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# Highlights

*No matter who you are or where you are on life's journey, you are welcome here*

SOMERS CONGREGATIONAL UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST WORSHIPING AND SERVING SINCE 1727  
599 Main St. PO Box 295 Somers, CT 06071 (860) 763- 4021

June 2025  
Volume 297 / #6

## Letter from the Pastor

*"You can never get a cup of tea large enough or a book long enough to suit me."*

-C.S. Lewis

*"The more that you read, the more things you will know. The more that you learn, the more places you'll go."*

-Dr. Seuss

Peace and greetings to you in the name of Jesus! I'm writing this letter to you as the "May Gray" seems to have taken hold in New England. It's cloudy and raining and while I know that we need the precipitation...it pulls me towards spending the day inside, sitting in my favorite easy chair and cracking open a good book.

With that in mind, I've decided to turn this month's *Letter from the Pastor* into a Spring Book Recommendation List. I asked clergy friends far and wide to pass on some titles and they responded. I hope at least one of these piques your interest. Please let me know what you think!

Here's the list:

*\*Furnishing Eternity: A Father, a Son, a Coffin, and a Measure of Life* by David Giffels

*\*What Is the Bible?: How an Ancient Library of Poems, Letters, and Stories Can Transform the Way You Think and Feel About Everything* by Rob Bell

*\*You Don't Have to Be Wrong for Me to Be Right: Finding Faith Without Fanaticism* by Rabbi Brad Hirschfield

*\*Love's Braided Dance: Hope in a Time of Crisis* by Norman Wirzba

*\*Fierce Women of the Bible* by Alice Connor

*\*Blessed are the Crazy: Breaking the Silence about Mental Illness, Family and Church* by Sarah Lund

*\*Everything Happens for a Reason and Other Lies I've Loved* by Kate Bowler

As always my door is open. God Bless.

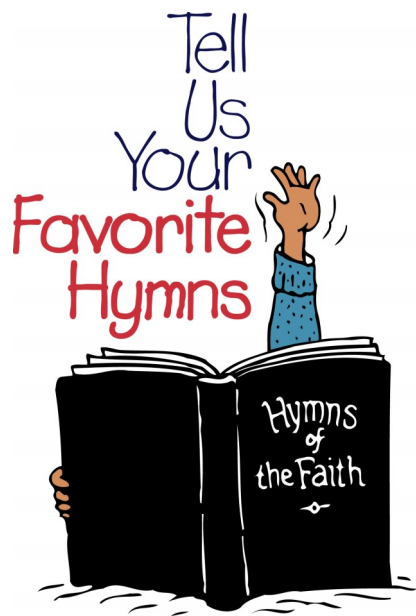
Pastor Scott



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## June Worship Schedule

<b>June 1st</b>	<b>Seventh Sunday of Easter</b> Mark 12:26-27 & 1 Corinthians 15:1-26, 51-57  Communion & Deacon's Fund Sunday
<b>June 8th</b>	<b>Pentecost Sunday</b> Acts 2:1-4 & 1 Corinthians 12:1-13  <i>Baptism of Arlo Anthony Perrone</i> <i>Strengthen The Church UCC Offering</i>
<b>June 15th</b>	<b>Graduate Recognition Sunday</b>
<b>June 22nd</b>	<i>Guest Preacher Sharon Midyette</i>
<b>June 29th</b>	<b>Third Sunday after Pentecost</b> <i>Summer Sermon Series on The Lord's Prayer</i> <i>Part 1: God the Creator</i>



### Favorite Hymns in our summer services

This summer, one of the hymns each Sunday will be someone's favorite. If you have a hymn that you love, let Boyd know by filling out a "My favorite hymn" ballot and dropping it in the box outside the office.

Please include the name and the **number** (in our hymnal) of your hymn. If it's not in our hymnal, just let us know the name, and we will find a setting for the congregation to sing.

The hymns for our services from mid-June through August will be set in early June, so please make your selections by June 8<sup>th</sup>.

