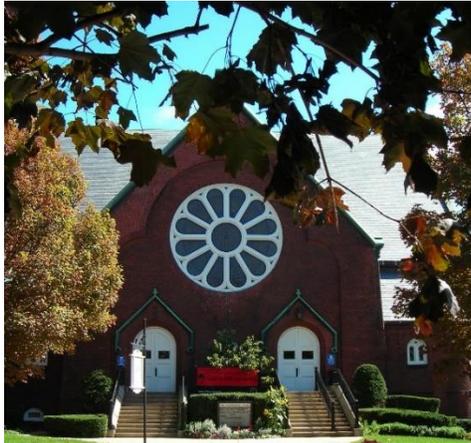




CHURCH AT THE CENTER

SEPTEMBER 2020



FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH "CENTER CHURCH"

United Church of Christ

One Church Street

South Hadley, Massachusetts 01075

(413) 532-2262

Email: centerchurch@verizon.net

Website: centerchurchsouthhadley.org

Facebook: [Center Church of South Hadley MA](https://www.facebook.com/CenterChurchofSouthHadleyMA)

Instagram: [@centerchurchsouthhadley](https://www.instagram.com/centerchurchsouthhadley)



*ALL ARE WELCOME AT CENTER CHURCH ON THE COMMON,
AN OPEN AND AFFIRMING UCC CONGREGATION,
WHERE THE SPIRIT OF GOD STIRS US TO EMBRACE OUR DIVERSITY,
DEEPEN OUR FAITH IN JESUS, SHARE OUR TEARS AND LAUGHTER,
AND EXTEND GOD'S ABUNDANT LOVE AND JUSTICE INTO THE WORLD.*

In the early mornings and after the sun disappears, I feel the promise of fall. What will fall bring us? Ahead are a slew of unknowns. Ahead are new configurations of school, jobs, child care, and church. Ahead are new possibilities.

Ok, I'm sounding like Pollyanna...because I have such hope in how we will re-emerge. We will not look the same (my hair is down to my knees so have to lift it up to sit), however new and the same tenacious, abiding, caring members/friends have come **this** far.

What do we need to do to hang in there? On Aug 30 I preached on Romans 12:9-21 (The Message translation). This scripture answers our question as to what do we need to do.

Love from the center of who you are; don't fake it. Run for dear life from evil; hold on for dear life to good. Be good friends who love deeply; practice playing second fiddle.

Don't burn out; keep yourselves fueled and aflame. Be alert servants of the Master, cheerfully expectant. Don't quit in hard times; pray all the harder. Help needy Christians; be inventive in hospitality.

Bless your enemies; no cursing under your breath. Laugh with your happy friends when they're happy; share tears when they're down. Get along with each other; don't be stuck-up. Make friends with nobodies; don't be the great somebody.

Don't hit back; discover beauty in everyone. If you've got it in you, get along with everybody. Don't insist on getting even; that's not for you to do. "I'll do the judging," says God. "I'll take care of it."

Our Scriptures tell us that if you see your enemy hungry, go buy that person lunch, or if he's thirsty, get him a drink. Your generosity will surprise him with goodness. Don't let evil get the best of you; get the best of evil by doing good.

To remind us that there is still joy and gratitude in our lives I am asking you to send a photo of what gives you joy or gratitude. Please send the picture to: centerchurchsouthhadley@gmail.com by Sept 10th so we can incorporate it into the virtual **CENTER CHURCH WELCOME BACK SUNDAY**. If you need me to take an outside photo of you by your garden, home, bike, the church, call me. I will come wearing a mask (with a smile underneath it) to take a picture. No internet? I'll do the same.

Get the best of evil (our setbacks) by doing good.

In faith, hope, and love,

Lori



Join us for worship September 13th as we host a virtual "WELCOME BACK" Worship Service and Promise Land Sunday School – Youth Group too! Teaser Alert: Benjamin LaBonte (parents Dan and Gretchen) was baptized on July 19th so we will share the baptism video during the service.



Vigils for Racial Justice: All who support racial justice are invited to stand with us along College Street by the Town Common on **Saturday mornings in September from 10-10:30**. (Aug 29th was our 23rd consecutive weekly vigil for racial justice.) Please bring your own sign, flag, etc., wear a mask, and be prepared to stand at least six feet from anyone not in your family circle. For more information, contact Center Church at 532-2262. A Center Church Vigil will be featured on Connecting Point: NEPM. Stayed tuned for updates on when it will air.

Saturday Vigils for Racial Justice - a Commentary

The church bells ring promptly at 10 am and for the next half hour until the bells ring again, we gather, masked and appropriately distanced, with our signs, children, and dogs. Only some of us are members of Center Church, but all the faces are becoming more familiar. It's become a community, drawn here week after week to take a stand for racial justice, to remember George Floyd and all who have suffered because of structural racism. We stand and wave to the cars passing by, many honking their approval, some indicating their disagreement. We chat about our lives, our hopes for a better future. Stephanie takes pictures, Lori makes sure everyone is welcomed and valued, I help hang flags on signposts and count attendance, and Randy rings the bells. It's become a necessary part of my week, a time to affirm and renew my commitment to the cause of racial justice, a weekly reminder to think about what I can be doing the rest of the week to be an ally to my neighbors of color. Standing in front of the church, I remember that what I do is rooted in my faith. It helps to fill the space that remains empty on Sundays. I hope we can sustain this. I hope it grows.

