

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

PO Box 825 Stockbridge MA 01262



**July 2021**

Pastor: The Rev. Brent Damrow – [bdamrow@stockbridgeucc.org](mailto:bdamrow@stockbridgeucc.org)

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

Administrator: Will Garrison – [office@stockbridgeucc.org](mailto:office@stockbridgeucc.org)

Financial Secretary: Ron Hanft – [rphanft@yahoo.com](mailto:rphanft@yahoo.com)

(413) 298-3137 | [www.stockbridgeucc.org](http://www.stockbridgeucc.org)

[www.facebook.com/stockbridgeucc](http://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*

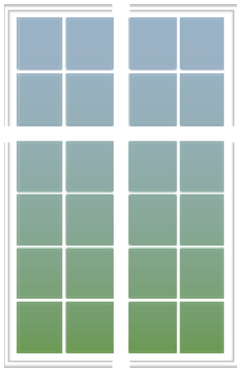
Thursday: Walking Prayer

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

# July 2021

The First Congregational Church, UCC, Stockbridge

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



# FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

Stockbridge, Massachusetts

## July 2021 Newsletter

Dear Friends,

In all three Synoptic Gospels (Matthew, Mark and Luke – the term synoptic means “with one eye” to suggest how closely these three texts track the story of Jesus), Jesus offers an enigmatic lesson that is familiar to many of our ears. He talks about not patching an old garment with a new piece of cloth and warning not to pour new wine into old wineskins. I love the way the Voice translation of the Bible brings some depth and context to the wisdom he offers (this if from Matthew 9):

*<sup>16</sup>You would begin by washing and shrinking a patch you would use to mend a garment—otherwise, the patch would shrink later, pull away from the garment, and make the original tear even worse. <sup>17</sup>You wouldn't pour new wine into old wineskins. If you did, the skins would burst, the wine would run out, and the wineskins would be ruined. No, you would pour new wine into new wineskins—and both the wine and the wineskins would be preserved.*

This teaching has been much on my heart as we continue to more fully re-gather. It has been a long time since we have been in the regular rhythm and routines of what we knew as church. In that time the world has changed and so have we. If we are to be fully present to one another and fully present to this moment, we must honor those changes in our life as church or the garment that wraps around us and holds us in loving company will tear or the wine that celebrates our shared life will run out onto the ground.

In the past few weeks, our newly constituted Boards have begun meeting. Our Moderator, Cathy Clark, has shown up to every single meeting offering words of wisdom and guidance as well as challenging each Board to consider *how* they will meet. Each Board is thoughtfully considering their areas of ministry to discern what we have learned over this past year, what we hope to hold onto from the past, and what needs to change and/or what new ways of being church has emerged that we need to honor.

I hope that each of us as part of this church will do the same. As we move toward this Fall and the chance to do more fully many of the things we love to do together, I pray that our hearts and minds are open. We all know at some level that the illusion of returning to some normal is never really a possibility in life, especially when something as profound as the pandemic of this past year affects all of us and each of us differently. We will need to find a new container for the joys that have emerged. We will need to be patient in our reconnecting that the ways we do so weather enough to hold us together.

We will continue to pursue our mission and purpose as a church to be the love of God, to be Christ to all the world around us. May we with grace, humility, boldness, openness and hope share with one another that we might discover the truth of *how* to do that together.

With love,

*Brent*

# OUR SHARED LIFE TOGETHER

## HAPPY JULY BIRTHDAYS

July 1 Gary Schieneman

July 2 Vicky Cooper

July 4 Carl Bradford

Frank Russell

July 5 Maddie Alsdorf

July 6 Conor Hall

July 7 Christine Rasmussen

July 8 Mia Freeman

July 9

Tom Ruffing

July 11

Jill Fleming

July 14

Jay Wise

July 16

Patricia Strauch

July 17

Margaret Hornick

Teresa Gentile

Eric Germain

July 21

Aiden Germain

July 24

Steve Hassmer

July 25

Hazel Slocombe

## A Gathering Place

In the UCC we often point to “the church” more as a body than a building and more a people than a steeple; our facilities are often a place where the ministries of our gathered family come to life. For months now, we have been welcoming in a new Al-Anon group on Saturdays and, of course, the Berkshire Waldorf High School.

More recently, this building has served as a place to gather to honor all parts of life. Since the beginning of May and by the time you receive this, we will have also hosted two weddings, one funeral, a lunch for another funeral, the return of our Tuesday Al-Anon group, a Viola Recital for a graduating high school senior, meetings for both the Tuesday Club and the Lenox Garden Club, and a quiet location for some mentoring. Then in July, our AA group will also return.