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#### My favorite hymn ballot


Hymn name \_\_\_\_\_

Hymn number \_\_\_\_\_

Your name \_\_\_\_\_



**WEDNESDAY**  
Bible Study – 10am

June 1	Music and Arts Meeting	10:45 am
June 2	Caring Committee Meeting	3:30 pm
June 2	Christian Education Meeting—Zoom	7:00 pm
June 3	Missions Meeting (Offsite)	7:00 pm
June 4	Fellowship Committee—Zoom	7:00 pm
June 5	Choir Rehearsal	7:00 pm
June 8	Facilities	8:30 am
June 8	All Church Picnic	11:30 am-1:30pm
June 9	CMC Meeting	7:00 pm
June 11	Community Supper	5:30 pm
June 12	Choir Rehearsal	7:00 pm
June 15		
June 17	Council Meeting	6:00 pm
June 19	Juneteenth (OFFICE CLOSED)	
June 19	Choir Rehearsal	7:00 pm
June 26	Choir Rehearsal	7:00 pm





## We Need The Following:

Tomato Soup  
Canned Peas  
Canned Carrots  
Mac n' Cheese  
Cereal

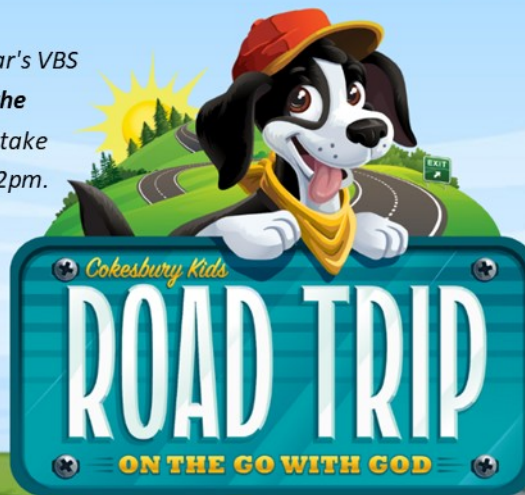
### Did you know. . . .

Champ's regularly provides food for approximately **80** families. Donations come in through various local organizations as well as deliveries from Food Share.

**HOURS:** Mondays 10 am—Noon and 6 pm -7

# IT'S TIME FOR VBS!

It's time for VBS! This year's VBS theme is **Road Trip: On the Road with God**. VBS will take place August 4-8, 9am-12pm.



We are looking for volunteers to help. Additionally, we are looking for travel themed props like maps, road signs, traffic cones, luggage, etc. Please let a CE member know if you can volunteer time or props. Thank you!

