

From the Staff-Parish Relations (SPR) Committee

Farewell to Michelle!

The SPR committee would like everyone to know that Michelle Ebert, our church secretary, will be leaving SUMC after the Uganda mission trip in early October. We thank her for her many years of service to the church – in the office, by coordinating the e-blasts and website, by conducting Safe Sanctuaries training, in her work with our international VIM trips, and in countless other tasks that she did without being asked.

If you would like to contribute to a farewell gift for Michelle, please send a check payable to SUMC to Jan Baker at 77 Maple Avenue, Bloomfield, CT 06002. You may also include a note of appreciation for Michelle and Jan will pass that on. The deadline for these gifts is October 7. Please share your best wishes with Michelle as she transitions to the next chapter in her life. She is not yet settled on what her next chapter is, thus it is best to offer support and care without a barrage of questions about her future. Although I'm sure we don't need to ask, please do this gently and with sensitivity.

Say Hello to Maureen Griffin!

Beginning October 1, we'll have a new SUMC Office Manager, so please take a moment to welcome Maureen Griffin! Maureen comes to us from the corporate world, but has prior experience working in a church environment. She is highly qualified, self-assured, and very cheerful. Maureen will make a wonderful addition to our church staff.

Youth Leader / Associate Pastor Update

With Pastor Peter's move to Block Island, many of you are wondering what will be happening with the Youth Group and Associate Pastor position. SPR and Pastor Gene are busy working on this critical area of our church ministry. We have several different ideas about this: full-time vs. part-time, ordained vs. not ordained, one person vs. two people, etc. We are in communication with the conference regarding some of the options that might be available and are gathering information that will be crucial to any decisions we make. Please stay tuned! We are making this a priority and are eager to have a new leader in place. In the meantime, Church School Coordinator Jody Swan has been helping to organize youth activities, and we all appreciate her support.

Thank you to everyone for your continued support as we navigate the many changes over the past year. There are so many great things happening at SUMC, and it is largely because of the positive and open-mindedness of everyone in this church family!

~ Jen Acheson, SPR Chair

Important Dates

October 1: "Sock-tober" sock drive commences

October 5-6: Women's Retreat in Madison, CT

October 7: World Communion Sunday; Info session about joining SUMC, 11:30 a.m., Verdin Parlor

October 9: Uganda VIM group returns

October 13: Men's Fellowship, 7:30 a.m., Wesley Hall

October 18: Deadline for the November *Messenger*

October 20: KISSS craft day, 9:00 a.m. – 9:00 p.m., Wesley Hall

October 21: Bible Sunday (3rd graders receive Bibles at 10:30 service)

October 22: Deadline to submit names for All Saints Day

October 28: Laity Sunday

November 4: All Saints Day; first Christmas pageant rehearsal; end of Daylight Savings

November 10: All-church clean-up day, 7:30 a.m.

Pastor's Page

Children and Youth at SUMC

Toward the end of September, the lectionary included a passage from the ninth chapter of Mark where Jesus specifically references little children, takes a child in his arms and states that whoever welcomes a child also welcomes him. During my sermon I emphasized how significant that passage is because children were all but invisible in Jesus' day, and as I repeated more than once during last month, when the writer of Mark includes a detail we should pay attention to it because it's very important. It goes without saying that children and youth are extremely important here at SUMC, and I wanted to take this opportunity to speak directly about them and share some thoughts and plans that I have as your new pastor. Both of them require some direct conversation, and I thought the October newsletter would provide a good forum for us to start that new journey together.

The first deals with an immediate need. I'm aware that over the last few years the Youth Group has been an up and down affair, with Pastor Peter leading quite ably over the last two years or so of his tenure here. His stability did a lot of good for our youth as did his love of the outdoors and a sense of levity when discussing weighty matters. With his departure a wide hole was opened, and I want you all to know that I am concerned right along with the parents about the direction of the program and what will happen next. We've already started to deal with some of that and I'd really like to thank Jody Swan, our Church School Coordinator, for stepping in while SPR and I begin looking at how we're going to bring someone on board long-term. Needless to say this will take some time to get right. While that happens, Jody, some dedicated volunteers, and I will make sure that the youth program at SUMC continues. We don't expect this search to be an easy one, and ideally we'd like to take our time to make sure that the person we find is a great fit, but we're also sensitive to time passing and young people losing interest, which easily happens without a consistent point person. These are big issues, and I wanted to bring you into the loop because I welcome the opportunity to hear your thoughts, fears, goals, and hopes for what a top-notch program can look like at SUMC. I look forward to hearing from you by phone, in person, or via email at Gene.ott@nyac-umc.com.

