



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

PO Box 825 Stockbridge MA 01262



October 2024

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

October 2024

The First Congregational Church, UCC, Stockbridge

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<p>2nd Nature Arts: M-T-W 3:15-5:30pm classroom</p>	<p>Yoga Classes are Wednesdays at 9:00am</p>	<p>Brent's Sabbath Day <i>Al-Anon 7:00pm</i> <i>AA 8:00pm</i></p>	<p>Morning Prayer 8 am Bible Study Zoom 1:00 Council 7:00pm</p>	<p>3</p>	<p>4</p> <p>Service League 10:30am</p>	<p>5</p> <p><i>AA special meeting 8:00am-12:00pm</i> <i>Funeral for John Miner 1:00pm</i> <i>Al-Anon 5:00pm</i></p>
<p>6</p> <p>Worship 10:00am World Communion SFC rehearsal 1:00pm Youth Group trip to Benedict Pond</p>	<p>7</p>	<p>Brent's Sabbath Day <i>Al-Anon 7:00pm</i> <i>AA 8:00pm</i></p>	<p>9</p> <p>Morning Prayer 8 am Bible Study Zoom 1:00 Community Meal 5:30</p>	<p>10</p> <p>Genesis Study 6:15pm – Room 4</p>	<p>11</p> <p>Service League 10:30am</p>	<p>12</p> <p><i>Al-Anon 5:00pm</i></p>
<p>13</p> <p>Kids' Choir 9:15am Worship 10:00am Stewardship begins SFC rehearsal 1:00pm</p>	<p>14</p> <p>Indigenous Peoples Day – office closed Theology Book Group 5:30-7:00pm</p>	<p>15</p> <p>Brent's Sabbath Day Tuesday Club 1:45pm <i>Al-Anon 7:00pm</i> <i>AA 8:00pm</i></p>	<p>16</p> <p>Morning Prayer 8 am Bible Study Zoom 1:00 Meetings of the Boards 5:00pm – 9:00pm</p>	<p>17</p>	<p>18</p> <p>Service League 10:30am Newsletter deadline</p>	<p>19</p> <p><i>Al-Anon 5:00pm</i></p>
<p>20</p> <p>Worship 10:00am SFC rehearsal 1:00pm</p>	<p>21</p>	<p>Brent's Sabbath Day <i>Al-Anon 7:00pm</i> <i>AA 8:00pm</i></p>	<p>23</p> <p>Morning Prayer 8 am Bible Study Zoom 1:00 <i>Lenox Garden Club 1:00</i> Minister of Music search meeting 6:15pm</p>	<p>24</p> <p>Genesis Study 6:15pm – Room 4</p>	<p>25</p> <p>Service League 10:30am</p>	<p>26</p> <p><i>Al-Anon 5:00pm</i></p>
<p>27</p> <p>Kids' Choir 9:15am Worship 10:00am Reformation Sunday SFC rehearsal 1:00pm Cathedral of the Beloved</p>	<p>28</p> <p>Theology Book Group 5:30-7:00pm</p>	<p>Brent's Sabbath Day <i>Al-Anon 7:00pm</i> <i>AA 8:00pm</i></p>	<p>30</p> <p>Morning Prayer 8 am Bible Study Zoom 1:00</p>	<p>31</p>		<p>Berkshire Waldorf HS play rehearsals Wednesdays 1:00pm – 3:30pm</p>



FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

Stockbridge, Massachusetts

October 2024 Newsletter

Dear Church Family,

There has been a breath, a wind, a Spirit moving through this place. With the new program year, we have witnessed a resurgence in attendance and participation. We have focused on the idea of covenant and our mutual promises to one another. Joy abounds.

It takes a lot to keep something like church going. Church is no benign or typical undertaking. Being church together is a counter-cultural commitment to a way of life that brings depth, beauty, possibility, purpose, and hope. It is a way of life bound to God and one another that ends up offering true freedom. It is something that seeks to offer each of us goodness, satisfaction, and joy. It does so not by catering to our every whim or desire but rather by drawing us into a life of real, connected, and honest service to one another and our world. It takes a lot.

