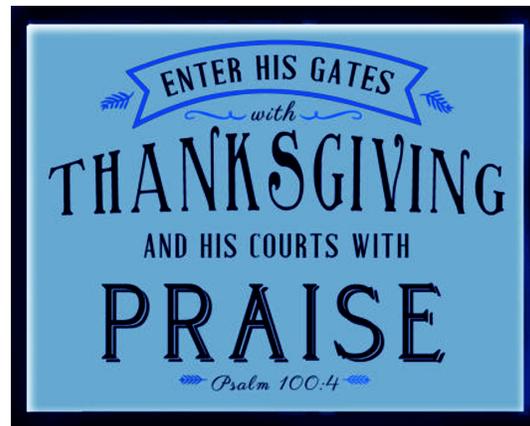


November 2017

Years ago I was going through a particularly lonely and painful time in my life. A highly valued relationship had shattered beyond repair and I was powerless to mend it. It was devastating. In the center of this struggle I stumbled upon this prayer attributed to Saint Teresa of Avila. To this very day I keep it where I can see it. The words were a great comfort at the time but I have come to rely greatly on this deep wisdom in every season of life. Knowing that God provides me with all I need all the time fills my soul with a profound sense of gratitude everyday, no matter what I am facing. In fact I have discovered that a grateful heart is more than just self-help. Being grateful actually ushers us directly into the Divine Presence. The psalmist writes,

Let nothing disturb you,
Nothing frighten you;
All things are passing;
God never changes;
Patient endurance
Attains to all things;
Whoever possesses God
Is wanting in nothing;
God alone suffices.

+Saint Teresa of Avila



Research has shown that communities in which gratitude is expressed publicly become knitted together with greater appreciation for everyone's contributions. This means that we should make a point of sharing our gratefulness with one another. What are you grateful for? Who are you grateful for? Can you find gratitude in the mundane and ordinary? Try it and tell someone.

Studies have shown that a grateful atmosphere actually inspires a collective sense of purpose and frames a common vision. Shared gratitude is actually the fuel for direct unified action. The more we practice it, the more satisfied we become. Resentment, anger, competition and negative comparisons are neutralized making it far easier to navigate through hard times and difficult situations. As TriCon Church defines a vision for the future, let us begin with grateful hearts, entering into God's presence with thanksgiving.

In faith, hope and gratitude,

Rev. Bob Brown - Acting Senior Minister

TRICON
EDUCATION

SMALL GROUPS

ADVENT 2017



Living
in the
Light
of

HOPE

sign ups begin
November 5
www.triconchurch.org



MARKERS ALONG THE JOURNEY

Transition Team Updates & Comments

REFLECTIONS FROM JEAN VANDERGRIFT

“Is it worth it?” This excellent question came up in a recent church meeting. “Jean, can you tell us that all the transition work we’re doing will be worth it in the end?”

I wanted to answer in the affirmative right away. I hesitated, though, because ultimately each of us has to define for ourselves the good end that would make it all worthwhile in our assessment, and often this end only becomes clear in hindsight. For instance, we can’t be sure that embarking on an exercise regimen will be worth it unless we have done an internal check and have a vision of personal fitness to which we are striving.

Plus, to answer “yes” too quickly in the midst of another’s doubts and concern can even come across as simplistic or disrespectful. It is usually better to draw out the questioner in further dialogue. This seems to me to have been the way of Jesus with others, and to be a consistent practice for the church to live out.

In dialogue with parishioners in other interim settings and from other interim ministers over the years, I have heard the following answers to “Is it worth it?”

- + Yes, we’re glad we took the time to reflect.
- + Yes, we are a stronger community of faith now. We aren’t afraid or angry any more. We have learned to accept each other and work through our differences.
- + Yes, we now have a vision and goals to work toward as one for the future.
- + Yes, there is now excitement and life when we get together for worship and work.



PRAYER VIGIL November 1- 23

Leading up to Thanksgiving please join your church family at prayer. Look for the sign up sheet in the Parish Hall and on the website.

The Transition Team and the Search Committee are listening to discern God’s call to TriCon and put it into words. Once they have done so, they will weave this Vision and its Priorities into the congregational profile. Your prayers will support them.

We seek at least one person per day. Pray wherever you are and whatever time is convenient for you.

+ Yes, this process helped us rely more upon God and ourselves than just on the minister.

+ Yes, we learned that we can do more than we originally thought.

+ Yes, we have learned to trust God's timing rather than trying to rush or control the outcome.

+ Yes, we have learned more about our neighbors and our community than we knew before.

+ Yes, we have matured in our relationships to be able to say "Good-bye" and "Hello" to new leadership.

What would make Evolve 2017 worth it to you?

