

FIRST CONGREGATIONAL
CHURCH UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
Stockbridge, Massachusetts

PO Box 825 Stockbridge MA 01262



September 2025

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

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

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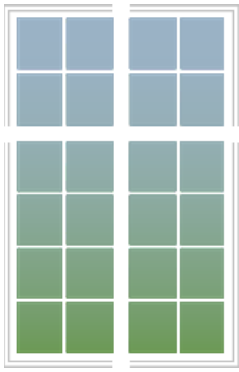
(413) 298-3137 | www.stockbridgeucc.org

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

September 2025

The First Congregational Church, UCC, Stockbridge

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<i>Yoga Classes Wednesdays, at 9:00am</i>	1 Labor Day – Office closed	2 Brent's Sabbath Day <i>Al-Anon 7:00pm AA 8:00pm</i>	3 Morning Prayer 8 am Church Council 5:00pm Choir 6:30pm	4	5 Service League 10:30am	6 <i>Al-Anon 5:00pm</i>
7 Worship 10:00am Rally Sunday	8	9 Brent's Sabbath Day <i>Al-Anon 7:00pm AA 8:00pm</i>	10 Morning Prayer 8 am Community Supper 5:30pm Choir 6:30pm	11 Exploring the Parables of Jesus 6-7pm	12 Service League 10:30am <i>Stockbridge Library fundraiser concert 7:00pm</i>	13 <i>Al-Anon 5:00pm</i>
14 Worship 10:00am	15 <i>2nd Nature Arts begins, M-W, 3:30-5:15pm</i>	16 Brent's Sabbath Day <i>Al-Anon 7:00pm AA 8:00pm</i>	17 Morning Prayer 8 am Bible Study Zoom 1:00 Meetings of the Boards 5:00pm – 6:30pm Choir 6:30pm	18 Great Characters of the Bible: 12-1:15pm online 6-7:15pm in person	19 Service League 10:30am Newsletter deadline	20 <i>Al-Anon 5:00pm</i>
21 Worship 10:00am Dedication of solar panels & celebration of Rev. Dr. Richard Floyd's 50 th anniversary	22	23 Brent's Sabbath Day <i>Al-Anon 7:00pm AA 8:00pm</i>	24 Morning Prayer 8 am Bible Study Zoom 1:00 Choir 6:30pm	25 Exploring the Parables of Jesus 6-7pm	26 Service League 10:30am	27 <i>Wedding 4:00pm Al-Anon 5:00pm</i>
28 Worship 10:00am Movie with discussion 11:30am at BWHS: <i>Hear Me, Gun Violence in Berkshire County</i>	29	30 Brent's Sabbath Day <i>Al-Anon 7:00pm AA 8:00pm</i>				<i>2nd Nature Arts M-W, 3:30 – 5:15 Starting 9/15</i>



FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH

UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

Stockbridge, Massachusetts

September 2025 Newsletter

Dear Church Family,

Grace and peace be unto you.

In these moments as summer ends and we prepare to return to the rhythms and routines of the fall I am acutely aware of how liminal these moments are. Liminality is defined by the Oxford dictionary both as “occupying a position at, or on both sides of, a boundary or threshold” as well as the process of transitioning through that threshold. What I love about liminality is that it is a “becoming.” I love that the becoming is not just some random occurrence but a beautiful gift of living in the moment that allows for honoring the past even as we let go of it to claim a new future.

I am grateful for the many volunteers who have engaged in that process this summer. From staffing changes to program realignment, to solar panels, and even new directories, all of it has been deeply liminal and now in just a matter of days we will launch into a new program year. I am excited about the new opportunities to engage our faith, our world and each other in truth, beauty, and calling. I am filled with optimism about the road that lies before us. I hope that you are prepared to meet our spirit of liminality with your own.

As you return this fall there will be new invitations for you to engage in seemingly familiar things. You will be encouraged to engage in everything from volunteering on Sunday mornings, to being part of new studies, to adding your voice to our choir, to sharing your commitments in our community and your perspectives on worship. To be church we really do need all who can to step up and in. And yet, how we do so matters too.

