



FIRST CONGREGATIONAL
CHURCH UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
Stockbridge, Massachusetts

PO Box 825 Stockbridge MA 01262



June 2021

Christian Education Sunday - June 20!

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

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

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

June 2021

The First Congregational Church, UCC, Stockbridge

| Sunday | Monday | Tuesday | Wednesday | Thursday | Friday | Saturday |
|---|--|-----------------------------|--|------------------------------|---|--|
| Pastor Brent's office hours by appointment, call church office. | Online worship is at stockbridgeucc.org | 1 <i>Al-Anon 7:00pm</i> | 2 Deacons 6:00 pm Council 7:00 p.m. | 3 Walking Morning Prayer | 4 Pastor Sabbath Day Service League 11:30 | 5 <i>Al-Anon 5:00pm</i> |
| 6 Worship 10:00 a.m. <i>Indoors gathered and online</i> | 7 | 8 <i>Al-Anon 7:00pm</i> | 9 Morning Prayer 8 am Bible Study 1:00 pm Christian Ed 5:00 pm Mission & Action 5:30 pm | 10 Walking Morning Prayer | 11 Pastor Sabbath Day Service League 11:30 Berkshire Waldorf High School – last day | 12 Service League Pop-up Fair at Stockbridge Library 10:00am <i>Al-Anon 5:00pm</i> |
| 13 Worship 10:00 a.m. <i>Outdoors gathered and online</i> | 14 | 15 <i>Al-Anon 7:00pm</i> | 16 Morning Prayer 8 am Bible Study 1:00 pm Trustees 5:30 pm Deacons 6:30 pm G & F 7:30 pm | 17 Walking Morning Prayer | 18 Pastor Sabbath Day Service League 11:30 | 19 <i>Al-Anon 5:00pm</i> |
| 20 Worship 10:00 a.m. <i>Online only</i> CE Sunday Father's Day | 21 Newsletter Deadline (send to Will) | 22 <i>Al-Anon 7:00pm</i> | 23 Morning Prayer 8 am Bible Study 1:00 pm | 24 Walking Morning Prayer | 25 Pastor Sabbath Day Service League 11:30 | 26 <i>Al-Anon 5:00pm</i> |
| 27 Worship 10:00 a.m. <i>Outdoors gathered and online</i> | 28 | 29 <i>Al-Anon 7:00pm</i> | 30 Morning Prayer 8 am Bible Study 1:00 pm | | Board meetings now via Zoom and/or in-person. | |



FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

Stockbridge, Massachusetts

June 2021 Newsletter

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Now what?

That question is appropriate for every moment, and yet there are moments that such questions take on much greater presence, depth, and import. Our faith understands believing not as a one-time mental activity, but rather a decision made over and over again in each moment.

The Bible is full of *now what* kinds of moments. There is the moment (Joshua 4) when the people having just crossed the Jordan River into the Promised Land bring twelve stones from the riverbed to leave as a memorial, a reminder of deliverance. There is the moment just after Solomon becomes king that God comes and offers any gift, and Solomon chooses wisdom for the road ahead (2 Chronicles 1). There is the moment just after Mary says yes to the angel Gabriel when she decides that in such times it is good to be with those you love so she sets out to see Elizabeth (Luke 1). There is the moment that Jesus knew he needed to select his disciples (Luke 6), so he spent the whole night praying on the Mountain. There is the moment (Luke 15) just after he returns to himself, that the Prodigal Son sets out for home. There is the moment in Emmaus (Luke 24) just after the bread is broken, when the disciples' eyes were opened and hearts enlivened so they got up and returned to Jerusalem. Our faith is a lived experience. There are hundred if not thousands of *now what's* in the Bible, some big and some small; some responded to well and others less well.

We are facing a *now what* moment of our own and it carries significant import for our own journey ahead. We have spent the last year being church in new ways. We have endured hardship and loss, just

as we have found blessing and connection. We have remembered some truths that had slipped through our fingers and discovered other veracities through the need to respond to unfamiliar times. Our task in this moment is to decide what we choose to release, what we want to retain, and what new truths might enliven our own hearts.

