Dear Saints of God at First Church, Welcome to Crier 100! I have written intros and been with you via these pages 100 times. I guess that’s what happens when you begin your 11th year with the same beloved Church. We have been through a lot – our 350th Anniversary, losses, my sabbatical, a church flooding following a lightening strike outside, and a pandemic… Yes, we have been through a lot, and yet God has remained steadfastly, stubbornly faithful to us. Who knew? Well, we did, kinda… but it’s always nice to know that we can trust God’s promises – isn’t it?

Speaking of Church with a capital “C”………It’s time to come back to worship.

I know that some of you are immunocompromised, and in that case I understand why you stay away and you need to listen to your doctor. But some of you are not. You are scared, some are just “out of the habit” and others are postponing returning until “after…” BUT: if you are going to the gym, are out for concerts & shows, or eat and socialize at restaurants indoors – all those places are far less safe than Sunday worship at First Church. As far as I know (and after 10 years I know you all quite well) all adults, teens and children who can – are vaccinated. We are wearing masks for the youngest ones until they can get their shots and develop immunities, and then we will take them off again. Right now, we have almost 100% of the adult congregation vaccinated and we worship in a room that is ventilated (windows are open, so wear something warm-think Gillette Stadium in winter but much more interesting…), people wear masks, and we have tried to limit exposure by keeping social distancing. Worship at First Church is really the safest way of being indoors right now – safer than airplanes, bars, concerts, gyms, shows or restaurants. So why not return?

What is really keeping you away?

It’s not just that I dearly miss you all personally. It’s not even that I have seen our online attendance drop to very low levels – even including the 50 people we get on a Sunday in worship, but there is also the element of the things we can do together as a church only in person. Watching the service in your jammies in the long run does not evoke a spirit of piety, reverence, and worship of the Living God – something that I hope, we at First Church are able to offer. Christians are not consumers – we are collaborators, we engage, we contribute, we are present. We live the life of faith together – so that when we are really alone in life, we can draw on that “life of faith” and reach out in prayer to God.

The Church needs you – and you need your church.

Please consider prayerfully what I am saying, and if you are able, return to First Church in person.

Yours in Christ, Kaz
INSIDE THIS ISSUE
Mask Mandate, Advent, Worship, Bible Study/Coffee Hours, Pastoral Care
Covid & Food at FC, Music, Flowers
Men’s & Women’s Fellowship, Silent Auction Baskets
Meeting House Fair, UCC Roots
Book Review
Church Around the World
November Calendar

WORSHIP SERVICES
Please join us in person or via Facebook live stream. Face masks are required for all (vaccinated or not for any reason).

November 3 Wednesday Evening Vespers 7:30pm
November 7 All Saints Sunday Worship & Communion 10am
November 14 Sunday Worship 10am
November 21 Sunday Worship 10:00am
November 28 Sunday Worship 10:00am Advent Sunday 1 ~ Hope

BIBLE STUDY WITH PASTOR KAZ
Tuesday Bible studies in November will be held every week except November 23rd. Morning sessions are at 10:00am and are now ONLY in person in classroom 7. Evening sessions are at 7:00pm via Zoom. See the weekly invite emailed to you if you’d like to join us!

PASTOR KAZ COFFEE HOURS
Thursday Coffee Hours in November will be held on the 4th and 11th from 11:30am-12:30pm at the Downtown Marlborough Starbucks (137 South Bolton Street).

PASTORAL CARE
Contact Pastor Kaz (203-781-6372) or the church office (508-485-6297) with any personal concerns, illnesses, deaths, prayer requests or to arrange homebound Communion.

CHURCH OFFICE HOURS
Tuesdays & Thursdays 9am – 3pm
Wednesdays 8am-2pm
OFFICE IS CLOSED THE WEEK OF NOVEMBER 22nd

MASKS IN FIRST CHURCH
A reminder that masks are mandatory for anyone (whether vaccinated or not), coming into the church building. Yes...it has ‘gotten old’ however, this should not feel like a sacrifice but rather a gift to yourself and others to keep healthy. Masks are to be worn so that they cover the nose and chin.

If someone believes there is a reason for an exemption to this policy, please contact Church Council chair, Marnie Hooker. Council will listen to your concern, and if appropriate approve an exemption for that particular instance or situation.

The mask mandate is for the health and well being of all. Please be respectful and considerate of everyone attending and using the building and wear masks.

