

Glad Tidings

First Congregational Church of West Brookfield
United Church of Christ
October 2025

36 North Main Street, PO Box 371
West Brookfield, MA 01585 508-867-7078
Facebook: First Congregational Church of
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Website: westbrookfieldcongregationalucc.org



From Our New Pastor

Dear Friends,

Writing my first piece for *Glad Tidings* is a bit of a daunting task. How do I distill into one page the myriad thoughts and emotions at this moment toward the close of my first month as pastor of our community of faith? I'll begin by saying thank you—thank you for the warm embrace of welcome you have offered to Karen and me as we have made this transition. Your thoughtfulness, caring, generosity (the welcome basket was lovely!), and assistance in getting us settled and me acquainted with worship practices and programming details here at church have all been appreciated deeply and sources of significant comfort and joy.

Such comfort and joy have been especially helpful to me in maintaining a spirit of hope as we navigate the troubling times in which we find ourselves in the life of our country, times that seem to be characterized by hate, fear, and injustice. I have been wrestling with the question of how do we “do” authentic Christian ministry, ministry that answers the prophet Micah’s call to “act justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with your God”? This is a question that we as a church family will be called to consider in these disturbing and difficult times—and we will seek tangible ways to answer that question and act. Together.

Two of my spiritual guides have written pieces of wisdom that might be touchstones for us in that process. The late pastor, theologian, and author Fr. Henri Nouwen wrote an important reminder: “For Jesus, there are no countries to be conquered, no ideologies to be imposed, no people to be dominated. There are only children, women, and men to be loved.”

What does that love look like? Well, it’s not passive, as Fr. Richard Rohr pointed out in a recent *Daily Meditation* column. He began by quoting Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.: “In his sermon ‘Loving Your Enemies,’ Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. (1929–1968) insists that agape love is the path to justice and peace:

“When I speak of love I am not speaking of some sentimental and weak response. I am speaking of that force which all of the great religions have seen as the supreme unifying principle of life. Love is somehow the key that unlocks the door which leads to ultimate reality.... Far from being the pious injunction of a Utopian dreamer, the command

to love one's enemy is an absolute necessity for our survival. Love even for enemies is the key to the solution of the problems of our world. Jesus is not an impractical idealist: he is the practical realist.

"I am certain that Jesus understood the difficulty inherent in the act of loving one's enemy. He never joined the ranks of those who talk glibly about the easiness of the moral life. He realized that every genuine expression of love grows out of a consistent and total surrender to God. So when Jesus said "Love your enemy," he was not unmindful of its stringent qualities. Yet he meant every word of it. Our responsibility as Christians is to discover the meaning of this command and seek passionately to live it out in our daily lives.... When Jesus bids us to love our enemies, he is speaking neither of *eros* [romantic love] nor *philia* [reciprocal love of friends]; he is speaking of *agape*, understanding and creative, redemptive goodwill for all people. Only by following this way and responding with this type of love are we able to be children of our Father who is in heaven."

Fr. Rohr then concluded by quoting John Dear, a contemporary priest and author, writing, "*Dear has worked on many movements for peace in the tradition of Gandhi and Dr. King to abolish war, racism, poverty, ... and environmental destruction. Dear identifies agape love as the source of his commitment to nonviolence: 'Nonviolence to me means active love, pursuing its common truth, this basic truth of reality, which is that we're all one. That we're already united, that we're already reconciled, that we're all children ... of a God of universal love. Therefore, we can't kill anybody, much less sit by if someone's hurting. We killed 100 million people in the last century. There are forty wars happening today. We are on track to blow up the planet and destroy the planet through catastrophic climate change. So, there's nothing passive about love. Love is active, creative, daring, public nonviolence that resists all the forces of death.'*"

Whew! I know this is a lot for an opening message. Thanks for inviting me to journey in faith and ministry with you—I feel quite blessed by your call and your welcome!