Let's keep talking,
Jean



Your Transition Team

Jane Turner Michael, Chair
Andrew Thut
Cynthia Schweppe
Charity Tremblay
Nick Bruning

Your Search Committee

Matt Boger
Peter Bruning
Loretta Filopov
Michele Forinash
Paul Mahoney
Ellen Quackenbush
Prescott Stewart
Jane Turner Michael



TRICON'S WELCOME STATEMENT

We, the members of the Trinitarian Congregational Church, are called by God to live as one community. We strive to love, as we are loved by God, both freely and unconditionally. We recognize, celebrate, and affirm the full humanity of all individuals, with our God-given diversity.

Therefore, we intentionally welcome individuals of any ability, age, class, ethnicity, gender, race, and sexual orientation into full fellowship and participation in the life of the church.

We strive with the help of the Holy Spirit to become more like Jesus in our love and support for one another, in order to oppose and overcome any injustice, oppression, and prejudice that continues in our society, our communities and ourselves.

HOW WOULD YOU ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS THAT ARE PART OF THE CONGREGATIONAL PROFILE?

+ Who is God calling you to become as a congregation?

+ Describe how the minister you are now seeking will assist the congregation in making an impact beyond its walls.

+ In a short paragraph, reflect on where your church is going and what it might look like when you get there. What do you need to get there? Who are you seeking to join you on this part of your church's faith journey?



NOVEMBER WORSHIP

November 5 COMMUNION	Service at 10:00 a.m.	Rev. Robert Brown preaching
November 12	Service at 10:00 a.m.	Rev. Robert Brown preaching
November 19 THANKSGIVING SUNDAY	Service at 10:00 a.m.	Rev. Dr. Jean Vandergrift preaching New Members Joining
November 26	Service at 10:00 a.m.	Rev. Robert Brown preaching

DAYLIGHT SAVING TIME ENDS

Set
Your
Clocks
Back!



SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 5 at 2:00 AM



WELCOME TO TRICON!

Whether you are just visiting, looking to find a church home or still feeling your way after several visits, we encourage you to pick up brochures and other information in the parish hall or the church entry, and to come for refreshments in the parish hall following the service.

You are welcome to participate in any of our church programs and activities and to sign up your children for Church School or youth programs. For more information, contact Christian Education Director, Carrie O'Brien or Youth Leader, Nick Bruning. Call the church office if you have any questions.

Welcoming Coffee Sunday, November 12

On November 12, the Membership Committee will be hosting a coffee after the worship service for anyone who is interested in learning more about our church. As part of our "themed coffees" this fall, we will focus on Christmas holiday traditions and events at TriCon -- the Christmas Eve services, the Advent series, the Christmas music, the Angel Breakfast, and much more! Please join us to learn more about how TriCon celebrates this special holiday season! **We hope to see you on the 12th!**

NEW MEMBERS JOINING Sunday, November 19 During the Service of Worship

ATTENTION MEN OF THE CHURCH Join the Anchor Group

The Anchor Group meets on the **first and third** Tuesdays of each month (note change of days) at 7:00 a.m. in the church parlor. The Anchor Group is a group for men of all ages who discuss and share issues of religion and spirituality in light of contemporary culture. Any questions, email Greg Howes at howes2012@gmail.com.

SILENCE IN THE STORM: A WEEKLY MEDITATION GROUP

When: Mondays, 10 A.M.-11:30 A.M.
in the Church Parlor

Looking for a quiet space for meditation and prayer? We meet weekly in the church parlor. We explore both guided and unguided meditation and prayer with music and occasional speakers. We mainly seek to find and honor the present. It is an exercise in being, rather than doing.

For more information, please contact Liz Crowell at Lbenema@gmail.com or 781-608-4765.

CAREGIVERS GROUP

The TriCon Caregivers Group is an opportunity for parishioners and friends in caregiving roles to come together to share accomplishments and failures, joys and sorrows, laughter and hope, as well as information about caring for others and ourselves.

If the role of caregiver is part of your life, please consider joining the TriCon Caregivers Group. **We will meet on Wednesdays, November 8 and 29 at 10:00 a.m. in the church parlor.** Call the church office (978 369-4837) for more information.



Knitwits

**JOIN US IN THE
PARLOR
Wednesday,
November 29
AT NOON!**

The Knitting Group meets in the church

parlor once a month. Everyone from beginner to expert is welcome. Bring your own project or work on one of ours'. You need not come every month but can join in when it is convenient for you. You may also choose to work on projects at home. Prayer shawls may be left at the church any time.

The deadline for the
December Newsletter
is November 15.

CITY MISSION SOCIETY CHRISTMAS SHOP

Drop-Off by December 3

Every year the City Mission Society's Christmas Shop brings holiday joy to the neediest families and individuals in the Boston area. Your donations help to make this possible.

