

Welcome Sunday
Sunday, September 20th
Worship at 10:00 AM

SEPTEMBER 2026



THE BEACON



First Church Congregational *United Church of Christ*

26 Pleasant Street
Methuen, MA 01844-3199

Telephone: (978) 687-1240

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Worship on Sundays at 10:00 AM

In person & on YouTube Live

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

Dear members and friends of First Church,

As we experience the last days of summer and beginning of autumn this month, we are glad our world is in constant motion giving us opportunity to appreciate the gifts of nature and the gifts of seasonal change. The Labor Day weekend prepares us for transformation and transition as the leaves turn, the air cools and the vibrant colors catch our attention. We are glad for the church, our spiritual home, helping us to be grounded and present in the moment to feel the Spirit guiding us with changes that are happening in the natural world and in our church this month.

Truly, the Pentecost season continues to invite us to be the living, breathing evidence of the Spirit moving in and among us whatever changes are in the making. In this last newsletter article to you, I'd like to express my gratitude for the time we have shared in mutual ministry. Truly, the song that

we'll sing in September with the children/youth in worship expresses my thankfulness for being the church "together" with you. The chorus is familiar: *"I am the Church, You are the Church, We are the Church together, All who follow Jesus all around the world! Yes, we're the church together!"*

The song goes on to say, *"The church is not a building; the church is not a steeple; the church is not a resting place; the church is a people."* Presbyterians ministers Richard Kinsey Avery (1934-2020) and Donald Stuart Marsh (1923-2010) collaborated on more than 150 songs and this is one of their best. All generations have embraced this childlike song as a clear description of the nature of the Christian church. A close examination of the text reveals that this hymn is not childish in its implications. Indeed, the authors offer a clear ecclesiology lesson that articulates the nature of the church.

I share about the "nature of the church" and our call to be the church (in all seasons) as I prepare to move on to a new position to serve as an intentional interim and take you, First Church family, with me in my thoughts and prayers. As you may know by now, I will be moving to a new interim ministry in October this year. September will mark two years of being with you as your interim pastor so the time has come to move to my next calling. I have been called to serve the Westwood Hills Congregational Church UCC in Los Angeles, California.

My heart is heavy as I prepare to say goodbye to you at the end of this month. I have come to know you and cherish our ministry together in this place. You have given me a warm welcome and a loving place in ministry among you. I will always be grateful for the ways we have joined our hearts and minds to love and care for one another, to be the church with words and actions.

I'll cherish your prayers for me as I begin a new ministry in southern California.

Interim periods in the life of the church are important times for reflection and discernment. I hope we have used this time wisely to talk about the past, process it, and allow past days to prepare you for future days of ministry with a new settled minister. We talk about "new chapters" in our lives as churches and you have a new chapter to write when you welcome a settled minister in the future. I am grateful for Steve Boyko, Search Committee Chair, and all who are serving faithfully during this search process. My prayers are extended to the First Church Search Committee and you, the congregation, as you continue in a period discernment.

The good news is that we are never alone as we journey with an interim or settled minister in life together. We turn to God's promises to be with us and guide us whatever our journey and whatever our time to be faithful followers of the Christ. Psalm 108 reminds us of God's promise to be with us so we can be "the church" at our best: *"Come to me when your hearts are heavy and I will give you rest. For as I am in you so do you live in me; We are One in the Spirit of Love. Be my messengers of peace, be bearers of mercy and justice; Let love triumph over fear."*

We come into September days grateful for the opportunities to be the church in word and deed! We have some wonderful Sundays ahead. I hope to see you when you are able to be in worship this month so we can celebrate our mutual ministry and say our goodbyes when that time comes.

Now, as the universal church, let us cherish each day and look forward to sharing a future of enriching and transforming moments that bind us forever as God's people. Whether together or apart, we thank our "God of the journey" for being our faithful Companion on the way of life.

Grace and peace,
Rev. Ann Rogers Brigham
Interim Minister



From the Chair of the Church Board...

Fellow Members and Friends,

I would like to share an update about an important transition in our pastoral leadership and the status of our search for a settled pastor.

