



The Link



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

April 2021

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,

I have a friend who believes that the losses of the past year have actually led to something positive in her life; she is convinced that after 12 months of dealing with lockdowns, social distancing, and mask wearing, she has far more patience than she did a year ago. My friend's realization intrigues me but I don't think the same has happened for me.

We have gone through a grief-laden time, both individually and collectively, and to be honest I am ready to move on. I'm ready to embrace whatever the new normal for our lives and our church will be. We won't be going back to the way things were before the pandemic, because that would be impossible. However, I have been working with our Safe Reopening Task Force to evaluate when and how we can gather again safely for in-person worship. After considering state guidelines and recommendations from the Southern New England Conference of the UCC we believe it is now safe to resume outdoor worship. We plan to begin gathering for worship in the church parking lot on March 28, Palm Sunday, weather permitting. For your continued safety, masks will be required and social distancing will be in effect.

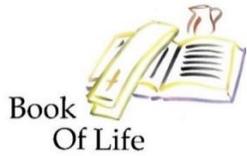
The Safe Reopening Task Force is committed to ensuring the well-being of our congregation and is recommending that we do not resume sanctuary worship before the fall. We will continue to monitor the Covid positivity rate and other metrics in our community, and will provide you with any updates as they become available.

Like me, perhaps you too are aware of the need to pray for patience as we begin to emerge from the pandemic, which promises to be a slow process. I pray that we will be guided by this verse from Romans, one that seems to be an appropriate touchstone for us in these days:

“Rejoice in hope, be patient in suffering, persevere in prayer.” (Romans 12:12)

With blessings of the Resurrection,

Pastor Mary



Death:

Robert Canfield, whose funeral service was led by Pastor Mary at Farley Funeral Home on March 6.

Robert Upton, whose funeral service was led by Pastor Mary at Pine Hill Cemetery in Lynnfield on March 12.

Rev. Jean Lenk, whose memorial service was held at Church of the Pilgrimage in Plymouth on March 13.



Holy Week and Easter Services

Palm Sunday (March 28): We will wave our palms and remember Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem as we worship outside in the church parking lot at 10:00 AM, weather permitting.*

Maundy Thursday (April 1): We will gather on Zoom at 7:00 PM to reflect on the events that took place on the night before Jesus' crucifixion. Communion will be celebrated.

Good Friday (April 2): We will gather on Zoom at 7:00 PM for a service created by the Southern New England Conference, "The Seven Last Words of Christ."

Easter Sunday (April 4): Celebrate the joy of Christ's resurrection with your church family outside in the parking lot at 10:00 AM, weather permitting. *

**If the weather for these services is unfavorable, worship will be held on Zoom. We will confirm the worship location as early in the week as possible and will notify you by email and with postings on our church Facebook page and website. Please call/text Pastor Mary (774-571-7307) if you have any questions about either service.*

Easter Sunday RSVP

Because of our obligation to comply with current Massachusetts restrictions on in-person gatherings, and for contact tracing purposes, if you plan to attend our outdoor service on Easter Sunday we ask that you RSVP with Pastor Mary by emailing revmary@uccstoughton.org or by calling/texting 774-571-7307. Thank you!



April Worship Services

We plan to hold worship outside in the church parking lot (weather permitting) on **April 4, 11, and 25**. Pastor Mary's scheduled Sunday off is April 18, so she will pre-record worship and the service will be held on Zoom.



We offer our gratitude to **Laura Kittery, Russ Congdon, and Marcia Olson** for their invaluable help with our church finances this month. We thank the members of our mask ministry for continuing to sew face masks for the local community. Thanks also go out to **Janet Clough** for facilitating our Easter flower orders and to Music Director **Gian DiCostanzo** for the beautiful music he has brought to our worship services. We once again thank **Marcia Olson** for her very successful efforts in selling Attic Treasures on Facebook Marketplace. Marcia has been assisted by **Stephanie Clough**, and has raised over \$1362 to date for the 2021 church fair. We are very blessed!



