

Glad Tidings

First Congregational Church of
West Brookfield
United Church of Christ
April 2024

36 North Main Street, PO Box 371
West Brookfield, MA 01585 508-867-7078
Our website: Westbrookfieldcongregationalucc.org
On Facebook: First Congregational Church of
West Brookfield, UCC



The 5th Annual Meeting of the Southern New England Conference of the United Church of Christ will be held June 21 and 22 at UMass, Amherst, and will focus on growing the church.

The keynote speaker for the event will be the Rev. Dr. Courtney Stange-Tregear, the Chief Relationship Officer at the Cornerstone Fund of the UCC, who plans to talk about "God Math," and to share inspiring stories of churches that have grown their ministries - and more greatly impacted their communities - by working smarter, not harder.

"God Math is about the abundance of God's grace manifest in real and practical ways," she said. "We are not necessarily called to work harder and harder to build the Church; we can work smarter, and with faith and God Math, see our ministries grow and stretch beyond our wildest imaginations."

Rev. Dr. Stange-Tregear formerly served the Pacific Northwest Conference as the Minister for Church Vitality and then as the Acting Conference Minister. While in conference leadership she worked to center relationship and storytelling for increased vitality, while drawing on her community organizing background to support and sustain dynamic, collaborative, and intersectional churches.

Also at the meeting, Dr. Erica Dollhopf, the Director of the Center for Analytics, Research & Development, and Data for the UCC, will make a presentation exploring findings from recent research on congregational vitality in the UCC and beyond.

"What if your church already had all the tools it needs to grow in vitality and faithfulness?" she asks. She will also lead participants in an opportunity to engage in the *Grow Your Church* board game, which is based on the UCC's Manual on Church's Marks of Vital and Faithful Churches, a document that draws on vitality research. The game is aimed at helping participants develop actionable ideas to cultivate vitality in their local church settings.

Dr. Dollhopf has authored numerous publications on congregations, congregational vitality, and faith-based nonprofits and is the president of the Association of Statisticians of American Religious Bodies, the research chair for the Faith Communities Today interfaith survey, the secretary of the Religious Research Association, and serves on the Operations Committee of the U.S. Religion Census.

The Scriptural basis for the meeting is Matthew 16:13-20, which tells of Jesus naming Peter as a rock, saying "this is the rock on which I will put together my church, a church so expansive with energy that not even the gates of hell will be able to keep it out."

Several Friday evening activities are being planned as part of the meeting, with plenary and worship held on Saturday. The Rev. Darrell Goodwin, Executive Conference Minister, will be the preacher. Registration will open in April; details will be posted at www.sneucc.org/2024AM as they become available.

It is clear that our denomination, the United Church of Christ (UCC) also sees and understands that growing the church is vital. Please plan to attend an all-church meeting called by your Search committee on Sunday, April 14 to share your ideas of becoming a more welcoming church that will hopefully contribute to our growth!

From our Boards and Committees

Church Council

The next meeting of the Church Council will be on Sunday, April 21 following morning worship.

Exciting News!

At last month's meeting the Council organized an ad-hoc committee to seek assistance for our church website. The website has not been maintained for a few months due to a lack of a volunteer to maintain it. The committee found and hired Brooke Canada to update and maintain the website and Facebook pages and to create and maintain an **Instagram** account for our church. It is understood that to reach people today an organization needs to be very visible in the online world. Watch for future updates regarding Brooke's progress in future issues of this newsletter!

Welcome to First Congregational, Brooke!

Capital Campaign Committee

Our Capital Campaign to fund the new heating system and repairs to the steeple is drawing to a close. While we are not quite at our \$60,000 goal, as of February 29th we recorded \$50,625 in cash and pledges. Last fall we withdrew \$49,000 from our Endowment Fund that was used to commence the start of the projects and allow for the payments to contractors. In April, we plan on returning the Endowment Fund draw from the amounts collected from the campaign. March 31st will signal the end of our solicitation effort and we will celebrate our success with a moment in our worship service on Sunday, April 14th followed by coffee and cake in the Fellowship Hall. We thank all friends and members of The First Congregational Church of West Brookfield for their financial support and encouragement during this successful effort.

Mission Committee

At our March meeting the Mission Committee voted to give Dismas Family Farm and St. Luke's Guesthouse each \$300. We also donated \$500 each to Camp Putnam, S.O.N.G. (Supporting Orphans Nationally and Globally), Worcester Fellowship and the Springfield Rescue Mission.