Throughout the Bible, and especially in Isaiah, there is the reminder that God is making all things new. Our job is to meet God where God is at work and to partner in that recreation. It is to adopt a mindset of liminality – honoring our story, living in this moment and yet seeing this moment as being both on two sides of a threshold and the gift to move through that threshold into something new.

On Rally Sunday there will be the joy of familiarity. The choir will be there (appropriately as it too is moving into a new place), the kids will head off to Sunday School (yes in new ways), we will gather out on the lawn for food and watermelon seed spitting (with the chance to find new friends and new joy). Can we meet that day in liminality? Can we open ourselves to the joy of that moment, the memories it brings, and the chance to step into the future? I know we can and I pray we will.

The truth is every moment of our lives is liminal. Each breath is that gift that stays in tension between what has already happened and what is about to be. Our faith is a story of being open to the truth that God is still speaking, still inviting us to be apart of doing something new, offering us the chance to grow, deepen, and transform. I hope you have had a full summer and hope that you are ready to step forward into a dynamic, vibrant, beautiful new fall.

In gratitude and hope,

Brent

Music Notes

I want to thank everyone for all that I've experienced so far over these past couple of months here in Stockbridge. My time here has started with so many positives, and I truly am looking forward to the music we will share and create together in the weeks and months ahead. From singers to ringers, and youth musicians to guest musicians, there will be a wide variety of music added to the life of the church. Whether you will be actively engaged in music on a regular basis, or you will be able to participate here and there, thank you in advance for all you do!

~ Sean Lewis, Minister of Music

Active Prayer of Thanksgiving Pop-Up Pantry

On Sunday, September 7, 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 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 for your loving generosity!

HAPPY SEPTEMBER BIRTHDAYS

September 1 Nick Pohl
Mary Hart
September 2 Margot Wise
September 5 Cindy Brown
Sara Zanin
September 7 Les Freeman III
David Schneider
September 10 John Frelinghuysen
September 11 Mark Bachman
September 15 Bob Doerr
September 20 Brian Hyatt
September 21 Adam Brown
September 22 Adrianna Duhon Rix
September 23 Patty Fadding
September 24 Barbara Kershner
September 25 Shirley Blanchard
September 27 Linda Frelinghuysen
John McKinstry
Mishel Kulibaba-Epstein
September 28 Tracy Schneyer

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.)



Fall Adult Christian Education Studies

The Board of Christian Education invites you to participate this Fall. We will be offering two different studies - the first focusing on "The Parables of Jesus" with the second exploring "Great Characters of the Bible." These studies will take place on Thursday evenings here at the church in the classroom beginning at 6:00pm. (Please note - there will also be an on-line version of the "Great Characters" Study offered Thursdays at Noon). For more information on each see below.

Exploring the Parables of Jesus

Every other Thursday 6:00 - 7:00pm (in person)

September 11 & 25, October 9, & 23, November 6 & 20

Led by Rick Floyd and Jeremy Ridenour

We'll study and discuss some of our old favorites as well as some of the thorny and head-scratching parables. Each session will stand alone and there is no sign up. It should be fun; hope you will come!



The Great Characters of the Bible

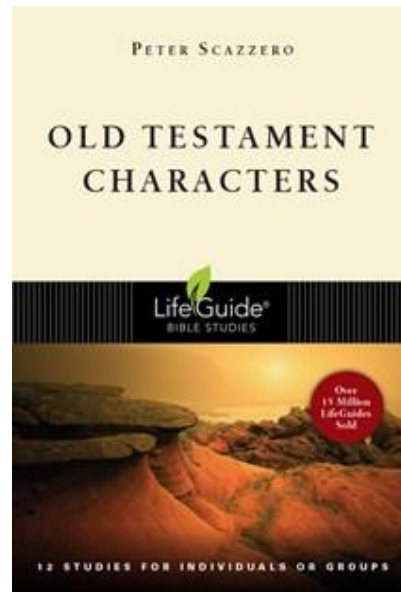
Every Other Thursday 6:00 - 7:15pm

September 18, October 2, 16, and 30, November 13

(On-line Section will be separate and available on the same Thursdays from Noon - 1:15)

