



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

PO Box 825 Stockbridge MA 01262



November 2021

Breaking news! Special Congregational Meeting, p. 7

Pastor: The Rev. Brent Damrow (on sabbatical)

Interim Minister of Music: Tracy Wilson - 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.

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

November 2021

The First Congregational Church, UCC, Stockbridge

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Online worship at stockbridgeucc.org	1	2 <i>Berkshire Waldorf High School in Sanctuary 1:00pm</i>	3 Morning Prayer 8 am Bible Study 1:00pm Council 7:00pm	4 Walking Morning Prayer	5 Service League 10:00am	6 Barbara Bracknell memorial service 2:00pm <i>Al-Anon 5:00pm</i>
7 Worship 10:00 a.m. <i>Indoors gathered and online</i> SFC rehearsal 1:00pm	8 Sermon Discussion 7:30pm	9 Sermon Discussion 11:00 <i>Al-Anon 7:00pm</i>	10 Morning Prayer 8 am Bible Study 1:00 pm Christian Ed 5:00pm Music 7:00pm	11 Walking Morning Prayer <i>Stockbridge Golf Club JE Room 10-5</i>	12 Service League 10:00am <i>Stockbridge Golf Club JE Room 10-5</i>	13 <i>Al-Anon 5:00pm</i>
14 Worship 10:00 a.m. <i>Indoors gathered and online</i> SFC rehearsal 12:00pm <i>Sabbatical Sessions 1:30 and 7:00</i>	15 Spiritual Direction 2:00pm Sermon Discussion 7:30pm	16 Sermon Discussion 11:00am Tuesday Club 2:00pm <i>Al-Anon 7:00pm</i>	17 Morning Prayer 8 am Bible Study 1:00pm Trustees 5:30pm Deacons 6:30pm	18 Walking Morning Prayer Newsletter Deadline (send to Will)	19 Service League 10:00am	20 Golf Club board meeting <i>Al-Anon 5:00pm</i>
21 Worship 10:00 a.m. <i>Consecration Sunday</i> SFC rehearsal 1:00pm	22 Sermon Discussion 7:30pm	23 Sermon Discussion 11:00am <i>Al-Anon 7:00pm</i>	24 Morning Prayer 8 am Bible Study 1:00pm M & A 5:00pm G & F 6:00pm	25 Walking Morning Prayer Thanksgiving Day	26 Office closed Service League 10:00am	27 <i>Al-Anon 5:00pm</i>
28 Worship 10:00 a.m. <i>Indoors and online</i> SFC rehearsal 1:00pm	29 Sermon Discussion 7:30pm	30 Sermon Discussion 11:00am <i>Al-Anon 7:00pm</i>		Guest Preachers 11/7: Mollie Mitchell 11/14: David Figliuzzi 11/21: Jyrekis Collins 11/28: JaQuan Beachem		



FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

Stockbridge, Massachusetts

November 2021 Newsletter

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Pastor Brent is now one month into his three-month sabbatical (and so are we). In place of his opening letter, we offer a thoughtful, autumnal piece written by Quinn Caldwell for the October 6th UCC Daily Devotional. You may remember Quinn as a guest preacher early on in the pandemic, when we were exclusively live-streaming, delivering his sermon while emerging from his storm cellar.

Enjoy and Peace,
Cathy Clark

Overlap

Quinn Caldwell

You crown the year with your bounty; your wagon tracks overflow with richness. The pastures of the wilderness overflow, the hills gird themselves with joy, the meadows clothe themselves with flocks, the valleys deck themselves with grain, they shout and sing together for joy. Psalm 65:11-13 (NRSV)

Some people think the highest expression of God's presence is the wilderness primeval, innocent of human befoulment. Others claim that one day when God moves to earth full-time, the world will become a great city, with order and harmony and beauty in a built environment that covers the globe.

The psalmist isn't interested in this sort of either/or, wilderness vs. inner city. They're not interested in purity; they're interested in what happens when you get the mixture just right.

Here's how the psalmist says you know when God is present on the earth:

When life springs up even after the machines pass.

