



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

PO Box 825 Stockbridge MA 01262



**April 2025**

**Stockbridge Festival Chorus concert - April 12**  
**Easter - April 20**

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

Minister of Music pro tempore: Tracy Wilson - [music@stockbridgeucc.org](mailto:music@stockbridgeucc.org)

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

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

# April 2025

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>
<p><i>Yoga Classes</i> <i>Wednesdays, at 9:00am,</i> <i>April 23 &amp; 30 only</i></p>	COTB = Cathedral of the Beloved, Pittsfield	Brent's Sabbath Day <i>Al-Anon 7:00pm</i> <i>AA 8:00pm</i>	Morning Prayer 8 am Bible Study Zoom 1:00 Council 5:30pm	Lenten Study 6:00pm	Service League 10:30am	SFC rehearsal 10-12 COTB prep 10:00am Gege Kingston Memorial 2:00pm <i>Al-Anon 5:00pm</i>
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
<p>Worship 10:00am Celebration of Tracy Wilson 11:00am SFC rehearsal 1 – 3 COTB 12:00 – 3:00</p>	<p><i>2<sup>nd</sup> Nature Arts</i> <i>3:15 – 5:30pm</i></p>	<p>Brent's Sabbath Day Spiritual Direction 3pm <i>Al-Anon 7:00pm</i> <i>AA 8:00pm</i></p>	<p>Morning Prayer 8 am Bible Study Zoom 1:00 Meet the Minister of Music candidate: Community Meal 5:30 Organ/piano/hymns 6:30</p>	Lenten Study 6:00pm	<p>Service League 10:30am SFC dress rehearsal 4:00 – 6:00pm</p>	<p>Stockbridge Festival Chorus Concert 3:00pm <i>Al-Anon 5:00pm</i></p>
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
<p>Worship 10:00am Palm &amp; Passion Sunday</p>	<p><i>2<sup>nd</sup> Nature Arts</i> <i>3:15 – 5:30pm</i></p>	<p>Brent's Sabbath Day <i>Al-Anon 7:00pm</i> <i>AA 8:00pm</i></p>	<p>Morning Prayer 8 am <i>2<sup>nd</sup> Nature Arts</i> <i>3:15 – 5:30pm</i> Bible Study Zoom 1:00 Meetings of the Boards 5:00pm – 9:00pm</p>	Tenebrae Service 7:00pm	<p>Service League 10:30am GOOD FRIDAY Service 12:15-12:45 Stations of the Cross 6:30pm</p>	<i>Al-Anon 5:00pm</i>
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
<p>EASTER Sunrise Service 6:00am Worship Service 10:00am Egg Hunt 11:15am</p>	<p>Office Closed <i>2<sup>nd</sup> Nature Arts</i> <i>3:15 – 5:30pm</i></p>	<p>Newsletter deadline Brent's Sabbath Day <i>Al-Anon 7:00pm</i> <i>AA 8:00pm</i></p>	<p>Morning Prayer 8 am <i>2<sup>nd</sup> Nature Arts</i> <i>3:15 – 5:30pm</i> Bible Study Zoom 1:00</p>		Service League 10:30am	<i>Al-Anon 5:00pm</i>
27	28	29	30			
<p>Worship 10:00am</p>	<p><i>2<sup>nd</sup> Nature Arts</i> <i>3:15 – 5:30pm</i></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 Supper Book Club 6:00pm</p>			



# FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

Stockbridge, Massachusetts

## April 2025 Newsletter

*Yes, God so loves the world as to give the only begotten one as whoever believes may not die but have eternal life. God sent the only begotten into the world not to condemn the world but that through the only begotten the whole world might be saved. John 3:16-17 Inclusive Translation*

Dear Church Family,

John 3:16-3:17 is a powerful testimony not only to what God is up to through Easter but how and why. I never cease to be amazed at the positivity of it all. Through the events of Holy Week and Easter, through the events of Jesus's life, death, and resurrection, things like death and sin and diminishment are overcome – defeated, vanquished even. Just as importantly, this passage reminds us of the “for-ness” behind it all. The gift of it all, the life of it all, the purpose not that people and the whole world would be condemned but rather that it and we would be saved.

