



The Beacon

First Congregational Church of Millbury, United Church of Christ

Our Mission: To welcome and inspire ALL through faith, love,
and fellowship according to Christ's example.

Volume 32 Issue 5 • May 2020

Dear Friends,

As I write this, the COVID 19 pandemic is raging across our state. My heart aches for those who are sick and their families, and for those who have died. My heart aches for grieving families who have not been able to mourn their loss with a funeral service, where they would receive support from friends. As well as feeling sadness, I'm deeply disturbed by the injustices that the ravages of this pandemic have been much more severe among African Americans and those forced by poverty to live in crowded conditions.

This is a very difficult time. For me as a pastor, it has been hard not to be able to minister in my usual way: leading worship in our beautiful sanctuary, having face to face conversations, sharing handshakes and hugs. I have had to learn a lot of new skills. The biggest challenge has been learning to use technology, so that I can still reach you, even though we are physically apart.

In the past three weeks, I've learned how to record myself preaching in my living room, using my laptop. I've learned how to create an audio file from this recording and send it to Audrey for our website (Thank you Audrey!) I've learned how to upload the video to our church YouTube channel (it's incredibly easy). (Thank you to Linda Lachance, who has been posting those videos on our church Facebook page!)

This technology has miraculous features! The Deacons and I see each other's faces as we meet over Zoom. My voice can be heard and my face can be seen by folks near and far through the magic of YouTube and Facebook*.

As I minister in this new way, though, I've confronted a spiritual problem. Because it's so easy to see myself on my laptop screen or iPad, I'm tempted to focus, more than I used to, on how I look. I'm tempted to play the recordings, again and again. I find myself wondering, "Was my voice just right as I read that Bible passage? Was the expression on my face effective at conveying the point I was trying to make?" And, of course, obsessing about the look of my hair, my clothes, and my jewelry. It's been tempting to focus more on my appearance than on sharing God's message from my heart.

Ever since Eve took her first look at Adam, we humans have been concerned about our appearance. It's human to want to look good. But I'm dismayed to find these days, as I master these new tools, how quickly my thoughts can shift: from thinking about the message I'm trying to share, to thinking about how I look and sound when I'm sharing it. Appearance can become the primary concern. A polished performance can become the goal.

We know that our appearance is not God's primary concern. God values most of all what is in our hearts. When the prophet Samuel was called to choose a new king for Israel, his first choice was the tall, good-looking Eliab. But God said to Samuel, "Do not look upon his appearance, or upon the height of his stature, ... for the LORD does not see as mortals see: they look on the outward appearance, but the LORD looks on the heart" (1 Samuel 16:7).

Because God looks on our hearts, we know that what God wants is not a polished performance, but a humble, heartfelt sharing of God's good news.


I'm eager for the day when we can gather again, in worship and fellowship. That day may not come for a

(Continued on page 2)

while. In the meantime, I thank God for the technology that makes it possible for us to gather virtually. I pray every day for you all, and for our church. And I ask God to help me pay attention to what really matters: the great good news of God's love for all the world.

In Christ's love,
Pastor Elva

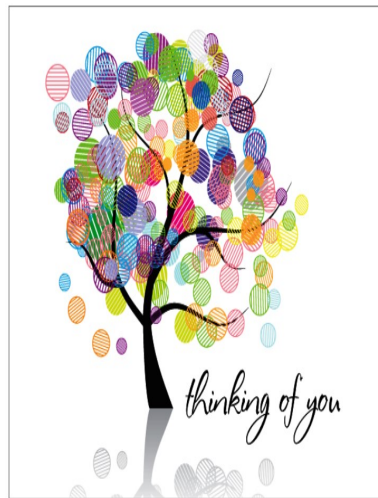
*If you have a computer, and need some help getting to our church Facebook page, please call Linda. She'd be glad to help you.



BIRTHDAYS THIS MONTH

- 4th Thomas Murphy
- 5th Joan Greenwood
- 6th Robert Jerszyk
- 7th Pastor Elva
- 8th Christine Hamer
- 9th Joseph Kosiba
- 10th Terry Bickford
- 15th Eva Aubin
- 18th Jean Orrell
- 23rd Karen Bickford
- 24th Abigail Thurlow
- 24th Cindy Bradway
- 25th Joyce O'Connor
- 26th John Davidson
- 28th Michael Murray
- 30th William Witter

Remember our shut-ins with a note or a card.....



Mr. Jay Stockwell
110 Hartness Road
Sutton, MA 01590

Chris Rudge
8 Carlstrom Lane
Millbury, Ma 01527

Bill Crandell
Care One at Millbury
312 Millbury Ave
Millbury, Ma 01527

Prayers & Concerns

- † Our Community
- † Our Country
- † Our World
- † All Military Men and Women
- † All First Responders
- † Our Church and our Ministry in Millbury and beyond
- † Ron Stead's sister in law Kathie Stead
- † Audrey Rossow's friend Michael Luchini
- † Steven and James MacArthur and their families, on the death of their father Steven MacArthur Sr. Steven MacArthur Sr. is the ex husband of Jim Mousseau's wife Mary.
- † Cheryl, Roland and Kay Lachance's niece, recovering from surgery.
- † Amy Peterson and family, on the death of David Stowe from COVID - 19. David was the first cousin of Amy's father, George Stowe.
- † Health care workers and first responders, caring for those with COVID 19

Painting Class Cancelled

The Acrylic Painting Class scheduled for May 16, at 1:00PM has been cancelled.