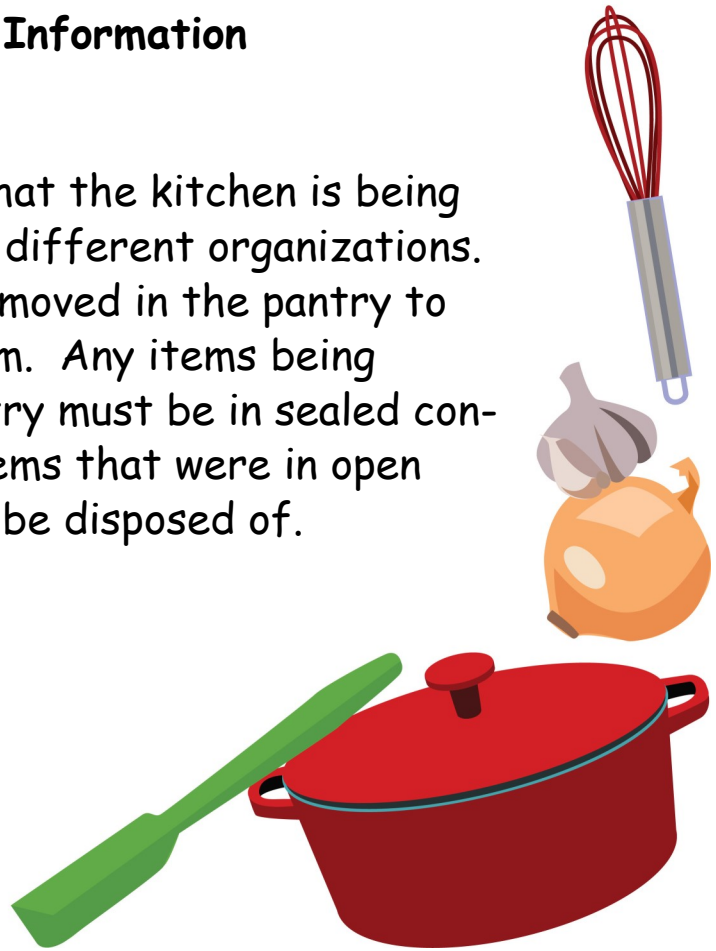


**Aug 4 - 8, 9am - 12pm**



## Kitchen Information

Please be aware that the kitchen is being rented by several different organizations. Things have been moved in the pantry to accommodate them. Any items being stored in the pantry must be in sealed containers. Some items that were in open containers had to be disposed of.



## Fellowship News

### Join the Fun

Our 3rd annual church picnic with our neighbors at the Somersville Congregational Church is coming up on Sunday, June 8th from 11:30 to 2:00 at the Pavilion at Connor's Place at Field Road Park. All you need to do is bring a side dish or a dessert to share. Hot dogs, hamburgers, and vegetarian burgers (let us know if you need one of these) will be provided, along with drinks. Ask or email one of the Fellowship Committee members if you have questions: Sue Moak ([sdmoak22@gmail.com](mailto:sdmoak22@gmail.com)), Carla Smith ([carlachristine1261@gmail.com](mailto:carlachristine1261@gmail.com)), or Jan Martin ([jan.martin13@gmail.com](mailto:jan.martin13@gmail.com)). We will have a sign-up sheet at coffee hour.





## TAG SALE POSTS RECORD HIGH SALES!

Each year as we watch all the treasures being unloaded from the cars, we wonder and worry about how successful the tag sale will be! Each year as we sort and price all the items, we again wonder and worry about how successful the tag sale will be! Each year as we cash out our customers with some items priced as low as a quarter, we again wonder and worry how successful the tag sale will be! Along with all that wondering and worrying, this year we worried how we would get through the tag sale without our beloved Kim Kelley! We missed her each and every day but we all felt her with us every single day. She is smiling down on us knowing that we had our most successful tag sale ever!

We dedicated this year's tag sale to Kim. She worked countless hours for several years on the tag sale, specializing in distributing leftover items to various organizations and keeping items out of our landfills. Special thanks to Sue Moak who stepped in to lead this overwhelming task.

Thank you to all of our volunteers who participated in table set-up and breakdown, donating, sorting, organizing, pricing, purchasing, working on the tag sale days, packers, making Goodwill and Allieds Attic deliveries, breaking down boxes and so much more. Whether you worked 2 hours, 80 hours, or somewhere in between, this sale would not have been successful without each and every one of you!

Thank you to our Communications and Marketing committee. They were able to spread the word through social media, took photos and continued to post to surrounding towns, enticing customers right up until the sale.

This year only a couple of items went to the dump and the remainder was donated to the following organizations:

Allieds Attic  
Chrysalis Center  
Covenant to Care  
Wilbraham Church  
Somers Public Library  
Heartsprings  
Somers Share Shack

Opportunity Works  
Goodwill  
Somers Women's Club  
East Hartford Public Schools  
Textile Recycling in Enfield  
SCC Women's Fellowship  
Town of Enfield Social Services

Our most successful tag sale ever began with 5 people huddled at the back door trying to keep out of the rain at 6:10 AM! By 8:00 AM, 200 people entered our Huge Indoor Church Tag Sale and by 3:00 PM on Sunday, over 1,300 people shopped at our tag sale. Our total sales this year were **\$21,112** with 10% of the total sales being split between Shriners Children's Hospital and Somers SafeGrad.

It's never too early to start your box for next year's sale! April 25th and 26th. Once again, thank you all for supporting this event!

The Tag Sale Team

*Dorian, Nicole, Sharon, and Sue*





## Jabez Backus, Son of Rev. Charles Backus

Our Church History

Our church is very fortunate that, in its almost 300 years of existence, pastors and church historians were thoughtful enough to save many interesting historical documents, not only records of baptisms and marriages but also important sermons, statements of faith, building contracts, family histories, minutes of meetings etc.

