



NeedhamUCC

FOCUS Newsletter • June 2023

From Rev. John As an Open and Affirming congregation, every year we observe June as LGBTQ+ Pride month, a time to be intentional about celebrating God’s diverse good gifts of sexuality and gender, especially as embodied in our queer siblings. Parades and parties give expression to queer joy and empowerment. **This year is different.** Old, hateful language about “grooming” and the lie of “protecting the children,” once a reliable weapons against gay men and lesbians has been repurposed to attack transgender and non-binary persons and even drag performers in states across the country. As the tide of anti-LGBTQ+ violence rises in state houses and city streets across the country, playwright Claire Willett posed this question: **“For Pride month this year, can straight people focus less on ‘love is love’ and more on ‘queer and trans people are in danger?’”**



And this isn’t happening just in places further South and West of us, but right here in Massachusetts. Just this morning, our friends at First Baptist Church, Jamaica Plain, arrive to find this hateful graffiti spraypainted on their church building: “All F+++TS SHOULD DIE. GOD DOES NOT LOVE U. YOUR GOD IS A FRAUD.”

This is why it is so crucial for us to be loud and proud in our proclamation of God’s radically inclusive love, especially for queer people, especially for queer and trans kids. Not just because there are too many people willing to spew hatred like this, but because there are too many queer people, young and old, who believe them because they’ve never heard an alternative—and research tell us that this hatred lands with deadly effect on queer youth, in particular. As some online advocates put it bluntly, **“We’re not trying to turn straight kids into queer kids. We’re trying to make sure queer kids don’t turn into dead kids.”**

Will you make a commitment to help proclaim this radically inclusive Gospel at our Needham Has Pride: Rally, March, and Party event coming up Sunday, 6/18 @ 2-4pm? Once again we’re partnering with First Parish in Needham, UU and others in our community to offer this “family-sized” Pride celebration to show our love for and support of our LGBTQ+ neighbors, especially queer families and the youngest among us. This year, we’re delighted to welcome our honorary marshal, local drag queen Mx. JP to the party, where she’ll be reading stories of extravagant inclusion. **If you’d like to volunteer, please email Kathie Carpenter at kacarp@comcast.net.**

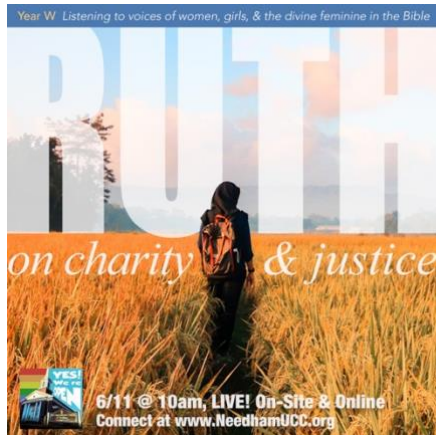


CHURCH PICNIC

after worship **THIS SUNDAY, 6/11**

Bring your lunch and we’ll supply beverages and dessert. Bring a blanket or lawn chair to sit outside. Bring your favorite lawn games. We hope this will be a time for refreshment and reconnection for our whole church community.

COMING UP IN WORSHIP



“Ruth: On Charity & Justice”

6/11 @ 10am EDT, live on-site & online via Zoom at <http://zoom.us/j/907548568>

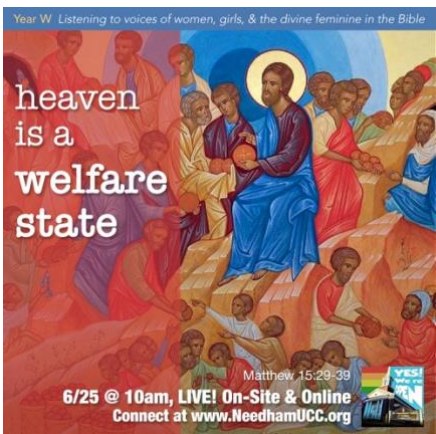
The story of the Book of Ruth is a story of women in need. Ruth and her mother-in-law Naomi are left destitute when their husbands die, cutting them off from traditional sources of community support. To make matters worse, when they return together to the land of Judah, Ruth is an outsider, a refugee. Ruth and Naomi must go to drastic lengths to secure the charitable care of a kinsman, Boaz, just to survive. But charity is one thing. Real justice is another.



