



# The Link



**First Congregational Church of Stoughton, United Church of Christ**  
*An Open and Affirming Congregation*

**November 2020**

## *Our Vision*

*We are called together to embrace God's transformation of our lives and our world  
by becoming and serving as Christ's disciples.*



Dear Friends,

Grace and peace to you and yours! Our stewardship season is underway, and each of us is now being asked to prayerfully determine how we will support our beloved church in 2021. The coronavirus pandemic hit churches of all denominations hard this year on top of our longstanding struggles with declining attendance and diminished resources. Despite these challenges, I believe that there is still a place for churches like ours in the 21st century. The question we have to ask ourselves, though, is how committed we are to remaining a worshipping community in Stoughton in the years to come.

Before anyone fills out a pledge card, though, each of us must ask ourselves if we are committed to maintaining this particular faith community that God has entrusted to us. Do we want our church to remain an active place of worship here in Stoughton - a place where we, and those who will come after us, are led and encouraged to embrace diversity and welcome the stranger, to reject intolerance and stand up for love, and to worship the God of our understanding?

If the answer is yes, the next question becomes, what must we do to make it happen? What will it take for our church to remain viable as we emerge from the pandemic, and will we be able to do what's necessary to ensure its survival? It won't be easy. It might involve sharing the same worship space with another church as two separate congregations. It might involve merging with another church and becoming an entirely new entity. It might involve worshipping in a different location than the one we're in now.

If we want to continue as the United Church of Christ in Stoughton it will definitely mean change. It will mean that we may have to give up our individual preferences for the sake of the greater good. It will take all of us, working and praying together, to discern the future that God has for our church, so that it will live and prosper. What I am sure of more than anything is that God will be with us through it all, because there is no end to God's faithfulness.

With trust in God and gratitude for each of you,

Pastor Mary



## Deaths:

Lois and Mark Ullock, whose combined graveside service was led by Pastor Mary at Evergreen Cemetery on October 15.



We send a hearty thank you to **John Baglole** for setting up our outdoor worship services each week and helping with the music, and for his faithful maintenance of the church computer systems. We once again thank **Marcia Olson** for her continued and successful efforts in selling Attic Treasures on Facebook Marketplace. Marcia has been assisted by **Stephanie Clough**, and has raised over \$5,500 for our church. We also thank **Carrie Sievers** for the seasonal decorations she has placed in the Church Office - it makes a difference! Thanks, too, to all those who lovingly made casseroles for our MainSpring serve date in October and to **Charlene Smith** for her faithfulness in coordinating this important outreach. We are very blessed!



**Worship on-line Sunday:** We will continue to worship at 10:00 in the church parking lot as long as the weather cooperates. We will transition to worship via Zoom once it is too cold to be outside and will provide you with the access information at that time. You will have the option to call in to the Zoom worship services instead of using video if that is easier for you. We know that God will be glorified no matter how or where we worship!

On **Wednesday** mornings at 10:00 AM Pastor Mary leads a 30-minute conference call Prayer Service. Dial 1-253-215-8782 and when prompted, enter conference code 862 2469 5175. There is a scripture reading and a time for the sharing of our prayer concerns. This weekly gathering is open to all, so if you have a friend who might find this opportunity helpful, please share the information.

Pastor Mary has set up a private Facebook group called **UCC Stoughton Prayer**. No one sees the posts except group members, so it is a safe place to share your prayer requests, pray for others in our community, or just vent. If you have a Facebook account and would like to join the group let Pastor Mary know.

Also remember to check our church [Facebook page](#) and church website (<http://www.uccstoughton.org/>).

**Church Council** has been meeting on the **2<sup>nd</sup> Monday of each month at 7:00 pm via Zoom**. These meetings are open to everyone, not just Council members. If you would like to attend, please contact Pastor Mary and she will send you the link to the meeting. If you prefer to call in by telephone, dial 1-646-876-9923 and enter Meeting ID: 837 8927 2962

## Attic Treasures



Our Church Fair may have been postponed until spring 2021, but you can still shop for just that right gift, find that hidden gem, or snag a bargain throughout the holiday season. Don't miss out! We have been regularly posting selected items from Attic Treasures on [Facebook Marketplace](#) - and you can shop now! Here's how:

- Go to Facebook Marketplace (<https://www.facebook.com/marketplace/109554902404443/>).
- Type "**Online Church Fair**" in the Search Marketplace box.
- Most items that pop up at the top of this search have Stoughton MA listed as the location of the seller.
- Click on one of those items, scroll down to **Seller Information** and click on **Marcia Olson**. You can also scroll down that post and see all the treasures currently for sale that day.

