

Church of Christ, Congregational, UCC

142 Exchange St., Millis, MA 02054

www.millisucc.org • (508) 376-5034 • millisucc@msn.com



An Open and Affirming Congregation

Church of Christ Vision Statement:

Worship God, Serve our neighbors, Share God's love.

A Message from the Interim Pastor

Our witness is vital and essential.

I am proud of this congregation. Being brand new in your midst when the social unrest concerning the death of yet another Black person, George Floyd, exploded, I had no idea how you would respond. The leadership of this congregation stepped up to the moral challenge by setting aside time for folks to discuss race issues and how those issues impact the church, the town and beyond during three different "Sacred Conversations on Race" opportunities. Members of the congregation marched and attended rallies. A small Black Lives Matter sign was placed in front of the church for about a month. The Diaconate voted to keep it out there for another month, at least. Folks have been reading and watching documentaries. So much is being learned and shared as our first discussions on White Privilege are drawing to a close. (Be watching for future discussions.) An important witness of love is being proclaimed.

Why is "Black Lives Matter" such a vital and essential message for us to publicly declare?

As disciples of Jesus Christ, we look to the teachings of Jesus to inform our actions. Jesus interacts with everyone. Jesus talks with and about the religious leaders and the national leaders, the sick and the lame, the prosperous and privileged, the poor in spirit and the downtrodden. Jesus teaches that everyone matters. And Jesus goes beyond and says, lepers matter¹, Samaritans matter², blind people matter³, those ostracized by society matter⁴. In some situations, Jesus goes so far as to disregard the law to do what is right for these subgroups of people⁵.

- continued on page 3 -



August Worship – Taking the Next Step

Outdoor*, in-person Sunday worship services to be held on August 9 & 23



During the month of August, you will have the opportunity to take part in two outdoor worship services on the back lawn of the church. **(*If it rains, services will be on Zoom only.)**

The church has developed a list of protocols for these services, and it will be important for everyone to follow the list carefully so that we can all worship together safely.

All of the Sunday services in August, including the two held outdoors, will be available live on Zoom, and will be recorded and posted to our YouTube channel, so the services can still be viewed and listened to from your home.

See page 2 for the complete schedule of Sunday worship services in August, the Zoom link, and a list of the required safety protocols.



Saturday, August 15

1-3pm

**Rev. Jen's Good-bye Gathering
& Gift Presentation**

See page 6 for details and safety protocols.

Complete Schedule of Sunday Worship Services in August

All Worship Services are at 10:00am.

**August 2 On-Line on Zoom
Communion**

Isaiah 55:1-5
Matthew 14:13-21

August 9 Outdoor at Church & On-line on Zoom

Romans 10:5-15
Matthew 14:22-33

**August 16 On-line on Zoom
Breakfast Church (see p. 4 for details)**

Romans 11:1-2; 29-32
Matthew 15:(10-20) 21-28
Isaiah 56:1, 6-8
Psalm 67

August 23 Outdoor at Church & On-line on Zoom

Romans 12:1-8
Matthew 16:13-20

August 30 On-line on Zoom

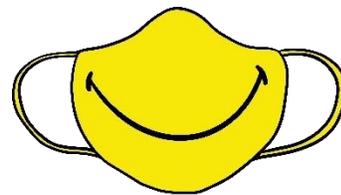
Romans 12:9-21
Matthew 16:21-28

To join by Zoom, click on this link:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87562091923?pwd=MVpJT21NelpRck9wM1UyaUtBalZsZz09>

If using phone, dial: 1-646-558-8656 US (NY)

Meeting ID: 875 6209 1923 **Password:** 02054



Required Safety Protocols for Outdoor Worship Services

The back lawn will be marked off, to allow for safe distancing for participants. Please arrive early so you have enough time to check-in and set-up your chair or blanket.

Ushers will seat you in pre-measured spaces for appropriate distancing.