We have several sermons by Rev. Charles Backus, our pastor from 1774 to 1803. These were printed and published in pamphlet form and have survived well. One copy is wrapped in a sheet of newspaper dated 1818 which, in itself, is interesting and historical.

Among Mr. Backus' papers is "The Oration on the Death of Jabez Backus" who died March 14<sup>th</sup> 1794, aged 17. Jabez, the only child of Mr. and Mrs. Backus, grew up in Somers and went off to Yale, probably to follow in his father's footsteps as a clergyman.

In his freshman year, an epidemic of scarlet fever raged through New Haven. There were 290 reported cases and 8 deaths, among them Jabez. His burial was quick because of the contagious nature of the disease and because communication was only by horseback, he was buried before his parents were able to reach New Haven.

His funeral oration was given by one of his classmates, Homer Hine, and says in part "He was a descendant of very worthy parents; the only son of the Reverend Mr. Backus of Somers. The goodness of his heart and the ingenuity of his mind were too obvious to remain unnoticed. His conduct was unassuming, his temper mild and his conversation easy, sprightly and agreeable. Modesty, humanity, benevolence, and the exercise of those virtuous principles which it well became a venerable father to instill into a tender mind of an only son, clothed his character with innocence, rendered his conduct laudable and himself respected."

Over the course of his ministry in Somers, Mr. Backus welcomed fifty young men, many of them Yale graduates, into his home on Springfield Road to prepare them for the ministry. As he mentored these young men, the memory of Jabez was probably never far from his mind.

Ailene Henry, Church Historian



## **MISSIONS' CORNER**

Happy spring and happy beginning to warm weather. Below is our Mission news for April & May.

### **Allocated donations for April:**

**Recycled Rides:** Recycled Rides Project is an organization founded in 2021 by Scott Starkweather, from South Windsor, in which free refurbished and used bicycles are distributed to the communities of Connecticut and Massachusetts. He takes in donated bicycles, fixes and repairs them making sure they are operationally safe, and then re-distributes them to the community for free. The project is supported by donations from group members, as well as the public and business entities. For the second year in a row, Recycled Rides has sent bicycles and bright neon glow shirts to the people of Kenya to use as transportation in their daily lives. "We are always excepting bicycle donations, parts donations, and monetary donations to keep our project moving forward so we can provide as many bikes as possible to everyone."

This is an individual who continues to pay it forward to others, and Missions is happy to donate to this organization every year in April. If you have an old bike that is broken or a bike you would just like to donate, please consider contacting Scott. Please visit his website for more information at [recycledridesproject.org](http://recycledridesproject.org).

### **Allocated donations for May:**

**Youth Challenge:** Founded as a residential outreach center in 1970 to simply provide a caring environment for troubled young people, Youth Challenge of Connecticut has continued to grow through the years and remains focused on helping troubled young men and women who have struggled with all kinds of addiction. Their open-door policy gives these individuals hope of living a new, drug free, productive and meaningful life and welcomes all men and women from every walk of life without regard to religious, ethnic, or racial background. In fact, 80% of residents are voluntary walk-in clientele, while the other 20% are referrals from hospital, courts, clergy, and correction facilities. Our church has been supporting this organization for many, many years and will continue to do so for many years to come.

**ALS CT Chapter:** Amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (Lou Gehrig's disease) is a progressive neurodegenerative disease that affects the nerve cells in the brain and spinal cord. Approximately 5600 new cases are diagnosed in the United States every year. The CT chapter Care Services Team works directly with patients and their families to create a plan to address the physical, emotional and financial challenges of living with ALS. Services provided include: Equipment loan program, transportation program, individual and group support, reimbursement grants, resources for military veterans, bereavement support and additional offerings. The donation idea/suggestion to the organization came from a church member whose father was afflicted with ALS. Missions has been providing support for about 7 years.



