

FIRST CONGREGATIONAL
CHURCH UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
Stockbridge, Massachusetts

PO Box 825 Stockbridge MA 01262



August 2025

BERKSHIRE ASSOCIATION
ALL-CHURCH SUMMER PICNIC

See page 10



Pastor: The Rev. Brent Damrow - bdamrow@stockbridgeucc.org

Minister of Music: Sean Lewis – music@stockbridgeucc.org

Administrator/Sexton: Will Garrison – office@stockbridgeucc.org

Financial Secretary: Marion Pomeroy - finance@stockbridgeucc.org

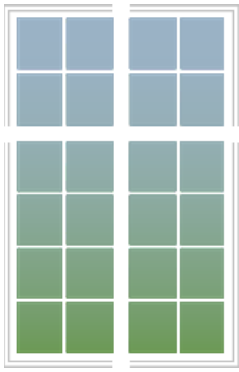
(413) 298-3137 | www.stockbridgeucc.org

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

August 2025

The First Congregational Church, UCC, Stockbridge

<i>Sunday</i>	<i>Monday</i>	<i>Tuesday</i>	<i>Wednesday</i>	<i>Thursday</i>	<i>Friday</i>	<i>Saturday</i>
<i>Yoga Classes Wednesdays, at 9:00am</i>	<i>2nd Nature Arts M-F, 9:00am - 3:15 Through 8/8</i>				1 Service League 10:30am	2 <i>Al-Anon 5:00pm</i>
3 Worship 10:00am	4	5 Brent's Sabbath Day <i>Al-Anon 7:00pm AA 8:00pm</i>	6 Morning Prayer 8 am Church Council 7:00pm	7	8 Service League 10:30am	9 <i>Al-Anon 5:00pm</i>
10 Worship 10:00am	11	12 Brent's Sabbath Day <i>Al-Anon 7:00pm AA 8:00pm</i>	13 Morning Prayer 8 am Community Supper 5:30pm	14	15 Service League 10:30am Newsletter deadline	16 <i>Al-Anon 5:00pm</i>
17 Worship 10:00am	18	19 Brent's Sabbath Day <i>Al-Anon 7:00pm AA 8:00pm</i>	20 Morning Prayer 8 am Bible Study Zoom 1:00 Meetings of the Boards 5:00pm – 8:00pm	21	22 Service League 10:30am	23 Anne McKinstry memorial service 11:00am <i>Al-Anon 5:00pm</i>
24 Worship 10:00am	25	26 Brent's Sabbath Day <i>Al-Anon 7:00pm AA 8:00pm</i>	27 Morning Prayer 8 am Bible Study Zoom 1:00	28	29 Service League 10:30am	30 <i>Al-Anon 5:00pm</i>
31 Worship 10:00am						



FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH

UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

Stockbridge, Massachusetts

August 2025 Newsletter

Dear Church Family,

Grace and peace be unto you!

Connections matter. One of our sacred books – The Bible reminds us that Jesus prayed “the glory that you (God) have given me I have given them, so that they may be one, as we are one” (John 17:22). Another of our sacred books – our hymnal puts these words on our lips “Blessed be the tie that binds our hearts in Christian love; the sharing of a common life is like to that above.” (NCH 393). Through both, we are reminded not only that togetherness matters, but that the connection we seek is enabled by God’s grace and points us to the depth of connection we see even in the Trinity itself.

This summer my heart has seen the beauty of that kind of connection in our shared life. Here are just three examples:

- ♦ Our July Community Supper (photo below) welcomed thirty people -ages 10 to 90 - to share food and fellowship.
- ♦ During worship on July 13th, some ten minutes of prayers – joys, concerns, celebrations, and worries were lifted by the

congregation – sharing the intimate and meaningful parts of our lives. To see this on YouTube, click [here](#). Also available on the church website, under Church Life / Fellowship & Community.

- ♦ There was a palpable joy out on the lawn on July 20th. From the Deacons who set up, to the festive fellowship hour afterwards we came together to share beauty, truth, and life.

As we gear up for the fall and a new year kicking off with Rally Sunday, there is another project in the works designed to stoke connections – a new printed photo directory.

Being able to contact each other, being able to put faces with names, being able to make calls or drop by are critical to fostering deeper relationship and connection. With many new members, with the complications of our database switch, and coming out of the pandemic we need a new directory. We will need your help! Please see page 9 for more information on what we need from you.

