

FIRST CONGREGATIONAL
CHURCH UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
Stockbridge, Massachusetts

PO Box 825 Stockbridge MA 01262

November 2022

Thanksgiving Day (More information to come.)

Ecumenical Worship with St. Paul's and St. Joe's – 10:30 a.m.,
in the Sanctuary.

Thanksgiving Potluck* Dinner to follow in the J.E. Room.

All invited!

- ◆ The Church will provide turkey, a veggie main dish, and beverages.
- ◆ *Guests are invited to, but not required, bring a side dish.



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

Minister of Music: Peter Frost - music@stockbridgeucc.org

Administrator/Sexton: Will Garrison – office@stockbridgeucc.org

Financial Secretary: Marion Pomeroy - finance@stockbridgeucc.org

CE Coordinator for Youth and Children: Julian Vallen - ce@stockbridgeucc.org

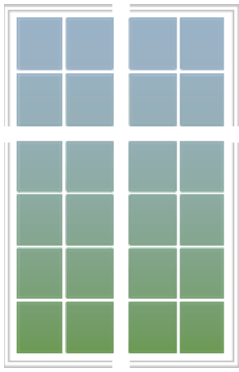
(413) 298-3137 | www.stockbridgeucc.org

Office hours: 9:00-2:00, Monday - Friday

November 2022

The First Congregational Church, UCC, Stockbridge

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Livestream worship at stockbridgeucc.org		1 <i>Al-Anon 7:00pm</i> <i>AA 8:00pm</i>	2 Morning Prayer 8 am Bible Study 1:00pm Intro Psalms 12:05pm Council 7:00pm	3 Walking Our Talk program 5:00pm Choir rehearsal 7:00pm	4 Brent's Sabbath Day Service League 10:00am	5 <i>Al-Anon 5:00pm</i> Lake Mahkeenac Radio Theater 6pm
6 Worship 10:00 a.m. Consecration Sunday SFC rehearsal 1:00pm	7	8 <i>Al-Anon 7:00pm</i> <i>AA 8:00pm</i>	9 Morning Prayer 8 am Bible Study 1:00pm Intro Psalms 12:05pm Diving Deeper 7:00pm	10 Choir rehearsal 7:00pm	11 Brent's Sabbath Day Service League 10:00am	12 Work Day 9:00am <i>A Childhood in Words and Song</i> Ronnie Cunningham 4:00pm <i>Al-Anon 5:00pm</i>
13 Intergenerational Worship 10:00 a.m. <i>Gathered & online</i> SFC rehearsal 1:00pm	14 Women's Spirituality Group 1:30pm	15 Tuesday Club 1:00 <i>Al-Anon 7:00pm</i> <i>AA 8:00pm</i>	16 Morning Prayer 8 am Bible Study 1:00pm Intro Psalms 12:05pm Meetings of the Boards 5:00pm – 9:00pm	17 Choir rehearsal 7:00pm	18 Brent's Sabbath Day Newsletter deadline Service League 10:00am	19 <i>Al-Anon 5:00pm</i>
20 Worship 10:00 a.m. <i>Gathered & online</i> SFC rehearsal 1:00pm Youth Event - after worship	21	22 <i>Al-Anon 7:00pm</i> <i>AA 8:00pm</i>	23 Morning Prayer 8 am Bible Study 1:00pm	24 Thanksgiving Day Ecumenical Worship 10:30am Thanksgiving Dinner 11:30am	25 Brent's Sabbath Day <i>Office Closed</i>	26 <i>Al-Anon 5:00pm</i>
27 Advent Begins Worship 10:00 a.m. <i>Gathered & online</i> SFC rehearsal 1:00pm	28	29 <i>Al-Anon 7:00pm</i> <i>AA 8:00pm</i>	30 Morning Prayer 8 am Bible Study 1:00pm Diving Deeper 7:00pm			



FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

Stockbridge, Massachusetts

November 2022 Newsletter

Dear Church Family,

By the time you receive this, we will be closer to Christmas looking forward than we are to Labor Day looking backward. Even closer to the moment you are reading this letter is the beginning of Advent. Take a deep breath, relax; no better yet get excited. I believe that there has never been a better or perhaps more important time for Advent.