**NEW items from the list below
may be left in the Parish Hall.**

**Winter Coats, Hats, Mittens, Gloves,
Scarves, Sweaters, Sweatshirts,
Socks, Underwear,
Blankets and Backpacks
Toys, Books & Games for All Ages
Gift Cards for Target, Walgreens,
Marshalls, CVS**

**Completed hand-sewn items
should be brought to the church
by November 29.**

DEDICATION OF GIFTS December 3



At the worship service on December 3, we will dedicate the gifts our church has collected for City Mission Society, as well as the gifts that have been provided for the prisoners in Concord. See your Season of Giving catalog, coming in the mail in mid-November, for more information about these causes.



Open Table Community Dinners All are Invited and Welcome!

The bi-weekly community dinners are designed for:

- People looking for an affordable, healthy meal
- People living alone wanting to socialize with others around the dinner table
- People stressed and needing a home-cooked meal they don't have to prepare
- People living with challenges who need a breather to rest and recharge
- People who want to meet those with different backgrounds and cultures and make connections

**DINNERS ARE HELD:
Tuesdays at 5:30 p.m.
Open Table, 33 Main Street, Maynard**

**Thursdays at 5:30 p.m.
First Parish, 20 Lexington Road, Concord**

Open Table - November 2017 Flour & Sugar



As the holidays begin, let's help our neighbors by stocking the shelves at Open Table with baking flour and sugar.



Helping Our Neighbors Locally and Globally --- Serving Over 300 Guests Weekly

LIFE CHANGES



Best wishes to Peter and Isabelle Eckel and siblings, Henry and Louise. Charles Mitchell Eckel was born on August 10. Delighted grandparents are Mitch and Susan Eckel.

AND A BOY!

We welcome Jameson Bouchard Fincke born on September 20 to Taylor (Parrott) and Chris Fincke and big sister, Hunter. Beaming grandparents are Hilda and Charles Parrott.

AND A BOY!

Congratulations to Beth (Mason) and Jason Botelho and big brother, Kyle. Cameron John Botelho was born on September 26. Happy grandparents are Janet and Bill Mason.

AND A BOY!

All good wishes to Jessica (Minty) and Steve Lane. Elliot Patrick Lane was born October 19. Thrilled first time grandmother is Sarah Lawrence.

Sincere sympathy to the family of our long-time member, Shirley Rohan, who died on September 23. A memorial service for Shirley was held at TriCon on October 28.



Heartfelt condolences to Monica and Woody Woodman and their family. Monica's father, Joseph P. Egan, Jr., died on October 13. A service

was held on October 19 in PA.

Celebrating Community

Please review the Stewardship materials you have received or will shortly receive and prayerfully consider your commitment to the church for the coming year. Once pledges have been received, The Finance Committee, in consultation with staff and other church committees will prepare a budget for 2018 to present to the congregation for approval at the Annual Meeting in February.

Here is the 2017 budget and a draft of 2018 with notes on potential changes:

Income	2017 Budget	2018 DRAFT
Pledges & plate offering	767,500	807,000
Use of Facilities	104,000	105,000
Mission Endowment	15,700	16,500
General Endowment	47,500	50,000
Clergy Housing Endowment	40,000	53,400
*Mission Special Offerings	36,000	36,000
From Reserves	8,900	0
Total Income	1,019,600	1,067,900

The 2018 draft assumes a 5% increase in pledges; modest increases in rental and special gifts; endowment fund draws at slightly under 4% of income based on the increased values of the funds; the addition of the proceeds from the parsonage sale to the Housing Fund and an assumption that there will be no need to draw from reserves.

Expense	2017 Budget	2018 DRAFT
Personnel	620,500	642,000
Property	126,000	126,000
Mission:		
Mission Budget	135,000	157,500
Mission Endowment	15,700	16,500
*Mission Special Offerings	36,000	36,000
Dues to Conference	14,000	14,400
Christian Education (Church School, Adult Ed, Youth)	8,000	9,500
Program (Music, Fellowship, Diaconate)	30,000	31,500
Administration, Technology, Stewardship	34,400	34,500
Total Expense	1,019,600	1,067,900

The 2018 draft increases Personnel to reflect a cost-of-living raise, higher insurance costs and a partial year of two settled ministers; the Mission budget is based on 20% of pledges; Christian Ed reflects an increase in Adult Ed and there is a small increase in Fellowship.

*Mission Special Offerings include the Christmas and Easter Offerings, Antique Show proceeds and special collections. Consistent with past practice, this is budgeted conservatively and often exceeds the budgeted amount but everything received is fully expended for mission causes.

Please note that 2018 appears to be shaping up as a financially challenging year. A five percent increase is really needed from everyone who can, and even more, when possible, to make up for those who can't increase or maintain their 2017 level of giving.

Confirmation Class in November

Sundays, November 5 and 19 – 5:00 – 7:00 p.m.
Confirmation Class

Please contact Rev. Bob Brown, Suzanne Giles, or David Hart with any questions.