**Thank You Notes:** Our donations do make a difference. Below are our recent thank you notes:

- **From Live Well:** “Thank you for your gift; we are grateful that you believe in the work we do. With your support, we are reducing stigma, normalizing life with cognitive change, and making living well with dementia a standard here in Connecticut, and beyond. Be well, Michael J. Smith  
~~President & CEO
- **Enfield Safe Harbor:** “On behalf of the entire team at Enfield People for People, Safe Harbor for the Homeless, I would like to extend our heartfelt thanks for your generous contribution.” “With your donation, we are able to continue offering compassion and respect to every individual who walks through our doors, ensuring that no one faces hardship alone. Your kindness and commitment make a real difference in the lives of those in need, and we are truly grateful for your partnership in this important work.” ~~Warm Regards, Board of Directors

**Honor Flight:** “We received your very generous donation to Honor Flight, CT. Your donation is so helpful in allowing us to continue our mission of honoring those that served, with a day of appreciation and honor in our nation’s capital. We are 100% fully funded by donations, so financial support is crucial to our endeavor. We are only able to offer these no-cost trips to our worthy patriots with support from organizations like yours. ~~Matt Sparks, Honor Flight CT

### **Mission Outreach News:**

Our Spring/Summer Mission outreach this year, Power-in-A-Shower, an organization that provides access to mobile showers for individuals in need, completed 06/01. We started with our first announcement on 05/04 that sadly many people in the local community only have access to a shower once a month and do not have clean clothing or underwear. Undie Sunday was 05/18 with the encouragement to fill our gigantic pair of granny panties with new packages of undies! Megan Jewell from Marketing and Advertising created a slideshow for the May Community Supper. Dorian Jones, chair of the tag sale committee, graciously donated the leftover clothing from this year's tag sale to support our mission. We selected items to help individuals, especially women, needing clean clothing for job interviews, as well as lots of other pieces. A huge thank you to our Marketing and Tag Sale committees! We have accomplished another successful mission outreach project, with the hope that our efforts have genuinely assisted those less fortunate than ourselves. THANK YOU to our congregation who always continue to help us with anything we ask for. Our hearts of full.

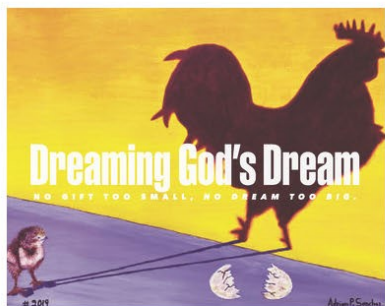
### **Misc:**

Sue Zdebski, our liaison for Covenant to Care, is working with a new social worker, Shannon Kiss, at CTC. Shannon is looking for furniture for families, including a small chest of drawers, twin beds, and a gently used twin mattress in good condition. If you can help, please contact Sue.

**Thought to Ponder:** “Mistakes are a fact of life. It is the response to the error that counts.” ~~  
**Nikki Giovanni**

As always, please reach out if you have an organization that you would like us to consider donating to. If you have any questions about anything we do on Missions, please feel free to ask. From all of us on your Missions Committee, be well and above all else, **always be kind**. We look forward to continuing the good work that we do on behalf of all of our congregation and our community.

Laura Jill, Ellen, Bev—Your Missions Committee



## Dreaming God's Dream

NO GIFT TOO SMALL, NO DREAM TOO BIG.



As we continue Dreaming God's Dream - No Gift too Small, No Dream too Big let us reflect on the story of the Good Samaritan who rescued a wounded stranger. The Good Samaritan brought the stranger to an Inn, where the innkeeper nursed him back to health until the Good Samaritan returned. What would it mean to understand our congregation as an "inn" for Good Samaritan work? Can we see our church as a place where we open ourselves up to caring for those in our community and as a place where healing happens?

