

FIRST CONGREGATIONAL
CHURCH UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
Stockbridge, Massachusetts

PO Box 825 Stockbridge MA 01262



July 2024

Land Acknowledgement

It is with gratitude and humility that we acknowledge that we are learning, speaking, gathering, and worshiping on the ancestral homelands of the Mohican people, who are the indigenous peoples of this land. Despite

tremendous hardship in being forced from here, today their community resides in Wisconsin and is known as the Stockbridge-Munsee Community. We pay honor and respect to their ancestors past and present as we commit to building a more inclusive and equitable space for all.

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

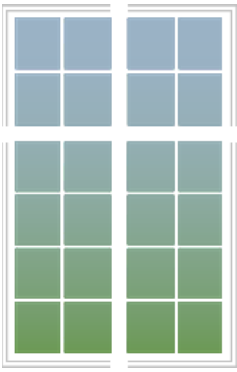
(413) 298-3137 | www.stockbridgeucc.org

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

July 2024

The First Congregational Church, UCC, Stockbridge

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Yoga Classes are Wednesdays at 9:00am	1 <i>Second Nature Arts begins – using the JE Room, Kitchen, and nursery.</i>	2 Brent's Sabbath Day <i>Al-Anon 7:00pm AA 8:00pm</i>	3 Morning Prayer 8 am	4 Independence Day Office Closed	5 Service League 10:30am Office Closed	6 <i>Al-Anon 5:00pm</i>
7 Worship 10:00am Rev. Nancy Taylor preaching	8	9 Brent's Sabbath Day <i>Al-Anon 7:00pm AA 8:00pm</i>	10 Morning Prayer 8 am Bible Study Zoom 1:00 Council 7:00pm	11	12 Service League 10:30am	13 <i>Al-Anon 5:00pm</i>
14 Outdoor Worship 10:00am	15	16 Brent's Sabbath Day <i>Al-Anon 7:00pm AA 8:00pm</i>	17 Morning Prayer 8 am Bible Study Zoom 1:00 Meetings of the Boards 5:00pm – 9:00pm	18	19 Service League 10:30am	20 <i>Al-Anon 5:00pm</i>
21 Worship 10:00am	22 Newsletter deadline	23 Brent's Sabbath Day <i>Al-Anon 7:00pm AA 8:00pm</i>	24 Morning Prayer 8 am Bible Study Zoom 1:00 Bible Study 5:30pm	25	26 Service League 10:30am	27 <i>Al-Anon 5:00pm</i>
28 Worship 10:00am Church trip to Tanglewood	29	30 Brent's Sabbath Day <i>Al-Anon 7:00pm AA 8:00pm</i>	31 Morning Prayer 8 am Bible Study Zoom 1:00 Community Meal 5:30	Second Nature Arts will be using the JE Room, kitchen, and nursery weekdays 9-3:15, July 1 - August 2. Please avoid these spaces during those times.		



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Stockbridge, Massachusetts

July 2024 Newsletter

Dear Church Family,

In the corner of my office stands a fig tree. It is an important symbol to me – a plant bought to bring life to my recently refreshed office following my sabbatical. It stands in the South-East corner of my office – next to a floor lamp from one of my grandparents’ homes and a portrait of Jesus from my other grandparents’ home. It is in the direction that I often glance when I am trying to figure something out while sitting at my desk in the opposite corner. It both reminds me of blessings and is a blessing in times where one is needed.

Last fall it became clear something was not fully right. Upon exploration and diagnosis, it was determined that the little tree was suffering from “scale.” It was still warm enough to give it a first treatment outside, showering it with a medication designed to treat the ailment. Unfortunately, I was unable to give it the second treatment given that the weather took a sharp turn toward the cold. Over the winter leaf by leaf fell off the tree, branch by branch became empty. There were many who suggested it was time to part ways. I resisted because there were still signs of life – there were still branches with green leaves holding on.

