

But so many people were coming and going that Jesus and the apostles did not even have a chance to eat. Then Jesus said, "Let's go to a place where we can be alone and get some rest." They left in a boat for a place where they could be alone.

(Mark 6:31-32)

July 1, 2020

Dear Friends,

It's July. Let that sink in a moment. It's seems both an impossibly short and impossibly long time ago that it was only March, the coronavirus pandemic was just ramping up in earnest, and for the safety of the most vulnerable among us, our friends and neighbors, we began being church in a brand new medium online. In the meantime, the world has changed, becoming simultaneously smaller and larger at the same time. Our horizons have been reduced to the four walls of our family rooms and expanded to include the movement for Black lives across the country and around the world – all of it just one focal length away on our computer screens. What a long, strange trip it's been, and how many miles we have yet to go, knowing full well that, for good or for ill, we're not going back to the way things were.

Which is why we need to take a break, just like Jesus did. Jesus stepped back from his ministry to rest and relax not only in the above passage from the Gospel According to Mark, but regularly. I know it can be a challenge to schedule such time away at the best of times, and I recognize it's even harder now. But that means it's also more necessary than ever to take time to care for what poet Mary Oliver called the "soft animal of your body," mind, heart, and soul. I will be taking two weeks back-to-back away from work in the middle of July, and Rev. Maddie will be doing the same in August. I have no idea what I'll be doing but I'm quite clear what I won't, and that's a fine place to start. I hope you are making it a priority to do the same, to change the set and scenery for a bit, even if that just means looking at the back yard instead of the front. God will be there, ready to refresh your spirit, regardless.

And church can be a part of that process as well. This summer we can reset our expectations and remind ourselves that church should be a "get to" and not a "have to." For the first time ever, you can take your time away and remain connected to what we hope is a life-giving church experience over the internet. I've noticed some folks doing that already over the past several Sundays, Zooming with us from Maine and the Cape and the Berkshires. Know that that's available to you this summer, too. During the month of July, we're also offering a program of "**Live from the Backyard**" informal vespers services of music, poetry, and prayer. Tune in **Wednesdays @ 7pm, July 8-29**. And if you'd like to be part of the small groups physically present and safely socially distant, yard party-style, for one of those Wednesday services, please contact Rev. Maddie at revmaddie@needhamucc.org.



So find some time, some place where you can sit and safely take a deep breath. It may take some practice to let those guts relax enough to make that possible. Then let it out. And do it all over again, until you can feel the ground under your feet once more, the sky overhead, the breeze on your cheek, and the Holy Spirit of God breathing with you. Lather. Rinse. Repeat. Relax.

Peace,
Rev. John MacIver Gage

Youth Group Mystery Theater:

Casting and rehearsing in July!



Youth in Jr and Sr high are invited to participate in this special event. Our script has been written especially for the zoom platform. We will practice together on Sunday evenings and record during the last two Sundays in July. Our video will premiere online in August.

There are still parts available! To participate, attend youth group on Sunday, June 28 or email Rev. Maddie

if you can't make it but would like to join in.



VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL: EVERY SUNDAY IN SUMMER

Our Sunday school classes will continue to gather through out the summer via zoom for Vacation Bible School! No rsvp is necessary, just print the materials that are emailed and log on to zoom at noon. Our summer VBS program will begin on Sunday, July 5. If you can't join us in class, there is also a family-led option - feel free to use this curriculum gathered around the dinner table or at the beach! Email Rev. Maddie with any questions.

FOCUS

Contributions are welcome. Please submit materials by e-mail to office@needhamucc.org.

August issue
deadline:
July 24th

Rev. John MacIver Gage
Senior Minister
revjohn@needhamucc.org

Rev. Maddie Foster
CE & Youth Director
revmaddie@needhamucc.org

Valerie Becker
Music Director
musicdirector@needhamucc.org

Danielle Jurdan
Administrator
office@needhamucc.org

Cindy Sullivan
Office Assist & Bookeeper
office2@needhamucc.org

The Church Board
board@needhamucc.org

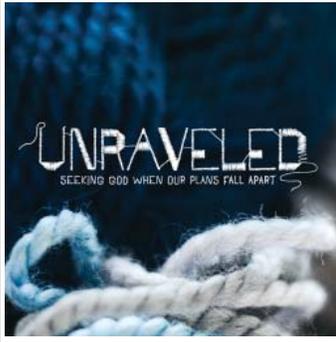
Judith Stewart, Moderator
moderator@needhamucc.org

The Deacons
Jim Ruetenik, Chair
emaildeacons@needhamucc.org

Pastoral Relations
Committee
prc@needhamucc.org

To provide feedback about
any aspect of the church,
email
feedback@needhamucc.org

Summer Worship Series Continues!



