

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.

Pastor's Message

Happy New Year 2021!
Good-bye and good riddance 2020!

If only it was that easy. Start the new year like wiping off a chalk or white board. I don't think the corona virus understands that we've turned the page to a new year. For some this year of loss and struggle will continue for months ahead. Yet there is hope, new medications and vaccines are being approved and administered; we see a glimmer at the end of the tunnel.

There are many other good reasons for hope. God has been with us through all we've experienced in 2020. So many of us have been lucky. Our houses remain standing. Our gardens grew. We have safe drinking water. Our faith community has been available and supportive through it all. We have gathered on-line and in person. Most members of our congregation have remained well. Babies have been born, weddings occurred. New homes were moved into, jobs changed. Graduations and new beginnings in further education or the working world happened. We have had abundant life even in the midst of death and loss. This doesn't diminish the pain and suffering but does offer us hope.

Much has changed. As a nation our eyes have been opened to privilege, discrimination, abuse of power, and opportunities to serve and support our neighbors. We've learned how near the edge so many people live. We've transitioned from one form of pastoral leadership to another. We stopped hugging and touching. We've learned to read eye expressions. We've developed a whole new vocabulary.

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NOTICE OF ANNUAL MEETING OF THE CHURCH OF CHRIST, CONGREGATIONAL

**Sunday, February 7, 2021
on Zoom**

following the 10am worship service

The Annual Meeting will be conducted following the Sunday morning worship service. The zoom link will be provided in the February Spire and upcoming weekly emails.

The meeting is open to all, however, voting is restricted to members of the Church of Christ, Congregational, Millis. This is an important event in the ongoing business and life of our congregation and reflects our responsibility of membership and the use of the democratic process within our congregation and in society at large.

PLEASE NOTE: 2020 Annual Reports from Leadership Council and other groups are due Friday, January 8. Please leave them in the church office, on the desk, in the folder marked "Annual Reports" or email them to: millisucc@msn.com



-Pastor's Message continued-

There is still much change to come. The transition team is hard at work gathering information. From that information a realistic image of this congregation will come into focus. At the same time, small groups will be asked to vision the future. What does this congregation want to look like in ten years and what type of pastor do you need to call to help you get there?

I am excited about the year ahead. I see much promise. It is my hope that we will create a church directory, complete with everyone's updated contact information, and have that in your hands soon. I want you to be able to contact each other. Please make sure the church office has all your up-to-date information. I hope to get to know you better and for you to know each other better. It feels to me that this congregation has some unique resources that God is calling forth for ministry. I hope you will listen to God and discern with me what those might be.

I believe that right now God is preparing someone to come to serve as your pastor. In God's time, this will be revealed. Until then, we have work to do being the church right now in this time and place. Let's smile, take each other's hands (figuratively) and march with confidence into the new year.

Grace,

Jennifer



“Who Are We?” Survey

The transition team needs your help to answer the question: “Who Are We?” In October at an outdoor meeting, we shared some information about our Millis UCC history. Now the next step is to fill out a short survey that will gather demographic information of who we are as a church. The information you share will guide future small group discussions and will help make our search committee successful in the selection of a new pastor.

The survey has been sent out, so please check your email or mail for the information. We ask that you return it by January 6. This survey should be filled out individually by each member/friend in the congregation. If you don't receive the survey, we may not have your current contact information, so please let the church office know at millisucc@msn.com, or (508) 376-5034. If you did get the mailing but someone in your household did not, please share the survey link with them.

Thank you for helping us with this important work.

The Transition Team: Becki Abalutzk, Jan Krohn and Art Payne

Collector's Note: 2020 Donations deadline

Deadline for 2020 donations will be “dated by December 31st and received by January 4, 2021”.

Last year there was some disappointment that requests for donations made after the first of the year to be credited for 2019, especially pledges, were denied. This was necessary because the church's financial books close with transactions taking place after January 1st. If you are in doubt as to your donation status, please refer to your December statement and your personal records for church donations after that statement date.

A Message from the Moderator

Happy New Year 2021!

As we start the year of 2021, I wanted to give everyone an update on the work that the council has been performing over the past months.

At our monthly meetings we focus on three major areas: Transition work, COVID and General Church updates. By now, you should have received the survey the Transition team has put together (thank you Jan, Becki and Art for volunteering to lead this effort). With the COVID limitations in place, it is looking like we will continue to be online for the foreseeable future. However as there are businesses still in our church building, the council is currently looking at doing some repairs in the church, including putting in an additional bathroom to deal with COVID guidelines given that we have a daycare in our building. We are still reviewing bids and determining a location for the bathroom. Our capital fund will be used for this work, so it will not impact our budget constraints.

In December, the council approved the 2021 Budget as prepared by the Prudential committee. This will be formally approved at the Annual Meeting in February. Due to the loss of members this past year who have pledged in the past, as well as COVID impacting our seasonal donations, we will be dealing with a significant shortfall. We will be looking at ways to decrease this shortfall by having additional fundraisers aside from the Jolly Holly Fair. Our online Jolly Holly Marketplace last month brought in \$5,900 which was above our revised budget of \$5,000. Thanks to all who donated and participated in the online event.

