

FIRST CONGREGATIONAL  
CHURCH UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST  
— Stockbridge, Massachusetts —

PO Box 825 Stockbridge MA 01262



## March 2021

Pastor: The Rev. Brent Damrow – [bdamrow@stockbridgeucc.org](mailto:bdamrow@stockbridgeucc.org)

Minister of Music: Dr. Sándor Szabó - (on leave)

Worship Music Leader: Noah Palmer

Administrator: Will Garrison – [office@stockbridgeucc.org](mailto:office@stockbridgeucc.org)

Financial Secretary: Ron Hanft – [rphanft@yahoo.com](mailto:rphanft@yahoo.com)

(413) 298-3137 | [www.stockbridgeucc.org](http://www.stockbridgeucc.org)

[www.facebook.com/stockbridgeucc](http://www.facebook.com/stockbridgeucc)

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

Wednesday: Bible Study, 1:00 p.m. *Online*

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

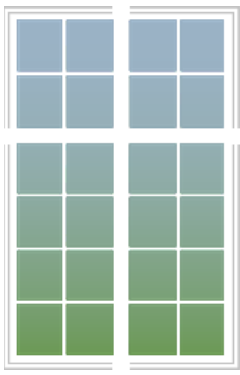
Thursday: Walking Prayer

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

# March 2021

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>
Pastor Brent's office hours by appointment, call church office.	1	2 Pastor Sabbath Day	3 Morning Prayer 8 am Bible Study 1:00 pm Deacons 6:00 pm Church Council 7:00 p.m.	4 Walking Morning Prayer	5	6 <i>Al-Anon 5:00pm</i>
7 Worship 10:00 a.m. <i>online</i>	8 International Women's Day <i>Berkshire Waldorf High School returns (M-Th)</i>	9 Pastor Sabbath Day	10 Morning Prayer 8 am Bible Study 1:00 pm Christian Ed 5:00 pm Mission & Action 5:30 pm	11 Walking Morning Prayer	12	13 <i>Al-Anon 5:00pm</i>
14 Worship 10:00 a.m. <i>online</i>	15	16 Pastor Sabbath Day	17 Morning Prayer 8 am Bible Study 1:00 pm Trustees 5:30 pm Deacons 6:30 pm G & F 7:30 pm	18 Walking Morning Prayer	19 Newsletter Deadline (send to Will)	20 <i>Spring Equinox</i> <i>Al-Anon 5:00pm</i>
21 Worship 10:00 a.m. <i>online</i>	22	23 Pastor Sabbath Day	24 Morning Prayer 8 am Bible Study 1:00 pm	25 Walking Morning Prayer	26	27 <i>Al-Anon 5:00pm</i>
28 Worship 10:00 a.m. Palm Sunday <i>online</i>	29	30 Pastor Sabbath Day	31 Morning Prayer 8 am Bible Study 1:00 pm	Please check the church website for updates.	Online worship is at <a href="http://stockbridgeucc.org">stockbridgeucc.org</a>	



# FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH

UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

Stockbridge, Massachusetts

## March 2021 Newsletter

Dear Friends in Christ,

We have passed some significant milestones in the pandemic. March marks one year since the World Health Organization declared the novel coronavirus (Covid-19) outbreak a global pandemic. In February, the United States mourned its 500,000<sup>th</sup> person lost to that pandemic. Both are staggering realities that previously were virtually unimaginable.

As days of sun and warmth point to the promise of spring, as prayers of joy now reference vaccinations, as Easter approaches our attention moves toward return to community, connection, and possibility. I am reminded of what Nelson Mandela said about milestones. Mandela was no stranger to either adversity or possibility having spent decades incarcerated in brutal conditions for his role in resisting Apartheid, and been freed and elected President. He charged us to “celebrate” (which includes serious notions of honoring, observing or mourning) milestones as we “prepare for the road ahead.”