When domestic animals are fed, tended, and protected—when they're pastured—in the wilderness with the wild ones.

When the valleys doll themselves up in wheat and barley.

When the meadows are considered underdressed until they're draped with flocks of sheep and goats.

For the psalmist, the place of delight where God

dwells is that part of the Venn diagram where humans and the rest of the world overlap. Ingenuity and impulse, evolution and breeding, genetic drive and human wisdom, wild exuberance and



careful tending. The urgencies of nature and the skill of people intertwining. No dichotomies, no hierarchies. Instead: mixture, balance.

Instead: a garden.

Prayer: *Give us strength for the tending of this garden, O God. Grant us such balance in our living that the earth springs to bloom in our tracks and all the world knows that you dwell here, in our overlap. Amen.*

OUR SHARED LIFE TOGETHER

HAPPY NOVEMBER BIRTHDAYS

November 3 Ken Fogarty
November 5 Diane Piraino
 Deb McMenemy
November 7 Holland Eaton
November 8 Betsey McKearnan
November 11 David Anderegg
November 12 Peter Wise
November 13 Meryle Epstein
November 18 Trudy Fadding
 Anna Duhon
November 25 Kristofer Kennedy
November 27 Judi Peyron
 Marcia Miner
November 30 Will Garrison



Pastoral Care

Rev. Barbara Kershner will be serving as Pastoral Care person during Pastor Brent's sabbatical.

If you need to contact Rev. Kershner, please call/text (570) 449-8581

Since cell phone coverage is spotty where Rev. Kershner lives, please try texting first.



Help Wanted

The Board of Deacons respectfully request a little help.

Anyone who is willing to contribute by doing a small amount of reading in front of the congregation on any given Sunday.

This could include the Call to Worship or a little scripture reading as well.

Please reach out to Donna Jacobs donnajacobsmw@gmail.com or Don Eaton deaton2007@gmail.com. if interested.

Gratefully Yours, Your Board of Deacons

Pledge News: Giving Envelopes

You will be receiving a pledge card in early November. We'll be asking you to consider a generous pledge for 2022 in support of our worship and many program opportunities here at First Congregational Church, Stockbridge. On that pledge card you may request giving envelopes for 2022, for either weekly or monthly giving.

This year we will be printing our own

envelopes, saving us significant costs. You do not have to pledge to use the card to request giving envelopes; we just need to know whether you want envelopes in a packet of 12 for monthly giving or 52 for weekly giving.

If you do not indicate your desire for envelopes on a pledge card you can send your request to me at rphanft@yahoo.com, or 413-232-4179. Many thanks for your cheerful giving! -- Ron Hanft, Financial Secretary.

Regathering Committee

The Regathering Committee continues to meet periodically, with the objective of maintaining protocols that keep us safe and are welcoming to all. We continue to rely on the COVID-19 case numbers in our area, guidance from our denomination, CDC guidelines, as well as state and local input. Currently we are adhering to the Tri-town Health Department Directive (Lee, Lenox and Stockbridge) that requires masks be worn inside, regardless of vaccination status (with some exceptions).

In light of the current situation, including increasingly chilly weather, our protocol no longer includes automatically opening windows when rooms are occupied, as all will continue to remain properly distanced and masked.

The committee will continue to update you on our ongoing response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Stay safe, Cathy Clark for the Regathering Committee (Anne Hutchinson, Michael Deegan, Hal Brink, Ronnie Cunningham, Will Garrison, Brent Damrow)

Board of Deacons

The Deacons would like to express our gratitude to the congregation for the heartfelt send-off for Pastor Brent as he left on Sabbatical; and the enthusiastic and warm welcome that has been extended to our Guest Worship Leaders. We are especially grateful to those volunteers who have filled in as liturgists and Deacon volunteers when we've been shorthanded.

