

**PURPOSE
STATEMENT**

*"We are disciples of
Jesus Christ
committed to making a
difference in the
community and in the
world through service
and invitational
outreach."*



The Messenger

First United Methodist Church, Chatham

From the Pastor

March 2025—Vol. 29—Issue 3

**THERE IS ALWAYS
SPRING IN GOD'S LOVE**

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As we start flipping through the calendar, spring is just around the corner.

Spring is here, a time of waiting, of expectation.

Spring is here, a time of preparing new ground, planting new plants.

Nurturing new seedlings, tending new shoots, protecting new buds.

A time of cleaning out the old and throwing away the tarnished. Discarding the wasted and emptying out the junk.

A time of dreaming new dreams. Thinking new thoughts. Making new plans and new goals. Welcoming New Hope and time for rebirth.

There are many blessings that each new spring brings. You can see it bloom about and hear the song it sings.

With winter's bleakness

over, and brighter days ahead, comes promise of new life springtime loves to spread.

As God unfolds the flowers, and their buds begin to show he gives to us the assurance grace in our hearts will grow.

God sends us the robin's song, with promise to provide a shelter under his mighty wing where in his love we can abide.

God melts the snowy covers, and sends refreshing rain sprinkling us with mercies to heal winter's aches and pains.

God has given to all his Son, to shed upon us a new Light, and the real blessing of spring is keeping Jesus in our sight.

Happy Spring!

Blessings, Pastor Sonny

Excerpts from a poem by
Deborah Ann Belka

Read:

Ecclesiastes 3: 1-16, and
Song of Solomon 2: 11-12



HAPPY BIRTHDAY
03-19—Robin Rank
03-21—Marylyn Norcross
03-25—Deb Holt
03-29—Cathy Bogue
03-31—Thom Gallen

THERE ALWAYS SEEM TO BE UNANTICIPATED CHANGES TO THE VOLUNTEER SCHEDULE AFTER THE NEWSLETTER GOES OUT. THEREFORE, THE SCHEDULE WILL NO LONGER APPEAR IN THE MONTHLY NEWSLETTER. WHEN CHANGES OCCUR, CALLS WILL BE MADE TO THOSE INVOLVED, AND A REVISED SCHEDULE WILL BE HUNG ON THE BULLETIN BOARD IN FELLOWSHIP HALL (BY THE CHANCEL FLOWER SIGN-UP SHEET).



Church in the news: Living Faith UMC prepares to raise the roof

Nearly seven years after ceiling collapse, this Ipswich, MA,

church readies for renovation and transformation.

“Adam Randazzo, pastor of Living Faith United Methodist Church in Ipswich, says he is never late for anything. But as luck — or perhaps a Higher Power — would have it, he was running behind schedule on May 25, 2018. At around 3 p.m. that day, when he would usually be doing his daily walkthrough of the church, the entire sanctuary ceiling collapsed. Thousands of pounds of plaster and wood slammed down onto the floor. Huge plumes of dust shot out in every direction.

“When I arrived at the church, there was a fire engine parked out front. Then the front doors opened, and a big cloud of dust came pouring out,” Randazzo said. “I was like, Uh-oh. That’s not good.” Fredrick Seaman, who lived next door at the time, [said] that he heard ‘a big smash that shook the ground almost like an earthquake.’

“Many of the pews, which dated back to 1859 when the church was built, were destroyed in the collapse. A Narcotics Anonymous meeting that would

have brought as many as 100 people to the church had been scheduled for that same evening. Randazzo called it ‘a sign from God’ that no one was injured. The building has remained closed to the public ever since.

“Now, as he walks around the church nearly seven years later, Randazzo sees only the future and the exciting possibilities it holds. In the works is a plan to share the historic building with local artists and musicians, including the Orchestra on the Hill. ‘With the pews being replaced by individual chairs, the church’s sanctuary will be easily rearranged to accommodate events, art shows, and performances,’ Randazzo said. Dan Lovy, president of the orchestra, [said] ‘It has never really had a place in town to call home. But this new venture, which he calls ‘The Ipswich Community House,’ could change that.

“This is not an unusual arrangement,” Lovy said. ‘Here’s an opportunity for the church to be even more connected to the community. There’s a lot of people in town who have never been in that church. It’s such a beautiful venue and sanctuary.’

