



THE GOOD NEWS *from the Belfry*



Monthly Newsletter of the
Higganum Congregational Church
and the First Congregational Church of Haddam
United Church of Christ



Higganum Congregational Church
First Congregational Church of Haddam
Returned mail to
P.O. Box 215
Haddam, CT 06438

Address Service Requested

Church websites:
haddamchurch.org and higganumchurch.org

Dear Haddam and Higganum Friends,

You probably have seen variations of the joke: "The most useless purchase I've ever made was a 2020 Planner." I chuckled recently when I stumbled upon my own version of this: a document on my computer confidently titled "2020 General Planning Calendar FCCH & HCC."

I assure you I haven't drafted such a document for 2021.

And yet, we do know "generally" what the coming year will bring for these two churches worshipping and serving as one:

God will continue to sustain you, and you will continue in faithful service.

We know because "*Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever*" (Hebrews 13:8), and because this past year has shown us the members and friends of FCCH and HCC have not "*grow[n] weary in doing good*" (Galatians 6:9).

This isn't to say the world doesn't change and with it our understanding of how we are called to serve the world in Christ's name. *In 2021 FCCH and HCC will continue to adapt and adjust.*

It also isn't to say we do not feel tired or need to rest and recharge. The Greek word for 'to grow weary' in Galatian's 6:9 can be translated 'to faint,' and *Paul's exhortation fairly may be understood as encouragement to acknowledge and address fatigue so it does not overwhelm.*

The coming year for FCCH and HCC *likely* includes returning to a more normal style of worship while continuing to provide online access for those at home. In this year you *probably* will welcome a new settled pastor and begin an exciting new chapter in ministry. As God wills and 2021 proceeds, we *hope* this year will be one of reunion and renewal.



The most Blessed of New Years to you!

With gratitude,
Pastor Michelle

INTERIM PASTOR'S SCHEDULE

Pastor Michelle will hold scheduled digital office hours this month **Tuesdays from 1pm-3pm**. "Stop in" by clicking the usual Zoom link or using the Zoom telephone number. (You also may call Pastor Michelle at 860-597-4223.) To arrange for an outdoor home visit, private Zoom chat, telephone call, or other visit with the Pastor, contact her at the number above or mmadsenbibeau@gmail.com.



**PASTORAL
SEARCH COMMITTEE**



The Pastoral Search Committee will present the much-awaited Church Profile to the congregations after online worship on **Sunday, January 17th**. This is the document that prospective candidates will be sent to learn about our congregations. Congratulations to the PSC on this milestone!

ZOOM MEETING INFORMATION

Sign on to most church events (online worship, meetings, or office hours) during the appointed hours using the information below.

Join Zoom Meeting at:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/3854472572?pwd=MXk3ODBFc0Vzei83d3hBOXRzVHNwUT09>

Telephone: +1 646 876 9923 US (New York)
Meeting ID: 385 447 2572 Password: 536662

JANUARY MEETINGS (By Zoom)

Phasing Forward Physical Reopening –
Scheduled for Tuesdays 8:30-9am and/or
Thursdays at 7pm

FCCH Prudential– Tuesday, January 5th, 7pm

Joint Diaconate – Monday, January 11th, 6pm

Christian Education – Tuesday, January 12th,
7pm

HCC Finance – Monday, January 18th, 7pm

Joint Council – Tuesday, January 19th, 7pm

Open meetings (including Council at which all
are welcome) use the Sunday Zoom sign on,
but please contact Committee Chairs for
agendas and any specific sign on information.

2020 Annual HCC & FCCH Committee Reports

All 2020 HCC & FCCH church committee
reports are due to the Church Secretary on or
before January 10, 2021. This is necessary in
order to prepare the Annual Reports and have
copies available for review by the congregation
on January 17 which is one week prior to the
Annual Meeting on January 24, 2021.

Please send them to: fcchaddam@gmail.com
(Church Secretary)

Thank you,
Terry Smith HCC Clerk
Nancy Soneson FCCH Clerk

CALL to ANNUAL MEETINGS

To the members of the
First Congregational
Church of Haddam
and the Higganum
Congregational
Church:



Notice is hereby given for the 321st annual
meeting of the First Congregational Church of
Haddam and the 177th annual meeting of the
Higganum Congregational Church on January
24, 2021 following the morning worship
service. The meetings will be held separately
on-line via Zoom.

