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The Church Mouse

April 2020 Newsletter

RHCC e-mail address – office@rhccucc.org
Website: www.RockyHillucc.org
Office Hours – 9:00 a.m.–2:00 p.m. Monday-Thursday
Sunday Worship Services – 10:00 a.m.
Childcare Available/Handicap Accessible

April 2020 - in Pandemic Time

“I do not cease to give thanks for you as I remember you in my prayers. I prayer that the God of our Lord, Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you a spirit of wisdom and revelation... so that, with the eyes of your heart enlightened, you may know what is the hope to which he has called you....”

- Ephesians 1:15-18



April 2020 - in Pandemic Time

From the Pastor's Desk

At least two or three times a day, I become overwhelmed with the realities of what's going on all around us in our world right now. What about you? Yes, I'm staying home and staying safe. Yes, I'm washing my hands and cleaning surfaces. Yes, I am praying and meditating. And no, it doesn't really feel like I'm doing enough...

I have begun taking time throughout each day to list for myself the things I'm grateful for. When you write them and say them out loud, it makes a real impression! At times, this too, is overwhelming.

There are many, many on-line conversations in our Conference (SNEUCC), with area colleagues and organizations, and within our own church Council, about how to reorganize ourselves and how to prepare for the "new normal," once we are able to start meeting again. Silver Lake staff and Deans and Chaplains are meeting virtually on a weekly basis to stay updated and support one another as we approach the summer camp season. For more see: (<https://www.silverlakeect.org/> *Now's a great time to sign-up for a summer session of camp! I'm once again helping to lead "Hiking The Way" in week #6*) There are also virtual campfires offered at 4pm every Wednesday if you're interested in some uplifting singing and story-telling (see our church Facebook page where I posted this recurring event!).

Palm Sunday and Easter celebrations are being modified and will happen! NOTHING can stop us from making the journey of Holy Week into Easter – but it will look and feel and sound different, just like almost everything else these days. Stay tuned for more (and wash your hands).

I'm grateful for chances to speak and write with many of you at points throughout each week. I'm grateful for weekly Sabbath with Sunday worship and other moments of sabbath throughout the week. I'm grateful that our church is reorganizing so we can communicate, and plan and offer support to one another and to our neighbors. I'm grateful for our church's ZOOM account. I'm grateful for the continued diligence of our Confirmation group (and their families!), and the leadership which Georgette and our mentors are continuing to provide. I'm grateful for those who are recovering from illnesses whether from the coronavirus or from lots of other bugs and allergies that are flying around. Rest a lot (and wash your hands!).

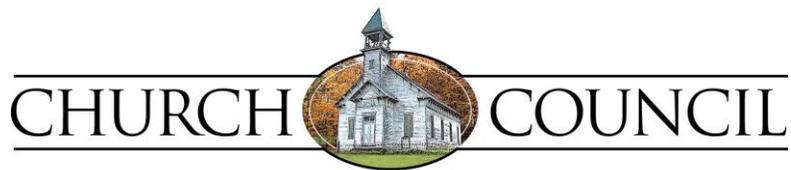
If you need a chat, or some on-line inspiration or information, don't hesitate to be in touch with me: nsellers@rhccucc.org or cell: 413-896-5901. I promise I'll keep being in touch with you! #stayhome #staysafe #StayHomeSaveLives

Staying well – and with prayers for all,

Pastor Nada

From my garden in Belchertown





2020 Vision

After listening to the news tonight and every night, we long for inspiring stories. Stories that will shed a bright spot on this virus and what people all over the world are experiencing. As we walk around our neighborhoods, we notice that people - while staying at the appropriate social distance - are friendlier and more aware of what and who are around them. Families were out walking. People were no longer rushing by without truly smelling the roses.

But we know that, beyond being a health crisis of proportions none of us can recall, this is also an economic crisis. People are out of work. Those without a safety net aren't sure where their next meal or rent payment will come from. Shelters are more restrictive to maintain proper "social distancing." And whether or not we are directly impacted on a personal level, uncertainty and anxiety are certainly affecting us all.

So it is more important than ever for our church to stay engaged through our ministries and our members. We are using alternate methods of delivering worship services in unique ways that allow us to stay connected. Ministry team discussions, Executive Committee conferences, and less formal gatherings are happening in virtual space. Georgette, our Minister for Children and Youth, held an online get-together to assure our kids that the people in their lives are still okay and still supporting each other. And our Helping Hand fund might be a lifeline as the economic fallout worsens. Even during these challenging times--*especially* during these challenging times—the work of our church must continue.

