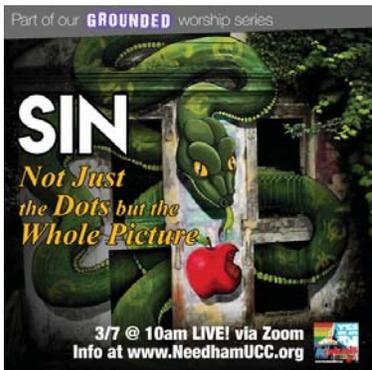


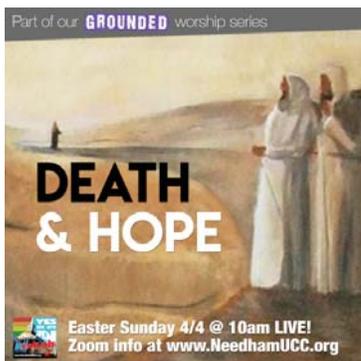
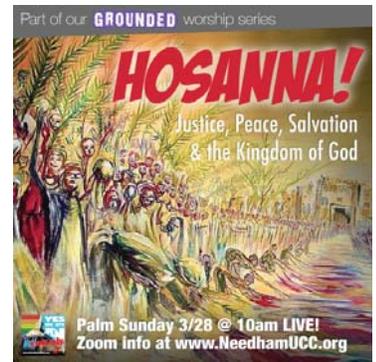
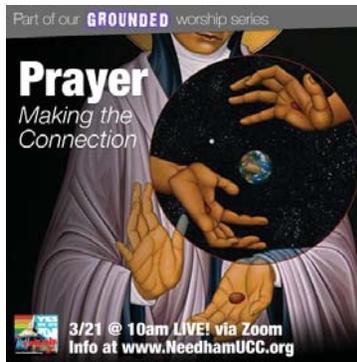
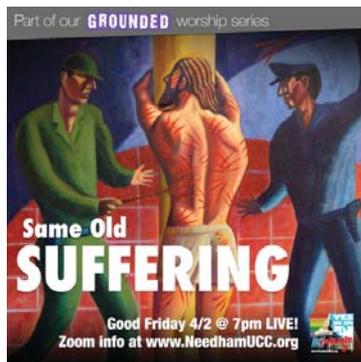
# GROUNDING

We continue with our Lenten worship series, "Grounded." Lent is a time for reflection, repentance, refocusing, and recommitment in our faith. Through this series we hope to ground ourselves again in God's good soil by (re)examining some foundational elements of what and how we believe. Here's the lineup for the rest of Lent, Holy Week, Easter, and just a tad beyond.



- 3/7: Sin & Forgiveness** Not just the dots, but the whole picture. And how to change the picture.
- 3/14: Incarnation** God is in the house, and not just in Jesus.
- 3/21: Prayer** The feedback loop. The transforming power of reflection and sharing.
- 3/28 Palm Sunday: Justice, Peace, Salvation, & the Kingdom of God** The point, here and now.
- 4/1 @ 7pm Maundy Thursday: Communion** Communion changes us. Or it should.

- 4/2 @ 7pm. Good Friday: Suffering** God is with the suffering, not in the suffering.
- 4/4 Easter Sunday: Death, Resurrection, & Hope** All three are real.
- 4/11: The Spirit** The power to go above and beyond.



You can watch these live Sunday mornings or online on our website or now, listen via our audio podcast, "Yes! We're Open: Living Faith with NeedhamUCC." Subscribe wherever you get your podcasts.

And don't forget, you have a chance to be a part of this dialogue with our "Close the Loop, Open the Sermon" conversations with Rev. John, Wednesdays @ Noon and Thursdays @ 7:30pm LIVE!




