



First Congregational Church of West Brookfield
United Church of Christ

July 2026

Glad Tidings

Dear Friends,

Most of you know that although I first truly felt a call to ordained ministry between my junior and senior years of college, I have tried to live out that call primarily in teaching in a variety of academic environments and in my years as a soccer coach and educator of other coaches. That means, relatively speaking, I am still new to the role of local church pastor—learning every day how best to serve in that role, making mistakes along the way, and always seeking the Spirit’s guidance regarding how best to preach, pray, and lead when and where it is appropriate to do so, and asking forgiveness when I get any of those things wrong.

Among the beliefs I bring to the role of local church pastor are two I’d like to mention in this month’s opening to Glad Tidings. The first is quite “Protestant” and comes from a hymn I learned in Sunday School: “I am the church! You are the church! We are the church together.” Although I am set aside by my ordination for certain roles as pastor, the ministry of our church is something we share together—and which this church has done well for many years! The second belief is that an important function of the pastor is to “pay attention”—a belief formed by an article written by a Mennonite pastor just a couple of years ago. That task involves paying attention to needs in our church, our community, and our world and helping us see how we, as a community of faith, might address any of them. It also involves paying attention to the reflections and writings of other ordained and lay Christian thinkers about the guidance of our scriptures and of Jesus’s teachings for our journeys of faith in the contemporary world, and the visions of those thinkers for the church in our time and beyond.

One of the ways I try to “pay attention” in that way is to read a variety of such writings on a regular basis. This past week, the writings of Fr. Richard Rohr grabbed my attention, and I want to share one of those offerings with us now, because it ties together a number of things I have mentioned thus far in this piece. Father Richard turns to the apostle Paul’s advice to the first churches to envision church renewal today (his words are in italics):

Prior to the imperial edicts in the fourth-century that pushed Christians to the top and the center of the Roman Empire, the church was still countercultural and non-imperial—a social movement for the reign of God. In a two-hundred-year period, Christians went from being complete outsiders to directing the inside! Christianity increasingly accepted, and even defended, the dominant social order, especially concerning war, money, and authority.

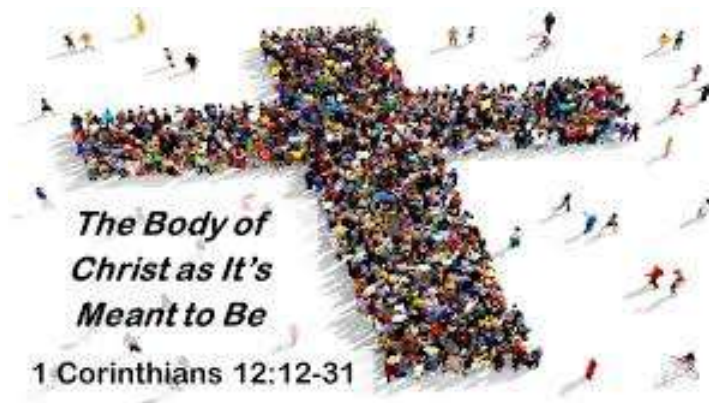
While Christian churches today do much good, they are still largely aligned, especially in the West, with cultural and political power. To recover the early church’s emphasis on faith as a loving and communal way of life, we clearly need to support good and compassionate pastoral and healing practices. We must begin to validate Paul’s original teaching on “many gifts and many ministries” (1 Corinthians 12:4–11) that together “make a unity in the work of service” (Ephesians 4:12–13). We

need Christian people who are trained in, validated for, and encouraged to make home and hospital visits; do hospice work and jail ministry; support immigrants and refugees; help with soup kitchens; counsel couples before, during, and after marriage; teach classes in parenting; offer ministries of emotional, sexual, and relational healing; help with financial counseling; build low-cost housing; take care of the elderly; run thrift centers—all of which put Christian people in immediate touch with other people. Remember, healing was most of the work Jesus appeared to do. It is almost too obvious. Either we see Christ in everyone, or we hardly see Christ in anyone. Either we are Christ to everyone, or we cannot be Christ to anyone.

My vision of any future church needs to be much flatter and much more inclusive. It is much less “churchy,” surely less patriarchal, and more concerned with fulfilling its mission statement than with endlessly reciting its heavenly vision and philosophy statement—the Nicene Creed—every Sunday. Simply put, any notion of a future church must be a fully practical church that is concerned about getting the job of love done—and done better and better. Centuries of emphasis on art and architecture, songs, liturgy, and prescribed roles have their place, but their overemphasis has made us a very top-heavy, decorative church that is largely, and constantly, concerned with its own in-house salvation.