First, let us offer a word of reassurance. It is true that our church has experienced many of the same financial stresses that have impacted most churches in recent years, and our endowment fund has experienced a significant decline in value in the past month. Fortunately, we have prudently maintained sufficient cash reserves to enable us to manage our way through the current scenario. Our continued existence is not under imminent threat.

There are many ways that we can help our neighbors near and far, but these endeavors require a stream of ongoing income. As we have been prevented from gathering in the sanctuary on Sundays, and as our attention has understandably been diverted to our most pressing individual needs, the primary income received by our church during this crisis has come from those who have already set up automatic recurring giving.

continued->

2020 Vision



We have been heartened in the past week to already see additional people signing up for **online automatic giving** for the first time. While automatic giving might have made them uncomfortable before, they decided that our church and ministries need to continue. If you feel the same way, we ask you to please consider signing up for automatic recurring giving as well. Instructions are provided at the end of this letter.

Stabilizing our flow of income will allow us to continue to:

- Meet needs that are increasing because of the coronavirus pandemic, including feeding those who are hungry in partnership with members of Center Church in Hartford
- Hold Sunday Services in unique ways, providing spiritual enrichment to all of those who can join in
- Reach out to our homebound members to make sure they are receiving the care and compassion they need
- And, most importantly, continue to join together for fellowship and service, even if it is mostly “virtual”

In the words of Gloria Gaynor, *We Will Survive*, but not without your continued financial and spiritual support. We are being called to have **2020 Vision** – a vision that sees us existing together in more and different ways than we have before.

Yours in Christ,
Sue Chatfield, Deb Copes, Jarod Taylor, Rev. Nada Sellers

Options for setting up recurring giving

You can set up your own recurring giving by visiting www.rockyhillucc.org/donate and selecting “Contribute On-Line.” This will take you to a page where you can set up and manage an account with Vanco Payment Solutions.

Or, if you have access to online banking, you can set up your bank account to mail checks to the church on a recurring frequency.

You can also call any of us and we will walk you through the best process for you over the phone; our phone numbers are posted below.

Sue Chatfield 860-595-6639
Deb Copes 860-729-6541
Jarod Taylor 316-260-4110

EASTER OFFERING – RIP MEDICAL DEBT

Our Easter offering this year will be designated to help support one of the first justice actions taken by the newly formed Southern New England Conference (SNEC) of the UCC. Our new conference has expressed a deep commitment to justice issues. SNEC has invited all congregations to celebrate the beginning of the newly formed conference by working together on a shared goal to make a difference in the lives of those burdened by medical debt. Our congregation's Easter Offering this year will go toward our conference's collaboration with the New York based non-profit RIP Medical Debt.

Individuals with medical debt may not have access to medical care as a result of difficulty paying their bills. They may also be unable to purchase food, clothing and other necessities.

With every \$100 donated, this company can eliminate \$10,000 of medical debt in some of our neediest communities in Southern New England. These local communities include Hartford, Bridgeport, Springfield, MA and Providence, RI. RIP Medical Debt helps locate, purchase and abolish unpaid and unpayable medical debt in these communities. The non-profit pinpoints those most in need of relief. They then use donations to buy debt in bundled portfolios at a fraction of the original cost. The individual's debt is taken care of with no taxes or penalties.

You may donate your Easter Offering in any of three ways:

1. Send a check to the church office, payable to RHCC UCC, with "Easter Offering" in the memo.
2. Donate through our church website www.rockyhillucc.org Click on the "Support Us" link at the top, then click on the orange "contribute on line" box. Enter your donation amount in the "Special Offering" line and designate "Easter" in the text box to the right.

Please join us as we support our conference's effort to eliminate medical debt for our neighbors.



Faith Formation News



Given that we all will likely be sheltering for the month of April, here is how Faith Formation for RHCC kids could happen (I say “could” because you and the kids themselves might have great ideas to share):

- Confirmation has already switched to online, live learning via Zoom. More about this below.
- Church school kids and families have been checking in live via Zoom. I will begin to offer online, live classes occasionally, supplemented with printed material I will send in the mail along with an occasional craft kit. My intent for the classes is to provide an opportunity for the kids to maintain their connections with each other and with God. They have enjoyed church school videos in the past, so I hope to find some good ones which we can watch together via Zoom.
- Middle school youth will be receiving a copy of Submerge magazine, and an online class will be organized for them.

If you would like to gather kids and families via Zoom, let me know. We can make it happen and even share pictures and videos. Our sense of community as a church can continue (and maybe even increase!) through technology.

