

Good News | September 2023
Bridgewater Congregational Church
United Church of Christ

“For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ.” 1 Corinthians 12:12

Two years ago, this month, this body of Christ, gathered together on a beautiful September Sunday and said “yes” to calling a new settled minister. Not only did you gather together to call this new pastor, but you took a chance on calling your first settled female pastor; you took a chance on calling a minister who had a young child, who lived out of town (at the time), who you knew would do things “differently”, who would invite you to take a chance on change, and who would continually remind you of this calling of ours to BE the body of Christ in word and action. Of course, this new pastor was me, and in these two years of ministry together, we have and continue to BE the body – the hands, feet, and voice of Christ together, and I am beyond blessed to minister beside you all.

The sermon that Candidating Sunday, was about Paul’s vision of a body with many parts, in which there was a weaving together of a diversity of folks, with a diversity of God given gifts. This diversity, while it could certainly be a catalyst for division, was instead to be a weaving together in mutual care, love, and ministry. During my message that Sunday, I told the story about an All Ages Worship service I had offered in one of my last churches, in which I had the children and youth draw a picture of a body. I had a large whiteboard in the front of the sanctuary. A variety of markers laid ready. As I began my message, I invited all the children and youth to come up front, and together, draw a picture of a body. No other directions were given beyond that they needed to work together to create this picture. The youngest children of the congregation immediately picked up the markers and began drawing arms, legs, a head, torso, eyes, nose, and lips. Once they were finished, they stepped back, and my older children and teens took up the markers and, with a little more finesse and expertise, they added hair, clothing, and connected some of the body parts that were not quite connected to the whole of the body.

In that cooperative drawing, each line was unique, each color was chosen specifically by the child, markers had been shared, lines and shapes built upon, and not one child seemed worried that their part of the body was not important, was going to be erased, or messed up by another child’s addition. Most important, was the pride and joy as they gazed upon and talked about their finished portrait. For me, this was the vision of the body of Christ that Paul envisioned, and was desperately trying to get the church in Corinth to understand. It is a vision for us today. The world around us tends to lend to less sharing and more taking. It speaks more of division, than unity. It is why this activity, this witness, of the children and youth has been seared into my memory. Rather than fighting over the markers, rather than pushing another out of the way to show case their own drawing ability, they took turns, they worked together, they enhanced each other’s lines, all while not erasing what was drawn already. Together they created this beautiful portrait of a human body.

We, together, are the body of Christ. We are Christ’s hands, Christ’s feet, Christ’s voice in the world. We are called upon to come together, to weave ourselves together, in our diversity of being and gifts, to nurture, to strengthen, to embolden, to serve, and to thrive as people of God, called upon to be a blessing to others. God intentionally designed each and everyone of us, this body, this church, its people, with the colors and lines of diversity. And as this body of Christ, we are called to weave ourselves together, and in that weaving we are called out of our everyday routines to care for and uplift, one another – to be that active force of light and love in our community, our world. As we gaze upon another, whether in passing or in conversation, we are to look into their eyes and see God’s own – with the gentle – sometimes urgent – reminder that we are all beloved children of God.

While we must continuously practice this weaving, practicing looking into the eyes of another and see God in them, practice lifting up rather than breaking down another, and while we must unceasingly work to bring forth unity rather than division, I am proud of the love that is present in this faith community – authentic, life-giving, life-changing love. This love is a light that shines in our world, a light that is a balm to this pastor’s soul. Let us – together – continue to be God’s Light and Love in the world, as we continue to BE the church, the Body of Christ.

May our Light and Love shine brightly, Pastor Abby

P.S. Thank you for taking a chance on calling me, and sharing in this difficult, yet beautiful calling of ours!

Carl Dill is an interesting guy. No surprise there!

I asked Carl how he and Josephine came to join BCC.

Carl said he and Josephine had been church shopping and had been to a lot of churches. A lot of churches! He isn't sure why they came to BCC (this is back before Alan Froggatt was our pastor). When asked what they liked about BCC Carl said that they saw a church family based on working together not only attending church on Sunday morning. Iola Whitten was there as well and scooped them in. Carl also saw a place for him at the church other than just on Sundays. The buildings needed some work and he could see himself helping out here and there. Carl and Josephine joined our church and became a part of the family. They raised their 3 kids there, participated in Men's and Women's Fellowship, and worked at the tag sale. Carl was part of the fruitcake team and was my introduction to the church when Jamie and I met him selling fruit cakes in front of the little Bridgewater store. When asked where the fruitcakes came from, Carl said "our wives gave us the recipe". Not our wives made the fruitcakes. We decided BCC was a church we should check out. Another story.