Submitted by Anita Sarro



We continue to keep track of everyone who enters the Church building so that, should we need to track a Covid case, we would have that information. To that end, we ask anyone who enters the building to either call into the church voicemail and leave your name and the day/time you will be in the building or put your name on the sheets at the Upper Church Street entrance or the Lower Park Street entrance. We pray never to have to do this tracking, but if it ever became necessary, we would want to inform everyone that could be affected. Thank you for your cooperation.

The Phase Forward Task Force continues to monitor the Covid Pandemic and evaluate the impact on Sunday Worship and other Church/non-church related activities in our building.



You can visit the Center Church YouTube page anytime, and watch any of the Mid-week Musings or Sunday Worship Services.

https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCenAmZ4uhw49Oe3m_qxyBTg

PLEASE KEEP THE FOLLOWING PEOPLE IN YOUR PRAYERS

Continual:

Emily Bangs-Orsini (at Mt. St. Vincent)
Barbara Blank's great-grandson, Cayden
Luke Bradley recently celebrating his
16th birthday (lifelong battle with cancer)
Ruth and family on the passing of Wayne
Cowan, August 25
Family and friends of Dolly Crossland, who
passed away
Muriel Graham
Family and friends of Lou Hamilton, who
passed away
Audrey Heinrichs
Tom Hazen
Phyllis Lacoste
Anna Sibley
Art Stanley
Ruth Thornton - Vero SH

*We keep all those affected by the Coronavirus,
in our prayers including medical personnel and
first responders, food preparers/ deliverers, grocery
workers, truckers and all "essential workers".*

*We keep the incarcerated, those who have lost their
jobs or are furloughed, all our elected officials and
the world at large in our hearts and prayers.*

*We keep those serving in the military
in our prayers, as well as the residents and
healthcare workers at the Holyoke Veterans Home.*

**If you have submitted one of these requests
for prayer, please let us know when it is time
to remove someone's name from the list.**



CORRECTION

Bev Howells
new address is:
4800 Fillmore Ave #101
Alexandria VA 22311

Situational:

Julie Burke's cousin, David Driscoll, on
waiting list for liver transplant
and her cousin Joanne, recovering from
surgery for endometriosis.

Frances Buzzard of the Granby Church
Emily Carle's dad, Jim, recuperating from surgery

Emily Carle's grandfather Sam, recovering from
a fall

Alice Chouinard of the Granby Church - in the
hospital with shingles

Dianne Clinton's sister in law, Carol Clinton, who
lives in NH and has been ill.

The Desrosier family of the Granby Church, on
the passing of Dave's mother

Granby member Butch Eaton had a heart attack.
He will be ok, but is in the hospital.

Audrey Heaphy's brother-in-law, Bob Brandt

Bev Howells, just moved to Virginia

Cathy Irish's friend Beverly

Marion Mason of the Granby Church, following
surgery for broken hip

Lucio Perez, in Sanctuary in Amherst FCC

Eric Tipton, needing a kidney transplant

Joy Weigel's grandson, Michael Martini,
recuperating

Linda Wolf and her family as they mourn the
passing of their mother

*Prayers for all the students, teachers and
administrators returning to school and those finding a
graceful way to navigate online.*

*We pray for family and friends those who have lost
their lives because of acts of racism.*

*We pray for those peacefully protesting
these killings.*

CHILDREN'S CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

Remote Sunday School classes begin September 13!



Hello Promised Land Sunday School Friends and Families,

It's time to reopen Sunday school classes but in a much different way this fall! The Center Church Christian Education Team, Rev. Lori and other church leaders have been hard at work this summer assessing the needs and desires of our children and families as we begin to plan a safe and meaningful Promised Land Program for fall. During these unprecedented times, the safety and well-being of our church community is paramount. Your input has been very helpful as we begin to visualize the best ways to continue Sunday School in September.

Remote Sunday School classes will begin September 13 and as of now will continue remotely for the remainder of 2020 - EXCEPT for an occasional class activity outside the building with me (Martha). Outdoor classes would be weather dependent and parents would attend with their children spaced safely apart, wearing masks.

Please know that all metrics are being followed and implemented for a safe reopening, and all guidelines will be met or exceeded before the church re-opens for any in-person worship or Sunday school classes. At this time, we will not open the building until the Covid cases decline steadily in Massachusetts.

Simone, Chelsea, and I and our Christian Ed volunteers hope your families continue to find grace and joy in each day during these unusual times. We are blessed with so many gifts in our midst, and I pray we are discovering new ways to see and hear God among them.

Peace,

Martha ~ Christian Education Director & *Kate Hoffman* ~ Christian Education Team Leader



Youth Group

Hello Center Church youth and families! We have been thinking about you during this atypical summer. We know a lot of you go to summer camp or do sport leagues or travel during the summer, and we know those experiences didn't happen how you wanted them to. Like these summer experiences, Youth Group will also be a little different. We are going to start off virtually as the church monitors the rising COVID cases in South Hadley. **Youth Group will start on September 13th with RALLY DAY!** Rally day will be a virtual celebration

of our youth and children as we return from summer and kick off the new school year. After Rally Day, the Youth Group will start a curriculum on racial justice that looks at systemic racism, the phrase "I don't see color," black lives matter vs all lives matter, white privilege, reparations, and kneeling/protests/riots while keeping in mind the life ministry of Jesus. We are excited to continue this conversation and the important journey of dismantling racism in all its forms. Also, new this year will be GAME SUNDAY! The first Sunday of every month, we will play a game that is either virtual or can be played over Zoom like charades, Pictionary, virtual escape rooms, and scavenger hunts. If you have any suggestions for games, please let us know! Families, you should have gotten an email and survey from Emily asking for your input about Youth Group this year. We want to make sure that Youth Group is something that energizes and excites the youth rather than burdens them, especially considering many of them have online classes. Please let us know if there is anything we can do to help you during this weird time. We are looking forward to welcoming everyone back on September 13th!



