



Embracing God's Presence,
Serving the City,
Building Upon Our Heritage

NEWS

Volume XXXI, No. 4

July/August, 2015

THE FIRST CHURCH OF CHRIST IN HARTFORD

A member of the United
Church of Christ (UCC)

CENTER CHURCH
60 Gold Street
Hartford, CT 06103

Church Office Hours:
Monday thru Friday,
8:30 am to 4:00 pm

Summer Office Hours:
Monday thru Friday,
9:00 am to 3:00 pm
(July thru Friday before Labor Day)

Phone: (860) 249-5631
FAX: (860) 246-3915

www.centerchurchhartford.org

Sunday Worship Service:
10:30am

Summer Worship Service:
9:00am & 10:00am
(First Sunday in June through
the Sunday before Labor Day)

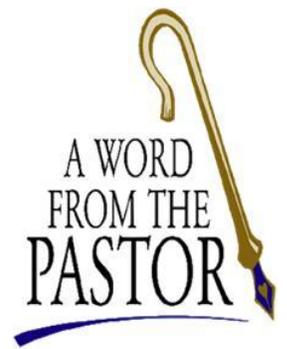


Taizé Service (begins July 12),
9:00am (Meeting House)

Worship Service, 10:00am
in the Church House's
air-conditioned second-floor
parlor
[through Rally Day]

Dear Church Family,

I write to you on the eve of my departure to Synod in Cleveland, Ohio. In highlighting the events of this past spring, I found that pictures are better than words...



Graduation. As you know, I earned a Doctor of Ministry degree from New York Theological Seminary, officially graduating in May, 2015. Thank you for your support during this past three years! Special thanks to my site team: Dectora Jeffers, Luciano Valles, Jr., Rev. Joseph Bradley, and Alvin Thompson. The work developed through my dissertation will be a road map as we look forward to the new church year.

This spring I received the Social Justice Vision Award from Charter Oak Cultural Center, a partner in mission in the City of Hartford. Thank you!



We celebrated our office administrator, Marie Ferrantino, on her anniversary of fifteen years of service. Marie, we appreciate your unwavering dedication to the mission of Center Church. Thanks for all you do!

*We rejoiced as we celebrated my installation on June 14th. We prayed, sang, and danced!
Many thanks to photographer Pablo Delano for these pictures!*



*The interfaith community
celebrated with us!*



We have a commitment to the city and the world, and so the work of the church continues through advocacy and presence around the city.



...and prayers were uttered and tears were shed this week as we mourned the loss of nine lives at Mother Emanuel AME church. As we commemorated Juneteenth in the Ancient Burial Ground, the pain was deeper than we anticipated. Let us continue to hold the community of Emanuel in our prayers.

I pray you find time for renewal during this summer.

Peace,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading 'Damaris D. Whittaker'.

*(Rev.) Dr. Damaris D. Whittaker,
Minister*





JULY BIRTHDAYS

7/2 Amy Salls
 7/2 Douglas Lombardi
 7/4 Obed Fonder
 7/5 Peter Piatti-Rios
 7/8 Theodore Vietzke
 7/11 Bradley Boisvert
 7/15 Lita Rathnam
 7/18 Luciano Valles, Jr.
 7/19 Elena Sanderson
 7/23 Sabas Whittaker
 7/24 Beverlee Sipes
 7/25 Gertrude Tatro
 7/26 John Chen
 7/28 Samuel Chen
 7/28 Joseph Lopez
 7/29 Brendan St. Amant
 7/31 Vanessa Nieves
 7/31 Victoria Seurattan

AUGUST BIRTHDAYS

8/1 Earl Sanderson
 8/1 Haley Reis
 8/1 Katelyn Reis
 8/2 Tina Bobbitt
 8/2 Jalena Diaz
 8/4 Patricia Anderson
 8/8 Niome Chaney
 8/12 Melani Norsigian
 8/12 Richard Markham
 8/13 Xaniyah Sanders
 8/15 Led Baxter
 8/16 Donald Gourlie
 8/20 Steven Lombardi
 8/24 Lisa Thomas
 8/28 Lesley Thompson
 8/29 Jim Oliver
 8/30 William Wurts
 8/31 Anthony Sanders