The first Advent came to a people who were tired, weary, worn out, and run down. Sound familiar? The first Advent came to a people buffeted by events beyond their control and so hungry for a new beginning. Is that where you are? I know I am.

The first Christmas came in a way no one expected. Its meaning unfolded in ways that left shepherds amazed, that prompted Mary to contemplation, and that beckoned wise ones to travel far following nothing more than a sign they couldn't ignore. Its meaning is still unfolding. None of the events were neat, tidy, or what anyone expected. Can we allow them to be the same this year? While we may have the image of exactly what we want this Christmas, I wonder what miracles are in store for us if we approach the day in amazement, contemplation, and ongoing daring like those who came before. I wonder what might unfold for us this year if we just loosen our grip on it all.

There is much on our plates as people and as a church. We are weary. We need new beginnings. Now, like then, God stands by ready to surprise. The opportunity of Advent is to get ourselves ready to receive what God offers. I invite you to



focus less on what you need to do and more on what God is doing. Let go of your expectations that you might even notice signs in the skies or hear the song of angelic choirs. Take a deep breath, relax, and then set out. As we approach these moments, I am reminded of John Bell's wonderful hymn text "God Surprises" and especially the first verse:

Who would think that what was needed to
transform and save the earth
Might not be a plan or army, proud in
purpose, proved in worth?
Who would think, despite derision, that a
child should lead the way?
God surprises earth with heaven, coming here
on Christmas Day.

The days are coming, days of hope, peace, joy,
love, and yes, SURPRISE. Come and see!

Pastor Brent

HAPPY NOVEMBER BIRTHDAYS

November 3 Ken Fogarty
November 5 Diane Piraino
Deb McMenemy
November 7 Holland Eaton
November 8 Betsey McKearnan
November 11 David Anderegg
November 12 Peter Wise
November 13 Meryle Epstein
November 18 Trudy Fadding
Anna Duhon
November 23 Rich Geiler
November 25 Kristofer Kennedy
November 27 Judi Peyron
Marcia Miner
November 30 Will Garrison

Financial Notes

Year-end Giving: If you wish to have annual pledge or other contributions recorded on your 2022 Giving Statement, you may send year-end checks dated no later than Dec. 31. We need to receive year-end checks no later than Jan. 15.

Pledge Envelopes: Due to fewer folks requesting giving envelopes, we will not be distributing the usual boxes of envelopes for 2023. This will help our printing budget, too! However, we are glad to provide “home-made” or recycled giving envelopes upon request. If so, please me know if you need 12 for monthly giving, or 52 for weekly giving. Of course, you may use any envelopes of your own.

**The only time an envelope is necessary is when you give cash and wish to have that included in your giving record.

A simple tracking sheet will also be available to record your contributions throughout the year. You may wish to use this in lieu of envelopes for keeping track of your giving.

Please reach out to me with any requests or questions.

Marion Pomeroy, finance@stockbridgeucc.org



Music

The Bell Choir has resumed rehearsals and will play during our service on Sunday, October 23rd.

The Adult Choir is still in need of singers, especially sopranos and tenors to balance our group. If you are interested write to me at music@stockbridgeucc.org or find me at church on Sundays.

If you are not sure you are up to the demands of this choir, please reach out to me and we can meet, sing, and then I will be able to help you answer this question.

Peter Frost, music@stockbridgeucc.org

Board of Deacons

The Deacons have had an active fall with two successful Food Fire and Song events behind us. Look for that activity to resume in the spring once it is warm enough to sing outside again! Since retreating inside we have become more introspective and reflective. We have spent time at our recent meetings discussing the nature of prayer and how we can make our prayer life as a church more meaningful.

We have also been considering the language we use regularly in our services. We are an open and affirming church with an intention of extravagant welcome. As we continue to live into this intention, the Deacons have been carefully thinking about the ways we refer to God and to ourselves.

Board Growth & Fellowship



Hello from the G & F crew! We'd like to extend a HUGE THANK YOU to our boards and everyone else who stepped up to host/serve during a Fellowship Coffee Hour this fall! The calendar of Sundays is full through December! With our in person attendance growing, Fellowship Hour is the perfect time to catch up with old friends, or, to take a moment to welcome a new face to our congregation.

