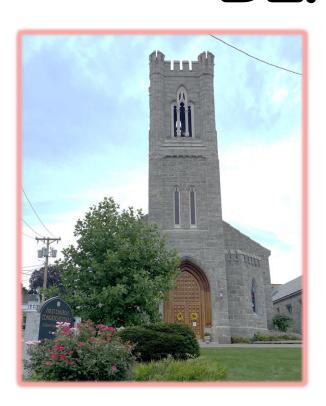
SEPTEMBER 2021

THE BEACON





First Church Congregational United Church of Christ

26 Pleasant Street Methuen, MA 01844-3199 Telephone: (978) 687-1240

Rev. William D. Ingraham, Senior Pastor pastor.bill.ingraham@gmail.com

Roberta Jurovich, Office Manager firstchurch.roberta@gmail.com

www.firstchurchmethuen.com





"GETTING PARSONAL"

Rev. William D. Ingraham

Throughout the Covid-19 pandemic, our Church Board has paid close attention to the numbers, tracking and comparing infection and transmission rates, hospitalizations and mortality not only locally (but especially locally), but also in the broader area. Significant time is set aside each meeting to consider the best and most appropriate response for our congregation. My column this month will serve as a report on what was decided by the Church Board on Wednesday, September 1st.

Infection rates in our community have risen modestly since we resumed in-person worship in our sanctuary. From our first Sunday back in our sanctuary, we have proceeded with caution, erring on the slightly conservative side in our policies and practice. We are grateful to be able to continue to broaden our approach as we move into the Fall.

Beginning in September, we will increase maximum attendance in Sunday worship to 100 participants. Additionally, we are broadening participation to include both vaccinated and unvaccinated individuals. Masks remain optional for vaccinated people while inside the building but are strongly

encouraged for those who are not vaccinated. We are especially grateful that children are now eligible to join us for worship each week.

Pre-registration is still required, with the name and contact information (email, telephone or both) of each person attending. We gather this information for contact tracing purposes.

The sanctuary has more than adequate fresh air circulation, thanks to the recent installation of both outside air intake and a UV filtration system. But please keep in mind that this does not apply to all areas of the building. We encourage people not to congregate in the Phillips Chapel hallway or in the bathrooms. Please feel free to gather for conversation outside or at the crossroads when both front and back doors are propped open.

We are asking people to be mindful of their health. If you have any cold, flu or Covid-19 symptoms, please stay home as a precautionary measure.

Coffee hour and other social gatherings in Parish Hall will not be resuming at this time, though we hope to be able to do so soon. Please be patient as we evolve our programs and activities forward through the Fall. As we regather as a community, we want everyone to feel as confident and comfortable as possible.

Having done so monthly since March 2020, the Board will now be monitoring Covid-19 infection rates, hospitalizations and mortality on a weekly basis moving forward. Should our community reach the transmission threshold where the CDC recommends universal masking indoors or if the City of Methuen establishes such a mandate, we will revise our policies accordingly.

We will not host our traditional "Welcome Sunday" cookout this year. We are exploring the possibility of hosting a gathering or two outside on a Saturday in September to give us a chance to enjoy some fellowship time. We will update you on the details for these events as soon as they are determined.

Thanks are due to the Church Board and staff for their hard and diligent work as they help our church to move forward through these pandemic days. Compared to this time last year, we've made so much progress! We give thanks and praise to God as we continue to find our way, seeking to fulfill our mission as a community of faith:

Seeking God. Caring for each other. Improving our community.

See you in church!

- Bill



Sunday Worship is Now Live! & on Facebook Live & YouTube

Sunday Morning Worship – LIVE!



On Sunday mornings, at 10:00 AM, our weekly worship service will be held LIVE, in person, for a limited number of parishioners! A registration link will be sent out on Tuesdays if you would like to attend in person. Worship will continue to be broadcast on Facebook Live (www.facebook.com/FirstChurchMethuen) and our YouTube channel (www.youtube.com/channel/UCfLSjhXs9UG8yC89aB8evrA). The service will also be available for viewing later on either platform. An Order of Worship will be emailed out each Friday before the service.