Adult Christian Education

A Peek at the Bible Psalm 4, v.8

"I will lie down and sleep in peace, O Lord, for you alone make me dwell in safety."

Suitable as a bedtime prayer for those who want to read or memorize a brief piece of Scripture instead of wondering what to share with God at day's end. It's similar in tone to a verse included in the Morning Rite in the Anglican Book of Common Prayer written in the 16th century by Thomas Cranmer, Archbishop of Canterbury, "Give us peace in our time, O Lord."

Randy Purinton is ordained in the U.C.C. and is a member of Center Church. He serves as a trustee.



News from the Trustees for September 2020

This has certainly been an unusual time for us all, in the world, the country, South Hadley and certainly Center Church. I know that we have all missed being together in person. You will be seeing two trustee articles this month - this regular one, and one from treasurer John Hoffman about the PPP (he will explain all of that) which we received. We are so grateful that, in spite of Covid 19, financially we are doing very well, so far that is. At the end of July, we stood at 76% of our projected income and 56% on the expense side. On the plus side, pledge income is at 72% which is truly amazing - many thanks to all who have helped with this. However, as we begin the fall "season," we will continue to do so remotely and without any of the people and groups which are normally in our buildings. As you know, there are a number of these groups who regularly use our facilities. We will miss/have missed their presence for sure and hope that they may be able to return later this fall. Since they cannot presently use these facilities, there is no regular income from that either.

We are all becoming familiar with new ways to communicate for church business. Trustees met via Zoom in July and August, as has Council and we will both continue that for some time. Some of our MHC students are "zooming" with Emily Carle (one of our youth leaders), Lorain Giles, and Lori and they will continue that way this fall since the College has decided to offer only remote classes for the fall semester. We will surely miss their presence in our sanctuary. At our meeting, Lori reported that the weekly Saturday vigils are going well and received positive coverage in the *Gazette*, and will be on NEPM's (WGBY) "Connecting Point" soon. Lori also reported that the Zoom meeting with Jennifer Gunderson, police chief, went very well. The Phase Forward task force is continuing to monitor the Covid situation and how it is affecting Center Church.

When we return to the church, you may notice that the floors in Fellowship Hall and the choir room have been stripped and re-waxed and look very nice. This had not been done on either in quite some time. And at some point this fall, the smaller outer windows on the sanctuary's south side should have been primed and painted, important to protect all the wood work which Adam Suska did previously.

Sexton Bob has been working hard to keep our facility in good, clean shape. Thia has been working both in the office and remotely at home to do her regular administrative duties, checking mail almost daily, checking the answering machine, etc. Lori has been working diligently both in the church and at home, learning a lot from Webinars, setting up our Zoom meetings, and doing the myriad of things that we don't even know. This has had the hardest impact on her and we salute her and all that she has been accomplishing. While Larry Schipull and Cheryl Cobb have been "off" for the summer, Cindy Morrell has filled in with music, as usual, for all of our services. And behind the scenes and mentioned before, Gretchen LaBonte, our tech guru, provided all the YouTube Sunday services - we all agree that she is awesome! We will welcome the rest of the staff who have been on summer "break" back this month!

Trustees will meet in September but until then if you have any questions about the facilities or our finances, please direct any question to Thia in the office and she will contact us.

Cindy Morrell, secretary



Paycheck Protection Program

As many of you know, Congress passed the CARES Act (Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security) earlier this year and churches were eligible to apply for a Paycheck Protection Program loan. In May this year, we applied for and were granted a Paycheck Protection Program Loan in the amount of **\$35,700**. This amount was based on the guidelines allowing for up to 2.5 times the actual average monthly payroll expenses incurred in 2019. The loan amount can be forgiven provided that (1) the funds are used to cover payroll costs and utility costs and (2) the employee and compensation levels are maintained.

We fully expect the loan to be forgiven and we will submit the loan forgiveness application once our bank receives guidance from the Treasury Department. As of August 10th, Peoples Bank has not received guidance for loans under \$150,000; we have been told to “hang tight”.

The money received has been a tremendous help to our church especially since our sources of income from fund-raisers (e.g. Fall Fair, Holiday Bazaar, Special Concerts) have been put on hold. Also, we have not received income from building use since we shut down in March. Thankfully, your pledge dollars have been coming in and we have not had any extraordinary expenses. This has allowed us to stay afloat financially during these uncertain times.

I want to thank Lori, Thia, the Trustees, the Deacons, Christian Education, the Musicians, and the Outreach Team for all their support to our congregation and the community as they have kept us afloat spiritually during these challenging times.

