



FIRST CHURCH CHATTER

October 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.

We continue new layout this month, and with larger, 1" margins, to show the poems and reflections as they were intended. We await your comments if you want this to continue or prefer the columns as has been our previous style. You can connect with Jody Green, Anne Atkinson Short or Carrie Waara for comments if you wish.

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.

👉 Hyperlinks: If you received this as a *.PDF file, use the links to take you to internet book sites and such, or to open your email program. If you receive a paper copy, *here are the [de-obfuscated hyperlinks](#)*:

In today's Chatter:

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Update on First Church's DEI (Diversity, Equity, Inclusion) Efforts

Background

At the May 2021 Church Council meeting, members voted unanimously to support conducting an *“examination of our institutional systems of racism and therefore inform a policy for the FCC Williamstown going forward that might impact funding, personnel, use of resources, worship, and things of that nature.”* An update was presented at the August Council meeting.

Carrie Waara volunteered to help organize this initiative as one of our church's efforts to put into practice our **Not In Our County** (NIOC) pledge. The **Excavating Our History/NIOC/DEIB (Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Belonging) Task Force** (we haven't settled on a name yet) falls under the aegis of the Outreach Ministry Team, and consists of Carrie, Hugh Guilderson, Elizabeth Smith, Sally Sussman and Jody Green. Rachel Payne helped with our initial efforts, and Pastor Mark has been a great help and supporter.

On June 8, Rev. Mark, Carrie, Hugh, and Rachel met on zoom with [Rev. James Ross, SNEUCC Minister for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion](#), to explore the possibility of him helping guide our church in developing a year-long deep dive/education and discernment process that would ultimately result in (a) making our church and town safer and more welcoming to ALL people, where all can thrive, (b) expanding and revising our Open and Affirming Covenant and all church policies, to make us more accountable to our Not In Our County pledge and to our religious commitment to social justice. Rev. Ross was very positive, and sent a program proposal **“Excavating Our History”** in August. The Task Force has exchanged emails with Rev. Ross about the scope and process; he has promised to identify and hire a facilitator for our program so that it can commence this fall.

In the meantime, several FCC folks and Pastor Mark participated in the two-day SPIRIT-North Adams forum hosted by the US Department of Justice and Northern Berkshire Community Coalition. One major take-away that we shared was that First Church and Williamstown need to take a broader perspective and consider how our efforts connect regionally with Northern Berkshire County. Gail Oberst volunteered to serve on the SPIRIT Board to implement the results. Two members of First Church (UCC) North Adams attended one of our task force meetings this summer as potential partners, so we are already reaching into North County.

Also, Hugh Guilderson submitted a proposal to the Outreach Team and Church Council for a “Fellowship Hall of All Peoples” through expanding our building use to groups like the Stockbridge-Munsee Band of Mohicans (and others, like Rainbow Seniors, who pre-COVID met regularly at our church) and organizing programming like music, films, food, presentations, discussions, and proposals for action around GLBTQ+, immigration, and racial justice topics. Obviously this is disrupted by the continuing pandemic, but we will be meeting with Stewardship and Education to gain their input on building use and programming when feasible. See the story Hugh appended to his proposal below this article of *Church Chatter*.

Most recently, Pastor Mark and Elizabeth met with Bonney Hartley, Historic Preservation Manager of the Stockbridge-Munsee Band of Mohicans, to acknowledge the fact that our forebears, the founders of the First Meetinghouse of Williamstown, were responsible for the removal of the Stockbridge-Munsee from their ancestral homelands. They explained that our church wishes to come to terms with our history to make reparation and begin a healing process. They learned that the Stockbridge Congregational Church is having similar conversations. Together they imagined a time in the future when our churches would gather together with the Stockbridge-Munsee Band of Mohican Tribes at a “Peace Convention” to formally acknowledge the truth.

