

Welcome Sunday
Sunday, September 14th
Worship at 10:00 AM

SEPTEMBER 2025



THE BEACON



First Church Congregational *United Church of Christ*

26 Pleasant Street
Methuen, MA 01844-3199

Telephone: (978) 687-1240

Rev. Dr. Ann Rogers-Brigham, Interim Pastor

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www.firstchurchmethuen.com



Worship on Sundays at 10:00 AM

In person & on Facebook Live

Minister's Message **Rev. Dr. Ann Rogers-Brigham**

Dear members and friends,

We welcome each other to September days and continue our journey in the Season of Pentecost. I appreciated time away in August for rest and renewal and looked forward, on my return, to a full September schedule at First Church Congregational. I hope you have felt the same! We have many opportunities for being the "church" in worship, in outreach, in study and in our close circles of caring and community.

As I walk into the First Church building, I am certainly aware of the opportunities but especially as I enter the Pastor's study. On the right-hand side of the door, the entrance to the office, in beautiful script, is the framed Mission Statement and Operating Covenant that was written many years ago. The script draws the eye to a moment in time, but, also, to a period when First Church life thrived with activity and life.

This statement was adopted by members of First Church in January 23, 1990, when Rev. Ladre and Rev. King were your ministers. (We pause to give thanks for these ministers and their ministries in this place! Recently, in April, we grieved the death of Rev. King, so it was moving to see her name on this statement/covenant). You may remember being part of the decision to adopt the statement of 1990. Like yesterday? Even though it was voted on and framed thirty-five years ago, it still has, at its core, a word about our calling and our covenant to be the church, alive and vibrant, welcoming and inclusive in our time. I hope you will read it and think about how we honor those words in our church life today.

Our present Constitution and By-Laws of First Church word our purpose and covenant with similar language and with the same intent. The wording has changed some to reflect language of our time but the sentiment and how we express our desire for covenant with God and with each other is the same. It is as words of the song go: *"I am the church, you are the church, we are the church together."* ("We Are the Church" by Richard Avery and Donald Marsh)

When we come into September worship services, the chorus of this song will be the song we sing at the children's message time. It has a timely message for us in this century. The first verse is simply: *"The church is not a building, the church is not a steeple, the church is not a resting place, the church is a people."* The second verse of the song is even more compelling: *"We're many kinds of people, with many kinds of faces, all colors and all ages, too, from all times and places."*

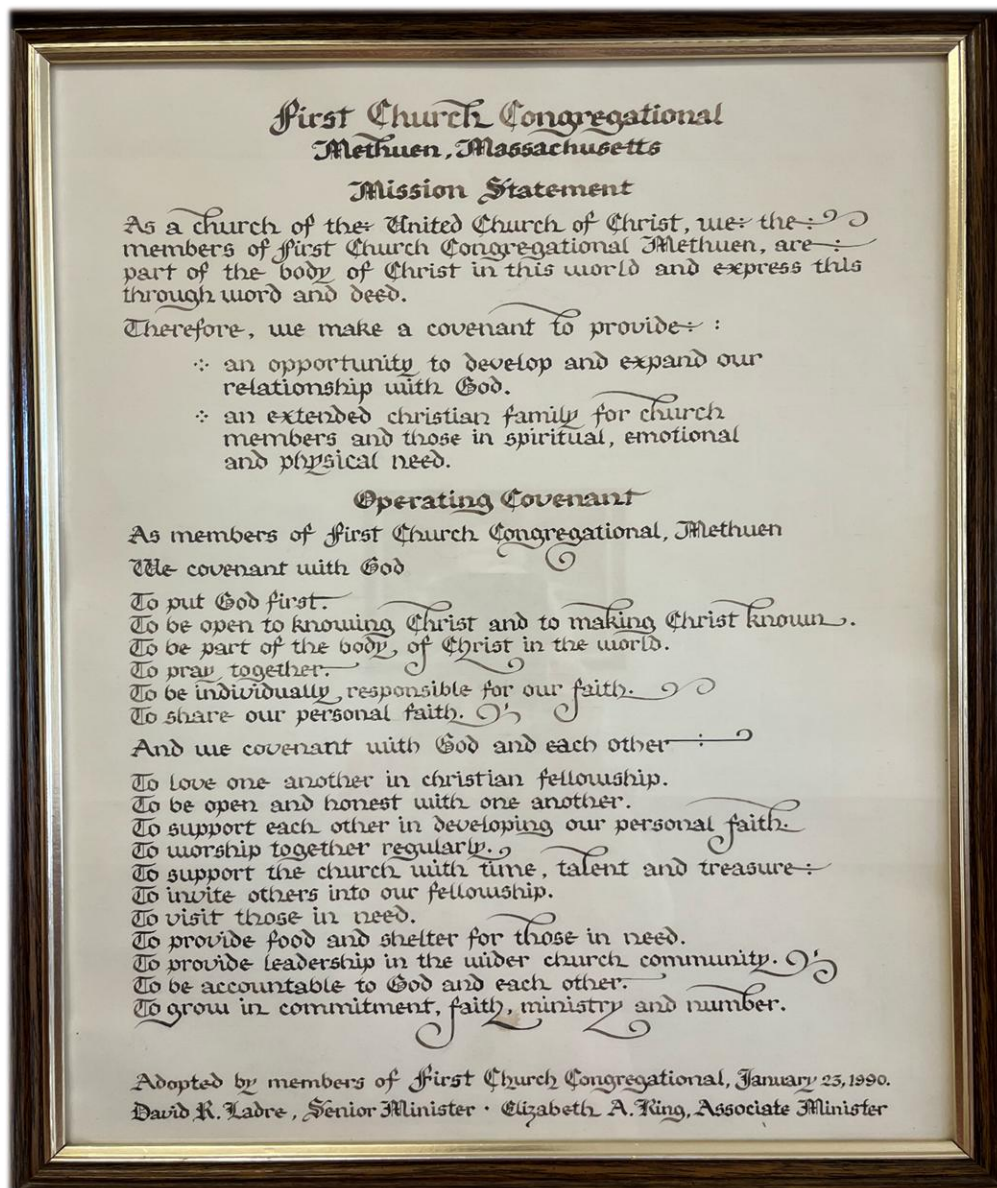
I hope the words of the song resonate with you as we make First Church that place where we welcome all people to life together. I hope the words of the "Operating Covenant" of 1990, *"to grow in commitment, faith, ministry and number"* still carry meaning for congregational life. As we welcome September days, may we embrace opportunities to be involved in church life this fall. Sunday School for our children begins, confirmation classes resume, a Global Ministries missionary will visit us, our choir comes back, a baptism will be celebrated, the Outreach Committee at First Church has many invitations for involvement and our search team for a settled pastor is hard at work. Our activity and programs need your prayers, your support and your involvement.

