



FIRST CHURCH CHATTER

May 2021

We are always looking for stories, poems, photos, thoughts to contribute. If you have notices about upcoming events which you would like published, please let [Anne Short](#) or [Jody Green](#) know and we will try to include. Thanks.

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This is another edition of our church newsletter. We thank those members and friends who have contributed stories, biographies, reflections, letters, poems and encourage any who wish to contribute to our church newsletter. As you can read in this edition, we have many talented friends and church members. We would like to get to know all of you better and encourage you to send your thoughts, poems, stories, photos, to us to publish. Thanks so much.

The newsletter will be printed at the beginning of each month and be sent via email to church members and friends, be sent by mail to those who would prefer a written copy and be available in the foyer for all to pick up when the church is reopened.

n.b. If you receive the Chatter as a PDF the links within the articles function to take you to external sources, if you wish. Clicking on a person's name shown in blue with a blue underscore will open your email program with that person already in as the recipient.

Mark Seifried and Mark Longhurst

Beloved,

Mark Longhurst and I have been in conversation about his relationship with First Church. As you probably know, Mark and his family still live in Williamstown – up the street from me, in fact. Mark has been prayerfully supporting the congregation since his departure. He met with me in my first weeks of ministry and was very helpful in terms of me understanding certain relationships and practices that were elusive to me. We have conversed a few times since. I have high regard for Mark, personally and professionally. He tells me the same is true for him.

With this background, I wanted to let you know that I have been in conversation with the Deacons and Church Council about Mark and his family re-engaging the church in some peripheral ways. His desire is that his family can be in community with other families seeking to ground their families in the love and justice of Jesus, which is at the heart of First Church's ministry. Both groups welcome the Longhurst family to be part of our flock. So, you can expect to see the family in children and family activities, perhaps joining us occasionally for worship and special programs.

With this new relationship, Mark will not be able to function in any pastoral capacity, for example to officiate at weddings, funerals or baptisms. Nor will he be able to be a pastoral confidant. That is my role and will be for pastors who follow me. Please bear in mind that Mark needs to be careful so as not to be perceived as interfering in the ministry of the church. For these reasons, he will limit the amount of socializing he does with the community outside of 906 Main Street.

This is new for Mark and the church. As the Longhurst family re-engages, Mark and I will check in with each other on occasion to see how things are working out. If you have questions or concerns, please contact me directly and we can talk about those issues.

In the meanwhile, we give thanks that “for everything there is a season,” and that new life emerges, post-Longhurst pastorate, post-COVID, even post-Christian.

Light and love,
[Pastor Mark Seifried](#)

In Remembrance: Dick Steege

To all our friends at the first Congregational Church, All of the Steeges want to thank the church for the many kind expressions of sadness on Dick's death. We so appreciate both the words and the flowers that have been showered on us. The church has been an important part of our lives for decades, and I know Dick would be honored by the love and kindness of his many friends in the church community.

With many thanks to all!
Gwen



Come and Sing at Pentecost Sunday!

If you've been wondering, here's your chance to find out. If you love singing and have missed the chance to sing with others, this isn't a perfect solution, but it's what we have so far...

I want you to join us for a special "expanded" virtual choir for Pentecost Sunday, May 23. I will send you a recording to practice with and invite you to a Zoom rehearsal - that's an experience on its own!

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Then, we'll talk you through the mechanics of

recording your part and submitting it to become part of the choir for that day.

It's amazing how the finished product sounds, and you get to listen to yourself singing "with others," which is a special thing.

Interested?

Contact me at [Ed Lawrence](#)

Strolling in the Spruces

Please join us on Tuesdays at 11am for a stroll in the Spruces. We will gather to share our hopes, joys, and concerns before setting out for a stroll. Friends and friendly dogs are welcome too. After entering the Spruces, please take the first right to the parking area and then meet us at the picnic tables by the pond and the pollinator garden. Please bring a mask to wear.

Questions: Please contact Anne Short or Bridget Spann

Habitat for Humanity

FCC member and Northern Berkshire Habitat for Humanity board member/volunteer Keith Davis has reached out to us for assistance in recruiting some new board members for this organization.

Affordable housing is a significant issue for Williamstown, and Northern Berkshire Habitat for Humanity has made a commitment to build several houses here over the next few years. Please talk with others who might be interested and share this request:

The Northern Berkshire Habitat for Humanity is seeking board members. Some of our board members have moved away and as things start to open up as COVID hopefully will have a smaller impact we will be able to utilize a broader group of volunteers. The board meets once per month currently via Zoom but eventually in person. Some of the tasks we need assistance on include:

1. An assistant for Kathy Kaulker in writing Grants
2. A volunteer coordinator
3. Members on our community relations committee
4. Someone to update our website and Facebook page.
5. Fundraising committee members.