Throughout our Lenten readings we have seen that same “for-ness.” We have witnessed the patient and deep love of a father for both of his sons. We have heard the deep longing of Jesus and his hen-like devotion to the people, desiring to spread out his wings for their protection. We have beheld a stranger's profound compassion and care for that poor man beaten and left to die on the road between Jerusalem and Jericho. Over and over again we have brought our burdens and our gratuities to lay at the foot of the cross where Jesus poured out everything for us.

As Jesus approached Jerusalem, as the powers of earth rose up to stop him, He kept on being for everyone else. He forgave, he healed, he fed, he taught, he held, he even raised people from the dead – all of it for them. On the night of his betrayal he gathered his disciples, he fed them,

he prayed for them, and in John's Gospel he not only served them he protected them. On the cross Jesus was still showing his “for-ness” – forging a mother and son bond, offering salvation to a convicted criminal, and forgiving everyone. For-ness on full display.

This year not only as we approach Easter but as we live into its meaning, I hope that “for-ness” is also our primary motivation. In our times, we may be called upon to stand up and against injustice. We may need to protest and defend. I pray though that we follow the example of Christ – concerning ourselves less with the powers of Earth and more how to be “for” those in need – how we bear witness to the power of love, kindness, and hope. The post Easter church lived into the way of Jesus – being for life. They existed for each other, the poor, and the widows. They lived until no one any longer had need – amazing.

Much to the dismay of many, the life, the death, and even the resurrection of Jesus did little ostensibly to change the power structures of the day. But to the delight of those who followed Jesus his life, his death, and his resurrection did everything to change how they lived for themselves, for others, and even for the whole world. Two thousand years later their lives modeled on Christ's way, a way that is profoundly for the other no matter what the powers of the earth do, continues to have the power to change everything.

I look forward to the journey with you to the cross and to our shared journey beyond the tomb - a journey of “for-ness” and the impossible made possible through Christ.

In hope and gratitude, **Brent**

## Music Notes

~ Tracy Wilson, Minister of Music, Pro Tem

The choir will be returning to the loft on Sunday, April 6 to sing a few of my favorite pieces for choir: Behold the Lamb of God from The Messiah, and Lutkin's The Lord Bless You and Keep You (please feel free to sing along with them!). The choir will also sing a beautiful piece from Dvorak's Stabat Mater for tenor soloist (Rich Geiler) and tenors and basses. Stabat Mater is a 13-century Christian hymn to the Virgin Mary that portrays her suffering as a mother during the crucifixion of her son Jesus Christ. The text is in Latin and is translated as "Let me weep beside thee, mourning the crucifixion, for as long as I live".

**Sunday, April 13**, the bells will help us celebrate Palm Sunday and will accompany the congregational procession with palms. This service will recognize the importance of Passion Sunday using special music by the bells, a powerful solo by Rich Geiler entitled "What a Savior!" with music written by Edwin Childs, text by Philip Bliss, and hymns that will both celebrate the joy of Palm Sunday, while we turn our lives toward Holy Week. Communion will take us to the Upper Room.

**Thursday, April 17, Maundy Thursday**, I am inviting any available choir members to sing a few meditative pieces during the evening service (please report at 6:30 pm in the sanctuary).

**Sunday, April 20: EASTER SUNDAY!** He lives! The choir, bells, Berkshire Brass, organ: we are pulling out all the stops for the 10 am service. (Choir, please report at 8:45 am). Two significant pieces from Handel's Messiah will be sung: I Know My Redeemer Liveth by Amy Shake, and Worthy is the Lamb by the choir.

Sunday, April 20 will be my last Sunday at Minister of Music Pro Tempore. Thank you for your support, your ideas, the amazing dedication of the choir, and your loving embrace and acceptance at some of my music choices! I love my church as I love sacred music and putting together a musically meaningful service with Brent.