Mandela understood that milestones are cause for pause. Even grim or unchosen milestones have the capacity for great transformation. Archbishop Tutu maintains that it was Mandela’s incarceration, and the subsequent imposed time of reflection and consideration that laid the foundation for his transformation from a rebel who often used violence for a cause to a president who championed peace toward a higher cause. Mandela never gave up hope or joy in his suffering and they helped him find a great new road. I encourage your hope, joy, and optimism in these days for they will be important if we are to emerge into a better, way of being church, neighbor, and community. I also encourage the honoring of both milestones.

One year is significant - we were forced to radically alter how we engaged traditions, seasons, and other annual events. Before we move forward, I hope we

linger in serious honoring. What did you find were great losses that you want to make sure you honor in the coming moments? What did you find as new ways of nurturing health or relationship that you don’t want to forget? What ways did you find to care for others in these clear moments of need that should continue when those needs fade back to hidden corners and shadows of our culture? What habits did you drop or take on that ended up being a blessing or source of health?

The passing of 500,000 people is a tragic loss of epic proportions. I remember how shocked we were after the first 100,000 and the mourning we did (yet the next milestones seemed to sweep right by us, didn’t they?). In the Biblical tradition mourning involves a sitting and a pausing to find a new way of being and change what must be changed. We must consider the loss experienced by so many and the injustice revealed in health care, economics, education, and access. At funerals we commit to honoring the lost both in that sacred ceremony and in the ways we live. How do we honor that milestone as we “prepare for the road ahead?”

Lent is an ideal season to do that. It is an intentional time of contemplation, reflection, and consideration about the road we have been on and the path laid out before us. I would greatly enjoy hearing from you. Tell me how you are approaching these things as well as how we might honor these milestones together.

There is a future, it is coming, there is reason to hope great things for it. So that we might be ready for it, let’s commit to a time to remember those things we have learned, honor the ones and the things we have lost, mark the wisdom that has been gained, and celebrate the things of life and joy that have emerged too.

*Brent*

# OUR SHARED LIFE TOGETHER

## HAPPY MARCH BIRTHDAYS

March 2 Andrew Hall  
March 6 Joyce Hovey  
March 8 Joy Douglass  
Jim Erwin  
March 11 Stephanie Bradford  
Don Paine  
Maria Carr  
March 13 Bruce Mandel  
March 14 Steve Alsdorf

March 19 Ted Randolph  
March 21 Angela Vuagniaux  
March 23 Julie McCarthy  
March 25 Gege Kingston  
March 26 Thomas Randolph  
March 28 Donna Jacobs  
March 30 David Wampler  
March 31 Noah Hassmer  
Mary Jo Erickson  
Oliver Thomas Brown

## The Service League

There's not a lot to talk about when we're hibernating, but many of us did, as promised, emerge from our caves long enough to roll up our sleeves and get our first dose of vaccine, and now are counting down to the second. There aren't too many times when one is happy to be in the "75+" category, but this is one of them. It was practically the social event of the season; I ran into Hal and Ann Brink, just missed Jackie Hawkins, and tracked Jeannene Booher's progress later in the day. If only we'd known of Governor Baker's new idea, letting younger caretakers accompany older friends and relatives to get the shot, I'm sure we could have figured out a way to turn it into a fundraiser - all for our mission projects, of course!

Nancy Wilcox, who, as many of you know, loves to travel, has adapted to being an arm-chair voyager. With help from the BBC series "The Long Song," she's been to Jamaica - and highly recommends it. She's also a fan of Rick Steves' adventure series.

Most of us, though, are just looking forward to traveling to the WEB DuBois Middle School, or the BCC Fieldhouse, for that second shot, and then, gradually, cautiously, socially distanced and double-masked, back to the Outside World. Remember when we sat out on the lawn and ate lunch together? By the time you read this, we'll be just over three weeks from the first day of Spring, and already well into Lent. And as we all know, Lent leads to a new beginning, which all of us will welcome, more than ever, this year.

Margaret Hornick, for the Service League

## COVID-19

If you or someone you know needs help navigating the sometimes confusing process of signing up for vaccinations, please call the church office. We have a team ready to help.

