

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

PO Box 825 Stockbridge MA 01262



May 2022

Welcome New Members! See pages 6-7

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: 9:00-2:00, Monday - Friday

May 2022

The First Congregational Church, UCC, Stockbridge

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1 Worship 10:00 a.m. <i>Gathered & online</i> Capital Campaign Kick-off 11:30am	2	3 Spiritual Direction 2:00pm <i>Al-Anon 7:00pm</i>	4 Morning Prayer 8 am Bible Study 1:00pm Church Council 7:00pm	5	6 Brent's Sabbath Day Service League 10:00am	7 <i>Al-Anon 5:00pm</i>
8 Worship 10:00 a.m. Special music: Melodious Accord <i>Gathered & online</i>	9	10 <i>Al-Anon 7:00pm</i>	11 Morning Prayer 8 am Bible Study 1:00pm Christian Ed 5:00pm "Remembering People" 6:05pm Music 7:00pm	12	13 Brent's Sabbath Day Service League 10:00am	14 Concert: The Reflected Voice 4:00pm <i>Al-Anon 5:00pm</i>
15 Worship 10:00 a.m. <i>Gathered & online</i> CEC meeting 11:30am	16	17 <i>Al-Anon 7:00pm</i>	18 Morning Prayer 8 am Bible Study 1:00pm Trustees 5:00pm "Imagining Worship" 6:05pm Deacons 7:30pm	19	20 Brent's Sabbath Day Service League 10:00am Newsletter deadline	21 <i>Al-Anon 5:00pm</i>
22 Worship 10:00 a.m. <i>Gathered & online</i> Annual Meeting <i>Berkshire Lyric - Young Singers 3:00pm</i>	23	24 <i>Al-Anon 7:00pm</i>	25 Morning Prayer 8 am Bible Study 1:00pm M & A 5:00pm G & F 6:00pm	26	27 Brent's Sabbath Day Service League 10:00am	28 <i>Al-Anon 5:00pm</i>
29 Worship 10:00 a.m. <i>Gathered & online</i>	30 Memorial Day Office closed	31 <i>Al-Anon 7:00pm</i>		Livestream worship at stockbridgeucc.org	Berkshire Waldorf High School: Mondays 12:45pm Tuesdays 10:25am Thursdays 11:30am	



FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

Stockbridge, Massachusetts

May 2022 Newsletter

Dear Friends and Family,

Are you still waving your palms and proclaiming hosanna with your lives?

Are you still waving your ribbons and proclaiming resurrection with your actions?

I hope so.

Our faith is a beautiful tapestry of truth woven into story across generations to influence how we live today. It is a way of living that places emphasis on both remembrance and imagination. It is a tradition that calls us to honor what has come before even as we make our faith our own. I hope that you are still waving your palms in honor of who Jesus is and how his life, death, and resurrection ought to reshape how we understand power and possibility. I hope that you are still waving your ribbons in celebration of what God is up to in the world and how resurrection ought to reshape how we step forth boldly in realizing the kingdom of God in these moments.

Even as our Capital Campaign kicks off on Sunday, it too draws our attention both to honoring these spaces and what they have meant even as we make our buildings, programs, and faith more welcoming to the larger community. The Campaign is one example of how we are called to live our faith looking backward and forward even as we live fully in this moment. It is a critically important call for our generation in

this faithful place that stretches back nearly three hundred years and points forward even further.

Another way in this Easter season that I hope to continue bringing remembrance and imagination together is through a series of conversations.

These will be open to all, informally structured, and with no premeditated outcome planned other than to share, remember, and dream. No one will leave with a to-do list, but these conversations will matter in shaping where we choose to go as a church and how we get there. My hope is that just like Palm Sunday and Easter, and just like our Capital Campaign, these conversations will turn our attention backwards, forwards, and to our present times.

Look to page 9 of this newsletter for more information and specific dates and times for our first two conversations. For those who choose to come to the church, we will have simple refreshments available. We are committed to making sure that anyone who wants to participate can so we will also offer folks the chance to zoom in too. I look forward to hearing your stories as you remember where this church has been. I look forward to hearing your dreams about where this church might yet be. Most of all, I look forward to being with you as we bring our faith to bear on these times.

