



**Worship offered in the church building and via Zoom online**

Since August 2020, worship has been offered in the church on Sundays at 10:30 a.m. as well as being broadcast on Zoom.

We are following all state and local guidelines which dictate the number of people allowed, social distancing, cleaning requirements, etc.

If you have questions about attending in-person worship, please call Worship & Spiritual Life Committee chair Pat at 413-634-5046.

\*\*\*

**WiFi Internet Service is at the Church Building**

Thanks to the generous financial donations of our friends and members, WiFi with Comcast was installed Oct. 1st at the Mary Lyon Church building. Since then, our online internet Zoom services have improved each week thanks to purchases and donations of equipment and constant "tweaking" of placement and settings. Your technology committee is grateful to all for making this technology possible. It keeps us connected to our friends and members who live near and far. For those of you in the church building, thank you for allowing the distraction of additional microphones and wires. ALL feedback on how this is going is appreciated and sought! Your Technology Committee is Carl, Annie, Judy and Tina. Reach us by calling any of us directly, leaving a message on church phone or by email:

[info@marylyonchurch.org](mailto:info@marylyonchurch.org)

\*\*

**Flowers for Worship**

Jan. Jill J.

\*\*



**IMPORTANT INFO**

**2020 Reports Due**

**Annual Mtg Jan. 24th**

A reminder that Committee and Officer written reports for the year 2020 are due by Sunday, January 10th. Reports may be left at the church on the table in the entryway, in the box on Willis's porch, or emailed to Judy Willis at judywillis56@gmail.com.

Copies of reports will be available to members on January 17th and can be picked up at church or from Willis's porch. Reports will also be emailed to members upon request.

An abbreviated Annual Meeting will be held on Sunday, January 24th, immediately following the 10:30 a.m. Sunday morning church service. The meeting will be held socially distanced in-person and will be broadcast via Zoom. The only two items to be reviewed and voted on at the meeting will be the 2021 Budget and the 2021 List of Officers and Committees. All other Committee and Officer Reports will be held until it is either safe to meet in person or the weather is such that an outdoor, socially distanced meeting is possible.

If you have any questions, please contact Moderator Paul Willis at 413-625-2649



**Thank You for Your Continued Support**

Thank you to all who send in donations and offerings! Your generosity helps us keep up with church expenses. Please continue to mail your donations payable to the Mary Lyon Church to our church collector, Vi S. whose address is in our directory or mail to the church to Vi's attention at Mary Lyon Church, P.O. Box 87, Buckland, MA 01338

\*\*

**Food Pantry Collections**

**Jan.: Soup & Crackers**

*See annual report elsewhere in this newsletter*

**Food Pantry Pickup days:**

**Tues. 1/12 & 1/26 from 3 pm to 6 pm** at Ashfield Congo Church on Rt. 116 in Ashfield.

*If you want to donate food, call 413-625-0020 and arrange either a pick up at your home or meet time at the church in Ashfield.*

Should you wish to send a financial donation directly, mail to: Hilltown Churches Food Pantry, c/o First Congregational Church, Main St. Rt. 116 P.O. Box 161 Ashfield, Ma. 01330 OR send to our church attn Missions, put Food Pantry on the memo line.

\*\*

**CHURCH COOKBOOKS FOR SALE**



**\$12.00 each**

**includes postage**

**We'll mail to you!**

**Email your order to [info@marylyonchurch.org](mailto:info@marylyonchurch.org)**

**Or call (413) 339-4231**

**Window Images**  
**Greeting Cards**  
**For Sale**

in packs of six for \$15.00  
You pick images



Price includes postage.  
Email [info@marylyonchurch.org](mailto:info@marylyonchurch.org)  
or call Tina.

\*\*

**Crafts for 2021 Bazaar**

Although we were unable to get together these past many months to make crafts, Cyndie S. is still creating items for our Silver Bell Bazaar which will be bigger and the best for 2021.



So, during these pandemic times and with winter upon us, Cyndie continues to make crafts and she hopes you are too. Happy crafting!!