At our last meeting, the Board accepted Reverend Ann's resignation, which she submitted in order to pursue a call to serve a congregation in Los Angeles, California. Although we are saddened that her ministry among us is coming to an end, we are profoundly grateful for the many ways Ann has supported, encouraged, and challenged us throughout our journey together. She has guided us through an important season in the life of our church, helping to restore unity within the congregation while offering thoughtful leadership, meaningful worship, personal and authentic pastoral care, and a deep commitment to our shared ministry. We have no doubt that her next congregation will be blessed by her wisdom, compassion, experience, and faithful leadership.

Reverend Ann's last day with us will be September 27th. Please plan to join us that day as we celebrate her ministry, give thanks for our time together, and wish her every blessing in her next chapter.

Reverend Ann's departure will understandably raise questions about where things stand in our search for a settled pastor. After reviewing the profiles of 17 candidates and engaging in considerable prayer, reflection, and discussion, the Search Committee has decided to pause the search. Although we interviewed several highly qualified candidates, we ultimately did not identify one person who possessed the full combination of skills, experience, spirituality, energy, and personal qualities that we believe our congregation needs at this time.

We do not believe it would be wise to recommend calling a settled pastor simply for the sake of completing the search. Instead, this pause will allow the candidate pool time to refresh, give us space to clarify and refocus our search, and enable us to work with our parishioners, friends, and community partners to prepare thoughtfully for the next chapter in the life of our church. Although this season brings both change and uncertainty, we move forward with deep gratitude for Reverend Ann's ministry, unwavering faith in our shared mission, and confidence in the future of our church.

I would be happy to answer any questions you may have about Reverend Ann's departure, the pastoral search, or our plans for the future. Please feel free to call or text me or simply stop me in the halls in the weeks ahead.

With gratitude and hope,

Steve Boyko
Church Board Chair



PASTORAL
SEARCH
COMMITTEE



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 YouTube Live (www.youtube.com/@firstchurchcongregationalm1729).

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

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Starting Wednesday, September 9th, the First Church & Chapel School Office will be open Monday through Friday, 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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Breakfast with Ann

Breakfast with Ann will be held on Wednesday, September 9th, at 8:00 AM. Join Rev. Ann and friends at Ellie's Farmhouse, 436 Broadway in Methuen, for good food and conversation.



Come back to worship and join the fun!

Welcome Sunday

Sunday, September 20th

Worship at 10:00 AM

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

Bring a salad or dessert to share.

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Special Worship Opportunities in September

- **September 6th – Fifteenth Sunday after Pentecost, Communion and Labor Day Sunday**
 - Lessons: Exodus 12:1-14, Matthew 18:15-20
- **September 13th – Sixteenth Sunday after Pentecost, Choir is back to sing in worship!**
 - Lessons: Exodus 14:19-31, Matthew 18:21-35
- **September 20th – Seventeenth Sunday after Pentecost, “Welcome Back” Sunday**
 - Lessons: Exodus 16:2-15, Matthew 20:1-16
- **September 27th – Eighteenth Sunday after Pentecost, Farewell to Rev. Ann**
 - Lessons: Exodus 17:1-7, Matthew 21:23-32

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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Labor Day Prayer

As the sun rises to bring in the new day:

We remember those who descend into the earth, their work begins in darkness, pulling from the earth, the resources we steward.

We remember those who work inside a building away from the light and brightness of the day.

We remember those who work outside in the harsh elements of our world, the bitter cold and sweltering heat of extremes.

We remember those who do not have a job to go to, who are struggling to meet the needs of their daily living expenses, for whom the day becomes long and arduous.

As the sun sets to bring in the evening of rest:

We remember those who work in the night.

We remember those who are trying to recover from their labor and toils of the day.

We remember those who participate in unsafe and dangerous work.

We pray for a renewed sense of dignity in their lives and in their work.

God, in your goodness, you have made a home for the worker. Make a place in our hearts for compassion to the men and women who labor tirelessly for basic necessities. Ensure a place for the men and women who are struggling to find work. Grant us your wisdom to greet and care for those who are unable to work due to illness or circumstances that prevent their participation. Be with the children who are not able to run and play, but instead must put in a hard day's work to help their family afford to eat, to live. Be with us all, Christ Jesus, as we go about the busyness of our work. Hold us accountable not only for our actions, but most importantly to each of our neighbors. May we continue to work together to bring about your reign! We ask this in your holy name, through the power of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Musical Musings

Summer has its own rhythm at First Church. Things slow down a little, familiar routines shift, and there is time to breathe, travel, and experience the world beyond our usual routines. Rich and I were especially blessed this summer to spend a couple of wonderful weeks in Guatemala—a beautiful country whose people, landscapes, faith, and stories stayed with me long after we returned home. Those of you who were in worship during July and August heard a little of Guatemala find its way into my preaching. I suppose that's inevitable: the experiences that move us have a way of becoming part of the stories we tell and the ways we understand God at work in the world.

