

Dear Friends,

I want to introduce you to a new conversation partner in faith, **Valarie Kaur**, and invite you to join me in engaging deeply with her book, *See No Stranger: A Memoir and Manifesto of Revolutionary Love*, in worship, study, and action this fall.

Valarie Kaur is a civil rights activist, documentary filmmaker, a third-generation Punjabi-American, and a leader in the Sikh faith tradition. She has a divinity degree from Harvard and a law degree from Yale and is a mother of young children. Like so many of us and even our nation as a whole, her life took a staggering turn with the terrorist attacks of **September 11**, 20 years ago this fall, and, unlike many of us, with the wave of hate subsequently directed at turban-wearing Sikhs and Muslims. These experiences formed the core of her first documentary feature, *Divided We Fall*.

Since then, Valarie has dedicated herself more and more to seeing and living the intersections between the personal and political, issues, individuals, and communities. In her book, *See No Stranger: A Memoir and Manifesto of Revolutionary Love*, she chronicles her personal involvement in struggles for civil rights from the movement to end the war in Iraq to the military tribunals at Guantanamo Bay to the demonstrations for Black Lives, as well as her personal struggles with family, fertility, and sexual assault, and the integral ways her faith has helped her navigate them all.

Valarie draws on all these elements of “memoir and manifesto” to help build a movement for

“revolutionary love,” **love for oneself, for others, and for enemies** (sound familiar?) that is at once profoundly visionary and eminently practical. She encourages us to consider whether what we’re experiencing in the world right now might not be the darkness of the tomb after all, but the darkness of the womb. She believes we can midwife a better world in love; toward that end, she offers a handy compass to help us assess where we are on that journey and imagine what our next steps should be.



I am so persuaded by Valarie’s work that **I am dedicating my preaching nine Sundays this fall beginning with Kick-Off Sunday, 9/12**, to putting each point of this compass – wonder, grieve, fight; rage, listen, reimagine; breathe, push, transition – in conversation with the Gospel life of Jesus and our lives as followers in his footsteps. And **I’m asking you: PLEASE, pick up a copy of *See No Stranger*, read along, and join in group discussion online (times and dates TBD.)** It’s available now in hardcover, Kindle, and audiobook and in paperback September 7.

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. **Won’t you email me at revjohn@needhamUCC.org and let me know you’re willing to take this step?**

Peace,
Rev. John MacIver Gage

Kick-off Sunday is September 12th

COMING UP IN WORSHIP



Listening to the Silence: *More Than (Dis)Ability*
Sunday, 9/5 @ 10am
LIVE! in-person & via Zoom

The Church tells so many stories of Jesus healing people that illness, disability, and healing all have become enduring metaphors for the life of faith. But for people living with disabilities, they're not just metaphors, and they themselves aren't objects for pity, aide, or inspiration. So let's reconsider Jesus' interaction with this "deaf man who had an

impediment in his speech" from Mark 7:31-37, and the Church's. The way we tell stories matters. The way we listen matters even more.

SOCIALLY RESPONSIBLE INVESTING

MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 20TH @7:30PM

Live on Zoom at <https://us06web.zoom.us/j/84313764849?pwd=RGFoUTgrS0l5ejNMTUdGZHNlbnVxUT09>

In conjunction with EMT, Outreach is sponsoring an introductory talk about what is sometimes referred to as Socially Responsible Investing.

Socially Responsible Investing (also known as ESG (Environmental, Social, Governance) Investing) is no longer a niche - it has become a mainstream form of investing with hundreds of available fund options across most major asset classes. We'll discuss the principles behind ESG investing as well as practical implementation for your investment portfolio with specific fund examples. We'll cover a wide range of questions including:

- What kinds of ESG investing are there?
- What issues does it seek to address?
- How much does it cost?
- How do ESG investments perform?
- Do they make a difference?



Our presenter will be David Dirks, a founding partner of Plum Street Advisors (2016) in Newton. David has 25 years experience in finance and governance, advising institutional clients for BNY Mellon as well as managing finance for a small company and working for McKinsey. MA. His firm has advised clients on ESG, selecting mutual funds and Exchange Traded Funds based on clients' individual values, and has previously presented to audiences interested in the topic. ESG funds have exploded in the last few years as a result of investors wishing to benefit by supporting their values.

