



Guatemala Delegation ReportBack, Sunday, March 15, 11:30 am, Linden Hall.

The church's February delegation has recently returned from Guatemala, and the travelers are excited to share their experiences and insights from the trip. Please join us for a lively Powerpoint presentation and hear what's happening in our sister village, while enjoying some light refreshments. Attending this presentation is the best way to get an idea of the delegation experience. Your next opportunity to join a delegation will be in August, per the information below.

August 2020 Delegation: Sign-ups Open

Bill Garrett and Caryl Johnson invite you to join the August 2020 delegation to Guatemala. Youth and adult travelers are welcome. Trip dates are August 5-16, 2020. In addition to visiting the village of Santa María Tzejá for a week, recent travelers have visited world-class museums on Guatemalan and Mayan history, studied the causes and effects of migration from the perspective of a developing country, met with leading human rights organizations, and experienced Mayan social and religious traditions. Total trip cost is approximately \$1,500 per person including airfare. Sign-up is open until early April or when the delegation is full. Don't miss this unique experience. Please contact Bill Garrett (wgarrett@mit.edu) or Caryl Johnson (caryljohnson@gmail.com) with your interest or questions.

Guatemala 'Servathon' - Saturday, April 18th - Sponsors/Workers Needed

The Guatemala Partnership is seeking sponsors and volunteer workers for our day of community-service work at the church and around Needham. We hope you'll support a volunteer who may ask for your pledge. Proceeds will support education in Santa María Tzejá. For questions or to work, please contact Nancy Lane at: nrlane6@hotmail.com.

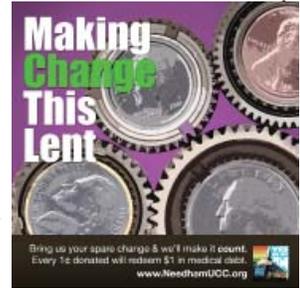
Guatemala Yard Sale, May 16: Save the Date and Your Treasures!

As you do your spring cleaning in March and April, please set aside any items in clean, working condition that you would like to donate to the Guatemala Yard Sale (no clothing). Desired items are: Kitchen and household items, children's gear, toys, puzzles and games, current sports equipment, bikes, collectible or vintage items, jewelry, artwork, electronics (no TV's or computers), books/DVD's/records, outdoor furniture, or small indoor furniture items. Donors are asked to hold their donations until the week before the yard sale. More details will be shared next month. For questions or to volunteer, please contact Brenda Metzler: bmetzler7@verizon.net.

Dear Friends,

Did you know that:

- every day 79,000,000 Americans make the choice between paying their medical bills or basic needs like food and shelter?
- 66% of all bankruptcies are tied to medical debt issues?
- 25% of all U.S. credit card debt is for medical debt?



The United Church of Christ nationally and here in Southern New England is dedicated to making a concrete difference in the lives of people in our communities by buying up the medical debt of our poorest neighbors (at just pennies on the dollar) and forgiving it. Poof! It's gone. It's hard to take "preaching good news to the poor" much more literally!

Last summer UCC churches in the Chicago area formed partnerships with other community organizations and forgave more than \$5 million in debt for nearly 6,000 low-income families on Chicago's South Side. In St. Louis, local churches raised and matched enough funds to buy and forgive more than \$13 million in debt on behalf of more than 11,000 households.

And now it's our turn! To honor the recent partnership of Massachusetts, Connecticut, and Rhode Island UCC churches in the new Southern England Conference, church leaders are asking every single UCC congregation in the region to find a way to participate together in a massive, radical act of love to literally redeem some of our poorest neighbors from medical debt slavery (with the help of the non-profit www.RIPMedicalDebt.org).

So we are collecting donations of POCKET CHANGE (and, c' mon, we all have a jar of it sitting around at home!) during this Lenten season to help MAKE CHANGE--real, life-giving change--for our neighbors in need. Those quarters, nickels, dimes, and even pennies add up, SO BRING YOUR CHANGE TO CHURCH, and together, through faith, we'll turn it into a very real kind of resurrection for Easter!

Peace, Rev. John

A MESSAGE FROM THE BOARD

The Board welcomed our three new members—Sue Cotton, Trish Marinilli, and Heather Salerno-- at the retreat on February 8. We had an engaging morning with Deacons studying scripture and brainstorming about the role of the Church and our roles as leaders of the Church. In the afternoon the Board of Directors convened and we established our subcommittees/ teams: Stewardship, Nominating, Finance, Personnel Support, Property, Ministerial Review, Membership, and 1180 GPA. The Membership team, a new joint effort with the Deacons, will determine what the church needs to be doing to follow up with visitors and to

orient new members. We reviewed all of the contracts overseen by the Board and the issues which are under current consideration and we anticipate this year.