This interim time in the life of First Church is filled with possibilities for deep spiritual potential, isn't it? As we covenant to be in relationship to God and to one another, may we take seriously the invitation to take stock of our life as a church and dream about who we might become and how we might grow in the year ahead.

Let me know of needs that may arise; I'm glad to reach out to you and extend support to you on your spiritual journey.

Grace and peace,
Rev. Ann Rogers Brigham
Interim Minister





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Sunday Worship

10:00 AM

We hope you will join us!

We like to see you in the congregation on Sunday mornings, but for those who cannot attend in person, worship will be broadcast each Sunday, at 10:00 AM, on Facebook Live (www.facebook.com/FirstChurchMethuen) and posted after the service on our YouTube channel (www.youtube.com/channel/UCfLSjhXs9UG8yC89aB8evrA). The service can be viewed at any time on either platform.

An Order of Worship will be emailed each Friday before the service. If you do not receive this email, please let the church office know at firstchurch.roberta@gmail.com.



Starting Wednesday, September 3rd, the First Church & Chapel School Office will be open Monday through Friday, from 9:00 AM – 2:00 PM. Rev. Ann will be in the office Monday through Thursday, from 9:00 AM – 2:00 PM

If after office hours, do not hesitate to use the answering service to leave a message. They send your message via email to the Church Office and the Pastor; and will help locate Pastoral Care if there is a pastoral emergency.

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Prayer Requests/List

We print a Prayer List in the Sunday worship bulletin. To have someone included on the bulletin prayer list, please let Roberta, in the Church Office, know at 978-687-1240 or firstchurch.roberta@gmail.com. No request is too big or too small! Thank you.



If you, or someone you know, is in need of a pastoral visit, please contact Rev. Ann at amrogersbrigham@gmail.com or 978-687-1240.

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Interested in Church Membership?

We are delighted to invite new members into our life at First Church. If you have interest in becoming a member, please speak to the Pastor or a Deacon and we'll be glad to include you in our next membership orientation. Here are the ways (according to our church bylaws) you can be received: Full Active Member, Associate Member or Friend of First Church. You may come into membership by affirmation of faith, reaffirmation of faith, letter of transfer or confirmation. Membership registration forms are available in the rear of the sanctuary or the "crossroads" near the church office. Please, don't hesitate to contact Rev. Ann for more info!



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Breakfast with Ann

Breakfast with Ann will resume on Wednesday, September 10th, at 8:00 AM. Join Rev. Ann and friends at Ellie's Farmhouse, 436 Broadway in Methuen, for good food and fellowship.



Special Worship Opportunities in September

- **September 7th – The Thirteenth Sunday after Pentecost - Service of Word and Sacrament**
 - Remembering our Grief – September 11, 2001
 - Rev. Ann Rogers Brigham – Worship Leader/Preacher/Communion Celebrant
 - Music: Led by Mike Boutin, Minister of Music – Choir Returns from Summer Break
 - **Lessons:** Psalm 1, Philemon 1-21, Luke 14:25-27, 33
- **September 14th – The Fourteenth Sunday after Pentecost – Welcome Sunday**
 - **Sunday School Begins and The Sacrament of Baptism for Lola James Aziz**
 - Rev. Ann Rogers Brigham – Worship Leader/Preacher
 - Music: Led by Mike Boutin, Minister of Music and Choir
 - **Lessons:** Psalm 51: 1-10, 1 Timothy 1:12-17, Luke 15:1-10
 - **Welcome Sunday Cookout** following worship. Fellowship, Good Food and Ice Cream Truck!
- **September 21st – The Fifteenth Sunday after Pentecost**
 - 8:30 AM – Children/Youth – Communion Education, led by Rev. Ann and CE Teachers
 - Rev. Ann Rogers Brigham – Worship Leader/Preacher
 - Music: Lead by Mike Boutin, Minister of Music and Choir
 - **Lessons:** Psalm 119: 33-40, 1 Timothy 2:1-7, Luke 16:1-13
- **September 28th – The Sixteenth Sunday after Pentecost**
 - Rev. Ann Rogers Brigham – Worship Leader and Elena Huegel, Global Ministries Missionary to Mexico, Speaker
 - Music: Led by Mike Boutin, Minister of Music and Choir
 - **Lessons:** Psalm 146, 1 Timothy 6:6-10, 17, Luke 16:19-31
 - **Special Coffee Hour**, sponsored by our Outreach Team, will welcome Elena for a time of conversations and Q&A! We have invited our Forest Street UCC friends and other neighbor churches to join us for this Coffee Hour to meet Elena and learn about her work. Please invite others you know who may have interest.

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Remembrance Prayer for Those Who Died and Were Injured on September 11, 2001

God, we remember those who lost their lives on September 11, 2001. We remember those who were injured and later died of their injuries. We know that you remember them, too, and are keeping them in your care. We acknowledge the pervasiveness of violence in our world: sometimes it explodes with intent to kill and has its success, as on 9/11. And, sometimes it creeps in subtly: in attitudes and mindsets, in world views and passing words. We find it even here in our own hearts.

Cleanse us from all unrighteousness, and restore us to justice. We rely upon your mercy. Grant that we may forgive all those who have committed atrocities against us. We hear your words to us: "Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you." (Matthew 5: 44)

We are baffled and astonished at this instruction. We have no way to understand a peaceable kingdom, other than your example. Console us in our grief, O Lovely, Compassionate One.

Speak to us in our confusion. Be to us a lamp in darkness, and lamp of peace drawing us lovingly in. This is my prayer; this is our prayer. Amen.



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Welcome Missionary Speaker, Elena Huegel from Mexico, on Sunday, September 28th

UCC/Disciples Global Ministries missionary, Elena Huegel, will be with us on Sunday, September 28th, to share about her ministry in Mexico. Join us for worship and a special coffee hour, sponsored by our Outreach Committee, to hear Elena speak. There will be a Q&A opportunity.

Elena Huegel serves with the Intercultural Research and Studies Institute (INESIN) in Mexico. Elena is a mission co-worker at the Instituto de Estudios e Investigación Intercultural, A.C. (Institute for Intercultural Studies and Research), as the coordinator for *Retoños en las ruinas: esperanza en el trauma* (Roots in the ruins: hope in trauma) in Chiapas, Mexico. Highlights of her ministry in Chiapas include learning from the wisdom of the Mayan and the Mexican cultures and traditions and bringing together the people and threads of the *Retoños en las ruinas* program to create an intricate tapestry of personal and community stories and experiences around diverse themes including trauma healing, resilience development, nourishing of dignity, grief process accompaniment, and exploring different paths for justice.



