

FIRST CONGREGATIONAL
CHURCH UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
Stockbridge, Massachusetts

PO Box 825 Stockbridge MA 01262



October 2025

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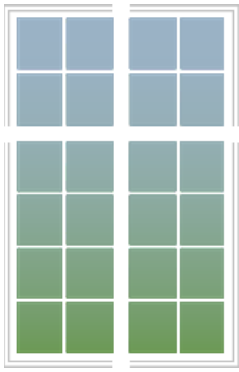
(413) 298-3137 | www.stockbridgeucc.org

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

October 2025

The First Congregational Church, UCC, Stockbridge

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Yoga Classes Wednesdays at 9:00am	2nd Nature Arts M-T-W, 3:30 – 5:15		1 Morning Prayer 8am Church Council 5:00pm Choir 6:30pm	2 Great Characters: 12-1:15pm online 6-7:15pm in person Bell Choir 4:30pm	3 Service League 10:30am	4 2 nd Nature Arts 11:00am Birch Festival concert 3:00pm Al-Anon 5:00pm
5 World Communion Sunday 10:00am Stockbridge Festival Chorus 1:00pm	6 2 nd Nature Arts, M-W, 3:30-5:15pm	7 Brent's Sabbath Day Al-Anon 7:00pm AA 8:00pm	8 Morning Prayer 8 am Community Supper 5:30pm Choir 6:30pm	9 Exploring the Parables of Jesus 6-7pm Bell Choir 4:30pm	10 Service League 10:30am	11 Al-Anon 5:00pm
12 Worship 10:00am New members welcomed; Neighbors in Need SFC 1:00pm	13 Indigenous Peoples Day – office closed 2 nd Nature Arts, M-W, 3:30-5:15pm	14 Brent's Sabbath Day Al-Anon 7:00pm AA 8:00pm	15 Morning Prayer 8 am Bible Study Zoom 1:00 Meetings of the Boards 5:00pm – 6:30pm Choir 6:30pm	16 Great Characters: 12-1:15pm online 6-7:15pm in person Bell Choir 4:30pm	17 Service League 10:30am	18 Al-Anon 5:00pm
19 Worship 10:00am Stewardship begins SFC 1:00pm	20 2 nd Nature Arts, M-W, 3:30-5:15pm Newsletter deadline	21 Brent's Sabbath Day Tuesday Club 1:30pm Al-Anon 7:00pm AA 8:00pm	22 Morning Prayer 8 am 2 nd Nature 12:30 Bible Study Zoom 1:00 Choir 6:30pm	23 Exploring the Parables of Jesus 6-7pm Bell Choir 4:30pm	24 Service League 10:30am	25 Stockbridge Festival Chorus 10:00am Jo Ann Levitt book signing 3:00pm Al-Anon 5:00pm
26 Worship 10:00am Stockbridge Festival Chorus 1:00pm	27 2 nd Nature Arts, M-W, 3:30-5:15pm	28 Brent's Sabbath Day Al-Anon 7:00pm AA 8:00pm	29 Morning Prayer 8 am Bible Study Zoom 1:00 Choir 6:30pm	30 Great Characters: 12-1:15pm online 6-7:15pm in person Bell Choir 4:30pm	31 Service League 10:30am	



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Stockbridge, Massachusetts

October 2025 Newsletter

Dear Church Family,

October is here. In New England, October is a great month of liminality. It would take willful stubbornness not to notice the change that comes throughout the month. The leaves literally change their colors before dropping to the ground and revealing a whole new landscape. The last vestiges of summer finally give way to the new routines of school, work, and church. The very air feels and smells different while not just the amount of light but its quality begins to change becoming weaker and warmer with golden hues and softer shadows.

In October, church life changes as we joyfully resume things like Sunday School, service, choir, study, and fellowship even as we think ahead through welcoming new members and stewardship.

What I love about liminality in general and its appearance in October in particular is its slowness. Change in October is gradual and lingering – it invites us not to a pivot but rather a reorientation, a turning. So how best to approach such a time?