David and Katy and their 4 children live in Needham and have been active members of our church for many years.

FOCUS

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

October issue
deadline:
September 24th

Rev. John MacIver Gage
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Rev. Maddie Foster
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Valerie Becker
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Judith Stewart, Moderator
moderator@needhamucc.org

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

Reflections as the Partnership Transitions to a New Letter Coordinator (by Dave Johnson)

It was winter of 2007. The Congregational Church of Needham was celebrating the 20th anniversary of the partnership with the rural enclave of Santa María Tzejá in Guatemala. At that time I had joined one delegation to Guatemala and was just beginning to appreciate the impact this partnership had upon a large network of people. It was in this setting that Kay Taylor, who masterminded a people-to-people element within the partnership, asked if I'd take on the partner letter exchanges between Needham and the village. Somewhat naive to what this added up to, I answered "Sure! How hard can it be to operate an international post office?"

It is now 2021, and over 7,000 exchanged letters later! I've made 7 more trips to Guatemala in person, helping carry family letters back and forth each time. Even when it was not possible to send travelers to the village, we've figured how to keep expressions of goodwill flowing between Guatemalan and U.S. families. Being positioned at the hub of this network has proven more gratifying than my wildest imagination could have forecast!

I write this on the eve of moving out of Needham after 39 years. A new home in Rockport, Mass. awaits us, as do new experiences, acquaintances, and activities. So the time has come to let someone else experience the role I've held in the Partnership. I'm happy to announce that Alan Clayton-Matthews has graciously agreed to pick up where I leave off. While I will complete the letter exchange from August, Alan will be the next one to reach out to all letter writers when the next exchange begins. I hope you will give him all your support and encouragement.

To everyone I say "Gracias!" for working with me, delegation upon delegation. What we have in this network of families who correspond twice a year is truly something unique, of our own making. So let's all keep at it! Like many who have moved from Needham, Caryl and I will continue to write to our partner family with the undaunted enthusiasm we had sending our first letter so many years ago.

Delegation Postponed:

The usual August delegation to Santa María Tzejá has been postponed to September/October or possibly even later this year, due to a recent outbreak of COVID-19 in the community. Since delegations, whether virtual or in-person, involve committees in the village working and meeting together in preparation for and during the delegation's activities, leaders in Needham and Santa María Tzejá agreed that a postponement would be in the interests of safety. It will also give more people in the community time to get vaccinated before gathering in groups. As this

will be the partnership's third 'virtual' delegation, we eagerly await the time when we can travel again safely and share time in person with our friends in Guatemala.

The Partnership would like to recognize the indispensable contributions of Caryl and Dave Johnson to our activities over the years. Caryl has led many delegations to Guatemala and served as one of the co-leaders of the project since 2010. Dave has long been the dedicated coordinator of the letter exchanges between families here and in Santa María Tzejá, which are a vital part of our transnational community relationship. We enthusiastically wish them all the best in their new community.

And if you'd like to see what engaged them for so long, please join the partnership's next monthly meeting on Sunday, September 12, 7:00 pm via Zoom.

COMING UP! GUATEMALA YARD SALE, SEPT. 18, 9:00 am - 2:00 pm



The Guatemala Yard Sale will be held Saturday, September 18th, from 9:00 am - 2:00 pm on the Church's front lawn this year! We invite all our church community to join in this 30th annual yard sale -- as item donors, volunteer workers, and shoppers! Don't miss this opportunity to be part of the face of this church project to our Needham community! 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 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. NO clothing.

Donation Drop-Off Times: (Access Church Library via outside steps from Church parking lot. Masked workers inside will receive your items.). Choose any of the following times:

- Sun. Sept. 12 (11:30 am - 2:00 pm) (Special Drop-off time, following Church service for those attending in person; 11:30 am for others)
 - Mon. Tues., Wed., Sept. 13-15 (10:00 am - 3:00 pm)
 - Thurs. Sept. 16 (Yom Kippur) (10:00 am - 3:00 pm)
- PLUS Evening Hours: 6:00 - 8:00 pm
- Fri. Sept. 17 (10:00 am - NOON only/No More Donations)

Volunteers Needed: Choose 2-Hour Work Shifts within the following time frames!