While the directory may not have the same heft or wisdom the Bible offers. While the directory might not have the same beauty and memory our hymnals do. The directory is still sacred – it is a tool that helps us live into relationship by being able to call on one another in times of celebration and need. We are a diverse and growing church – the directory helps us with the sacred task of connection – it matters!

In gratitude and hope,

Brent



Music Notes

As I write this, it has been nearly two months since I officially began my time with everyone here in Stockbridge. It has been a joy-filled start for me, and everyone has been so supportive and welcoming. I appreciate the conversations both before and after worship on Sunday mornings, and it's been such a pleasure getting to meet more of you each week.

And as this beautiful summer continues to spread sunshine and joy on a daily basis, I am in the process of starting to plan for what is ahead in September and beyond. I'm eager to work on a variety of music with so many of you, and to help me plan and prepare for those opportunities, I need to know more about those involved in the musical life of this church. An opportunity for that is planned for Wednesday, August 20th, from 6:30-8pm. I want to invite all singers (returning and new/prospective) to gather for a time of food, fellowship, and some music that evening. Singers ages 15+ are encouraged to attend! We will use that time to fellowship, discuss upcoming plans, and sing through a couple of music selections. More information to follow! And for those non-singers who wish to be involved in musical opportunities, you are welcome to come as well! Please email me (music@stockbridgeucc.org) with any questions or to RSVP regarding your attendance for August 20th. Hope to see many of you there!

~ Sean Lewis, Minister of Music



HAPPY AUGUST BIRTHDAYS

August 2	Jacob Geldert Damrow
August 6	Susan Moyle Lynch
August 8	Muriel Wermuth
August 9	Ashley Collins
August 11	Hannah Fries
August 13	Ronnie Cunningham Janet Canning
August 14	Kinney Frelinghuysen Kim Ruffing
August 17	Helen McCormick Mary Lou Ryce
August 18	Nora Randolph Linda Hoddy
August 21	Emily Brown Joan Nimmo Linda Russell Miles Wheat
August 24	Joe Roy
August 25	Natalie Doerr
August 26	Jon Geldert
August 27	David Cooper
August 29	Joshua Hall
August 31	Steven Bankert



Drivers

needed for members and friends who live at Kimball Farms (in Lenox) to attend Sunday worship. If you have some availability to help out occasionally,

Ted Randolph would love to hear from you. tedfr4@gmail.com (London bus not provided.)

Play Forever

Liza Catino plays goalie for an over-65 women's soccer team who travel across the US to participate in soccer tournaments.

In June she and her teammates went to The Good Games in Guelph, Ontario and came in first place with four wins against teams from California and Massachusetts.

"It's so much fun to be a part of a team," said Liza, showing off her gold



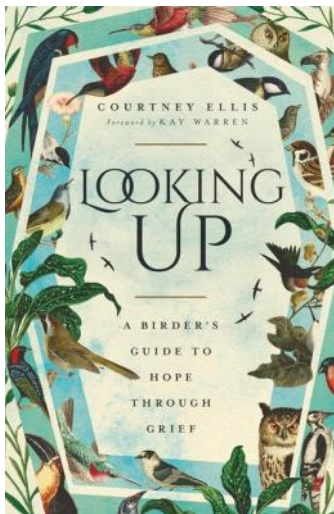
because, as Liza joked, "We've got the ball rolling now!"

medal. "We call ourselves Play Forever, because that's just what we want to do."

The next tournament will be in October at The Huntsman World Senior Games in St. George, Utah.

They should do well

A Book Review: "Looking Up: A Birder's Guide to Hope Through Grief," by Courtney Ellis (InterVarsity Press, 2024)



I met Courtney Ellis through social media several years ago, and we had several good conversations about church and theology. She's a writer and a Presbyterian pastor in a big church in Orange County California. She shares

a staff position with her husband, who is a theologian. Courtney is about the same age as my pastor daughter, Rebecca, and has three little kids. About a year ago she asked me if she could have her publisher send me a review copy of her new book and I said yes, and then I reviewed it on my blog. You can see the full review [here](#).

I really loved this book. I'm not a birder, but I love birds. And this little book is about much more than birds. It's about dealing with the grief of her beloved grandfather. It's about parenting three littles during a pandemic. It's about navigating the troubled waters of a complicated

family around the dying of a loved one. It's about faith, hope, and love.

