

Ministry Update Report April 2024

A. Upcoming Activities and Dates

Apr 20	11a	Cemetery Association Annual Meeting (I will not be available to attend)
Apr 21	10a	Earth Day Worship (Common Ground: Food, Soil, Climate) Adam from Unbounded Glory will visit
May 4	12-4p	QC Pride (set up 10:30, event 12-4p) (giving benediction)
May 17	5p	Academy rededication of Bowen Building (giving Invocation)
May 27	10a	Memorial Day (Hill Cemetery blessing)
Jun 4	7p	Online Windham Association Annual Meeting and possible Ecclesiastical Council
Jun 9	9a-3p	Offsite all church vision retreat at Crystal Pond
Jun 21	9a-4p	SNEUCC Annual Meeting UMASS Amherst

I will be unavailable Saturdays January 9 – May 11 from 9a-1p.
Taking a week off April 28 – May 4.

B. Webinars and Training

when		who	what
Apr 18	12-1p online	FIA, Vision, others	Rumors of Our Death are Greatly Exaggerated (about the journey of United Church Worcester)
Apr 19	2-3p online	Finance	PRC: Managing Investments and Endowments for Churches
Apr 25	2-3p online	Worship	PRC: Pew to Pulpit: How to Select Music
May 8	6-9p	FIA, Vision	Organize: Clergy and Lay Leader workshop on Justice, Revitalization, and Developing Leaders St. Joseph’s church Willimantic

C. Ministry Update

1. Faith Formation

With Earth Day around the corner, we are planning screenings and discussions of two movies from Interfaith Power and Light, Common Ground and Kiss the Ground. These will be intergenerational screenings.

Bible Study is exploring the topic of suffering.

We are seeking an after-church activity for families and youth for April or May.

I am going to offer several topics and conversations that may be of interest to congregants and people we meet at Quiet Corner Pride.

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Jessica from East Woodstock has reached out with regard to joining East for summer VBS programming. She is not as keen to engage in a music camp, as was suggested in the Ministry Planning process. We will be in conversation in the next couple of weeks.

2. Faith In Action

Several activities are being planned regarding Faith In Action, including Earth Day Worship service (April 21), Quiet Corner Pride (May 4), a singles cooking / dinner opportunity, a service day at the Willimantic Soup Kitchen (June 1), workday gatherings, and the annual All town Yard Sale (June).

3. Care Ministry and the Deacons

We are setting dates to meet with the principals of the schools in Woodstock to make them aware of the Benevolence Fund and discuss other opportunities to support families, teachers and students.

4. Worship

Struggling together to bring depth to life, finding deeper meaning in our faith stories, and celebrating the goodness of the Living God are the heart of worship. And Holy week worship was a joyful exploration of creative possibilities:

- The Palm Sunday choir rendition of “Hosanna Hassana” animated the familiar story and interrupted the usual flow.
- Maundy Thursday’s focus on the story from a single Gospel accompanied by related music enhanced the meaning for many.
- And Easter’s unscripted shared experience - being instructed by a youth to turn flat pieces of paper into three-dimensional works of art - was the most powerful expression of Easter’s truth that I have experienced in decades.

It takes work and effort and collaboration to coordinate these activities in meaningful. And yet, the Music team is in a state of flux a, efforts to form hospitality and an altar guild have been difficult, and it is increasingly challenging to schedule Creative Worship meetings and focus the team on shared expectations and a common vision.

These challenges are symptomatic of anxiety around change, as well as expectations and “competing priorities” identified through the values process. They are highlighted here to underscore the need for the congregation and its leaders to engage in healthy conversations that can lead toward a shared vision – for worship and the direction of the congregation.

The Summer Worship planning team has not met since late February, at the request of deacons from East. Our next meeting will be April 17. East has expressed a desire to revert to the pattern in which East provides the speakers for July and First for August, as they believe it will be easier for them to coordinate. ***Please note: That does not imply that I will take the month of July off.***

Themes are texts have been identified for April – June, and September – November. September and early October will pick up on our beliefs and explore the new liturgical season of Creation.

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From Mid-October through November, worship will be based on our Stewardship them, Imagine Together.

D. Communications

Ministry Moments have been well received. To enhance their effectiveness we will coordinate creating articles for the bulletin and weekly email regarding the highlighted ministry, and importantly next steps and actions.

A new web page is in the works for the Faith In Action team.

We are in process in time for the Quiet Corner pride. The brochure will highlight activities May – Aug. Other materials to publicize ministries and activities, a banner, etc. will need to be produced in the next couple of weeks to maximize our impact.