

First Congregational Church, U.C.C.
102 Middle Street
Hadley, Massachusetts 01035-9429



July - August

CHURCH STAFF

Pastor – The Reverend Thomas Hawkins
Organist & Choir Director – Toni S. Wilcox
Christian Education Director – Jean Baxter
Deacon of the Month – Rick Ward
Church Administrator – Cathy Samson
Custodian – Bryan Harper

WORSHIP SERVICES

Sunday Morning – 10:00 a.m.
Worship services & past events can be
accessed on Facebook and YouTube.

CHRISTIAN ED

Sunday Morning – 10:00 a.m.
In-person and via Email and Facebook.

Telephone: 413-584-4117
Facebook.com/FirstChurchHadley
Website: www.firstchurchhadley.org
YouTube: <https://youtube.com/c/FirstChurchHadley>



The Rooster Crows

July-August, 2022



BECOMING INTENTIONAL ABOUT CONGREGATIONAL CARE

At our March annual meeting, our congregation adopted three important goals for the next two years: (1) continued highlighting of our communications covenant; (2) establishing a system of congregational care that effectively utilizes the energy and skills of pastor and members in caring for those in need; and (3) examining our governance system and committee structure to assess if we are making optimal use of everyone's time, energy, and attention.

I want to briefly discuss progress on our goal for intentional congregational care. One of our congregation's defining characteristics is our care for each other as well as for others in the larger community. We have many caring members who are engaged in ministries of compassion. What we lack is a way of coordinating these efforts when there is a specific need such as short-term meals during an emergency, crisis or transportation for medical treatments or simply being present with someone so their regular caregivers can have some relief. Two members have spoken with me about their willingness to visit the hospitalized and the homebound. All these are important ministries that do not depend upon having a full-time settled pastor. As one deacon said at a recent meeting, "We are a congregational church, which ought to be we as a congregation can care for our members."

What we most need to achieve the second goal established by last March's congregational meeting is a "switchboard coordinator" who maintains a list of people who are willing to offer specific help (along with time limitations or other restrictions on their availability) and to whom those with a particular need – transportation, meal assistance, or a caring presence – can contact when a specific need arises.

Another building block of a more intentional system of congregational care is specific training for volunteers that helps them be better listeners and more thoughtful in what may be helpful or unhelpful in conversations with those for whom they are providing care. I am working on assembling resources for one or more trainings that we might offer in the early fall. This theme will also be the focus of some worship and preaching this fall.

How can you help our congregation make progress on this goal of more intentional congregational care? First, prayerfully consider if you might be willing to serve as a "switchboard" coordinator. Your goal is NOT to meet every need that comes your way. It is to look at the lists you maintain

and make suggestions about a person or persons who may be able to assist someone with a specific need. You would also solicit and maintain a list of people willing to provide helping services like short-term meals, medical transport, or simply spending a few hours with someone. **If you feel a call to this ministry, please contact me or one of our Deacons.**

How else can you help? In August we will be inviting everyone to share what they are already doing or might be willing to do to assist those in need. The goal of this effort is to pull together a list of who is already doing what kind of congregational care into one database that we can maintain and update on a continuing basis. This database is what our “congregational care coordinator or coordinators” would rely on to make suggestions and recommendations to someone with a specific need.

So many of us are already offering informal care to those among us who need a little assistance. We are simply trying to make more explicit and routine something we are already doing but with less intentionality. Of our three goals, this is surely one of the most important and most easily achievable ones. I am excited about our working together to celebrate its accomplishment.

Pastor Thomas

SUNDAY WORSHIP SERVICES **JULY & AUGUST**

Sunday Worship Services during the month of July will be held at North Hadley Congregational. Services will be “in person only” as they do not have the ability to stream services nor will they be broadcasting over the FM radio as this interferes with their sound system.

North Hadley Congregational is allowing people to attend services unmasked, however, please note that if there is anyone at church who is masked, please do not approach them without wearing a mask. They are trying to honor everyone’s situation in terms of vaccinations and allergies and worries. Coffee hour does tend to be completely non-masked, so people who want to attend coffee hour should be aware of that.