Beyond scripture, our tradition offers a gift appropriate for all times and absolutely needed in this moment. It is the understanding that we can and must look back on our tradition – to the Bible, to the people who have gone before, to our sacraments and rites and yet we also must make in each generation (or I would argue each moment) our faith our own.

We are moving forward. We are committed to an ever more comprehensive re-gathering. I am deeply excited about coming back together and engaging those things that have brought us joy. I also know that we have been at this pandemic for over a year. It will take us time not just to go back to business as usual but to be church with everything that we have learned.

I deeply hope that you will share with one another, with church leadership, and with me those things you have discovered in this past year. What things you have let go? What has become more precious? What new insights you have gained about faith or life? If we do that well, compassionately, and openly we will do what faith tells us to do – go forward into even deeper connection with God, neighbor, and the world.

Now what? Come and see, come and share, come and listen as we become church again in this moment.

Peace, *Brent*

OUR SHARED LIFE TOGETHER

| | | | |
|----------------------|------------------|---------|----------------------|
| HAPPY JUNE BIRTHDAYS | | June 15 | Karen Lindstrom |
| June 1 | Lynda Morse | June 16 | Thomas Frelinghuysen |
| June 2 | Rebecca Hall | June 19 | Fiona Brown |
| June 6 | Evelyn Battaglia | | Jean Stackhouse |
| June 7 | Mary Hoeltzel | | Ruth Wheat |
| | Barbara Moore | June 24 | Anne Fix |
| June 12 | Michael Deegan | June 26 | Pat LaBagh |
| June 13 | Anne Hutchinson | June 28 | Becky Smith |

Regathering

At the recent meeting of the Regathering Committee, we focused on the current status of the pandemic and the advice of two physicians of our congregation: Diane Piraino and Lisa Nelson.

We continuously came back to the ideas of perceived and real safety and the desire to move slowly and cautiously. To be welcoming we need to both be inclusive and to honor our congregants' concerns for their own and their neighbors' health. We cannot assure that everyone will always be completely safe and individuals must assess their own levels of comfort. Lisa put it nicely when she said that the expectation of zero risk is not historic, realistic, or welcoming.

Everything changes: our scientific understanding (increasing), CDC guidelines (liberalizing), community vaccination status (vaccines now easily available to anyone 12+), and community incidence of infection (falling rapidly). All of our plans are, accordingly, transitional, and we are choosing to err on the side of caution (even if it means engaging in some "hygiene theater"- a great term we had not previously heard).

The protocols we establish need to be simple and internally consistent.

Children are to be treated like any other unvaccinated individuals.

Outdoors, starting immediately:

Eliminate registration for outdoor services.
Encourage anyone who feels unwell to stay home.
Everyone is to mask outside their distanced

seating area (as we cannot assure distancing while socializing). Everyone who is vaccinated, including singers, may be unmasked at all times in their designated area. Unvaccinated individuals (including children and professional singers) are to mask while speaking or singing. We may or may not offer an area where everyone is masked at all times, a super-safe area, pending discussion with deacons.

Indoors, effective May 30, 2021:

Preregistration required as there will be a limit to available spots. There will be distanced spots for individuals/groups. Unvaccinated individuals are to mask at all times. Vaccinated individuals are to mask moving to and from their seats but may be unmasked in their seats, including when they are singing and speaking.

We understand that there are different levels of comfort. The most fragile and/or anxious congregants can continue to livestream. Our outdoor protocol is extremely conservative in hopes that all local congregants will feel comfortable with it. Our indoor protocol is more strict than CDC guidelines. All protocols are evolving.

The committee will continue meeting to consider appropriate changes.

The Regathering Committee members are: Jack Brown, Cathy Clark, Brent Damrow, Michael Deegan, Will Garrison, Diane Piraino and Hal Brink.

~ Hal Brink for the Regathering Committee

Board of Deacons

As I write this reflection, my last as Chair of the 2020-2021 Board of Deacons, I am heading home from a purely relaxing week with my sister and brother-in-law in Buffalo. The train just went through Rochester, and there is a lot of beautiful countryside and small upstate towns to go through before I get to my destination. It is a geographical transition, and a meaningful symbol of this phase of my life in the church.

