

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

PO Box 825 Stockbridge MA 01262



August 2021

Summer Fair - August 14

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

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

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.

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

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

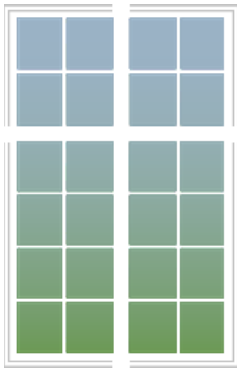
Thursday: Walking Prayer

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

August 2021

The First Congregational Church, UCC, Stockbridge

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1 Worship 10:00 a.m. <i>Indoors gathered and online</i>	2 Service League 10:00am	3 <i>Al-Anon 7:00pm AA 8:00pm</i>	4 Morning Prayer 8 am Bible Study 1:00 pm Council 7:00 p.m.	5 Walking Morning Prayer	6 Pastor Sabbath Day	7 <i>Al-Anon 5:00pm</i>
8 Worship 10:00 a.m. <i>Outdoors gathered and online</i>	9 Service League 10:00am	10 <i>Al-Anon 7:00pm AA 8:00pm</i>	11 Morning Prayer 8 am Bible Study 1:00 pm Christian Ed 5:00 pm Board of Music 7:00 pm	12 Walking Morning Prayer	13 Pastor Sabbath Day	14 Summer Fair 10:00am – 2:00pm <i>Al-Anon 5:00pm</i>
15 Worship 10:00 a.m. <i>Indoors gathered and online</i>	16 Service League 10:00am	17 <i>Al-Anon 7:00pm AA 8:00pm</i>	18 Morning Prayer 8 am Bible Study 1:00 pm Trustees 5:30 pm Deacons 6:30 pm	19 Walking Morning Prayer	20 Pastor Sabbath Day Newsletter Deadline (send to Will)	21 <i>Al-Anon 5:00pm</i>
22 Worship 10:00 a.m. <i>Outdoors gathered and online</i>	23 Service League 10:00am	24 <i>Al-Anon 7:00pm AA 8:00pm</i>	25 Morning Prayer 8 am Bible Study 1:00 pm Mission & Action 5:00pm G & F 6:00 pm	26 Walking Morning Prayer	27 Pastor Sabbath Day	28 <i>Al-Anon 5:00pm</i>
29 Worship 10:00 a.m. <i>Indoors gathered and online</i> with Kids Choir	30 Service League 10:00am	31 <i>Al-Anon 7:00pm AA 8:00pm</i>			Pastor Brent's office hours by appointment, call church office.	Online worship at stockbridgeucc.org or subscribe to the church's YouTube channel



FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

Stockbridge, Massachusetts

August 2021 Newsletter

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

Over the next couple of months, you will be hearing a good deal about a couple of things: coming back together (regathering) and my temporary leave-taking (sabbatical). Both are markers along our shared journey that have the potential for meaning making and renewal. Both are occupying the imagination and attention of staff and lay leadership. Approaching both can include wide ranging emotions from joy to worry and from fear to hope.

This time of pandemic has not been insignificant either in its length or impact. For more than one full year we have stayed connected, imagined new sources of beauty, and retained our identity as a church family. It has not always been easy and we have not always done it perfectly – but we have persevered and learned. Regathering will have profound joys (singing together, sharing a cup of coffee, sharing our lives together in sacred space, watching as our kids bring energy, listening to the voices and stories of our faith family and so much more). It will also have challenges. We have developed some new habits, preferences, and traditions in these times too. Coming back together will require openness – both of sharing and listening; of holding on to cherished traditions and welcoming new truths; and of how church has been and what it is still becoming. I know this – that if we honor the way Christ has set before us and honor each other, we will live our way into the beauty of being church again in this time.

I love this church and the calling that God has placed before it. I am grateful, humbled, and

excited to serve as your Pastor – it is no small task either in what that role demands or the gifts it offers. Especially during the pandemic, it has offered new sets of both demands and gifts all while removing one of the core places I derive energy and meaning – being literally together in relationship and purpose. The pandemic also has delayed my chance to embark on my sabbatical as a time of renewal and re-connection for me to God, faith, and this church.

