

## Ministry Areas Update March 2023

The following items are highlighted for Governing Board action. Items 1, 3, and 4 need Governing Board attention at this meeting. Item 2 can be deferred or delegated to Finance. And Item 3 can be acted on at this meeting or deferred until April.

Key actions for the Governing Board are **highlighted in bold purple** and include the following:

- 1) Woodstock Cemetery Association Annual Meeting will be March 25 at 10:30am. Although I am a nonvoting member of the WCA Board, I cannot attend as the Worship Retreat is on the same day. All members of FCCW are members of the WCA. **Can a member of the Governing Board attend the meeting?**
- 2) Funding congregation's portion of Member in Discernment funds (please see **Item II below**)
- 3) Extending an offer to a candidate for the Children and Family Ministry Coordinator Position (Please see **Item III.2 below**)
- 4) Placing a Witness Stone on our Property (Please see **Item III.d.3.b**)
- 5) Identifying delegates to Windham Association Annual Meeting (Please see **Item III.d.4.b**)
- 6) The Annual Data Hub update for SNEUCC and our Benevity reverification have been completed.

### I. Upcoming Activities and Dates

Mar 11	5:30pm	Italian Dinner
Mar 20	9am	April May Share Content Deadline
Mar 25	9am – 4pm	Worship Retreat at the Mercy Center
Mar 25	10:30am	Woodstock Cemetery Association
Apr 1	7pm	CK benefit Concert
Apr 2	10am & 11:30am	Guest Preacher & 2 <sup>nd</sup> Hour from Witness Stones Project
Apr 6	7pm	Maundy Thursday
Apr 15	11am	Austen Eadie-Friedmann Memorial Service
Apr 22	All day	SNEUCC Lay Delegate Training at FCCW
Apr 23	10am	Intergenerational Earth Day service
Apr 30	10am	Guest Speaker singer/song writer Peter Mayer
May 14	10am	SNEUCC Executive Minister Rev. Darrell Goodwin
May 20	3pm	Alyssa McDonagh and Evan Salvatore Wedding
May 17	9am	June July Share Content Deadline
<b>May 20</b>	<b>9am-12n</b>	<b>SNEUCC Regional Gathering in Oxford Ma</b>
Jun 10		Town Wide Yard Sale
<b>Jun 19</b>		<b>Witness Stone Project Ceremony</b>
July - Aug	9am worship	Sue preaching July 2, 9, 23, Sept 3

### II. Member in Discernment Process

As Noah moves forward with his studies in seminary, he is discerning whether to be ordained. As his home church, we are called to walk with him on this journey. To that end, I have been working with the Windham Association to clarify its process, SNEUCC to identify the conference's resources and requirements, and within our congregation to form a Discernment team. Deni V. chairs the team, which also includes Bruce L., Laura B., and Carl D.. The team is meeting Thursday with Noah and will be voting to recommend that the Windham Association consider Noah to be a "member in discernment."

In the coming month or so, Noah will need to complete the required Psychological Assessment. The UCC, SNEUCC, and Windham Association recommend that this burden be shared equally by the candidate, association and local congregation. **I believe that our portion will be a \$500 - \$800 expense. This is not currently in the budget.**

### III. Ministry Areas

The Ministry fair was a success - good energy, lots of conversations and the identification people willing to volunteer in certain areas.

The challenge is that few are willing to be identified as leaders, coordinators or part of a core/coordination team.

In the near term, we will take an incremental approach to forming the new ministry areas/team.

Priority will go to Worship and Care, because there are many leaders and people engaged in these areas.

**a) Worship:** I am working with the creative worship team and deacons to clarify roles, expectations, teams/subteams related to worship planning, liturgy development, music, etc. This conversation will take part in part through the deacons and at the upcoming worship retreat (March 25).

The goal for the ministry is to bring everyone together as a team to plan, facilitate, and experience meaningful, spiritually ground, relevant worship.

Overall there are four aspects of worship:

- 1) Creative Planning to explore themes; evolve the flow of worship; and engage in an ongoing conversation to ensure our worship invites congregants to experience the sacred and grow spiritually.
- 2) Liturgy and 3) Music that support/deepen the themes and teaching points, facilitate service flow, and draw the community into shared worshipful experiences that invite participation, wonder, spiritual growth, and joy.
- 4) Volunteers who participate in leading/facilitating aspects of worship., including reading, prayers, faith stories, set up, creative readings, visual arts, children's messages, A/V, hospitality.
- 5) Logistical planning, e.g., setting up communion, ensuring we have candles, and other things we need to facilitate meaningful worship.