WEDS @ Noon & THUS @ 7:30pm from 2/24, www.NeedhamUCC.org

via Zoom at <http://zoom.us/j/907548568>

Dear Friends,

As I write this we are approaching the one year anniversary of when we closed our church building and moved our worship online - and, of course, all of the numerous changes in our day to day life as Covid-19 spread and changed so much of our daily life. Anniversary seems like a funny word to use in this context. Surely, no one is celebrating the complicated sorrow of the past year: plans and dreams deferred; weddings, new babies, and birthdays celebrated, losses grieved and lives remembered in previously unimaginable ways; and the daily uncertainty of what lies ahead. At this time last year, this is not where we expected to find ourselves and yet here we are. We're all just doing the best we can and our "best" changes from day to day.

What remains the same even in the midst of all of this is the call of our faith and our commitment to one another. Our leaders made the bold and brave decision early on to move to online-only worship and to form a team of knowledgeable folks to assess that decision through the course of the pandemic and in this way we continue to hold sacred and safe space for one another. Valerie has found ways for the Chancel choir to continue to sing together, Cici has been able to bring the Once-In-a-While choir together virtually, and individuals have contributed vocal and instrumental solos to fill our worship with music - an element of worship that soothes and uplifts so many. Our committees and teams have continued to meet and minister in an online space and to find ways to continue to involve the wider community in that work. Our kids have continued in their fellowship and learning together in different ways as well. We worship live on Zoom, in real time, together on Sunday mornings. We get to see each other's faces and hear each other's voices, read reactions to what's happening in worship in the chat, and lift up and hold each other's prayers weekly. And we continue to care for one another, our prayer and care team meets regularly to help in this work, and we are still accompanying one another through times of joy and sorrow.

All of that being said, I know I am not alone in harboring a hope-filled anticipation of a day, as soon as may be safe, when we begin to gather in a shared physical space again, bringing with us the new resources and ways of connecting we have garnered over the last twelve months to continue widening our welcome and infusing our worship and community. Until then, beloved, we move together in spirit through the days ahead, resting in the promise and assurance of God beside and among us.

Hold fast to what is good,  
Rev. Maddie

## Easter Flower Donations

In past years we've asked for donations for Lilies and Tulips to decorate our sanctuary during the season. This year we're making a shift: Your donation this year will go purchase potted plants which we'll distribute to members of our congregation to remind them they are in our thoughts and in our hearts.

You can make your donation via the PayPal link on our website at [www.NeedhamUCC.org](http://www.NeedhamUCC.org) (simply choose "Easter Flowers" from the drop-down menu) or by sending your check made out to "Congregational Church of Needham" with the memo: "Easter Flowers" to the church office at 1154 Great Plain Ave., Needham, MA 02492.



## FOCUS

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

April issue deadline:  
**Wed., March 25th**

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  
Nancy Lane, 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)

# FROM THE BOARD

The Board welcomed four new directors at the February meeting, and their talents are already being tapped by various teams. The subcommittees of the Board alone include Stewardship, Property, Finance, Covid Advisory Team, and Rental Growth. Short-term Board teams include Sale of 1180 and 1180 Proceeds/Capital Campaign. Joint Board/Deacons teams include Nominating, Personnel Support, Ministerial Review, Membership Growth, and Fundraising for the Operating Budget.

The church was notified recently that the Axt Trust will give \$33,000 to the church endowment. Emily Axt, who passed 20 years ago, was a longtime member of our congregation. Her devotion to the church is like that of so many who have gone before us who sustained and nurtured this wonderful community.

Some progress has been made in the sale of 1180 Great Plain Avenue. In December of 2019 after negotiations and revision, the Needham Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA) approved the development proposed by the buyer of 1180. The neighbor who owns the land over which the right of way for the rear driveway of 1180 passes filed an appeal in Superior Court of the ZBA decision. The buyer responded in January of 2020 by filing a Motion for Summary Judgement to have the suit dismissed. After much delay due to the pandemic, Superior Court decided in December that the neighbor does not have standing and the suit was dismissed. The neighbor filed an appeal of that dismissal in January.