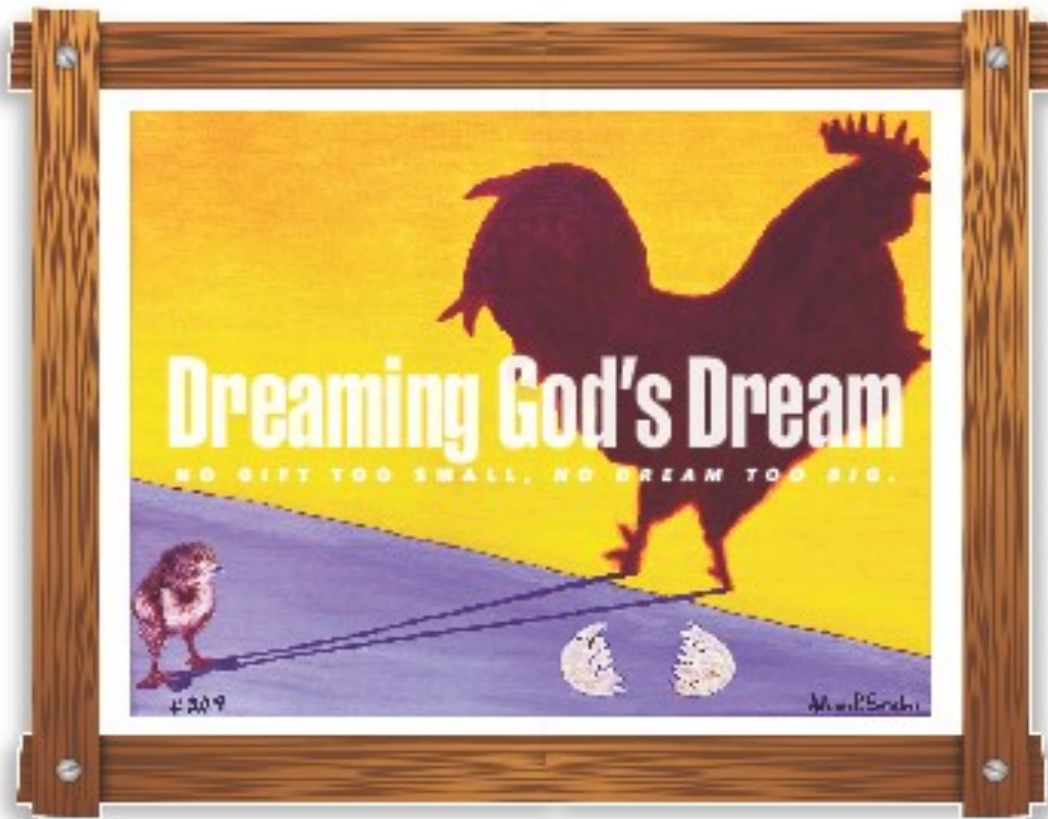
What might God do with what you have to offer? Your time, talents and financial pledge make all of our dreams possible for our church. The Stewardship Committee is asking you to prayerfully consider pledging if you have not already done so for 2025. Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. 2 Corinthians 9:7.

As always, if you have any questions about giving or about how your offerings become ministry, please feel free to contact the Stewardship Committee.

Blessings

Your Stewardship Team

Jeff Roig (Chair) & Tyler Cass



## The Church as Innkeeper

*"All humanity are our neighbors."*

St. Augustine of Hippo

**T**he familiar Parable of the Good Samaritan tells the story of the Priest and the Levite who walked past a person in the ditch and the Good Samaritan who stopped to help. We often overlook another character in the story: the innkeeper. The Good Samaritan brought the wounded person to the inn, where the innkeeper nursed them to health until the Good Samaritan returned.

Saint Augustine, reflecting on this parable, highlights the unique role of the innkeeper, who provided a place where healing could happen. What would it mean to understand our congregation as an "inn" for Good Samaritan work? Can we see our community as a place where healing happens?



The innkeeper's role included managing resources, ensuring the inn's readiness, and extending mercy and help – roles we mirror when we care for one another and open ourselves up to caring for those in our community.

Focusing on the innkeeper can also challenge the ways we operate our building. Having a building is not the point of church. Rather, the building serves as a tool of our ministry. A church facility matters only because it can *facilitate our mission*.

Your gifts to our congregation help us provide a place of healing in our community, an "inn" where Good Samaritan ministry can happen.

