



THE GOOD NEWS *from the Belfry*



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



F E B R U A R Y

The Year of Our Lord 2021



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

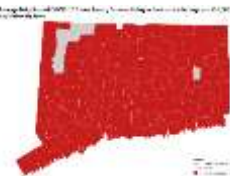
Dear Haddam and Higganum Friends,

With Easter on April 4th, Ash Wednesday feels early this year. Yet since 2000, Easter has been in March five times, and in the single-digit days of April five more. It turns out this year's dates for Ash Wednesday and Easter are distinguished only by their ordinariness.

Perhaps I am just not ready to hear *"From dust you came and to dust you will return."* On the other hand, I am more than ready to hear *"He is risen! Alleluia!"*

Liturgically, and often in our lives, we are required to spend a good long while on the path of dust before we arrive at glory. It can be hard to remember that there ever was or believe there ever again will be rejoicing.

The map of Covid19 cases per 100,000 population for Connecticut has looked about



like what you see here for a long time: almost every town at the highest alert level. By comparison, when we planned for and enjoyed in-person hybrid worship last

fall, Haddam was grey (lowest level), yellow, or at worst (signaling-imminent-return-to-distance-worship-only) orange.

On the one hand, we have started vaccinations (including for many in our congregations- yay!), and it can be projected from encouraging Israeli data that we might see a resultant improvement in infection rates soon. On the other hand, we are aware of the circulation of new strains of Covid19. Approaching the anniversary mark of the dramatic changes in our lives wrought by the pandemic, we sigh with David, *"How long, O Lord?"* (Ps. 13:1)

Psalm 13 is a *'song of lament.'* *"When we lament, we experience healing from God; we trust the unfailing love of God and keep coming back to that. We hold on even in the face of discouragement and temptation to give up, and we also look ahead to the day when God brings resolution."* – Calvin Institute of Christian Worship [Psalm 13 Service](#)

Here ["In the Bleak Midwinter,"](#) may we be honest about the challenges we continue to

face in this pandemic, and know that God is with us and cares for us.

Let us remember: this will not last forever, but [faith, hope, and love](#) will.

Blessings,
Pastor Michelle

INTERIM PASTOR'S SCHEDULE

Pastor Michelle will continue to 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 a private Zoom chat, telephone call, or other visit with the Pastor, contact her at the number above or mmadsenbibeau@gmail.com.

After online worship on January 17th, the Pastoral Search Committee (PSC)

presented a summary of the

Church Profile to the congregations. This represents a huge amount of work and is a significant milestone!

Click [HERE](#) to view an introductory video created by the PSC. If you would like an opportunity to review the church profile document, please contact the Church Office.

The next step will be for FCCH/HCC's position posting to appear on the [UCC Ministry Opportunities Listing](#). Candidates then will be able to submit their materials for the PSC members' review.

From here forward until a recommended candidate is presented, the PSC's work is confidential to guard the privacy of candidates.

Please keep the PSC and FCCH/HCC's future minister in your prayers!



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

FEBRUARY MEETINGS (By Zoom)

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

Joint Diaconate – Monday, February 8th, 6pm

Service/Outreach – Wednesday, February
10th, 7pm

HCC Finance – Monday, February 15th, 7pm

Joint Council – Tuesday, February 16th, 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.

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

WELCOME NEW/RETURNING MEMBERS



During our Sunday, January 24th
online worship service, we
welcomed into membership at
FCCH and HCC three

new/returning members: Stacey Kinney, Iris
Heit, and Meredith James. Click [HERE](#) to read
brief biographies of our new members.



PHASING FORWARD

**Our 9:30am Sunday
worship services will
be in online only**

format through at least March 7th. The
Physical Reopening Team will be looking
closely at state and town Covid19 levels this
month, and the Joint Deacons and Joint
Council will discuss worship plans at their
February meetings. Please contact Terry Smith
or Sue Craffey (Diaconate), Greg Shields or
John Edmondson (Moderators), or Interim
Pastor Michelle with questions or to join our
Reopening Team.

This month, we will restart
our Prayer Shawl Ministry
gatherings for work and
fellowship. Join us

Wednesday, February

3rd, at 10am for a virtual

gathering using the usual Sunday Zoom sign
on. For materials or more information, please
contact Carol Ricker or Edie Williams.