I have been working closely with Council, Boards, and the Sabbatical Committee to plan my time away from October until the end of December. We are making sure that details and logistics are thought out so that the congregation need not worry. The sabbatical is a chance for both me and the congregation to enjoy blessings of rest and reflection. It is a chance for both me and the congregation to slow down and contemplate the calling of our shared lives. It is a chance to be apart for a short time that our ongoing relationship might be strengthened and refreshed.

I am very much looking both to the time of rest and to coming back together again, sharing what we have learned, and moving forward with new purpose, new possibility, and a new bounce in our shared step! Stay tuned for more information – feel free to call anytime to talk more about either of these things.

Peace and Blessings,

Brent

OUR SHARED LIFE TOGETHER

HAPPY AUGUST BIRTHDAYS

August 2 Jacob Geldert Damrow
 August 6 Susan Moyle Lynch
 August 8 Muriel Wermuth
 August 9 Ashley Collins
 August 13 Barbara Bracknell
 Ronnie Cunningham
 Janet Canning
 August 14 Kinney Frelinghuysen
 Kim Ruffing
 August 17 Helen McCormick
 Mary Lou Ryce
 August 18 Nora Randolph

August 18 Linda Hoddy
 August 21 Emily Brown
 Joan Nimmo
 Linda Russell
 Miles Wheat
 August 23 Jennifer Germain
 August 24 Joe Roy
 August 25 Kyle Germain
 Natalie Doerr
 August 26 Jon Geldert
 August 27 David Cooper
 August 29 Joshua Hall
 August 31 Steven Bankert

Worship Updates

We continue to gather together to worship. It is a central time in our share life. A few things to keep in mind:

All Sunday morning worship will continue to be streamed. Our schedule through Sept 5:

All first/third/fifth Sundays are scheduled for indoors.

All second/fourth Sundays are scheduled for outdoors. (In the case of inclement weather, the service will move indoors.)

We no longer require registration. We do welcome people to go online to sign up to be a liturgist or a welcomer!

We continue to be guided by numbers, CDC recommendations, and local information.

Given the data, we are retaining current practices which include:

Masking is always welcome and a beautiful sign of care.

For OUTDOOR worship, people are asked to mask as they go to their seats. Once they are in the area of their seats (and as long as they remain there) all may remove their mask regardless of vaccination status for all elements of worship.

For INDOOR worship, people are asked to mask as they go to their seats. Once they are in the area of their seats (and as long as they remain there), those who are not fully vaccinated are asked to remain masked. Those

who are fully vaccinated may remove their mask for all elements of worship.

For those coming into the church for any non-worship function:

Those fully vaccinated are welcome to enter without a mask.

Those who are NOT fully vaccinated are asked to wear their mask while inside.

We request that those who enter without a mask understand if staff or someone else inquire about vaccination status if not clear or known.

If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact Will in the Church Office who can help clarify and/or relay information to the Re-Gathering Committee.

Mission & Action

M & A will be meeting soon to discuss new goals and initiatives for the coming year. This is your opportunity to contact us with any suggestions about our church mission.

The Pop-up Pantry, located in the shed at the back of the church, continues to operate offering shelf stable basic groceries. If you know someone in need, please make them aware of this program! There is a handout in the shed that details more information on how to access food pantries across Berkshire County, including the Peoples Pantry in Great Barrington, that offer a wide variety of fresh foods including meats, eggs, milk and garden fresh produce!

Charlotte Rodgers, Carl Bradford, Cindy Brown, Sarah Conly, Martha Floyd, Nick Pohl and Bruce Wilkens

Deacons

At our All Boards meeting (lite) we did not have a candidate for Chair. However, by the time we met again on July 7th, Donna Jacobs declared herself ready and willing to step into this role for our board. She was swiftly (and duly) voted in. Many, many thanks go to our outgoing chair, Elizabeth Young, for her quietly joyful, stolidly creative leadership throughout a challenging year.

