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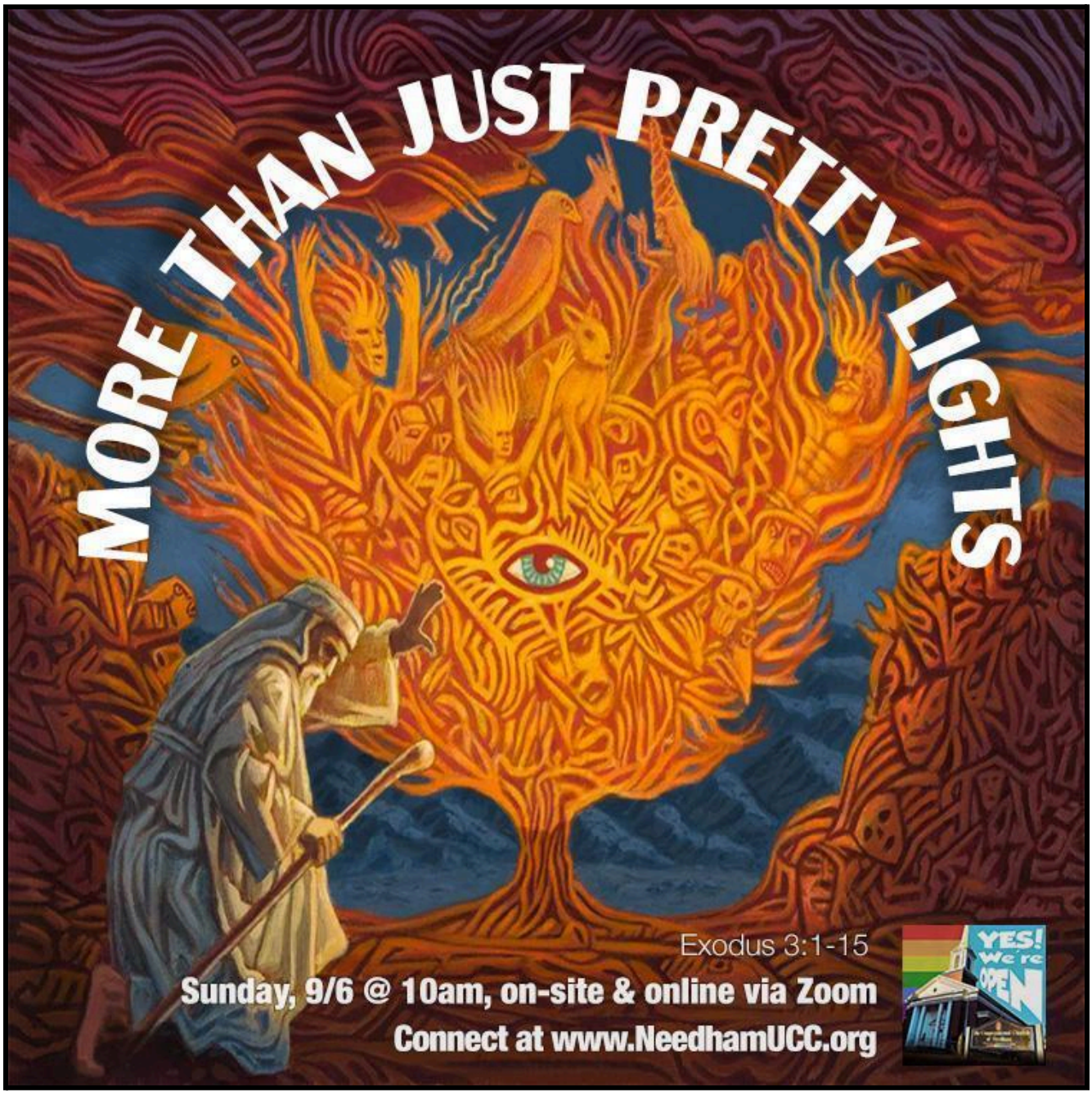

