



Steeple Notes

FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH OF ROWLEY, UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
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From the Pastor's Corner Blog

Hello All,

Last week as I was driving down my street I noticed one of my neighbors standing awkwardly by the road peering in another neighbor's backyard. I slowed down enough to see that they were looking at a skunk. After parking my car I walked over to see what the problem was. The neighbor pointed out the skunk was not behaving normally. It was making grunting noises as it struggled to move. The air was filled with the stench of skunk spray. We concluded the skunk was probably very sick.

My neighbor and I conferred further. How do you help a sick skunk? The answer we arrived at is you don't. We figured that if we tried to get closer to the skunk it would probably spray us. Even if we were willing to get sprayed the skunk would probably bite us. Animal control wouldn't be able to help. Eventually we decided the best path forward was to leave the skunk alone. A few hours later when I checked the skunk was nowhere to be found.



Some people are like sick skunks. They have defenses that keep anyone from getting close. Everyone knows not to mess with them. The problem is that everyone will experience weakness at some point, we will all need help. If we have created a situation where nobody can get close enough to help us in a time of trial we will end up like the skunk; alone in our desperation.

Meditation Verses: Proverbs 17:12 Let a man meet a she-bear robbed of her cubs rather than a fool in his folly.

In Christ,
Brent

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Building Maintenance

As we have had the opportunity to observe over the past few months, the Education Building, bridge, kitchen, Everett Room, chair and table room, Parish Hall and the store room exteriors have all been painted. The company that did the job (Wilichowski Painting)



performed very conscientious scraping and sanding followed by two coats of paint over the entire structure.

As is normally the case with any construction job, a few tasks remain that have been added to a "Punch List" maintained by Eric Fila. As the job progressed there were spots where the wood was found to be rotten. Those areas had to be structurally repaired and still need to be painted. In addition, as the appearance of the exteriors improved, Beverley Phillips observed two critical needs that were not previously as obvious.

The points at which the Sanctuary joins the Store Room are rotting. The flashing likely needs to be replaced and those surfaces will need to be painted, AND there are holes in the fascia on both sides of the Sanctuary that allow rain and animals to get into the building. They need to be repaired and painted.

The Finance and Trustees Board, by unanimous vote, authorized a Change Order to have the painting company and their affiliated carpenter perform this work. The dates when the contractor schedules will permit this work to be done have not yet been finalized, but Eric Fila will coordinate the remaining steps.

The appearance of the outside of our buildings again reflects the good work done by our people inside and outside our congregation!

Submitted by Doug Phillips, FT Board Co-Chair

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PRC

PRC Highlights

PRC continues to be proactive in working to keep communication open between the congregation and our Church Administrator, Angie. (Our role as the support and mediator for a pastor is on hold until such time as the church has a settled pastor.)

Even as I write this, Angie's role continues to expand in ways beyond her well-executed administrative jobs. We live in a time of rapid change, with social media platforms becoming more crucial to effective communication with the community. Angie has both the temperament and the skills to adapt to these changes and keep our church as proactive in messaging. Her creative use of graphics and language are highlighted in our weekly Powerpoints and monthly Steeplenotes.



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Most recently, PRC and the Diaconate have been grateful to have Angie helping with pastoral care. As noted in the Compassionate Care update this month, Angie has many years of pastoral education and experience and offers her ministry to our congregation.

Penny Hurley, chair - Les Warren, Jen Loring, Paul Chang and Ken Sanford

Picture By Penny Hurley

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5th Annual Meeting of SNEUCC on June 22 Highlights by Holly Ardito and Paul Chang, Conference Delegates

KEY TAKEAWAYS:

- A new slate of officers was approved.
- The Conference passed a resolution to engage in the process to be recognized as W.I.S.E (Welcoming, Inclusive, Supportive and Engaged). In claiming this status, the Conference is making a commitment to offer open-hearted hospitality to those living with mental health illnesses and challenges, and those who care for them. Congregations would be encouraged to be involved in lifting and ending the stigma around mental illness. To this end, the Conference would help guide congregations through the WISE process by providing support, programming, and advocacy in the areas of mental health.
- Two excellent resources available to assist with our strategic planning process:
 - Manual on Local Church. Available free at ucc.org/manual-on-church. Still in draft form but it is intended to be used and tested.
 - Grow Your Church board game -available for \$75. Players land on spaces that encourage reflection and conversation about qualities that are reflective of vitality in a congregation.
- Conference Minister Rev. Darrell Goodwin spoke about finding hope now. "On this rock I will build my church". We need to stand together as one body united in Christ. Be about the sense of welcome and radical inclusion so we may save someone's life. Be people of faith, vision, action. Expansive ministry - no limits, no bounds. We can change legislation, policies, school districts. Trust facts and fail forward.



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Conference Delegates, Cont...

