

THE CHURCH BELL

AUGUST 2022

The First Congregational Church Newsletter

A Congregation of the United Church of Christ
At 26 Central Street in West Boylston
online at www.fccwb.com

*"The Lord has yet more light and truth to break
forth from his holy Word."*
- John Robinson, pastor to the Pilgrims



"Happy is the nation whose God is the Lord." ~ Psalm 33:12 NRSV

AUGUST WORSHIP SCHEDULE

Worship at 10:00 a.m.

Pentecost: On Fire with God's Love

August 7 ~ The Ninth Sunday after Pentecost

The Sacrament of Holy Communion

The Reverend Julie L. Cedrone preaching
Mae Stroshane, piano and vocals

August 14 ~ The Tenth Sunday after Pentecost

The Reverend Thomas McMillan preaching
Michael Westberry, piano and organ

*****August 21 ~ The Eleventh Sunday after Pentecost*****

10:00 a.m. Worship at Next Level Church
112 Crescent Street, West Boylston

August 28 ~ The Twelfth Sunday after Pentecost

Outdoor Worship
The Reverend Julie L. Cedrone preaching
Mae Stroshane, keyboard and vocals

Pastor Julie is on vacation from 8/9—8/22.

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Jewels from Jules

Sermon excerpt "Dusty Feet" (Luke 10:1-11, 16-20)

Ok, let's get our feet wet.

Really, that's what this scripture is all about, the cleaning of our feet, shaking off the dust and honoring those feet as they move forward one step at a time. I know, you're thinking that I am trying to sneak in a foot washing service, and it certainly would be a treat in this hot weather! But there is a theological reason for foot washing as well as a history of cultural practice. Foot washing is not just a Holy Week ritual that seems to serve as a looming threat to everyone in need of a pedicure or with foot anxiety. Foot washing appears throughout the scriptures (examples) and was a common sign of hospitality. Be mindful that sandals were the usual footwear and feet were far more prone to get dusty in the dry Middle East climate than in our geographical context; nonetheless, when a traveler or guest would enter a home in biblical days, they would either be offered a basin of water and a towel to wash their feet or a servant would be sent to wash them. On occasions, the host washed the feet of their guest.

For those of you with foot issues and a squeamishness regarding touching other people's feet or your own, you would be required to abandon them very quickly if you wanted to be a respectful member of the community.

And, in this scripture, Jesus is sending out seventy of his followers in a dry run - a dusty run - to prepare the way for his ministry. He pairs them up, and gives them instructions for how to share the Good News with strangers, trying to prepare them for the inevitable rejection along the way: slammed doors, sneers, challenges, avoidance, being invisible. While we may be struggling with a decline in church attendance, Jesus and his followers were struggling with the creation of the church, starting a movement where there was not one. In anticipation of the rejection that his followers would encounter, he does describe it as "being sent like lambs into the midst of wolves" Jesus tells them this, "But whenever you enter a town and they do not welcome you, go out into its streets and say, "Even the dust of your town that clings to our feet, we wipe off in protest against you."

And, so, with the mandate to wipe the dust of their feet when not welcomed, the missionaries are launched. This "launching" is called the Limited Commission, not to be confused with the Great Commission when Jesus sends his disciples to share the Good news with ALL people; the Limited Commission has a different purpose, it's not about ALL people, it's a commissioning only for the Israelites, and a test, if you will, to determine who is willing and worthy among them to receive Jesus's message. A more challenging target audience, you could say, and challenging enough that this story is mentioned in all four Gospels with the assumption that the Good News of Jesus Christ would not be greeted with enthusiasm.

Sounds familiar....we all travel in circles where the Good News of Jesus Christ is not greeted with enthusiasm. Sometimes at our kitchen table. Jesus never said that following him was easy.

Their gesture of leaving behind their foot dust was a deliberate one; it was the custom of pious Jews to wipe off their feet and leave the dust behind after they traveled through a "mixed" territory, to separate themselves from the unclean. It's not a very kind gesture. If any of us traveled through a neighborhood in Worcester that was rather unlike our own neighborhood, then cleansed ourselves at the border and left our dirty residue, that would be viewed as rather....rude. And, for Jesus to suggest that his disciples reclaim this dust ritual is a dramatic reversal.

