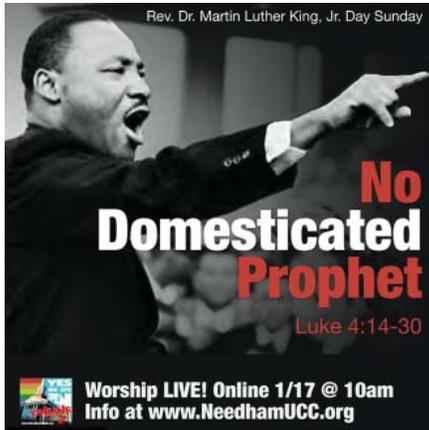


save THE DATE!

Annual Hearing Jan. 24 @11am Annual Meeting Jan. 31 @11am



Dear Friends,

If 2020 felt like one of the longest years ever, January 2021 is already shaping up to take the title for Longest Month, and we're not even halfway through! But over my now 21 years in ordained ministry, I've learned that when things get tough (or confusing or infuriating, etc.) the healthiest way for me to get through is just to do the work: visit a parishioner, write a sermon, decorate the sanctuary, baptize a baby, help someone in need. Be the church.

It may feel much easier to be the church in easy times, but then it's also much easier to mistake our own tastes and temperament for the call of Gospel. Jesus' Gospel of justice, peace, and compassion, like the prophets' before him, is a response to hard times, to a demoralizing sense of exile, the dehumanizing systems of his day, and the ultimate hard time of the cross.

In our own hard times, that heart still beats, reminding us to do the work, to love God, our neighbors, and ourselves in all the specific, real-world ways we can. Be the church.

So that's what we're going to do. This month we have opportunities to be the church and move our church toward a healthier, more sustainable financial life – which means a healthier, more sustainable mission life, as well – at our **annual budget hearing after worship on 1/24** and our **annual meeting after worship on 1/31**, both live via Zoom. Please keep an eye out for informational materials that will be coming your way prior to those meetings.

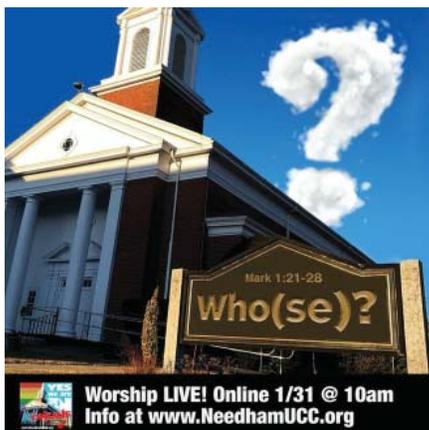
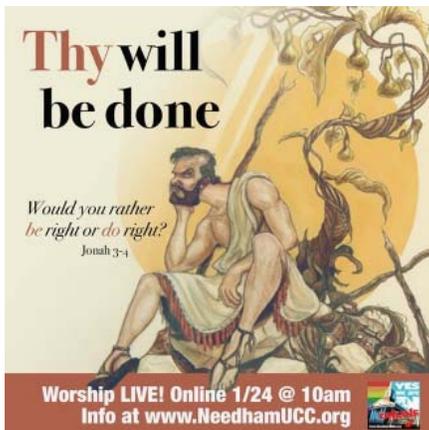
And of course we'll continue to reflect, reassess, and refocus our lives in light of the Gospel in worship:

1/17 "No Undomesticated Prophet" What do we lose when we sand off all of a prophet's rough edges? (For MLK Day weekend)

1/24 "Thy Will Be Done" Jonah gets upset when God proves graceful to "the undeserving." Would we rather be right or do right?

1/31 "Who(se)?" Even demons recognize the power of God at work in Jesus. What does the world see when they see us? Who and whose are we?

Peace, deep and abiding,
Rev. John MacIver Gage



Your Holiday Greetings to the Village:

In December our youth team completed the final touches on a joyful video of holiday greetings from our community to share with our friends in Santa María Tzejá! Thanks to all of the partner families who sent friendly messages of snowfall and goodwill, hope and cheer. Stay tuned for a link to the finished video!