I hope that this church family brings you blessings. I hope that our music stirs your heart, our worship stokes your imagination, our ministries bring you deeper into the meaningful parts of life, and that they all do it in ways that feel good. I hope that in those moments when you are stressed or pushed beyond your limits that you know and experience that you are not alone. I hope that when you need to be served you allow your church family to do so. I hope that through this church family you also find joy, laughter, abundance, grace, and wonder. For the truth is, this undertaking of church does ask a lot, but is built on ancient wisdom and experience that through that deep participation we find so much more. It is built on the way of Christ that offers living abundantly that by serving we

remember and find how much we are so beautifully served.

It may feel like the church is asking a lot these days. The end of September has focused on the ministries of Christian Education, Deacons, and Growth and Fellowship and the invitation to step up and into those callings with them (I hope you also noticed the joy the spoke about and demonstrated). In October you will hear from Mission and Action even as the Stewardship campaign kicks-off. There is a lot of asking because it takes a lot to keep something like church – a place of connection, honesty, and care – going. There are many needs and yet there are many of us. I hope that you might consider, reflect on, and pray about how serving might bring you joy, how it might reflect your passions, how it brings life to others (and to you too), and how you feel called to step forward and in.

Church asks much of us and we have come to know how much it also offers us. Church, like creation, is animated by the Spirit that flows into and through each of us. Church, like creation, is good in all of its small parts and very good when it all comes together. I am grateful for the life of this church and for each of you and the ways we come together to be church. I pray for the life of this church and for each of you. I look forward to the ways the asks and the responses will come together and bring us together in ever more fullness of life.

In gratitude and hope,

Pastor Brent

HAPPY OCTOBER BIRTHDAYS

October 2 Michael Lynch
October 3 Madonna Meagher
October 6 Nellie Rustick
October 11 Betsy Wise
October 13 John Tracy
October 19 Tristan Osgood
October 23 Starbuck Smith
October 27 Sarah Boyd
October 31 Anna Smith
Xiaobing Qian

Honor and Hope: Two Mohican Artists

October 1 - 31 during library hours
Stockbridge Library, 46 Main Street



Cathedral of the Beloved

Since 2014, the Cathedral of the Beloved has openly, safely and warmly welcomed all to come as they are to be seen and welcomed in joy, to share their struggles, questions and faith, knowing that we are each a beloved child of God, made in God's image. The Cathedral of the Beloved congregates every Sunday for a service at 1:00 p.m. on the lawn at St. Joseph's Church, 74 First Street, Pittsfield followed by a meal.

On Sunday, October 27, we have another opportunity to cook and serve 75-100 of our brothers and sisters. Please sign up in the JE Room to help cook on Saturday 10/26 and/or serve on Sunday, 10/27.

Rally Day!



We are still smiling after a marvelous Rally Day September 8. Many thanks to the many volunteers who jumped in spontaneously to help set up and put things away. It was a special day for Fellowship.

We anticipate a quieter October of simple gatherings during Fellowship after Sunday services. We welcome your feedback and your participation.

Please let us know if you need a name tag. We want to be a place where 'Everybody knows your name.' ~ Cheers, Your Growth & Fellowship Team:

Donna Jacobs, Ted Randolph, and Tom Ruffing



A new member of the Brown family - Chelsea!

Neighbors in Need

Neighbors in Need (NIN) is a special mission offering of the United Church of Christ that supports ministries of justice and compassion throughout the United States.

In 2024, the Neighbors in Need theme is “**Mental Health Justice For All!**” In 2015, the General Synod of the UCC passed a resolution to become WISE (Welcoming, Inclusive, Supportive, and Engaged) for mental health. A just world for all is a world where the human rights and well-being of people with mental health challenges are respected, no matter who you are or where you are in life’s mental health journey.

Through this offering we express our deep commitment to reaching out and touching our neighbors with justice and compassion. This allows us to speak prophetically to those in power and to advocate for a society where all people have a voice in decisions that affect their lives. In the spirit of Christ, we will seek to confront evil in the world and to alleviate suffering. NIN funds are also utilized by staff to develop social justice resources, such as webinars, bible studies, curriculums, and advocacy tools within the program areas of environmental justice, racial justice, LGBTQ justice, economic justice, women’s justice, and immigration justice.

