

FIRST CONGREGATIONAL
CHURCH UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
— Stockbridge, Massachusetts —

PO Box 825 Stockbridge MA 01262



May 2021

Art Show Fundraiser - May 2!

Pastor: The Rev. Brent Damrow – bdamrow@stockbridgeucc.org

Minister of Music: Dr. Sándor Szabó - (on leave)

Worship Music Leader: Noah Palmer

Administrator: Will Garrison – office@stockbridgeucc.org

Financial Secretary: Ron Hanft – rphanft@yahoo.com

(413) 298-3137 | www.stockbridgeucc.org

www.facebook.com/stockbridgeucc

Sunday Worship: 10:00 a.m.

Wednesday: Bible Study, 1:00 p.m. *Online*

Wednesday: Morning Prayer, 8:00 a.m. *Online*

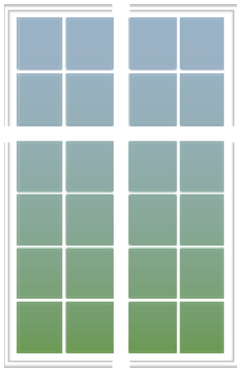
Thursday: Walking Prayer

Office hours: 9:00-1:00, Monday - Friday

May 2021

The First Congregational Church, UCC, Stockbridge

<i>Sunday</i>	<i>Monday</i>	<i>Tuesday</i>	<i>Wednesday</i>	<i>Thursday</i>	<i>Friday</i>	<i>Saturday</i>
Pastor Brent's office hours by appointment, call church office.	Online worship is at stockbridgeucc.org					1 <i>Al-Anon 5:00pm</i>
2 Worship 10:00 a.m. <i>online</i> Art Show Fundraiser 1:00pm – 6:00pm	3	4 Pastor Sabbath Day	5 Morning Prayer 8 am Bible Study 1:00 pm Deacons 6:00 pm Council 7:00 p.m.	6 Walking Morning Prayer	7 Service League 11:30	8 <i>Al-Anon 5:00pm</i>
9 Worship 10:00 a.m. <i>Outdoors gathered and online</i> Mother's Day	10	11 Pastor Sabbath Day	12 Morning Prayer 8 am Bible Study 1:00 pm Christian Ed 5:00 pm Mission & Action 5:30 pm	13 Walking Morning Prayer	14 Service League 11:30	15 <i>Al-Anon 5:00pm</i>
16 Worship 10:00 a.m. <i>online</i>	17	18 Pastor Sabbath Day	19 Morning Prayer 8 am Bible Study 1:00 pm Trustees 5:30 pm Deacons 6:30 pm G & F 7:30 pm	20 Walking Morning Prayer Newsletter Deadline (send to Will)	21 Service League 11:30	22 <i>Al-Anon 5:00pm</i>
23 Worship 10:00 a.m. <i>Outdoors gathered and online</i> Annual Meeting 11:00	24	25 Pastor Sabbath Day	26 Morning Prayer 8 am Bible Study 1:00 pm	27 Walking Morning Prayer	28 Service League 11:30	29 <i>Al-Anon 5:00pm</i>
30 Worship 10:00 a.m. <i>online</i>	31 Memorial Day Office closed					



FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH

UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

Stockbridge, Massachusetts

May 2021 Newsletter

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

May is always a season of great change in the Berkshires. The natural landscape changes as greens in multitudes of shapes and hues burst forth on the hillsides. There is a change of pace as visitors flock to absorb many of the blessings we enjoy every day. Various institutions in the area find greater life in anticipation of and preparation for the summer that is drawing ever nearer. Energy and emotion swell as we begin to do those things we love.

This year there will be an additional layer of change for all those things and for the church too as we emerge from this past year of pandemic. In that layer additional energy and emotion will certainly be present in both joyful and stressful ways.

The Regathering Committee has affirmed a plan to begin more in person worship, including adding outdoor worship on the second and fourth Sundays and pursuing ways to invite groups of people into the sanctuary for other weeks. We will continue to livestream Sunday services whether indoors or out. The tent is going up which will allow some meetings, classes, and other things to gather outdoors. We are planning a second, simple outdoor service. We are beginning to plan for the fall in the hopes that even more robust activity and connection are possible.

