



The Link



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

September 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 Church Family,

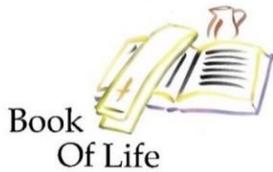
No, it's not Pastor Mary. We pray she has been enjoying her leave from pastoral duties and finding time to rest, rejuvenate and visit with family. We look forward to welcoming her back in September. So, this month, you are stuck with me.

What an unsettling summer this has been. After a glimmer of returning to something resembling "normal", the troubling surge of the delta variant instead has us watching helplessly as the death toll among the unvaccinated continues to rise. According to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, July was hottest month in recorded human history. The warming climate is making heat waves, droughts, and floods more intense and frequent. People across the globe are suffering loss from wildfires, earthquakes, and political unrest. It is hard not to feel helpless and overwhelmed. As people of faith, we are called to carry God's message of love and hope to people in crisis. A quote attributed to Mother Teresa resonated with me this week, "It's not how much we give, but how much love we put into giving." Please reach out however and wherever you can to alleviate suffering, heal our planet, offer kindness. Acts of giving, large or small, can make a big difference in a hurting world.

While church activities have slowed over the summer, those who have gathered for Sunday worship have been grateful to see beloved and familiar faces, to share our joys and concerns, and to lift our prayers up to God together. Stoughton Extended Day has moved in and we look forward to welcoming this new preschool program in September along with the return of Head Start. The sound of children back at school is a blessing. Church leadership has also been busy. After the congregation voted to authorize Church Council to begin an exploratory process regarding a potential merger with another UCC church in the Pilgrim Association, we met virtually with our Area Conference Minister, Rev. Patty Kogut, for guidance on how to begin. We will be sharing more with all of you when we gather together in September. I have missed you all.

And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near. (Hebrews 10:24-25).

Yours in faith,
Marcia Olson, Moderator



Baptisms:

Braelyn McKenna Pantier and Ella Rose Pantier, daughters of Kendra and Paul Pantier, were baptized by Pastor Mary on June 27.

Claire Charlotte Cantor, daughter of Lauren Armstrong and Eric Cantor, was baptized by Pastor Mary on August 1.

Deaths:

Barbara Bingamon, whose memorial service was led by Pastor Mary at our church on July 1.

William Palmer, whose memorial service was led by Pastor Mary at the First Congregational Church of Yarmouth on July 7.

Wayne Alholm, whose memorial service was led by Pastor Mary at the Massachusetts National Cemetery in Bourne on July 27.



Thank you to **Ed and Gale Porter** for their maintenance of the church grounds. Thank you as well to **Ed Porter** who has done so much work getting our new Stoughton Extended Day tenants settled into their new space on the lower level. We also thank all who faithfully provided casseroles for the MainSpring dinners in June and August and **Anita Keenan** for coordinating this important outreach. We once again thank **Marcia Olson** who has continued to sell Attic Treasures on Facebook Marketplace. Thanks to the donations of so many, more than \$13,800 has been raised in 2021 for our church. We are very blessed!



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



CHURCH FAIR - SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 13 9 AM – 3 PM

Plans are underway to hold a holiday fair once again this November if Covid-19 health and safety protocols permit it! **Maurine Upton** has been busy making calls asking people to commit to take an active part in making our Church Fair a success. Not only is the fair important to our church's financial health, it also brings old and new friends together and to have a few minutes to "catch up" as we begin the holiday season. If you did not hear from Maurine, please give her a call (781-344-4609) and let her know how you can help. If you led a specific area last year (Attic Treasures, Books, Jewelry, Baked Goods and Candy, Raffle Baskets, Knit Goods, and Crafts) we hope you will do so again. There may also be a lunch area. You can also help out in other ways – donate an item to Attic Treasures, make a craft, knit good or baked good for one of our tables, help set-up tables so they are ready for sale time, offer to work at one of the tables, or help with cleanup. This year's fair will be smaller than in the past as the whole fair will be on the upper floor of our building using the Library, Fireplace Room, Lobby, and the Fellowship Hall.

We are ready to hear from you so we know who we can depend on. Talk with your family and friends, get a partner to work with, mark your calendar NOW!



What's Happening This Month?

Faith & Fellowship Opportunities

- **Sunday Worship at 10:00 AM.** We worship together each Sunday morning at 10:00 AM. Please pay careful attention to Pastor Mary's weekly emails and other church communications for any changes in Covid-19 health and safety protocols. The Safe Opening team, after monitoring the current data on the Delta variant surge and recent CDC recommendations, has asked that all who attend indoor worship wear face masks and observe social distancing. If you do not get the weekly email, contact the church office at office@uccstoughton.org. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact **Pastor Mary** at 774-571-7307.

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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. These meetings are open to everyone, not just Council members. Contact Pastor Mary if you would like to attend via Zoom, 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](#) and church website (<http://www.uccstoughton.org/>).



Opportunities to Serve

- **Prayer Shawl Ministry:** Look for upcoming church communications for when we can again meet in person but until then 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 20 (Wed) Mainspring House:** This is the 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, October 17** 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.
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Opportunities to

- **Food Pantry:** Donations are still urgently needed. Now that we have resumed indoor worship, you can bring your non-perishable food items to church on Communion Sunday each month or leave them in the Giving Corner in the church lobby at any time. Please check the expiration dates. You can also donate online at (<https://www.gofundme.com/f/food-pantry-foundation-of-stoughton-incYou>) or by sending a check to the Food Pantry Foundation of Stoughton, PO Box 757, Stoughton, MA 02072.