G & F will be delivering Holiday Breads again this year in December – so, if you are a baker, please volunteer to help support this important outreach!

If you have questions or you'd like to help out at Fellowship Hour or with baking, please reach out to Holland Eaton or Charlotte Rodgers.



The Youth Group sprang into action for the 2022-2023 school year with a now traditional outing to Benedict Pond. We postponed the event for one week, trading a great weather forecast for a great turnout. The delay gave us eight youth participants, with a chance of showers, instead of only three, albeit with high temps and sunshine). Scattered showers just added to the sense of adventure, and the happy smiles and bright spirit that came with a bigger group provided all the warmth and sunshine needed.

We began with a brisk hike around the lake. Conor, Devin, Ryleigh, Khalil, Ruth, Julian, and Kaitlyn dodged puddles, climbed rocks, signed the logbook, spotted ducks, and identified trees. While these seven, plus Ted, Diane, Rebecca, and Josh were circulating around the pond, Andrew stayed back with Miles Wheat & Co. to set up a tarp, light the fire, and prepare for

The People's Pantry Needs You

...to volunteer to drive carless South County people to the Great Barrington pantry on Monday afternoons or Thursday mornings. Or shop and deliver to their door. Quite often Anne Hutchinson hears of people who need to come to the pantry but have no transportation. Mission & Action would like to create a list of people to call upon when help is needed. Just ask Vicky Cooper, Nancy Wilcox or Cindy Brown how fulfilling it is to help people and make new friendships at the pantry! They've all been volunteering for years, and the need has increased. If you're interested in getting on the volunteer list, contact Cindy Brown (email: cindytoddbrown@gmail.com, text: 413-446-2623, home phone: 413-298-5365).



snacks. No one was very interested in being IN the water, but there was plenty of interest in being ON the water in kayaks and a canoe. All eight kids, plus two adults, jacketed up and got into seven boats for a brief tour of the beaver lodges and finishing with an unannounced, adult-instigated boat race back to the beach. I think Devin won, only because she realized in time that it was a race.

We wrapped up with a time of snacking on fruit and cheese around the fire, as well as roasting marshmallows (of course) and sausages.

A special shout out to Miles for figuring out how to bring four boats for us, and for managing the base camp along with his younger helpers.

Be on the lookout for news of our next Youth Group event, on November 20. For more information about the group, talk to one of us!

Jill Wheat, Terry Wise, Josh Hall, Ted Randolph, Julian Vallen - Youth Group Planners

Sunday School

Sunday School Feeds the 5,000! (Well, almost...)

Sunday School is back in full swing this fall! So far students have engaged in several fun, hands-on activities to learn the message of our church. This past month kids also participated in the first Intergenerational Worship service of the year. During Intergenerational services kids are asked to stay for 40 minutes and much of the service is dedicated to their participation and engagement. Intergenerational services will be happening on the second Sunday of each month.

For October's Intergenerational service, Pastor Brent taught the story to the congregation of Jesus feeding the 5,000 through an interactive skit. Sunday school students got to witness the miracle that happens when people share their abundance, in the form of multiplying goldfish crackers (many of which were enjoyed as a snack back in the Sunday School classroom).

Back in the classroom, the kids -- along with our new CE Coordinator for Youth and Children Julian Vallen, Sunday school teacher Elizabeth Evans and Mission & Action member Cindy Brown -- were able to engage with the idea of sharing in a hands-on way. Cindy explained our



congregation's **Pop-Up Pantry**, which is situated in a shed behind the Sunday school wing, and the students refilled the pantry themselves.

Students discussed ways they could share the things they have in abundance. Clothes, toys, and books were all items they decided they could give to others, in the same way adults share food.

Cindy shared that the children enjoyed following in Jesus' footsteps to help feed people, remembering that Jesus also said if you love me, then feed my sheep (aka people!). The class ended in prayer: Thank you, God, for giving us enough to eat, and thank you for giving us the chance to be your hands in the world, helping to feed others.

In the coming months Terry Wise and Vicky Cooper will help students set up a Little Library sponsored by the church. We hope that our kids will feel inspired and empowered to donate some of their own books to the library.

