



The Link



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

March 2018

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,

The times, they are a-changing. This may have been the title of a song written by Bob Dylan back in 1964, but it also describes the religious landscape today. As I'm sure you know, declining worship attendance, aging congregations, and diminished financial resources have affected churches in all denominations. For most of us, the days of two hundred people in the pews on Sunday and an equal number of kids at Sunday School are over. Churches everywhere are being forced to re-evaluate their mission and are asking themselves tough questions about their viability as communities of faith. Some have closed, some have redefined their mission, and some have merged with other churches.

Seminary education has also changed. Andover Newton Theological School, my alma mater and the seminary our church has had close ties to for many years, is leaving its longtime location in Newton to become part of Yale Divinity School. Another theological institution, Episcopal Divinity School in Cambridge, has recently closed.

Seminary educators and church leaders are working together to evaluate best practices for seminary education and are looking at ways to serve both students and churches effectively.

Another change that is underway in the United Church of Christ is the proposed merger of the Massachusetts, Rhode Island, and Connecticut Conferences. At a joint meeting last June, which I attended, delegates from all three Conferences voted to move ahead toward forming a new, unified conference, which should become operational in 2020.

Change is an inevitable part of life. We all tend to prefer comfort and familiarity. Words that God spoke through the prophet Isaiah remind us, though, that God can be the creative force behind the change and that God's presence and strength can help us navigate whatever comes our way.

"I am about to do a new thing;
now it springs forth, do you not perceive it?
I will make a way in the wilderness
and rivers in the desert." (Isaiah 43:19)

May our church continue to be a place where we love and trust God and where we know that God's faithfulness to us will continue.

With every blessing,
Pastor Mary



Youth Group/Faith4Life

Sunday, March 4

Faith4Life Church School Class (Mr. Clough)

"Tough Questions: What does it mean to be 'born again'?"

10:00-11:30 AM

Sunday, March 11

Faith4Life Youth Group (Marcia Olson)

10:00-11:30 AM

"Money, Money, Money"

Sunday, March 18

Faith4Life Youth Group (Marcia Olson)

8:30-12:00 AM

Pancake Breakfast

Sunday, March 18

Faith4Life Youth Group (Marcia Olson)

6:00-7:30 PM

Good Friday Service Prep

Sunday, March 25 (Palm Sunday)

Faith4Life Youth Group (Marcia Olson)

6:00-7:30 PM

Good Friday Service Prep

Friday, March 30

Faith4Life Youth Group (Marcia Olson)

5:00 PM (Fri) - 8:00 AM (Sat)

Good Friday Service and Lock-in

Sunday, April 8

Faith4Life Church School Class (Mr. Clough)

"Tough Questions: What if my friends aren't Christian?"

10:00-11:30 AM

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Sunday, April 29 (TBD)

Community Garden Day Work Day

Sunday, May 6

Faith4Life Church School Class (Mr. Clough)

"Tough Questions: Is it okay to be angry at God?"

Sunday, May 6

Feet for Food

11:00-12:00

For more information, contact Marcia

Olson, baglole.olson@verizon.net or [339-987-1730](tel:339-987-1730).



**Meet
for
Breakfast**

Faithful Gents---and Ladies

On the last Saturday of each month, a group of the men from our church gather at Bickford's for breakfast at 9 AM to share events in our lives and those in our church family. It has become a custom for women of the church and other friends to join the breakfast group at a neighboring table. So, if you and your partner would like to go out for breakfast on a Saturday morning, please join us. If you are single (men or women) —come and join us! Get to know other members of our church family in a different setting. All are welcome. Our next breakfast will be on Saturday, **March 31 at 9 am**. We are usually in the smaller room at the back of the restaurant.

Bickford's Restaurant, Oak Street, Brockton. If you have any questions or need a ride, please contact Bob Kuver at 781-341-2751.



Hello from the Christian Education Team! Who are we? We are the ministry team at Stoughton UCC that educates our congregation in their Christian faith.