\*\*

**Window Capital Campaign**

We've hit the \$85,000 mark for our Stained-glass window campaign – just \$5,000 more to meet our original goal of \$90,000! We continue to accept donations and will do so for another entire year - all during 2021. Please send your contributions to the Mary Lyon church with a notation for the WCC. Hopefully we can have some fundraiser events in Spring and Summer 2021. We're almost there! Thank you very much.

**Still**  
**Collecting**  
**Pennies**



Even though we're not out shopping much these days and getting change back from our purchases, the stained-glass window capital campaign continues to collect pennies. So please save those pennies (and maybe other change too) so that when we're all back together, we can count those coins and put them toward our campaign. Thanks to everyone!

\*\*

**Opportunity for**  
**Diversity Learning**

Dr. Bernard LaFayette, Jr., Civil Rights Movement activist and colleague of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., will be on a Zoom Webinar on **Sunday, January 17 at 5 pm.**

Dr. LaFayette will offer:

“Peace Now!” a special event celebrating his work with

Dr. King and the peaceful protest movement. Register at: <https://whfirstchurch.ccbchurch.com/goto/forms/148/responses/new>

**Monday Nighters**

The Monday Nighter's would like to thank everyone who bought and sold tickets for our annual quilt raffle! A special thank you to Helen and Ken Wood who made it their mission to sell as many tickets as possible and ended up selling nearly half of them. What an effort! The ending tally is \$836. This is, because of the pandemic, less than last year. But it is very helpful and more than we expected. Plus, it gave our winners a boost! We hope the creativity and skills of our quilters and artist brings them cheer for years to come. Thank you one and all!

**Winners:**

1st Prize Quilt - Tina Peters  
2nd Watercolor - Kyle Wood  
3rd Placemats-Lorraine McCarthy

\*\*

**Save the dates**  
**"Lenten series"**

A spiritual conversation about race and diversity with The Franklin County Interfaith Council. The Council seeks to promote understanding, support, and collaboration among different religions and traditions throughout Franklin County on both the individual and community level. **The dates are Feb 18, March 4, and March 18 all at 7:00 pm to 8:30 pm via special Zoom link on line.**

More info to follow next month.

**Thank You**  
**Kelly Gallagher**  
**Assoc. Pastor UCC**

Special appreciation service on Sunday, January 10 at 3:00 PM via ZOOM for Rev. Kelly who for 7 years has provided leadership and guidance for our Franklin County Association, churches and individuals. Tina has had the pleasure of working with her on the Executive Committee of the Association. Kelly has supported search and call, guided churches through times of sorrow and conflict as well as joy, brought new learning and fresh ideas to churches, participated in ordinations and installations, and helped us to live up to our calling to “be the church.” *A special Zoom registration link is available on our church website calendar special events section. Preregistration is required.*

\*\*\*

**Church Directory Update**

It has been nearly two years since our last church directory update. The directory is printed out and distributed to members and friends upon request – it is NOT published electronically. The Directory includes our church’s members’ and friends’ addresses, phone, and email contact info as well as a monthly birthday list (no year). This is a handy tool to stay connected to one another. Please check in with Jill at 413-625-9801 or email [info@marylyonchurch.org](mailto:info@marylyonchurch.org) to insure we have your information accurately.

**Book Nook**

*Suggested by Ken Wood*  
**A Dog Named Christmas**

by Greg Kincaid

*Also available online and on other digital media via*

*Hallmark Hall of Fame movies*  
When Todd McCray, a developmentally challenged young man still living on his parents’ Kansas farm, hears that a local animal shelter is seeking temporary homes for its dogs during the days leading to Christmas, he knows exactly what he wants for the holidays. His father objects, but Todd’s persistence quickly wins out. Soon the McCrays are the short-term foster family for a lovable pooch the young man names Christmas.

But what about all the other dogs who will be forced to spend the Yuletide season in cages? In the days that follow, Todd uses his special gifts of persuasion to encourage his hometown to participate in the “Adopt a Dog for Christmas Program.” What follows from his small act of kindness will teach his family, and his community, about peace on earth and good will toward men—and animals. [book description from Amazon.com]  
*Share your book suggestions with us. Call or email Luahn or [info@marylyonchurch.org](mailto:info@marylyonchurch.org).*

\*\*



Charlie Raymond (Tina’s dad), wants everyone at church to know how much he appreciates being a part of Zoom services and receiving your cards and prayers.

