

FIRST CONGREGATIONAL
CHURCH OF FALMOUTH,
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

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Have you ever visited a vineyard? The vines and leaves and fruit grow together, wrapping and weaving, holding and supporting, strengthening one another. It is difficult to discern where the vine begins and where it ends. The vine is irrevocable, it is interwoven, and it is knit together.



The Gospel of John describes God's presence as a vine. A vine that brings sustenance, structure, and support to us all. A vine that nurtures our lives. A vine that connects and transforms us, attaching each one of us together until we turn from being grapes into becoming a vineyard. Through our connection to the vine we are made vital, we are fed and watered, and we are bound to one another.

If this is true, then I believe the God vine is found in love. For it is love that makes us one, and it is love which nurtures us, sustains us, and ripens us. Without love we do not grow. Without love, our lives wither around us and we do not bear fruit. Today, we have been called to become the face of God, the hands of God, the feet of God today, and the vine of God. We are called to love one another!

As the First Congregational Church in Falmouth celebrates a season of new life, growth, and opportunity, I want to say thank you for being a crucial part of our little vineyard. This community exists because of all of the generous and thoughtful people who work very hard here to make church happen. Your efforts are recognized, and through the power of God's love in community, they are magnified!

I am grateful to be walking by your side,
Jonathan

We're baaaaack!

Yes, everyone, we're back to in-person services on Sunday mornings! For the time being, while it's not on a "reservation only" basis, we are asking folks to either call or email the church office to let us know you'll be in attendance on any given Sunday. This will give us an idea of how many to expect and plan appropriately.

Masks will be required. We will also ask everyone to monitor themselves as to social distancing. For now, please enter and exit through the portico entrance. Also be aware that the windows will likely be open to assist in ventilation, so you might want to bring a sweater just in case! Because of current state guidelines, there will still be no congregational singing of hymns and no large choir, but special music will continue each Sunday.

We look forward to seeing as many of you as feel comfortable returning to the sanctuary. We've missed everyone so very much!

Women's Union

The Women's Union will meet on Wednesday, May the 12th. An email with time and details will be sent to our membership when arrangements are complete. We are looking forward to meeting in person!!



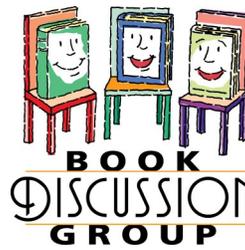
From Christian Outreach...

The Outreach Committee would like to thank everyone who contributed and/or supported our Emergency Cleanup Bucket Project. Families and communities across the country affected by disasters will greatly appreciate your efforts today.

As mentioned last month, the annual **HAC Walk for Hope**, scheduled for June the 26th will give you another opportunity to help our neighbors in need. The **Housing Assistance Corporation** is sponsoring this **virtual walk** to help our neighbors who need access to safe, stable housing on Cape Cod and the Islands. We'd like to put together a team from our church. Carole Lyons has graciously agreed to be our team captain. If you need help with registering and/or donations, please contact Carole at lyonsca381@gmail.com. Families are welcome!! Please remember whether you walk as an individual or as part of a team, you are offering hope! Also, since it's virtual, you can walk **wherever** you want and **whenever** you want. Registration for the **Walk for Hope** opens on May 1st. Please let Carole Lyons know if you're interested in participating or supporting the team. We're counting on you. You can find more information and the pledge form through the following URL: <https://haconcapecod.org/events/walk-for-hope>

During the month of April, the Outreach Committee met and voted to make the following donations. A donation of \$100. was made to the **Alternative Gift Program**. This program annually hosts an Alternative Gift Market every fall. Faith communities in the Falmouth area sponsor the various organizations participating. A donation of \$500. was made to **Back Bay Missions, MS**. The mission of this nonprofit organization is to strengthen neighborhoods through ministries of education, empowerment programs and housing rehabilitation programs for communities on the Mississippi Gulf Coast. A donation of \$800. was made to the **Samaritans of Cape Cod and the Islands**. This non-sectarian organization is dedicated to ending suicide through fostering caring, connection, resilience, and public understanding. Finally, a donation was put aside to be used only if needed, to complete the **Emergency Cleanup Bucket Project**.

Thank you for your continued support of these important ministries.



All members of the church are welcome to attend any meeting of the group. Our next meeting is on Monday, May 24 at 1:00 p.m. at the church. We will discuss the book *Braiding Sweet Grass* by Robin Kimmerer. If you plan to attend or have any questions, please call Bette West at 508-457-9860.



Inviting and Welcoming

I'm pleased to announce the launch of the church's new "Inviting & Welcoming Initiative"--to elevate the church's visibility within our community through church-hosted events, with the ultimate aim of promoting new membership. Jonathan Drury, John Honey, and Bob Johnson have asked me to lead this effort, and I've convened a workgroup consisting of committee chairs and other at-large church members. The Church Council endorsed the idea at its March 17 meeting, and the workgroup held its first meeting on March 30.

