



The Signpost

November 2020
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The Bolton Congregational Church,
United Church of Christ
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The vision of the Bolton Congregational Church UCC is to be true to the model and example set by the early Church of the Apostles, in our own time.

From the Interim Minister

So no one responded to my request last month in my newsletter reflection, for assistance with technological issues. I could make sadness, or anger, or disappointment my emotional companions – or not.

I don't know why no one responded. Perhaps no one in the church feels comfortable with technology? (I know a lot of people don't.) Perhaps no one knows anyone who likes working with technology? (I find that hard to believe.) Perhaps people don't want to commit themselves? Perhaps no one really cares about whether we have a presence online? Perhaps people are tired?

These are all relevant questions, and important as we consider what direction BCC will take in the future. If people don't want to commit themselves; if people don't care about reaching out; if people are tired, then that shapes what the church will be able to do and who the church will be able to reach.

Again I will ask a question (a different one), and invite you actually to tell me: what do you really care about? What floats your boat? What fills your sails? It doesn't have to be churchy. It doesn't have to be religious, or spiritual. It needs to be something you care deeply about and hand commit your time and resources to.

On the other hand, perhaps people don't actually read these reflections. I say this because I get little feedback to what I write here, even when I specifically ask people to tell me what they think. (see the paragraph before this one).

I don't know if what I write in the newsletter matters to anyone. This isn't an expression of self-pity. I simply wonder if this forum serves the church well.

BCC isn't unique that way. I have found in several churches that writing reflections for the newsletter seems like shouting into a dry well.

That being said, I will be ever thankful (this being November). I am thankful that BCC is alive. We had between 25 and 30 people attend an outdoor worship each week in the summer. On October 10 we began a new experiment by gathering for worship in Chandler Hall. We have averaged about 10 fewer people indoors. I recognize that even with doors propped open, it is inherently more risky to gather inside so the lower number makes sense. While it's nice to see people and to worship together, I am glad people use their best judgement as to whether they will come.

I am thankful that the church boards have been meeting regularly and doing the business we need to do. People have continued to give both time and money to sustain the church and its mission. I am glad to find people who are interested and willing to think about new ways to do things that are important. Some of us have been exploring how to worship in some different and meaningful ways during the holyday season that fast approaches. If you have ideas or would like to participate - let me know!

Worship Schedule for November

Worship will be held
at 9:30 am.
in Chandler Hall.

Please email or call the church office, if you plan to attend, so we know how to set up the hall.

From the Interim Minister (continued)

I rejoice that the Southern New England Conference of the United Church of Christ has called a new Conference Minister, the Rev. Darrell Goodwin, to provide overall leadership for the Conference. The Conference held its annual meeting and Super Saturday gatherings online. It's not the same as in person but it has connected us and facilitated good sharing and conversation.

And here's some amazing news: the Conference, churches and members began a fundraiser in February that, despite the pandemic shutdown, resulted in the purchase of \$26.2 million in medical debt. This is part of an effort across the United Church of Christ and in some other denominations.

-from United Church News, by Connie Larkman:

The United Church of Christ effort to abolish medical debt stands at \$51.8 million with the latest buy announced in New England.

A collaborative effort by 122 United Church of Christ congregations, four Associations, and more than 100 households in the Southern New England Conference has abolished \$26.2 million in medical debt. Two separate buys benefited families in seven states and first responders around the country. All will soon be receiving letters telling them that their medical debt has been forgiven.

... A conference-wide fundraising campaign in Connecticut, Massachusetts and Rhode Island, birthed before the pandemic, along with a contribution from the UCC National Setting, raised over \$200,000. The gifts were sent to the New York based nonprofit RIP Medical Debt, which bought up debt in August for pennies on the dollar in 65 counties in [all 6 New England states and New York].

The [first] purchase wiped out \$8.4 million in medical debt for 7175 households, with the average forgiven being \$1171. ...

Check out SNEUCC.org for details.

So too, in the midst of all the turmoil in the nation and the uncertainties of the next few weeks, let us keep ourselves grounded in our faith, in the community of the Body of Christ. Whatever the challenges, we will be the Church and be thankful to God.

I am deeply grateful that at BCC we pray for one another and continue to help those in need around us. We care for one another and try to keep from infecting others. We pray and worship God in person, or at home or wherever we are, not forgetting that nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ.