**12 Christmas Prayers**

*Thanks to our organist Sandy C. for her beautiful music and leading our terrific choir. And, Sandy, thank you for sharing these prayers*

- 1. Faith** Father God, it is by Your grace we have been saved, and through our faith-this is not from ourselves, but a gift from you-not by our works. Ephesians 2:8-9
- 2. Hope** May the God of Hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in Hope. Romans 15:14
- 3. Love** Help us to love because You first loved us. 1 John 4:19
- 4. Forgiveness** Thank you for being faithful and just in forgiving us our sins and thus purifying us from all unrighteousness 1 John 1:9
- 5. Mercy** Let us be merciful, just as our Father is merciful. Luke 6:36
- 6. Kindness** Let us be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as through Jesus, You forgave us. Ephesians 4:32
- 7. Generosity** Let us be enriched in every way to be generous in every way, and to give the glory and thanks to you Lord! 2 Corinthians 9:11
- 8. Compassion** Let us live in harmony with each other, be sympathetic and compassionate, love as brothers, and be humble. 1 Peter 3:8
- 9. Joy** Let us be joyful in home, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer. Romans 12:12
- 10. Salvation** Thank you for providing Jesus who is the way, the truth, the life and the only way to You. John 14:6
- 11. Obedience** Help us to not merely listen to Your Word, and so deceive ourselves. Help us do what it says. James 1:22-25
- 12. Life** Thank you for coming that we may have life, and have it to the full. John 10:10

*Editor’s note: Christmas - and prayers -*

*are for all year long 😊*

**A young man learns  
what's  
most  
important  
in life  
from the  
guy next  
door.**



*Pastor Rich recently shared the following story from the pulpit. A good friend had shared it with him...well worth putting in print here:*

It had been some time since Jack had seen the old man. College, girls, career, and life itself got in the way. In fact, Jack moved clear across the country in pursuit of his dreams. There, in the rush of his busy life, Jack had little time to think about the past and often no time to spend with his wife and son. He was working on his future, and nothing could stop him.

Over the phone, his mother told him, "Mr. Belser died last night. The funeral is Wednesday." Memories flashed through his mind like an old newsreel as he sat quietly remembering his childhood days.

"Jack, did you hear me?"

"Oh, sorry, Mom. Yes, I heard you. It's been so long since I thought of him. I'm sorry, but I honestly thought he died years ago," Jack said.

"Well, he didn't forget you. Every time I saw him, he'd ask how you were doing. He'd reminisce about the many days you spent over 'his side of the fence' as he put it," Mom told him.

"I loved that old house he lived in," Jack said.

"You know, Jack, after your father died, Mr. Belser stepped

in to make sure you had a man's influence in your life," she said. "He's the one who taught me carpentry," he said. "I wouldn't be in this business if it weren't for him. He spent a lot of time teaching me things he thought were important...Mom, I'll be there for the funeral," Jack said. As busy as he was, he kept his word. Jack caught the next flight to his hometown.

Mr. Belser's funeral was small and uneventful. He had no children of his own, and most of his relatives had passed away.

The night before he had to return home, Jack and his mom stopped by to see the old house next door one more time.

Standing in the doorway, Jack paused for a moment. It was like crossing over into another dimension, a leap through space and time.

The house was exactly as he remembered. Every step held memories. Every picture, every piece of furniture.... Jack stopped suddenly.

"What's wrong, Jack?" his mom asked.

"The box is gone," he said.

"What box?" Mom asked.

"There was a small gold box that he kept locked on top of his desk. I must have asked him a thousand times what was inside. All he'd ever tell me was 'the thing I value most,'" Jack said.

It was gone. Everything about the house was exactly how Jack remembered it, except for the box. He figured someone from the Belser family had taken it.

"Now I'll never know what was so valuable to him," Jack said.

"I better get some sleep. I have an early flight home, Mom."

It had been about two weeks since Mr. Belser died.

Returning home from work one day Jack discovered a note in his mailbox.

"Signature required on a package. No one at home. Please stop by the main post office within the next three days," the note read.

Early the next day Jack retrieved the package.

The small box was old and looked like it had been mailed a hundred years ago. The handwriting was difficult to read, but the return address caught his attention.

