

THE SPIRE

Sept./Oct. 2025

We seek to be a Christian community by worshipping God through prayer, music, and the proclaimed Word. Following Christ's example, we enthusiastically reach out to everyone with compassion, respect, and love so that we may grow in faith and commitment together.

Church of Christ, Congregational, UCC

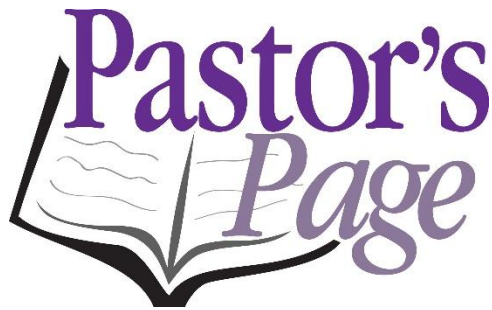
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An Open and Affirming Congregation

Worship God, Serve our neighbors, Share God's love.



A Letter from Pastor James

Dear Friends,

There is a distinct feeling in the air as October arrives. The crispness of the mornings, the earlier sunsets, and the first hints of color on the trees all signal the gentle transition from the ease of summer to the fullness of fall. This new season often brings with it a renewed sense of purpose and a desire to reconnect, both with each other and with our routines. As the world outside begins to change, our church community is also joyfully ramping up for a season of fellowship and growth.

This time of renewed activity brings to mind the story of Mary and Martha from the Gospel of Luke. When Jesus visited their home, Martha busied herself with the many tasks of hospitality, growing frustrated that her sister, Mary, sat at Jesus' feet, listening to his teachings. Too often,

we've been taught to see this as a story that pits action against contemplation—pressuring us to choose between being a “Martha” who's always doing, or a “Mary” who's always reflecting.

But let's challenge that interpretation. These two sisters should not be seen as rivals, but as a powerful reflection of the diverse gifts within our own community. The church needs both Marthas and Marys—and we need to stop forcing people into one box or the other. We need those who are moved to serve through action—organizing events, preparing meals, and tending to the details that make our church a welcoming home. We also need those who are moved to serve through quiet presence—listening, learning, and deepening their spiritual connection. Martha's service was an act of love, and Mary's devotion was an act of love. Together, they show us that all talents are valuable and necessary for our community to thrive. As we enter this busy season, let us truly appreciate and honor the unique ways each of us contributes.

We have many wonderful opportunities to come together this month, using all our collective talents.

I hope you will join us for these special events:

- **Blessing of the Animals Drive Thru:** We got rained out, but join us for a Saturday morning drive-thru blessing of all God's creatures and the joy they bring into our lives. Saturday Oct. 18th 9:00-10:30am.
- **Trunk or Treat:** An annual fall favorite, bring your trunk decorations and peanut-free treats for our community event. Oct. 26, 11:00am.

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If you have been considering making this church your spiritual home, it is not too late to join this wonderful group. We would be delighted to welcome you. Please reach out to me at pastoruccmillis@gmail.com to express your interest or ask any questions you may have.

I look forward to seeing the wonderful things we will accomplish together this fall, embracing all the gifts and talents that make our congregation so special.

Peace,
Pastor James



Farewell to Keith Jefferson. On August 24th, the congregation said goodbye to Keith as he and his wife Becca moved to Vermont. Keith came to us about 2.5 years ago, became a member, and joined Deacons. He was usually the first one here on Sunday mornings, winter and summer! We will miss his devotion.

God be with you,
From all of his friends



A Message To All Our Members:

The end of August meant one less member of the Board of Deacons. With the leaving of Keith Jefferson, we have 3, Artie Payne, Katey Andrews and Kathy Stevens.

We need at least one church member to join us, two would be wonderful! The work is not hard, but attendance on most Sundays is necessary.

If any of you have any questions, please contact Kathy Stevens in person or by phone.

Kathy Stevens.



Thanks to Sue Conte for keeping the church gardens blooming throughout the very warm summer.

Thanks to all the folks for setting up our summer altar each week and helping with the “goodies.”

Thanks to Marsha Mancuso for providing The Message on August 17th. When asked to do it, she wrote it in 45 minutes with a few extra minutes for touch up! She’s a wonder! Look for her message later in this edition of The Spire.

Thanks to Maria Melchionda for repainting the sign board to have

Rev. James’ name on it and to Rick Jones for taking it down and putting it back up. Thanks also to Rick for taking care of the tree work after the most recent storms.