God is good, all the time,
Pastor Bruce

From the Deacons

Holiday Calling Tree

With the holidays coming up and the long hiatus due to COVID-19 concerns, the Deacons would like to reach out to those in our congregation. If you would like to hear from some one on the board please send your updated phone and email info into the church office so the Deacons can update a calling tree. Also if you would also like to reach out to others, please let Amanda know as well and we will add you to the calling tree for making calls.

Thank you all.

Church School News

I hope this edition of the Signpost finds you all well. 2020 has been quite a year! If anything good can come out of this it is that we are forced to look at things differently. We are required to find new ways of doing things that we may have done the same for generations. The simple act of going to the grocery store or going to school may never be the same. Masks have become common place and part of our everyday wardrobe. However, just because we are forced to approach things in new ways doesn't make those new ways bad or wrong, they are just simply that "new". Perhaps shaking things up is what is needed. This pandemic has forced me to approach Christian Education in a new way. I have been trying out different ways to reach the children and families. Some have worked, some have not, but without failing how would we ever learn what success looks like. Zoom Church School does not seem to be the answer for our families. I am trying to find new and exciting ways to reach our children. I of course want to share the stories of the Bible with them, but I also want us to just to be able to share with one another our joys and even sorrows. I miss seeing the smiling faces of the children. It was one of the highlights of my week. The way they loved to share what they had done at school or at home. Maybe what a sibling had done that didn't make them very happy. I miss all of it. In the next few weeks I will be asking for volunteers who would want to help in planning different aspects of Christian Education. Maybe you would like to organize a Bible Study for adults. Perhaps you would like to help organize some safe and socially distant intergenerational activities for families. The holidays are fast approaching and maybe this is the time to rethink and plan things in new ways. If you read this and are thinking "I have some great ideas!" Don't wait for me to call. Feel free to reach out to me with your ideas. If you don't have any ideas, but really want to help out in finding ways to bring our families together in safe ways please don't hesitate to reach out to me. Things may not ever go back to the way they were, but that does not mean that new ways aren't just as good or even better than the old.

Crafters' Corner & Church Store

October 20th was an exciting day for all of us. We once again had access to Chandler Hall where we were able to finally get together again. There was a good deal of protocol to be followed but none of that much mattered to us. We were just all very happy to be able to be together for a short time to catch up and have things feel a little more normal. We were very lucky as the day happened to be a warm one so leaving doors open was not a hardship. We all wore our masks (which seems to be the new normal for everyone), brought our own lunch , snacks, and drinks and thoroughly enjoyed our three hours together. Just being able to just be at the Education Building was a joy. We had not been there to meet since our last meeting on March 3rd.

The Store looked like a time capsule. Very Eerie! The winter scarves were on the front table with a half price sign on them, the Easter cards were in their rack in the hallway and all of the Easter decorations were spread around the Store. It appeared that a few people had been in the building in the past several months as there was a little money in a couple of the containers that are around the shop for the self-serve shoppers and there were several donations left behind our counter. It was nice to see a few signs of life.

We were able to remove all of the spring items and add some fall items to the offerings in the Store and hallway. Our Thanksgiving cards are now on display and for sale in the hallway and many Halloween and Fall items have been added to our offering in the Store. If you do decide to shop (if the Church protocol approves it), please be safe and keep a distance between you and another shopper (probably 2-3 in the shop at one time would be best at present).

We plan to meet on Tuesdays from 10:30 a.m. - 1:30 p.m. until it is not feasible to do so. At present, we are not opening the Store or meetings to the public.

We wish everyone a safe and Happy Thanksgiving

The Board of Stewardship
will be hosting our

Fall Work Day

November 7th

9 am-12 pm

Rain date:
Nov. 14th

Prayer Shawl Ministry

Your prayer shawl ministry is still at work, knitting shawls for your request. We will not be meeting this month, but we are still with you in spirit. If you wish to request a shawl, we will make every effort to get it to you in the safest way possible. For now, as we continue to knit, we hope that you are safe and well and know that you are in our thoughts and prayers. To request a shawl, please contact Dot Lessard or Barbara Maheu.

From the Missions Board

October Project

Two church members registered to walk in the 2020 Manchester area CROP Hunger Walk on October 18th: Susan Schardt and Wick Wickersham. Both practiced social distancing by walking on a route separate from the Walkers who gathered in South Windsor. It was a picture perfect autumn day. The air was crisp, the sunshine warm, colorful leaves cascading onto the trails. Together they raised \$825 including their own donations and donations from friends and family. Church members also donated \$350 to support the BCC Walkers. The total raised was \$1175. The goal set being \$1500. Thanks to the Walkers and those individuals who donated to this Church World Service charity which fights hunger locally, nationally, and around the world "one step at a time".