JULY ANNIVERSARIES

7/10 Nilsalynn & Reagan Wagan

AUGUST ANNIVERSARIES

8/13 Susan & Patrick Hayes
 8/15 Efrain & Olga Agosto
 8/15 James & Mary Ellen Jacobs
 8/16 J. Alan & Joan McLean
 8/18 William & Kathleen Gourlie
 8/20 Julie & Patrick Hurley
 8/25 Thomas & Sally St. Amant

Hartford Intermodal Triangle Project Construction Updates

Below is a link to an interactive map showing construction activity associated with Hartford's Intermodal Triangle/the iQuilt project (including the relocation of Gold Street.)

<https://sites.google.com/site/hartfordtrafficalertupdates/>



CHURCH MEMBERS & FAMILY NEWS BULLETIN BOARD

Deaths: *A. Harry Sanders (June 29)*

Baptisms: *Graeme MacKenzie (June 21);
Andersson Andrea Hilleri (June 21)*

Weddings: *Jennifer Morales & Rafael Valdes
(June 13)*

New Members, Births, Transferred
at own request: *None*

2015 CHURCH MEMBER DIRECTORY

This year's Church Member Directory will be available for members to pick up after Worship services starting on Sunday, July 5. Please see a deacon to pick up your copy. If you cannot be present and would like a copy mailed to you, please email Marie in the Church Office at mferrantino@cchartford.org.

+ IN OUR PRAYERS +

*Frances Burton, Gladys Hernandez, Peter Libby, Christine MacDonald,
Margie Mair, Michael Plankey, Lita Rathnam, Gabi Smith-Rosario,
Sally St. Amant, Norman Stanley, Liz Stoeber, the City of Hartford,
the Connecticut Conference of the United Church of Christ,
the First Church of Christ in Hartford,
& the State of Connecticut*

MUSICAL NOTES

by Jason Charneski,
Director of Music and the Arts



Volunteer Choir for Worship Services in July and August

As a way to build upon the success of the volunteer choir on successive Sundays in August last summer, we'll expand the opportunity into the month of July. Thus, anyone is welcome to gather at 9:00 a.m. in the second floor parlor of the Church House to learn a simple anthem and service music to be offered at the 10:00 a.m. service. The Sundays on which this will occur are July 5, 12, 19, and 26, and August 2, 9, and 16. Invite your friends to join you!

Mark Your Calendars for Friday, September 11: Albert Schweitzer Organ Festival Update

The opening concert and celebration of the 2015 Albert Schweitzer Organ Festival will be held in the Meeting House the evening of Friday, September 11, beginning at 7:30 p.m. The concert, which begins a weekend that includes competitions for young organists and masterclasses with the competition judges, will be multi-cultural, including members of the Center Church Choir, the choir of the Cathedral of Saint Joseph, the choir of First Church in Wethersfield, and the Legacy of Spirituals Choir. The competition judges, who will perform as part of the concert, are concert organist Diane Meredith Belcher, Peter Richard Conte, who serves as organist of the Grand Court Organ at Lord & Taylor (néé Wanamaker's) in center city Philadelphia and organist and choirmaster of Saint Clement's Church in Philadelphia, and John Walker, president of the American Guild of the Organists and a former organist and director of music of The Riverside Church in New York City.

The Festival, which has been "in residence" at First Church in Wethersfield for some 18 years, will have a new "home" at Trinity College beginning with the festival competitions in 2016. The new legal entity, the Albert Schweitzer Organ Festival, Inc., has filed the required certificate of incorporation with the Secretary of the State's office and is in the midst of completing the process to be an independent, not-for-profit organization.

Beyond the Friday evening concert, two of the competitors will be invited to play the organ in worship at Center Church on Sunday, September 13. Please plan to attend these offerings and demonstrate your support of the next generations of musicians who likely will find themselves in service to the Church.

A Few Days' Visitor in the Meeting House



Those who attended worship on May 31 were made aware that I could not play the organ because a squirrel had found its way into the Meeting House sometime in the few days prior. It was discovered by our sexton, Thomas St. Amant, and officers from the Hartford Police Department because it tripped the motion detectors on the burglar alarm! It explored many areas of the building, including getting into the organ and, as a result, knocking out of tune a significant number of pipes.