And thanks to our friend Don May, for repairing the ramp, fixing the shed doors and taking care of our tiny roof leak.



If you would like to be added to the prayer chain, or if you or someone you know wants to receive prayers for a specific situation, please

Contact Mary Jensen.





Church Sermon by Marsha Mancuso:

Today my topic is stealing. It seems like an appropriate sermon for these times. Where every day I check my bank account and keep an eye on my credit card charges, while many thieves that are invisible to me and you attempt to take what is ours. The scammers are making money dishonestly rather than working via honest labor. Especially taken advantage of are older people, who may be confused when they hear a voice that they believe to be their grandchild or think that it is their bank calling because they see that name come up on the caller ID. I, in the midst of writing this, got scammed. I was renewing Mark's passport and I thought I was on a website that I wasn't on. I thought I was pretty hip to this stuff, but I got taken. I had to replace that money in Mark's account from my bank and I was just the other day able to recover that money. The scamming is such a travesty. Jesus would not like it. He told us, "Let the thief no longer steal, but rather let him labor, doing honest work with his own hands, so that he may have something to share with anyone in need."

I think we could touch on that idea of sharing, too, while we're at it. Hoarding is a type of stealing. If we have so much that we don't need it all then it seems

right to share that with other who are needy. It's about taking from others by giving ourselves too much.

What about if you find money that isn't yours? Is it okay to keep it? I have returned found money and I have been the recipient of my lost stuff. I once took the corner in South Bellingham after leaving my wallet on the roof of the car, where I had set it for a minute. I received a call from the honest person who found it. Yeah! It seems okay to keep it if you have exhausted all ways to return the money. And then maybe donating a chunk of it to a worthy cause. This is my humble opinion.

We have seen a few examples where someone cashed in a lottery ticket that was not theirs. They are caught because of security cameras. But, they were perfectly willing to take that ticket and walk away, and if not for that technology, would take it home as their own.

Corporations steal indirectly via highest interest rates to those in the most need. By stacking on fees and charges to the point that sometimes we don't even know what they're for. Ditto for landlords, who charge higher rents without making improvements and who make those rents so high that it forces out the people who were there before because they don't have the income to support a higher rent.

And it seems that sometimes no matter how much money people have, they will still steal from others. Case in point: Bernie Madoff, who through his

scheming and conniving in the 90s, defrauded many investors of billions of dollars. At one time, he told his sons that his Ponzi scheme was “a big lie.” Oh, yes, and big loot, for sure.

There were times in the past that I took, that I stole. It was part and parcel of my addiction. Addictions can force or coerce individuals into doing crimes that are in contrast to what was best for their souls. But, for me, in turn, much was taken from me. When I freed myself from that lifestyle, I reversed that immediately. I found that as I gave, so I received. It is the way of the world, the universe: to give and to receive. There must be a balance.

Sometimes we could justify our stealing. By taking a few paperclips, pens, paper from the office. Rationalizing that they have plenty, so why can't we take some? And aren't we also stealing when we make personal phone calls on company time? Or when we take breaks that are beyond the length of time allowed? We can say, “Well, I work there and I give to them of my time and energy, so I can take a few items or a few hours and it won't matter.” But, that's just not true. Let's be perfectly clear: Stealing is always condemned in scripture. No exceptions.

As many of you know, I teach yoga. In yoga, one of the ten righteous ways of living is called *asteya*, non-stealing. And it might involve other than material things. There are other ways to steal. We can steal someone's time. What about if we are continually late? The person that is waiting for us has his time

and energy taken from him. Sometimes there's a good reason when someone is late occasionally: traffic, couldn't find a parking spot, road construction. But, what about that friend that is habitually late? Is he not robbing your time as you sit there waiting, once again? And when this happens time after time—and I once had a friend like this—countless hours are consumed by this person. Hours that belong to you. For no good reason, although they may make up many excuses. Basically, it's poor planning or lack of empathy or consideration for your situation. Or both.

I recently took my mother-in-law, three times, to a doctor's office for complications after a routine eye surgery. She and others there—the waiting room was packed, mostly with older people—were waiting between two and a half and three hours to be seen. It was terrible! It was stealing as far as I could see. Just a result of greed and poor scheduling. Robbing them blind.