August Sunday Worship service will be back here at Hadley First Congregational.



Highlights for August

August 7 - Communion

August 14 - Blessing of the Animals

August 21 - Worship at Ken & Judy Parker’s home



CHURCH COUNCIL NOTES

Church Council Meeting Notes from meeting on June 8, 2022.

The Church Council members met in person in the Fellowship Hall of the church on Wednesday evening, June 8th, 2022, at 7:00 p.m.

Moderator Adam Woodrow led a discussion regarding a review of traditional annual events that have in the past been conducted by our church. Some of these events have not taken place due to two years of Covid 19 restrictions. Some have not been planned due to lack of volunteers. Council members were asked to review these events with their respective boards and committees and return to the meeting in August with any feedback.

Rev. Hawkins announced that he was going to begin offering “Pastries with the Pastor” on Tuesday mornings from 10 a.m. to 11 a.m., an open time of conversation about whatever anyone wants to discuss.

Lila West reported from the Christian Education Board that they were planning to evaluate their need to search for an interim Director of Christian Education in the fall.

Terri Smith reported as Church Treasurer that all was well, and Stan Brown reported that even though the investments had dropped quite a bit, we would be able to keep the doors open for quite some time.

In response to a question about paying for the steeple work, Kurt Betchick said that the Board of Properties planned to pay the contractor first from the church’s pledge of \$10,000. When that money is used up, we would then send bills to the town for use of the CPA funds. The work is expected to begin later in the summer as the contractor currently has a shortage of employees. The interior painting is going well, and they hope to have the same person continue in the sanctuary.

Judy Stone reported that the Missions Board would be volunteering at the Cathedral in the Night at the end of August.

The question regarding the quilt in the office hallway was resolved by Terri Smith and Judy Stone.

The church Council will not meet in July.

The next meeting is scheduled for August 3, 2022.

Respectfully submitted,
Debbie Ward, clerk

A MESSAGE FROM THE DEACONS



The past two or three years have been difficult for all of us as we have gone through the twists and turns of the effects of Covid 19. Many of us have had to change the way we interact with our friends and families. Recently, my wife and I attended a funeral for a neighbor and friend and were struck by the poem on the back of his funeral program. I believe we all need to take the message of this poem to heart as we move forward as a Church.

The Dash

By Linda Ellis

I read of a man who stood to speak
At a funeral of a friend.
He referred to the dates on the tombstone
From the beginning...to the end.

He noted that first came the date of birth
And spoke of the following date with tears,
But said what mattered most of all
Was the dash between those years.

For that dash represents all the time
They spent alive on earth
And now only those who loved them
Know what that little line is worth.

For it matters not, how much we own,
The cars...the house...the cash.
What matters is how we live and love
And how we spend our dash.

So, think about this long and hard;
Are there things you'd like to change?
For you never know how much time is left
That can still be rearranged.

For the Deacons, Ken Parker

If we could just slow down enough
To consider what's true and real
And always try to understand
The way other people feel.

And be less quick to anger,
And show appreciation more,
And love the people in our lives
Like we've never loved before.

If we treat each other with respect
And more often wear a smile,
Remembering that this special dash
Might only last a little while.

So, when your eulogy is being read,
With your life's actions to rehash,
Would you be proud of the things they say
About how you spent your dash?

Dear Friends,

I read this piece on Facebook recently and it resonated with me. I hope does for you as well.

Shared by Debbie Ward,
First Congregational Church of Hadley Prayer Shawl Ministry

CLOSE KNIT

Sean Dietrich, author, seandietrich.com
Reprinted with permission from the author.

The light clicks on in the United Methodist Church basement. The coffee is made. The old women sit in a large semi-circle, positioned on folding chairs. Their hair is stark white, leaning a little more toward the blue side. And they knit. They knit for hours.

They are making shawls. Prayer shawls.