In order to ensure a safe experience for everyone, please follow these protocols:

- **Stay home if you have any signs of infection, i.e. fever, cough, loss of smell/taste, scratchy throat or if you feel ill.**
- A mask or other face covering must be worn at all times by everyone over the age of two. Masks for children ages 2-5 are at the discretion of parents.
- We will have hand sanitizer available.
- Bring your own chair or blanket to sit on.
- All participants must check-in and provide contact information prior to the service. Bringing a note with you with your names and phone or email will speed this process.
- We encourage you to use your home bathroom before arriving for services. Restrooms will be open if needed.
- The rest of the building will be closed.
- Liturgies will be available on the church website and in the Friday email, so you can print at home and bring it with you, or follow along on your phone/tablet. No printed materials will be provided at the time of the service.
- You may hum or mouth the words during hymns. There will be no singing by the congregation.
- Please bring your pledges and offerings. A drop-off basket will be provided at the service. You can also mail in your donation to the church.
- Please stay at least 6 feet apart at all times.

Message from the Interim Pastor - continued from page 1

In Matthew 18 and Luke 15, Jesus tells the story of the shepherd leaving the 99 sheep to find and help the 1 missing sheep. Jesus demonstrates, that for everyone to matter, society needs to see who is being left behind, who is purposely being denied their rights, and after seeing, to fix the situation. Throughout Jesus' ministry, Jesus calls into question systems of oppression. As followers of Jesus we must do the same.

This is a social and humanitarian issue. When one segment of our society is neglected or purposely violated, our entire society suffers. The only people who can fix that, are those who have power. The Church that espouses a wide welcome is at the forefront of insuring that positive change happens. When we seek justice, we are saying to the system, a system of which we are a part, all lives matter and right now, we are not valuing Black lives.

This congregation was bold and courageous in taking a stand, by becoming Open and Affirming of people who are Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender. I am encouraged by the efforts of the leadership of this congregation to be bold and courageous in taking a stand that Black lives, which have been trampled on by systemic racism, matter. For over 400 years people who are Black have had their humanity denied. That denial is still being used to justify violence and discrimination. Now, just might be the moment in history where the tide changes.

What are some of the stumbling blocks before us?

- We are good people. Being a racist is seen as bad. Since we are good people, we can't be doing anything all that bad. It hurts to think we are being blamed for the discriminatory practices of others.
- Fear. There is fear. We have seen the way people who are Black are treated and we are afraid that if we stand with them, we will be treated the same. Jesus called out inequitable treatment of non-dominant groups and got himself killed.
- We are white. As white people, we benefit from this discriminatory system, mostly without us realizing it. We want people who are Black to get a fair share, and we don't want anything to change for us.

A teacher once gave each of the students in the classroom a wadded-up piece of paper. She then put the recycling bin in front of the room. She told the students this was a simulation exercise; those who, shooting from their seat, could get their paper in the bucket would move into the

upper class and be rich. The people in the back called out against the unfairness of this as those in the other rows had an advantage. Interestingly, the people in the front row didn't complain at all. This is injustice. Not just the fact that some did not get the same opportunity as others, but those who were given greater opportunity did not use it to level the playing field. The front row could have suggested that every person get three tries, one from each of the rows, so everyone had an equal opportunity to succeed. But they didn't. It didn't cross their minds.

Jesus calls us to use our privilege to benefit more than ourselves. We are to use our privilege to help others. There are many kinds of privilege, white privilege is just one. We, most people in this congregation, happen to have white privilege because the benefits of the current system in which we live are skewed towards those with white skin. And the negatives of our current system, are skewed against those with dark skin. As Christians with white skin, we are called to use the privilege we have, to help those for whom the system is not just failing but conspiring against.

For this particular conversation, it does not matter if we are without economic privilege. It does not matter if we are without health privilege, it does not matter if we are without political privilege. All those privileges are for a different conversation at another time. This conversation is about Race. We, who have white privilege, are called to care about those who don't. Today's pressing societal conversation is about the neglect and willful disregard for Black Americans. Thank you for engaging in the conversation. Now, just might be the time for real meaningful change to happen for these underprivileged children of God.

I am proud to stand with you as you bear witness to God's love for all people.