A powerful suggestion emerged at our final leadership book group. Gathered around a table, eating pasta, stew, crusty bread, and salad, a group of nine explored Rabbi Sharon Brous' treasure, *the amen effect- Ancient Wisdom to Mend Our Broken Hearts and World*. Without question the Rabbi's advice is "show up!" Show up with your body and your heart. Show up with your challenges and bad news. Show up with your celebrations and good news. Show up bringing occasions so full of joy you can't help but dance and with those moments when all we can do is sit side by side in silence. Show up, she says so that you not only can be seen, but

that everyone in our church family knows they are seen.

On October 12th – new members will join the church including some of our youth. In the very litany of membership is the commitment not only to welcome and help them but to learn from them and allow our church to become new through them. If we are to allow that not just to be a moment of celebration but the possibility for transformation, we all need to show up. Show up to make promises with them. Show up in ways that make clear we pledge to bring our full authentic selves and only ask the same of them. Show up in ways that proclaim they are not joining our congregation, but we are becoming a whole new family, a brand-new body through their presence.

On October 19th – we will kick off our Stewardship Campaign. The theme this year is "Dreaming God's Dream." Stewardship is one way we make a commitment to this church. If we are to allow that process not to just be a way to pay our bills, but a new way to experience a faithful commitment or a way to encourage our church to live boldly, we all need to show up. We need to show up with open hearts to hear the whisper of God and the testimony of our church family. We need to show up in ways that show we are not just trying to hold on but trying to live, to thrive. We need to show up not in control but allowing Christ to show us the way.

October is a liminal time. A time of great import for each of us and our church. I hope and pray that we engage this important time slowly and gradually and most importantly by showing up.

In gratitude and hope,

Brent

HAPPY OCTOBER BIRTHDAYS

October 2	Michael Lynch
October 3	Madonna Meagher
October 6	Nellie Rustick Eric Smith
October 11	Betsy Wise
October 13	John Tracy
October 19	Tristan Osgood
October 23	Buck Smith
October 27	Sarah Boyd
October 30	Gary Fix
October 31	Anna Smith Xiaobing Qian

Active Prayer of Thanksgiving People's Pantry

On Sunday, October 5 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.

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!

Stockbridge Festival Chorus

We begin rehearsals on Sunday, October 5, from 1 to 3 pm for our Christmas concert on Saturday, December 13, 3:00 pm. The featured selection will be Rutter's Magnificat, a joyous, beautiful composition to celebrate the Christmas season for chorus, soprano soloist, organ, piano and percussion. Other anthems by Chilcott and Gardner will also be performed.

All rehearsals take place in the sanctuary of the First Congregation Church of Stockbridge, from 1 – 3 pm. The last Sunday to officially join is Sunday, October 12. Choristers are asked to not miss more than three rehearsals, and dress rehearsals on Friday, December 12, 4:30 to 6:30 pm, is mandatory. Dues are \$50 per person which will cover the cost of the music (to be picked up at the first rehearsal attended). Please have your check made out to Stockbridge Festival Chorus.

This will be the third performance of the Magnificat by the Festival Chorus, having been performed by the choir in December 1993, December 2015 and this coming December. Niti Martin is the President of SFC, and a dedicated volunteer staff assist with marketing, PR, library and financial matters.

Looking forward to making a joyful sound with many of you! ~ Tracy Wilson

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

(1965 Shelby GT350 not provided.)



Building Relationships

On September 19 Joe Catino (Trustees), Martha Floyd (Social Justice) and Pastor Brent were blessed to meet with a leadership group from the Stockbridge Munsee Community. That group included President Shannon Holsey, Tribal Liaison Sherry White, and Tribal Historic Preservation Manager Bonney Hartley.

The conversation was dynamic, far ranging, imaginative, and inspiring. We left the meeting committed both to developing ways to better get to know each other, committed to us learning more about them and our responsibility in stewarding this place, bringing the history of this place to life, and seeing where the road takes us. We both committed our organizations to tangible ways of staying in touch and will keep you in the loop moving forward. Feel free to contact Joe, Martha, Terry Wise (Moderator), or Brent with any questions or ideas.

Summer Leadership Book Reads

Beginning in July, Church Council and Board members tackled a book each month. Rather than studying the books or thinking about new programs, we looked to see how their questions point to new life for our Church. The first (*Everywhere you Look*) challenged us to think about why we do this thing called church and how important it is to listen to the Spirit and our community. The second (*I Refuse to Lead a Dying Church*) proclaimed the need to be a living and dynamic community choosing life over death and bold over mild. The final one (*the amen effect*) inspired us to show up in fullness and authenticity to church and to each other - to allow ourselves to see and be seen.

