

FIRST CONGREGATIONAL  
CHURCH UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST  
Stockbridge, Massachusetts

PO Box 825 Stockbridge MA 01262



**July 2025**

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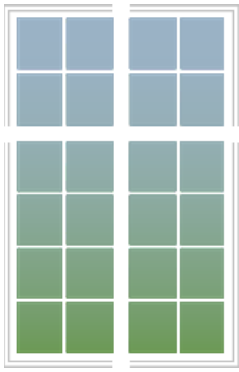
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Office hours: 9:00-2:00, Monday - Friday

# July 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>
<b>Yoga Classes</b> <b>Wednesdays, at</b> <b>9:00am</b>	<b>2<sup>nd</sup> Nature Arts</b> <b>M-F, 9:00am - 3:15</b> <b>in JE Room &amp;</b> <b>nursery</b>	<b>1</b> Brent's Sabbath Day <i>Al-Anon 7:00pm</i> <i>AA 8:00pm</i>	<b>2</b> Morning Prayer 8 am Bible Study Zoom 1:00 Council 7:00pm	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b> Independence Day office closed	<b>5</b> <i>Al-Anon 5:00pm</i>
<b>6</b> Worship 10:00am	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b> Brent's Sabbath Day <i>Al-Anon 7:00pm</i> <i>AA 8:00pm</i>	<b>9</b> Morning Prayer 8 am Bible Study Zoom 1:00 Community Supper 5:30pm	<b>10</b>	<b>11</b> Service League 10:30am	<b>12</b> <i>Al-Anon 5:00pm</i>
<b>13</b> Worship 10:00am	<b>14</b>	<b>15</b> Brent's Sabbath Day <i>Al-Anon 7:00pm</i> <i>AA 8:00pm</i>	<b>16</b> Morning Prayer 8 am Bible Study Zoom & in-person 11:30-2:30 Meetings of the Boards 5:00pm – 8:00pm	<b>17</b>	<b>18</b> Service League 10:30am	<b>19</b> <i>AA Berkshire</i> <i>Intergroup 9-3pm</i> <i>Al-Anon 5:00pm</i>
<b>20</b> Worship 10:00am Church Picnic 12:00pm	<b>21</b> Newsletter deadline	<b>22</b> Brent's Sabbath Day <i>Al-Anon 7:00pm</i> <i>AA 8:00pm</i>	<b>23</b> Morning Prayer 8 am Bible Study Zoom 1:00	<b>24</b>	<b>25</b> Service League 10:30am	<b>26</b> <i>Al-Anon 5:00pm</i>
<b>27</b> Worship 10:00am Church Picnic (rain date)	<b>28</b>	<b>29</b> Brent's Sabbath Day <i>Al-Anon 7:00pm</i> <i>AA 8:00pm</i>	<b>30</b> Morning Prayer 8 am Bible Study Zoom 1:00	<b>31</b>		



# FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH

UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

Stockbridge, Massachusetts

## July 2025 Newsletter

Dear Church Family,

I remember being fascinated by the simple arcade game “Whack-a-Mole. Perhaps it was the different cartoonish smiling moles that popped up begging to be whacked. Perhaps it was the music that kept getting more frantic as the game went on. Perhaps it was that no matter how many moles you hit another popped up. I think we are living in a “Whack-a-Mole” time.

In conversations with you, fellow clergy, not-for-profit leaders, and denominational leadership, I hear how tired we all are, how worn thin we are. I hear people lamenting about how many issues they are facing. Grinning mole after grinning mole popping up begging to be whacked. Over time, Whack-a-Mole grew less exciting and more wearying. Perhaps it was because I came to realize I couldn’t hit them all and even if I did, the music would still grow more frantic, I would grow more tired, and even when the game ended I would still see that frustrating grin.

This summer, my reading list is deep with books from people writing about these times. Through esteemed teachers like Richard Rohr, insightful observers like Ezra Klein, and amazing religious leaders like Rabbi Sharon Brous, I am beginning to gather insights and perspectives on how to not just manage these times but to find places of rest and peace amid them. Each day I also begin with beautiful writings from [www.grateful.org](http://www.grateful.org), I encounter the poetry of Jeff Foster who invites us to just be ourselves, and I rest in the blessings of John O'Donoghue. I do so to not just react to those outward things that are affecting me but also to honor the inward challenges I bring to my encounter with the world.