TRICON
EDUCATION

CONFIRMATION

TRICON
EDUCATION

CHURCH SCHOOL



Sunday, November 5th

10:00am Church School
10:00am 4th Grade Bibles and Communion
11:15am Hosanna Singers

Sunday, November 12th

10:00am Children's Chapel
Church School
11:15am Hosanna Singers

Sunday, November 19th

8:30am Winter Teacher Training
9:30am Hosanna Singers
10:00am Church School

Sunday, November 26th

Thanksgiving Weekend
No Church School
Childcare provided during
the 10am service up to age five

Where Can You Share Your Faith?

In Church School!

Our invitation to participate in Children's Ministry is extended to our entire TriCon family, not just those with children in our program. For all, it is the connections with children that help broaden and nurture our church community.

Many opportunities to support programming exist for people with a variety of gifts, in and out of the classroom. Church School Director, Carrie O'Brien, is looking forward to sharing them with you.

All of us working together will continue to pave the way for TriCon's children's journey of faith. They are the church of today and tomorrow!

Check out our November on-line Church School newsletter for detailed information about calendar programming as well as news, photos and announcements. If you are not a Church School family and you would like to receive our newsletter to learn about all of the fabulous happenings in our program please contact Carrie O'Brien and she will gladly add you to our distribution list.

If you are a new family and would like information about our Church School program, please contact our Church School Director, Carrie O'Brien, at cobrien@triconchurch.org. You may also visit our church website at www.triconchurch.org and click the Christian Education tab.



YOUTH GROUP MISSION TRIP 2018

Important Mission Trip Dates this Month

Kick-Off Meeting, Sunday, November 5th, 12:00 - 1:30

This is a mandatory meeting for all kids who have signed up for the February Youth Mission Trip.

Parents Meeting to follow, 1:30 - 2:00

This is NOT a required meeting for all parents. This is an informational session for parents seeking more detail on where we are going, the scope of our work, and our expectation of the kids. This is the only scheduled Parents Meeting, but NICK is always available for questions by email to nbruning@triconchurch.org, or by text/phone at 978.618.1629.

Final Payment DUE, November 12th

The cost of the trip to families is \$1,300 per person for those who financially support the church. It is \$2,000 for those who do not. *Remember, the final payments due Nov, 12th will be \$1,200 or \$1,900 because a \$100 deposit was paid upon signing up.*

Scholarships may be discussed confidentially with Judy Walpole at the church office, 978-369-4837 or jwalpole@triconchurch.org.

Youth Group in November

Sundays, Nov. 5th, 12th, and 19th

7:00 PM - 8:30 PM

NO Youth Group on the 26th

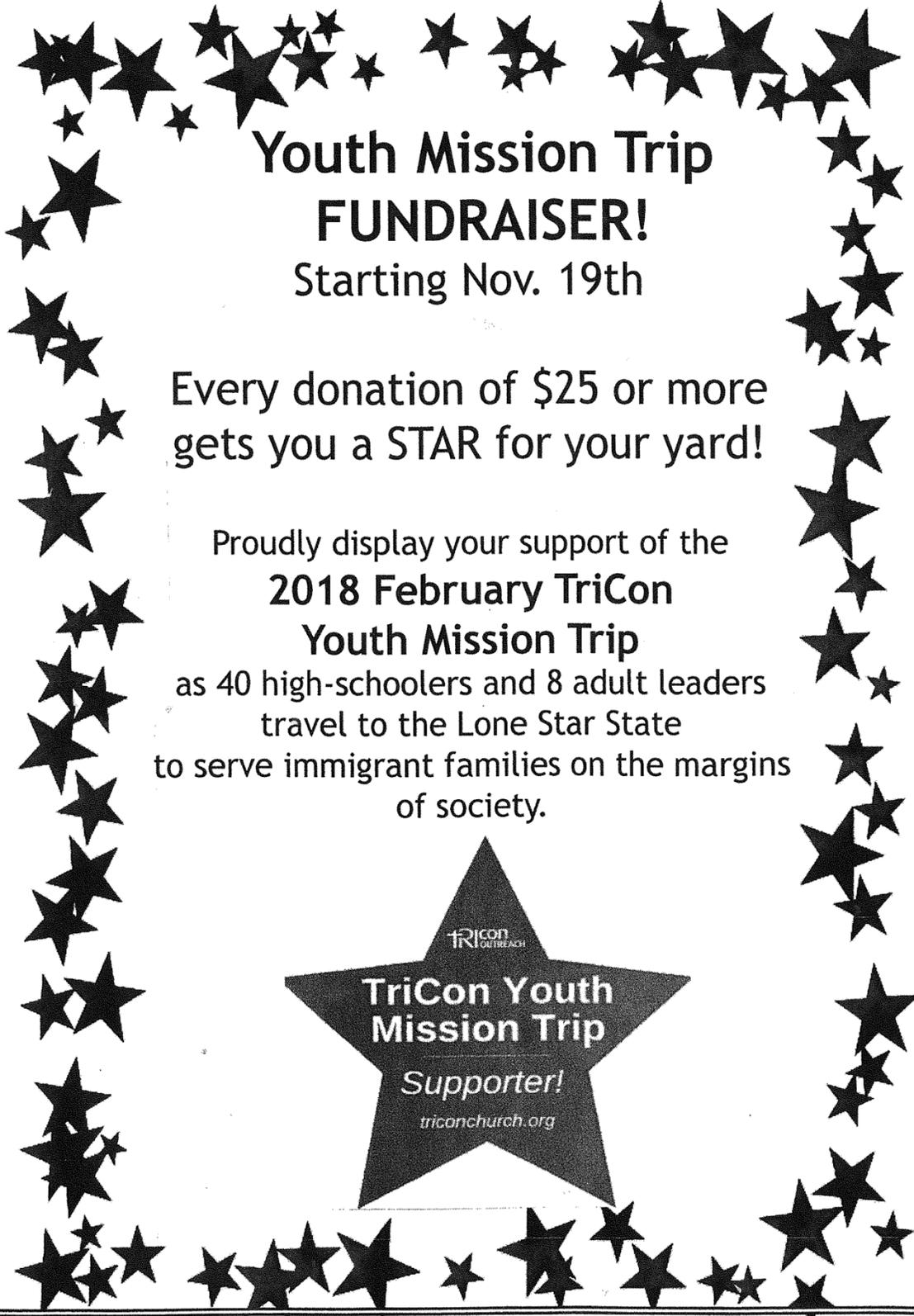
Discussion Group meets most Wednesday evenings