The Congregational Church of Needham, *United Church of Christ*

1154 Great Plain Ave, Needham MA 02492 / Tel 781.444.2510 / www.NeedhamUCC.org / IG @NeedhamUCC

Rev. John Gage, *senior minister*	revjohn@needhamucc.org
Valerie Becker, *director of music*	musicdirector@needhamucc.org
Darlene Wong, *director for children & youth*	childrenandyouth@needhamucc.org
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Pastor-Parish Relations Committee	prc@needhamucc.org

Welcome! Please take a moment to let us know you're here, whether you are an official church member, a frequent guest, or a first-timer. **Scan this QR code with the camera on your phone and follow the link to sign-in.** *There's a paper sign-in sheet in the foyer, if you prefer.*

Our Church Covenant *At the Congregational Church of Needham, United Church of Christ, we strive to be a joyful, welcoming Christian Community. We seek to be faithful in a world torn by suffering, injustice, oppression, and war. We are inspired by God, Christ's Ministry, and the examples of other faithful people. We join together in worship and song, fellowship, study, and mission to embrace the risks and challenges of continuing Christ's ministry. We struggle to live out our faith in the world by furthering justice and peace, witnessing to the truth, and proclaiming God's love and mercy for all people.*

Our Open and Affirming Covenant *We believe that all people are created in the image of God, who loves each of us as we are. Following the example of Jesus, we welcome and affirm all people, including those of every age, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression; every racial, ethnic and cultural identity, and country of origin; every faith background, family configuration and economic situation; every mental and physical ability and health status; every life experience and circumstance. We strive to be an example of God's extravagant welcome and to live these beliefs in our worship, language, actions and relationships. We invite all people who desire to join us in this journey of faith to share in the full life and ministry of this church.*

If you are a guest with us today, a special welcome to you! We'd love to know that you're here. Please sign in using the QR code at the top of this page or the physical attendance sheet in the lobby. If you'd like to learn more about our church or what it means to be a member here, please reach out to Rev. John at **revjohn@needhamucc.org**.

Children of all ages are always welcome in worship! Quiet books and **pew pals** (soft toys) are available in the narthex/foyer just outside the sanctuary doors. All accessible bathrooms have **changing tables**.

WIFI in the sanctuary: UCC_Guest, password: **needhamucc**

FOR TODAY:

Sunday school is on hiatus for the summer, and will resume on Sunday, September 13. There continue to be age-appropriate books and coloring pages and crayons in the lobby for kids to use during worship, if they like.

Baby Basics Groceries Ongoing Food Collection

Every Sunday we collect specific proteins for the groceries we give to the families accessing diapers through Baby Basics every other month. In September we're looking for **small cans of tuna fish.**

September 6, 2026

Earth's crammed with heaven,/ And every common bush afire with God:/ But only he who sees, takes off his shoes,/ The rest sit round it, and pluck blackberries,/ And daub their natural faces unaware

– from "Aurora Leight," Book VII, by Elizabeth Barrett Browning (1856)

PRELUDE *Non troppo presto* Valerie Becker, *piano*
by Elisabetta de Gambarini

WELCOME Rev. John MacIver Gage

CALL TO WORSHIP

One: Friends, we are invited here by the living God, who creates all things and calls us each by name.

Many: **In the thick of life, in our joys and challenges, we gather now to recognize the Holy among us.**

One: We come not just talk about God, hear about God, learn about God,

Many: but to talk with God, listen for God, and learn from God.