Take Marie. Marie is the one wearing the T-shirt that says, "Life is Good." She received her first prayer shawl when her husband was dying. The shawl is fire-engine red. A stranger gave it to her. Marie was in the hospital corridor, weeping, when a woman sat next to Marie, unannounced, and said, "Here. God bless you."

"The lady said it was a prayer shawl," said Marie. "I didn't even know what that was." The mysterious woman told Marie that she had spent several hours knitting this garment, praying over with every stitch. Marie used the shawl daily. It went everywhere with her. It was with her on the day of her husband's funeral. It lay beside her at night, when she couldn't sleep because her bed was empty. She carries it with her all over.

And now she knits shawls, too.

"I can knit one in about eight hours," Marie said between needle strokes. "I give them to whomever God tells me to. Doesn't matter who it is. Could be a little boy, could be an old man."

Another woman adds, "I have given away over two hundred since I started making them."

Others chime in to say similar things. Between members of group, they estimate they have given away at least a thousand shawls. Maybe more.

You might not know this, but there are throngs of prayer shawl clubs and needlecraft ministries around the United States. Not just a few. Millions. More than you or I can possibly imagine.

From Trinity Episcopal Church in Thorington, Connecticut; to Saint Henry Catholic Church in Gresham, Oregon; to Saint Mary's Episcopal Church in Goochland, Virginia; to Saint Joseph on the Rio Grande Catholic Church, in Albuquerque. From Harris Hill United Methodist Church in Williamsville, New York; to Copper Hills Church in Peoria, Arizona. From Dauphin Way United Methodist Church, in Mobile, Alabama; to Saint Mary's Parish in Winona, Minnesota.

Millions. And millions.

In Eudora, Kansas, for example, each Tuesday, six ordinary women get together in a Lutheran church. They knit for two hours. They tell stories. They pray for each other. They pass their shawls along to anyone they feel drawn to.

“I’ve given my shawls to kids who came from nasty divorces,” one woman said. “And I’ve given them to people whose dogs died.”

In Jacksonville, Florida, Madison Lee knits shawls with her Methodist church. She remembers when she got her first shawl.

“My grandma had just died; I had just left her house and had gone to my youth group because I needed to take my mind off things. While I was there, a man came up to me. He was holding a Ziploc bag full of some type of fleece material. “When he handed it to me it had a prayer on the front, and as I read the prayer, I got a sense of comfort. Right then the whole youth group prayed with me and tears ran down my face. I felt as though the prayer shawl had some type of superpower within it.”

Sheila, in Sacramento, California, remembers. “I made my first prayer shawl when I was sixteen. I made it for a lady in my church who was dying of pancreatic cancer.”

In Milwaukee, Grace Simpson says: “During COVID, my group gave out over 400 shawls. So many that I lost count.”

Ellen, from Towson, Maryland, said: “I knit them for hospice patients. This might be the last shawl anyone ever touches or sees in their life. It has to have a lot of power in it. Good thing my God has a lot of power.”

Sylvia, in Ohio, knits in a prayer shawl group a few times each month. She received her first prayer shawl 28 years ago when the doctor told her she was dying.

“I did not know if I was going to make it, but then along comes this little act of goodwill, and I knew. I just knew it would be okay.” She beat breast cancer. Twice. Maybe it was the shawl that brought the miracle. Maybe it wasn’t. It doesn’t matter either way. Because the point is, it happened.

You might be wondering how you can get a shawl of your own. I asked one of the old women about that. She chuckled between stitches.

“Just pray for one. You’d be surprised what happens. It’ll find you. And that’s a promise.”

CHRISTIAN ED NEWS



Thank you to everyone who has enjoyed Christian Ed Breakout this past year! This summer we will be taking a break from Breakout and focus on getting ready for the fall. Check back for updates in the weekly email blast and the September Rooster. We will have outdoor children's activities available in person in August. Thank you so much to everyone who came to the Blue Sox Game! We had a blast and it's always a great time to get together.