Partner-Family Letters Due January 10th:

Although the February 2021 delegation will be a virtual one again, we anticipate that our Partner-Family letter exchange with our friends in Santa María Tzejá will continue without missing a beat. In the absence of an in-person delegation to express our friendship and solidarity, your letters are especially important and appreciated. Please write and send your letter by the deadline, Sunday, January 10th, to Dave Johnson: davejohnson77@gmail.com. The partnership and its volunteer translators thank you in advance for making this a priority in the New Year.

Guatemalan Face Masks for Sale:



The partnership has a limited number of face masks for sale. They are direct from Guatemala and are made in the traditional Mayan colors! 100% of the

proceeds go to support education and healthcare in Santa María. The face masks are \$20 each, including free delivery in the Boston Metro area or free shipping to anywhere in the U.S. Accepted forms of payment include debit/credit card, Paypal, and Venmo. If interested in purchasing a mask, please contact Jeff Clausen at clausenj@gmail.com.



COVID Update:

As in many places, Guatemala is experiencing a second wave of Covid infections centered around the capital city, and hospitals are full again. Our partner community has so far been spared. However, in the absence of effective public health campaigns or adequate treatment facilities, people in marginalized areas like Santa María lack the information and resources to properly guard against the virus or to access care in the case of further outbreak. We remain on the alert to provide health support as requested by the community.

Recent Storms:

Two tropical storms slammed Guatemala back-to-back in November, exacerbating already precarious living conditions in the country. Torrential rains and mudslides buried houses and flooded fields, and the entire region where Santa María Tzejá is located was temporarily cut off from the rest of the country when bridges and roads collapsed. While Santa María emerged largely unscathed due to its topography, neighboring villages lost homes and crops and now face food shortages.

FOCUS

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

February issue
deadline:
Fri., Jan. 22nd

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

FROM THE BOARD

Overview of Presentation at Budget Forum Jan. 10

The Chairs of the Finance Team have been telling us for a number of years that our pattern of drawing funds from the endowment is unsustainable. Our extraordinary withdrawals have become ordinary. To continue doing church as we have been doing it in the coming year would require a 15% withdrawal from the endowment. That is not acceptable nor responsible. The healthy and sustainable withdrawal rate is 5%.

How do we right the ship and get on that course toward a healthy and sustainable future? The Finance Team and the Board have worked hard over the past two months and developed a three-year plan. The endowment draw will decrease each year from 11% in 2021 to 9% to 7% and to our goal of 5% in 2024. This task was difficult and heart-wrenching. We all love this church. These decisions required prayerful deliberation.

The first step in the plan is for 2021. Increasing our revenue will be difficult. The only revenue area that could increase is pledging, so please feel free to contact the church office this week and increase your pledge. According to philanthropy data for our region and denomination we should be able to raise more funds from our congregation. Our rental income is projected to be flat with our core tenants financially strapped and our occasional renters suspending their programs through much of this year.

The way to right the ship in the near term is to decrease our expenses. The Finance Team and the Board are proposing cuts in Music, Outreach and Major Maintenance. The Major Maintenance budget, where we save for expensive projects like an anticipated \$200,000 roof shingle replacement, will be half of what it should be. In consultation with our Music Director, the 25% cut in Music will likely mean we cannot afford paid singers. The Outreach budget, excluding our proportional giving to the UCC, will be cut in half. The Outreach budget once again includes their regular budget as well as EMT, ONA and the Guatemala Partnership.

This pandemic has laid bare a situation that has been evolving for years, BUT this is an opportunity for us to reinvent ourselves. We are never going to go back to doing church solely like the past. We have folks joining us for worship from far away and some from their living room nearby because they have not been able to physically get to the church for years. We have remarkable, talented musicians in this congregation and they have stepped up and met the challenge.