We provide nurturing care for little ones under the age of 4 in the nurse, lead fun and engaging classes about faith and the Bible to kids from pre-school through middle school, offer a special Faith4Life program for middle school youth, as well as occasional classes for adults wanting to explore and deepen their faith.

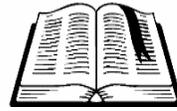
We invite all parents to share your ideas and questions about what is being taught with any member of the CE Team. We also encourage you to talk to your own kids at home about what they are learning - this helps to reinforce their lessons. If you would like to get involved, there is always room on our team for more people!

On Sunday, **March 18** we will be holding our annual Pancake Breakfast after service! There will be pancakes, sausage, bacon (mmmm, bacon!) and other goodies. The cost is \$5 per person and a maximum of \$20 per family. Proceeds will go to support the Faith4Life group.

This month in Church School, we continue with our lessons on the Books of the Bible for our younger children. The lessons are going well and the kids are learning a lot. Be sure to ask them about it.

For the adults, look for details elsewhere in The Link about a six-week Lenten study led by Student Pastor Lisa and Pastor Mary focusing on prayer.

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Book of Life

Deaths:

William Mazur, whose funeral service was led by Pastor Mary at Russell and Pica Funeral Home in Brockton on February 13.

Nancy Ivaldi, who died at the Nemasket Health Care Center on February 16. A celebration of Nancy's life will be held at a later date.

Richard McPherson, whose funeral service was led by Pastor Mary at Russell and Pica Funeral Home, Brockton, on February 22.



Thank you to **Charlene Smith** and **Sally Monahan** for organizing the "Tailgate Party" we had at coffee hour on Super Bowl Sunday, and to all those who brought food and games. A good time was had by all! Thanks go out too, to **Adam Isbitsky** for creating a new directory on the wall by the office stairs, and to **Jill Taylor** for designing a "Volunteer Board" for the Fellowship Hall. We are very blessed!



LUNCH with Pastor Mary

Lunch with the Pastor

Please join Pastor Mary in the Fireplace Room at **11:45 AM on Thursday, March 1**. Bring a brown bag lunch and she will provide beverages and dessert. This is a nice way to share what's going on in our lives. Bring a friend! All are welcome.



On *Communion Sunday, March 4*, Pastor Mary will remain in the sanctuary after worship to meet with you privately and pray with you. If you are in need of any kind of physical, emotional, or spiritual healing or simply need to know that God cares... please come.



Please submit any Sunday worship bulletin notices to the church office by **8:30 am on Tuesday**. Articles for the **April LINK** will be due by **March 17**. Contact the church office with any changes or additions to the church calendar.



Pancake Breakfast, March 18

Come join us as at our annual Pancake Breakfast to support the Faith4Life group. All are invited to a Pancake Breakfast following worship on **Sunday, March 18**. Brunch will include pancakes, sausage, bacon, fruit, and a muffin or coffee cake. The cost is \$5 per person with an immediate family maximum of \$20. All are invited. Coffee, juice and a baked good will be available to all free of charge.

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It's that time again to start thinking about our community garden. Please get these dates on your calendar.

- **Sunday, April 8** – garden planning meeting after worship during coffee hour.
- **Sunday, April 22** – workshop at Packard Manse at 4 pm to start a bunch of seeds for later transplantation
- **Sunday, April 29** – **Community Garden Work Day**, see the April Link for details

A good way to get in that gardening groove is to attend a **Free Garden Planning Workshop on Sunday, March 4 at 4 PM** in the Fireplace Room.

Learn how to measure, map, plan, and plant your own organic home garden. You'll get details for starting or expanding your garden. There will be a few example gardens and other resources for organic and urban gardeners. Herb, fruit, and veggie varieties, along with their cultural information and spacing needs will be suggested and much more. This event is free and open to all.

For more information, contact Lindsey Medeiros (medeiros.lindsey@gmail.com).