Copies of the books are available in the Church Library for you to explore. Call Brent with any questions.

Second Nature Arts

Second Nature Arts continues to bring big imagination and lots of playful art experiences to kids in our community! For six weeks this past summer, in the Creative Playdate Program, campers dove into a whirlwind of creativity—crafting whimsical creatures, treasure boxes, and time capsules, among many projects. The children also enjoyed the lawn to its fullest, with outdoor art making, fort building, pop-up pretend restaurants, and obstacle courses!

This fall, Second Nature Arts continues to offer After School and Special Holiday/No School programs for 5–10 year olds, plus a Junior Art Mentor program for ages 11–14. They are also launching a new Craft Club for adults starting Sept 29th! This *Fantastic Fibers* program will explore creative techniques like weaving, felting, and embroidery, offering a wonderful chance to learn something new while enjoying making art in the company of fellow creatives.

If you would like to participate in [Craft Club](#), please or learn more about the [Creative Playdate Program](#), please visit www.secondnaturearts.org. You can also contact Susan Lynn Smith at 413.457.1646 or via susan@secondnaturearts.org. Also, if you'd like to volunteer one or more afternoons each week—helping with art projects and sharing in the fun of kids' play—please get in touch!



Rally Day - and more! From Growth & Fellowship

Rally Day 2025, and other updates from G&F
From the Growth and Fellowship Board's point of view, Rally Day 2025 was a wonderful success. Heavy rain the day prior, and the threat of rain during setup on Sunday, both brought special challenges. But the day turned fair, and we were able to keep the event outside, where it belongs!

G&F once again had the pleasure of providing food for the event, and handling all that comes with this, such as setting up tables and chairs, cleanup, etc. Thanks to all who helped in any way, especially those who baked brownies or stayed long after to wash all the dishes and disassemble the games. Brownies make us happier, and washing rather than tossing dishes make us a little greener. I know that many of you carried chairs or a card table back to the JE Room, and we are so grateful for those efforts, too. Many hands!

What about the rest of Rally Day? I just happen to know that we had an Epic Watermelon Seed Spitting Contest this year; details are recorded elsewhere in this newsletter. A shout out to Cathy Clark for recording the distances and generally helping out. The Face the Cookie challenge had several people contorting their faces in a (usually failed) attempt to get an Oreo to move from their forehead into their mouth – no hands allowed! Maybe Khalil succeeded? Crafts and Golf: There was a lot of activity at the craft table, and the Disc Golf was quite popular as well. Thanks to Jon and Jake for helping Elisabeth with morning-of design and construction of the links. Bible Crosswords: Brows were furrowed and Bibles consulted as folks tried their hand at solving puzzles about Noah, The Last Supper, and several other stories. Some clues were hard! Do you remember the distinctive race of people who were around during the time of Noah? [8 letters starting with "N"] Which disciple didn't want Jesus to wash his feet? Name the prophetess who attended the



Temple at the time of Jesus' circumcision. Thanks to Cindy Brown for finding and printing these tantalizing puzzles.

OTHER UPDATES: We are pleased to see an increase in the number of Fellowship Hour sign-ups. This is partly your response to efforts by our board to reach out to you in a more personal way, during Fellowship Hour itself. The idea is catching on - you may expect to see the "volunteer boards," (CE, Deacons, and G&F) doing more of this in the future. Look for a volunteer table in the JE Room from time to time. Someone will be there with a smile and a laptop. They can show you how to sign up online (or just do it for you), and answer other questions you may have about what a role involves. New descriptions of the volunteer roles should be coming to your inbox soon, if they haven't already.

Ted
Randolph,
Vicky
Cooper,
Joanne
Conroy, Tom
Ruffing, and
Bob Doerr for
Growth &
Fellowship



Veni. Vidi. Spitty.

Being a short but epic account of the
Watermelon Seed Spitting Contest of 2025

They came. Nineteen in all.

They saw. Watermelon. Tyvek. Glory.

They spat.

