

Dear Friends,



E.B. White, author of *Stuart Little* and *Charlotte's Web* told this October story about his wife, author and editor, Katherine, and her life-long habit of planting flower bulbs in the fall garden, which she continued right up to her last year:

*Armed with a diagram and a clipboard, Katherine would get into a shabby old brooks raincoat much too long for her, put on a little round wool hat, pull on a pair of overshoes and proceed to the director's chair – a folding canvas thing – that*

*had been placed for her at the edge of the plot. There she would sit, hour after hour, in the wind and the weather, while Henry Allen produced dozens of brown paper packages of new bulbs and a basketful of old ones, ready for the intricate interment. As the years went by and age overtook her, there was something comical yet touching in her bedraggled appearance on this awesome occasion – the small, hunched-over figure, her studied absorption in the implausible notion that there would be yet another spring, oblivious to the ending of her own days, which she knew perfectly well was near at hand, sitting there with her detailed chart under those dark skies in the dying October, calmly plotting the resurrection.*

This pandemic season has been an October time for all of us. We have lost so much that was beloved or at least familiar to us, and so many, many beloved friends and family around the world. But Katherine White had faith, and so do I, that through the worst of it, after a time, new life will emerge. It may be uncomfortably new, barely recognizable, and vulnerable and in need of nurture, but it will come. Resurrection will come. It's up to us to continue to plant the seeds and tell the story, no matter the weather.

This year, as part of our stewardship fundraising theme, "Rooted in Love," we'll try our hands at "plotting the resurrection" together in a very down to earth way. We have ordered 250 daffodil bulbs – ugly, dry and dead-looking things! – and we'll share the work of planting them around the church (and perhaps in a few other places around town), committing our hopes for the future to God's care, and the earth's.

**Please make plans to join us Saturday, 10/30 @ 10am for this bulb-planting event at the church.** (The rain date will be 11/6.) We'll be outdoors, so safer, if also a bit chillier. Bundle up, bring your gloves and a spade or two, and be prepared to get a bit messy. Gardening, like birth and rebirth, is definitely messy business, but so, so beautiful.

Peace,  
Rev. John

## COMING UP:



Our stewardship fundraising season kicks off October 24. Our theme this year is "Rooted in Love," taking inspiration from Psalm 1:3a, "They are like trees planted by streams of water, which

yield their fruit in its season." Between then and November 21, we'll reflect on how we experience God's love in our roots in the past, the gifts of the present, and our hopes for the future, as we prayerful consider how we can support the work of the church with our financial support.

## All Saints Sunday Worship 10/31 @ 10am



All Saints Day is about more than just the big names – St. Paul, St. Peter, St. Teresa. It's about those names that are much closer to us and less likely to be called in any roll call of official saints. It's about remembering our family, friends, all those who've died and on whose shoulders we stand, both those we love and those who made it more difficult to love them. We give thanks for the gifts they've given us and, more importantly, God's gift of grace that covers us all.

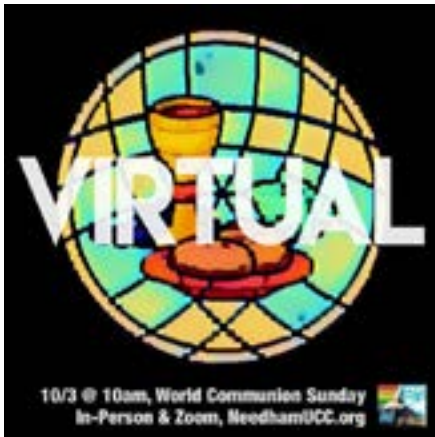
Once again this year, you are invited to send in digital photos of those you'd like us to remember, whether they passed away this year or long ago, and we'll put them together into a photo montage to share in worship. Send those photos to [revjohn@needhamucc.org](mailto:revjohn@needhamucc.org), with the subject line "All Saints Day." Thank you!



# TRUNK-OR-TREAT VOLUNTEERS NEEDED!

We're excited for our third annual Trunk-Or-Treat! Bring your cars and decorate the trunks or volunteers for other assorted tasks during the event - use the link below to see available roles and sign up. Thank you for your help!