I have also enjoyed recent conversations with many of you. I am grateful every time someone

forwards me a newspaper article or a song that is bringing them perspective for these days. As we explored in worship recently, hope is a communal thing that is rooted in what God has done and is doing and flourishes in our connections. Hope is that thing that keeps us from being stalled and allows us to catch a glimpse of God’s long ark of goodness. Thank you.

Being in dialogue with you helps avoid the waste of time playing “Whack-a-Mole.” Summers allow me a little bit more breadth to think and imagine, to plan and dream, to imagine and get ready. For me, ministry is profoundly an act that remembers from where we have come and meets us profoundly in this very moment that we might together find a future. I have a serious and literal request - **I would love to hear from you.**

Whether we get together for a conversation or whether you write me a note or an e-mail, here is what I would like to learn from you: (1) how are you – *really*, (2) what moles are popping up in your world (whether about the broader world or your own life), and (3) what are you yearning for in our shared church life? Don't worry if you don't have those answers in complete depth or clarity the whole point, as Rachel Held Evans would remind us, is simply to get the conversation started.

Summers are a blessing. They allow me to slow down enough to find myself and to try to find the outlines of a path placed before us by the Spirit. I hope that you are hanging in there in these “Whack-a-Mole times.” I hope, even more, to hear from you and to be together with you.

In gratitude and hope,

**Brent**

## Music Notes

### Got Music in You? We'd Love to Know!

The Board of Music is putting together a list of musical gifts within our church community to help Sean, our new Minister of Music, get to know you—and to serve as a resource as he plans music for worship and other events. Whether you've been a regular contributor over the years or have a hidden talent you've never shared, we'd love to hear from you. If you'd like to be included, please email Jon Geldert at [jkgeldert@yahoo.com](mailto:jkgeldert@yahoo.com). Being on the list doesn't commit you—or Sean—to anything. It's simply a way for Sean to get to know our congregation better and learn how you might enjoy participating in the church's music ministry. We look forward to hearing from you!



*Thank you all so much for the warm welcome you have given me! I've enjoyed meeting so many of you already, and your comments and thoughts of support and gratitude have meant so much these past weeks. My apologies if I don't remember names right away, but I will get there! And in case you missed it, here is what I shared last month, so you can know a little more about me...*

Beyond music, I have a lot of interests that keep me busy. I love spending time with and taking care of my family, traveling, and visiting friends. I enjoy tackling DIY projects around my house and yard. I love planting and cultivating my vegetable garden, as it's something that connects me to my grandparents (though my vegetables never come close to being what theirs were!), and it brings me joy to see it grow from seed to harvesting!

I will watch, play, and talk about all kinds of sports - golf, baseball, basketball, football, Formula 1, soccer, or rugby, to name a few. Growing up in Connecticut I am one of those Red Sox/NY Giants fans when it comes to MLB and NFL; I grew up in a split home - my dad a



### 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
July 24	Steve Hassmer

life-long Yankees fan and my mom loyal to the Red Sox. Needless to say, the events of the fall of 2004 brought me much joy! I love being on the golf course and I try to do so as much as possible this time of year, though given my scoring average, sometimes I'm not sure why I continue. I am a founding (fan) member and season ticket holder for the New England Free Jacks, the Major League Rugby team in Quincy, MA, and I love international rugby (Wales and Ireland especially).

When it comes to my musical tastes, Billy Joel, James Taylor, Marc Cohn, Bruce Hornsby, Howard Jones, John Pizzarelli, and Dianna Krall top my list, but the list is long and varied! Nothing compares to live music and being there in the moment. My

favorite musical to have seen on Broadway is *Natasha, Pierre, & the Great Comet of 1812* (saw it three times in one summer); my favorite musical to have been music director and conductor for is *In the Heights*.

~ Sean Lewis, Minister of Music

## Behind the Scenes with the Board of Trustees

Much of what the Trustees do takes place behind the scenes (investments), in the netherworld of the church basement (furnaces, plumbing), or in the imagination (long-range planning), and you may hear about it primarily when it appears as an item in the annual budget. So we wanted to share some recent developments with you.