Historical Background from <https://www.mohican.com/our-history/>: “In 1750 the General Court of Massachusetts Bay Colony, wanting to encourage permanent settlement in the western parts, passed legislation that in order to incorporate, and for settlers to gain title to their cleared lands, a town must have a settled pastor. That same year, the first lots were sold in the newly surveyed West Hoosuck plantation, which later became Williamstown. Our town and church shares this history with the First Congregational Church in Stockbridge where the archaeological dig is uncovering remains of the first meeting house. The archaeologists are also amassing evidence that Indigenous people, known as ancestors to their Mohican descendants, maintained permanent residences here prior to the time of contact. All of this evidence lays bare the mythology that the Berkshires were never settled by Indians but was a “passing through place” on the “Mohawk Trail”.

“For a period of time, in the mid-1700s, the native people and colonists governed the town of Stockbridge together. But over time, the colonists took over the governance of the town — and the land. "Elijah and Ephraim Williams in Stockbridge, Massachusetts, were the main family individuals that were the cause of dispossession of our tribe’s lands here," Bonney Hartley said. "In all of the historical documentation, it comes across very clearly. It’s not hidden.

"The bequest of Ephraim Williams, Jr. founded the school that became Williams College. His father, Ephraim Williams, Sr., claimed land in 1742 that several Stockbridge Mohicans had cleared for themselves. A few years later, Williams claimed more acreage that tribal members said had been taken from them. In both cases, the Massachusetts Bay General Court allowed Williams to keep the land.”

[See below for opportunities to learn and do more on this subject in the Clark Art bulletin and the Mohican/Indigenous Artifact Search.]

Concluding this full summary of our DEIB efforts so far this year, we have decided to initiate a book group while waiting for Rev. Ross to hire a facilitator for “Excavating Our History”. One book that is at the top of everyone’s “must read” list is [*Caste: The Origins of Our Discontents*](#) by Isabel Wilkerson. One of the Soul Talk small groups has decided to read it this fall-winter, and we want to invite everyone to do so!

“Truly reckoning with history, though morally necessary, is often difficult — but it’s made easier when communities reach out to do it together. We must be literate in the history that has preceded us. We owe it to ourselves, as well as our fellow humans who for too long have been locked out from joining in the writing and contextualizing of that history.” ([Berkshire Eagle editorial 7/9/21](#))

Anyone looking for a good start is welcome to join others in the church in reading and discussing *Caste*. Email or call Carrie Waara (carrie.waara@castleton.edu 413-458-0270) for information or to sign up.

Other recommended resources:

From Elizabeth an outstanding [EFSchumacher/Center for New Economics](#) round table discussion on Community Land Trusts that might help us re-imagine indigenous reparations: <https://community-wealth.org/sites/clone.community-wealth.org/files/downloads/report-davis14.pdf>

From Carrie this very compelling *On Being* episode with Robin DiAngelo (*White Fragility*) and Resmaa Menakem (*My Grandmother's Hands*): <https://onbeing.org/programs/robin-diangelo-and-resmaa-menakem-towards-a-framework-for-repair/>

A Fellowship hall of all peoples can work in Williamstown. It reminds me of the episode in *The Kindness Diaries* when the narrator is visiting one of the poorest families he has met while going around the world on a motorbike. The youngish husband and father in India earns his living by driving a rented motor scooter taxi. The man, the woman, and their two children live in a two room apartment that totals maybe 60 square feet. The man offers one of the rooms to his guest, the narrator. The narrator declines the offer. His host insists. He explains that to welcome a stranger into his home is the same as welcoming God.

I believe the several faith traditions here in Williamstown share certain beliefs and practices that can be the basis for a community.

--Hugh

Here are some ideas for future programs:

- A thank you event for front-line Covid pandemic workers.
- Events by and for the Stockbridge-Munsee Mohican Nation.
- A meeting space for Iraq and Afghanistan veterans.
- Special days in the religious calendars of Buddhists, Hindus, Muslims and people of other faith traditions who do not have a formal place of group worship in Williamstown.
- LGBTQ Folks and Friends
- Rainbow Seniors and Friends.
- 18 Degrees: Programs for LGBTQ kids and their families
- Craft Fairs: one in late Spring or early Summer, another in the Fall

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Clark Art bulletin

The new October Clark bulletin has a lecture listed that goes along with the Chatter's theme of Stockbridge-Munsee Community. It's listed as "Not the Last of the Mohicans: Heather Bruegl on the History of the Stockbridge-Munsee Community", 10/16, 2PM, simultaneously broadcast on Zoom and Facebook Live. visit clarkart.edu/events for more info and to register.

