



Steeple Notes

The First Congregational Church of Rowley
United Church of Christ
175 Main Street • P.O. Box 364 • Rowley, MA 01969



Sunday Worship Services
10am*
Reverend Tom Bentley

Sunday, July 3
Holy Communion
Sunday, July 10
Sunday, July 17
Sunday, July 24
Sunday, July 31

Sunday, August 7
Holy Communion
Sunday, August 14
Sunday, August 21
Sunday, August 28

All is Quiet in Rowley, however, here's the headlines for our UCC Siblings around the **country**: Headlines from June 27, [UCC News](#)

United Church of Christ News

'We will stand with you in protest': National officers speak out after SC overturns Roe v. Wade

by UCC Leadership

Silent lawn displays are one way churches cry out about gun violence
by Hans Holznagel | published on Jun 7, 2022



The Rev. John McIver Gage said he should have been writing his sermon that Saturday morning.

UCC distributes more appeal donations to assist Ukrainians

by Carol Fouke-Mpoyo | published on Jun 14, 2022

Millions of people are displaced by the war in Ukraine. Additional millions are trapped by the fighting. Across Ukraine, in neighboring countries and beyond, churches are assisting them with food, shelter, safety, hygiene and psychosocial support.

The generous gifts sent to the United Church of Christ Ukraine Appeal are supporting this work.

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Traveling Light to be a Light to the World

I just finished booking the details for our flight to Puerto Rico for the last week in June and into the first days of July. The cost of checking the baggage and selecting the seats cost \$302! That's almost as much as the plane fare itself.

I was tempted to not take any baggage. Of course, fearing I might need something won out, and I paid the dough.

On the first Sunday of July, we will be reading from Luke where Jesus sent out seventy of his followers to go into the villages and towns in Israel and announce the Kingdom of God. He tells them to "Travel light. Comb and toothbrush and no extra luggage" (Luke 10:4 The Message)

He's on to something with this. We carry baggage because we are afraid. It's too risky just to go into the world and trust other people will help us along the way. Jesus knew that his disciples would have to engage the folks they met openly, if they didn't bring all the supplies they needed.

We are all travelers in this earthly journey. Over the years we collect "baggage" – emotional and spiritual baggage as well as the physical stuff we think we need to survive. Eventually we become burdened by all this, and we can't seem to get anywhere in life. We become isolated as we live behind walls made of insecure feelings and even the real estate in which we live.

In some ways we are all "spiritual hoarders". We accumulate so much and do not know how to live without it.

In our affluent homes – among our familiar family - bonded exclusively to our old friends; the world begins to appear as an inhospitable place. It is then we cease to be spiritual travelers able to share the good news and love of God with new people who need this gift.

Jesus is often telling us to be a light of love to the world. He tells us not to hide this light under a basket, but instead place it high and bright for all to see.

In the spirit of that encouragement, I echo his advice. Let's all work together to take the risk and reach out to new souls we meet on the road of life. Who is there in your life you feel could benefit with a kind hello and a deep listening to follow? As we move forward to renew our congregation, our Strategic Planning Team is helping us to go out into the Town



Reverend Thomas Bentley

of Rowley and meet folks where they are at. In these encounters we will ask them questions as to how they view our church and in what ways we might be helpful to the wider community.

We don't need suitcases to share love with those who need it. Let's get going with Jesus. He is the ultimate tour guide, and there's no need to bring much along for the trip.

Peace and Best Wishes in the Journey,

Rev. Tom

Compassionate Care Network Update (CCN)



The CCN Team continues to reach out to members and friends of our congregation who are going through a tough time and /or simply in need of a loving connection from the church. Since we began this effort two years ago, we have given out 12 prayer shawls to those who are

struggling with illness. Each shawl is sent with a picture of our church and a message of hope, healing, and the promise of keeping a prayer vigil for each individual. The feedback of gratitude we receive back is such a reflection of God's love.

We are in need of additional shawls, so if anyone is interested in knitting one, please contact Kay Dalzell, our master knitter and crocheter. Kay has the instructions.

In addition to individual outreach, weekly Inspirational Messages by Penny Hurley has become a ministry unto itself. Penny is a gifted writer who is able to translate spiritual inspiration in pictures and words.

If you know of anyone who would benefit from an outreach by the compassionate care network team, please let Shawna in our church office know.

An illustration of an elderly man and woman jogging together. The man is on the left, wearing a black t-shirt and blue shorts, with a white beard and glasses. The woman is on the right, wearing a yellow t-shirt and black leggings, with short grey hair. They are both smiling and waving.

COA Fitness/Exercise Classes

Mon & Thurs
9:30 - 10:30 am

Wed & Fri
1-2 pm

First Congregational Church of Rowley

No classes on holidays,
contact COA for information

Ballroom Dance Classes

Taught by Reeva-Gibley Cooper

Place: Everett Hall in the First Congregational Church of Rowley

Dates & Times: Mondays & Tuesdays from 5:30-6:30pm in July

Cost: Make a donation to the church and you're in

RSVP at: PaulKChang2000@Yahoo.com with Ballroom Dance in the subject line



Two Granby churches reunite after 150 years apart. They did it in a ‘very careful, thoughtful and strategic way’

June 27, 2022 | Alison Cross, Hartford Courant

After 150 years of separation, two congregations in Granby are coming back together to counter diminishing church attendance and financial resources in Connecticut’s changing religious landscape.