John Hoffman
Treasurer

- 01 Katy Daniels
- Tori Daniels
- 04 Bob Russell
- 05 Alina Sokop
- 08 Chris Orsini
- 10 Corinne Chartrand
- 12 Patricia Correia (Keyes)
- Doug Smith
- 13 Nancy Towne
- 18 Lori Souder
- 20 Phyllis Lacoste
- Ruth Thornton
- 21 Don Donihue
- Matt Gage
- 22 Sallie Waite
- 23 Wayne Cordes
- 25 Jonas Clarke
- 27 Bennett Anz
- 28 Sanford (Sandy) Belden
- 29 Lynne Bertram



Did Jesus vote? There's no indication in the scriptures. The Christian communities that cropped up following him promoted a life of charity and sharing.....maybe there was no need to vote for people espoused common values. We have an opportunity to vote, so please do. Register, ask for a mail-in ballot, or plan to head to the polls on Nov. 3rd. **Vote!**

If you need more info as to how to register:

[Vote.org](https://www.vote.org)

Reminder that there will be
NO FALL FAIR OR HOLIDAY BAZAAR
this year.



Please save your donations for
Spring 2021 when we will HOPEFULLY
begin accepting them again.

Notes from Church Council

The Council met virtually through Zoom on July 7 and August 6. The July meeting was led by Kate Hoffman. The recent church survey results were shared. 20 members, mostly seniors and only two participants who had school-age children submitted answers. Almost all volunteered to help with keeping in touch with our congregation through phone calls and emails, etc. The Covid-19 Phase Forward Task Force continued discussions about developing safe practices for our building use which includes employee safety, worship, Sunday school, youth programs and outside groups. The Peterson Fund had a total of \$1,800 available for scholarships and \$1,600 was distributed. Two scholarships were for \$475 each, one for \$350 and the last for \$300. Outreach brought up a Massachusetts Council of Churches fund which was established to provide financial assistance to vulnerable church communities. These are often in minority communities. Center Church was encouraged to contribute. It was **MSV** unanimously to take \$1,000 from unrestricted memorial funds and donate it to this worthwhile fund. Stewardship is working with Vanco to establish a portal on our website to accept donations. Once completed, this credit card portal will make donations even easier!

The August Council meeting was led by Karen Hyvonen. Covid-19 Phase Forward Task Force is working on a "cleaning task list" for the buildings. There may be a gradual opening of Center Church in November, once there's a steady decline in the Town's virus numbers. Fellowship Hall may be utilized first. Two special thermometers (one for persons entering the church and one for Promiselanders) have been purchased. Deacons will be continuing YouTube worship services until further notice. They expressed a need for more technological electronic equipment for recording and filming. Outreach is forming an ad hoc group to focus on race relations. Trustees announced that the Fellowship Hall and choir room floors have been stripped and re-waxed. The Council discussed by what name our church should be known. Once a name change decision has been made, it will be presented to the congregation for a vote. [See the article in this CAC issue by the church historian pertaining to the various names used in the past 287 years.]

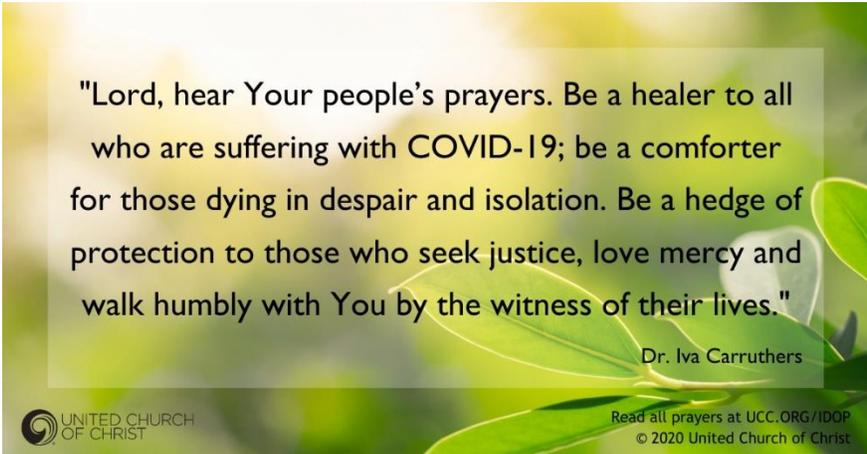
Center Church in Transition

Deaths: Shelley (Bull) Granger, June 25, age 91.

Dorothy "Dolly" (Sullivan) Crossland, July 31, age 90.

Marion Louise "Lou" (Winter) Hamilton, August 3, age 88.

David C. Morrell, Clerk



"Lord, hear Your people's prayers. Be a healer to all who are suffering with COVID-19; be a comforter for those dying in despair and isolation. Be a hedge of protection to those who seek justice, love mercy and walk humbly with You by the witness of their lives."

Dr. Iva Carruthers

Outreach Partners of the Month

To the Good Folk from Center Church!

We hope a few were able to join the recent Girls Inc event, which sparked much good thinking and offered ideas for digging deeper into the ideas shared about realities for girls of color in our region.

This is an invitation to join others from our congregation in exploring more about racism, and how it affects us where we are. In the wake of national events, and the energy palpable in our recent vigils, it is clear that many are recognizing a need for better understanding. The United Church of Christ throughout its history has focused on the value of all humankind. Our Outreach Team has initiated an ad hoc committee to organize periodic opportunities for learning and engagement in the coming months. In light of Covid 19 realities, we are making use of online tools as well as paper communication.