ADVENT BEGINS NOVEMBER 28
THE SUNDAY OF HOPE

NATIONS WILL COME TO YOUR LIGHT
—ISAIAH 60:3

HOPE
As the status of vaccinations, the virus, and people's comfort levels evolve, so do our policies. Each month, the Council discusses the latest data, guidance, and what different groups are doing. Based on this and other information, we review our policies and requests we have received and try to make the decisions that allow flexibility and keep people as safe as possible.

Following the October Council meeting review, changes are being made to the policies followed at First Church. The new policies are:

1. For new renters, their particular needs will be discussed with them during the contracting process and will be in line with the updated policies.

2. For Church groups and existing renters:
   - Served food will be prepackaged or plates filled individually by our masked servers (buffet style serve yourself is not recommended by the Marlborough Department of Health).
   - Take out servings may be prepared for people to pick up.
   - Masks are to be worn (except when eating or performing) by all participants.
   - Masks removed for eating or performing are to be put on again when finished.
   - Practice social distancing.
   - Eating outside is strongly encouraged.
   - Hand sanitizer will be made available, it is encouraged that all participants use it before and after eating or serving.
   - Any materials advertising or distributing information about an event at First Church are to include information about our requirement to wear masks. (First Church does not have masks to hand out to people who show up without a mask).
   - As with all events, doors and windows in Parish Hall are to be kept open for ventilation.

If anyone has any questions, please direct them to the Council Chair, Marnie Hooker (not Pastor Kaz) at meshooker@verizon.net or 978-310-6726.

**MUSIC MINISTRIES**

The Music Ministries at First Church have resumed! Hallelujah! The Chancel Choir is once again participating live in worship with anthems, introits and other music. The Joyful Ringers have resumed their rehearsals in preparation to play during worship once a month.

If you have ever considered joining the choir or the Joyfuls, now is a great time to get started! The Joyful Ringers meet on Monday evenings and the Chancel Choir meets on Thursday evenings. Both groups rehearse in the sanctuary and follow COVID-safe protocols.

If you are interested in either ensemble, please reach out to our Music Director, Ellie Armsby at earmsb@firstchurchmarlborough.org to learn more.

**FLOWER MINISTRY**

Regarding flowers, just a thank you to those who continue to sponsor flowers each week and a reminder that if anyone is interested in donating an arrangement or two, newbies are welcomed! Just email kklynch13@verizon.net or call me (508-485-9175) to make arrangements.

A reminder that starting November 7th, we will be going back to our pre-Covid routine regarding Sunday flower pick up after church which means that your flowers will be brought down to the flower room after the service if you are not in worship to pick them up. They will be discarded (or enjoyed by the church staff) if not picked up by noon on Tuesday.

Thanks! Krysta Koppenal-Lynch
CONFIRMATION & SUNDAY SCHOOL
DIACONATE & TRUSTEES

No updates this month.

MEN’S FELLOWSHIP

We are very pleased to announce that Men’s Fellowship is planning to resume our monthly Spaghetti Supper Fundraiser starting Wednesday, December 22nd (you can dine in Parish Hall or purchase it for take out).

We will also be assisting with the set up and breakdown for the tables, displays, etc. for the Meeting House Fair. We would welcome anyone who would like to join us in our fellowship endeavors. Please contact Cliff Fenton (978-618-2323).

Submitted by: Dave Kemp

WOMEN’S FELLOWSHIP

Women’s Fellowship had a very successful Rummage Sale in October! Thank you to those of you who brought in things for the sale, helped with set up and sorting, helped out during the sale and came and shopped! It was a group effort!

Women’s Fellowship November meeting is Tuesday, November 9th. We will meet at 6:30 for coffee and social time followed by a brief business meeting conducted by Laura Lane, President. There will be discussion about the Meeting House Fair which will be held on Saturday, Nov. 20, 9am-2pm (see page 5 for more information). The Fair is sponsored by the Women’s Fellowship, but is an all church fair.

Our speaker for the evening will be Jonathan Pekor, PT, DPT from Fyzical Therapy and Balance Center. He will do a presentation and demonstration of balance exercises with a focus on balance and aging.

Looking ahead, Women’s Fellowship meets on Tuesday, December 14 at 6:30pm when we will enjoy a musical program presented by Jim and Linda Duncan.

Submitted by: Laura Lane and Mary Wenzel

MEETING HOUSE FAIR SILENT AUCTION
BASKETS, BASKETS, BASKETS!!

