

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

PO Box 825 Stockbridge MA 01262



March 2022

Pastor: The Rev. Brent Damrow

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*

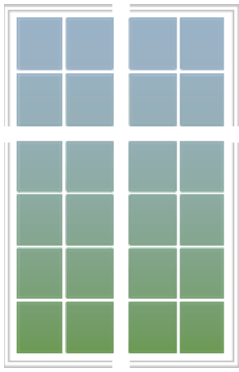
Wednesday: Morning Prayer, 8:00 a.m. *Online*

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

March 2022

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 at stockbridgeucc.org		1 Gospel of Luke Study 12:00noon <i>Al-Anon 7:00pm</i> Gospel of Luke Study 7:00pm	2 Morning Prayer 8 am Bible Study 1:00 pm Ash Wednesday 12:00 – 1:30pm and 5:00 – 6:00pm	3	4 Brent's Sabbath Day	5 <i>Al-Anon 5:00pm</i>
6 Worship 10:00 a.m. <i>Gathered & online</i> Lenten Study – Hope 11:20-12:30	7	8 Gospel of Luke Study 12:00noon <i>Al-Anon 7:00pm</i> Gospel of Luke Study 7:00pm	9 Morning Prayer 8 am Bible Study 1:00pm Christian Ed 5:00pm Music 7:00pm Church Council 7pm	10	11 Brent's Sabbath Day Service League 10:00am	12 <i>Al-Anon 5:00pm</i>
13 Worship 10:00 a.m. <i>Gathered & online</i> Lenten Study – Hope 11:20-12:30 Berkshire Lyric 4:00pm	14 Spiritual Direction 2:00pm	15 Gospel of Luke Study 12:00noon <i>Tuesday Club 1:15pm</i> <i>Al-Anon 7:00pm</i> Gospel of Luke 7:00pm	16 Morning Prayer 8 am Bible Study 1:00pm Trustees 5:00pm Deacons 7:30pm	17	18 Brent's Sabbath Day Service League 10:00am Newsletter Deadline (send to Will)	19 <i>Al-Anon 5:00pm</i>
20 Worship 10:00 a.m. <i>Gathered & online</i> CEC 11:30am Lenten Study – Hope 11:20-12:30	21	22 Gospel of Luke Study 12:00noon <i>Al-Anon 7:00pm</i> Gospel of Luke Study 7:00pm	23 Morning Prayer 8 am Bible Study 1:00pm M & A 5:00pm G&F 6:00pm	24	25 Brent's Sabbath Day Service League 10:00am	26 <i>Stockbridge Golf Club meeting 8:30am</i> <i>Al-Anon 5:00pm</i>
27 Worship 10:00 a.m. <i>Gathered & online</i> Lenten Study – Hope 11:20-12:30	28	29 Gospel of Luke Study 12:00noon <i>Al-Anon 7:00pm</i> Gospel of Luke 7:00pm	30 Morning Prayer 8 am Bible Study 1:00pm	31	Berkshire Waldorf High School schedule (JE Room)	Monday 12:45- 3:30; Tues 10:25- 11:20 & 1:15-3:30; Wed. 2:15-3:30; Thurs 11:35-12:30 & 2:30-3:30.



FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

Stockbridge, Massachusetts

March 2022 Newsletter

Dear Church Family,

This year we bring the lens of hope to our Lenten work of prayer, reflection, and preparation. It is a theme that resonates through the Biblical story and in our own times too. Hope was in the whispers of the people of Israel who dared to wonder if Jesus was the one to bring restoration and possibility. Hope was what brought the shepherds to the stable, led the fishers to throw down their nets, compelled the throngs out into the wilderness, and gave courage to all who sought out Jesus for healing and wholeness.

Hope is no small thing. Buffeted by forces and times beyond us, hope not only provides that which enables us to survive, it inspires the kind of thinking, imagination, and action that helps us to thrive. Hope doesn't ignore or forget challenge or suffering it allows what was learned in the midst of such things or the blessings discovered to be applied and incorporated that life moving forward might be deeper, richer, and even more joy filled. Hope is what allows us to turn away from fear and towards possibility.

We face big challenges. An already complicated world is groaning under the added weight of this pandemic. The world's political, military, and economic systems are all strained to the breaking point. We are witnessing war in ways many of us thought relegated to the past. We also know that disagreement and lack of civility are not just problems for big systems far away – they are affecting our own relationships too. I know this because I have talked to many of you about your own struggles in relationships even as I find myself in those same struggles with people I know and care about. I give thanks that hope is up to the task because it is also hope that which

allows for patience when no good outcomes are apparent. It is hope that helps us return to our true selves. It is hope that allows us to pray for others as they pray for us right back.

