



The Link



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

September 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,

It's hard to believe it has been almost six months since we last worshipped in the sanctuary. What we anticipated to be a building closure of a few weeks has continued far beyond what any of us imagined as the coronavirus pandemic continues to disrupt life worldwide. Unfortunately, there is no real end in sight.

I have been meeting regularly throughout the summer with both Church Council and the Safe Reopening Team to evaluate recommendations from Governor Baker, Massachusetts public health officials, and the Southern New England Conference of the United Church of Christ. We believe that a science-driven and fact-based approach to dealing with the pandemic is in the best interest of our community and consistent with Christ's call to love our neighbor.

We have decided to offer weekly outdoor worship services in the church parking lot beginning on August 30 and extending until mid-October, weather permitting. To ensure everyone's safety, masks will be required and social distancing will be in effect. We ask that you bring a lawn chair if possible. Gathering to worship God in the beauty of the natural world promises to be joyful even though there will be no singing, bulletins, traditional passing of the peace, or coffee hour due to public health recommendations.

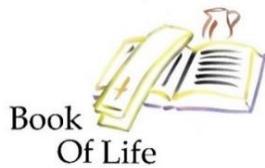
Your health and well-being are our church's first priority. We understand that not all people are ready to regather and encourage you to discern your own acceptable level of risk. If you have any questions or concerns about worship or any other issue, please call me at 774-571-7307.

God is faithful and cares deeply about what we're going through. I invite you to respond to God's love by spending a few moments in prayer every day. Read a passage from the Bible - the Psalms can be especially comforting during trying times. Check in with your friends and neighbors, join us for outdoor worship if you feel comfortable doing so, or call in to our Wednesday morning prayer time. Join others in our church who are educating themselves on racism by reading "Just Mercy." Comfort someone who's lonely or simply listen to a person who's having a difficult day. Each of us has an important role to play in Christ's family, pandemic or not.

You are always in my prayers.

Love and peace,

Pastor Mary



Deaths:

Fred Dimond, whose funeral service was led by Rev. Adam Isbitsky at Farley Funeral Home on July 30.

Charles Wade, whose funeral service was led by Pastor Mary at Farley Funeral Home on August 14.

Baptism:

William Keith Moore, son of Gregory and Amanda Moore, who was baptized by Pastor Mary in an outdoor service at our church on July 12.



Alyssa McGillicuddy, daughter of Julie and Ed, graduated cum laude from the University of Vermont with a bachelor of science degree in Professional Nursing. Alyssa passed her boards in July and is now searching for employment as a registered nurse.

Lucan Curtis-Mahoney, son of Carolyn and Al, graduated from Stoughton High School and is planning to work in the IT field. He will also continue singing with a young adult chorus based in Medway.

Ashlyn O'Connell, daughter of Carol and Kevin, graduated from Stoughton High School and will be attending UMass Amherst remotely this fall and will hopefully be on campus in January.

Noah Celia, grandson of Barbara Bingamon, graduated from UMass Dartmouth.

Montana Matthews, granddaughter of Bonnie and Chuck Bittner, graduated from Bristol-Plymouth Regional Technical School.

We pray for God's blessing to be upon all our graduates!



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



We are very blessed

A huge thank you goes out to **Marcia Olson** for her continued and successful efforts in selling Attic Treasures on Facebook Marketplace this summer. Marcia has been assisted by **Stephanie Clough**, and has raised over \$3,500 for our church. We are also very grateful to **Ed** and **Gale Porter** who have put in many hours of work keeping our church grounds looking their best. **Ed** has also been hard at work cleaning the inside of the church. Thanks, too, to all those who faithfully made casseroles for our MainSpring serve date in August and to **Charlene Smith** for her faithfulness in coordinating this important outreach. We thank **Flo Ledin** and **Susan Hill** for tending the Community Garden.



A Message from Equal Exchange

COVID-19 has changed the way we do things. Many churches and temples aren't meeting for in-person services, which means Equal Exchange's sales in the Interfaith program are down by 38,000 pounds compared to this time last year. This loss of volume has a real impact on Equal Exchange and our farmer partners. We believe Interfaith sales could be down by more than 80,000 pounds by the year's end.

That's why we're asking for your help.

One way our church can continue to support Equal Exchange during this time is to think about starting a buying club. Dozens of other churches and temples around the country have started to do this during the pandemic. For more information on how we might set up a buying club at UCC Stoughton, check out the easy directions [here](#) and read some [stories](#) about coordinators who have come up with some creative solutions for church sales.

If a buying club isn't possible for your church, you can also order wholesale cases directly from Equal Exchange for home use (*or for donating to the food pantry*) by calling Customer Service at 774-776-7366 or on the webstore at: shop.equalexchange.coop Spread the word; invite fellow congregants, family, and neighbors to support us as well! We'd like to be in better touch with you during the pandemic to see how we can be of help. Please call either Susan (401-644-8094) or Bethany (508-427-5217) or reply to this email with your phone number and we'll schedule a call to talk about various options. We have so many ideas about how you and your congregation can support small-scale farmers and the alternative supply chain during COVID-19.

