

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

PO Box 825 Stockbridge MA 01262

Newsletter

July 2022

Pastor: The Rev. Brent Damrow

Administrator: Will Garrison

Financial Secretary: Marion Pomeroy

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Sunday Worship: 10:00 a.m.

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

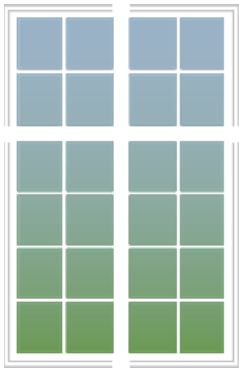
Wednesday: Bible Study, 1:00 p.m. *Online*

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

July 2022

The First Congregational Church, UCC, Stockbridge

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Livestream worship at stockbridgeucc.org					1 Brent's Sabbath Day Service League 10:00am	2 <i>Al-Anon 5:00pm</i>
3 Worship 10:00 a.m. <i>Gathered & online</i>	4 Office closed	5 Book Discussion Group 4:00pm <i>Al-Anon 7:00pm</i>	6 Morning Prayer 8 am Bible Study 1:00pm Council 7:00pm	7	8 Brent's Sabbath Day Service League 10:00am	9 <i>Al-Anon 5:00pm</i>
10 Worship 10:00 a.m. <i>Gathered Outdoors & online</i>	11	12 Book Discussion Group 4:00pm <i>Al-Anon 7:00pm</i>	13 Morning Prayer 8 am Bible Study 1:00pm	14	15 Brent's Sabbath Day Service League 10:00am	16 <i>Al-Anon 5:00pm</i>
17 Worship 10:00 a.m. <i>Gathered & online</i>	18	19 Book Discussion Group 4:00pm <i>Al-Anon 7:00pm</i>	20 Morning Prayer 8 am Bible Study 1:00pm Meetings of the Boards 5:00pm – 9:00pm	21 Newsletter deadline	22 Brent's Sabbath Day Service League 10:00am	23 <i>Al-Anon 5:00pm</i>
24 Worship 10:00 a.m. <i>Gathered Outdoors & online</i>	25	26 Book Discussion Group 4:00pm <i>Al-Anon 7:00pm</i>	27 Morning Prayer 8 am Bible Study 1:00pm	28	29 Brent's Sabbath Day Service League 10:00am	30 <i>Al-Anon 5:00pm</i>
31 Worship 10:00 a.m. <i>Gathered & online</i>						



FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH

UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

Stockbridge, Massachusetts

July 2022 Newsletter

Dear Friends,

There have been many moments of clarity in my life. Those moments have so often appeared at unexpected times and not always through any intentional action on my part. Perhaps there have been more moments ripe for clarity, but all I can reflect on are those that came when I have been open enough to at least notice them and ideally spacious enough to accept them.

Moments of clarity were abundant during my sabbatical. In full disclosure, I was not sure what to expect from my sabbatical. I was fairly sure that rest would come. I imagined that the chance for things I love like playing games, reading books, cooking meals, and reconnecting with friends and family would appear. I hoped for many things, but I have to admit I might never have dared to even dream how much emerged in my time physically away from here and connected to God, love, family, and beauty.

What a joy it was to return to this place so full of life and vitality. I heard stories about your adventures last fall. I found joy in worship. I tried to drink from the fire hose that is this church including projects related to the Capital Campaign, the hiring of a Minister of Music, the passing of a balanced and aspirational budget, the launching of Bible studies, and the response to yet another wave in our ongoing pandemic. Over time, some of those moments of clarity that came to me while away retreated into corners of my consciousness and slipped out of what had become regular and life-giving routines. Yet, the clarity that I had found and their impact on my

physical body, my spiritual life, the health of my relationships, and the possibilities I could imagine were too profound to simply let go. In short, my sabbatical put me in the place to be a better person, father, pastor, and child of God. You challenged me when I left. I took you up on that challenge and now I want to live into the results.

I am looking forward to conversation and sharing. I engaged time and prayer during my recent study week to be able to articulate what I learned during my time away. I engaged time and prayer to revisit my answers to the three questions we spent time thinking about in the fall (What is church for/why do we do this thing called church? How does that vision impact/shape our relationship with each other? How does that vision impact/shape our relationship with our community?). I will start in dialogue with the Sabbatical Committee, the Pastoral Relations Committee and Church Council. I hope that it will spread to Boards and to anyone who wants to share and imagine.

My goal is not agenda driven rather it is coming to shared understandings. My goal is not to make more work but to determine what work is full of joy, possibility, and life. My goal is to together create the kind of space where we can together not only notice the moments ripe for clarity that are in the air right now but embrace them, together. I look forward to doing so with you. I look forward to hearing from you and sharing with you.