Grace and peace,
Doug



A Special Visit - *Stories from the Dignity Cookbook*

Please join your Mission Committee and others on **Tuesday, October 21st** for a delicious meal and an engaging presentation by Global Ministries missionary, Elena Huegel from Chiapas, Mexico. Elena has visited our church a few times over the years and with each visit those who attend are always mesmerized by her storytelling and message of hope. Elena, who works at the Institute for Intercultural Studies and Research on the southern border of Mexico will present stories, games, prayers, cultural notes, and indigenous wisdom from the Mayan people and maybe even a recipe or two from the *Dignity Cookbook: A Journal to Nurture our Relationships*.



A Simple Supper of soup, salad, bread and desserts will be served at 6 pm.

Elena's presentation will begin at 7 pm and will last about 1 hour.

Please plan to attend this wonderful presentation.



Elena's bio:

Elena Huegel, a Global Ministries mission co-worker, is a teacher, storyteller, poet and artist. As the coordinator of the Roots in the Ruins: Hope in Trauma International Collective, she works with a team of facilitators across Latin America to offer holistic spiritual accompaniment to individuals, groups and communities, nourishing hope and developing resilience in the midst of conflict and emotional trauma.

LINK TO SNEUCC STORY ABOUT ELENA.

[Churches Encouraged to Invite Visiting Global Partner to Speak](#)

Your Mission Committee: Stephanie Beland, Neil Blodgett, Debbie Steltzer, Angela Carville



October.... A time for Fall and the beautiful colors of God's gorgeous earth to start peeking out. In September we welcomed our new Pastor, Doug Williamson and his wife Karen to our church family. We have met with Doug and we are looking forward to his leadership in the coming years.

We will be having *Blessing of the Animals* service on the common, October 11th at 10 a.m. Our new banners have arrived and we have been displaying them with the beautiful altar cloths that we currently have. Let us know what you think. If you know of anyone that our church family should reach out to please contact Karen Murphy at kmurphy718@charter.net.

Blessings from your Deacons!

Nancy Arsenault, JoAnn Bakulski, Pat Jackman, Karen Murphy, Chris Showalter



Dreaming God's Dream - No gift too small, No dream too big.

The 2025 Stewardship campaign will begin on Sunday, September 28th and conclude with a special coffee hour on October 26th. During this period, we look forward to hearing from members of the congregation about what Stewardship means to them. On the 28th (this Sunday), you will find addressed envelopes containing a pledge card and a letter from the committee on a table in the fellowship hall. We ask that the pledge cards be returned on or by October 26th.

Thank you for your support of our church and Missions,
not just financially but also with donation of your time and talents.

Dee Blanton, Mary Deotte, Terry Hall, and Angela Carville.

Dismas Family Farm Fall Harvest Festival

Saturday, October 4th ~ 12-4pm

687 Lincoln Road, Oakham, MA

Come join us for hay rides, pumpkins, and
delicious fall treats at the farm!

Admission Free!

www.dismasisfamily.org

Rain Date- October 5th



Dismas Farm Dinners

We will be hosting the gents from Dismas
Farm on

**Tuesday, October 14th at 6.00 PM
at the church**

Main dishes, salads, sides and desserts are
welcome! Please contact Angela or Deanna if
you are bringing something to share.
Please join us for dinner and meet the gents!

Dismas Volunteers:

Deanna Randall - 413-436-7849
or drandall444@comcast.net

Millie Gushue - 413-436-7125;
or gushoo@comcast.net

Angela Carville - 508-347-1148 or
angelacarville67@gmail.com

Puzzle!

Use the words provided to complete the puzzle.
Then write the numbered words in the correct blanks
below to complete Psalm 67:6, NIV.

