

Dear Friends,

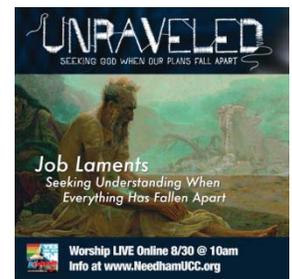
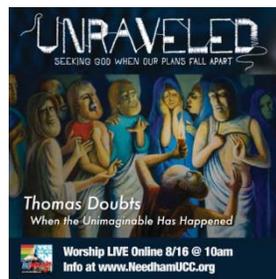
Here we are on the backside of a summer we never could have imagined! I hope despite all the changes necessitated by the on-going coronavirus pandemic you've managed still to find ways, moments to relax, recharge and be refreshed. At our last July vespers service, I shared this poem from Emily Dickinson in which she compares the ending of summer to the experience of grief – an unlikely pairing, but what has this summer been if not unlikely?

As imperceptibly as Grief  
The Summer lapsed away –  
Too imperceptible at last  
To seem like Perfidy –  
A Quietness distilled  
As Twilight long begun,  
Or Nature spending with herself  
Sequestered Afternoon –

The Dusk drew earlier in –  
The Morning foreign shone –  
A courteous, yet harrowing Grace,  
As Guest, that would be gone –  
And thus, without a Wing  
Or service of a Keel  
Our Summer made her light escape  
Into the Beautiful.

“...Our summer made her light escape into the beautiful.” A wonderful reminder, like the babe in the manger and the man on the cross, that beauty and joy can be found right alongside even life's most difficult moments. Our loving God can be found in any season.

In our live online worship via Zoom each Sunday, we will be continuing with our Unraveled sermon series through Labor Day weekend.



8/2 “**Jeremiah Dreams: When a Vision of the Future Unravels**” (Jeremiah 29:1-7) Our lives are thrown off-balance whenever the world zigs where we'd hoped it would zag. It fell to the prophet Jeremiah to minister to a whole people whose future was imperiled by exile. Maybe they can minister to us, too.

8/9 “**The Samaritan Woman Speaks: Shame Unraveled**” (John 4:1-29)

8/16 “**Thomas Doubts: When the Unimaginable Has Happened**” (John 20:19-29)

8/23 “**Moses' Mother Lets Him Go: When Our Plans for Our Children Unravel**” (Exodus 1:22; 2:1-10)

9/6 “**Loose Ends**” (Romans 8:28)

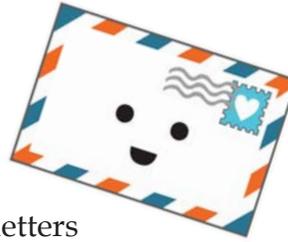
**SAVE THE DATE!** We'll begin our new program year **Sunday, September 13 with a Blessing of the Backpacks** (for our children returning to whatever school will look like this fall). I'm taking as my mantra this line from a hymn by Fred Pratt Green: “**The Church of Christ in every age, beset by change by Spirit-led, must claim and test its heritage and keep on rising from the dead!**”

Rev. John



## August Delegation and Partner-Family Letters

As many of you know, the August delegation will be a 'virtual' one rather than an in-person one, due to the worldwide coronavirus pandemic. But we are delighted that your partner-family letters will arrive in the village to maintain our connection of friendship and solidarity. In fact, 120 partner-family letters have already been translated and delivered by email to the village for printing and distribution. We anticipate replies by August 15th, and will then arrange for their translations. Thanks to everyone for responding with letters on short notice!



Although we will be very disappointed to not spend a week with our friends in Santa María Tzejá, our August delegation leaders (Alan Clayton-Matthews, Caryl Johnson, and Bill Garrett) have been working with Ali Durbin and the community's leaders to set up a number of our usual activities remotely. In early August we hope to 'meet' with a number of the key village committees, hopefully via Zoom. Then in September we plan to engage with the community in other ways, possibly via video. Stay tuned for more details in the September FOCUS.