In other roles, Joshua Hall was tapped to continue as secretary and will also keep tabs on the self sign-up schedule he created for us on Google docs.

Anna Duhon will usher in the new program year as Council Rep, Don Eaton is

on board to conduct matters relating to the Meal Train, and Michael Deegan has been given leave to serve on the Sabbatical Committee. We anticipate appointing a point person for communication with our supply worship leaders while Brent is away. Hal Brink departs from the diaconate, but will continue to act as our representative to the Regathering Committee. Thank you, Hal, for your past and continuing service.

Deacons will be meeting on a new schedule starting in August, on third Wednesdays at 7:30 pm. This is a change from our twice-monthly meetings and will accommodate our two new deacons, Jill Fleming and Michael Deegan. Welcome, Jill and Michael!

As our church resumes a modicum of pre-pandemic normalcy, we contemplate what the new normal will look like. The challenges and the silver linings of the past year will surely inform our thinking as the deacons formulate goals for the year to come. Meanwhile, we are looking forward to supporting our supply worship leaders during Brent's long overdue sabbatical.

Finally, on behalf of the deacons, I want to express our gratitude for Brent's (and Jon's) unflagging dedication to our worship life. It seems they never missed a beat as our world turned a stranger practically overnight, and continued with grace through a long haul.

~ Ted Randolph

Music

It's summer and the sounds of music are in the air, from the Tanglewood Shed to the front lawn of the First Congregational Church! As of June, the Board of Music has some new members, and some stalwarts carrying on from the previous year. Our duties include overseeing music in worship services, and we can't do that alone. We need to hear from the whole congregation about what is working- and what is not working- for you in our music program. We want music that brings us closer to God, and not music that detracts from that



goal. So...we welcome your comments. We will pass along, in a constructive way, whatever comments you have about music in worship services. If any of you have ever worked in restaurants (as I have) you might remember that little sign by the cash register that said

“If you liked our food, tell your friends; if you didn't, tell us!” Our motto is almost the same: “If you liked the music, tell your friends and us; if you didn't like the music, tell us!” We'll make sure your comments are heeded.

Ronnie Cunningham

(413) 881-4945 veronica404@netzero.net

Bob Doerr (917) 921 6602

Mary Hoeltzel

(413) 298-3361 mhoeltzel@aol.com

Deb McMenemy (413) 298 3434

Tom Ruffing

(914) 261-9667 thomas.ruffing@outlook.com

David Anderegg

(413) 281-9694 danderegg@gmail.com

Gary Schieneman (413) 232-4443

Thanks, one and all. We hope to hear from you. Keep singing!

~ David Anderegg, Chair

The Service League

This month, we're all about the SUMMER FAIR, which will be held Saturday, August 14 at the Church. Everything will be outside, except Grandma's Attic, which will be in the JE Room. We have been very busy pricing and organizing the many wonderful donations that you've brought in. THANK YOU to all who've contributed items for sale. All that lockdown pruning is going to pay off - more free closet space for you, more support for mission projects for us.

We'll also be very grateful for donations of baked goods, home-grown produce, jams and jellies, and flowers the day of (between 9 and 10 AM) or the day before. And while we're quite certain that it isn't going to rain that day - on the theory that there can't possibly be any rain left - we'll be under the tent, just in case. See you there!

~ Margaret Hornick, for the Service League



Sabbatical Committee

Hello from the newly formed Sabbatical Committee! We met with Brent recently to begin discussing the things that will need attention while Brent is on his 3 month sabbatical. Committee members are: Cathy Clark (Church Moderator), Michael Deegan (Deacon) Holland Eaton (Church Council/Growth & Fellowship) and Charlotte Rodgers (Church Council/Mission & Action).

While every board will have specific responsibilities during Brent's sabbatical, the Sabbatical Committee will take on the role of imagining, designing, communicating and facilitating church wide things that will need to get done – as well as being available to deal with anything that comes up unexpectedly.