Led by Brent Damrow

Following a dynamic new curriculum, we will get to know some of the great characters of the Bible starting in the including some familiar ones like Jonah, Elijah, Moses and David and some less familiar ones like Hannah, Caleb and Joshua, Esther, and Saul. There will be some reading to do and questions to ponder for each session but the load is not heavy. Sign-ups are encouraged to make sure that you have the study guide, the reading materials and discussion questions. If you plan to "drop-in" for one session, call Pastor Brent in advance so that he can get you the materials and so that you will be prepared. Our goal will be to see our own journeys through theirs' and to learn more about God, ourselves and each other. It will feature lively discussions, a dash of context, and a hefty dose of imagination.



From the Service League

We're still on summer speed, but have continued to meet, more for fellowship than production, but that counts! Anne Hutchinson has just returned from a family wedding in Chicago (it is that time of year), your reporter from a quick trip to Canada, and Ann Brink from the Brink family reunion in upstate New York.

We were happy to be asked by Janet and John McKinstry to provide a reception for the memorial service for Anne McKinstry, Janet's mother and John's wife of many years, who died recently. Ann was beloved and is missed. One way we will remember her, I hope, is through the many poems she wrote and set to familiar hymns tunes.

I'll be away for the month of September. As soon as I return, I'll start reminding everyone of the HOLLY FAIR, December 6. Hard to believe, but it will be here before we know it!

~ Margaret Hornick



Church Picnic

Mother Nature did not cooperate for two Sundays in a row, and the church picnic on Mohawk Lake was cancelled this year. This didn't prevent Micah and Ava Ridenour from enjoying their own picnic in the JE Room on July 27.



New Recycling Dumpster!

We will be sharing recycling and trash pick-ups with the Berkshire Waldorf High School. Due to the increased use, Casella replaced the two recycling totes with a spiffy new dark-blue dumpster. Casella uses a single-stream process, meaning that paper, cans, and bottles can be mixed.

A reminder:

These items are not recyclable - please put in the trash:

Paper napkins, paper coffee cups, plastic bags, or black plastic (e.g. food trays).

For more information, go to www.springfieldmrf.org/what-do-i-do-with and www.casella.com/services/recycling/recycle-better

Both websites are very helpful and interesting.

Volunteering

In Greek, the word for church is ecclesia which literally means “the gathering.”

Gathering is no small matter – it is not just assembling – it is coming together on purpose for a purpose. On Sunday mornings we gather for many reasons. Some of those reasons have to do with what we each get from a Sunday morning. Other reasons though, are for what others need or for what God is calling us to do.

The truth is that on any Sunday morning we need many volunteers to allow “the gathering” to happen. We rely on volunteers to provide hospitality, both remembering the joy it brings us and also in remembrance that there are people who come on Sunday morning who desperately need to be welcomed and to feel part of a family. We rely on volunteers to help nurture and teach our children, both because we know how precious our children are and because we know that Sunday morning is maybe one of the few times parents of those children can be in a place of peace, growth, and expansion. We need volunteers to help with worship so that they might add their voice, but also so that we might hear each other's stories and be drawn closer together.

This summer, the boards of Christian education, growth and fellowship, and deacons have been working hard to revitalize our volunteer systems. They have taken the time to clarify the rules of each volunteer position so that you as a congregation might understand what we need and what we are asking for so that you can discern where you might jump in. We have worked hard on the functional systems that support volunteering. We have developed simpler ways for the whole congregation to be able to become volunteers on Sunday morning. Now all we need is for you to respond.

Shortly you will receive a mailing with descriptions of all of these roles as well as the process for how to sign up. Starting on Rally Sunday each week you will hear from a



different person in our congregation who has volunteered. They will share both why they volunteered and what they discovered in doing so. Finally, each Sunday we will have volunteers in the Jonathan Edwards room ready to answer any questions you might have and able to help sign you up for a coming date.

Each Sunday we need approximately 7 to 10 volunteers to make our gathering a reality. Those roles include outdoor greeters, ushers, liturgists, a variety of roles within Sunday School, and fellowship hour hosts too.