This spring, the base of the trunk sprouted a new branch which has since burst forth in large, healthy, growing leaves. The weather has turned

more than warm enough to apply another treatment for the scale. That isn’t to say that some leaves still do fall. It isn’t to say all is magically better. It is to say new life springs forth. I now look over and into that corner intentionally – just to get the joy from seeing the new life and to imagine what it will look like in time.

I see that little fig tree now also as a symbol of our church here in Stockbridge. There are times when our life is verdant and growing and other times when scale seems to cover our shared life and leaves are dropping. The pandemic and other current challenges have impacted our shared life in ways we don’t

still fully know or understand. We will need to continue exploring and diagnosing what those challenges (and also the opportunities we have discovered) mean for our connection to God, each other, and this world. We will need to determine what if any course we need to take to address them. We also though, just need to hang in there for I can see even now new branches bursting forth with beautiful leaves popping out all over the place. This summer we will be resting and planning and imagining and grieving and celebrating and as we do I will keep looking over at that little tree and finding blessing.

In hope and gratitude, Brent



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	Patty Strauch
July 17	Margaret Hornick Teresa Gentile
July 23	Peter Frost
July 24	Steve Hassmer

Administrator Notes

The Trustees have turned off the gas to the kitchen stove for safety. If you have questions about using the stove, call the church office.

[Second Nature Arts](#) will be using the JE Room, kitchen, and nursery weekdays 9-3:15, July 1 - August 2. Please avoid these spaces during those times.

Will Garrison, 413-298-3137;
office@stockbridgeucc.org



Membership

Have you been visiting this church for a while and thinking about calling it home? Please contact Pastor Brent to talk about how to make this step in your faith journey. We try to offer this twice a year, so if now is not the right time, another opportunity will come soon.

Pastor Brent can be reached at
bdamrow@stockbridgeucc.org or
413-298-3137 x11

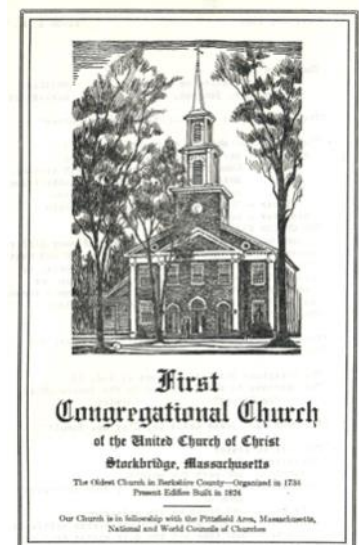
First Among Equals

Here is an excerpt from the upcoming history of the current church building, *How Firm a Foundation: An Architectural History of the Stockbridge Congregational Church 1824-2024*.

In June 1957, the Congregational Christian Church merged with the Evangelical and Reformed Church to form the United Church of Christ (UCC). Full implementation required drafting a constitution and obtaining approval of a majority of the synods of both denominations. The merger was not without controversy and some New England pastors lectured widely about their opposition, saying churches “should continue as free churches with all control in the local church.”

The Stockbridge church apparently saw the benefit of such a merger and at its January 1960 annual meeting approved the proposed bylaws of the UCC and gave a unanimous vote of confidence in their pastor, Rev. Nehemiah (Bob) Boynton III.

When the General Synod met again in July 1960, it approved a constitution with some amendments on Thursday, July 7th. The Synod stated that congregations were free to vote any time starting on July 8th or later. Our congregation decided it wanted to be the FIRST UCC Congregational Church, so they agreed to meet at midnight as the clock struck July 8th. Earlier that evening Pittsfield attorney Lincoln S. Cain, chairman of the Massachusetts Congregational Committee, called with details of the changes. The Stockbridge congregation met at the agreed upon hour and, with a quorum of members present, voted unanimously to approve the constitution, thus becoming the first First Congregational Church of the United Church of Christ in the country.