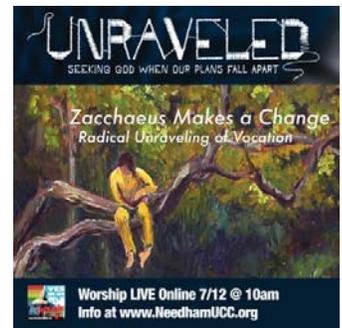
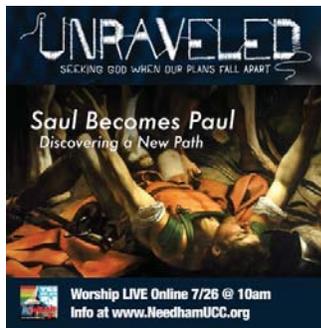
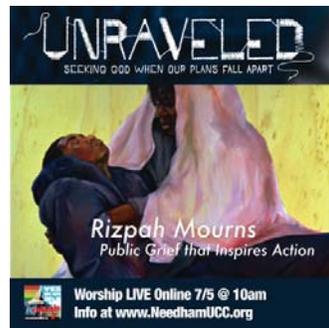
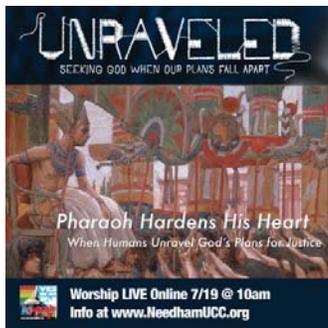
Unraveled

Seeking God When Our Plans Fall Apart

What happens when our world falls apart? (Not just an academic question these days, if it ever was one.) What does it look like to search for God in the gray area of our lives? How do we press onward when our tightly-knit plans unravel into loose threads? Sometimes we need to be unraveled – from shame, fear, patterns, or identities that cause harm. To unravel is to acknowledge and grieve what has fallen apart to allow God's newness to unfurl.

Remember, there is a full-color study journal to accompany this series, with original visual art to inspire reflection and discussion. You can download and print out the entire journal from our website at www.NeedhamUCC.org or download each week's installment from the weekly church email. (Contact our church administrator, Danielle, at office@needhamucc.org if you'd like to receive a paper copy in the mail.)

Coming Up Sundays in July...



- July 5 Rizpah Mourns: Public Grief that Inspires Action (2 Samuel 21:1-14)
- July 12 Zacchaeus Makes a Change: Radical Unraveling of Vocation (Luke 19:1-10)
- July 19 Pharaoh Hardens His Heart: When Humans Unravel God's Plans for Justice (Exodus 7:8-23)
- July 26 Saul Becomes Paul: Discovering a New Path (Acts 9:1-20)

A Message from Music

Happy Summer to Everyone,

The Chancel Choir, Section Leaders, and a few special musicians from our congregation and I have learned to adapt to new ways of making music. We hope that you are uplifted by our efforts thus far. I wanted to let you know that we will continue throughout the summer to provide music that will hopefully inspire you and your loved ones as we continue adjusting to life during Covid 19.

During the months of July and August we are lucky to be graced with music from Maggie Furtak singing our hymns, Cici Hunt, Eric Slosser, Phil Gotwals, Soomi Lee Lowry, Bruce Goody, Carolyn MacGregor, and Sharmon and Katherine Rock.

If there are other members of our congregation that would like to share their gifts of music please contact me at musicdirector@needhamucc.org.