Fellowship Time after Sunday Worship

Fellowship Time will be held on Sunday mornings, starting at 11:15 AM, over Zoom, following the worship service above. A Zoom link will be provided via the Friday email to access this weekly gathering.



Morning Coffee on Wednesday



On **Wednesday, September 8th**, from 8:00-9:00 AM, join Pastor Bill and brew your own coffee or tea, grab a glass of orange juice or chocolate milk, for friendly fellowship and conversation. You can even eat your breakfast with us if you like! A Zoom link will be provided via the Tuesday email blast the day before.

Neighbors in Need Tuesday Night Methuen Food Pantry Update

All items from the food pantry have now been moved out of Parish Hall in preparation for the start of the Chapel School on September 8th.

The new procedure will be that the NIN's new, larger truck will arrive at First Church on Tuesdays at 4:30 PM. Everything for that evening's distribution will be unloaded into Parish Hall, which will quickly be arranged for the pantry's operation. Pickup will continue to be in a drive-thru, socially distant style in our parking lot. When the pantry closes at 6:30 PM, the remnants will get loaded back into the NIN truck, tables will all be put away and the floors will be swept and mopped. When folks walk out the building will be ready for Chapel School's opening in the morning.

We owe a huge debt of gratitude to Ken Peck for *everything* he has done to facilitate the Tuesday Night Food Pantry throughout the pandemic. It has been no small undertaking! Of course, he has had a large team of volunteers at his side throughout, and we're grateful for everyone's efforts. We're also grateful for all the donations of food and money to keep the pantry going in the days when supplies were hard to come by.

If you would like to volunteer on Tuesday nights, or for more information on how to help, please contact Ken Peck.

Note from Ken Peck:

We thank all those who have donated food and money for us to purchase food for the food pantry. Without your donations, we would not have been able to provide food for all the clients that have come to this food pantry each and every week. The volunteers and I thank you very much!

However, with the opening of the Chapel School this year, we will no longer be able to accept food donations of actual food at First Church, effective September 1, 2021. We will have a food drive on a specific date as we go forward. Again, thank you very much for your support.

~ Ken Peck

Prayer and Visit Requests

If you, or someone you know, is need of prayer or a visit, please contact Rev. Ingraham at pastor.bill.ingraham@gmail.com or 978-687-1240.

Prayer Requests

To have someone included on the bulletin prayer list, please let Roberta in the Church Office know at firstchurch.roberta@gmail.com or 978-687-1240. No request is too big or too small!

Stories of the Cross

A Source of Peace

Recently a member of First Church lost a very family member. After a difficult surgery for Pancreatic cancer, she visited her cousin at a local rehabilitation hospital. Not knowing what to bring to comfort her she decided at the last minute to bring a small cross hanging on a narrow white ribbon made by the church. Being of a great faith, the patient was immediately impressed with the cross and admired the detail with the little heart carved into it. Being weak and not able to raise her head, her cousin asked for help by putting it around her neck. Then she crossed her arms over her chest and held onto the cross, feeling it with her hands. She said it was so very beautiful and she would not take it off.

When she passed away, after almost 2 years of a courageous battle with cancer, the church member was surprised to get an e-mail from one of her cousin's daughters with an attached picture. It was of the little cross on the white ribbon asking if she had any idea who had given it to her mother. The daughter went on to say that her Mom cherished that cross and never, ever took it off, all during treatment and those last two years of her life. She then told me since her Mom treasured it so much, that she would be burying her with it on. Her cousin led a beautiful life with a very strong faith that touched many. And likewise, the first church crosses touch many people.