One of the other great joys of my summer was the opportunity to lead worship during several Sundays in July and August. I loved being able to serve our congregation in a different way. Whether I'm sitting at the organ, standing in front of the choir, or leading worship from the pulpit, I'm reminded of what a privilege it is to help create the space in which we gather as a community and encounter God together.

And now, almost unbelievably, September is here—and that means **the choir is coming back!**

We begin our season a little differently this year with an **all-day Choir Retreat on Saturday, September 12, from 9:00 a.m.–2:00 p.m.** at the church. Along with plenty of singing and a first look at music for the year ahead, we'll spend time in prayer, work on vocal technique, brush up on a little music theory, and—perhaps most importantly—simply enjoy being together. Choir is about making beautiful music, certainly, but it is also about building community, caring for one another, and offering our gifts in service to the church.

The choir returns to Sunday worship on **September 13**, and then we'll celebrate **Welcome Back Sunday on September 20**, as our whole church family begins another year of worship, ministry, learning, service, and fellowship together.

I'm also delighted to welcome **Michael Mitchell, our new Choral Fellow**. Michael recently graduated from the Osher School of Music at the University of Southern Maine, where he studied Vocal Performance and minored in Dance, and he is now pursuing graduate studies in Music Education at UMass Lowell. While at Southern Maine, Michael served as president of the school's a cappella group and on the board of its student chapter of the American Choral Directors Association, and was recognized in both classical and musical theater competitions through NATS. In addition to his studies, Michael teaches voice at North Main Music in Nashua and performs in regional theater. He'll be lending his voice to both our tenor and bass sections this year. We're thrilled to have him with us, and I know you'll join me in giving Michael a very warm First Church welcome!

There is lots of wonderful music ahead this year, and I can't wait to get started. After the quieter rhythms of summer, it will be very good to have everyone back—and to hear the choir filling our sanctuary once again.

See you in September!

Mike Boutin



Christian Education Report

Hello everyone,

Hope you are having a wonderful summer. **Looking forward to our 2026/2027 Season.**

Sunday School will begin on September 20th. We will continue using Spark, a lectionary-based curriculum, which follows the same scripture the congregation will be reading during worship throughout the year, as well as adding some variety with some special lessons. If you are interested in helping with the Sunday School program, please speak to Mrs. B.

We will be having a Ladies Craft Evening which Mrs. B will run. Our craft is planned, but the Date TBA. A mission outreach to Common Cathedral is being planned for our older youth as well as one for the adults. More information once dates are picked. We are also trying to get more information about serving Under the Bridges, which will be for adults and older youth and/or families who wish to join us. A Bible study is ready that is focused on the book, *"All Creatures Great and Small"* and I am willing to do this if there is an interest.

We will be Clucking for Chickens this year for Heifer. In addition to Heifer, we will also be doing an outreach fundraiser to help our local MSPCA Farm.

We welcome any thoughts or ideas you might have, as we continue to put together CE events for the year.

Blessings,

Mrs. B, Sarah Pavlovsk and the CE Committee

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Family Youth Interests

Sunday School Schedule to be completed when lectionary Scriptures are determined.

- September 20th – Welcome Sunday
- September 27th – Matthew 21:23-32
- October 4th – Communion Review
- October 11th –Matthew 1:14

Please complete the Sunday School registration form, on the following pages, for all children who will be attending Sunday School and return to the Church Office as soon as possible.

Thank you.

First Church Congregational

--- Founded 1729 ---
26 Pleasant Street
Methuen, Massachusetts 01844
Phone: 978-687-1240; Fax: 978-687-6547
www.firstchurchmethuen.com



Rev. Dr. Ann Rogers-Brigham
Interim Senior Pastor

Registration Form for Sunday School

PLEASE PRINT

Parent/Guardian Name(s): _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Emergency Contact (Name/Phone): _____

For Sunday School Notifications

Parent/Guardian 1

Email: _____ Cell Phone: _____

Parent/Guardian 2

Email: _____ Cell Phone: _____

Child Name(s)	Birthdate	Age	Grade
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1: _____

2: _____

3: _____

4: _____

5: _____

Please list all allergies, or medical conditions, for each child:

1: _____

2: _____

3: _____

4: _____

5: _____

< Please complete both sides >

- I have read the attached Safety Guidelines and discussed them with my child(ren) and we agree to abide by them.