In the past months we have participated in weekly Saturday morning vigils in support of equal justice and the realities highlighted by the Black Lives Matter movement. We have had an in-depth conversation with the South Hadley Police chief. The July/August Church at the Center gave links to an extensive resource list compiled by Emily Carle, our youth director. We shared the invitation to the Girls Inc event that exposed us to concerns of area young people of color. We have contributed substantially to churches and agencies responsive to the particular needs of more vulnerable members of local communities of color through ROCA (see July/Aug newsletter) and the One Church Fund (see article in this newsletter) We have asked Dr Donique McIntosh, Racial Justice Team leader for the Southern New England Conference of the UCC to speak to us later this fall.

This month and next, we would like to suggest a couple of articles for you to read and consider, followed by a chance for conversation. Down the road, we might share a book or movie and explore ways to make a positive difference.

If you would like to join in, the first readings are two general articles about what constitutes racism at

**<http://www.coming-together.org/learn-more-about-racism/what-is-racism/>
<https://www.russvernonjones.org/how-to-be-an-antiracist/>**

Both are from this site, if you choose to explore more: <http://www.coming-together.org/>

Paper copies can be made available if you need one. **Please let the church office know if you are participating and we will include you in the contact list.** Lori will host a Zoom meeting on a date to be named in September so that we can share our thoughts, but if Zoom is not in your comfort zone, we will find another way to share as well.

If you have ideas, need a paper copy, or would like to be a part of the ad hoc planning committee, please let the church office know and we'll be glad to include you!



CENTER CHURCH SUPPORTS HUMANITARIAN FUND

At the recommendation of the Outreach Team, the Church Council voted to give \$1,000 from undesignated funds to help struggling Massachusetts churches during the Covid-19 crisis. The **One Church Fund** was launched by the Massachusetts Council of Churches to support immigrant, black, unhoused and unaffiliated churches with money and volunteer assistance.

According to Rev. David Wright, Executive Director of the Black Ministerial Alliance of Greater Boston, humanitarian needs are increasing exponentially during the pandemic. Churches across the Commonwealth are essential service providers to people in the black and brown communities, immigrant communities, and temporarily homeless shelters.

Helping our sister churches in this time of need answers the call to love thy neighbor.

MASSACHUSETTS COUNCIL of CHURCHES
ONECHURCHFUND



Neighbors in Need (NIN) is a special mission offering of the United Church of Christ that supports ministries of justice and compassion throughout the United States. On behalf of Center Church, the Outreach Team has designated \$250 to support the 2020 Neighbors in Need fund.

One-third of NIN funds support the Council for American Indian Ministry (CAIM). Two-thirds of this offering is used by the UCC's Justice and Witness Ministries (JWM) to support a variety of justice initiatives, advocacy efforts, and direct service projects through grants. Neighbors in Need grants are awarded to UCC churches and organizations doing justice work in their communities. These grants fund projects whose work ranges from direct service to community organizing and advocacy to address systemic injustice. This year, special consideration will be given to projects focusing on serving our immigrant neighbors and communities.

Furthermore, due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the elected officers of the United Church of Christ determined that the highest priority for our churches was to offer relief where possible. Thus, they gathered monies from a variety of sources, which included NIN, and formed a Covid-19 relief fund.

The prolonged impact of COVID-19 has caused increased economic challenge for many of our churches and conferences. The UCC seeks to provide financial assistance to local church ministries in crisis by repurposing and redirecting established grant funding for one year. The goal is to release resources with the least amount of red tape, towards directed initiatives needed while maintaining accountability for the funds and integrity of donor intent.



We are fortunate to have some elves as members. A few elves are weeding, tending to the lawn and garden, touching up the walls, straightening up rooms, safely. **Thank you.**

Summer Music Thank You

The summer 2020 season will be completed with our Labor Day service. Normally we would return to the church and our regular services the following Sunday, but this is not a normal year. We have been away from the sanctuary since March and using *YouTube* to provide all of our services and the Wednesday musings. Because of Covid 19 and the restrictions in place, you have not heard any of the small groups that I can usually put together. And we have been providing a more stripped-down service with only two hymns and just one “choral” piece during the offertory.

So to those who helped provide the anthem/offertory piece, I extend my thanks to: Gretchen LaBonte’s harp as well as Gretchen and her father (Rev. Gary Streiff) who managed two long-distance musical collaborations between Ohio and South Hadley. You also heard from Cheryl Cobb, Elise Ramsay (MHC '18, currently living with husband Stuart in Edinburgh, Scotland, who provided a lovely piece that they sing in her church there), Sharyn Kovalesky, and David Morrell. I thank them all for either working at the church with me or sending their pieces directly to Gretchen! I know that I could not have managed my music participation without the amazing wizardry on the computer of Gretchen. Larry Schipull was in the habit of sending her PowerPoint presentations for the hymns and other music because of his MHC regular music coursework. My computer literacy did not extend that far, so I am most appreciative of what Gretchen was able to do with what I sent her each week. I also need to thank David who was good enough to come to the church each week, listen to me practice, and then record preludes, postludes and two hymns per Sunday.

We are all doing our best to cope with the hand that Covid 19 has given us and doing our best to keep things as normal as possible. I confess that I really missed having the congregation sing along with me on the hymns (particularly on *We Shall Overcome* on 8/30!) so I do hope that you were able to continue that at home with the *YouTube* services. And I missed being able to offer duets and small group pieces too.

