



First Congregational Church of West Brookfield
United Church of Christ
an Open and Affirming Church

September 2026

Glad Tidings

"We humans are bound to God and to one another in a cosmic covenant that also includes all the other living creatures on the face of the earth:

'I will make for you a covenant on that day with the beasts of the field, the birds of the air, and the creeping things of the ground.'

We humans are not saved from the world but with the world; and that means, with the animals. Moreover, this cosmic covenant is not something that we humans have devised, but it has its source in the divine realm. It is conferred upon us as a gift by God."

— Metropolitan Kallistos of Diokleia

Dear Friends,

In our August 21 weekly announcements, I mentioned that our outdoor service of worship on Sunday, September 20 will focus on themes from the "Season of Creation." From September 1 to October 4, Christians around the world mark the Season of Creation, a relatively recent development in the liturgical calendar.

The practice began in 1989 when Ecumenical Patriarch Dimitrios I proclaimed September 1 a day of prayer for the environment. In 2000, a Lutheran congregation in Australia developed a four-week celebration of creation — and the idea spread throughout that nation and beyond. Eventually, the Vatican picked up the practice and the World Council of Churches promoted the new liturgical season. During these weeks, Christians are urged to recognize the theological centrality of God the Creator, Creation itself, the human vocation of caring for Creation, and doing justice on behalf of the Earth and all of her inhabitants.

One of my favorite Christian writers, Diana Butler Bass, challenges Christians everywhere not only to observe this season in some meaningful way, but to become proactive in promoting healing of the badly damaged planet upon which we live. She writes: "For all of its struggles internally, especially in the West, Christianity remains the world's largest religion — and it is incumbent upon people of faith to work for the Earth's healing and renewal in this time of crisis. Christians bear the burden of being part of the problem as many Christian traditions have badly muddled their theologies of creation and promoted practices that colonized and destroyed the very world we were instructed to 'till and keep.'"

Dr. Bass continues: "The Season of Creation is marked by repentance for that past, a call to deepen theological reflection and spiritual awareness of Creation, and engaging justice on behalf of nature and our neighbors. Attending to Creation in liturgy, prayer, scripture, and spirituality may be one of the most significant theological shifts in contemporary Christianity, and is certainly one of the most needed.

"The World Day of Prayer for Creation is not a kind of off-handed 'thoughts and prayers' dismissal," concludes Dr. Bass. "It is an invitation to experience faith differently, to center Creation and the Creator, and to learn the Bible and theology anew. This [season] invites us to *metanoia* — a profound change of heart and life, a genuine conversion toward a Creation-based vision of God, nature, and neighbor. "

We all need a new heart when it comes to the repair of this hurting, wounded world. And we need each other now — as urgently as the planet needs us. To help us renew our commitment to be faithful stewards of God's creation, we might begin with this prayer from the late Pope Francis:

*All-powerful God, you are present in the whole universe
and in the smallest of your creatures.
You embrace with your tenderness all that exists.
Pour out upon us the power of your love,
that we may protect life and beauty.*

*Fill us with peace, that we may live
as brothers and sisters, harming no one.
O God of the poor,
help us to rescue the abandoned and forgotten of this earth,
so precious in your eyes.*

*Bring healing to our lives,
that we may protect the world and not prey on it,
that we may sow beauty, not pollution and destruction.*

*Touch the hearts
of those who look only for gain
at the expense of the poor and the earth.*

*Teach us to discover the worth of each thing,
to be filled with awe and contemplation,
to recognize that we are profoundly united
with every creature
as we journey towards your infinite light.*

*We thank you for being with us each day.
Encourage us, we pray, in our struggle
for justice, love and peace.*

Grace and peace to one and all,

Pastor Doug



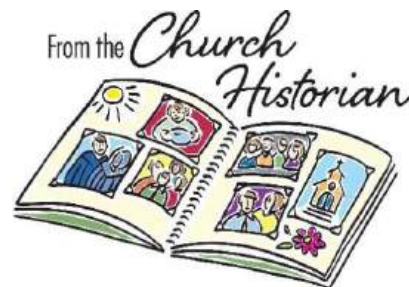
Historian Report – September 2026

Below are documents I've recently added to our shared FCCWB Google Drive folder at:

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

The First FCCWB Pipe Organ (1826)

I wonder, does the first pipe organ of our church still exist? And is it currently located in The Center Meetinghouse of Old Sturbridge Village? In this document I explore this question and why it has occurred to me. The correct answers to these questions have not yet been fully determined.



