

A. Upcoming Activities and Dates

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| June 28 | 9a-12n | Town Wide tag Sale |
| July 6-27 | 9a | Summer Worship at First |
| July 5 | tbd | Memorial Service Scott Weaver |
| Aug 3-31 | 9a | Summer Worship at East |
| Aug 19 | 6:15p | Rethinking/repurposing facilities (Willimantic Congregational) |

B. Ministry Update

1. Faith Formation

Weekly Prayer Meetings

The prayer meetings continue at 6pm on Wednesday, though they are lightly attended (2 – 4 people each week).

Houses of Hope

Our team met Sunday June 1 to review Pathways I and II, explore the Gratitude Pathway notebooks, and discern how we can bring these experiences into the heart of the congregation.

The Houses of Hope Gratitude Pathway is comprised of a 9-session spiritual practices program, and is centered on cultivating gratitude as a transformative spiritual discipline. The program progressively moves from personal reflection to communal engagement, aiming to foster a "culture of gratitude" within individuals, congregations, and the wider community.

The following key themes and theological principles are woven throughout the program:

- Gratitude as a Response to Divine Gift-Giving: A foundational theme is that gratitude is not merely a feeling but an active response to God, who is the ultimate "Gift-giver" and "font of all good gifts." This is emphasized in sessions like "Gratitude is a Response" and "The Shape of Gratitude."
- The Circular Flow of Grace and Gratitude ("Me to We to All"): The program posits a dynamic, circular relationship where God's grace flows to individuals, then outward from individuals to others, to the community/congregation, and ultimately to the whole world, eventually returning to God. This concept, particularly highlighted in "The Shape of Gratitude," suggests that gratitude is not static but a continuous movement of love and generosity.
- Hope and Gratitude as Intertwined: The program explicitly addresses the question "Why practice gratitude when what we need is hope?" suggesting a close connection between the two. Gratitude is presented as a means of fostering and realizing hope, particularly in the face of uncertainty and hardship.
- Community and Connection through Gratitude: The program consistently emphasizes the communal aspect of gratitude. Sessions like "Gratitude Maps" and "Gratitude Lookout" encourage participants to identify and celebrate gifts within their congregation and wider community, fostering connection and mutual recognition of gifts.

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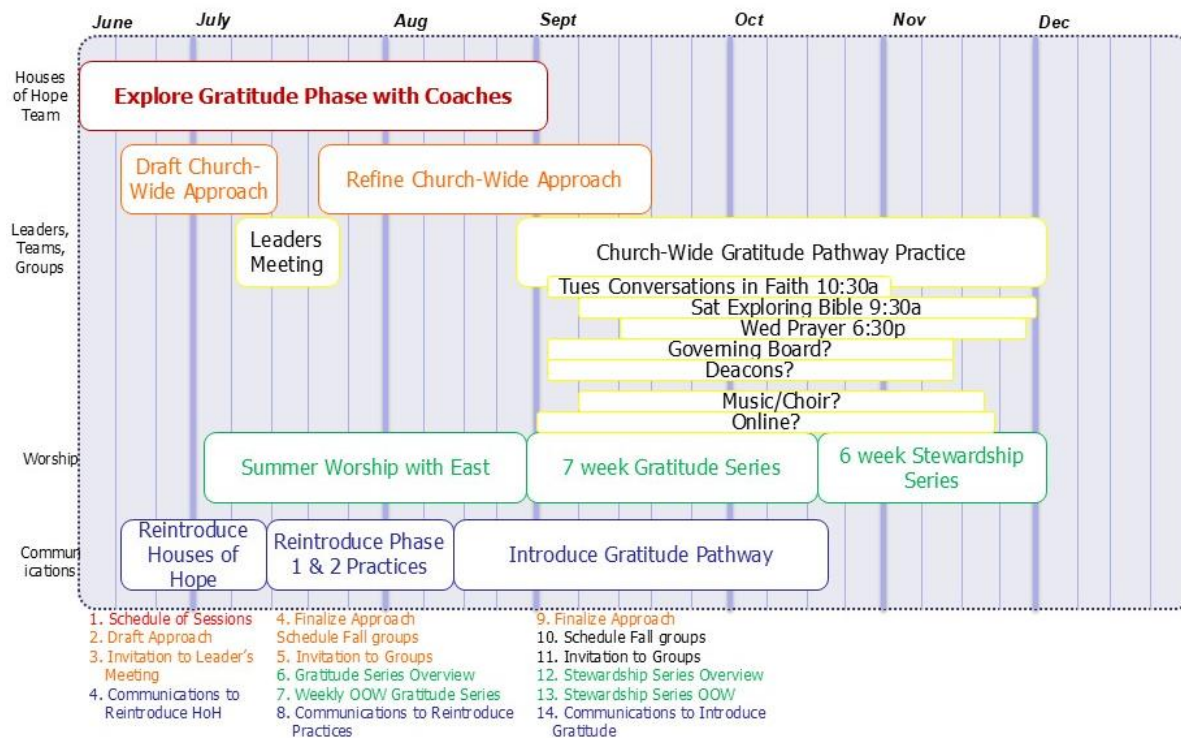
- Visioning and Dreaming for a Grateful Future: "Gratitude Dreams" encourages participants to envision how gratitude can transform themselves, their congregations, and their towns, implying that gratitude is a catalyst for positive change and God-given dreams for "the healing of the world."