I have always said that our music program is definitely one of our strengths here at Center Church and is mentioned often in listings of what draws in new members. I can assure you that Cheryl, Larry Schipull and I, along with the choir when they can return, will do all that we can to continue to lead our excellent music program forward as we begin the fall season. I will tell anyone who will listen how fortunate our congregation is that we have Mount Holyoke right next door and are so lucky to have Larry and Cheryl who share their considerable musical gifts with us on a continuing basis. We do hope that, at some point in the nearer future, we will be able to actually be together physically at the church, whether in the sanctuary or Fellowship Hall, to participate in a more traditional service. Until then – may this stanza from our 8/30 service bring you hope, comfort, and peace – *“We are pilgrims on a journey, we are travelers on the road; We are here to help each other go the mile and bear the load.”*

Cindy Morrell, associate in music

thank you

From the Church Historian



WHAT'S IN A NAME??

At a recent Church Council meeting, there was a discussion about our church name. The question was asked: “is there any history pertaining to our name?” Researching through our historical church records, it is written that when we completed our church (“a one room unpretentious”) building and called a “learned” minister, we gathered on October 3, 1733, and were called the “Second Church of Hadley.” By 1759 (six years after becoming the incorporated town of South Hadley in 1753), we were then a church formally incorporated as the First Precinct of South Hadley. In 1824, we were known as the First Parish Incorporated of South Hadley. At that time, our Sunday school (started in 1819) was six years old! Within the time of our third meetinghouse (1844-1875), as an 1860 church manual states, we became the First Church (Inc.) of South Hadley, Massachusetts. Soon after that, the denomination designation “Congregational” was added. In the 1930s our members began referring to us as the “Church at the Center.” This name became more prominent in the 1940s through our monthly newsletter called the *Church at the Center*. The name “Center Church” became more widely used by the 1960s.

The term “the Center” referring to the section of South Hadley where our church building is located, was probably used as far back as the mid-1700s. This was because our various church buildings (through the years) were not only for church services and meetings, but also for political gatherings, such as village/town meetings, into the early 1800s. We were the “center” of all public and political life here! But, for being the actual center of town, that location is closer to the “Woodlawn” section, where the “shopping plaza” is now located.

In 1953, our church constitution and by-laws referred to us as the First Congregational Church (Inc.) of South Hadley, Massachusetts. The Congregational designation can be confusing to some of our newer members. Theoretically, we have been Congregationalists since the Pilgrims landed in the New World. Over the years, our confirmands have learned about our Congregational heritage such as: it was Robert Browne (1550-1632) of England and educated at Cambridge University who is considered the founder, in 1580-81, of what is now considered Congregationalism. In the United States, the Evangelical and Reformed Church and the Congregational Christian Churches came together in 1957 to form the United Church of Christ or as we refer to it today the UCC. We belong to the UCC. Our church is a Protestant Congregational church in the Reformed tradition. We practice Congregationalist governance by which we, as an independent and autonomous congregation, establish and run our own governing affairs. We stem from the Puritans who authored the *Cambridge Platform of 1648* that describes the autonomy that we as a congregation enjoy today!



It is hoped that “what’s in a name” provides a bit more clarity here at Center Church.

Tell Me the Stories - September 2020

I have chosen two hymns from our August 30 Sunday to feature this month. I feel that the words are appropriate to everything that has gone and is going on with Covid-19 and all its ramifications. Perhaps their words will bring you comfort. Do check out the *YouTube* program for 8/30.

We Shall Overcome (NCH 570) is a well-known song of the Civil Rights era. One source says that “music drove many of the rallies and demonstrations” of the 50s and 60s. It goes on to say the song was written by an African American who began life as a slave during the day, but after work, he would run more than ten miles to a school for former slaves. He mainly educated himself on a variety of subjects. Charles Tindley was born in 1851 in Maryland. After a while including time as a janitor, he moved to Philadelphia and became pastor at East Calvary Methodist Church. He was always out in the community working among the people, talking to folks about overcoming any barrier with God’s help. This source says that one day in church when his congregation was looking particularly downtrodden, he used his song *I’ll Overcome Some Day* to inspire them. He died before the song was taken up by the Civil Rights Movement and made into an anthem for it. [His church in Philadelphia is now named after him, as is a street]. The NCH Companion tells a different story and says that its “specific origins are a topic of some debate.” It does allow that the words we sang developed during the 50s and 60s. It cautions that the hymn is more than a protest – it is a song “of patriotic commitment to the ideals of equality for all people.” Just as it was used for rallies about freedom of African Americans back then, it is now used frequently in many of our churches promoting equality for all. The tune “We Shall Overcome” is an anonymous one which was used in the 40s by striking southern tobacco workers who wanted to unionize. Pete Seeger then picked it up and popularized it through his concerts. The harmonization that we sing was done by J. Jefferson Cleveland, co-editor, in 1981 for a compilation of African American spirituals, hymns and gospel songs. As a teenager of the 60s, it still evokes powerful memories of that era for me. Words include “*shall overcome,*” “*walk hand in hand,*” “*not afraid,*” “*God will see us through,*” “*truth shall make us free,*” and “*shall live in peace.*” [CAC 2/13]

These words come from the next hymn. (1) *Won’t you let me be your servant, let me be as Christ to you? Pray that I may have the grace to let you be my servant, too.* (2) *We are pilgrims on a journey, we are travelers on the road; We are here to help each other go the mile and bear the load.*