Grace,

Jennifer

Rev. Jennifer Geary

¹ Matt 8:2-4, Mark 1:40-42, Luke 5:12-13, 14:1-4

² Luke 10:30-37

³ Matt 9:27-31, 12:22, 20:29-34; Mark 8:22-26, 10:46-52; Luke 18:35-43; John 9:1-7

⁴ Matt 8:28-34, 9:20-22, 9:32-33, 12:10-13, Mark 1:23-26, 3:1-5, 5:1-5, 25-29, 9:17-29; Luke 6:6-10, 8:27-35, 43-48, 13:11-13

⁵ Mark 1:29-31, Mark 3:1-6, John 9:1-16, Luke 13:10-17, Luke 14:1-6, Mark 1:21-28, John 5:1-18

BREAKFAST CHURCH

Sunday Worship Service on Zoom
August 16 at 10:00am

On Sunday, August 16, instead of our usual worship service, Deacon Sue Conte will lead the church in a Virtual Breakfast Church at 10:00am. Zoom link information will be on the website and in the 8/14 Friday email.

After the opening of the service, you will be invited to enjoy a breakfast, snack, or perhaps just coffee that you have prepared. While we are virtually sharing our meal, we will read and then discuss a Bible passage. This will be a chance for everyone to participate in our Sunday service, while breaking bread together.

YOUTH GROUP SERVICE PROJECT EVENT

Tuesday, August 4 from 3-7pm

Covid may be delaying us from using the church building, but there are many cleaning projects that need our attention. The youth group will be holding a Service Project event to tackle some of these projects. Youth will receive service hours for their work.

Adults are welcome, too!

Special thanks to Paul and Nydia Rice for spending time cleaning the refrigerator and kitchen. We are grateful for their time!

Masks must be worn at all times. Youth leaders will organize tasks so that safety protocols can be followed. Please bring household cleaning gloves if you have them.

**RSVP by August 2 to
Doug Briggs at:
dcb.joel@verizon.net**



Message from the Deacons

It is hard to believe August is upon us. The past five months have certainly not been typical for any of us. During this time of the church building being closed, the work of the church has continued in earnest and it has kept the Deacons busy.

Thank you to everyone who completed the Next Steps Survey. The results have been very helpful in making decisions for moving forward regarding timelines and types of worship services. As the state has moved into Phase 3 of opening we now have written infectious disease policies and protocols developed by the COVID-19 response team aligned with the state and CDC guidelines for outdoor worship, the use of the church building for services, staff safety and for outside groups using the facilities. Thank you to Jan Krohn, Art Payne, Rev. Geary and members of the Trustees for their work on this daunting task.

Mark your calendars! We are planning two in-person outdoor services (weather permitting) on August 9th and 23rd. These services will also be live on ZOOM. Please check the special section of the Spire that outlines the protocol information for attending.

August also brings us into Rev. Geary's third month as our Interim Minister. It has been a pleasure to get to know and work with her, as this has been a very different introduction for her to our church as well as us to her.

It can be easy to forget we have work to do during this interim time. This is the time to ask yourself what talent, time, and expertise you have to share with the process going forward. It is not up to the Deacons or other officers of the church to make the decisions on their own. WE NEED YOU!

One last note. Our gathering to officially say goodbye to Rev. Jen will be held on Saturday, August 15, from 1 to 3 PM on the back lawn of the church. This is a rain or shine event. The same protocols for outdoor services will be followed. Bring your own snacks and drinks if you want. No food or drink will be provided. That being said, this will be a time to chat, laugh and to let Rev. Jen and her family know how much we appreciated their time with us. All socially distanced of course. :)

Be Well,
Wendy Schneider & Sue Conte, Co-Lead Deacons



On-line Bible Study

Each Wednesday at 11:00am, a group gathers on Zoom to listen to and discuss the Psalm of the week. Each gathering is a stand-alone event.

Zoom link:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87641484473?pwd=aGM2c2I2aGExMU1lS0NHVHRycjVldz09>

If using phone, dial: 1-646-558-8656 US (NY)

Meeting ID: 876 4148 4473 **Password:** 02054

August 5: Psalm 85:8-13

August 12: Psalm 67

August 19: Psalm 138

August 26: Psalm 26:1-8

September 2: Psalm 119:33-40

A Message from the Visitors' Group

The Visitors' Group will not be meeting in August. We think about the people we visit and miss you and pray that each of you is doing well. If we can help you in any way, please leave a message at the church office, (508) 376-5034.

