



Summer 2025



**All Berkshire Association Churches
Family Picnic - August 9. See page 8.**

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BERKSHIRE
ASSOCIATION
SOUTHERN NEW ENGLAND CONFERENCE OF THE UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

Summer 2025 Newsletter

And, behold, all the earth sitteth still, and is at rest. Zechariah 1:11

Summer is here...sunscreen, flipflops, afternoon thunderstorms, visitors, family reunions, beach vacations, backyard barbecues, fireflies and fireworks. Who doesn't love long, hot summer days.

Beneath the teeming activity of a summer day, there is the slow but steady hum of peace of summer nights when darkness comes late and the whirl of an overhead fan churns rhythmically through the oppressive heat to bring on sleep.

There is this moment, and it is just a moment, as brief as the flicker of a firefly's light, when it seems all the earth sits still, and the striving, the toiling, the contradictions of

your day come to a complete rest. When greed and need no longer drive you and all desires within you cease. When you simply are, swimming, as the psalmist says, in a sea of mercy as in an endless sea. And you know, if only for this split second, that wherever you are God is and all is well.

It is a delicious moment, made rich by its depth, made precious by its brevity.

May you enjoy the many blessings of summer days and summer nights. And don't forget to come to the Berkshire Association All-Church Summer Potluck Picnic on August 9th! It will be hot. It will be buggy. It might even rain. But it will be fun, because you all are there.

~ Cara Davis



GENERAL SYNOD 2025

Every two years, [General Synod](#) brings together faithful members of the United Church of Christ for inspirational worship, fellowship with friends (old and new), and public witness through engagement with the business of the church and passing new resolutions.

This year General Synod 35 will be held July 11-15 in Kansas City, Missouri the barbecue capital of America! Our SNEUCC delegation of 100 (the max we were allowed) is the largest delegation. They join nearly 2000 other delegates from all over our country, including Hawaii and Alaska to discern resolutions of witness, church structure, and function.

Key Note Speaker: Rev. Jennifer Butler, an author and faith-based activist, is an advocate for justice and human dignity. She is the founder and director of Faith in Democracy, a new organization founded to organize a global response to autocracy and religious nationalism.

Our delegates:



Rev. Liz Goodman is the pastor of the Monterey Church, where she's been since 2001, and Church on the Hill in Lenox, where she's

been since 2019. Baptized in the UCC at the age of three months old, she's a lifer, whenever critiquing the ways of the UCC always from a place of love. She's recently had essays in The Christian Century and enjoys rowing, walking her dogs, and watching British people murder each other on Acorn TV. General Synod 2023 was her first time at Synod, and she's looking forward to having some experience going into Synod 2025.

Liz's son **Jack Goodman** is a member of Church on the Hill in Lenox and is a rising sophomore at St. Olaf College in Northfield, MN where he'll likely major in



Philosophy and an Independent Study in Fashion Construction. Baptized in Monterey at three months old, he's a lifer like his mom but 36 years younger. He enjoys making music and making people laugh. His comic timing equals his crackling mind.

Elaine Gross is a member of the First Congregational Church, Lee, UCC. She is the Founder and President Emerita of ERASE Racism, a regional civil rights organization based on Long Island, NY that does cutting edge work exposing and addressing the devastating impact of historical and ongoing structural racism, particularly in housing and public school education. Her previous experience also includes serving as Founding Executive Director of Sustainable America, Program Officer at the Unitarian Universalist Veatch Program at Shelter Rock, Deputy



Director of the Boston Housing Partnership, and Human Services Director at the Boston Housing Authority.

Elaine is a delegate to the Berkshire Association for FCC, Lee and currently lives in Otis, MA.

WELCOME -

Reverend Aja Burba is the new designated term minister at First Congregational Church, UCC North Adams. She graduated from Andover Newton Theological School in 2018 with an M.Div. and a Certificate in Pastoral Care. She began her work in ministry in the summer of 2018 and was ordained in January of 2021 (a pandemic ordination! We all needed a little joy at the time.).

Rev. Suzy's primary ministry passions include preaching and pastoral care but she also comes with experience in middle and high school youth ministry and being a solo minister of a small congregation. A native of Plymouth, MA, Rev. Suzy has spent the majority of her life on the South Shore with a seven-year stint in the Twin Cities, MN during young. Prior to going into ministry, Rev. Suzy primarily worked in the mental health field, as well as doing hospital work, and tutoring in the science department at Massasoit Community College.