As a church, we gather because we know what it does for us, and we remember the gifts that others may need. We hope that you will take our invitation to heart and respond with open hearts. If you wish to speak with

anyone about the possibility of volunteering, you can always start with the chairs, Elisabeth Bellows (CE), Ted Randolph (Growth and Fellowship) or Elizabeth Young (Deacons) or by calling the church office and speaking with either Will or Brent. Thank you!





From the Scholarship

Committee: We're pleased to be able to distribute grants of \$1000 each to the following college students this year: Lucy Garrison, who is entering her junior year at Mount Holyoke; Erving Henderson, who is transferring to UMASS-Amherst as a sophomore, Iaslyn

Lewis (Sean's daughter), who is studying stage management at Boston University, and Wynne Lewis (Sean's youngest) who's entering Naugatuck Valley Community College in Connecticut.

Congratulations to all of them!

~ Margaret Hornick, for the
Scholarship Committee

To the congregation, from the Deacons

Wouldn't it be wonderful if we, when we're feeling blue, to have a special button to push – bling – and someone is right there at that moment? If we just wanted company, sit and chat, go for a drive, whatever we needed at the moment so we didn't feel all alone we could just push that button.

Our wishes may be granted! One of the Deacons, Pastor Brent, or anyone in our church community can answer that call.

Remember, we are not alone. Don't be afraid to get in touch with someone. It would be good for them and good for you, too.

My name is Helen McCormick, and I am just one of the people who would love to help someone. There are many of us ready to step in. At some time in our lives, we all need help. We'll put a little ray of hope and sunshine into your day.

Don't be afraid. Push that button.

Contact a Deacon, Pastor Brent, or send an email to the church office.



Community Connections

The Board of Mission and Action is continuing to ask 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. Look for sign-up notes at coffee hour. 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.

Treasurer's Budget Update

Here is the latest budget update, showing our numbers through June 30, 2025, and presented as a one-page summary. If you would like to see a full 3-page copy of the budget, please reach out to me, or to Will in the office.

Things are looking good! Our income from pledges, loose offerings, and facility use continues to be strong and in line with our budget projections. Although those numbers may look slightly low right now, there is income that has happened in July and August that aren't noted in these June numbers.

Combined with the good work of all of our Boards, we are both supporting our missions, programs, and administrative needs and staying at or below budget projections on expenses.

While it may be too early to give an exact final budget number for the year, I feel good about where we are and the projections we are starting to look at. I will continue to share financial updates, and I am also happy to provide more details, and to answer any questions you may have about our budget.

Patty Strauch, Treasurer

The First Congregational Church, UCC, Stockbridge - Performance vs. Budget Income Expense Report as of June 30, 2025

	Actual Income & Expense As of 06/30/2025	Target Numbers (6 months of total budget)	2025 Budget Approved at Feb 2 2025 Budget Mtg
Income			
32000 · Income			
32100 · Pledges			
32101 · Pledge Commitments	118,469.71	127,600.00	255,200.00
32102 · Pledge Growth & Additional	0.00	2,500.00	5,000.00
32200 · Loose Offering	8,340.35	8,000.00	16,000.00
32300 · Facility Use	4,170.25	6,300.00	12,600.00
32500 · Gifts	4,300.00	2,350.00	4,700.00
Prepaid Budget Gifts (2)	4,340.02	4,340.00	8,680.00
32600 · Golf Club Parking	0.00	800.00	1,600.00
41100 · Endowment Fund Transfer	33,551.52	34,928.03	69,856.05
41350 · Music Minister Fund Transfer	2,500.04	2,500.00	5,000.00
CE Restricted Transfer (carryover from 20	0.00	500.00	1,000.00
45020 · Interest			
Total Income	175,675.32	189,818.03	379,636.05
Expense			
Total 50000 · Salaries & Benefits	107,213.98	115,873.50	231,747.00
Total 61000 · Board of Christian Education	4,036.35	4,582.50	9,165.00
Total 62000 · Growth & Fellowship	2,148.95	2,060.50	4,121.00
Total 63000 · Board of Deacons	4,784.59	4,511.50	9,023.00
Total 64000 · Board of Music	4,214.08	5,277.50	10,555.00
Total 65000 · Mission & Action	6,225.47	9,229.50	18,459.00
Total 66000 · Administrative / Council	6,674.83	7,600.50	15,201.00
Total 67000 · Trustees & Maintenance	46,646.71	43,057.50	86,115.00
69000 · Capital Reserve	1,500.00	1,500.00	3,000.00
Total Expense	183,444.96	193,693.00	387,386.00
	-7,769.64	-3,874.98	-7,749.95



From The Trustees: The crews from Northeast Solar have been hard at work, installing the panels on the building and running conduit through attics and crawl spaces. They will be done by the end of August.