These stories of the cross are documented from true experiences related to a mission of First Church Congregational. We invite you to make your own experience through the simple act of sharing part of our faith through the cross. If you find a moment where they have made an impact on yourself or others, we invite you to share it with us anonymously. Please contact Josh Ferry for more information.

From the Outreach Ministry Team

Samaritans' 5th Annual Walk for Hope

May 15-22, 2020, First Church held its "6th Annual Stride into the Light 5K Walk/Run." Due to COVID the event was a virtual one. Sixty walker/runners and donors raised \$4,558.00 which was donated directly to Family Services' Samaritans of Merrimack Valley.

On October 23, 2021, the Samaritans are holding their "5th Annual Walk for Hope" from 9:00 AM to 12:00 PM. The location for the walk is Willows Park in North Andover and the walk is 1½ miles. The Registration Fee is \$30.00. First Church has a "Walk for Hope" team called "First Church Stride Team." Further in this issue of the Beacon is information on how to register as a walker or to make a donation to the team for anyone who would like to do so.

Like the Samaritans, First Church is committed to raising awareness of mental health challenges and suicide prevention in our communities.

Methuen C.A.R.E.S Program

The City of Methuen offers the Methuen C.A.R.E.S program, Community Addiction Resource Engagement Services. One component of providing help to community members has been an ongoing support program held in Sanborn Hall this summer called "Wellness Wednesdays." Groups meet in Sanborn Hall along with support from specialists to offer help for individuals to have the tools to design a wellness plan to lead to wellness and a healthy lifestyle. To date, the offerings have been on Grief of Loss, Anxiety, Mindfulness and Coping Skills. For the month of September, the offerings include:

- September 1st Self-Care
- September 8th Cognitive Behavior Therapy
- September 15th Positive Affirmation
- September 22nd Building a New Narrative
- September 29th *Mindfulness*

Participants listen and share, learn from one another, and are encouraged to put into practice the strategies they learn. If anyone is interested in attending, there is no pre-registration required, and the sessions start at 10:00 AM each Wednesday.

NIN Tuesday Evening Food Pantry

Throughout this summer of rain and hot, humid weather, our dedicated Food Pantry volunteers have continued to volunteer each week to serve those in need of food. Due to a variety of circumstances, the number of families coming each Tuesday has declined to 130 to 150 families. We thank and appreciate our volunteers as well as the people who have continued to donate food and money to the pantry.

Outreach Team – Marilyn Peck, Chair, Cindy Bateson, Ray Benedix, Cynthia Causbie, Barbara Donaghue, Deb MaueSprague, Ken Peck, and Becky Smith



From the Outreach Ministry Team

Random Acts of Kindness

We have been sharing Random Acts of Kindness this past year, and this month would like to also include gratitude. Leading gratitude expert Robert Emmons notes that the social component of gratitude is especially important because it requires us to acknowledge how others have supported us. In this regard, gratitude strengthens the bonds we have with others, encourages us to <u>pay forward</u> the gifts we have received in life and recognize the goodness that surrounds us.

The social, physical, and psychological benefits of practicing gratitude are numerous and well-documented. Gratitude neutralizes negative emotions while also boosting our happiness, optimism, and life satisfaction. Expressing gratitude results in positive effects beyond psychological and social well-being. Grateful people sleep better, have stronger immune systems, exercise more, and are more resilient to trauma.

Communities and individuals become more interconnected through expressions and feelings of gratitude. When partners show regular appreciation for one another, they report feeling closer to each other and more committed in their relationship. Grateful children and adolescents are more generous and make active contributions to their communities.

Dr. Chloe Carmichael, author of <u>Nervous Energy: Harness the Power of Your Anxiety</u>, suggests adapting Mental Shortlist technique.

The Mental Shortlist technique usually involves thinking in advance of five healthy or productive topics for your mind to pivot onto whenever you're prone to ruminate on an old, unfruitful topic.