<https://www.signupgenius.com/go/8050E4EAFAD2CAAFF2-needham1>



## THIS SUNDAY! Virtual World Communion Sunday 10/3 @ 10am EDT

LIVE! In-Person & via Zoom at <http://zoom.us/j/907548568>

There's been a lot written in this pandemic season about the "unreality" of virtual experiences, from work to school to church, even virtual communion. Sure, it's not the in-

person experience we're used to, but if persons are doing it, doesn't that make it in-person and just as real? After all, remember that all communion is virtual; in our understanding, the bread and wine don't become literal flesh and blood, but we do encounter Jesus in them all the same. Even Jesus himself is virtual God and his presence makes a very personal difference for us, indeed. (John 1:14, 16-18)

We will celebrate holy communion this Sunday, so whether you're worshipping at home or at church, make sure to bring your elements with you – bread and wine or juice or even coffee and cookies or water and crackers, the very simple stuff of our lives through which God blesses us to be a blessing to the world.

## Ride for Food/Off the Beaten Path



For the 6th year the Church is sponsoring a team in the Ride for Food. We participate in support of the Needham Community Council, which means that all of the money we raise stays right here in Needham.

There are two ways Church members can help: by participating in either the actual bike ride or the "off the beaten path" option and by donating.

For more information, visit the web site of Three Squares New England, organizers of the Ride for Food: <https://www.threesquaresne.org/ride-for-food/>. Or contact either of the co-captains: Lynn Gotwals ([lynn.gotwals@gmail.com](mailto:lynn.gotwals@gmail.com)) or Mike Normile ([mnormile@comcast.net](mailto:mnormile@comcast.net))

**To Register** Visit our team page : <https://ride.threesquaresne.org/team/371634>. Click on "Join Team" on the left side and follow the instructions from there.  
**To Donate** Visit our team page: <https://ride.threesquaresne.org/team/371634>. Click on "Donate" on the left side, and follow the instructions from there.

## FOCUS

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

November issue  
deadline:  
October 22nd

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)

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[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 Finance Team will report to the congregation on October 17th after worship. Please see the report from the team in this issue of Focus.

The inquiry from Dish Network about leasing space in the steeple is on hold and may be withdrawn. In August, Dish reached an agreement to lease tower space from AT&T.

The buyer of 1180 Great Plain Ave had told the church several months ago that the sale would close in late October no matter what the status of the court case. With a hearing scheduled soon, the buyer has changed his mind and has requested another extension of the Purchase and Sale Agreement. The Board is currently conferring with the church attorney and deliberating as to our reply.

Respectfully submitted,  
Judith Stewart, Moderator



## 30th Guatemala Yard Sale Recap!

By every measure this year's Guatemala

Yard Sale, held Sept. 18th on the Church's front lawn for the very first time, was a huge success. Despite the newness of the venue to the partnership for its sale, our church community rallied together to set up and staff 45 tables with donated items galore, drawing in a continuous flow of residents and others to the sale. Proceeds of more than \$5,300 were raised for education in our sister community of Santa María Tzejá – one of our best results ever.

Yet that was by no means the only benefit. Church members clearly cherished the opportunity to see their friends in person following the long period of isolation we have all endured. A table with Guatemalan handicrafts and information about the partnership served to highlight the church's engagement in mission beyond its walls, while the joy and welcome of our church community was palpable to all who attended. Rev. John's presence and the conversations that ensued were meaningful to both folks from our church community and to those he met for the first time. It was also very special that Clark and Kay Taylor dropped by the sale and clearly enjoyed sharing and receiving warm greetings from friends. Shoppers were enthusiastic, and one woman, known for her thrift, admitted that she had come back 3 times to buy more items and

had spent \$70. Others appreciated the sale's environmentally positive aspect of promoting reuse of hundreds of still useful items.

Sincere thanks are extended to the Church for hosting the sale, to the generous donors of so many items, to those who sorted and priced donations all week prior to the sale, and to those who worked tirelessly the day of the sale -- from set-up that started at 7:00 am with a seemingly endless stream of tables and boxes flowing out of the church, through the sale itself, to clean-up and packing up the leftovers for delivery to Savers. We hope that this energizing event will once again unfold on our church's front lawn next year.