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- **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.
- **Seafarers Clothing Drive:** Once again help us gather warm clothing for the men and women who serve us upon the sea. These Seafarers help to bring us items we need daily. **Friendly Service** will collect and deliver your clean clothing items in good condition between **September 1 – October 15**. Place your donation in the large baskets in the church lobby. Thank you.

Articles From The United Church Of Christ

UCC issues \$100,000 appeal for Haiti after 7.2 earthquake, tropical storm

published on Aug 16, 2021

The United Church of Christ is issuing a call to action to help the people of Haiti. A [massive 7.2 earthquake](#) on Saturday has killed nearly 1,300 people. Search and rescue efforts are expected to be hampered by Tropical Depression Grace, which came ashore on Monday.

“The island of Haiti suffered major damages and loss of life from an earthquake this weekend,” said the Rev. Karen Georgia Thompson, associate general minister, [Wider Church Ministries](#) and Operations. “We are issuing an appeal through the [Global H.O.P.E.](#) team to raise funds to assist in Haiti in any ways that we can, short-term, and also to assist with long-term recovery needs.

“We hold our partners and Haitian siblings in our thoughts and prayers through this time of suffering.”

The UCC appeal hopes to raise \$100,000 to assist the people of Haiti through this crisis.

[Click here](#) to read the whole article or to make an online donation. One can also mail a check made payable to the United Church of Christ, to 700 Prospect Ave., Cleveland, OH 44115. Please be sure to note “Haiti Appeal” on your check in the memo section, or in an attached letter.

“WE MUST NOT TURN OUR BACK ON AFGHANISTAN”

By UCC Leadership | published on August 17, 2021

“As he came near and saw the city, Jesus wept over it, saying, “If you, even you, had only recognized on this day the things that make for peace! But now they are hidden from your eyes.” (Luke 19:41-2)

We write with profound grief at the news of the Taliban takeover of Kabul and fall of the Afghan government. Images like those of people clinging to U.S. planes are haunting, and they point to the desperation and fear of our Afghan siblings. After 20 years of military intervention, it is clear that U.S. and international approaches have not brought about a Just Peace for the people of Afghanistan. Twenty more years of the same approach would not have done more. The cycle of violence and endless war had to end. As we have said for years in the United Church of Christ, peace is not the absence of conflict but the presence of justice. We need new approaches to address the root causes of unrest that lead to radicalization, and to break the cycle of violence.

To the resilient people of Afghanistan, we grieve with you and stand by you. Your country and lives have already been devastated by years of conflict which have claimed the lives of over 40,000 Afghan civilians and 60,000 military and security officers. The cost you have borne already is unimaginable, and now probable life under a Taliban rule brings the likelihood of more violence, brutality, and a constriction of human and civil rights, particularly for your women and girls. We confess our nation’s failure in not centering Afghan leadership more and finding a way to build a durable peace over these twenty years. We repent our contribution to this cycle of violence, and we will not turn away from your suffering. We commit to actively engage our policymakers to see to it that our nation does not abandon you.

To our policymakers, now is not the time for partisan finger-pointing. America’s longest war spanned across four administrations and several changes of power in Congress. We all must collectively own failure to draw this conflict to an end sooner and with a greater possibility for success. While we support the end of U.S. military occupation and operations, we must not turn our back on Afghanistan now or in the years to come. As a nation, we have invested billions in over-militarized approaches that have not succeeded in bringing about the true security or restoration needed for peace. We call for a long-term surge of investment in the “things that make for peace” such as peace-building, humanitarian support, diplomatic engagement, and expansion of access to the U.S. resettlement program to provide refuge for Afghans fleeing violence and persecution.

To our active military, veterans, peacebuilders, aid workers, and civil servants who have served and worked to aid Afghanistan, we are grateful for your service and sacrifice. Because of your efforts, many benefited from improved security, education, and a more robust civil society that included the leadership of women. We call on our congregations to extend a compassionate welcome to support you in your grief and trauma. We pray the seeds of hope and progress planted over these last 20 years continue to take root.

As a Just Peace Church, we proclaim with prophetic hope that “peace is possible.” We are not about to stop believing that today. Let us hold on to the hope that peace is possible and commit ourselves not only to keeping our Afghan siblings in prayer, but also to committing: our churches to welcome refugees; our voices to engage in advocacy; our hearts to establish partnerships; and our minds and bodies to support the “things that make for peace.”

Faithfully,

The National Officers of the United Church of Christ

The Rev. John C. Dorhauer
General Minister and President

The Rev. Karen Georgia Thompson

Associate General Minister, Wider Church Ministries and
Operations

The Rev. Traci Blackmon

Associate General Minister, Justice and Local Church Ministries

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:

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
 Care One at Randolph
 49 Thomas Patten Dr
 Randolph, MA 02368

Maizie John
 996 Canton Ave.
 Milton MA 02186

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

Ruth Scrivens
 18 Daly Dr.
 Stoughton, MA 02072