



Dear Friends,

I hope you are finding time for rest and relaxation this summer and finding ways to let the Spirit find you and speak peace to your heart. For sure, this summer has not turned out how we hoped, prayed, and needed it to be over the last 18 months, likely not for any of us. And yet... And yet... God is still speaking, not in the rising tide of the renewed pandemic, but in our faithful response to it as we continue to love God, love our neighbors, and love ourselves in these trying times. I continue to be grateful for your grace under pressure as a congregation and your willingness to hold onto this core of our faith and life together – mutual love – even as almost everything else changes around us.

I am especially grateful for our officers, boards and committees, staff and other leaders, who continue to manifest incredible resilience and creativity in guiding our response as a congregation, centering our threefold goal of (1) safeguarding our health, (2) remaining a vibrant faith community, and (3) maintaining our commitment to equity for all our members. Fully hybrid, simultaneously in-person and remote worship has been up and running for a month now, and it has been a blessing for those at home and those in the sanctuary. We owe David Libby and our new cadre of audiovisual techs-in-training a debt of gratitude for this gift.

As we head toward the fall, our COVID Advisory Team of faithful experts continue to review the advancing science of the pandemic and have made the following recommendations for our congregation **beginning Homecoming Sunday, September 12**. These protocols have been unanimously endorsed by the Boards of Deacons and Directors.

- **Masks remain required for all persons 2+ years old for all indoor in-person church events.**
- We will continue to collect contact tracing information at all church events.
- Seating in the sanctuary will be every other pew, with family groups separated by 6' social distance.
- **We will begin singing again, masked!** This goes for the congregation, choirs, and soloists.
- **We will gather outside for conversation after worship, weather permitting** (coffee hour, without the coffee).
- **Children's church school during worship will return** in a large one-room classroom format, with all children masked and sat socially distanced by family groups. A recorded version of each lesson will be made available to those not able to attend in person.
- Youth group will continue to meet Sunday afternoons, outdoors or masked and indoors.
- We will continue to post worship bulletins as PDFs online and in the weekly email. Necessary words will be projected in the sanctuary.

These protocols remain necessary, per the CDC, because while Norfolk County vaccination rates are very high and our COVID risk is rated "moderate," nearby Suffolk County is rated "substantial" and Barnstable County on the Cape, "high." In addition, many, if not most of our members fall into the category of those for whom masking indoors is strongly recommended due to age or underlying health conditions.

Quite simply, this is how we love our neighbors and ourselves in these extraordinary circumstances. Thank you for continuing to respond to the call to love.

Peace,
Rev. John Gage



COVID Vaccination Advances in Santa María Tzejá:

While most of Guatemala is still only vaccinating people aged 40 plus, the US recently donated 1.5 million doses of the Moderna vaccine to the country, targeted to rural areas like Santa María Tzejá and available for adults of all ages. Intrepid health workers are crossing rivers using rope bridges and cables to carry the vaccine to remote sites.

In Santa María, 184 people received the first dose of Moderna over a 2-day period in July. A couple hundred other community members, specifically health workers and those aged 50 plus, had previously received the Astra-Zeneca or Sputnik vaccine. The Guatemala Partnership celebrates the arrival of Covid vaccines in Santa María Tzejá and looks forward to a future when the pandemic is over and our two communities can meet in person again.

Reminder! Guatemala Yard Sale on September 18th at the Church

This is a quick reminder to ask you to save your donations and your

volunteering time for the upcoming Guatemala Yard Sale, to be held Saturday, Sept. 18th from 9 am - 2 pm at the Church (outside on the lawn). We are now recruiting volunteers to: a) sort and price items at the church during the prior week (Sept. 13-17); and/or b) work at the sale on Sept. 18th (Help needed: 7:00 am - 4:00 pm). Please contact Brenda Metzler anytime at: bmetzler7@verizon.net to volunteer.



The September FOCUS will publicize where and when you can drop off your donations. In the meantime, please save the following:

ITEMS WANTED (in clean, working order):

Kitchen and household items, children's gear, toys, games, and puzzles for all ages, current sports equipment (from recent ski boots to lacrosse or hockey gear, etc.), bikes, collectible or vintage items, jewelry, framed artwork, electronics (no TV's or computers), books, DVD's/records, or small furniture items. Contact Brenda with any questions. Thanks.