The parishioners of First Congregational Church and South Congregational Church in Granby are careful not to refer to their move as a merger. They call it a reunion.

About 100 First Church members and 150 South Church members voted last month to form a new United Church of Christ congregation. This resolution has been discussed for nearly five years after both churches experienced a declining number of Sunday worshipers.



First

Bob Giles has been a member of First Church for more than 40 years and serves as the congregation’s moderator.

“We’re two congregations, but in many ways we’re a new church start,” Giles said. “I think the biggest challenge is to say, ‘OK, how do we decide how we’re going to grow in the future, and how do we reach out in different ways to a community and a society who doesn’t see church the way it’s been seen in the past?’”

“Granby’s not a big town. We’ve known each other many of us for a long time, and it’s been a real joy to see people coming together and excited about this,” Giles said. “Churches around the country and around the world are facing what we’re facing as far as declining membership and so forth. This is one example of two churches who took that task on and came up with a solution that we hope it’s going to be something really great going forward.”

First Church was founded in 1732 in the geographical center of Granby. In 1872, a group of congregants and the then-minister left First Church to create South Church in Granby’s business center. Factors driving the split may have also included a difference of opinion regarding the second wave of the temperance movement and horse racing.



South

Becky Sielman is the moderator of South Church and has been a member for 35 years. She said that the ideological differences that drove the split in the 1800s have disappeared in the 21st century. Today, both churches have the same spiritual background and are open and affirming, meaning that they welcome all people regardless of sexuality or gender identity.

“As we had conversations with one another, we realized that while once upon a time, there may have been differences in culture or style between the two congregations, there really are no differences today,” Sielman said. “You can’t find differences between a member of South Congregational Church, and First Congregational Church.”

Sielman said that the United Church of Christ is unique among other denominations in that congregations make all decisions about their church from the bottom up. Sielman explained that the decision to reunite was critical for the future of both congregations.

“We were very conscious that we were making maybe the most important decision in the last hundred-fifty years, since the decision was made to split



off. And we were making this decision thinking not so much about ourselves, but our children and our grandchildren and our great-grandchildren, and people who will live in Granby that we haven't met yet," Sielman said.

A national trend

Over the last two decades, churches of all denominations have experienced shrinking congregations. According to the Faith Communities Today survey of more than 15,000 religious communities across the country, the median attendance at worship services was 137 in 2000. Over 20 years, that number was slashed by more than half — in 2020, median worship attendance was just 65 per congregation. At the same time, studies have found that the country's churchgoing population is aging. In 1998, the National Congregations Study by Duke University documented that in the average congregation, 29% of parishioners were 60 or older. In 2019, 43% were 60 or older, and only 24% of worshipers were younger than 35.

The Rev. Sandra Fischer was a member of First Church when she felt called to enter the ministry. "I can say that the Northeast has had the steepest decline in church affiliation," Fischer said.

"There's all sorts of things that are going on, but I think the real driver is that there is a steep decline in the participation of younger generations in organized congregational life across all denominations. I mean, you've heard of the 'spiritual, not religious' terminology. Each generation seems to be less interested in being involved in a structured congregational life as opposed to finding their own path to their own spiritual fulfillment."

Fischer explained that another factor driving low attendance is the large array of church choices for Christians. According to the Association of Religion Data Archives, there are more than 20 Christian

congregations within a 6-mile radius of Granby's town center.

"There's such a wide range of choice, and there's a small amount of people that are interested in going to church, so it really just divides the impact," Fischer said. "In many of these churches that are declining, these faithful people, [who are] trying their best, think it's their fault. Churches are not aware that this is a 20-year national trend that they are being swept along by. And so I think that there is guilt and grief and loss in many, many, many of these congregations."

Fischer said that preserving these churches is also key to preserving town livelihoods. From providing a location for preschools or alcohol and addiction anonymous meetings, to collection drives for local food pantries or shelters for people experiencing homelessness, church impact extends beyond those who attend Sunday worship.

"Whether or not you go through the front door of that white UCC Church in the center of town or not, your daily life and the nature of the town in which you live is directly impacted by its presence in ways that most people don't know or understand," Fischer said.

Sielman said that she hopes the reunification between First and South Church will be a success story for other Connecticut congregations to look at.

"There is a lot that can be said about congregations with dwindling size and resources and the challenges they face," Sielman said. "We're hoping to be a maybe somewhat rare but happy ending. And we hope also that the very careful, thoughtful and strategic way in which we approach the situation will provide a roadmap for other congregations that need to consider changes in order to continue to be viable going forward."

"I don't think that there is any less of a need in the population for something spiritual in people's lives. But I don't think people are looking to meet that need in the same way they used to. So it's up to us to figure out how we can provide that spiritual presence in new ways."

