



Early Summer 2025



Celebrate Richmond's Worship Life

Sunday, May 18, at 3:00 PM (see page 7)

Berkshire Association email:
berkshireassociation@gmail.com



Early Summer 2025 Newsletter



BERKSHIRE PRIDE Festival – Saturday, June 7, 11am – 4pm

ONA UCC Churches of the Berkshires - This year more than ever let us proudly show up for our LGBTQIA siblings and show them how much we believe that together, we are all God's children! We do this by marching, but also by being visible at our booth and throughout the festival enjoying and sharing in the fun throughout the day!

Facts: Berkshire PRIDE is Saturday, June 7 11am parade, 11am - 4pm festival with vendor booths (staffed 12-4) on The Common, Pittsfield

(FYI - This is the SAME day as SNEUCC Annual Meeting 9am – 1pm which is online only this year.)

*We are registered under “Open & Affirming Churches of the Berkshires, United Church of Christ” as an Inclusion Friend sponsor of the event (\$500) which would mean we were listed in the event promotion/marketing and website, etc.

*All churches should march with their own church banner!

*We will have a vendor booth again this year – and need churches to take shifts at this – you can promote your church's activities and events, as well as give blessings or do prayer or communion to people who come by.

*Once you are registered with us, we'll get you all the details about where and when to meet.

WE NEED YOU!

Will you march with us? Please confirm your church's participation to march no later than Friday, May 30, 2025

Please confirm now by email to Marisa Brown Ludwig at Lee Congregational
revmarisaucleechurch@gmail.com
(413) 575-4497

Can you **donate** towards our sponsorship of the event – we are raising \$500 to cover our sponsorship *Suggested donation: \$100*

Please send your donation in to us no later than Friday, May 23, 2025

Check payable to “Berkshire PRIDE” sent to:
Carrie Waara 34 Coles Grove Road,
Williamstown, MA 01267

Volunteer:

- 9-10:30 am 1st shift - set up of booth
- (11am – parade - all march)
- 12-1:30 2nd shift at the booth
- 1:30-3pm 3rd shift
- 3-4:30pm 4th shift at the booth and help pack up /break down the tent

Please sign up for your shift now by email to
Marisa Brown Ludwig at Lee Congregational
revmarisaucleechurch@gmail.com

Can your church provide our vendor tent? We'll have folks to help set up and break down!

Can your church help underwrite a banner for the booth with the logo: **Love is Louder?**

For all questions, ideas and concerns contact us:

Carrie Waara, carrie.waara@gmail.com
(413) 441-3308 or Marisa Brown Ludwig,
revmarisaucleechurch@gmail.com
(413) 575-4497

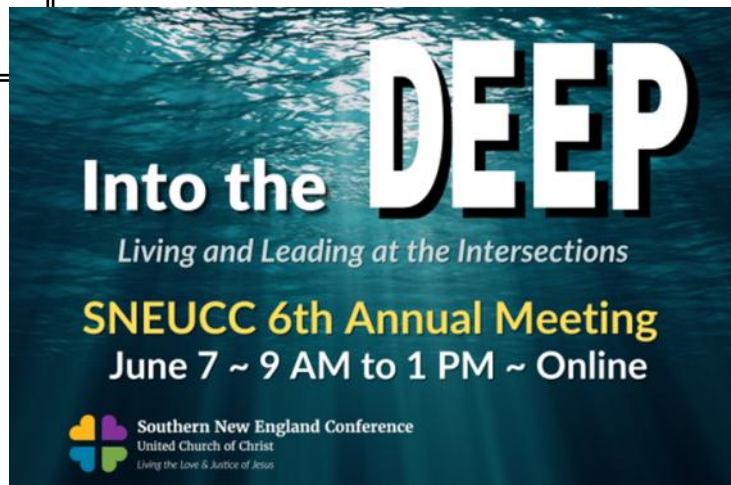
Save the Dates

JUNE 21 – Movie Night

An inter-denominational movie night at Zion Lutheran Church, Pittsfield, at 6:30pm on Saturday June 21. Sponsored by Cathedral of the Beloved. Dessert and table conversation after the movie.