November & December Project

We will participate in the MACC Joy of Community Sharing Program by adopting four area families for the holidays. These are families have requested help to provide holiday meals and Christmas gifts for family members. Due to safety concerns and practicality during the pandemic we have altered past procedures to accomplish this project. Instead of a food collection during service we are asking members to make monetary donations by mailing checks to the church office at the beginning of November and December. Please note on the check "Missions Holiday Project". The funds will be used to purchase food and items for the Thanksgiving and Christmas dinners for the four families. Four Mission Board members have volunteered to shop, package, and deliver the bags of groceries to the families. The delivery dates are November 22 and December 20. In December the families will also receive a \$25 gift card for each immediate family member to purchase a Christmas present. Please be generous in supporting this project to give a joyful holiday to others in need. Together we can do this!

Finance Committee Update

Just want to let people know that everyone's contribution is greatly appreciated. The Financial Secretary sent out statements in October to let people know where they were in respect to their contributions. If you did not receive yours, please let us know. As of this week, for of those who have been able to contribute so far this year, 30% have already met or exceeded their pledge or what they had donated last year as non-pledges and another 32% have contributed 75% or more as compared to their pledge or last year's non-pledge contributions. As noted in previous Signposts, expenses are down, Income is also behind due to the COVID-19 setbacks and we are currently \$2,300 behind expenses for the year but are able to maintain at this point. Please keep your donations to the special Missions projects that we have for Thanksgiving and Christmas so we can help others in need. Thank you.

From the Heart

**“Be the change you want the world to see”
Mohandas Gandhi**

Thank you for your continued support throughout this year. It has been a difficult year for so many and your support ensures that others know they are not alone.

“From the Heart” continues to collect and bring grocery items to the individuals and families in our Adopted Family program.

We have also continued to create candy boxes and gift bags on a monthly basis for the seniors at Woodlake Nursing Home...since we have not been able to run our monthly Bingo Nights, these gift bags are our way to keeping in touch, bringing items the seniors need and even reaching those who could not physically attend our bingo nights. We sure do miss them.

We continue to mail care packages to two US Air Force teams. This is an ongoing mission and we have been sending to the same location for two years now. As each team completes their deployment, they connect us to the incoming team and we continue the conversation. Snacks are the number one requested item...any and all kinds. They are grateful for the items already sent and share all items amongst each other.

The holidays are about to begin. Normally, we would be holding our Holiday Food Drive to help cover the Thanksgiving and December holiday meals, however, we have heard already that people will not be getting together in the same settings this year. Do we still need grocery items and gift cards? YES WE DO because more people will be on their own this year. If you are able to help, please consider donating a grocery or retail store gift card or any of the items mentioned in the “Adopted Family” program! We will pair your donations to the specific needs we are hoping to fill. The needs are still there!

Thank you...BCC has always been a place to go for faith, support, friendship and blessing. You definitely help to create “the change we need the world to see”!

Stay healthy!
Laura Ann / From the Heart
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Calendar of Events

Mondays, 7pm, Planning Committee—Z

Tuesdays, 10:30a-1:30p, Crafters—Ed. Bldg.

Fridays, 7pm, AI-Anon—Ed. Bldg.

Tues., Nov. 10, 6:15pm Missions Board—Z

Tues., Nov. 10, 7pm Finance Committee—Z

Wed., Nov. 11, 7pm Church Council—Z

Wed., Nov. 18, 7pm Deacons Meeting—Z

Z—indicates meeting is taking place remotely via Zoom



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ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED



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The Signpost is a publication of the Bolton Congregational Church UCC, Bolton, CT.

The Rev. Bruce MacLeod, Intentional Interim Pastor; MaryLou Prescher, Organist and Choir Director; Jessica Romeo, Director of Children & Youth Programming; Amanda Andersen, Church Office Administrator; Bob Bagley, Custodial Services; Lisa Catanese, Webmaster; The Rev. Dr. Chris Davies, Minister in Mission; The Rev. Charles H. Ericson, Pastor Emeritus

The Church Office Hours are currently by appointment only. Amanda can be reached via the office email at boltonucc@gmail.com or by leaving a voice mail at (860) 649-7077 (Email is best, although voicemails are checked regularly.) Pastor Bruce is available via phone (508) 769-1809 or email at interim_pastor.bcc@yahoo.com, or 24/7 in case of pastoral emergency.