We can also rob a person of his peace. Picture yourself in a room with a group of people, enjoying a meal or celebrating an event and in walks a person who is in a very bad mood. Their negative energy invades the premises. Infiltrates the whole room. It can immediately change the whole feeling in that space. They have taken away the fun and joy you were all having. Think Debbie Downer on Saturday Night Live. Wha Wha. Of course, you can also be the one bringing that bad energy. None of us are perfect every day. So, maybe we have done this occasionally. Either way, it is pilfering in a different manner.

Relationships can steal our tranquility too. Abusive ones. Codependent ones. And if you've ever dealt closely with a narcissist or with a person who deals in underhanded, below-the-surface behaviors, this can be a terrible experience for the person on the receiving end. It can also create division and can separate us from others we care about. Unarmed robbery.

Then we can get into that idea of coveting. Yup, wanting what others have. And that can lead to other things like robbery, adultery, even murder. On that note, one can watch, if one so chooses, on crime channels, the continuous, all day long, shows where people kill spouses for life insurance, business partners for a bigger share of the till, a husband or wife for the custody of their children. All kinds of madness.

Sometimes people steal another's idea. They attempt to present it as their own, when really it was someone else's. We have seen this within the music industry in the form of the plagiarism of a song's music or lyrics. History has shown that it has happened with regard to inventions, as well. Although Thomas Edison is known as the inventor of the lightbulb, there is evidence that there were numerous inventors who thought of the idea first. One was Heinrich Goebel, the actual first person to invent the light bulb in 1854. He tried to sell the invention to Edison, who was not interested, but later, after Goebel's death, Edison bought the patent for that invention.

Albert Einstein is famous for his Theory of Relativity, but he was not the original

creator. It was Henri Poincare, who had published 30 books and over 500 essays on that theory before Einstein ever arrived on the scene. Einstein was able to claim it was his idea because that idea was not protected under patent law. End result, though: stealing.

And the Astronomer Galileo has been credited with the invention of the telescope. But, the person who was responsible for that idea was a man named Hans Lippershey. He had applied for a patent in 1608, but his application was denied. We don't know the exact reason why. Galileo heard about Lippershey's work and was able to get a patent for it, leaving Lippershey in the dust.

Ya, sometimes people get away with theft. How about the biggest art heist in history? That happened in 1990, when in a period of eighty-one minutes, thieves took thirteen works of art valued at \$500 million from the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum right here in our home state. In fact, it was suspected that some from the little town of Mendon were involved, but no arrests have ever been made in that robbery. In a case where the criminal was caught, a former Louvre employee stole the Mona Lisa in 1911. He wanted to return it to its rightful home, Italy. He did get caught, but because the court saw that he committed the crime for patriotic reasons, they were lenient in sentencing him to one year and fifteen days in jail, but ended up serving only seven months. In Italy, he was hailed as a hero.

Identity theft is the new thing lately. People getting personal information, attacking related accounts, rifling money from said accounts. Even stealing the deeds to houses or other properties. Pulling the rug right out from under. I was reading about this in a magazine. How one woman went on vacation and, upon returning, walked into her home to find people living there. When she called the police, they weren't sure who actually owned the home. How frustrating and unimaginable is that?

War is stealing too. Taking property from others. We did this when we stole tribal lands from the Native Americans. And that craziness continues on today.

And history has shown that people will sometimes steal other people's freedom. Bind them with chains. Rob them of their very life force. Their energy. Even their DNA. It is a scientific fact that the DNA of people who have suffered great tragedy, including those imposed by others, such as the holocaust survivors, have experienced a change to their very DNA structure. And so have their children and their grandchildren and so on. The Nazis stole what was so inherent to the Jewish people.

Racism is stealing too. It robs a person—belonging to a certain nationality or belief or country of origin—of their good name, their dignity, even their children's potential and future. Because I live in Milford where there are a lot of immigrants, I hear a lot of negative comments. But, truly, we are all immigrants. Slavery is part of that

thievery, as well. A human being becoming property, stolen from their very selves and granted to someone else.

As a son of God, Jesus asks us to ask for deliverance from evil. And that would include stealing, in any way, shape or form.

NewsLetter DEADLine

We are looking to resume our monthly newsletter soon. If you have any articles for the next issue of the Spire, please email them to Laura **No Later Than Oct. 20th!**

Pollinator Garden Pics

Courtesy of Sue Conte



Autumn Joy Sedum



Arizona Sun Blanket



Matrona Sedum



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