MISSIONS NEWS



The mission committee has committed our church to provide a meal for Cathedral in the Night in Northampton on Sunday, August 28th, at 4:30 p.m. They have resumed their outdoor service as it was before Covid, and we will need five or six volunteers at the service that day to help serve the food. We will also need volunteers to prepare the meal as well as 100 sandwiches after church on August 28th. There will be a sign up for help and items needed when we resume worship on August 7th. We will also be looking for donations of gently used or new clothing as well as backpacks for the 28th.

CHOIR NOTES



Many thanks to everyone who participated in the music-filled service on June 26. You deserve a vacation! Take the month of July off to travel and relax or take your musical abilities up the road to North Hadley.

During August, I welcome any and all of you to join me at 9:00 a.m. on Sunday mornings. Bring your voice or instrument of choice. We will put together something to "Make a Joyful Noise Unto the Lord." We will also have at least one Old-Fashioned Hymn Sing in August. Stay tuned for more details.

Choir rehearsals will resume on Thursday, September 8, at 7:00 p.m. in the air-conditioned Choir-Christian Education room upstairs. Have a great summer. Toni

CELEBRATION OF LIFE

A gathering to celebrate the life of Beth Cook will be held on Sunday, August 14th, from 1:00 to 5:00 p.m. at the Young Men's Club pavilion in Hadley. All are welcome.

DELEGATES' REPORT OF THE ANNUAL MEETING OF THE SOUTHERN NEW ENGLAND CONFERENCE

Third Annual Meeting June 18, 2022

The third annual meeting of the Southern New England Conference UCC was held on Hop-in (similar to Zoom but more elaborate) on Saturday, June 18, 2022. The day consisted of welcome, morning worship, plenary session, breakout sessions, lunch, plenary session and closing worship. There were 322 attendees with 268 of them voting delegates. The only vote of the day (besides the trial vote to see whether everyone could manage the new technology in which chocolate ice cream handily won over vanilla ice cream as the preference of the group) was for the election of officers, committee members and synod representatives.

During the morning plenary session, the Rev. Patrick Duggan of the UCC Church Building and Loan Fund spoke on what various churches are doing to reimagine and repurpose their buildings and ministries. Some had refocused their ministry on providing a health facility for the community, others a clothing distribution or food distribution center. One worked on water distribution in the city, one on providing a hospitality hall for the community, essentially an activity center. One built a building for new businesses for minorities, mainly women led, giving the community 100 new jobs and \$75,000 in revenue yearly. One provided a home care ministry and another provided help for returning citizens (from prison) to regain and keep their employment. These churches usually partnered with agencies and departments in their city or town in developing their programs.

The breakout session on Right Sizing Church Governance discussed updating by-laws to make it easier for people to participate in church activities, for example, deacons did not all have to lead worship if they did not feel comfortable doing it, yet they could be deacons in other ways. Other suggestions were to give committees more authority to make decisions about their work, and only have certain things the entire Council or congregation had to vote on. Decisions that might change frequently depending on certain situations, were put in a Supplement. They were referenced in the by-laws. The vision statement should be revisited every five years as well to respond to our changing times.

Another breakout session on Repurposing Church Buildings and Land urged church leadership to meet with town leadership now, when you need nothing from them--before there is a need for a variance or CPA grant--to talk with them about their vision and plans for the town, what it needs now and what the officials envision will be needed later. Thus, a relationship can be built long before it is needed. Also, the congregation should begin thinking now about how its space and land can be used in the future and identify the partners that will be helpful when the time comes. If town officials are not interested in meeting with you, let them know how much money is involved should the church partner with the town on given projects.

Quick notes: Announcements were made (1) about a Seniors-to-Seniors group connecting high school seniors and senior citizens in a program that urges the young ones to vote, (2) a program for youth working on climate change, (3) a talk was given and well received in Orange, MA, on "race and white congregations" by Marilyn Kendrix, a UCC resource person from Connecticut.