Please watch for more information in your local newspapers, Facebook and the church website for future classes.



Cancellation of Services

Acting on the recommendation of our government officials, in a continuing effort to slow the spread of the corona virus, services of worship, have been cancelled until Governor Baker lifts the stay at home order and restrictions. We will keep you updated.

- Pastor Elva

Easter Celebration

On Easter morning Pastor Elva asked Justin to ring the church bell at 10:00 AM. A few folks discussed driving to the church to hear the bell toll.

What a wonderful surprise to see the parking lot full of cars with people getting out and standing a safe distance apart. Some wore masks and gloves and some did not. Some stayed in their cars for safety reasons. It was truly a sight for sore eyes in this time of uncertainty.

Unexpectedly, Joyce arrived to play the organ and with the doors open we could hear her beautiful music. After the bell rang 10 times we all sang Christ the Lord Is Risen Today, as Leah had made copies of the hymn in hopes that people would come.

We totaled about 25 parishioners or so. We did not hug, we did not shake hands. We simply enjoyed speaking and spending a little time together at this difficult time in our lives from a distance. We joined together on a gorgeous Easter morning to welcome Jesus unto our lives and praise God for all his goodness.

That little 15 minute gathering in a world of turmoil and heartbreak gave us a spiritual lift that we all needed to help heal our hearts and minds. It gave us hope for a brighter tomorrow.

Praise Be to God!!!!



Recently I came across this creed from the ecumenical Christian community on the island of Iona, off the west coast of Scotland. It spoke to me powerfully of our faith. It's a good message for these difficult times of pandemic.

—Pastor Elva

In these difficult days of the COVID 19 pandemic, we draw strength from our faith. Our faith is grounded in a loving God, described powerfully in the Iona Creed:

The Iona* Creed

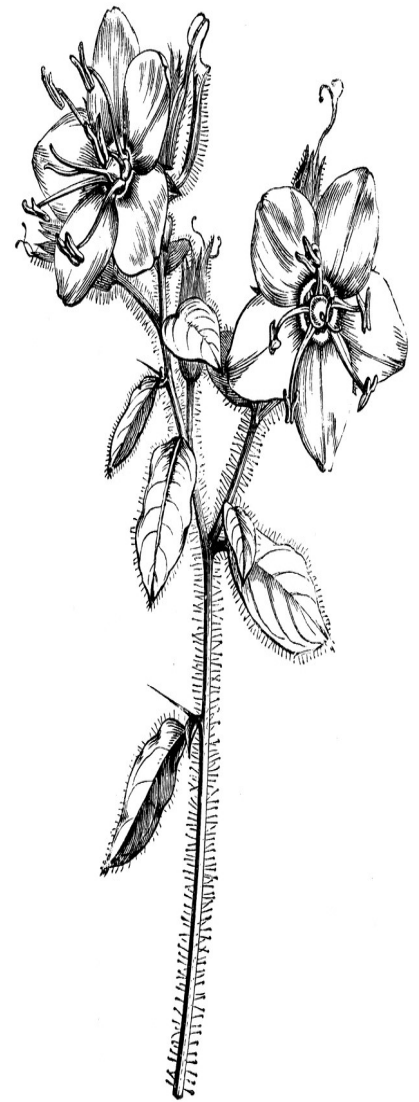
We believe that God is present
in the darkness before the dawn:
in the waiting and uncertainty
where fear and courage join hands,
conflict and caring link arms,
and the sun rises over barbed wire.

We believe in a with-us God
who sits down in our midst
to share our humanity.

We affirm a faith
that takes us beyond a safe place:
into action, into vulnerability...

We commit ourselves to work for change
and put ourselves on the line:
to bear responsibility, take risks,
live powerfully and face humiliation:
to stand with those on the edge,
to choose life and be used by the Spirit
for God's new community of hope.

Amen.



*The Iona Community is an ecumenical Christian group living on an island off the west coast of Scotland.

**First Congregational Church
of Millbury, UCC
148 West Main Street
Millbury, MA 01527**

Address Correction Requested

The Beacon

**May
2020**



**Worship and Church School: 10:00 a.m.
Church Phone: 508-865-9737
Email: Millbury1stChurch@gmail.com
Web: <http://millburyfirstchurch.com>**



**Resolve to
make a
difference
in someone's life!**



To add an event, please
email
Millbury1stchurch@gmail.com

Remember to check us out
on Facebook. See all the
photos. It's a great way to
introduce your friends to our
Friendly Church on the Hill.

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Deadline for June

May 17th. The BEACON is distributed by email or first class mail. It can also be downloaded from the church website. Copies are available at the back of the sanctuary.



2020