## Artists' Work for a Church Fundraiser

Art Show coordinators Madonna Meagher and Olga Schwede are calling all artists to participate in an Art Show in May 2021 - in person or virtual, to be determined.

Art may be of various media, including paintings, graphic designs, photography, collage, mixed media, sculpture, or woodwork. Each piece must be 12" x 12" and will be priced at \$100 per piece. Artists may contribute one or two pieces, of which one will be sold as a fundraiser and another for personal sale.

The art pieces may be submitted during the week of April 26-30, 2021, with final directions to follow.

Questions? Please call Olga at 413-644-9846.

## Community News

We look forward to the students of the Berkshire Waldorf High School returning on March 8. As before, they will use the sanctuary and JE Room Mondays - Thursdays each week.

## Board of Christian Education

For Black history month, Diane Piraino put together a short series on Black Sacred Music from spirituals to jazz. It's not too late to check it out on the church website.

Think that Black History month is the only time to talk about systemic racism? Neither do we. Check out these books by Black authors:

- ◆ *Caste and The Warmth of Other Suns*, by Isabel Wilkerson
- ◆ *Between the World and Me*, by Ta-Nehisi Coates (available in church library)
- ◆ *Care Work: Dreaming Disability Justice*, by Leah Piepzna-Samarasinha
- ◆ *The Fire Next Time*, by James Baldwin
- ◆ *How to Be an Antiracist*, by Ibram X. Kendi
- ◆ *I'm Still Here*, by Austin Channing Brown
- ◆ *Just Mercy*, by Bryan Stevenson (available in church library)
- ◆ *Stamped: Racism, Antiracism and You*, by Jason Reynolds & Ibram X Kendi

Throughout Lent, our Children will be involved in a project on Covenant. Each week in the Children's message, Pastor Brent will be talking about covenants made between God and God's people. Each family has a string art kit to explore the connections between us and God. Virtual Sunday School is covering important New Testament stories about the life of Jesus from Baptism to Resurrection. As ever, these lessons are available for kids of all ages on our Family Resources page. You can now, also, find recordings there of each Children's Message.

~ Cris Raymond for Board of Christian Education

## Board of Mission & Action

The First Congregational Church and Mission & Action are pleased to announce, in response to the ongoing pandemic, the creation of a Pop-Up Pantry to assist those in our community who are in need. In the first phase of operation, we will pre pack bags of non-perishable, shelf stable foods. When weather permits, we will stock a shed at the rear of the church with shelf stable food items.

The central mission (and action!) of this project is to provide emergency, short-term food supplies free of charge to anyone who needs them. Each bag will contain information about how to access local food pantries and social services. We're planning to start slowly and gauge our response.

We are seeking donations of food and/or a financial donation to help us purchase and set up the bags of food. Mission & Action has budgeted limited funds to kick off the Pop-Up Pantry.