Our second hymn is *Won’t You Let Me Be Your Servant?* (NCH 539). The text was written in 1977 and was first published on a record album in New Zealand. Richard Gillard was born in England but moved to New Zealand when he was only three with his parents and five siblings. He also composed the tune “*Servant Song*” and gave it this name which he felt spoke to the text’s topic. He has no formal musical training, plays by ear, and usually lets others put his music down on manuscript paper. He says his musical style is “folk.” The tune’s arranger, Betty Carr Pulkingham, a North Carolinian 25 years his senior, has been an active music teacher, choir director and published composer and is a founding member of a Berkshire, England Community of Celebration. [CAC 9/10]

Cindy Morrell, associate in music

Resources used: Stories Behind the Hymns that Inspire America, A. Collins (2003); and The New Century Hymnal Companion, ed. Kristen Forman (1998)



Gazette Boys Indoor Track and Field Player of the Year: Jonas Clarke, South Hadley



Jonas Clarke, of South Hadley, runs to a first place in the 55-meter dash final during the 2020 PVIAC indoor track championships, at Smith College. Clarke has been named the Daily Hampshire Gazette Boys Indoor Track & Field Player of the Year. STAFF PHOTO/JERREY ROBERTS

After making an impression during his freshman year outdoor season, the track community knew Jonas Clarke was a name to watch heading into his sophomore year of indoor competition.

Clarke even knew it himself, ramping up his own intensity with the sport going into the season.

“I took things a bit more lightly freshman year,” Clarke said. “I didn’t realize how good I was and the potential I had, so going into this year I started taking things a lot more seriously.”

And his work ethic paid big dividends for his sprinting season at South Hadley, which culminated in a Division 5 state championship in the 55-meter dash. For his accomplishments this season, Clarke has been named the Gazette Boys Indoor Track & Field Player of the Year.

His improvement in the 55 dash, his feature event, was drastic from the beginning of the season to the postseason.

In Clarke’s first race of the season, he recorded a victory in 6.53 seconds. He hit a wall for the majority of January, stuck with times around the 6.6 range. After a solid February, though, Clarke reached the 6.4 range, one of his biggest goals for the year.

And at the Division 5 state championship, it paid off in the form of a meet record: Clarke won the event in 6.41 seconds, the top time in the history of the event and South Hadley program history. His efforts helped lead the

Tigers to a third-place finish at the state meet, their best finish in program history.

“(The state championship) was really cool because we weren’t expecting to do as much as we did,” Clarke said. “Individually, I got the meet record which I also wasn’t expecting. It was really cool to experience, because as an underclassman I wasn’t really even thinking about stuff like that yet.”

Clarke topped the incredible performance just a week later at the All-State Championship. With a 6.39-second finish, Clarke beat his own program record and finished second in the competition, just behind Richard Kwateeng of Lowell, who won in 6.37 seconds.

Clarke was thrilled with the performance, and excited for what his future holds after his final results of the season.

“My main goal of the season was to get into the 6.4s,” Clarke said. “So to smash that and even get below 6.4 was really crazy to me. I wasn’t too upset about the second-place finish, because I know I’m young and I’ll come back and dominate next year, if there’s a next year.”

And though the future is a bit uncertain, Clarke is motivated by his success this season as he moves forward in his training and competitive sprinting.

“The season really surprised me as a whole, because I wasn’t expected to be pulling these times out,” Clarke said. “It kind of opened up my perspective on running — I’ve started to compare myself nationally to other kids ... I just have a more competitive mindset than I did freshman year.”

Reprinted from the Daily Hampshire Gazette





Local child reads to families in live stream, 'Dreamland with Aaliyah'

WWLP – Nine-year-old Aaliyah has been hosting live bedtime stories to spread the joy of reading and family time.

Live from 'Sister, Sister Studios' in South Hadley, 'Dreamland with Aaliyah' has been streaming every night with one mission: **to inspire hope.**

During the bedtime story live show, Aayliah selects books about family, friendship, and love. With a little help from her younger sister Ava and mom Marcella, Dreamland with Aaliyah is a show aimed towards kids to bring happiness during these difficult times.

"I think family time is very important," said Aaliyah. "We need screens sometimes now, like video chatting and things like that, to keep in touch with people. But I think it is really important now that we catch up on reading so that when we come back we're ready."

During Aaliyah's dreamland, she also hosts live guests. They've included local teachers, family members, mentors, and positive role models – like former Mass Appeal Host Ashley Kohl.

Aaliyah's mom Marcella told 22News that Aaliyah has been inspiring her youngest daughter Ava to read.

"This is really important to our family," said Marcella. "Reading is really important. We really believe we are all in this together, so we are trying to keep each other inspired and connected." Aaliyah has read more than 40 books since the start of her show on March 30th. She will continue her live show on Facebook and Instagram and is even thinking about starting a YouTube channel.



THE MINISTRY AT CENTER CHURCH

Ministers: All Church Members
Senior Minister: Rev. Lori J. Souder

Christian Education Program

Children: Martha Guild, Simone Jacob and Chelsea Korzeniowski
Youth: Emily Carle and Emma Martin



Music

Organist: Larry Schipull
Choir Director: Cheryl Cobb
Associate in Music: Cynthia J. Morrell
Office Administrator: Cynthia Jubinville
Sexton: Robert Farman



Southern New England Conference

United Church of Christ

Living the Love & Justice of Jesus

Announcing the FIRST ANNUAL MEETING of the
Southern New England Conference of the United Church of Christ, Inc
Saturday September 26, 2020 8:30 AM – 12:30 PM
Remote Meeting using the Zoom webinar platform

Welcome to the Southern New England Conference Annual Meeting!
PLEASE READ THIS ENTIRE EMAIL, even if you have attended many Annual
Meetings. This year will be different in many ways.