Respectfully Submitted,  
Judith Stewart, Moderator



## A VIRTUAL FEBRUARY DELEGATION

In 1987, members of the Needham Congregational Church and the community of Santa María Tzejá formed a partnership that was sealed with a simple handshake and the commitment that a delegation from our church would visit the village every six months. At the time, the path forward was unknown; it was a leap of faith with no real plan other than to visit twice a year. However, the commitment has been upheld and since that handshake, a delegation has visited the village each February and August for 33 years. This year, due to the pandemic, our church's February delegation was unable to travel to Santa María Tzejá in person, but we did not let the pandemic break our commitment to visiting the village every six months. To express this sentiment, the February delegation shared the below 'meme' with the community. The meme shows our church's first delegation leaders, Clark and Kay Taylor, in 1989 before there was a road to Santa María Tzejá, and one had to cross a log bridge to get to the village. Clark had one way of crossing that log; Kay had another!

The photo caption communicates the sentiment that "By whatever method, we always make it to Santa María Tzejá." And this remains true.



This year our church's February delegation had a very busy week with many on-line meetings with our friends in the village. We met with Santa María Tzejá's middle

school, its primary school, the Women's Union, and its health committee, among other groups. Each of these meetings provided a broad and rich discussion accompanied by many smiles, and laughter. All of this is evidence that despite the distance, we remain united in friendship. The pandemic will end, but our commitment, begun so many years ago, to walk in solidarity with the village endures.

Stay tuned for an announcement of the date for the Delegation's Reportback, when you'll hear what we learned about education, health, and other priorities during our week 'in' the village.

## WORSHIP, FELLOWSHIP & ADULT ED

Well wishing,  
John, jsbadwin@comcast.net, Rob, rob@rob.com

### 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.

### CLOSE THE LOOP, OPEN THE SERMON Wednesdays @ noon & Thursdays @ 7pm

Join Rev. John Wednesdays @ Noon and Thursdays @ 7:30pm LIVE! via Zoom at <http://zoom.us/j/907548568> throughout the Lent Worship series to talk about each of the weekly sermon topics. Just because they're essential – especially because they're essential! – doesn't mean there's just one way to understand them. It's good to reflect together.



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.*

### NEEDHAM COMMUNITY COUNCIL PRESENTATION March 7th following Worship

After worship on Sunday, March 7, 2021, Sandra Robinson, Executive Director of The Needham Community Council, is happy to join us to share information about the Council's activities and contributions to our community. The 30 minute presentation will include a video (11 minutes) showing the variety of services provided by the Council, a short talk by Sandra, followed by a 15 minute Q&A session.

### 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](mailto:office@needhamucc.org) or 781-444-2510 for the Zoom details

### AFTER WORSHIP CONVERSATIONS March 14th & March 28th

The church will host two more brainstorming sessions in March following Worship. Everyone is invited and encouraged to attend via zoom with the link you use to attend Worship.  
**March 14: Growing Fundraising**  
**March 28: Growing Rental Income**

### MEN'S FELLOWSHIP Sunday, March 21st @ 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.

### AT MY NEIGHBORS TABLE Sunday, March 21st @ 5:30pm

Please join the At My Neighbor's Table interfaith conversation group for a discussion on **Sunday, March 21, 2021, from 5:30 - 7:00 p.m.** The event, entitled "**Fault Lines: Grappling With Segregation in Our Schools,**" will discuss the high levels of K-12 school segregation in our communities and the detrimental impacts on our children. The presenters are Liam Kerr, DFER (Democrats for Education Reform) Massachusetts State Director, and Rep. Chynah Tyler, (D) 7th Suffolk District. For registration for the Zoom event, please go to [dividedk-12.eventbrite.com](http://dividedk-12.eventbrite.com) by March 17, 2021.

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



We hope you were able to join the fun for Meatless Monday fundraiser with

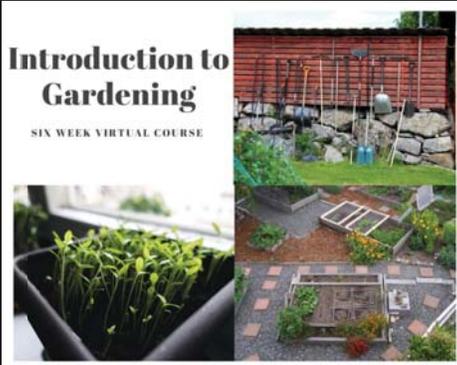
David Becker from Sweet Basil and Juniper. The event raised \$3,000 for the Needham Community Council Food Pantry.