"Mr. Harold Belser" it read.

Jack took the box out to his car and ripped open the package. There inside was the gold box and an envelope.

Jack's hands shook as he read the note inside.

"Upon my death, please forward this box and its contents to Jack Bennett. It's the thing I valued most in my life." A small key was taped to the letter.

His heart racing, as tears filling his eyes, Jack carefully unlocked the box. There inside he found a beautiful gold pocket watch. Running his fingers slowly over the finely etched casing, he unlatched the cover. Inside he found these words engraved: "Jack, Thanks for your time! Harold Belser."

"The thing he valued most...was...my time."

Jack held the watch for a few minutes, then called his office and cleared his appointments for the next two days.

"Why?" Janet, his assistant asked.

"I need some time to spend with my son," he said.

"Oh, by the way, Janet...thanks for your time!"

[retrieved 10/02/2020 from <https://www.beliefnet.com/inspiration/2003/05/what-do-you-value-most.aspx>]



**Church Member**  
**Sue Samoriski**

**Citizen of the Year**

*Published: On Monday 12/27/2020 on the front page of The Greenfield Recorder, story by Anita Fritz, staff writer.* Susan Samoriski, who founded and has served as executive director of the Mary Lyon Foundation in Shelburne Falls for the past 30 years, has been chosen as the Greenfield Recorder's 38th Citizen of the Year. The Mary Lyon Foundation provides services and programs to all the schools within our nine town area in northwestern Mass. The towns served are Ashfield, Buckland, Charlemont, Colrain, Hawley, Heath, Plainfield, Rowe, and Shelburne. Sue has announced her retirement as of January 2021. The Recorder selects its Citizen of the Year through nominations submitted by its readers. With input from the Franklin County Chamber of Commerce's Executive Board, the newspaper's editorial board makes the final decision on who will be honored.

CONGRATS SUE!  
HAPPY RETIREMENT!  
WE WISH YOU ALL THE  
BEST IN WHATEVER  
YOU DO NEXT!!

**Pastor's Message**

My sisters and brothers as we enter the New Year:

Let us try to cultivate an awareness of the constant presence of those who would offer their guidance and support whenever we raise the need.

Let us try to expand our concepts of a Community of Cooperation.

Take these terms literally and then apply them vertically as well as horizontally.

The Body of which we are a part is much more all encompassing than we realize.

Remember that the communion with our sisters and brothers on the higher planes, as well as the communion with our own Higher Selves starts with an openness and desire focused through our conscious mind to connect with the "many mansions" – states of consciousness that Jesus spoke about. The coming of the Magi came through such a connection!

*May the blessings from on high greet you and Christ's love be with us this coming year.*

*Rich*



**Think about it...**

Once all the villagers decided to pray for rain. On the day of the prayer, all the people gathered, but only one boy came with an umbrella.

**That is faith.**

When you throw babies in the air, they laugh because they know you will catch them.

**That is Trust.**

Every night we go to bed without any assurance of being alive the next morning, but we still set the alarms to wake up.

**That is Hope.**

We plan big things for tomorrow in spite of zero knowledge of the future.

**That is Confidence.**

We see the world suffering, but still, we get married and have children.

**That is Love.**

On an old man's shirt was written, "I am not 80 years old; I am sweet 16 with 64 years of experience."

**That is Attitude.**

*From Forgotten Ireland  
Thanks to Sandy C. for sharing!*

**Church Ladies**  
**With Typewriters**

*Thanks to Dena for sending these along. They're Back! Those wonderful Church Bulletins! Thank God for the church ladies with typewriters. These sentences actually appeared in church bulletins or were announced at church services:*

The Fasting & Prayer Conference includes meals.

Scouts are saving aluminum cans, bottles and other items to be recycled Proceeds will be used to cripple children.

The sermon this morning: 'Jesus Walks on the Water.' The sermon tonight: 'Searching for Jesus.'

Ladies, don't forget the rummage sale. It's a chance to get rid of those things not worth keeping around the house. Bring your husbands.

Don't let worry kill you off – let the Church help.

Miss Charlene Mason sang 'I will not pass this way again,' giving obvious pleasure to the congregation.