In hope and gratitude,

Pastor Brent



HAPPY MAY BIRTHDAYS

May 9	Donald Eaton
May 10	Sarah Conly
May 12	Erving Henderson
May 15	Chuck Wales (100th!)
May 18	Marissa Peyron
May 19	Marie Raftery
May 20	Terry Wise Jeremy Ridenour
May 22	Gene Kalish Diane Fogarty
May 24	David McCarthy
May 26	Suzanne Dower
May 27	Cary Quigley Marc Fadding
May 30	Al Wermuth Ed Ivas

CALL TO MEETING

To all members of the First
Congregational Church
of the United Church of Christ
Stockbridge, Massachusetts

In accordance with the bylaws of the
church, we hereby call the
Annual Meeting of the church for
Sunday, May 22, 2022 immediately
following worship.

The business to be transacted:

- I. Call to Order
- II. Opening Prayer /
Remembrance
- III. To act upon scheduled business:
 - A. Election of Boards and
Offices of the Church
- IV. To act upon any other business
that may legally come before
the meeting.

Jeremy Ridenour, Clerk
Catherine Clark, Moderator

One Great Hour of Sharing

When you give to One Great Hour of Sharing, you deploy resources to people in need all around the world, and in our own communities. When man-made or natural disasters strike, love responds. Not just for the immediate future, but for the long haul. When you give, you are working alongside families to restore not only structures, but hope. Your giving ensures that no matter how difficult the situation, love remains.

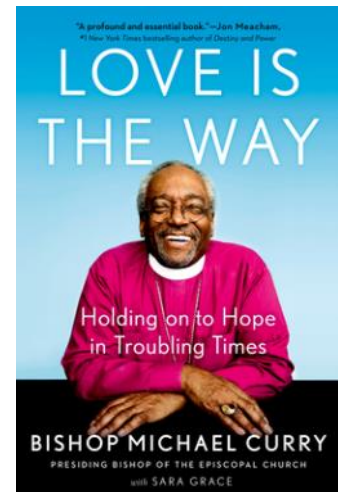
Details to follow in weekly emails; gathering of gifts on May 15.

Book Small Group Launching Soon

Linda Russell is delighted to lead a small group exploring Dean Bishop Curry's inspiring and insightful book, *Love is the Way: Holding onto Hope in Troubling Times*.

Bishop Curry is the Presiding Bishop and Primate of the Episcopal Church. As the first African-American to lead that denomination, he shares his own story even as he weaves it into the larger story of the church and these times. Many might remember him for preaching at the wedding of Prince Harry and Meghan Markle. In this book he does not see Love as some small or trite emotion, but a way and purpose of living. He writes, "We were created by love, for love, to love and to be loved. And we are at our best when we live in God's love. And I believe deep down, it's what we all want. We don't want hatred. We don't want the abyss. We want Beloved Community. The way of love is how to live it."

The book is highly engaging and promises rich jumping off places for conversation. Linda is returning to the Berkshires in mid-May and we hope to launch this group toward the end of May or beginning of June. For more information or to sign-up, please give Will a call in the office. We are happy to secure copies of the book for those who would like us to.



Morning Prayer

Tall bay windows look over the river.

Small table and rocking chair – both black-
await would-be pray-ers.

On the altar/table, arms of Thanksgiving

cactus reach out ever-so-gently,

 blessing thoughts of gratitude *and* pain

 as they flow toward the throne of God.

Stoic jade and exuberant dieffenbachia

 join in with Alleluias

 and Amen.

~ Linda Hoddy

Dear Friends,

Each day as I recover from my accident, I feel deep gratitude for the love, prayer, flowers, visits, and all the encouragement I have been given.

Thank you for being so generous with your good wishes; I hold them close to my heart.

With appreciation & love,
Christine Rasmussen

Musings from a Deacon-Angel

I was the angel at the tomb on Easter. You may have missed that, glorious as it was. You also probably missed seeing the rather small disciples I addressed. Unless you were a parent of



one of them. The whole story of the Resurrection unfolded on the church's front lawn starting at 9:00am, and finished shortly before our lips started to turn blue. And it was pretty amazing.

Deacons get to do many things you wouldn't expect, like becoming angels on short notice. I'd like to say that, as a deacon, I had a big role in planning the Family Service on Easter, but it was mostly Brent's doing, and an almost complete re-working of his original service to create a wonderfully narrated (by Anna Duhon), participatory service for the kids and their adults. We had shouting, musical instruments, and a trip to the tomb and back. What more could you want?