There is a Jehovah's Witness community on the edge of my town, and I passed the Mormon temple on route 2 the other day, two American Christian churches that have a strong practice of visiting door to door in pairs, to spread the message of Jesus. I wondered if this was a hallmark scripture for them, and I quickly found that Joseph Smith, founder of the Mormon Church, did quote and practice "shake the dust off your feet." In fact, the controversy was whether or not the dust shaking should happen visibly, so the judgment should be seen.

Through a series of revelations from God in the early 1830s, Joseph Smith clarified that the dust shaking should be done in secret "lest thou provoke them." That makes sense, seems respectful, but his next revelation is a bit troubling to not only me but other Christians, as he instructed his missionaries to shake the dust off their feet and "I be filled with joy and gladness and know this, that in the day of judgment you shall be judges of that house, and condemn them, and it shall be more tolerable for the heathen in the day of judgment, than for that house."

That's a lot of power for us, to be able to condemn others who may not want to receive the Christian message, nor receive it from us at that moment. So, that becomes the core question for me, and for us, in this "Spiritual, but not religious" era. WHEN do we shake the dust off our feet? We are called to share God's love persistently, and there are some who may never be ready for the message....is it our place to judge, try again or quietly move on, cleaning our feet much later?

If you want to know a little secret, this scripture is one of my mantras every time I fumble or fail at something, and I am a master at making mistakes! "Ok, Julie, wipe the dust off those feet and move on..." I remembered a sermon on this scripture from high school, and I latched on to the idea that this is a scripture about failure, about falling down and then getting back up again. As I read it again now, decades later, I notice that Jesus never mentions failure and certainly when this scripture wraps up joyfully once the seventy return, the followers don't seem to harp on their "failures" This scripture is much more about resilience, perseverance, staying on course with a faithful message and a practice of loving hospitality. This scripture is a worthy recipe for how to stay somewhat sane in these very reactive times, a three step method to loving, lived faith for the long haul.

I think it's beyond time to get our feet wet.

I have a friend with a lovely beach house in Provincetown, and there is always a large square bucket of water on the front porch, and a nubby mat, so you can step in and allow all the dust and sand to stay behind so you can enter the house clean. The mat dries and massages. So, maybe this story is less about casting judgment by wiping off all the dust, and more about an opportunity to be clean, forgiven, and walk each step with newness. And maybe we don't worry about shaking the dust off our feet..... but focus more on offering a basin of water to others.

SAVE THE DATE!

Art mini-retreat during Homecoming Weekend! September 10, 3:00-5:00pm

"I give my life into the Potter's hands"

Join Pastor Julie and local artist, Linda Leach, for a pottery workshop and very happy hour (or two) as we create together and enjoy spirited conversation over beverages and snacks.

Cost \$20 covers supplies



A note from Carolyn Gagnon on her volunteer work with refugees:

My interest in helping people displaced by war was most likely instilled in me at a young age when my Dad had me watch WW2 documentaries more times than I can count. As a Polish American, the horrific acts inflicted on millions of innocent people was a lesson to hold not just in my memory, but in my heart as well. I believe that apathy towards the suffering of refugees only perpetuates the evil and pain inflicted upon them by the dictators in our world.

Recently I have had the opportunity to help refugees by volunteering with Welcome Alliance for Refugee Ministry, WARM. Since October I have helped with many apartment set ups and collecting donated household items for the 400 Afghan refugees who came to Worcester since September 2021. It has been a great learning experience to learn about their customs, holidays, and values. I also have worked closely with a mother and son from Sudan who arrived in the United States in November. I have advocated for her by navigating very complex and often contradictory refugee assistance programs. Comprehending how to obtain assistance and fill out necessary forms is difficult as an English speaking college graduate who was born here. Compound that scenario with a refugee trying to learn English who doesn't understand how are systems work and you can see how frustrating a refugee's life can be.