The Religion of Early West Brookfield (by David FitzGerald)

I've added this fine article by Dave, my fellow Historian of our church, to this folder. In this article, Dave gives us a quick overview of these important periods in the early history of our area and church: the Puritans, Quaboag Plantation and our First Meeting House, the Re-settlement and our Second Meeting House, the Great Awakening, the Division of the Parish, Legacies of Puritanism, Congregationalism, and our Third Meeting House and the American Revolution.

FCCWB Ministers (folder with two articles presently)

~ Rev. Eliakim Phelps 1816-1826

Rev. Phelps was a significant minister of our church. For example, he organized a Sunday school in our church, which was said to be **“one of the earliest Sunday schools established in this country.”** Imagine my surprise when I discovered that this same early minister of ours was portrayed in a 2017 movie. That movie showed him in his later retirement years when he had become involved in Spiritualism, lived in Stratford, Connecticut, and believed that evil spirits were haunting his house, ransacking it, causing house items to fly around suddenly, speaking in eerie voices, passing notes, and more. That movie is in the Amazon Prime series “Lore,” Season 1, Episode 4, “Passing Notes.” His supposed “haunted house” in Stratford was demolished in 1974.

~ FCCWB Minister Censuses 1790-1950

This document contains the every ten-year 1790-1950 census records of the ministers who served our church at those times. Depending on how detailed each census is, you may see where those ministers were living, the names, ages, and occupations of their family members and their neighbors, and much more in more recent censuses.

~ FCCWB_Cong. Library

This is a list from the Congregational Library in Boston, which shows the historic records it has of our church. Years back, our church gave many or all of those records to them for safe-keeping.

~ FCCWB Deacons Elected 1721-1819 and FCCWB 1867-1889 Synopsis of Records

These documents show handwritten notes found in our History Room, which were created from records of our church. The 1867-1889 Synopsis was taken from a record book that is now at the Congregational Library, but not available online.

For the general public to become more aware of our church and its long and interesting history, many of the documents in this shared Google Drive folder are now also available on “The Plantation Town Churches” page of the Quaboag-Research.org website at: <https://quaboag-research.org/the-plantation-town-churches>

Doug Showalter



Something New!

Worship Service on the Town Common, September 20th

Our September 20th worship service will be held on our beautiful town common in conjunction with The George Whitefield United Methodist Church. The service will begin at 10 am and the public is warmly invited to attend. Extra chairs will be available, but bringing your own is strongly requested. Instead of a collection, it is asked that items for the Sharing Cupboard Food Pantry be brought for donation. In case of rain, the service will be inside our church. Mark your calendars and plan to attend!

Can you lend a hand to help carry items to the common?

Please see Pastor Doug or Terry Hall to volunteer.



Annual Flea Market on the Common: Saturday, September 12th

9 am - 3 pm

Don't miss our Annual Flea Market on the Common!

- There will be a variety of vendors with beautiful hand-crafted items, antiques, and tag sale treasures! *Always something for everyone.*
- Be sure to check out our bountiful baked-goods tent sponsored by Debbie Steltzer and Karen Andersen and our yummy grilled-lunch tent run by Karen & Doug Murphy. Get your fresh grilled dogs and burgers before the summer ends!
- Chances to buy a raffle ticket for the beautiful handmade quilt by Mary Deotte are dwindling, as the winner will be drawn this December! Tickets will be sold at the Flea Market.
- Stop by the church's "Free and Donation Only" tables. Dee Blanton and Terry Hall will have tables of useful but unwanted items available for your donations (and a few usable free items too!).
- All of the above will be on the church lawn. Stop by!

A Special Announcement

Due to many factors, this will be our last Flea Market. This fundraiser was started more than 50 years ago and the organizers feel it is time for something new. The decision took a lot of thought and discussion, but it was felt that this is the best thing to do for the times we are in.

Questions? See Karen Murphy or Terry Hall



UCC Corner

The United Church of Christ (UCC) is a very active denomination and one our church is a member. Each month they send emails sharing the events the wider church is involved in, inspirational messages, informative workshops and events, and more. If you would like to know more about the UCC and what they do, please explore the following sources.

Website: <http://www.ucc.org>

Facebook: UnitedChurchofChrist

Instagram: unitedchurchofchrist

The UCC is divided into conferences around the country and our local conference is the Southern New England Conference. To learn about what they are doing and what they offer locally please visit their website: <http://www.sneucc.org>

Following is a sample of some of the programs and events currently being presented by our local conference:

[7th Annual Meeting: The Ties That Bind](#)

(UCC delegates, Pat Jackman and Terry Hall will attend with Pastor Doug).