Now a word about confirmation: when the confirmands learned in depth about the United Church of Christ, they were quite impressed with its longstanding commitment to inclusivity and acceptance. Despite the fact that RHCC has a rainbow banner on its building, there was something about studying UCC history and polity, examining the “God is still speaking” logo and ad campaign, that drove the message home for the youth – this is who we are. They expressed how their peers would be interested to know that there is a church that would accept *them* for who they are. We adults were excited when the confirmands agreed to work on an ad campaign for RHCC, aimed at their age group. Sheltering may make this project more difficult or even impossible this school year, but I am hopeful it will come to life when we can gather once more.

Georgette Huie



Greetings to the Rocky Hill Congregation Family and Friends!

This is a very different season of Lent for all of us. A journey of restrictions and isolation is continuing to unfold and, with it, all kinds of unique situations are emerging nearly every day. We hope this update finds you well and staying safe.

We are sharing the following news, with a plan to begin a regular pattern of electronic communication focused on the life of our congregation.

We direct your attention to the following:

1. As of this moment, (now on Monday, March 30, 2020), we are continuing to monitor local, state and federal information about the spread of COVID-19. This is a rapidly changing crisis, and until officials relax restrictions for public gatherings of people, we will continue holding on-line worship gatherings, Lenten book group discussions, confirmation sessions and church school hang-outs. Also, the Council and other Core Ministries, committees and ministry teams will continue to meet online as needed during this time. The work of the church continues!!!
2. Our on-line gatherings are hosted using the Zoom virtual meeting platform. Zoom allows us to not only speak with each other, but to see each other on screen also. Instructions for a connection via internet are posted on the church web site. But if you need additional help, please contact Georgette Huie (ghuie@rhccucc.org). There is also an option to attend worship or meetings with just a regular phone. Directions for that are at the end of this email.
3. Please continue to observe all safety measures including staying at home as much as possible, washing your hands, using sanitizers for hands and surfaces, taking some time to get outside for fresh air while distancing socially from other people, and savoring time with immediate members of your family (including pets!).
4. Currently, our custodian, Myke Halpin, is spending time at the church each weekday. Pastor Nada, Theresa, Georgette, Treasurer Dave Hall and other leaders are dropping in occasionally to retrieve materials, check the mail and the like. All of us, including Council leaders are in communication from our homes – phone, email, Zoom meetings with our webcams and microphones. The church phone messages are being monitored virtually as well.
5. If you find you need help or know of someone else who might need assistance, please contact Pastor Nada nsellers@rhccucc.org; Heather Collins heathercollins2004@gmail.com; Heather Wolfe-Taylor oulinguist@gmail.com; Ruth Fitzgerald rfitzgerald@fhiplan.com or Georgette Huie ghuie@rhccucc.org. All of us, including Marsha Hoffman, Moderator, are always ready to receive your emails and calls.
6. If you do not have a current church pictorial directory, you can download it by visiting our website, click upper tab for “Member Portals” then click on tab for “Members & Friends Directory in the middle of the page. Here’s the link: <https://www.rockyhillucc.org/church-portals>. Or if you prefer, call the office to have a printed directory mailed to you.
7. Stay tuned for newsletters, email updates and more regular ways of “staying connected.” Together we will find ways to get through this, with patience, perseverance and prayer. Remember, “For mortals it is impossible, but for God all things are possible.” (Jesus, Matthew 19:26)

HOW TO JOIN us for WORSHIP with Zoom on SUNDAYS at 10am.

ONLINE

The link for upcoming worship services will be:

URL: <https://zoom.us/j/748298483>

This link will be recurring so you can keep this link and reuse it each Sunday.

NO COMPUTER? NO PROBLEM! HERE'S HOW TO CONNECT BY PHONE

Instructions for using a dial-in phone connection to attend a virtual meeting (including worship services) using ZOOM:

1. Please silence any background noise (TV, radio, conversations).
2. Dial this phone number: **(929) 205-6099**. Be aware that this is a New York City phone number, and is not toll-free. If your telephone calling plan does not include free long-distance calling, you may not want to make this call.
3. At the prompt, type in the meeting ID followed by the # sign. For example, “748298483” and “#” - you will get the meeting ID from the coordinator of that meeting.
4. If you are prompted to enter your participant ID, just enter “#.”
5. You will be told you are in the meeting. You may need to wait until the meeting coordinator has accepted your call.
6. You may then announce yourself: i.e. “Terry Jones is here”
7. You will be able to hear everyone else on the call. They will also be able to hear you – unless the meeting coordinator has muted everyone. Sometimes muting everyone is done to help simplify what what’s being heard.