## Update on Santa María Tzejá

As part of the community's commitment to protect their nature reserve, people from SMT and the nearby area are being offered scholarships to train as eco-tourism guides through an extended and thorough course. They will expand their knowledge of ecosystems and culture in order to impart meaningful tours to visitors interested in exploring protected areas off the beaten path such as SMT's Cantil Reserve.

Meanwhile, construction of SMT's communal marketplace, funded partly by a Needham donor, is underway!

These two promising pieces of news provide hope in a difficult national context. Guatemala is experiencing one of the worst Covid surges since the pandemic began, with most of the country deemed high-risk. Most schools have still not reopened for in-person classes. About one-fifth of

the population has been vaccinated nationwide.

## Virtual Delegation in October

The 68th delegation connecting families from Needham and around the United States to the community in Santa María Tzejá is scheduled from October 3-10, 2021. These visits have occurred continuously since 1987. Of course, the global pandemic has caused us to adapt and organize the delegation activities as on-line meetings and forums; but it has not disrupted our commitment to supporting the village nor our intent to engage in activities and planning with the community in Santa María.

Despite the need to hold our meetings virtually, folks on both sides of the partnership have shown true joy to see and greet each other. Over the last year we have continued to hear updates about activities in the village, discuss issues and share ideas, thoughts, and concerns. These virtual opportunities to communicate and engage in each others' lives serves to maintain our connection until we can return to greet our friends in Santa María Tzejá in person.

The on-line meetings in October will offer opportunities to discuss current needs with many of the community committees including the Middle School, Health Committee, Computer Center, and Scholarship Committee. Following the delegation meetings in October, we will be scheduling an on-line report back and providing other opportunities for engagement. If you have an interest in participating in any of the meetings during the first week of October, please contact Bill Garrett at wgarrett@mit.edu.

## WORSHIP, FELLOWSHIP & ADULT ED



### HYBRID WORSHIP Sundays @10am

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](mailto:revjohn@needhamucc.org) ahead of time.
- Bring and wear your mask.
- The Sanctuary isn't air conditioned
- Give your name to the ushers for contact tracing.
- Maintain social distance. You can sit 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.

### FINANCIAL UPDATE TO THE CONGREGATION Sunday, October 17th @11:11am

Join us immediately following worship for an update by the Finance Team. They will be discussing the finances of the church as of the September 30th, 2021 financial reports and how the numbers fit into the multi-year strategy presented at the 2021 Annual Meeting. For more information please see the September 2021 Report - Financial Update on page 5.

### MEN'S FELLOWSHIP Sunday, October 17th

Zoom at <https://zoom.us/j/93975548873?pwd=S3AydjcxQjdjUGhUaW8rM0dlQnpvUT09>

Men's Fellowship creates space for men of the church to get to know each other and converse about sermons, scripture and issues in a way that supports our personal journeys and experiences of living faithfully in a complicated world.

### 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

### TRUNK OR TREAT Saturday, October 23rd 2-4pm, Raindate: Oct. 24th

Wear your Halloween finest and come to the church parking lot for masked, socially-distant, Trick-or-Treating family fun! OR Volunteer/ decorate your trunk at the 3rd Annual NeedhamUCC Trunk or Treat! Sign up to volunteer and/or decorate your trunk at <https://www.signupgenius.com/go/8050E4EAFAD2CAAFF2-needham1>



### DISCUSSION GROUP - SEE NO STRANGER: A MEMOIR AND MANIFESTO OF REVOLUTIONARY LOVE, BY VALARIE KAUR Thursday, October 29 @ 7pm via Zoom.

Rev. John was so persuaded by Valarie Kaur's work that he has dedicating his preaching for nine Sundays this fall to the topics in her book. He will be leading groups in discussing the different aspects of *See No Stranger*. Personal and political, strategic and visionary, there is a way into this work for just about everyone, and at this time when so many of us are wondering what we can do, there is so much to get out of it, as well. Email Rev. John at [revjohn@needhamucc.org](mailto:revjohn@needhamucc.org) if you're willing to take this step.