We are trying to expand our board so the amount of time members spend is minimal. Currently, Beth Goodman is president, Cynthia Payne and me are board members. I also assist on the build site.

We expect to finish the current project by the first of July and the new home owner can move in. The family consists of a single mother, a 10 year old daughter and an 8 year old son. Currently, the sheetrock installation, taping, and mudding are complete and we are painting the walls and ceilings.

Any help the church could provide would be appreciated. Thank you.

Sincerely,
[Keith Davis](#)



WALKING THE PATH

Adrian Dunn

SEA SONG

I go back to the sea
salt to salt
to lie in hot sand
till the shell of my body
is baked dry and clean
to roll in the foam
till mermaids can't find me

I am not of the earth
dust to dust
but of the wild ocean
born out of water
so I return
salt to salt
now my sojourn
in air is done

when fiery skies fade
in damp evening air
I press the cold edge
and slip into the deep
green is the water
skin to fin
all is forgiven
nothing forgotten

Hugh Guilderson

MEMORIAL DAY

Some plant flags
and lay flowers
others say prayers
and study old photos
some share stories
all share sorrow.

Hugh Guilderson

the path teaches attention
the grace and weight of other lives
the impulse to be useful

Second Hour

The Education Ministry Team is working to revive more consistent Second Hour programming. For those who were not exposed to Second Hour before COVID, this is a learning opportunity that takes place after our weekly worship service. We would love to collaborate with the congregation and invite your input. If you have a topic you would like to explore, a speaker to suggest, or if you would like to facilitate a program that would enrich our collective spiritual life, please reach out to us.

With thanks and hope,
[Sam Humes](#), 413-458-5110
[Charles Fox](#), 413-884-5333
[Pastor Mark Seifried](#), 413-458-4273

Unite Against Racism - BLM Weekly Vigils

You are invited to join in a weekly gathering to mourn and deepen our collective resolve for racial justice.

We will gather again weekly on Fridays at 5 pm in the center of Field Park in Williamstown (the green on the rotary). A speaker will give a short reading to honor, mourn and uplift recent victims in support of their families and communities. At 5:15, we will join in respectful silence for 9 minutes and 29 seconds around the Park's perimeter, in honor of George Floyd and the countless other Black people killed by police brutality and other forms of white supremacist violence.

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All are welcome. We hope that this weekly

gathering may serve to deepen our commitment as a community to dismantle systemic racism. We recognize that Williamstown, too, must uproot white supremacy. We gather on Fridays to recognize these truths and recommit ourselves to the work. We aspire to maintain this particular practice every week throughout the spring, summer and fall, though we recognize that the work must continue long after that.

Please wear a mask, practice social distancing, and invite your friends and family. You are invited to bring signs or works of art if you are so moved. Anger is welcome. Rage is welcome. Grief is welcome. Exhaustion is welcome. We welcome all heartfelt expressions in honor of Black liberation and ending white supremacy.

Parking is available at the Williamstown Public Library.

Please spread the word!

Questions? Contact:

[Abby Reifsnyder](#), (413) 446-8844

or [Rachel Payne](#), 617-309-0186

or #blacklivesmatter #justiceforgeorgefloyd

Please refrain from:

Bringing wooden sticks to hold signs and standing in the roadway.

FIELD PARK is the green space at the rotary in Williamstown - if you're coming from out of town, you can plug in the address for the Williamstown Public Library (1095 Main Street, Williamstown) and this will take you there!

Gender Identity, Learning and Discussion

Please join us for a series on gender identity on Monday, May 3, May 10, and May 17 at 7pm.

May 3 documentary film screening and discussion of The Trans List

May 10 book discussion of *Becoming Nicole: The Transformation of an American Family*, by Amy Ellis Nutt (please order a copy from the library today!)

May 17 Conversation with Mx Chris Paige (pronouns they/them) author of [OtherWise Christian: A Guidebook for Transgender Liberation](#)

Join Zoom Meeting

[https://zoom.us/j/98462040936?](https://zoom.us/j/98462040936?pwd=ek5GTTVMbStoaitzTDIDTEl3bERFUT09)

[pwd=ek5GTTVMbStoaitzTDIDTEl3bERFUT09](https://zoom.us/j/98462040936?pwd=ek5GTTVMbStoaitzTDIDTEl3bERFUT09)

Meeting ID: 984 6204 0936

Passcode: 352105

May 2021 Birthdays

3rd Lauren Stevens

4th Allen Rork

6th Liz Costley

15th Steve Chick

19th Katherine Myers

23rd William Clark

24th Mary Ellen Pattee

26th Ashley Bianchi

30th Jody Green

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