In Christian love,

Pastor Nada and the Church Council



Scrip-Sure: HOW TO ORDER



For Orders of Cards in Stock

For your immediate needs, I will plan to hold another "drive-by" scrip delivery day for this coming Saturday, April 4, from 1pm-1:30pm.

Please send your Saturday pickup order to me in advance so that I can setup your cards for a quick delivery. As before, I'll be at the back of the church (i.e, the side facing town hall). Just drive up in the protected parking area. If that delivery time doesn't work for you, let me know and we can make alternate arrangements.

For Special Orders

The next special scrip order will take place this weekend. Please send in your orders via email no later than Sunday, April 5. Cards ordered by Sunday night should be available for pickup the following weekend.

We have several special deals available:

1. Bed, Bath, and Beyond: E-cards can be ordered this week at a profit rate of 11.75% (up from the usual 7%). Card sizes can be from \$10-\$300 in \$5 increments. To get the bonus rate, you must order the e-card by Friday, April 3rd. Delivery will be immediate (via email). (Note - this offer applies only to e-cards.) BBB and affiliated stores may be closed for now, but should still be open for online orders.

2. Outback/Flemings/Bonefish Grill: E-cards are currently available at 16% (up from the usual 8%). This special rate will be in effect for e-cards through April 10. I can also order physical cards (\$25 or \$50 denominations only) at the same 16% rate. Deadline for ordering physical cards is April 5. (The Berlin Turnpike Outback Steakhouse appears to be currently offering take-out and delivery orders.)

For more information about our Scrip program, please visit our website and click on the tab: "Support our Church" then click on "Scrip". A list of all participating retailers is posted.

Place your order by email to: treasurer@rhccucc.org.

Stay safe,... while continuing to think SCRIP!

Dave Hall



A Message from the Church Office



We are open for business – from my living room! I am working from home Monday through Thursday, from 9am-2pm. I'll be checking email and voicemail during that time. Feel free to contact me with any questions you may have as we adjust to our TEMPORARY 'new normal' way of living.

- **Worship** – is virtual right now via zoom. You can log on via computer, smart phone or tablet; or simply by calling in with your phone. Instructions are elsewhere in this newsletter.
- **Prayer Requests** – send weekly prayer requests to Office@rhccucc.org OR on our main 'home' page on our website RockyHillUCC.org
- **Altar Flowers & Light the Tower** – Altar flower dedications are suspended for now, but they can be changed into Light the Tower dedications. The weekly tower dedication will be read during worship and will be posted on our facebook page, and in weekly email.
- **Pastoral Care** – contact Pastor Nada or the office if you or someone you know needs a call, a visit (will keep social distance, only come to the door, etc), a prayer, or some food or medical supplies dropped off, give us a call at 860-529-4167.
- **Mail** - We are receiving mail and I gather it at least once a week, so If you have sent something in, we will get it.
- **Church Directory** – If you are in need of a printed or pdf version, contact me and I can send it to you. It is also available on our website.
- **Reminder** – our building is closed during this time. There are no meetings with outside groups, only vendors for needed repairs are allowed in. We ask that you do not come into the building so we can maintain a clean, safe building.

I hope this newsletter finds you healthy and comfortable at home. Stay safe, Stay home!

Theresa Cleary

Sole Hope Shoe Party 2020 Is postponed – Future date to be announced.

We will hold this fun and important intergenerational event at future date, to be announced. Keep collecting old denim jeans (non-stretch material). We will transform them into shoe tops for Ugandan children on a Sunday evening, date to be announced. As we did last year (and it was so much fun!) we will begin with a pot luck dinner at 5:30pm and then trace, cut and assemble the pieces that shoemakers in Uganda will convert into shoes for children in need. For more information about this project, go to www.solehope.org.



High school seniors and college students; it's time to apply for scholarships!

Graduating high school seniors and returning college undergraduates who are seeking a RHCC scholarship for the 2020-21 academic year are invited to complete and return an application prior to **May 15**. Scholarship awards will be announced in June.

Applications are available at: www.rockyhillucc.org/scholarship-program.

Submit completed applications to: scholarships@rhccucc.org,

Scholarship Committee: Hilaire Leavitt, Randy Pulling, Gail Hall and Steve Ware.



Frank Roswell Fuller Scholarship - This scholarship requires that you be a member of the UCC/Congregational Church. Applications are available in the church office. The deadline for submitting your application and other documents is May 15.