Sept. 25 - 27

Worcester, MA & Online

A dynamic multi-day gathering with a keynote address by the Rev. Dr. Raphael G. Warnock, U.S. Senator from Georgia, workshops for church leaders, and inspiring worship. Registration now open.

[Rev. Dr. Raphael G. Warnock Keynote Address](#) - Sept. 26, 4:00 PM

[Conference Worship](#) - Sept. 27, 10:00 AM

DCU Center, Worcester, MA & Online

Not Attending the full Annual Meeting? Get \$35 tickets for the Keynote Address here, and/or register for free for Sunday worship.

Conference Workshops Available to All:

[Lunch & Learn: Starting the Conversation: Planned Giving](#)

Oct. 8, 12:00 to 1:00 PM • Online

This interactive workshop invites participants to reflect on generosity, personal values, and the legacy they hope to leave.

[Lunch and Learn: People Beyond Sunday: Simple Tech & Digital Ministry for Today's Church](#)

Oct. 22, 12:00 to 1:00 PM • Online

This hands-on workshop will help pastors and church leaders create quality digital ministry using simple, affordable technology.

[Sacred Soil](#)

Sept. 18, 9:30 AM to 5:30 PM

The Ecology School at River Bend Farm, Saco, ME

SNEUCC's Environmental Ministries Team will sponsor 10 people from SNEUCC church green teams to attend BTS's Convocation with speaker Leah Penniman, a Black Kreyol farmer, activist, author, scientist, and African Priest.

....AND SO MUCH MORE!



The parking lot repair is going very well. The guys from AFS have been working with us as far as our busy church schedule goes.

Currently we are cleaning out the closet by the History room as well as the one in the History room. We have found many old books in boxes. Juan has spread them all out in the big room. If you are interested in looking through them, please do it soon. Our historian Doug Showalter and Doug Williamson have been looking through them to decide if there are any of importance that pertain to our First Congregational Church of West Brookfield that we will keep.

During the coming months we will be working on several other projects such as gutter cleaning and freshening up the back hall.

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)



Dismas Farm Dinner

At the Church
Tuesday, September 8th at 6pm

Please let Deanna or Angela know if you are coming to join us, and what you will bring to share with the gents. Hope to see you there!

Dismas Volunteers

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

Angela Carville (508) 347-1148 or angelacarville@gmail.com



Our music program continues to shine!



Small Town Pride

On Saturday, June 27th, Rural Justice Network sponsored *Small Town Pride* at Ogara Park in Spencer. Small Town Pride is a celebration of all things LGBTQIA. The event included live performances of bands, dancers, singers, and speakers. The field was full of vendors distributing their own creations and information about opportunities in our surrounding towns and communities. Nonprofits were encouraged to attend, and our church was there sharing with others that we are now an open and affirming church and that *all are welcome*. Thanks to those who came out to help us set up and to those who stayed for the day to chat with people about what it means to be an Open and Affirming Church in the United Church of Christ.

Your Open and Affirming Committee





Charlie Lamothe – 9/4

Al Randall – 9/6

Everleigh Page Boucher – 9/10

Ellen Haynes – 9/16



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.*

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 October is Monday, September 28th

SOCIAL MEDIA CONNECTIONS

Website: westbrookfieldcongregationalucc.org

Facebook: First Congregational Church of West Brookfield, UCC

Instagram: Search @firstcongowestbrookfield

SEPTEMBER 2026




SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
		1	2 Sharing Cupboard 10 – 11:30 am	3 Sharing Cupboard 7 – 8 pm	4	5
6 Worship 10 am Coffee & Fellowship	7  LABOR DAY	8 Dismas Farm Potluck dinner at the church 6pm	9 Sharing Cupboard 10 – 11:30 am	10 Sharing Cupboard 7 – 8 pm	11	12  FLEA MARKET
13 Worship 10 am Sunday School Coffee & Fellowship Deacon's Mtg	14	15	16 Sharing Cupboard 10 – 11:30 am	17 Sharing Cupboard 7 – 8 pm	18	19
20 Worship on the Common with the Methodist Church at 10am	21	22	23 Sharing Cupboard 10 – 11:30 am	24 Sharing Cupboard 7 – 8 pm	25	26
27 Worship 10 am Sunday School Coffee & Fellowship Church Council	28 <u>Glad Tidings</u> <u>Deadline</u>	29	30			

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
September 2026