Lent is always a liminal time, but this year even more so. Amid all the challenges, there are also signs of new life. We are emerging from the season of winter with the hope of spring. We are emerging from the harshest grip of the pandemic too. This has been a hard time when so much has felt beyond us. It has been a time of suffering and discovery, of challenge and resilience, a time of separation and profound connection. As we emerge, hope will help us to honor the real hardship while also incorporating the blessings and insights of these times just as it has done for people of faith for millennia.

Worship during Lent will be grounded firmly in hope. The Old Testament stories drip with hope and they will be the basis for my preaching. The Gospel stories reveal hope through the stories of Jesus, and they will be front and center in our time with the children (of all ages). Music will include beautiful, sturdy, and well-worn hymns along with newer texts that stir our imagination. In the end, our task will be a familiar one – to walk together as we follow Christ. It is to remember what God has done and is still doing. It is to commit ourselves to seeing the kingdom of God all around us and working to expand its reach.

The ancient call to live into hope is our very calling today.

I look forward to the journey,

Brent

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	Doris Brochu 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 Connor

Cellist
Annabelle
Hoffman shared
her talents
during worship,
February 13.
Annabelle, a
recent transplant
to the
Berkshires,
teaches at the Berkshire Music School.



Ash Wednesday Observances

The deacons have been thinking a lot about Ash Wednesday. We've been talking with each other about how the times we live in continue to be challenging and stressful for individuals as well as communities. So we wondered, how might an outdoor, non-traditional Ash Wednesday service—or should we call it a gathering?—speak to us where we are?

I wish I could say we hit upon the definitive magic-miraculous formula that brings it all together. All I know for sure is that we like the idea of fires in fire pits, prayers of confession, sticks of atonement to burn in the fire pits, ashes on the forehead, the cold beauty of a March evening, and the chance to linger in silent but communal contemplation.

These are the elements, weather cooperating, that will make up our 2022 Ash Wednesday Gathering, to be held March 2 between 5:00 and 6:30pm. This is an “open house” format: come whenever you wish and stay as long as you like. Please consider dressing warmly enough to stay for a little while by the fires (bring a blanket!), and we invite you to bring your own thermos of hot tea/coffee/cocoa to sip. Chairs will be available.

Earlier in the day, between 12:00 –and 1:30pm, you are welcome to come to the Sanctuary for a time of reflection, prayer, and to receive the imposition of ashes. The sanctuary will be warm and set up to facilitate individual reflection. There will be soft music, symbols of faith and scriptural passages on hand. When you are finished you are welcome to receive ashes as well as a prayer of blessing.

Call for Readers and Welcomers

The deacons are calling for volunteers to read scripture or other parts of the liturgy during Sunday services. We are also inviting anyone who would like to be a welcomer (similar to the traditional greeter, but you get to stand inside) to help us out by doing that. Any questions? Ask Donna Jacobs or Pastor Brent. Ready to sign up? Please contact Will in the church office, and he will add your name to the list of your choice, reader or welcomer. Each month you'll get an email asking if you'd like to serve that month, and on which day(s).



Board of Mission & Action

Mission and Action continues to operate a Pop Up Pantry located at the rear entry of the church 24 hours a day. The central mission of this project is to provide short-term food supplies free of charge to anyone who needs them. During these times of rising inflation, food prices are rising dramatically and dollars are stretched, so we are stocking shelf stable non-perishable food staples such as cereals, oats, boxed milk, peanut/nut butter, tuna, rice, pasta, pasta sauce, soups, crackers and assorted canned foods. We even offer some items that are gluten free and nut free, as well as limited supplies of basic paper goods.

Here is how you can help!

Please spread the word about the pantry to anyone you know who could be helped by this gift of food.

Check out the Pop Up Pantry on the church website (under Church Life / Service & Justice) and look to see what items you can donate to the Pantry here. Bring your items for donation to the church office.

If you would like to volunteer to help stock the Pop up Pantry, just let us know! It usually takes less than one hour per week!



You can also designate a monetary gift to the Pop up Pantry, or, to the Peoples Pantry in Great Barrington. Just note on your gift where you wish your funds to go.

Thank you from all of us at Mission and Action!
Cindy, Carl, Sarah, Martha, Nick, Charlotte and Bruce.

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



Service League

Here's the latest from the Service League. Nothing from Scholarship this month unless you'd like to include an image of that nice letter from Ella Smith.