This year is the First time that the Mission Committee has donated to St. Luke's Guesthouse. Located in Southbridge, the organization provides Christian hospitality to men, women and children needing temporary shelter until they can find a permanent place to live. Currently, it is the only place doing this in southern Worcester County. It began as a private group in 2013 becoming a 501c3 organization in the fall of 2017. The clients are provided with support and help to assist them in working out their problems while they are there. Unfortunately, they are currently turning people away for lack of space. With the community's help they are hoping to expand.

The Mission Committee
Millie Gushue, Shelley Fullam,

Dismas Farm Dinners

The dinner for the gents at Dismas Farm will be held on Tuesday, April 9, at 6 pm, at the farm. Contact Deanna or Angela ***the week before*** if you would like to bring a dish to take to the farm.

Dismas Volunteers:

Deanna Randall - 413-436-7849 or drandall444@comcast.net.

Millie Gushue - 413-436-7125; or millieg2@comcast.net

Angela Carville - 508-347-1148 or angelacarville67@gmail.com

Thank you for your support of this important ministry!

Designated Term Pastoral Search Committee

As our Designated Term Pastoral Search committee continues its search for a new pastor, we have decided, in consultation with our Church Council, to begin work now on one of our church's most important goals as we move into the future. And that goal, as voted on by our congregation and currently listed in our church's Pastoral Search profile, is for us to: "REVIEW AND STRENGTHEN OUR PRACTICE OF BEING A WELCOMING CHURCH."

What does it mean to be a very welcoming church?

What things can we do to strengthen that practice, so we also strengthen our church with more people participating in our church's various ministries?

One thing which has become very clear to our committee in this search process, is that such strengthening is really going to depend a great deal upon the work of our own parishioners. A new minister alone, and particularly one who is only part time, will be very limited in what he/she can do in that regard.

So, to begin that work, our committee is inviting all interested persons in our church to attend a special meeting on Sunday, April 14 after our church's worship service and coffee hour. At that meeting, we'll begin to explore some of the things which can be done to enhance our practice of being a very welcoming church.

At that meeting on the 14th:

- Our search committee will present some of our committee's ideas on that subject.
- Our committee will also seek your ideas as to how we can be more welcoming.
- Our committee will also see if there are volunteers who would like to do some research on one or more of those ideas, so they can be discussed further and perhaps implemented to benefit our church.

I'll tell you about a welcoming project I'm already interested in and very willing to help with. As a relative newcomer to our church myself, I would like to see our church have a pictorial directory, so when new people come to our church, they'll be more quickly able to identify and become acquainted with their fellow parishioners. So, I'll begin to research that idea and we'll see what might be possible in that regard.

Someone might ask: Why begin working on this welcoming goal now? Why not wait until we get a new Designated Term Pastor?

I think that's a good question. Here's my answer. Given our work so far, our search committee believes that beginning to work on this goal now, will likely be a great help to us in searching for and securing a new minister. For beginning to work on that goal now should show a potential new minister two things:

- First, that this goal is really important to our church and
- Second, that a number of our church people are already making their own personal efforts to help our church achieve that goal. Thus, this goal of strengthening our welcoming is not just a goal which will be dropped on our new minister to accomplish alone.

So, bottom line: our search committee really hopes that a number of our parishioners will:

- attend that meeting on Sunday April 14 and
- be willing to contribute their own ideas and personal efforts, as we seek to move forward with this very

important work for the well being of our church.

We thank you!

Doug, Angela, Linda and Terry

Board of Deacons

Holy Week is a time of reflection on our lives and what Christ has done for us. With Palm Sunday, Maundy Thursday, Good Friday and concluding with a beautiful Easter Service, it was a glorious week. We had a small coffee hour following our Easter service that was enjoyed by all who could stay. The new banners purchased to add to the ambiance for Easter were a wonderful addition to our Sanctuary along with the beautiful Easter flowers and matching choir stoles.

It is with a heavy heart that we must say goodbye to Pastor Fran Graveson, our Bridge Minister. We would like to thank Fran for the memorable and heartfelt lessons she taught us. April 7th will be our last service with Fran followed by a small celebration with a cake and light refreshments. We hope you can all join us.

COVID 19

Covid 19 continues to be a part of our lives. In keeping with CDC guidelines and restrictions regarding Covid-19 and its variants, our church is making mask-wearing optional for vaccinated people. Please remember to practice social distancing in seating. If you are not feeling well, or test positive for COVID please stay home and take care of yourself as well as your church family. If you have questions, please reach out to a Deacon.