I even stayed around for the adult service, but they had enough deacons, and no need of an in-person angel, so I just hung around for a bit. As I was in the JE Room (after returning my neatly folded angel garb to the correct box in the basement) I did have a chance to assist one person to a pew. As we walked into the sanctuary, arms linked, someone in a close pew smiled at us and moved over to make room. I'm not sure anything more important happened to me that morning.

For the Deacons, Ted Randolph

New Members - Palm Sunday



JOE CATINO

I am delighted to be easing into retirement following a career in the pharmaceutical / biotech world as a Research and Development scientist. I continue modest professional involvement through mentoring and assisting start-up companies. After years of visiting the Berkshires, I am excited to now call it home. Aside from the many tasks that come with an old lake house, I enjoy working in the kitchen and pairing those

creations with a nice bottle of wine. Our six grandchildren (ages 4 – 14) are now a point of emphasis and joy for me. I look forward to continuing my faith journey in this community.

LIZA CATINO

I have been coming to the Berkshires since 1965 and we moved to Monterey this past December from Guilford, CT where I was very active in the community and our church, as a musician. We have three married children who have blessed us with six lovely grandchildren.

I love to read English mysteries, eat good meals that my husband prepares, travel, and to write letters and my journal. I love to sew and quilt. I play soccer on a 0-60 team and I am President of a non-profit organization that runs a women's soccer tournament in Connecticut every summer that benefits Chrysalis. This organization helps women and children get out of abusive situations. I am a new member of the handbell and vocal choirs here at First Congregational Church, and also sing in Berkshire Lyric.



RICHARD GEILER: I moved to the Berkshires with my partner, Michael Monroe, in September 2020 for the weather, village life, liberal politics, arts and culture found here. Michael and I have been together for 10 years, and had each lived in the San Diego, CA area for decades. I was born in Ohio of German post-WWII immigrant parents

and was raised until 14 in Crystal Springs, Mississippi (the self-proclaimed Tomatopolis of the World), where my father was transferred. After his death, we escaped to California to be near our exuberant extended family. I attended UC Berkley, where I received a BA in Music—studying music history and theory. As a practical musician, I began studying piano at 4 years of age, served as our tiny church's organist from age 10-13, switched to voice in college, and eventually had a professional vocal career spanning 40+ years. I was a tenor soloist and

section leader in Episcopal, Presbyterian and Methodist churches, as well as Jewish congregations, and also performed in early music ensembles, musical theater, and in the San Diego Opera Chorus. I grew into an emotional soloist, comfortable with Bach and Britten, while also able to be a performing ham as required for community events. In order to support my musical habit as I began my career, I took a job with the District Attorney's Office as a junior clerk typist, and was promoted to Legal Secretary, Staff Supervisor, and finally Legal Support Manager over a career of 30+ years; I had the pleasure of mentoring many excellent employees in a career of meaningful public service. These simultaneous careers kept me both busy and sane, offering a counter-balance for each other. Baptized as an infant, my conscious spiritual life began in our small Lutheran church in Mississippi, where I was confirmed; my relationship with the loving comfort and mystery of God grew within me through the challenges of life, and through my prayer through singing at services and concerts. I look forward to being a part of this living Congregation.



NITI MARTIN
 Patricia “Niti” S. Martin, transfers from Lee Congregational Church where she has been a delegate and stewardship chair. Niti has been enjoying services and friends at Stockbridge C. C., singing with the choir and

Stockbridge Festival Chorus, participating in prayer groups and bible study. She served as president and programs chair of the Tuesday Club of Stockbridge. Niti enjoyed a career as part of the photography staff at Rodale Press, and at Kripalu Center for Yoga and Health as a director of photography. Niti is a long-time yoga staff member at Canyon Ranch and program leader at Kripalu, currently teaching through her business Doing Well Yoga. Husband Tim and she reside in Lee cherishing community, cultural events and travel.

XIAOBING QIAN

Fun facts about her name: First name Xiaobing: Think of Shopping, say “Sh-i-ao bing. Last name Qian: pronounced like “Ch-an”. The Chinese character of “money”.

“Shopping with money” helps you remember her name “Xiaobing Qian” The Chinese characters of her first name: “Xiao”, means dawn or morning; “Bing”, means ice. Together you get the imagery of ice glittering in the morning sun.