Check back frequently as items will be posted throughout the rest of the year. Many are snatched up quickly! Items are also posted to several local area yard sale Facebook pages like Online Yard Sale of Stoughton, MA. We hope to be posting knit goods, jewelry, and seasonal items for sale online as well. If you have any holiday crafts to donate, let [Marcia](#) know. Helpers are always welcome for pricing and sorting items. Please keep those donations coming!

## PASTOR'S SCHEDULE

Over these past 7 months as we have tried to navigate in a virtual world, communicating mostly by email, text messages and Zoom meetings, it is easy to lose track of regular work schedules as one day blends into the next with no clear boundaries between work and home life. And that is certainly true of our pastor. Church Council would like to remind the congregation that Pastor Mary's contract with the church calls for a 3/4 work schedule. Pastor Mary has gone above and beyond her contracted hours as she has worked to help our church stay together as a worshipping community in this "new normal." We are, of course, very grateful for her dedication to our church and we encourage her to take the time off she has earned to rest, recharge and spend time with her family. And we must do our part by respecting her "off" time. Pastor Mary will continue to lead worship on Sundays, except when she is on vacation or study leave, and will attend board and committee meetings as needed. She will always be available in the event of an emergency but her response to non-urgent matters may not be immediate. We ask that you keep Pastor Mary in your prayers.



## **Beloved, Love in Action**

*“Do your little bit of good where you are. It’s those little bits of good put together that overwhelm the world.”* – Archbishop Desmond Tutu

The Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. once called love “the most durable power in the world.” As he explained, “Hatred and bitterness can never cure the disease of fear; only love can do that. Hatred paralyzes life; love releases it. Hatred confuses life; love harmonizes it. Hatred darkens life; love illuminates it.”

In the United Church of Christ, we believe that God is calling us to Three Great Loves: love of neighbor, love of children, and love of creation.

Across the country, congregations like Covina Community Church in Covina, CA, have reached out in love to their neighbors. The congregation had become Open and Affirming and hung a rainbow flag outside the sanctuary. But Pastor Lee Yates wondered, “How was that going to undo centuries of hurt, often inflicted by the church?” He invited speakers to share stories of how they experienced exclusion and shame in other church communities. In response, the congregation learned about homophobia and then held a Rainbow Day, using the biblical story of David and Jonathan as inspiration for worship. They invited the whole community, provided a celebratory meal, and organized workshops with nonprofit partners who served the LGBTQIA+ community. This public celebration of love transformed the church. A small congregation that averaged 20 on a Sunday hosted an event for 80+ people and found themselves on the front page of the newspaper. This began a process of continued growth and service to the community.

Like Covina Community Church, we strive to love courageously in this challenging time.

Our annual stewardship campaign, “Beloved, Love” begins on November 1. Your generosity will assure that our congregation can faithfully answer God’s call to love. You will be receiving a pledge card in the mail mid-month and we ask that you return it to the Church Office on or before Pledge Sunday, November 22. Thank you in advance for your generosity and for your continued love for our church!

-Stewardship Committee (**Janet Clough, Russ Congdon, Al Mahoney and Pastor Mary**)



### What's Happening This Month?

#### **Faith & Fellowship** Opportunities

- **Sunday Online Worship at 10:00 AM.** Once it is too cold to worship at 10:00 in the church parking lot, we will transition to worship via Zoom and will provide you with the access information at that time. You will have the option to call in to the Zoom worship services instead of using video if that is easier for you. If you have any questions or concerns about this service or our plans to reopen the church building, please contact **Pastor Mary** at 774-571-7307. More details about worship will be communicated via Constant Contact, email and our Facebook page.
- **Wednesday Prayer Service: Pastor Mary** leads a brief 30-minute prayer service by way of a conference call each Wednesday morning at 10:00 AM. Dial 1-253-215-8782 and when prompted, enter the conference code 862 2469 5175. There will be a scripture reading and time for the sharing of our prayer concerns. This weekly gathering is open to all, so if you have a friend who might find this opportunity to connect helpful. Please share the information.
- Remember to check our [Facebook page](#) and church website (<http://www.uccstoughton.org/>)



