

First Congregational Church of UCC  
Williamstown, Massachusetts

# First Church Chatter

February, 2024



Birthdays:

February:  
14<sup>th</sup> Carrie Waara  
18<sup>th</sup> Olver Longhurst  
19<sup>th</sup> Carol Johnston  
19<sup>th</sup> Bob Janes  
27<sup>th</sup> Carolyn Behr

March:

4<sup>th</sup> Adriana Brown  
4<sup>th</sup> Ann Clark  
7<sup>th</sup> Carl Faulkner  
14<sup>th</sup> Anna Bennett Robertson  
18<sup>th</sup> Wendy Hopkins  
20<sup>th</sup> Phil Smith  
20<sup>th</sup> Cristina Mancilla  
21<sup>st</sup> Judy Reichert  
29<sup>th</sup> Cesar Silva  
24<sup>th</sup> Shira Lynn

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

We 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

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In today's chatter:

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## Heard at Church Council 1-15-24

By Margy O'Connor

### Plans for Annual Meeting, Sunday February 4<sup>th</sup>:

Following the worship service, we will have our traditional Annual Meeting to reorganize for 2024. We'll consider and vote on the slate of new and returning Church Officers and Ministry Team members, and hear brief highlights from our Teams and committees. I love the long history of this Congregational meeting and its traditions, such as sending greetings to past ministers and remembering fellow parishioners who died in the past year.

Another is Owning Our Covenant and singing "Blest Be the Tie That Binds." If you are new to the church or an old timer it's well worth attending, and I promise it won't last all afternoon.

Printed copies of the Annual Report for 2023 will be available ahead of time, so grab one and take a look at the Nominating Committee's proposed Slate, then marvel at all that our church accomplished in 2023!

Most of the newly re-constituted Ministry Teams get together right afterwards to greet each other and set the time and agenda of their next meetings.

### What Next for the Music Program?

Moderator Betsy Burriss reminded us that there are only 3 & ½ months before the retirement of Ed Lawrence, effective May 19. Deacons have formed a committee (including Ruth Giordano and Cesar Silva) to convene listening sessions for members and friends to consider what we hope for in the way of music for our church. Music for children is as important as music in worship, Rev. Deanna pointed out. Are there new directions in music to explore? Yes, we can find supply organists or accompanists and other musicians to help us through the summer, but we need to move quickly in order to define, advertise and fill the new position or positions by Fall. The first Listening Session is set for Second Hour on January 28th, with another in an evening session. With this input in hand, a job description must be created, then a search team called.

Ed has served and delighted us in so many ways over the past 40 years. His talents, flexibility and dedication have been a real gift to the congregation and its many pastors.

### Second Hour: Opportunities, Publicity Gaps, & Challenge

Sam Humes reported for the Education Team that it organizes about 18 Second Hour programs each year on a variety of topics, but there is room for other groups to offer presentations; e.g. for the Outreach team to invite a local social service agency to inform us of their work and possible volunteer opportunities. Teams or other groups in the church should contact the Chair of the Education Team to discuss topics and dates.

One thing that is sorely needed is advance publicity for the presentations besides in the Friday Eblast. Many of our offerings could be of interest to the wider public, but they need to be invited 2-3 weeks in advance! This would include mentions in the Chamber of Commerce events listing, Facebook, and by "posters", both digital and real posters outside on a sandwich board in front of the church. Each sponsoring group must provide the wording and perhaps an illustration for the program invites/posters, and Lynn Chick or the Office Administrator can assist from then on.

The discussion shifted to the purpose of Second Hour as Adult Christian Education. David Langston sees the need for programming which allows us to reflect on and wrestle with questions, like "What is the mission of Our church, Now, In This time?" Some topics might require several weeks of

thought and discussion. David is nominated to join the Education Team, so I'm expecting more from him!

Lauren Stevens handed out a page describing the original design of Second Hour as time for thoughtful reflection on the meaning of Christian faith, Christian identity and its implications for ethical action, as well as learning about other religious traditions. But also including regular programs dedicated to our Outreach mission (which now largely supports local social service agencies according to a comment from Carrie Waara).

More time for an extended Fellowship Hour has also been requested, and Communion Sunday is usually reserved for this.

Nominating Committee Report (New nominees only listed here):

Moderator: Kyle Tong

Education Team: David Langston, Anne Skinner.

Fellowship Team: Kathy Hurley

Deacons Ministry: Adriana Brown, Penny Bucky

Outreach Team: Leesa Bennett

Stewardship Team: David Dewey, Julie MacDonald

Farewell to our Moderator:

Council stood to enthusiastically endorse a "Motion to thank Betsy Burris for serving as an outstanding moderator with love and grace for the past two years."

Betsy has poured her love, acumen and energy into this Church and this Council, and we feel blessed by her time with us.

