

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



**CHURCH STAFF**

Deacons

Lisa West  
Ken Parker  
Jonathan Morel  
Bob Andersen  
Office 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.

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



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# *The Rooster Crows*

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September, 2023

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## **CHILDREN'S MESSAGE SHARED BY LILA WEST ON SUNDAY, AUGUST 20**

Today I'd like us to talk about air. It feels fitting to start by talking about fresh air, and how fortunate we are to live in a place that provides us, the vast majority of the time, with fresh, beautiful air that smells clean and safe, and like home, if not a little farmy on occasion.

And like so many things, fresh air is something I think we forget about and take for granted, at least I do, until I don't have access to it any more. Until the Canadian wildfires send a haze over my summer. Or until a pandemic sends masks to cover my face. That feeling of removing a mask after wearing it for too long - we all know the one - we notice it in the moment but now that our faces feel air every day, do we remember what a privilege that is? I'm not sure I do.

But on days like today, when we take a moment to slow down and look around at the world God gives us, I think we can take a moment to recognize the power of the air around us and within us. Which brings up the topic of breathing that fresh air.

And that leads me to a TikTok video I saw the other day. If you're not familiar, TikTok is an app on smartphones in which people create and share short videos for other people to watch. The topics it covers are VAST. You name it, there is a "corner" of TikTok with videos about that. I've seen a lot of videos not worth mentioning, but this one I think is worth sharing. Here's what it said:

There was a moment in time when Moses had the courage to ask God what His name is.

God answered, and the name He gave is recorded in the original Hebrew as YHWH.

Over the centuries humans have arbitrarily added an "a" and an "e" in there to get YaHWeH. Presumably because we have a preference for vowels.

But scholars and Rabbis have noted that the letters YHWH represent breathing sounds, or aspirated consonants. When pronounced without intervening vowels, it actually sounds like breathing.

YH (inhale). WH (exhale).

Perhaps this is why YHWH was considered an unspeakable name ... because quite literally it is not supposed to be spoken, but breathed.

*So from our first breath to our last,  
We are speaking the name of God.*

It's no wonder that when we hold our breath in fear, we are told to take a deep breath to help us calm down. And it's not a coincidence that we often take a deep breath to help us muster courage.

YHWH, our God, has given us His name as our very breath of life. A constant reminder for us that it is only because of Him that we live. He is our life sustaining power.

Thus ends the TikTok video and begins the Children's Sermon portion of this spiel. That video was posted by a man named Charles. That is literally all I know about him, and I did not fact check anything he said. But that video has made me think a lot ... about air.

We speak often to our children, to one another, that God is all around us, and within us. Yet it can be hard to imagine, I think, God being in those places. It's not hard, however, to imagine air in those places. We know that air is above us, below us, beside us, inside us. So the idea that God is our breath, our very air, helps, I think, to more concretely understand that concept. God, like air, as air, is always surrounding us, holding us, sustaining us.

And like fresh air, I think that God's presence in our life is also something that can so easily be taken for granted. The poet Sarah Kay said (and I'm paraphrasing) that it's not until we've had the wind knocked out of us that we remember how much our lungs love the taste of air. And maybe it's not until things are hard that we remember to turn to God for help. The country singer, Jelly Roll, says "I only talk to God when I need a favor, and I only pray when I ain't got a prayer." I only remember the feeling of air on my face after I've covered it with a mask, but in reality, I have the privilege of air to breathe everyday. I am blessed to have God with me, every day. When I breathe, I am repeating God's name, praying God's name, which is pretty powerful to think about.

Now my only task is to remember this privilege of air, this blessing of God's presence. So maybe the next time I complain about humidity, when I notice the bite of the autumn air, when I can see my winter breath in front of me, when I leave the airplane and remove my mask, when I open my windows, I'll try to remember the gift of Yahweh in my lungs. His gift of life, of His presence.

And I will breathe easier.

## MISSION NEWS



Thank you all for your support of the food pantry this summer! That is an ongoing mission for us and we welcome all donations! Thank you also for the quarters collected in the sanctuary which totaled \$44 to be sent to Habitat for Humanity.

As we head into the autumn season, we will be thinking of ways to help others prepare for colder weather.

We are signed up to provide a meal for Cathedral in the Night on Sunday, November 12th, at 4:30 p.m. As part of that mission, we will be collecting warm clothing, including socks and underwear, to donate as well!

We will get more details as the time gets closer.

Mission Committee

Judy Stone      Mara Breen      Cindy McQueston      Barbara Andersen

## CHRISTIAN ED NEWS



Please join us for a special HOMECOMING SUNDAY, September 10, 2023, at 10 a.m. We will be celebrating all of the wonderful people in our lives who have inspired us, especially grandparents! All ages are welcome to join us. The service will be followed by a special Fellowship Hour.