In my conversations with our church family there are some who are anxious to resume quickly and others anxious to avoid doing so too quickly. There are some who have been vaccinated, others who haven't, and others who can't. There are elements of our life together that will require additional research and contemplation like singing, coffee

hour, in-person learning, and choir.

As a church we will be undertaking all of these decisions mindful of our faith, our mission, and the recommendations of the scientific and medical communities. We are making plans now to be ready knowing that we might need to change or cancel some of our plans as numbers change. Already at the April Council meeting, I asked each Board to begin making specific plans/recommendations for the Fall so that we have a starting point and so that we can find places for collaboration. We know that these plans will evolve and change. We also know that if we do not get started, we won't be ready.

I ask each of you to pray for our work that it might be infused with the Spirit. I ask each of you for your wisdom and your patience. If you have good information or creative ideas to share, please give me a call or talk to the folks on any of the Boards. If there are things you have found to be a gift in this past year that we have been doing, let us know so that we can incorporate those things into our plans. If you are frustrated by our pace, please try to remember that we are working hard, doing our best to accommodate a diverse congregation, and feel free to volunteer to lend a hand.

I, like all of you, are so ready for this pandemic to be over and for us to emerge back into a more gathered and connected reality. Let us continue to care for one another as we emerge into our new reality just as we did when we entered this one last year.

Peace and blessings,

Brent

OUR SHARED LIFE TOGETHER

HAPPY MAY BIRTHDAYS

May 9	Donald Eaton	May 22	Gene Kalish
May 10	Sarah Conly		Diane Fogarty
May 12	Erving Henderson	May 24	David McCarthy
May 15	Chuck Wales	May 26	Suzanne Dower
May 18	Marissa Peyron	May 27	Cary Quigley
May 19	Marie Raftery		Marc Fadding
May 20	Terry Wise	May 30	Al Wermuth
	Jeremy Ridenour		Ed Ivas

Worship Plans

Worship is at the heart of our shared life. It is an important way we find connection, we abide in truth, and we become one body, one family. Over the past year, we have worked hard to find ways that allow us to continue worshipping while caring for one another's safety and the broader safety of our community. As vaccinations increase, as weather improves, and as over-all safety measures improved we are working equally hard to map out safe ways to gather in-person for worship. We understand and value the spiritual, emotional, and relational needs of the congregation and are imagining the best and safest ways to gather as soon as we can safely do so.

The Regathering Committee will be meeting the week of April 26 to finalize our plans for May. We will be continuing to rely on the case numbers in our area, guidance from our denomination and CDC guidelines. We will communicate quickly to let you know the details. There are a few things we have already decided:

We will hold outdoor morning worship on the Second and Fourth Sundays of the month. We will live-stream these services which will largely follow the blueprint of our Easter worship including requirements for registration, face coverings, and social distancing. Space will be marked out on the lawn for you to choose, bulletins will be provided upon your arrival, and you will be welcome to bring your own chairs or to use those on hand. All are welcome and

opportunities for fellowship are currently being planned by Growth and Fellowship.

On the First, Third, and Fifth Sundays we are planning for ways to allow groups of a safe size into the sanctuary. The details of these are not yet finalized and are subject to the consideration of the Regathering Committee.

Pastor Brent and Diego are working to imagine technological ways that will provide for full participation of those in the sanctuary and those streaming these services. We imagine continuing to use recorded readings and other liturgical elements to include as much of the congregation in worship as we can. These would be seen and heard both over the live stream and in the sanctuary.

Vaccinations are now available to all people over the age of 16 and we hope that members of our congregation will avail themselves of the opportunity to get one out of care for one another.

We understand that younger children will not have the opportunity to get a vaccine for some time. Deacons have already begun discussing how we might hold special outdoor worship and fellowship time for families with kids in this transition time.

We are exploring the possibility of an additional "Evening Worship" outside as the weather warms. We imagine this to be a more informal service, with opportunities for contemplation, sharing, and connection. We are still discerning when and how such a service would be offered. Stay tuned.

Board of Mission & Action

The operation of the First Congregational Church of Stockbridge's **Pop Up Pantry** began on March 31. This outreach provides access to non-perishable, shelf stable food items to anyone in need. The pantry is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. According to Feeding America, hunger in the Berkshires rose by 153% during the Covid 19 pandemic – which is above the national average of 146%. We are seeking to bridge the gap for those people who may need emergency food. A specific food donation list is available on the church website or by clicking [here](#). We ask that you not leave donations in the shed, they are organized inside the church in the CE classroom. If you are interested in helping out, please let Will know. You can [donate funds](#) to the Pop up Pantry specifically or designate funds to the Peoples Pantry in Great Barrington to assist those facing hunger.

