In Jesus

We not only find peace,
but we also find the Prince of Peace.
We not only find righteousness,
but we also find the Righteous One.
We not only find counsel,
but we also find the Counselor.
We not only find wonders,
but we also find the Wonderful One.
We not only find spiritual food,
but we also find the Bread of Life.
We not only find provision,
but we also find the Shepherd of our souls.
We not only find salvation,
but we also find the Savior.
We not only find the Kingdom,
but we also find the King.

—ROY LESSIN

April/May 2021

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

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

Please join us Sundays for Worship Service 10:30 am
and Virtual Coffee Hour 11:30 am
Website: www.SouthwickUCC.org
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.

WORSHIP SCHEDULE
We invite you to join us each Sunday at our in-person service at 10:30 am or to view our service on Facebook or on our website.

COFFEE HOUR
Our virtual coffee hour is every Sunday at 11:30 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
For the next 6 weeks, Charnelle is working remotely Monday and Tuesday but in the office on Wednesday-Thursday from 9:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m. Please continue to 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 is posted on page 5. You can also call the church office number for the name of the on call person.

VISIT OUR FACEBOOK PAGE!
Our Facebook page is Southwick Congregational Church UCC Please check it out, “like” us, and follow us!!!
Pastor’s Greeting

Greetings of Peace and Grace to you, my friends!

We are coming out of the shadows. We are stronger than we were a year ago, six months ago, six weeks ago, maybe even yesterday. I thank everyone for having participated in whatever ways you did for the Lenten season. We have had rich and thought-provoking discussions and prayer in our Wednesday evening series, with good attendance overall from both churches. We have gotten to know each other better and have a clearer idea of where we are going and how to do church in all kinds of circumstances. The days are longer, the weather is warming our hearts and souls. And what do we do now?

We celebrate. Did you know that celebration is a discipline of our faith? In his seminal book “Celebration of Discipline: The Path to Spiritual Growth” the last chapter is actually called “Celebration.”

Here is an excerpt from that chapter: Celebration is central to all the Spiritual Disciplines. Without a joyful spirit of festivity, the Disciplines become dull, death-breathing tools in the hands of modern Pharisees. Every Discipline should be characterized by carefree gaiety and a sense of thanksgiving. Joy is part of the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22). Without joyous celebration to infuse the other Disciplines, we will sooner or later abandon them.

Without joyous celebration to infuse the other Disciplines, we will sooner or later abandon them. Joy produces energy. Joy makes us strong. You all have somehow, throughout this dark and challenging time we have all been facing, managed to continue to create joy. Through phone calls, emails, Zoom meetings and services, drive-bys and deliveries, in myriad...
ways, the joy has endured. So many have participated, contributed and been a guiding light in the darkness. I thank you all, for your patience, your open hearts, your acceptance of me as your “temporary shepherd.” Special thanks to Terry and Jim Putnam and the deacons, as well as Administrative Assistant Charnelle Harris, who have brought me on board with grace, patience and enthusiasm.

Now, with our new worship time of 10:30am, we have the chance to celebrate not only the resurrection but our resurrection as well! The stone has been rolled away! Many of us have been vaccinated. Restrictions are in place enough to safely gather up to 40% of capacity, which is a good deal more than recently. All fifty days of Easter, I invite you to wear your holiday hat, and/or your colorful mask. Put a twinkle in your eye and a song in your heart. God has ensured victory over death, new hope, and a colorful future of possibility and jubilee (forgiveness of debts). Invite your friends and family to church this month. Say, “Hallelujah! Christ is Risen!” Include everyone. God gave us this life to love, serve and to enjoy. Let’s show up for the world each Sunday this month and beyond, bright-eyed and bushy-tailed. Blessings and all good things in the days and hours to come, my friends.

In Christ always,
Pastor Julie

Our Pastor has been fully vaccinated! If you would like a brief visit on a Monday or Tuesday, please call at the church office (413)569-6362 or her cell phone (937)409-1375. She is eager to make your acquaintance in person!

Rob Rabtor
Angelo Castagna
Craig Perras
Ted Kowal
Kim Heath
Becky Bliven, Flo Pitoniak’s sister
Jeanne Stromgren
Jane Webster
Robert Ruel
Mary Goodwin
TJ Welch
Raymond Fox
Diane Rood
George Webster, Patty Banasik’s uncle
Patti Wood’s nephew Matthew & co-worker’s son
Jack
Sally Wood, Norma Cagney’s aunt
Kerry Morris Weaver, Phyliss Martin’s cousin
The Connor family at the loss of their son
**April Prayer List**