As of February 11, we are back in our routine of meeting on Friday mornings - a slightly altered routine, with shorter meetings and less food, in deference to Covid protocols, but still, it's a joy to be together again after a long break. And of course there's lots of plotting and planning going on as to how we should structure our upcoming fund-raisers. In spite of Covid restrictions, we were pleased with the year's accomplishments, and between the Holly Fair, Summer Fair, two pop-ups, and the pie sale, we netted nearly \$4000, all of which will be dedicated to mission projects at home and abroad.

Nothing's set in stone yet, but at present we're imagining a pop-up in June, so if you're starting plants indoors for your garden, would you earmark a few for us? Those are always popular in late Spring/early Summer. And it's not too soon to mark your calendar for the 2022 Holly Fair, on Saturday, December 3. We all know time flies and it will be here before we know it. And of course Holly Fair means Grandma's Attic, so feel free to start bringing in your no-longer-used treasures so that we can offer them to someone else who will treasure them. So many lovely things were donated last year, making Grandma's Attic a big success, and a lot of fun for us as we open each mystery box. Thank you all for your support - we could never do it without you! One notable absence at this year's Holly Fair was our own Helen McCormick, who went south for a month to be with her son's family. It was hard, but we let her go. The easy part? Welcoming her back on February 11. And, if there are any frustrated crafters out there - or just anyone who would enjoy some Friday morning fellowship, please join us! New faces are always welcome.



CALLING ALL CHORISTERS!

The search committee for the new Minister of Music is hard at work, and we are getting closer to the time when we might bring candidates to our church to get to know them better. One of the things we might want to know is how these folks conduct a choir rehearsal. To that end we are

CALLING ALL CHORISTERS!

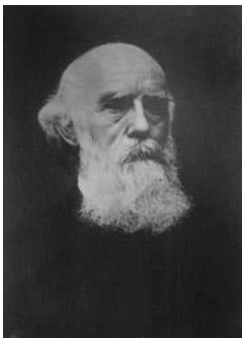
We are looking for a group of choir singers to serve as a pick-up choir when we bring candidates on site. Be assured, this is not a long-term commitment: this is a short-term group to be convened simply for the purpose of learning more about our candidates. So we hope if you have sung in the church choir recently, or have sung in Festival Chorus or Berkshire Lyric or Berkshire Concert Choir, or have sung in the Nightingales Choir at Millard Fillmore Middle School in East Nyack NY...you get the idea. We will announce the when and where, but right now we just want you all to consider this so when the time comes you are ready to dust off your pipes.

Thanks so much...can't wait to hear you! ~ David Anderegg for the Board of Music

First Congregational History

The list of ministers here at the First Congregational Church has been filled with great theologians like Rev. Jonathan Edwards, as well as those whose impact was closer to home like Rev. C.W. Fisher who endeavored to create the first endowment for our church. Did you know we also had an early environmental activist as well?

While doing research for someone on Daniel R. Williams, a long time Deacon in our church, I came upon the name of the Rev. Nathaniel H.



Egleston. Rev. Egleston preached in Stockbridge from 1860 to 1869, through the difficult times and aftermath of our nation's Civil War. It was not long after the end of the Civil War that Egleston seemed to become very concerned with the conservation of our

forested areas. I am sure living in the Berkshires did nothing to help his concerns as it would soon be clear cut with the development of the first wood pulp mill in the United States here in Stockbridge.

In 1883 Rev. Egleston was appointed to the US Department of Agriculture's Division of Forestry as its second chief. Admittedly unqualified for the position, Egleston did promote the idea of the Federal government protecting forested areas for the enjoyment of its citizens and wrote various articles about promoting forestry in the United States and the creation of schools specializing in that area as well.

Rev. Egleston was replaced as Chief of the Forestry Division in 1886 as a new administration entered office. Rev. Egleston, seemingly relieved that he was being replaced, gladly accepted a new and less stressful position as a clerk and continued to work for the Forestry Division for another 12 years, retiring in 1898. He later moved to Jamaica Plains, MA where he died in 1912 at the age of 90.

~ Joshua Hall

Stockbridge Festival Chorus

Tracy Wilson is thrilled to announce that the Stockbridge Festival Chorus will present a concert on Saturday, April 30 at 5:00pm, at First Congregational Church. Save the date!