Outside of ministry, Rev. Suzy enjoys spending time in nature, working with animals, and various creative activities. She is a hiker and has volunteered with The Trustees of Reservations. Her primary volunteer work has been with a cat rescue where she provided care for foster animals, functioned as one of the rescue photographers, and assisted with fundraising events. She has done stained glass, wood carving, drawing, jewelry making, lampworking



(making glass beads), and knitting. Her other passions include spending time with family (especially with her two, now very big, nephews), providing a great, happy, healthy life for her three cats, and simply loving the people whom she serves.

Wind & Fire at UCC Pittsfield

Sunday School students at UCC Pittsfield cast down tongues of fire from the balcony for Pentecost. The communion table was appointed to represent the bounty and feast of Pentecost. Later, all enjoyed a birthday cake at Fellowship time.



THANK YOU

The Berkshire Association Council is very grateful for the help from The First Congregational Church, UCC Stockbridge and Will Garrison with getting each edition of this newsletter formatted, edited, copied, mailed and emailed. With their help we stay strongly connected as a Berkshire UCC community. Thank you! Thank you!



Interfaith Pride Day in Lee

At First Congregational Church, UCC, Lee, co-
led by Rev. Marisa Brown Ludwig, Rev. Tadd
Allmon-Morton from First Congregational
Church, UCC, Great Barrington; Rev. Carol
Allmon-Morton, Unitarian Universalist Church,
Housatonic; and Rabbi Jodie Gordon from
Hevreh South Berkshires.

Berkshire Pride Day, June 7

Several churches came to the Common in
Pittsfield, including First Congregational Church,
UCC North Adams.



New Life



As the First
Congregational
Church,
Richmond held
its last service of
worship, they left
legacy gifts to the
South
Community Food
Pantry and
BEAT. In this
way the spirit of
their church

carries on in and through these important
Berkshire organizations.

Mary Wheat (at right) accepting gift from Holly Stover.

Clock and Tower

Church on the Hill, in partnership with
the newly formed Friends of the Lenox
Meeting House, recently completed Phase I of a
three-phase restoration and reconfiguration
of the 1805 Meeting House on the hill. This
involved a repair of the clock and
restoration of its two faces and the tower,
cupola, and weathervane. Then came the
celebration, on June 21st, the first sunny
Saturday we'd had in a long time. People
from all over town and beyond came to the
festival on the front lawn and to take tours
of the sanctuary and the cemetery beside.

Our Churches' Delegates

Lee: Olivia Tousignant Kuhn, Valerie Brey, Elaine Gross
UCC, Pittsfield: Carol Killian, Sally LeBarron
Dalton: Donna Bishop, Tom Towne
Lenox: Emily Johnson, Bob Gardiner, Amy Chin
Sheffield: Julie Hannum, Alicia Brazie
Stockbridge: Margaret Hornick, John Canning
First Williamstown: Samuel Smith, Elizabeth Smith
Canaan: Susan Bues, Jay Aronson
North Adams: Julie Filkins
Great Barrington: (alternate delegate) Bonnie Daniels

For even more news...

- [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](#).

Relational Covenant

In Stockbridge, like so many places, we see our congregation as a family. Our mission calls us to follow the way of Christ and offer love.

Sometimes in regards to each we do better, sometimes we fall short. We recognized amidst changing dynamics after the pandemic, and with new people joining our family, how we treat each other not only matters, but ideally should be patterned on the faith we claim.

A small group was formed to explore what has become a yearlong experiment with a "Relational Covenant." That group talked with the congregation, read articles, and worked with the Conference Staff to develop a draft to share with Council. After some incredible feedback, we agreed to live into the Covenant at our Budget Meeting in January, see how it goes, and then consider a more formal implementation at our next Annual Meeting in May, 2026. While there was no "precipitating crisis," we saw this opportunity as a way to strengthen our existing relationships as well as communicate to newcomers what they ought to be able to expect from us and what we hope for from them too. So far, the reaction has been overwhelmingly positive. Our Boards and Committees use it to start meetings, it has been used in times of disagreement, and many have shared that it has helped them approach church life more hopefully and lovingly. See the Covenant on the following page. We would be delighted to share our process with you - just call us at 413-298-3137.