"The Lord gives strength to His people;
The Lord blesses His people with peace."
~Psalm 29:11 (NRV)

The Visitors:

Judie Ackerman, Ellie Costa, Ginny Demery, Pam Johansson, Linda Jones, Judy Kosinski, Shirley Rowley, Pat Spearing, Kathy Stevens, and Rev. Jennifer Geary



A Request for Empty Pickle Jars

If you bought any pickles from one of our fairs, and your jar is now empty, please join us in being "GREEN" by helping us get the jars returned to the church.



Since the church building has been closed due to Covid, people have been unable to drop off their empty pickle jars to the church. If you have any of those jars, please call Kathy Stevens at (508) 376-8124, and she will arrange to get them from you.

Sanctuary Will Be Open for Prayer on Designated Day & Hour

Beginning August 19...the sanctuary will be open for prayer on Wednesdays, from 1-2pm, on a trial basis.

Masks will be required at all times. Signs will be posted at the church with additional safety protocols.

Rev. Geary's Monday Office Hours on Zoom August Schedule

Rev. Geary will be available to church members on-line via Zoom during the following days/hours in August:

August 3, 17 and 31
10:00am-Noon

To connect via Zoom from your computer, click this link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81936525328>
If using a phone, dial: 1-646-558-8656.
Meeting ID: 819 3652 5328

You can call, text or email Rev. Geary at other times but might need to leave a message.

Phone: (774) 993-9407

Email: pastoruccmillis@gmail.com.

Please note: Rev. Geary will be on vacation from August 10-16. During that time, if you are in need of pastoral assistance, call the church office at (508)376-5034, and the voice recording will provide pastoral emergency contact information.

Church Check-Ins Wednesdays at 7pm Live on Facebook

Join us for our weekly check-in where you'll hear the latest news and announcements from the church. You don't need a Facebook account to access the Church Check-In. Just click the link below to get to our Facebook page:
<https://www.facebook.com/MillisUCCChurch/>



Good-bye Gathering & Gift Presentation

Saturday, August 15

1-3pm

**Back Lawn, Church of Christ, Millis
(rain or shine)**

Rev. Jen will be returning as our guest of honor at an outdoor gathering, so we can give her a more meaningful fond farewell send-off (from 6 feet, instead of from inside our cars!). We will also present Rev. Jen with a gift from the church.

In order to ensure a safe experience for everyone, please follow these protocols:

- **Stay home if you have any signs of infection, i.e. fever, cough, loss of smell/taste, scratchy throat or if you feel ill.**
- A mask or other face covering must be worn at all times by everyone over the age of two. Masks for children ages 2-5 are at the discretion of parents.
- We will have hand sanitizer available.
- Bring your own chair or blanket to sit on.
- All participants must check-in and provide contact information prior to the service. Bringing a note with you with your names and phone or email will speed this process.
- We encourage you to use your home bathroom before arriving for services. Restrooms will be open if needed.
- The rest of the building will be closed.
- Please stay at least 6 feet apart at all times.
- We will not be providing any food or drink.

PRIORITY! VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

The Church of Christ is always in need of volunteers willing to lend their time and talent to keep our church vibrant for our members and the community. For a list of all current volunteer opportunities, [click here](#).

Our highest priorities are:

Serve on the TRANSITION TEAM to help us find our next settled pastor. We are in the process of reviewing our database and membership lists, and will soon begin to develop the church profile, which serves as a roadmap for where we've been, and what we want our future to look like.

Assist us with TECHNOLOGY. Covid has pushed us to find creative and remote ways to connect with our members and friends. We have some knowledge, but would greatly benefit from having several volunteers with even a little experience to help guide us in our various technological challenges. Even once we're able to worship in-person again, our on-line offerings will continue.