HONDURAS TRINIDAD, SANTA BARBARA



2008



2010



2009

Donation items:

- Toothpaste
- Deodorant
- Old suitcases
- First Aid Products (Band-Aids, Neosporin, generic pain relievers)
- Gently used medical supplies

Dear Friends,

I've been invited to participate in a missions trip to a small village in Honduras from July 30 -August 7. We are going to assist a small nursing school that was recently founded, and will be hosting bible studies, community health/hygiene clinics and activities for children.

As you know, Honduras is a very needy country. with more than 66 percent of the population living in poverty. In rural areas, 1 out of 5 Hondurans live in extreme poverty, or on less than US\$1.90 per day.

As Christians, we often explore tangible ways in which we can honor our neighbors and serve vulnerable communities. One of the practical ways we do this is by sharing our resources. Would you be willing to love on our friends in Honduras by partnering with me on this endeavor? You can do this is by donating any of the items you see listed on the left. You could also partner with us by praying for our team.

I was deeply involved in missions during an earlier part of my life - but it's been a long time since my last missions trip and although I'm excited, I'm not sure what to expect. Please pray for our safety, pray for provision and more than anything please pray that God's love and power would be manifested in a special way during this trip. Feel free to reach out with any questions. God bless - Angie, angiefestevez@gmail.com

Officers, Boards, Committees, Staff

June 2022-May 2023

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Music Director	Karl Schmuck	978-948-5062, nakamaka@verizon.net

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PASTORAL RELATIONS

Kay Dalzell, Penny Hurley, Ken Sanford, Nancy Schmidt and Les Warren

*Emeritus ** Chairs

2022

MON TUE WED THU FRI SAT SUN

Ballroom Dance Class
Monday & Tuesday
5:30-6:30pm
start July 5 for July

				1	2 Thrift 9am-1pm	3 Worship 10am
4	5	6 GTKU 10am	7 Thrift 3-6pm	8	9 Thrift 9am-1pm	10 Worship 10am
11	12	13 GTKU 10am	14 Thrift 3-6pm	15	16 Thrift 9am-1pm	17 Worship 10am Missions Walk 1pm
18	19	20 GTKU 10am Diaconate 6:30pm	21 Thrift 3-6pm	22	23 Thrift 9am-1pm	24 Worship 10am
25	26 Compassion- ate Care 6:30pm	27 GTKU 10am Trustees 6:30pm	28 Thrift 3-6pm	29	30 Thrift 9am-1pm	31 Worship 10am

JUL

July Birthdays

Andrew Kay	7/1
Danby Whitmore	7/2
Shirley MacRae	7/8
Sue Gebow	7/13
Nathaniel Schmuck	7/14
Cameron Cummings	7/19
Stephanie DesJardins	7/25
Chuck Loring	8/25
Douglas Phillips	7/28

Help the Earth; Help the Scouts!

The Rowley All-Scout Paper Drive will be held **Saturday, July 9th from 9:00 A.M. to 12:00 P.M.** behind the First Congregational Church of Rowley on Main Street.

The Boy Scouts will be collecting newspapers, books, cardboard, and magazines. As well as re-deemable bottles and cans. The paper drives are held the second Saturday of odd numbered

months. If you have any questions, please call George Pacenka at (978) 948-7918.

July Anniversaries

Douglas & Beverley Phillips
7/8

Douglas & Eilene Chadbourne
7/23

Jerry & Nancy Schmidt
7/28

2022

AUG

MON TUE WED THU FRI SAT SUN

1	2	3 GTKU 10am	4 Thrift 3-6pm	5	6 Thrift 9am-1pm	7 Worship 10am
8	9 Executive Committee 6:30pm	10 GTKU 10am	11 Thrift 3-6pm	12	13 Thrift 9am-1pm	14 Worship 10am
15	16	17 GTKU 10am Diaconate 6:30pm	18 Thrift 3-6pm	19	20 Thrift 9am-1pm	21 Worship 10am
22	23	24 GTKU 10am	25 Thrift 3-6pm	26	27 Thrift 9am-1pm	28 Worship 10am
29	30 Compassion- ate Care 6:30pm	31 GTKU 10am Trustees 6:30pm				

August Birthdays

Luke Pyburn	8/2
John Grover	8/3
Emily & Sarah Gebow	8/4
Bill Manning	8/4
Ethan Dixon	8/11
Schuyler Cummings	8/18
Justin Flodman	8/21
Gabrielle Hanson	8/24
Helen Downing	8/24
Millie Dummer	8/24
Will Gundrum	8/31

Would anyone be interested in watching the series THE CHOSEN on Monday nights in August?

2 episodes per evening, snacks and conversation?

Contact Shawna
firstchurchrowley@gmail.com

Only Church events are listed on these calendars. Please visit our calendar online for information on all events held at the church.

<https://www.firstchurchrowley.org/church-calendar>

August Anniversaries

**Elizabeth & Nicholas
Morris
8/3**

**John & Tina Robillard
8/13**