We would also like to formally introduce our new Interim Christian Education Director Shannon Stilla!

From Shannon:

Greetings!

Although I have had the chance to speak with many of you personally, I would like to formally introduce myself and say how thrilled I am to be your new Interim Christian Education Director. As an elementary educator and a Pastor's wife, I look forward to nurturing the spiritual life of the youth in this congregation, and I hope to invoke a life-long curiosity of Jesus's all encompassing and never ending love.

My husband Peter, who you may have seen giving a Sunday service recently, and our daughters Sophia and Parrish, are thankful for this space of love and acceptance. First Congregational Church of Hadley is a uniquely warm and inviting group and my family and I feel blessed to be a part of such a welcoming congregation.

In God's Love,  
Shannon Stilla



## MUSIC NOTES



The search continues for both substitute accompanists for worship and a permanent Music Director. We have and will continue to enjoy the talents of several pianists during the fall. The sub list is short and there are many churches in the area in need. Continue to pray and keep your ears open for anyone interested in sharing their talents with us.

Debbie Ward, Music Committee

## **HANDBELL CHOIR NEWS**

Quotes from some of the postcards that we received from Pennsylvania:



“I sure hate getting up so early for yoga class. But it is making me more flexible.”

“I love having so much more core strength. I’m sure it will help me sound better.”

“The food here is good, but I can’t wait to get a pizza when I get home.”

“I really miss all those warm hands around my handles.”

We can’t wait to see you again!

Ruth Morse,  
Handbell Choir Director

## **REPORT FROM THE BYLAWS TASK GROUP**

The bylaw task group has been working hard. By the time you read this, we will have met five times, with more meetings planned for September.

We have been charged with proposing amendments to the bylaws that will change us from having a church council to having quarterly congregational meetings.

We are making these modifications in order to make our governance more flexible, and to decrease the total number of meetings that people must attend.

More specifically, we are eliminating the church council and replacing it with “the active members.”

That’s the easy part. For every word we change, we have to follow all the connections to make sure that everything the church council did is covered. And “Church Council” appears 59 times in the bylaws!

What we aren’t doing is anything about boards and committees — not size, not duties, not length of terms. That will be the job for another task group.

We will have the proposed changes available prior to the September 24 Special Congregational Meeting.

The Bylaws Task Group:  
Ruth Morse, Judy Parker, Jan Schott, Deb Ward

## **YOUNG ADULTS: WHAT BRINGS THEM TO CHURCH & WHY THEY STAY**

Our churches are located in communities that host or are near to renowned preparatory schools, colleges and universities. We live in a region surrounded by higher education institutions. And yet, many of our congregations look like young adult deserts.

Is this an inevitable fact of changing times, or is there a way to bring young adults into our communities?



Rev. Shannon Farrand-Bernardin, Student Care Coordinator of Amherst College, and former Assistant Director of Religious & Spiritual Life and Christian Chaplain at Amherst College, and Assistant Chaplain of Christian & Interfaith Life at Carleton College, will share reflections about what brings young adults to churches, why they continue attending (or don't), and offer suggestions for creating vibrant and welcoming faith communities that are hospitable to teens, college students, and young adults.

*(Photo by Jennifer Sanders)*

This talk will be hosted by the First Congregational Church of Hatfield, United Church of Christ. The church is located at 41 Main Street in Hatfield. This in-person event is open to all who are interested in reaching out to young adults. The talk will begin at 7:00 p.m. on Tuesday, September 26th, and also will be live-streamed. If you would like to receive a link to the live-stream, please send a request to [randyc1897@gmail.com](mailto:randyc1897@gmail.com).

# SEPTEMBER

1	Friday	4:00 p.m.	Take and Eat Preparation
2	Saturday	8:00 a.m.	Take and Eat
3	Sunday	10:00 a.m.	WORSHIP SERVICE
5	Tuesday	7:00 p.m.	PRAYER SHAWL KNITTING GROUP
6	Wednesday	6:30 p.m.	Hadley Women's Group AA Meeting
10	Sunday	10:00 a.m.	MULTI-GENERATIONAL WORSHIP SERVICE
12	Tuesday	12:00 p.m.	Clergy Luncheon
13	Wednesday	6:30 p.m.	Hadley Women's Group AA Meeting
17	Sunday	10:00 a.m.	WORSHIP SERVICE
20	Wednesday	6:30 p.m.	Hadley Women's Group AA Meeting
20	Thursday	7:00 p.m.	Hampshire County Farm Bureau Meeting
24	Sunday	10:00 a.m. 11:00 a.m.	WORSHIP SERVICE SPECIAL CONGREGATIONAL MEETING
27	Wednesday	6:30 p.m.	Hadley Women's Group AA Meeting

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