One: People of every race and ethnicity, younger and older and middle-aged, individuals and families, of differing gifts and abilities, richer and poorer, gay and straight, of every gender identity and expression, indigenous and immigrant,

Many: **Christ calls us all to join in the work of love.**

One: This congregation is a place to pursue the Spirit's vision for all people,

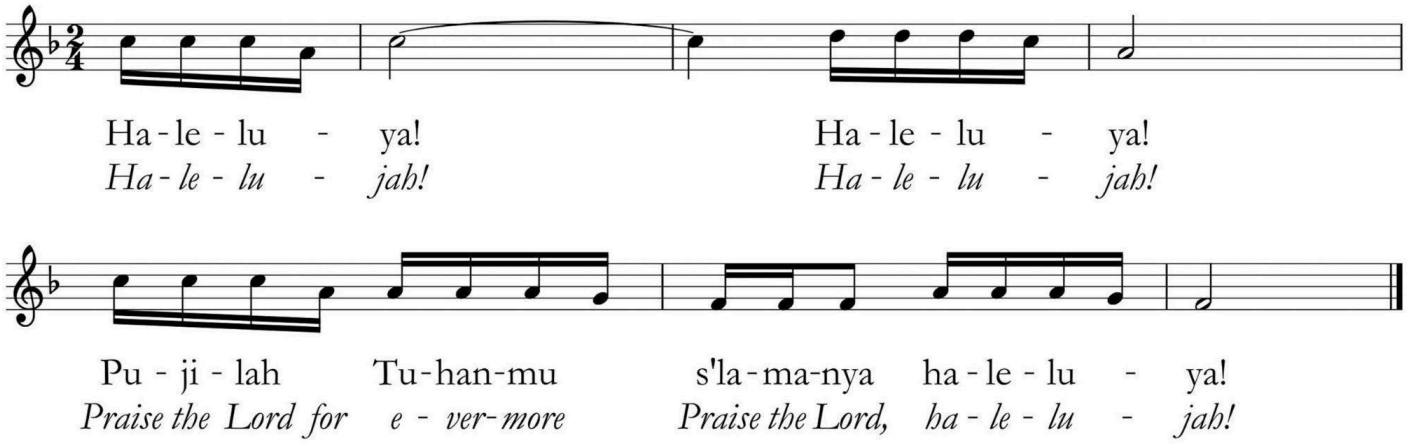
Many: **to practice justice, peace, and compassion and learn to live together in faith.**

All: ***Let us worship God together in spirit and in truth, in word and in deed.***

HYMN ***Come, Living God, When Least Expected*** *(see below)*

GREETING ONE ANOTHER IN PEACE
("Peace be with you / **And also with you"**)

SUNG PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION Godlief Soumokil, Indonesia



READING FROM SCRIPTURE *from the Pentateuch,* Exodus 3:1-15

TIME ESPECIALLY FOR CHILDREN

SERMON *More Than Just Pretty Lights* Rev. John MacIver Gage

HYMN ***When Israel Was in Egypt's Land ("Go Down, Moses")***
(see below)

SHARING OUR PRAYERS ("O God, **hear our prayer"**)

THE LORD'S PRAYER
(using these or whichever words are closest to your own heart)

Our Father/Mother in heaven, holy is your name. Your reign come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. And forgive us our sins, as we forgive those who sin against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For yours is the kin-dom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.

MUSICAL OFFERING

Come Dance and Sing, Shaker tune, arr. Joan Szymko

Maria Whitcomb, Maggie Furtak, Kristian Mitchell, *vocalists*

Come dance and sing around the ring,
Live and love in union
Dance and sing around the ring,
Live in sweet communion
Sing with life, live with life,
Live with life and power.

INVITATION TO DEEPER RELATIONSHIP

Feeling like you might like to make this congregation your church home? Curious to learn more about who we are and how we practice our faith and what membership means here? Reach out to Rev. John at **revjohn@needhamucc.org**

PARTNERING IN THE GOOD NEWS

SINGING OUR THANKS AND PRAISE

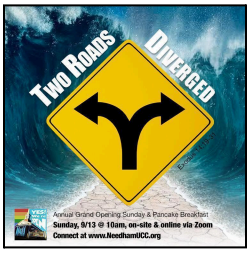
Praise God from whom all blessings flow;
Praise God, all creatures here below;
Praise God above, you heavenly hosts–
Creator, Christ, and Holy Ghost. Amen.