LGBTQ+ Pride Sunday: “Mama Bear God”

5/18 @ 10am EDT, live on-site & online via Zoom at <http://zoom.us/j/907548568>

This June, as the tide of anti-LGBTQ+ violence is rising in state houses and city streets across the country, playwright Claire Willett posed this question: “For Pride month this year, can straight people focus less on ‘love is love’ and more on ‘queer and trans people are in danger?’ Can we bring ourselves to say that? Can we do something about it? Can we wholeheartedly share the fierce love of God the Mama Bear who fights like hell to protect her suffering cubs? (Hosea 13:1-8)



“Heaven is a Welfare State”

5/25 @ 10am EDT, live on-site & online via Zoom at <http://zoom.us/j/907548568>

In our progressive Christian tradition, we tend to metaphorize away the miracles of Jesus, like this Feeding of the 5000. “It’s not meant to be taken literally,” we say, “but to show us who Jesus is.” But if Jesus gives out free food and health care without regard for who society deems deserving or not, and we claim to be following in his Way, shouldn’t we be doing the same? Or have we metaphorized ourselves out of the Kin-dom of God altogether? (Matthew 15:29-39)



Guest Preacher

7/2 @ 10am EDT, live on-site & online via Zoom at <http://zoom.us/j/907548568>

Sunday, July 2, we’re glad to welcome to the pulpit Caitlin Purinton, M.Div. She’s a graduate of Andover Newton Theological School, a member of the Vermont Conference of our United Church of Christ denominational family, and Chief Warrant Officer 4 in the U.S. Army Vermont National Guard. She enjoys working on her passion project, The Fainting Goat, a tiny taphouse, and is a new mom to Max.

FOR CHILDREN & YOUTH

Summer

CHECK OUT THESE FUN FAMILY OFFERINGS FROM OUR CHURCH AND UCC CONFERENCE FOR SUMMER 2023!



BIG ADVENTURE SUMMER FUN WEEK K-5 | AUG 21-25

Needham UCC & The Hills Church are partnering to offer a week of summer fun for kids in **Kindergarten - Grade 5**. Join us for Epic Scavenger Hunts, Wacky Water Games, Fun Farm Adventures, and a whole week of learning about the earth with STEM activities, stories, music, and crafts!

Find more info & Sign up at:
tinyurl.com/BigAdventure2023

Youth in **Grades 6 - 12** & adult volunteers are needed during the week!
Email RevMaddie@NeedhamUCC.org or SallyT@HillsChurch.org for more info.

MINDFULNESS

SUMMER PROGRAM

AGES 6-11 | JULY 10-14



Join the Agape Spiritual Community of Waltham at United Parish of Auburndale for meditation, yoga, mindfulness, and more!

Email: Rachel@AgapeWaltham.org for more info and **sign up online: AgapeWaltham.org**

UCC SUMMER CAMPS

The United Church of Christ offers outdoor ministries close by in both CT and NH! Offerings for **Grades 3-12**, attend for a week or a summer!

Silver Lake Conference Center | Sharon, CT
SilverLakeCT.org
Horton Center | Gorham, NH
HortonCenter.org



Summer Food Drive

Every other month church volunteers support the families served by the Baby Basics diaper distribution program with bags of food. This summer, we hope to involve the congregation in this very important project. **For June, we are asking you to contribute 5oz cans of chunk light tuna (in water); 12.5oz cans of chunk chicken breast, and large jars of natural peanut butter.** You can bring your donations to

worship on Sundays or drop them off when the church office is open during the week.



From our **Environmental Ministries Team**

Ring Out for Climate Justice

EMT will continue to ring the church bell on the 11th of each month @ 11am to signify that we are in the 11th hour in the fight against climate change. Join us to ring the bell and hold signs on Great Plain Ave **THIS SUNDAY, 6/11** and again on 7/11, 8/11, and into the fall!!



The **Needham Farmers' Market** is opening for the season **THIS SUNDAY, 6/11 @ 11am-3pm** at Greene's Field and will run every Sunday until November.



In April, members of EMT spent a morning cleaning up the Mitchell School woods, as part of the town's **Earth Day clean-up**. We collected over 10 bags of trash and large pieces of scrap metal.



From our **Guatemala Partnership**

August 2023 Delegation Seeking Travelers & Partner Family Letters

The August delegation to Santa María Tzejá, to be led by Bill Garrett and Alan Clayton-Matthews, is seeking additional travelers. They invite high school youth (with or without a parent) and adults of all ages to consider joining this unique and even life-changing opportunity. Travel

dates are August 2-13. For more details, email Bill (wgarrett@mit.edu) or Alan (a.clayton-matthews@northeastern.edu).