Parish Board

There has been a lot of work done around the church this month...

- Many doorknobs were replaced: Fellowship Hall, office, basement door, outside double door. Double door still sticks but will be worked on as soon as the weather is a little warmer and dryer.
- Baseboards and old radiator spaces have been repaired and painted.
- Parish Board is aware that the red lights are on again on the mini-splits, they are working on a resolution.
- The old clock blue space in the Sanctuary has been repaired and painted.

We ask that you continue to write any building issues and repairs in the book that is in the Parish mailbox.

Music Committee

Our church choir sang for Palm Sunday and Easter services this year with Ginny Bailey leading us in a rehearsal to prepare for those services. We were happy to offer choral music as part of the special occasions.

The committee brainstormed possible ways to add another monthly choir Sunday and decided to use online sites to advertise. We are asking for a generous soul who would prepare us, as Ginny has done, for an anthem once a month. This would be a volunteer position.

First Congregational will continue to enjoy the music that Stephen Page brings to our weekly services.

Chris Showalter must step down at this time, due to personal medical needs. We will miss her. The temporary Music Search Committee members – Deanna Randall and Wally Hall – will help when needed to make music-related decisions for the church.

Mike Spencer, Nancy Zurawka, Deanna Randall, Wally Hall

Pastor Parish Relations Board

Our church is in the midst of change and planning. Committees are working to bring a pastor to lead us. It can feel overwhelming, and confusing. Please know that the PPRC is available to help you find those who can answer your questions. Contact us with any concern or suggestion you might have.

Nancy Zurawka Rev. Sharron Lamothe Helen Lapierre Martha Giguere

Church Historian

The Perils of One-Person Rule

You may have heard the expression, “Power corrupts, and absolute power corrupts absolutely”. The pages of the history books are filled with the accounts of persons who have sought, and sometimes acquired, absolute political power. From the earliest recorded human history it has been a common theme, from Sumerian kings and Egyptian pharaohs, to Nazi dictators and Russian czars. But absolute power as a form of government always fails in the long run.

A classic example is the history of Rome. Following the expulsion of the oppressive Tarquin kings, the Roman state became a republic. Although far from being a democracy, the republic had a senate and various elected or appointed offices, and gave the people a voice in the government. It lasted about 400 years. But as the success of Roman armies brought larger and more remote lands under Roman rule, the machinery of Republican government proved inadequate. The Roman Senate was often divided or indecisive when prompt decisions were needed. The result was a period of about a century of civil war and revolution, as various “strong-men”, usually successful generals, contended with each other for control of the state. It was a period of anarchy and chaos, and when Octavian (usually known as “Augustus”) finally emerged victorious over his last rival at Actium in 31 B.C. , thus becoming sole ruler of the Roman state, he was accepted with relief and joy by a war-weary people. As he took over the reins of government, Augustus shrewdly kept all the trappings of the former republic intact, but in fact did what was necessary to ensure absolute power, namely, gain control of the army.

The “Pax Romana” thus begun, lasted in the western part of the Roman Empire for about another 400 years. The emperors that succeeded Augustus varied greatly in quality, but the fundamental fact was that their power was based solely on the control of the army, and not on the support of the people as a whole. As time went by, the army became increasingly corrupt and inefficient, no longer the invincible force it had once been. Eventually it was no longer able to hold back the hordes of barbarian tribes which poured in and took possession of various parts of the Empire. The Roman Empire disintegrated because there was no one left to defend it.

Dave FitzGerald, History Committee

Bridge Search Committee

Our Bridge Search Committee is hard at work once again to find another Bridge Minister to be with us as our DTP Search Committee continues to seek a minister for our church. Until another bridge minister is found we will continue to enjoy a variety of clergy and speakers from non-profits on Sunday mornings. The committee is seeking suggestions of non-profit organizations that may come and speak to us on a Sunday morning. If you have suggestions, please see a member of the committee.

Thank You's

To Pastor Fran Graveson for her wonderful ministry with us these past few months. She has been a blessing and we will miss her!



Farmer's Market

The Winter Farmer's Market that was held in our Fellowship Hall has ended for the winter months and will be returning to the town common beginning Wednesday, June 5. The market is held each Wednesday from 3 pm - 6 pm and features a wonderful variety of vendors. Stop and enjoy some local produce -- and much more!

