



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

October 2026

Glad Tidings

Dear Friends,

A number of years ago I began signing off in many e-mail communications with the “valediction,” or complimentary close, “Grace and peace,” prior to my name. It is a practice I borrowed from the apostle Paul, who began every letter he wrote to early Christian communities with the salutation, “Grace and peace to you” (a practice continued by those who wrote letters in his name). For me the use of that phrase is not just a theological nicety; it is a reminder that God extends grace to each and every one of us, and desires peace for one and all.

When we were in the process of making a decision about becoming an Open and Affirming Church, many of us watched two short videos of interviews with Rachel Held Evans (1981-2019), a Christian “public theologian” who died suddenly, quite young, and whose wisdom many of us miss immeasurably. In the paragraphs below I’ll share a piece she wrote that describes how Paul used his education and background to spread the good news of Jesus.

Rachel begins: “Paul of Tarsus was a proud Jew, ‘circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews’ (Philippians 3:5). A Pharisee and the son of a Pharisee, he knew and loved the Torah and maintained his Jewish identity in a pagan culture. He was also a Roman citizen and Greek, profoundly influenced by Hellenistic thought. Paul knew at least three languages—Greek, Hebrew, and Aramaic—and himself possessed both a Jewish name, Saul, and a Greek and Roman name, Paul.

“Originally a persecutor of Christians, Paul experienced a dramatic conversion on the road to Damascus one day, when a blinding light threw him to the ground and a voice from heaven asked, ‘Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?’ (Acts 9:4). Despite their fears, the Christians in Damascus and Jerusalem welcomed Paul into their homes and cared for him until his sight was restored, acts of radical, risky hospitality that undoubtedly shaped Paul’s posture toward others in the years to come. As he came to terms with this divine interruption to his own story, Paul began to understand its place in a larger story, and to preach Jesus as the long-awaited Messiah, whose life, death, and resurrection fulfilled biblical prophecy, in particular Isaiah’s vision that Israel would be ‘a light for the Gentiles’ that would bring “salvation to the ends of the earth” (Isaiah 49:6; Acts 13:47).

This message of good news for all people of all nations became Paul’s obsession. As he traveled the region with other followers of Jesus, sharing the gospel in cities across Asia and Europe, he almost always preached first to the Jews in the synagogues and then to the Gentiles at their marketplaces, academic forums, and homes. He described himself as a ‘slave to everyone’ willing to become ‘all things to all people ... for the sake of the gospel’ (1 Corinthians 9:19, 22, 23)....

“Unsurprisingly, Paul’s declaration of the good news found special resonance among people of lower classes, and with slaves, widows, and women. In fact, women proved to be a vital force in the ministry of Paul, serving as apostles, teachers, benefactors, and friends.

“Every New Testament letter authored by Paul or in his name begins with ‘grace and peace to you,’ a combination of the Greek word *charis* (grace) with the Hebrew word *shalom* (peace), a seemingly mundane turn of phrase packed with rich theological meaning for both groups, pointing them toward mercy, wholeness, justice, and unity.

“Yes, Paul did a lot of theologizing. The man never met a metaphor he didn’t like. But every letter he wrote was in service to an inclusive grace-filled gospel that he believed was good news for everyone, Jew and Gentile, rich and poor, man and woman alike.”

It is that “inclusive grace-filled gospel” that we proclaim here at First Congregational Church of West Brookfield, UCC, the gospel of God’s unconditional love for all God’s children. With that in mind, and with gratitude for the apostle Paul’s ministry (even though I still find myself at odds with some of his ideas about our faith), I will continue to more often than not conclude my e-mails and letters with the valediction,

Grace and peace,

Doug



Open and Affirming Committee

Please wear your comma pins!

Be sure to remember to wear the lgbtq+ comma pin that you picked up a few weeks ago. We love to see them proudly worn. If you would like a comma pin, please see a member of the committee.

We hope everyone has noticed that our new status has been shared on church publications. That we are now an Open and Affirming church now appears on our website, Facebook page, newsletter and bulletins. Be sure to tell your friends!

We are currently looking into purchasing the permanent sign that will be placed on the lawn in front of the church showing our community that everyone is truly welcome. The sign will replace the temporary fabric sign that is there now.

We are looking for someone who is willing and able to make "rainbow ribbon pins". A rainbow ribbon pin is simply a small piece of turned ribbon attached to a small gold safety pin that can be worn on a person's garment. We hope to have a bunch of these created and made available to all. They will be in a dish on the rear table of the church. Let a member of the committee know if you are willing - and thanks.