## Progress Toward Funding Needs in Santa María Tzejá

Our thanks to all of you who have made a donation to help the partnership replace some of the lost income from our cancelled Guatemala 'Servathon' and Guatemala Yard Sale fundraisers this spring. We are pleased to report that, through your generosity, we have now reached nearly \$6,000 toward our goal of \$10,000.

So in case there are others of you who would like to help us fulfill the educational and other needs in Santa María Tzejá, we would greatly appreciate your making a tax-deductible donation of any amount in either of two ways:

- Checks may be made payable to "Congregational Church of Needham, with the notation "Guatemala", and mailed the church at: 1154 Great Plain Ave., Needham, MA 02492.
- Go to: [Guatemalapartners.org](http://Guatemalapartners.org) and make a secure on-line donation via PayPal.

Either way, 100% of your donation will go directly to meet needs in the village. For questions, e-mail Brenda Metzler: [bmetzler7@verizon.net](mailto:bmetzler7@verizon.net). Many thanks!

## FOCUS

Contributions are welcome. Please submit materials by e-mail to [office@needhamucc.org](mailto:office@needhamucc.org).

September issue  
deadline:  
**August 24th**

Rev. John MacIver Gage  
Senior Minister  
[revjohn@needhamucc.org](mailto:revjohn@needhamucc.org)

Rev. Maddie Foster  
CE & Youth Director  
[revmaddie@needhamucc.org](mailto:revmaddie@needhamucc.org)

Valerie Becker  
Music Director  
[musicdirector@needhamucc.org](mailto:musicdirector@needhamucc.org)

Danielle Jurdan  
Administrator  
[office@needhamucc.org](mailto:office@needhamucc.org)

Cindy Sullivan  
Office Assist & Bookkeeper  
[office2@needhamucc.org](mailto:office2@needhamucc.org)

The Church Board  
[board@needhamucc.org](mailto:board@needhamucc.org)

Judith Stewart, Moderator  
[moderator@needhamucc.org](mailto:moderator@needhamucc.org)

The Deacons  
Jim Ruetenik, Chair  
[emaildeacons@needhamucc.org](mailto:emaildeacons@needhamucc.org)

Pastoral Relations  
Committee  
[prc@needhamucc.org](mailto:prc@needhamucc.org)

To provide feedback  
about any aspect of the  
church, email  
[feedback@needhamucc.org](mailto:feedback@needhamucc.org)

# News From the Board

## New COVID Advisory Team

The Board and the Deacons have created a new team, the COVID Advisory Team, to help our congregation navigate through these unprecedented times. The team will assess our use of the building, develop protocols, and evaluate the timing for our congregants, employees, and renters to re-inhabit our church property in accordance with Massachusetts Covid-19 response requirements. They will be guided by three goals:

Vibrance – the spirit and energy of our congregation will be promoted

Participation – everyone can participate fully, and

Safety – the health and wellbeing of our congregants is respected.

In addition to Rev. John, Rev. Maddie and Kristin Mollerus from the Board of Directors, the team consists of scientific and medically-trained individuals who are abreast of the ever-changing coronavirus findings and protocols:

- Phil Gotwals, Ph.D. - Deacon and Global Head of Business Development at Novartis Institute of Biomedical Research, Cambridge. He has been involved in assessing COVID situations and closing down facilities worldwide.
- Stephanie Oddleifson, MPH - Senior Health Data Analyst, Center for Quality & Safety, Massachusetts General Hospital. She completed graduate work in epidemiology and is currently part of a team building COVID analytic tools for the hospital.
- Cy Hopkins, M.D. - Retired Infectious Disease Physician at MGH, where he was the Founder and Director of their Infection Control Unit for 30 years. He also has a background in epidemiology, spent 2 years at the CDC, and is working on safety protocols at his retirement community.

The COVID Advisory Team will provide updates through Sunday service announcements, Friday Constant Contact emails and the Focus Newsletters.

## Update on sale of 1180 Great Plain Ave

The Board agreed to extend the Purchase and Sale Agreement with the buyer until October 30, 2020. The court system has started to crawl along and we hope that the Motion for Summary Judgement will be heard in the next few months. We negotiated with the buyer on the monthly payments and he agreed to pay \$3000 per month.