WORDS:

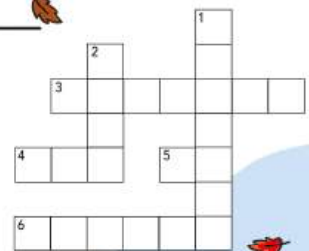
GOD, BLESSES, HARVEST,
YIELDS, US, LAND

ACROSS

3. Rhymes with farthest.
4. Rhymes with nod.
5. Rhymes with thus.
6. Rhymes with fields.

DOWN

1. Rhymes with messes.
2. Rhymes with hand.



The _____
its _____;
our God, _____

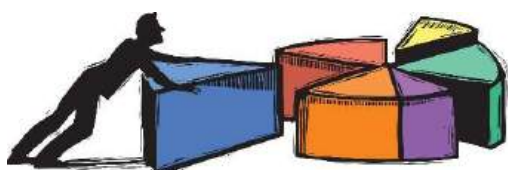
Psalm 67:6, NIV





Matthew Griffing – 10/04
Pat Turner – 10/12
Babs Martell – 10/21
Neil Blodgett – 10/22
Richard McDonald – 10/24

Greg & Cindy Dwelly – 10/5



Submit Your Budget Requests

Committee & Board Chairs: Budget Requests are due to the Parish Board no later than **Saturday, November 1** but prior to, is welcome! Please send to Wally Hall at terryle56@yahoo.com.

CONTACT INFORMATION FOR YOUR CHURCH OFFICERS & CHAIRS

Moderator: Dee Blanton – deebanton86@gmail.com

Deacon Chair: Karen Murphy – kmurphy718@charter.net

Parish Board Co-Chairs: Wally Hall – terryle56@yahoo.com & Mike Murphy – kmurphy718@charter.net

Treasurer – Mary Deotte – hombai@yahoo.com

Collector: Deanna Randall – drandall444@comcast.net

Clerk: Terry Hall – terryle56@yahoo.com

Church Phone: 508-867-7078

From Our Church Office

Church Secretary – Bonni Holmes – fccwbworship@gmail.com

Office Hours – Friday 8 am – 10 am

Please note – The *Glad Tidings* deadline for November is Monday, October 27th.

SOCIAL MEDIA CONNECTIONS

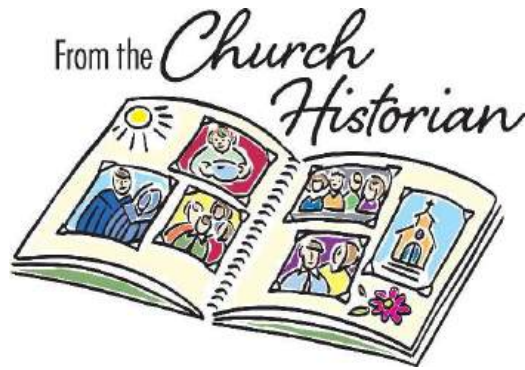
Website: westbrookfieldcongregationalucc.org

Facebook: First Congregational Church of West Brookfield, UCC

Instagram: Search @firstcongwestbrookfield



Our Mission and Vision Statement: *We are a church where all are welcome to worship together, to share in fellowship and to grow spiritually in our journey with Christ. We value justice, diversity, and freedom of expression. We strive to serve our community and all God's creation and to spread the love of God to all people.*



“In Remembrance of Me”

Have you noticed that recently our church has begun using a communion table on the main floor of our sanctuary and not the altar in our chancel to serve Holy Communion from? That communion table likely was added to our church in 1882, when our church was rebuilt and rededicated after our previous church building on this same basic site was completely destroyed by lightning and fire.

You might be interested to know that our church’s use of a communion table instead of an altar for Holy Communion is really a reaffirmation of our church’s long-standing heritage as a Congregational church.

Our Congregationalism grew out of the Reformed Protestant movement of the 16th century, which began then with Ulrich Zwingli and John Calvin, who were ministers in Switzerland. Reformed Protestantism has differed in some ways from the Lutheran branch of Protestantism, which Martin Luther began in Germany. And one of those ways was that both Zwingli and Calvin opposed the use of altars in churches. They also promoted the removal of such things as stained glass, crosses, statues, ornate vestments, and pictures from churches, because they viewed those items as distractions from Christian worship. They did that to return to what they considered the unadorned simplicity of early Christian churches.