- Sept. 13-17 - 10 am - 4 pm (for Sorting/Pricing in Church Library)
- Sat. Sept. 18 - 7:00 am - 4:00 pm (Yard Sale Staffing - Set-up thru Clean-Up)

To Volunteer or For Questions: Contact Brenda Metzler: bmetzler7@verizon.net or (781) 449-5696.

WORSHIP, FELLOWSHIP & ADULT ED

HYBRID WORSHIP Sundays @10am

As we gather this fall, 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. 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.

GUATEMALA YARD SALE Saturday, September 18th @9am

The Guatemala Yard Sale will be held on the Church's front lawn this year! We invite all our church community to join in this 30th annual yard sale -- as item donors, volunteer workers, and shoppers! Don't miss this opportunity to be part of the face of this church project to our Needham community! See pg 3 for details.

SOCIALLY RESPONSIBLE INVESTING WITH DAVID DIRKS

Monday, September 20th @7:30pm

Live on Zoom at <https://us06web.zoom.us/j/84313764849?pwd=RGFoUTgrS0l5ejNMTUdGZHNlbnVxUT09>

In conjunction with EMT, Outreach is sponsoring an introductory talk about what is sometimes referred to as Socially Responsible Investing.

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principles behind ESG investing as well as practical implementation for your investment portfolio with specific fund examples. We'll cover a wide range of questions including:

- What kinds of ESG investing are there?
- What issues does it seek to address?
- How much does it cost?
- How do ESG investments perform?
- Do they make a difference?

MEN'S FELLOWSHIP Sunday, September 19th

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

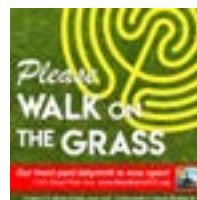
Sure, the breakfast may be BYOBreakfast at this point, but the fellowship remains as rich as ever. Join us for conversation around worship scripture. *****ALL***** men in the congregation are invited to this time of reflection and fellowship.

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

DISCUSSION GROUP - SEE NO STRANGER: A MEMOIR AND MANIFESTO OF REVOLUTIONARY LOVE, BY VALARIE KAUR

Rev. John was so persuaded by Valarie Kaur's work that he is 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 if you're willing to take this step. Times and dates TBD



**"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. We're inviting our whole community to enjoy it as well. There are information sheets available there with suggestions for how to approach walking.

From the Board

Sale of 1180 Great Plain Ave

The sale of 1180 is expected to close in October. The last appeal by the abutter is yet to be resolved in the courts but the buyer wants to close on the sale. The congregation authorized the Board to sell the property, as required by the bylaws, at a Special Meeting of the Congregation on October 14, 2018. The Purchase and Sale Agreement was signed October 22, 2018. The closing has been delayed by the town approval process and legal challenges by the abutter (which have been very drawn out by the pandemic). The buyer has been making monthly payments since signing the P&S to help cover the operating costs of the building.

Property

The inquiry by Dish Network about leasing space in the steeple seems to be on hold. In August Dish Network reached an agreement to lease cell tower capacity from AT&T and Dish must be reassessing their requirements.

Respectfully Submitted,
Judith Stewart
Moderator

A New Season of Music

Dear Friends,

It is with hope and joy that I write you to say that we will begin rehearsals once again with the Chancel Choir, the Youth Choir, and the Friendly Chimers. Chancel Choir will meet two Thursdays a month and then of course on Sunday morning before the service. The Youth Choir will meet after church at 11:30 and Chimers will meet at 12:15. Both of these groups will meet every other week. All of this is of course, contingent on the CDC and Church rules. Everyone participating must be vaccinated.

Anyone who wishes to join any of these groups should email me at musicdirector@needhamucc.org.

I hope that bringing live music back gives you a feeling of happiness and inspiration.

Valerie Becker, Music Director

Ride for Food/Off the Beaten Path

For the sixth consecutive 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, supporting the Council's Food Pantry.