- In the State of the Conference Address, Conference President Stacy Keene discussed our primary objectives:
 - Growing our churches
 - Finding hope - remaining beacons of hope and inclusivity. Initiative called Find Hope Now. Grow the church by building relationships. Foster a sense of belonging. Reach out to those on the margin. Be willing to listen and learn and walk aside others on their spiritual journey.
 - SNE Legacy Corporation is a new legal tool to smooth the external path for churches that are having to dissolve. Assets would go to an organization that will continue in the original mission by sharing assets with other churches. Despite having to conclude its ministry the church will seed the path for another one to continue.

Dr. Erica Dollhopf, Ph.D. presented data on current trends in the UCC. Complete data report is available at <https://www.ucc.org/what-we-do/justice-local-church-ministries/cardd/statistics-and-reports>.

Also community data available at theardo.com.

Small churches are the norm. Median attendance at worship is 37.

Best predictors of vitality:

- Fit between pastor and congregation
- Level of innovative worship
- Number of participants
- 10% or more people of color

Not predictive of vitality:

- Congregation age
- Percent of young adults
- Current financial health
- Proportion of female participants

Keynote speaker Rev. Dr. Courtney Stange-Tregea spoke about the Cornerstone Fund -one of five UCC financial ministries. "God Math". The fund offers low-cost, no-fee added, real estate secured loans available to established churches for capital improvements, accessibility, repairs, elevators, steeples, educational wings and other real estate-related projects. Churches can invest in the pool and earn interest.

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Message from Angie

Sending warm salutations and a heartfelt "Thank You" to the church's leadership and everyone else that attended and assisted with the **Celebration of Life** that we recently held in memory of Dianne Short.

I believe that we honored Dianne in a way that she deserved and her family felt cared for. It is always heartening to see how this church rallies around those who are in need or are hurting. **"Romans 12:15: Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn"**.

This is church my friends!



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Message from Missions

Request for your help!

The Missions Committee has been helping a family in Rowley that emigrated from Haiti less than a year ago. As we announced previously, the family had been looking for housing for quite some time but were having difficulties finding their own place.

We're happy to announce that they have found an apartment.

Unfortunately, this means that they will be moving out of Rowley, as they were not able to find any rentals in this area.

The Missions Committee is committed to assisting the family through this transition and we could really use your assistance over the next few days, as the family gets ready to move to their new place in Attleboro on Tuesday.

Ways you can help:

- **Tuesday is moving day.** Although the family does not have many furnishings - **"Many hands make light work"**. Please let us know if you can help load/unload the moving truck.
- **Financial donations.** We are also taking financial donations to help pay for the moving truck which is \$50 per day plus \$1 per mile as well as other moving expenses that the family will be incurring. **Any amount that you can contribute will be greatly appreciated.**

Please see Holly, Ellen or Pam if you have any questions or if you want to assist in any way. We appreciate you!



Getting to Know You

Wednesday morning's Getting to Know You group has been meeting for 60 years (1964-2024)! As I remember, we first met in the parsonage with Rev. George Corey as a bible study. We were about 8-10 members. Next I remember that we moved to the Corinthian Room (after the new education wing was built) and have been there every since.

From the original group - Marge Thurston and Judy (Stoddard) Robillard remain pretty much faithful each week.

At one time we had as many as 20-25 women and many children came with them. We even hired a babysitter, one in particular I recall, Priscilla Todd, loved doing this call. We always had coffee, conversation, and most times a theme for discussion. Some of our ministers had joined with us or prepared a few programs for us. Many books and subjects have been addressed over the years. We shared leadership, including all members at one time we had "Secret Pals" giving random kindness and small gifts anonymously until revealed at the end of the year. We have written many cards and notes to our elderly friends.

We used to collect dimes (the smallest coin) or any other change we had that day, and would disperse the funds to various causes which we would suggest and vote on to be sent out. A great amount was donated from a small group of ladies. Judy's son Doug Stoddard, when serving in Ukraine (over 14 years!!!) would use us as an example, saying "Every little bit helps - my mother's group of ladies pledged \$5 a month for many years." Always gratefully received. We saved the nickels and sent to the "Bible a Month" club.

We even managed to gather during COVID, meeting outside in our camping chairs.

Some of us attended and supported the scholarship program of the Women's Council at Gordon Conwell Theological Seminary quarterly as members of the Northeast Association Women's Fellowship of the New England Conference of the United Church of Christ. Several of us have attended their bi-annual meetings even hosting a few. Marge and Judy have served on the board over many years. Several of the ladies have attended women's celebrations including a gathering of all New England women every four years.

As we continue...as always, we would like to invite any and all ladies to come and join us on Wednesday mornings at 10am to get to know you...Please come.

Faithfully, Judy Robillard.