~ Cindy Brown and Julian Vallen

(Questions? Julian can be reached at ce@stockbridgeucc.org)

Return of the (Berkshire) Native: From Fairview to First Church, via Baton Rouge

Unless you have a child in Sunday School, or are directly involved with the Board of Christian Education, you may not yet have had the pleasure of meeting Julian Vallen, who recently joined the staff as a part-time Coordinator of Christian Education. I had the chance to meet and talk with him mid-October, so I have the fun of introducing him to you via the Newsletter.

First, a few background facts: Julian graduated in December from Louisiana State University, where he earned a BA (Summa Cum Laude!) with a major in Anthropology and a minor in History. If, like me, you're curious to know how someone gets from one place to another, and why, here's Julian's story. He was born right here in Berkshire County, where his mother's family lives, and lived in Otis until he was nine, when the family moved to Louisiana to be nearer his father's family. He stayed in the South for college, then returned to the Berkshires after graduation. The previous summer he'd worked as a Counsellor/Educator at Berkshire Botanical Garden's Farm in the Garden Camp, where Jake was one of his campers and he met Brent and Jon. So when Julian returned North after graduation and went to work again at BBG, it wasn't long before he found his way to First Church and his current job here.



Julian has extensive experience working with children, which he loves to do. He's currently implementing the results of Elizabeth Young's canvass of the interests and wishes of the kids who attend our Sunday School. You may have already noticed the gradual transformation in the classroom, in preparation for changes that will accommodate those interests and wishes. Julian acknowledged the challenge of designing spaces and programs for children whose ages range from 5 - 14, but on one

point there was unanimity: Everyone loves beanbag chairs. So, Julian's been researching where we can buy the best, most colorful, environmentally sustainable, generally fun and comfy beanbag chairs. And he'll work closely with CE to coordinate the teachers' schedules, ensure supplies are available, keep an eye on overall program planning, look for opportunities to

involve the kids in service projects, and more.

In case you're wondering how Julian ties this in with his academic interests, the connection is pretty straightforward - he loves to get to know all kinds of people and learn about - and be part of - organizations. He was attracted to ours for its open, welcoming, diverse congregation. And I know that with Julian as a part of it, it will become even more so for our children and families.

Keep your eye on the classroom and watch for the beanbag chairs!

Margaret Hornick, for the Newsletter

Mission & Action

Mission & Action's checkbook is smoking! Here are the projects we've funded this month:

We sent \$4,000 to the UCC Disaster Relief program for floods in Pakistan, Kentucky, Puerto Rico, and Japan (\$1,000 for each). We also sent \$250 for the Florida hurricanes and \$250 for the famine in Somalia, also through the UCC Disaster Relief program.

More projects we funded with your mission dollars include \$500 to Construct, \$500 to the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention (Walk Out of Darkness), \$500 to the Berkshire Coalition for

Suicide Prevention, \$250 to the Diaper Project, and \$250 to Legal Aid of South County.

Thanks to your generous giving, we were also able to donate \$2,000 to the People's Pantry in Great Barrington toward their "Fill the Bag" fundraising campaign. With the pandemic and inflation, the number of people needing the Pantry has grown exponentially. In this month as we approach Thanksgiving, let us give thanks that we have the opportunity and the means to help feed our neighbors in south county.

May we come to know Christ more fully in the breaking of the bread!

A Word from the Justice Task Force

The JTF met again on October 19 with Pastor Brent. We focused our discussion on recent outreach to the Stockbridge Munsee Community, as we seek to learn more about the Land Acknowledgement process, and how our congregation can best continue to develop meaningful relationships with the Stockbridge Munsee Community whose ancestors lived in this region dating as far back as 12,000 years ago. More information can be found on their website, www.mohican.com

The JTF is planning to meet again with members of the Stockbridge Munsee Community, and also meet with some members of the Williamstown First Congregational (UCC) Church.

The next JTF meeting is scheduled for Wednesday November 30 at 2 pm. If you would like to attend a JTF meeting or learn more, please reach out to any of us!

~ Martha Floyd, Diane Piraino, Charlotte Rodgers & Terry Wise

The Ballot Box-Your Vote Counts

"Voting is one of the most - if not the most-powerful tools we have as people of faith. Why? Because essentially voting takes your caring values into the public square and thereby into other people's lives. Your vote matters, not just in the big national election years, but in all the local and state elections in between, because politicians pay attention to the priorities of people who vote." *From Southern New England Conference website sneucc.org*

REMINDER! VOTE on Election Day Tuesday, November 8th.