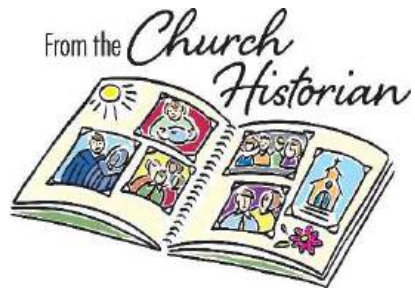
Most people today, in fact, understand church to mean a building, rather than “where two or three gather in my name,” where the Divine Presence is promised just as certainly as it is promised in the bread, in the Bible, in the Sacraments, or in any anointed leadership: “There I am in your midst” (Matthew 18:20).

Authentic leadership, I think, implies people who can spot, affirm, train, support, finance, and validate gifts and leadership wherever they see them in actual practice (think multipliers instead of monarchs). Then we are not all striving toward the top but striving toward supporting the supreme work of love flowing into the world.



I have included this lengthy piece here because I think Father Richard provides us with wise counsel and provocative food for thought about being the church in our time, including helpful ideas about leadership within the church, not just by the pastor, but by lay people as well. I recognize that his model for church in this moment of time can seem daunting and even overwhelming, and we will not be able to do all that he envisions—but I hope we will continue to think about we can do to “be Christ” in active ways to our community and beyond. Grace and peace,

Doug



Historian Report - July 2026

I continue to create, add, and revise (with additional information) documents to the Google Drive folder I am using to share historical information with our church. The following are my recent additions to that folder.

First Parish/FCCWB Land

~ Copies of deeds from 1759 to 1838 (with descriptions of their land parcels), which were given to First Parish for our Congregational church to be on.

First Parish Bylaws Compilation

~ Bylaw documents and information related to the First Parish from 1754 to 2017.

10-16-1717 Sermon at FCCWB Gathering

~ A copy of the sermon preached by Rev. Solomon Stoddard of Northampton when our church was officially “gathered” and Thomas Cheney was ordained to serve as our church’s minister. That sermon was entitled: *The duty of Gospel-ministers to preserve a people from corruption.*

10-16-1717 Covenant at FCCWB Gathering

~ A copy of the covenant, which people needed to give their assent to when our church was first “gathered” in order for them to be accepted as members of our church.

My Papa’s Meeting House --Franke Coombs

~ What was it like to worship in a Massachusetts Congregational Meeting House in the years before the Civil War? This document was written by a grandmother (who died in 1911) to describe her experience of worshiping in such a meeting house when she was a very young girl in the 1840s. Her family was active in that church, and it was right beside her home. The church she speaks of apparently was the North Brookfield Congregational Church. But I don’t doubt that her experience there would have been quite similar if she had been in our West Brookfield church then. This document was found in our Historical Room.

The Night our Church Burned to the Ground

~ A compilation of newspaper articles that tell the story of the total destruction of our church, including its Paul Revere bell and organ, when our church apparently was struck by lightning on the night of February 28, 1881.

The link to that shared Google Drive folder is:

https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1WKYMBDAMgxt_unYZfBik9cJdaR2GnukX?usp=sharing

Doug Showalter

Congratulations - Special Recognition!

Recently, Pastor Doug's alma mater, Rockford University in Illinois, named him this year's recipient of their Annual Alumni of Distinction award!

This Award of Distinction is given to alumni for fulfilling the ideals of Rockford University and bringing honor and esteem to the University in one or more of the following ways: through their vision, dedication, and initiative in a purposeful endeavor; by their responsive and sustained efforts in community improvements; or by their notable achievements in a profession. As a church, we are living his success in all of these areas! Congratulations, Pastor Doug. We are proud that you are our minister!



J. Irving & Jane L. England Award

Pat Jackman has been recognized by the Quaboag Historical Society with the J. Irving England and Jane L. England Award for community service. This award is presented to an individual whose volunteer work in the community has made the town of West Brookfield and the larger Quaboag Plantation a better place. Pat's service as the Director of the Sharing Cupboard Food Pantry for the past 22 years made her an outstanding candidate for this award. The Sharing Cupboard, housed in the basement of our church, was started in 2002 to address food insecurity in the communities of West Brookfield, Warren, and West Warren. The Sharing Cupboard is a partner agency of the Worcester County Food Bank. Pat will be honored at a dinner at Salem Cross later this Fall. Congratulations Pat, this recognition is well deserved!