The Roman Catholic religious tradition has long maintained its doctrine of transubstantiation. That is the belief that Christ is re-sacrificed every time Holy Communion is celebrated. It is the belief that when consecrated, the outward appearance of Communion bread and wine remains the same, but those elements are really transformed into the actual body and blood of Jesus, which in this sacrament are broken and shed for believers once again.

In fact, Zwingli and Calvin both rejected that doctrine and its view of the ever-continuing re-sacrifice of Christ. Instead, they maintained that Christ’s one death on the cross many centuries ago was the sufficient sacrifice of his body for all believers forever. As Zwingli maintained, the bread and wine of Holy Communion are only symbols or signs of Christ’s sacrificed body and blood. As Calvin essentially maintained, by the power of the Holy Spirit believers who partake of the bread and wine of Communion (also known as the Lord’s Supper) are nourished and spiritually filled with the life of Christ. Calvin also viewed this sacrament as a “bond of love” that seeks to inspire believers to love one another.

Evolving from the influence of Zwingli and Calvin, Reformed Protestantism emphasized the belief that the Lord's Supper is a remembrance of Jesus' sacrifice and not a continuing reenactment of it on a sacrificial altar. It also emphasized the belief that all believers, and not primarily clergy, have direct access to God through Christ. The result of these views was that for centuries, Congregationalists rejected altars and chose to use communion tables for this sacrament. And those tables were placed close to the congregation so clergy and parishioners could participate in and celebrate this sacrament together as a fellowship meal of remembrance and strengthening of their Christian faith, both as individuals and as a church family.

Have you noted the words that are engraved on our church's late 19th century communion table? They say, **"In Remembrance of Me."**

That practice continued for centuries. But then in the 1930s, some Congregational churches began to want to have more than just a pulpit and a communion table at the front of their sanctuaries for parishioners to focus on during their worship. That interest led to the creation of split chancels in many of our Congregational churches. Those chancels are usually on a level above the congregation, and they contain the pulpit, a lectern, a cross, and a piece of furniture in the middle of the chancel, which often looks much like an altar.

The 1938 hurricane badly damaged the sanctuary of our church. Our sanctuary was then rebuilt with such a new split chancel, which still remains today. I don't know for sure, but I suspect that likely was the beginning of our having a cross in our sanctuary.

In our modern day, does it really matter if we celebrate the sacrament of Holy Communion from a communion table or an altar? In my own thinking, this sacrament is still deeply meaningful to me whether I receive it from a split chancel altar or a communion table. Its significance doesn't change for me. However, admittedly, I do like, at least from time to time, both the reaffirmation of our Congregational heritage by serving this sacrament from a traditional communion table and by having those who lead it and our congregation be so close together on the same level when we all share this sacred meal of remembrance, fellowship, and inspiring Christian faith together.

Doug Showalter, FCCWB Historian





OCTOBER

<u>SUNDAY</u>	<u>MONDAY</u>	<u>TUESDAY</u>	<u>WEDNESDAY</u>	<u>THURSDAY</u>	<u>FRIDAY</u>	<u>SATURDAY</u>
			1 Sharing Cupboard 10 – 11:30 am	2 Sharing Cupboard 7 – 8 pm	3	4 Dismas Family Farm Fall Festival 12-4pm
5 Worship 10 am Coffee & Fellowship	6	7	8 Sharing Cupboard 10 – 11:30 am	9 Sharing Cupboard 7 – 8 pm	10	11
12 Worship 10 am Sunday School Coffee & Fellowship Deacons	13	14 Dismas Farm Potluck dinner at the church 6pm	15 Sharing Cupboard 10 – 11:30 am	16 Sharing Cupboard 7 – 8 pm	17	18 Parish Board 10am
19 Worship 10 am Coffee & Fellowship Church Council	20	21 Elena Huegel Global Ministries Presentation & simple supper 6pm	22 Sharing Cupboard 10 – 11:30 am	23 Sharing Cupboard 7 – 8 pm	24	25
26 Worship 10 am Sunday School Coffee & Fellowship	27 <i>Glad Tidings Deadline</i>	28	29	30	31	



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PO Box 371
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