Offer a friend or neighbor a ride to the polls!

Prayer Before An Election

God, as the election approaches, we seek to better understand the issues and concerns that confront our cities and towns, states and country, and how the Gospel compels us to respond as faithful citizens in our communities. We pray for discernment so that we may choose leaders who hear your Word, live your love, and keep in the ways of your truth and guide us to your Kingdom of justice and peace.

We ask this in the name of your Son Jesus Christ and through the power of the Holy Spirit.

- Author unknown



Habitat Work Day Saturday, Oct 15

Work crew: Bruce Wilkens, Louie Graff, Diane Fogarty, Jon Geldert, Martha Floyd, Ted Randolph and Cathy Clark (not shown).



Our church work crew helped at Habitat's first ever home site in Great Barrington. We were the first team to work with Habitat since the Covid pandemic shut down their volunteer crews.

Jon Geldert shared about the experience during prayer time in worship October 16:

"I had the real joy and blessing of being part of the Habitat for Humanity volunteer project on October 15 that the church put on in Great Barrington, the Habitat project renovating a house on Grove Street. The past few years I've found myself wondering what my place in church was, and what church was for me. And boy, did covid ever accelerate that when worship together went away, when the choir went away, when the congregation went away. It was Brent and Jake and I alone in the sanctuary running the livestream camera for about a year. And so being together matters so much to me. At the Habitat group project, it felt like old times. We did really good work, necessary work. And we got to be together, which felt really good, in the same way that being together now in the sanctuary just feels really good. So I'm very grateful just being together with you. And doing good work matters."



The Hussainis have a car!

Photo: Husain and member of UU Meeting of South Berkshire, Housatonic, our HOST partners.

Husain took driving lessons and passed his driver's exam. The wheels will add tremendously to the family's independence. The new car will also accommodate his growing family- they are expecting a new child in January! Husain thanks our congregation for all our help and support in purchasing the family's new car.

A Childhood in Words and Song

On Saturday, November 12 at 4:00pm, Ronnie Cunningham will present a program in the church sanctuary. The concert will include "Bless this House" and "Hush, Hush, Whisper Who Dares." This is Ronnie's contribution to the Organ Fund and the Capital Campaign. Suggested donation at the door, \$10; any amount welcomed.



Ronnie and her brother, Michael. 1942

Advent Engagement Opportunities

Daily Devotionals

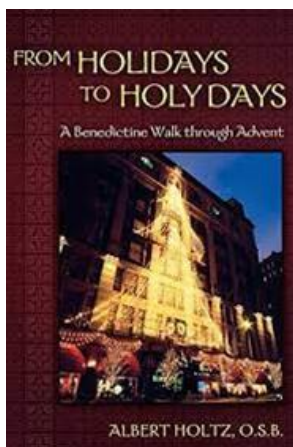


The Board of Christian Education is happy to continue our tradition of offering the popular “Still Speaking Writer’s Group” Daily Devotionals this year. Copies are on the way and will be available on Sunday mornings or by calling the church office to reserve one.

They are our gift to you and we hope they bring quiet and meaning to your Advent this year. We have ordered fifty and ask that families share one if possible.

Small Groups

From Holidays to Holy Days: A Benedictine Walk through Advent.



This gem of a book offers short daily readings, even shorter reflections, a reference to scripture, and a connection to the Benedictine rule.

What we love about this book is that it is fun, engaging, deep, and different from some of the things we have tried in the past. Each day uses a beloved tradition of the

season to draw our attention to our faith.

Examples include Holiday Music, Salvation Army red kettle donations, Christmas Wreaths, Memories, Wrapping Paper, Christmas Cards, the Manger Scene, and Family Visits. These are things we encounter daily, and this book helps us to contemplate how they can draw us into the deeper meaning of the season. The writing is approachable yet meaningful.

We will offer small groups (led by Pastor Brent, Kim Ruffing, and others) that will meet weekly to connect with each other and the readings. Copies have been ordered through a local bookstore and can be obtained through the church office (donations of \$17 can be made to offset the costs of the book but are not required). A schedule of meeting times and locations/formats will be available by Sunday November 13.