From the cards and calls we receive we know that offering a beautiful and functional location is a great gift to those who need one. Many of the events pass quietly by, often without most of the church even knowing they ever happened. In addition to our staff who help to arrange and coordinate these events, having a facility that is beautiful, clean, safe, functional, and inviting helps us to be church in the fullest sense of the word. Our facilities require our care and our attention. In turn they offer much to us and to all who need a gathering place to attend to the fullness of life.

## Re-Connecting

I miss you! I am grateful for the ways I have been able to stay in touch with so many of you whether

through meetings, text messages, walks, studies, phone calls, worship, or prayer. I am also mindful of the challenge it has been to keep in touch with the whole church.

Sundays have traditionally provided many benefits through gathered worship. One of them has been the ability to see each other and to share both the big and the small things that occupy our days. I miss the chance to stand in those doors between Sanctuary and J.E. Room, greet each of you, share things with each other, and make arrangements for longer conversations.

In times like these, often attention is directed to those places where there is clear and visible need – whether the joy of a wedding, the passing of a loved one, an illness, a birth, or another significant life event. It has been good to be with people in the midst of the fullness of their lives.

Unfortunately, though, it can mean that those all-important points of connection with others who may be doing well or at least getting by don't happen as often.

I hope in these summer months for that to change. I would love to hear from everyone. Give me a call here at the church, stop by for a quick visit, set up a time for a walk and chat, or drop me a note. Don't be surprised if I do the same thing in your direction. This thing called church is all about relationship and relationship depends on connection.

Even as we re-gather, I hope that we can likewise re-connect. I look forward to hearing your stories and seeing your smiles.

*Brent*

## Mission & Action

As we close out the year, the board gives thanks to retiring members – Patty Strauch, Patty Fadding and Sara Zanin for their contributions to the M & A Board. You will be missed! We also welcome new members - Carl Bradford, Cindy Brown and Martha Floyd as we work together to define “mission” at First Congregational Church.

Two ways M & A supports greater mission in the world involve the United Church of Christ (UCC) Mission Giving and Disaster Relief Funds. In May, our church donated \$2,000 directly to Disaster Relief in India – specifically focused on “boots on the ground” COVID relief efforts in this hard hit country. Our church (through M & A) also gives funding throughout the year to the UCC to support the following 5 initiatives: Church’s Wider Mission, One Great Hour of Sharing, Strengthen the Church, Neighbors in Need and The Christmas Fund.

Closer to home, M & A helped to fund the purchase of a new computer for use on the church’s new Zoom meeting cart. This new cart will allow us to hold meetings in person at the church, while still having the ability for those who cannot attend in person to Zoom in – and see and hear each other clearly! This is just one of the uses for this improved technology – which will also be great for education!

The Pop-up Pantry, located in the new shed at the rear door of the church, continues to operate offering shelf stable groceries. If you know someone in need, please make them aware of this program! There is a handout in the shed that details more information on how to access food pantries across Berkshire County.

As we head into summer and fall, please take a moment to say hello to one of the M & A members and share your thoughts on mission, outreach and action!

~ Charlotte Rodgers, Chair

Carl Bradford, Cindy Brown, Sarah Conly, Martha Floyd, Nick Pohl and Bruce Wilkens

## Christian Education

The Board of Christian Education is grateful for the steadfast service of Diane Piraino, Anne Hutchinson, and Cris Raymond. They have been wonderful advocates for children’s education at church. As Diane, Anne, and Cris left the Board at the June 9<sup>th</sup> meeting, Terry Wise and Elizabeth Young were welcomed as new members. Jill Wheat was lauded for her faithful and creative leadership of Sunday School during the pandemic.

CE identified new and continuing interests and goals for the coming year. The Board discussed focal points in CE, including intergenerational programming with possible collaboration with other Boards; various formats for adult education as Pastor Brent prepares for sabbatical leave; the development of a youth group with the motto borrowed from *Field of Dreams*, “If you build it, they will come”; and the continuity and creation of activities for younger children.

We discussed ways to support parents’ desire for children’s activities during worship services, and Jill noted the high priority and challenge of addressing family needs for safe CE programming for children too young to be vaccinated.

Arts and crafts projects under the tent during outdoor worship services will be one way CE can support children and enable their parents to focus on and enjoy worship with fewer distractions. All CE members readily signed up to lead the activities, recognizing that the time under the tent will be opportunities for us to interact with the children.