July Worship Themes and Directions

This summer I hope to visit the lectionary and each of its components. There are some beautiful passages that give us a wonderful excuse to spend approximately three weeks with each of the components of the lectionary (Hebrew Scripture, Psalms, Letters, Gospel) ~ Pastor Brent

June 23-July 7 Hebrew Scripture

June 23 – David and Goliath

June 30 – The death of Saul and Jonathan
(the cost of war)

July 7 – Ezekiel 2:1-5 (whether the people listen or not they will know a prophet has been in their midst)

July 14 & 21 – The Psalms

July 14 (outdoor worship) – Psalms 24 and 85:8-13

July 21 – Psalm 23

July 28-August 11 – The Letters

July 28 – Ephesians 3:14-21 (Christ may dwell in your hearts)

August 4 – Ephesians 4:1-16 (equipped to live a worthy life)

August 11 – Ephesians 4:25-5:2 (rules of living and speaking)

August 18-25 – The Gospel of John

August 18 - John 6:35, 41-51 (I am the Bread of Life)

August 25 – John 6:51-69 (tough teaching)

September 1 – Sabbath (outdoor worship)

September 1 – Mark 7:1-8, 14-15, 21-23
(Sabbath rules)

News from Mission & Action

~ Tracy Wilson

The Board of Mission & Action met on Wednesday, June 19 during the All-Boards meeting to pave the way to continue the work of doing good deeds with the funds bestowed upon us by you, the congregation. We do this by reviewing local community, national and international needs to create priorities for our outreach, keep you informed of our activities and involve you whenever possible (think Cathedral of the Beloved, Pop Up Pantry, Construct, etc.), support the Social Justice subcommittee of our Board, and continue our focus on housing and food insecurity.

At this point, we want to say a huge thank you to Martha Floyd and Cindy Brown, who served as Co-Chairs of this very busy board. Your shoes will be impossible to fill, but we will figure it out and feel very fortunate that Liza Catino has agreed to be our interim convenor (AKA “coach) and Council Rep while we figure it out. We also want to say a big thank you to other Board members whose terms have expired: Carl Bradford and Nick Pohl. Remaining on the board for the class of 2025 is Ronnie Cunningham, Marion Pomeroy and myself. Class of 2026 is Alice Collins and Beth Cilley.

Please put this date in your calendars for a workshop sponsored by the Social Justice subcommittee of M&A: **Monday, September 23**, in the evening. Rev. Noah Brewer-Wallin, Assistant Director of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion for the Southern New England Conference of the UCC will lead a workshop entitled “Having Difficult Conversations” to talk about engaging, within and beyond our church family, around challenging topics.

Who’s invited? Church leadership and board members, those interested in social justice issues, and anyone looking for more comfort around having difficult conversations.

From the Service League



By the time you are reading this issue of the Newsletter, the Summer Fair will be a few short weeks away. In case you haven't put that in your calendar already, now is a perfect time to do that: Saturday, August 10, 10 AM - 1 PM. And while you're waiting impatiently, you can dust off your favorite cookie recipes, pot up some of those divided perennials, can a few extra jars of jams or pickles, and give one last once-over to the basement for potential donations to Grandma's Attic! And please say "Yes!" if you possibly can when Helen McCormick or Nancy Wilcox calls to ask for help or baked goods.

Speaking of those Service League members, Nancy just returned from a trip to Weed, California, where she visited her son James and his wife Lynette and their two sons (see photo). And Helen and her sister-in-law Jane are now the proud great-great aunts to Alexander Patrican, born May 29. Patty Fadding's granddaughter Trudy has just returned from Hong Kong and is working at Middlebury College in Vermont for the summer, after which she'll return to Hong Kong.

Graduation day at Tanglewood was a happy occasion for Anne Hutchinson, shown here with Erving Henderson, of Spartans' soccer fame. Erving's off to Springfield College in the Fall, where (no surprise) he'll be playing soccer. We'll miss him - he's been a great fair helper - but it's wonderful to see our young people out and about in the world.

Until next month, stay well and enjoy our beautiful Berkshire summer! ~ Margaret Hornick, for the Service League



Where's the Pulpit?