The Outreach Committee has already done a remarkable pivot and during a pandemic they have brought us marvelous programs and causes with a convenient PayPal link. They have educated and energized us and managed to raise over \$60,000 in 2020 from folks inside and outside the church.

We are going to chart a course into the future together and we need every hand on deck. Every individual, committee and group MUST wear a membership hat. How can programs be designed to be visible, enticing and easily accessible for the wider community? We need to draw on the expertise in our congregation to expand our rentals and find new ways to reach out to prospective tenants. The Board and Deacons will host forums to brainstorm for these initiatives and special teams are being formed. If you have expertise in social media engagement with young families, rental marketing or property maintenance and development please contact me. We also are looking for outside-the-box fundraising ideas.

This church has been an integral part of my life for 60 years and I firmly believe that we can chart this new course. I know the creativity, spirit and passion of this congregation can take us into a healthy and sustainable future.

The proposed budget was presented at the January 10 forum and the Board is reviewing feedback from the congregation. The Finance Team and the Board will finalize the proposed budget for 2021 and it will be presented at the Hearing on January 24 at 11 am. The vote on the budget will be held during the Annual Meeting on January 31 at 11 am. Your participation is essential. All of these events will be held on Zoom. We encourage those who are not online to call the Zoom phone numbers. Rev. John will consult with the conference on guidelines for voting procedures. The Annual Report will be made available via email and in hard copy.

1180 Great Plain Avenue Update

The Board voted to sign a Purchase and Sale Agreement extension through October of 2021. A hearing was held in Superior Court during the first week of December regarding the Motion for Summary Judgement that was made by our buyer in the case filed by our neighbor. The MSJ has a low probability of being granted but we will hear by mid-February.

Online Worship through March

The Deacons and the Board both voted to continue with worship online through March 29, 2021.

Judith Stewart
Moderator, moderator@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.

The Congregational Church of Needham, UCC



WORSHIP with us ONLINE -----> SUNDAYS @ 10am
info at 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 the first Sunday of the month and on holidays 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. Contact Sue Findlay or the office at office@needhamucc.org or 781-444-2510 for the Zoom details

MEN'S FELLOWSHIP

Sunday, January 17th @ 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 preceding.

Our schedule will include a chance to say hello/ introduce yourself including a personal response to the sermon topic, or chosen scripture.

Please consider volunteering by signing up to lead a prayer or initiating responding to the topic.

Well wishing,

John, jsbadwin@comcast.net

Rob, rob@rob.com



Keep in Touch with Children and Youth Activities!

Whether it's Sunday School, Youth group or an awesome activity you know Rev. Maddie always has something fun going on!

Sign up at <https://mailchi.mp/b7e772052a05/needhamyouthandfamily> to see what Rev. Maddie has planned for the youngest members of our church community.

Worship Flower Donations

Now that we're Zooming worship from the sanctuary, we'd like to have a flowering plant on the altar (which will then be given to someone in our congregation afterward). If you would like to sponsor the flowers for a Sunday, you can sign up online at

<https://www.signupgenius.com/go/10c0844a8aa23a2fd0-worship>, email the

church office at office@needhamucc.org or call the office at 781-444-2510 with your

two choices of dates and your dedication. Donations may be made via PayPal on the church's web site or by sending a check to the church office.



**ENVIRONMENTAL MINISTRIES
TEAM NEWS**
...EARTH STEWARDSHIP FOR OUR
LIVES TODAY...

Some suggestions for books and movies on climate change and environmental issues to keep you busy on cold winter nights.

BOOKS

Silent Spring, by Rachel Carson. A classic book published in 1962, which describes the dangers of indiscriminate use of pesticides. This book spurred changes in laws affecting our air, land and water and inspired generations of environmental activists.

Rising: Dispatches from the New American Shore, by Elizabeth Rush. A beautifully written book, in which the author travels to places hardest hit by climate change and rising seas in the U.S., from the Gulf Coast to Miami and NYC to the Bay Area. For many of the plants, animals and humans in these places, the options are stark: retreat or perish in place.