For those of you who have children and don't know it, we have a nursery downstairs.

Next Thursday there will be try-outs for the choir. They need all the help they can get.

Irving Benson and Jessie Carter were married on October 24 in the church. So ends a friendship that began in their school days.

A bean supper will be held on Tuesday evening in the church hall. Music will follow.

At the evening service tonight, the sermon topic will be 'What Is Hell?' Come early and listen to our choir practice.

Eight new choir robes are currently needed due to the addition of several new members and to the deterioration of some older ones.

Please place your donation in the envelope along with the deceased person you want remembered.

The church will host an evening of fine dining, super entertainment and gracious hostility.

Pot-luck supper Sunday at 5:00 PM – prayer and medication to follow.

The ladies of the Church have cast off clothing of every kind. They may be seen in the basement on Friday afternoon.

This evening at 7 PM there will be a hymn singing in the park across from the Church. Bring a blanket and come prepared to sin.

The pastor would appreciate it if the ladies of the Congregation would lend him their electric girdles for the pancake breakfast next Sunday.

Low Self Esteem Support Group will meet Thursday at 7 PM. Please use the back door.

The eighth-graders will be presenting Shakespeare's Hamlet in the Church basement Friday at 7 PM. The congregation is invited to attend this tragedy.

Weight Watchers will meet has at 7 PM at the First Presbyterian Church. Please use large double door at the side entrance.

*And this one just about sums them all up*

The Associate Minister unveiled the church's new campaign slogan last Sunday: 'I Upped My Pledge - Up Yours.'

\*\*\*



*January 3rd, 2021 will be a communion Sunday. Because of the COVID we will not be passing around the pieces of bread and grape juice at church. Bring your own if you go to church. Folks via Zoom have yours ready if you wish.*

Hilltown Churches Food Pantry  
Annual Report 2020

To say that this has been a challenging year would be an understatement!! Covid 19 caused us to reach deep to meet the ever increasing need for food in our community. It hit hard and fast as folks were furloughed and businesses closed across our little corner of the world. Our Board of Directors met and talked over options to continue to provide food to our neighbors. The idea of stopping was never a serious consideration, we all knew that we had to figure out a way to continue that would protect us as well as our clients.

We decided on a drive-through model that would keep us separated physically and to require the use of masks. This has meant a lot more work from our volunteers as well as doing it with fewer folks as we limited the number of volunteers in the room. All stepped up to the task!

We expected our numbers to increase and did they ever! We went from serving 85 households or 395 people per month to serving 112 households with 543 individual visits to our pantry.

We noticed that many of our regular clients stopped coming so we called them to see why. Most responded that they were afraid to come due to the virus or their ride would no longer bring them. Some had little children that they didn't want to expose to the risk. A volunteer stepped forward and agreed to deliver to these families which now number about 15. What an amazing act of generosity. We do this for families who are not able to get their food any other way. No one should go hungry when there is food available.

We were able to get 135,103 pounds of food from the Food Bank of Western Mass. for a total charge of \$10,164. Of this 12,026 lbs. was fresh produce, 7,348 fresh fruit, 6,196 dairy, 7,093 protein and 7,470 were carbohydrates. All of these foods came to us free of charge. The foods that we purchase we get for cents on the dollar so any monetary donations can be leveraged for an amazing amount of food. Again local families planted an extra rows for us, Sidehill Farm donated yogurt and many others helped out as they could with eggs, honey, food donations, etc.

We have continued to work with our local churches that are the pillars of our pantry. The Mary Lyon Foundation helped identify families in need through the Mohawk school system. They gave gift cards to Keystone Market for families with children. Smith College staff and students supported 60% of the cost of the \$100 gift certificates given to parents to shop for their children.

We salute you all for your selflessness during a time of need in our community and wish you all the very best for a healthy and happy new year..

Pat Thayer for the Board of Directors of the HCFP.

If you want to donate food, call 413-625-0020 and arrange either a pick up at your home or meet time at the church in Ashfield.

Should you wish to send a financial donation directly, mail to: Hilltown Churches Food Pantry, c/o First Congregational Church, Main St. Rt. 116 P.O. Box 161 Ashfield, Ma. 01330 OR send to our church attn Missions, put Food Pantry on the memo line.