Please check one and initial:

_____ yes

_____ no

_____ Parent/Guardian Initials

- Please check all you be interested in helping with:

_____ Sunday School Teacher/Assistant

_____ 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 qualifications for the scholarship.

- Please make your selection below as to whether you give permission for pictures to be taken of your child(ren) participating in Sunday School and church activities to be used in the weekly bulletin, Beacon Newsletter, FCC website and social media pages, 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 cellphones or electronic devices in the Sunday School Classroom. Parents should hold these devices while the child(ren) is/are in class. If a child does bring a device to class, the teacher will hold the device until the end of class.

Signature: _____ Date: _____
Parent/Guardian

Return the completed Registration Form to the Church Office. Thank you!

< Please complete both sides >

First Church Congregational

Sunday School

Safety Guidelines and Procedures

Our Safe Church Committee and the Christian Education Committee has worked together to put guidelines and procedures in place for all Sunday School students and those people that work with the children and 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** – 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.
- **Personal Protection** – No adult will EVER be alone with any child or youth where they cannot be visually observed by others (unless with their own child). Two adults will be present in all groups of youth and children. The Church will obtain and have on file a CORI (Criminal Official Records Investigation) for all Sunday School Teachers and others that work with the children. Any person charged with a violent offense or sexual offense and convicted will not be involved with our youth in any manner.
- **Supervision** – Children/Youth who come to church for Sunday School will be supervised properly until they are dismissed to their parent or guardian.
- **Notification** – Any inappropriate conduct or relationship between an adult and a child or youth and any injuries, bruises, or behavior which are suspicious in nature need to be reported to the Pastor or Safe Church Committee as soon as possible.
- **Rules ALL the children/youth should abide by:**
 - Check in and check out with Sunday School teacher.
 - No cellphone, or electronic device, use during class.
 - Proper behavior is expected at all times.
 - Do not take Chapel classroom toys or supplies.
 - Stay with your class, DO NOT go off alone.

Keep This Sheet for Your Information.



From the Stewardship Ministry Team...

For the past several months we have been Living the Vision Together. We heard from many members and friends about their vision for First Church. We have a vision to grow, learn, reach out, and serve our community. We want to be a welcoming place that is growing in membership and in faith. During this past year we have seen growth in our Sunday School program, attended group book/Bible study and worked together on many community outreach opportunities.

Practicing Generosity Together is the theme our Stewardship Team has chosen for this year's pledge campaign, celebrating the ways that we generously give of our time, talent and treasure. It is incredible to realize how generous our congregation is when we think about the amount of time our members and friends contribute to put on our two annual dinners, cooking meals for the needy (Bread and Roses), handing out groceries at our weekly food pantry, serving on the Church Board and its teams: how so many share their talent singing in the choir, knitting shawls and hats, assisting in worship by serving as liturgist: we all share our treasure thru our weekly/monthly offerings, and donating goods or money to our many Outreach Programs. These are just some of the ways that First Church is ***Practicing Generosity Together***. You will hear much more during our annual pledge campaign this fall.

Stewardship Ministry Team:

Kathy Romano – Chairperson

Irene Maggio, Marilyn Peck, Robyn Sliney

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New Church Directory with Pictures!

It's been a few years since we last had a church directory with pictures of our church family. We are planning a "Picture Day" on Sunday, September 13th, during coffee hour, with an additional day on Sunday, October 4th.



Prayers for the 25th Anniversary of 9/11

We remember, God of history and remembrance, we remember. We remember when the towers fell and the lives were lost; we remember the dust and the smoke, the despair, and the grief. We remember that sense of vulnerability and shock. We remember the numbness that overwhelmed us as we watched our screens for hours and hours, waiting for an explanation and understanding that never came. We remember.