Lenten Prayer Study

Lenten Prayer Study

The prayer study led by **Lisa Loughlin** will continue during the month of March. We meet on **Tuesday** evenings from **7:00-8:30** and begin with a short video then move into a time of discussion. Please join us on any or all of the following **Tuesdays: March 6, 13, 20, and 27**

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The Link is now digital. If you are not currently receiving our emails, you may subscribe 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. Now would be a good time to make sure we have your current email address on file. And give us the name and email addresses of any of your family members that want to get **The Link** as well. We would love to reach out to our college students.

Computers and smartphones not in your comfort zone? If a printed copy is still your preference, please let the church office know and we will gladly mail you a copy of **The Link**. A donation of \$10 to defray the cost of postage would be greatly appreciated. Some print copies will also be available in the literature rack in the church lobby.

The Link is also posted on our website at www.uccstoughton.org.



Maundy Thursday Service

We will be observing Maundy Thursday on **March 29 at 7:00 PM** at the **First United Methodist Church, 103 Pleasant Street**. It is a blessing to worship with our brothers and sisters in Christ, especially during the holy season of Lent. Come and draw near to Jesus on the night before his crucifixion and share in his great love.

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Attic Treasures Wanted

Cleaning out your closet? Ready to get rid of "stuff" you'll never use again? We accept Attic Treasures donations throughout the year. If you are doing some spring cleaning, we will gladly take your clean housewares and small appliances, holiday decorations, planters, jewelry, books, children's toys and games and other attic treasures. Contact Marcia Olson before bringing any furniture or electronics. And please no TVs, textbooks or magazines.

Donations can be brought to the church any Sunday morning and left at the bottom of the stairs outside the church office. For more information contact Marcia Olson at baglole.olson@verizon.net or 781-344-9547



A Service for Good Friday March 30 @ 7:00 PM

All are invited to join us in a very powerful and moving **Good Friday service** led by members of the Faith4Life youth group. The Good Friday worship service shows you can shake things up a little, be willing to look at the old, old story in a new way -- and find new meaning in the cross and the great love God has for us. Youth who have led the worship service and have pre-registered may stay for our annual Good Friday lock-in and overnight vigil. Please pray with us.



Friendly Service

This month's meeting will be on **Tuesday, March 20** from **10 AM - 2 PM**. We have many different projects to work on. A priority right now is to sew the 100 school bags that will be needed to hold all of the school supplies you have so generously donated for Church World Service. Pick-up date for the kits will be in early April so many hands are needed. We also have a good supply of fabrics to use to make the bags. Please contact **Janet Clough** if you can help with this project.

With the assistance of **Lee Thomson** we delivered a car load full of clothing, magazines and personal items to the Seafarer's Friend office in Chelsea. They were very happy to receive your donations which will quickly be used by those mariners who have recently arrived in the port. Thanks to all who donated.

Women's Fellowship

Come and celebrate the evacuation of the English from Boston with an English Tea Party on **Saturday, March 17**. We will be traveling to The Bridgewater Village Bakery for a full course tea at 1 PM. The cost will be \$15.00. If you would like to attend, but find it too costly, we can help out! Contact **Gail Randlov** at 781-436-8344. We need to set up a transportation plan so please also let Gail know if you plan to join us for the afternoon. We will be meeting at the church at noon.

On **Thursday, April 26** we will be touring the Equal Exchange facility in West Bridgewater. Please mark the date on your calendar now. Then in May, we will have our annual banquet—be thinking of what type of an affair this should be. Remember, all ladies of our church family are part of Women's Fellowship. Plan to join us for any or all of our gatherings.

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PROJECT 275

A Year of Dialogue and Discernment

The fourth in our series of conversations in Project 275 will be held on **Sunday, March 11**. We will start in the sanctuary at the end of worship and we will then move to the church hall for coffee and a 30-40 minute facilitated discussion led by Russ Clough. The topic for discussion is **"Do We Stay, Part 2?"**

Please put the dates of future conversations on your calendar and try to take part in as many discussions as possible.

