

*The First Congregational Church, UCC
PO Box 825
Stockbridge MA 01262*



September 2020

Pastor: The Rev. Brent Damrow – bdamrow@stockbridgeucc.org
Minister of Music: Dr. Sándor Szabó - music@stockbridgeucc.org
Administrator: Will Garrison – office@stockbridgeucc.org
Financial Secretary: Ron Hanft – rphanft@yahoo.com

(413) 298-3137

www.stockbridgeucc.org

www.facebook.com/stockbridgeucc

Sunday Worship: 10:00 a.m. *Online*

Sunday Evening Worship: 5:00 p.m. *Gathered, church front lawn*

Wednesday Morning Prayer: 8:00 a.m. *Online*

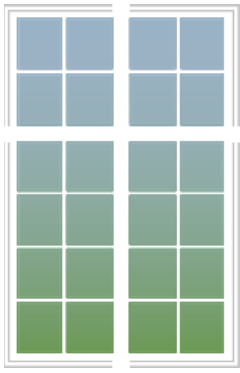
Thursday Morning Prayer: 8:00 a.m. *Gathered, under the tent*

Office hours: 9:00-1:00, Monday - Friday

September 2020

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>
Online worship is at stockbridgeucc.org	Calendar is subject to change. Please check the church website for updates.	1	2 Morning Prayer 8 am Church Council 7:00 p.m.	3 Gathered Morning Prayer 8:00 a.m. <i>under the tent</i>	4	5
6 Worship 10:00 a.m. <i>online</i> Evening worship 5:00 p.m. <i>on church lawn</i>	7	8	9 Morning Prayer 8 am Bible Study 1:00 pm Mission & Action 5:30 pm Christian Ed 5:30 pm	10 Gathered Morning Prayer 8:00 a.m. <i>under the tent</i>	11	12
13 Worship 10:00 a.m. <i>online</i> Evening worship 5:00 p.m. <i>on church lawn</i>	14	15	16 Morning Prayer 8 am Bible Study 1:00 pm Trustees 5:30 pm Deacons 6:30 pm G & F 7:30 pm.	17 Gathered Morning Prayer 8:00 a.m. <i>under the tent</i>	18	19
20 Worship 10:00 a.m. <i>online</i> Evening worship 5:00 p.m. <i>on church lawn</i>	21	22	23 Morning Prayer 8 am Bible Study 1:00 pm	24 Gathered Morning Prayer 8:00 a.m. <i>under the tent</i>	25	26
27 Worship 10:00 a.m. <i>online</i> Evening worship 5:00 p.m. <i>on church lawn</i>	28	29	30		Brent's office hours by appointment, call church office.	Morning prayers, open hours, and meetings are online, via Zoom.



FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH

UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

Stockbridge, Massachusetts

September 2020 Newsletter

Dear Friends,

If you have had the joy of being outside in the star-filled night recently, you have felt it in the air – that unmistakable briskness that signals the coming of the fall. Here in New England the fall is a cherished time where nature begins to slow even as our routines resume their traditionally determined pace. Shaped by the academic calendar, all sorts of organizations annually either wind down or gear up including our own. Typically, the kinds of festivals and events that draw people to the region give way to local events and institutions.

While the summer's relative calm has been a gift in many ways during these turbulent times, I am also aware that some of the energy and expansive experiences that accompany the concerts, plays, dances and more is not there to draw upon either. I am aware that some of the things that I could count on will be different too. This fall, we here at the church are planning to do some things differently and meant for these moments. We are planning to offer those things that traditionally have given us a lift and drawn us back together – even if they might look or feel a little different. We are imagining moments big and small in new ways; sometimes offering something similar, sometimes introducing something new. We know that there is uncertainty about what the fall and winter months might bring as our nation continues to struggle with the pandemic and as national elections loom on the horizon. We plan to meet them, honestly, hopefully, and collectively.

As you read this newsletter – look for those opportunities and innovations. More than that, commit to engaging those opportunities for your own sake and the sake of our family in Christ. Look for Rally Weekend coming soon through Christian

Education. Look at the new Evening Worship that the Deacons have imagined and for information about the second gathered Morning Prayer too. Look at the All Church Birthday Party and the Open Saturdays that Growth and Fellowship are cooking up. Look at the Bible Studies being done in small intimate groups that I will be helping to lead. From recent meetings, I also know that Music is dreaming up fantastic ideas for Halloween, All Saints Sunday, and Christmas Eve too. I know that Trustees are hard at work imagining how to care for this place we call home.