As we talked, I found some things about Carl that surprised me, maybe you too. Did you know that he is an avid reader and collector of books by Mark Twain, Ernest Hemingway, John Steinbeck and others? Did you know that Carl has a degree in journalism and in English? Did you know that Carl worked for 2 years in the Pentagon doing data entry on the computer. This was back in the day when computers were new to most of us! Carl had a skill that many young men in the army did not have. He could type!

There are more things I could write about Carl. Carl is a good guy. He pitches in. The church as a family is very important to him. He always works hard and does his best at whatever he chooses to do. He helped build the family lumber yard to 23 stores. He is a collector of many, many hats. He has been to every county in Ireland because the Irish people are so interesting and he wanted to get to know them. He loves to work alone but is willing to teach too (he tried to teach me how to build a stone wall.) There is lots more to say about Carl but you can also ask him yourself! Have fun.



THE ALMOST CLASSICAL CONCERT

You know that a concert was a smashing success when people stop you in the aisle begging for another show! This was the case on June 11th when our Church hosted the Almost Classical Concert.

We are so fortunate to have such a talented congregation who also has many gifted friends. Jamie Pfeiffer and Chris Smith's granddaughter Annike played the piano beautifully and with such poise. Sarah Jane Chelminski's daughter Krystyana Czeiner and son-in-law James brought the house down with their violin duets (We all loved Krystyana's facial expressions and how she winked at James).

Larry Deming and Jane Chung's violin performances were magical, and Larry's student, Sandy Sudarsanam, played like an angel. Jan Gregory's Femina Melodia ladies and the Wykeham Consort singers rounded out the concert with their uplifting and varied song selections. It was hard to sit still in your seat!

It was a true gift to our Church!

THANK YOU ALL!



Almost Classical Concert
June 2023



Roots Rock
Revue
May 2023

Tag Sale

Always thinking "the live-long year" about our super Tag Sale.

Boy, do we gals have a good old time. If we aren't worrying "we won't get anything this year", it's wishing "please no more". The same emotions every year. At the average age of 75, about 15 of us have two weeks of sorting, arranging, and pricing. We always would love more help (of course). Lunch the second week is the most fun. On the big day more than 50 Church people gather to pull this Tag Sale off. And clean up is even more impressive. Over 40 years of experience, this thing runs like a well oiled machine.

This was an exceptional year with almost \$10,000 realized. Thank you to those who gave so generously and worked so hard. Spring 2024 will be here soon. Come join in. It's the best!!

Such a blessing you all are!! Love, Jean



Tag Sale and Pastor Abby's Birthday!





Lent and
Easter



Children's Sunday & All Ages Art Activity

MARDI GRAS CELEBRATION – SATURDAY, MARCH 4, 2023

As has become our tradition, the Congregational Church sponsored a Mardi Gras celebration on Saturday, March 4, 2023.

With the approval of the Health Department our chefs prepared and served three types of chili: Chicken, Beef, and Vegetable (all Gluten Free!) along with a tasty green salad. This year our chefs were Heather Dietrick, Jeanne Papparazzo, Candy Smith, and Chris Smith.

There were many hands-on-deck to assist in serving more than 90 people! Adding to the festivities was the music from the Crescent City King Cake Band that brought people to the dance floor and had a great time. One of our deacons, Carol Hacker, joined in with a member of the Renewal House in enjoying the music.

We made a joyful noise in support of the Renewal House with a donation of \$1500!!



Pshenianikov Family

Our Ukrainian refugee family, Vira, Yuri and Maksym then 7, were living in Donetsk, Eastern Ukraine very close to the Russian border when the city was invaded in 2014.. Denys was born in January 2015 and as the conflict continued to escalate they left for the western city of Kharkiv to begin again. Yuri was employed as an IT Systems Specialist and Vira as a teacher in Secondary School. They purchased a home, enjoyed good neighbors, friends, walking, basketball, tennis, fishing and traveling.

On February 24, 2022 Karkiv was plunged into war with the Russian invasion. Once again their home located close to an airport became unsafe as it was a prime target for bombing. When Russian forces began indiscriminately attacking both the Ukrainian military and civilians, thousands began fleeing Kharkiv. A decision was made for Vira and the boys to evacuate and Yuri had to remain because the government was beginning to mobilize civilians. They traveled west, eventually crossing the border into Slovakia on foot and were bussed to an overcrowded railroad station. There throngs of evacuees, mostly women and children boarded trains for Poland. Vira sat on the floor through the overnight ride to protect her boys and small bags containing clothing, a few valuables and critical documents.