## HAPPY APRIL BIRTHDAYS

April 2	Olga Schwede Hannah Alsdorf
April 7	Bronly Boyd Casey Jones Margo Davis
April 11	Tracy Wilson
April 12	Olivia Doerr
April 13	Don Rodgers
April 15	Marty Noyes
April 18	Jack Brown
April 19	Anna Grace Nimmo
April 22	Keith Raftery
April 23	Seth Ivas
April 26	Chet Douglass
April 27	Ivy Cote
April 28	Beth Cilley
April 30	Samuel Connor

## Saturday, April 12, 3:00 PM. Stockbridge Festival Chorus Presents Mozart's Requiem

Stockbridge Festival Chorus, a 38-year old community chorus based at our church, will perform the Mozart Requiem for its Spring concert on Saturday, April 12, 3:00 pm. A piece composed in 2015 by David Stone, In the Darkest Hour, will be sung prior to the Requiem. A reception will be held after the concert. Admission is a \$20 donation at the door, \$10 for local community choir members, and free for people age 18 and under.

Mozart's Requiem is a masterpiece, yet cloaked in mystery, from its commission by Count Franz von Walsegg to questions about who actually completed the Requiem. It was in July 1791 that Mozart was visited by a stranger, representing a man desiring a Requiem for his recently deceased wife, and provided a 50 percent deposit and the final payment would be upon delivery of the completed piece. As Mozart was already in ill health, he believed he was writing his own

Requiem. He passed on December 5, 1791 at age 35 with some of the twelve movements incomplete. Mozart's wife, Constanze, was concerned that she would not receive the final payment if the work was submitted incomplete, and she was in desperate need of money, so she set to finding other composers to complete the work and pass off the commission as completed by Mozart. Eventually the piece was given to Franz Xaver Süssmayr, one of Mozart's students who was very familiar with Mozart's intention for the composition.

In the Darkest Hour by David Stone was composed in 2015 after the loss of his nephew who was stillborn. In the face of significant physical challenges living a life in a wheelchair following a spinal injury, his composition is full of strength and encouragement to his grieving brother. David passed in January 2024 at age 53; he was the son of Susan and Fran Stone, both members of the Festival Chorus.

The Stockbridge Festival Chorus is conducted by Tracy Wilson. Ed Lawrence will be the concert organist for the Requiem, which will also be accompanied by a trombone trio and timpani. Aaron Likness is the SFC accompanist. Soloists for the Requiem are Samantha Talora, soprano; Mary Verdi, alto; Richard Geiler, tenor; and John Demler, bass.



### Lost, Found, but still here...

It's spring! The usual forgotten and misplaced winter gear (including one very impressive hat) has accumulated in the office hallway. Please check to see if your cold-weather items are missing from your closet. Unclaimed items will eventually be given away to charitable agencies.

# LOST & FOUND



## Flower Power!

### Flowers for the Communion Table

The Board of Deacons is undertaking a new take on an old process: flowers for the Communion table. Since the passing of our dear Jackie Hawkins, flowers on the communion table have been occasional and unpredictable. We have organized a simple process whereby members of the congregation can sign up to provide flowers for Sunday worship.

You can sign up to provide flowers using the online registration form [here](#), on the website, or in the weekly email. If you have any questions, ask a Deacon!



### Easter Plants

The sanctuary will be filled with beautiful pots of tulips, lilies, and daffodils for Easter. You may order a plant in memory of or in honor of a loved one; the deadline is April 13. The recommended donation is \$20 per plant.

We plan to deliver some of the flowers to members of our community and keep others for use during the Easter season. To order online, click [here](#). There will be paper forms in the weekly bulletin in due time.