We're looking forward to communicating to you in this newsletter, and in person, as together we navigate the sabbatical experience.

Capital Campaign Steering Committee

Thank you all for all your thoughtful and heartfelt suggestions of your "Needs and Dreams" for a potential Capital Campaign.

The Steering Committee continues to process the lengthy list and to determine reasonable estimates, moving toward a Feasibility Study by our consultant, Jennifer Williams, in September,

to determine a likely Capital Campaign goal, and then a congregational vote in October on whether to proceed with a Capital Campaign.

Meanwhile, work is being done to help keep our church buildings protected and inviting. Almost everything was removed from the basement so that the Green Collar crew could install a vapor barrier on the floor. Then they blew in insulation into all the attics. Thanks to the Trustees, over half of the cost of this project was covered through a MassSave grant. While this insulation work is mostly invisible, you might notice the freshly painted gables of the JE/classroom wing and some of the trim on the Manse.

Work so far has been covered through our Capital Reserve Fund, and Council has approved a \$100,000 line of credit to ensure that needed work continues.

Two major projects are in the offing: resetting the sanctuary front steps, necessary to protect the building from further water damage; and a new accessibility ramp outside the JE Room entrance.

The Steering Committee will continue to keep you appraised, and we welcome your questions, comments and suggestions.

Cathy Clark, for the Capital Campaign Steering Committee

ceclark@aol.com 528-9949

Save the Date - September 12

Each Fall, we hold a special worship service to mark the end of Summer and the resumption of the greater programming of the “church year.” From Sunday School to music to fellowship to adult studies, “Rally Day” brings us all back together in joy.

This year there is added weight to the day as it will mark a homecoming from some of the distance the pandemic has created. We are still working through many details of how this day will work. It will undoubtedly be different from years past, but we also hope it will hold the same joy, love, and renewal. As always, there will be opportunities both streamed and in-person. Stay tuned for more details and save the date to make sure you are a part!



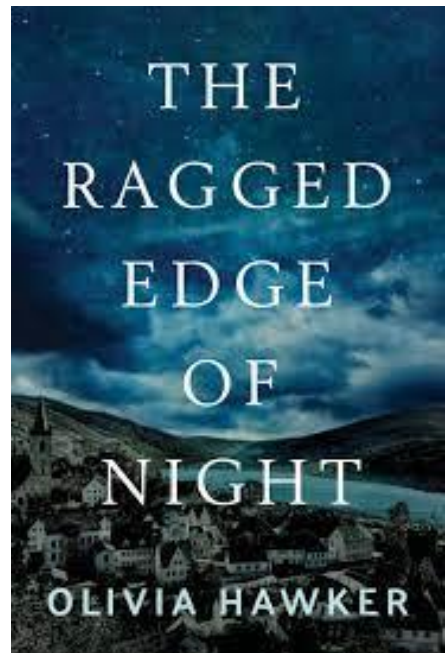
On the Nightstand

We are a blessed with the joy of reading in our congregation. Each month we invite you to share what is providing joy or meaning for you that you would recommend for others. We start with what Pastor Brent has been reading this month and look forward to hearing from you!

In progress: The Ragged Edge of Night by Olivia Hawker – this beautifully written and gripping story takes on the moral, physical, and familial struggles of life in WW II Germany through the eyes of a Franciscan friar and the family he comes to love and claim.

Finished recently: For the Life of the World by Miroslav Volf and Matthew Croasman (see Men’s Book Group section) – this challenging work releases a sense of joy, purpose and possibility in this endeavor we undertake of faith. Brilliantly combining aspects of traditional theology with a broad cross-section of scripture and church life the book stakes the claim that God creates for the purpose of flourishing and calls us into the task of making a home for God and us together.