7:30 PM - 8:30 PM

Text Nick at 978.618.1629 with any questions







Youth Mission Trip FUNDRAISER!

Starting Nov. 19th

Every donation of \$25 or more
gets you a STAR for your yard!

Proudly display your support of the
**2018 February TriCon
Youth Mission Trip**
as 40 high-schoolers and 8 adult leaders
travel to the Lone Star State
to serve immigrant families on the margins
of society.



Forty-Eighth Annual



November 3rd and 4th, 2017

Friday, 10am - 5pm
Saturday, 10am - 4pm

Admission \$10

Visit our TriCon Café for lunch or sweet!

**this card is good for
\$1.00 off
one admission**

Trinitarian Congregational Church
54 Walden Street, Concord, MA
triconchurch.org

It's not too late to volunteer!

Please visit our website to find the sign up.

<http://triconchurch.org/antiques-show>

Or, simply call the church office 978.369.4837.

There are ways to volunteer as Movers and Porters, Café workers and Bakers ... please consider joining the fun in this whole-church effort. All proceeds from the Show go to our TriCon Mission budget, and out the door to local and international efforts helping our neighbors in need.

The Antiques Show Committee THANKS you for your support ... and encourages you to visit the show and enjoy a homemade lunch or sweet treat at the TriCon Cafe!

TRICON
OUTREACH

Antiques Show

ITEMS OF INTEREST

Volunteers Needed For **HOLIDAY GIFT BAG PROJECT** Concord Prison Outreach

Volunteers are needed to sort items and prepare gift bags at Trinity Episcopal Church, Concord, weekday mornings Tuesday, November 28 through Friday, December 8 from 9:00 a.m.-12:00 p.m. There will be one evening session on Wednesday, December 6 from 7:00 - 9:00 p.m. Please sign up in advance for the evening session: Carol Miller (978-369-3755 or carolhmiller@comcast.com).

Your Generous Mission Dollars at Work **MONTHLY SPOTLIGHT**



CONCORD PRISON HOLIDAY GIFT BAGS

The Holiday Gift Bag Project provides all 1,700 inmates at MCI Concord with gift bags during the holiday season. These simple gifts and handmade cards let the men know that they have not been forgotten. For many recipients, these gift bags are the only presents they receive. As one inmate wrote, "I want to thank you for the gift bag you gave me and the card you wrote me. It really means a lot; it shows me that even though I ended up in prison, people still care."



Learn more at:
triconchurch.org/missions-outreach

Caroling Night **Northeastern Correctional** **Center**

(976 Barretts Mill Road, Concord, MA)



Friday, December 1, 2017
6:45 pm – 9 pm

Celebrate the joy of the holiday season at this annual event where incarcerated men, adult community members and prison staff gather together.

RSVP by Friday, November 19th

Email your full legal name, driver's license/state issued ID #, date of birth and phone number to events@concordprisonoutreach.org or call 617-286-6728.

Sponsored by Concord Prison Outreach and the prison chaplains

THANK YOU, TRICON
From Zimbabwe



The words of Ezekiel 37 of the dry bones coming to life were made practical when TriCon assisted Southdown School to put to life again their three-classroom block now the best classroom block of the district. Thank you TriCon Church for making this good looking school from what was an eye sore. When the schools were opened in September we were able to collect a few dollars to buy paint so that our block may look like this. **THANK YOU.**

Rev. Fungayi Mutsumbei



**LET'S GET TO KNOW
EACH OTHER BETTER!!**

Amantha Butler



Amantha grew up in Concord and returned back to town seven years ago with her husband and two daughters. Amantha's favorite part of being back in town is going to the Cheese Shop to sample their wares.