As we look ahead, our focus is on our Annual Meeting, which will be held online February 7th, after the church service (via Zoom). In addition to approving the budget, we also need to fill some upcoming vacancies for the following positions:

- Deacons (2-3 spots open)
- Treasury (1 person needed for backup)
- Prudential (2-3 spots open, including someone to review and code our bills)
- Members at Large

Please give some thoughtful prayer to help the church in whatever way you can. A lot of these positions do not require a significant amount of time and can help offset time of others. We really need to fill these vacancies to help run the church.

The Annual Report will be sent via email two weeks before the Annual meeting for you to review. This includes a draft of the 2020 financials; the final version will be made public at the Annual meeting.

We thank everyone who has continued with their pledges and donations. We know this time has been difficult on many, and the Deacon's Fund is still available for those who need it.

If you have any questions or concerns, feel free to reach out to either Jennifer, the Deacons, or myself.

Again, take care and stay healthy and safe until we physically see each other again!

Gail Luck, Moderator



Happy New Year from Your Deacons!

The month of December was a busy one. We would like to thank the families who participated in our travelling Advent Wreath. We appreciate the Sennott, Nadeau, Anderson and Woodley families for inviting us into their homes for the lighting of the candles.

We also extend our gratitude to Myrna, Becki and Deb as well as those who added their voices to the carols during our services during the month of December.



The Reverse Advent food collection activity was a big success with over fifty bags and boxes of donations going to the Millis Ecumenical Food Pantry. We are looking forward to making this a new tradition.

A shout-out goes to Paul Rice to his nimble fingers and tying the tags and ribbons on the candles handed out for the Christmas Eve service.

The new year will be bringing changes to the Diaconate. As many of you know June Murphy moved to the Cape in the Spring and Paul Rice will be stepping off in February. Both June and Paul have dedicated many years of service in a variety of tasks within our church community and we are very grateful.

According to the Constitution the Diaconate may consist of up to eight active members of the congregation. With the above changes we will have four. We are contacting members whose names have been suggested as someone who would take an active role in the Diaconate. If you have an interest, please contact one of the Deacons.

Stay well,
Wendy Schneider, Sue Conte, Paul Rice, Doug Briggs and Joan Nichols

A Message from the Visitors' Group

The Visitors' Group will not be meeting in January. We hope that everyone had a blessed and wonderful Christmas. May the gifts of Christmas, Hope, Peace, Joy and Love be with each of you throughout the year.

We also hope and pray that the New Year will be filled with good health, joyfulness, much happiness and many blessings.

"Come to me all who labor and are heavy, laden, and I will give you rest."
-Matthew 11:28

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



Sunday Worship in February

Invite friends to join us for Sunday morning worship at 10am on Zoom. It's so easy for them to join, just share the link below and/or our website address, www.millisucc.org, where they can get the link on their own. It's never been easier to invite someone to join you for worship.

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

These are the scripture passages you will hear each Sunday. Consider taking a moment to read through them before arriving at worship.

January 3 – Communion, Epiphany

Jeremiah 31:7-14; Psalm 147:12-20;
Ephesians 1:3-14; Matthew 2:1-12

January 10 – Baptism of Jesus

Genesis 1:1-5; Psalm 29;
Acts 19:1-7; Mark 1:4-11

January 17

1 Samuel 3:1-10; Psalm 139:1-6, 13-18;
1 Corinthians 6:12-20; John 1:43-51

January 24 - Week of Prayer for Christian Unity

Jonah 3:1-5; Psalm 62:5-12;
1 Corinthians 7:29-31; Mark 1:14-20

January 31

Deuteronomy 18:15-20; Psalm 111;
1 Corinthians 8:1-13; Mark 1:21-28

Let's Talk About White Privilege

Mondays, January 4 - February 1, 7-9 PM

You must preregister.

This is a 5-week on-line program where participants will examine the concept of white privilege. The focus of the course is on personal awareness and understanding. Each week participants will read 5 short essays in preparation for class, engage in large & small group discussion in response to exercises, experiences, and video clips. And most importantly, write an autobiography through the lens of race. Pre-registration is required for this free program. Participants will be directed to internet sites to download all materials. If a participant needs to have the resources printed out for them, there will be a charge to cover that cost. Invite friends you know who would be interested in this discussion.

Register in advance for this meeting:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tzMvd-GsqTorGtzYaShCJHtfcgMNwsGDRWmq>

After registering, you will receive a confirmation email containing information about joining the meeting.

On-line Bible Study

Each Wednesday at 11:00am, a group gathers on Zoom to listen to and discuss one of the passages from the upcoming Sunday's worship service. Each gathering is a stand-alone event.

For a list of each Sunday's passages, see the "Sunday Worship in February" section.

Bible Study Zoom link:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87641484473?pwd=aGM2c2I2aGExMU1IS0NHVHRycjVldz09>

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

Meeting ID: 876 4148 4473

Password: 02054



From the Music Director

December this year was like no other any of us have experienced. In Early October, we began formulating a plan for a mini-concert. There were many restrictions as to gathering and singing, so we scaled down to a Christmas Offering of three carols, *O, Come All Ye Faithful*, *Joy to the World*, and *Silent Night*. The idea was eagerly received and recruitment of singers began.