We've been working closely with the Re-gathering Committee and the Sunday School to ensure a comfortable and safe environment as worship has transitioned back into the Sanctuary. Each week we learn a little more about collecting text messages as they come in from remote worshippers; how to adjust airflow so the candles don't blow out; how to adjust the volume so we can comfortably hear our Sunday morning speakers in the Sanctuary; and a variety of other invisible tasks that serve our worship together. Each week has been encouraging. Many may be glad to know that we no longer need to keep windows wide open-- and just in time as temperatures are dropping!

We are looking forward to Advent as a time when we will slow down and reflect in prayer amidst the excitement of the season. We continue to pray for recovery from these months of quarantine, and for the times we come together, whether in person or remotely, in safety and in fellowship.

We would also like to hear from you. Please contact Michael Deegan, Anna Duhon, Don Eaton, Joshua Hall, Donna Jacobs, or Ted Randolph to let us know how we're doing.

~ Donna Jacobs

Sabbatical Committee Update

On Sunday, October 17, we had our first Sabbatical Session to discuss "What is church for?" Both the afternoon in-person and the evening Zoom session were lively, and engaging (and I would even say, "fun"), and our facilitator, Rev. John Nelson kept us on track.

The next session is on Sunday November 14 and will focus on "**How does that purpose show up, inform, relate to, or impact the relationships with each other within our church?**" There again will be an in-person session at the church 1:30-3:00, and that evening 7:00-8:30 via Zoom. To register, please visit stockbridgeucc.org or call the office.

There are no prerequisites and there's plenty of room in both sessions.

Hope you can join us.

Cathy Clark, for the Sabbatical Committee (Michael Deegan, Holland Eaton, Charlotte Rodgers)

Christian Education

The Board of Christian Education will offer Sunday School outdoors if it isn't too cold or damp; kids can wear outdoor clothing and masks, and the classes will involve a lot of physical activity to keep everyone warm! When the weather doesn't cooperate, we will be inside in the JE Room, masked and socially distanced. We welcome all kids to join us as we explore the new curriculum! Many thanks to congregants who are not CE Board Members but have agreed to teach Sunday School, most recently Cindy Brown and Ted Randolph. Your generosity and experience contribute so much! If other congregants are willing or even eager to teach, please contact Jill Wheat.

The children will be collecting donations for the Heifer Project this year on Halloween Sunday. It's always a treat to see them in costume, and they will be learning about how the Heifer Project helps people develop self-sustaining agricultural projects all over the world. If you can, please bring cash (change and/or bills) or check to help the kids help the world. (UNICEF, the traditional trick-or-treat program, decided not to collect cash this year as a COVID caution.)

The new incarnation of the Youth Group at church is underway, planning outings, gatherings at church, and projects. Youth can invite friends to come join in. For info, contact Jill Wheat.

The Sermon Discussion Groups have had lots of great content to discuss with our first three visiting

preachers! Many thanks to Sarah Drummond, JaQuan Beachem, and Ned Allyn Parker for meaty sermons, to hardworking Cindy Brown for providing transcriptions, to Diego Salinetti for posting the worship services so speedily to our YouTube channel, and to Jeremy Ridenour, Kim Ruffing and Linda Russell for facilitating the discussion groups held by Zoom on Monday nights at 7:30 and Tuesday mornings at 11:00.

Adult Education is looking ahead to Advent with a plan to offer programming based on this year's UCC Advent Devotional, titled Jesus Crisis. CE plans to buy copies of the devotional—either on paper or as a pdf. In the next week or two you'll be receiving an email inviting you to read the devotional and, perhaps join a group in discussing the writings in the booklet. Keep your eyes out for an email from Elizabeth Young. If you don't have email and want to be on the list to receive a copy of the Devotional, you can call Will at the church office.

Finally, we plan to offer a winter Bible Study when Brent is back: a course on the Book of Luke. It will run for 14 weeks, beginning shortly after Christmas, and ending right at Easter. We will use the book, *Good News for All*, part of the Kerygma bible study series. We hope you'll consider signing up for this exciting exploration!

The Board of Christian Education: Elizabeth Evans, Barbara Kershner, Paul Rix, Ken Ward, Jill Wheat (chair,) Terry Wise, and Elizabeth Young.