Your ONA Committee

Doug Showalter, Beverly Prestwood-Taylor, Stephanie Beland, Pat Jackman, Karen Murphy, Angela Carville and Terry Hall

Stewardship Sundays Ahead

When the leaves turn and there's a nip in the air, we know it's time to begin thinking about *giving*. Thanksgiving is just around the corner, but before that wonderful day of gratitude, we hope everyone will give thanks for our church and the spiritual gifts that it provides for us every day.

Our season of Stewardship will begin in October with 3 guest speakers from our congregation sharing why they are a part of this community and why it is important that they make an annual pledge to this church. Stewardship will conclude on Sunday, November 1, with a special coffee hour to celebrate our collective giving. Please plan to join us on this day so we can all celebrate together! Watch the mail for your pledge card that is being sent next week. Plan to fill it out and return it before November 1 - and *thank you*.



Your Stewardship Committee

Angela Carville, Mary Deotte, Dee Blanton and Terry Hall

From the
Church
Clerk



Annual Reports for our 2026 annual report are due by December 13th. Committee chairs, please be sure someone on your committee is responsible for getting the report in. Please remember to submit all reports in Word, NOT as a PDF. Please do not indent your paragraphs, use bold or use any program other than Word to send the reports. Another option is to create your report in the body of the email to me. A separate document is not required. Let me know if you have questions.

Thanks,

Terry Hall, Church Clerk

Board of Deacons

On Sunday, September 20 the service planned for our town common was moved inside due to the *threat* of rain and then *actual* rain! It turned out to be a dynamic service with both Pastor Doug and Sandy Damn from George Whitefield Methodist Church leading. There were two guest musicians accompanying Mike and Stephen and the four of them together created inspirational and foot-tapping tunes. As a member from GWMC shared during prayer time, "It was wonderful to be worshipping with *all* of her friends, not just the ones from her church." She may have been speaking for many, as overall it was a warm and welcoming well-attended service that we plan to do again. Our thanks to all who worked to make it happen. Your efforts were appreciated!

On Sunday, October 4, we will be welcoming Pastor Karyl Leslie to our church while Pastor Doug and Karen are away. Please provide your support to Pastor Karyl and plan to attend our service. It is Communion Sunday with coffee hour, as usual.

The Board is looking forward to the special moments coming up in our services during the season of Stewardship, Advent and Christmas. Please read the weekly email announcements to keep up with all of the activities ahead! (If you would like the weekly email printed, please let us know and a copy will be made for you each week.)

The Board continues to meet each month to oversee and organize our Sunday morning worship. If you have questions or comments, please share with a member of the board.

Terry Hall - Chair, and your Deacons: Chris Showalter, Pat Jackman, Nancy Arsenault, Debbie Decoste, Linda Daskowski and Deanna Randall



Senior Fraud Alert

Incidents of fraud have exploded, with older adults suffering the greatest financial impact from fraud last year, according to the [FBI's 2025 IC3 Annual Report](#). **Americans age 60 and older reported losses of \$7.7 billion — about a 60 percent increase from 2024.** In comparison, those in their 30s and 40s reported \$4.6 billion in losses. There are ways to protect yourself, including staying up on the latest **schemes** and following the advice in the printout available on the rear table at church. Also consider adding the [AARP Fraud Watch Network Helpline](#) phone number, [877-908-3360](tel:877-908-3360), to your contacts, so you'll have it if you need to call to report a scam attempt or get more advice on how to prevent scams and identity theft.

We are sharing this information with our community of faith to heighten awareness and perhaps provide protection should the need arise. While we are not intending to promote AARP, the organization has proven to be a safe and informative source of information we can all use as scams, AI fakes, and fraud proliferate. Should anyone not be familiar with the organization, **AARP** (formerly the American Association of Retired Persons) is a large, nonpartisan nonprofit that supports and advocates for Americans aged 50 and older. With each \$20 annual subscription the reader receives the AARP semi-monthly magazine *AARP* and a subscription to the *AARP Bulletin*. If you would like to preview an issue please let the church office know.

FLEA MARKET FUNDRAISER

The Flea Market was a wonderful success, blessed with beautiful weather and a joyful spirit throughout the day. Smiles, positivity, and fellowship were abundant, and we extend our heartfelt thanks to everyone who helped make the event possible.