Karen Brzezinski
Patti Wood
Roberta Kowal
Eleanor Bates
George Wheeler
Lulu and Jim Fanion’s son, Phyliss Martin’s friends
Nancy and Frank McNulty
Jenny, Karen Brzezinski’s sister
Ann, Lee Zinnack’s friend
Chris Assard, friend of Lorraine & Bob Bates
Ben Ingalls, Flo Pitoniak’s nephew
Hetti Thompson, friend of Mary Grasso
Jim Rundall, Eric Nitsch’s friend
Dawn Turgeon’s sister-in-law Julie and niece Emilie
Emma C.
Stephen Piascik, Patty Banasik’s uncle-in-law
Debbie, Karen Brzezinski’s cousin
Dawn Turgeon’s spiritual friend Jack
Rob Rabtor

Pastor Julie’s virtual Bible study is on Wednesday evenings at 7:00 pm. Please contact Pastor Julie or the church office if you’d like to participate.

The pastoral search committees from both our church and First Congregational Church of Westfield have completed and submitted our church profiles to the UCC and are currently working together to compose a joint cover letter to let potential candidates know that we are partners in the search for a shared minister. Both committees are now beginning to function as one joint search committee. More info to come.

Immediately after the Sunday worship service on **May 23** (weather permitting), we will be hosting an **outdoor coffee hour** to give our congregation the opportunity to safely visit and enjoy some light treats.

We’ve been invited to worship at First Church in Westfield at 9:00 a.m. on Sunday, May 30, and will be providing rides for those who’d like to attend. There will be no worship service at our church on that day. Please call the church office if you would like transportation.

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.
**Night Emergency Coverage**

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<tr>
<th>Period</th>
<th>Name</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Apr 26—May 2</td>
<td>Ted &amp; Dianne Orson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 3—May 9</td>
<td>Eric &amp; Melanie Nitsch</td>
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<tr>
<td>May 10—May 16</td>
<td>Jim &amp; Terry Putnam</td>
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<tr>
<td>May 17—May 23</td>
<td>Patty Banasik</td>
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<tr>
<td>May 24—May 30</td>
<td>Ted &amp; Dianne Orson</td>
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as the snow melts away the hope is to see new things
the anticipation to see changes of the world both, high and below
encourage yourself to seek patience and happiness
even when its hard and it doesn’t feel like you have the strength
encourage yourself
I know this time isn’t like the other times
today isn’t yesterday, tomorrow isn’t today
sometimes its hard to believe
that there are people who share your
LOVE, PAIN, SADNESS, JOY, GUILT AND WORRY
but choose to believe
The climate now does seem to feel warmer but yet
the climate of the world feels frigid
don’t seek for what your neighbors and friends want
seek after your own heart, mind, body & spirit
seek justice! seek truth!

each day, choose... - Anonymous

"poems are like dynamite... they pack a lot of punch into a tiny package!" — Rachel Quintero, Age 8
Broken—An article by Phyliss Martin

I was in Dollar Tree last night and there was a lady and two kids behind me in the LONG line. One was a big kid, one was a toddler. The bigger one had a pack of glow sticks and the baby was screaming for them so the Mom opened the pack and gave him one; which stopped his tears. He walked around with it smiling, but then the bigger boy took it and the baby started screaming again. Just as the Mom was about to fuss at the older child, he bent the glow sticks and handed it back to the baby. As we walked outside at the same time, the baby noticed that the stick was now glowing and his brother said "I had to break it so you could get the full effect from it." I almost ran because I could hear God saying to me, "I had to break you to show you why I created you. You had to go through it so you could fulfill your purpose." That little baby was happy just swinging that "unbroken" glow stick around in the air because he didn't understand what it was created to do which was "glow". There are some people who will be content just "being" but some of us have been chosen by God to be "broken". We have to get sick. We have to lose a job. We go through divorce. We have to suffer with the disease of addiction. We have to bury our spouse, parents, best friend, or our child because, in those moments of desperation, God is breaking us, but when the breaking is done, then we will be able to see the reason for which we were created.. so when you see us glowing just know that we have been broken but healed by his Grace and Mercy!!!

ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Christian Ed program is happy to announce that we will be resuming activities for our children! We welcome kids of all ages to join us every Sunday from 10:30-11. All activities will be on the church green when weather permits, or in the new fellowship hall if weather is not cooperating. Per our COVID regulations, masks will be required at all times for all events, inside or out. Over the next few weeks, we will be focusing on fun activities to bring our children’s program back together after this difficult year.