Looking forward to more wonderful music.
Valerie



FROM THE BOARD

Mid-Year Update from the Board and Deacons (Summary of the meeting on June 14)

Introduction-- Judith Stewart, Moderator

We started the year with great energy and enthusiasm for Rev. John's ministry and this exciting new chapter in the life of this church. After his first year we had gotten to know John and come to appreciate his innovative ideas, his ability to nudge us in new directions, and his inspirational leadership. Rev. John had learned a lot about us as well--the creativity, passion, strengths and quirks of this wonderful congregation. Rev. Maddie has been blossoming in front of us and all the possibilities of her ministry were becoming apparent. We had big plans for this year and we had great events early including the Period Party in February which drew a number of folks from the community. Then COVID19 hit and we had to do a very quick pivot. Rev. John and Rev. Maddie have done an exceptional job adapting our activities to an online format and keeping the congregation engaged from near and far. Church leaders are so appreciative of all of you and your embrace of all the changes that have unfolded since mid-March.

COVID19-- Jim Ruetenik, Chair of Deacons

The Board and the Deacons have voted unanimously to continue the online worship services through the summer.

To establish a plan going forward, we are putting together a small committee of highly qualified and committed individuals to review the science and the recommendations from government entities. Our commitment to safety and inclusion will guide us in making decisions, both for our parishioners and for our renters. We are taking this time to make sure that when the day comes that we can get together, we are prepared to do so safely.

We are trying to balance our desire to get together with the risks inherent in being together. We have decided that it is in the interest of every individual who attends the church, and for the church as a whole to move deliberately and thoughtfully. We are working on ways that we can continue to expand our programs and services and begin to prepare ourselves for when we can gather together.

Along those lines, we will be adding a Wednesday night vesper service for the month of July. We will be on-location in the back yards of 4 Deacon's homes. Small groups of people who have been vigorously selected for safety and observe social distancing, will

take turns leading the service. We will also include music in the vesper service.

Financial update-- Trish Marinilli, Director and Chair of Finance Team

Operations

Given uncertainty regarding rental income and payments from the buyer of 1180 Great Plain Avenue, the Board has been very carefully stewarding our financial resources. Through May, our financial results are looking solid compared to our budget. Revenues are \$10k favorable to plan while expenses are \$23k favorable to plan.

- Revenues: \$10.4K better
 - Congregational giving is \$49k ahead of plan, primarily due to timing as many pledges have been paid in full. There are some pledges that have not had any partial payments made. The shortfall in pledges will not be apparent until later in the year.
 - We haven't yet drawn down the budgeted funds from the Endowment. We had anticipated needing to draw these funds in July, but it won't needed until approximately September / October with receipt of the \$74k Payroll Protection Plan loan.
 - Rental income is down slightly by about \$4k. We're expecting to see that rental income total as compared to the budget to be down even more in the coming months with reduced rent from tenants expected for at least three more months.
 - Other income is a little ahead due to additional payments from the buyer for 1180 as we budgeted payments through March the then expiration of P&S. The P&S extension through July continued those payments but the church agreed to waive the payments from the buyer in May and June due to the shutdown of the courts.
- Expenses: \$23.3k favorable to plan
 - YTD, church operations haven't added additional dollars to the Outreach fund, which accounts for nearly half of the favorable variance (\$10k). There was extensive discussion about the Outreach line items and its targeted breakdown at the Annual Meeting and further discussion / clarification was planned. That was delayed with COVID-19 but will resume in the weeks ahead.
 - Denomination assessment is \$4.6k favorable, but this is timing as it has not yet been billed. Last year it was paid in second half of the year.
 - Minister / staff compensation is slightly over budget, which is due to timing and benefits.
 - Music is slightly under but close to budget.