Finished recently: The Magic Mountain by Thomas Mann – this lengthy tome dives deeply into ideas of life and death, time, meaning, and the human condition through the eyes of young Hans Castorp who travels to a sanatorium in the Swiss Alps to visit a cousin. The story finds life in his interactions with the diverse and intriguing cast of character Castorp claims as family in his seven years there.



Send the titles and a brief description of any titles that have found a place on your nightstand or in your imagination and we will share them in the upcoming newsletters.

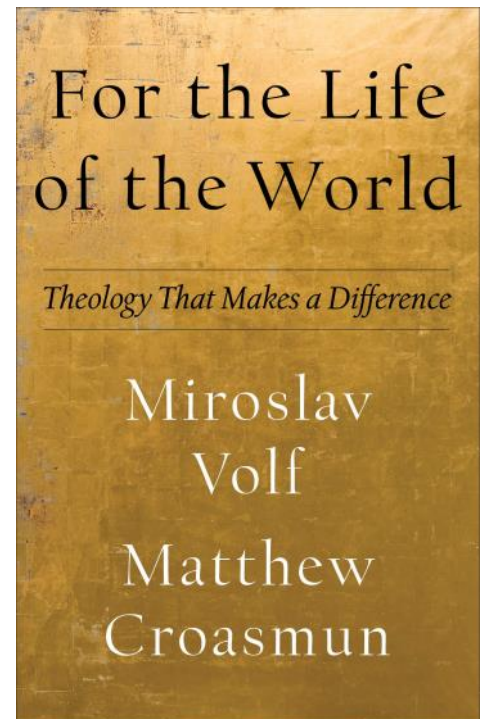
Men's Book Read Forming

Our church enjoys many traditions. Among them is the Men's Group. The two most gatherings included an exploration of *Puritan Boston, Quaker Philadelphia* led by Max Stackhouse and a study of Jonathan Edwards based on a work by George Marsden led by Rick Floyd.

In consultation with Rick, Pastor Brent will be sharing the work *For the Life of the World; Theology that Makes a Difference* written by Miroslav Volf and Matthew Croasmun. This relatively short work (185 pages) tackles critically important questions about what it means to experience "true life in the presence of God." The authors dedicate their work to their daughters and proclaim it to be a manifesto on how to reclaim the importance of theology for the world.

While the book is aimed at "theologians" it should not surprise anyone that Pastor Brent thinks that we are all theologians. The plan is to meet three times with each session covering two chapters and approximately 60 pages. The book is challenging, yet deeply provocative. It is concerned with the current state of things while deeply hopeful and beautiful. It brings together Bible, theology, and community into wonderful dialogue.

Books are available in the church office. Those who choose to participate will be provided with a glossary (to cover the theological terms) and a short video will be prepared for each session to help participants encounter the reading. We will meet the week of August 16, August 30 and September 13. Prior studies have been held over coffee and doughnuts in the morning (8:00 a.m.) so that folks can get to their day. While we hope to follow a similar schedule we will confirm once interest has been gauged. To sign up, please contact the church office. If you have any questions, reach out to Pastor Brent.



From the Church Archives

The organ loft before the mid-1950s renovation. Note the little office on the left, with the open door.



Top left: Larry Iemolini painting the Manse entryway, part of a project to address a few of the areas most in need of sprucing up. The crew also repainted three gables on the church office wing.

Top right: Helen McCormick, Ann Brink, and the rest of the Service League

are preparing for the famous Summer Fair, scheduled for August 14.

A couple of months ago, Chris Marsden of the Town of Stockbridge installed a new driveway sign; the church provided the sign itself. Bottom: a hard-working crew from Green Collar recently finished blowing in additional insulation into the three attics of the church. They also put down a vapor barrier on the dirt floors in the basement. Thanks to all who helped to prepare the basement by moving the many items that were stored there.

Personnel Committee News

In the church by-laws, employees of our church should have yearly employment reviews. With the onset of COVID-19, our church faced many challenges and yearly evaluations were halted. We are now overdue for congregational feedback to the staff.