Upon arriving in Poland, they were accepted as refugees under the US Government's Uniting For Ukraine Program. When they arrived in New Haven at the end of May 2022, they were given one room in the sponsor's home. Yuri was allowed to join the family in late September and it became necessary to find a more suitable resettlement. IRIS (Integrated Refugee and Immigrant Services) contacted the Congregational Church of Brookfield Refugee Resettlement Ministry which had been resettling refugee families for many years. A small group from Bridgewater CC Imagination Committee including Reverend Abby Gackenheimer agreed to join the CC of Brookfield RR Ministry. They were trained and had background checks in order to work directly with the refugees during resettlement. In late October after their long arduous journey from Ukraine, the family was grateful to move into the charming Brookfield cottage generously provided by the CC of Brookfield RR Ministry. Maxym was enrolled as a freshman at Brookfield High School and Denys joined the second grade at Huckleberry Elementary. Yuri and Vira began having tutoring lessons for English language and job preparation.

Before long they became integrated into the Brookfield community as people began reaching out to them in friendship and with generous offers of help. The boys were safe and settled in school, sports, activities and scouts. They appreciated the many Ukrainian flags displayed in solidarity for their home country. Vira said, "When we see flags or sunflowers on American property, it shows support and symbolizes that we are not alone and are joining our souls." They left more than their home and possessions behind. Vira and Yuri's mothers were still living in Russian occupied territory, though fortunately have since been able to relocate.

Vira was hired in January as a paraprofessional at Huckleberry Elementary School and continued teaching her displaced Ukrainian students via Zoom on Saturdays until June. Yuri first worked part-time for Five Guys. They both began studying for Connecticut Driver's Permits and passed their tests in Russian. Yuri was hired by Southridge Technology of Brookfield in June and they moved into their own Brookfield apartment as well. Yuri passed the CT Driver's Test in English last month. Vira is continuing as a para at the new Candlewood Lake Elementary School where Denys is in third grade. Currently her Ukrainian documents are being reviewed by the CT State Department of Education to determine the requirements for teaching certification in CT.

Having twice fled war, the Pshenianikovs are eligible for asylum and a pathway to permanent citizenship. Being separated, uprooted and forced to leave everything behind has been difficult for the whole family. Brookfield High School is the ninth school for Maxym and Denys has never known a Ukraine that was not ravaged by war. Their hearts are full of gratitude for so many: The Congregational Church Refugee Resettlement Ministry for warmly welcoming them to Brookfield and providing all their initial needs; the pro bono Connecticut attorney who has initiated their path to citizenship; Brookfield Department of Social Services; Brookfield Town Hall; Ingersoll Auto of Danbury for donating an SUV; and every group or person who has reached out in friendship and support. Despite scars from unthinkable danger, tragedy and uncertainties they faced, the healing process has begun. They look forward to their future with hope and thankfulness for every moment they share together in a peaceful community. "Our happiness is our family - we have enough," Vira commented.



DID YOU KNOW?

Answers can be found on the last page of the newsletter.

1. I have traveled to Russia and Italy and visited all 48 continental states.
2. I was in a band all through college. We played 50's classics, slicked back our hair, and had great synchronized dance steps. The highlight was when we opened up for comedian Robert Klein at a large venue in Pennsylvania.
3. I flew all alone for the first time at age 5 because of a family emergency. I remember it being an exciting adventure and I was not afraid.
4. When I was 20 and had had a couple of margaritas with my crazy boyfriend, we jumped off of the dock at the 79th Street Boat Basin into the filthy Hudson River. He got very, very sick and I was very aware that I was not in Oregon anymore!
5. When I was young I took flying lessons, and I flew solo several times. Instead of taking the test for my license, I went off to college.
6. One summer my parents rented our house in Westport, CT, and my sister, brother and I along with our parents travelled through Europe in a green and white Volkswagen bus.

THE SWEET SPOT

“Poeppel puts more planes in the air than an ambitious air traffic controller, yet manages to gracefully land each one.”

-The Washington Post

On June 4th our Church's Community Book Club hosted Amy Poeppel, author of THE SWEET SPOT. The Friendship Hall was filled with guests from near and far. Amy kept everyone spellbound as she recounted her journey as an author and shared some hysterical stories about her creative process. She prefers to write in her bed, talk about her characters like they're real people and change their names and professions at least ten times. Amy has a home in Kent and has a large group of other CT authors who Zoom together every Thursday.

She has kindly recommended our Community Book Club to other local authors, and we have Fiona Davis coming to us in early 2024. Fiona's new book THE SPECTACULAR, transports us back to 1950's Manhattan and the glamorous Radio City Music Hall. Fiona's other New York Times best sellers include: THE LIONS OF FIFTH AVENUE, THE CHELSEA GIRLS, THE MASTERPIECE, THE DOLLHOUSE and THE ADDRESS.