Look for offering envelopes in your worship bulletin on October 6 and 13.

Pop-Up Pantry

For about 3 years now, our congregation has provided a small 24/7 self-serve pantry with non-perishable food items, in a shed behind the office wing. The pantry has proved to be popular and needed, and we run through food items quickly and make frequent grocery runs. We are always happy to take donations from the congregation. Donation bins are normally in the back hallway. On October 6, as our monthly active prayer of Thanksgiving, look for them in the JE Room during coffee hour. Monetary donations for grocery runs are also welcome.

Make checks payable to: First Congregational Church, Memo: People’s Pantry.



LAKE MAHKEENAC RADIO THEATER DO'S AND DON'TS!

- ◆ **DO** plan to come to our biennial evening of fundraising fun, Saturday, November 2 at 6 pm!
- ◆ **DO** plan to invite a friend from outside the church community! This is an opportunity to raise money and to introduce our community to non-church folks in a casual and entertaining atmosphere. We already know who we are...so let's introduce ourselves to new people!
- ◆ **DO** consider baking a pie for the pro-am pie contest!
- ◆ **DO** let Pastor Brent know if the \$25 suggested donation is prohibitive. “Scholarships” are always available for church members.
- ◆ **DO** pass the word about this event! We will (soon) have flyers available for you to put up wherever you can, and PDF versions of the flyer for you to post to your social media platforms.
- ◆ **DON'T** miss it!



From the Service League

We finally have a tally of the results of the Summer Fair - \$1932.85! That's an improvement over last year, which always gives a good feeling. And we won't spend it all in one place - it will go to a variety of mission projects, as well as church projects. We'll keep you posted. Once again, thanks to all who contributed in so many different ways. We really, really, really couldn't do it without you.

Now for something completely different: We've decided to rebrand the Summer Fair as the Spring Fair. There are two main reasons, and those are the weather, and the number of other fairs that are scheduled for late summer. So we've set the date for May 10. Let's see how that works out, and don't be surprised if you get that phone call from Nancy Wilcox or Helen McCormick in April instead of July. Speaking of dates, next up is, of course, the Holly Fair: Mark your calendars for December 7. And in the meantime, we'll happily take off your hands any containers that can be used, or reused, for table decorations. Thank you!

Margaret Hornick, for the Service League



Left-right: Kay Holden, Tracy Schneyer, and Neil Holden

Church Picnic

Our annual Church Picnic on August 25 was a blast! Many church members, family, and friends joined our hosts Kay and Neil Holden and Tracy Schneyer at Mohawk Lake. The sky was blue, the water refreshing, the food great, and the

fellowship even better. Some toured the pond by paddle boat; others by simply swimming. Some basked in the sun; others in the shade of the gazebo or the party tent. Thanks to Ted Randolph, Cindy Brown and Patty Fadding for helping to organize things, and to our talented publicity crew (we're talking about you, Rich Geiler and Ted Randolph!). A humongous and heartfelt thank you to our hosts Kay, Neil and Tracy for sharing this idyllic spot and making us feel so welcome. And we are convinced that it was the pure hearts and clean consciences of our lovely hosts that convinced Mother Nature and the Almighty to give us such perfect weather for a delightful day!

Youth Group Expedition



After worship on Sunday, October 6, the Youth Group heads back to Beartown State Forest's Benedict Pont.

We are looking forward to another year of Youth Group! Church youth age 10 or older, and their friends, are invited. We will hike around the pond, swim (we hope), get in boats, eat lunch around the fire, burn marshmallows – we mean make s'mores – and play some games.

Parents are welcome to come and stay, and some may be asked to help. We're looking forward to this!

Ted Randolph, Terry Wise, Diane Piraino, Elisabeth Bellows, Joshua Hall, and Pastor Brent



Pro Tempore: Choir News

Hello choir members and anyone interested in singing in the choir – there is always room for more singers so if you're interested, come find me at coffee hour.