Christian Ed / Youth Group Events:

April 11th - Welcome Back Games and Activities
April 25th – Bible Scavenger Hunt
May 2nd – Spring Games and Activities
May 9th – Mother’s Day Special Activity
May 16th – Special Church Service for Confirmands, followed by a church Picnic on the green
May 23rd – Games and Activities
May 29th/ rain date May 30th - Drinks for Griffin’s Friends Fundraiser (more details will be released at a later date)
May 30th – Please join us for our first “joint” service between Southwick Congregational Church and First Church of Westfield. Service will be held in Westfield, and we would like to shower our potential sister church with handcrafted cards/gifs from our kids. (more details will be released at a later date)
**Savers Clothing Drive - Wednesday April 21**

All items must be clean, minimal to no damage and in good condition for resale. We are accepting the following; Clothing, Soft linens (blankets, towels and drapes), Stuffed animals, Belts, Purses & bags, Shoes. We are not accepting the following; Kitchenware, Appliances, Electronics, Books.

All item must be bagged in a plastic kitchen or yard trash bag. Donations can be dropped in the New Fellowship Hall. If you are unable to drop off your items, please contact Kristy at (413) 977- 

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**Collections Dates / Times are:**

- Saturday, April 3: 9-12
- Friday, April 9: 9-12
- Saturday, April 10: 9-12
- Sunday, April 11: 12-2
- Monday, April 12: 5-7
- Tuesday April 13: PICK-UP ONLY (contact Kristy to set up a pick up time)

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**Stewardship – the History of Tithing**

Tithing has its roots in the Biblical tale of Abraham presenting a tenth of the war spoils to Melchizedek, the king of Salem. In the Old Testament, the tithe is mentioned in the Books of *Leviticus*, *Numbers* and *Deuteronomy*. Jews brought 10% of their harvest to a storehouse as a welfare plan for the needy or in case of famine. These tithes were akin to taxes for the people of Israel and were mandatory. This tithe was distributed locally "within thy gates" to support the Levites and assist the poor.

The New Testament is silent on tithing, though it does offer guidance in Luke 21 through the familiar story of Jesus observing the rich men and a poor widow offering their gifts to the treasury.

Forty-eight Stewardship pledges totaling $85,085, or $7000/month, have been received for 2021. First quarter receipts, shown below, include $12,370 in pre-paid pledges which is distributed as $1031 per month.
Meeting Minutes, Continued

Treasurer
Ted Orson is still working on and improving the budget in the computer. He hopes to have the monthly budget report available shortly. We are in good shape financially and our fuel bills are starting to decline.

Search Committee
Jim Putnam spoke about the “awesome and hard-working” committee. They have thoroughly worked through the Profile and have made a few changes. It is almost near completion and they are anticipating sending the draft to our new district minister in 1-2 weeks. They will meet with the Westfield Church Search Committee next week. Jim will co-chair the combined Search Committee along with the chairperson of the Westfield Church Search Committee.

New Business
Karen Brzezinski had concern about a potential wedding in our church for June 11th for 100 people. She will investigate if the interested party still wants to have the wedding in our sanctuary. COVID guidelines in place for June through the Southwick Health Dept. and the State of MA will need to be observed.

Our Moderator, Terry Putnam, had a recent conversation with the Moderator of the First Congregational Church of Westfield, Steve Pierce. They both shared their respective churches’ histories and how we saw ourselves going forward through this shared ministry. Terry offered that we are looking forward to sharing a minister but we do want to maintain our individual identity as a church. Executive Committees from both churches may possibly have an out-of-doors meeting in April or May.

Terry reported that possibly on the 5th Sunday in May we may have a joint service with Westfield to be held in their Sanctuary and on the 5th Sunday in August the joint service may possibly be held in our New Fellowship Hall due to the air conditioning we have in that hall during the summer.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:45 pm.
Respectfully submitted,
Melanie Nitsch, Clerk

Happy Birthday!

Michael Stevens        April 1
Emily Pitoniak         April 2
Melissa Day            April 11
Wyatt Baker            April 12
Melanie Nitsch         April 15
Barbara Day            April 20
Dennis Day Jr          April 22
Selwyn Williams        April 26

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!

April Birthdays

Happy Birthday!

Michael Stevens        April 1
Emily Pitoniak         April 2
Melissa Day            April 11
Wyatt Baker            April 12
Melanie Nitsch         April 15
Barbara Day            April 20
Dennis Day Jr          April 22
Selwyn Williams        April 26

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!
Happy 99th Birthday, Selwyn!

On Sunday, April 25, the congregation surprised Selwyn Williams with birthday well-wishes and song, balloons, and cupcakes in honor of his 99th birthday.

It was great to be able to celebrate this milestone in the life of such a caring, giving, and special man.

Here’s to many more birthdays and celebrations with you, Selwyn!