Our Church's Community Book Club in cooperation with the Burnham Library, the Bridgewater Senior Center and the Hickory Stick Bookshop strive to bring together area residents who love to read and partake in lively discussions.

COME JOIN US AND INVITE A FRIEND!

CHRISTMAS SHOP AND TREE SALES

The annual Christmas Shop and Tree Sales will be looking for your support in the Shop and with selling trees in the next few months. We plan on opening the Friday after Thanksgiving, November 24th and remaining open every weekend until Saturday, December 16th.

Please watch for more details on how you can help make this a successful year for the Church by making a monetary donation to help defray some costs, donating a bottle of wine or Prosecco, etc. with a value of \$20 or more for an auction item wine basket, volunteering to work in the Store or by selling trees and if you are a fabulous baker or have a hidden talent creating something we would love to put in the store, please let us know.

Watch for the shift sign up sheets in the Friendship Hall in late October.

And, you can reach out to some of us, Jean Jusko, Jamie Pfeiffer, Jeanne Paparazzo, Candy Smith or me if you would like to help in some way or have any questions.

Sandy Neary and Committee

The Food Pantry

The Pantry is available to any Bridgewater resident with participation held in the strictest confidence. There are no formal records of participants kept or reported. It's free and available Tuesday through Thursday 10:30-2 pm or by appointment by calling (860) 354-8283. Whether a one-time visit or more regular, the Pantry is your free resource to help stretch your budget.

The Pantry has evolved into this smooth-running collaboration out of Peter Kivela's Eagle Scout project tackling the renovation and relocation to where it is today. It was great foresight and a lot of work! The project was finished in January 2015 and the firm roots of this program were set.

Today, the BCC is proud to partner with Town Hall and the Burnham Library as donation sites and the Burnham School which holds food drives. We appreciate our town Tax Collector, Cathy Vikstrom, not only putting out the call for needed items on the Town's website and in email blasts but also for including a food drive during her Drive Thru tax collections. Many thanks to our volunteers for gathering and shelving donated goods and to our Secretary, Ashli, for facilitating a smooth and confidential process for all participants.

John Kivela	PASTORAL SUPPORT COMMITTEE Jamie Pfeiffer	Candy Smith
Heather Detrick Jean Jusko Chris Smith	BOARD OF DEACONS Sharon Harvey Jeanne Paparazzo Alan Smith	Jane Bernstein Carol Hacker Cheryl Nelson
Jan Gregory Dan Storrs Alan Michener	BOARD OF TRUSTEES Dick Jones John Kivela Jamie Pfeiffer	Jim Crosskey Cheryl Nelson
Kathy Crosskey Fran Kelly	BOARD OF CHRISTIAN EDUCATION Heather Detrick Sarah Jane Chelminski	David Bengston
Helen Jackson	BOARD OF MEMORIALS Fran Kelly	Jane Storrs
Kathy Conroy Fran Kelly Corrine Cox Marcine Crowhurst	BOARD OF MISSION AND OUTREACH Kathy Crosskey Candee Kilian Alan Smith	Lisa Klein Tamsin Looker Candy Smith
Heather Detrick	BOARD OF MUSIC Sharon Harvey	Chris Smith
Jean Jusko Carol Hacker	FELLOWSHIP/SANCTUARY COMMITTEE Cheryl Nelson Lisa Klein	Marcine Crowhurst Candee Killian
Frank Kelly	PERSONNEL COMMITTEE Jeanne Paparazzo	Ted Anson
Carl Dill	STEWARDSHIP COMMITTEE Wendie Gabel Frank Kelly	Larry Neary
Ted Anson	NOMINATING COMMITTEE Alan Smith	Jim Crosskey
MODERATOR: Frank Kelly TREASURER: Jim Crosskey HISTORIAN: Heather Detrick		
FINANCIAL SECRETARY: Josephine Dill		CLERK: Marcine Crowhurst
LITCHFIELD SOUTH ASSOCIATION REPRESENTATIVES		
CONNECTICUT CONFERENCE DELEGATE Josephine Dill, Carl Dill		Frank Kelly, Fran Kelly
SUNDAY SCHOOL TEACHERS: Amy Cox, Fran Kelly		
CHOIR DIRECTOR Maggi Heilweil	PIANIST Chris Smith	ORGANIST Larry Deming

ANSWERS:
Corinne Cox
Alan Smith
Marcine Crowhurst
Tamsin Looker
Candee Kilian Lisa Klein