally made up my mind what I wanted to purchase, the item was sold out from every single store in the United States. Apparently, Ministers of Music all over the country had the same idea I had, and so we all had to wait for our product. This has brought about quite a shift in how we make worship together, how we make music for worship, and even how we consume music.

Also it has made an incredible shift in what it means to be a choir member. For decades the choir has met every Thursday night, but since March we haven't met. I know many choir members dearly miss the time together. The time together was valuable, not just for the practice of improving our efforts as a choir, but also in being together for its own sake. Perhaps the thing we miss the most is the satisfaction we derive from making music together. There is a magic that happens in joint music making, that we will continue to long for until it is safe to gather again. Also while we make music in isolation, the choir members have contributed their voices to our congregational hymns, recording their voices alone in their homes. Our congregational hymns have been such a wonderful symbol of our gathering. Many voices sounding together as a group, even though they are all singing safely distanced in their homes. That being said, the effort from the choir is trickier than one might expect. We have choir members who have mastered technology that seemed beyond them, and we have had other choir members who have devoted time to helping others master challenging technology. Additionally, it can be a little humbling hearing your voice in isolation without your colleagues. I cannot say enough about how much effort and devotion went into creating our music in the spring, and I can only say that I am already full of gratitude for the efforts that our choir will make in the fall as we return to this practice.

Lastly I want to thank Matthew Stansfield for the time he spent singing with us over the years. He sang with us for several years, moved to London, then came back and sang several more years. He and his husband Tai Oney are moving to St Louis to be nearer to their families. Matthew has been the model of what a section leader does at Second Church. He has been a consummate professional. He would show up prepared for his work, singing beautifully, watching over the basses and helping them to execute their part. Also he has been kind, and helpful, always the first to volunteer for some extra even non-musical task. The last service we sang in the sanctuary was the perfect example of what Matthew does. He was tasked with conducting the benediction from the back of the church, but when a choir member had misplaced his cane, Matthew was much more concerned about helping and supporting his brother in the choir. Without appearing rushed or panicked, he supported his brother, then quickly and gracefully walked to the back of the church, all just in time to conduct the benediction which he did as if nothing had happened. We will miss Matt, and I think a bit of his spirit will always be with us. Our new Bass soloist in the Fall will be Paul Max Tipton, who has sung with us before on occasion, and it will be wonderful to have him with us.

From Co-Moderator Sally Anderson

VIRUS IMPACT STUDY COMMITTEE - VISCOM

In May 2020, the Church Council voted to form VISCOM with the following charge: *to study the impact the COVID 19 virus has had on various aspects of the church community, how that impact is being mitigated, and is that working or not working.* The following people were asked to be on that committee: Sally Anderson (Co-Moderator), Donna Johnson, Frank Neal, Mary Ann Donaldson, Joy Paine, Lissa Gilbert, and Dale Bengtson. Each committee member is responsible for a different aspect of our church community; i.e., worship/program, building use, clergy/staff, congregation, the work of the church (boards/mission), and finances.

For the past few months the committee has engaged in "fact-finding" in regard to each of these aspects. MANY THANKS to those of you who have engaged in very useful conversations with committee members. Because this virus (and the resulting impact) is ever-evolving, the committee will continue its fact-finding mission - probably at least throughout this year - with the goal of giving some kind of report at the Annual Meeting in February 2021.

If at any time, you have additional thoughts about the impact of the virus on any aspect of our church community/work/mission, please feel to contact me at sallyjaneanderson@gmail.com, and thank you for your support of this initiative.

~Sally

News and Congratulations!

- Nathaniel and Laura Foote shared the happy news that their daughter Eleanor and her husband Will had a baby! Theodore Hanlon Harte was born on July 17 in Denver. Eleanor was active in Sunday School and the youth group especially in her middle school years and was confirmed at Second Church. (Nathaniel and Laura rented an RV and after five nights on the road made it safely to Denver August 10. They were able to meet Theo that night.)

- Priscilla and Karl Gazarian shared the happy news that their son Chris Gazarian and Melissa Green were married at the Arnold Arboretum on August 22, 2020. The Rev. Karl Gazarian officiating!

- For the past 25 years *Newton Tab* readers have selected the #1 business in their town in more than 80 categories. Voting began in February; the results were tabulated by an outside 3rd party who recently provided the results:

Second Church Nursery was **not only** voted #1 Daycare/Preschool in Newton, but also winner of Metro 1 Regional Gold Award having received **more votes than any other Daycare/Preschool** in Newton, Needham & Wellesley combined! Look for the *Tab's* special print edition of the week of 9/21. Congratulations Second Church Nursery and Susan Benes, Director!

Potluck Dinner Church - Wednesdays at 6 o'clock

Every Wednesday at 6, join Leah and others for conversation about a passage of Scripture which changes weekly. Eat dinner while in the virtual gathering and Leah will lead participants through conversation and a communion meal. All are welcome!

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The Second Church in Newton is an inclusive community of curious and creative spiritual seekers, committed to learning, teaching, social justice and embodying a progressive practice of Christianity through loving kindness, engagement and joyful worship.

Rev. Dr. Carla Jean Bailey, Senior Minister Barbara Cancellieri, Administrator
Andrus Madsen, Minister of Music Mary Ayotte, Bookkeeper
Rev. Leah Rumsey, Minister of Faith Formation
Sally Anderson and Kathy Lucey, Co-Moderators
Susan Benes, Nursery School Director; Sydney Koo, Faith Formation Assistant
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