Music Director News

We are delighted to welcome Music Director **Gian DiCostanzo** to UCC Stoughton. Gian is an accomplished actor and musician having performed in theaters all around the country (most recently "Jersey Boys"). He is originally from North Smithfield, Rhode Island. Gian attended Emerson College in Boston, MA where he earned his BFA in Theatre & Performance. Prior to the pandemic, Gian was living in New York City pursuing a career as an actor full-time. He is excited to share in the gift of music and to get to know each and every member of the community. Welcome to our church family, Gian!



The Easter plants are given to the Glory of God and in celebration of:

The Resurrection of Christ by Rev. Mary Perry

The Easter Plants are given in honor of:

All first responders, front line workers and medical professionals who have worked tirelessly during the pandemic by Marcia Olson

In celebration of Nora and Jack Waddell by Neil, Leanne, Nicole and Jon

The Easter Plants are given in loving memory of:

All who we have lost to Covid-19 by Marcia Olson

Robert Connor by Donna, Tess and Megan Connor

Earle and Winifred Sterling by Bob and Marge Nutter and family

Thorald and Ruth Curtis by Peggy Webster and Barbara Smith

Our loved ones in the Giroux and Allen families by Kay Giroux

Ralph Clough by his family

Clifford and Amy Fowler by their family

Barbara Boyd, her mother, by Kevin and Sally Monahan, Ben and Sam

Patricia Monahan, his mother, by Kevin and Sally Monahan, Ben and Sam

My parents, Fred and Virginia Gibson by their daughter, Dolly

My grandparents, Anne and William Gibson, by Dolly Gibson

My aunts, Violet Gibson, Marion Gibson-Brides, and Annie Runzo and my

uncle, William Gibson, by Dolly Gibson

Eddie Ivaldi Sr. by Dolly Gibson

Joan (Johnny) and Milton Kerman by Neil, Leanne, Nicole and Jon

The Rev. Jean Niven Lenk by our church family



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

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Quick Connect

For those who prefer to call in to our Zoom gatherings, here is the information you will need:

Sunday worship - 10:00 am: Dial 1-253-215-8782 and enter Meeting ID 811 4826 1177

Sunday worship recordings – YouTube -

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC6ig4pUwSRhn9bBAgUzeTsg>

Wednesday prayer - 10:00 am: Dial 1-253-215-8782 and enter Meeting ID 862 2469 5175

Church Council - second Mondays at 7:00 pm: Dial 1-253-215-8782 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. 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 items to donate, let [Marcia](#) know. Helpers are always welcome for pricing and sorting items. Please keep those donations coming!



Stoughton Food Pantries

Due to the pandemic, there are many people in our own community who are in need of food assistance. If you are looking for practical ways to help your neighbors, please consider making a monetary donation to the Stoughton Food Pantries.

To donate by credit card:

[Food Pantry Foundation of Stoughton](#)

To donate by check please mail to:

Food Pantry Foundation of Stoughton
P.O. Box 757
Stoughton, MA 02072

Your donation will be equally divided between the Ilse Marks Food Pantry and the St. Anthony's Free Market Pantry. May God bless you for your generosity!



What's Happening This Month?

Faith & Fellowship Opportunities

- Sunday Worship at 10:00 AM.** We worship together each Sunday morning at 10:00 AM, outside in the church parking lot if the weather is sunny and warm enough or online if it is not. Face masks and socially distancing will be required for all who attend outdoor worship. Look for details and the Zoom link for online services in **Pastor Mary's** weekly Friday email, or on our Facebook or website page (www.uccstoughton.org).

For online services you may connect online or by phone. For those who prefer to call in, dial 1-253-215-8782 and enter Meeting ID 811 4826 1177. If you do not get this weekly email, contact the church office at office@uccstoughton.org. 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. Be sure to join us for a few minutes of fellowship immediately following the service.
- Church YouTube Channel** - Sunday worship services are recorded and made available later in the day on UCC Stoughton's YouTube channel. You will also be able to view any of our past services. Just go to <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC6ig4pUwSRhn9bBAqUzeTsg>.