In summary, the "Pathways to Gratitude" is a holistic, biblically-informed approach to cultivating gratitude, framed within a theological understanding of God as the generous Giver and humanity as called to respond in gratefulness, leading to personal and communal transformation.

Our questions at this point relate to practical ways to successfully engage the congregation in the practices from the first two phases of Houses of Hope as well as the Gratitude Pathway. The Pathway consists of 9 sessions, we believe we may be able to combine some of these to create a more condensed series. And/or it may be possible that some of the session content may be short additions to the beginning of team meetings.

We are still absorbing the content for the Gratitude Pathway, and, to a certain extent, we will need to "make the way as we walk it;" adjusting and adapting our approach we engage the pathway.

That said, here is the basic framework for our approach:



1. House of Hope Core Team - Explore the Gratitude Pathway with our coaches, as we did in Phases I and II, to engage the content. We are currently in the process of comparing calendars for the summer. (June – August depending on schedules)

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2. House of Hope Core Team - Develop and refine over the summer our approach to engage the Gratitude Pathway as a congregation-wide experience (and some of the essential teachings from Phases I and II). (June-mid July)
3. All Church Leaders - Hold a leaders' meeting in July to a) ground the leaders in the Houses of Hope premise and Phases b) bring the leaders through one of the Gratitude Pathway community practices, c) refine our congregation-wide approach, and d) invite any who wish to the Might Networks to explore Phases 1 and 2 on their own or as a group and to engage Gratitude more deeply. "Leaders" will including current leaders of teams, all deacons and Governing Board members, as well as anyone from the congregation who wishes to attend (July)
4. House of Hope Core Team w/ Church Leaders - Develop and refine our approach and schedule in conversation with leaders We envision several small groups meeting concurrently in the Fall to move through the Gratitude Pathway, e.g., Tuesday Conversations in Faith, Saturday Bible Study, a Sunday 2nd Hour group, as well as one or two teams. (July – Mid-September)
5. Pastor Kevin / Creative Worship - Base the September and early October Worship theme on the Gratitude Pathway, utilizing some of the prayers and exploring theology, themes, and stories related to the Gratitude Pathway. This will deepen the congregational experience and expose individuals who will not attend a small group to some of the Gratitude Pathway Themes. The Question of the Day and Action for the Week will be based on some of the Gratitude Pathway activities. In addition, this will connect nicely and overlap with the launch of our annual Stewardship Campaign in October, "Dreaming God's Dream: No Gift Too Small, No Dream Too Big". (Plan: June-August, Initiate: September – Mid October)
6. Pastor Kevin with assistance from House of Hope Core Team - Re-introduce the Houses of Hope and introduce the Gratitude Pathway through weekly email, worship bulletin inserts, and social media posts. The goal is to remind the congregation of the premise of Houses of Hope and why their engagement in this next phase is crucial. (mid-June through mid-October)
7. Pastor Kevin with assistance from House of Hope Core Team - Create a document to encourage teams and meetings throughout this period to move through their meetings during this period by adopting the gathering and departing practices experienced through each Houses of Hope session. Whether a one on one or team meeting, encouraging these practices can help further deepen how we dream, listen, share, and show up differently. (develop June-July)

2. Faith In Action

Quiet Corner Interfaith Community Organizing Study Group

Monthly conversations of the Windham County Interfaith Action Alliance Sponsoring Group (a working title) continue. The next conversation is June 26 at Temple Bnai Israel 383 Jackson St, Willimantic, CT 06226 at 4pm.

We are working toward a two-pronged strategy 1) to engage questions of justice and action now, e.g., housing, refugees, etc. and 2) an event in October or January with an eye toward testing the

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viability of the group. At that point we will determine if we focus on creating the Interfaith group or becoming a Chapter of the Center for Leadership / GHIAA.

The process is a great process. It is relational, identifies challenges from the ground up, and is consistent with the work we are doing through the Houses of Hope. As a congregation who cares about justice it continues to make sense to engage this process as it is the only such effort in the area and the only group working toward systemic justice on issues that matter locally.