From the RHCC Green Team:

Rocky Hill Congregational Church is taking steps toward becoming a more energy efficient and environmentally friendly church. Here are our Green Tips for April:



GREEN TIPS

Nine times out of ten, green options are also the more frugal option. Being environmentally-friendly is also good economics—not only in RHCC but also in our homes. Spring and summer is coming!

1. Don't turn on lights at all for as long as you can — open your curtains and use natural light.
2. Reuse scrap paper for To-Do-Lists, shopping lists, etc. Print on two sides and let your kids or grandkids color on the back side of used paper.
3. Support local restaurants that use food derived less than 100 miles away - healthier and less expensive.
4. Repurpose glass jars as leftover containers and bulk storage, especially in the kitchen. Vintage canning jars are beautiful. On a recent rerun of a NPR Faith *Middleton's Food Schmooze*, she mentioned how she recycles almost all glass jars for storage.

- Thanks, Elaine Sellenberg and Gail Tine.

**VISIT OUR
WEBSITE**



Stay in touch with us on Facebook, and with our Weekly News Email. Contact the office if you are not receiving the weekly email and would like to get signed up.

SOCIAL MEDIA





BIRTHDAYS

| | | | |
|----|------------------|----|--------------------|
| 1 | Dick Webster | 17 | Jake D'Addario |
| 1 | Donna Gagnon | 18 | Sarah DeGiovanni |
| 1 | Lynn Macri | 18 | Dawn McLean |
| 2 | Gregson Curtin | 18 | Grace Triplets |
| 4 | Bobbie Hawkins | 19 | Lois Griswold |
| 4 | Marsha Hoffman | 19 | Sue Monaghan |
| 4 | Sherry Silkowski | 19 | Wendy Ware |
| 7 | Judy Frascarelli | 20 | John Goff IV |
| 7 | Grace Hoffman | 21 | Linda Gilbert |
| 8 | Meghan Montana | 21 | Elaine Malespini |
| 8 | Isabel Donahue | 21 | Jason McGowan |
| 9 | Sam DeGiovanni | 22 | Elaine Sellenberg |
| 11 | Brian Donahue | 23 | John McNeil Jr. |
| 11 | Kaedryn Pulling | 24 | Alexander Lataille |
| 12 | Steve Ware | 25 | Jane Yorgensen |
| 12 | Skyler Dean-Lee | 26 | Linda Rupaka |
| 13 | Alan Wind | 27 | Julie Dostie |
| 13 | David Hawkins | 28 | Nadine Bell |
| 13 | Ruth Fitzgerald | 29 | Liz Reed-Swale |
| 13 | Sara Lataille | 30 | Polly Pagnucco |
| 13 | Maya Donahue | | |
| 14 | Carolyn Furman | | |
| 14 | Nicholas Benson | | |
| 16 | Joan Diaz | | |

*Spencer and Linda Rupaka, April 20th,
Jay and Jeannie Alessi, April 20th,
Mark and Pat Walworth, April 21st
Todd and Gayle McGowan, April 21st
Louis and Candace Smith, April 27th
Dale and Donna Rowlan, April 29th*



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Hartford, CT 06101

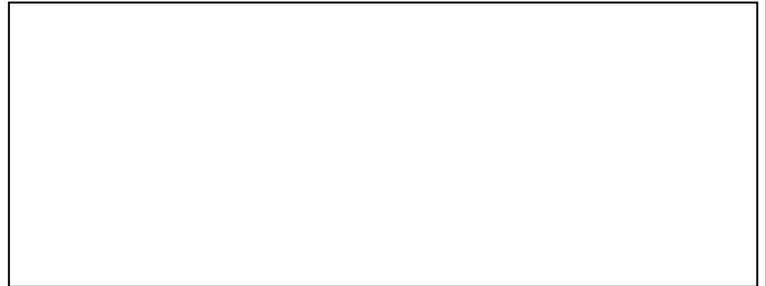
Permit #7

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED
TIME VALUE MAIL

Mailed March 31, 2020



Jesus didn't turn people away. Neither do we.
The United Church of Christ:
No matter who you are,
Or where you are on life's journey...
You're welcome here.



RHCC Outreach and Witness Ministry is offering to help our members who are in need of assistance with shopping for groceries or other necessities.



We also would like to expand our roster to include a few more volunteers. If you need help or know of someone else who does, or if you can volunteer, please email Heather Collins or Sue Chatfield:
atheathercollins2004@gmail.com
smchat999@att.net

Or call the church office and leave a message: 860-529-4167.
Thank you!