It is that time of year again to start thinking about what kind of awesome basket you can create for our Meeting House Fair. This has always been a very fun-loving competitive event and a huge hit at the fair. We are again looking for volunteers to make up baskets for the Silent Auction table. Just choose a theme of your liking such as games, sports, seasons, pampering, kids, wine (very popular) etc. You then just need to wrap the basket in cellophane and include a list of the contents with a total dollar value to create a beautiful donation!

All baskets WITH ONLY NEW ITEMS AND ONE THEME PER BASKET should be brought to the church no later than Friday, Nov. 22nd please! If you need us to pick them up or if you have any questions contact Laurel Hill (508-480-9234) or Kathy Leonard (978-875-0606).
Education By Women, For Women ~ Julia M. Speller, Contributor

Much has been said about the accomplishments of the feminist movement that erupted in the 1970s in the secular world. Less is celebrated, however, about this same feminist energy in theological education and the church. Florence Amanda Fensham (1861-1912) has the distinction of being the first woman in the nation to receive a theological degree from a Congregational seminary. Her enrollment at Chicago Theological Seminary (CTS) in 1902 caused “considerable consternation.” But her excellent work earned the highest honors in her class, “raised the tone of the student body distinctly,” and opened the door for other women to enter.

Born in East Douglas, Massachusetts, she was educated in Europe at Mansfield College, Oxford, Cambridge and Edinburgh universities. She was an accomplished biblical scholar and linguist. Her studies prepared her for teaching and missionary positions at the American College for Girls in Constantinople, Turkey in 1883 and the Dean of women at Beloit College from 1902. This passion for women’s education also positioned her as the key figure among Congregationalists to provide education opportunities for women. The culmination of her life’s work came through the creation of the Congregational Training School for Women (CTSW) in 1909.

(Continued on next page)
The CTSW had roots in the ancient and often forgotten role of “deaconess.” This office was restored in the late 19th century by the Evangelical Synod, a forerunner of the United Church of Christ. While it advanced volunteer service with the sick, poor and homeless, many women sought more. Fensham’s new model expanded vocational opportunities for women, laying the groundwork for many contemporary paths to ministry for women in the United Church of Christ today. Prominent CTS professor Graham Taylor, said, “She gave it all she had . . . she was its inspiration and initiative, its principal instructor and only administrator, its homemaker and outside representative.”

BOOK REVIEW

Fannie Lou Hamer’s Fight for First-Class Citizenship ~ Carolyn Renee Dupont

Remembering a courageous civil rights activist whose name and story are too little known.

As voting rights take center stage in America’s national conversation, a new biography of civil rights activist Fannie Lou Hamer speaks with special relevance. *Walk with Me*, written by historian and biographer Kate Clifford Larson, serves at once as a history of the civil rights movement and a rebuke to ballot-restriction efforts sweeping the nation. Accessible and moving, Larson’s account offers history’s best gifts—context and complexity—to readers who want a better grasp of the trajectory of voting rights in our nation’s past.

America’s civil rights story often reads as the tale of great leaders, extraordinary unity, and heroic corrective legislation. But Hamer’s story demands that we rethink these narratives. Her life highlights the role of sharecroppers, women, students, and poor people who wanted, in her words, “to live as decent human beings.” Rather than marching together in unity, they struggled through deep and ongoing disagreements about the best way to achieve their goals, and they endured unspeakable danger and harassment. As for corrective legislation, Larson’s account demonstrates how new federal measures required unrelenting follow-up at the local level.

Born to Mississippi sharecroppers in 1917, Hamer seemed destined for a life that differed little from that of her parents. With only a sixth-grade education, she worked as a timekeeper on a cotton plantation in Sunflower County, Mississippi. Inspired by young people working with the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), Hamer took the first courageous steps on a new trajectory when she and other Sunflower County Blacks tried unsuccessfully to register to vote in the summer of 1962.

That simple and innocent effort exacted a high cost—she lost her job and her home. Hamer’s actions also set off reprisals against all Sunflower County Blacks who shared her vision of first-class citizenship and a better life. But intimidation only strengthened Hamer’s resolve to fight.

The most absorbing parts of Larson’s narrative describe the brutal beatings local authorities inflicted on Hamer and other activists in June 1963. Law enforcement officials in Winona, Mississippi, beat Hamer and four other women bloody. One of the men raped Hamer in addition to bludgeoning her. These events scarred all five women physically and emotionally—damage to Hamer’s left eye and kidneys lingered for the rest of her life. Typical of the time and place, the perpetrators paid no price for their crimes.