Kids Music News

The Kids Choir has been enthusiastically spreading musical Joy this autumn. They are learning about hand chimes and may add them to their sweet voices and kids bells. School aged children are most welcome to join this fun musical ensemble! They will re-connect at church, participate in worship, see familiar faces, make some new friends and create soulful & spirited music to share. Generally, the kids rehearse from 9-9:50 before the worship service two Sundays each month, and participate in the service on the fourth Sunday, with occasional other dates.

There are sure to be exciting plans for Advent! Please contact Jill Wheat for more information.



Photo: Christmas Eve, 2019

Special Congregation Meeting

Capital Campaign

On October 24th, the congregation met after church (both in-person and via live-streaming) to consider whether the church should begin a capital campaign. We heard presentations and discussed potential capital projects: needed organ repairs; an update on our front stairs; a report on our recent Feasibility Study; and a preliminary report on an independent, but concurrent, Planned Giving component to a capital campaign.

A motion to “approve the launch of a capital campaign with a goal of \$850,000, including consultant fees” was unanimously approved by the congregation!

The next step is to set up a Campaign Executive Committee (CEC) composed of the co-chairs of the following committees: advance gifts and evaluation; church family gifts; publicity; brochure; kickoff dinner and program; administrative support; recording,

acknowledgement and follow-up; prayer group; building/projects; minister and members-at-large; grants; and planned giving. The co-chairs of the CEC are Bronly Boyd and Cathy Clark. Already over a dozen folks have stepped up to leadership positions on these committees, and eventually we hope that over half the congregation will contribute their time and talent through these committees to ensure a successful capital campaign (“many hands make light the work”).

If you would like to volunteer, or would just like more information on what the tasks are of any of the committees, contact Will or any of us on the Steering committee.

Peace,

Cathy Clark for the Capital Campaign Steering Committee: Bronly Boyd, Carl Bradford, Susan Moyle Lynch, Joe Nicolosi, Frank Russell, and Patty Strauch

Tracy Wilson returns!

We are fortunate indeed that Tracy Wilson agreed to fill in as Interim Minister of Music until early January, 2022.

From her bio: Tracy Wilson earned a Master of Music from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, with a concentration in piano and arts administration, with additional studies at Catholic University and an internship at the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts (Washington D.C.) After the internship was completed, Tracy was offered a full time job as Coordinator for Programs for Children and Youth and served for three years in that position; during the summer months, she worked as Assistant Music Director of main stage productions and Music Director of the after-hours cabarets at Weston Summer Theatre in Vermont.

Tracy recently wrapped up a 35 year career in arts administration, working in development at Jacob’s Pillow Dance Festival, nine years as Director of

Development and twice acting/interim director at Berkshire Museum, seven years with Boston Symphony Orchestra/Tanglewood, and nearly 17 years at Berkshire Music School’s Executive Director. Throughout her professional career as an arts administrator, Tracy was, and continues to be, actively involved in the local community as a collaborative pianist, conductor of the Stockbridge Festival Chorus, conductor of Stockbridge Sinfonia (a summer community orchestra), and church organist/choir director with First Congregational Church of Stockbridge.





Stewardship

As we enter November, days are growing shorter and hearty stews are replacing the carefree meals of summer. It is a time to slow down and reflect on our personal lives as part of a church family.

We've spent almost two years living with uncertainty and anxiety at a time that your connection with church changed as we tried new and different ways to "be the church." During this time, we became aware of the role that church plays in our lives as we shared through zoom our challenges, struggles, and connections. In many ways, this part of being part of "my church family" created an opportunity to feel the gifts of faith, fellowship, and community in an environment that nurtures, educates, and challenges us to become thinking and acting Christians in our community and world.

We are excited to be back in our church, albeit constrained, but this gives us hope for a strong future. It's a time to give thanks for what we have, trust in each other, transform to become our better selves and renew our faith.

And as the new year approaches, it is the time for each of us to engage in prayer to decide the level of support we can give to this vital part of our lives that depends on the generosity of our gifts.