This initiative will focus on engaging more actively with the local community in ways that can potentially bring new members into our congregation. In launching the initiative this spring, we want to take advantage of the opportunity that presents itself in the coming months as we re-open the church to in-person Sunday services and can safely host on-site meetings and events—at a time when newly retired Falmouth residents and others migrating to our area may be seeking a new church home.

Our workgroup members (with representatives from Christian Education, Deacons, Music, Outreach, Reception, Stewardship, and Women's Union) have already begun to plan summer and fall events that can attract members of the public to our doors. We envision events such as music concerts, hands-on outreach opportunities, historical tours, children's activities, craft fairs, book signings, and Sunday morning open-house services. Coupled with these events will be active publicity through signs, posters, newspaper ads, and our church's website and Facebook page.

Central to the success of this initiative will be YOUR involvement—in inviting your friends and neighbors to join you in attending an upcoming event. As soon as our plans come together for a series of community events—consistent with the relaxation of COVID restrictions on public gatherings — we'll share that schedule with you through the monthly *Messenger* and the weekly *Care & Connection* newsletter. Your role as an "inviter" is REALLY important — research has shown that, among those who come to a church and eventually join, 87 percent do so because someone from the church invited them to attend.

Please feel free to contact me (at millsgregoryb@gmail.com) if you have questions or suggestions. Thanks!

Greg Mills, Inviting & Welcoming Workgroup Chair

Workgroup members: Carol Andersen, Steve Birmingham, John Bowers, Jeanne Burton, Tom Durham, Julie Fitzpatrick, John Honey, Evelyn Johnson, Lisa McGillicuddy, Elsa Partan, and Sue Simchock



Church Council

The Church Council held its thirteenth meeting via Zoom on April 21. Reverend Drury opened the meeting with prayer.

Jonathan said that with our church reopening for Sunday worship our goal should be to reflect who we are as a church. It will likely not be who we were before COVID. Jonathan is completing eight years of service on the Church and Ministry Committee of the Barnstable County Association, UCC, and in the fall he will begin a two year term as president of the Board of Directors of the Cape Cod Council Churches.

John Honey noted that in-person worship will follow the same protocols that were used last fall. Those wishing to attend should contact Martha so that we have an idea of how many to expect. Receptions can not be held indoors as yet, but beginning May 2, punch will be served on the portico, weather permitting. Council also voted to allow large outside groups to meet in Fellowship Hall, following current Massachusetts guidelines.

Greg Mills reported that the Inviting and Welcoming Initiative work group has held one meeting at which discussion centered around developing ways we can be seen as a community church. Efforts are also being considered to do more advertising in various local media and to offer events open to the community.

The Treasurer's report showed that member support for March was down slightly from March 2020. The application for forgiveness of the 2020 Paycheck Protection Program loan of \$39,215 was submitted to Eastern Bank. After approval the loan will become a grant.

Council then heard reports from the church boards and committees. The Cape Cod Council of Churches will hold a silent auction fundraiser from May 1-8. A link for the auction can be found in the weekly Care and Connection e-mail. The FCC Kids program resumed on April 25. Julie Fitzpatrick of the Board of Christian Education worked with Eight Cousins bookshop to curate a list of books from which kids in K-7grade could each choose two books. Kids in grades 8-12 will receive gift cards for books. In April, Outreach Committee grants were made to The Alternative Gift Market, Back Bay Mission, and the Samaritans. The committee will join with the North Falmouth church outreach committee to assemble emergency cleanup buckets with items donated in April. This project is a ministry of Church World Service. Deacons will be present at Sunday worship serving as greeters and ushers. The board is focusing on how we appear to visitors, how inviting we really are, and what people coming to church are looking for. During July and August worship will begin at 9:00. The Music Committee is looking forward to our reopening and hopes to be able to offer community sings in the not too-distant future. Soloists and small groups will continue to provide music for Sunday services. The Nominating Committee announced that Carolyn Dreyer will be serving on the Stewardship Committee as a youth member. Stewardship's goal this year is to increase financial support by improving donor participation and by growing membership. The committee will partner with the Inviting and Welcoming Initiative in this effort. The Trustees are developing an estimate on performing the Steeple External Rehabilitation Assessment. A contract for the solar project has been signed with MyGenerationEnergy. James Rowland has been preparing the church for reopening with both inside and outside projects. UCC Delegates will attend a virtual annual meeting of the Barnstable Association on April 25. The Women's Union is looking forward to a May meeting in Fellowship Hall, details of which will follow.

Marcia Young, Clerk



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YOU are welcome here!

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Elected Officials of the Church

Moderator—John Honey

Clerk—Marcia Young

Treasurer—Carol Mills

Board/Committee Chairmen...

Christian Education—Elsa Partan & Julie Fitzpatrick

Christian Outreach—John Bowers

Deacons—Evelyn Johnson

Music—Steve Birmingham

Nominating—JoAnn Coleman and Joanne Blum-Carnevale

Reception—Sue Simchock

Stewardship—Dennis McGillicuddy

Trustees—Bob Johnson