



The Link



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

February 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,

Our church recently celebrated a milestone - our 10th anniversary of becoming an Open and Affirming congregation of the United Church of Christ. It was back in 2011 when we voted overwhelmingly to proclaim our extravagant and unconditional welcome to each and every one of God's beloved people, without exception.

This anniversary is a good time to remind ourselves of the serious nature of the commitment we made 10 years ago and to re-dedicate ourselves to living lives that prioritize the gospel values of peace, justice, and love of neighbor.

Guided by these foundational teachings of Jesus, our church recently publicized the following statement on our website and Facebook pages:

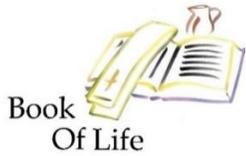
"As followers of Jesus we are deeply disturbed by the insurrection at the U.S. Capitol and grieve the violence, trauma, and loss of life that took place there last week. We publicly condemn the sins of racism and anti-Semitism and the heresies of white supremacy and Christian nationalism that are so deeply ingrained in the fabric of our society. We deplore the actions of the rioters and insurrectionists who were proclaiming Jesus as their Lord and Savior and who were carrying Bibles and holding 'Jesus Saves' signs. There was nothing Christlike in any of these displays.

We at UCC Stoughton are committed to doing the work that is necessary to help move our country toward the shalom that we believe God envisions for us all. We are inspired in this task by the words of the prophet Micah, who calls us to go forth to 'do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with our God' and we invite you to join us in this work of love."

Let us pray that our church will continue to bear witness to the power of love, peace, and inclusion that characterized the ministry of Jesus, and is at the very heart of what we are all about.

Blessings,

Pastor Mary



Death:

Doris Bamberg, whose graveside service was led by Pastor Mary on January 19 at the Gardens at Gethsemane, West Roxbury.



We continue to be blessed by the music that **Ginny Gibson** has been providing for our Sunday worship services, and by **John Baglole** and **Russ Clough's** technical assistance. We once again thank **Marcia Olson** for her very successful efforts in selling Attic Treasures and Knit Goods on Facebook Marketplace. Marcia has been assisted by **Stephanie Clough**, and has raised \$7836 for the 2020 Church fair. We thank **Anita Keenan** for coordinating our MainSpring suppers and **Janet Clough** and **Susan Hill** for bringing donations of clothing to the Seafarers in Boston. Thanks also go out to **Leanne Kerman**, **Julie McGillicuddy**, and **John Baglole** for their invaluable help with our Christmas Eve services. We are very blessed!



Sign up to get **The Link** delivered directly to your email inbox each month by sending your name and email address to Link@uccstoughton.org. Or drop a note with your contact information in the offering plate on Sunday. Let us know if your address or email has changed as well so you never miss an issue. The Link is also posted on our website at www.uccstoughton.org. Printed copies are available in the literature rack in the church lobby.



Articles for the **March LINK** will be due by **February 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

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



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!



ASH WEDNESDAY

The season of Lent begins on Ash Wednesday, **February 17**. We will gather for a Zoom worship service with Communion at 7:00 that evening, with the Zoom link to be provided in advance of the service. Please plan to join us for worship as we prepare to walk with Jesus in this holy season.



What's Happening This Month?

Faith & Fellowship Opportunities

- **Sunday Online Worship at 10:00 AM.** We worship online together each Sunday morning at 10:00 AM during the winter. You may connect online or by phone. The Zoom link is sent out each Friday in Pastor Mary's weekly email. 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. Portions of the online service will be recorded and posted to our YouTube site as soon as it is available and a link to the recording will be posted on the church [website](#). 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.
- **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 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

- **Feb 17 (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). She can provide you with a baking pan and the recipe. Casseroles must be delivered to the church by **Sunday, February 14** 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. At the request of Rev. Darrell Goodwin, our new Southern New England UCC Conference Minister, **Marcia Olson** delivered 10 prayer shawls to Edwards House in Framingham so that conference staff would "*be covered and surrounded in prayer.*" Kate Ostertag, Executive for Camps & Retreats at Edward House emailed "*They are beautiful. Thank you so very much and please extend our gratitude to everyone who shared in making this gift possible.*"
- **Mask Ministry:** As we are experiencing another surge in COVID-19 infections now that the cold weather has arrived and we spend more time indoors, the need for face masks is greater than ever. The Mask Ministry team has started making masks again and have been distributing them to the Outdoor Church of Cambridge, Father Bill's and Mainspring House, the local Red Cross and Soupman of Brockton. To date this fall and winter we have distributed 518 face masks. There is plenty of fabric and elastic at the church if you want to join our team. Please contact Marcia Olson (baglole.olson@verizon.net | 781-344-9547) 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.
- **Outdoor Church: Pastor Mary** delivered several boxes of scarves, hats and socks to Outdoor Church at the end of January. *Thank you for your generosity!* During this cold winter season the Outdoor Church street ministry is greatly in need of warm, waterproof socks, scarves, hats or gloves for the homeless in Harvard and Central Squares in Cambridge. Please contact **Marcia Olson** (baglole.olson@verizon.net | 781-344-9547) if you would like to make a donation. Donations can also be left at the church office.
- **Mitten Tree:** In January **Susan Hill**, on behalf of Missions & Outreach, delivered many pairs of mittens, hats and scarves to Evelyn House and other local children in need. There are still plenty of mittens and hats made by our talented knitters for you to purchase and donate throughout the winter. Mittens are \$6/pr or two for \$10. Hats are also \$8-10 each. Please send a donation to the UCC Stoughton Mitten Tree, c/o Marcia Olson, 247 Prospect St., Stoughton, MA 02072.