Beyond the right to vote, Black Mississippians craved the political representation long denied them. Achieving this goal meant cracking open the all-white Mississippi Democratic Party, which dominated the state’s politics and excluded Blacks. As part of the alternative Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party (MFDP), Hamer joined Black and white Mississippians in challenging the legitimacy of the regular delegation at the 1964 Democratic National Convention in Atlantic City, New Jersey.

Her testimony before the Credentials Committee at that convention catapulted her to national attention. Hamer held the room spellbound as she recounted her efforts to register to vote, the reprisals she and others suffered, and her beating the previous year. That is, until President Lyndon Johnson called an emergency press conference that drew news cameras and network coverage away from the charismatic Mississippi sharecropper.

(Continued on next page)
The Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party’s challenge amounted to little in the moment. Still, a nation had heard the courageous and compelling voice of a sharecropper who wanted full citizenship rights and had suffered mightily to attain them. Going forward, the Democratic Party adopted a tone and strategy less conciliatory toward white Southerners, who began their long pilgrimage toward the Republican Party.

Hamer’s compelling persona, rich singing voice, fiery speeches, and steely commitment made her vital to ongoing civil rights efforts in Mississippi. As a person of deep Christian faith, she galvanized other Mississippi Blacks to join the struggle. She also criticized Black ministers who, for fear of losing white patronage or provoking violent reprisals, kept civil rights activity at arm’s length. She ran unsuccessfully for Congress and for the state senate, participated in voter registration drives, hosted a steady stream of civil rights workers in her home, and joined the 1966 March Against Fear.

Raised in grinding poverty, Hamer also devoted herself to improving life for impoverished Mississippians. She ran a food and supply distribution center and founded a “pig bank” that gave away pregnant sows to needy rural families. But Hamer seems not to have escaped poverty herself. Near the end of her life, she underwent a mastectomy as part of treatment for the cancer that would eventually kill her. Unable to afford a prosthesis, she stuffed her bra with socks until a friend came through with the money.

Larson’s narrative emphasizes the extraordinary violence white Mississippians visited on those who fought for their rights. Beyond the infamous deaths of three civil rights workers during the summer of 1964, activists suffered job loss, beatings, church burnings, drive-by shootings, and harassment from local officials—including heavy and arbitrary fines and traffic stops.

Walk with Me also highlights the deep cleavages among and within different civil rights organizations. The priorities and strategies favored by poor Black Mississippians did not always mesh with those embraced by middle-class Blacks and high-profile leaders. Young people impatient with the pace and nature of change often rejected compromise and sought a more radical agenda. NAACP director Roy Wilkins scorned Hamer for her ignorance and poor grammar. She reciprocated his disdain, criticizing the organization as “the National Association for the Advancement of Certain People,” for its elitism and top-down operations.

But such tensions did no lasting damage to Hamer’s reputation, and the nation’s leading civil rights figures eulogized her when she died in March 1977. The current generation can best honor her by taking inspiration from her life and fighting to preserve the rights she suffered to attain for herself and others.

Carolyn Renée Dupont is professor of history at Eastern Kentucky University. She is the author of Mississippi Praying: Southern White Evangelicals and the Civil Rights Movement, 1945–1975

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**CHURCH AROUND THE WORLD**

“Tigray, in northern Ethiopia, is in turmoil” ~ *by Philip Jenkins*

*October 8, 2021 Reprinted with permission from The Christian Century*

Over the past year, a dreadful military conflict has swept over a region that is one of the most ancient and significant heartlands of Christian history—in its way, a holy land. The crisis demands the attention of anyone in the West who is concerned about the Christian past or future.

The city of Aksum lies in the northern Ethiopian region of Tigray. In the first Christian millennium, Aksum ruled a sizable empire that spanned the Red Sea, and it accepted the new faith around the time that Constantine was ruling in Rome. The sheer range of monuments in the area—rock-hewn churches, inscribed pillars, tombs—is quite overwhelming, but the most venerated site of all is Aksum’s Church of Our Lady Mary of Zion. The building has been destroyed and rebuilt repeatedly, and in 1964 Emperor Haile Selassie completed a splendid new cathedral alongside the old one. The great center of devotion remains the old church, where Ethiopians devoutly believe that the Chapel of the Tablet contains the actual, original Ark of the Covenant. The annual feast of Mary of Zion—*Tsion Maryam*—in late November is one of the greatest religious gatherings on the African continent.

