

Faith Formation

Children are the future of our world and our faith. It is our privilege to nurture and love them as Christ does while they are with us!

Our **Sunday School classes** meet every Sunday morning throughout the school year. After a children's sermon in worship, the children leave for their classrooms. On Communion Sundays they meet together in the chapel before joining their families in the sanctuary. In the summer months and on holiday weekends we offer a one-room schoolhouse.

We have a well-equipped **crib room** for our tiniest members. It's staffed by experienced young adults, following the protocol of our Safe Church Policy. Here parents may also feel free to curl up in a rocker with their child and listen to the service on an audio speaker!

The goal of **chimes** and **drama** is to affirm the children's gifts as they help to lead us in worship. On Wednesday afternoons our Music Director, Joyce Simpson, offers sessions on **chimes** and **drama** for children age 5-18. A

snack is provided. These are wonderful opportunities (at no cost!) for the children to learn to make music together and to explore their inner thespian through biblical storytelling. Twice each year a play is presented in worship.

The First Church **youth group**, for young people in grade 5 and up, meets on a monthly basis. The youth participate in a variety of activities as they explore what it means to be in Christian community and have some fun!

Our **Acolyte Program**, for young people in 5th through 8th grades, offers the opportunity to carry the light of Christ at the start and close of worship. Several training sessions and a dedication ceremony ready them for the office of Acolyte.

Confirmation classes are offered every other year for young people in grade 8 and up. Confirmation offers our teenagers an educational forum to explore and wrestle with their faith, their doubts, and their questions. It not only makes them voting members of First Congregational Church, but it

affirms their personal responsibility for the nurture of their spiritual lives.

Vacation Bible Blast is an amazing week-long adventure that's held every August. This wonderful event is intergenerational. It brings together loving adult volunteer leaders, a host of eager and capable teen helpers, and lots of excited children from First Church and surrounding communities. VBB immerses everyone in Old and New Testament bible stories that come alive through arts and crafts, catchy songs, theater performance, science experiments, yummy snacks, and games.

Mission projects empower even our smallest children to help others in Christ's name. We choose projects, such as Heifer Project and Cradles to Crayons, where the children learn that they can make a difference in the lives of others.

Seasonal Activities

Rally Sunday marks the start of Sunday School and a new program year each September. We ask God's blessing on the children and their Sunday School teachers. We bless the

children's backpacks to remind them that God keeps them company at school too. Following worship we enjoy an all-church lunch with special activities for the kids.

Our **Advent Craft Celebration and Luncheon** is held on the first Sunday in December. The entire church looks forward to sitting down for a simple lunch. The children make the rounds of various craft tables to build ginger bread houses, decorate ornaments, and construct Advent wreaths. This is always a festive beginning to a joyful season!

The annual **Christmas Pageant** is presented on the last Sunday in Advent. It involves as many children as want to be in it, and some of our teens and adults as well, much to the congregation's delight.

On Good Friday the children meet with Pastor Merrie to talk about the death of Jesus and to walk the labyrinth. On Easter morning they gather before worship on the side lawn outside the church for an **Easter Egg Hunt**. What a joy it is to watch them poke around the garden for these symbols of new life!

For More Information . . .

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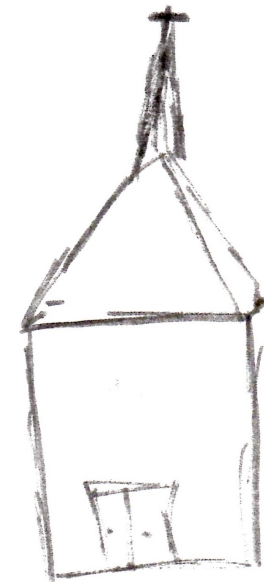
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Welcome to The First Congregational Church Stoneham, Massachusetts

An Open and Affirming Congregation
of
The United Church of Christ

– Christian Education –



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