Our society is more divided than ever. Many have moved into tribal corners, seeing the world from an “us versus them” point of view. The teachings and writings of Bishop Michael Curry, most well-known for his passionate [sermon about “The Power of Love”](#) at the royal wedding of Prince Harry and Meghan Markle, inspired A CASE FOR LOVE.

This feature-length documentary is a powerful film that examines the question of whether or not love, specifically—unselfish—love, is the solution to the extreme societal and political divide facing the world.



BERKSHIRE ASSOCIATION ALL-CHURCH SUMMER PICNIC

Fun and Fellowship

AUGUST 9, 1:00pm

Pittsfield State Forest

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

Spotlight on Partners in Mission and Ministry

Cathedral of the Beloved

This month we lift up a local organization that provides a unique street ministry to the people of Pittsfield, **Cathedral of the Beloved**. Many of our UCC churches participate in COTB in some way, either through donations, providing a meal, and/or worshipping together on the lawn at St. Joe's on North Street in Pittsfield every Sunday afternoon at 1:00pm.

A note from COTB:

Easter Greetings to our beloved brothers and sisters of the UCC from your friends at Cathedral of the Beloved.

Cathedral of the Beloved is an ecumenical collaboration of people creating community where all know God's unconditional welcome and love. We couldn't do this work without you! We worship outside in downtown Pittsfield on Sunday afternoons making ourselves accessible to all or those who live on the margins. We share a meal together after worship. Tuesday mornings we celebrate Holy Communion at Zion Lutheran Church, and on Thursday mornings we gather at Dottie's for coffee and conversation.

We thank you Pittsfield, Lenox, Lee, Stockbridge and Dalton, UCC churches who have made a contribution of a meal, hosted a presentation, shared in worship, or made monetary donations. All are welcome who want to share their gifts with us, contact us or learn more at (www.cathedralofthebeloved.org). Check out our facebook page: (www.facebook.com/CathedralPittsfield/)



Action on Immigration: An Update

ICE (Immigration and Customs Enforcement) has made arrests in Berkshire County.

This Spring, 13 people have been arrested by ICE (10 in a single day). We recently learned that four of the ten have been released and back at their home to wait for a court date.

The work team for Institutional Preparedness for ICE has completed and distributed a packet of information for houses of worship (Thanks, Marisa!). If you have not received a packet for your church, please let us know and we will get one to you.

A second work team offers regular alerts when someone from Berkshire County has been detained. An available volunteer arrives to witness and to remind the person of their rights. Another volunteer might accompany a detainee to their court date to witness and support.

A third team sponsors immigrants for their driver's test. Having a license or valid ID helps if ICE detains them. The team has purchased a car that can be used for the driving test.

Many of our UCC congregations are partnering with BIO and BASIC as well as other community-based non-profits to respond to recent deportations. Pass-through Funds have been created at **VIM** www.vimberkshires.org in South County and **Roots and Dreams and Mustard Seed**

(rootsandmustardseeds.com) in Pittsfield to provide financial help to detainees and their families. Donations are welcome to help families with food, rent, transportation or legal assistance.



2nd Annual Berkshire Association Council Retreat

The Berkshire Association Council spent much of day on retreat at Church on the Hill in April to review last year's initiatives and plan for 2025. We are committed to four goals again this year, building on last year's goals:

Goal I: Support our churches

- Continue to make church visits annually
- Complete the Resource Directory
- Plan an all-church summer picnic potluck at Pittsfield State Forest
- Plan an all-church event with a speaker

Goal II: Support our clergy

- Make periodic review visits
- Pulpit Swap
- Retired Clergy Gathering
- Clergy Sunday Off for family day or personal sabbath

Goal III: Strengthen Relationships among church leaders

- Continue Delegate training and Mod/Treas gatherings
- Worship Committees/Diaconate workshops for planning lay-led worship service and/or other creative worship ideas. Two possible types of retreats. 1) How to create worship services without relying upon preaching as a centerpiece. 2) Gather worship planners and musicians to gain facility with alternative ways to include worship music without an organist or pianist.
- Mission/Outreach Leaders Gathering on Zoom to share what is each church's top two passions for mission and how to better collaborate for the purpose of community impact and strengthening inter-church relationships. We would "map" the responses to enable our congregations to collaborate on the same issue.
- Vote at Annual Meeting on funds for Mission/Outreach/Social Justice all-church events (not

for direct services – but activism, education or raising awareness) Note: Doing this will necessitate a carefully worded resolution to keep it bound with enough flexibility to respond outside of an annual cycle.

