January 2021

The Good Newsletter of the
Southwick Congregational Church
United Church of Christ
Southwick, MA

Please join us Sundays for Worship Service 10 am
and Virtual Coffee Hour 11 am
Website: www. SouthwickUCC.org

Southwick Congregational Church
United Church of Christ
488 College Highway; P.O. Box 260
Southwick, MA 01077

VOLUME MMXX No. 10

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**MISSION STATEMENT**

*Southwick Congregational Church is a faithful Christian presence in the community of Southwick since 1773, and we look to the future. We are a diverse and loving congregation, joyfully serving, teaching, and sharing with one another, according to the gifts we have been given.*

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**WORSHIP SCHEDULE**

We invite you to join us each Sunday at our in-person service or to view our service on Facebook or on our website.

**COFFEE HOUR**

Our virtual coffee hour is every Sunday at 11 a.m. via Zoom. If you’d like to join us, please make sure the office has your current email address so we can send you an invitation with a link to join. Email us at SouthwickUcc@gmail.com with your email address.

**OFFICE HOURS**

Monday, Wednesday, and Friday from 10:00 a.m. until 12:00 p.m. (hours subject to change based upon Covid restrictions). Please leave a voicemail message or an email if you need anything nonemergent after hours.

**EMERGENCY CALLS**

Members of the church leadership team are on call for any emergent needs such as hospitalizations, etc. A schedule for November is posted on page 5. You can also call the church office number for the name of the on call person.

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**VISIT OUR FACEBOOK PAGE!**

Our Facebook page is

*Southwick Congregational Church UCC*

Please check it out, “like” us, and follow us!!!
Dear Friends,

Welcome to a New Year, in your life and in the life of the church. You have an exciting adventure ahead of you in your search for a new settled pastor. We say settled, not permanent, because nothing in this world is permanent, but we always hope for an extended stay, especially if things are going along smoothly. However, we should always be ready to “move on” should God be calling us to do so... Meanwhile, I am your “Temporary Shepherd” for a while and am grateful to be at your service! I hope you won’t be shy to call on me in any situation. Just because we haven’t had time to get to know each other, sometimes it’s best to just make a “leap of faith” and get to know each other as we go along. I have been making calls and sending out cards and emails, just to make a connection. Feel free to call me at 937-409-1375 for a chat or to discuss anything at all.

My schedule for Southwick is Sunday, Monday and Tuesday. Of course in an emergency all of that is set aside. The schedule is just a guide.

My schedule for Westfield is Sunday, Wednesday and Thursday. My “weekend” is Friday and Saturday (also subject to change). I am trying to “keep Sabbath” on Fridays, but as I said, in an emergency, do not hesitate to call on me.

Do you like resolutions? Resolutions are fine if they’re serious, challenging, and you actually do them. 😊 I have also found that resolutions work better if you make them public. It is so easy to break a promise to myself. But when others are holding me to account, it’s more powerful and I’m more likely to think twice before breaking the resolution.
When I think about the New Year, I think about the song popularized way back in the Seventies in the movie “Godspell:”

Day by Day, Day by Day
Oh, dear Lord, three things I pray:
To see thee more clearly,
Love thee more dearly,
Follow thee more nearly,
Day by Day
I think by holding this prayer/song close to heart, the things we wish and hope for will come somewhat naturally. It’s like Scripture says in Matthew 6:33: Seek ye first the Kingdom of God and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.

We have a little leg of the journey to walk together. I pray that we can seek and find God’s will and God’s ways together in light and mutual understanding and respect.

May you find peace and blessing as we gently travel along.

Yours in Christ love,
Pastor Julie

“Faith is taking the first step even when you don't see the whole staircase.”

~ Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

George Zanolli Robert Ruel
Janice Hall Mary Goodwin
Angelo Castagna Sally Merlo
Craig Perras TJ Welch
Ted Kowal Raymond Fox
Kim Heath Diane Rood
Becky Bliven Tom and Karen Brzezinski
Jane Webster Roberta Kowal
Jeanne Stromgren Ann Putnam, Putnam’s daughter-in-law

Jim Rundall, Eric Nitsch’s friend
Patti Wood’s nephew, Matthew & co-worker’s son, Jack
Larry Cannon, the Paggen’s daughter-in-law’s father
George Webster, Patty Banasik’s uncle
All Mental Health Counselors
Those who are battling, or whose family members are battling, Covid

Nursing Homes/Assisted Living:
Elsie Gosselin Louise Tagliavini
Barbara Machietto Jean Lamoureaux

Serving in our Military at home and abroad:
Samantha Perusse Andrew DeWinkeleer Josh Davis
Nicholas Potts Tyler Arnold Nolan Kononitz
Jody Miller Robert Goodman, III

Please also pray for all those unnamed who are suffering or in need of prayer in our community and worldwide.
What do you think of when you hear The Holy Ghost?