Music
Joyce Paggen reported her committee has met by email. She will be the chairperson of the group but they will work closely together so she prefers the title of “team leader.” The pianos in the church will be turned on May 26th. There was an error in the Music Committee budget that was included in the Annual Budget for 2021 voted on in February at the Annual Meeting. Melanie Nitsch made a motion to amend the Annual Budget by changing the line item for the substitute organist from $0 to $750. The motion was seconded and after discussion was approved unanimously. The group will try and look for summer music but will discuss the COVID issues involved. After a discussion, it was determined that music-wise, the church is safe to record and post our services on YouTube and Facebook.

Deacons
Patty Banasik reported they are planning our Easter Service for 10:30 am. They plan to do the Flowering Cross for Easter and will work with our janitor, Chris, for the clean-up of the flowers. She is working on ordering palms for Palm Sunday and the service will include our children. There are three deacons currently who are rotating taking turns doing our in-person services with Flo Pitoniak, Kirsten Allhusen, and Pastor Julie. They have decided not to do Easter plants for our shut-ins this year and will wait until closer to summer for shut-in plan deliveries.

Nominating
Patti Wood reported nothing new.

Fundraising
Patti Wood reported the clothing drive for soft goods only will be held on April 21st, Wednesday, at 3 pm. Bags will need to be counted this year before delivery to Savers. Patti will ask Chris for help with this. Bags brought in early need to be placed on New Fellowship Hall Stage behind the curtain.

Christian Ed
Kristy Johnston reports she will try to contact our youth to help with the Palm Parade on Palm Sunday as long as it is COVID compliant. The group will begin talks about a Sunday School class re-opening, perhaps in one of our large halls. She has spoken with First Church in Westfield regarding their youth program and will plan to attend one of their meetings.
Executive Board Meeting
March 11, 2021
The meeting was called to order by Terry Putnam, Moderator, at 6:35 p.m., and was held via Zoom. In attendance: Terry Putnam, Ted Orson, Patty Banasik, Melanie Nitsch, Eric Nitsch, Joyce Paggen, Karen Brzezinski, Kristy Johnston, Patti Wood, Pastor Julie Olmsted, and Jim Putnam. The meeting was opened with a pastoral prayer by Pastor Julie.

Minister’s Report
Pastor Julie reports the Ash Wednesday drive-in service was held outdoors and went very well. She is holding Lenten services each Wednesday evening via Zoom with a good mix of attendance by both churches. She is getting to know our administrative assistance, Charnelle, a little better each time they speak. She is fully vaccinated if someone would like an in-person visit. She has been speaking with the family of Connie Johnson to plan for her memorial service.

Safety Committee
Eric Nitsch reports they have not been meeting. Terry & Jim Putnam will be purchasing a Ring doorbell for the church to help Charnelle see who is at the New Fellowship Hall door. Bob Franzen will help with the hard wiring of this.

Buildings & Grounds
Eric Nitsch reported the boiler was recently repaired. A big thank you to Shirl Hamilton who did some electrical work on the boiler. As of March 2nd, the Boy Scouts are back meeting in the church on Tuesday evenings.

Finance
Melanie Nitsch reported she hopes to soon apply for forgiveness for the first PPP loan the church received. She has been working with Berkshire Bank and waiting for the newer one-page form. Melanie has been working with First Congregational Church of Westfield to solve issues with Pastor Julie’s pension. The new office schedule is Monday thru Thursday 9-2. This change will be temporary. Melanie is reminding anyone who enters the church building at any time that they are required to be masked. If someone forgets their mask, we are trying to make them available at all church entrances. Signage at all entrances will be put up.

As of Easter Sunday, April 4, the times for our in-person worship service and for our zoom coffee hour have changed for the foreseeable future. Our worship service now begins at 10:30 a.m. and our coffee hour starts at 11:30 a.m.

Reminder
Out of respect for the safety of everyone, any person entering our church building for any purpose or length of time must wear a mask that covers both nose and mouth and maintain appropriate social distance.

We are following the most current CDC, state, and local guidance and will relax our guidelines only when it is safe to do so. Until that time, please help us prevent the spread of illness among our congregation by adhering to these rules.

Thank you in advance for your compliance.

~~Terry Putnam
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<td>2 Office Closed</td>
<td>3 Henrietta’s Thrift Shop 9–12</td>
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<td>5 Church Office Open 9–2</td>
<td>6 Church Office Open 9–2</td>
<td>7 Church Office Open 9–2 Wednesday Word 7pm</td>
<td>8 Church Office Open 9–2</td>
<td>9 Office Closed Thrift Shop 9–12 OA–6 pm AA–7:30 pm</td>
<td>HOLY SATURDAY</td>
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<td>11 Worship 10:30a</td>
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<td>13 Church Office Open 9–2</td>
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<td>25 Worship 10:30a ZOOM Coffee Hour 11a OA–3:30 pm</td>
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