### Needed now:

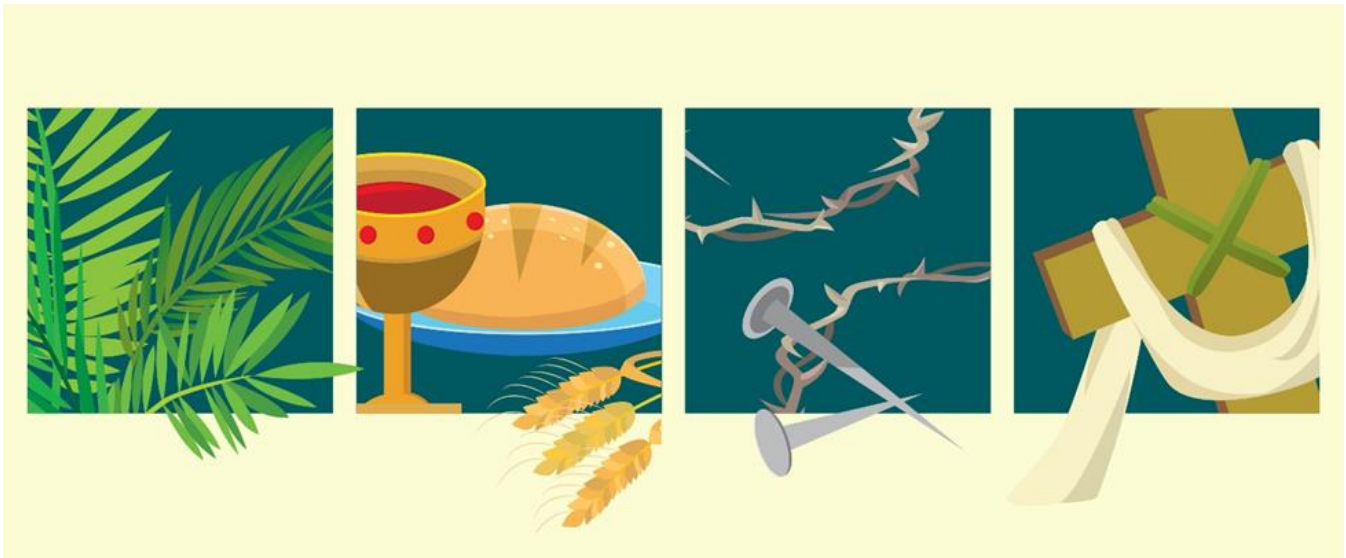
- Clean grocery bags (reusable or double paper)
- Volunteers to help organize and pack bags (call Will for details)

### Suggested Food Donations:

- Cheerios
- Boxes of instant oatmeal
- Milk – shelf stable box OR powdered
- Nut Free butters (SunButter or Wow Butter)
- Pasta
- Pasta sauce
- Box macaroni and cheese
- Canned diced tomatoes
- Canned beans
- Canned vegetables
- Canned soups
- Canned tuna – water pack only
- Canned chicken or Spam
- Crackers

We are also asking for donations that are NUT FREE and welcome Gluten Free!





## Holy Week and Easter

The two Sundays of Palm Sunday and Easter along with the days in between are among the most significant in the church year. They include moments of triumph and tragedy, scenes of public glory and humiliation, outpouring of joy and grief, moments that are profound both individually and collectively. They invite us to come together to witness and be transformed.

We will continue to bring people together in ways that matter to observe moments that matter. How we will do that will be a little bit different and are still under planning. So that you can plan, though, we want to alert you to where we are in the planning process:

- Maundy Thursday – April 1
  - ◇ We are planning a streamed or Zoom service where we share a meal, hear the story, engage a service of light and remember the story of that day as Mark tells it.
- Good Friday – April 2
  - ◇ We are working with the Marian Community to walk the stations of the cross in the evening. Similar to Ash Wednesday, we would invite folks to come to Eden Hill and provide you with prayers and other materials to facilitate your experience.
- Easter – April 4 – We anticipate two outdoor services.
  - ◇ For both services, reservations would be required with capacity informed by state guidelines.
  - ◇ We are working on a short, family friendly service at 9:00 a.m. followed by some simple and safe activities for the kids. We do not anticipate streaming this service.
  - ◇ We would hold another service at 11:00 a.m. of a more traditional nature out on the lawn AND streamed.

Final decisions along with additional information will be sent in the weekly e-newsletter on March 25. You can also contact the church office any time after to obtain a printed copy of the details and/or to ask any further questions.

## **Is there fundraising in our future?**

The following was reported at the January 2021 Annual Financial Meeting by Chair of the Trustees Joe Nicolosi. "At the 2020 Annual Meeting, I reported that the Trustees had engaged a Historic Preservation Consultant to do a professional assessment of the church, offices, classrooms and manse. Due to the projected high cost of deferred maintenance and much needed capital improvements it became clear that a capital fundraising campaign would be needed to address these needs.

This year in the 2021 Annual Report the Trustees listed the tasks that we've completed and also pointed out the much longer and growing list of what remains to be addressed. Having the support of Pastor Brent, the Trustees, Church Council and the Fundraising Steering Committee, I'm pleased to report that we have engaged fund raising professional Jennifer Williams to guide us through this planning process. Jennifer has a wealth of fundraising experience having worked with twenty-three churches like ours over eighteen years.