Continued on pg 5

FROM THE BOARD

Continued from pg 4

| Summary Operating Statement – Year to Date May 31, 2020 | | | | | | |
|---|-------------------|------------------|------------------|---------------------------|-------|--|
| | 2020 | 31-May-20 | 31-May-20 | Favorable / (unfavorable) | | |
| 000s | Annual Budget | Budget YTD | Actual YTD | (\$) | (%) | |
| REVENUE | | | | | | |
| Pledges | \$ 377.9 | \$ 157.5 | \$ 201.2 | \$ 43.7 | 28% | |
| Other Member Contributions | 35.0 | 14.6 | 20.0 | 5.4 | 37% | |
| Endowment | 96.1 | 40.0 | - | (40.0) | -100% | |
| Rentals | 110.0 | 45.8 | 42.0 | (3.9) | -8% | |
| Other/Miscellaneous | 36.3 | 15.1 | 20.3 | 5.2 | 34% | |
| | 655.323 | 273.051 | 283.473 | 10.422 | 4% | |
| OPERATING EXPENSES | | | | | | |
| Outreach | 25.0 | 10.4 | - | 10.4 | 100% | |
| Minister & Staff | 472.1 | 196.7 | 200.3 | (3.6) | -2% | |
| Education & Worship | 17.0 | 7.1 | 4.4 | 2.7 | 38% | |
| Music | 78.2 | 32.6 | 31.6 | 1.0 | 3% | |
| Parish Admin | 38.3 | 16.0 | 10.5 | 5.5 | 34% | |
| Building Maintenance | 142.1 | 59.2 | 53.3 | 5.9 | 10% | |
| 1180 GPA | 9.3 | 7.7 | 8.1 | (0.4) | -5% | |
| Other | 34.9 | 23.3 | 21.5 | 1.8 | 8% | |
| | 816.8 | 352.9 | 329.619 | 23.3 | 7% | |
| Operating Surplus / (Deficit) | \$ (161.5) | \$ (79.9) | \$ (46.1) | \$ 33.7 | | |

- Building maintenance items are mostly under budget particularly with utilities. Just outdoor maintenance is a little over due to snow conditions in the winter.
- Interest on the Bank loan for the 1180 property is a little over budget. This loan matures at the end of June and we just heard the Bank will extend the current loan through year end.

Endowment

Finance has met with Dave Dirks, the financial manager and former Moderator of the church, twice during the first half in March during early weeks of COVID-19 and most recently in late May. Markets have been volatile and have partially recovered from low point in March. As of 5/26, endowment value was back over \$2.2 million, which was down 7.8% YTD. Some modest rebalancing was needed to stay within tolerance levels in the Church's investment plan approved in 2017. Cash position was increased in that process to assure funds are available as needed.

Outlook

For the remainder of the year, Finance will continue to work with the Board to monitor our financials:

- We'll monitor impact in rental income with existing tenants as reopening expands. At this point, it looks as if schools will be reopening buildings in some fashion.
- P&S with 1180 buyer will need to be extended. The continuation of monthly payments to support 1180 is potentially at risk and the timing of sale is uncertain.
- The Finance team will support the Board's efforts to make progress on the \$160k operating deficit, identifying and exploring feasibility of increasing rental income and what building improvements would be needed as well as looking at ways we can trim expenses because it's not likely that the deficit can be resolved only on the revenue side.
- COVID-19 has severely constrained our ability to come together and draw in new members. COVID-19 has negatively affected the value of our Endowment and the ability of our tenants to pay rent. The sale of 1180 has been delayed. Receipt of the PPP funds will help substantially and the rules for use of those funds to qualify for forgiveness have loosened somewhat.
- Needham Bank has approved extension of the loan from June 30 to the end of the year.

GARDEN OF EATIN: FOOD JUSTICE GARDEN TOUR



As we continue to grow vegetables in our Garden of Eatin' for local food pantries, we'd like to invite you to participate in this justice work by joining in creating a virtual garden tour. Each individual or family who participates will receive a short script and directions on how to film their portion - you have the month of July to find your favorite spot in your garden, film, and get that recording the Rev. Maddie. We'll put all of these together into our video for folks to learn about food justice and explore how our faith asks us to respond.

To participate, email revmaddie@needhamucc.org

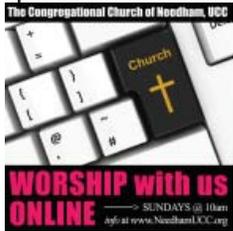


WORSHIP, FELLOWSHIP & ADULT ED

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.