The second item I wanted to cover is confirmation. I've received a few questions about holding a class this year, and spoken with a few interested parents. I'm as excited as anyone about teaching a confirmation class, but it's my understanding that SUMC has an on-again/off-again cycle for confirmation meaning that with such a successful confirmation class last year, this year we would effectively be dark. As the new guy in town, still getting up to speed on everything else that's going on, I would like to keep to our traditional schedule and launch a wonderful program next year when I've had time to plan and make some connections in the community so that I can give your daughters and sons the program they deserve and you expect. I hope that that works for you, but if not, please feel free to reach out to me.

I realize that this isn't an ordinary newsletter article, but I wanted to address these two very important items directly. I look forward to hearing from you on what I've outlined above. As we move into the fall together I would ask for your continued prayers with everything I've outlined above.

On the journey,
PG

Donate to UMCOR to Help Victims of Hurricane Florence and Super Typhoon Mangkhut

The United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR) is the humanitarian relief arm of the United Methodist Church. UMCOR is responding to Hurricane Florence in the United States and Super Typhoon Mangkhut (Ompong) in the Philippines. In addition to praying for the affected areas and for the response teams and volunteers, please consider donating to UMCOR's relief and recovery efforts at umcor.org/donate (U.S. Disaster Response, Advance #901670; International Disaster Response, Advance #982450; Undesignated, Advance #999895).

A Letter from Miss Dorothy

To my church family,

I wanted to send a big thank you to everyone who wrote a note and/or donated to the basket I received at the 10:30 service on September 16. So many kind words both written and spoken! And a huge public “thank you!” to Cheryl Langin for organizing and pulling that together. I understand just how much time and effort went into that and I am humbly grateful. Thank you again, for the wonderful notes and gifts.

I am also grateful for the kindness I have received through this transition. People have been both supportive and encouraging. I have had many conversations as to why I made this choice and I would like to share a portion of my exit letter to Woody and SPR from last November:

The time is right for a fresh take on the music programs at SUMC. In addition, I find myself continually saying, “It’s time.” After 17+ years I feel the need for something different – a change. I am also tired. SUMC offers a vibrant music community, which should be attractive to prospective musicians. We are not a big enough church to support all of the music groups we currently have, and in the continuing effort to “Re-Think Church,” it is time to re-think the music programs. Different is not always bad. I think this could breathe new life into our programs. Bringing someone in with new perspectives and new energy could have refreshing momentum.

That said, I can look back and clearly see God’s hand in all of that. He knew the time was right and had a better plan!

I also want to give a shout-out to the amazing job that SPR did in defining, searching, and advertising, setting up interviews, choosing and disseminating music, coordinating dates and the myriad of other things that went into not only hiring new musicians, but reorganizing how music looks at SUMC. I know there were others, but Beth Nelson’s and Jen Acheson’s names were on so many of the communications!

That brings me to our two new musicians: Bridget Scarlato, our new Director of Music Ministries, and Kari Miller, our new organist. I keep saying, “I don’t know how we got so lucky!” but I go to church and should know better. Luck had nothing to do with it. They are both talented beyond belief *and* easy to work with; under these ladies’ guidance, music at SUMC will thrive: “To God be the glory amen!” (I used to have the Children’s Choir say that if they got applause in the service).

For those who might not know, my new role is as director of Contemporary Music Ministries. I will run the CAYA Worship Team and provide music for the 9:00 a.m. contemporary “Come As You Are” service. I am so excited to be a part of the next chapter in the life of this church and I look forward to the many ways in which my path will cross with Bridget and Kari.

Here’s to many more wonderful years ahead!

~Dorothy Cowles

Christmas Is Coming...

Calling all crafters: We need your help! In December, SUMC will once again host a Christmas workshop for children to buy presents for their loved ones. We would appreciate donations of homemade crafts such as jewelry, Christmas ornaments, stationery, pillows, etc. There’s plenty of time to craft before the holiday season is upon us! For more information, please contact Heather Kaliden. Thank you!



SUMC Outreach Projects

“Sock-tober”

SUMC will be sponsoring a town-wide sock collection for the homeless during October. As the weather turns cold, SUMC wants to remember those who are less fortunate. Socks are one of the least-often donated items and are vitally important to those who cannot afford them. Collection boxes will be set up throughout Simsbury and Avon, where area residents can drop off **new** socks for women, men, and children. The socks will be distributed to South Park Inn in Hartford, Streetfire in New Haven, and Gifts of Love in Avon, among others.

Local drop-off stations currently confirmed are:

- Fitzgeralds,
- Brookside Bagels
- Hoyt Cinemas
- Simsbury Library
- Kane’s Market
- Ana’s Kitchen (formerly Peaberry’s)
- Starbucks in Simsbury
- Avon Prime Meats
- Wesley Hall at SUMC

Please bring **new** socks to one of these locations any time during the month of October. Questions can be directed to Debbie Dunn, dunnds@comcast.net or 860.651.4408.