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Resolution for 2024 Annual Meeting

"WHEREAS our collective Lay Leadership served effectively and with grace and love for our church,

- when we were without a settled pastor for over three years,
- during a disruptive global pandemic and economic crisis,
- as well as facing serious and ongoing issues with our building;

Now, for these and other reasons too numerous to include, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, that the Members of the First Congregational Church of Williamstown, Massachusetts, assembled at its Annual Meeting on February 4, 2024,

Herewith recognize, with heartfelt gratitude, Moderator Betsy Burris, past Moderator and Clerk Lynn Chick, and the many, many others who volunteer as lay leaders, stepping in to help in so many capacities, for their outstanding service to our church."

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## SNEUCC Newsletter

"This is the SNEUCC newsletter I mentioned at our meeting. It has announcements of upcoming webinars and events sponsored by the Justice ministry team. I like subscribing to it. I've found a few events that have knocked my socks off, and a nice "Racial Justice Cross-Pollination gathering" the fourth Monday of the month at 6:30pm. There is also a cross-pollination gathering for LGBTQ+/ONA folks that I have attended and like.

'You will notice that Rev. Ross's position has been temporarily filled by Noah Brewer-Wallin, who is the SNEUCC Ministry for Creation Care/Environment. I think Sally, Elizabeth, Hugh, Mark S. and Rev. Ross and I met with her on Zoom way back at the beginning, when her/their name was Emma Brewer-Wallin.

"Also, this "Ever Flowing Streams" email came from Karen Methot, who has retired from being the administrator of the Justice team. Don't know if her position has been filled yet or not.

"Finally, I am attaching a UCC document, the Manual on Ministry, which contains valuable information about how ministers are expected to behave in the UCC. See especially the "Marks of Faithful and Effective Ministers" section. There is also a "Marks of Faithful and Effective Congregations" document that I need to find. Might be helpful to us as we seek to revitalize the church."

Carrie Waara

### Local Church Highlight for April

- United Church of Christ in Norwell, MA: A WISE Journey
- The Journey to Become Certified as a WISE Congregation for Mental Health by Carl Isihara/UCC Norwell Mental Health Team
- The United Church of Christ in Norwell WISE Ministry Team for Mental Health, which includes the leadership of our pastor, Leanne Walt, started its journey to address the stigma of those suffering with chronic mental illness about four years ago. Our initial strategy back in 2020 involved engaging with community partners including Aspire Health Alliance and others, to help our wider community to be better informed regarding mental health.
- Aspire CEO Antony Sheehan gave a kick-off talk after worship in February of 2020 attended by a group of 75 people. Sheehan, in his remarks, guaranteed that those gathered would remember three things: 1&2) the personal faith witness of two members of our congregation who shared their own compelling, challenging, hopeful and inspiring stories related to their mental health experiences; and 3) the message enshrined in Aspire's organizational vision, "There can be no health without mental health."

Mental Health Month: Personal to Communal, a reflection by Deborah Ringen, Minister for Health and Wellness

- Now is the time to talk about mental health: May is Mental Health Month! In the United States one in five Americans will have a diagnosable mental health condition in any given year (Mental Health America). Even though so many people struggle or know someone who struggles with mental illness, there is stigma attached.
- Since the beginning of my faith community nurse ministry in 2003, education and conversation about mental health has been a priority. Just over eight years ago the reality of serious mental illness became a part of my family life when my son was diagnosed, and we began the rollercoaster journey of seeking treatment, hospitalizations, and his feelings of hopelessness.

### Wanted: Churches Working for Justice

- SNEUCC congregations: Is your church active in justice or outreach in the areas of anti-racism, immigration/ refugee/asylum, environmental ministry, or ONA? Are you focused on health and wellness or disability ministry? Let us know your story! You may be featured in a future issue of Ever Flowing Streams. Contact us at [methotk@sneucc.org](mailto:methotk@sneucc.org) photo by Ahmed Akacha

## Action Alerts

- LGBTQ+ Is your church having - or participating in - a Pride event? Let us know using this form! Our hope is to create a SNEUCC Pride Guide, where people can look up what events their local church, Association, or our Conference offer with regard to celebrating our LGBTQ+ community.

## Racial Justice

- UCC Join the Movement Calls for an All Church Read of Ibram X. Kendi's book How to Be An Antiracist. Every setting of the UCC, from local churches to global partners, has a role to play in expanding our practices of antiracism and strengthening our capacities as partners and participants in the burgeoning racial justice movements of our time.

## Other Justice Issues

- "An Interfaith Gathering to Explore Together... What Can We Do About Antisemitism?" is a program shared with us by the Lexington (MA) Interfaith Clergy Association. The presenter is Rev. Dr. Daniel Joslyn-Siemiatkoski (Episcopal, professor at Boston College). Watch the video on Youtube.