Beyond what we do formally and programmatically as a church, just as importantly we are trying to find those ways to be church to one another. That may require some innovation on your part. The what: the loving, the caring, the sharing, the forgiving, the healing does not change, but how we do it will have to. Keep reaching out to one another in love, keep the church informed of your joys and challenges, and now more than ever keep following the way of Christ.

Please keep in touch with me too. With the tent outside, I have enjoyed sitting and talking with many people. With the coolness of the day, I have enjoyed walking with others in this beautiful place of ours. I have found similar joys zooming and talking, texting and e-mailing. Let me know what you are up to, what blessings you are finding, where you might need some help, and how you are connecting to church and one another. Fall is here; a season so full of reconnecting, let us honor that tradition even as we find new ways to do it.

With love,

Brent

OUR SHARED LIFE TOGETHER

We will be including prayers in the weekly emails, including those gathered in Sunday worship. If you have a name you would like to add, please contact the church office.

SEPTEMBER BIRTHDAYS			
September 1	Nick Pohl	September 11	Mark Bachman
	Mary Hart	September 15	Bob Doerr
September 2	Margot Wise	September 23	Patty Fadding
	Allison Tracy	September 24	Barbara Kershner
September 5	Cindy Brown	September 25	Shirley Blanchard
	Sara Zanin	September 26	Christopher Slocombe
September 6	Jackie Hawkins	September 27	Lois Hall
September 7	Les Freeman III		Linda Frelinghuysen
	David Schneider		John McKinstry
September 10	John Frelinghuysen		Mishel Kulibaba-Epstein
	Lee Dixon	September 28	Tracy Schneyer

NEWS FROM AROUND THE CHURCH

From the Organ Bench: Singing and the Pandemic

For Christians, singing together in corporate worship is about more than entertainment or even tradition. Christians are commanded to sing together, offering their praises unto God, when they gather for worship (Psalm 68:4-5, Col. 3:16). And throughout their long history, the people of God have been a singing people.

“Restrictions related to singing and other voice performance due to COVID-19 have had enormous professional, financial, and emotional consequences. Unfortunately concern over uncertain future has led to a plethora of unsupported opinions and publications. While most people and organizations probably have tried to gather as much evidence and other information before establishing policies, the urgency and emotional impact of decisions about singing and other performance and face to face contact is stressful. Everyone is under so much pressure to act that is easy for us to act prematurely and especially to forget to explain our reasoning. If people see restrictions as having been arbitrary, or at least as not grounded in credible justification, then they might be more likely to ignore them and make pandemic more likely worse. Almost every day, we hear about groups that have ignored precautions, that have led to high number of COVID-19 infections among participants.

In an effort to provide clarity and guidance, a group of 18 authors (laryngologists, speech-language pathologists, singers, singing teachers, choir conductors, a basic scientists, and others) collaborated to write ‘Safer Singing During the SAR-CoV-2 Pandemic: What We Know and What We Don’t.’”

Go to *Journal of Voice* at jvoice.org. [jvoice.org/article/S0892-1997\(20\)30245-9/fulltext](http://jvoice.org/article/S0892-1997(20)30245-9/fulltext).

This article summarizes science and myth and suggests areas for research that need to be explored soon. It also provides suggestions on ways to return to singing safely, and it separates evidence from opinion clearly, trying to offer best of both. Eleven specific suggestions are provided to guide return to singing with as much safety as possible.” From The American Guild of Organists, with permission from *The Voice Foundation*.

~ Sándor Szabó, Minister of Music

Would you like to meet with Pastor Brent?

Brent would be delighted to talk with you under the church tent! (Or phone or Zoom.) Just call or email the church office to make an appointment.

Board of Deacons

As is common in crisis, the Pandemic is a time of stories. We each have ones about ourselves: I lost my glasses at Price Chopper the first time I went shopping in a mask and have been “blind” and disoriented ever since. We have cultural ones: Yard signs appearing in Anthony Fauci’s neighborhood which declare “Thank you, Dr. Fauci!” Prince Harry and Meghan Markle delivering food in Los Angeles. A 102-year-old great-grandmother recovering from COVID.

Stories help us explain things, to ourselves and each other. They also serve as guides for the future: sometimes **how not to be**: Don’t put your glasses on your head when loading groceries in your car. And sometimes **how to be**: Support essential workers. Be generous with your time and energy. Have hope.