Goal IV: Strengthen relations between Association/Conference

- Continue bi-monthly newsletters and announcements
- Seek more articles for the newsletter from our churches and other partner organizations
- Hear from our General Synod Delegates at Annual Meeting

UPDATE THE DASHBOARD

Please take some time this month to go to your SNEUCC Dashboard and make any changes for 2025.

Also: To help us better stay in touch with clergy, and church leaders, please also furnish names and contact information for 2025. We would love to have contact information of Moderators and Vice Moderators, Treasurers, Delegates, and chairs of your primary committees Facilities, Mission/Outreach, Stewardship, Diaconate/ Called to Care, Spiritual Formation and Christian Education, and Fellowship or their equivalents in your church.

Go to <https://www.sneucc.org/dashboards>. Create an account. Go in and update your clergy and lay leaders as updates are needed.

Our Offerings Touch People We May Never Meet

Beyond taking care of our congregation's expenses, such as staff salaries, programs, local missions, and building ownership costs, what else do our offerings fund?

A portion of our offering goes to support Our Church's Wider Mission, also known as OCWM. OCWM helps to fund the ministry of our conference and our denomination. Even though funding supports their administration, it also funds their missions.

Here's one mission story in which the UCC played a major role:

Incarcerated people who speak to family and friends by phone or video pay for those calls. They are not covered by jail or prison. The charges for these calls were exorbitant, sometimes as high as \$14.00 per minute. Data show that incarcerated people had a lower rate of recidivism when they stayed in contact with loved ones

In October 2015, the [FCC capped in-state and long-distance calls](#) emanating from the jail or prison. It lowered the cap on long-distance calls by 50%.

The UCC's Media Justice Ministry was instrumental in pursuing this with the FCC. It took many years of advocacy beginning in 2012, which included five years of lobbying to enshrine the cap into law. The bill sponsored by Sen. Tammy Duckworth (D-IL) became [The Martha Wright-Reed Just and Reasonable Communications Act of 2022](#) on January 5, 2023.

The UCC's involvement with the [Martha Wright-Reed Coalition](#) began with Frank Krogh, a member of the Rock Spring Congregational UCC in Arlington, VA. He represented the coalition on a pro bono basis in 2012. The coalition began its efforts in D. C. District court in 2000.

This [story](#) reminds us that justice is possible when we work together. Frank Krogh's advocacy became the UCC's advocacy. Though the path was long, this is the law of the land made possible by our support through our offerings. As Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr preached, "The moral arc of the universe is long, but it bends towards justice."

~ Quentin Chin

Berkshire Association Council

- Rev. Cara Davis, Moderator
- Rev. Janet McKinstry, Vice-Moderator and chaplain to the Delegates
- Rev. Quentin Chin, Registrar
- Donna Bishop, Treasurer
- Rev. Joel Huntington, COM chair
- Amy Chin, member
- Rev. David Hurst, member
- Sara Milano, member
- Barbara Mahoney, member
- Carrie Waara, member
- Rev. Terry Yasuko Ogawa, Area Conference Minister, SNEUCC

SHARE YOUR NEWS

Items for the newsletter can be sent to: berkshireassociation@gmail.com

We hope to feature any event, program or project your church is planning that is open to all of our congregations. If including pictures, it is preferred to use **jpeg**.

We also welcome a reflection, a story about your church, a best practice to share across all of our churches. Both laypersons and clergy are welcome to contribute to the newsletter. We welcome your voices!

Come and Celebrate Richmond's Worship Life

On Sunday, May 18, at 3:00 PM, the Richmond Congregational Church will celebrate the end of its worship life in a service open to everyone in the Berkshire Association and the Richmond community.