Rise up and Sign display.

As we move toward the summer, it is time for us to consider updating the Rise Up Signs. Rise up for Hope? Rise up for Justice for All? Rise up for the Love of God? Rise up for Love of neighbors and strangers? Thoughts?

Town Wide Tag Sale is June 28.

Paula is organizing with proceeds being given to TEEG.

3. Care Ministry and the Deacons

The deacons were briefed regarding increased access to ChurchTrac. Once the policy is finalized, I will move forward with granting access and offering training.

As planned earlier this year, Aimee Ahearn has stepped down as a deacon and will focus on Houses of Hope. We acknowledge Aimee's contribution and "graduation" during the annual meeting in January and again at the June Deacons' meeting. I encourage Governing Board members to also thank her for her service.

I have been asked by the Weaver family to help plan and lead the memorial service for Seth on July 5.

I have also been asked to be on call for the Canterbury Congregational Church in a pastoral emergency arises while their Interim Minister is traveling the first week in July.

4. Worship

June 8 Worship

June 8 worship seemed to go well. Several people found the theme "Dreaming Differently" challenging, but in a good way. And three people commented on how impactful the video was.

July and August Summer Worship

July and August worship will be at 9am. July will be at First Congregational with Easte providing the preacher and the bulletins; and August at East with us providing the speaker and the bulletins. August 31 is the Sunday of Labor Day weekend. This will be at East Woodstock and Pastor Gary will be preaching.

Gretchen and the Deacons are working with East Woodstock to organize and plan July worship, and I am intentionally not engaging questions related to July worship.

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The August theme is “Prophetic Imagination: Envisioning a Community of Justice and Hope.” I am meeting Nancy this week to finalize music and finalize the liturgy.

September 7 – October 19: Pathways to Gratitude

This series will present some of the key concepts, theologies, and themes that are part of the Gratitude Pathway. Although the series will use and present some of the Gratitude Pathway content, it is not intended to be an alternative or substitute for the church-wide Houses of Hope Gratitude conversations.

This series will also look forward to and dovetail with the Stewardship campaign.

October 26 – November 30: Dreaming God’s Dream: No gift too small, not dream too big

"Dreaming God’s Dream: No Gift Too Small, No Dream Too Big" is based on the Stewardship theme for this year. The worship series is designed to encourage congregations to see their individual and collective acts of generosity as essential parts of God’s larger vision for a more just, inclusive, and loving world. It challenges us to reimagine stewardship—not merely as a matter of money—but as the whole of how we live out our faith. The series asserts that every contribution—even those that seem small—is imbued with divine potential, pointing to the transformative power that emerges when communities unite around a shared dream.

In essence, "Dreaming God’s Dream" is a call to see one’s life as a canvas for God’s dream—a canvas where every act of generosity, every shared meal, and every sincere worship moment becomes a thread that weaves a larger tapestry of justice, love, and community care. It is an invitation to engage deeply with Scripture, where ancient texts speak to modern needs, and where every member of the community is affirmed as a vital part of God’s unfolding story of restoration and hope.

C. Communications

1. Communications Coordinator

The Job opening has been posted on CT Hires, Indeed, SNEUCC, Our Website, Nextdoor, Woodstock Proud, and Quiet Corner Community Forum.

2. ChurchTrac

A policy has been drafted and is posted separately in the Governing Board folder for the June Meeting. Once reviewed and approved by the Governing Board, we will proceed with inviting deacons, the Governing Board, and others to use Church Trac.

3. Website

Amber has done significant work reimagining and simplifying the website. Amber has also identified a simpler content management tool that appears to be much easier to learn and use to update website content. Amber and Bill will be away for the next two weeks. We agreed to meet after worship on Sunday June 29 to review. Anybody who is interested is welcome to join us for the conversation/demo.

D. Other/Misc

1. August 19 Workshop/Presentation

August 19th, the Windham Association is hosting a conversation entitled "Renewal through Repurposing" with Rev. Patrick Duggan from the UCC Church Building and Loan Fund.

This is a reprise of a presentation he did a year or two ago at Super Saturday. It is open to all clergy and congregants who may be interested in exploring the needs of the greater community, thinking differently about the resources and assets that we have, and utilizing our facilities creatively.

The presentation will be at the Willimantic Congregational Church and will include a simple meal before hand. Arrive 6:15pm, eat 6:30pm, program starts 7pm, program ends no later than 8:30pm.

2. July

I will take two weeks off during July and will be traveling for some of that time. The rest of July will be used for advanced planning for the Fall (and prayerfully) training the new communications coordinator. I also plan more time off in October or early November.