Order of business:

1. To approve the minutes of the 320th annual
meeting of the First Congregational Church of
Haddam and the 176th annual meeting of the
Higganum Congregational Church.
2. To hear the reports from the committees
3. To approve the slates of officers for the
coming year
4. To approve the budgets for 2021
5. To act on any other items brought to the
meetings

Dated: January 05, 2021

Nancy Soneson, Clerk,
First Congregational Church of Haddam
Terry Smith, Clerk,
Higganum Congregational Church



SOUP SWAP

Saturday, January 23rd
(day before Annual Meetings)

- **Make** your favorite soup(s) at home.
- Wearing your mask and practicing social
distancing with others, **drop off** your
soup(s) in labeled **ONE QUART**
containers at HCC Parking Lot between
10am and 10:30am.
- Gloved volunteers will sanitize the outside
of the containers and place them into paper
bags for easy pick up.
- Beginning at **10:30am, come and choose**
an equal number of others' soups to take
home.
- Please be sure your soup can be warmed
to a simmer by the recipient, and practice
suitable precautions when cooking/serving.
- **Check** the Thursday, January 21st, email
for any updates if bad weather is expected.
- **Donations of canned soup for the**
Haddam Food Pantry also gratefully
accepted!

FROM THE DEACONS

Worship will continue virtually via Zoom through February 7th. Discussion regarding extending this will be made by Diaconate and Council in January. Our Annual meeting will be held via Zoom on Sunday, January 24th for both congregations after worship (separate break out rooms). Please attend.

A HUGE Thank You to all who participated in our Advent celebrations... we couldn't have done it without you! Our candle lighting families, readers of scripture, music, pet-tivity participants, poinsettia purchasers, decorators and gift givers are what makes our church the most wonderful thing in the world!

May 2021 bring you good health, happiness, reunions with friends and family and worship face to face.

Respectively submitted,
Sue Craffey

WEEK of PRAYER for CHRISTIAN UNITY

The Week of Prayer for Christian Unity is observed annually in January in the week between two liturgical days honoring the apostles Peter and Paul. Each year a theme is developed by a particular national or other faith community. The 2021 theme, *"Abide in my love... you shall bear much fruit,"* was discerned by the Monastic Community of Grandchamp in Switzerland. For more information, click [HERE](#).

Daily devotions for the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity (January 18th to 25th) may be found at the links below:

- Day 1 [Monday, January 18th](#)
- Day 2 [Tuesday, January 19th](#)
- Day 3 [Wednesday, January 20th](#)
- Day 4 [Thursday, January 21st](#)
- Day 5 [Friday, January 22nd](#)
- Day 6 [Saturday, January 23rd](#)
- Day 7 [Sunday, January 24th](#)
- Day 8 [Monday, January 25th](#)

PHASING FORWARD UPDATE



Our 9:30am Sunday worship services will be in online only format through at least February 7th. The Physical Reopening Team will continue to meet periodically to plan for building use by staff,

volunteers, and both internal and external groups, and the Joint Deacons and Joint Council will discuss worship plans at their January meetings. Please contact Terry Smith or Sue Craffey (2020 Diaconate Co-Chairs), Greg Shields or Kristin Battistoni (2020 Moderators), or Interim Pastor Michelle with questions or to join our Reopening Team.

MIDWEEK STUDY

During the weeks before Lent begins, our midweek study will engage some of the scriptures/themes associated with the Season after the Epiphany, paired with stories from a variety of sources. Join us for one or all of our sessions at **10am Tuesdays** (note meeting day change) using the Sunday Zoom sign on. (Our session on 1/19 will focus on the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity).

- 1/12 [The Magi \(read "The Gift of the Magi"\)](#)
- 1/19 [Week of Prayer for Christian Unity](#)
- 1/26 [Baptism of Jesus](#)
- 2/2 [The Wedding at Cana](#)
- 2/8 [Transfiguration \(read "The Minister's Black Veil"\)](#)

NEW MEMBER INFORMATION SESSION

If you would like to know more about our two congregations and the process of becoming a member of one or both, please join Pastor Michelle and representatives of our various ministries for an online session after worship **on Sunday, January 10th**. The gathering will be held as a separate 'breakout room' during the Fellowship Hour.

