

**The First Community Church of Southborough
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February 14, 2021 – Transfiguration Sunday

VALENTINE'S DAY!!

(Also, ironically, Racial Justice Sunday in the United Church of Christ)

Blessings, Everyone!

Keeping in Touch

Concerns:

We hold in prayer:

- Our country. We stand in need of prayer for healing, for an end to the hatred that has led to the polarization of our people around political and social issues. Our tribalistic mentality needs to be replaced with a new, more inclusive, more enlightened vision of who we are as Americans, and we need the patience and dedication to make the true American way of life a reality for all people.
- Our world. We stand in need of a vision of world community, a world where people care about each other and where we know deep down that we are all in this together. Most of the problems that the peoples of the world face are solvable, if only we put our minds and our tremendous resources to work on them.
- Myanmar (Burma). Once again, we see a military coup overthrow a democratically elected government. And, once again, the nations of the world are reluctant to take a stand against the junta (reminding me of the world's silence when China invaded Tibet). Authoritarianism/totalitarianism is in the ascendant not only around the world but also in our own country. In Myanmar, civilian protests have been outlawed.
- Nature. Our environment. The world in which we live. Approximately 1,000,000 little and some big animals are in danger of extinction. This is not right! The melting ice cap. Our little planet is in need of healing and tender-loving care.
- Those who are hungry or food insecure in our own country and even in our own state and town.
- The over 5,000,000 people in our country who, because of the pandemic, are newly unemployed, many of whom have lost their health insurance because it was tied to their employment (a good argument for at least having an option of obtaining health insurance that is not dependent upon one's employer).
- Those who have become seriously ill though having contracted COVID-19; families that have lost loved ones to this virus; and all those whose lives have been disrupted in

serious ways because of the pandemic restrictions. BTW, being asked to wear a mask and socially distance does not qualify one to receive intercessory prayer.

- Joe Biden and Kamala Harris, our President and Vice President, and their new administration and cabinet.

- Sheila (a colleague of Dianne Simmons), her husband Danny, and their two sons. Danny, who contracted COVID-19 in December, remains in Hospice Care. This past Monday, Danny felt well enough to try walking. Unfortunately, he fell and injured a knee. Danny and Sheila decided not to follow the recommendation of the Hospice nurse to simply put him on a morphine pump; they took him by ambulance to the ER for evaluation and possible treatment.

The family thanks us for remembering them in our prayers.

- John, the husband of a friend of Marlene & Gil's daughter Cathy, who recently had a heart attack.

Thank you to:

- Jim Holmes for faithfully ringing the church bell at 11:00 a.m. every Sunday morning to remind our neighbors and the world that we are still here, for sending pictures of the church to our church mailing list, and for clearing the entrance to the church after each snow storm.

- Four people who keep our church going during this pandemic period:

- o Jim Holmes, our Church Collector, who receives your pledges and gifts, records them for tax purposes (they *are* tax deductible, you know!), and gives those designated to the General Fund to our Church Treasurer and those designated to missions to our Mission Treasurer.

- o Bob Farmer, our Church Treasurer, who deposits the checks and pays all our bills (when we have the money to pay them, which is not always the case and which is frustrating to Bob, who takes his job very seriously).

- o Beverly Lees, our Mission Treasurer, who receives the mission offerings and, at the end of every month, sends a check from our church to the mission recipient.

- o David Crane, our Webmaster, who posts my newsletter/reflection every week as well as a cleaned-up version of my Audio Worship Service.

- Those who have already turned in their 2021 pledges to the General Fund, and those Friends of the Church who have either already sent or pledged a special gift to support us financially in the year to come.

Note: If you have not yet turned in your pledge, please do so as soon as possible. At the present time, the total amount pledged to the support of the General Fund (the operating expenses of the church) is approximately 50% of what it was last year. It is questionable whether our church will be able to survive at this level of support.

COVID-19 and Sunday Worship as the Gathered Church

In a recent email, although he agrees that holding an annual meeting in person, as we have done for over 150 years is not possible because of safety issues, Bob Farmer made a good case for at least putting together an Annual Report for the year that has passed. I find that I agree with him and also Jim Holmes, who made a similar plea, in this. I can write a Pastor's Report, report on the PPP grant that we received, and update the list of active and inactive church members. Bob can pull together his Treasurer's Report and the proposed budget for the coming year. Jim Holmes can present the Collector's Report for the past and also the coming year. The Investment Committee can bring us up to date on where we are with our invested funds. The Trustees can report of what it takes to keep the building in shape when it is not in use. It would also be an opportunity for us to record, recognize, and remember those members of our church community who died this past year.

If you are (technically) serving on any board or committee, would you please take the initiative to have your committee submit a report. I will get back to you on how the reports might be collated and by whom.

Once again, I hope that everyone who offered to serve on a board or committee but did not have the opportunity to do so this past year, will be willing to extend his/her term for the coming year as well.

I also hope that everyone who pledged support to the General Fund last year will renew or hopefully even increase his/her pledge for the coming year.

<i>Birthdays</i>	
Bob Farmer	8 th
Evelyn Till	10 th
Joan Brunelle	10 th
Joyce Harrington	11 th
Thelma Oakes	11 th
Jim Holmes	13 th
Helen Varney	14 th
Jason Elias	19 th
Diane Sickles	22 nd
Cody Willman	24 th
<i>Anniversaries</i>	
Helen and Dick Varney	16 th
Marlene & Gil Joe	19 th

Audio Weekly Worship Service

We are offering an abbreviated weekly worship service on our "Pod Cast" site. There is a link to it on the Home page of our church website: www.firstcommunitychurch.com. It can also be accessed from a link at the top of the Sermons page. On the Pod site, each service is listed by date. The reflection/homily is the reflection that is sent to those on our expanded church contact list, a list that is comprised of church members, members of our larger church family, and friends of the church who have asked to be put on our contact list. The pastor's reflection is also accessible in printed (PDF) form on our website on the Sermons page.

Quote/Thought of the Day

"We could never learn to be brave and patient if there were only joy in the world"
(Helen Keller)

Attention-Grabbling Church Signs

Come As You Are.

You Can Change Inside!

(Get it??—Change *inside!*)

Kids Say the Darndest Things!

"A Christian can have only one wife. This is called monotony."

(I know it is dangerous to post this quote on Valentine's Day! I hope my wife doesn't read it.)

Worship Service Music

The Prelude for today's audio worship service is "Largo from Xerxes," the opening aria from the 1738 opera *Seerse*(Xerxes I of Persia) composed by George Frederic Handel. The opera was a commercial failure, lasting only five performances in London after its premiere. In the 19th century, however, the aria was rediscovered and became one of Handel's best-known pieces.

This is a beautiful recording by the Berlin Philharmonic conducted by Herbert von Karajan. I confess, however, that I would prefer hearing Michael playing it on our organ at the beginning of worship on a Sunday morning! Michael does a beautiful job with "Largo." Of all his preludes, this is one of my favorites.

Missions:

Our mission recipient for the month of February is the Pastoral Counseling Centers of Massachusetts. Located in Westborough, this pastoral counseling service provides counseling/psychotherapy to individuals regardless of their ability to pay. Our church has supported their mission both financially and through representation on their Board of Directors since long before I came to this church. From time to time, we have had members of their staff come and speak to us during worship about the importance of providing counseling that is sensitive to people's religious background and spiritual issues as well as psychological issues.

If you would like to help us support this ministry, please send your check to First Community Church and indicate that you would like it to be in support of the Pastoral Counseling Centers of Massachusetts.