Stories typically help us identify with other people, whether fictional, historical, or real characters in our lives. The Bible, of course, is full of stories to help us and guide us through all kinds of crises, and I read an illustrated children’s bible when I want easily accessible stories of tribulation and faith. An illustration of the story of young Isaac carrying wood for the sacrifice of his own self while Abraham follows him with agonized fear helps me identify with both son and father—and with the (absent) mother. What if I were Isaac? What if I were Abraham? What if I were Sarah? The different challenges posed to my faith in God resonate in our current crisis as they have through the centuries.

Quinn Caldwell’s sermons earlier this summer highlighted a focus on stories, in part in his vivid preaching style, but also by his different dramatic settings, both actual (the exit from the cellar) and narrative (the trans woman being thrown into a paddy wagon outside Stonewall). As I watched the sermons, I entered in: If I were Noah, would I have been able ever to get off the boat, to face the enormity of rebuilding a life and community? Would I ever have heard God again? More challenges, and more reminders of how other people and cultures have endured life-threatening crises, sustained their faith in God, followed Jesus, allowed the Holy Spirit in.

Our outdoor regathering service on August 9 had

some great stories, some of them implicit, some explicit. Sarah Conly and I shared the story of Jesus, and then dearly human Peter, walking on water. Sandor’s rousing jazz rendition of “When the Saints Go Marching In” with its foot-stomping, hand-clapping rhythms took us all to New Orleans—a setting evoking a long history of renewals. Even the noisy motorcycles coming repeatedly around the bend on Route 102 conjured stories of individuals-in-community for some of us.

The first Evening Worship service on August 16 overtly invited us to share our stories in the weeks and months to come. Brent led the way by telling his story of being called to the Ministry on a street in Moscow. There are opportunities for you to tell a personal story—or sing a song or read a poem—that has served to guide you in challenging times in your life. The Deacons hope that you might share a faith story with your church family. If you might, please let Brent or a deacon know so that we can hear God still speaking in you.

~ Elizabeth Young on behalf of Evelyn Battaglia, Hal Brink, Anna Duhon, Joshua Hall, Donna Jacobs, Jim McMenemy, and Ted Randolph.

Dear Church Family,

We are planning a special day of celebration for children in our congregation, akin to Rally Days of yore, to connect and share with you, create safe ways to play together, and EAT PIZZA.

More details to follow in coming weeks, but here are the main details and information we would like for you to know and/or receive from you:

Saturday Sept. 19 from 11am-1pm a socially distanced gathering on the church front lawn.

One full pizza will be provided per family. You just need to bring beverages and cutlery as needed.

Please RSVP by Thursday September 17 to the church office 298-3137 / office@stockbridgeucc.org with number of people attending and pizza order and be sure to include pizza topping preferences and any dietary restrictions we need to be aware of.

The following Saturday September 26 from 11am-1pm will be our rain date.

Thank you and we look forward to seeing you,

~ The Board of Christian Education

The Service League

FROM THE SERVICE LEAGUE: First, we just want to say: We love the new tent! Thanks, Trustees, Brent, and, especially, Will Garrison and Ted Randolph, who erected it a few weeks ago. Now we don't have to keep moving our (socially distanced) chairs to stay ahead of the sun, and, if it ever rains, we'll be ready. And oh yes, everyone else is welcome to use it too!

As you can see, we've continued to meet every Monday for lunch and to stay connected, and we'll continue as long as weather permits. We usually get a drop-in from Brent and Will, and of course we always welcome anyone who wants to join us. Here's our member update since last report: We're following Russ Fadding's progress with Patty and are glad to hear he's home from the hospital and doing well. We'll be happy to have Jane McCormick and Anne Fix back, as soon as they're feeling better, and meanwhile are sending healing thoughts to all. Anne Hutchinson's back from a lovely month with her family in New Hampshire, and gave us a detailed report on the People's Pantry, which has been running smoothly with the benefit of her coordination and the generosity of many area supporters - Guido's, Highlawn Farm, Price Chopper, and others. It has a lot of moving parts, but the volunteers keep it all going, fortunately, since the need is expected to increase again with the end of stimulus benefits.

In case you think all we do is gossip and eat, we wanted to let you know that the Service League donated funds for the replacement of the plate glass table top in the JE Room, which, Will informed us, was delivered recently. And when we can go back inside, we can all take a look. It will happen! Coffee hour will rise again!