A wildlife control company installed two "have-a-heart" traps in the gallery windows on June 1. By the morning of June 2, our visitor was contained safely and, within a few hours, was released back into its natural habitat. Technicians from Foley-Baker, Inc., our organ maintenance company, retuned the errant pipes on Thursday, June 4, to the tune (pardon the pun) of \$539.00.

(continues on next page)

I believe we can consider ourselves blessed that the squirrel did not do more damage, as the technicians told me they recently had to replace dozens of pipes in an organ to which a squirrel had regular access: The squirrel was dropping nuts down into the pipes for safekeeping, then later eating the pipes in order to get the nuts (I hope the pipes in question were made of wood, not metal!)

It is likely the squirrel entered the Meeting House through a door that had been propped open.

The Minister's Journey

The pastor stands upright to affront the pulpit
like an echo in the wide open seas.
Head bowed in prayers, eyes closed shut, heart wide open
soul, faith and spirit no longer adrift
No longer tied up in the harbor, alongside the docks,
among the old tired ferries, freighters, who'd sailed
the river harbor long, long ago... now resting beside the pier
as if nesting upon the frigate pelican lifeless eggs.

But to face the challenges beneath the deep blue yonder
like a submarine commander
in search of the conniving U-boats
Binoculars, sextant, periscope in hand fast forward toward aspiring souls to mend
Pastoral care in search to tend, as if navigating eyes once closed shut
again once open through spiritual eyes to reexamine
the footsteps of a lost tired essence left in the craters
soul and spirit still strong, thus unbroken

But the imprints of their hands are found
stamped upon the tombs of repented sinners
still trying to scratch their way back out
and reach to the heavens above...
wedding halls filled with laughter. Or hospital rooms echos now overflowing with prayers
At the baptismal font with beautiful babies crying in laughter
Then on to the streets to wage protest and fight for justice
Breakfast to serve at community and social outreach gatherings
Our homeless brothers and sisters still needing their warmth
They're all strong believers they'll carry on
At day's end, our pastor's arduous battle still wages on and on

~ Sabas Whittaker

*Dedicated to my sweet and beautiful wife, Rev. Dr. Damaris Whittaker 6/14/2015
Center Church Hartford's UCC, Minister's Installation Service.*

CHURCH SCHOOL DONATIONS NEEDED

Do you have any of the following items you are willing to donate to Church School? The children will be using these items in workshops this school year learning about Noah, the birth of Jesus, Lenten journey and Jonah.

- Shoe Boxes
- Aluminum Foil
- Wooden Paint Stir Sticks (i.e. like you get from Home Depot or Lowes to stir a gallon of paint)
- Hammers



Donations may be dropped off anytime at the Faith Formation Office in the Church House

Rally Day



Sunday, September 13, 2015

**Church School Begins!
Fun, multigenerational
worship and activities!**



Outreach @ Center Church: Assessing our Time, Talents, and Treasure

Submitted by Adam Bulmash, Nate Fox, and Melinda Knebel

Center Church strives to make an impact in the local community and to fight for social justice issues here in Hartford. We know so many of you are passionate about making a change and working to help others, so we have been surveying our members to get a sense of where our congregation's talents and interests lie. The Outreach team wanted to make sure people had the opportunities to engage with the community, and that those opportunities matched up with everyone's interests.

Through just sixteen surveys, we learned that we have retired social workers, analysts, teachers, and many more who are willing to give their time, talents, and treasure. One respondent, who is willing to put their skills and their expertise to the cause of ending homelessness, indicated experience working in housing management. Another is in sales and marketing and is excited to volunteer in the Warburton Room once it's up and running. We are thrilled to see so many people volunteering at Center Church, Hands On Hartford, and in their communities.