#### Opportunities to Serve

- **Friendly Service:** Although we cannot meet in person, there are plenty of projects that can be done at home. If you have a sewing machine, some time to give us, and the desire to be a part of this ministry. Let **Janet Clough** know and she will see that you will get the blocks of fabric, some direction, some thread if you need it, and be ready to sew. Even if you can only handle a small amount, all is greatly appreciated. Call Janet at 781-344-3860 or via email at [cloughjl@gmail.com](mailto:cloughjl@gmail.com) for more information.
- **Prayer Shawl Ministry:** Although we cannot yet meet in person, we encourage you all to continue to knit prayer shawls for those who need to feel God's loving care wrapped around them. You can also work on knit goods for the church fair.
- **Mask Ministry:** Public health officials are anticipating another surge in COVID-19 infections as the cold weather approaches and we spend more time indoors. The Mask Ministry team has started making masks again. We are still making masks for the Outdoor Church, Father Bill's and Mainspring House and Soupman of Brockton. There is plenty of fabric and elastic at the church if you are interested in joining our team.

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- **Dec 16 (Wed): Mainspring House:** This is the next date we are scheduled to provide dinner for Brockton's homeless shelter. Although we cannot serve dinner due the pandemic, food donations are still needed. If you can make a casserole or make a monetary donation to defray the cost of salad and dessert, please contact **Anita Keenan** ( [keenans21@gmail.com](mailto:keenans21@gmail.com) | 781-244-7742). It's a busy time of year so you can make your casserole early and pop it in the downstairs church freezer any time before **Sunday, December 13**. Contact Anita if you need a foil baking pan and recipe.

THANKS  
FROM THE  
HEART

We are so grateful to **Charlene Smith** who has so faithfully coordinated dinners for Mainspring House for the past several years. These dinners are a vital part of our mission to feed the hungry and Charlene and her team made sure that our church provided and served delicious casseroles, salad and dessert every two months without fail. Charlene has some big shoes to fill, so we are also grateful that the entire **Keenan family** has stepped up to keep this ministry humming along!



### Opportunities to

- **Nov 22 (Sun): It's Pledge Sunday.** Please consider prayerfully what your annual pledge will be to support the life and ministries of UCC Stoughton and mail your pledge to the church office.
- **Food Pantry:** Donations are still urgently needed. You can drop off your non-perishable food items each Tuesday morning at the Ilse Marks Food Pantry, 103 Pleasant St. between 8:30-10:30 AM. Or you can contact director **Suzanne Blacker** (781-341-1994) to arrange for a drop off at a different time.
- **Bottles and Cans:** Please donate your clean, redeemable bottles and cans from your holiday events and parties. They can be left in the drop-off box at the bottom of the stairs just before the church office. Monetary donations are always gratefully accepted and the money collected is used for various church ministries and operational needs. Contact **Maurine Upton** for more information.
- **Needy Persons Fund:** Many in our community are in need during this pandemic. Our church maintains a Needy Persons fund through which we are able to offer assistance to such individuals. If you are able, please mail your donation to the church office at 76 Pierce Street, Stoughton noting Needy Persons Fund on your check. Through your generosity, we are able to help many people. *Thank you!* If you are experiencing difficult financial circumstances and could use some help through our Needy Persons Fund, please speak to Pastor Mary in confidence.
- **Socks for Outdoor Church:** The weather is getting colder and the street outreach ministry of The Outdoor Church in Cambridge is greatly in need of warm socks for the homeless in Harvard and Central Squares in Cambridge. We will be collecting new socks for both men and women over the next two months. Please contact **Marcia Olson** ([baglole.olson@verizon.net](mailto:baglole.olson@verizon.net) | 781-344-9547) if you have some to donate.