WE ARE SENT OUT

POSTLUDE

The flowers on the altar today are given to the glory of God and in loving memory of Barbara Boyd.

OPPORTUNITIES TO GET INVOLVED: September 6, 2026



Two Roads Diverged: Making Our Way Together as Church

Annual Grand Opening Sunday, with Brunch & Conversation to Follow

9/13 @ 10am, on-site & online via Zoom at

http://zoom.us/j/907548568

At the climax of the Exodus story, two roads run into the Red Sea. One, the Hebrew people's path of vulnerability and interdependence, leads to liberation and life. The other, Pharaoh's path of oppression and exploitation, leads to disaster and death, and not just for him but for the rank and file who follow him and refuse to choose a better way. In light of today's reading, maybe we in the church who claim the name and way of Jesus want to double check our GPS to see which road we're really on? (Exodus 14:19-31)

All-Church Brunch & Conversation

9/13 @ 11:11am, *following Worship on Grand Opening Sunday*

September 13 is our annual Grand Opening Sunday, when we kick-off a new program year in the life of the church. Everyone is invited to stay after worship to enjoy brunch together and engage in a conversation about what church is and what it–*we*–are called to do in the world as followers of the way of Jesus. The Deacons encourage anyone so moved to make (or buy) and bring a brunch casserole, muffins, coffee cake, sausages or other brunch dish to enlarge the table. Please contact Sue Turner at **suegturner1@comcast.net** and let her know. We look forward to seeing you there!

Guatemala Yard Sale
Saturday, 9/19 @ 9am-2pm, *in Fellowship Hall*

The 35th annual Guatemala Yard Sale fundraiser will be held in Fellowship Hall on Saturday, 9/19 @ 9am–2pm! Please contribute by donating items, sorting and pricing, working and/or shopping at the sale. All items should be dropped off at the church Library according to the schedule below:

Early Donation Drop-Offs: Sunday, 9/13 @11:15am–1pm (use Noah's Ark Entrance, Door #4.)
Weekday Drop-Offs (use Linden Street Ramp):
Monday-Thursday, 9/14-17 @ 10am-3pm
Friday, 9/18 @10am-12 Noon ONLY

We need volunteers to sort and price donations (Monday-Friday, 9/14-18 @ 10am-4pm) and the work the sale (Saturday, 9/19 @ 7am-4pm).

To volunteer, contact Brenda: **bmetzler7@verizon.net**, home phone: 781-449-5696 or cell: 781-686-7254

Donations Wanted (clean and in working order):
Household and kitchen items, small appliances, collectible or vintage items, jewelry, musical instruments, holiday items, children's gear, toys, games, and puzzles for all ages, current sports equipment for adults and children (especially hockey, golf, ski boots), bicycles, framed art, tools, electronics **(no TVs or computers)**, books/DVDs/non-classical records, small furniture items. **No clothing.**

Guatemala Partnership August Delegation Highlights
Sunday, 9/13 @ 7pm

The August delegation recently returned from an enriching visit of friendship, learning, and solidarity with our sister community of Santa María Tzejá. In lieu of a longer delegation ReportBack, we invite you to join us for the first 30 minutes of our Partnership meeting on Sunday, 9/13 @ 7pm EDT,

when you will hear directly from travelers about their experiences and impressions, as well as community updates. Meeting Link: **https://us06web.zoom.us/j/81273638681?pwd=nkLsuJICytRoYJE4IpNopNcboHalja.1**

Children & Youth Ministries: ***Get Ready for the Fall!***

After a summer break, Sunday school programming for kids of all ages will resume with Darlene Wong, our director of children and youth ministries, on Grand Opening Sunday, September 13. Until then, Darlene will be with us in worship as she gets ready to help us welcome kids in Sunday school, so come to worship, say hello, and get ready for a great fall.