Confirmation Class Resumes Meetings in September



Confirmation classes will meet after worship on Sunday, September 7th and Sunday, September 21st. On September 14th (*Welcome Sunday*), the students are encouraged to participate in the “welcome” picnic and on Sept. 28, the students may assist Rev. Ann in welcoming our missionary speaker, Elena Huegel at our church Coffee Hour for Q and A.

Students attending classes are: Andrew Pavlenkov (Mentor: Scott Sanborn), Bella Bane (Mentor: Judi Boyko), Haleigh Sanborn (Mentor: Allan Barlow) and Alexis Murray (Mentor: Sarah Pavlenkov). We are looking forward to meaningful confirmation classes in weeks ahead.

Remember that youth who are middle school and high school may join our classes at any time. Speak to Rev. Ann if you have youth interested in being part of our confirmations study experience.

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Sunday School at First Church – Begins September 14th

We are glad to welcome your children/youth for Christian education. ***Please complete a registration form for Sunday School.*** Registration form can be found on pages 9-10 in this Beacon. This info is required and needed so we can provide the best CE program possible for our children/youth.

When is Sunday School at First Church? After the children’s message time in the beginning of the worship service, children/youth go to class during the remaining part of the worship service with teachers to continue to hear a Bible story and participate in a learning experience.

This year our CE Committee decided upon the curriculum “Sparkhouse” for our weekly lessons. It is a Bible based curriculum from Augsburg Fortress press. We invite volunteers to assist our regular teachers, Lori Bennett and Sarah Palenkov. We will need assistants to help them and coverage when they need to be away.

Please let Rev. Ann know of your interest or speak to Lori or to Sarah directly about your desire to help with our children/youth. We are grateful to Barbara Donaghue and Steve Boyko for attending our CE meetings and for giving direction to the program in an advisory capacity.

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New This Year! *Learning About Communion for Children and Youth*

Rev. Ann will lead a communion orientation for our children/youth who wish to receive communion, especially for the first time. All children/youth and parents are welcome to join us on **September 21st from 8:30 to 9:30 AM** to learn together about the meaning of the Sacrament of Communion. Normally, older children/youth are brought into worship on Communion Sundays by a Sunday School teacher to receive communion with our congregation. We want them to be prepared to understand a little about this sacrament of our church. Questions? Ask Rev. Ann and she’ll be glad to help explain more.



Family Youth Interests

September 2025

Sharing our Faith in our upcoming events:

- **September 7th** – Communion Sunday
 - No Sunday School
- **September 14th** – **Welcome Sunday!** Sunday School Resumes, 10:00 AM
 - If you need a SS registration form, and a photo release form please see Mrs. B, Mrs. P., or the Church Office and we will make sure you receive one.
We hope you will all plan to stay and share in our church cookout.
 - **Bible Story Lesson:** Creation Genesis 1:1-2:4a
- **September 21st** – Review Communion Class, 8:30-9:30 AM
 - **Bible Story Lesson:** Noah's Ark Genesis 6-9
- **September 28th**
 - **Bible Story:** Abram's Call Genesis 12:1-9
- **October 5th** – Worldwide Communion Sunday
 - **Bible Story Lesson** : Abraham and Sarah's Visitors
- **October 12th**
 - **Bible Story Lesson:** Isaac's Blessing

Note: Children/Youth offering envelopes are available and will be given at the beginning of the Children's Message in worship.

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Come back to worship and join the fun!

Welcome Sunday

Sunday, September 14th

Worship at 10:00 AM

Followed by a Cookout, Ice Cream Truck, Games & More!

Bring a salad or dessert to share.

First Church Congregational

--- Founded 1729 ---
26 Pleasant Street
Methuen, Massachusetts 01844
Phone: 978-687-1240
www.firstchurchmethuen.com



Rev. Ann Rogers-Brigham
Interim Pastor

Registration Form for Sunday School

Parent/Guardian Name(s): _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Emergency Contact (Name/Number): _____

For Sunday School Notifications

Parent/Guardian 1

Email: _____ Cell Phone: _____

Parent/Guardian 2

Email: _____ Cell Phone: _____

Child Name(s)	Birthdate	Age	Grade	Acolyte* (Y or N)
1. _____	_____	_____	_____	_____
2. _____	_____	_____	_____	_____
3. _____	_____	_____	_____	_____
4. _____	_____	_____	_____	_____
5. _____	_____	_____	_____	_____

*An Acolyte needs to be 2nd Grade or older.

Please list any allergies or medical conditions for each child?

<Please complete both sides >

- I have read the attached Safety Guidelines and have discussed them with my child/children and agree to abide by them.

_____ yes

_____ no

_____ Parent/Guardian Initials

- Please check all you may be interested in helping with:

_____ Sunday School Teacher

_____ Substitute Teacher

_____ Help with Special Events

For High School youth:

- **Scholarships are given to High School Seniors in June.** Please pick up an application to review the application qualifications.

Please make your selection below as to whether you give your permission for pictures to be taken of your child(ren) participating in Sunday School and church activities to be used in bulletins, Beacon newsletter, website, social media sites and possibly the newspaper.

_____ Yes, I give permission for my child(ren)'s picture to be taken.

_____ No, I do not want my child(ren)'s picture to be taken.

_____ Parent/Guardian Initials

Note: Children are NOT allowed to have cell phones or electronic devices in the Sunday School Classroom. Parents should hold these devices while child is in class. If a child does bring the device to class, the teacher will take the device until the end of class.

Signature: _____

Parent/Guardian

Date: _____

Return the completed form to the Church Office. Thank you!

<Please complete both sides >

First Church Congregational

Safety Guidelines and Procedures

The Christian Education Committee has worked with the Behavioral Safety Committee to put a program in place for all people and committees that work with the youth of our church.