Adapting this technique to the concept of gratitude, a person would think in advance of five special things for which they are grateful and challenge themselves to focus on something from that list and/or rapidly recall all five things on that list whenever they wanted a "shot of gratitude" in their outlook.

We hope that as we once again face uncertain times ahead, we invite you to think about all the little things and people that make your life extra special. What's one way you can show your gratitude to those people or for those things today? You can pick up the phone, send an email, or text to show your appreciation. We have included a sample sheet that you might print out and use to create your personal gratitude list.

Hoping to see you all soon, when we will gather and celebrate the goodness that is our church family!





1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

JOIN US and make a difference

5th Annual Walk for Hope

Samaritans of Merrimack VAlley

October 23, 2021

The world may look a little different right now, but one thing has not changed: the Samaritans and First Church Congregational's commitment to raise awareness of mental health challenges and suicide prevention in our communities.



First Church Congregational has a Walk for Hope team.
It is called *First Church Stride Team*

TO REGISTER, GO TO:

https://app.mobilecause.com/vf/WalkForHope/team/FIRSTCHURCHSTRIDETEAM
The registration fee is \$30.00. This link connects you to our team page and allows you to either register as a walker or to make a donation to the team.

Now more than ever, the Samaritans need help to continue to provide trainings, support services for loss survivors and attempt survivors, and to keep their crisis line staffed so they can achieve their mission. Because of COVID-19, the need for their services has increased and this increase will continue for the next few years.

We ask you to support our team and the Samaritans.

Thank you.

Walking Group for Fitness and Fellowship

Tuesdays in September

Let's welcome fall by walking together at Riverside Park in Methuen on Tuesday mornings. The flat, hot-topped, picturesque loop next to the Merrimack River allows walkers of all levels to get some exercise and talk with friends. We will be walking at **10:00 AM** on <u>9/7, 9/14. 9/21, and 9/28</u>. Please note the time change!

Sunday Walk on the Methuen Rail Trail

Our scheduled monthly Sunday walk on the Rail Trail will be on <u>Sunday, September 12th at 12:00 NOON</u>. We will meet at the far end of the Nevins MSPCA parking lot, where we can access the Methuen Rail Trail.









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 or Anne Benedix or Carol Gray for more information.

We invite you to join us on **Wednesdays from 1:30 - 3:30 PM**, in the Parlor of First Church Congregational.



KNIT. CROCHET. PRAY.



Original Artwork by Emily Jurovich

The Chapel School



Whoever said Christmas was the busiest time of the year has never worked at a school. Preparations have been underway now for several weeks to open Chapel.

The building is cleaned - bathrooms, rugs, floors waxed.

Class lists are made, the teachers are putting final touches in their classrooms.

Many thanks to the Trustees for all their help. They moved four rooms of classroom furniture so that the rugs and floors could be cleaned by the cleaning service and then they moved it all back. The hallways and crossroads are washed and waxed too. We are squeaky clean and looking good!! The Parish Hall is empty, and Chapel is ready to use it again for large motor activities, indoor activities during inclement weather and Lunch Bunch. The children's tables and chairs are set up and ready to go.

We are ready to welcome our little ones back! Our numbers were a bit slow coming in over the Summer, but we have now exceeded last year's enrollment numbers. Many children are also staying a longer day now that we can once again offer early drop off and late pickup. We will be open 7:30AM to 4PM.

We will still be wearing masks during the school day. Arrival and dismissal will continue at separate entry doors so that we can minimize close contact with each other and other classrooms. We will also continue to use separate bathrooms for each classroom. These safety guidelines have proven to be just good practices. Parents will be allowed to enter the building on the first day of classes for a short Open House in each classroom. They can meet their child's teacher, see the classroom, and get acquainted with one another. Last minute paperwork can be dropped off and tuition payments can be made in the office. After the meet and greet, parents will leave, and we will continue our day.

We are so happy to be starting our school year!!!