We have successfully been using Zoom for Sunday services since May 23rd but, the challenge of recording and submitting the recording was a bit daunting. Many churches throughout the country have been including virtual music in their services. While the presentations, which can easily be found online on YouTube are often excellent, I don't know if it's clear how many hours (50-100) of work go into creating a virtual anthem. In addition, equipment is not only expensive, but we were unsure as to what we needed. We decided to use what we had, smart phones and iPads. An email was sent to many people in the choir, former choir members, and people who might be interested.

Working with Becki Abalutzk, I created a piano soundtrack and she developed an instruction sheet. There was a learning curve and although many tried, not all were successful, but the most important aspect of this was the willingness to try and to persevere. Ultimately, we had enough tracks to have a recording of what I called the Millis UCC Caroleers. We were incredibly fortunate in having the skill and experience of sound engineer, Pat Dreier of Encore Music. He mixed the tracks, combining all of the voices and we had a recording! Links were sent out on Facebook, in email and in every way possible so that these recordings could be heard and enjoyed during the Christmas season. Becki inserted photos that we asked for from everyone who had pictures of the choir. This was a wonderful addition to the singing as many former choir members were seen in the photos.

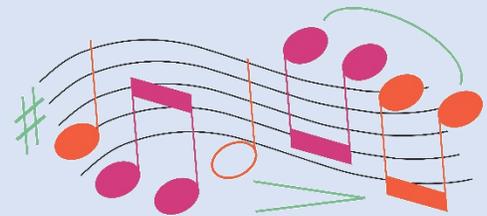
As we go forward, I am hoping that with some equipment and a desire to maintain our music program, others will volunteer to sing or play instruments to add to the music we present. So many people in our town commented on the carols that sounded twice a day from the steeple, thanks to Rick Jones who revived the system. The bells and choir give us a place in the community and we need to keep working on that.

Even with the vaccine and restrictions, it will probably be September before we can meet and sing in the sanctuary.

Easter is coming and I hope we will be able to present at least one Easter anthem. Although there will be many challenges again, we can build on what we've learned and I have every confidence that what seems impossible will be overcome!

My thanks to all who made the project possible and I urge you to offer your talents be they vocal, instrumental, or recording equipment and recording skills to the Easter program. And finally, please take pictures and video recordings so that we have a visual record of how we dealt with the pandemic.

With Deep Gratitude, Myrna



Youth Group Notes

Activities for 2021 are in the planning stages, including a rescheduling of the Yankee Swap event. Watch your email for future communications involving the Youth Group.

Important note to youth and parents: Please continue to check your spam and promotions folders/tabs for youth group emails, as they will sometimes end up in there.

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

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

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

By computer, click this link:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/2987904285?pwd=VENBMmRob2krQW83RFJhNGJQQjJUdz09>

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

Meeting ID: 298 790 4285

Password: 866156



Rev. Geary's Monday Office Hours on Zoom

Rev. Geary will be available to church members on-line via Zoom, from 10am-Noon on Mondays.

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.

Church Check-Ins Live on Facebook Wednesdays at 7pm

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/>

Gratitude Corner

Thank you to everyone who sent in pictures for the Christmas Eve service. They were a wonderful addition. -Rev. Geary

Thank you Eileen for all the extra work done during December. -Rev. Geary

Thank you Myrna, Becki & singers for trying something new and pulling it off; gifting us with three lovely carols. -Rev. Geary

Thank you to everyone who helped make the Advent and Christmas Seasons merry and bright. -Rev. Geary



To the Deacons – our grateful thanks for the leadership you have shown since we learned in early March that we would need a new minister. This was followed by the shutdown of our church a few weeks later because of Covid-19.

By late April you found and approved the Rev. Jennifer Geary as our interim. You, and the council members, proceeded to work with her to continue "church" as close to normal as possible, when she began her ministry on May 18th. You were thrown into a world of technology as never before. Along with Rev. Geary and Administrative Assistant, Eileen Yates, you have done wonders to keep us informed and able to have services, Bible Studies, and meetings on zoom.

We all await the day when the church doors will be opened. God Bless you all.

If you would like to express your gratitude to others, either anonymously or with your name attached, please email the church office at millisucc@msn.com



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We're on the Web!

Visit us at:

www.millisucc.org

IMPORTANT COVID SAFETY REMINDERS

Currently, even when there are people in the building, the exterior doors are kept locked as a Covid safety measure.

If work needs to be done in an area used by any of our tenants, please schedule it through the office (millisucc@msn.com or 508-376-5034) or through the pastor (pastoruccmillis@gmail.com or 774-993-9407), so that we can coordinate it with the tenants.

If you are at the church property:

- Observe posted signs and safety protocols (copies of the church's protocols are posted on our website and the office door)
- Wear a mask
- Use hand sanitizer & wipe down surfaces
- Sign the contact tracing sheet

Thank you for helping us function in a safe environment!



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