More elaborate description of Bruegl presentation in [Clark bulletin](#).

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Mohican/Indigenous Artifact Search

We, [Stockbridge-Munsee Mohican Community](#) and Williams College History Department student researchers, are reaching out to the Williamstown community to ask about any knowledge locals may have about Mohican/Indigenous artifacts or sites within Williamstown.

Please fill out this [form](#) should you have any information. (n.b. - *This is a Google docs form and access to the form appears to require a google account.* - editor) A QR code is attached if that is better to use for publication in a community newsletter.

Knowledge gathered from this survey, along with State archaeological records, will help us better map indigenous sites and identify areas where Mohican Nation and the College could partner on future preservation projects.

Knowing this history is deeply important to Stockbridge-Munsee Community and can empower both Williamstown and Stockbridge-Munsee community members to address and reconcile their shared past. We will share this information with the community in a final report next year.



The deadline to reply is October 31, 2021. Note: it is not required to donate any known indigenous artifacts; we are simply seeking information about sites.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

All the best,

Gwyn Chilcoat '24, Hikaru Hayakawa '24,
and Jayden Jogwe '24

Here is a link to a recent Berkshire Eagle article, "[Stockbridge-Munsees focus on correcting historical record through collaborations with Berkshire Institutions.](#)"

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what moves elephants

what moves elephants to weep
whales to sing
giraffes to signal faraway cousins
grandma is dying, come home?

must that have a name?

Hugh L. Guilderson

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Bob Behr Memorial Service



From Carolyn – Last spring our family scheduled Bob’s memorial service for October 2, 2021. It seemed at that time that the church would be open and safe for people to gather...and Bob really wanted his service to be in our beautiful sanctuary. But that was not to be. We have now scheduled it for next summer – June 25, 2022.

One of the hymns Bob requested was The Hymn of Promise – “In the bulb there is a flower...” And so, we had planned to give each person who attended a little muslin bag with bulbs that will bloom next spring as brilliant purple tulips. The little bags are ready to distribute, but they cannot wait until next summer. So, anyone who would like to plant a few tulips in Bob’s memory, please email me at carolynbehr@gmail.com and I will deliver a bag to you.

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October Birthdays

Here is a list of those folks whose birthdays occur in October. If you see one such, please wish them a Happy Birthday!

2nd Anne O'Connor	15th Jonathan Vankin
" " Lynne De Lay	20th Judith Wright
3rd David Langston	27th Susie Smith
9th Monica Mackey	31st Hugh Guilderson
10th Mae Burris-Wells	

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Tag Sale: This Church fund-raiser is this coming Saturday, October 9th, and help is still needed for preparation and for the day of the sale. Here is the link to use to sign up: [Tag Sale!](#)

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[Rev. James Ross, SNEUCC Minister for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion](#)

<https://www.sneucc.org/newsdetail/rev-james-ross-to-move-to-justice-position-15141744>

<https://www.mohican.com/our-history/>

<https://www.mohican.com/>

[Caste: The Origins of Our Discontents](#)

<https://www.goodreads.com/en/book/show/51152447-caste>

[Berkshire Eagle editorial 7/9/21](#)

https://www.berkshireeagle.com/opinion/editorials/our-opinion-a-lesson-in-history-and-reconciliation-in-stockbridge/article_47c6c970-e0d5-11eb-b9fd-e78fe844f46b.html

[EFSchumacher/Center for New Economics](#)

<https://centerforneweconomics.org/apply/community-land-trust-program/>

[Clark bulletin](#)

<https://www.clarkart.edu/event/detail/1874-87425>

[Stockbridge-Munsee Mohican Community](#)

<https://www.mohican.com/>

[Stockbridge-Munsees focus on correcting historical record through collaborations with Berkshire Institutions](#)

https://www.berkshireeagle.com/arts_and_culture/berkshirelandscapes/stockbridge-munsees-sheffield-historical-society-the-mohican-journey/article_0586ea40-1726-11ec-b0f8-7bb2bbaba24d.html

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