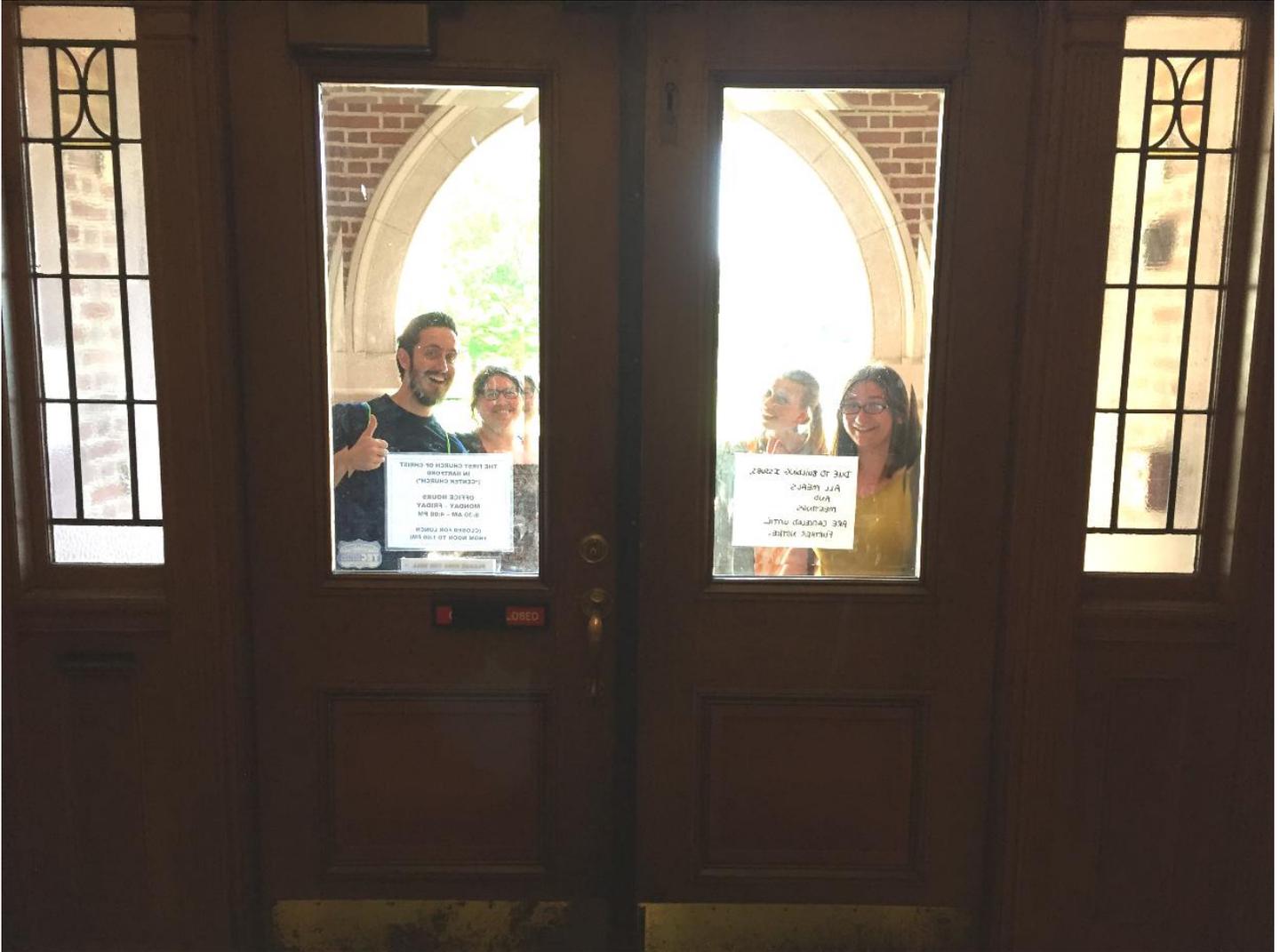
One thing we hoped to learn from the survey was what kind of volunteer opportunities people would be interested in. We discovered many people were interested in volunteering around policy change and organizing in addition to providing meals. Outreach is currently building a Peer Outreach Group of individuals who have experienced housing injustice and want to work to change the system, and we were glad to see so many people excited about helping with the group's efforts. Although we are still in the building stage of this group, we look forward to offering the people of Center Church opportunities to lend them support soon. We were also happy to see so many people enthusiastic about the opportunities in the Warburton Room. We will have plenty of opportunities for people to utilize their skills and knowledge to help those in Hartford in need.