We remember, God of hope and presence, we remember. We remember the heroes, those who rushed to help, who guided the wounded down innumerable flights of stairs, who rose to overwhelm those who held death in their hands. We remember the hours and the days of binding wounds and healing hurts, giving comfort, drying tears. We remember words of support and compassion from nations far and wide. We remember.

We remember in part because we see the ripples of that tragic day continue to impact our world many years later. We grieve with allies today as our allies grieved with us twenty-five years ago. And together we wonder if there will ever be an end . . . to violence, to war, to hatred, to death. We remember and we grieve our world's inability to learn the things that lead to peace.

We call to you now in our remembrance, God of justice and of peace. Give us a will to truly pray that your kin-dom may come on earth as it is in heaven. Amen and Amen.



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Ham & Bean Dinner

Saturday, October 17th



From the Outreach Ministry Team...

Back to School Project

Many thanks to Lisa Yarid Ferry who led the Back to School Project in its 16th year. Lisa worked tirelessly through many tasks over several months to make the project a great success. There was an air of excitement on Mall Day as children and their parents arrived to pick up their new clothes, New Balance sneakers and a hand knit hat (thank you Prayer Shawl Ministry), not to mention a snack pack from the Masons, and ice cream treats from the ice cream truck thanks to Mayor Beauregard. Be sure and read Lisa's detailed thank you letter in this Beacon!

Fall "Let's Book It!" Board Book Drive

The Book Drive will run from **September 13th to October 4th**. The books collected will be donated to the Methuen Public Schools Early Childhood Center which provides special education classroom programs and therapies to preschool children identified with a variety of special needs. Make sure you read the book drive flyer contained in this Beacon newsletter for more important details.

Lazarus House Walk for Hope Fall Festival

The 2026 Lazarus House Walk for Hope Fall Festival is happening on **September 19th** at **Lawrence Veterans Memorial Stadium**. Funds raised help support programming for individuals and families facing homelessness and food insecurity. There is no set distance for this walk, you may walk as many loops around the track as you want. It is a fun and festive atmosphere with music and special guests. The walk starts at 10:00 AM and check-in opens at 9:00 AM. Come enjoy the music and festivities and help raise money for Lazarus House.

You can click on the link below to register to walk with the First Church Methuen Team or to donate. https://secure3.convio.net/lhmin/site/TR?fr_id=1060&pg=entry

Samaritans of Merrimack Valley Walk for Hope

The 2026 Samaritans Walk for Hope is taking place on **Saturday, October 24th** at **The Park on Chestnut Street in Andover**. Check-in starts at 9:00 AM and the walk begins at 10:00 AM. Funds raised will provide suicide prevention trainings, support for individuals who have experienced loss, support groups for loss survivors, outreach, education and much more. Speak to Becky Smith if you are interested. You can also learn more and register with the First Church team on their website at fsmv.org.

Clothing Drive for YMCA Kids Closet

This fall we will be holding a clothing drive from **October 11th through November 8th** to help restock the Methuen YMCA's "Kids Closet". We will be collecting "gently used" clothes for children wearing sizes 2T up through adult small and medium. Share this news with family and friends who may have children growing out of their clothing and looking to donate them. Watch for more information in upcoming Beacons and bulletins.

Outreach Ministry Team

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



Let's Book It!!

"Enjoy watching our bookcase come alive!"

This year our fifth annual book drive will benefit the **Methuen Public Schools Early Childhood Center**. The ECC provides classroom special education programs and therapies to 3-5 year old Methuen children identified with special needs. Board books donated during our book drive will be used in the classrooms or given to children to take home, to boost their developmental skills.

A list of suggested titles has been provided by Kelly Blanchette, ECC Special Education Administrator. You can access the wish list on Amazon by clicking on the link below. You may also pick up a printed list at First Church. Very gently used board books will be accepted (please check all pages).

Each Sunday from September 13th through October 4th, you may bring your books to church and place them in the box next to the bookcase or leave them on the table at the crossroads. The books will be counted and placed on the bookcase following each service.

If you prefer to donate money and have us order books for you, please speak to someone on the Outreach Team. Thank you for supporting "Let's Book It!"

"A book is a gift you can open again and again."

~ Garrison Keillor

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 books at the Nevins Library Fall Book Sale, September 25th – 28th.