The Personnel Committee of the church is charged with reviewing the paid staff which includes, Pastor, Music Minister, Church Administrator/Sexton, Financial Secretary, and Nursery attendant. This committee (*See below*) functions similar to an HR department, and all information is confidential. The committee makes recommendations to the Church Council and does not make any decisions about an employee of the church.

The committee as elected at the annual meeting in May is the same as elected in 2019:

Madonna Meagher , Chair, songbirdmm@gmail.com	Jeremy Ridenour , jeremy.ridenour@gmail.com
Joan Kopperl , jhkopperl@gmail.com	Hal Brink , brink725@gmail.com
Carl Bradford , bradfordc39@gmail.com	Pastor Brent Damrow , Ex-Officio bdamrow@stockbridgeucc.org

The Personnel Committee will ask for feedback from: the Congregation, peers of the employee, and a self-evaluation by the employee just as we did in 2019. This year we will focus on the Church Administrator/Sexton position of Will Garrison, Pastor Brent Damrow, and Financial Secretary, Ron Hanft. **First up is Will (see page 11).**

The more feedback forms that are returned, the stronger the data we have to clearly marvel in our strengths as a church, recognize the good work of our staff, and also the areas where we can grow as a church, to reflect about our roles as congregants, what each of us can do to make our community of faith stronger.

We need each and every one of you to “lift up your voice” and tell us what you think. And if you would still like to, we’re all ears; email us, snail mail us, phone us, put a note in the lock box in the JE Room.

Please be part of this important work.

Madonna Meagher,
Chair, Personnel Committee

Stockbridge Sinfonia

Stockbridge Sinfonia, Berkshires’ intergenerational community orchestra since 1972, announces its summer season of performances. Tracy Wilson is the Sinfonia’s Music Director, and players range in age from 12 to 97 years. This summer’s program features Dvorak’s New World Symphony (No. 9), Copland’s *Hoedown* from his Rodeo Suite, *River* from Berkshire Triptych by local composer Alice Spatz, and an arrangement of *Schindler’s List* by former Sinfonia Music Director Simeon Loring. *Schindler’s List* will feature Sinfonia string players who will be graduating (or graduated in 2020) from high school. Concerts are free and open to the public. COVID protocols for each venue will be observed, signs will be posted at entrances.

- Saturday, July 31, 3:00 pm. Lenox Memorial Middle and High School
- Saturday, August 7, 11:00 am. Zion Lutheran Church, Pittsfield (masks required for unvaccinated audience members)
- Sunday, August 15, 6:30 pm. Saint James Place, Great Barrington

For more info, contact Tracy at 413-822-8688

Congregational Input for the Church Administrator/Sexton

You may return this document to the Church by mailing to the church in a sealed envelope addressed to Personnel Committee, First Congregational Church, PO Box 825, Stockbridge MA 01262, or email comments to Madonna Meagher at songbirdmm@gmail.com. There is a locked box in the JE Room if you wish to deliver in person. The deadline is August 15.

Name: _____

(All feedback will remain confidential but having a name will be helpful for follow-up.)

1. This has been a unique and challenging year. Please provide any feedback for how Will Garrison served the church and congregation during the Pandemic.
2. Have you contacted the office for any need or issue? If so, how did Will handle your concern?
3. Please provide feedback on the publications of the church for which Will is responsible (Bulletin, Newsletter, Weekly E-mail, Annual Reports...).
4. Will also serves as our sexton. The Sexton is charged with ensuring the safety, beauty, and maintenance of the church building and grounds. Where appropriate the Sexton will directly perform cleaning and maintenance. Please provide any feedback in how that work is going here:
5. Are there parts of the buildings or grounds that could use loving attention? If so, please indicate here:
6. Please provide any other input regarding Will's role as either Administrator or Sexton:



Summer Fair

Mini-Grandma's Attic

Sat., Aug. 14, 2021
10 am – 2 pm

Crafts • Baked Goods
Fresh Produce • Cut Flowers
• Silent Auction •



FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH
4 Main St., Stockbridge, MA