If you are interested in volunteering or want to learn more, leave a message at the church and someone will respond. Phone: (508) 376-5034, or Email: millisucc@msn.com.

Summer Socializing with the M&M's on Zoom!



The M & M's Monday Morning Needlework Group is now gathering virtually on Zoom! Join the Zoom meeting on Monday mornings, anytime after 10am.

By computer, click this link:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/2987904285?pwd=VENBmRob2krQW83RFJhNGJkQjJkUz09>

If using a phone, dial: 1-646-558-8656.

Meeting ID: 298 790 4285

Password: 866156

All are welcome – even if you're not working on a needlework project, join in for the socializing!

Missing Church

I miss church.

I miss the spot in the sanctuary where I tend to sit, on the left-hand side, the south side. It is the same side I live in our town, divided down the middle by a state highway. We did not choose the spot for any particular reason: it just felt right to us when we first entered the sanctuary over 30 years ago.

I know that church isn't the structure, but the people who fill that structure, who give it life, on Sunday mornings. On Sundays, but also on Food Pantry Saturdays, and the Monday Morning drop-in group that meets in the parlor for handwork and catch-ups and laughter and tears and loving support. It is the lively Christmas Fair, and church suppers. It is the Visitors, who do just that - visit the sick and the shut-ins and mail cards and notes... except we are all shut-ins now to some extent.

It is the church youth groups with their meetings and suppers and outreach and work projects. They give me hope for the future of our world.

It is the children, always the children, scattered throughout the congregation and then gathering like chicks for the Children's Story before church school.

It is the committed teachers and youth leaders, the committee members, the volunteers who clean and repair and cook and organize.

It is the music director and it is the choir, which sings with such heart that age and dwindling numbers do nothing to dull the brilliance of their songs.

It is the Deacons, ever-present, to serve: as readers, as ushers, as collectors of offerings. As servers at the Communion table.

It is the pastor, who guides us all.

Our world is not now what it was at the turn of the New Year. 2020 came roaring at us like a wild nightmare beast, and it is still tearing apart the fabric of our lives. We struggle to find answers to impossible questions.

We have work to do, God's work, of comforting, reaching out, helping in any way we can. Now more than ever we are called to be a visible Church in this broken world.

Yet when we most need to come together for worship, we have only the ability to gather virtually on-line. Many of us are tech-savvy; for many others, it is just one more struggle in adapting to this new way of living and being together.

I miss church. I do miss the sanctuary and my favorite spot to sit. I miss the way the sunlight pours in through the windows. I miss the soaring height of the room, all that space. I miss the hard, polished wood of the pews. I miss the Light, the sense of Spirit. It is truly sacred space.

Someday we will return to that physical space. Someday we will greet each other joyously, face to face, with hugs. But for now we must carry that hope in our hearts.

And we must be the shining Church in the world in all the ways we can.

Lisa Palson Priest
7/2020

Special Edition Newsletter Voices from the Heart

Inspired by Lisa Paulson Priest's beautiful words, we had the idea to put together a special edition newsletter, devoted entirely to your voices, especially during this time of Covid when we have been unable to connect with each other in person.

You can submit an essay, a poem, an anecdote, a photograph, a drawing, a cartoon, etc. – it doesn't have to be a specific length or style. This is open to all ages. This is an opportunity for you to express your thoughts in a way that can be shared with others in our church community.

Email your submissions to the church at: millisucc@msn.com or mail to: Church of Christ, 142 Exchange St., Millis, MA 02054

If you are emailing your submission:

Writings should be saved in Word or .pdf format. Photos or artwork should be saved in .jpg format.

Deadline for submissions is August 31, 2020.

Church of Christ
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Millis, MA 02054

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We're on the Web!

Visit us at:

www.millisucc.org

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Millis, MA 02054



"Which one of you, having a hundred sheep and losing one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the wilderness and



go after the

ONE

that is lost until he finds it?"

Luke 15:4, NRSV

The image shows a scenic landscape with a large lake in the center, surrounded by rolling green hills and mountains in the background. A single sheep is standing in the foreground on a grassy slope. The text is overlaid on the image, with the word "ONE" in large, bold, white letters.