~ Elizabeth Young for The Board of  
Christian Education

Elizabeth Evans, Barbara Kershner, Paul Rix,  
Ken Ward, Jill Wheat, Terry Wise and  
Elizabeth Young

## The Service League

We've had a busy month, preparing for the Pop-Up Fair that was held on the Stockbridge Library's front lawn on June 12. Even though we were competing with that interesting event, the Stockbridge Town Meeting, we still managed to make \$629 which will, as always, help to support our mission projects. At least, this is what my informants tell me, since I actually missed the Fair, having gone to California to attend my son Ted's delayed 2020 graduation (MFA, Screenwriting) from California State University at Fullerton. Pandemic restrictions made for an oddly structured event, but it was still a lot of fun, and spirits were high, as I hope you can see from the photo.



But I won't miss the Summer Fair, Saturday, August 14, and I hope you won't either! It will be a hybrid indoor-outdoor event, and the indoor part will be the ever-popular Grandma's Attic. So for those of you who've been asking if we are accepting donations, the answer is a resounding YES. Items can be left in the classroom anytime the building is open, and will be gratefully received. Please call Will Garrison in the church office, 413-298-3137, to make an appointment to drop off items.

In addition, of course, there will be the usual eclectic assortment of baked goods and preserves, crafts, flowers, and home-grown vegetables. Contributions are also very welcome in all those categories, too, but most of all, YOU will be welcome on August 14. Mark your calendar!

~ Margaret Hornick, for the Service League



### Family News

Our big news is our granddaughter Zina will be spending the summer with us. She'll attend Shakespeare camp for two sessions, and sleep away camp in Becket. We welcome her back to the Berkshires and look forward to a wonderful summer.

Madonna Meagher and Mark Bachman

### 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.

## Grant Made to Sheffield

This year, part of our denominational support is being given through micro-grants to other churches. These grants allow churches to fund critical needs in their ministries. At their June meeting, Church Council unanimously voted to send funds to the First Congregational Church, UCC, Sheffield to assist in their efforts to purchase the technology needed to launch hybrid worship.

This is the second grant that has been extended (the first enabled another church to have vocal music for Holy Week and Easter). It is one of the ways we answer our calling to support our Sister Churches and contribute to the church universal. Some funds still remain in the account. We hope that in addition to supporting the ministries of these churches, this program will also strengthen our ties to these congregations. When the year is over, we hope to check back in with each church or invite them to gather and share a little bit about their churches and how the grant helped them be church.

## Zoom Carts Arrive

Over the past year our attendance at Board Meetings, Morning Prayer, and many other things have greatly increased due in part to the ability for people to attend from their homes. For some, this has saved the time needed to drive to the church from where they live. For others it has allowed folks to participate from great distances and other states.

Thanks to the leadership and generosity of our Moderator, Cathy Clark, the gift of a television from the McMenemy family, some funds for a new computer from Mission and Action, the enhanced internet connectivity at the church, and the hard work of Will; the church now has two Zoom carts that can be used in any room of the church to increase our connection.

These carts will allow a group of people to be

together for a meeting, study, or other event and enable those who cannot be physically at the church to still participate. Our Boards have already made plans to use this equipment, but so too the Twelve Step groups who meet here have requested that ability, and we anticipate other uses will naturally emerge.

The new small conference room is a natural fit for this technology, but it will work literally anywhere we need it to. It is one of the new ways of being church that is emerging from this past year. Come and see!



## B'Shalom Chorale of the Berkshires

The B'Shalom Chorale, founded by Cantor Emily Sleeper Mekler, is the Berkshires' only chorale showcasing Jewish music. Under the direction of conductor Jack Brown, the group will be rehearsing in the Jonathan Edwards Room on Wednesday evenings until August. Welcome!





The Children’s Chime Tower was built in 1878, a gift to Stockbridge from David Dudley Field, a wealthy New York lawyer and son of the Rev. D.D. Fields of First Congregational Church. Field gave the tower in memory of his grandchildren and, in accordance with his instructions, its chimes are rung every evening between “apple blossom time and the first frost on the pumpkin.” Note that the church is painted white, and Main Street is unpaved.



In July, the Stockbridge-Munsee Community Band of Mohicans, with funding provided by the U.S. Park Service, will continue to investigate the site of the 1739 Meeting House. In this photo, this would be in front of the work crews (on Town land). For more information, search online for the article in the Mohican News, or click [here](#).

*Photo courtesy of Stockbridge Library Museum & Archives.*



Left: On June 13, we celebrated Noah Palmer’s wonderful musical contributions to services over the past few months.