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We realize that this is a difficult time for everyone in the U.S., but a shortfall of 80,000 pounds will be extremely significant for small-scale farmers and their families during this especially difficult time. To learn more about how farms are doing during the pandemic go to our blog [here](#).

If you are interested in any of these options and want more information, contact **Charlene Smith** (CJTS107@comcast.net | 781-254-5910).



—STAYING— CONNECTED

Ways to stay connected:

Worship will be held outdoors in the church parking lot on Sundays at 10:00 AM from August 30 until mid-October. Masks are required and social distancing will be in effect.

On Wednesday mornings at 10:00 AM Pastor Mary leads a 30-minute conference call Prayer Service. There is a new call in number as of September 1. Dial 1-253-215-8782 and enter Meeting ID 862 2469 5175. There will be 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.

Church Council has been meeting monthly 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.

Pastor Mary is available to speak with you on the telephone, by video chat, or in person (socially distanced). Please call/text her at 774-571-7307 if you would like to set up a time to talk. She may also be reached by email at revmary@uccstoughton.org.

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



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We know that the COVID-19 pandemic has disrupted our daily routines as well as long range plans. Our first hope is that you are all safe and healthy. If you are in need, please know that your church family is there to assist in any way we can.

The church also needs your continued financial support if we are to find new ways to minister to the wider community, worship together and care for one another. Even though our spiritual life has been also been disrupted, the reality is that life goes on and we still have bills to pay.

If you are able, we encourage you to continue to send your pledges and/or contributions in the following ways:

- **Write a check:** Mail it to First Congregational Church of Stoughton 76 Pierce Street Stoughton, MA 02072 ATTN: Offerings Clerk
- **Pay Online:** Go to the church website at <http://www.uccstoughton.org/>. Click on [Online Giving](#) and then choose the Contribute Securely Online Now option. Fill in the boxes as directed. (This, by the way, is an excellent way to ensure that your support continues year-round...not just in these trying times.)

Thank you for your generosity.



There is an immediate opening for the position of Offerings Clerk. **Russ Congdon**, our current Offerings Clerk, would like to take up the now vacant (and vital) Assistant Treasurer position. He cannot hold both roles as it would constitute a conflict of interest. Please contact **Joanne O'Reilly** (jdoreilly12@msn.com) or **Russell Congdon** (rcongdon@comcast.net) if you are interested or would like more information. The responsibilities of the Offerings Clerk are as follows.

The Offerings Clerk shall:

1. Be an Active/Associate member of the church and is appointed by the Trustees.
2. Keep a full and correct account between the church and each person contributing toward the current expenses, benevolence, or other funds of the church.
3. Receive all contributions to the church, whether by mail, online or in the regular church offerings, record and deposit them in the proper financial institutions as promptly as possible, immediately notifying the Treasurer of the amounts and dates of such deposits.
4. Provide yearly statements of account to all persons who have pledged and/or provided identifiable gifts to the support of the church.
5. Provide the Stewardship Committee and the Board of Trustees with a quarterly report of pledges and giving.
6. Be bonded with the church bearing the cost.



CHURCH FAIR POSTPONED

We have been diligently following news of the latest COVID-19 guidelines issued by our state, local, and public health officials in hopes we would be able to safely hold an outdoor church fair in September. Unfortunately there has been an uptick in the state's positivity rate and Governor Baker has restricted outside gatherings to no more than 50 people. Safety has to be our top concern, so we decided to postpone our outside church fair until next spring. The date will be decided early in the new year. While this is disappointing as the church fair is our largest fundraiser, there is still much we can do to hold some of our activities online and prepare for the spring fair as well.

Here's how you can help:

ATTIC TREASURES ONLINE – Don't miss out! We have been posting selected items to Attic Treasures on Facebook Marketplace - and you can shop now! Go to [Facebook Marketplace](https://www.facebook.com/marketplace/109554902404443/) (<https://www.facebook.com/marketplace/109554902404443/>) and type "Marcia Olson" in the Search Marketplace box. Check back frequently as items will be posted throughout the rest of the year. And many of them are snatched up quickly! We will also 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.

APPLE PIES: It just wouldn't be Thanksgiving without a delicious apple pie! While we are still trying to work out the details of being able to provide prepaid apple pies, please let **Charlene Smith** know if you would be able to help with peeling and preparing the apples. And if you were planning to bake for the September fair, please consider a monetary donation to defray the cost of the ingredients. Save those other yummy treats for our bake table in the spring.