If you are like me, you may think it is the ghost of Jesus. That is what I grew up believing. We Congregationalists believe in the Holy Trinity: Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. But since I moved back to New England on my 40th birthday, after wandering off from God from time to time, and since some 6 years later God brought Lorraine into my life, we started going to the Florence Congregational Church, Lorraine first, then I. I was attracted by the availability of Bible Study and told Pastor Irv I wanted to know more about the Holy Ghost or Holy Spirit.

The more I read the Bible and especially Acts, the more I felt that my Congregational upbringing failed to provide me with this third part of the Trinity. I am happy to report that I have since found and accepted the Holy Spirit. But I am wondering if any of my brothers and sisters here at Southwick Congregational have any connection to this wonderful gift from Jesus. I would refer you to John 14:15-31.

In the Message Bible, the disciples are concerned about Jesus leaving. Jesus is promising to go to the Father and ask him to send another friend....the Spirit of Truth...and in vs. 20 tells them, "I will not leave you orphaned." Are we struggling because we have not accepted this gift and remain as orphans?

I have much more to say about this and first hand personal testimony. But for now consider during this season of gifts, have we left this gift unopened? Some have said it is the greatest gift. ~ Bob Bates

<table>
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<th>Night Emergency Coverage</th>
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<td>January 4-10, 2021</td>
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<td>January 11-17, 2021</td>
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<td>January 18-24, 2021</td>
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Patti Wood Our Country
Eleanor Bates
George Wheeler
Lulu and Jim Fanion and their son, Phyliss Martin’s friends
Linda Sepanik Boucher, Phyliss Martin’s friend
David Brockway and family
Ann, Lee Zinnack’s friend
Jenny, Karen Brzezinski’s sister
Chris Assard, friend of Lorraine & Bob Bates
Ben Ingalls, Flo’s nephew
Hetti Thompson, friend of Mary G
Jamie Poston, Terry’s nephew
Virginia, Mary’s mother
Judy, Patti’s Sister
Travis P., Ben’s friend
The family of Danielle Loiko, Robin Sklarski’s daughter-in-law
The family of Roxanne Cook
The family of Connie Johnson and Betty West
Melissa Day and family in the loss of her father, Cork Young
The family of Joy Hannon, Lee Zinnack’s friend
Irene, Mary’s friend, and her mom
Dawn’s Sister-in-law Julie and niece Emilie
Ginny Tyrowicz, Diane Orson’s friend
Frances Hurley, Patty Banasik’s Mother-in-law
Thanks to all who have pledged and to those whose pledge is in the mail. Forty-six Stewardship pledges for 2021 totaling $83,760 have been received through early January. It is encouraging to see the determination and stewardship support provided by you, our loyal members. Our 2021 Stewardship support base may be fewer in number but your dedication remains strong. Shown below is the distribution of these 46 pledges, with an average pledge being $152 / month.

"Darkness cannot drive out darkness: only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate: only love can do that."
~ Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

Joint Leadership Meeting 1/7/2021 (continued)

What we could work on jointly: sharing ideas on fund raising (Southwick likes First Church’s luminary idea which was a success), retreats and programs for youth, bringing back the bell choirs.

What is the most important thing you would like to stay the same through our partnership? Music, missions, outreach programs.

We need to explore how to share a pastor and how the Sunday services will work. Both will maintain a concentration on youth and also the elderly in all we do. It seems we all are already on common ground.

What should the role of this group be? Should we continue to meet via ZOOM? We need regular connections to discuss ideas and issues. We want to give all an opportunity to express their thoughts. Large meetings give us an opportunity to hear things that tweak our minds. Smaller group meetings are also important.

Both congregations need to work on their profile process. We need to put ideas together and get moving so that the new combined search committee will have a focus. A new search committee should have 4 representatives from each congregation. In addition, the moderators from each church will attend until candidates are identified to interview. First Church will decide who among their current search committee is interested in continuing on as part of a joint search committee. Southwick will select 4 representatives to serve.

It was suggested that this group meet again via zoom in 3 weeks to share ideas and guidance on how to move forward.