Cadillac Desert: The American West and Its Disappearing Water, by Marc Reisner. Originally published in 1986, this book examines the history of western water management – a topic fraught with controversy that persists to this day.

The Nature Fix: Why Nature Makes Us Happier, Healthier and More Creative, by Florence Williams. Williams investigates current research on the health benefits of spending time in nature.

Winning the Green New Deal, by Vashini Prakash. A collection of essays by contributors such as Bill McKibben, Naomi Klein, Reverend William Barber, Joseph Stiglitz, which provide a clear blueprint for creating solutions to the climate crisis, standing up for appropriate representation and uniting disparate forces to build a better world.

MOVIES

The Biggest Little Farm – A 2018 family-friendly documentary that chronicles the life of John and

Molly Chester and their dog, who purchase a farm outside of LA with the dream of developing it into a diverse farm in complete coexistence with nature. They find that the land is completely devoid of nutrients, but through lots of hard work and trials and tribulations they bring the dream to reality.

Kiss the Ground – A 2020 documentary narrated by Woody Harrelson that sheds light on an “new, old approach” to farming, called “regenerative agriculture” that has the potential to balance our climate, replenish our vast water supplies and feed the world.

Dark Waters – A 2019 movie based on the true story of a town and lawyer who in the 1990s, sued Dupont, the producer of PFAS or PFOA, chemicals used in production of Teflon and other products, for its release of these chemicals into drinking water. Prolonged exposure to these chemicals is linked to many illnesses, including cancer. It is a battle still being fought today.

NEEDHAM RECYCLING

Several team members attended a zoom conference offered by the Temple Beth Shalom Environmental Action Committee entitled “What’s up with Recycling Business” on November 12th”. Greg Smith from Needham DPW spoke. The presentation was recorded and will be available in a few weeks on the Temple Beth Shalom website Environmental Action Committee page soon at <https://www.tbsneedham.org/environmental-action>

Below is helpful Needham recycling information: Needham uses Casella in Milford for our recycling and trash. The Casella website is: <https://www.casella.com/services/recycling/zero-sort-recycling> then go to zero sort recycling and then the recycling brochure

1. Corrugated cardboard (has a fluted layer in the middle) is the only Needham recycling that makes money.

2. Cardboard includes cereal boxes, egg cartons, paper towel & toilet paper inner rolls. It has to be clean and dry and no WAXY COATINGS. Therefore milk, orange juice, Dunkin Donuts cups, soiled pizza boxes etc have to be placed in trash.

3. Paper can include office paper, newspapers, paper bags, magazines and junk mail. No books.

4. Plastics include plastic drink bottles, milk jugs, yogurt cups, tubs, lids shampoo bottles. They should be clean and dry and Casella asks that you put caps back on. There are many questions about where plastic is now recycled since China’s National Sword policy. Casella reports they have found other outlets and it is anticipated that fiber mills will be coming online in the next 18-24 months in the Northeast. Casella has made a pledge to not send plastics outside the US.

5. Do not include plastic bags in the plastic recycling. Sudbury Farms and Whole Foods have receptacles accepting these.

6. Metal recycling accepts aluminum & steel cans. It does not accept clothes hangers. Some of the local dry cleaners accept used metal hangers and the plastic bags used over clothing.

7. Needham tried food composting using the school’s lunch program. However it attracted many birds and sea gulls creating significant bird issues in the area and was stopped. The bird issues resolved with ending the program. There are independent composting programs that some residents use as well as home composter use.

8. Glass is straining recycling facilities because it is expensive to process and markets are limited. Some municipalities have begun to exclude glass from their recycling mix for this reason. Needham/Casella still accepts glass. Do not place ceramics or baking glass in the recycling mix. They should go to trash.



The Congregational Church of Needham

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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

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

On Instagram: @NeedhamUCC

address

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

stamp