Almost everyone was interested in learning more about structural issues related to housing, homelessness, income inequality, racism, and social justice. We at Outreach will be creating opportunities to learn more about these issues very soon. We are currently exploring an Outreach newsletter, to provide a space to talk about these issues and the work being done on them.

Thanks to all those who have completed the survey and shared feedback – moving forward, we'd like to hear from even more of you, so expect an email blast with the survey in the near future! We are excited to hear about your interests and how you want to get involved, so please take the time to fill them out. The more you tell us, the better we can match your passions with direct opportunities.

We look forward to hearing from you soon!

Meet the new Faces of Homelessness VISTA!



[Melinda, far right, joined on the front steps of Center Church by her fellow Hands On Hartford VISTAs Kyla, Rachel, and Logan]

Hello, Center Church! My name is Melinda Knebel and I'm the new VISTA for the Faces of Homelessness Speakers' Bureau at Hands on Hartford. My position centers around coordinating events and outreach for the Bureau, but I also do many other tasks: I work with Adam at Center Church to develop the Peer Outreach Group, plan for the Warburton room, serve at Community Meals, and anything else that involves reaching out to the community!

This year, in addition to continuing to expand the profile of the Speakers' Bureau in the Greater Hartford region and across Connecticut, I also hope to help the Bureau expand the ways in which they engage with audiences, start to connect audience members directly to efforts to affect housing issues, and help the Bureau move towards greater autonomy and involvement in some of the other functions of the group.

I moved to Hartford from Maryland, where I was active in housing and homelessness activism. I'll see you around Center Church, and we can have a conversation. My favorite conversation topics are justice, the joys of cheese, and funny cat stories. Talk to you soon!



CENTER CHURCH TAKES A STAND FOR HOUSING JUSTICE

Submitted by Nate Fox, Warburton Director of Outreach Ministries

In early April, I was approached by Cecil Thomas, a housing attorney at Greater Hartford Legal Aid, who was looking for “organizational supporters” for an appeal and amicus brief he was working on with his colleague Amy Eppler-Epstein, an attorney at New Haven Legal Aid. The case was related to an unjust decision that had been made regarding an individual’s affordable housing, which had resulted in the individual (once again) facing housing instability and marginalization. Center Church should be proud of the conversation that followed, resulting in our supporting the case. The paragraphs that follow represent a modified version of a Friend of the Court Brief written by Bill Warner-Prouty and submitted by Center Church in “support of an appeal in the Connecticut Appellate Court brought by Cecil Thomas of the Greater Hartford Legal Aid on behalf of a formerly homeless legally-blind and disabled man who has been terminated from his state RAP (Rental Assistance Program) housing voucher solely because he is on the sex offender registry.”

*As the founding church of Hartford, under the leadership of Thomas Hooker, Center Church has a long history of civic engagement in the social concerns of the greater Hartford community. It was natural, therefore, that on **Tuesday, April 14, 2015**, Nate Fox brought to the Outreach Board of Center Church the possibility of joining with the Greater Hartford Legal Aid’s appeal on behalf of a formerly homeless man now facing the termination of his housing due to a policy that was put in place after this, now legally blind and disabled man was brought off the street and placed in a suitable living environment through the state’s Rental Assistance Program. After much discussion, the Outreach Board reached consensus that this is the kind of advocacy that the church must embrace if it is to take seriously its goal of “Serving the City” through its outreach ministry on behalf of, and with, the homeless. It was voted that Outreach Board would ask for the Church’s full support for this amicus brief at the next meeting of the congregation’s governing board, The Prudential Committee.*