Articles for the **December LINK** will be due by **November 17**. Contact the church office with any changes or additions to the church calendar.

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A graphic on a light blue background. The text "our faith our voice" is written in a white, lowercase, sans-serif font. A large red checkmark is superimposed over the word "VOTE", which is written in a large, white, uppercase, sans-serif font. The words "our" and "voice" are positioned above and below "VOTE" respectively. Several small white stars are scattered above the text.

**YOUR VOTE IS YOUR VOICE,  
DON'T GIVE IT UP!**

The logo for the United Church of Christ, featuring a stylized white swirl icon to the left of the text "UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST" in a white, uppercase, sans-serif font.





## A Message from the Safe Reopening Task Force

It has been wonderful to be together for outdoor worship over the course of these past few weeks. The weather has cooperated with us and we are all grateful to be able to worship God surrounded by the beauty of nature. Although it would be so nice to continue to worship outside for a few more weeks, Mother Nature will have the final say on that. Once the temperature drops below 55 it will be too chilly for outdoor services.

It has been difficult for us to determine how and where to hold worship after that. Our immediate priority is to keep our church family safe and healthy, and the recent uptick in Covid-19 cases in Massachusetts, while slight, is concerning. Although we are all experiencing “pandemic fatigue,” and want more than anything for our lives to regain some semblance of normalcy, we cannot let our guard down now. We’re dealing with a lethal virus that is not widely understood by public health experts and the medical community. It has caused the deaths of over 220,000 Americans and the disability of thousands of others. It is clear that there is no risk-free way to gather in a building until there is a proven, tested, and effective vaccine along with adequate testing and contact tracing.

The Safe Reopening Task Force along with Church Council has considered the wants and needs of our church in light of current public health data. After much prayerful discussion, Church Council voted earlier in October to delay our return to sanctuary worship until at least January 1, 2021.

While we believe this is the right decision, it’s also a hard one. We are a close-knit community and it brings us joy to be together in person on Sundays. Seeing one another for worship on Zoom will obviously not be the same. But we are convinced that taking this step to delay our return to the sanctuary will ensure that when we do gather inside the building again, we will all be present and accounted for.

We ask that you pray for our church and for Pastor Mary as we weather some extraordinarily difficult times. Remember that God is faithful, we have a lot of love in our church family, and the pandemic will not last forever. Thanks be to God!

**Ed Porter, Russ Clough, Kevin Monahan, Marcia Olson, John Baglolo, and Pastor Mary**

The people on this list may not be able to receive visitors during this time. Please think of dropping them a card or note



**AT HOME, IN NURSING HOMES, AND ASSISTED LIVING FACILITIES**  
*For those who wish to send greetings, the following list is included:*

*Wayne Alholm*  
 149 Homeland Drive  
 Whitman, MA 02382  
 (781) 523-1640

*Doris Bamberg*  
 Copley at Stoughton Nursing Care Center  
 380 Sumner Street  
 Stoughton, MA 02072  
 (781) 341-2300

*Barbara Bingamon*  
 The Arbors  
 2121 Central Street  
 Room 328  
 Stoughton, MA 02072

*Charles Bittner*  
 Life Care Center, Room 282  
 546 South Street East  
 Raynham, MA 02767

*Amanda Cushing*  
 103 Benson Road  
 Stoughton MA 02072

*Dorothy Dawe*  
 The Arbors  
 2121 Central Street Apt 112  
 Stoughton, MA 02072

(781) 344-8367  
*Judy Giannangelo*  
 148A Britton Ave  
 Stoughton, MA 02072

*Maizie John*  
 996 Canton Ave.  
 Milton MA 02186

*Betty Lambert*  
 West Acres Rehab and Nursing Center  
 Room 311B  
 804 Pleasant Street  
 Brockton, MA  
 02301

*Rev. Jean Lenk*  
 229 Old Plymouth Road  
 Sagamore Beach, MA. 02562

*Muriel Rowland*  
 92 Cedar Hill Dr. Apt. 202  
 Windsor, VT 05089

*Ruth Scrivens*  
 18 Daly Dr.  
 Stoughton, MA 02072