In gratitude, *Pastor Brent*

HAPPY JULY BIRTHDAYS

July 1	Gary Schieneman
July 2	Vicky Cooper
July 4	Carl Bradford Frank Russell
July 5	Maddie Alsdorf
July 6	Conor Hall
July 7	Christine Rasmussen
July 8	Mia Freeman
July 9	Tom Ruffing
July 11	Jill Fleming
July 14	Jay Wise
July 16	Patricia Strauch
July 17	Margaret Hornick Teresa Gentile
July 24	Steve Hassmer

News from Mission & Action

PEOPLE'S PANTRY FOOD DONATIONS AT COMMUNION

Now that we are back to in-person worship, we encourage everyone to remember to bring shelf stable food items, paper products and toiletries to church on communion Sundays (the first Sunday of the month), as part of our Active Prayer of Thanksgiving following communion. And if you bring items on other days, they may be placed in the church's back hallway in the blue plastic storage bin which is labeled for the GB People's Pantry.

MEAL TRAIN

We have had two very successful meal trains recently (overseen by the Deacons and M&A). Church members and friends can sign up to cook and deliver meals to members of our congregation who are in temporary need of meals due to illness, injury, surgery or other challenges. Thank you to all you cooks out there! If you or someone you know in the congregation has need of the meal train, please let Will Garrison in the church office know.

All-Boards Meeting

The Church Boards—Christian Education, Deacons, Growth & Fellowship, Mission & Action, Music and Trustees--met on their usual first Wednesday in June, for what finally seemed like a normal All-Boards meeting, after two years of maneuvering around Covid-19. Most of us came in person, where we gathered in the sanctuary and shared stories and perspectives from the last year. When it came time to split up into individual board meetings, Patty Strauch orchestrated break-out rooms so that all the in-person and Zoom folks ended up in the right place. Board chairs were chosen and planning for the next year began.

A scant two weeks later, all boards met separately on the same evening, beginning a new plan for all boards to meet the 3rd Wednesday of the month, with individual boards choosing a time either around 5 or 7. The new plan allows time in between board meetings to touch base with other boards, collaborate and gather in fellowship. It also means that our busy pastor devotes one, instead of four, evenings per month to attend board meetings. Why didn't we think of this before?

As a delightful bonus to the June board meetings, chocolate-chip cookies, freshly baked by the pastor, were offered in between sessions—just one example of the unexpected pleasures of board service.

Cathy Clark, Moderator



More News from Mission & Action

LOCAL FAMILY MOVE

For the last two years, Cindy Brown and Charlotte Rodgers have worked with a couple in our congregation who lived in sub-standard housing to apply for better housing. They finally were accepted by Berkshire Housing Authority for a great apartment at Bostwick Gardens in Great Barrington. Charlotte and Cindy then spent weeks helping them organize and pack. M&A bought them a new bed and bedding, a new electric recliner for the husband who has had a stroke, and some kitchenware. Church volunteers moved them in on June 1 and 2, with 4 pickup trucks and lots of muscle!



Many thanks to these volunteers: Charlotte & Don Rodgers, Cindy Brown, Brent Damrow, Martha Floyd, Will Garrison, Bruce Wilkens, Tom Ruffing, Terry Wise and Brian Hyatt. The family is very grateful!

POP UP PANTRY

Our congregation's Pop Up Pantry, located in the shed behind the church building and open 24/7, has enjoyed an uptick in usage the last few months, no doubt in part to climbing grocery and gas prices. M&A keeps the shed stocked with shelf stable foods, and we encourage you to donate food items and money earmarked for the Pop Up Pantry. You can leave food items in the church's back hallway in the blue plastic storage bin which is labeled for the Pop Up Pantry.

Items needed: Box cereal, boxes or drums of instant oatmeal, peanut butter, nut-free butters (such as Sunflower butter), box rice, pasta, mac & cheese, pasta sauce, canned diced tomatoes, also

canned veggies, fruit, soup, tuna and chicken, crackers, shelf stable box milk, toothpaste, toothbrushes, soap, lotion, and specialty food items such as cooking oil, cake mix, bottled juice, snack bars, sugar, flour, etc. Gluten free cereal, pasta, mac & cheese, snack bars, etc. are also needed.