Amantha and her family have a lot of fun exploring the world a short walk from their house.

Amantha loves to travel and, in her younger days, backpacked around the world. With the children, the family now opts for less exotic locales although they went on a cruise to Alaska this summer. They saw bears, rivers packed with salmon and an iceberg calving off a glacier - a once in a lifetime trip.

An interesting, little known fact is that Amantha was a member of the last graduating class from Ripley School. She still remembers jumping up to ring the bell on her last day of fifth grade.

Fred Williams



Fred grew up in an 1841 house in Bristol, Rhode Island where Bristol Harbor lay out the west windows. His grandparents had a wonderful library and liked to travel abroad bringing home remarkable

souvenirs such as a Polynesian carved canoe paddle, a foot-long totem pole from Alaska and a crystal ball atop a bronze dragon among other curiosities. Fred's father enjoyed paleontology and stamp collecting. As a child, Fred loved the images of long-gone creatures and tokens of remote countries and territories now many times renamed. Fred's mother was musical and loved songs, poetry, fiction and essays about 18th century Britain.

Fred went to Phillips Exeter Academy and Yale, and, after five years' active duty in the Navy, attended Harvard Business School. Before retiring in 2008, he worked in commercial banking for nearly 30 years and then in customer support for software companies.

Fred appreciates taking the time to learn about other people so as not to judge others on limited impressions. He enjoys the histories of new people, places and ideas, books and music.

Fred is grateful for God's many gifts, his parents and his two sisters. He has been happily married to his dear wife, Tussie, for forty-eight years. Their daughter, Abby Pinto, lives in St. Paul MN with her husband, Dave, and their two sons, Ben and Will.

STEWARDSHIP – PLEDGE PAYMENTS SHORTAGE

As we approach the end of the calendar year (and our fiscal year), we are over \$150,000 behind in our 2017 pledge receipts. We are aware that some parishioners chose to make their donation in one lump sum at the end of the year or to make quarterly payments and we know that it is easy to lose track of what you have contributed and when. We will be sending statements early in November and hope that you will look at yours carefully and if possible, fulfill your pledge by 12/31 so we can end the year in a solid financial position.

ON-LINE GIVING AVAILABLE AT TRICON

We are able to accept on-line donations and payments via our website – triconchurch.org. On the homepage, you will see “Click here to make donations and pledge payments”. Any questions, please call or email Judy or Amy at the church office: jwalpole@triconchurch.org or abruning@triconchurch.org.

TRICON’S QR CODE

This QR code automatically opens a special webpage on mobile devices (phones, iPads, etc.) that’s designed for smaller screens. You can scan the code with your phone to make the process of giving to the church that much simpler.



THE SEASON OF GIVING CATALOG

Once again this holiday season, we will be publishing our Season of Giving catalog. The catalog contains information for a number of worthwhile causes any of which you may want to include on your Christmas list.

Whether you are interested in giving gifts to City Mission Society, Concord prisoners, or food for the hungry, you will find these and other worthwhile causes in our Season of Giving catalog. Watch for it in your mail.

ADVENT RESOURCES

The Advent/Christmas season is not always a joyous time for everyone. Those who are feeling depressed or stressed may find it hard to get into the spirit and it can be particularly difficult for those who have recently lost a loved one. In the parish hall, we have a collection of Care Notes – small booklets that provide helpful advice on getting through the holidays when you are finding it difficult to feel the joy of the season. Feel free to take them for yourself or to give to a friend or relative.

WREATH OF LOVE & REMEMBRANCE

The holiday season makes especially poignant memories of those whom we have loved and lost. During the upcoming Advent and Christmas season, we shall have a *Wreath of Love and Remembrance* in the front of our sanctuary. Near the wreath will be a small basket of ribbons. Individuals are invited to take a ribbon and tie it to the wreath in remembrance of a loved one whose life meant much and whose loss lingers long in aching but grateful hearts.

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITY!

We are looking for one or two people to straighten up the sanctuary each week, either following the Sunday service or at a time that is convenient for you during the week. If you have an hour to spare each week from September through June and would like to help keep the sanctuary neat and orderly, please contact the church office.



REMINDER: FIND IT ON OUR WEBSITE TRICONCHURCH.ORG

If you have recycled your paper copy of this Newsletter and then remember an article you wanted to save or are looking for a date you forgot to put on your calendar, you can always find it on our website. Past and current newsletters are available there as well as a complete calendar of church events and lots of other important information about the church - check it out!