We do not tell you how much to pledge because it is truly an individual decision based on your heart's telling. We can tell you though making a pledge in an amount that you are comfortable with will make you feel good because it reflects a commitment to the place you have chosen as your spiritual home.

If this is your very first time to consider pledging, welcome! Or, if you have questions, just let us know, and we'll walk you through the process. Email: office@stockbridgeucc.org

Thank you for your generosity! We can't exist without you!

Peace be with you,

The Trustees and Stewardship Committee

Art News

Terry Wise will be showing her colorful still life paintings in a two-person exhibit at the Red Raven Art Company gallery in Lancaster, PA, during the month of November.

A virtual tour of the show will be posted on the gallery website throughout November: redravenartcompany.com. Many of Terry's other paintings can be seen on the website under the tab "Visiting Artists" and scroll down to her name.





Helping our Neighbors: The Giving Tree Holiday Gift Program

As the Christmas season comes near, please plan to engage with Mission &

Action in the annual tradition of the Giving Tree program! We've reached out to area social services agencies to provide our congregation with the opportunity to give gifts to families in need. As in prior years, we try to provide each person with three gifts (an item of clothing, a household item or a toy, and a book). As you shop, think about grabbing gift cards (CVS, Big Y, Price Chopper) that can be used in South County. There is also an opportunity for you to shop for pets – food and treats!

Again, this year you will be able to go online and select a family. You also will be able to contact Will for help selecting a family if going online is not your thing. Look for full details that will be sent in a special E-news email on or around November 12th. You can then shop and drop your wrapped gifts at the church. Questions? Contact Charlotte Rodgers 978-618-5767

Mission & Action

On October 3, the Board of Mission & Action asked the congregation for donations to support the People's Pantry in Great Barrington, and offered to match them up to \$1000. We are happy to report that there was a very robust response and we exceeded the \$1000 match! Thank you to everyone who so generously stepped up. As a reminder, there are two ways to help support the local fight against hunger – The People's Pantry, and our congregation's Pop-up Pantry. Details for both are on the church website, stockbridgeucc.org - just click on "GIVE."

We sent a directed donation of \$800 to the Salvation Army in Pittsfield and \$1000 to UCC Disaster Ministries/Outreach to help those impacted by the hurricane in



Giving Tree elves, 2019

Louisiana. We are learning more about refugee families from Afghanistan who will be coming to live in the Berkshires. As we know more, we will be updating you and determining how we can best help our new neighbors!

As we near the season of Advent, we are once again making plans for the annual Giving Tree. This year's program will be available to you on line. You will be able to select a family to shop for, wrap the gifts and return them to the JE Room for distribution. Please be on the lookout for a special E-news with all of the details on how to participate in the Giving Tree.

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



FROM THE SERVICE LEAGUE: On October 8, the members of the Service League, along with a number of community members, gathered in the Stockbridge Cemetery, where Barbara Kershner led a lovely, simple graveside service for our own Barbara Bracknell, who died September 29th at the age of 99. It was a bittersweet occasion, as fond and funny memories were shared on a beautiful, sunny, perfect Stockbridge afternoon. A memorial service for Barbara will be held at the Church on November 6 at 2:00 PM; the Service League will host a reception after the service in the Jonathan Edwards Room.

Looking a bit farther ahead, we are, of course, focused on plans for the upcoming HOLLY FAIR, which will be held on December 4, 10 AM - 2 PM. It will look a bit different from past years - there won't be a luncheon, for example, so we can spread out a bit more for covid-safety and our greenery and pie sales have moved online - but we guarantee it will still be fun. Mark your calendar! For delicious home-baked apple and pumpkin pies and lovely decorated wreaths, you can order online. Please visit the church website, www.stockbridgeucc.org for details, and keep eny eye on the weekly emails. And, of course, you may call the office (413-298-3137), where elves are standing by to help you place your order!

And, if you'd like to play too, we could use some extra elves to help make those wreaths. We'll be meeting at the Grange on Church Street on Monday, 11/29, Tuesday, 11/30, and Wednesday, 12/1, from 9:00 AM till 3:30 PM (with a lunch break). Call Anne Hutchinson at 413-854-7798 to sign up for a shift!

