



EST. 1639

# First Church of Rowley

*...A voice of hope serving the community*



## JUNE AND JULY 2026 STEEPLE NOTES

# Pastor's Corner

## Summer is for Progress

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Summer is a time not only for rest and renewal, but also for meaningful growth. That's especially true this year if you're a planted vegetable, a blossoming flower... or a person of faith who participates in the life of First Congregational Church of Rowley.

This summer, we'll be doing something new that's sure to expand our hearts and minds. From June 28 through August 26, we'll be worshipping with our daughter congregation, First Congregational Church of Georgetown.

This means we'll see new faces, hear new voices, gather in new spaces and experience new worship formats. And if we're intentional about how we use these experiences, they won't just be a blip that comes and goes. Instead, they'll resonate. They'll expand what we can imagine doing with enthusiasm in the year(s) ahead.

Here's what to expect. Georgetown will join us for worship in Rowley at 9:30 on Sunday mornings from June 28 through July 26. Then in August, we'll go to Georgetown for Wednesday evening services that begin at 7:00 PM. Note: we'll have no Sunday services in Rowley on Aug. 2, 9, 16 and 23. We will return to Rowley for 9:30 AM worship on Sunday, Aug. 30.

I encourage you to take part weekly all summer! If you do, you'll encounter worship in fresh ways, even without leaving your region, your UCC tradition or your congregation's life as it unfolds not just in Rowley but in multiple locations.

# Pastor's Corner

## Summer is for Progress

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How can we have church anywhere other than 175 Main St., you ask? Because the church is not a building. It is a faith community that can gather and embody the love of Jesus anywhere. We are part of the larger body of Christ beyond Rowley, and that truth will be on display to an extent we don't always get to see.

Having a spirit of discovery will serve us well. Wednesday services following a light supper in the cool lower level at Georgetown will be a bit less formal than ours typically are. The music might be acoustic. The sermon might be more conversational than one-way. As we participate, we're apt to appreciate how Congregational worship can take a variety of forms. This might help us get comfortable with using more types of formats in Rowley, including some that are simpler, easier and less expensive to execute than our usual fare.

Worshipping alongside new people can be enriching for all involved. Imagine what you might hear as diverse voices bear witness based on personal experiences and share prodigious gifts for music and art. Bottom line: First Church of Rowley has a unique opportunity on tap this summer. I pray that we'll all embrace it, let it stir our thinking and uplift our souls in the process. I hope to see you soon in Rowley and Georgetown.

Your brother in Christ,  
The Rev. Jeff MacDonald  
Designated Pastor, First Congregational Church of Rowley



# Megan In Ukraine

Spring 2026

Hello friends!

Praise God that He sustained us through the harsh harsh winter. Spring arrived recently and it is still hard to believe. It brings with it reminders of Gods grace, to slow down and live each moment but also it seems impossible to pause in times like these. Prolonged survival mode wears us down. In some ways, it seems as though I could say that the war has died down a bit but this is simply not the truth. I might have grown more numb to it all but the reality of evil is front and center. The stench of death mixed with the aroma of spring. The sounds of explosions mixed with the singing of the birds. Nothing new as the the enemy continues it brutal destruction. Here are a few things the Lord has been teaching me, as well as a few stories from the basement.

As much as I try to be positive and find the glimpses of God in and through it all, I will not lie. This semester and this year has been incredibly challenging. Every area of life-physical, mental, emotional and spiritual has been stretched thin in harsh conditions. I do not want to just skip over this, but in it I long to declare Gods goodness. Its just as important to look to him, remember him and praise him in the valleys (maybe even moreso) as on the mountaintops. I guess I'm STILL learning that two things can be true at once-both the vile evil and the majesty of God.

Ive been reflecting a lot on what it means that God holds it all in his hands. It seems like this theme has come up in every song, verse and conversation lately. Psalm 103 has been a great encouragement in this area and so poetically describes how he cares for us "Praise the Lord, O my soul and forget not all his benefits-who forgives all your sins and heals all your diseases, who redeems your life from the pit and crowns you with love and compassion, who satisfies your desires with good things so that your youth is renewed like the eagles." Wow- sounds too good to be true and truly unbelievable. I have to admit that no matter how tightly I hold onto this truth and how many times I repeat it, I still struggle to believe it. Lord, help my unbelief! Psalm 104 goes on to descibe how he so majestically and takes care of all the things and keeps the world spinning- in his timing, in his way, for his glory and our good. He is sovereign over everything.

On rotation in our morning activities with K-2 are some simple English "sunday school" songs that we start the day with. One of them is "He's Got the Whole World in His Hands". It was an April day when we sang this together and then I had the kids share things that God holds and we sang through their answers. Such a sweet moment that then carried on with the second graders as our morning journal sentence was "God holds the whole world in his hands including..." They wrote for five minutes and asked for more time as they listed all the things God holds. One student prayed that day praising God for all the seasons, the gift that each one is, and that they are in a very specific order. He praised God for holding everything and giving us good things. Some more prayers from the kids: "God help that every country will help Ukraine and help that every country will come to know you so that they can know that you make everything possible." "God, please help the enemy to understand that destroying others' things and killing people will not help them to build anything. Thank you that the war will finish." These hearts and these prayers are so pure and real.