Partner-family letters (and letters to scholarship students) are due Sunday, 6/18 in order to get them translated in time for the delegation's departure. Please send them to: Alan Clayton-Matthews: a.clayton-matthews@northeastern.edu. Your family in the village will be so happy to hear from you.

SAVE THE DATE! Guatemala Potluck Gathering, Sunday, 7/23 @ 6pm

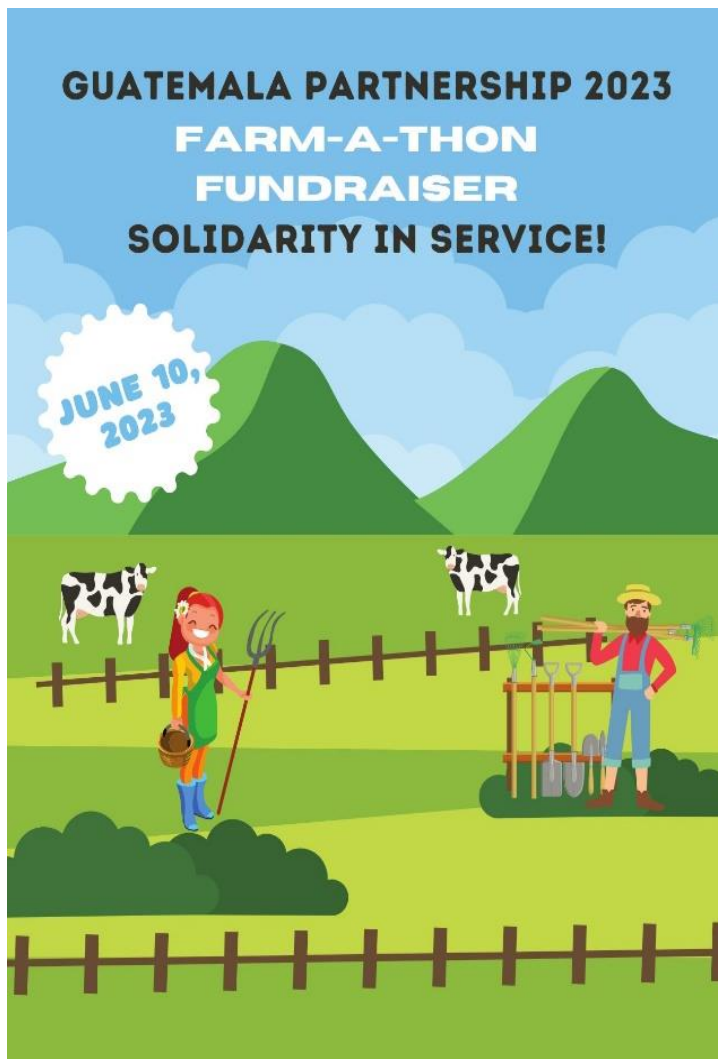
All are invited to attend this social event at Alan Clayton-Matthew's home (105 Concord St., Needham, MA) where we will enjoy relaxing and catching up with one another over food and drinks. We are delighted that Ali Durbin and husband Edwin Canil will be in town and will join us. Whether you are a partner-family, a former or prospective delegation traveler, or simply someone who might like to learn more about the Partnership, we invite you to join us.

Mark Your Calendar (and Save Your Donations):

GUATEMALA YARD SALE, Saturday, 9/16

As you do your spring/summer cleaning, please set aside your high-quality items for the Guatemala Yard Sale, to be held on the Church's front lawn on Saturday, September 16th from 9 am to 2 pm. You may drop off items the week before the sale. For questions, or to volunteer early, contact Brenda Metzler: bmetzler7@verizon.net.

Desired items (clean and in working order): Household and kitchen items, collectible or vintage items, jewelry, musical instruments, children's gear, toys, games, and puzzles for all ages, sports equipment for adults & children, bicycles, framed art, electronics (no TV's/computers), adult and children's books, DVD's, non-classical records, or small furniture items (no clothing).



FARM-A-THON FUNDRAISER

Saturday, 6/10 @ 9am-Noon

The Guatemala Partnership is seeking volunteer workers as well as sponsors to support its community-service 'Farm-a-Thon' event **at the Natick Community Organic Farm on Saturday, 6/10 @ 9am-Noon**. This fun and collaborative event that brings together folks from both our congregation and the First Church Natick (UCC). Participants are asked to raise pledges from family and friends to support their work at the farm. All funds raised will support education and development in Santa María Tzejá, while the work of our hands will support the Natick Community Organic Farm. As we approach summer, this is a great way to celebrate our earth and support our friends both globally and locally.