The program will include:

Malcolm Dalglish: *Great Trees*; Mack Wilberg: *Come Thou Fount*; David Hurd: *Every Pilgrim has a Mountain*; Moses Hogan: *Down by the Riverside*; Stephen Paulus: *The Road Home*; Randall Thompson: *Choose Something Like a Star*; *The Pasture, and Girls Garden*; Steven Sametz: *I Have Had Singing*; Steve Murray: *El Dorado*; Anson Olds: *Prairie Spring*; Alice Parker: *Be Joyful/O How Happy Are They*; Aaron Copland: *The Promise of Living*.



The Bell Choir practicing for the March 6 worship service.



Capital Campaign

Sometimes the news isn't news. Brochures are at the printers; a certain insert will, in fact, be included in with the second letter; we are closing in on finalizing a venue for the Kickoff event; a proposed memento item has been given the unanimous approval of the CEC; people are uploading photos to a church Dropbox site for possible inclusion in a video; and so on.

Don't get me wrong; this all represents a ton of work- but it's under the radar stuff. Still, if you have any questions about the campaign, don't hesitate to ask Bronly Boyd or Cathy Clark, or any of us on the CEC. In the meantime, I have some questions for you.

~ Ted Randolph for the CEC

CEC Quiz No. 2

(1) Our present building, the third structure to house our church, was built in

(a) 1739, (b) 1785, (c) 1824, (d) 1865, (e) 1890.

(2) Which of the following are true of John Sergeant?

(a) He learned to speak the language of the Mohican people, (b) His first wife's name was Abigail (née Williams), (c) He did not baptize Lt. Umpachene because he (Sergeant) was not yet ordained, (d) He had a son, John, Jr., who was a missionary to the Mohicans both in Stockbridge and New Stockbridge (NY) for many years, (e) all of the above, (f) none of the above.

(3) Which of these verses is not from the Bible?

(a) God loves a cheerful giver, (b) do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, (c) ...rob Peter to pay Paul, (d) If I give all I possess to the poor and give over my body to hardship that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing, (e) For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

(4) The fellowship hall of the church is best known by members as the Jonathan Edwards (or J.E.) Room. What is the name of the 1956 addition to the church, advertised until recently by a plaque until it was removed to paint the wall?

(a) The Education Wing, (b) The West Wing, (c) Niebuhr's Nook, (d) The John Sergeant Memorial, (e) The Janet Merkl Rooms.



Christian Education

Update: With the help of the Regathering Committee, we continue to assess the viability of offering in-person Sunday School, a strong priority. See recent online Family Resources, including a special series related to Capital Campaign projects on the Livestream page. If your kids have drawings and prayers from the series, please email photos to Will at office@stockbridgeucc.org so they can be shared with the congregation in the Weekly E-News! Participation prizes will be awarded! Kids Choir will start back up on March 20 at 9:00am for rehearsal, then March 27 for rehearsal at 9:00am and then singing in that service.

Adult Education continued with the Bible Study on Luke—reports from both groups are that the course is good. If you're interested in joining a group on the same material later in the year, please let us know as we are keeping that as a possibility.

Lent begins on Ash Wednesday, March 2. There are two Adult Education opportunities:

Forty Days of Hope: A Lenten Devotional

With your help, the Board of Christian Education has created a devotional dedicated to personal stories about hope. Please consider contributing a short personal experience you've had with hope. We've planned for about 40 stories for a Devotional for people to read during Lent. A small group will discuss the devotionals on Thursday afternoons (March 10, 17, 24, 31, and April 7 and 14 at 2:00pm) at the church. Copies of the Devotional will be available online and, as needed, in print. Please contact Will in the office if you wish to get a copy.

Annual Lenten Study - Hope

A long-standing tradition of Lent has been to gather in study and sharing. This year, we will be looking at hope through poetry and two fantastic books:

[The Book of Hope: A Survival Guide for Trying Times](#) by Jane Goodall and Douglas Adams

[Love is the Way](#) by Bishop Michael Curry

Participants will be asked to read ONE of the books and then to be part of weekly small group discussions. Pastor Brent and Elizabeth Young will offer a section in-person after church for the first five Sundays in Lent. We also will be forming small groups to meet face-to-face or over Zoom. To sign up, select your book, and indicate your preference for gathering, go to stockbridgeucc.org or call Will in the office.





A note from Terry Wise

Thank you to all who have been holding Jay Wise in your prayers. His open heart surgery on January 24 was successful, timely, and nothing short of miraculous, and he is recuperating at home.

Volunteer Work Crews!

With hope, we plan to open up the church more and more during Lent and beyond. A few areas of the church can use your help. Will is putting together task lists, keyed to each room in the church. Come alone, or put together a team, to tackle dusting, window washing, and more. For more information, contact Will in the church office.