SERMONS ON LINE

You can HEAR SERMONS on line by going to www.triconchurch.org

OR

Facebook.com and search *Trinitarian Congregational Church*

COMMUNITY EVENT

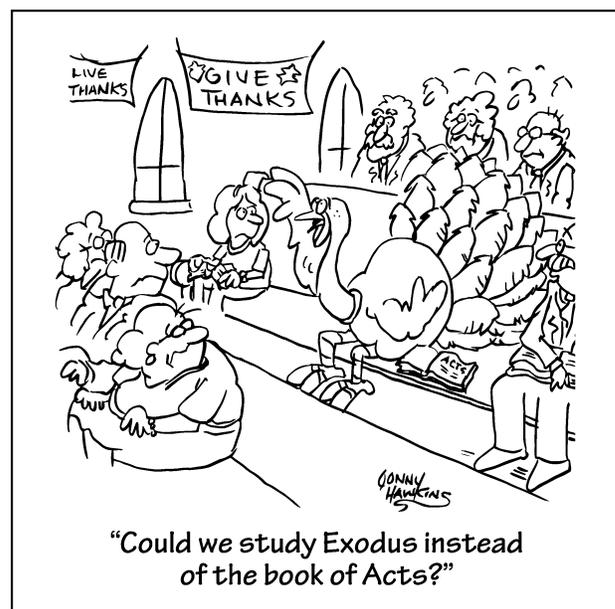
CLIMATE SOLUTIONS SPEAKER SERIES

Wednesday, November 8th
7:00 - 8:30pm

What's That Smell? Concord Gas Leaks Forum

Far from being safe and environmentally clean, methane gas can pose serious health, safety and environmental problems - especially when it leaks. Concord alone has over 115 methane leaks. On Wednesday evening, November 8th, in the First Parish lower hall, Nathan Phillips, Ph.D., Regina LaRocque, MD, and Audrey Shulman of HEET (Home Energy Efficiency Team) will discuss the impacts of gas leaks on climate, asthma, ecology, etc. and what can be done about this problem. A reception will follow at 8:30pm.

This event is organized by *The Climate Solutions Speaker Series*, of which TriCon is a co-sponsor.





Again this year, we will have a mitten tree in the parish hall during Advent where you may select a mitten providing information about a toy or an article of clothing that you purchase for one of the children at the Transitions Shelter for homeless woman and their children located in Devens, MA.



A special invitation for all the women in the church to enjoy fellowship and tasty treats at an

Advent Tea

Wednesday, December 6th - 12:30 - 2:00 p.m.

If you would like, please bring a small gift for one of the moms at the Transitions Shelter.

These women, who have so little, would be delighted to receive personal care products such as shampoo, conditioner, soap, body and face lotion, makeup, toothpaste, toothbrushes, etc; towels (bath, hand and washcloths), and gift cards to places like Walmart and Target.

Sign up in the parish hall or call the church office.



MEET REV. DR. JEAN VANDERGRIFT

Leslie Ackles recently interviewed Rev. Dr. Jean Vandergrift, Interim Minister for Spiritual Development and Congregational Life

When did you start your ministry?

The first church where I was pastor was in Kentucky in 1979. This was before I was ordained and while I was still in seminary. At the same time, my husband, Steve, was the pastor at another church in the same county. After seminary, we did ministry for three years in France through Global Ministries. Then we got to serve together at a church in Fayetteville, NC. Later Steve taught in the public schools in Fayetteville and did some specialized ministries in the area while I stayed on as pastor of the church.

God's call next led me to be the Senior Minister at a church in Seattle, Washington, and Steve came on as the Christian Education Director at the same church before he went into full-time public school teaching. In this congregation I became interested in learning anew how to lead churches in today's context, particularly those in decline. The Seattle church had gone from an average worship attendance of 2,000 members in the 1950s to about 100 members in the 1990s. I was able to work with them to get the membership up and the average worship attendance to 170, and we did some great things in ministry, but with all the effort we expended it still did not "turn the tide". They had top-notch leaders, a great, though challenging location, and strong resources, but all that was not sufficient to change the course of institutional inviability.

This experience led me to enter a PhD program in Practical Theology at Boston University, School of Theology. My dissertation was on Congregational Transformation and involved qualitative research on-site with three congregations, very different from each other, who had been in significant decline and then negotiated a turnaround. My major research question was what actually changed in the way they were living church from before to after?

It took nine years to obtain my PhD., completed in 2014, and during this time, I began providing interim coverage for UCC congregations in transition. Steve taught Physics and Astronomy at Newton South High School.

What do you enjoy about being an Interim?

I get to bring my experience as a settled pastor and my research to bear upon congregations at a critical juncture, and I find it fulfilling. All of my gifts come together and I learn from these unique settings. I get to make a difference.

Churches like TriCon are not in a spiral of severe decline, but every church facing a transition, if it is faithful and seeking to be relevant and vital, needs to look at change.

Churches in a transition of pastoral leadership tend to be more ripe and ready to consider change. They are at a point in their life when they are more willing to ask themselves what every church needs to ask in order to be church faithfully:

- Who are we?
- Who is our neighbor?
- Who is God calling us to become?