“It’s been a long and winding road to get to this point, but the church’s congregation has remained intact throughout. They’ve endured several relocations — including to their current place of worship at Living Faith in Beverly — and the COVID-19 pandemic, which forced services to be held online. The congregation has even gained members as the church continues to broadcast its services on Facebook Live.

“He suspects that many of the new followers are watching the services not only to worship but to learn English as well. ‘Now, they’re actually commenting at appropriate times during the services and saying, ‘Amen,’ or lifting up prayer concerns.

“It’s been almost seven years, and we’re still going strong,” he said. ‘Churches that have major disasters don’t usually end up surviving. This is all a testament that God really wants us to be here helping people in this area.’”

*Story from The Ipswich Local News, appearing in **UM Catalyst**, Weekly Newsletter for the New England Conference.*





TOGETHER IN CHRIST

A few weeks ago I was truly blessed to be a part of the 55th Annual Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial Breakfast in downtown Boston. This event is the longest running of its kind. The music was breathtaking, the speakers put me on the edge of my seat, and the keynote address from noted author, activist, and feminist Angela Davis revealed how the long journey toward racial equality continues to rely on endurance, strength, and conviction. The journey is long, and it so easily tempts those of us on the journey to get discouraged and worn down. Yet the speakers bore witness that in times of discouragement, we can find endurance and inspiration in each other.

It was mentioned several times that on the very same day, in the very same moment, the inauguration of a new president and a new administration was taking place. What I found intriguing as an ultimate act of discipline, one speaker after another said, *"We are not here to talk about what a new administration stands for. We are here to talk about what Martin Luther King, Jr. stood for and how we keep those principles alive in our quest for truth, justice and racial equality."* Those words gave me a needed reminder of what our role is and how we live it out in our leadership, and with one with another. We can spend a lot of time bemoaning what is or instead we can invest our time in working toward what can be.

This is a constant temptation facing us. It doesn't matter what the subject is, everything, and I mean everything, has a problem associated with it. If you look hard enough, far enough, deep enough, you'll find it. It's there. There's an underbelly, a consequence, a risk. There's a mistake made, or an alternative path taken that leads us to say, *"if given the chance I would have followed that direction instead."* Conversely, if you look for a blessing, a possibility, a promise, a hope, you'll find that too. It's all in how you look at it.

Personally, I believe that's what the Apostle Paul was alluding to when he said in Romans 8:28, *"All things work together for good for those who love the Lord and are called according to his purpose."* Even amid the ugly, the unfortunate, the negative, there is a way through the morass, a chance to rise above and make a meaningful impact. It's more than making lemonade out of lemons. It's believing in the transformation of the world.

The struggles to maintain and keep a positive, hopeful spirit is getting more and more challenging these days. [During] Black History Month, there were attempts to cast a pall over those who want simply to honor those who came before them with joy and celebration. It has been reported that the federal government, specifically the Department of Defense, will not officially mark any "special observances," including Black History Month. No Women's History Month observance. No Pride Month, no Holocaust remembrance. The list is long.

As I write, immigrants are being deported and those who have not are afraid. The poor and hungry will no longer receive global aid. Diversity, equity, and inclusion are being deemphasized or eliminated completely. The fallout is great. And the temptation to resign ourselves to this new reality is greater. How do you fight city hall?

A few days ago, a prominent leader said these words,

"I feel as though if Christ himself walked through these doors and said what he said thousands of years ago that we should love our neighbor and our enemy, that we should welcome the stranger, fight for the least of us, that it's easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to get into the Kingdom of heaven, he would be maligned as a radical and rejected from these doors. And I know, and it is part of my faith, that all people are holy, and all people are sacred unconditionally and that is what makes faith. Sometimes that's what prompts us to transform because it is unconditional. It's not up to us to love parts of people. We love all people ... It is not up to us to deny medical care. It is up to us to feed the hungry, to clothe the poor, to protect children and to love all people as ourselves."

That person was Democratic Representative Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, (NY). She is a Congressperson. She writes laws. She speaks out. She said what we should be saying. She said what we need to say.