### "ROOTED IN LOVE" BULB PLANTING EVENT Saturday, October 30th @10am

Please make plans to join us for this bulb-planting event at the church. (The rain date will be 11/6.) We'll be outdoors, so safer, if also a bit chillier. Bundle up, bring your gloves and a spade or two, and be prepared to get a bit messy. Gardening, like birth and rebirth, is definitely messy business, but so, so beautiful.



### "A MAZE IS ABOUT LOSING YOUR WAY. A LABYRINTH IS ABOUT FINDING IT."



Please enjoy our outdoor labyrinth on the front lawn of the church at 1154 Great Plain Ave. There are information sheets available there with suggestions for how to approach walking.



## SEPTEMBER 2021 REPORT FINANCE UPDATE

At the Annual Meeting, we adopted an operating budget, which anticipated revenues of \$756,223 inclusive of \$401,423 in pledges, \$92,000 income from rentals and \$216,500 funded from Endowment including \$12,500 from the Konetsky Trust to support music. Budgeted funding from the Endowment equaled 11% of the 3-year average of unrestricted Endowment, consistent with Year 1 of a multi-year strategy to reduce reliance upon the Endowment for operations to a sustainable, healthy level presented to the Congregation in January 2021. As discussed, funding from endowment for operations will reduce to 9%, 7% and ultimately 5%, respectively over the next three years. Work has already begun to explore ways to enhance revenue via increased membership, increased rental revenue and fundraising opportunities beyond our annual stewardship campaign.

Through the first eight months of the year, financial operations are tracking close to YTD budget. Revenues are \$22k behind budget YTD 8/31/21, but this is primarily due to timing. Pledges, worship collections and gifts totaled \$327k, a total which is \$46k or 16% ahead of \$282k YTD plan as of 8/31/21. This positive variance is largely due to members prepaying approximately \$48k of 2021 pledges and actual pledges coming in 5% ahead of plan. Endowment is under budget due to timing with an additional \$70k draw in process. Rentals and other income are slightly ahead of plan. At this time, we anticipate favorable variances with pledges, rentals and fundraising based on actual pledges being approximately \$18k above budget due to pledges received after the budget was finalized in January, short term rentals and fundraising from the Flea Marche.

Expenses are \$25k favorable to plan for the eight-month period. Some line items such as insurance, interest, certain administrative expenses and 1180 costs are expected to be over budget. Other line items are generally within budget with some that could be lower based on needs that arise in the final months of the year.

Net operations are thus \$2k ahead of plan for the first eight months.

## Environmental Ministries Team News ...earth stewardship for our lives today...

This year EMT will write monthly suggestions in Focus re: household sustainability products including cleaning agents, paper goods and recycling options such as composting via private firms and options at the Town Recycling and Transfer Center. We encourage you to explore all these options and see if one works for you. This month's suggestion is Blueland (see below).

In each Focus, we will also recommend a book on sustainability. This month we recommend both the adult and children's versions of "The Hidden Life of Trees: What They Feel, How they Communicate- Discoveries from a Secret World" by Peter Wohlleben. After reading this book, you will never look at a tree in the same way. The children's book has beautiful illustrations and has been enjoyed by adult members of the Environmental Ministry Team!

### **Blueland: [www.blueland.com](http://www.blueland.com).**

Plastic was meant to last forever, but most of it is only used once. Blueland creates everyday eco-friendly cleaning products to save you money and space, without any plastic waste.

*Products:* They all are plastic-free cleaners in reusable bottles.  
*Cost:* The Clean Suite costs \$83.00 and includes the following. All have reusable (glass or tin) containers. Check out website for refills.

1 Foaming Hand Soap tablet in Iris Agave, 40 fragrance-free Laundry Tablets, Fragrance-free Powder Dish Soap, 40 fragrance-free Dishwasher tablets, 1 Multi-Surface tablet in Fresh Lemon (cleans counters, sealed stone & wood), 1 Bathroom tablet in Eucalyptus Mint (cleans tub, tile & shower), 1 fragrance-free Glass + Mirror table.