April 22:	Do We Go?
June 3:	Do We Merge?
June 24:	Wrap Up Session

We need your voice. Child care will be available. We invite you to be in contact with us throughout the year. Here is how you can keep the conversation going:

- * Send an email to future@uccstoughton.org
- * Contact Pastor Mary or any member of the Financial Viability Working Group

Let's pray. Let's talk. And let's move forward in faith to face the future to which God is calling us.



Don't forget to set your clocks forward March 11.

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UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST NEW ENGLAND WOMEN'S CELEBRATION X

Forty plus years ago the women of the New England states who were members of UCC churches began planning a weekend meeting for all of the women of this area. The idea was to let the women in on what was happening in their denomination, to give the women an opportunity to reflect on their faith, to experience worship in a variety of ways, to learn what they could from each other and to make friends with other women of faith. The first Celebration, as it was called, was a huge success and has continued every four years. This year Celebration X will take place in Portland, Maine from **April 6-8**. The theme for this celebration is based on Luke 14:17b - "A Seat At The Table: Come for all things are now ready". The three days of the Celebration are filled with workshops, a vendors' area, entertainment, free time to explore Portland, music and worship. For full information as to what you could experience there go to www.uccwomenscelebration.org If you register before February 15 the fee is only \$125. for the three days. You may also choose to attend only on Saturday and that fee is \$100. Travel to Portland can be done with car pooling or by train. It would be wonderful to have a car full of our ladies attend. Check out that web site!

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Are you looking for a way to serve but don't have a lot of time? Willing to tackle a short-term job to help further our church's ministries but don't want to join a board or committee? Well, look no further! Thanks to the Taylor family, we have a newly designed "Volunteer" board.

It's simple! Individuals and groups post a job with which they could use some help. You check the board in the lobby on Sunday morning, pick the job that is just right for your skills and time commitment and contact the individual listed for more details.

"I am only one, but I am one. I can't do everything, but I can do something. The something I ought to do, I can do. And by the grace of God, I will."

~ Edward Everett Hale



Help make our sanctuary look beautiful on Easter Sunday by purchasing a plant. Dedications may be made "In honor of", "In memory of", or "In celebration of" whomever you choose. A suggested donation of \$10 per plant would be most welcome but all donations are gratefully accepted. After the Easter Service, the Caring Committee will deliver the plants to our sick and housebound church family members. You may also take a plant home that you yourself have donated and give it to whomever you choose. We are grateful for your help in making our sanctuary festive for this joyous day. Look for the order slips in the Sunday bulletin or send your information to Janet Clough (cloughjr@verison.net or [781-344-3860](tel:781-344-3860)) by **March 18**.



AT HOME, IN NURSING HOMES, AND ASSISTED LIVING FACILITIES
For those who wish to send greetings, the following list is included:

Jennifer Alholm
 156 Dean Street
 South Easton, MA 02375

Mary Alholm
 2049 Dorchester Ave., Rm 222-1
 Boston, MA 02124
 (617) 698-6008

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

Amanda Cushing
 103 Benson Road
 Stoughton MA 02072

Clifford and Amy Fowler
 30 Belcher Street
 Stoughton, MA 02072
 (781) 344-9573

Betty Lambert
 19 Rose Street Unit #4
 Stoughton, MA
 (781) 436-3416

Rev. Jean Lenk
 63B Stafford St.
 Plymouth, MA 02360

David Niven
 Elm 103, Brookdale
 97 Warren Ave
 Plymouth, MA 02360

Dorothy Dawe
 The Arbors
 2121 Central Street
 Apt 112
 Stoughton, MA 02072
 (781) 344-8367