One of the top priorities is to work with the Outreach Committee to determine a clearer understanding of how the new line item Outreach budget will work.

Regarding the sale of 1180 Great Plain Avenue, the buyer recently offered to extend the Purchase and Sale Agreement for four months to the end of July. The Board voted to accept the extension. The buyer has not been able to successfully negotiate with the abutter to 1180 who filed the appeal of the Zoning Board decision, so we shall await the legal process.

FOCUS

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

April issue deadline:
March 25th

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 & Bookkeeper
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



OPEN AND AFFIRMING
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

A Little ONA history...

ONA Team News

Open and Affirming is 20 years old in our church. We were the 322nd church in the UCC to be certified as ONA. In 1984, the historic Massachusetts Conference adopted the original Open and Affirming resolution at its annual meeting. Elements from this resolution and one from the Rocky Mountain Conference became part of a national the ONA resolution adopted by the UCC's General Synod. It would launch the Open and Affirming program. The resolution called on all churches to be open to and affirming of all lesbian, gay and bisexual people. Regrettably, it took until 2003 for the UCC's General Synod to adopt a resolution affirming the gifts and ministries of transgender people.



Thirty-five later, there are over 1600 ONA churches in the United Church of Christ and 191 in the Historic Massachusetts Conference.

ONA was intended to affirm LGBTQ people in the church, but the understanding of ONA is no longer limited to those groups. God's welcome and the principles of full inclusion make sense only if applied to any person or group that is marginalized because of their identity, background, experience or life circumstance.

We are called to share the news of God's Extravagant Welcome. This means acknowledging the worth of people who come from places, speak languages, think, or have life experiences, opportunities and identities different from ourselves or from the majority. It means getting outside of our own experiences and privilege and hearing other stories. It does not mean standing at the door and deciding that some of God's people deserve the welcome and others do not. It's God's welcome. Our call is to be vehicles to let that news shine.



ENVIRONMENTAL MINISTRIES TEAM NEWS

...COVENANT WITH CREATION..

The EMT is proposing a small change to our church covenant, which will take into account our church's commitment to care for all of God's creation. The change is in keeping with the UCC's commitment to creation justice and with the current climate crisis, we feel that this is a good time to make this change. Here is the proposed change to the covenant:

At the Congregational Church of Needham, United Church of Christ, we strive to be a joyful, welcoming Christian Community. We seek to be faithful in a world torn by suffering, injustice, oppression, and war. We are inspired by God, Christ's Ministry, and the examples of other faithful people. We join together in worship and song, fellowship, study, and mission to embrace the risks and challenges of continuing Christ's ministry. We struggle to live out our faith in the world by furthering justice and peace, witnessing to the truth, and proclaiming God's love and mercy for all creation (replacing people in the old covenant).

Our committee and the church have taken many steps to reduce our carbon footprint and have provided many educational programs about environmental issues to the congregation over the past decade. Here is a list of EMT's accomplishments over the past decade,

EMT: 2008 - 2019

12 Years Building Climate Awareness & Leading Church Action to Reduce Member, Church & Community Carbon Footprint

NOTE:

- Church was awarded Level 1 Green Church Certification from the MA State UCC Chapter (2012);
- Church has subsequently met all requirements for Level 2 (of 3) Honor Role Certification (plan to apply for official award in 2020 and become the 11th member of the Level 2 Honor Role)

Education:

- Café Screened 8 Documentary Films to our Climate Change Cafe:
 - Renewal (Men's group watched Renewal and discussed)
 - The Story of Stuff
 - The Great Work, Father Thomas Berry
 - The True Cost
 - Paris to Pittsburgh
 - The Devil We Know (sponsored by Clean Water Action & Clean Water Fund)
 - Made in God's Image
 - Time to Choose (with UU church)
- Led 2 Book Reading Groups: (Other Books about

the Environment donated to library)

- The End of Night by Paul Bogard
- The Great Tiding Rising by Catherine Dean Moore

Invited 2 Guest Speakers to Climate Change Cafe

- Vince Maraventano (Dir. MA Interfaith Power & Light re: lowering carbon footprint)
- Alan Clayton Matthews ("Trends in the Rise of Greenhouse Gases and Climate Change from Economist's Perspective")

Regular sharing of Infomation with Congregation at Coffee Hours, via Focus (sample only)

- 'Green Tips of the Week' (in Focus Bulletin)
- Garden Fliers (Coffee Hour table handout)
- 'Carbon Offsets - What it Means'
- Photos of Members Gardens (posted on EMT Bulletin Board)