Most of you probably know that for many years the Service League has sponsored scholarships for our college-enrolled members, or children of members. While the SCHOLARSHIP FUND is now a Church-wide project supported in part by the Service League, our members will continue to help administer it, along with Carl Bradford, who's ably overseen its finances for years. The deadline for requests for grants is fast approaching, so please see the announcement elsewhere in this Newsletter for more details about the application process.

Until next month - stay well, stay safe, and enjoy the last bits of summer warmth.

Margaret Hornick, for the Service League

FROM THE SCHOLARSHIP

COMMITTEE: The Scholarship Fund will again provide grants for members or children of members who are enrolled in a two or four year college. The deadline for applications is November 15. Applications should contain the following information:

- The applicant's name, membership status, and names of parent(s), if the applicant is applying under their name;
- The applicant's mailing address;
- The college or university in which the applicant is enrolled, and the field of study.

Applications should be submitted, in the form of a letter requesting a scholarship and containing the above information, sent to The Scholarship Fund, c/o the First Congregational Church, PO Box 825, Stockbridge, MA, 01262. Applications may also be emailed to Will Garrison, the Church Administrator, at office@stockbridgeucc.org, with Attn: Scholarship Committee as the subject line.



The amount of the scholarship typically varies from year to year, and depends on both the performance of the funds which support the grants, and the number of grants requested. The

exact amount will not be announced until approximately December 15, at a church service. Scholarship recipients, or a family representative, are encouraged to attend the service at which grants are given. Scholarships may be requested for four years. A copy of the application guidelines may be obtained from the church office.

If further information is needed, please contact the church office, or one of the members of the Scholarship Committee: Carl Bradford, Patty Fadding, or Margaret Hornick.

Barbara Bracknell

It was with sadness we learned of the death of Barbara Bracknell, a long-time member of First Congregational Church.

There will be a memorial service in the sanctuary of Saturday, November 6 at 2:00pm; Rev. Barbara Kershner officiating.

Mrs. Bracknell was also a long-time member of the Service League. At a recent meeting, they shared a few memories:

Barbara Smith grew up at High Lawn Farm, and attended Lee Congregational Church. Barbara met Robert Bracknell at Benjamin's Pharmacy (now Minkler Insurance); Bob proposed to Barbara at the church.

Barbara joined this church, and loved being a deacon; she served many terms and was designated emerita status. She did not hesitate to "wag her finger" at ministers and caregivers alike if they or the children misbehaved. She loved her cat, Tigger.

Barbara was famous for her knitted mittens, hats, and sweaters - many given to the children of the church. See photo, taken at the 2006 Holly Fairs by Cindy Brown. She made the famous "scrubbies," still sold at Holly Fairs. Be sure to come to this year's Fair to buy one in honor of Barbara.



Repairs, Renovations, and a Call for Volunteers

Just a few projects completed by our talented roster of contractors over the past few months: repainting gables on office/classroom wing of the church and much of the trim on the manse; installing a new garage door (which meant installation of a much-needed new electrical circuit, which meant a trench dug between the garage and the house); additional insulation throughout all the attics and vapor barrier in the basement (which meant taking everything out then putting some of it back); installation of more rebuilt shutters on the church; and starting the repair of the front steps. Another project, just under way, is a serious refreshing of Brent's office. The crew from the Stockbridge Golf Club will swoop in with their equipment to take care of the leaves.

But don't fear - there is plenty for volunteer work crews, inside and out!

- Tidy up the flower beds and borders, where Golf Club crew may not have reached
- Take down and pack away the tent
- Wash windows
- Put in orange sticks to mark edge of driveway/parking areas, for snowplows.
- Re-stain the garage exterior
- Vacuum pew cushions
- And more! Just contact Will in the office, and we'll schedule the work. Thanks!



Don Eaton and his son Marius, on the occasion of Marius' 21st birthday.



Sunday School students (we think!) Photo by Tracy Wilson



Don Hayward takes a break from installing shutters to repaint the front windows.