(Continued on next page)
Ethiopia is the second most populous country in Africa. It is also a vibrant and expansive center of Christianity: the present Christian population of 80 million is on track to double by 2060, placing Ethiopia far ahead of any European nation. The Orthodox make up 44 percent of Ethiopia, and 22 percent are evangelicals or “Pentays”—Pentecostals. Some 31 percent are Muslims.

But religion is by no means the only factor dividing the country, which is a patchwork of ethnic, tribal, and linguistic groupings. From 1975 through 1991, those diverse populations allied to resist and ultimately overthrow a savage communist dictatorship. After liberation, one of the most powerful ethnic groups seceded to form the new nation of Eritrea. The remaining groups cooperated, somewhat tensely, to rule the restored Ethiopia. That coalition was dominated by the Tigray People’s Liberation Front, which effectively held power until 2018. The TPLF was then displaced by the new regime headed by Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed, who has won golden opinions as a peacemaker. In 2019, he received the Nobel Prize for promoting peace with Eritrea. As a faithful Pentay, Abiy Ahmed represents that sizable and fast-growing share of the population.

But despite initial hopes, the country has descended rapidly into turmoil. As the TPLF became ever more disaffected, violence erupted with Ethiopian armed forces, and in 2020, a full-scale Tigray War was in progress. Ethiopian forces seeking to impose their rule on Tigray were assisted by allied Eritrean regulars, and also by some lethal ethnic militias. Massacres and atrocities mounted.

One hideous episode occurred at Aksum itself, at the very time of what should have been the Tsion Maryam pilgrimage. (Not surprisingly given the dense fog of war, the exact dates are uncertain.) Probably in late November of 2020, Eritrean forces began mass killings in the city, including the area around the great church. Reportedly, Eritrean fighters even entered the church itself, killing many who had taken sanctuary there. In scenes that recall the darkest eras of Europe’s Middle Ages, the clergy were left to recover and bury the remains. Local rumor suggested that the Eritreans were attempting to steal the Ark of the Covenant.

Horrible though this massacre was, it was not necessarily motivated by religion. Eritrea has a Christian majority and shares a considerable ethnic and linguistic overlap with the Tigray region. Still, it was a devastating shock. The church holds a position in Ethiopian faith comparable to that of St. Peter’s in Rome for the Catholic world.

Future prospects for the region are grim. It is quite possible that as Tigray’s insurgency spreads, so the Ethiopian state will be forced to shed one or more secessionist regions. Meanwhile, the country’s turbulent and well-armed neighbors might well be drawn into such conflicts—those adjacent countries include such trouble spots as South Sudan, Sudan, and Somalia. Quite apart from such political pressures, the whole Horn of Africa region is already being acutely affected by climate change, with all that implies for increased competition for diminishing resources and aggravated ethnic and religious tensions. Supplies of food and drinkable water are both deeply stressed, and governments are often tempted to deploy the “food weapon” against restive populations.

Religion itself is by no means the sole factor shaping these wars. But this ancient and holy Christian region is fast becoming a very troubled place for its Christian peoples.

HOLY SITE: The Church of Our Lady Mary of Zion in Aksum, Ethiopia. The 1964 church building was erected alongside a much older one, which is said to contain the original Ark of the Covenant. (Photo by Sailko, used via Creative Commons License)
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<td>Scouts 6pm (Hall)</td>
<td>Bells 7:30pm (Sanctuary)</td>
<td>Bible Studies 10am (Room 7) 7pm (Zoom)</td>
<td>Vespers Service 7pm</td>
<td>Kaz Coffee Hours 11:30am -12:30pm Starbucks Downtown Choir 7pm (Sanctuary)</td>
<td>Early Risers AA Group 6:30am</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>10am Worship Communion All Saints Day Girl Scouts 3:45-5:45pm (Hall)</td>
<td>Scouts 6pm (Hall)</td>
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<td>10am Worship</td>
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<td>21</td>
<td>10am Worship Deacons 11:45am (Zoom) Organ Concert 3pm (Sanctuary) Girl Scouts 3:45-5:45pm (Hall)</td>
<td>Scouts 6pm (Hall) Bells 7:30pm (Sanctuary)</td>
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<td>28</td>
<td>10am Worship 1st Sunday in Advent-Hope</td>
<td>Scouts 6pm (Hall) Bells 7:30pm (Sanctuary)</td>
<td>Bible Studies 10am (Room 7) 7pm (Zoom)</td>
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SUNDAY WORSHIP AT 10:00AM IN-PERSON & LIVE STREAMED (MASKS REQUIRED FOR ALL WHEN YOU ARE IN THE CHURCH BUILDING)

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508-485-6297

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