Submitted by Judy Lyon, Westfield First Church
Joint Leadership Meeting 1/7/2021

Attending from Westfield First Congregational Church: Mayme LaJoie, Cindy LaPlante, Steve Pierce, Janet St. Jean, Michelle Downs, Joyce Bard, Carol Whalen, Martha Roman, Jim Yesu, Judy Lyon, Doug James, Carol Whalen, Darlene Biggs


Also attending: Pastor Julie Olmsted, interim pastor

After introductions, the following was discussed: What do you hope to gain through a partnership, what excites you about exploring a shared ministry? A chance to meet each other and find out what we have in common and what our goals are. The futures of both congregations have been a concern for a number of years. No one can imagine being in a position of closing down the church. We have in common lower memberships, fewer resources, and the need to get the word out for new members. We all would love to see a full sanctuary. Each congregation has seen a slow and steady decline in attendance over many years. However, we notice a resilience as shown in pledges.

Julie Olmsted stated that there is real faith in getting out there. There are so many opportunities to enhance what we already have going. We will focus on what we are doing well and nurture those things. We can learn from each other.

We all like the term “partnership” to insure longevity. Joining together in many areas will make things move along more smoothly, i.e. more minds, more ideas. We will be able to keep our own traditions and our own pride while we work together.

Look back about three decades and you will find a diligent, hard-working crew led by Bob Mills, laboring in the summer of 1989 to create the church’s handicap access ramp. Plaudits to Eric Nitsch and fellow volunteers seen in this photo.

Once the ramp was completed, tested and baptized, there followed a dedication ceremony featuring Rev. David Wright and a ground-swell of church members.
Pastor Julie Olmsted is hosting a virtual Bible study every Wednesday at 1 p.m. and a monthly virtual evening service the first Wednesday of every month at 7 p.m.. Please contact Pastor Julie or Terry Putnam if you'd like to participate.

In loving memory of Roxanne Cook
October 14, 1956-December 19, 2020

What does our Finance Committee do?
The Finance Committee has the responsibility of the Church’s financial planning and stewardship, as well as financial oversight of Church employees. The committee requests budgets from each committee prior to the Annual Meeting and submits an Annual Budget for approval by the Church at the Annual Meeting held in February of each year. Stewardship and Memorial Gifts are sub-groups of the Finance Committee. We enlist the support of a Coordinator for our annual Stewardship Appeal. Currently Virgil Paggen has been our faithful Coordinator. Our church’s Memorial Gifts funds are maintained in a separate account from our general funds, and managed by our Memorial Gifts Treasurer, currently Karen Brzezinski. Things not often thought about that fall under the Finance Committee jurisdiction are our church’s liability and property insurance policies, worker’s compensation policy, salary and benefits decisions for employees, and compliance with Federal and State labor laws. Our committee would welcome new members, especially those with any interest or experience with finance, as we sincerely want to be good stewards of our church pledges and financial resources.

Important Reminder
Masks, covering your nose and mouth, are required at all times when you’re in our church building, regardless of whether you are alone in the building or with others.
In loving memory of Betty West

December 21, 2020

Moderator’s Notes

Exciting things continue to happen for our church! Pastor Julie has joined us and will be preaching for the first time on Sunday, 1/17. We have begun meeting with First Church of Westfield to plan how a shared ministry will work for our two churches (minutes, pp. 18-19). We will be pulling a small group together as quickly as possible to work on the logistics of sharing a pastor (i.e. Sunday services, etc.) and also forming a joint search committee. Please see me if you are interested in serving on either. There will also be a joint zoom meeting between both congregations soon to give each a chance to get to know the other.

Next month is our annual church meeting and we need your help. Our church survives due in large part to the work of a small group of people. Please consider volunteering to serve on one of our committees. Currently meetings are held virtually, by phone, or via email. There are openings on multiple committees. Please see Patti Wood if you are interested.~~~Terry Putnam

Our services have taken place during the pandemic and will continue throughout. Check out our Sunday worship services on Facebook and on our website. Please call our church office if you need assistance.

Happy Birthday!

Janice Hall January 1
Terry Putnam January 1
Shirl Hamilton January 4
Trevor Ireland January 5
Susanne Hayes January 10
Erica Ireland January 12
Ellie Bates January 20

Please let the church office know through a phone call or email when your birthday is so that we can update our records and share our best wishes. Thanks!

“Life” is the spring name of God,
“Warmth” is the summer name of God,
“Color” is the autumn name of God,
“Silence” is the winter name of God.