[COVID-19 2021: Prolonged Uncertainty](#)

1/12/2021 - by: [Deborah Ringen](#), Transitional Minister of Health and Wellness for the Southern New England Conference, UCC.

Here we are a little over a week into the new year. Our nation and our world continue to struggle under the COVID-19 pandemic. As of January 12th all three states in the SNEUCC conference are experiencing high positivity rates for COVID-19. New variant strains are being identified that appear to be more contagious than the earlier strain making it even more important to continue wearing a mask, maintaining social distance and washing our hands. The good news so far is that the new variants do not appear to be more deadly. They also are thought to respond to the current vaccines. Even so, many feel great uncertainty.

We are weary, weary of isolation and fear of others, weary of having to plan carefully for each and every activity in our daily life. If we give up now, while positivity rates are high, and hospitals are struggling to care for all who are ill we will see even more difficult circumstances before the end of this pandemic. This is why we are continuing on-line worship and carefully managing essential ministries for vulnerable people in the community. One only needs to read the papers to find examples of outbreaks of the virus even when appropriate precautions are followed. In Woburn, Massachusetts, 44 people tested positive for Covid-19 after worship services were held Dec. 23, and 24th. Christmas services at a church in Vermont led to 80 COVID-19 cases. An outbreak at a church in North Carolina resulted in 3 deaths and almost 100 people infected. If you are like me, you don't want to be the source of an outbreak!

So, let's be patient. We are called to remain vigilant in protecting ourselves and others. The first vaccines are being distributed and more are being developed. Vaccine administration is proceeding more slowly than desired. We wonder when will be our turn? The experts are considering vulnerability, and public health issues in order to decide who should be vaccinated first. This is an ethical and a scientific issue as the world strives to reach a level of herd immunity that will protect the greatest number of people. Click the link for Massachusetts to learn more: [Massachusetts COVID Vaccination Information](#)

It is unfortunate that we must be aware of potential scams related to the Coronavirus vaccine. Remember that you will never be asked for your social security number or bank information at a vaccination site. You also will never be required to pay to put your name on a list to get the vaccine. If you suspect a fraudulent email contact your department of consumer protection to report what you saw.

There is hope on the horizon and there are ways for us to manage uncertainty and reduce the impact of stress in our daily lives. It is important to focus on the things we can control in our life, accept what we cannot change and to live according to our values. The [World Health Organization](#) (WHO) is an excellent resource for information and data related to the pandemic. WHO has published a guide that offers a simple, illustrated discussion and practical tips to help people recognize and manage anxiety and stress. It includes audio file links in multiple languages to listen and practice stress relief. Techniques such as grounding, acting on your values, unhooking, engaging, making room and being kind are discussed. The guide reminds us that our values and actions are important in relationship to care of ourselves and others.

I pray that we will be able to be together soon. Until then here are some tools to manage stress and anxiety in these uncertain, stress-filled times:

- Decide how much news coverage you can handle and stick to it. Try watching one or two news programs or reading the paper daily. You do not have to listen to constant updates.
- Take care of yourself. Drink your water, eat a healthy diet, get some exercise and keep regular sleep habits.
- Remember the helper principle: helping others is also a benefit to the helper. Make a phone call, write a note pick up groceries for a neighbor while you are out.
- Don't hesitate to reach out to your physician, trusted friend or spiritual director, mental health professional if your emotions are keeping you from your daily activities.
- Doing what matters in times of stress: an illustrated guide. Geneva: World Health Organization; 2020. License: CC BY-NC-SA 3.0 IGO. Retrieved on January 11, 2021 from: <https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789240003927>

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

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

Al Manson
 130 Plain Drive
 Stoughton, MA 02072

Ruth Scrivens
 18 Daly Dr.
 Stoughton, MA 02072