The pandemic may keep us from gathering in person, but it is no impediment to
the Holy Spirit.

Our Annual Meeting will be woven through with vibrant worship. We will gather in
small groups focused on shared ministry interests. And we will hear from the
Search Committee about their grace-filled journey as we welcome, affirm and
celebrate our first Executive Conference Minister.
Come and be a part of this formative moment!

Business to be Conducted:

- Adoption of Behavioral Covenant and Rules of Procedure for the meeting
- Action on the Nomination of Directors and Officers
- Action on the Nomination of the Executive Conference Minister
- Release of Executive Conference Minister Search Committee

Our Worship Theme will be Jeremiah 31:31-34, [*The Days are Surely Coming...*](#)
Registration for the Annual Meeting is available on line [here](#). The deadline for
those who wish to participate in the Networking Breakout Groups is September
18th.

If you are new to on-line meetings, do not fear! You will have an opportunity to
attend a practice Zoom session, and technical help will be available during the
meeting. It is possible to attend a Zoom meeting by computer, tablet, smartphone,
or to listen in by dialing in on any kind of phone.

Zoom Practice Sessions will be held at the following times. You must register for a practice session in order to receive the Zoom link to attend it. Please register at your chosen link below.

Sunday, Sept 20, 1-2

PM https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_qnwKb6AsT_aN-bZ24gJHvQ

Monday, Sept. 21, 7-8

PM https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_0xbMZJcRHi_xjW5wCbRsQ

Wednesday, Sept. 23, 7-8 PM https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_-5xw182cQqg_zr7ZXg9hQ

In response to much feedback about our commitment to environmental justice, Delegate Materials will be distributed electronically this year. There will be no automatic paper mailing of materials to any church or registrant. Those who need paper materials are invited to request them when they register – see the Accessibility section of the Registration form. In order to receive paper materials, you must register and request them no later than September 15th.

A Speakout is a 60-second opportunity for a delegate to address the Annual Meeting on a topic of their choice. As an adaptation to our remote format, Speakout opportunities will be assigned by lottery, and all Speakouts must be recorded and submitted in advance. More information may be found [here](#). Further information and delegate materials are at the website [here](#). Additional materials will be added in the coming weeks.

We hope to see you on the 26th!

Mr. Ian Tosh, Moderator

For the Annual Meeting Planning Team

Southern New England Conference, United Church of Christ

Framingham, MA office: 508-875-5233

Hartford, CT office: 866-367-2822



400 Years: Truth and Healing for the Next Seven Generations

An interfaith/intercommunity project of **listening, reflecting** and **acting** for justice on the 400th anniversary of the first settlement Europeans on Native lands in the Northeast.

Sunday, Oct. 18th 2:00 pm (rain date Oct 25)

We hope to gather in person outdoors (as well as broadcast via YouTube) from

Unity Park 1st & Unity Streets, Turners Falls

Unity Park is near the site of the [Great Falls Massacre](#) where around 200 native women, children and elders were killed in their sleep on May 19, 1676. On May 19th, 2004 there was a Reconciliation Ceremony held on this same site.

COVID Safety: If we will gather outdoors, safely m asked & socially distanced.

If this is not possible, we will hold a virtual gathering only on YouTube & Facebook (link TBA)

Listening to Indigenous voices:

- [Rhonda Anderson](#) - Iñupiaq - Athabascan Commissioner of Indian Affairs for W. Mass
- [Larry Spotted Crow Mann](#) - Nipmuc author, cultural educator & singer
- [Bryan Blanchette](#) - Abenaki singer & musician
- [Jim Peters](#) (tentative) - Mashpee Wampanoag Commissioner of Indian Affairs

Reflecting and developing relationships of respect & solidarity:

Interfaith allies participating in the Oct. 18 program will include

- [Sr. Clare Carter](#) - New England Peace Pagoda
- [Dr. Mohmmad Saleem Bajwa](#) - Islamic Society of Western Mass
- [Rev. Kelly Gallagher](#) - UCC Justice & Witness Ministries
- [John Sheldon](#) - musician

Acting for Restorative Justice:

- Standing with Native-led efforts to gain rights, respect & land
- Repudiating the *Doctrine of Discovery* and other beliefs that upheld and still uphold systems of racial and religious domination
- Raising funds (as a form of reparation) for projects advancing Native concerns & needs including the [Native Land Conservancy](#) and [Ohketeau Cultural Center](#)

Info & “pay as led” tickets for Oct. 18 program: [www.groupsinging.org/events/400 Years](http://www.groupsinging.org/events/400%20Years)

(All funds go to the Native projects after program expenses)

More information at:

- **Interfaith Council of Franklin County** www.facebook.com/allarewelcomeatthistable/
- **Interfaith Opportunities Network** <https://interfaithamherst.org/>

Other sponsors & partners include: (partial list) [Islamic Society of W. Mass](#), [Mt Toby Friends Meeting](#)

Mail checks for support and reparations to:

Interfaith Council of Franklin County (ICFC), P.O. Box 1171, Greenfield, 01302

(Note on envelope & check that donation is for “400 Years Project”)