(cont'd. on page 4)

Friends, these days, it doesn't take long to find a problem and even less time to focus on talking about it. But these days are days to follow the lead of Rep. Ocasio-Cortez and speak up, act out. It's time to love all people. Time to feed the hungry. Time to clothe the poor. Time to protect the children. It is time to welcome Jesus into the room and into our hearts with open arms and celebrate him as the way, the truth, and the life.

Now is the time. The Journey continues

**New England & New York Annual Conferences
Thomas J. Bickerton
Resident Bishop
New Hope Episcopal Area**



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New Hope Area Cabinets gather for joint retreat



Members of the New England and New York Conference Cabinets came together for a joint retreat last week in Connecticut with guest speaker Bishop Robert C. Schnase.

"Schnase described the day as a 'deep conversation about what it means to be a Cabinet in the

changing world and the changing United Methodist Church. And, more specifically, what does it mean to share a bishop and to do that in a way that multiplies the ministries of these conferences?"

"Bishop Bickerton posed a central question for the day: 'How does our [United Methodist] system need to alter itself to become relevant in what is a rapidly changing context? I think that takes courage.'

"Part answering that question, Bishop Schnase said, 'it means "going deep in how we work with our pastors and our churches in a mission-driven way that is honest and authentic.'" [He] pointed to some of the specific places where Cabinet leaders need that courage, including being willing to exercise their authority beyond what has strictly been outlined by the system structure. 'Dancing on the edge of your authority is leaving the obvious,' he said. 'It's stepping outside that and there's some risk there.'

"Another challenge,' Bishop Schnase said, 'is how to measure success. Metrics such as worship attendance were once good measures, but,' he said, 'there are many, if not most things, about ministry that are immeasurable, but that doesn't mean that we don't attend to them — you talk about fruitfulness with story.'

"Bishop Bickerton said, 'I am inspired and blessed how our two Cabinets come together and interact with one another so freely. There is a lot of trust in the room, and this sets the stage for good conversation and discernment. Together we are paving the way for the New Hope Episcopal Area to find life and purpose.'"

Cabinets heading to Vermont this summer

"The New Hope Area Cabinets are planning to come together this summer for a week-long Volunteer-in-Mission Work Team trip to Vermont to do flood recovery work. Bishop Bickerton has urged all Area churches to consider sending a mission team to help with this effort as part of the 2025 Vermont Mission Blitz.



Flood Recovery/Rebuilding Mission

NEW HOPE EPISCOPAL AREA
THE NEW ENGLAND AND NEW YORK ANNUAL CONFERENCES
© THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

"Contact NEAC Disaster Response Coordinator, Rev. David A. Arruda CDRC-NE@neumc.org

"Find an info sheet outlining specifics for mission teams about the

work, lodging, logistics, what to bring, etc.

"Register your mission team for a work session using the link above.



"I love Paris . . ."

"This romantic song Cole Porter wrote in 1953 stands in sharp contrast to the current U.S. administration's decision to withdraw from the Paris Climate Agreement. This decision reflects the administration's view that the potential "disease" of climate change is less painful than the "therapy" required to address it—such as preparing for climate impacts and phasing out fossil fuels.

"The administration has also made its disdain for ESG (environmental, social, and governance) assessments in the corporate world abundantly clear. It has shown contempt for corporate commitments to reduce dependence on fossil fuels and is even exploring ways to label ESG initiatives or corporate decarbonization strategies as "anti-competitive collusion." This includes threats to subpoena managers and board members of companies pursuing such strategies.