SIGN UP TO HELP WITH SUNDAY SCHOOL! Every Sunday we need at least one volunteer from the congregation to help lead Sunday school. (Our Safe Church Policy–and our love for our kids–requires that we always have two unrelated adults in the classroom.) Will you help us share God's love with the youngest among us? **Sign up at this link: https://docs.google.com/document/d/1ONwEBXFjwykTz8QU58rgAflm4QTkNziHytxxi-E5Qa8/edit?usp=sharing**

Save The Date

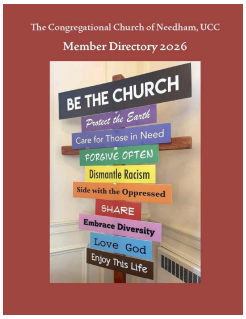
The Immigration Justice Task Force with
The Needham Diversity Initiative
Sunday, 9/27 @ 7-8:30pm, *in Fellowship Hall*

The Immigration Justice Task Force, along with the Needham Diversity Initiative, have put together a very engaging program on immigration. It will take place on Sunday, September 27, from 7:00 to 8:30pm In Fellowship Hall. It will include an update on what is happening currently in our local area, as well as speakers from Needham who will describe the kinds of volunteer work they do on behalf of our immigrant neighbors, offering others the opportunity to join them in their diverse volunteer activities.

Buy your tickets now for the
LGBT Asylum Task Force Annual Gala, "We Persist"
Saturday, 10/10 @ 5:30-11pm, *Mechanics Hall, 321 Main St, Worcester, MA*

The LGBT Asylum Task Force, a ministry of Hadwen Park Congregational Church, UCC, in Worcester, provides housing, food, clothing, financial and personal support as well as legal assistance to LGBT folks seeking political asylum in the United States to escape oppression and violence in their home countries. It's always been costly, Christlike ministry, but you can imagine how much harder it is in our current political climate in this country.

Their biggest and most important fundraiser of the year is their annual gala, this year themed, appropriately, "We Persist." Won't you consider buying tickets and attending in support of the incredible work they're doing? **Tickets are on sale now at this link: https://givebutter.com/c/tfgala26.** When you purchase your tickets, please let our own Kathie Carpenter know **via email** so she can keep track of our congregation's support for these new neighbors in need.



New Church Directory!

We're delighted to announce that after far too long a time, we have a brand new church directory of church members, which includes a section of beautiful full-color photos. If you haven't picked one up yet and would like to get your own copy, they are available every Sunday after worship. (Just ask Rev. John.) If you are an official member of the church or a consistent participant, we'd also be happy to send you a physical copy. Simply email Robin Bevilacqua in the church office at **office@needhamucc.org**, and she will verify your information and send you one via USPS. You can also arrange a time to pick one up in person, if you prefer.

Come, Living God, When Least Expected

Come living God, when least expected,
when minds are dull and hearts are cold,
through sharpening word and warm affection
revealing truths as yet untold.

Break from the tomb in which we hide you
to speak again in startling ways;
break through the words in which we bind you
to resurrect our lifeless praise.

Come now, as once you came to Moses
within the bush alive with flame;
or to Elijah on the mountain,
by silence pressing home your claim.

Then, through our gloom, your Son will meet us
as vivid truth and living Lord,
exploding doubt and disillusion
to scatter hope and joy abroad.

Text: A. Gaunt (1991); Tune: ST. CELEMENT (Scholefield)

When Israel Was in Egypt's Land
("Go Down, Moses")

When Israel was in Egypt's land,
Let my people go,
Oppressed so hard they could not stand,
Let my people go.

Refrain
Go down, Moses, way down in Egypt's land,
Go down Moses, Tell old Pharoah to let my people go.

"Thus spoke our God," bold Moses said,
"Let my people go;
or consequences on your head,
Let my people go." ***Refrain***

No more in bondage shall they toil,
Let my people go;
Let them escape with Egypt's spoil,
Let my people go. ***Refrain***

The Lord showed Moses what to do,
Let my people go,
to lead the Hebrew children through,
Let my people go. ***Refrain***