Your delegates are concerned about the fact that we feel engaged persons in our leadership should be hearing these speeches and feeling the inspiration they give. We have difficulty relaying the excitement we get from these meetings when we are not the ones on the cutting edge of being able to use the information. To get the maximum benefit, we should think about who should be attending these excellent meetings. The next annual meeting will be held in person (possibly hybrid) on June 10, 2023, in Rhode Island. With our aging hearing, we were pleased that the speakers were easily heard. It was a smooth, well-organized presentation throughout. We were well instructed on the use of the Hop-in software, the music was beautiful, and the speakers were inspiring, hope-filled and oriented toward successful futures for the church even though there are going to be changes.

**Please listen to the inspirational keynote address by Patrick Duggan by following this link
2022 Annual Meeting Keynote Address - Patrick Duggan on Vimeo**

“In uncertainty lives hope.”

*Dawn Hammond, Conference Executive Minister
for Policy and Finance*

Your delegates,
Rosalee Oakley
Joan Johnson



JULY

3	Sunday	10:00 a.m.	WORSHIP SERVICE NORTH HADLEY
5	Tuesday	10:00 a.m. 7:00 p.m.	PASTRIES WITH THE PASTOR PRAYER SHAWL KNITTING GROUP
6	Wednesday	6:30 p.m.	Hadley Women's Group AA Meeting
8	Friday	2:00 p.m.	Memorial Service Winchell Moore
10	Sunday	10:00 a.m.	WORSHIP SERVICE NORTH HADLEY
13	Wednesday	6:30 p.m.	Hadley Women's Group AA Meeting
14	Thursday	7:00 p.m.	Hampshire County Farm Bureau
17	Sunday	10:00 a.m.	WORSHIP SERVICE NORTH HADLEY
19	Tuesday	10:00 a.m. 7:00 p.m.	PASTRIES WITH THE PASTOR SUMMER BOOK DISCUSSION
20	Wednesday	6:30 p.m.	Hadley Women's Group AA Meeting
24	Sunday	10:00 a.m.	WORSHIP SERVICE NORTH HADLEY
26	Tuesday	10:00 a.m. 7:00 p.m.	PASTRIES WITH THE PASTOR SUMMER BOOK DISCUSSION
27	Wednesday	6:30 p.m.	Hadley Women's Group AA Meeting
31	Sunday	10:00 a.m.	WORSHIP SERVICE NORTH HADLEY

Events listed in ALL CAPITAL LETTERS are church-related events.



AUGUST

2	Tuesday	10:00 a.m. 7:00 p.m.	PASTRIES WITH THE PASTOR PRAYER SHAWL KNITTING GROUP
3	Wednesday	6:30 p.m. 7:00 p.m.	Hadley Women's Group AA Meeting CHURCH COUNCIL
5	Friday	4:00 p.m.	Take and Eat Preparation
6	Saturday	8:00 a.m.	Take and Eat
7	Sunday	9:00 a.m. 10:00 a.m.	PICK UP CHOIR WORSHIP SERVICE
9	Tuesday	7:00 p.m.	SUMMER BOOK DISCUSSION
10	Wednesday	6:30 p.m.	Hadley Women's Group AA Meeting
14	Sunday	9:00 a.m. 10:00 a.m. 1:00 p.m.	PICK UP CHOIR WORSHIP SERVICE AND BLESSING OF THE Beth Cook Celebration of Life
16	Tuesday	10:00 a.m.	PASTRIES WITH THE PASTOR
17	Wednesday	6:30 p.m.	Hadley Women's Group AA Meeting
21	Sunday	10:00 a.m.	WORSHIP & BLESSING OF THE ANIMALS
24	Wednesday	6:30 p.m.	Hadley Women's Group AA Meeting
28	Sunday	9:00 a.m. 10:00 a.m.	PICK UP CHOIR WORSHIP SERVICE
30	Tuesday	10:00 a.m. 7:00 p.m.	PASTRIES WITH THE PASTOR DEACONS MEETING
31	Wednesday	6:30 p.m.	Hadley Women's Group AA Meeting

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