From the Service League

We've barely emerged from the Summer Fair and we're now plotting and planning our next



moves: We're

taking orders for pies (for Thanksgiving) and wreaths (for Christmas). Here are the basics: Two kinds of pies, apple and pumpkin, will be made to order by members of the Service League. If you'd like to have one for your Thanksgiving feast, please let us know by Wednesday, 11/16, and your pie will be available for pick-up at the Church on Wednesday, 11/23. They'll be \$18.00 each. Go to “[Latest News](#)” on the front page of stockbridgeucc.org to order.

Wreaths can be ordered through Thursday, 12/1 and will be available for pick-up on Friday, 12/2. The wreaths, which will cost \$40, are hand-decorated, and each is unique. And if you are a crafter at heart, we'll welcome your joining us at the Stockbridge Grange during the week of November 28 where you can let your creativity run wild - greens, ribbons, and miscellaneous trims will be provided. Go to “[Latest News](#)” on the front page of stockbridgeucc.org to order.

This is all part of the run-up to the Holly Fair, of course, on December 3. If you can spare an hour or two to help with set-up, take down, or sales on the day, we'd be very grateful for any help. And we'll be grateful as well for contributions of baked goods.

By the way, does anyone have an erasable white board you're not using? We could put it to good use posting prices and other information. And we're also hoping Santa brings us some lightweight shelving to help store our Grandma's Attic boxes and other supplies in the basement. If you have an in at the North Pole, please put in a word for us. Thanks, as always, for all your support!

Margaret Hornick, for the Service League

Family News

Cindy and Jack Brown are overjoyed to announce the marriage of their daughter Fiona Brown to Anson Olds. Pastor Brent officiated at a lovely ceremony in our sanctuary on October 1, with Tracy Wilson at the organ, sister Emily Brown as maid of honor and scripture reader, and aunt Winifred Brown as soprano soloist. Anson's sister Katie Olds also gave a reading, and Anson's niece and nephew were flower girl and ring bearer, making it truly a family affair!



Terry and Jay Wise welcome their new granddaughter Violet Genevieve Wisefriend, second child of their daughter Betsy.



Capital Campaign Updates



Greetings from the Capital Campaign Committee! With your support, several critical projects have already been completed, and work is well underway for the new universal access ramp and access to the JE Room:

- ◆ The old steps have been removed and the area excavated and prepared
- ◆ A fun historical discovery – the digging unearthed a large granite stone, perhaps dating to 1890 – possibly used as a “landing ” for arriving carriages!
- ◆ Complicated forms built then filled with concrete, ready for backfill.
- ◆ The ramp will soon begin to take shape with the mason's stone work, and railings.
- ◆ A new inner entry to the JE Room is being designed.
- ◆ Prayers for continued good weather will help this project move forward!

There is much for us to celebrate, and we are making great strides! If you have not already done so, please send in your Capital contribution for 2022 as soon as possible, so the church can continue progress on these important Campaign projects.

Watch your church Restore! Renew! And Rejoice!

If you would like to learn more contact: Cathy Clark, 413 528-9949, ceclark@aol.com



PUT ON YOUR
PARTY PANTS
FOR



SATURDAY
NOVEMBER 5th
6PM

An evening of storytelling, singing, and all-around merriment!

Nashville recording artist JoAnne Redding

**The Lake Mahkeenac Radio Players
Christopher Brophy and Rikke Borge**

**The Double Divas
sopranos Nellie Rustick and Erin Casey**

Pianist extraordinaire Tracy Wilson

Head writer and host David Anderegg

Your pie could be the star of the show! Interested in competing or donating pie? Call Don or Holland Eaton, or call the office, 413/298-3137.



\$25 Suggested Donation

PROCEEDS WILL BENEFIT
HISTORIC PRESERVATION OF
THE 1824 STOCKBRIDGE
CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH



FIRST CONGREGATIONAL
CHURCH UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
Stockbridge, Massachusetts

4 MAIN STREET, STOCKBRIDGE
413.298.3137



**OUR GUARANTEE:
NO ELECTION JOKES!**

LIVESTREAM AT STOCKBRIDGEUCC.ORG/RADIO THEATER