If you are mailing a check, send to: Flowers at FCC, P.O. Box 825, Stockbridge, MA 01262



## From the Service League

Everyone seems to have Spring on their mind these days, and the members of the Service League are no exception. But for us it's taking on special meaning this year, since we decided to change things up a bit and reinvent the Summer Fair as the Spring Fair. In case you haven't marked your calendar yet, this is a perfect time to do it - May 10, 10 - 1. We won't have the benefit of the late summer bounty of flowers and vegetables, but we will - we hope - have lots of

yummy baked goods (always top sellers), plant starts (on your mark, gardeners!) Grandma's attic goodies, and handcrafts. It will be a festive way to start the summer and celebrate the return of warm weather while supporting mission projects. As always, we will be grateful for your help and your contributions! ~ Margaret Hornick

### Because

~ by Rosemerry Wahtola Trommer

So I can't save the world - can't save even myself,  
can't wrap my arms around every frightened child,  
can't foster peace among nations,  
can't bring love to all who feel unlovable.

So I practice opening my heart  
right here in this room and being gentle  
with my insufficiency.

I practice walking down the street heart first.

And if it is insufficient to share love, I will practice loving anyway.

I want to converse about truth, about trust,

I want to invite compassion into every interaction.

One willing heart can't stop a war.

One willing heart can't feed all the hungry.

And sometimes, daunted by a task too big, I tell myself what's the use of trying?

But today, the invitation is clear: to be ridiculously courageous in love.

To open the heart like a lilac in May,  
knowing freeze is possible and opening anyway.

To take love seriously. To give love wildly.

To race up to the world as if I were a puppy, adoring and unjaded,  
stumbling on my own exuberance.

To feel the shock of indifference, of anger, of cruelty, of fear, and stay open.

To love as if it matters, as if the world depends on it.

Contributed by Linda Hoddy



It's spring! Photo by Beth Cilley.



# Holy Week & Easter 2025



## **Palm/Passion Sunday – April 13<sup>th</sup> – 10:00 a.m.**

Join the crowd to welcome Jesus as he enters Jerusalem. We will tell the full story of the week including a Palm Processional, gathering in the Upper Room for Communion and watching events unfold all the way to the cross.

## **Maundy Thursday – April 17<sup>th</sup> – Tenebrae/Foot Washing – 7:00 p.m.**

Gather for John's account of Thursday as Jesus gathered with his disciples, washed their feet and gave them a new commandment of love. Witness service, love, prayer, betrayal, and denial. The Deacons will offer an optional foot washing experience following worship.

## **Good Friday – April 18<sup>th</sup> – 12:15 p.m. & 6:30 p.m.**

### **Worship Service 12:15 p.m. – 12:45 p.m.**

We take our place at the foot of the cross to bear witness to the fateful events of the trial, beating, crucifixion, and burial. We will have the chance to confess the ways we continue to betray or deny Christ. We will face truth in love.

### **Stations of the Cross – National Shrine of Divine Mercy (Stockbridge) - 6:30 p.m.**

We meet on Eden Hill to walk the Stations. This flat course winds through the scenes from the trial to the tomb. Along the way we will use a beautiful prayer liturgy from Australia that tells the story of each station and offers a prayer. We walk it together as family and community.

## **Easter Sunday – April 20<sup>th</sup> – 6:00 a.m. and 10:00 a.m.**

### **Sunrise Service 6:00 a.m. – The Jonathan Edwards Room**

Christ is Risen! We will gather facing the sunrise to celebrate the Easter truth of life and resurrection. A time of simple food and fellowship will follow.

### **10:00 a.m. – Festival Worship**

With special music, the flowered cross and cries of Alleluia we will sing, pray, and celebrate! Stay after for the **Egg Hunt for children** and a time of food and fellowship.



## Organ Rededication

It was an amazing concert and reception on March 1. There were many stars in the show, including guest organists Brian Hoffman, Tim Pyper, Ed Lawrence and Nick Reid; singers Rich Geiler, Amy Shake and John Demler, and Tracy Wilson, Music Director Pro Tempore. We are deeply grateful to the firm Messrs. Czelusniak et Dugal, Inc. of Northampton, Massachusetts for their excellent renovation and restoration work which was funded by generous donors to the church's capital campaign.