This summer we are hosting a 15 yr old Ukrainian refugee student who is attending Woodstock Academy in Connecticut. We took her with us on an already planned vacation to Canada. Ironically, we had more trouble reentering the United States than we did getting into Canada, due to a problem with her visa. It was a unique experience to be detained at the border of the country we were born in!

I believe Americans are blessed with so much, clean drinking water, job opportunities, education, healthcare, and a strong military. Most Americans can not begin to imagine being invaded by an enemy and leaving their homes behind to find a safe place to live.

The scripture lesson in Matthew 25: 31-40 states my belief well: " I was hungry and you gave me food. I was thirsty and you gave me drink. I was a stranger and you welcomed me."

Blessings,
Carolyn Gagnon





WB FOOD PANTRY

First Congregational Church partners with Oakdale United Methodist and Our Lady of Good Council churches in West Boylston to host a Food Pantry. It is open from 1-3 p.m. on the 3rd Tuesday of every month. Donations of food and money are always welcome.

**Next distribution date is
Tuesday, August 16th 1-3pm**

Current Pantry Needs include:

Crackers, cookies, 4 packs of pudding, condiments, salad dressing,
black beans, baked beans, rice, jelly (especially strawberry), fruit bars, Chef Boyardee, and Knorr Pasta Sides.

Please check all items for expiration dates as we have to discard any items that have expired.

Donations may be left in the blue bins in the ramp entrance. Thanks so much for your generosity

If you would like to volunteer, please contact Martha Adams.
uponastar4@aol.com



In the Hour of Need Family Shelter

Our next week to host at the In the Hour of Need Family Shelter (IHN) is September 18th through September 24th. You can sign up to volunteer with this link:

<https://www.signupgenius.com/go/10C0D49A5AB2CA5F5C61-volunteer1>

Dismas House

FCCWB prepares a meal 4 times per year. for the residents. Always on the 5th Friday of the month. The next date is Friday, September 30th.

If you would like to volunteer to help, please contact Maureen Bagley.

mb080102@yahoo.com



WORKING WITH

WORCESTER FELLOWSHIP

Join us on **September 4th at FCCWB** for worship and to make boxed lunches after service for those in need.

Look for collection bins in Fellowship Hall; we are **collecting white socks** to donate!



We are in the heart of "the small town with the big heart," so, let's wow the town with our spirit! There is a town Fall Festival in the works for October and more summer concerts, all happening around our stately church (with much improved parking lot - thank you, building team!). What an opportunity to be welcoming neighbors to our town, to open our doors. This means that we can bring new faces inside, and also come on out. So, I ask you to consider how we may want to engage with these town events beyond being the parking lot for them - we can have a concert, a food booth, games....who knows? Start brainstorming. Let our outdoor worship and picnic be a beginning



SAVE THE DATE
OCTOBER 22ND

FALL FESTIVAL

How can our church community participate in this new town event? We want your ideas, here are some thoughts:

- musical concert
- food booth
- pumpkin painting/fall crafts
- costume parade

Email Julie@fccwb.com with your ideas!

Community Nursery School



We are thrilled to be welcome a new director here at the Community Nursery School. Corinne Uliano joins us August 9th and we are happy to welcome her; as the school is certainly ready for a new beginning as we head into the 2022-2023 school year. Corinne comes to us with a wealth of knowledge from working in the field of Early Childhood over the past 23 years holding positions in the classroom as well as out of the classroom and working with children and their families in the role of teacher and director.

We certainly have all the feels in the building as we know the new school year is right around the corner. Although, it feels like Summer just started with the current weather. We have really taken all the opportunities to be outside this summer and will soon be reminiscing about being outside in the hot sun during water play!

Soon our focus will shift to preparing our classrooms for the Fall. With Fall comes change and we begin to plan for this as we welcome new children, families, new routines as well as the change in weather. We are looking forward to the final weeks of summer and are excited for what the new school year will bring!

Kristen Sheldon,
Acting Nursery School Director



Community
Nursery School

Register for
fall 2022!

Call
508-835-3845 or
Email
CNSWB@fccwb.com
to enroll now!