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- **Wednesday Prayer Service: Pastor Mary** leads a 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 Meeting ID 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.
- **UCC Stoughton Prayer** is a private Facebook group where you can safely share your prayer requests, pray for others in our community, or just vent. No one sees the posts except group members. If you have a Facebook account and would like to join the group let **Pastor Mary** know.
- **Church Council** meets on the **2nd Monday of each month** at 7:00 pm via Zoom. These meetings are open to everyone, not just Council members. Contact Pastor Mary if you would like to attend via Zoom , please contact Pastor Mary and she will send you the link to the meeting. If you prefer to attend by telephone, call 1-253-215-8782 and enter Meeting ID 837 8927 2962.
- Remember to check our Facebook page, church website (<http://www.uccstoughton.org/>) and the Quick Connect information found elsewhere in The Link.



Opportunities to Serve

- **Apr 21 (Wed) Mainspring House:** This is this next date we are scheduled to provide dinner for Brockton's homeless shelter. If you can make a casserole or give a monetary donation to defray the cost of salad and dessert, please contact **Anita Keenan** (keenans21@gmail.com | 781-244-7742). Casseroles must be delivered to the church by **Sunday, April 18** and stored in the downstairs freezer. Contact Anita if you need a foil baking pan and recipe or to make arrangements to drop off your casserole.
- **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.
- **Mask Ministry:** This ministry is winding down as more of the community is getting vaccinated against COVID-19. Our thanks go out to our ministry team - **Gwen Bailey, Caroline Cesario, Colleen Cesario, Janet Clough, Kay Giroux, Susan Hill, Flo Ledin, Sally Monahan, and Marcia Olson** – for making and distributing more than 2700 face masks, ear savers and surgical caps since the pandemic began last spring to organizations such as The Outdoor Church, the local Red Cross, Father Bill's and Mainspring House, Soupman of Brockton and many, many others.
There are still ways those sewing skills can be used in the church's other vital ministries. **Friendly Service** has quilt parts that need to be sewn together. There are also plenty of jobs for the non-sewers in our midst. Please contact **Janet Clough** (cloughjl@gmail.com | 781-344-3860) to find out how you can help.



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. You can also donate by credit card or check to the Stoughton Food Pantries (look for details elsewhere in The Link).
- **Bottles and Cans:** Please donate your clean, redeemable bottles and cans. Monetary donations are also gratefully accepted and the money collected is used for various church ministries and operational needs. Cans and bottles can be left in the drop-off container at the bottom of the stairs just before the church office or 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.



SPRING IS HERE



News from the Safe Reopening Team

Now that spring's warmer weather has arrived and we have encouraging news on the Covid-19 vaccine front, we are all understandably eager to "return to normal" and gather with our friends and family again. That includes gathering together with our church family in person after so many months of "Zoom fatigue" and staying home. As anxious as we are for those gatherings to happen, the health and safety of all congregants must be our highest priority and we still need to be cautious about re-opening too soon. The Safe Reopening Team is staying current on outbreak trends as we make decisions on resuming the use of our church building and trying to develop best practices policies for preventing any further spread of Covid-19.

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As we develop these best practices, please follow the guidelines below for use of our church building until further notice:

- No groups should meet indoors at the church until the Safe Reopening Team, in consultation with Council and Trustees have given the green light with a clear set of guidelines in place, e.g., a cleaning and disinfecting protocol.
- Our first “re-gathering” as a congregation will be outdoor worship for Palm Sunday and Easter.
- Small groups are welcome to meet outdoors on church grounds following state guidelines on the number of people allowed to gather. Please notify the Trustees.
- The Safe Reopening Team will be monitoring the CDC, MA, Insurance Board and Conference guidelines closely to see when and what kind of group activities will be safe to resume inside the church building, with priority given to worship and small group church-related activities first rather than strictly social gatherings.
- Reach out to any member of church leadership with questions or concerns as we consider how to safely conduct daily operations before attempting to hold in-person worship services or events.

Rev. Jean Niven Lenk

April 20, 1954 - February 27, 2021



The world became a quieter and less joy-filled place when Rev. Jean Niven Lenk, [age 66], of Sagamore Beach, MA, (prior of Ipswich, Foxboro and Plymouth, MA) went home to God surrounded by her family on Saturday, February 27, 2021.

She was the wife of Peter E. Lenk, whom she had first met in nursery school at age 3 and with whom she re-connected at the 30th Reunion of the Wellesley High School Class of 1972.