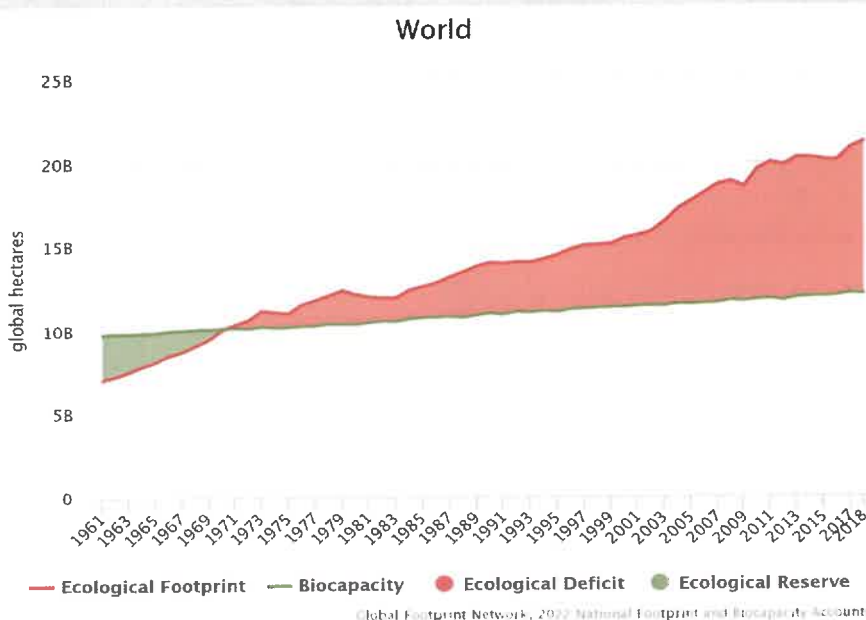
"In essence, the U.S. is spending public resources to blind itself to reality, recklessly undermining its ability to respond and prepare effectively for a trend in action makes even more likely, if not certain.

"Environmental, social, and governance (ESG) is shorthand for an investing principle that prioritizes environmental issues, social issues, and corporate governance. Investing with ESG considerations is sometimes referred to as *responsible investing* or, in more proactive cases, *impact investing*.

"One might question how a government with libertarian leanings justifies interfering with corporate intentions—unless, of course, those intentions are criminal. But the larger issue is whether such efforts benefit companies or society at large. We believe that ignoring the realities of **ecological overshoot** is not only counterproductive but also economically damaging. Companies that fail to prepare—particularly in terms of their product offerings—for the inevitable challenges of climate change and resource constraints are undermining their own futures.

"**Ecological overshoot refers to the overuse of nature by people.** More specifically, it is the state in which human demand, within a given time period, exceeds the amount ecosystems regenerate in the same time period. It means that demand is larger than what ecosystems regenerate. By using more than what ecosystems can renew, humanity is depleting the biosphere, and becomes a major force shaping the planet's condition. Global overshoot, with global demand exceeding total regeneration of the biosphere, has occurred at least since the early 1970s. The resulting impacts have moved humanity into the '**Anthropocene**, a term that is used to refer to the period of time during which humanity has become a planetary force of change.

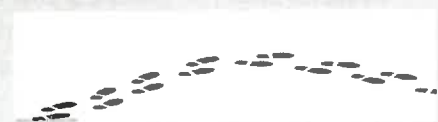
"**Supply and Demand:** Our time-series graphs map out the gap between human demand on nature (**Ecological Footprint**) and nature's capacity to meet that demand (**biological capacity**) for over 200 countries and regions from 1961. A country is running an ecological deficit if its Ecological Footprint exceeds its biocapacity. It has an ecological reserve if its biocapacity exceeds its Footprint.



"Ecological Wealth of Countries:

Ecological resources are at the core of every country's long-term wealth. Yet population growth and consumption patterns are putting more pressure on these critical assets."

From a presentation by [Global Footprint Network](#), [Advancing the Science of Sustainability](#); [York University](#); and [Footprint Data Foundation](#).



READING ROOM



I have read both of these books and found them enlightening, full of ways to take care of yourself and have a life full of meaning and contentment (ed.).

The chapter titles of *Winter Grace* are:

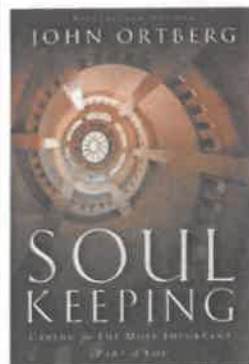
Spirituality and Aging
Memories
Love and Sexuality
Humor and Hope
Dying

A Heart of Wisdom
Dependence and Independence
Older Women
Loss
Resurrection

In the Introduction (the book was written in 1998), Fischer says, "In 1990 there were nearly 32 million persons in the United States aged sixty-five and older. By the year 2020, that number will rise to over 52 million, and by 2030 it will include more than one in every five Americans. This phenomenon of a large aging population is clearly one of the most significant developments of our century. It affects each of us. We all have older parents, relatives, and friends. We are all aging ourselves . . . we now better understand many of the physical, psychological, social, and economic aspects of the aging process. But we have not yet fully answered the deeper questions emerging from our longer life expectancy. Is this lengthening of human life an anomalous triumph of science and technology over purpose and meaning?"