I am sad to be leave the Deacons, where I have felt nurtured by people's commitment to the vitality of the church, its many purposes and strengths, its challenges and needs. In recent weeks as the sermons focused on the beloved community in Acts, and on Peter's growth as the leader of the evolving church, I have realized how much our church has been the cornerstone of my experience of the pandemic.

Church has strengthened my hope: as my companions in Wednesday Morning Prayer know, I frequently turned my biggest fears over to God, often with tears and a wobble in my voice. The quiet sharing and acceptance, the release of burdens I did not know I was carrying until I opened my heart, the bolstering emails afterward if I were having a hard time, Pastor Brent's thoughtful and sensitive selections of readings and music all kept me anchored.

Church has provided peace: oh, those moments of stillness at Evening Worship last summer! Moments when Cathy knelt on the grass and arranged bouquets of flowers; when Jon's delicately powerful voice floated over the lawn in song; when my hand wrote a prayer—of thanksgiving every time—to place on the growing prayer flag between the trees; the weekly communion, innovative and well-spaced; the deep togetherness that marked renewal and affirmation. Peace poured over me every Sunday evening.

Church has fostered joy: the first outdoor worship, where I saw elderly friends, met people I'd gotten to know on Zoom, and recognized children who astonished me with their growth and maturity; the fun of constructing a labyrinth and making "little presents" to place around the Advent trees; a luminous moment on Ash Wednesday's pilgrimage when I did not recognize my own sister

(in a mask and without her glasses) until she said, "Lizzy, it's me," just as I realized that those beautiful eyes were hers—and I burst into tears.

Church has emboldened love: after debating a spontaneous "With love" in closing to an email to the deacons and deciding to go with the real feeling it represented, I dared to use those words whenever the Spirit moved me. I hesitated a few times, not wanting to make people uncomfortable. But I now turn to Rabbi Hillel's encouragement-- "If not now, when?"—to seize the moment to do anything important, even if it is not comfortable, or is in fact difficult and risky.

As the train nears Syracuse, I think again about the symbolism of this train ride. I have left a sanctuary and am returning to work, responsibilities, routine. I feel a little resistant! But remembering the ways that the Deacons' work and the support of the church family have sheltered me in the psychological perils of the pandemic, I also feel glad to be coming home. My heart needed a little rest, which I got this past week with my family. Renewed and revived, my heart is ready to open again. I love you.

~ Elizabeth Young

Christian Education

It was announced at the May 12th meeting that Diane Piraino will be leaving the Board after serving as Chair for three years, along with Anne Hutchinson. Cris Raymond also just announced that she too will exit the committee. Our heartfelt thanks go with them for the tremendous contributions they have made. At the annual meeting, new members will be announced.

The Board is looking forward to September and is recruiting teachers. Do you have interest in working with our youth?

Jill Wheat, with help from the CE Committee, is organizing the program for Christian Education Sunday on June 20. It promises to be a fun service with lots of community participation, both youth and adult. We hope you'll join us!

The Service League

So much to report this month! We are busy planning for the June 12th Pop-up Fair in front of the Stockbridge Library, which will launch at 11:00 AM and be open till 1:00. Stockbridge residents will notice that it will be running next to the town meeting, which we think is a good thing, since everyone knows that town meetings go better with baked goods.

June, of course, is graduation month, so unfortunately some of our members will miss the Pop-up in order to be celebrating those life events with children and grandchildren: Ann (Surgery successful! Welcome back!) and Hal Brink's granddaughter Camille is graduating from Wheaton, with a biology major - a smart career choice these days. Helen McCormick's grandson Bryce Craig McCormick is graduating high school in Palmyra, Virginia, and heading to Virginia Tech, and her granddaughter is off to the University of Virginia. And I'll be attending my son Ted's postponed 2020 graduation from California State University Fullerton's MFA program in screenwriting. Not graduating yet, but still celebrating: Anne Hutchinson's granddaughter Jayna Lewis will be matriculating at Miss Hall's in the Fall, much to Anne's delight, and Erving Henderson celebrated his 15th birthday! Yes, time flies.