So, it is not surprising to learn that Xiaobing is a fun of all arts - paintings, music, theater, dance, poetry... and the natural beauty and rich characters that inspire arts and artists, which are found in abundance in the Berkshires.

Xiaobing and her husband Dapeng came to the US in the late 1980s, after they graduated from Beijing Medical University in Beijing, China, to study for their PhD degrees in

Chicago. They made US their home since then and have two sons, Kevin (24) and Dustin (21). They built their careers in the biotechnology pharmaceutical industry over the years and have worked in companies in San Francisco, shoreline Connecticut, Westchester NY, and Boston area, developing drugs for cancer, immune disorders, and other diseases. Xiaobing is currently working as a consultant. This allows her to spend more time in the Berkshires and to attend an international (UK/ France/China/US) Executive Master of Business Administration (EMBA) program starting in the Fall.

Xiaobing has gone through a long spiritual journey to develop her Christian faith and was baptized 10 years ago. She has mostly recently been a member of UCC Briarcliff Manor in Westchester NY and was delighted to find a number of her BCC friends now in this congregation. At BCC, Xiaobing has served on the Music Committee as a member and the Chair to support the music ministry, as the Medical Advisor of the COVID Committee during the pandemic, and as a Greeter and Usher. She took part in annual rummage sales to raise funds, and the Shelter programs to house and serve homeless people in the Ossining, NY area.

As a perpetual learner, Xiaobing looks forward to deepening her spiritual growth with her new church family and contributing to the missions of the First Congregational Church, UCC, Stockbridge.



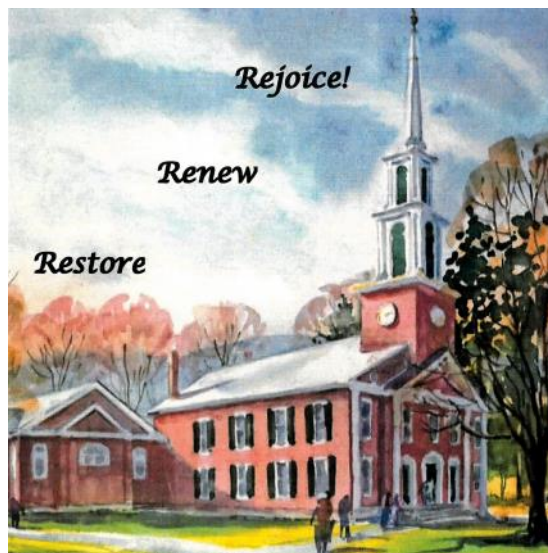
Capital Campaign - Now What?

The countdown is over and the Capital Campaign has officially started. Many of you were able to attend the Kickoff to the campaign right after church on May 1st. If you missed it, a report on that event will be in the next newsletter.

Now that the Capital Campaign has officially started, what's next? Well, if you haven't already been called upon to make a pledge to the campaign, you will be! Volunteer visitors from church will contact you by email or phone to set up a time to meet with you. It is very important to have this meeting in person, if at all possible, for the campaign is as much about reinforcing the connections that make us a church family as it is about shoring up physical structures. These visits will also provide you a chance to ask questions and receive information to help you decide about your pledge.

Visits will happen throughout May so that all pledges can be in, and our goal of \$850,000 met, by Sunday, June 5th. Then, after church that day, we will celebrate! (On our CEC calendar this day is called "Celebration Sunday.") Coffee Hour this day will include wrap-up information about the campaign. Also, some special memento-art by Olga Schwede will be given away through a drawing, and anyone who wants to take home a chunk of the 200 year-old marble steps can put their name in the hat for one of those as well.

Throughout May, you may keep tabs on the progress of fundraising by taking a peek at the fundraising "thermometer" in front of the church, by checking out Cindy Brown's bulletin board in the JE Room, or by visiting the church website. On the website, you can also click on the Campaign Video link to see the beautiful six minute movie written and compiled in-house, and edited by Joe Nicolosi's son, Joe Jr. A big thank-you to all who contributed to this effort. A separate piece



about the making of this video may appear in a later newsletter.