Cíndy Mazella Director



The Chapel School

Where a Lifetime of Learning Begins

Register Now for the 2021-22 School Year



- 2, 3 or 5 Day Preschool Programs
 - For Children 2.9 5 Years Old
- Customizable Days to Fit your Needs
 - Half Day Classes (8:30 11:30 AM)
- Lunch Bunch and Extended Day Options!

Safe, Learning Environment for Everyone!

- Low Student/Teacher Ratio
 - Affordable Rates
 - Non-Denominational
- Over 60 Years in Methuen!



Contact us to schedule a tour today at 978-689-8414 or



chapelschoolmethuen@gmail.com

www.chapelschoolmethuen.com





Located at: First Church Congregational 26 Pleasant Street, Methuen







First Church Congregational & The Chapel School are registered to participate in this event.

We are looking for a few good volunteers to help with set-up (8:30 am), breakdown (3:00 pm), and take a shift at the First Church table (between 10:00 am – 3:00 pm).

Please call the Church Office at 978-687-1240, if you can help.

Thank you.

Need Financial Help?

If you, or another member of First Church you know, is need of some temporary financial assistance, please contact Rev. Ingraham at pastor.bill.ingraham@gmail.com or 978-687-1240.

Due to the generosity of Thomas Longworth, through his estate plan, there are some funds available for short term financial assistance of our members.

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 --Reliable, Engaging, Able, Caring and Heartfelt support.

Contact Judi Boyko or Pat King for more information.

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 "Ways to Donate" page.

Thank you for your support.

Daily Lectionary Scripture References -September 2021 (Year B)

Wed., Sept. 1

Psalm 144:9-15 Song of Solomon 8:5-7 Mark 7:9-23

Thurs., Sept. 2

Psalm 125 Proverbs 1:1-19 Romans 2:1-11

Fri., Sept. 3

Psalm 125 Proverbs 4:10-27 Romans 2:12-16

Sat., Sept. 4

Psalm 125 Proverbs 8:1-31 Matthew 15:21-31

Sun., Sept. 5

Fifteenth Sunday after Pentecost Proverbs 22:1-2, 8-9, 22-23 Psalm 125 James 2:1-10 [11-13] 14-17 Mark 7:24-37

Mon., Sept. 6

Psalm 73:1-20 Proverbs 8:32—9:6 Hebrews 11:29—12:2

Tues., Sept. 7

Psalm 73:1-20 Proverbs 11:1-31 Hebrews 12:3-13

Wed., Sept. 8

Psalm 73:1-20 Proverbs 14:1-9 Matthew 17:14-21

Thurs., Sept. 9

Psalm 19 Proverbs 15:1-17 Hebrews 11:17-22

Fri., Sept. 10

Psalm 19 Proverbs 19:24-29 James 2:17-26

Sat., Sept. 11

Psalm 19 Proverbs 21:1-17 Matthew 21:23-32

Sun., Sept. 12

Sixteenth Sunday after Pentecost Proverbs 1:20-33 Psalm 19 or Wisdom 7:26— 8:1 James 3:1-12 Mark 8:27-38

Mon. Sept. 13

Psalm 73:21-28 Proverbs 22:1-21 Romans 3:9-20

Tues., Sept. 14

Psalm 73:21-28 Proverbs 25:1-28 Colossians 3:1-11

Wed., Sept. 15

Psalm 73:21-28 Proverbs 29:1-27 John 7:25-36

Thurs., Sept. 16

Psalm 1 Proverbs 30:1-10 1 Corinthians 2:1-5

Fri., Sept. 17

Psalm 1 Proverbs 30:18-33 Romans 11:25-32

Sat., Sept. 18

Psalm 1 Ecclesiastes 1:1-18 Matthew 23:29-39

Sun., Sept. 19

Seventeenth Sunday after Pentecost Proverbs 31:10-31 Psalm 1 James 3:13—4:3, 7-8a Mark 9:30-37