Mother's Day & Father's Day

Your Board of Deacons gave each woman in the church a lovely carnation on Mother's Day and each man in the church a delicious whoopie pie on Father's Day. We appreciate all that both genders do for our church throughout the year!

Thank you!

(Our thanks to Nancy Arsenault for securing the carnations and to Karen Andersen for making the delicious whoopie pies!)

Visiting Friends

Are you someone who would be able to make a short visit or a phone call to a shut-in, someone recovering from a medical issue or grieving? The Board of Deacons are seeking a group of folks who enjoy reaching out to others with a kind word and an inquiry regarding how they are doing. Is that you? If so, please let Pastor Doug or a member of the Deacons know. Thank you.

Prayer Requests

If you have a prayer request you would like to be shared on a Sunday morning, there are different options you can use. There is a red book on the rear table where you can write your request for the deacon on duty to share with Pastor Doug, or you can raise your hand during prayer time and speak your prayer out loud. Please keep in mind that if you speak your request, say it loud enough for all to hear.

Pat Jackman, Chris Showalter, Nancy Arsenault, Debbie Decoste, Linda Daskowski, Deanna Randall and Terry Hall





Parish Board would like to thank Dave Steltzer for painting the men's room. Take a look if you haven't already.

We will be having the parking lot repaired and resurfaced in the very near future. Please watch for notices or, a notice to be posted. There will be several days that the parking lot will not be available to be used.

Just a reminder if you find anything that needs the attention of the Parish Board, please write it in the book that is in the PB mailbox. Sunday is our time of worship not work. Your issue will be addressed just not on Sunday unless it is urgent.

Thank you!

Parish: Juan Bacigalupi, Karen Murphy, Dave Stelzer (handyman), Wally Hall, Mike Murphy & Doug Showalter (assistants)

THANK YOU!

TO ALL THAT HELPED MAKE THE SUMMER SOLSTICE “SING” PROGRAM SUCH A HUGE SUCCESS! THE “CHORUS FOR THESE TIMES” WERE WONDERFUL, IT WAS AN INCREDIBLE EVENING AND MUCH FUN WAS HAD BY ALL.

***AS A BONUS WE RAISED \$726 FOR
ABBY’S HOUSE!***





Kai von Bleicken – 7/1
Wally Hall – 7/3
Pastor Doug Williamson – 7/11
Al Collings – 7/15
Debbie Stelzer – 7/17
Karen Murphy – 7/22

Rev. Sharron & Charlie Lamothe – 7/13
Al & Kathy Collings – 7/18
Mike & Karen Murphy – 7/18
Helen & John Lapierre – 7/21

CONTACT INFORMATION FOR YOUR CHURCH OFFICERS & CHAIRS

Moderator: Dee Blanton – deebanton86@gmail.com
Deacon Chair: Terry Hall – terryle56@yahoo.com
Parish Board: Karen 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

Pastor - Rev. Dr. Doug Williamson – 913-387-9947 – djwnscaa@gmail.com
Office Hours- Wednesday by appointment & Friday 9:30am – 12:00, 1:00 – 2:00pm

Church Secretary – Bonni Holmes – fccwbworship@gmail.com
Office Hours – Friday 8 am – 10 am

Please note – The *Glad Tidings* deadline for August is Tuesday, July 28th

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.*



SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
			1 Sharing Cupboard 10 – 11:30 am	2 Sharing Cupboard 7 – 8 pm	3	4 
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
19 Worship 10 am Coffee & Fellowship	20	21	22 Sharing Cupboard 10 – 11:30 am	23 Sharing Cupboard 7 – 8 pm	24	25
26 Worship 10 am Sunday School Coffee & Fellowship	27	28 <u>Glad Tidings Deadline</u>	29	30	31	

Covenant of Welcome



We, the members of the First Congregational Church of West Brookfield, UCC, are a people of faith, following Jesus and sharing God's abundant love, believing each of us is created in God's image. We seek to demonstrate God's love through respect and care for one another. We celebrate and learn from differences in race, culture, gender identity and expression, sexual orientation, economic and political background, and physical and cognitive challenges. We welcome those who have no church home, need strength, want to follow Christ, or are seekers in their spiritual lives. All are invited to participate fully in the life, leadership, ministry and mission of this church as we strive to grow in a safe and nurturing community of faith. No matter who you are or where you are on life's journey, you are welcome here.

First Congregational Church of W. Brookfield, UCC
PO Box 371
36 N. Main St
W. Brookfield, MA 01585
July 2026