They gathered their gumption and garnered their grit; toed the line and spit the pit. They came in high heels, they showed up flat-footed; some let out a cheer, and others just hooted. We had our first-timers, we had comeback kids; the short and the tall, they all made their bids. With arms spread to fly, lips puckered just so, they all took their shot and bid their seeds go. More than conquerors all, they were tops-in-their-class, where the last shall be first and the first shall be last.

On Judy! On Jake! On William and Amos! Now Cathy! Now Lizzie! Patty S. and Maddie! Avianna! Khalil! Jade, Adam and Hannah! Sengdao and Ted, with Helen McC! Alessandra and Ray! Don't forget Ashley C.! To the top of the tarp, outside the great hall, now spit away, spit away, spit away all!

In order of appearance:

Judy -13' 7" Jake-7' 5-½" William-4' 5-½"
Amos-10' 5" Cathy-18' 2" Lizzie-15' 7-½"
Avianna-6' 11" Maddie-13' 5" Jade-4' 9-¼"
Khalil- 17' 3-½" Adam-25' 6-½" Hannah-24' 3"
Sengdao-13' 2" Ted-18' 9" Helen McC-11' 8-½"
Ray-22' 1-¾" Alessandra-10' 0"

Patty S.-14' 6-½" Ashley-15' 1"

~ Ted Randolph



From the Service League

At one of our recent meetings, Charlotte Rodgers dropped in and asked, "Are you planning to have a Holly Fair this year?" In case there's any doubt, the answer is "YES!" and, as always, it's on the first Saturday in December. So from now until then, you can expect a steady stream of reminders and requests for contributions and assistance. We will be making arrangements of greens, and if you're the lucky owner of evergreens in your yard, we'd love to have any bits you might wish to prune. We'll even come and collect them, if that helps. As always, we're

soliciting donations for Grandma's Attic, and you'll be hearing our perennial request for baked goods. Stand by!

Meanwhile, life goes on, and in the case of Anne Hutchinson, that means welcoming a new grandchild. Jennifer and Robin are adopting 7-year-old Evela, and Anne, Gene, Ariana, and Erving will be traveling to North Carolina to celebrate with them on Indigenous Peoples'/Columbus Day weekend. Wonderful news! believe, but it will be here before we know it!

~ Margaret Hornick

The Church to Welcome New Members

On October 12 we will joyfully welcome members into the Church Family. 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.

Berkshire Association

Most of you are probably aware that John Canning and I are this congregation's delegates to the Berkshire Association of the UCC, and the Southern New England Conference of the UCC. That means it's our job to represent our Stockbridge congregation at annual meetings and other events those organizations convene, and also to communicate from those groups back to you.

The Berkshire Association - led by our own Janet McKinstry - puts out an informative Newsletter. A copy of it can be found on the bulletin board in the JE Room, or, if you'd like your own copy, Will (who publishes it) can put you on the mailing list. It provides an opportunity to see how other congregations are approaching issues we all face, and a listing of association events. In October, the following opportunities are coming up, and all are invited to attend:

- On October 12, at 3:00 PM, the Reverend Suzy Aja Burba will be installed at the FCCUCC in North Adams;
- On October 18, from 10 AM - 2 PM, there will be a Lay Worship Planning Retreat at the Pittsfield UCC. (Participants should bring their own lunch);
- On October 19, at 3:00 PM, the Reverend Mike Denton will be installed at the FCCUCC in Canaan, New York.

I'll provide updates in the next Newsletter, and a preview of November's events, as well as more information from the Southern New England Conference. ~ Margaret Hornick



Sunday, October 12



The UCC Office of Public Policy and Advocacy in Washington D.C. is funded in part by gifts to Neighbors in Need. The goal of the UCC is to make a better world possible by addressing the systemic injustices we face as a country and as part of the world.

The UCC Washington Office was called into being by a resolution at General Synod 10 in 1975. This body to Justice and Local Church Ministries was created to assume a leadership function for social action concerns in the UCC and to provide resources to the national, conference and local churches. Foremost among the tasks assigned to the office was identifying, analyzing and forecasting emerging social issues which call for the attention of the denomination.

Today the UCC staff in Washington D.C., in partnership with UCC staff, Conferences,

Associations, congregations

and individual UCC members, continues this mission by monitoring and seeking changes in legislation at local, state and federal levels through a variety of coalitions and working groups. The policies that guide this work are crafted by UCC members who gather for General Synod to pray, reflect and discern a faithful response to God's call through resolutions and pronouncements on the issues facing our world.