Everyone probably knows by now that The Trustees of Reservations has renamed Monument Mountain Trail - it's now [Mohican Mountain Trail](#) - and that the name "Squaw Peak" has been retired in favor of Peeskawso Peak, more historically accurate and culturally appropriate. But did you know that Patty Fadding's granddaughter Trudy, a Williams College student, helped to create the information kiosk which illuminates the mountain through Mochican eyes during her internship with the Mohican Heritage Center? You do now! I like to think that her interest might have been sparked right here at First Congregational, through its longstanding connection to the Mohican nation. And PS - "Peeskawso" means "virtuous woman".

Speaking of the Trustees, we had a wonderful outing to Naumkeag on May 14, to take in the daffodil and tulip festival. You can tell from the photos (thanks, Diane Piraino!) how happy we all were to be outside, in the gorgeous Spring weather, feeling almost safe again, and one hundred percent thankful for the beauty and bounty of nature.

~ Margaret Hornick, for the Service League



Photos for Church Directory

We are working on a new directory of all in the church family. Thanks to Breeze, our new church database, we can print directories in the office. However, we need photographs! Please contact Will in the church office for tips on taking and sending in digital images of individuals and families.

And, of course, we always welcome updated and corrected names and contact information.

Letter to the Editor of *Stockbridge Updates*, 5/15/2021

Dear Carole [Owens],

As we near the end of the school year, I want to thank the First Congregational Church of Stockbridge, the Shrine of The Divine Mercy and the Town of Stockbridge on behalf of the community of Berkshire Waldorf High School—students, parents, teachers, and members of our Board.

Our school has been able to hold classes in person for most of the year—with (so far) zero cases of COVID—because of the generosity of the Congregational Church, Pastor Brent Damrow, and Will Garrison, who welcomed us in to use their Meeting Room and Sanctuary as classroom spaces in order to maintain appropriate distance and ventilation. On any given day, half our students are in our school building on Pine Street, and half are at the Church. We simply couldn't have operated as we have without the generosity of the Church.

And, in a year when the Class of 2020 didn't know if they would be able to graduate in person, the Marion Fathers, particularly Father Kaz Chwalek and Father Anthony Gramlich, welcomed us to use the outdoor Shrine last August for our ceremony. And, for the Class of 2021, the Shrine is welcoming us again this June.

Balancing the requirements of safety, of education, and of institutional viability has been a challenge for the past year, and Berkshire Waldorf High School simply couldn't have done it as well as we have without true partners in the Town of Stockbridge.

Many, many thanks. Steve

Stephen Keith Sagarin, PhD, is Executive Director & Faculty Chair at Berkshire Waldorf High School.

Sunday School Materials for Families

The Board of Christian Education provides terrific online resources for families, posted weekly on the church [Livestream page](#) at the "Sunday School Family Resources" link. Scroll down the Livestream page to find the link button.

The resources often include familiar church members telling a worship lesson on video, relevant songs, coloring sheets & craft projects & other fun activities relating to the lesson. Email the church office to contribute, with questions or if you would like print outs.

To watch the **Kid's Time** portions of the weekly services, please visit the [Kids Time](#) page under Church Life / Learning & Formation, on the church's website.

Art News

Many “thank-yous” are extended to so many of you who helped to produce a successful Art Show and Fundraiser on May 2.

To my fellow artist friends who so generously provided valuable art as a contribution – I can't thank you enough.

To Jeannene Booher, Margaret Hornick, Terry Wise, Ronnie Cunningham and Ellen Murtagh for warmly welcoming visitors. Thank you, too, to Madonna Meagher for her initial input and good ideas for the show. To all among us and beyond who contributed and purchased art we are all very grateful. Thank to Will for all his continuous help. Lastly, my deep gratitude to our minister and guide Brent for his shared planning, caring, and footwork.

Together we exceeded our goal of \$2,500 to support this place of community and hope. Thanks be to God!

~ Olga Schwede



The Kids Choir, led by Jill Wheat and Barb Kershner, started rehearsing again!



Holland Brown and Don Eaton celebrated their marriage. Ceremony held outside on May 9.



I celebrated Mother's Day in New Jersey with my fully-vaccinated family, outdoors in the 50 degree rainy weather! But we had the firepit to keep us warm!
~ Patty Strauch

Below: Pentecost Sunday.