### CONSIDER YOUR PLEDGE AS A PERCENT OF YOUR MONTHLY INCOME.

Annual Income	Monthly Income	2%	3%	4%	5%	10%
20,000	1,667	33	50	67	83	167
25,000	2,083	42	63	83	104	208
30,000	2,500	50	75	100	125	250
35,000	2,917	58	88	117	146	292
40,000	3,333	67	100	133	167	333
45,000	3,750	75	113	150	188	375
50,000	4,167	83	125	167	208	417
60,000	5,000	100	150	200	250	500
75,000	6,250	125	188	250	313	625
100,000	8,333	167	250	333	417	833
125,000	10,417	208	313	417	521	1042
150,000	12,500	250	375	500	625	1250
200,000	16,667	333	500	667	833	1667

On average, Americans give 2% of their income to charity.  
Giving even 1% more of annual income to charity would be transformative for our  
congregation and other organizations doing good in our community.



# Community Supper



Join us on the second Wednesday of the month for a meal with the community in the foundation of Somers Congregational Church.

## Calendar

April 9th

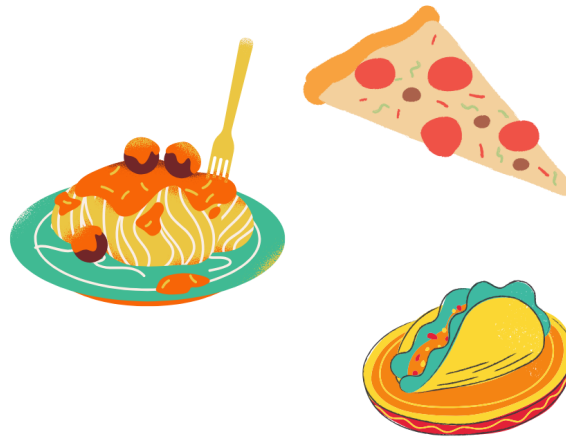
May 14th

June 11th

July 9th

August 13th

September 10th



**All dinners begin at 5:30pm.**

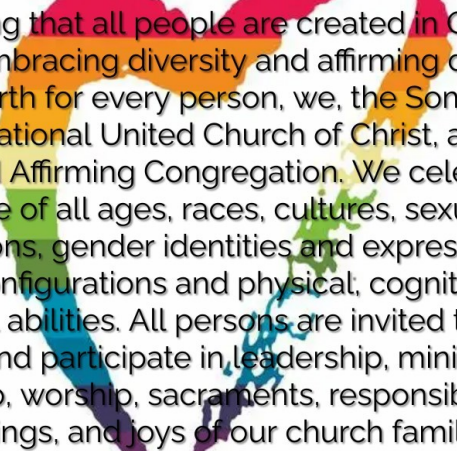
Call to reserve your spot for meal planning:  
(860) 763-4021 (please leave message if no answer.)

DONATIONS ARE GREATLY APPRECIATED AND KEEP THESE  
COMMUNITY SUPPERS RUNNING! Thank you.



The volunteer staff at Champ's Place Food Pantry would like to acknowledge the retirement of Amy Kozik and Kit Devlin, long time coordinators of the pantry, and thank them for their years of dedicated service and commitment assisting residents in need of food. Their timeless energy and enthusiasm will be missed. The food pantry extends a warm welcome to Monica Newcity who has agreed to assume the coordinator position. Monica is a resident of Somers and looks forward to maintaining the high standards of Champ's Place as the pantry continues to address the food insecurity situation in our state.

**Somers Congregational United Church of Christ**  
**Open and Affirming Covenant**



"Believing that all people are created in God's image, embracing diversity and affirming dignity and worth for every person, we, the Somers Congregational United Church of Christ, are an Open and Affirming Congregation. We celebrate people of all ages, races, cultures, sexual orientations, gender identities and expressions, family configurations and physical, cognitive or emotional abilities. All persons are invited to fully share and participate in leadership, ministry, fellowship, worship, sacraments, responsibilities, blessings, and joys of our church family."



Somers Congregational Church  
P.O. Box 295 · Somers, CT 06071

Our Church Administrative Assistant edits and publishes the  
Church Newsletter, Highlights.  
Please be aware of deadlines and send your articles to  
**[Highlights@thesomerschurch.org](mailto:Highlights@thesomerschurch.org)**