Gifts to Neighbors in Need have supported justice and compassion work through direct service and advocacy for decades in the United Church of Christ. Your gifts continue to fund grants, the Council for American Indian Ministries, and justice ministries at the National Ministries of the United Church of Christ.

Thank You for your Generosity!

Thanks to your support of the annual church budget, we have recently supported these organizations! ~ The Board of Mission & Action.

Berkshire Coalition for Suicide Prevention

Habitat for Humanity to replace funds for their AmeriCorps workers when their federal grant was terminated

UCC Disaster Relief Fund

World Central Kitchen for feeding the people of Gaza

The People's Pantry

The American Civil Liberties Union

Zion Lutheran Church, Pittsfield Housing Resource Center

Let's Revive the Green Team and Work Towards Becoming a Creation Justice Church!

As our solar panels go live, what better time to revive the Green Team and re-dedicate our work to becoming a Creation Justice Church.

There are **five big reasons** why every church should want to be a Creation Justice Church:

1. **It's our first calling!** In the opening pages of Genesis, we learn that the first job that God gives to us humans is to care for God's creation (Genesis 2:15).
2. **It's what Jesus would do!** The apostle Paul spells out how Jesus sought to put right the broken covenantal relationship between God and all of creation (Romans 8:20-24).
3. **Clean air, clean water—those are good things!** If there is something that should bring together Christians in common cause, it is protecting the gifts of creation. Who doesn't want clean air and water?
4. **It's about justice!** As Christians, we seek justice—to be in right relationship with God, our neighbors, and all of creation. From racial inequities to the ongoing legacy of colonialism, creation justice is deeply intertwined with multiple matters of justice. The current climate crisis gives matters of justice utmost urgency.
5. **It's in our DNA!** The UCC's Commission for Racial Justice was [the central organization in the watershed events of the environmental justice movement](#). It is one of the most significant parts of our denominational heritage, and every UCC church has the opportunity to continue this powerful legacy.

The UCC's Creation Justice Church program assists congregations in making the ministry of environmental justice an integral strand in the DNA of their faith community. The first step in this process is to create a 'Green Team,' a group within our church dedicated to promoting and implementing sustainable practices to reduce our environmental impact. The Green



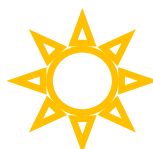
Team will work to achieve various sustainability goals, such as reducing waste and conserving energy and water. It will also promote sustainable behavior in the members of our congregation and develop programs to educate people on environmental issues.

If you are interested in being part of the Green Team, please contact the church office at (413) 298-3137 or office@stockbridgeucc.org.



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.



On September 10, we flipped the switch and the solar panels went on line. Almost immediately the meter started to “run backwards.” Patty Strauch, who led the Trustees’ project to get the panels installed, filmed the meter for the moment it clicked backwards.

Below: everyone continued the service on Sunday, September 21, going outside to dedicate and bless the panels.

From the litany of dedication:

... In 1734 this church was founded to shine the light of Christ’s love in this place and to all who call it home...

And it was good!

For 200 years here at 4 Main Street this church has built and maintained these buildings and turned on our lights to welcome, to worship, and to build a community of faith.

And it has been good!

In 2025 in answering the ancient call to care for creation we have installed these solar panels to harness the gift of God’s light and to empower our ministries of grace...

And it is good!





Left: Children's Time on September 14 featured a chocolate fountain. Above: our new Nursery Care Providers, Dana Sanchez and Mari Brennen. Welcome!

On September 21 we celebrated the 50th anniversary of the ordination of the Reverend Doctor Richard Floyd. (right)

Since 1975 [Rick] has answered the call faithfully, offering his gifts, heart, and time for the sake of the Gospel—for the church and for all those who call it home.



Below: Rick and Martha Floyd



COMING SOON!
Saturday October 25th -3-4:30 PM

Join us in the JE Room to hear readings from this work, learn about the craft of writing & purchase copies of this book or Jo Ann's other recent work: *The Spiritual Path of Aging*. A portion of proceeds from all book sales will be contributed to the church on behalf of the Capital Campaign!