- Mass Home Save Energy Audits offered free to congregational members
- Green Cleaning Coaching to avoid using chemicals toxic
- "Made in God's Image" personal choices matter-personal care products

Worship:

- Associate Minister Werder preached on 'God & Reverence' (April 2015)
- Rev. Betsy Sowers, guest preacher (summer 2017)
- Advent Sermons incorporated Environmental themes (2018)
- Rev. Vince Maraventano as guest preacher (2019)
- Lenten Carbon Fast (2018, 19)

Church Action Activities, Green Initiatives (sample):

- Church Fair: table with 'Re-use it, re-purpose it' objects
- Church Fair lights powered by cycling
- Gave away LED lights at Coffee Hour
- KITCHEN related:
 - switched from disposable cups to church coffee mugs
 - set up outdoor composting bin and organized weekly composting after coffee hours (including altar flower waste)
 - acquired recycling bins for plastics
 - drafted kitchen policies for rentals and plastic uses
- donated old cell phones for soldiers
- Helped start Needham Farmers' market
- Supported Needham Community Farm during inception

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- Initiated Spring Walk/Bike to church
- Collected Christmas cards to be re-used for gift tags
- Letter to Board requested for Carbon Footprint Reduction of 25% by 2020; 80% by 2050
- Purchased, installed bike rack
- Distributed free produce bags to replace store plastic bags
- Collected plastic bags for responsible recycling and re-use (2019)
- Matting for Change with plastic bags collected (2019)

Advocacy: Rallies, Marches, Community & Political Action, Outreach (sample):

- Organized members to attend Climate March in DC (2017), Science March in Boston, rally at Moakley Federal Courthouse in Boston to support student court case, Juliana vs. US (wo seek people’s right to a habitable planet)
- Organized letter-writing campaigns to advocate for ‘dark sky compliant’ LED streetlights in Needham, and to Congress after Citizens’ Climate Lobby film screening at church
- Organized Adult & Youth volunteers for Summer environmental service (2016)
- Organized Adult & Youth volunteers for Earth Day service (2018, 2019)
- Participated in Community gardening and farming at church and in Needham

Initiated over a dozen Improvements to Church Building Environmental Impact (in order to fulfill requirements for MA state UCC Honor Role Level 2 Certification)

- 2009 Energy Audit (led to free CFLs 30% savings in electricity; 7 trucks loads of free insulation)
- 2010, 2016: Feasibility study done for solar panels on south roof (presented to board)
- 2013: Board endorsed proposed carbon footprint goals of -25% by 2020 and -80% by 2050.
- 2015 New Gas Condensing Boilers installed (23% carbon reduction, \$10-15K/annual savings; donated epicurean dinner for 6 people in boiler room to raise \$ at Church Fair.
- Installed faucet aerators, low flush adapters, water bottle filler with purifier
- Cleaned fin-tube radiation units
- Motion sensor lights installed
- 2019 Lighting changed to LEDs for free
- Changed outdoor lights to ‘dark sky compliant’ LEDs
- ‘Set-Back’ thermostats installed
- Electric hand drier installed in women’s restroom
- Changed to environmentally friendly hand soaps in restrooms
- converted to Smart Power Strips for office computers
- Converted sprayer in dishwasher to more energy efficient model
- Got grant from Green Needham for new upright freezer to reduce carbon footprint
- Reduced carbon footprint by 50% from 2009 to 2020.

ONCE IN A WHILE CHOIR SINGING AT 9AM SERVICE ON EASTER!

We have officially been invited to sing at the 9 am service on Easter morning, April 12. This service will be geared for families and will be approximately 45 minutes in length. Then there’s a big pot-luck brunch to be enjoyed by the whole church followed by a second service at 11 am which will feature the Chancel Choir.

I am looking to have two Sunday morning rehearsals, from 9-9:50 on Sundays March 22 and April 5 in Fellowship Hall. We will gather on Easter morning, on the 12th of April, in the sanctuary at 8:15 and sing at 9.

I hope you will be able to join in

the musical celebration!!

If you know of anyone who would like to join in this wonderful music making, please pass this message along to them. Even if they’ve never sung in a choir, they have a place in our choir. No age requirement and no audition.

Looking forward to seeing everybody along the way and especially on those rehearsal dates. If you are able to come just one of those two dates, I totally understand. We will keep your seat open for you.

I hope to put the music onto audio files to allow for easier learning of the songs.

Looking forward to our singing together.

Blessings, Cici

Tabletalk Potlucks Lent 2020



Over the Lenten season, we’re hoping to gather as many members and friends of the church to share small meals together we’re calling TableTime Potlucks. You pick one of the dates and times we’ve scheduled (3/8, 14, 21, 22, 28, 29 @6pm or 3/29 @noon) and the office will put together parties of 8-10 folks for a meal of potluck “heavy hors d’oeuvres” and dessert. A pastor and a Deacon will attend, too, just to help conversation flow as we get to know one another (again) as members of this community of faith.