~ Margaret Hornick, for the Service League

Growth & Fellowship

The pandemic has created all kinds of new: who, before March, knew what "PPE" stands for? Who knew the ins and outs of face masks? We are adaptable, thank God, and we have to be in these difficult times.

So...here's another one: THE ZOOM COFFEE HOUR! The Growth and Fellowship Board has been hosting coffee hours in a Zoom format after live streamed church services on Sunday morning. Stick around after church and talk to your neighbors and friends, or, better yet, meet people you have never met! We now have attendees from many different states and a few other countries, so we hope they will come and meet us as well.

We will keep the groups small: if there are a lot of coffee hour Zoomers, we will use "breakout room" technology to keep the groups to a manageable size. And we invite everyone to stay as long, or as short, as you please. In old-fashioned in-person coffee hours, you remember how some people stayed for five minutes and some people stayed until the last plate was cleared away? Same thing here: if you can only stay a little while, come anyway. We would love to see you. If you wish to exit, just say the magic words: "Gotta go!" Everyone will be happy to see you no matter how long you stay.

To attend the Zoom coffee hour, look for the place on the live stream page for you to indicate your interest; you will then receive a Zoom invitation. We hope to see you there.

In other G and F news, we are now charged with recruiting hosts for open church hours. Remember when we on G and F always pestered you to host coffee hour? Well, you've had your break. Now we will start pestering you to sign up to be a host for the open sanctuary hours on Saturday. The sanctuary will be open on Saturdays from 10 am to 1 pm, and we need people to sit there and quietly remind people how to behave. There is very little to learn: just a few simple rules, like don't go beyond the ropes, and leave a marker if you sat in a pew, things like that. You don't need to know anything: the self-guided tour will answer history questions, so you don't need to do that. This is a chance to read, pray, sit quietly and look out the window, or catch up on your correspondence, and quietly monitor people so they don't get rowdy.

We hope you will take advantage of this meditative opportunity. We will start calling soon to line up sanctuary hosts for September. Ready...set...SIT!

~ David Anderegg

Art Gallery News

Our church art shows continue as we head into autumn with limited access to the church building, due to the coronavirus.

The September show will display photography by Ronnie Cunningham on the theme, “Inspirations through Texture and color.” Please stop by and enjoy the show and should you wish to purchase an art piece—20% of the price will go to the church fund.

Be safe & healthy & keep the faith!

~ Olga Schwede

*West Surrey College's Gardening and
Landscaping School*

Photograph by Ronnie Cunningham



Membership: A Relationship of Commitment and Covenant

Our family has been growing in different ways. Many have been joining in for worship, morning prayer, small groups, Open Table, and other connection points. Even now in the midst of changing ways, the idea of covenant remains central to our identity. Covenant is a form of holy promise making that joins us together to live into our calling to be a family of purpose.

Here at the First Congregational Church that is how we understand membership – a relationship of commitment and covenant. If you have been connecting with us for a while now and are thinking about calling it home and us family, we invite you to consider becoming a member.

Part of the process includes a conversation about what membership is and isn't; about how this church fits into the larger UCC; about our history, this moment, and our future; and the joys and responsibilities of joining in. **If this is something you are thinking about, give Pastor Brent a call soon at 298-3137 or e-mail him at bdamrow@stockbridgeucc.org.**

Old Tradition in New Ways

A recent study by Harvard University involving thousands of churches across the country identified that Bible Study, more than any other activity, contributes to both an individual's and the community's sense of faith, connection, and purpose. This Fall, we are pleased to invite you into a tradition unfolding in a new way. Every three years we offer extended studies of the Bible and every three years dozens of people step forward to learn, grow and connect.

This year we will offer two different studies both done in new ways that foster connection to God, scripture, and each other.

Both studies work on a theme basis. Both will be done through a combination of recording teaching sessions and small group discussion groups. The idea behind this is to allow people to do the learning and contemplating on their own schedule while connecting people in smaller more intimate groups for conversation, discussion, learning, and application. Pastor Brent will organize and lead the teaching sessions and join the small groups regularly to check-in and help where needed.

One track will use the Disciple program. This study goes from cover to cover of the Bible in the order the texts appear. While you will not read every chapter and verse, the study will expose you to a great deal of the material. Daily readings should take about 20-30 minutes and there are questions for you to ponder along the way. While we will be concerned about content, just as importantly we will be exploring ways of reading the Bible. The Bible is comprised of many different styles of writing and we will make sure you are equipped to approach these sacred texts with tools to help your understanding. This study is ideal for those new to the Bible and those wanting to return to its beauty in a wholistic way.