Backpack drive was a success

Heartfelt thanks to our SUMC congregation for your generosity during the summer backpack drive benefitting Covenant to Care. We had our fingers crossed for collecting 60 backpacks and were able to supply this wonderful organization with 79! Your monetary contributions, along with the many purchased backpacks deposited on the stage in Wesley Hall each Sunday, were a blessing to many children as they were starting school. Once again, Covenant to Care was delighted and overcome by your generosity! Thanks to Joanne Maurer for coordinating this year’s backpack collection.

Calling Potential New Members!

If you are interested in learning about joining SUMC, come to the parlor on **Sunday, October 7**, after the 10:30 service for an informal conversation with Pastor Ott and the Welcoming Committee. If you are unable to attend this session, we plan to offer other sessions on the first Sunday of each month, so please watch for additional dates!

Stay Tuned for Church Council Update

A report from the September 25th Church Council meeting was unavailable at press time, but please watch for an update in the November issue of the newsletter.

Crying Out

I am worn out from crying; all night long I flood
my bed with weeping and drench my couch with tears.
Psalm 6:6 NIV

Crying is an important emotional release, but how often do we suppress our tears? Maybe we think crying indicates we're giving up hope. Or perhaps we're afraid others may think we're weak. Then there's the false notion that crying means we're not trusting God to handle our situation.

Like a cut that must be cleaned in order to heal properly, our wounded hearts need a cleansing too. Releasing our tears to God is a way we can purify our hearts from the emotional debris collecting inside. Our Lord set an example for us to follow. Jesus, the creator of tears, cried. He wept in front of others. He cried out to His Father. Neither fear nor pride stopped Him from expressing these painful emotions. Jesus knew that His Father would hear His cries and come to His aid.

God will do the same for us, wiping away our tears and healing the wounds of our heart. Crying may make us feel vulnerable – but God's comfort reminds us we're loved.

Stephen Ministers hear a lot of crying and sometimes cry along with their care receivers. God will always be there to listen and comfort you during these times. A Stephen Minister is also a good listener and will go on that healing journey with God and you.

Blessings to all who are in pain. If you or someone you know needs the services of a Stephen Minister, please contact in confidence Barbara Vasquezna, Referrals Coordinator, at 860.712.2710, or Pastor Gene.

~Barbara Vasquezna, from Strength & Grace/Guideposts/Daily Devotions for Caregivers

Circles

The **Susanna Circle** will meet on Tuesday, October 9, at 7:00 p.m. in the parlor. Rev. Mel Kawakami will present a program. All women are welcome. For information, contact Rolene Johnson at halandrolene@gmail.com or 860.658.0634.

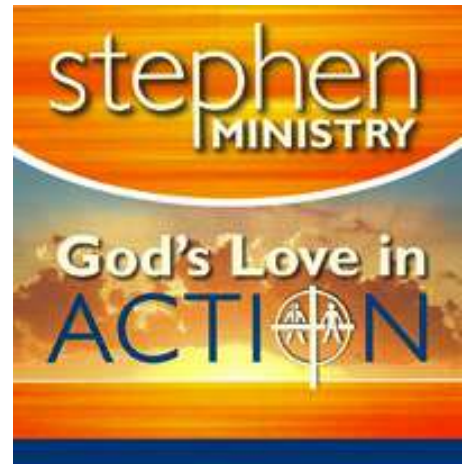
The **Rebekah Circle** will meet on October 25 in the Annex at noon. All are welcome! Call Jane Whelchel with any questions at 860.658.7356.

The **Rachel Circle** will meet on October 10 in the Annex at 9:30 a.m.

Prayers and Squares Quilters will meet on October 3, 5, 10, 12, 17, 19, 24, and 31, at 12:30 p.m. in the Annex Upper Room.

November Newsletter Deadline

Please email items for the November 2018 issue of the newsletter to hryan@snet.net by **October 18**.



Adult Spiritual Growth Opportunities

Adult Study Groups are underway for the fall, but there is always room for one more in any of the offerings. If there is something in particular you would like to see offered, please let us know. If there is a group you would like to lead, please let us know. If you have an idea, we welcome all input! Adult Spiritual Growth classes are for all of us, to broaden our views and grow on our spiritual journey. For more information, please contact Susan Samuel at singnring@gmail.com.



SUNDAYS, 10:30 a.m. in the Annex: *First Light: Jesus and the Kingdom of God (DVD study)*

Filmed on location in Galilee and Jerusalem, this DVD series is by John Dominic Crossan and Marcus Borg. Crossan is a former Roman Catholic monk and priest, and both he and Borg have written many books and are former college professors. Hearing from these historians should provoke valuable discussion and stretch us a bit. There will be about 15 minutes of reading to prepare for each class – a much lighter requirement than usual! The study is led by Amy Kulig.