- **Open Door Policy** – There will be an “Open Door” Policy in effect on all programs involving children and youth. Parents of the children, clergy, administrative and professional staff have the right to visit and observe any program unannounced.
- **Meetings** – All youth meetings will be planned and coordinated through the Christian Education Committee and Director. Meetings and classes will be planned so that one adult is never alone in the building with children or youth. Staff and volunteers will not make secret plans or arrange secret meetings with children or youth. All meetings are to be posted on the church calendar.
- **Behavior** – All participants, in all groups, are expected to remain with the group throughout the times listed in the church publications. No pairing, or otherwise separating, off from the group to other parts of the building or grounds is permitted, unless under the direct instruction of the leader present. When such splitting off is part of the program, the leader takes responsibility to ensure that the standards listed in this policy are followed. All participants will demonstrate respectful behavior and appropriate language
- **Offenses** – Any person charged with a violent offense or sexual offense and convicted will not be involved with our youth in any manner. This includes sitting on the Christian Education Committee.
- **Personal Protection** – No adult will EVER be alone with any infant, child or adolescent where they cannot be visually observed by others (unless the child is their own child). Two adults will be present in all groups of youth and children when they are the only group meeting in the church. The Church will obtain and have on file a CORI (Criminal Official Records Investigation) for all Sunday School Teachers, Youth Leaders, Staff and anyone else that works with the children. The minister may be involved in a one on one counseling session if an additional adult is in the building and someone else is aware of the meeting.
- **Sunday School Registration Form** – All parents of children participating in programs at First Church need to complete and return a Sunday School Registration Form. This form allows your child to attend all activities held at First Church Congregational in Methuen. Special Medical Needs: If there are specific needs for a child, be sure to include that information on this form. Please be specific if there are certain procedures that need to be followed.
- **Activity Approval** – Any adult chaperone of First Church children or youth will obtain approval of the Christian Education Committee, or Pastor, as part of the pre-approval of the plans for every event.
- **Overnight Activities** – During overnight activities, boys and girls will be physically separated when sleeping. A signed permission form stating where and when the night is to be spent will be received for each child.

- **Supervision** – Children, Preschool – Grade 5, who come to church for any program will be supervised properly until they are dismissed to their parent or guardian.
 - Youth, Grades 6-12, may be dismissed from class with signed agreement form from parents.
 - No children may be left in any room at any time without an Adult or High School Aide.
 - If there is an individual who does NOT have the parent's permission to pick up a child, the details must be made known on the registration form in writing or to the adult leader prior to the event.
 - The Adult leader has the right to refuse permission for any child to stay if there is ANY concern about rides, or if there have been problems with a child not following the Safety Guidelines and Procedure Agreement Form rules at any time.
- **Rides Home** – Clergy, youth leaders, etc., should not drive children home. If at some point a child needs a ride home from an adult other than their parent, the parent must notify the youth leader or adult in charge and give written permission. No one under the age of 21 is allowed to drive to any off site programs run by the church.
- **Physical Contact** - Physical contact such as wrestling, horseplay, sardines, or other high contact games are not appropriate for any reason.
- **Notification** – Any inappropriate conduct or relationship between an adult and a child or youth, or any injuries, bruises or behavior, which are suspicious in nature need to be reported to the CE Committee or Pastor *as soon as possible*.

Rules ALL kids should abide by:

- Check in and check out with leader.
- Travel in Twos – bathroom, supplies, snacks, etc.
- No secret meetings.
- Leave with the person you came with.
- Make sure your parent(s) sign forms for offsite activities.
- Stay with your group. Do not go off alone!



From the Chair of the Church Board...

September is always an exciting time. The weather is still nice, as well as all the fun activities that come with it. School has started, with the joyful noise of youth everywhere. The days are a bit shorter, reminding us to make the most of it. Maybe more importantly, we have a new church season, welcoming many back to our sanctuary. Many of our church committees are rolling out special elements, events, and programs to make our time together so wonderful. This includes worship is still in full swing, so please come enjoy all that the sanctuary has to offer.

As always, we have plenty more going on, including:

- The search process for our next settled pastor is continuing. As of the writing of this, the team is going to be publishing our church's profile with the UCC. Hopefully that will begin the interviewing process for potential candidates to be our next settled pastor. The committee is meeting virtually and physically, and they are working at a rapid pace to build our future
- We have several big events scheduled soon, starting with our annual Welcome Sunday on September 14th. We will have burgers, dogs, and chips available, but people are requested to bring salads & sides to share. There will also be an ice cream truck arriving, so don't miss it! Also, our annual Ham & Bean Supper has been scheduled for October 18th. This is always a wonderful fellowship event, so please see Carol Sanborn or Marilyn Peck to volunteer.
- The A/V system has been completely revamped and there have been a lot of bugs to be worked out. It was a large endeavor to upgrade our ailing equipment, so I thank you for your patience as we try to move forward. A big thank you goes out to the team for all of their diligence. With the upgrade, it is even easier to run the system, so if you'd like to help out, please see Stacey or Carol for more information.
- Our Outreach group is hard at work with numerous efforts. Last month, the focus was on our Back-to-School program, where we supplied 75 youth with shirts, jeans, hoodies, and shoes (in their favorite color!!) as well as a backpack with all of their grade-appropriate school supplies. It was a massive endeavor, so huge thank you goes out to Lisa Ferry and the countless volunteers that helped. More is being planned and there are a ton of other ways to give for the upcoming season, so please read further to find out how you can help. Between all these focused projects and our continuing food pantry, helping so many in our community, there are numerous ways to make an impact.
- The Chapel School is back in session! The teachers and children are busy in the classrooms and playground, and it is wonderful to hear the joy throughout the church. However, enrollment is still active for the 2025-2026 school year, so if there is a family that may need our services, I invite you to connect them with Gina or Roberta. Tours are happening regularly.
- We are working to have another new member class soon, for those that may have missed it back in the spring. So, if you or someone you know is interested in being a full and voting member of our congregation, there will be more opportunities soon. Please see Rev. Ann or myself for more information.
- Our Membership Development & Communications team is hard at work planning fun events throughout the coming year. They are investigating lots of activities and fellowship times, so

stay tuned. If you're interested in their work or helping out, please reach out to Christine Bane for more information.

- ...and so much more!

So, if you're looking for some way to help our church and our community, there's plenty of options. Also, there's always the prayer shawl ministry, other outreach projects, singing or ringing in one of our outstanding choirs, or just joining the walking group to help yourself. There are so many new opportunities available through our historic congregation, so feel free to seek out what you would like and help our neighbors & neighborhood at the same time.

As always, all are welcome to chat anytime with me. I love to hear your ideas and suggestions. We also have a lot of other activities and missions scheduled, so I would love your input. I know you all work so hard to make our church a blessing to our families and neighbors, and I thank you from the bottom of my heart. Let's keep the energy and drive rolling, continuing to seek God, care for each other, and improve our community.

God bless!!!

Josh Ferry



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SOUP'S ON! 2025 HIGHLIGHT

This spring brought powerful moments of hope—especially at our *Soup's On!* Dinner & Auction, where the energy, stories, and shared purpose reminded us of what's possible when a community comes together. Thanks to our amazing guests, volunteers, sponsors, soup donors, potters, and supporters, we not only gathered in joy and solidarity, we surpassed our fundraising goal!