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July



Andrew Kay 7/1

Danby Whitmore 7/2

Shirley MacRae 7/8

Sue Gebow 7/13

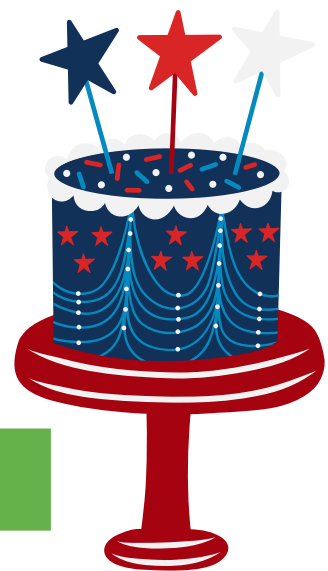
Nathaniel Schmuck 7/14

Cameron Cummings 7/19

Stephanie DesJardins 7/28

Douglas Phillips 7/28

Gale Penton 7/28



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July Anniversaries

Douglas & Beverley Phillips

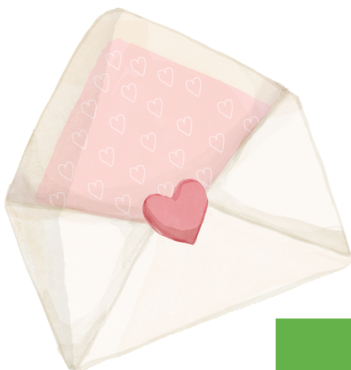
7/8

Douglas & Eilene Chadbourne

7/23

Jerry & Nancy Schmidt

7/28



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Steeple Notes Schedule

January - Compassionate Care Network

February - Missions - Holly

March - Deacons (including Christian Ed) - Jerry and Nancy (for 2024)

April - Finance/Trustees - Doug

May - Music Committee, including Inspirational Singers - Karen Schmuck

June - The Thrift Shop - Paul Chang

July - Pastoral Relations Committee - Penny

August - Getting to Know You - no response

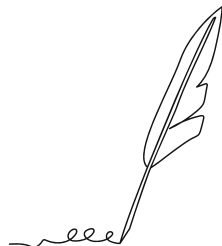
September - Golf Tournament and Flower Committee - Debbie Confalone

October - Old Tyme Country Fair - Donna Irving and Kay Dalzell

November - Community Dinner Team - Liz Butler

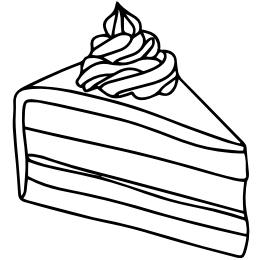
December - Pancake Breakfast Team - Jerry Schmidt

Staff - Any month as needed - you know this team :)



After Church Fellowship Board/Committee Assignments

Pastry or treat 1st and 3rd Sunday Updated Schedule



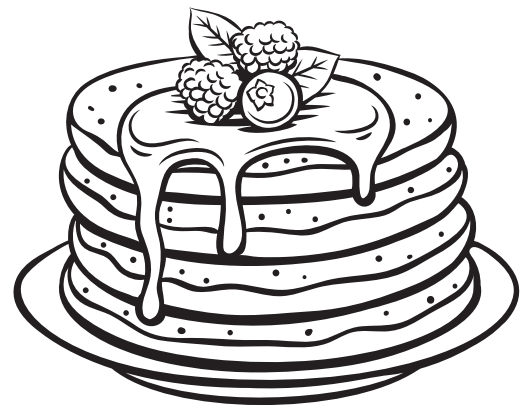
- January - Compassionate Care Network
- February - Thrift Shop
- March - Diaconate
- April - Missions
- May - Music Committee and Inspirational Singers
- June - Finance/Trustees
- July - Thrift Shop
- August - None
- September - Missions
- October - Finance/Trustees
- November - Diaconate
- December - Music Committee and Inspirational Singers.



*The schedule will be posted at coffee hour and reminders will be sent via email.

Community Pancake Breakfast

2nd Saturday in each month from
September 2023 through April 2024
\$10.00 - Under 12 free!
Looking Forward to Seeing you!





15TH ANNUAL EZEKIEL ROGERS GOLF TOURNAMENT

HOSTED BY
THE FIRST CONGREGATIONAL
CHURCH OF ROWLEY

SEPTEMBER 28TH

FAR CORNER GOLF COURSE, BOXFORD, MA

8AM - REGISTRATION, 9AM TEE TIME
AFTER TOURNAMENT EVENT W LUNCH BEGINS AT 2PM.

- \$165 PER PERSON INCLUDES GOLF AND LUNCHEON
- \$35 LUNCHEON
- \$150 CORPORATE SPONSORSHIP
- \$75 FAMILY SPONSORSHIP
- \$500 LUNCH SPONSORSHIP

SPONSORSHIP INCLUDES A TEE SIGN AND RECOGNITION
AT THE "AFTER THE TOURNAMENT" EVENT.



For more info:

www.firstchurchrowley.org

Debbie Confalone: dconfalone@comcast.net, 781-290-6502

Summer Sabbatical Reverend Brent Fugate



Reverend Brent and his family are on
Sabbatical through early September.