CHURCH JOINING DISCUSSION

The main topic at the joint meeting of FCCH
and HCC on January 24th was “What’s next?”
Several members expressed their desire to
move forward with a decision regarding the two
churches’ future collaboration/status. The
challenge of doing this work using virtual rather
than in-person gatherings was noted, but a
number of workable ideas were proposed.
Pastor Michelle will consult with interim
ministry colleagues about adapting to our
current context a “fishbowl” discussion tool
often used in interim ministry, and will bring a
proposal to the Church Council at its February
meeting. One planned component will be for
members to reflect in writing on their hopes
and fears (the specific question has not yet
been formulated) and then share and hear
others’ responses. It is likely that this work will
coincide with the Lenten period of self-
reflection. Please listen on Sundays and look in
the weekly emails for more information.

FEBRUARY 9:30am SUNDAY SCHEDULE

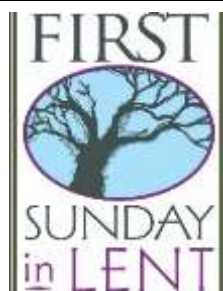
Sunday, February 7th
Zoom Worship
with Home Communion



Sunday, February 14th
Zoom Worship
Transfiguration Sunday
Prayer Shawl Blessing (Tentative)

Sunday, February 21st
Zoom Worship

First Sunday in Lent



Sunday, February 28th
Zoom Worship

Second Sunday in Lent



ASH WEDNESDAY ONLINE

Pastor Michelle, Music Director Eric Lundin, and members of the Deacons will prepare an online Ash Wednesday devotional service using the “Illustrated Labyrinth Meditation” resource. This service will be streamed to Facebook Live and over Zoom using the usual Sunday sign on at **8am February 17th** and then available throughout the day at FCCH’s Facebook page. If there is interest, a live evening Zoom also could be offered; please contact Pastor Michelle or one of the Deacons before their meeting on February 8th to let us know if you would find this helpful.



The “Illustrated” organization’s resources, as the name

suggests, include an engagement with visual art. To participate fully in the Labyrinth Meditation, you will want to print a copy of the labyrinth and intentions pages from the resource. This material cannot be shared through our weekly email or linked in the *Belfry*, but can be emailed or distributed in print form.



After February 8th, all members of the Diaconate will have access to an electronic copy they will be able to forward; you also may contact the at fcchaddam@gmail.com to ask for an emailed or print copy.

DIACONATE CORNER

Happy February!

The Diaconate Shepherd/Sheep lists are in transition... We are welcoming new [Diaconate] members: Jeanne Messick, Sadie Harlow, Liz Anderson, and Steve Bull for FCCH, and Kate Rizzo, Glen Stebbins, and Ginny Murphy for HCC... Outgoing: Sue Craffey, Patty Blodgett, Sabine Nyenhuis, Tracy Thompson, and Paul Lewis. Stay tuned for contact... but feel free always to reach out to Terry, Sue, or Pastor Michele for anything!

Respectively submitted, Sue Craffey

February 2021 Belfry: Joint Diaconate

The Diaconate continues to work on Sunday services with Pastor Michelle. Planning for Lent has started with Ash Wednesday being on February 17. Also being discussed with Pastor Michelle and the Joint Council is how to adapt to in-person Sunday services when it is permitted. There have been requests that the remote Zoom Sunday services be continued, if possible, even while conducting in-person Sunday services. We are evaluating our options and technical support requirements. With a new Joint Diaconate being assembled after the annual meeting, we will be realigning the Deacons (Shepherds) with the congregation (Sheep). The purpose of assigning a Deacon to each member/church friend is to provide at least one point of contact so everybody is being periodically checked on and to provide a source of church information.

Respectively submitted, Terry Smith

MIDWEEK STUDY

Our midweek study currently is exploring themes associated with the Season after the Epiphany paired with stories from a variety of sources. Beginning February 23rd we will use the "Where Your Heart Is" materials as the basis of our discussions. (See info at right for more information.) Join us for one or all of our sessions at **10am Tuesdays** by Zoom.



We have obtained access for our members and friends to the 2021 Illustrated Ministry Lenten Devotional "Where Your Heart Is."

The Devotional spans the six weeks of Lent and Easter week, and can be used by youth and adults. It includes meditative coloring and written reflection pages, scripture texts, and applications.

Its weekly themes are:

Week 1 Storing Up Treasures (Matt. 6:19-21)

Week 2 Sharing Our Hearts (Luke 2:41-52)

Week 3 Knowing the Good (Matt. 19:16-26)

Week 4 Consider the Lilies (Luke 12:13-34)

Week 5 Becoming Someone New (Matt. 14:45-46)

Week 6 Shifting Our Gaze (Mark 9:30-37)

Week 7 Sharing Our Treasures (Matt. 27:62-28:10)

As with the Ash Wednesday materials, we are not able to send links to this material in the *Belfry* or weekly emails, only directly to individuals by email or in print form. Watch for an email with more information, or let the Office know (fcchaddam@gmail.com) of your interest.