Email Carol Brown [walshbrown1@gmail.com](mailto:walshbrown1@gmail.com) or Jenni Haynes [jennihaynes@comcast.net](mailto:jennihaynes@comcast.net) if you have sustainability suggestions you have found and we will share them as well.

## PROPERTY TEAM UPDATE



This has been a busy summer around the church! We were able to tackle a list of projects while the building was empty.

- A new fence and handicapped accessible gates was installed on the parking lot border of our two playgrounds.
- Room B17 which is currently occupied by the NCE Early Childcare Center had waterproofing system installed. A sump pump and drainage system was put in to avoid water seeping into the room during hard rainstorms.
- New crashbars, locks and a few keypads are being installed on interior doors that separate the upper and lower floors of the building. Some items are backordered so this project will hopefully be completed in October.



## October Family & Youth Events

### Sunday, October 3

10:00am World Communion Sunday, Students remain in worship (Allergen Alert: Wheat & Dairy)  
3:00pm Youth Group Offsite - meet at McGolf, Dedham, MA; cost: \$10 per person

### Sunday, October 10

10:00am Worship - No Sunday School or PM programming

### Sunday, October 17

10:00am Worship & Sunday School - Pumpkin Painting and Parables  
12:30-2pm Youth Group Trunk-or-Treat Prep and Pizza lunch.

### Saturday, October 23

2:00-4:00pm Trunk-or-Treat

### Sunday, October 31

10:00am Worship & Sunday School - Parables & Wear Your Halloween Costume  
1pm Youth Group Halloween Party



## Sunday School & Youth Group Registration - Now online!

We are looking forward to the start of our 2021-2022 Children & Youth programming! Please register your students (Pre-K - Grade 12) using the online registration form found here: <https://forms.gle/reZCFgUHqdaXmd4B8>

All children and youth need to be registered to participate in Sunday School, Youth Group, Confirmation, and other children's and youth programs for the 2021-2022 school year.

## TRUNK-OR-TREAT

Saturday, October 23rd  
(Raindate: Sun., October 24)



Wear your Halloween finest and come to the church parking lot for masked, socially-distant, Trick-or-Treating family fun!

Want to volunteer/decorate your trunk at the Trunk or Treat?

We are looking forward to offering our third annual Trunk-Or-Treat to the families of our wider community! We are looking for volunteers to bring their cars and decorate their trunks as well as volunteers for other assorted tasks during the event - use the link below to see available roles and sign up. Thank you for your help!

We are also looking for a car to park on the front lawn and decorate the exterior (typically with big corrugated plastic eyes and a mouth - nothing permanent or marking the car). We would need your car for the first few weeks of October prior to the event. If you are able to offer this, please email Rev. John or Rev. Maddie and we will coordinate.

<https://www.signupgenius.com/go/8050E4EAFAD2CAFF2-needham1>

## Outdoor Sunday School

- Children in Kindergarten - Grade 5 are invited to join Rev. Maddie and volunteers from our CE Committee for outdoor Sunday School! Children will remain outside for the duration of worship. Parents are welcome to remain outside with us as well. Outdoor Sunday School is under a tent and will be rain or shine except in the case of severe weather. Bundle up in New England layers if it's a colder morning and we'll see you for Bible stories, crafts, games, and time together.
- Wear your own mask or we will provide a disposable mask. All students must be registered (link above) to participate.



## CONFIRMATION (GRADES 9 & 10)

Confirmation will meet in our Zoom classroom on the second Tuesday of each month. Additional opportunities for in-person service and fellowship may be available later in the school year. Our first class is scheduled for Tuesday, October 12 at 7:00 PM. If you are interested in participating in our class exploring Confirmation and church membership, please email [RevMaddie@NeedhamUCC.org](mailto:RevMaddie@NeedhamUCC.org).





# ONA News

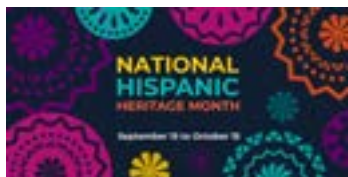
October is full of important dates and activities. As members and friends of an Open and Affirming congregation, we want you to know about them.