You can still join and take the Meatless Monday Needham pledge. Check out the website for meat free recipes, upcoming events, and sign up to eat meat-free on Mondays. <https://www.meatlessmondayneedham.org/>

### LENTEN CARBON FAST

During Lent, the Environmental Ministry Team would like to invite you to be stewards of Creation by reducing your carbon footprint. Please check out ideas for reducing your production of climate changing pollution on EMT's church web page at <https://www.needhamucc.org/environmental-ministries.html>.

### Eager to Learn Gardening Skills after being shut-in for the Winter Months?



EMT and Mass Horticultural have partnered to offer our church members **20% OFF their 'INTRO to GARDENING' 6 Class Virtual Series beginning Tuesday, March 23, from 7:00-8:30!**

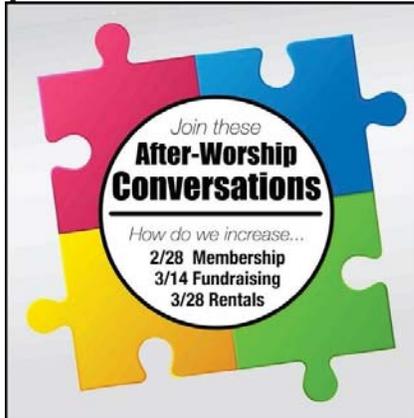
If you become a member, you will receive 20% off the member rates for these classes as well!

Members can call the church office for the 20% OFF discount code when registering for the Virtual Series on the MassHort.org website: <http://masshort.org/education-events/intro-to-gardening-six-session-course/>

Class topics start with Growing from Seed, and go on to cover Soil Prep & Garden Math, Diving into Composting [figuratively speaking], Vegetable Gardening, Urban [small space] Gardening, and come full cycle to end with Seed Saving.

*It's "all hands on deck" time!*

### AFTER-WORSHIP CONVERSATIONS SUNDAYS 3/14, & 3/28 @ 11:15AM LIVE! VIA ZOOM



It takes a whole church to be a whole church. Our church needs your input and participation in order to be as healthy and sustainable a community as we can be. We've already seen marvelous

growth in our stewardship pledge campaign to fund the church budget in 2021, but there's more we need to do. The Boards of Directors and Deacons have identified three areas, in particular, where we need your help in new ways. We met on February 28th for a productive conversation about Growing Membership. Please plan to be a part of one or both of these important upcoming conversations:

#### 3/14 Growing Fundraising

We do a fabulous job raising money, for other people (and we should). But we're less adept at raising money for ourselves, for the roof, the gas bill, salaries and benefits, which are important if we want to keep helping others. How do we create opportunities to give that reach both inside and outside our congregation? And how do we do that without overly relying on the labor of a tiny group of people and burning them out (Looking at you, Village Fair!)

#### and 3/28 Growing Rentals

Back in the day, renting out our building to outside groups was pretty much an extra, icing on the cake. Now it's essential bread and butter. We need this income and we have an opportunity to resource outside groups in our community with like-minded missions. How do we harness the social connections of our members to attract more long term and occasional rentals. Who would be a good fit? And what do we need to change to accommodate them?



May 26, 2020

Rev John MacIver Gage  
Congregational Church of Needham  
1154 Great Plain Ave  
Needham, MA 02492

Dear Reverend,

On behalf of Family Promise Metrowest and the people we serve, I want to extend my appreciation for the donation of \$5,441.00 from your Church's Outreach Committee and individual contributions. While the Family Promise Network has grown considerably over the years, our congregations continue to be the foundation for all we do.