"Does anyone know how to live the last years meaningfully and joyfully? It is precisely here that the need for a spiritual perspective is most acutely felt. Since the spiritual is interwoven with all other aspects of life, we cannot fully treat human aging without attention to this dimension, especially where meaning is concerned . . . we cannot really understand any stage of our life journey unless we can penetrate the mystery of its final stage.

A theologian and counselor, Fisher has been asked hard questions about religion in the later years. She says, "This book brings together my reflections on that topic, reflections which have been sharpened in dialogue with others through teaching and counseling . . . exploring the Christian perspective" on the key experiences represented by the chapter titles.



Soul Keeping, Caring for The Most Important Part of You, is actually a study guide for Bible study, Sunday school, or any small group gathering. However, to me, the contents of the book are also good for one reader (ed.). It's six chapters (the book calls them sessions) are:

What Is the Soul?
What the Soul Needs
The Practice of Gratitude

The Struggle of the Soul
The Practice of Grace
The Practice of Growth

Dallas Willard is quoted from his book, *Renovation of the Heart*: "Our soul is like an inner stream of water, which gives strength, direction, and harmony to every other element of our life. When that stream is as it should be, we are constantly refreshed and exuberant in all we do, because our soul itself is then profusely rooted in the vastness of God and his kingdom, including nature; and all else within us is enlivened and directed by that stream. Therefore we are in harmony with God, reality, and the rest of human nature and nature at large."

The first chapter, *What Is the Soul?*, poses an interesting question: "What does it mean to 'keep' one's soul? . . . ruthlessly eliminate hurry from your life . . . Hurry is the great enemy of souls in our day. Being busy is mostly a condition of our outer world; it's having many things to do. Being hurried is a problem of the soul. It's being so preoccupied with myself and what myself has to do that I am no longer able to be fully present with God and others. There is no way a soul can thrive when it is hurried. And nobody will come along and unhurry your soul for you." (Willard).

Willard also reminds us our souls will live forever—and [we] are the keepers of our souls. "This is the most important thing you can know about your identity: You are an unceasing spiritual being with an eternal destiny in God's great universe."

MARCH 2025 FUMC CHURCH CALENDAR

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
						1 11-2 Thrift Shop Open
2 10am Worship/ Communion. Pancake Breakfast in Fellowship Hall immediately following worship	3 7pm ACA Group (for children of alco- holics) meeting in the Heberton Room.	4 8:30—9:30am Osteo Exercise in Fellowship Hall 10:30—Noon Study of Faiths in Peace Room (by the offices)	5	6 8:30—9:30am Osteo Exercise in 9:30am— Meditation Group 11-2 Thrift Shop Open	7 11-2 Thrift Shop Open	8 11-2 Thrift Shop Open
9 10am—Worship POT LUCK LUNCHEON	10 7pm ACA Group (for children of alco- holics) meeting in the Heberton Room.	11 8:30—9:30am Osteo Exercise in Fellowship Hall 10:30—Noon Study of Faiths in Peace Room (by the offices) APRIL NEWSLETTER DEADLINE	12	13 8:30—9:30am Osteo Exercise 9:30am— Meditation Group 11-2 Thrift Shop Open 5:30—Finance and Trustees	14 11-2 Thrift Shop Open	15 11-2 Thrift Shop Open
16 10am Worship	17 7pm ACA Group (for children of alco- holics) meeting in the Heberton Room.	18 8:30—9:30am Osteo Exercise in Fellowship Hall 10:30—Noon Study of Faiths in Peace Room (by the offices)	19	20 8:30—9:30am Osteo Exercise 9:30am— Meditation Group 11-2 Thrift Shop Open	21 11-2 Thrift Shop Open	22 11-2 Thrift Shop Open
23 10am Worship	24 7pm ACA Group (for children of alco- holics) meeting in the Heberton Room.	25 8:30—9:30am Osteo Exercise in Fellowship Hall 10:30—Noon Study of Faiths in Peace Room (by the offices)	26	27 8:30—9:30am Osteo Exercise 9:30am— Meditation Group 11-2 Thrift Shop Open	28 11-2 Thrift Shop Open	