Life is the spring name of God,
Warmth is the summer name of God,
Color is the autumn name of God,
Silence is the winter name of God.
MEETING MINUTES 12/10/20, CONTINUED

New Business
Karen Brzezinski reported we have been asked to hold a wedding in the sanctuary on June 11, 2021, of approx. 100 people. After discussion with the Executive group, Karen was asked to let the couple know that the availability of our building will be “subject to Board of Health requirements” at the time of the wedding. The couple will also be asked to pay an additional fee for cleaning/sanitizing the building after the wedding in addition to the regular fees required.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:30 pm.
Respectfully submitted, Melanie Nitsch, Clerk

In loving memory of Connie Johnson
May 31, 1929-January 4, 2021
Buildings & Grounds
Eric Nitsch reported he is very pleased with Chris Roberts, our janitor, and the work he is doing. The committee’s budget will need to be increased as minimum wage is increasing in January. A pew or two in the Sanctuary needs to be re-taped for social distancing purposes. Eric has agreed to be the church representative for the Boy Scout Troop that we sponsor. Eric will sign their Annual Charter Agreement with the church and the scouts will sign our Building Use Agreement. Brief discussion again about turning off the kitchen refrigerator but it was decided we are better off leaving it running rather than risking problems when we need to re-start it in the future.

Treasurer
Ted Orson provided the church financial report through the end of November with the bottom line showing the church continuing to operate in the black. We have received some fully pre-paid pledges for 2021. It will need to be decided how we will share expenses with First Cong Church of Westfield going forward.

Fundraising
Patti Wood reported the RADA cutlery fundraiser was very successful and approx. $500 was raised for the church’s general fund. Thank you to Robin Sklarski for her help.

Music
Joyce Paggen has volunteered to take over as chairperson for the Music Committee and will be invited to future Executive Committee meetings.
The meeting was called to order by Terry Putnam, Moderator, at 6 p.m., and was held via Zoom. In attendance: Terry Putnam, Ted Orson, Patty Banasik, Donna Sullivan, Melanie Nitsch, Eric Nitsch, Karen Brzezinski, Roxanne Cook, and Jim Putnam.

**Updates from the Moderator**
- The group had a discussion of Pastor Julie’s Olmstead’s interim contract for 20 hours per week. This will be a six month contract to start and we are considering asking her to be in our pulpit 2-3 times per month, along with various other duties to be decided.
- The Westfield Evening News will not be advertising our Christmas Eve Service this year in the hopes to keep down the attendance due to COVID. Roberta, Terry, and Patty are working on a brief service for 6:30 pm. The newspaper though will carry an article about our Christmas happenings, i.e. Henrietta’s Thrift Shop, the local family we are adopting for the holidays.
- Each committee chairperson is asked to write an article for next month’s Gold Dome describing what their committee does in order to help the Nominating Committee attract new committee members.
- A new Search Committee will need to be formed with the Westfield church and we are looking for about six volunteers.

**Pastoral Relations**
Roxanne Cook inquired about the necessity for the continuation of the committee since we will have an interim for the foreseeable future. After discussion, it was decided to keep the committee intact.

**Finance Committee**
Melanie Nitsch has asked committee chairs to discuss their 2021 budgets with their committee members and send them to the Finance Committee. Due to our COVID status quo, not much change is expected for the 2021 budget. Melanie, Jim Putnam, and Ted Orson met to discuss the financial aspect of the interim contract after figures were received from First Congregational in Westfield. A generous donation was received toward Flo Pitoniak’s minister educational fund. Members are encouraged to also contribute to this fund in the church’s ongoing efforts to support her. Jim Putnam was invited to the meeting to make a motion for Memorial Gifts.

**Memorial Gifts**
Jim Putnam made a motion to offer a resolution to approve Karen Brzezinski (or any future Memorial Gifts chairperson) to conduct financial transactions and make decisions regarding stock holdings for our organization. The motion was carried unanimously after discussion. This was the result of some of the church’s stock holdings needing some attention. Jim Putnam will draft a letter to respond to the stock company Computershare’s inquiry as to who will be our church’s authorized representative.

**Missions**
Donna Sullivan reported approx. 80 food items were delivered recently to Southwick Food Pantry. They are donating $200 to the family the church is adopting to help at Christmas.

**Deacons**
Patty Banasak reported 25 shut-in plants will be delivered for the holiday season. They will be available Sunday, 12/13, for pickup and delivery by anyone who would like to help. There has been difficulty getting silk poinsettias for the sanctuary so they are considering asking members to purchase their own and bring them in for the service and pick them up right after the service due to the colder temps in the sanctuary.