



The Link



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

October 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,

At a recent Wednesday morning prayer service, we heard these verses from the seventh chapter of Matthew's Gospel, and I've been reflecting on them ever since:

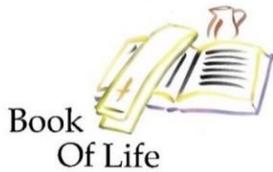
"Ask, and it will be given you; search, and you will find; knock, and the door will be opened for you. For everyone who asks receives, and everyone who searches finds, and for everyone who knocks, the door will be opened." (Mt 7:7-8)

This passage from the Sermon on the Mount has always been one of my favorites because it's reassuring. It reminds us that God will provide for our needs and that God is a loving and wise parent who cares about everything that is happening in our lives and who wants to bless us, not always with exactly what we ask for, but as Matthew puts it, with "good things."

The reminder to rely on God and to trust in God's goodness and generosity is always pertinent but seems especially so as we seek the guidance of the Holy Spirit regarding the future of our church. Although we are generally comfortable sharing our thoughts and concerns with one another, let's remember to lean into God's strength and love for us in this season of discernment, confident that God wants what is best for us all. Let's be open to the holy work of the Spirit in our lives and in our church, as we ask, seek, and knock, knowing that God will always open the door for us.

Grace and peace,

Pastor Mary



Deaths:

Ralph and Virginia Holmes, whose memorial service was led by Pastor Mary at Evergreen Cemetery on September 10.

Helen Estabrooks, whose memorial service was led by Pastor Mary at Evergreen Cemetery on September 10.



Thank you to **Maurine Upton** and **Janet Clough** for initiating the planning for this year's Church Fair. We also thank **Gian DiCostanzo** and **John Baglole** for the extra worship help they provided during Pastor Mary's sabbatical in August, and **Janet Clough** for organizing a large stack of our church history documents. We are very blessed!



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

**Confirmation News**

Confirmation classes begin on **Sunday, October 3** and will be held after worship on the first Sunday of the month. These classes are led by Pastor Mary with the assistance of parent volunteers. If you would like your child to participate, please contact Pastor Mary.



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.
 - **October Worship Schedule**
All services will be held in the church sanctuary unless otherwise noted. We ask that you wear a mask and observe social distancing while in the building.
 October 3: World Communion Sunday. Pastor Mary leading worship.
 October 10: Pastor Mary leading worship.
 October 17: Laity Sunday - worship will be led by members of the congregation.
 October 24: We encourage you to visit a neighboring church while Pastor Mary is on vacation.
 October 31: Pastor Mary leading worship.
- **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 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.
- **Oct 10 (Sun) New Directions Conversation:** Join us for an informal conversation immediately following worship about the exploratory process on our church's future. We want to hear your ideas, concerns, and insights. We make our best decisions when we do it together in prayer and truthful, loving conversation.
- 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.
- **Oct 30 (Sat) Outdoor Church of Cambridge:** We will be serving at the Outdoor Church on Saturday afternoon, October 30 and would love your help to either make sandwiches that morning or travel into Cambridge to distribute them. We also welcome donations of new socks, which are much needed by those who live on the streets. Our next serve date will be January 29. Please let Pastor Mary know if you're interested in helping with this important outreach.



Opportunities to

- **Oct 3 (Sun) Neighbors in Need Offering:** We will be receiving this special offering on October 3 as part of World Communion Sunday, but contributions can be made at any time. Look for more details elsewhere in this issue. Thank you for your generosity!
- **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-inc>) or by sending a check to the to the Food Pantry Foundation of Stoughton, PO Box 757, Stoughton, MA 02072.
- **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.

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- **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.
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Neighbors In Need

Neighbors in Need Offering - October 3

This year UCC's "Neighbors in Need" special missions offering is focused on supporting organizations and projects that are serving homeless and immigrant neighbors or communities. One-third of NIN funds support the Council for American Indian Ministry. Two-thirds of this offering is used by the UCC's Justice and Witness Ministries to provide funding grants to UCC churches and organizations leading justice initiatives, advocacy efforts, and direct service projects in their communities.

We will be receiving this special offering on October 3 as part of World Communion Sunday, but contributions can be made at any time. Thank you for your generosity!

General Synod 2021

Over the summer I was blessed to serve as a delegate to the UCC's 33rd General Synod, whose theme was "Rooted In Love." Due to the ongoing pandemic, this was the first virtual General Synod in the church's history which, of course, presented a host of unique challenges and opportunities. As the UCC's Constitution frames it, "The General Synod is the gathering of a faith community representative of the wider church to listen for and discern the call of God to the United Church of Christ. The General Synod deliberates, discerns, and identifies the mission of the wider church of the United Church of Christ in God's world and receives and offers suggestions, invitations, challenges, and assistance in covenant with Local Churches, Conferences, and other settings as they engage in mission together."

There was much to deliberate and discern this year. In addition to three separate worship opportunities and keynote addresses by social justice activist Valarie Kaur and author Rev. Adam Russell Taylor, president of the organization Sojourners, there were amendments to the UCC's Bylaws, and several resolutions considered and voted upon in plenary sessions. These resolutions addressed a variety of important issues and concerns, including, but certainly not limited to: recognition of the United Nations' International Decade for People of African Descent initiative; pledges to respond to racism as a public health crisis and to affirm of the "Rights of Nature;" a call for "Just Peace" between Israel and Palestine; and commitments to ensure gender equity and safety in ministry settings, to change the current U.S. cash bail bond system, and to end the practice of conversion therapy.

Although I missed being with other Synod delegates in person, it was an honor to serve the wider UCC and reminded me once again that we are blessed to be part of a denomination that is actively working to make God's kingdom real for all people.

-Pastor Mary



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. **Help is needed in all areas.** If you led a specific area last year - Attic Treasures, Books, Jewelry, Baked Goods and Candy, Raffle Baskets, Knit Items, and Crafts - we hope you will do so again. You can also help out in other ways – donate an item to Attic Treasures, make a craft, knit item 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.

Will you give us some of your time in 2-hour increments or more? Please fill out the following form (either copy and paste it and send it in an email, or fill out this page in the Link and return it to either the **Church Office** (office@uccstoughton.org) or contact **Janet Clough** (cloughjl@gmail.com | 781-344-3860) or **Maurine Upton** (781-344-4609).

Fair Setup:

Thu 11/11 from 7-9 PM YES

Fri 11/12 from 7-9 PM YES

Work at table on fair day on Sat 11/13:

9 AM – 11 AM YES

11 AM – 1 PM YES

1 PM – 3 PM YES

Fair Cleanup

Sat 11/13 from 3-5 PM YES

NO. I am unable to work but I am enclosing my donation to support the Church Fair.

NO, I am unable to work but I am donating Attic Treasures, books, jewelry, craft item, or baked good.

Please include your contact information.

Name: _____

Phone: _____

Email: _____

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

Willimansett Center East
 Room 308A
 11 St. Anthony Street
 Chicopee, MA 01013

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