One possibility is that there will be three sub-teams: Creative Planning and Liturgy, Music, Logistics and Volunteers. Another is that there are two sub-teams (Creative Worship and Liturgy, and Music) and one or two coordinators (one for volunteers and another for logistics – or one for both areas).

As we have clarity and leaders in this area, we will share this with the congregation and make opportunities to join the ministry and teams more visible.

**b) Faith Formation/Lifelong Learning:** Bible study continues as does the Life of Prayer book study Wednesdays in Lent. Only six people completed the survey to help us better understand interests and needs, despite posting the survey during the ministry fair, putting a survey in the worship bulletin, and having the link in the weekly emails.



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An Intergenerational Earth Day service is planned for April 23, an Easter Egg hunt is planned for Easter Sunday and families (and congregants) are being invited to enact the joyful entry into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday.

In February the **Children and Family Ministry Search** team identified a very strong candidate for the position. (*Resume and details will be shared at the Governing Board Meeting*) **We are at the point of issuing an offer letter. In the past the Trustees would make the offer. How shall we proceed?**

**c) Care Team:** Working with the deacons we will clarify roles and responsibilities. Some of this is taking shape and simply needs more collective conversation to think through our processes, documentation, training in some areas, and expectations.

### **d) Faith In Action:**

1) *Forming the Core Team:* I will work with Ginny to further clarify the Faith In Action core/coordination team and make the opportunity to serve in this area more visible.

2) *Supporting Ukrainian Students:* Based on the relationships formed with congregants and some of the students, we are aware of practical needs of some of the students at the Academy. The former members of Outreach have agreed to use the monies from last year's tag sale to support the Ukrainian Students. We are working with the deacons and congregants who are connected with the students to simplify and clarify our process.

3) *Witness Stone Project:* Working with Donna, students from the middle school have been researching the enslaved peoples of Woodstock.

The students have traced the history of an enslaved person held by one of the prominent families of our congregation in the 1700's. Their teacher, Christine Carter, contacted me Monday to ask if a) the students could use the sanctuary as part of their final presentation **and b) place a Witness Stone on our property. The stone is a 10 inch x 10 inch square and 4 inches high. I proposed placing it near the Peace Pole, which Christine thought would be a perfect spot.**

I participated in a similar presentation last year for Caesar, an enslaved person of the McLellan family. <https://witnessstonesproject.org/tag/cesarct94/> As well as, the placement of a stone at the Randall-Higginbotham cemetery in Pomfret's "lost village."

4) *Other Faith In Action Activities:* a) From an organizational and policy perspective the Core Team once formed will be charged with developing a process for ministry formation as well as the identification and disbursement of grant monies. Draft/proposed policies will then be reviewed by the Governing Board.

b) Windham Association lay delegates. The Annual Meeting to the Windham Association will take place in late May or June. In the past, delegates were appointed by and/or came from Outreach. **In the new model, and given the need to invite more people into the Faith In Action Core Team will the Governing Board appoint delegates or should I be working with Ginny to do so?**

c) I will be connecting with all the identified leaders, liaisons, and/or representatives of various Faith In Action related activities to include updates and/or policy needs and questions in subsequent Ministry Area Updates to the Board. And to work toward a gathering of all leaders of active or potential ministries to coordinate communications, clarify plans, and share how to communicate activities, updates, events, etc.

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### IV. SNEUCC Regional Gathering Oxford Ma



Dear North Central Region local churches, authorized ministers and association leaders,

We hope you will come and G.R.O.W. with us at the North Central Regional Gathering on Saturday, May 20th 9:00am - 12:00pm at First Congregational Church UCC in Oxford.

The confluence of the pandemic and the start-up of the Southern New England Conference has left us all yearning for stronger connections. Some of us still need to be introduced to each other; others need to reestablish relationship. Still others want to share the strong connections they have. Wherever you find yourself on that continuum, we hope you will join us!

These gatherings are happening in every region of the Southern New England Conference this spring. We'll share resources and they will be led by Executive Conference Minister Rev. Darrell Goodwin and Executive Minister for Area Conference Ministry Rev. Liz Garrigan-Byerly. Please register at <https://sneucc-reg.brtaapp.com/GROWregional>