On June 10, the installation of a new building-wide, code-compliant, fire alarm system was completed. You may or may not have noticed a few new discreetly-placed strobe lights, but we can all enjoy an enhanced sense of security for our buildings, our congregation, and the community partners who use our space.

We're also happy to share a progress report on the **solar panel** installation.

The company which will be doing the installation has inspected our roof and deemed it suitable, has obtained the necessary approval from National Grid, and is now awaiting the town permits. When this project is completed, it will be a significant win for both our church budget and our stewardship of the environment. We'll keep you posted as this important project moves along.

~ Margaret Hornick, for the Trustees



## Helping our Community

On April 29, Central Berkshire Habitat for Humanity was notified that their AmeriCorps grant, funded by the



AmeriCorps Agency in Washington was terminated effective immediately. The stated reason was that the award "no longer effectuates agency priorities" yet no clear criteria or warning were provided.

This devastating decision threatens not only the stability of their programs but the work of AmeriCorps workers who serve the community every day. On the local level, this termination immediately impacts eight dedicated AmeriCorps members who have been working tirelessly to build affordable homes and strengthen our neighborhoods. These individuals have committed themselves to a year of service living modestly on the small stipends provided by the AmeriCorps grant. With the sudden loss of the grant they are not only stripped of their ability to continue their service but are also facing the loss of the stipends they depend on for basic living expenses.

A generous local donor has provided \$5000 for emergency support and is willing to double the donation if the agency can match this amount. The Board of Mission and Action is contributing \$500 to this fundraising drive. If you would like join in the support of the important work done by AmeriCorps members, donations can be made online at <https://donorbox.org/mericorps>.

### BERKSHIRE ASSOCIATION ALL-CHURCH SUMMER PICNIC

#### Fun and Fellowship

Saturday, August 9, 1:00pm

Pittsfield State Forest

- ◆ Barbecue with  
potluck salads and desserts
- ◆ Bring your own plates/utensils
- ◆ All-Berkshire UCC clergy **and**  
congregations
- ◆ **Rain or shine**



## From the Service League

In spite of the weather - Rain! Chilly temperatures! - we're declaring it summer, which means we get to kick back a bit and break out of our usual habits and routines. On June 13th, that meant a potluck lunch and birthday celebration for our president, Anne Hutchinson. There were flowers, cake, and lots of laughter. And the following Friday, we went completely AWOL and actually had a picnic at Anne's house in Great Barrington. No cake this time, but the laughter and fellowship remained.

But we'll soon be back at work, which means pricing and preparing for sale those items that come in for Grandma's Attic (donations always welcome!), crafting, and generally plotting for the Holly Fair, which, this year, is December 6. Don't worry, I won't let you forget!

~ Margaret Hornick



## Community Connections

To expand on the article in the June newsletter about finding community connections, the Board of Mission and Action would like to learn about those connections already in place. Over the summer we will ask you to let us know about your volunteer



activities. Do you prepare taxes through Habitat for Humanity? (one member prepared 116 returns this spring!) . Do you volunteer at the People's Pantry in

Great Barrington? Do you deliver boxes of food to families through the Berkshire Hills School District Food Box program? So many of you are involved in supporting local communities in need of assistance. By knowing where you share your time and talent, Mission and Action will be better able to support your work with these agencies, connect you with others interested in volunteering and we will highlight some volunteers and agencies in future newsletters. Stay tuned for announcements in church.

**Ages 5 - 10**

**Creative Playdate Program**  
Join us to make art, play, and let your imagination soar!

**Spring After School**  
April 7 - June 12 3:45 - 5:15pm  
Mon - Tue - Wed - Thu

**Summer Camp**  
June 30 - July 3: Fabulous Fibers  
July 7 - 11: Time Travelers  
July 14 - 18: Books & Beyond  
July 21 - 25: Creature Feature  
July 28 - Aug 1: Myth Makers  
Aug 4 - 8: Masterpiece Mash-Ups

4 Main St. Stockbridge

[secondnaturearts.org](http://secondnaturearts.org)



Cindy and Patty Strauch at Long Beach Island

## Stockbridge Sinfonia

For those of you who simply cannot get enough musical offerings in your lives over

the summer, here are some more things to put on your calendar, and they are free! Many of you know I conduct the Stockbridge Sinfonia in the summer, tucked in between the Winter-Spring Stockbridge Festival Chorus concerts. The Stockbridge Sinfonia was founded 53 years ago and is the Berkshires' longest running community orchestra. In fact, it was born right next door at the old Town Hall. The group is comprised of students ranging from 14 to 22 years of age, and adults, both amateur and semi-professional.