From Our Church Office

Church Secretary – Terry Hall – terryle56@yahoo.com

Office Hours – Friday 12 pm – 3 pm (Most Fridays, but not all. Call first – 508-867-7078)

Fellowship Hall Bulletin Board & Church Calendar

The Church Community Calendar is located on the bulletin board in the Fellowship Hall and is checked often. **Be sure to add all your meeting dates and times to the calendar** so that they may appear in the monthly newsletter and to prevent conflicts in the church office. **Thanks to all who are continuing to use this calendar. The use of this small tool goes a long way in keeping all of us organized. Keep up the good work!**

Please note – The *Glad Tidings* deadline for May is Monday, April 22.

Updated 2024 Directory Corrections

An updated directory was sent out last month. Please make note of the following corrections:

Jim & Ellen Haynes CORRECT email address is: hayjimell23@gmail.com

Deb Macklin's phone number is 413-559-7153 (do not use 413-559-7154)

Terry Hall, Church Secretary

April Birthdays & Anniversaries



Happy Birthday!

Paul Andersen – 4th Dan Mazzaresse – 7th Lois Bennett – 10th
 Kathy O'Donnell – 15th Elaina Iris Cole – 16th Herrick Spencer – 19th
 Ken Elow – 24th Ashlee Hall – 27th



Happy Anniversary!

Paul & Karen Andersen – 14th Mary & Greg Deotte – 21st

Coffee & Celebration!

Each month a different committee or board in our church offers a time of coffee and sharing for a celebration of all birthdays and anniversaries for that month. This coffee hour is offered on the LAST Sunday of each month.



Coffee Hour for April: Christian Education

April 2024

<u>SUNDAY</u>	<u>MONDAY</u>	<u>TUESDAY</u>	<u>WEDNESDAY</u>	<u>THURSDAY</u>	<u>FRIDAY</u>	<u>SATURDAY</u>
	1	2	3 Sharing Cupboard 10-11:30 am	4 Sharing Cupboard 7 – 8 pm	5 11 am - Asparagus Festival Planners Meeting 1 pm – Bridge Search Committee 2:30 pm – Music Search Committee	6 10 am – Parish Board
7 Worship 10 am Communion <i>Pastor Fran's last day</i> Special Coffee Hour	8	9 The Sew & Sews 9 am-12 pm Phyllis Allen's lake house <u>Dismas Dinner at the farm 6p.m.</u>	10 Sharing Cupboard 10-11:30 am	11 Sharing Cupboard 7 – 8 pm	12	13
14 Worship 10 am <i>Special all- church meeting</i>	15	16 The Sew & Sews 9 am-12 pm Phyllis Allen's	17 Sharing Cupboard 10 – 11:30 am	18 Sharing Cupboard 7 – 8 pm	19	20

<i>on being a Welcoming Church</i>		lake house				
21 Worship 10 am Church Council	22 Glad Tidings Deadline	23 The Sew & Sews 9 am-12 pm Phyllis Allen's lake house	24 Sharing Cupboard 10-11:30 am	25 Sharing Cupboard 7 - 8 pm	26	27
28 Worship 10 am Coffee Hour: Board of Christian Education	29	30 The Sew & Sews 9 am-12 pm Phyllis Allen's lake house				

CONTACT INFORMATION FOR YOUR CHURCH OFFICERS & CHAIRS

Moderator: Dee Blanton – deebanton@gmail.com

Deacon Chair: Karen Murphy – kmurphy718@charter.net

Parish Board Co-Chairs: Wally Hall – terryle56@yahoo.com & Mike Murphy – kmurphy718@charter.net

Treasurer – Mary Deotte – hombai@yahoo.com

Collector: Deanna Randall – drandall444@comcast.net

Clerk: Terry Hall – terryle56@yahoo.com

Church Phone: 508-867-7078



Our Mission and Vision Statement: *We are a church where all are welcome to worship together, to share in fellowship and to grow spiritually in our journey with Christ. We value justice, diversity,*

and freedom of expression. We strive to serve our community and all God's creation and to spread the love of God to all people.

Tri-Parish Community Church 18th Annual Plant, Bake, Tag & Craft Sale

Saturday, June 1 & Sunday, June 2

10 am – 3 pm

Hardwick Town Common

Rt-32 A

Hardwick Center

Hardwick, MA

Held Rain or Shine

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