**Drivers needed** for Kimball Farms (Lenox) members and friends to attend Sunday worship. Right now, rides are mostly being provided by Donna Jacobs. If you have some availability to help her out occasionally, she'd love to hear from you at [donnajacobsmw@aol.com](mailto:donnajacobsmw@aol.com)





We invite you to meet our candidate for the position of  
**Minister of Music** on Wednesday, April 9

- 5:30 p.m. Family Style Community Supper (J.E. Room)  
6:30 p.m. Organ and Piano Playing and Hymn Singing (Sanctuary)

The food will be served family style and the menu will include lasagna, salad, bread, and brownies. We plan to offer vegetarian and gluten free options. Please RSVP if you can attend so we can prepare. We also invite anyone who is able to either contribute a dish or help set up or clean up.

All this information can be sent via this [online form](#) or by calling Will in the Church Office (413-298-3137 ext 1). The form is also available on the church website, [www.stockbridgeucc.org](http://www.stockbridgeucc.org)

~ Liza Catino, Chair, Search Committee,  
Donna Jacobs, Chair, Growth and Fellowship

## Connections Class

Have you been visiting this church for a while and thinking about calling it home? Then you are invited to come to a gathering we call **Connections!** The next class will be soon, the exact date to be determined.

We will have the chance to talk about what membership means and what it is and isn't. We will look at how we and the United Church of Christ fit into *Christianity* including both our bold and progressive history as well as our open and hopeful vision for the future.

The class will include conversations with one another, Pastor Brent, and lay leaders. Our hope is that you will learn more about each other, the church's rich history, as well as the many programs, small groups, opportunities for service,

and other ministries that are available to you *whether or not* you decide to join.

We try to offer this class twice a year, so if now is not the right time, another opportunity will come soon.

Please indicate interest, and possible dates that fit your schedule to Will Garrison (298-3137 or [office@stockbridgeucc.org](mailto:office@stockbridgeucc.org)). Childcare is available for those who might desire it. Questions? Please contact Pastor Brent.



## Board of Mission & Action

### Notes of Gratitude



Dear friends,

I want to welcome you as a contributor to the ACLU Foundation and extend my sincere appreciation for your gift of \$500 received December 13, 2024. Your generous gift will sustain and strengthen our efforts to protect the health and future of our democracy and ensure the rights of all individuals nationwide.

Your support comes at a critical time as anti-democratic forces across the country are fighting to block reproductive care, LGBTQ rights and even the freedom to vote. Your contribution reminds our ACLU community that the fight for civil liberties is stronger than ever and we are in this together.

Thanks to your partnership, we have staffed offices in all 50 states, Washington DC and Puerto Rico to ensure that we are on the ground every time our liberties are at stake. We are aggressively defending reproductive freedom and propelling the movement for systemic equality. Collaboratively, we are zeroing in on voting rights, election protection and free speech – the cornerstones of democracy from which all civil liberties flow.

We deeply appreciate your investment in the ACLU's efforts to meet this moment. Your leadership and the commitment of the ACLU staff, volunteers and partners ensure we can keep up the fight in the courts and on the streets.

Thank you again for your support as we continue to defend our fundamental freedoms.

With gratitude, Anthony Romero, Executive Director

#### M&A Expenditures February 2025

The church supported the following:

Local Needs: Pop-Up Pantry - \$130.92

Riverbrook Employment Partnership - \$185



Dear First Congregational Church,

Thank you for your generous donation of \$17. On behalf of the entire Habitat Team, I want to express our deepest gratitude for your support of building affordable housing in the Berkshires. Your gift allows us to move our mission forward and make a lasting impact in our community.

With Gulf Road in Dalton and 82/84 Robbins in Pittsfield, we have welcomed three first-time homebuyers into the Habitat family. We'll share more info on them as they settle in. Stay tuned.

Now that 2025 is here, Habitat is preparing to transform some vacant properties in Pittsfield into 6 more units. At the same time, work on the infrastructure for our 20-home community in Housatonic called Prosperity Way is moving right along.