Please know how much your donation means to the families we serve, as your generosity is ensuring their safety and sustainability during these difficult times. For the families in our shelter, this includes the cost of hotel rooms and food usually offered in kind by our network of congregations. For the families in our Transitional Living or LIFE programs whose wages have been reduced, it provides subsidies for expenses that are now a challenge to address. For the families in all our programs, your donation also supports the work of our case managers who are offering essential guidance and resources during these challenging times.

With all that we have accomplished over the years we know that our success is only possible with the foundation of support from our congregations. Thank you for caring and for understanding the emerging needs of our families. While the future is uncertain, there is strength in knowing we will face it together.

Sincerely,

  
Sue Crossley  
Executive Director

Donation Amount: \$5,441.00  
Ref #: 21679  
Donation Date: 5/19/2020

Dear Reverend,  
Please send my warmest gratitude for all at the congregation for this generous donation. We are so deeply grateful for your support at this time.

With warm regards,

*Family Promise Metrowest, Inc. is a 501(c) 3 nonprofit organization, Federal Tax ID# 20-5963640.  
No goods or services were received in consideration of this gift.*



# Fault Lines: Grappling With Segregation In Our Schools

Join us for an interfaith conversation on how we can bring ourselves closer to being more inclusive communities

We will discuss the high levels of K-12 school segregation in our communities and the detrimental impacts on our children.

*“Tens of thousands of children are learning in racially isolated environments... The central finding of a half century of research: Segregation is enormously destructive.” ~ Boston Globe*

**Presenters:  
Liam Kerr**



- MA State Dir., Democrats For Education Reform
- Organized report and event on school segregation in Massachusetts
- NHS alum & Needham resident with 2 children

**Rep. Chynah Tyler (D), 7<sup>th</sup> Suffolk**



- Chair, Black & Latino Legislative Caucus
- Chair, Boston Delegation
- Filed bill to create commission studying school segregation

**For registration:** [dividedk-12.eventbrite.com](https://dividedk-12.eventbrite.com)

**Please share on social media!**

**For questions or zoom link support, please email:** [atmyneighborstable@gmail.com](mailto:atmyneighborstable@gmail.com)



## At My Neighbor's Table Series

**Sunday, March 21, 2021  
5:30-7:00 PM**

**Kindly register by Wednesday  
March 17**

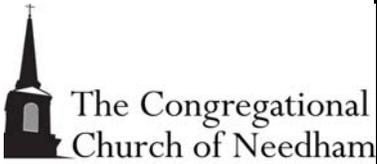
**Event is Free, Space is Limited**

### Sponsors:

- Cooperative Metropolitan Ministries,
- Needham Baha'i Community, Christ Episcopal Church,
- Congregational Church of Needham UCC,
- First Baptist Church in Needham,
- First Parish in Needham Unitarian Universalist,
- Temple Beth Shalom, Wellesley Friends Meeting, Equal Justice Needham, Inclusive Westwood, League of Women Voters Needham, Needham Diversity Initiative, Needham Human Rights Committee, Neighbors In Action, Progressive Dedham/Norwood/Westwood, Progressive Needham, World of Wellesley

See our Eventbrite and Facebook pages for the full list of Sponsors

*These groups have come together to support this event*



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

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**Facebook**  
Congregational Church  
of Needham UCC



## And now... We're a Podcast!

In an attempt to make our weekly sermons more accessible and more useful to you, we've created a new, audio-only podcast we're calling

### "Yes! We're Open: Living Faith with Needham UCC"

Find us on podcast providers including **iTunes, Spotify,** and others. (If you can't find it on your favorite service, let us know and we'll put it there.) So now it's even easier to listen to a sermon again or for the first time, around the house, in the car, or while you're out walking off the pandemic blues. You can even easily share a sermon or the whole podcast with someone you think might enjoy it. It's a great way to share our church. **So like it, subscribe, and start listening now.** (Oh, and give us a "like" to make it easier for others to find our podcast, too. (Find it now at <http://needhamucc.buzzsprout.com>)



address

stamp

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