In our tradition, the communion table, baptismal font, and the pulpit are central to our worship life. On the occasion of the 200th Anniversary of the sanctuary and in honor of their parents



Bob and Aleva, the Henderson family made a generous gift to the church to care for those three things. To start, on June 10, we took the pulpit to Tom Kuklinski Woodworking in Shelburne Falls. Tom has done restoration work at the White House's Eisenhower Executive Building, Historic Deerfield, Inc., and Naumkeag. He will replace missing pieces, clean, and put a protective coating on the pulpit, returning it to Stockbridge in a month or so.



Left: note missing piece at bottom. Right - worn out top surface of pulpit.

The repair of our pipe organ is under way!

~ Ron Hanft

Did you know what that would entail? We're now beginning to see, literally. It all started back in 2015 when our beautiful organ started to become, well, unhinged. But organists are sneaky, and for years they've found ways to keep the organ working. Until it doesn't. To prevent that final collapse, thanks to our Capital Campaign, we have organ builders now working to get the whole thing fixed.

But why dismantle the pipes? Well, it's as though they have chest congestion. The windchests that supply the wind to make the pipes play need to be healed. To get at the windchests, the pipes sitting in them must be removed. Now, where do you put 1627 pipes, especially when some of them are 16' square wooden columns, and hundreds more are 8', 4',

and 2' big metal whistles? First, you clear out the choir loft, stacking chairs and risers in a corner of the sanctuary. (Thank you Will, Pastor Brent, Peter & choir members!) Then the organ builders remove and stack up large piles and trays of pipes in the choir loft and on top of the risers. After that, the builders can also remove, repair or swap out those pesky windchests so that our organ can "breathe" again. But there's more: all kinds of connections, wood, leather, electronic and a solid state mechanism, need to be upgraded. More about that later.

For now, we have a rare opportunity to see some of the pipes of our beautiful instrument that we enjoy but take for granted. For a while they'll be hangin' out with us in the sanctuary. They have inspired us for decades. Now, we can sing even louder to give those pipes a rest, and inspire them to eventually stand up again and play even more beautifully for us.



Artist Josephine Halvorson, inspired by the Little Library in front of Procter Hall, 5/30/2024.



First Sunday of Pride Month, with Active Prayer of Thanksgiving.

Treasurer's Budget Update

At our February Budget Meeting, I shared with the Congregation that the Budget Committee, Board of Trustees, and Council had all agreed that we should share updates of our financial budget status throughout the year, and not just at the end of the year, or at the Annual Budget Meeting. With that in mind, I am presenting the budget status, through May 31, 2024, for your review. This is being presented as a one-page summary, if you are interested in seeing the full detailed 3-page budget, please reach out to me, or to Will in the office. I welcome the opportunity to discuss our financial position, and to answer any questions you may have.

How to read this report:

- The first column lists the line item of the budget. For ease of reference, the categories and boards with multiple lines are shown as a total line for the category.
- The second column shows the actual income or expense for each line, as of May 31, 2024.
- The third column shows the target number for each line, i.e., 5/12th of the budget (Jan-May)
- The fourth column shows the budget, as approved at the Feb 4, 2024, Budget Meeting.

Income:

- We are doing well for this time of year. Pledges have been coming in steadily, including Growth/Additional from people who are new to pledging or to our church. In addition, we have received \$1,817.75 from people who have stepped up to try to help us close the gap for this year's budget. I am grateful for everyone who continues to support the good work of our Church.
- There are also many people who have been able to pay their full pledge early in the year, and we hold these funds in our Restricted Account, and move an equal amount over to our Operating Account each month. This is extremely helpful, as it allows us to have a consistent income stream during the year.
- The total of fully-paid pledges is a little more than \$69,000, held in the restricted account. As of the end of May, \$25,029.10 has been moved from restricted, into our operating
-

- account, and is reflected in the Pledge number you see of \$103,760.72.
- This leaves us with \$44,430.90 in our restricted account, which will be moved over in equal amounts for June thru December.
- If you would be interesting in learning more about options for either prepaying your pledge, or setting up a recurring payment option for yourself, I am happy to share information with you (there might be tax benefits!)