Another golden moment: We have been learning a verse for every letter of the alphabet this year. The kids had to chose their favorite so I placed all their coloring sheets on the carpet and they all looked through them, humming the songs that go with each and writing down their favorites. I sat there in awe of their memory and their faith in the midst of hardship. Grateful. And during an indoor recess, the kids were playing games or coloring as our verse songs played in the background. One song came on that we studied last year. Its my favorite verse and a girl who was coloring was singing along when she looked up and asked "Miss Megan, what is mercy?" This question caught me off gaurd as I tried to give some sort of simple example, but struggled to explain it. This question rung in my head for two weeks, as I pondered the concept of mercy, and realized I still have no good answer. Then during chapel, where we have been studying characteristics of God, we learned how God is merciful. The kids reinacted the story in Matthew 18. She looked at me and we smiled at eachother. Wow- how merciful was God to answer my student's question and also help me better get a sense of what mercy is.

Two powerful basement stories come to mind from this semester. Let's just say- the basement is one of my least favorite places. Hauling everything and everyone down into the cold basement, crammed with furniture and no space to sit to have lessons simultaneously with multiple classes in multiple languages is exhausting and overstimulating. I try to stay thankful as I know we are blessed to have this space, uncomfortable and crammed as it might be and that many schools don't have this "luxury". Anyways- the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> graders had been working on a project for a few months to create and plan a party for K-2 and the kids were all looking forward to it for weeks. The theme was Marvel. There would be food, games, prizes, activities, costumes and a whole lot of fun. The time had finally come and after discussing the expectations we lined up ready for the fun. I led the class to the other room only to realize that an air raid had started. So down to the basement we went with 30 very disappointed kids. We prayed first and then I ran upstairs to find a marvel book to read and some games to play. We had no idea how long we would be down there. I read, the kids drew their favorite characters and then we played some games. It had been about an hour and a half already and Uno and all the other games were getting quite boring. One girl looked at me, tears welling in her eyes, the weight of disappointment so heavy. "Now what? Its too late and we will never have our party" she whimpered. I suggested we pray again and 5 kids prayed, not only for the air raid to end and the party to start but also for our country, and those who are deeply suffering. We finished praying and I checked the time on my phone. The teary eyed girl saw the red dot notification and asked about it. I told her when a green dot comes on the screen it will be over. And just as I was explaining it the green dot popped up and we were able to go upstairs and enjoy the party. Everyone was cheering when the notification came but this girl just looked in disbelief. She knew that God heard her and we chatted for a minute before going upstairs. "He even cares enough about us to let us have our party!" It made the rest of the day, and each smile and memory that much more special- a true gift from God. He hears and he cares, even about Marvel parties in the midst of war.

Another basement moment happened during the science fair. About 15 Elementary school scientists had prepared their stations and the rest of the students got to go around and watch their creative experiments. Our class had finished observing about three stations when the air raid went off. We headed down to the basement, science projects suspended for who knows how long. I had the kids share with each other about what they had seen and then we played a bit of eye spy to pass the time. One of the little scientists burst into tears. We calmed down a bit and she helped me understand as she explained that her parents told her that if the air raid lasted longer than 20 minutes they would have to go home and she would have to continue her presentations without them. "But, why, Miss Megan, whyyyyy do they have to do this to us now? Can they not wait until the science fair is over? Its not fair!" I tried to comfort her as the anger too boiled up in me. And I ask the same question "God, why now? Why can we not just enjoy learning, without all these threats?" Eventually we got to go back upstairs and her parents were able to stay and help her finish her presentations. We were blessed to finish the science fair and enjoy all the beauties and discoveries of His great Creation.

Life here and now is full of challenges and joys. I am grateful for our Merciful God, who hears and who is with us. I am grateful for the glimpses each of these children reflect of His character. I am grateful to get to be the one to teach them in these very days here and now- the very students that I prayed so long for and now I get to spend each day with. What a gift! Mostly I am grateful He holds it ALL in his hands and we are not left to carry it alone. With a little over a month left of school, please continue to pray for us at NewGen and for the country and people of Ukraine. We covet and deeply appreciate your prayers!

#### Prayer Requests:

- Pray for stamina for people here, for strength to continue on- especially for the soldiers, pastors, families, grieving and hurting
- For the end of the school year to be able to wrap up without any more severe interruptions
- For the hearts and minds of each of the students and for their families, for their lives to shine outward into the communities
- For those searching for something steady in these trying times
- For an end to this wicked war

Handwritten signature: *Handwritten signature*



My SWEET and CRAZY 2<sup>nd</sup> graders!