As noted by Tim Bosworth in the August newsletter:

Northeast Solar's system will provide us with solar-generated electricity that will significantly reduce our energy costs and pay for itself in 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. Contact Andrew Thompson at Northeast Solar and tell him you were referred to him by The First Congregational Church of Stockbridge. 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



A few of the crew: Farlin, Dave, and Dano.



A joyous event: the baptism of Hannah Russell Cha on August 3.

Donate Your Gently Used Winter Coats and Winter Accessories!

Berkshire South Regional Community Center is collecting winter coats and cold-weather gear for local families in need.

Donations can be dropped off at the collection box in the JE Room

through October 8. All items will be distributed during Berkshire South's Winter Coat Drive distribution event on October 11, 2025, from 9am to 12pm. Help us keep our community warm this winter.



The First Annual Berkshire Association Picnic - August 9

(adapted from the Berkshire Association Newsletter)

It was a beautiful sunny Saturday afternoon in August and so exciting to see Berkshire UCCers arrive carload by carload, everyone emerging tentatively from their vehicles not quite knowing what to expect or if they were at the right picnic! As it turned out, there we forty-five of us from south to central to north county who managed to find our way to the Pittsfield State Forest picnic site and immediately engage in warm greetings and animated conversations with old friends and

new ones. It was like we had been away a very long time, and at the same time, never been away at all, held fast in a friendship that crisscrossed the county and marked by our love for the Church and our Berkshire UCC community. Of course, the grace of a gorgeous summer day in a big woods also helped.

Our thanks to David Hurst, Quentin and Amy Chin, Carrie Waara, Joel Huntington, Janet McKinstry for coordinating, setting up, and grilling. But special thanks to all who ventured forth with your potluck offerings in hand and risked lunch in "the wild."

(If you look closely, you'll see our own John McKinstry on the far left!)

The Church to Welcome New Members

During worship on October 12, we will joyfully welcome new members into the Church Family. This action takes place through the mutual claiming of our congregational covenant and results in a new congregation.

If you wish to join the church and have not yet met with Pastor Brent, please give him a call to set up an appointment. All who are baptized and eleven years or older are welcome to consider membership.

Key Upcoming Dates

There are important things that unfold in September. Many are described in greater detail here in the newsletter. If the event happens more than once we list only the first occurrence.

September 2 – Choir Rehearsal – 6:30 p.m. – Warm Ups in Sanctuary

September 7 – Rally Sunday – 10:00 Worship followed by Fellowship and Activities

September 10 – Community Supper – 5:30 p.m. – J.E. Room – theme “Favorite School Lunch”

September 11 – Parables Study – 6:00 p.m. – Classrooms (see page 5)

September 18 – Great Characters of the Bible Study 6:00 p.m. – Classrooms (see page 5)

September 21 – Special Worship (Blessing of the Solar Panels & Honoring the 50th Ordination Anniversary of Rev. Dr. Rick Floyd)

Berkshire Waldorf High School to Move in Next Door

In September, students will start next door at 6 Main Street. We are so grateful that the old Town Hall has found a new life and look forward to the excitement and energy that come with it. We have been working in close partnership with the school regarding logistics and will shortly start dialogue about greater partnership and programming opportunities. We have also started discussing parking, traffic, and safety.

Please help us to welcome them and feel free to share any observations or ideas with us too. Feedback or concerns can be shared with Will, Terry Wise (Moderator), Don Rodgers (Trustees) or Brent.



Choir Returns

Fun activities!!

Rally Sunday

September 7!!

Yummy Food



SUNDAY SCHOOL LAUNCH