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

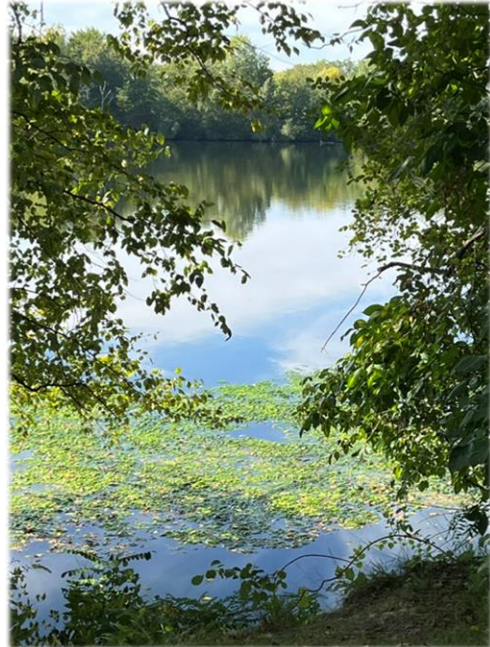
The Outreach Ministry Team

Cindy Bateson (chair), Lori Bennett, JoAnn Crosby, Ken Peck, Marilyn Peck, Marie Rubino. Carole Silva. John Silva and Beckv Smith

Walking Group for Fitness and Fellowship

Tuesdays in September

Fall is coming and we invite you to join us walking along the Merrimack River. We are changing back to our 10:00 AM time as the weather starts to cool down. We walk at the Raymond J. Martin Riverside Park at 971 Riverside Drive in Methuen on a safe, flat looped walkway, with beautiful scenery along the Merrimack River. Tuesdays in September are 9/1, 9/8, 9/15, 9/22 and 9/29.



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.



KNIT. CROCHET. PRAY.

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While Cynthia Causbie, former Outreach Committee Chair, was in town recently, several FCC friends got together for lunch with her.

Open and Affirming (O&A) Committee

We often hear the question: "Why can't the church just say God loves everyone? Why do we have to specifically affirm LGBTQ+ people, speak against racism, celebrate diversity, or advocate for women?"

The answer is simple.

Because throughout history, the Church has not always treated everyone as though they were equally beloved by God. There have been those who were told they were less than. Less worthy. Less welcome. Less called. Less human.

To name those who have been excluded is not to exclude everyone else. It is to proclaim the Gospel where it has too often been denied. Jesus consistently saw those society overlooked and drew them into the center of the community. The Church is called to do the same.

We believe God loves everyone. And because we believe that, we will continue to speak clearly to those who have been told otherwise.

"There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus." ~ Galatians 3:28

Until everyone knows they are fully loved, fully welcomed, and fully valued, the Church's work is not finished.





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 the children back! We have 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 9th. We will be open from 7:30 AM - 4:00 PM, 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 bursting 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/Meet & Greet on Thursday, September 3rd. Miss Roberta & I have been working hard getting all the paperwork completed and into our Procure system.

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

Gina Colarusso
Director



The Chapel School is ready for 2026-27



Playground ↑

↓ Classroom 3



PreK Classroom ↑

↓ Classroom 2



↓ Classroom 1



Lunch Bunch ↓



Prayer for the New School Year and Special Prayers for Our Chapel School at First Church

We honor learning as a gift from God and pray for students, staff and teachers as they begin a new year. We pray for our Chapel School here at First Church, our staff, teachers and young students and their families who enter our doors through the week.

As we begin this new school year, we give thanks, O God that you have given us the ability to learn many things in many ways.

Loving God, sometimes a new school year seems exciting or scary or both.

Help us remember to show our thanks for your gifts of learning by doing our best every day.

We ask that you bless our schools, teachers, classmates and friends.

We ask that you bless those who prepare our lunches, those who drive us to school, and those who keep our schools clean and safe.

We ask for your blessing, Loving God, on this new school year. We ask, especially, you bless our Chapel School here at First Church. May be a time when we appreciate and fully use your gift of learning. Amen.