In the last month, M & A is outreaching to local organizations we've assisted financially prior to the pandemic (Construct, Volunteers in Medicine, Gould Farm, Lit Net and the Elizabeth Freeman Center) to check in and gauge their needs. Please speak with one of the M & A members if you know of other unmet needs in our community that we should consider.

~ Charlotte Rodgers, Patty Strauch, Patty Fadding, Sarah Conly, Sara Zanin, Bruce Wilkens & Nick Pohl

The Service League

Our big news this month is that we actually resumed meeting, IN PERSON, as of the second week in March. Since the weather, as you know, can be highly variable in March, we went from basking on the lawn one week to huddling over the radiator vent in the JE Room the next. But any way you slice it, it was great to be back together, sharing lunch, stories, and laughs.

Oh, and we did actually transact some business. Still uncertain about whether it's realistic to plan for a Summer Fair, we decided to schedule two more smaller-scale pop-up fairs instead. The first will be on Saturday, June 12, in front

of the Stockbridge Library, and the second on Saturday, August 14, outdoors at the Church. More information will be forthcoming in next month's Newsletter, but in the meantime, please think about saving a few plant starts for the June sale, and making an extra batch of jam, jelly, or pickles if your talents run in that vein. Baked goods are always welcome and are always popular with shoppers. We will of course have the usual array of baked goods, kitchen crafts, and who knows what else? Sometimes we even surprise ourselves.

On the family news front, Anne Hutchinson reports that Erving, now 15 (!) is playing JV Soccer and is proving to be a standout. Nancy Wilcox has been entertaining bears in her back yard - see below. (We told her to bring in the bird feeders, but she wouldn't listen!) I guess she just likes animals, because she has also taken on the honorary position of minding Bishop William Byrne's dog - at Church services - when he's in the Berkshires. They sit in the front pew. Yes, you read it right! If only we had a picture of that.

Most importantly, we are all praying for Ann Brink, who's having back surgery on April 27. After suffering for several months, she finally has a good diagnosis, a good plan of action, and best of all, an excellent prognosis. And while we're giving thanks for modern medicine, let's not forget to mention the miracle of vaccines.

~ Margaret Hornick, for the Service League



CALL TO MEETING

To all members of the First Congregational Church
of the United Church of Christ
Stockbridge, Massachusetts

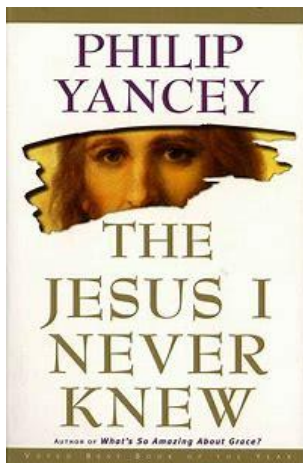
In accordance with the bylaws of the church, we hereby call the
Annual Meeting of the church for
Sunday, May 23, 2021 immediately following worship.

The business to be transacted is as follows:

- I. Call to Order
- II. Opening Prayer / Remembrance
- III. To act upon scheduled business:
 - A. Election of Boards and Offices of the Church
- IV. To act upon any other business that may legally come before the meeting.

Jeremy Ridenour, Clerk

Catherine Clark, Moderator



From the Church Library

Our library in the Jonathan Edwards room has not seen any activity in the past year, but there are resources there that can be accessed with Will's help, with respect to the Waldorf High School students who use that room during this time.

Several years ago, Brent and I did a major overhaul of the library holdings, eliminating many books and making space for the Max Stackhouse library. I took one of those eliminated books home with me – one I had long planned to pick up and read. After it sat on my own bookshelf for several years, I finally got to it as my Lenten meditation this year. I'm going to recommend it, and will return it to the shelves in the JE room.

The Jesus I Never Knew, by Philip Yancey, delves deeply into the human person of Jesus of Nazareth and the concept of Jesus as God. The author compares the gospel accounts and researches others' views of Jesus through playing and replaying scenes from many popular films made about the life of Jesus over the years. He examines his own struggles with belief and ultimately portrays a strong yet vulnerable God-made-human. He steps through Holy Week in great detail and sets it the known historic facts of that time and place. This book made Jesus much more real to me.