So many wonderful moments! We are especially honored by First Church Methuen's ten thousand dollar donation and are grateful for the local family foundation that matched twenty-five thousand dollars in donations.

Thank you for believing in our mission—and for making Soup's On! 2025 such a success.



Pastoral Search Committee Update



The Search Committee has had a busy few months. Since our last update, we completed a congregational survey, held feedback sessions, and continued to work on our church profile that will be circulated to prospective candidates. The profile is a comprehensive description of who we are, what we do, and who we want to be. It also includes data on our community, our finances, and our membership. We expect to wrap up work on our profile in early September and post it with the UCC. Once our profile is posted, the search begins!

Our committee meets every other Thursday at 7:00 PM, typically in person. As with all committees (other than the Pastor Parish Relations Committee), our meetings are open to everyone. Our next meeting is in September, and we will be discussing the draft of the profile. Feel free to join us!

Please speak to any one of us if you have any questions. Our committee members are Steve Boyko, Lori Bennett, Mike Boutin, Jen Dockham, Fred Frederiksen, Stacey Murray, Sue Newton, Sue Riedel, Carol Silva, John Silva, Becky Smith and Josh Ferry (ex-officio).

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Blessing of the Animals Service Saturday, October 4th, at 10:00 AM

It is that time of year when we gather for a ***Blessing of the Animals*** service. Saint Francis of Assisi is known as the patron saint of animals, and his commemoration takes place on October 4th. He lived long ago, yet his message is still among us!

Here is what we know: He was born Giovanni di Pietro di Bernardone (c. 1181 – 3 October 1226). He was known as Francis of Assisi OFM (Order of Friars Minor), an Italian mystic and Catholic friar who founded the Franciscans.

For us today, Francis is the patron saint of all animals. This is not limited to the animals that happen to be our pets; in fact, his patronage is based on the lore of his preaching the gospel to wild animals. If we keep to the spirit of Saint Francis, then our blessing should encompass pets, work and farm animals, and animals in the wild.

Plan to join us (rain or shine) for a blessing day at First Church! We'll gather in the church parking lot for this time together. Come and bring a furry friend! (Or just come and be part of the blessing day.) Questions? Call Rev. Ann at First Church. She'd be delighted for you to come to assist her with the service and in offering a blessing to animals and their families.



Musical Musings

I can't believe summer is nearly over...didn't it just start? Rich and I spent some time in the woods of Pennsylvania, which was lovely and relaxing, even though I was working remotely most of the time! And we've had some long weekends, and some fun day trips....another great summer! And of course, in the midst of the summer, I had the opportunity to lead worship and preach here twice, which was such a blessing. And I led worship and preached twice at Stratford St Church in West Roxbury, too. I must confess: I had forgotten how much I love to preach....

Now, it's back to choir season. Choir will return on Sunday, Sept 7, and Welcome Back Sunday is Sept 14: I am looking forward to another great choir season. We always welcome new singers: for a week, one or two weeks a month, or every week. Singers who can read music are most welcome....and younger people who like to sing are welcome too! We rehearse on Sunday mornings beginning at 8:30 AM. Come to a rehearsal, or introduce yourself to me after worship on a Sunday morning. If you play an instrument, I'd love to hear from you, too. There are lots of ways to get involved in music at First Church: we are a great community of faith friends. We laugh together, pray and sing together, learn together, and we'd love for you to join us!

Our handbell choir this year will be ably led by Paul DeLabruere, a doctoral music candidate at BU, who has rung bells with us and sung in the choir for special events. I am so happy that Paul agreed to direct the bells after Jim Conner left last spring. Paul will direct the handbells for special events throughout the year: Advent Cantata, Christmas, Palm Sunday Cantata, Easter, and Music Sunday. He is an extraordinarily gifted musician, so we are blessed to have him working with us.

I'm also pleased to announce that Chris Albrecht has agreed to be our Choral Fellow this year. Chris has sung occasionally with us in the past for special Sundays, but for this coming year, will be singing with us weekly. It is a real blessing to have someone like Chris with his voice and training leading our tenor and bass sections and providing the necessary support for the other singers. Thank you, Chris, for taking on this important role!

As always, I welcome your thoughts and comments about our music program: what you like or don't like, hymns you'd love to sing or never sing again!, or ideas or suggestions you'd like to share.

Peace and all good things,

Mike Boutin



From the Outreach Ministry Team...

Back to School Project

- Under the leadership of Lisa Ferry and her team of volunteers, the 15th Annual Back to School Project was successfully held on Saturday, August 16th at the Methuen Arlington Neighborhood, Inc.
- 75 excited children received new school outfits, sneakers, backpacks filled with age-appropriate school supplies, and a healthy snack pack. They also received a hand knit, winter hat in their favorite color from our Prayer Shawl Ministry.
- Volunteers said they received great pleasure in seeing the joy and happiness on the children's faces when they opened their box of sneakers and found a new pair of New Balance sneakers in their favorite color.
- Lisa thanks everyone who contributed in any way to the success of the Project.

"Let's Book It" Book Drive

- The Outreach month-long book drive for the Marsh Grammar School kicks off on Sunday, September 14th and ends on Sunday, October 12th.
- In this issue of *The Beacon*, you will find a flyer with information on suggested books and authors to purchase as well as a list of curriculum related books suggested by the Marsh School to compliment a new curriculum they are using this year. There is also information on suggested places from which to purchase books. We also accept "gently used" age-appropriate books. Our book list is also on Amazon.
- If you prefer not to purchase books yourself, we will do it for you. You can send a check to FCC made out to First Church Congregational with the words "Book Drive" written on it. Team Leaders are Cindy Bateson and Jo-Ann Crosby.

Outreach Welcomes Missionary Speaker Elena Huegel

- Elena Huegel will be with us on Sunday, September 28th during worship to share some of her experience as a UCC Global Ministries missionary in Mexico. She is from Houston, Texas. Currently she is with the Intercultural Research and Studies Institute in Chiapas, Mexico. See her biographical information in this issue of *The Beacon*.
- Outreach will host a special Coffee Hour to enable us to have conversation with Elena after church. Rev. Ann has invited the Forest Street Union Church to join us for Coffee Hour.

