



Central Square Congregational Church

United Church of Christ

71 Central Square

Bridgewater, Massachusetts 02324

March 16, 2021

Dear Friends in Christ,

Every year, lives are changed by the ministry we do together. Last year alone:

- We almost seamlessly transitioned our worship to online-only, with the expertise and dedication of our incredibly faithful staff. We hosted drive-thru communion, welcomed dozens of guest musicians into our worship, had more worship participation each week than ever before, baptized new members of the body of Christ in outdoor rituals.
- We ran virtual Sunday School lessons and even had an Epiphany Pageant.
- We all suddenly became experts at using Zoom, and continued with board and committee meetings.
- We began a Care Circle Ministry, sent cards to each other, and made video chat dates to check in with each other.
- And we fed so many people through the Food Pantry, thanks to the support of the entire Bridgewater Community and our dedicated volunteers.
- We supported one another, and the greater Bridgewater community, through financial assistance, advocacy, and donations of all kinds.

We know that our special community of faith didn't get this way by accident. Our church is only as vibrant as our members and friends. People like you give of your time, talent, and treasure to help us boldly embody God's love and compassion in awe-some ways that impact the lives of our neighbors near and far.

As we enter into 2021, we need your help to not only continue, but also expand our ministries of fellowship, spiritual growth, and service for our church family and community. We humbly ask you to consider the impact Central Square Congregational Church, UCC has had on your life. Please join us in sustaining our current programs and expanding our impact for future generations through a financial pledge for 2021. We have set a bold goal of \$250,000 for the 2021 fiscal year, and your pledge makes a difference. We know it's a lot to ask for, but that's what it will take for us to continue to expand our ministries.

If you made a contribution in 2020 - thank you! Please prayerfully consider increasing your pledge - as you are able - to help us meet our goals. If you've never made a pledge before, we've included a helpful attachment to this letter which might answer some questions. You can also visit the giving page of our website. (<http://cscucc.org/giving/>) If you visit our website and scroll to the bottom, you have the option of printing out a pledge form and mailing it in, or you can click on an online pledge form. You could also print out the PDF pledge form linked on that page and enclose it in the mailing.

Whether your gift feels large or small to you, please know that every gift matters. It all adds up to make a big difference. Thank you for all you do!

In Christ,

David Sheibley
Treasurer

Rev. Beth Stotts
Pastor

Ed Buckland
Chair, Board of Trustees

How Much Should I Pledge?

Pledges are confidential and are up to the individual. There is no set expectation, but we are challenged to give generously within our individual means. It is an important personal decision to make prayerfully in conversation with others in your household and with God. Your pledge should be realistic based on your financial situation, but it should also be exciting to allow resources to flow to the church you love. Here are several ways people think about how much to pledge:

- **Proportional Giving** - The Bible talks about giving first fruits of the harvest (as opposed to giving what's left over), and making a pledge that is proportional to one's income. For example, 5% of \$60,000 is \$3000 or \$250/month. Some people choose to tithe, pledging 10% of one's income. Others practice a "modern tithe," striving to give 5% to the church and 5% to other organizations that one values.
- **Comparative Giving** - Look at the other things you spend your money on. Does your gift to the church match the value you place on this community vis-à-vis other priorities in your life? Your daily espresso drink might cost \$5 or \$1825/year. A week-long vacation might cost \$5000. How does your gift to the church compare with other ways you use your money?
- **Share-Based Giving** - The annual ministry budget of the church is currently around \$230,000. With 141 people on our membership rolls, that's about \$1600/member annually.
- **Grace-Filled Giving** - Whatever you decide to pledge will be just right and just enough. Gifts large and small given with a grateful and generous heart are equally wonderful.
- You can also use the spreadsheet on the back of this page to help you discern what you should give.

How Will My Pledge Be Used?

Income from operating pledges are used to fund:

- **Programs** - worship services, education, community outreach and other programs.
- **Staff** - salaries and benefits for our minister and other staff members.
- **Operational Expenses** - utilities, facility maintenance, office supplies, and other overhead.
- **Reserves** - money set aside for future major expenses
- Additionally, we also give to the United Church of Christ's wider mission and support our conference and denomination as a whole.



Gifts of Word and Deed

Luke 6:43-45

Actions speak louder than words. You no doubt have heard that before, perhaps for most of your growing up. It is true that our actions are very important. But words are important as well! The power of our speech to encourage or discourage should not be discounted. In the gospel of Luke, in particular, it is the words spoken by the main actors that often gives evidence of the influence of the Holy Spirit. The great poetry (songs) that flow from Elizabeth, Mary, Zachariah, and Simeon early in this gospel is prophetic speech that issues both a word of hope and a caution about judgement.

When Jesus speaks about good fruit coming from good trees and bad fruit from bad trees we know he is really talking about integrity — the integration of the thought and practice into the whole of a person's life. As the Book of James would remind us, it does little good to tell a hungry person to be well fed and full of encouragement if we don't also provide food to back up our good intentions. The letter of 1 John counsels that we can't say we love God and at the same time hate our sister/brother. They are non-sequitur. It is equivalent to looking for peaches on a sycamore tree. To love God is love the "other." To care for the poor is give them a hot meal, not just a platitude.

To say we believe in God and that our faith is a priority, but to fail to engage in the praxis of discipleship is missing something. Now we know that despite the inference of Jesus' words that we are to be good trees and thus always be bearing good fruit, sometimes our fruit is less than perfect. That is why the words and actions are to be blended together — the reminder of the need to do good deeds (words) and the practicing of good deeds (actions), even when we don't feel like it, leads us to better and more consistent results.

It is a bit like that with generosity. To be generous sometimes means we have to practice it even when we don't feel like it or when we find it hard, because we have told ourselves that being generous matters and we know that it is evidence of the faith that is in us. Perhaps it is time to inspect the quality of our harvest. Are we consistently bearing good fruit?



WEEKLY GIVING IF THE PERCENTAGE IS

(Rounded to the nearest dollar)

Annual Income	Monthly Income	Weekly Income	2%	4%	6%	8%	10%	15%
16,000	1,333	308	6.00	12.00	18.00	25.00	31.00	46.00
20,000	1,667	385	8.00	15.00	23.00	31.00	39.00	58.00
25,000	2,083	481	10.00	19.00	29.00	38.00	48.00	72.00
30,000	2,500	577	12.00	23.00	35.00	46.00	58.00	87.00
35,000	2,917	673	13.00	27.00	40.00	54.00	67.00	101
40,000	3,333	769	15.00	31.00	46.00	62.00	77.00	115
45,000	3,750	865	17.00	35.00	52.00	69.00	87.00	130
50,000	4,167	962	19.00	38.00	58.00	77.00	96.00	144
60,000	5,000	1,154	23.00	46.00	69.00	92.00	115	173
75,000	6,250	1,442	29.00	58.00	87.00	115	144	216
100,000	8,333	1,923	38.00	77.00	115	154	192	288
125,000	10,417	2,404	48.00	96.00	144	192	240	361