~ Terry Wise

Be sure to check out the new [Book Sharing Initiative!](#)
Call the office if you want more information.

We celebrated Easter with two services - At 9:00 a.m. families gathered indoors for a short service, and took turns filling in a heart-shaped puzzle. At 11:00 there was a gathering outdoors, complete with a flowered cross and a trumpeter.



Board of Christian Education

Easter was chilly, but we had eight families for our early service. And after service, in the spirit of hope and resurrection, kids were invited to do some planting. We had kits for them all to take home, complete with pots, dirt, and sunflower seeds and snap peas. Hopefully, everything is sprouting and waiting to go out in the garden.

Sunday school is rounding up the year with a series of lessons on The Fruit of the Spirit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.

As ever, the Family Resource page has videos of lessons and projects for kids. Interested in helping out? We're looking for more volunteers to teach the youngest members of our church family. Just reach out to a member of the Board of Christian Education. ~ Diane Piraino

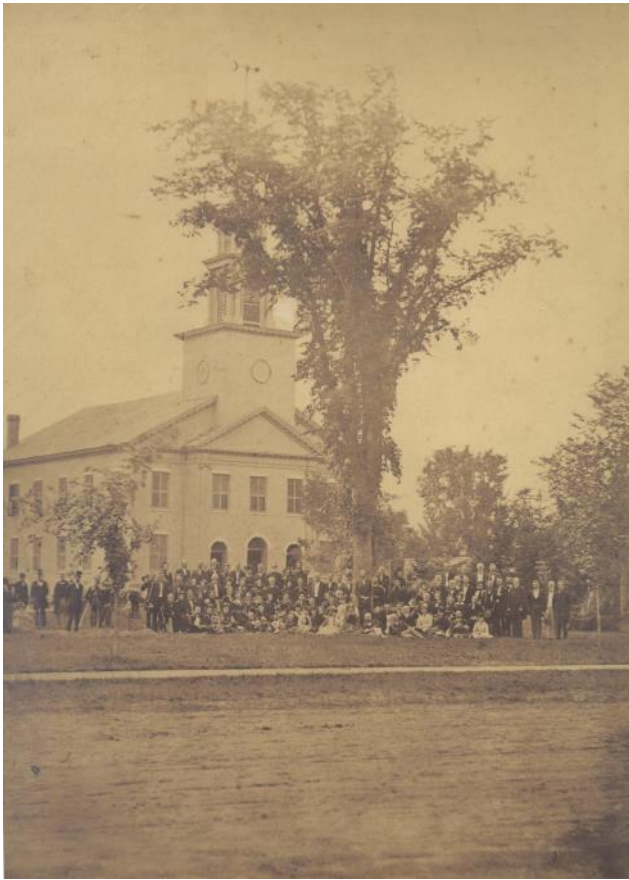
Art Show Fundraiser

The First Congregational Church will host a mixed media art show fundraiser to support restoration of the historic building.

Sunday, May 2, 1:00pm – 6:00pm. The event is free of charge.

Well-known local artists are contributing their artwork in diverse mediums and will be priced at \$100 each. Artwork being featured will be square 12" x 12" and some "off the square." COVID-19 protocols will be observed with social distancing and masks.

For further information, please visit www.stockbridgeucc.org. Questions? Call Olga at 413/644-9846 or the church office 413/298-3137.



Church is all about family, is it not? In September of 1870 some 250 descendants of Rev. Jonathan Edwards gathered for two days in Stockbridge with our church as the center of much activity. One of the final activities was the taking of this reunion photograph.

~ Joshua Hall

Photograph from the Edwards Collection at the Stockbridge Library Museum & Archives.



Easter baking for neighbors!

During Holy Week, the Board of Growth and Fellowship sponsored a baking-for-church-neighbors project...as we said then, kind of like secret Santa without the secret and without the Santa. Church members signed up and baked an Easter treat for their neighbors, who baked for someone else on the list, and so on.

Gwendolyn was an enthusiastic helper!

Elizabeth and Gwendolyn delivered goodies to Cathy Clark (top photo).

The Evans family, in turn, happily accepted treats delivered by Elizabeth Young.