The pandemic did not stop us last year, and we raised over \$11,000 for the Pantry. With your help, our goal is to raise at least that much again this year. Council leaders have called the Ride for Food a "game changer" for the Pantry, helping them support the 260 Needham families who rely on the Pantry each month.



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.

To Participate

There will be the traditional in-person bike ride on Sunday, October 3. The ride will start and end at the Noble and Greenough School in Dedham, and will be followed by a wonderful picnic. Registration is \$50, and there is a firm fundraising commitment of \$500. The minimum age is 14. There will be 25 and 50-mile route options.

Last year's "Off the Beaten Path" option is again being offered. You can choose the activity, and perform it whenever is convenient between now and October 31. There is no age minimum, making it family friendly. Registration is \$25, with a suggested fundraising commitment of \$350.

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) or Mike Normile (mnormile@comcast.net)

To Register

Visit our team page on the Three Squares web site: <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 on the Three Squares web site: <https://ride.threesquaresne.org/team/371634>. Click on "Donate" on the left side, and follow the instructions from there.

September & October Family & Youth Calendar of Events

<p>Sunday, September 12 10:00 AM Kickoff Sunday & Communion, Sunday School 3:00-4:30 PM Youth Group</p>
<p>Sunday September 19 10:00 AM Worship & Sunday School 1:00 PM K-5 Candy Bar BINGO! 3:00-4:00 PM Youth Group</p>
<p>Sunday, September 26 10:00 AM Worship & Sunday School, Bible Sunday 1:00-3:00 PM Youth Group Car Wash (Youth arrive at 12:30)</p>
<p>Sunday, October 3 10:00 AM World Communion Sunday, Students remain in worship 3:00 PM Youth Group Offsite - meet at McGolf, Dedham, MA; cost: \$10 per person</p>
<p>Sunday, October 10 10:00 AM Worship - No Sunday School or PM programming</p>
<p>Sunday, October 17 10:00 AM Worship & Sunday School</p>
<p>Saturday, October 23 2:00-4:00 PM Trunk-or-Treat</p>
<p>Sunday, October 24 10:00 AM Worship & Sunday School 2:00-4:00 PM Trunk-or-Treat Rain Date</p>
<p>Sunday, October 31 10:00 AM Worship & Sunday School 3:00-4:30 PM Youth Group Halloween Party</p>

Supplies Needed for September 26: Empty cereal boxes - 66 total needed (please do not flatten) If you have cereal boxes to contribute, please leave them in the bin in the narthex starting September 12. Thank you!



Sunday School & Youth Group Registration - Now online!

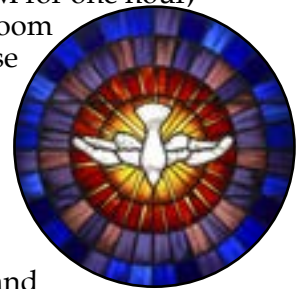
We are looking forward to the start of our 2021-2022 Children & Youth programming! Please register your students (Pre-K - Grade 12) using the online registration form found here:

<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.

EXPLORING CONFIRMATION (GRADES 9 & 10)

Our 2021-2022 class will meet on the second Tuesday of each month at 7:30 PM for one hour, October-May in our Zoom classroom (plus orientation). Over the course of these 8 classes we will explore the history of our faith, how the United Church of Christ (UCC) was shaped, and what our denomination and our local church values. We'll also learn what the rite of Confirmation is and students will have an opportunity to explore if membership in the UCC feels like a good fit for them at this moment in their lives. The class time set-up consists of a brief review of the assigned chapter, and group discussion. If safety allows, an overnight retreat may be offered in March and a group event in May. If your student is interested in participating in Confirmation, please email RevMaddie@NeedhamUCC.org



Confirmation orientation for registered students will be held on Sunday, October 3 at 11:30 AM; students will receive their Confirmation workbooks, meet their peers, and have an opportunity to ask questions and get acquainted before we move into our online space. Students in grades 11 and 12 are welcome to participate in Confirmation if they have not participated before.