Adult Choir: we will sing twice a month, the first and third weeks in the months of October, November and December. So in October, here are the dates: Sunday, October 6 (World Communion Sunday) and Sunday, October 20. For October 6th, we will be singing the full Mark Miller Communion Service, and a favorite anthem of mine: *Draw Us in the Spirit's Tether* by Harold Friedell.

On the Sundays the choir sings, please gather in the loft at 8:55 am for warm ups, run the hymns, learn the introit, prayer response and offertory anthem. We'll leave 10 minutes to run a new anthem for the following choir Sunday. There will be no Thursday evening choir rehearsals in the pro tempore season.

Additional rehearsal: Sunday, October 20, we will return to the choir loft 15 minutes after the service ends to work on the anthems for November. 45 minutes maximum. We will have additional rehearsals on November 17 (for Advent and Christmas music), and December 15 for Christmas Eve music.

All anthems and special music for the current month will be made available in a basket in the music office by the beginning of each month.

Kid's Choir and Bells: we are excited to be including them in the fall-Advent season!

Kid's choir meets twice a month (second and fourth Sundays) from 9:15 to 9:50 in the small classroom in preparation for sharing their music during the service on the fourth Sunday. Stay tuned for bell choir news.

Festival Chorus: starts up Sunday, October 6, from 1 to 3 pm, and takes place every Sunday up to the concert date of Saturday, December 14. The main selections for the concert will be Vaughan Williams' *Fantasia on Christmas Carols*, featuring John Demler; Vaughan William's *Magnificat for Women's Voices and Contralto* featuring Ukrainian singer Vira Slywotzky; plus anthems by Dale Jergenson and David Anderegg. Dues are \$40 to cover the cost of music and some expenses. Any interested singer is invited to come and check us out; no audition is necessary.

~ Tracy Wilson, Minister of Music pro tem

We Were Energized!

On the evening of September 23, 22 of us gathered for a workshop with Rev. Noah Brewer-Wallin (they/he), Assistant Director of Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion for the Southern New England Conference UCC. He presented "What Energizes You?" about the tools of community organizing (including relational meetings, power analysis, and identifying self interest) and how they can help our church strengthen our ability to work together. Our group included representatives from all the church boards and Council. We appreciated Noah's insight, expertise and humor.

How Firm a Foundation

Be sure to get your copy of *How Firm a Foundation: A History of the First Congregational Church, Stockbridge, Massachusetts on the Occasion of the 200th Anniversary of the Brick Church*. Available in the church office and during Fellowship Hour Sunday. Hard cover \$30; soft cover \$22 - cash/check/Venmo.

Husain and Fatema - an update



Many of you will recall the Afghan family that our congregation cosponsored with the Unitarian Universalist Meeting of South Berkshire. In August, Husain and Fatema and their four children moved from Pittsfield to Virginia.

Husain and Fatema and three children were relocated to Pittsfield through Jewish Family Service of Western Mass January 1, 2022. You provided a warm welcome to a family that had to leave Afghanistan quickly with nothing. You gave furniture, food, clothing, gift cards and furnishings to help them get settled in their Pittsfield apartment. Our congregation, through Mission & Action, contributed toward a car and we gave them a crib at the baby shower for their fourth child in January 2023.

We will miss them but we can feel proud that we helped them settle in to their first home in the United States. They adapted well to a new culture and showed amazing resilience after all they had been through. Husain will continue his job remotely. The two older children are in school, while Fatema is busy taking care of the younger girls.

I had the opportunity to visit Fatema and Husain in their new home a few weeks ago. It is a lovely (and larger) apartment in a nice neighborhood. There is a large Afghan community and they have a Halal market nearby.

Fatema and Husain expressed their gratitude to our congregation for all that was done for them. We wish them all the best in their new home.

~ Martha Floyd

The Capital Campaign

Organ Restoration: Many problems needing repair in our organ occurred with the old keyboards and the deteriorating conditions within the console. These totally new keyboards and updated electronics will solve many problems and reduce maintenance costs in the future. Below: Bill Czelusniak supervising the reworking of the console.