October is **LGBT History Month** Check out the LGBTQ icons on the website. A new list comes out each week in October.

<https://lgbthistorymonth.com>

## Hispanic Heritage Month Sept 15- Oct 15



National Gallery of Art Discover works by artists from Mexico, the Caribbean, Central and South America, and Spain in the Gallery's permanent collection.

<https://www.pinterest.com/ngadc/works-by-hispanic-artists-from-the-collection/>

## National Coming Out Day is October 11



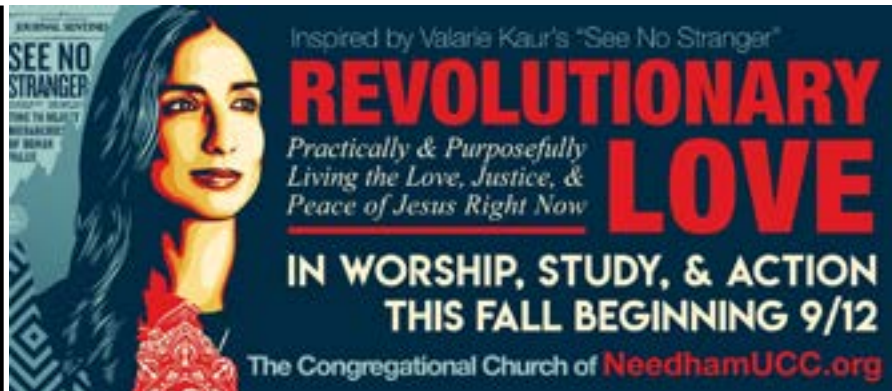
## Spirit Day Oct 21 - Wear Purple

<https://www.glaad.org/spiritday> Bullying

From 2012 to 2016, our church studied bullying. We held a series of programs on gender identity and expression, followed by forums featuring transgender and non-binary people, because of the high risk that they have for bullying.

Will you take the pledge against bullying today?

<https://www.glaad.org/spiritday>



# “Revolutionary Love” Worship Series Continues

We continue putting activist and author Valarie Kaur’s book, *See No Stranger: A Memoir and Manifesto of Revolutionary Love*, into conversation with the Gospel of Jesus as we work to create visionary and practical strategies to love our neighbors, ourselves, and even our enemies as our faith demands. This month we’ll focus on perhaps the toughest of the three, loving our enemies, in three sermons that reflect on *Rage* (10/10), *Listen* (10/17), and *Reimagine* (10/24).

Mark your calendar: Our next book discussion gathering will be Thursday, 10/29 @ 7pm via Zoom. (Link to follow later in the weekly email)

## An Invitation from Cici Hunt, Director of the Once in a While Choir

It was wonderful seeing some of our Chancel Choir singing IN church last weekend. Now, the Once in a While Choir has been invited to sing on Sunday, October 17th.

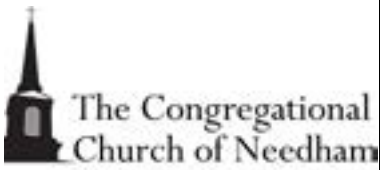
We will rehearse virtually, through Zoom, which has worked well in the past. Then, we will gather in the church on Sunday, October 17th at 9 am to rehearse, and sing at the 10 am service that same day. It can even be learned on the same day. We will space ourselves in the church in a creative way.

The song is an easy one to learn, and many women know the basic melody from our Women’s Retreat. It’s called, “Family of God,” and is a song I wrote many years ago. Some of the lyrics, “How we all need to take You along. Throughout our day, together singing a song of rejoice. Hear it in our voice. It is there in our proclamation.”

Let me know at [cicihunt@gmail.com](mailto:cicihunt@gmail.com) (or 781-540-9113) if you are interested in singing. We may even do a creative rendition allowing for those who cannot sing at the church to sing a part of the song through a recording. Still working the specifics on that. This is the time calling for creativity.

Blessings and thanks,  
Cici





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### 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>)



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UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST  
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