MONDAYS, 4:30 - 6:00 p.m. in the Annex: *C.S. Lewis's Greatest Book (DVD study)*

This eight-session DVD study by Eric Metaxas seeks to discover why Lewis's *Mere Christianity* is one of the most read and beloved Christian books of all time. The study also aims to fulfill the vision of C.S. Lewis of reaching people from all faith backgrounds. This study group is co-led by Jan Bennett and Susan Samuel.

TUESDAYS, 10:30 a.m. - noon in the Annex: *Unafraid: Living With Courage and Hope in Uncertain Times*

Adam Hamilton's latest book—*Unafraid: Living with Courage and Hope in Uncertain Times*—is the resource for this six-week study. Hamilton integrates Christian faith and neuroscience to present a compelling, intelligent response. This study group is led by Rev. Dennis Winkelblack.

THURSDAYS, 9:15 – 11:00 a.m. in the Annex: *Women's Bible Study*

Women's Bible Study is led by Donna Motyl and Rolene Johnson. The group is studying the gospel of Matthew. There is no homework. Read a chapter and then discuss it using study Bibles and Internet resources.

Come to KISSS Day on October 20!

KISSS is an acronym for **K**nit, **I**nspire, **S**ew, **S**tamp and **S**crap. KISSS Days are days set aside for crafting, working on projects, and great fellowship! All are welcome – crafters of any kind or those who have a project to work on and want to spend the day in fellowship with others. Ideas might be to organize recipes, sort/organize paperwork, sort/organize kids school paperwork/art projects, address Christmas cards – whatever your project is, it will be more enjoyable with this wonderful group.

- Dates (all Saturdays): October 20, January 26, and March 30
- Wesley Hall from 9 a.m. – 9 p.m.
- Breakfast munchies, lunch, dinner, and snacks throughout the day
- Please bring a potluck dish to share
- Suggested donation of \$25 to benefit a church ministry

Contact Linda Stroud at linda.stroud3@gmail.com or 860.212.9616 with any questions or to sign up. Hope you can join in for a fun day!

Notes from the New Music Director

This is an exciting time for the music ministry at Simsbury United Methodist Church, and I am thrilled to begin my tenure here as your Music Director. Although I have only been with you a short time, it is clear that this is a vibrant, welcoming, faith-filled community, and I look forward to getting to know you all in the days to come. It has been a pleasure to begin working with the talented and devoted musicians of the vocal and hand bell choirs, as well as with my new colleagues, especially Pastor Gene (who has been helpful and supportive as I've transitioned into my new role), Dorothy Cowles (who has already provided so much guidance throughout my transition to the church), and the talented Kari Miller (SUMC's new pianist and organist, who brings so much to our worship services).

We have an active program year planned, which in addition to our regular weekly offerings in worship will feature outreach performances throughout the community. Stay tuned for more updates on these special performances.

If anyone has a desire to participate in any part of the music ministry here at SUMC, please come and talk to me! Rehearsals are fun and productive, and there is a strong sense of community in each ensemble. No matter your age or musical background, there is room for everyone in music ministry.

I look forward to continuing to get to know the members of this wonderful SUMC Community.

*God bless,
Bridget Scarlato*

Church School News

Elementary school children

Our Church School year is off to a great start! Many thanks to the dedicated teachers and shepherds for their support in our Church School. As we head into October and our second rotation, "Out of Egypt," I look forward to what our new group of teachers will share with our kids!

October 21 is Bible Sunday! Third graders (and any older children new to SUMC) will receive their very own Bibles from Pastor Gene that morning during the service. Please mark your calendars for this exciting time.

We would love to see our volunteer list grow! Please contact me if you'd like to volunteer in any capacity with our Church School program. We'd love to have you.

Youth

It is my hope to schedule some youth activities this fall so middle schoolers and high schoolers can enjoy time with their SUMC peers. September started off with a visit to Sonny's Place in Somers with Pastor Gene. Kids enjoyed riding go-carts, playing laser tag, and spending time with one another. Please stay posted for October activities, as I firm up dates for a fall corn maze activity, creating care packages for SUMC freshmen in college, and baking cookies in early December. If any teen or parent has an idea for a service project or a fun activity, please see me or text me at 860.712.9517.

~Jody Swan, jody@simsburyumc.org

All Saints Day

Every year on All Saints Sunday, we read the names of our church family and friends who have died since the previous All Saints Day. If you would like the name of a recently deceased loved one read at the services and listed in the bulletins on Sunday, November 4, please submit that person's name to the office by **October 22**. Thank you.

Don't Forget to "Fall Back" November 4!

Daylight Savings Time officially ends on Sunday, November 4. Don't forget to change your clocks so that you can join us for worship on time! Please note that November 4 is also All Saints Day.



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