DONATE: Do you have some Stoughton-themed items or a gift card to a local Stoughton eatery, let **Leanne Kerman** know so she can stuff the Stoughton Raffle Basket for the spring. Have you been knitting (mittens, scarves, hats, blankets)? Tell **Maurine Upton** and **Susan Hill**. We will be trying to sell some items online and that mitten tree will still need some trimming! Do you need to make room for more baubles in your jewelry box and have some jewelry to donate? **Marcia Olson** or **Donna Connor** will gladly accept it. And **Marcia Olson** will happily take the Attic Treasures you have unearthed while being stuck at home during quarantine throughout the fall and winter. Email **Marcia** at baglole.olson@verizon.net or call 781-344-9547 to make arrangements for drop off.

We don't know when our church building will be reopening, but here are ways you can still participate in the life and ministries of our church

What's Happening This Month?



What's Happening This Month?

Faith & Fellowship Opportunities

- **Sept 6, 13, 20, 27 (Sun): Outdoor Worship at 10:00 AM.** We will gather in the church parking lot, so please park either behind the building or by Halloran Park. To ensure your safety, masks will be required and social distancing will be in effect. We ask, if you are able, to please bring a lawn chair although there will be a few chairs available for you to use if necessary. Your health and well-being are our church's first priority. We understand that not all people are ready to regather and encourage you to discern your own acceptable level of risk. 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.
- **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:** As you might expect we will not be having any regular meetings until we get an "all clear" to do so, but **Bevely Richard** has been very busy organizing squares into sets to be sewn together as blocks of four. These blocks will at some time be organized into a design for the face of a quilt. 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 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.
- **Oct 21 (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 **Charlene Smith** by **September 27** (CJTS107@comcast.net | 781-254-5910) and get a foil baking pan and recipe if needed. Casseroles must be in the church freezer by **Sunday, October 18**. If you can help deliver the food to Mainspring House on Monday morning, **October 19**, please let Charlene know.



Opportunities to

- **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.
- **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.
- **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.



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

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
 Bridges by Epoch
 140 University Ave
 Westwood, MA 02090

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



Prepare Now to Vote in November



We are fast approaching the final stretch of the 2020 election season. The United Church of Christ's [Our Faith Our Vote Campaign](#) is here with resources and opportunities to help you get active in your congregation and community with nonpartisan election engagement.



One of the most important components of [Our Faith Our Vote](#) is voter registration and voter empowerment. This year, to keep ourselves and others safe, we have to be creative with how we register and interact with voters. That's where our [Civic Action Center](#) comes in. This tool in the Our Faith Our Vote campaign allows individuals to check their registration status and get registered (in 39 states and the District of Columbia) ALL ONLINE! It even tells you when and where to vote in upcoming elections, local and federal. [Check it out yourself](#), then send it to a friend, or maybe two! Make sure you and those you love are registered and have their voices heard in November.



After electing officials, the next step is to engage with them. November is important, but there is much to do before then, and long after, to ensure our legislators are pushing for the causes and policies that we, as people of faith, care deeply about. Each week, the UCC D.C. Office keeps track of what is being tackled in Congress, then

Around the Southern New England Conference of the UCC

[Centering Prayer: A Spiritual Resource For These Times](#)

Sept. 9 & 16, 2:00 PM

In this two-part webinar Terry Shaughnessy will introduce participants to the meditation/prayer practice known as Centering Prayer which has deep Christian roots, is easy to learn, and provides a tremendous resource for navigating these times of pandemic. In this two-part webinar, we will learn about the “prayer of quiet” and how some measure of silence, outside and within us, is necessary for spiritual growth as well as for strengthening the spiritual immune system. For more details or to register visit the [Southern New England Conference website](#).

[Caring for Families with Kids with Disabilities](#)

Sept. 24, 2:00 PM

While many families are struggling to maintain their lives and relationships right now, families with children with disabilities have unique challenges and stresses. In this free Zoom webinar, join Rev. Mindi Welton-Mitchell, a pastor and mother of a special kid as she considers how faith communities can support families. Click [here](#) to register.

Racial Justice: Top Things to Read Now

- [A Reflection on Ahmaud Arbery's Murder and Racism](#), by Dr. Donique McIntosh, Minister for Racial Justice
- [There Are Precious Few Good Police](#), by Rev. Marilyn Kendrix, Bridge Conference Minister
- [Racism in the Time of COVID-19](#), by Zinzi Bailey, Sharrelle Barber, Whitney Robinson, Jaime Slaughter-Acey, Chandra Ford, Shawnita Sealy-Jefferson
- [Performative Allyship is Deadly: Here's What To Do Instead](#)
- [Allies to Anti-Racist Accomplices](#) - Resources for the Stages of White Identity, created by Anna Stamborski, M.Div Candidate; Nikki Zimmermann, M.Div candidate; Bailie Gregory, M.Div., M.S. Ed.
- [Pay Attention. And Act](#), reflection by Don Remick, Bridge Conference Minister
- [A Message to White Allies](#), by Nancy Taylor, Senior Minister, Old South Church in Boston



Monday September 7th