We received many compliments on the lunch offerings and the delicious items at the bake table. **Karen A., Debbie S., and Angela C.** did an outstanding job organizing and preparing the baked goods, and their efforts were deeply appreciated.

Financial Summary

- Total expenses: *\$300 for the Porta potties*
- Total funds collected (after expenses): **\$3,847.00**
- Quilt raffle proceeds for the Pastor's Discretionary Fund: **\$32.00**

(The quilt tent was unintentionally placed where it was partially blocked by the FCC sale table.)

Acknowledgments The Fundraiser Committee extends sincere gratitude to everyone who contributed—through donations, vendor coordination, set-up, running tables, take-down, and clean-up. This event requires many hands and a great deal of work before, during, and after the day itself, and we are truly thankful for all who stepped forward.

Committee Decision Due to the consistently low revenue generated by this event relative to the effort required, the Fundraiser Committee has decided to discontinue the Flea Market moving forward.



We have many projects in progress:

Parking Lot Project is in the final stages. Weather & our schedule has created delays.

Roof Leaks by the steeple and over the bulkhead. We are currently collecting estimates.

Gutter Repair & Clean-Out weather permitting should be done by end of September.

History Room & Upstairs Hall Closet Clean-Out Disposal of old books

Furniture Removal & Trash removal throughout the building. Our goal for this is early October. If you or someone you know would be willing to help with this please contact Karen Murphy at kmurphy718@charter.net.

Pakachoag Music School We are in active communication with the Pakachoag Music School regarding a potential Friday morning class at **9:30 AM** for **10–12 pre-K children**.

Winter Farmer's Market will soon be starting **November 4th** through **March 31st**, Wednesdays **3:00–6:00 PM**.

IMPORTANT: Our church is extremely busy throughout the week, with many ongoing events, meetings, and community groups utilizing our space. It is essential that everyone regularly checks the **church calendar** to stay informed about scheduled activities. We must be mindful of the groups renting our facilities and ensure that their events are not disrupted.

Thank you!

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



Candy Donations Needed for Trick or Treating

Trick or Treating in W. Brookfield will be held on Saturday, October 31 and our church will be participating. There will be a huge crowd of kids and parents throughout downtown W. Brookfield and right at the front door of the church, so we will need many bags of candy to share. Donations can be left on the table in the Fellowship Hall by Sunday, October 18th. As before, only bagged candy can be used. No homemade treats are allowed.

See Debbie Steltzer if you have any questions and thank you in advance!

A poster for a farm dinner. It has a beige background with a white and brown plaid pattern. In the center is a white, scalloped-edged frame. Inside the frame, at the top, it says "JOIN US FOR" in a small, brown, sans-serif font. Below this is an illustration of autumn-themed items: a pumpkin, a bundle of hay, a cup of hot cider, and some leaves. Below the illustration, the words "DISMAS FARM DINNER" are written in a large, bold, brown serif font. Underneath that, in a smaller brown font, it says "At the Farm" and "Tuesday, October 13th at 6pm". Further down, in a small brown font, it says "The current plan is a fish fry for the gents thanks to Bob Bents and his son-in-law! Check with Deanna or Angela for other items needed!". At the bottom of the frame, it says "Dismas Volunteers" in a bold brown font. Below the frame, on the plaid background, are the contact details for Deanna Randall and Angela Carville in a small brown font.

JOIN US FOR

**DISMAS
FARM DINNER**

At the Farm
Tuesday, October 13th at 6pm

The current plan is a fish fry for the gents
thanks to Bob Bents and his son-in-law!
Check with Deanna or Angela for other
items needed!

Dismas Volunteers

Deanna Randall (413) 436-7849 or drandall444@comcast.net
Angela Carville (508) 347-1148 or angelacarville@gmail.com



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.*

	
Matthew Griffing – 10/4 Babs Martell – 10/21 Neil Blodgett – 10/22	Cindy & Greg Dwelly – 10/5

CONTACT INFORMATION FOR YOUR CHURCH OFFICERS & CHAIRS

Moderator: Dee Blanton – deebanton86@gmail.com
 Deacon Chair: Terry Hall – terryles56@yahoo.com
 Parish Board: Karen Murphy – kmurphy718@charter.net
 Treasurer – Mary Deotte – hombai@yahoo.com
 Collector: Deanna Randall – drandall444@comcast.net
 Clerk: Terry Hall – terryles56@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 November is Monday, October 26th