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 or

781-444-2510 for the Zoom details

MEN'S FELLOWSHIP

Sunday, July 19 @ 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 say hello/ introduce yourself including a personal response to the sermon topic, or chosen scripture. That Sunday's example of "Unraveling" will be: Pharaoh Hardens His Heart to Moses' Requests: When Humans Unravel God's Plans for Justice, Exodus 7:8-23

Well wishing,
John, jsbaldwin@comcast.net
Rob, rob@robd.com

UNRAVELED: INTERGENERATIONAL ART PROJECT

You are invited to participate in this artistic reflection as we explore the Unraveled worship series this



summer. Over the next two months we will work individually to create a hoop loom and weave our prayers into it using strips of fabric and fiber. At the end of the summer series, we will collect these into one



communal art project.

Rev. Maddie will create videos on how to make your loom and begin your weaving and you'll work at your own pace to add to and complete your piece.

To participate, please email your address to RevMaddie@needhamucc.org and we will arrange a porch/contact-less drop off of materials.



ONA Team News

The ONA Ministry Team
Recommends...

DONATE TO SUPPORT BLACK LIVES

The footage of the horrifying deaths of Ahmaud Arbery, George Floyd and Rayshard Brooks, and the marches and demonstrations for Black Lives provoke much emotion. The effects of violence are not just somewhere else; they are right here in Greater Boston.

Here are three organizations where you can donate to make a positive impact on people's lives.



VIOLENCE IN BOSTON violenceinboston.org

"Poverty is punishment for a crime you didn't commit." The mission of Violence in Boston is to improve the quality of life & life outcomes of individuals from disenfranchised communities by reducing the prevalence of violence and the impact of associated trauma.

VIB was founded Monica Cannon Grant, a committed community member, and is a public, private and crowd-funded organization. Partners include Boston Mayor Martin J. Walsh, the Rev. Liz Walker, Minister Randy Muhammad and former Boston mayoral candidate Tito Jackson.

BLACK VISIONS COLLECTIVE blackvisionsmn.org

Their site explains: "We aim to center our work in healing and transformative justice principles, intentionally develop our organizations core "DNA" to ensure sustainability, and develop Minnesota's emerging Black leadership to lead powerful campaigns. By building movements from the ground up with an integrated model, we are creating the conditions for long term success and transformation."

THE BAIL PROJECT bailproject.org "The Bail Project National Freedom should be free.™"

Revolving Bail Fund is a critical tool to prevent incarceration and combat racial and economic disparities in the bail system. We believe that paying bail for someone in need is an act of resistance against a system that criminalizes race and poverty and an act of solidarity with local communities and movements for decarceration."

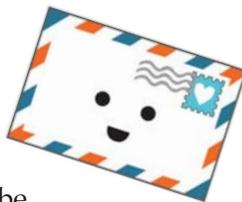


August Delegation Update

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. Although we will be very disappointed to not spend a week with our friends in Santa María Tzejá and to interrupt our string of 33 years of twice-yearly delegations, we plan to hold a number of our usual activities remotely and perhaps even add some new ones. In 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, so stay tuned for more details to follow.

URGENT -- Partner-Family Letters DUE JULY 1st

We are pleased to announce that, with the collaboration of folks on both sides of the partnership, we will be exchanging Partner Family letters as usual this delegation, but it will happen electronically. The Computer Center director has agreed to receive the letters from Dave Johnson via e-mail and print them out, and the Improvement Committee has agreed to distribute the letters to families and collect the



responses to send back to Needham for translation and return to you.

So please do your part by writing your partner-family letter ASAP, and send it by the July 1st deadline to: davebjohnson77@gmail.com. Our volunteer translators need 4-5 weeks to convert your English letters to Spanish, so please don't delay. Keep in mind that, in the absence of an in-person delegation, your letters are more important than ever -- as an expression of your friendship, support, and care for the families you write.

Opportunity to Support Needs in Santa María Tzejá

As the partnership tries to replace some of the lost income from the cancelled Guatemala 'Servathon' and the Guatemala Yard Sale fundraisers, we are reaching out to various members of our church community. If you receive more than one request for support, please accept our apologies. And whether or not you have been asked directly, we would greatly appreciate your making a tax-deductible donation of any amount in either of two ways:

1. 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.
2. Go to: 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. Thank you.



The Congregational
Church of Needham

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

T: 781-444-2510
office@needhamucc.org

On the web at
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 and Rev. Maddie at revmaddie@needhamucc.org.

The church website: 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

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