You can sign up online at <https://www.needhamucc.org/tabletime2020.html> or call the church office.

FELLOWSHIP & ADULT ED

10,000 MEALS PACKING EVENT Noon, Sunday, March 22

All are welcome to pack meals for needy families at the Outreach Committee's 2nd Annual Meal-packing event on Sun., March 22nd! We've arranged for the materials, equipment, and processes necessary to pack 10,000 meals to be distributed to needy families across New England. All we need is you!



Packing will take place in Fellowship Hall at noon. Anyone is welcome to register; families, children, and friends are encouraged. Register at <https://www.needhamucc.org/10000-meals.html>

COMMUNITY DINNERS 6-7pm, March 3, April 7, May 5

Dinners coincide with monthly Baby Basics Diaper distribution. Volunteers are welcome to help with set up, cooking, serving, visiting, eating and cleaning up with our Baby Basics families. Please contact Diana Conroy (conroyjd@rcn.com) if you are interested in helping out.

CANCER SUPPORT GROUP Thursdays 9:15am

Our Cancer Support Group will meet Thursday mornings. You can contact Rev. Maddie (revmaddie@needhamucc.org) for more information. Come, if you need an extra hug or prayer said for yourself or a family member.



PASTOR'S COFFEE HOURS Tuesdays, 10am-Noon @ Volante Farms, Needham

Rev. John holds regular coffee office hours in the café section of Volante Farms at 292 Forest Street.

If you've a moment free, drop by for some informal conversation and fellowship in a relaxed setting. (For private pastoral conversations, just email or call Rev. John at 781-444-2510 to set up an appointment.)

MEN'S FELLOWSHIP BREAKFAST Sunday, March 15, April 19

The Men's Fellowship Breakfast brings men of all ages together in the Library on the 3rd Sunday of the month before worship in honest and lively discussion touching our faith and our lives in today's complex world. Arrive at 8:15 AM for fellowship and breakfast or by 9:00 AM for the discussion. Contact: John Baldwin (jsbaldwin@comcast.net) or Rob Dunlavey (rob@robd.com) for more information.

THURSDAY & LENT SOUP LUNCH Noon -1pm, March 5, 12, 19, 26, April 2, May 7

Lent Soup lunches begin the Thursday after Ash Wednesday and continue until the Thursday before Palm Sunday.

Monthly Soup luncheons are on the first Thursday of the month at 12 noon in our Library. All are welcome - bring your friends and neighbors!

MEDITATION GROUP 11:30am, March 8 & 22

The meditation/mindfulness group meets twice each month after the church service. The group is open to everyone, no prior experience needed. We will explore various types of meditation practice, including mindfulness. If you have any questions feel free to call or email Sue Findlay, 781-455-8056; sgfindlay1@gmail.com

BIBLE STUDY Sundays at 11:30am - Small Conference Room

Would you like to learn more about the Bible but feel that you don't know where to start? Please join us for Bible Study after church. We will be reading sections from Exodus and Joshua this fall, about the founding of Israel. No preparation needed! We read a few chapters together and reflect on how God is still speaking to us today through His word.

2020 WOMEN'S RETREAT Friday, May 8-9

Save the date - 2020 Women's Retreat. Friday evening 5/8 to Saturday afternoon 5/9. 20 hours away that feels like a vacation. New location Rolling Ridge Conference Center, North Andover

UPCOMING FELLOWSHIP EVENTS 2020 MARK YOUR CALENDARS!

- **March 8, 14, 21, 22, 28, & 29** - Tabletalk Potlucks
- **March 14th** - Serving Community Lunch at Pilgrim Church, 9am
- **March 22nd** - 10,000 Meals Packing Event
- **April 4** - Spiritual Spa Day
- **April 5** - Walk for Hunger
- **May 8-9** - Save the date - 2020 Women's Retreat.





The Congregational
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**SAVE
THE
DATE**

Walk A Thon to Support Family Promise of Metrowest

Join the Team from the Needham Congregational Church in the 11th Annual Walk to End Homelessness. Note the new day and time of

SUNDAY APRIL 5 at 12:30 at NATICK HIGH SCHOOL.

The 2.5 mile family friendly and dog welcoming walk will include booths, food and music. Join our team or sponsor the team or a waker by registering at <https://www.familypromisemetrowest.org/news-events/events.html>. Contact Vance Fernandez (vancefernandez@hotmail.com) with questions.

address

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