SOCIAL MEDIA CONNECTIONS

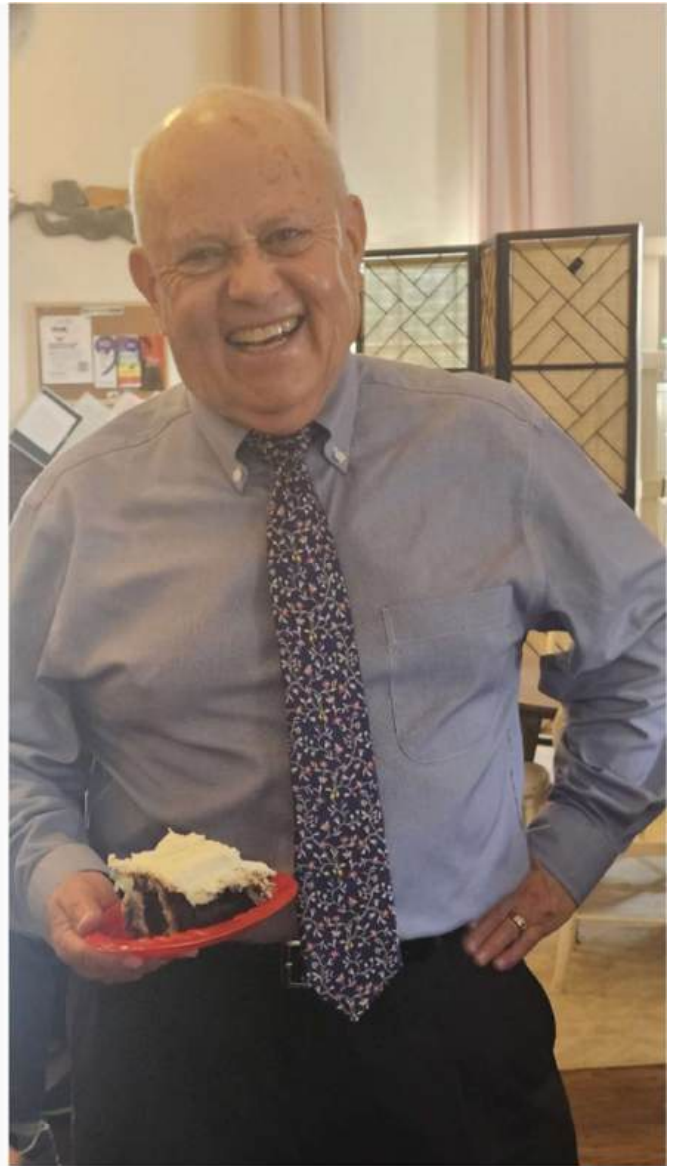
Website: westbrookfieldcongregationalucc.org
 Facebook: First Congregational Church of West Brookfield, UCC
 Instagram: Search @firstcongowestbrookfield

OCTOBER

2026



SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
				¹ Bible Study 5:15-6:30 Sharing Cupboard 7 – 8 pm	²	³
⁴ Worship 10 am Coffee & Fellowship Communion Pastor Karyl Leslie, guest minister	⁵	⁶	⁷ Sharing Cupboard 10 – 11:30 am	⁸ Bible Study 5:15-6:30 Sharing Cupboard 7 – 8 pm	⁹	¹⁰
¹¹ Worship 10 am Sunday School Coffee & Fellowship Deacon's meeting	¹²  INDIGENOUS PUPILS DAY Transition Team/Review meeting	¹³ Dismas Farm Potluck dinner at the farm 6pm	¹⁴ Sharing Cupboard 10 – 11:30 am	¹⁵ Bible Study 5:15-6:30 Sharing Cupboard 7 – 8 pm	¹⁶	¹⁷
¹⁸ Worship 10 am Coffee & Fellowship	¹⁹	²⁰	²¹ Sharing Cupboard 10 – 11:30 am	²² Bible Study 5:15-6:30 Sharing Cupboard 7 – 8 pm	²³	²⁴
²⁵ Worship 10 am Sunday School Coffee & Fellowship	²⁶ <u>Glad Tidings</u> <u>Deadline</u>	²⁷	²⁸ Sharing Cupboard 10 – 11:30 am	²⁹ Bible Study 5:15-6:30	³⁰	³¹  Trick or Treating



Celebrating One Year!
On Sunday, September 6 we
celebrated Pastor Doug and Karen
being with us for one year! Cake,
balloons and deep appreciation
were expressed by all.
"Doug, We're glad you choose West
Brookfield!"

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
October 2026



Season of Stewardship