SAVE THE DATE:



TRUNK-OR-TREAT
Saturday, October 23rd (Raindate: Sun., October 24)



This year's programs may look a little different but we are looking forward to our faith education and ministry offerings starting in-person on Sunday, September 12. Read more about how our programs will be organized this year. Please note, recommendations from the church's COVID Advisory Team may alter offerings.

Sunday School (Grades K-5)

We gather for worship on Sunday mornings at 10AM both in the sanctuary and online. Sunday School is offered during worship most weeks between mid-September and the end of May. Children begin in the sanctuary with their families and head to Sunday School after the Time for Children. Rev. Maddie sings, prays, and shares a story with children before we move into an activity to help us engage the story more. Adult volunteers serve as teachers for the activity portion and as an attentive and friendly presence throughout class time.

How are we being safe in these times? Children, volunteers, and staff remain masked in the classroom at all times. Movement between spaces is limited. Children are seated in the classroom with members of their household with 6' distance between their tables; our classroom can accommodate 8 families at a time. We have 2 air filters and will keep windows open as weather allows. Special events will be outdoors whenever possible.

Hybrid/Online Options: If your family would worship and learn more comfortably in an online space, the singing and story portion of our class time will be available online on the following Tuesday for children and their grown-ups to share together.

Youth Group (Grades 6-12)

Youth in grades 6-12 gather for exploration, service, and fellowship most weeks between mid-September and the end of May. Our typical meetings begin with a check-in time, a time for exploration and conversation centering our faith, experiences, and world events, and an activity - often a big group game but sometimes working on a project for service, worship, or a fundraiser. We also love occasional special events like mini golf, bowling, and laser tag and hope to offer these this year as well if safety allows.

Special offerings for Junior and Senior High separately may be offered as well.

How are we being safe in these times? Students, volunteers, and staff remain masked during youth gatherings at all times. When we meet indoors, we will meet in the large Sunday School room, with air filters and keep windows open as weather allows. Our meetings will be outdoors whenever possible.

Hybrid/Online Options: Teens and their grown-ups are invited to follow Rev. Maddie on TikTok for Two Minute Tuesday, where we engage a topic from a faith perspective in a two-minute video. Got a topic you want to hear about? DM @RevMaddie

Youth Group Car Wash: Sun., Sept. 26, 1-3pm

Youth, save the date to join in our first fundraiser of the school year! Folks will drive into the parking lot and remain in their cars while we wash and dry.

We are planning to hold a service trip for Summer 2022, and this will be a fundraiser for that fund. If you are interested in participating in the mission trip when details are announced, please make sure to participate in working at this fundraiser!

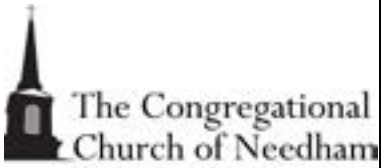
Students: please email RevMaddie@NeedhamUCC.org to sign up to work this fundraiser.

Sunday School Teachers & Youth Group Chaperones Needed!

We are seeking volunteers to assist in our children's and youth ministries offerings. Adults can sign up to volunteer/chaperone here: <https://www.signupgenius.com/go/8050E4EAFAD2CAAFF2-sunday>

Service Trip - Summer 2022 (Grades 9-12, Location TBA)

Please note: due to the Needham Public School's last day in case of snow days being scheduled on 6/27, our 2022 service trip may take place over July 4. Date and location will be announced. If your student is interested in participating in this opportunity, please email RevMaddie@needhamucc.org



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

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Congregational Church
of Needham UCC

The Ministerial Review Team says "Thank you!"

Over the past couple of months the MRT has compiled survey responses from more than 40 participants in the Ministerial Reviews. It is very apparent from your feedback that we are blessed to have two such talented clergy to lead us. The MRT appreciates the thought and care you put into this annual effort. We have had the opportunity to discuss your input with both Rev Maddie and Rev John. They are using this feedback to set goals for the coming program year.

As always, if you have a concern or a question, please email John or Maddie directly so they have the opportunity to respond as quickly as possible.

With gratitude,
Kathie Carpenter, Heather Salerno, Nancy Lane and Sue Turner
MRT members