

# SPIRIT SOUNDINGS

AUGUST 2017



## SOME SPIRITUAL LESSONS OF SUMMER

Summer is often a season of rising expectations, even more so than spring. We go to our favorite garden center and see various plants in all their glory. The fancier garden centers have beautiful arrangements and all kinds of little things you can spend your money on. And you look at the various plants and wonder how they got to be so lovely.

Or, if you are the outdoors type, you may decide to take a walk or go on a hike and you feel full of summer—even on a humid day. And when you return, you feel as if you’ve had a good day.

Or, if you are the city type, perhaps you take a train into Manhattan and spend the day in a bookshop or a museum. (The Morgan, only a short walk from the 33<sup>rd</sup> Street Path station, has a wonderful exhibit on Henry David Thoreau.)

Each of these activities has a spiritual lesson for us; it’s called patience. The writer Paulo Coelho notes that the two hardest tests on the spiritual road are the patience to wait for the right moment and the courage not to be disappointed with what we encounter. But it is more than just waiting for the right moment. It is also the ability to stay calm during the wait.

We think of summer as a time to slow down but our society is always in such a hurry, even in summer. On Sunday mornings the Garden State Parkway is full of people going so fast that they don’t even have time to enjoy looking at the landscape, seeing Cheesequake State park or the boats in the Laurence Harbor marina. There is little patience among the drivers.

A friend of mine has a fig tree in her yard. For three years she has watched it and finally this year it is bearing fruit. Nature can’t be hurried and the sun of summer will yield harvest in its own time. We eagerly look forward to Jersey corn, tomatoes, and the blueberries we are now having. And each comes in its own time.

The early morning walk forces us to slow down, to take notice of the world around us whether it’s the deer nibbling at our neighbor’s garden or the sound of the early morning breeze rustling through the trees. Walking also teaches us another important lesson—how to put one foot in front of the other. We think, of course, that’s what walking is, but the lesson of doing just that helps us to think about the various paths we have taken in our lives and will continue to take.

Summer is also a time of preparation, especially during the month of August. It really is the harvest season. What are the fruits that we harvest? More than simply the peaches and blueberries, corn and tomatoes, we should examine how we can harvest justice and peace, especially during this time of turmoil. A verse in Proverbs notes that “The ants are not a strong people, but they prepare their food in summer.” Our preparation for harvest can become a source of strength for our community as we think about the fall and winter to come.

Patience does not preclude preparation so during this time of summer as we take stock of our lives, we can plan and prepare for the work to come in the fall when the winds pick up and we continue our journey as a community committed to following the One that God sent to open us to all possibilities.

—*Rev. Joyce*

**Phone:** 732-671-1905

**E-mail:**

[ofc@oldfirstchurchnj.org](mailto:ofc@oldfirstchurchnj.org)

**Twitter:**

[twitter.com/old1stchurchnj](https://twitter.com/old1stchurchnj)

**Web-Site:**

[www.oldfirstchurchnj.org](http://www.oldfirstchurchnj.org)

**Pastor**

Rev. Dr. Joyce Antila  
Phipps

**Worship 10:30am**

Communion 1<sup>st</sup> Sunday  
Fellowship Hour, every  
Sunday  
Book Club, monthly

## Moderator's Message

We have a lot to be thankful for this summer. God's blessings have brought us a number of good things for which we are grateful.

First, we thank Rev. Alice Batcher for gracing our pulpit with two thoughtful, insightful sermons during Pastor Joyce's absence in late July.

Second, the six wonderful young volunteers from the **Jersey Shore WorkCamp** that I worked with in July have finished painting our dingy center entrance and upper hallway with two coats of fresh paint. They also painted three walls of one of our downstairs rooms, too! They were courteous and careful, scampered up and down ladders like monkeys and left us with brighter, fresh-smelling walls and lots of good will. I enjoyed praying and dancing with them, sharing devotions at Noon and getting to know them as individuals. They came from Georgia, NJ, Florida, Maryland, Canada and Hawaii. In addition to saving us the perilous work of a big paint job, they also saved us \$1,500 in contractor costs. Blessings to these wonderful young people!

Special thanks go to Peter Ahern and Mary Pearson, who took down our center entrance's wall of commemorative plaques and hung them up again following the paint job.

## MISSIONS

Thank you to the caring folks in our congregation who donated funds to help pay for our **August Cleaning Supplies Mission** to the *Calico Cat*. On Sunday, August 6<sup>th</sup>, we will ask our congregation to help the Deacons pack up the many cleaning items for fourteen low-income families who will be supplied with products that they cannot purchase with food stamps. Home and personal items include: toilet paper, tissues, toothpaste, plastic wrap, laundry and dish soap, hand soap, personal sanitary supplies, deodorant, kitchen and bath cleaner, shampoo, etc.

Today, our donation table in the sanctuary groans under the weight of foodstuffs and fruit juices for the *Calico Cat* Food Pantry and **Family Promise for the Homeless**. Thanks go to Deacon Mary who lugged in several shopping loads for these missions and blessings go to those who donated. Our congregation collects for these important food missions all year round.

Please be mindful of the upcoming school days. During August, our Deacons are collecting funding for the *Calico Cat* **Back to School Mission** which supplies clothing, shoes and school supplies to support those less fortunate in our community. Remember how good it felt to have new clothes for that all-important first day of school in September? Growing kids' feet outgrow their shoes very quickly, so new shoes (plus a set of new underwear) round out the needs for children preparing to start the new school year. Notebooks and school supplies are essentials in the classroom, too. If you can help us, **please mail a check made out to the OFC Deacons Fund with Back to School written on the memo line or drop a check into the collection plate on Sundays through the end of August**. Thanks to you, children from less fortunate families can start a new school year on an even footing with others.

Most of all, I give thanks for a loving God and the blessings of a caring congregation which gives until it hurts. The help received from all of you lies at the foundation of our community's support system.

—*Elaine Lent, Moderator*

## LOOKING AHEAD

**Sunday, August 6<sup>th</sup>, following Coffee Hour**, help our Deacons pack items for our *August Cleaning Products Mission*.

**Sunday, August 13, 12:00PM**: Deacons Retreat at Elaine Lent's home, at 1370 W. Front St., Lincroft. We will join for fellowship and lay plans for exciting fall events.

**Monday, August 14, 7:00-9:30PM**: RAGE group meeting in the parlor.

**Thursday, August 17, 1:00-3:00PM**: Monmouth Community Climate Coalition meets in Fellowship Hall.

**Sunday, August 20, 12:00PM**: Trustees meeting.

**Sunday, August 27, 12:00PM**: Church council meeting.

**Monday, August 28, 7:00-9:30PM**: RAGE group meets in the Parlor.

**Sunday, September 3, 12:00 PM**: Bible Study.

**Sunday, September 17, 2:00PM**: Riotous Readers book discussion group will meet to discuss *Cleopatra: A Life* by Stacy Schiff.

**Good News**: Rev. Dr. John Inscore Essick will be visiting us again this summer! Currently on Sabbatical from his teaching work at the Seminary of Kentucky and his church in Port Royal, KY, John just sent me a note indicating his desire to spend some time with us. We welcome him with open arms. Rev. John continues to research early Baptist Churches in the Northeast.

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**The AAUW Bookstore is closed for the summer.**

**Please remember these people in your prayers:**

✝ Joan B.

✝ Sandy K.

✝ Jean H.

*If you would like someone added to the September 2017 Spirit Soundings prayer list, send an email to [ofc@oldfirstchurchnj.org](mailto:ofc@oldfirstchurchnj.org) with "September Prayer List 17" in the subject line.*

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