Thank you!



Claire Williams passed along this wonderful picture of the Junior Choir, circa 1941. Claire is in the front row, far right. Other singers, location in the photo not specified, included Mary Cooper, Nan Price, Pat Jones, Doris and Marian Hopkins, and Gerry Turner.

The photo was taken in a place that no longer exists. This was the south side of the JE Room, before the office/Sunday School wing was added in the 1950s. Laura Seeley led this choir as well as the Senior Choir.

Connections (New Member) Class

Saturday March 19 – 10:00 am - Noon

Have you been exploring this church and want to know more? Have you been attending worship on-line or face-to-face and wondering about what might come next? Are you finding hope, love, or joy through some of our activities and want to imagine what being part of this family might be like? Do you just enjoy being around good people and sharing stories? If any of those are true, you are invited to come to a gathering we call Connections!

In this class we will have the chance to talk about the ways that this church and the United Church of Christ fit into *Christianity* including both our bold and progressive history as well as our open and hopeful vision for the future. The class will include conversations with one another, Pastor Brent, and lay leaders. Our hope is that you will learn more about each other, the church's rich history, as well as the many programs, small groups, opportunities for service, and other ministries that are available to you *whether or not* you decide to join.

Please RSVP to Will Garrison (298-3137 or office@stockbridgeucc.org) if you plan to attend.

In the Congregational tradition, joining a church is an event that takes place as part of worship and involves the whole congregation. We are planning to take new members into the church on Palm Sunday – April 10. Questions? Please contact Pastor Brent.

Update From the Re-Gathering Committee

Thank you for your input and conversation regarding our policies and protocols. We are a large and diverse family and have heard important and personal things from many people holding a variety of perspectives. As a committee, we continue to try to lovingly, humbly, and faithfully create approaches that are rooted in the teachings of our faith, provide as much safety as possible, and care for the most vulnerable among us. We strive to listen to you, pay attention to the metrics of our location, and seriously consider the findings of medical science and the wisdom of scientific and religious leaders. It is no small task and we ask for your prayers as well as your forgiveness when we don't get it quite right. The pandemic is changing and at our recent meeting we affirmed some benchmarks based on the weekly average of daily cases and the infection rate which will indicate when some of our safety measures will change. See below for how our masking and vaccination policies are changing as the pandemic changes.

As the new daily new case rate is now below 40 (with a low infection rate <.9) groups of 12

using the church may now meet without masks providing that everyone in the group agrees to do so. We ask all to engage this question with your group in a caring way encouraging honesty and honoring the most vulnerable. The office can share more details.

When the case rate drops below 20 (assuming the retention of the low infection rate) the mask mandate will no longer be used. People will be welcome to continue wearing masks as they see fit or need. At this point we would also resume food and beverage consumption at church.

We are meeting as a committee again in early March to review these policies and to focus closely on the vaccination policy. We know that this is the hardest question for folks at the church and in our conversations. Full vaccination status not only provides protection for the person vaccinated, but studies have demonstrated that it reduces the risk for spread even if someone unknowingly is positive for Covid. It is a way of caring for one another. Thank you for your prayers, your patience, and your support. Thank you for reminding each other not just of our policies but why we hold them. We, like you, anxiously await the return to more full connection. Be well.

BERKSHIRE LYRIC PRESENTS

From the Shadows to the Light

Faure Requiem

and contemporary motets by Eric Whitacre, Anson Olds, Roxanna Panufnik,
Pablo Casals, Stephen Paulus, Morten Lauridsen and Moses Hogan

Berkshire Lyric Chamber Chorus Melodious Accord

Jack Brown, director, Joe Rose, organist
with soloists Lily Lothrop, Campbell Bridges and John Demler

Saturday March 12, 2022, 4:00 pm

First Church of Christ Pittsfield
23 East Street, Park Square, Pittsfield

Sunday March 13, 2022, 4:00 pm

First Congregational Church Stockbridge
4 Main Street, Stockbridge

**\$20 admission, children free, tickets sold at the door
or in advance through www.BerkshireLyric.org**

We ask that our audience show proof of vaccination at the door and are masked for the concerts.
All performers will be fully vaccinated.

For further information call 413 499 0258 or visit www.berkshirelyric.org

This program is supported in part by a grant from the Massachusetts Cultural Council awarded by the local cultural councils of the towns of Alford-Egremont, Great Barrington, Hinsdale-Peru, Lenox, New Marlborough, Otis, Pittsfield, Stockbridge, Washington, West Stockbridge and Windsor