Our class dressed as PACMAN



The first sunny day of the year, celebrating spelling accomplishments with a pajama picnic popcorn party



Writing out their favorite verses



Two sweet students

Ukraine Day



The long awaited MARVEL party



My dear friend Alla who I practice Ukrainian with



Recess twister fun





# Happy Birthday

June 1 Youssef Salib  
June 8 Cheryl Watson  
June 9 Al Locke  
June 10 Mariah McCormick  
June 10 Jim Somers, Jr.  
June 11 Cameron Hazen  
June 13 Rev. Lee Ireland  
June 14 Abeba Whitmore  
June 16 Abigail Confalone  
June 18 Donna Irving  
June 22 Sean Gundrum  
June 28 Mike Blouin  
June 28 Kay Dalzell  
June 30 Lisa Stevens

July 1 Andrew Kay  
July 14 Nathaniel Schmuck  
July 19 Cameron Cummings  
July 20 Daniel Morris  
July 25 Stephanie DesJardins  
July 28 Gale Penton





# HAPPY *Anniversary*

JUNE 7<sup>TH</sup>

JEFF NICKLESS & LOUISE DIMELLA

JUNE 10<sup>TH</sup>

KEN & PAM SANFORD

JUNE 23<sup>RD</sup>

CHARLES & JENNETTE LORING

JUNE 29<sup>TH</sup>

PAUL CHANG & HOLLY ARDITO

JULY 23<sup>RD</sup>

DOUGLAS & EILENE CHADBOURNE

JULY 28<sup>TH</sup>

JERRY & NANCY SCHMIDT

# Steeple Notes Entry Schedule



**January** Compassionate Care Network

**February** Missions

**March** Deacons (including Christian Ed.)

**April** Finance/Trustees

**May** Music Committee

**June/July** The Thrift Shop & Pastoral Relations  
Committee

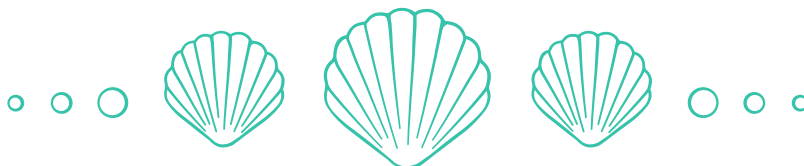
**August/September** Getting to Know Us, Golf Tournament  
and Flower Committee

**October** Old Tyme Country Fair

**November** Community Dinner Team

**December** Pancake Breakfast Team

*Welcoming additional entries!*





# Events at a glance

**GETTING TO KNOW US**  
WEDNESDAYS 10 - 12 PM  
IN CORINTHIAN ROOM

**BIBLE STUDY**  
SUNDAYS 11:15 - 12:00 PM  
IN PARLOR ROOM

No background or engagement needed, all are  
welcome to join!

**DEATH CAFE**  
SUNDAY JULY 26<sup>TH</sup>  
5:00 PM - 6:30 PM  
*(last of the season)*



The background is a vibrant, warm-toned collage of summer and beach-related illustrations. At the top center is a bright yellow sun with a spiral center and radiating lines. To its left are two blue flip-flops and a yellow star. To its right is a large beach umbrella with alternating yellow and orange segments. Below the sun are more stars and a blue beach towel. In the center, the text 'ALL ARE WELCOME' is written in a teal, sans-serif font, arched upwards. Below this is the main title 'GETTING TO KNOW US' in a large, bold, red, sans-serif font. Underneath the title, the text 'WEDNESDAYS 10 AM - 12 AM ALL ARE WELCOME' is written in a teal, sans-serif font. To the right of the title is a pineapple with a green crown. Below the title is a blue and white life preserver on the left and a blue and white beach ball on the right. At the bottom, there are illustrations of a yellow beach mat, a pair of orange flip-flops, and a pair of orange shorts with a white drawstring. The overall style is flat and colorful, with a friendly and inviting feel.

**ALL ARE WELCOME**

# **GETTING TO KNOW US**

**WEDNESDAYS  
10 AM - 12 AM  
ALL ARE WELCOME**

Corinthian Room  
175 Main Street Rowley MA 01969  
[firstchurchrowley@gmail.com](mailto:firstchurchrowley@gmail.com)

FIRST CHURCH ROWLEY



# BIBLE STUDY

*All are Welcome*

Test your knowledge. Strengthen your faith. Have fun



SUNDAYS



11:15 - 12:00 PM



IN PARLOR AT CHURCH



## TOPIC

Who are We? What Are We? A Study  
of Ephesians

## WHAT TO BRING

A Bible or use one of ours

QUESTIONS: PLEASE REACH OUT TO REV. JEFF AT  
[FIRSTCHURCHPASTOR44@GMAIL.COM](mailto:FIRSTCHURCHPASTOR44@GMAIL.COM)

**ROWLEY'S**

**DEATH**



**CAFE**

**COMMUNITY  
CONVERSATIONS**

*Death, Grief, Living & Loving  
Cake too!*

Location:

First Congregational Church of Rowley  
175 Main Street, Rowley, MA

**APR 26, MAY 31 & JUL 26  
(NO DEATH CAFE IN MARCH OR JUNE)  
JULY IS OUR LAST DEATH CAFE  
OF THE SEASON**

**LAST SUNDAY OF EVERY MONTH  
5-6:30PM**

Info: [Angie@IllStandByYou.Net](mailto:Angie@IllStandByYou.Net)  
IG & FB : Community Conversations  
#CommConvos

