



FIRST CHURCH CHATTER

May, 2023

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 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. In the meantime, we will deliver the Chatter to those who would prefer paper copy or don't receive email.

We are always looking for stories, poems, thoughts to contribute. If you have notices about upcoming events which you would like published, please let Carrie or Jody know and we will try to include. We try to publish by the beginning but realistically often it is sent out by the 10th or so.

In this chatter:

- [Heard at Church Council.... 4/18/23,](#)
Margy O'Connor
- [Love Over Hate](#) - R. E. Markham
- [May and June Birthdays](#)
- [Second Hour, with Rev. Valerie Bailey Fischer in discussion of revision Haystack Plaque](#)

Heard at Church Council.... 4/18/23

- Over 100 people attended Easter Services in all, at Sunrise, in the Sanctuary, and by Zoom!
- The Berkshire Eagle had a very favorable illustrated article about our church which ran April 11th. It featured us as a vibrant, committed group, determined to keep our building in good repair, and excited to find ways to reach out for more community use of The Meetinghouse. We will get more copies printed out to share, or click [here](#).
- Have you noticed the two new banners hanging between the pillars of the front portico?
We feel it's important we show our progressive Christian values with the "Black Lives Matter" and "LBGTQ+" flags on display.
- Susan Yates, for the Meetinghouse Preservation Fund, sent word that they have the building permit to go ahead soon with a metal mesh lining to our steeple louvers to keep out the rain and snow! The mesh and better drainage will help prevent water damage and keep costs down. The WMPF is getting estimates for new roofing, and hopes for installation this summer.
- Moderator Betsy Burris heads up a group working on safety and emergency response protocols. They are in contact with St. John's Church about their practices. There might even be FEMA grants if equipment is warranted.
- Have you noticed the new wording on our signs? We are renewing the old name "The Meetinghouse of First Congregational Church," a title that goes back to 1767 when the required congregational church was the only meeting place in our new town.
- The Building Taskforce meets regularly to brainstorm ways to promote use of The Meetinghouse, keeping the church viable for us and for the town. Sherwood Guernsey reported that Williams College is not interested in acquiring the land and building at this time. But he is excited about the tenants who have engaged some unused rooms and underused spaces. This also adds funds useful for proper maintenance.
- Council discussed reviving the neighborhood groups system as a way of renewing connection with each other that may have been lost during COVID times, or starting up a phone tree for times we have information to share and want to get the word out quickly.
- Kathy Hurley has volunteered to do an inventory of our kitchen, and organize items used for a simplified Sunday Fellowship time. She suggests a dedicated rolling cart with everything available together. Then anyone can help with Coffee hour. Yay Kathy!
- Elayne in the Office, Trevor Murphy and Betsy have been updating our website with new features plus removing outdated references. There is so much good stuff there about us!
- Council also focused on timely communication with the congregation at large, and this article you are reading is one result. A summary of Council proceedings will be posted each month in the Friday Eblast shortly after Council meets, and also reprinted in Church Chatter. How do you like what we did at Council, and "What We Heard at Council?"

Summary By Margy O'Connor

[return](#)

LOVE OVER HATE

R. E. Markham

Throughout most of my life, I've occasionally had dreams of being lost (in a building, a parking lot, a suburb, on a mountain side., wherever). I've been baffled by these dreams and unable to understand the reason/s for them. Recently, my occasional dreams have shifted to having lost something and not being able to find it. Perhaps my feelings of being lost or having lost something refer to my being out of touch with the spiritual dimension of my being.

I've long believed that each of us has this spiritual dimension, but more often than not we aren't aware of it because it's layered over by the dominate conditioning of our culture. It's one thing to intellectually believe in our underlying spirituality; it's another actually to give expression to it, It's far easier to ignore or to deny it and be dominated by conventional beliefs and practices, many of which are tinged with hatred. In doing so, we disregard the message of revered leaders, such as Jesus, that we should love our enemies.

How can we "love" our enemies who seem bent on carrying out evil actions which we read about or hear about every evening on "news" programs and which echo all those evil doings humans have perpetuated for centuries, even thousands of years. How can we not hate them and carry out actions to counter them, perhaps being hateful ourselves?

I agree with those maintaining that all humans have a spiritual dimension of their beings. This includes Donald Trump, Vladimir Putin, and all purveyors of hatred. They all are children of God but are ignorant or denier of their spiritual depths because they are prisoners of their upbringing and seek to survive by dominating others. Can we not condemn their actions without hating them.?

[Return](#)

May and June Birthdays

May	June
3. Lauren Stevens	1. Margy O'Connor
4. Allen Rork	3. Mark Robertson
6. Liz Costley	8. Bill Oberst
15. Steve Chick	12. Larry Wright
19. Katherine Myers	18 Nina Donati
23. William Clark	19. Margaret Oxtoby
24. Mary Ellen Pattee	21. John Green
26. Ashley Bianchi	27. Holly Edwards
30. Jody Green	

[Return](#)

- *Second Hour visit from Williams College's Chaplin, Rev. Valerie Bailey Fischer, discussion of revisiting the Haystack Monument Plaque.*
- *First Church hopes to be partnered with Rev. Valerie at the 220th anniversary of the Haystack Meeting in 2026 as an ongoing follow-up to the January Williams student presentation on revising the monument's plaque.*



Sam Smith, Jackie Laughlin, Elizabeth Smith, Rev. Valerie Bailey Fischer, Carrie Waara



Jackie Laughlin, Sam Smith, Elizabeth Smith, Rev. Valerie Bailey Fischer

[Return](#)