Mon., Sept. 20

Psalm 128 Proverbs 27:1-27 James 4:8-17

Tues., Sept. 21

Psalm 128 Ecclesiastes 4:9-16 James 5:1-6

Wed., Sept. 22

Psalm 128 Ecclesiastes 5:1-20 John 8:21-38

Thurs., Sept. 23

Psalm 124 Esther 1:1-21 Acts 4:13-31

Fri., Sept. 24

Psalm 124 Esther 2:1-23 Acts 12:20-25

Sat., Sept. 25

Psalm 124 Esther 3:1-15 Matthew 5:13-20

Sun., Sept. 26

Eighteenth Sunday after Pentecost Esther 7:1-6, 9-10; 9:20-22 Psalm 124 James 5:13-20 Mark 9:38-50

Mon., Sept. 27

Psalm 140 Esther 4:1-17 1 Peter 1:3-9

Tues., Sept. 28

Psalm 140 Esther 5:1-14 1 John 2:18-25

Wed., Sept. 29

Psalm 140 Esther 8:1-17 Matthew 18:6-9

Thurs., Sept. 30

Psalm 26 Job 2:11—3:26 Galatians 3:23-29

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SEPTEMBER BIRTHDAYS

- 01 Joan Zonfa
- 09 John Pavlenkov
- 10 Julianna Buck
- 12 Kenneth Peck
- 13 Nancy Drummond
- 17 Beth Buck
- 18 Sally Dockham, Kathy Romano
- 22 Laurie Cruz
- 25 Debra Brown
- 26 Larry Sliney
- 30 Janet Diver

OCTOBER BIRTHDAYS

07 Joyce Koop



SEPTEMBER ANNIVERSARIES

9/1	Melissa & Justin Hodgkins	Married 5 years
9/3	Jonathan & Stacy Bennett	Married 10 years
9/16	Patrick & Terry Romano	Married 48 years
9/19	Gary & Sally Dockham	Married 23 years
9/25	Michael & Diane Alaimo	Married 40 years
9/30	Charlene & Matthew Bunting	Married 15 years

OCTOBER ANNIVERSARIES

10/4	Michael & Cynthia Causbie	Married 35 years
10/6	John & Carole Silva	Married 31 vears

	◎	Sep	september 2	2021		
Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday

							-
	Saturday	4	11	18	25	September	
	Friday	m	10	17	24	31	
	Thursday	2	6	16	23	30	o change
September 2021	Wednesday	1 8:00 AM Morning Coffee (Zoom) 1:30 PM Prayer Shawl 6:30 PM Church Board	Classes Start The Chapel School 1:30 PM Prayer Shawl 7:00 PM Diaconate	15 October BEACON deadline 1:30 PM Prayer Shawl 6:30 PM MDCC	22 1:30 PM Prayer Shawl	29 1:30 PM Prayer Shawl	Dates and times are subject to change
Sept	Tuesday	Sapphire	7 9:00 лм Walking Group (Riverside Park, Methuen)	14 9:00 AM Walking Group (Riverside Park, Methuen)	21 9:00 AM Walking Group (Riverside Park, Methuen)	28 9:00 лм Walking Group (Riverside Park, Methuen)	Dates and
≫	Monday		6 Labor Day	13 6:30 PM Outreach	20 6:30 PM Stewardship	27	
	Sunday	Worship Service Sundays at 10:00 4M In-Person & on Facebook Live www.facebook.com/ firstchurchmethuen	5 Communion 11:15 AM Fellowship Time (Zoom)	12 11:15 AM Fellowship Time (Zoom)	19 11:15 AM Fellowship Time (Zoom) 12:00 PM Walking Group (Methuen Rail Trail)	26 11:15 AM Fellowship Time (Zoom)	

First Church Congregational
United Church of Christ
26 Pleasant Street
Methuen, MA 01844-3199

Address Service Requested