You may have noticed that Celebration Sunday coincides with a more traditional church celebration, Pentecost, a feast day that remembers the birth of the church. Perhaps it's not too much of a stretch to think of **our** Capital Campaign, and the commitment to the future of our own church and community that it represents, as a sort of renewal or re-birth of our mission to represent Christ in the world.

Rejoice!

Alice Collins and her professional crew cleaned up the Memorial Garden. Thank you!



News from Mission and Action

The First Congregational Church of Stockbridge's Pop up Pantry began in March, 2021, and we are still going strong. This outreach provides access to free, non-perishable, shelf stable food items to anyone in need. Located at rear of the church in a small shed, this pantry is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. As grocery and gas prices are going up – we see that there is indeed a need and that people are making use of the Pop up Pantry. We are looking for donations of shelf stable foods, and have a real need for: boxes of instant oatmeal, snack bars/energy bars, box or powdered milk, peanut butter and nut free butters, pasta and gluten free pasta, pasta sauce, diced tomatoes, mac and cheese and gluten free mac and cheese, canned tuna or chicken, soups and crackers! Canned fruit or applesauce is appreciated too! We also need volunteers – your main job is to check the shed for supplies, making sure we have premade bags available and extra food on the shelves. Food can be

dropped off in the box at the back entrance of the church.

In January, M & A voted to send \$1000 to UNICEF for immediate aid to children and families in Ukraine. We are looking at the UCC International Disaster Relief and deciding the best ways to donate to a number of crisis situations across the globe. M & A also voted to provide funding for a new desktop printer, paper and ink for the Houssaini family – giving them access to a printer has been a big boost, helping them print out applications and school work!

Finally, please take a look at the weekly E News from the church for more information about the Meal Train. M & A and the Deacons have teamed up to provide meals for those in our congregation in need, and we are now in need of a few volunteers to provide an occasional meal. All you need to do is click on the link, or call Will at the church office for more information.

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

You are Invited! You are needed!



Knowing our story is critically important to imagining our future. Please come to these 45-minute monthly conversations to share, learn, and grow closer together. You can come to one or come to all and you will not leave assigned with anything. You can attend either in-person or on-line.

Wednesday, May 11 – Remembering People (6:05 p.m. – 6:50 p.m.)

This church, like all churches, has been shaped by

the people who have called it home. This first remembrance conversation asks you to tell stories about people you remember. Share stories about people who touched your life, pointed this church in a particular direction, or left a mark.

Wednesday, May 18 – Imagining Worship (6:05 p.m. – 6:50 p.m.)

Worship is at the heart of our shared life. This first imagination conversation invites us to dream about kinds or acts of worship that would stoke our faith. This is not designed to be a review of our current services (Morning Prayer or Sunday Morning), but rather a chance to share what could be life giving or faith inspiring. We will leave not with a road map or plan, but rather with a shared sense of hopes and possibilities.

Please R.S.V.P to the church office, 413-298-3137 or office@stockbridgeucc.org. You need not have RSVP'd to come but it will be helpful in planning. The Zoom link will be sent to all who RSVP and will also be placed on the Church website. Questions? Contact Pastor Brent.

Hope for Ukraine

The **Youth Group** met on March 27 for an “Eggstravaganza” event that had two goals. One was to work on a very at-home service project, assisting CE by stuffing two or three hundred plastic eggs with goodies for the Easter Sunday egg hunt. The second goal was a very away-from-home cause, also involving eggs: a fundraiser to benefit the children of Ukraine. To anyone who watched the egg hunt on our front lawn, it was clearly as exciting and joyful as ever for kids of all ages, occasional snowflakes notwithstanding! We hope our Youth learned a little about pitching in and giving back by helping to make the hunt a success.

To meet the second goal, our older kids decorated over fifty blown eggs to trade for donations at Coffee Hour two Sundays, finishing on Palm Sunday. This was a different sort of undertaking, aiming to provide basic human needs, as well as hope, in a war ravaged land. In addition to decorating the eggs, the youth took turns staffing the donation table after church, and decorated additional eggs as we began to run low after the first coffee hour. Their efforts inspired donations totaling \$1394.57, to be sent to Ukraine via AmeriCares of UNICEF. Thanks to all who donated, or assisted in other ways.



Those of us who participated in The Book of Hope (Jane Goodall, et al.) Lenten discussion groups read, “...hope is essential, for without it we become apathetic...”. May our congregation, young and old, continue to be hopeful, and to give hope where it is needed.