JANUARY 9:30am SUNDAY SCHEDULE

Sunday, January 3rd

Zoom Worship with Home Communion
Epiphany Celebration



Sunday, January 10th

Zoom Worship
Baptism of the Lord



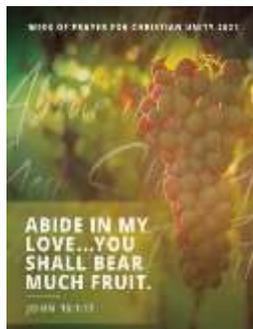
During our worship service, we will be invited to reflect on our own baptism. [Please prepare a bowl or other vessel of water for your use during the service.](#)

Sunday, January 17th

Zoom Worship
Week of Prayer for Christian Unity

On this Sunday we will begin our observance of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity. The theme is "Abide in My Love... You Shall Bear Much Fruit."

(See previous page for more information.)



Sunday, January 24th *Zoom Worship*
Leader Appreciation

We are so grateful for those who serve in our churches' leadership. Join us on this Sunday as we express our thanks during worship and then gather for our annual meetings.

Sunday, January 31st *Zoom Worship*
Affirmation of Ministry Sunday

As the month concludes, we will commission in prayer those elected to serve in the coming year.

VIRTUAL CHOIR REHEARSAL

Singers and other musicians are invited to join Music Director Eric Lundin for a virtual choir practice this month at **7pm on Thursday, January 28th**. We will do some singing and plan for Lent and Easter music and activities.



COVID19 MEMORIAL

On **Tuesday, January 19th, at 5:30pm**, our two congregations will join in a national Covid19 Memorial Observance, lighting our sanctuaries and tolling our bells. Please speak with the Interim Pastor, Moderators, or Diaconate Chairs for more information.

CHURCH SECRETARY

Due to increasing requests from students she helps with online learning, our Administrative Assistant Bronwyn has had to step away in this new year. We wish her well in her endeavors.

Our small Search Committee of Kristin Battistoni (FCCH), Ralph Livieri (HCC), and the Interim Pastor will review applications from the fall (including some submitted after our previous search closed) and any additional applications received by January 15th. (The job description will remain unchanged and is available [HERE](#); please forward it to those who might be interested.) As previously, church members will not be interviewed for the position; please speak with Interim Pastor Michelle for clarification of her policy on this.

JOINT MISSION/OUTREACH JANUARY 2021

The Joint Mission/Outreach committee met in December to plan our end of the year donations. We reviewed the many requests received by the churches and decided that we would support six organizations as follows:

- Middlesex Hospital chaplaincy- a local agency that supports people of all ages who are hospitalized.
- Holy Joe's Coffee Ministry- an agency based in Wallingford that supports coffee house programs developed by chaplains in military bases around the world.
- Nathaniel B. Field Memorial Foundation- a local agency that supports suicide prevention counseling and activities in our town.
- UCC Back Bay Mission- a community ministry in Biloxi, Mississippi, that meets emergency needs and helps people begin their journeys out of poverty.
- Silver Lake Conference Center- year-round outdoor ministry of the Southern New England Conference, UCC.
- Fidelco Seeing Eye dog foundation- provides animals and education for people who are blind or with very limited vision.

CHRISTMAS PROJECT

Adopt a Family through HKYFS

(Haddam Killingworth Youth and Family Service)

This year we participated in the Christmas HKYFS Adopt a Family program using a different format. In early November, Carol Matregrano contacted HKYFS to indicate our desire to adopt one or more families. She was given the lists for two families. One had two children, the other had one child. The committee meet virtually and decided on 7 gifts per child. One family requested mostly clothes, the other had mostly toys. A list was then put on the Sign-up Genius app along with the directions, etc. The list included the approximate cost for each toy. Eight spots were included for gift cards of unspecified amounts and vendors. The link to the site was shared in the weekly emails, the *Belfry* and announced at church. All the slots were filled;

fifteen members participated. Two people also included a book for each child, and one added coloring books and crayons. Participants were asked to bring the gifts unwrapped and to place the gift cards in an envelope with the vendor and amount on the outside. These were brought to the HCC parking lot on Saturday, December 12 from 10-11a.m. Because of COVID, everything was all socially distanced. The gifts were put directly into the appropriate large Christmas bag dedicated to that child. Envelopes with gift cards were collected in a small separate gift bag. The bags were double checked and the gift cards distributed between the two families with the larger family receiving a slightly higher value. The cards varied from \$15-50 and were to Walmart, Stop and Shop, Amazon, AJ Pizza, Subway, Kohls, and Target. The total value of the gift cards was \$420. The gifts and cards were taken to HKYFS on Tuesday, December 15th. They were gladly received, and two families had more to enjoy on Christmas day.