*On **April 28, 2015**, Attorney Cecil J. Thomas of the Greater Hartford Legal Aid presented the case to the Prudential Board for its consideration. Quoting from the Minutes of the April 28, 2015, Center Church Prudential Committee, “Bill Warner-Prouty (of the Outreach Board) said that we have the opportunity to join a ‘friend of the court’ (appeal) for a homeless person. This individual is now legally blind, and has been on the sex offender registry from an incident in 1996. Since then he has obtained an Associate’s Degree from Capital Community, connected with HOH (Hands on Hartford) and lived at Peter’s Retreat. He entered a state rental assistance program and received other services, too. In 2009, he lost his eyesight. In 2013, new regulations allowed the termination of individuals on the sex offender registry from the rental assistance program (RAP). His termination has been appealed to Superior Court, and now Appellate Court. A component of the defense is that the regulation was applied retroactively, and rehabilitation efforts were not being considered. One thrust of the friend of the court brief is that this is not rational public policy.”*

“Discussion followed. Are there categories on the registry? Not really. The law allows use of discretion and this is an instance where discretion should be applied. This man is 50 years old. If the appeal doesn’t go through, he will lose his apartment and go to short-term housing. A shelter may not allow his disability equipment or assistance animal. What about reasonable accommodation through the ADA? Cecil (Thomas) said this has been considered and denied.”

*“Bill W-P (Warner-Prouty) presented the **motion** that Center Church sign on as a friend of the court on this case; Deborah (Tuthill) seconded. What would this mean? We would get involved in the process going forward. Bill stated that the Board of Outreach consensus was that this man’s situation does not make sense. All systems have been working for this person, why take them away? **The motion passed unanimously.**”*



CHORAL SCHOLARSHIP (Tenor) AVAILABLE TO COLLEGE STUDENT FOR THE 2015-2016 SEASON

The First Church of Christ in Hartford, Connecticut, a.k.a. "Center Church," invites interested college tenors to apply for a position in the Center Church Choir for the period September 9, 2015 through May 22, 2016 (*no duties required during respective academic Winter recesses*).

Remuneration is \$2,500 for the season. Interested persons need not be music majors to apply; rather, they need to have choral or instrumental ensemble experience, the ability to read music, and a willingness to work with and learn from professional and volunteer singers.

All Warburton Choral Scholars are expected to participate in the weekly choral rehearsal (Wednesday evening) and Sunday morning service, as well as special services, community outreach activities, and concerts that occur during the traditional semester. Free parking is provided.

For more information or to request an application, please contact
Jason Charneski, Director of Music and the Arts,
via phone at 860-249-5631, ext. 19;
or e-mail at jcharneski@cchartford.org

June 2, 2015



CHOIR SECTION LEADER POSITION OPENING

The Choir at Center Church in downtown Hartford
(The First Church of Christ in Hartford, UCC)

has an opening for

one TENOR section leader
for the 2015-2016 season.

Wednesday evening rehearsal from 7:30-9:15.

Sunday morning warm-up at 9:45.

Sunday morning service at 10:30.

Christmas Eve and Maundy Thursday services.

Quick learner with solid choral voice is sought to lead, support, and encourage volunteer singers and work with other professional singers. There are opportunities for solo singing. Competitive compensation. Free parking provided.

For more information or to schedule an audition, please call
Jason Charneski, Director of Music and the Arts, at 860-249-5631, ext. 19, or write
to him at jcharneski@cchartford.org.

--PLEASE POST--
June 2, 2015

Family Camp in August!

All Center Church members are invited to take part in Family Camp at Asto Wamah in August. Family Camp is a unique and treasured opportunity for the Center Church community to spend time together at Columbia Lake.

This year, the two weeks start at Noon on August 16th and end on Sunday, August 30th at Noon. You are welcome to sign up for the entire two weeks, just a day, or anything in between. What a wonderful way to relax and enjoy the final days of summer: swimming, boating, fishing, walking the Nature Trail, reading a book, etc., all in the company of the Center Church family. For more details, please contact Nancy Maclean at: ntmaclean@gmail.com or (860) 798-8098; or Sue Thomas at: suemthomas@comcast.net or call her at camp at (860) 228-3489.



The deadline for the SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER 2015 ISSUE OF
CENTER CHURCH NEWS is **Wednesday, August 19.**

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Minister Emeritus: The Reverend J. Alan McLean
Director of Music & the Arts: Jason Charneski
Warburton Director of Outreach Ministries: Nate Fox
Director of Faith Formation: Jana Priestley
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