Then, last October a very cool thing happened. I got a message from Courtney that she was in the Berkshires. She was doing a DIY continuing education with a writer friend from Northampton. They were staying at an Airbnb in Pittsfield, and Courtney said to her friend, "Wait! Are we in Pittsfield? Richard L. Floyd (my nom de plume) lives here." They invited me to lunch in Lenox the next day, and I went and met Courtney in person. She took a selfie.

Then, earlier this year she announced that she was making an audiobook of "Looking Up" so I downloaded it and I just finished it a second time. Courtney reads it herself and I love it even more as an audiobook. Each chapter is a different species of bird and she begins with the birdcall from the Cornell Ornithology Department.

Whether you're a birder or not I think you might love this book as much as I do. I recommend listening to it. ~ Rick Floyd



From the Service League

I'm going to admit it, right up front. We've been enjoying the dog days of summer and relaxing a bit. Some of us have been doing a bit of traveling; Anne Hutchinson to New Hampshire with nieces, nephews, and great-nieces and nephews, and I just got back from a family wedding in California and a lovely visit with my son. All good!



Margaret and Ted Hornick

Even though we're on summer-speed, we're still getting some work done and we're still enjoying fellowship and lunch together on Fridays. In fact, we had a special lunch at Anne Hutchinson's soon-to-be-former home in Great Barrington, just as she and Gene are decamping to Kimball Farms. The highlight was seeing Helen McCormick (who else!?) climb up to the backyard treehouse (pictured below). But the amazing bit of trivia to go with this picture is that the treehouse was built (by Ted Randolph, who else) of wood salvaged from Max Stackhouse's



Anne Hutchinson (on ladder), Helen McCormick (peeking out window).

bookcases at Andover Newton Seminary! History is everywhere.

~ Margaret Hornick



Online Bible Study - in person

The Bible study group, led by The Reverend Dr. Rick Floyd each Wednesday afternoon on Zoom, met in person for a potluck lunch on July 16. Marilyn Strauch, Vicky Cooper, Cathy Clark, Marsha Burniske, Rick Floyd, and Ray Bergmann were happy to sit around one big table together.

All are welcome to join the weekly meetings. (note: Rick will be away the first couple weeks in August.)

To join, go to the homepage of the church's website and scroll down to Upcoming Events.

From The Trustees: Most of you are aware by now of the solar project which is underway, and we've just been informed by Patty Strauch, who has been involved in the research, planning, and contracting processes, that installation will begin on August 11. This means that by the time we have to begin heating our buildings this winter, we'll actually be able to use our own banked electricity. But there's more good news to share, which Tim Bosworth describes:

Our church has engaged Northeast Solar to design and install a system to provide us with solar-generated electricity that will significantly reduce our energy costs and pay for itself in just a few years. Northeast Solar is offering a referral bonus to us of up to \$750 for anyone who signs up with them for a new solar installation. All you (or your neighbors/family/friends) have to do to help us take advantage of this opportunity is contact Andrew Thompson at Northeast Solar and tell him you were referred to him by The First Congregational Church of Stockbridge. He'll take it from there. You can get solar, save money, and help the church (and the environment) with one easy phone call!

Andrew Thompson, Northeast Solar
136 Elm Street, Hatfield, MA 01038
northeast-solar.com, office: 413-247-6045

In addition to that information from Tim, I'll add that if you are considering solar, this is also a great opportunity to take advantage of the extensive comparison shopping and vetting that has already been done by Patty, Bronly Boyd, Terry Wise, and Cathy Clark. (If you're at all like me, that is the most daunting part, and they've already done it for you.)

In preparation for the installation, some repairs to the chimney and surrounding roofing in the back of the JE Room will be necessary. This work will begin as soon as weather permits and our contractor can schedule it. So if you see someone up on the roof, you'll know what that's about.

The other very exciting news is that our new gas stove will be up and running by August 28. The old stove will be removed on the 25th, then the necessary plumbing and electrical supply lines will be brought in. The completion of this project will be a great relief to all who use the kitchen, and especially to Will, who for the past year has had to trek to the basement to turn on the gas every time we've needed to use the current ovens. This brings us to our next major project, which is the planned upgrade of the kitchen and the JE Room. We'll be sharing more details soon; stay tuned!