Justice Task Force Launching

Justice is an important theme in the Bible and a constant call of the Prophets. Members of this church have long been active in causes of justice and deeply connected to issues of justice. As a result, the Church Council approved the formation of an ad-hoc committee known as The Justice Task Force to spend a year trying to explore a few things:

1. How we might develop relationships with our denomination, local organizations, and others that might help us learn about and engage issues of justice.
2. Engage the congregation in learning about and discerning any potential engagement in a current justice issue. The topic chosen is Land Acknowledgment – an issue currently being engaged by many churches and other

organizations here in the Berkshires. To learn more about it you can google the term (Northwestern University has an informative site on the topic).

3. Make any recommendations at the end of the year as to how the church might develop sustainable systems to explore other topics of justice.

Any person may be part of this task force including those who are not members or other local people interested in the topic. The Board of Mission and Action will help to support the Task Force. On May 15th, worship will touch on issues of justice and there will be an informational session following worship. For more information or if you have any questions please contact Anna Duhon, Jeremy Ridenour, Charlotte Rodgers, or Pastor Brent.

Music for Spring!

The Board of Music, in partnership with artistic adviser Carl Shuster, will present Yevgeny Kutik and Benjamin Luxon in "The Reflected Voice: Music for Violin and Spoken Word" on Saturday May 14. The concert will feature two works by British composer Richard Pantcheff: the US premiere of *To Autumn*, featuring British poetry on the theme of autumn, and the world premiere of *New England Elegy*, with a text by Nathaniel Hawthorne. Kutik will also perform works of JS Bach for solo violin.

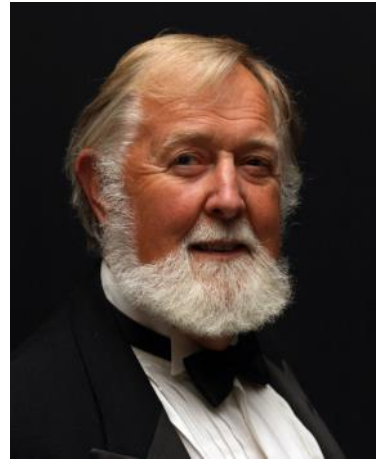
The texts will be narrated by world-renowned baritone and Berkshire County resident Benjamin Luxon, who has performed title roles at the Metropolitan Opera, La Scala, and the English National Opera. Luxon's retirement from singing has led to a career shift to narration and spoken word performances.

Violinist Yevgeny Kutik, raised in Berkshire County, made his orchestral debut in 2003 with the Boston Pops as the winner of the Boston Symphony Young Artists competition. Since then he has appeared as a soloist with orchestras across the US and Europe. His most recent CD, released in 2021, is entitled "The Death of Juliet and Other Tales," featuring the music of Prokofiev and settings of Russian folk music by contemporary composers.

Composer Richard Pantcheff is a specialist in music for the Church of England whose organ and choral works have been performed in sacred and secular venues in England and South Africa. His piece for solo cello "...the field long-slept in pastoral green..." had its world premiere at Tanglewood in the summer of 2021. Pantcheff will attend the concert to introduce his work.

The concert will take place **Saturday May 14 at 4 pm.**

Admission is \$35 at the door. Church members only: if the cost of admission is prohibitive, please contact Rev. Damrow to arrange a manageable donation.



Service League

Now that we're meeting in person again, planning is underway for our next fundraiser, which will be a pop-up fair in front of the Stockbridge Library on June 18. The pandemic forced us to innovate, and we discovered that a pop-up fair is a relatively low-stress way to make up for the lost revenue of big indoor events, as well as being a great way to raise awareness in the community. Don't be surprised if you get a call from Nancy Wilcox soliciting baked goods for that day,

but regardless, come and check us out. Meanwhile, we are doing what everyone does this time of year, which is Spring cleaning, organizing our drawers and cupboards and getting rid of unused items. And we're also doing what we do all year round, which is accepting donations for Grandma's Attic. Your Spring clean-out becomes our Holly Fair treasures! Keep them coming!

~ Margaret Hornick



From an intergenerational service outside (see page 5) to an egg hunt, to waving ribbons, it was a glorious Easter Sunday.

Bottom photo: Ruth Wheat leading the Call to Worship.