We have two sets of concerts this summer, first by members of our Wind Ensemble performing Gounod Petite Symphonie and Mozart Gran Partita. These concerts will be guest conducted by David Diggs, who has been attending our church recently with his wife, Grace. Concerts are Sat. July 12, 3 pm at Zion Lutheran Church in Pittsfield and Sun. July 13, 3 pm at Church on the Hill in Lenox.

The full Sinfonia has three concerts in August, and the series is entitled Overtures and More! We are doing the Overture from Mozart's Marriage of Figaro, Roman Carnival Overture by Berlioz and the Festival Overture by Shostakovich. We are doing a piece by local composer Joan Devoe based on her personal experience pre-during-post covid pandemic, and finishing with Dvorak Symphony No. 8. Concerts are August 2, 3 pm at Lenox Memorial Middle and High School, August 9, 3 pm at Zion Lutheran Church, and Sun August 10, 6 pm at Saint James Place in Great Barrington.

I hope to see many of you at one of the concerts.

~ Tracy Wilson, recently retired Minister of Music  
Pro Tempore



## Active Prayer of Thanksgiving

### Pop-Up Pantry

Sunday, July 6

We continue the practice of an Active Prayer of Thanksgiving as an act of gratitude after communion. We encourage you to bring non-perishable food items and toiletries and/or money for food (cash or check), for our own Pop-Up Pantry.

Suggested food/toiletry items: canned/dried beans, peanut or other nut butters, breakfast cereals/rolled oats, canned fruit/vegetables/soups/tuna/salmon/chicken, brown rice/quinoa/other grains, white or whole grain pasta, pasta sauce, white or whole grain flour, cornmeal, condiments, cooking oil, coffee, tea, shampoo, soap, toothpaste, paper towels.

If you wish to contribute by check, please make your check payable to First Congregational Church, memo line: Pop-Up Pantry. To contribute via Venmo, FCC Stockbridge, note Pop-Up Pantry on the 'What's this for?' line. Many thanks!

### The Pop-Up Pantry Needs Your Help!

Our Pop-Up Pantry is an important resource for those in our community facing food insecurity. Do you have 20-30 minutes once a month to re-stock our Pop-Up Pantry? Could you shop for needed pantry items? The pantry is re-stocked twice each week on Sunday or Monday and Wednesday or Thursday. Shopping is done about once a month. Re-stocking involves checking the inventory in the pantry and moving items from the closet in the back hall of the church into the pantry, tracking items used and noting on the shopping list attached to the door when supplies of items are running low. (Training will be provided.) If you could contribute to this important community outreach, please contact: [bethcilley428@gmail.com](mailto:bethcilley428@gmail.com)



## Church Picnic: Sunday, July 20 at 12:00 noon

YOU are invited to the Church Picnic at the Schneyers' beautiful gazebo with lawn sloping down to picturesque Mohawk Lake in Glendale (see map). This is a relaxed time of picnicking, fellowship, swimming, and boating for all members of our congregation – your friends and family are welcome too. **We're asking everyone to bring their own meat & buns or main dish and their own soft drinks (no alcohol)** —a grill will be available. **Please also bring a dish to share: salad, side dish, dessert, or munchies.** Condiments, paper products (plates, napkins, cups), cutlery and ice will be provided.

This is a great day to come to church dressed for a picnic. Just don't forget to pack your bathing suit, towel, sand toys, hat, sunscreen, bug repellent, and a chair or blanket. Floaties for small children are fine, but please don't bring any large rafts or boats. There are boats available at the lake. The Schneyers have a house next to the lake where we can change clothes or use the restroom, and they can drive people up and down the hill in their golf cart if needed.

Please note that parents are responsible for their own children's safety. Mohawk Lake is a private lake and our hosts kindly request no fishing, no outside boats, and no dogs. Carpooling is encouraged as parking is somewhat limited. If it rains, the rain date will be July 27. Any questions, ask Ted Randolph or Cindy Brown.

### Find your way to the Church Picnic at beautiful Mohawk (Schneyer's) Lake in Glendale