Muriel Rowland
 92 Cedar Hill Dr. Apt. 202
 Windsor, VT 05089

March 2018

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
25 10:00 AM Worship 11:00 AM Coffee Hour 1:00 PM BRC-Sanctuary/2ClassRm 3:00 PM BRC-FH/Kitchen 6:00 PM Faith4Life Youth Group	26 7:00 PM Rel Addiction	27 6:00 AM BRC-FR 8:30 AM N&N Deadline 6:30 PM Cub Scouts 7:00 PM Prayer Study	28 6:00 AM BRC-FR 10:00 AM Prayer Shawl	1 6:00 AM BRC-FR 10:30 AM Caring Committee 11:45 AM Lunch with the Pastor 7:00 PM AA 8:00 PM BRC	2 6:00 AM BRC-FR 9:30 AM 12 Step Group 5:00 PM Girl Scouts	3 6:00 AM Boston Renewal Church 9:00 AM Red Hat Society 11:00 AM AA
4 COMMUNION 10:00 AM Faith4Life Class 10:00 AM Worship 11:00 AM Coffee Hour 11:00 AM Healing Prayers 1:00 PM BRC-Sanctuary/2ClassRm 3:00 PM BRC-FH/Kitchen 4:00 PM Garden Planning Workshop	5 7:00 PM Rel Addiction	6 6:00 AM BRC-FR 8:30 AM N&N Deadline 7:00 PM Prayer Study	7 6:00 AM BRC-FR 10:00 AM Prayer Shawl 11:45 AM Missions/Outreach 7:00 PM Choir Rehearsal	8 6:00 AM BRC-FR 7:00 PM AA 7:00 PM CE Meeting 8:00 PM BRC	9 6:00 AM BRC-FR 9:30 AM 12 Step Group	10 11:00 AM AA
11 10:00 AM Faith4Life Class 10:00 AM Worship 11:00 AM Coffee Hour 11:00 AM Project 275 Meeting 11:30 AM Worship & Music 1:00 PM BRC-Sanctuary/2ClassRm 3:00 PM BRC-FH/Kitchen	12 7:00 PM Rel Addiction	13 6:00 AM BRC-FR 8:30 AM N&N Deadline 6:30 PM Cub Scouts 7:00 PM Prayer Study	14 6:00 AM BRC-FR 10:00 AM Prayer Shawl	15 6:00 AM BRC-FR 7:00 PM AA 8:00 PM BRC	16 6:00 AM BRC-FR 9:30 AM 12 Step Group	17 LINK Deadline 11:00 AM AA 12:00 PM Women's Fellowship (offsite)
18 10:00 AM Worship 11:00 AM Coffee Hour 11:00 AM Pancake Breakfast 11:30 AM Trustees 1:00 PM BRC-Sanctuary/2ClassRm 3:00 PM BRC-FH/Kitchen 6:00 PM Faith4Life Good Friday Prep	19 7:00 PM Rel Addiction	20 6:00 AM BRC-FR 8:30 AM N&N Deadline 9:00 AM Friendly Service 7:00 PM Prayer Study	21 6:00 AM BRC-FR 10:00 AM Prayer Shawl 7:00 PM Choir Rehearsal	22 6:00 AM BRC-FR 7:00 PM AA 8:00 PM BRC	23 6:00 AM BRC-FR 9:30 AM 12 Step Group	24 11:00 AM AA
25 PALM SUNDAY 10:00 AM Worship 11:00 AM Coffee Hour 1:00 PM BRC-Sanctuary/2ClassRm 3:00 PM BRC-FH/Kitchen 3:00 PM Special Needs Bible Club/Easter Play 6:00 PM Faith4Life Good Friday Prep	26 3:00 PM Women's Fellowship 7:00 PM Rel Addiction	27 6:00 AM BRC-FR 8:30 AM N&N Deadline 6:30 PM Cub Scouts 7:00 PM Prayer Study	28 6:00 AM BRC-FR 10:00 AM Prayer Shawl	29 6:00 AM BRC-FR 7:00 PM AA 7:00 PM Maundy Thursday Worship at First United Methodist 8:00 PM BRC	30 6:00 AM BRC-FR 9:30 AM 12 Step Group 5:00 PM Good Friday Lock-in 7:00 PM Good Friday Worship	31 12:30 AM Good Friday Lock-in 9:00 AM Faithful Gents-(Bickfords) 11:00 AM AA