Judith Stewart  
Moderator

# An Update From The Deacons

The Deacons hope that you enjoyed the Vesper services that Reverend John and Reverend Maddie offered during the month of July. They were held on Wednesday nights, from 7:00 to 7:30 and broadcasted live from a Deacon's backyard.



We are working on plans for an "Invite a Friend" Sunday service in the fall. We will be providing tips and templates of how to go about inviting a friend to join in

our service. Now is a good time to share what we enjoy about our church. Your friends can experience our service from the comfort of their living room couch.

Deacons have been contacting members to inform them of the Vesper services and also to make sure they are doing well. If you know of someone who could benefit from a conversation with a Deacon, please let us know.

We are looking at ways to make better use of our Zoom account. If you have ideas of ways that we can use Zoom to help people connect with each other, please let us know.

We look forward to learning from the COVID advisory group. We feel fortunate to have such a talented and dedicated group to lead us in this important area.

## SPACE CASE

A Youth Group Mystery Theater Presentation

- Some of our youth group members have worked together to create an original mystery theater play on zoom! Watch along with us on **Friday, August 7** premiering at 7:00 pm on our Facebook page!

# ENVIRONMENTAL MINISTRIES TEAM NEWS

## ...EARTH STEWARDSHIP FOR OUR LIVES TODAY...

This summer has been a bounty for local produce. With all the local veggies try to eat



at least one vegetarian meal a week. Also remember to patronize local farms and farmer's markets. Here are the websites for the farmer's markets in

Needham: <https://needhamfarmersmarket.org/>  
Natick: <https://www.natickcenter.org/natick-farmers-market/>  
and Dedham: <https://www.dedhamsquarecircle.org/farmers-market>.

Also Volante Farms has fresh produce; <https://volantefarms.com/>.

If you have a garden at your home you can donate your extra produce to the Needham Community Council; <http://needhamcommunitycouncil.org/food-pantry/>.



This time of year the days are getting shorter making it easier for younger children to enjoy the evening sky. Find a star chart online and look up after dark to observe constellations. And just keep in mind to get outdoors and relax in the day or night.

# Outreach and the MetroWest Worker Center

The Outreach Committee was excited to share with you the informational session with the Director of the MetroWest Worker Center after service on Sunday, July 26th.

Diego Lowe, the director of the center, spoke to the Center's mission, activities, and growing needs



facing the Center due to the COVID pandemic. MetroWest Worker Center is a non-profit which works with immigrants in the Framingham and Milford area, providing assistance with wage theft, loss of work, rides to medical and other appointments, emergency food supplies, etc. Since the pandemic started, many immigrants have lost their jobs, creating an unexpected, crushing need for basic foodstuffs.

The Worker Center relies mainly on donations to provide food for immigrant families and individuals who have nowhere else to turn. Initially assisting 50 families, the need has ballooned to 700 families who come to the Center every two weeks for food packages prepared by volunteer from bulk food purchases. They estimate that they spend over \$13,000 every two weeks on this effort.

The Outreach Committee hopes that church members and friends will help these families by donating generously to this worthy cause. To that end, we have set a goal to feed 100 families throughout the month of August. While Outreach funds are very limited this year, we will match \$16 for every \$50 donation. And, we have made donating easy by adding a MetroWest Worker Center option to our PayPal site. If you wish to donate via personal check, please make your check payable to The Congregational Church of Needham with "MetroWest Worker Center" in the memo line and send it to the church's mailing address in Needham.

# Online/Mobile Church Directory

Did you know the church has an Online/Mobile Church Directory! It contains most members, staff and some active friends of the church. The directory is password protected and only available to members of our church family. You control how much information to share.

If you have questions you can use the Help tab in the directory or contact Danielle Jurdan at [office@needhamucc.org](mailto:office@needhamucc.org)

To access the Directory on your computer, go to <https://www.needhamucc.org/needhamucc-directory.html> and input your username and password. Your username is your first and last name all lowercase with no spaces. If you do not know your password you can click the "Forgot Password" link.