The second track will focus on the concept of Covenant, a central part of how we understand our faith journey in the UCC. Through three broad themes of Creating, Trusting, and Living this study works its way throughout scripture looking at how holy promise is not just a central theme but a practice of our faith. Similar time commitment to the Disciples track will be required.

In both cases, we will focus on not just learning the Bible but engaging in dialogue about how it matters for our lives today. They will equip you to be more comfortable talking about the Bible and understanding its full sweep even as they help you to bring those texts into the story of your own life.

The studies will begin in September and run through the end of May. We anticipate taking breaks that make sense with the calendar. There is the expectation that those who choose to participate will commit to the length of the study. Obviously, if that becomes impossible or burdensome, we will not hold you to it, but we hope you are prepared to make that commitment.

Please take some time to think about this and whether it is right for you. If you have any questions, reach out to Pastor Brent. If you want to speak with one of the more than 50 members of our congregation who have been part of an extended study, call the office and we will put you in touch. This can be so transformative for each participant and our whole church family. Come and see.



Jon Geldert connected the August 9 outdoor worship service to the world via Livestream.



All Church Birthday Party

COMING SOON

One of our great traditions is the shared Birthday Party and parade of cakes. Growth and Fellowship is hard at work designing a way that we can bring cake to you and then all gather virtually to sing and celebrate! Four different cakes, delivery available, fun decorations, and the joy of love – it is a work in progress. Stay tuned for how and get ready to party!



GATHERED Morning Prayer

Thursdays 8:00 a.m.

“Under the Tent”

While we are continuing our Zoom prayer service on Wednesday mornings, we are also offering gathered prayer on Thursday.

What is morning Prayer? It is 25 minutes of gentle music and shared prayer. We share our gratitude for the blessings in our lives, we ask for guidance and forgiveness in the messiness of our lives, we lift our love and hope for others in the realness of our times. Those who participate have found it to be profound. It is a beautiful way to get to know others, to enrich our prayer life, and to start the day in hope, possibility, and love.

Chairs will be set out or you can bring your own. For now, we do not need any registration, just come when you can. Simple bulletins will be on hand to guide our path. We will end by 8:25 so that you can get on with your day, with new energy! Please contact Pastor Brent with any questions.



It has been quite some time since we have all been together inside of the sanctuary. Although we see the inside of our beloved building each Sunday, thanks to the livestream, it is not the same and we still long to take in that familiar space. In an attempt to fulfil that want to see the inside of the church again, here is an image of the sanctuary taken in 1889 decorated for the commencement celebration of the Williams Academy. There are some subtle changes here and there, but overall, it is the same beloved sanctuary.

~ Joshua Hall, Church Historian



the Sunday we hope we're all excited to be able to host outdoor events!! Join us Wednesday and Friday to... more

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Rice Business - Jones Graduate School of Business



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sfr24 First day of kindergarten (1999) and first day of MBA (2020)! #ricebusiness #unconventionalwisdom... more

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kbuellesbach 🥰💕 go Sophie the Sophie!

sfr24 @heylizzieann ❤️❤️❤️



Church Family News

Sophie Randolph began her MBA at the Jones School of Business at Rice University a few days ago.

Nora Randolph is engaged to be married; she and Eli met at Outward Bound. They are both avid rock climbers, so already know something about tying knots. Nora has accepted a full-time teaching and outdoor leadership position at the French Broad River Academy.

Andrew Hall recently finished a fun filled summer of on-line, back yard camp. As a result, Andrew just passed his Board of Review and was granted the rank of Tenderfoot. He has also completed 15 merit badges ranging from Bird Study and American Heritage to First Aid, Emergency Preparedness, and Space Exploration.



Outdoor worship at 10:00 a.m. on Sunday August 9 was enjoyed by all.



September 2020



Evening Worship Launches

Open, connected, authentic, quiet, hopeful, grounded, beautiful, outdoors... these are just some of the attributes the worship committee has tried to imbue in our newest worship experience. Each week approximately

30 people have spread across the lawn to engage ancient and modern scripture and poetry, sing new songs, hear the faith stories of each other, pray, reflect and share the feast of communion. After worship people have lingered to talk or sit distanced while connecting over a picnic or a conversation. Check out the website for more and then come and check it out in person.