JOINT MISSION/OUTREACH

FEBRUARY 2021

A Soup Swap was held in January, 2021. Our annual meetings held in January are usually followed by a soup and bread lunch that includes a time of fellowship. As our meetings this year were virtual, Rev. Michelle suggested we have a soup swap to provide a special lunch for each family after the meetings. Each family brought quart containers of a variety of home-made soups to the HCC parking lot and took home a different one to try. We abided by the Covid precautions when we were together. We also collected canned soup for the Haddam Food Pantry and shelf stable milk, instant oatmeal, fruit cups and sandwich bags for the Haddam/Killingworth Back Pack program. THANK YOU to everyone who brought in items to share. All the supplies have been delivered to the local agencies.

We have had several requests for a church-wide TAG SALE. We will be discussing this at the first meeting of the Joint Mission/outreach committee in early February.



CORRESPONDENCE

Thank you for your very generous donation to Haddam Emergency Fuel Bank. Your support is a blessing to our community and will keep many families warm during the cold months.

Stay well and God Bless!

-Jessica Condil

Haddam Social Services



Silver Lake Conference Center

THANK YOU! We are so grateful for your financial support in 2020!

Please join us for a special live program in honor of you! Hear how your gifts made a difference in the lives of conferees, how you are supporting our ministry, and our plans for 2021!

Join us on Facebook Live

Sunday, February 28th, at 3pm



Middlesex Health Philanthropy
January 4, 2021

Dear Friends,

Thank you for [your gift] to support our Spiritual Care Program. I know that Rev. Dr. YangHee Christine Stopka joins me in thanking the congregation for their continued support of this program.

As an expression of our gratitude, we are pleased to list [you] as an Associate in the Crescent Society. As a member, the congregation is among our most distinguished contributors.

My best wishes to you and your congregation for the New Year.

Thank you!

Sincerely,
Sarah Moore, Director of Development



To keep everyone safe, the 33rd General Synod will be held virtually. This means EVERYONE can attend! If you've always wanted to see our covenantal denomination in action- this is your chance!

Save the Date: July 11-18, 2021.

**Bookmark the website:
<http://generalsynod.org/#UCCSynod>**

MUSIC News



Rogene Gillmor writes: *"I have just listened to a very nice organ program given by Brian Parks, one of our past and very beloved organists in Higganum. He is now Organist/Interim Music Director at Marietta First United Methodist Church. The performance is at Episcopal Cathedral of St. Philip in Atlanta. It is available for streaming any time as it is part of the permanent archive of the concerts at that church. There may be some members who are organ fans (like me) and who remember Brian. If so, it is quite easy to tune in."*

Brian's program features the Bach *Passacaglia* in C Minor and a transcription Brian made of the music from *Superman 2*. The concert may be accessed by clicking [HERE](#), or by pasting the following into a browser's address bar: <https://www.cathedralatl.org/worship/music/concerts/recitals/>



At the Joint Meeting on Sunday, January 24th, Lori Chadwick gave an introduction to Mission at the Eastward, and several expressed interest in exploring a service trip with MATE's Housing Ministry.

Church members are invited to gather virtually to learn more and do some initial planning on **Tuesday, February 2nd, at 7pm** using the usual Sunday Zoom sign on.

MATE's Housing Ministry website is <https://northparishhousingministry.weebly.com/>
See below for excerpts of Housing Ministry information.

WHO? Volunteer Mission teams from all over the northeast come to western Maine to share their talents and caring with area homeowners, who without assistance with labor and/or materials, would be unable to make needed repairs and maintenance to their homes. Many of the volunteers take vacation time to be here.

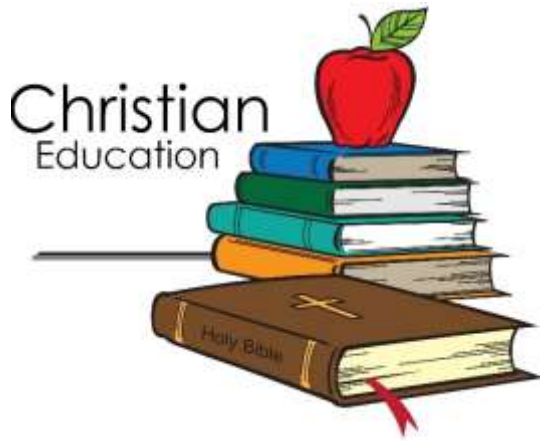
WHAT? Painting, roof repairs, porches, steps, ramps and simple interior and exterior repair are likely prospects for the teams. Wherever possible, we ask homeowners and families to participate in the work and its cost. At times the mission can help with materials through grants and donations.