Prayer and Praise***All those with health concerns:***

Sophia Landeo
 Lori Rotti-Carol Barnes' daughter-in-law
 Philip Helle
 Nancy-Peter Borge's sister
 Richard Whitney
 Nick Person
 Ursula Helle
 Allison Person
 Rob Nierintz
 Sarah and Wally Trisdale
 Sue Coviello
 Ron Newman-Dan Newman's father
 Carol Ann Hamilton
 Nancy-Ben Bryant's friend's significant other
 CNS teacher-Chris and her husband Paul
 Scott Holt
 A child-Donna Raymond's friend
 CNS teacher -Kelly Lane
 Donna-Jenna Hoodlet's family
 Ron & Carol Barnes
 Donna-Karyl Leslie's friend
 Gail-friend of Diana Engelbart
 Virginia-Karyl Leslie's friend
 Chuck Crone
 Brent-Beverly Fisher's son
 Dawn-a former faithful thrift shop volunteer
 Karyl Leslie
 Obadidullah- a14 year old Afghan refugee seeking medical help in Worcester
 Oakdale United Methodist Church and Pastor Michelle Grube
 Connie Stewart
 Tommy Hayes and family
 Lee Bolivar
 June Crone
 Brian Dombrowski-Beth Tivnan's brother-in-law
 Ken Richards
 Lue and Brad Hawley

***In sympathy:***

The family of Margaret Borge
 Carol Blake and family-Carol's brother passed away

Prayers of celebration:

Positive start for our new CNS director, Corinne Uliano

Wider concerns:

Ukrainian refugees and those struggling to survive in Ukraine.
 Victims of violent crimes and their families.
 The refugees from Afghanistan.
 Those who are feeling especially lonely or bereft at this time.
 Our service men and women around the world and their families.
 Those who are unemployed among us and around the country.

If you would like to donate altar flowers please contact Lisa Fisher in the church office, 508-835-4462.

The cost of the flowers is \$35.00.
 Available dates: Aug 7, Aug 14, Aug 21, Aug 28

Church Register***Baptisms***

Max John David Allen
July 10

Marriages

Emily Walker
 &
Aaron Pearl
July 16

Deaths

Margaret Borge
July 21

**Send address changes to
administrator@fccwb.com**

CHURCH OFFICE HOURS

MONDAY THRU FRIDAY 9:00 A.M. - 2:00 P.M.

TELEPHONE: 508-835-4462 FAX: 508-835-4463

OFFICE EMAIL: administrator@fccwb.com

WEBSITE: www.fccwb.com

Messages may be left on the church phone system for the staff at any time.

Pastor-**Julie Cedrone** (ext. 101)

Administrative Assistant-**Lisa Fisher** (ext. 100)

Financial office (ext. 103)

Staff Email addresses are:

Pastor Julie: julie@fccwb.com

Financial Office: financial@fccwb.com

Community Nursery School: cnswb@fccwb.com

FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH, UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
26 CENTRAL STREET, WEST BOYLSTON, MA 01583-1600

The Reverend Julie L. Cedrone, Pastor
Ken H. Richards, SPC, Minister of Music
Lisa A. Fisher, Administrative Assistant, Editor

Waldo Cummings, III, Custodian
Kristen Sheldon, Nursery School Acting Director
The Reverend George E. Vogel, Associate Pastor Emeritus

PHONE: 508-835-4462
FAX: 508-835-4463

EMAIL: administrator@fccwb.com
WEBSITE: www.fccwb.com



03 Jake O'Brien
04 Lisa Zendzian
05 Laurie Rauktis
06 George Richardson
07 Benjamin Fancy
08 Joe Doyle
08 Kristin Franger
11 Lauren Espe
11 Zachary Newman
11 Molly O'Connor
15 Nicholas Pearson
17 Meaghan Flaherty
18 Lehman Bolivar
20 Nicholas Coviello
20 Emily Walker
22 Dean Carlson
25 Amy Colangelo
26 Katrina Pusateri
27 Luke Fancy
27 Todd Raymond
28 Julie Cedrone
28 Donna-Drew Price
29 Julie Krugman
31 Tina Beaupre