I also like meeting new people and working in new settings. It fills me with wonder just how many different kinds of churches there are. It fills me with wonder how God is working amongst us. I enjoy going from place to place to see the variety. That is a fun part for me. It is such a blessing!

How long is a typical interim position and how long do you expect to stay at TriCon?

Full-time interim ministries usually last anywhere from one to two years. I think I heard through the Conference that the average length is about eighteen months. Initially I entered a one-year agreement with TriCon, which would have put my departure around the end of February 2018, but with the need for continuity of planning through the church's program year and because at this point in the Evolve process, my services may be needed beyond February, either until a new Associate Minister is brought on or to cover in the case of a national search for a new settled senior minister, the Church Council voted to extend my contract through June 2018.

What is the down side of being an Interim?

It is easy and necessary to become attached to each congregation, and it is hard to say good-bye and let go. It is also important to keep certain professional boundaries. When I leave, for example, I will not return to do weddings or funerals. I will keep in touch and will hope for the church to be successful, but keeping this boundary allows the settled minister to be successful and the transition healthier.

This is why I have reiterated that I will not be considered for a permanent position on the staff here at TriCon, not that it is not tempting to be at a vital place like TriCon doing good work! I enjoy it here. I get along with the staff, and I see so much potential here.

It is most important for me and for the congregation to follow our gifts and our call. It is best for the church to search for a minister with the gifts to lead it into the particular vision to which God is calling – a search process that is more vision-driven than personality driven.

This approach also gives the interim minister leverage to experiment and ask questions. It renders the congregation more flexible and open to the changes that the vision demands and that the new settled pastor will inevitably propose.

As is well known, since the 1960s, there are fewer people in our society that find church relevant and compelling, so if a congregation just tries to keep things going as in times past they will experience decline. By contrast, when we look anew at our context and ourselves, we can trust God to lead us into new life.

AN UPDATE ON FAMILY HOMELESSNESS IN MASSACHUSETTS

As of June 30, 2017, there were 3,545 families with children, including pregnant women, in the Massachusetts Emergency Assistance (EA) shelter program. Forty-six of these families with children were being sheltered in motels. While the numbers of families in shelters are down significantly in recent years, these statistics do not include families who are doubled up, living in unsafe conditions, or sleeping in their cars.

In 2012, the Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) began a policy to require some families who are otherwise eligible for shelter to sleep in a place "unfit for human habitation" for at least 24 hours before being admitted into the EA system. Annually, 600-700 families, about 60 percent of whom are single mothers with children, have been put in this category. They must sleep in their car if they have one, in train or bus stations, hospital emergency rooms or on the street and provide photos as proof. This policy puts families with children in harm's way and contradicts our constitutional status as the only "right-to-shelter" state. The Advocacy Network to End Family Homelessness (ANEFH) is conducting a focused advocacy effort in support of legislation to end this inhumane practice.

In August, Frank Austin, ANEFH convener and Chair of the Steering Committee, testified at the Massachusetts State House before the Joint Committee on Housing in support of a bill that would require the state's emergency shelter system to take into shelter all families who are otherwise eligible and within 24 hours of having to sleep in unsafe places.

For the past twelve years, ANEFH has held large, successful one-day forums in Concord. This year, we reached out to communities where homelessness advocacy is especially needed and whose state legislators have not been strong supporters for state funding of homelessness prevention programs. We began in Haverhill, a town with residents at risk of or already homeless. We have had three successful meetings with Rev. Donna Collins, pastor of Phoenix Rising UCC, other Haverhill faith leaders and concerned residents, some of whose families have been personally touched by homelessness. They have already begun to advocate for changes in the Emergency Shelter admissions requirements with their state representative.

We are advising advocates to phone or email their legislators to vote for overrides of Governor Baker's vetoes of \$2 million for Residential Assistance for Families in Transition (RAFT), a program that allows families on the brink of homelessness to access funds to cover emergency expenses. The veto would also prevent the elderly, persons with disabilities and unaccompanied homeless youth to access RAFT. We are also urging advocacy to override Governor's veto of \$675,000 for Unaccompanied Homeless Youth Housing and Services. We have hopes that funding for these important programs will be restored as they were after a successful override effort last year.

Since its founding in 2004 by TriCon members, along with colleagues from other churches in Concord and Acton, ANEFH has grown to over 900 active advocates from 20 towns. Advocacy is easy and effective. We send out email alerts during the state's budget season (usually May to September) with clear, concise guidance. Legislators want to hear from their constituents and all it requires is a phone call or email.

Thanks and gratitude to TriCon members who are already active advocates for your good work this year. Educational programs and events for next year are currently being planned. Interested in adding your voice to help homeless families? Join us or seek more information at www.endfamilyhomelessness.net. Or contact Barbara Schiappa (TriCon member and ANEFH Steering Committee member) at schiappab@comcast.net or (978) 369-4345.