Lazarus House's "Walk for Hope Fall Festival"

- Lazarus House is changing the name of this event from "Hike for Hope" to **"Walk for Hope Fall Festival."** This year's "Walk" is on Saturday, September 13th at the Veteran's Memorial Stadium in Lawrence. Registration is at 9:00AM and the "Walk" begins at 10:00 AM. Registration is \$30.00. Becky Smith has set up a First Church Team. She also has an article in this month's *Beacon*. The team link is: https://myevent.com/walkforhope2025/participants/first_church_methuen
- Lazarus House's mission is dedicated to breaking the cycle of poverty and homelessness in our community.
- If you are unable to walk, please consider giving one of our walkers a donation they can donate for Lazarus House's Mission work in our community.

Samaritans Walk for Hope

- The Samaritans Walk for Hope is on Saturday, October 18th. Please save the date and consider walking. The “Walk” begins at 10:00 AM and is held at the North Andover High School Indoor Track. Becky Smith will be setting up a FCC Team. We’ll have more information in the October *Beacon*.

Outreach’s Page on FCC Website

- At our August meeting we discussed the need to update our page on the church’s website. We will do this using information from our “Outreach Opportunities” booklet.

Spicket River Clean-Up

- Becky Smith and Rev. Ann were recently at a Greater Lawrence Community Action Council Networking Event. It was from materials there that Becky learned they were going to work on cleaning-up the Spicket River at Manchester Street Park in Lawrence on Saturday, September 20. Becky plans to go and invites others to join her. If interested, please talk with Becky.

Neighbors In Need Food Pantry

- Our Food Pantry has continued to be open each Tuesday evening through the summer even though many of our other church groups took July and/or August off. We are grateful to all the volunteers who worked through the summer heat and humidity.
- As we reported last month, NIN is continuing to find it increasingly difficult to obtain enough food for all the people who come to our pantry as well as their other pantries. Many of the food sources they have used in the past are no longer available.

Outreach Ministry Team

Marilyn Peck, Team Leader, Cindy Bateson, Lori Bennett, Jo-Ann Crosby, Barbara Donaghue, Ken Peck, Marie Rubino, Carole Silva, John Silva and Becky Smith



Let's Book It!!

"Enjoy watching our bookcase come alive!"

The Outreach Ministry Team, in collaboration with the Marsh Grammar School, will be hosting a month-long book drive for grades K-5, which kicks off on **September 14th**.

The Marsh School is a K-8 school attended by a diverse group of learners from our community. There are approximately 1100 students in the school. The Marsh focus on building literacy skills has resulted in notable progress since the challenges of virtual education during COVID. A new literacy curriculum will be used in the Methuen Public Schools this school year, which will address literacy across subjects including history, science, literature and the arts. The Marsh School has provided us with a list of 23 requested books which align with their new curriculum. These books have been added to the beginning of our Amazon Wish List.

How will the Book Drive work? Each Sunday, September 14th to October 12th, bring your books to worship (10:00 AM). You may leave them on the table in the crossroads or bring them into the sanctuary and place them next to the bookcase. Members of Outreach will count them and arrange them on the bookcase. We will have a printed list of book titles, authors and book series to hand out in September. You may also access and purchase them on our *Amazon Wish List* using the link below. It's always exciting to watch the bookshelves fill up!

Not sure how to get involved, here are some ideas:

- You can purchase new books, in-person or online, at retailers such as Barnes & Noble, Target, Walmart, Book Bundler, etc.
- Amazon Wish List
https://www.amazon.com/hz/wishlist/ls/3RS6VJMNR45HA?ref=wl_share
- Shop for gently used book's at the Nevins Library Fall Book Sale, September 26th – 29th.

• Requested authors & book series:

Tedd Arnold
Annie Barrows
Aaron Blabey
Katrina Charman
Beverly Cleary
Roald Dahl

Kate DiCamillo
Rebecca Elliot
Jory John
Jeff Kinney
Eric Litwin
Lois Lowry

Mary Pope Osborne
Dav Pilkey
Tracey West
Mo Willems
"Who Was ..." Series
"Who Would Win" Series

Help us fill our bookcase and bring the joy of reading to children's hearts!

The Outreach Ministry Team

Jo-Ann Crosby and Cindy Bateson (Book Drive Leaders), Lori Bennett, Carole Silva, John Silva, Barbara Donaghue, Becky Smith, Marie Rubino, Ken Peck, and Marilyn Peck (Outreach Chair)

Walking Group for Fitness and Fellowship

Tuesdays in September

Come join church friends for weekly walks along the Merrimack River as the weather begins to cool down. We will return to walking at **10:00 AM** on the following Tuesdays in September: 9/2, 9/9, 9/16, 9/23 and 9/30. We walk at the Raymond J. Martin Riverside Park (960 Riverside Drive) in Methuen. You can walk as many loops as you want (3 times around equals 1 mile) and walk at your own pace. Hope you can join us as fall arrives!



CALLING ALL WALKERS!!



Lazarus House Ministries WALK for HOPE Fall Festival

(formerly called the Hike for Hope)

Saturday September 13, 2025

10:00 AM – Lawrence Veteran's Memorial Stadium

Come join our **“First Church Methuen”** team for this fun community focused event that brings us all together to raise critical funds for Lazarus House to continue to meet the needs of the increasing number of Guests who find themselves without the necessary Food, Clothing and Shelter for their families.

Schedule of Events

- 9:00 AM – Registration/Check-in Begins
 - 10:00 AM - Walk for Hope starts
- Kids activities – Face Painting & Temporary Tattoos
 - After the walk - Music and snacks
 - Dog- friendly event

REGISTRATION FEE IS \$30.00

Click below to register:

https://myevent.com/walkforhope2025/participants/first_church_methuen

By using the link above the form should automatically give you the option to join the **“First Church Methuen”** team. Just click the **“join this team”** button and complete the registration.

If you are unable to join us on the walk this year, but would still like to make a donation, please use the link above. The donation link is on the same page.

If you have any questions about how to register, donate or about the event itself, please contact Becky Smith who set up our team. The Outreach Team thanks everyone who has supported the Walk for Hope Fall Festival all of these years.



From the Stewardship Ministry Team

During this past year we have Imagined Together ways that we can live by our mission statement to seek God, care for each other and improve our community. And throughout this year we have welcomed new members, held confirmation classes and a group book study, heard from some guest speakers, and grown our Sunday School program. What can we envision for the future of our church as we seek a settled minister.

Living the Vision Together is the theme our Stewardship Team has chosen for this year, hopefully inspiring us to set forth what we see our church becoming in the future with the guidance of a new minister and living that vision. We have requested everyone to let us know what you envision for our church, and we are thankful for all of the responses we have received. We would still appreciate hearing from you and ask you to share your vision for First Church by emailing the church office or using the form available with the Sunday bulletin. We can all be good stewards of our church by *Living the Vision Together*.