Expenses:

- Each of our Boards work diligently to have their expenses stay in line with their budget amount. Great thanks for all of the work that goes on during the Board meetings (and in between!)
- Some expenses are spent earlier in the year - - some are spent later in the year - - and still others are paid on a quarterly basis. This is why the actual expense spent may not exactly line up with the 5/12th budget number. But we track these carefully to be sure that at the end of the year, things are going to come out on target.
- There may be exceptions for some expenses which can fluctuate outside of our control or planning (utilities, maintenance and repairs, lots of snowstorms to plow, etc.) However, at this point, we are staying within budget and that is a good thing!

Bottom Line:

- At the Budget Meeting, the congregation approved a gap budget of -\$17,875.19.
- We are currently at -\$464.59.
- Hopefully, through increases in income, and careful, smart expenditures on our operating / administrative / and programs, we will continue to close the gap!

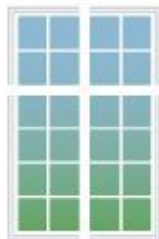
I will continue to share financial updates, and again, feel free to reach out with any questions,

~ Patty Strauch, Treasurer

(See next page for budget report.)

The First Congregational Church, UCC, Stockbridge MA
Performance vs Budget Income Expense Report
As of May 31, 2024

	Actual Income & Expense As of 05/31/2024	Target Numbers (5 months of total budget)	2024 Budget Approved at Feb 4 2024 Budget Mtg
Income			
32000 · Income			
32100 · Pledges			
32101 · Pledge Commitments	103,760.72	99,166.69	238,000.00
32102 · Pledge Growth & Additional	426.81	2,083.38	5,000.00
32104 · Add'l Budget Gifts & Pledges	1,817.75	0.00	0.00
32200 · Loose Offering	6,503.95	6,100.00	14,640.00
32300 · Facility Use	3,313.25	4,583.38	11,000.00
32400 · Fundraisers	0.00	1,666.69	4,000.00
32500 · Gifts	250.00	1,875.00	4,500.00
32600 · Golf Club Parking	1,600.00	666.69	1,600.00
Total 32000 · Income	117,672.48	116,141.83	278,740.00
41000 · Fund Transfers			
41100 · Endowment Fund Transfer	27,959.69	27,959.69	67,103.13
41350 · Music Minister Fund Transfer	3,750.00	6,666.69	16,000.00
41500 · Carryover from 2023	617.18	1,028.60	2,468.50
Total 41000 · Fund Transfers	32,326.87	35,654.98	85,571.63
Total 45000 · Interest	1.19	0.00	
Total Income	150,000.54	151,796.81	364,311.63
Expense			
Total 51000 · Minister - salary & benefits	49,045.21	49,744.89	119,387.33
Total 52000 · Music Director - salary & bnfts	22,792.59	22,820.68	54,769.38
Total 53000 · Administrator - salary & bnfts	15,836.70	15,836.23	38,006.77
Total 53600 · Sexton - salary & bnfts	6,652.33	6,652.33	15,965.20
Total 54000 · Financial Secretary - sal & bnf	2,447.19	2,447.30	5,873.38
Total 61000 · Board of Christian Education	2,347.99	2,916.83	7,000.00
Total 62000 · Growth & Fellowship	1,152.58	1,666.76	4,000.00
Total 63000 · Board of Deacons	3,977.80	3,668.38	8,804.00
Total 64000 · Board of Music	5,033.96	4,287.71	10,290.00
Total 65000 · Mission & Action	7,119.61	7,479.33	17,950.00
Total 66000 · Administrative / Council	3,368.83	6,300.21	15,120.00
Total 67000 · Trustees & Maintenance	30,065.34	34,384.07	82,520.76
69000 · Capital Reserve	625.00	1,041.69	2,500.00
Total Expense	150,465.13	159,246.41	382,186.82
	-464.59	-7,449.60	-17,875.19



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