You can also download the App on your Smartphone and Tablet by searching "CTRN Online Directory" at your app store. You will be asked for our mobile code. It is needhamucc. When the app opens, enter your username and password, and select "remember me."



## DONT FORGET TO UPLOAD YOUR PICTURE!

If you have any questions or need any assistance, please contact the office at [office@needhamucc.org](mailto:office@needhamucc.org) or 781-444-2510.

# UNRAVELED INTERGENERATIONAL ART PROJECT

As we continue in our summer worship series, you are invited to use this weaving project to engage in prayer and reflection and create something together! Kits



are still available to begin.

We will collect your finished looms back during the last week of August. When you are done, please take a picture or video holding up your finished loom that we will include in a video reflection and email to [Revmaddie@needhamucc.org](mailto:Revmaddie@needhamucc.org).

We also have a plastic tote box by the office doors where you can place your finished piece or connect with Rev. Maddie for a porch pickup. We will display all of the physical weaving together as well as sharing the video reflection during worship.

## Drive-thru Blessing of the Backpacks

Mark you calendars now for our annual Blessing of the Backpacks! Families are invited to a drive-thru the church parking lot on **WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 9 BETWEEN 5:30-7:30 PM** so children and Youth can receive a blessing prayer along with a handmade tie-dye face mask.

We will also use our backpacks during Time for Children on Sunday, September 13 so make sure to have them handy while we worship together on zoom!



## WORSHIP, FELLOWSHIP & ADULT ED

**WORSHIP TOGETHER ONLINE**  
Sundays @10am

We'll be using Zoom and will have the same Zoom link, phone number and Meeting ID every Sunday.

The Zoom link is <https://zoom.us/j/907548568>  
The call-in number is Tel (253) 215-8782 or (301) 715-8592  
The Meeting ID number is 907 548 568.

The Congregational Church of Needham, UCC



**WORSHIP with us ONLINE** -----> SUNDAYS @ 10am  
info at [www.NeedhamUCC.org](http://www.NeedhamUCC.org)

Feel free to invite your friends and family to join us, too, no matter where they live, and share this sign-in information with them. We don't want anyone who wants to be connected with a spiritual community in this turbulent time to go without.

**PS:** *Worship each Sunday will include our celebration of holy communion. Please prepare your own elements--something to eat and drink. Hint: It doesn't have to be bread and grape juice. Most Sundays we'll have a bring-your-own coffee hour at the end of worship, so... bring your own and be prepared to mingle*

**MINDFUL MEDITATION ONLINE**  
Sundays @7pm

Stressed? Worried? Scared? Bone-Tired?

There's never been a better time

to lean into mindful meditation.



It's a way to reel in all our frayed emotional-mental-physical feelers and ground ourselves again in the present moment.

Join us online on the Zoom platform via desktop, laptop, tablet, smartphone, or landline. Please contact Sue Findlay or the office at [office@needhamucc.org](mailto:office@needhamucc.org) or 781-444-2510 for the Zoom details

**MEN'S FELLOWSHIP**  
Sunday, August 16 @ 9:15am



Men's Fellowship plans to meet with a Zoom format at 9:15. Church men will receive an emailed invitation from our Zoom host, that week. Our schedule will include a chance to introduce yourself including a personal response to the sermon topic, or chosen scripture. Join us!

John, [jsbaldwin@comcast.net](mailto:jsbaldwin@comcast.net)  
Rob, [rob@rob.com](mailto:rob@rob.com)

## Thank you! From the Ministerial Review Team

The Ministerial Review Team wishes to thank the more than 60 people who completed surveys for Reverend John and Reverend Maddie this spring. The MRT appreciates your support and values your contributions to the process. This annual review will help the MRT to create goals in the fall with John and Maddie for the next program year.

Both ministers read all of the results, shared anonymously and discussed them with members of the MRT. They welcome the feedback and insight that they received. In the midst of an unprecedented time we are fortunate to have such creative, flexible and caring ministerial leadership. Going forward, if there's a concern you wish to discuss, please don't wait for a survey; first, be in touch with John or Maddie, then, talk to the Pastoral Relations Team. We strive to be as open and as transparent a community as possible.