Stewardship Ministry Team:

Kathy Romano – Chairperson

Irene Maggio, Marilyn Peck, Robyn Sliney



* * * * *

Spicket River Clean-Up

Rev. Ann & Becky Smith met at the many local organizations at the Greater Lawrence Community Action Council networking event last spring. One of those organizations was Groundwork Lawrence. The Groundwork Lawrence mission and operations are premised on the understanding that environmental conditions are inextricably linked to the economic and health of a neighborhood. They are changing places, changing lives, and changing systems through on-the-ground projects that help to transform local communities.

On Saturday, September 20th, they are holding a clean-up of the Spicket River at Manchester St Park in Lawrence from 8:00 AM to 1:00 PM.

If you are interested in joining me and helping out, you can register at <https://groundworklawrence.org/events/spicketrivercleanup>. And if you have any questions, please see Becky.



Prayer Shawl Ministry



The Prayer Shawl Ministry meets year-round and always welcomes anyone who wishes to be part of this ministry. Knitting or crocheting experience is not a prerequisite to becoming a member. Come for the fellowship and someone will be glad to help you if needed. Please contact Carol Gray or Deb Bonfanti for more information.

We invite you to join us on **Wednesdays from 1:00 - 3:00 PM**,
in the Parlor of First Church Congregational.



* * * * *

First Church Congregational



On October 29, 2029, First Church will be celebrating its 300th birthday! Some churches over the years have closed their doors or consolidated with other churches, but First Church has thrived and grown! And I believe this is something to be celebrated!!

I have some ideas... I'd love to have the year before with some small celebrations where we invite the community to join us. And end with a celebration weekend on the last weekend of October 2029. I'd love to hear your ideas. But more importantly, we need to pull a 300th Birthday steering committee together to guide this momentous occasion.

It may seem early, but things will take more time to plan and execute. And in 2026, Methuen will be celebrating its 300th birthday; wouldn't it be great for First Church to join in this celebration. If you are interested in joining me on this exciting adventure, please join me in the Ladies' Parlor after church on September 21st.

I am so excited about the future of First Church and its history, and I hope you are too and that I'll see you on September 21st. If you have any questions, please see Becky Smith.

Open and Affirming (O&A) Committee

The ONA Committee completed the exploratory survey but do not feel we have enough support to take it to a congregational vote at this time. We paused our activities for now to give us all time to reflect. In the meantime, we as a congregation are discovering how to live as a church that welcomes and embraces everyone who comes through our doors. We want to intentionally create a space where everyone feels safe, valued, and included. This involves actively seeking to understand and meet the needs of newcomers, both in terms of practical assistance and emotional support. A welcoming church fosters a sense of belonging by demonstrating genuine care, offering opportunities for connection, and celebrating the diversity within the community.

To show our commitment to being a welcoming congregation, we now include the following inclusivity statement in our bulletin each week:

"We welcome you to First Church Congregational! Indeed, all are welcome including those of all races, ethnicities, ages, sexual orientations, gender identities and expressions, family structures, faith backgrounds, abilities and economic circumstances, into the full life and ministry of the church."

Over the next several months, we ask that you consider how we can be more welcoming to others. Perhaps sit with someone we don't really know at coffee hour, help a visitor find the Parish Hall, or remember someone's name that we were introduced to last week.

Romans 15:7 instructs believers to *"Welcome one another, then, just as Christ also welcomed you, for the glory of God"*. This verse emphasizes the importance of acceptance and unity within the Christian community, using Christ's acceptance of believers as the model. It highlights that this mutual acceptance is not just a social nicety but a way to glorify God.

The ONA Committee invites you to join us for conversations about how to continue to foster our spirit of welcoming and acceptance to all who come through our doors.



ONA Committee – Sue Newton, *Chair*, Irene Maggio, Christine Bane, Josh Ferry *Ex officio*

* * * * *



Ham & Bean Dinner

Saturday, October 18th



The Chapel School

Wow!! Summer went by so fast and we are so excited to start our new school year. Preparations have been underway now for several weeks to open Chapel. The building is cleaned, class lists are made, and the teachers are putting final touches in their classrooms. We are ready to welcome our little ones back! We have lots of new students and many returning! We can't wait to see all the smiling faces.

We are looking forward to the sights and sounds of the children in the building again! We will be opening the doors for the school year on Wednesday, September 3rd, 2025. We will be open from 7:30-4:00 with lots of children coming and going at different times. Our before and after school sessions are filling up quickly and our lunch bunch program will be busting at the seams before we know it.

We are excited for all the new and returning events that the school has to offer and look forward to collaborating with the Church for other exciting events.

Parents and children attended our open house on Aug 28th. Ms. Roberta has been working so hard getting all the paperwork completed and into our Procure system. We cannot thank her enough for this task is very time consuming and she has it down to a science.

This team of teachers and administrators are excited for another great year at Chapel.

Gina Colarusso
Director



The Chapel School is ready for 2025-26



Playground ↑



PreK Classroom ↑

↓ Classroom 3

↓ Classroom 2



↓ Classroom 1



Lunch Bunch ↓



Prayer for September Days

Amena Brown is a spoken word poet and performing artist from Atlanta, Georgia. May her words be an invitation help us hear God speaking to us, nurturing the life in the Spirit, as we celebrate life in the context of church community or wherever our journey takes us.

*She said, "How do you know when you are hearing from God?"
I didn't know how to explain ...
My words never felt so small, so useless, so incapable
I wanted to say
Put your hand in the middle of your chest
Feel the rhythm there
I wanted to say you will find the holy text in so many places
On crinkly pages of scripture in dusty hymnals
In the creases of a grandmother's smile
God's ears are here for the babies
For the immigrant, for the refugee
For the depressed, for the lonely, for the dreamers
The widow, the orphan, the oppressed and the helpless
Those about to make a mess or caught in the middle of cleaning one up
Dirt don't scare God's ears, God is a gardener
God knows things can't grow without sun, rain, and soil ...
I want to tell her God is always waiting
Lingering after the doors close and the phone doesn't ring
And we are finally alone, God is always saying
I love you, I am here, don't go, stay, please
I try to explain how God is pleading with us
To trust, to love, to listen
That God's voice is melody and bass lines and whisper and thunder and grace
Sometimes when I pray, I think of her
How the voice of God was lingering in her very question
How so many of us just like her
Just like me, just like you
Are still searching, still questioning, still doubting
I know I don't have all the answers, I know I never will
That sometimes the best thing we can do is put our hands in the middle of our chest
Feel the rhythm there
Turn down the noise in our minds, in our lives
And whisper, God whatever you want to say
I'm here, I'm listening*

(This is poem in found in "She said, 'How do you know when you are hearing from God?'," in *A Rhythm of Prayer: A Collection of Meditations for Renewal*, ed. Sarah Bessey (New York: Convergent Books, 2020), 7, 8, 9, 10–11. Used with permission of author.)