Like many UCC congregations in Massachusetts, Richmond's founding coincided with the town's incorporation in 1765. The congregation joined the United Church of Christ in 1961.

The first meeting house stood at the end of Rossiter Road. Thirty years later the congregation erected its own building on the present site. This building burned to the ground in 1882. The present church was built after a fire destroyed the second church in 1969.

The congregation has served the town through its scholarship program and generously supported the wider community's environmental and social justice causes locally and through the UCC. True to its founding as the town's meetinghouse, it has hosted countless community gatherings including a drop-in place for coffee to pancake breakfasts to community suppers and music performances.

The Rev. Carol Killian will guide the service, with a sermon by the Rev. John Hamilton and special music. It will be a time to remember, release, and rejoice as the congregation proclaims its legacy and honors its saints. Its former pastors and our Associate Conference Minister, the Rev. Terry Yasuko Ogawa, will offer their final blessings. It will also be a time to look ahead. Though this congregation's worship life will end, its ministry will continue through other community partners, recipients of the congregation's largesse. A reception following the service will present the congregation's history through pictures.

If you cannot attend in person on May 18, you can attend online with this [Zoom link](#)
Meeting ID: 886 7373 7575 Passcode: 846307

The Zoom link is available on the website of The First Congregational Church, Stockbridge,
stockbridgeucc.org.



For even more news...

Would you like to delve more deeply into the news of member churches? There is a lot of great information in their newsletters.

Here are the links to two:

[Messenger Archive – First Congregational Church of Lee, MA](#)

[News – First Congregational Church, Stockbridge, Massachusetts](#)

And check out the [blog of Church on the Hill, Lenox](#).



Share the Love a Grand Success!

Since 2022, the **First Congregational Church North Adams** (FCCNA) has been sponsoring Share the Love, a month-long challenge campaign designed to encourage folks in Northern Berkshire County to help their neighbors in need.

In 2022, we considered ourselves fortunate to raise a total of \$4,805. This year, the community went above and beyond: we gathered over \$6,000 from North Adams, Adams, Williamstown, and beyond. As announced in its challenge, FCCNA's Missions Ministry matched the community's largesse 50%, for a total of \$9,075.

We designated three organizations—Berkshire Food Project, Louison House, and Greenagers at Many Forks Farm—as the campaign's recipients, each of which received \$3,025 to spend as they see best to fulfill their missions: alleviating food and housing insecurity and supporting youth empowerment in the northern Berkshires.

All year long, five days a week, Berkshire Food Project, which has been located at FCCNA for over 30 years, welcomes all comers to sit down to a hot, nutritious meal, cooked from scratch. Since 1990, Louison House, the only comprehensive housing agency in North County, has provided services to over 8,000 individuals and families

struggling with housing insecurity and its related ills. Greenagers at Many Forks Farm, now in its second year, inspires teens to develop self-discipline, empathy, cooperative skills, and confidence as they form deep connections to land, work, and community.

This February FCCNA sweetened its ask with the promise of a raffle. We were heartened that 18 businesses from North Adams, Williamstown, and Adams contributed goods or services to help entice individuals to contribute to our initiative. And we are delighted that 60 individuals chose to do so!

Please thank the businesses who supported Share the Love with your patronage. Those establishments are: Aubuchon; Big Y; Clark Art Institute; Emporium; Freight Yard Pub; Images; Limited Editions; M&J's Taste of Home; MassMoCA; Meraki Salon; Nature's Closet; Plant Connector; Provisions; The Public; Roam; Stop and Shop; Unlimited Nutrition; Where'd You Get That; Wild Oats; and the Williams Shop.

Share the Love is a good deal of work, but it is also so heartwarming to be out in the community, talking to folks, and seeing all the good they want to do for their neighbors in need. Fortunate are we to live in such a community!



Pictured: Liz Mach, Lesa Bennett, and Bruce Shepley (Berkshire Food Project); Lois Daunis (FCCNA Missions Ministry); Molly

Comstock (Many Forks Farm, host of Greenagers); and Kathy Keeser (Executive Director, Louison House)
[Picture credit: Jack Guerino, *iBerkshires*]