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Thank you to our Youth Liturgists in August



Nico Jurovich on Sunday, August 23rd



Bella Bane on Sunday, August 30th



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. 16th 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. Thank you to all of the volunteers from First Church Congregational including Josh Ferry, Becky Smith, Pat King, Cindy Bateson, John & Carole Silva, Ryan DiZoglio, Marie Rubino and Marla Yarid DeLaCruz. 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 Beaugard for attending and for providing the Ice Cream Truck; MPD Officers Laflamme and Fitzgerald for handing out the delicious ice cream treats, State Representative Ryan Hamilton, Kasey Armstrong from State Auditor Diana DiZoglio's office and Methuen City Councilor Ryan DiZoglio for being there to volunteer and support this amazing project. Thank you to Lynn Vidler for providing the craft supplies and thank you to my sister Linda Yarid Koutoulas, Gavin O'Connell and MPD Sergeant Dan O'Connell for their guidance and help for all the kids who made beautiful cards to thank Methuen's first-responders in the Methuen Police Department, Methuen Dispatchers and Methuen Fire Department.

Big shout out to Beth Buck for all her help with clothes shopping! A big thank you Brenda Rubio, Lisandra Mejia, Erli Rivera, Carl Cadet, Gabriel Nyarko, Ruth Estes, 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 Eileen DiBartolomeo and Punishers LMC Dirty Water Chapter Motorcycle Club; Methuen Police Superior's Union, Methuen Fire Department Local 1691, Methuen AFSCME Union, Pat King, Carole & John Silva, Josh Ferry, Julie Tulley, and the Methuen Exchange Club.



Prayer for Autumn Days Ahead

Autumn Months

O God of Creation, you have blessed us with the changing of the seasons.

*As we welcome the autumn months,
may the earlier setting of the sun
remind us to take time to rest.*

*May the brilliant colors of the leaves
remind us of the wonder of your creation.*

*May the steam of our breath in the cool air
remind us that it is you who give us the breath of life.*

*May the harvest from the fields remind us of the abundance we have been given
and bounty we are to share with others.*

*May the dying of summer's spirit remind us of your great promise that death is temporary
and life is eternal.*

We praise you for your goodness forever and ever.

~ Author Unknown

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Save the Date

Blessing of the Pets

Sunday, October 4th at 2:00 PM



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

9/3	Jonathan & Stacy Bennett	Married 15 years
9/16	Patrick & Terry Romano	Married 53 years
9/19	Gary & Sally Dockham	Married 28years
9/25	Michael & Diane Alaimo	Married 45 years
9/30	Charlene & Matthew Bunting	Married 20 years

OCTOBER ANNIVERSARIES

10/6	John & Carole Silva	Married 36 years
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 September 2026 						
Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Worship Service <i>Sundays at 10:00 AM</i> <i>In-Person &</i> <i>on YouTube Live</i> www.youtube.com/@firstchurchcongregationalm1729		1 10:00 AM Walking Group (Riverside Park, Methuen) 4:30 PM Methuen Food Pantry Distribution	2 1:00 PM Prayer Shawl 6:30 PM Church Board	3 9:00 - 11:30 AM Chapel Open House/Meet & Greet 12:00 PM Chapel Staff	4	5
6 Communion 11:15 AM Fellowship Time	7 Church Office Closed 	8 10:00 AM Walking Group (Riverside Park, Methuen) 4:30 PM Methuen Food Pantry Distribution	9 Classes Start The Chapel School 8:00 AM Breakfast with Rev. Ann 1:00 PM Prayer Shawl 7:00 PM Diaconate	10	11	12
13 <i>Book Drive Begins</i> 8:30 AM Chancel Choir 11:15 AM Fellowship Time	14 1:00 PM Cook For Bread & Roses 6:30 PM Outreach	15 10:00 AM Walking Group (Riverside Park, Methuen) 4:30 PM Methuen Food Pantry Distribution	16 1:00 PM Prayer Shawl	17	18	19 10:00 AM Hike for Hope Fall Festival (Lawrence Veterans Memorial Stadium)
20 <i>Welcome Sunday</i> 8:30 AM Chancel Choir 11:15 AM BBQ Fellowship	21	22 10:00 AM Walking Group (Riverside Park, Methuen) 4:30 PM Methuen Food Pantry Distribution	23 October BEACON deadline 1:00 PM Prayer Shawl	24	25	26
27 8:30 AM Chancel Choir 11:15 AM Fellowship Time* *Committee Fair and Farewell to Rev. Ann	28 2:00 PM Stewardship	29 10:00 AM Walking Group (Riverside Park, Methuen) 4:30 PM Methuen Food Pantry Distribution	30 1:00 PM Prayer Shawl			

Dates and times are subject to change