Anyone who does anything to help a child in his life
is a hero to me. ~Fred Rogers

December 21, 2020

Dear Friends from First Congregational Church of Haddam
and Higganum Congregational Church,



I am writing to thank you for your generous donation to our
Holiday Giving Program. We could not do the work that we
do without the support of friends like you. We had 30
Families (83 children) sign up this year for our Holiday Giving Program. Thank you for bringing smiles, joy
and laughter to each of those families.

Thank you again for your support and belief in our mission. Our door is always open and I invite you to take
advantage, come, and visit, get to know us. Thank you again for helping us, help others.

Happy Holidays!

Laurie, Laura, Katy and Franny



A note from one of the
HKYFS families that
received gifts from our
congregations:

*“Thank you so
much!!! The boys will
be so happy with their
gifts! I can’t thank your
organization enough
during this difficult time
in our lives. Have a
Merry Christmas and
Happy New Year!!!!”*



From Elaine Jackson at the Solnit Center after
receiving the stockings from our congregations:

*“Thank you so much... you are the best!”
“Happy Holidays to all.”*



The Birth of Love: A Christmas Message

From the Bridge Conference Ministers

This year has been like no other. At times it has felt like the world was completely turned upside down. COVID, racism, elections – it has been almost too much to bear. And yet we know that God is faithful and always near.

“Fear Not!”, said the angels. Over and over again in the story. Over and over again throughout scripture. For unto us a child is born.

We await that coming of Immanuel, God with us, in the form of a helpless and vulnerable baby who knows about turning the world upside down.

At this Christmas time as we look forward to the birth of love among us once again, we wish you the peace, hope, joy and love that is Christmas. And we wish you a healthy new year.

~ Don Remick and Marilyn Kendrix

On behalf of the staff of the Southern New England Conference, United Church of Christ



ONLINE SUNDAY SCHOOL

We will continue to offer online Sunday School in 2021 beginning the

weekend of January 17th. Please contact the church office to be added to the email list for session information for your child/grandchild.

PETIVITY PAGEANT

Enjoy the first ever Petivity Pandemic Pageant at: <https://fb.watch/2JVeAih8Aj/>.



CHRISTIAN EDUCATION MEETING

Tuesday, January 12th at 7pm
Use Sunday Zoom link to attend.



MEMBER'S CORNER

Do you have a special message to share with your Church family? If so, send it in for the Members' Corner!

The Clock of Life by Robert H Smith

The clock of life is wound but once
And no man has the power
To tell just where the hands will stop,
At late or early hour.

To lose one's wealth is sad indeed,
To lose one's health is more.
To lose one's soul is such a loss
As no man can restore.

The present only is our own.
Live, love, toil with a will.
Place no faith in 'tomorrow'
For the clock may then be still.



STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM

Thank you to those who have returned pledges for 2021. If you have not already participated, please watch your mailbox for a hard copy of the Stewardship Mailing, or click [HERE](#) to download materials to print and send.

GIVING INFORMATION

FCCH has an online contribution option accessible [HERE](#). Mailing addresses are:

Higganum Congregational Church
23 Parsonage Road, Higganum, CT 06441

First Congregational Church of Haddam
P.O. Box 215, Haddam, CT 06438

JANUARY Birthdays & Anniversaries

JANUARY Birthdays

2	Clare Hoover	Carol Ricker
4	Lori Chadwick	
10	Kristen Gras	Cherylann Hunt
11	Suzanne Murphy	
13	Walter Bragoni	
18	Aubrey Chadwick	
19	Hannah Williams	
22	Patty Blodgett	
25	Rogene Gillmor	
28	Cody Johanson	Carter Michael Hansen
30	Sadie Harlow	

JANUARY Anniversaries

28 Washington and Karen Malave

Please let the Office know at fcchaddam@gmail.com if there are omissions from or corrections to our birthday and anniversary lists.