Thank you again. We appreciate your kindness, your sense of community and your support of the mission of Central Berkshire Habitat for Humanity.

Working together to make a difference, Carolyn Valli, Chief Visionary Servant Leader



To Rev. Brent, the Mission and Action Board and the entire church congregation,

I write with belated but heartfelt thanks for your generous support. It has been dispiriting to see the stress and uncertainty that is plaguing our clients. Your support reminds us to stay hopeful

Warm wishes, Sheryl Lechner, Development Director



Dear Stockbridge Congregational Church,

Your generosity of a \$1500 donation in 2024 made a lifesaving difference for people affected by poverty or disaster in the U.S. and around the world. I am inspired by your dedication to supporting people in crisis by giving to Americares.

Gifts from friends like you helped deliver urgently needed humanitarian aid to people affected by the relentless war in Ukraine and ongoing crisis in Gaza.

With a moment's notice, your support sent medicine, relief supplies and emergency funding to communities affected by disasters such as the devastating hurricanes in the southeastern United States, last fall, Typhoon Yagi in the Philippines and Tropical Storm Sara in El Salvador. And you've helped insure people in the United States who can't afford basic health care have critical medicines and quality care within reach. Thank you so much for your generosity and loyal support. We could not do this lifesaving work without you.

Sincerely, Christine Squires President and CEO



### Cathedral of the Beloved

#### Sign up for April 5/6

**We need volunteers!** The Cathedral of the Beloved is an ecumenical ministry that holds a worship service and offers a free meal each Sunday afternoon in Pittsfield. This ministry serves the marginalized and homeless, serving about 100 people each week. **We will prep the meal together in our church kitchen on Saturday, April 5 at 10:00am and serve in Pittsfield indoors at the First United Methodist Church on Sunday, April 6 from 12:30 until around 3:00. Please check out the sign-up sheet in the JE Room bulletin board or sign up on Breeze.**

*I can't tell you how meaningful it was to serve at Cathedral of the Beloved. There's so much that's wrong with the world right now that the chance to do something good and true and pure was a huge gift to me. ~ Jon Geldert*



### Warm Up the Winter report

On February 23 and March 2, our congregation took up a collection for Construct's Warm Up the Winter emergency fuel fund campaign. Tristan Osgood and Anna Smith staffed a donation table at coffee hour. This annual fundraising campaign is dear to Tristan's heart, and he campaigns for it year round in various venues, raising thousands of dollars each year. From our congregation this year, Tristan received \$761 for Construct, bringing his total raised to \$3760.

Many thanks to our congregation, and kudos to Tristan for his persevering commitment to Construct. Warm Up the Winter Call to Action for Emergency Assistance is one of Construct's most critical and impactful annual fundraisers, with proceeds supporting those in need of emergency assistance for fuel, utility, rental payments, and emergency accommodation. It provides a winter safety net for those who need it most.

Based in Great Barrington, Construct has been the leading nonprofit provider of affordable housing and supportive services to south Berkshire county residents in need for over 50 years. With a small, highly skilled staff and committed volunteers, Construct leverages time, talent, money, and long-standing community relationships to support its mission. More information on Construct can be found at [construct.org](http://construct.org).

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, softcover \$22 - cash/check/Venmo.

**STOCKBRIDGE  
FESTIVAL CHORUS**

*Mozart*

**REQUIEM**

**In the Darkest Hour by David Stone**

**Saturday, April 12, 2025**

**3:00 pm**

**Tracy Wilson, director**

**Edwin Lawrence, organ**

**Aaron Likness, piano**

**Trombone trio and timpani**

**Sixty voice chorus**

**Samantha Talora, soprano**

**Mary Verdi, alto**

**Rich Geiler, tenor**

**John Demler, bass**

**First Congregational Church  
of Stockbridge, 4 Main Street**

Recommended donation \$20 ~ \$10 for members of  
local community choirs ~ free for people 18 and under.  
Church is fully accessible. For more info, call 413-298-3137