Ministerial Review Team:  
K.M. Abraham, Jay Carter,  
Sue Cotton, Nancy Lane,  
Barbra Morton and Sue Turner

**THANK YOU!**

# The ONA Ministry Team Shares Selections from poets.org

"As we grieve the loss of innocent lives and stand in solidarity with those calling for change, join us in reading and sharing poems addressing racial injustice, human rights, the right to protest, and imagining a more perfect union. Reflect, support, and act with these poems." From poets.org

## **A Small Needful Fact** *Ross Gay*

Is that Eric Garner worked  
for some time for the Parks and Rec.  
Horticultural Department, which means,  
perhaps, that with his very large hands,  
perhaps, in all likelihood,  
he put gently into the earth  
some plants which, most likely,  
some of them, in all likelihood,  
continue to grow, continue  
to do what such plants do, like house  
and feed small and necessary creatures,  
like being pleasant to touch and smell,  
like converting sunlight  
into food, like making it easier  
for us to breathe.

## **I, Too** *Langston Hughes*

I, too, sing America.  
I am the darker brother.  
They send me to eat in the kitchen  
When company comes,  
But I laugh,  
And eat well,  
And grow strong.  
Tomorrow,  
I'll be at the table  
When company comes.  
Nobody'll dare  
Say to me,  
"Eat in the kitchen,"  
Then.  
Besides,  
They'll see how beautiful I am  
And be ashamed —  
I, too, am America.

## **not an elegy for Mike Brown** *Danez Smith*

I am sick of writing this poem  
but bring the boy. his new name  
his same old body. ordinary, black  
dead thing. bring him & we will mourn  
until we forget what we are mourning  
& isn't that what being black is about?  
not the joy of it, but the feeling  
you get when you are looking  
at your child, turn your head,  
then, poof, no more child.  
that feeling. that's black.

think: once, a white girl  
was kidnapped & that's the Trojan war.  
later, up the block, Troy got shot  
& that was Tuesday. are we not worthy  
of a city of ash? of 1000 ships  
launched because we are missed?  
always, something deserves to be burned.  
it's never the right thing now a days.  
I demand a war to bring the dead boy back  
no matter what his name is this time.  
I at least demand a song. a song will do just fine.

look at what the lord has made.  
above Missouri, sweet smoke.





The Congregational  
Church of Needham

1154 Great Plain Avenue  
1180 Great Plain Avenue  
Needham, MA 02492-2202

T: 781-444-2510  
[office@needhamucc.org](mailto:office@needhamucc.org)

**On the web at**  
[needhamucc.org](http://needhamucc.org)

**On the twitter**  
[@needhamucc](https://twitter.com/needhamucc)

 Like us on  
**Facebook**  
Congregational Church  
of Needham UCC

## OTHER WAYS TO BE CONNECTED

As the situation continues to change beneath our feet, we are working hard to keep up and put out good resources for you and your family through all the means at our disposal. Please check in and make use of any and all of these as you feel the need. Please also let us know what you would like to see. Email Rev. John at [revjohn@needhamucc.org](mailto:revjohn@needhamucc.org) and Rev. Maddie at [revmaddie@needhamucc.org](mailto:revmaddie@needhamucc.org).

The church website: [www.NeedhamUCC.org](http://www.NeedhamUCC.org)

This is the hub to stay connected. If you lose any of these other sites or information, they'll be up there.



On Facebook: [www.facebook.com/NeedhamUCC](http://www.facebook.com/NeedhamUCC)

Sign up for our private Facebook Group: NeedhamUCC In-House Group

On Twitter: [@NeedhamUCC](https://twitter.com/NeedhamUCC)

On Instagram: [@NeedhamUCC](https://www.instagram.com/NeedhamUCC)

address

THE CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH OF  
NEEDHAM  
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST  
1154 Great Plain Avenue  
Needham, Massachusetts 02492-2202

stamp