I would like to share a little bit about how this process will work and its approximate timing. Jennifer and our steering committee will be studying the Needs and Dreams of our congregation – not just the needs of the physical structure but also the needs created by our programmatic vision. Armed with this wish list we will conduct a feasibility study to evaluate not only what may be possible with anticipated resources but how far we may reach beyond the readily apparent current assessment of physical needs. We envision the final phase, the actual fundraising campaign to start next fall when we will ask for your commitment.

We are a strong church family, thriving amidst this challenging time. I believe we can successfully rise to meet this challenge. We will keep the congregation informed of ongoing campaign activity in our monthly newsletter. The process will be open and inclusive and we will be asking for your views and desires. Please help the process by participating where and when you can. Thank you."

## **Sharing Books Initiative**

Looking for something good to read? Wondering what others have been reading? This program allows folks to share, browse, check-out, and connect. Thanks to those who have already participated. You can find the growing list on the Fellowship and Community tab under Church Life on our website. If you have a recommendation, share it! If you need a book, check it out! You can make an appointment to come browse in the JE Room or give us a call and we can bring one out to your car.

## **Worship Help Needed**

Liturgy literally means the work of the people. We need your help to bring worship to life and to build connections when we cannot physically come together in the sanctuary.

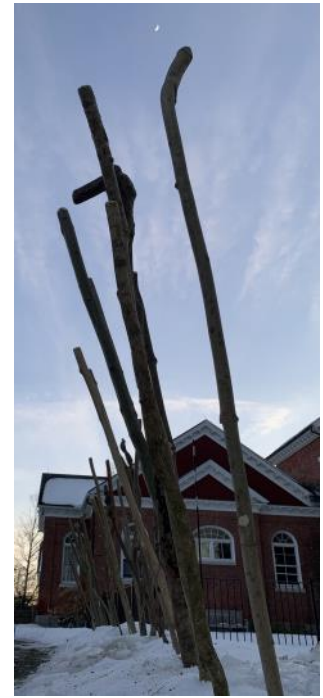
1. Volunteer to do a recorded reading or other worship element. This simple process helps to bring a wide variety of faces into worship. If you would like to do this, give the church office a call and we can tell you how it works and put you on the schedule!
2. Anna and Elizabeth have shared their stories of encounter to start Lent. We invite others to do the same. These need not be stories of encounter on a formal pilgrimage. What we want is to share unexpected encounters that were transformative in some way. Call Brent for more details.

## **Manse Fireplace Work Underway**

The fire boxes for both fireplaces and the internal chimneys in the basement are receiving love and care. The fireplaces show sound craftsmanship, and this is likely the first work done since they were built over 100 years ago. This will keep them safe and in service for another 100 years. The work is being done by a local and well-respected mason.



At our Ash Wednesday worship there was the beauty of the setting on a brisk star-filled night, a winding path lined with hundreds of luminaria, hand crafted walking sticks, fires blazing on a cold night offering warmth and forgiveness, candles outlining a place of openness, and ashes laid out in a beautiful pattern on soup spoons. Thanks to the Deacons who worked so hard to make it happen: Hal Brink, Anna Duhon, Don Eaton, Joshua Hall, Donna Jacobs (along with Joe Nicolosi), Ted Randolph, and Elizabeth Young.



### **Sándor Szabó Tops Off AGO Concert**

In case you missed it, or want to hear it again, the Toccata Tues concert of the Berkshire American Guild of Organists can be seen and heard through this [YouTube link](#). Or go to [www.berkshireago.org](http://www.berkshireago.org) to find the link, and more information.

Seven of the best organists in our region held forth on the organs of their home churches. The concert is concluded with our own Sándor Szabó icing the cake with the Toccata from "Suite Gothique" by Leon Boellmann, on our organ here (see picture) at the First Congregational Church, UCC, Stockbridge.