## Upcoming Events

- LGBTQ+ 2023 Justice Summit - Trans and Nonbinary Belonging in the Church October 7, 10 AM-5 PM at Old South Church Boston and online. This full-day hybrid event will include worship and preaching, workshops, affinity groups, relationship-building and connection. Read this blog by Rev. Noah Brewer-Wallin and Michael Streib

## Environmental Justice

- Energy Efficiency - Resources for Houses of Worship and Homes May 3 at 7 PM online. In partnership with Inter-religious Eco-Justice Network, this webinar will cover resources available to houses of worship in Connecticut and through the federal government.
- Cross-Pollination Environmental Gatherings - third Mondays at 6:30 PM. SNEUCC series of online gatherings intended for local church leaders involved in environmental ministries (green teams, creation care committees, etc).
- Cross-Pollination Racial Justice Gatherings - fourth Mondays at 6:30 PM. Gatherings are for local church leaders involved in racial justice ministries. This is an opportunity to exchange ideas, celebrate successes, and troubleshoot challenges.

## Other Justice Issues

- Love & Solidarity: A Film Showing and Panel Discussion on Nonviolence and the Church May 17, 7 PM online. Join filmmaker Michael Honey for a film showing (38 minute run time) and discussion. Love & Solidarity is an exploration of nonviolence and organizing through the teachings of Rev. James Lawson
- Swords to Plowshares Northeast Event May 20, 11AM-3PM. The First Congregational Church of Southampton (MA) hosts this violence prevention outreach program, inviting participants to assist in the transformation of decommissioned gun barrels into gardening tools and jewelry.
- Ever Flowing Streams features stories focused on immigration, racism, climate change, ONA, health and disability. We want to hear from churches doing justice in these areas. Please contact Editor Karen Methot for consideration, by the third Thursday of the month for a usual fourth Thursday publication date. Thank you!

Southern New England Conference, United Church of Christ, Toll Free: 866-367-2822. This newsletter is made possible by your church's contributions to Proportional Giving to Our Church's Wider Mission.



# Scones

## Ingredients

- 2 cups all-purpose flour
- 1/3 cup sugar
- 1 teaspoon baking powder
- 1/4 teaspoon baking soda
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 8 tablespoons unsalted butter, frozen. (*Just refrigerated is fine so long as it can be grated.*)
- 1/2 cup raisins (or dried currants) (*or other dried fruit, perhaps nuts*)
- 1/2 cup sour cream
- 1 large egg

## Directions

- **Preheat** the oven to 400 degrees F (200 degrees C); adjust the oven rack to the lower-middle position. Line a baking tray with parchment paper.
- (*I just use Crisco and grease the tray rather heavily.*)
- In a medium bowl, **mix** flour, 1/3 cup sugar, baking powder, baking soda and salt. **Grate** butter into flour mixture on the large holes of a box grater; use your fingers to work in butter (mixture should resemble coarse meal), . . .

- (*The grater I use has about 1/4" holes*)
- (*I use the whisk on our Kitchenaid stand mixer, starting slow and then speeding up as the shreds of butter begin to get broken up, and get to about the stage where they have about the size of kernels of corn.*) (*It helps to have even a partial cover for the bowl. Flyaway flour!*)
- . . . then **stir in** raisins
- (*or dried currants, other dried fruit, maybe nuts*).
- In a small bowl, **whisk** sour cream and egg until smooth. (*immersion blender!*)
- Using a fork, **stir** sour cream mixture into flour mixture until large dough **clumps** form.
- (*I use the beater on our Kitchenaid, on low until the dough begins to clump.*)
- Use your hands to press the dough against the bowl into **a ball**. The dough will be sticky in places, and there may not seem to be enough liquid at first, but as you press, the dough will come together.
- Place on a lightly floured surface and pat into a 7- to-8-inch **circle** about 3/4-inch thick. (or thicker!) **Sprinkle** with remaining 1 tsp. of sugar. Use a sharp knife to cut into 8 triangles; place on a cookie sheet (preferably lined with parchment paper), about 1 inch apart.
- **Bake** until golden, about 15 to 17 minutes. Cool for 5 minutes and serve warm or at room temperature.

This recipe can be found at [Allrecipes.com](https://www.allrecipes.com), at this link: <https://www.allrecipes.com/recipe/79470/simple-scones/>.

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## Roof Replacement

Wolliver roofing has been at work replacing the roof over the sanctuary, west side of community hall, and south side of the 60-wing facing the west side of community hall. The project became more complicated when copper gutters were identified under the old sanctuary roof. Replacement of the copper gutters took more time than expected. The hope was to have the roof replacement done by the end of February. Weather has also been a factor and has created some delays. The expectation is to have the work completed by March 1<sup>st</sup> or soon after.

New roofing is in place on the east side of the sanctuary and the aesthetics of the Majestic Slate are excellent. The Majestic Slate is a material made from recycled tires and plastic. It has the life span of stone slate and is more durable during ice and hail storms. It is also much less heavy than stone slate and easier to install.

It will be exciting to see the long awaited roof replacement completed in the near future!

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Photos of the roof in progress



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