MAN Back to School Project

Saturday, August 16, 2025

Thank you to everyone that came to help today at the First Church Congregational MAN, Inc. 15th Annual Back to School Project Mall Day distribution event! Seventy-five children were so excited about their new clothes, new hand-made winter hats, new sneakers, their brand-new backpacks filled with school supplies and their snack packs donated and prepared by the Methuen Masons, Sam Drogin and Rich Dooley.

Thank you to all of the volunteers from First Church Congregational including Josh Ferry, Beth Buck, Becky Smith, John & Carole Silva, Marie Rubino, Barbara Donaghue, Anne Edwards, Marla Yarid DeLaCruz and Magda Ballard.

A big shout out to the First Church Congregational Prayer Shawl Ministry for making 75 winter hats for the children!

Thank you to Mayor DJ Beauregard for attending and for providing the Ice Cream Truck; Kasey Armstrong from State Auditor Diana DiZoglio's office, Marina Acosta from Senator Pavel Payano's office, Firefighter Eric Moreau from Methuen Fire Department, Methuen City Councilors Ron Marsan, Neily Soto and Patricia Valley for being there to support this amazing project.

A big thank you to John Vargas of Bada Bing for providing all the volunteers with a wonderful and delicious lunch.

Thank you to Lynn Vidler for providing the craft supplies and for working with my sister, Linda Yarid Koutoulas and Gavin O'Connell to help all the kids make beautiful cards to thank Methuen's first responders in the Methuen Police Department, Methuen Dispatchers and Methuen Fire Department.

Big shout out to Jill DeLeary from Old Navy for all her help with clothes shopping!

A big thank you to Ruth Estes, Erli Rivera, Iverson Rodriguez, Anailys Moreta Garcia, and Linda Soucy from MAN, Inc.

Thank you to all those that made this possible with their donations: the Masons for their donation of snack bags and financial support, New Balance Footwear Company for the 75 pairs of beautiful sneakers; Commonwealth Motors, the donation of backpacks and school supplies from Accutemp Engineering and DCU Credit Union; Methuen Police Superior's Union, Methuen Fire Department Local 1691, Methuen AFSCME Union, Jennifer Kannan, former Mayor Bill Manzi, former Senator James Jajuga, Anne Benedix, Glen & Anne Edwards, Pat King, Carole & John Silva, Josh Ferry, Julie Tulley, and the Methuen Exchange Club.

Thank you notes from the children who received backpacks!



What's the REACH Ministry?

Do you know of someone facing surgery, recovering from surgery or living with a long-term illness? Do you know someone who has recently lost their job or could use financial support? Do you know someone who suffers from depression or is often down in the dumps around the holidays?



Maybe this person is you?

If so, we can help. Our new **REACH** Ministry wants to make sure that members of our community have a place to turn for support in their time of need. The term **REACH** stands for -- **R**eliable, **E**ngaging, **A**ble, **C**aring and **H**earfelt support.

Contact Judi Boyko or Pat King for more information, or speak to our Pastor.

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Would you like to make an electronic donation to the church?

Use your smart phone or tablet by scanning this QR code!



Or visit our website at www.firstchurchmethuen.com
and click the **"Donate"** button.

Thank you for your support.



SEPTEMBER BIRTHDAYS

01	Joan Zonfa
04	Mike Boutin
09	John Pavlenkov
10	Julianna Buck
12	Kenneth Peck
13	Nancy Drummond
17	Beth Buck
18	Sally Dockham, Kathy Romano
21	Tina Willard
25	Debra Brown
26	Larry Sliney
30	Janet Diver

OCTOBER BIRTHDAYS

07	Joyce Koop
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SEPTEMBER ANNIVERSARIES

9/1	Melissa & Justin Hodgkins	Married 8 years
9/3	Jonathan & Stacy Bennett	Married 13 years
9/16	Patrick & Terry Romano	Married 51 years
9/19	Gary & Sally Dockham	Married 26 years
9/25	Michael & Diane Alaimo	Married 43 years
9/30	Charlene & Matthew Bunting	Married 18 years

OCTOBER ANNIVERSARIES

10/4	Michael & Cynthia Causbie	Married 38 years
10/6	John & Carole Silva	Married 34 years

 September 2025 						
Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Worship Service <i>Sundays at 10:00 AM</i> <i>In-Person &</i> <i>on Facebook Live</i> www.facebook.com/firstchurchmethuen	1 Church Office Closed 	2 10:00 AM Walking Group (Riverside Park, Methuen) 4:30 PM Methuen Food Pantry Distribution	3 <i>Classes Start</i> The Chapel School 1:00 PM Prayer Shawl 6:30 PM Church Board	4 7:00 PM Search Committee	5	6
7 Communion 8:30 AM Chancel Choir 11:15 AM Fellowship Time 11:15 AM Confirmation Class	8 4:00 PM Chapel Staff 6:30 PM Finance	9 10:00 AM Walking Group (Riverside Park, Methuen) 4:30 PM Methuen Food Pantry Distribution	10 8:00 AM Breakfast with Rev. Ann 1:00 PM Methuen Clergy Group 1:00 PM Prayer Shawl 7:00 PM Diaconate	11	12	13 10:00 AM Hike for Hope Fall Festival (Lawrence Veterans Memorial Stadium)
14 Welcome Sunday 8:30 AM Chancel Choir 11:15 AM BBQ Fun	15 1:00 PM Cook for Bread & Roses 6:30 PM Outreach	16 10:00 AM Walking Group (Riverside Park, Methuen) 4:30 PM Methuen Food Pantry Distribution	17 October BEACON deadline 1:00 PM Prayer Shawl	18 7:00 PM Search Committee	19	20
21 8:30 AM Chancel Choir 11:15 AM Fellowship Time 11:15 AM Confirmation Class	22 5:00 PM CE Meeting	23 10:00 AM Walking Group (Riverside Park, Methuen) 4:30 PM Methuen Food Pantry Distribution	24 1:00 PM Prayer Shawl	25	26	27
28 8:30 AM Chancel Choir 11:15 AM Fellowship Time *Special Missionary Visit	29 2:00 PM Stewardship	30				

Dates and times are subject to change

First Church Congregational
United Church of Christ
26 Pleasant Street
Methuen, MA 01844-3199

Address Service Requested