WHERE? Franklin County for the following areas/towns: The "Greater" Farmington area, Chesterville, Jay, N. Jay, Livermore Falls, Wilton, New Sharon, Temple, Strong, New Vineyard. Also, western Somerset County for the following areas/towns: New Portland, Lexington, Highland Plantation, Embden, N. Anson, Anson. Volunteer work groups stay in North New Portland and Farmington, and we like to keep the work within 30 minutes of these towns.

WHEN? Volunteer Mission teams arrive during the months of June, July and August.

WHY? The North Parish Housing Ministry was created to help people in need stay in their home by doing needed repairs they could not otherwise afford to do. The volunteer Mission teams seek to do Christian service.

MATE-NPHM determines what applications are accepted based on the skill levels of the volunteer teams and the extent and complexity of the work requested, doing their best to prioritize the requests as to those most in need of assistance. [They] keep in mind that the work will be done by volunteers with varying skill levels [and work] is done with the safety of the volunteers as [their] highest priority.



CHRISTIAN EDUCATION NEWS

Hello everyone! First, I would like to thank everyone for your continued support. I really am so deeply grateful for my church family. A special thank you to Eric Lundin and Dave McComas who both have reached out personally, multiple times to encourage me and thank me. Dawn Alger, my best friend, you are such a kind and wonderful person, thank you so much for your kind words and support through the years. You are such an amazing person, a true treasure, I am grateful and honored to have you as my friend. Love you all! Pastor Michelle, you have pushed me and guided me, all of us, through these crazy COVID times. I am so thankful for your tireless efforts, you are a true gem! Thank you.

Second semester of Christian Education has begun and this semester we are finding out the answer to the question "Who does God say I am?". Again I am using the Dig In Discipleship series and adapting it to Zoom. I have prepared a second semester craft bag filled with items we will need to complete the crafts and games in this semester. Fabric markers and invisible ink pen and black light are just some of the fun things included in this kit! I know I'm pretty excited about that! 👍 If you haven't gotten this add on bag of goodies and would like one please contact me at amyharlow.ucc@gmail.com. Thanks again all!

Peace and blessings,
Amy Harlow Christian Education Director



SAVE THE DATE: FRIDAY, MARCH 5TH PAINT NIGHT

Our own Denise Bouchard has agreed to lead us in a virtual paint night! Cost for materials (organized by Amy Harlow) will be \$15 for local pick up or delivery/\$20 mailed. We will need to have a count; please sign up by February 15th [HERE](#). Per Denise's request, income beyond expenses will benefit [A Place Called Hope](#).

COVID19 MEMORIAL

Last month our two congregations joined in the national Covid19 Memorial Observance, lighting our sanctuaries and tolling our bells. Thank you to ringers Terry Smith (HCC) and Sue Craffey, Ginny Evensen (FCCH), and to videographer Nancy Soneson for their help. The video devotion for this event is still viewable [HERE](#).



A Note from Jeanne Calhoun



HCC and FCCH Family,
I would like to thank everyone for all the prayers that were raised up for me this year. As you may know I am now in remission. What a blessing!

With Christian Sympathy



Longtime Higganum Congregational Church member Carol Zanelli passed away on January 28th. Calling hours were held on Sunday afternoon,

January 31st at Biega's in Middletown, but the planned graveside service planned for February 1st was postponed. Updated information will be sent out when it is available. Please hold Walter and the rest of Carol's family and friends in your prayers.

MEMBER'S CORNER



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



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

FEBRUARY



BIRTHDAYS & ANNIVERSARIES

BIRTHDAYS

- 2 Connor Wells
- 5 Quinn Rebecca Steffens
- 6 Paul Lewis
- 8 Cassandra Pringle
- 10 Judy Hodgson
- 11 Jason Jansak
- 13 Stewart Gillmor, III
- 14 Sue Henehan
- 15 Ruby Cameron William Aduskevich
- 18 Harry Evert
- 20 Catherine Wendt
- 21 Martha Wilson
- 22 Dena Liedke
- 23 Lise Thayer
- 25 Arianna Bloch
- 28 Brian Gras

ANNIVERSARIES

- 27 Jack and Jeanne Calhoun
- 29 Bruce and Sue Kocsis