~ Rev. Brent Damrow

Pastor/Parish Relations Committees Workshop

[Aug 28, 5:30 – 7:00pm ET, PPRC to Pastoral Support Committees with Rev. Tara Barber](#)

Not your Predecessors PPRC! Pastor/Parish Relations Committees have provided essential leadership in the life of a congregation. And the name has led to some confusion about the focus of their role. Come to this workshop (*article title is a weblink*) as we explore what it means to become a Pastoral Support Committee - what it is and what it is not. We'll be talking through and naming the priorities and commitments of a well-functioning PSC. Rev. Tara Barber will share best practices from around the church and be prepared to answer your questions. Open to pastors, lay leaders, and judicatory staff. Note: this is a program hosted by the Wisconsin Conference UCC. For info, go to www.wcucc.org/event

Relational Covenant

As followers of Jesus Christ and as part of The First Congregational Church, UCC, Stockbridge we seek to build a beloved community within the church by treating one another with compassion, mercy, and love. We recognize that we will sometimes fall short, hurt one another, and find ourselves in disagreement or conflict. We commit to carrying out the mission of our church that is rooted in the love of God and to creating a safe and welcoming environment for all. We aspire to respect one another in the following ways:

Remember

We will remember the marks of faithful living - approaching one another in genuine love, outdoing one another in showing honor, and practicing humility. (*Romans 12*)

We will remember when we speak to only say what is useful and necessary for building up so that our words come as grace to others. (*Ephesians 4:28*)

Experience

We will speak from our own experience even as we make room for the experiences of others. (*1 Corinthians 3:16*)

Support

When someone else has accepted responsibility for completing a task, we will support the process and them in their work. When we discern the movement of the Holy Spirit and make a decision, we will support that outcome. (*1 Corinthians 1:10*)

Pray

We will proceed with the premise that we are all doing the best we can for our community, we will exercise patience in the midst of conflict, and we will bathe all things in prayer. (*1 Thessalonians 5:17*)

Empathize

When we encounter disagreement or difference, we will seek out one another and speak face-to-face with openness and empathy. (*Ephesians 4:15*)

Communicate

We will invite and accept the invitation of another to come to a table of reconciliation and will engage an intermediary if necessary in order to communicate in ways that offer healing and forgiveness. (*Matthew 18:16*)

Truth telling

We will strive to be instruments of peace, listening with open, curious, and non-judgmental minds, tempering our anger in love, seeking truth where there is misunderstanding, and trying as hard to understand as to be understood. (*The Prayer of St. Francis*)

The church is committed to supporting you in this process.
Should you need or want assistance, please contact Will in the Church Office.



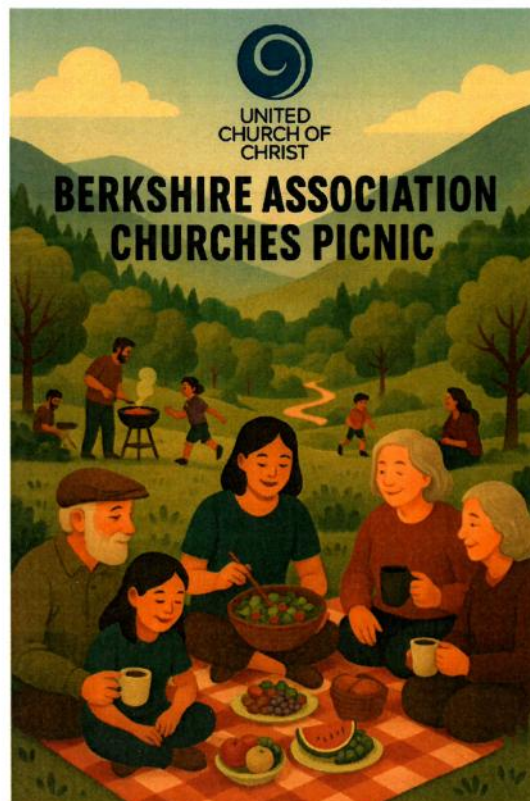


All Berkshire Association Churches Family Picnic

This is a chance for us to gather to have fun, fellowship, and food!

When: Saturday, August 9, 1pm to 4pm

Place: Pittsfield State Forest Lodge



We'll provide grilled burgers and hot dogs, both meat and vegetarian

Bring a potluck dish and your own utensils and plates.