Rev. Lenk fought a courageous battle against Leiomyosarcoma, and when first diagnosed had been told by doctors that she had less than two years to live. She delighted in proving them wrong by living another 8 years.

A native of Wellesley (MA), Rev. Lenk was the mother of two children who were the “light and joy” of her life: Elizabeth Sangster of Sagamore Beach, and Ian Sangster of Quincy. She had two beloved stepchildren, Timothy Lenk of Milford and Beryl Lenk Wagner (Rob) of Steamboat Springs, CO, and a sweet grandbaby, Booker Timothy Wagner, on the way. She leaves two brothers, David C. Niven of VA and Andrew L. Niven of NV, her mother-in-law Constance R. Lenk of Mashpee, as well as many cousins, nieces and nephews. She was the daughter of the late David W. Niven and the late Olive C. Niven. She was predeceased by two husbands: Darcy W. Lever, Jr. who died in 1982, and Arthur John Sangster who died in 1997.

Rev. Lenk received her Bachelor of Arts in English Honors (now Commonwealth Scholars) from the University of Massachusetts, Amherst, where she was a proud member of the UMass Marching Band. She completed both high school and college a year early, graduating Magna Cum Laude just after turning 20. She then embarked on a corporate career, eventually becoming Vice President of Human Resources in the financial services field. Along the way, she earned a Master of Science Degree in Human Resource Management from Lesley University in Cambridge.

After almost 20 years in business, she felt unfulfilled by “helping people with money make more money” and, hearing God’s call to ministry, left her corporate career to enter seminary. She graduated first in her class from Andover Newton Theological School in Newton Centre (MA) with a Master of Divinity in 1999, being honored with the Russell Chase Tuck Biblical Studies Award and membership in the Jonathan Edwards Honor Society. She was ordained into Christian ministry on May 23, 1999, at the United Church of Christ of Medfield (MA).

Rev. Lenk’s first call was as Associate Pastor at The Congregational Church of Topsfield (MA), United Church of Christ, where she served for six years. She was then called as Senior Pastor to the First Congregational Church of Stoughton (MA), United Church of Christ, where she served for eight years. In her years as a Pastor, she was recognized for her upbeat, optimistic and compassionate demeanor, her high energy and creativity, and her joy-filled sense of humor which she punctuated with an infectious laugh. She served the UCC in various local, regional, and national settings, and the Mass. (now Southern New England) Conference of the United Church of Christ recognized her leadership, service, and pastoral achievements with the Haystack Award for Discipleship in 2012.

Rev. Lenk received “out of the blue” a diagnosis of Stage IV cancer on Good Friday, 2013. She courageously led the Stoughton congregation in Easter celebrations two days later, then immediately went on a Leave of Absence to focus all her energy on her health. She began a CaringBridge blog of her first year as a cancer patient to keep friends and loved ones informed, which she later published as a book entitled *Fertilizer Happens: A Pastor’s Faith, Calling and Journey with Cancer*. Over the years, she underwent multiple different chemo protocols and endured six major surgeries as doctors tried to stem the spread of cancer.

When her health allowed, she was an active lay member of The Church of the Pilgrimage in Plymouth, using her knowledge and experience to start a Prayer Shawl Ministry, lead Bible studies, and serve on various ministry teams. In her spare time, she loved crocheting prayer shawls, baptismal shawls, and baby blankets. With her husband she enjoyed camping and serving as a long-time member of the Waltham Stamp Club, receiving accolades for her extensive collection of stamps depicting figures and scenes from the Old and New Testaments.

When the chemo and surgical options had run their course and the pain had taken its toll, it was time for the angels to escort her to Everlasting Life, where God, Jesus, her loved ones, and many dogs and cats were waiting to welcome her home.

A link to a recording of Rev. Jean’s memorial service can be found at our website www.uccstoughton.org. Contributions in Jean’s memory can be made to either the First Congregational Church of Stoughton, 76 Pierce Street, Stoughton, MA 02072 or The Church of the Pilgrimage, 8 Town Square, Plymouth, MA 02360.

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

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

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

Al Manson
 130 Plain Drive
 Stoughton, MA 02072

Ruth Scrivens
 18 Daly Dr.
 Stoughton, MA 02072