~ Margaret Hornick, for the Trustees

Active Prayer of Thanksgiving People's Pantry

On Sunday, August 3, we will continue the practice of an Active Prayer of Thanksgiving as an act of gratitude after receiving communion. We encourage you to bring non-perishable food items and toiletries and/or money for food (cash or check), for the People's Pantry in Great Barrington.

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: People's Pantry. To contribute via Venmo, FCC Stockbridge, note People's Pantry on the 'What's this for?' line. Many thanks for your loving generosity!





The Bell Choir rehearsing before taking Worcester by storm. The choir participated in the American Handbell Association's Festival/Conference, held June 26-29 at Worcester State University.

A Note to Families about Summer Worship

Even though Sunday School taking a break for the summer, we continue to create ways for our kids to participate in worship. We are crafting special parts of worship to engage them in the story and offering meaningful activities for them during worship time. Each week we will send out information to families that alert them to our plans for the upcoming Sunday.



Calling all college students! If you are a church member, or your parent is a member or an employee of the church, and

you're matriculated as a student in an accredited college, you are eligible to receive a grant through the church's Scholarship Committee.

In order to process applications in time for the beginning of the fall semester, please note that the deadline has been moved forward to August 8. (The amount of the grant varies from year to year depending on the number of applicants and the performance of the underlying investments.)

Please request a grant by contacting Will Garrison in the church office or Margaret Hornick, at mhhornick@gmail.com.

Margaret Hornick, Scholarship Committee

Community Connections



The Board of Mission and Action would like to learn 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. Starting on Sunday, July 27, during Coffee Hour, you will have the opportunity to let us know of your involvement. Thank you for all that you do to bring the love that we share here in our congregation to those in need in our community.

Looking to find someone's email address or phone number?

Let's put together a new church directory!

On Rally Sunday (September 7) we are excited to put new directories into the hands of our congregation. The Connections Committee has been working with the staff to design a new format that will be both efficient and easy to use. Before that can happen, **we need your help** updating contact information and photographs.

Here is how you can help:

Beginning on August 3 we will have a copy of the directory for your review after worship, during fellowship time.

Please:

- Come to the table hosted by the Connections Committee and check your information.
 - ◊ Make sure that phone numbers and emails are correct.
 - ◊ Make sure we have both a mailing and a physical address (looking at you, Stockbridge residents!)
- Check to see if we have an up-to-date photo. We would like to have individual photos and a family photo (if applicable).
 - ◊ Cindy Brown will be available to take photos after worship on August 10.
 - ◊ Will Garrison will be available to take photos during regular office hours at the church.
 - ◊ You can send in digital photos to Will (office@stockbridgeucc.org). If you are doing this, please make sure the photos are in a landscape orientation.
- If you can't make it on a Sunday, you can also call Will in the Office (413-298-3137 ext. 1) and he can share the information we have and make any updates that are needed.

Directories are an important resource for building relationships here at the church. Thank you for helping to bringing that directory to life! Please contact the Church Office, Brent or any member of the Connections Committee (David Anderegg, Cindy Brown, and Charlotte Rodgers) with any questions.





The Bergmann and Strauch Families meet at last!

From Patty Strauch: My mom (Marilyn), sister (Cindy), and myself with Sengdao and Ray Bergmann. At the Red Lion Inn, celebrating five years of knowing each other on Zoom, but finally being together in person!



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
- ◆ **Rain or shine**



Relational Covenant

(Reprinted from the current newsletter of the Berkshire Association.)

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

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.*

Berkshire Lyric presents

UBI CARITAS



Down to the River to Pray

Sunday August 3

3:00 Saint Mark's R.C. Church, Pittsfield
400 West Street, Pittsfield

5:00 Saint Joseph's R.C. Church, Stockbridge
11 Elm Street, Stockbridge

Berkshire Lyric's select young chamber chorus
in their annual summer concerts of sacred and secular music for a cappella chorus,
conducted by Lyric's artistic director, Jack Brown

**A free will offering to benefit local food pantries
will be taken by each church.**

For more info, visit www.BerkshireLyric.org or call 413 298 5365.

Overtures

AND MORE

Stockbridge
SINFONIA
BERKSHIRES' COMMUNITY ORCHESTRA
Tracy Wilson, Musical Director

August 2
LENOX

August 9
PITTSFIELD

August 10
GREAT BARRINGTON

2025 SUMMER CONCERTS — free & open to the public