AFGHAN REFUGEE FAMILY

Our church, along with the Unitarian Universalist Meeting of South Berkshire in Housatonic, are sponsoring the Hussaini family who were evacuated from Afghanistan last August and now live in Pittsfield. The children are in school this year and are looking forward to summer camp. Husain recently started working at Compuworks. He and Fatema are taking driving lessons and will soon need a 6 passenger car. Our two congregations are trying to raise \$6,000 to purchase one. M&A has voted to use up to \$2,500 toward this. More funds are needed to be raised for this ongoing project.

UKRAINE RELIEF

Earlier this year, M&A sent \$1,000 to UNICEF for their efforts to help children in Ukraine. This month, we voted to send \$500 for the Ukraine relief efforts of the United Church of Christ's disaster relief fund.

"LITTLE EDEN" POLLINATOR GARDEN

Congregation members Anna Smith and Liz Murray were guests at a recent M&A meeting to talk about the new use of the 4 raised beds in the grassy circle of our parking lot, "Little Eden." Some members of our congregation are joining with the Lenox Garden Club to create a conservation garden of native flowering plants (plants that were in this area before the English settlers brought plants from Europe). This will also be good for our local pollinators (bees, butterflies, etc.). It will be educational with signs identifying the plants and the purpose of the garden. It will also honor the original inhabitants of our area, and connect to part of the mission of our new Justice Task Force. We hope it will attract members of the community as they pass by. M&A voted to donate \$500 toward the project.



Marion Pomeroy and her horse, Willow. Marion is the new Financial Secretary, and may be reached at finance@stockbridgeucc.org

From the Service League

Since your roving correspondent is in California this week, visiting family (see below - Teddy, his girlfriend, her dog and me on a windy walk on the San Francisco Bay) you are getting a second-hand account of Saturday's Pop-up Fair in front of the Stockbridge Library. The weather was cloudy and windy and unseasonably cool, which was reflected in low turnout as few people were out and about. Baked goods were the top seller

(thanks to all who contributed!) with plants and crafts a distant second and third. Still, it was worthwhile, and we netted almost \$300 which will go to support one of our missions. Thank you, as always, for your support!

Margaret Hornick, for the Service League



Help Wanted

- Nursery Care Provider
- Children's and Youth Ministry Coordinator
- Video Technician/Live-Streamer

For job descriptions, please contact the church office.



Kids Time, June 12

June 19 was CE Sunday, with much celebration of the past year of Christian Education. Terry Wise and Khalil Haddir (right) led the Passing of the Peace and Jake Damrow read the Sending Charge. Elizabeth Evans was the emcee, and Jill Wheat, Bob Logan, and the Kids Choir provided the music.



Engagement with Our Conference

As many of you might know, I serve on the Board of Directors for the Southern New England Conference of the United Church of Christ. Our church is part of a groups of about 20 churches that make up the Berkshire Association. The Berkshire Association is one of 26 Associations that make up the Southern New England Conference. The Conference does many things to support churches. On a recent Saturday, I had to go to the Annual Meeting of the Conference as part of my role on the Board. I was joyfully surprised not just at how good it was, but how many resources are available to churches like ours and how many chances for relationship can come through the Conference. During the course of the meeting, I sent

messages to both the Deacons and Christian Education with ideas or resources that could help them with current things they are thinking about. I hope that we can find ways to engage our Association and our Conference more actively and deeply because I think we would benefit greatly. There are programs, meetings, conferences, and resources out there that can help us become even more alive and to do so more efficiently and successfully. Margaret Hornick and David Anderegg are our official delegates to both the Association and the Conference, but anyone is welcome to help us connect – just give me a call and let me know of your interest.

Thanks! Pastor Brent



Sophie Randolph and Patrick Ray were married on June 11 on Diane and Ted's front lawn in Richmond, Massachusetts. There was a lot of joy, magic, and wonderful weather to go around. Sophie and Patrick live in Houston, Texas.

A new garden is growing in the four raised beds here at the church. With the wonderful support of Mission and Action and the work of the Lenox Garden Club, a Conservation Garden was born. The plants are all native perennials that encourage a wide range of pollinators, pollinators we all need to keep our trees, shrubs, and perennials thriving. Native plants are those that grew in the area before the English settlers came to the continent. Many were growing here when the Stockbridge- Munsee Tribe cared for these lands.

Members of the Lenox Garden Club will tend the garden for three years. That should give it a good start that will need minimal work to keep it going strong. Small identification signs will be placed next to various plants. Are you interested in planting more natives in your garden? Or are you curious about native plants? The plants were purchased from Helia Native Plant Nursery in Alford.

The goal is to encourage a "Pollinator Pathway" county wide. For every native plant you add to your yard, you encourage native pollinators. Start with one! ~ Liz Murray and Anna Smith