TO PARTICIPATE in this event, contact Brenda Metzler at bmetzler7@verizon.net. **TO DONATE** to the Needham team, please: 1) Send in a check payable to the Congregational Church of Needham, memo: "Guatemala Farm-a-thon"); or 2) **Donate online via PayPal** at www.NeedhamUCC.org/paypal; select Guatemala Farm-a-thon" from the drop-down menu.



From our
OPEN AND AFFIRMING MINISTRY TEAM

Coming Up This Fall
JUSTICE SUMMIT
Trans and Non-binary
Belonging in the Church



The 2023 Justice Summit, on **October 7** in Boston and online, will center on **trans and nonbinary belonging in the church**. This full-day event will include worship and preaching, workshops, relationship-building and connection. Our keynote preachers are Rev. Nicole Garcia, Faith Work Director for the National LGBTQ Task Force, and Rev. Tyler Connoley, Conference Minister for the Central Pacific Conference UCC.

To register, go to: <https://www.sneucc.org/eventdetail/17384234>

From "TRANS IN AMERICA"
By The Washington Post

In middle age, they realized they were trans: 'A lightbulb went off'

Ray Gibson spent half a century living as a woman before realizing he might be a man. Growing up in Omaha in the 1960s and '70s as the child of the Hall of Fame pitcher Bob Gibson, he always felt something was off. At age 6, "I thought, 'Gee, I'm the son my dad doesn't know he has.'" When he got his period at age 13, he locked himself in the bathroom, screaming and crying... (To read more, go to <https://www.washingtonpost.com/dc-md-va/2023/05/25/transgender-adults-coming-out-poll/>)



May was Asian-American/Pacific Islander Month

You can still see the fascinating *The New Face of Hollywood - A Soul of a Nation* presentation at ABC OnDemand, Disney + and Hulu. It features the histories of some of the cast members from *Everything, Everywhere, All at Once*.



Mindful Meditation ONLINE

Sundays @ 7pm LIVE! via Zoom at <https://us06web.zoom.us/j/88272388482>

What is mindful meditation? *It's a type of meditation in which you focus on being intensely aware of what you're sensing and feeling in the moment, without interpretation or judgment. Practicing mindfulness involves breathing methods, guided imagery, and other practices to relax the body and mind and help reduce stress. Who couldn't use more of that?* Join longtime practitioner Sue Findlay and others Sunday evenings online via Zoom.



3rd Sunday Men's Fellowship

Sunday, 6/18 @ 9-9:45am LIVE! via Zoom

All the men of the church are invited to gather online for fellowship and Bible study via Zoom before worship on the third Sunday of each month. For more info, email Rob Dunlavey at robdunlavey@gmail.com

2023 GENERAL SYNOD



UCC General Synod Info Session

6/25 @ 11:11am after worship, on-site & online via Zoom

Every two years, elected delegates from across the life of our United Church of Christ denominational family — clergy and laypeople from local congregations, national and conference staff people — from across the country come together to

worship, to learn, and to do the work of the church as our General Synod, including taking up resolutions on issues facing the church and the wider world from reducing plastic waste to supporting transgender & non-binary persons to studying reparations to African-Americans and more. (See the entire list of this Synod's resolutions at <https://generalsynod.org/proposed-resolutions>)

Rev. John has attended every General Synod since 1999 and is once again an official delegate this year. Come hear more about the ins and outs of this important part of our church life at a program **Sunday, 6/25 at 11:11am after worship**. Also, read through the resolutions and send your thoughts to Rev. John so he can bring your voice with him to Indianapolis.

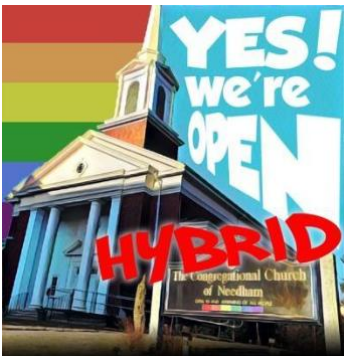
Congratulations to Rev. John, who has been asked to serve on the Board of Directors of our Southern New England Conference of our United Church of Christ denominational family!

FOCUS newsletter contributions are always welcome!

The submission deadline for our Mid-Summer Issue (including events for July and August and Save-the-Dates for September) is scheduled to go out mid-July is:

Tuesday, July 11

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



Rev. John MacIver Gage, *senior minister*

revjohn@needhamucc.org

Rev. Maddie Foster, *minister for Christian education & youth*

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Valerie Becker, *music director*

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Robin Bevilacqua, *church administrator*

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Cindy Sullivan, *finance administrator*

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