FOCUS

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

September issue deadline: **August 25th**

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Judith Stewart, Moderator
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The Deacons
Nancy Lane, Chair
emaildeacons@needhamucc.org

Pastoral Relations Committee
prc@needhamucc.org

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

HYBRID WORSHIP Sundays @10am



As we gather this summer, we hope you will join us, either live in the sanctuary or live via Zoom, as the Spirit leads you. If you choose to participate via

Zoom, nothing will change. **The Zoom link is**

<https://zoom.us/j/907548568>

The call-in number is (253) 215-8782 or (301) 715-8592,

The Meeting ID number is 907 548 568.

If you choose to participate in the sanctuary, here's what you need to know:

- You do not need to sign up ahead of time.
- Enter from the parking lot through the door by the office. If you or a loved one need to use the ramp, please contact revjohn@needhamucc.org ahead of time and plan to park in front of the church along Great Plain Ave.
- Bring and wear your mask.
- Dress comfortably. It's summer, and the sanctuary is not air conditioned.
- Give your name to the ushers to help us with contact tracing.
- Maintain social distance. You can choose your own seat anywhere in the green areas in the Sanctuary. Families may sit together.
- We will not sing, not yet.
- Bathroom facilities will be available on a one-at-a-time basis.
- There will be no childcare and no in-person Sunday school.

COMING UP IN WORSHIP IN AUGUST



August 1, "Group Project"

Last week, we were reminded that when we feel small and insignificant in the face of the challenges of our world, we are never alone. Even "drops in the bucket" can turn the wheel, together. This week, we reflect on the challenges such a "group project" approach presents (Have you read the news lately?) and the opportunities, as we share our diverse gifts toward a common purpose: abundant life for all. (Ephesians 4:1-17) **This will be a hybrid worship service. *We will celebrate holy communion—bring your own food and drink!***

August 8, "Burning Yet Unconsumed: Rethinking Rage"

Anger traditionally has been rated one of the 7 Deadly Sins in Western European Christianity, and it certainly can be destructive. But is it always? Is there ever a proper, righteous anger that burns but does not consume us or others? And what do we lose when we try to keep our anger in the closet? (Ephesians 4:25-5:2) **This will be a hybrid worship service.**

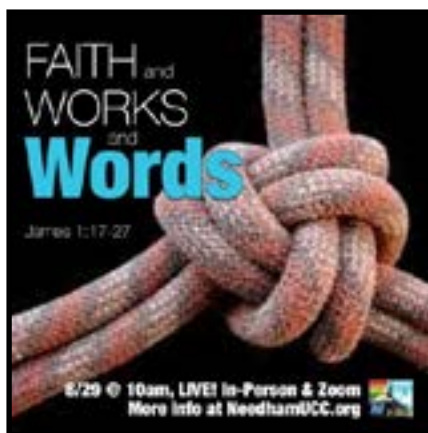


August 15, "Simple & So Complicated"

"Holy Wisdom cries out, 'You that are simple, come and share my table! Walk in the way of wisdom and live!'" The way of wisdom, the way of love is so simple, deceptively so. Making our way and our world according to love is a complicated life-long – lives-long! – journey, but we begin and end by just putting one foot in front of the other, day by day. (Proverbs 9:1-6) **This will be a hybrid worship service.**

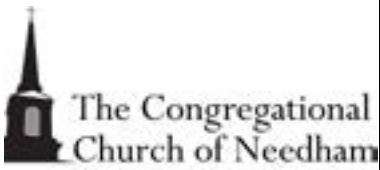
August 22, "What Are Your Gospel Accessories?"

Ephesians 6 famously describes the gifts believers are given for the life of faith and the struggle against injustice: "the armor of God, the belt of truth, the breastplate of righteousness." But that way of thinking about spiritual gifts isn't one-size-fits-all. What are your particular gifts, your "gospel accessories," tailored just to you and to the needs of our historical moment? And are you working them as God intends? (Ephesians 6:10-20) **This will be a hybrid worship service.**



August 29, "Faith and Works and Words"

We often make a distinction between words and deeds, and rightly so. The Epistle of James certainly encourages us to do more than just talk about love, justice, and peace, but to take action. But what about the ways our words are deeds? We'll reflect on the very real power of words for good and for ill in our lives today. (James 1:17-27) **This will be a hybrid worship service.**



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And now... We're a Podcast!

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