



# The Spire

September 2026

The Newsletter of the First Congregational Church of Hanover, United Church of Christ

**Rev. Peter Johnston**  
Senior Pastor

**Chad Weirick**  
Minister of Music

**Janet Cook**  
Director of Christian Education

**Kimberly Booker**  
Office Administrator

**Peter Jansky**  
Sexton

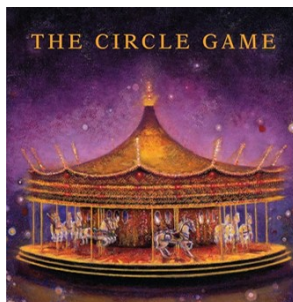
**Valerie Fink**  
Bookkeeper

## OUR VISION STATEMENT

We strive to be a church that welcomes all and empowers all in Christ to share their God-given talents.

## OUR MISSION STATEMENT

We are a community of inclusive love that has no walls or barriers, where all who enter are loved, respected, and accepted for who they are, reaching beyond social class, gender, race and sexual orientation, welcoming all into our circle of love. We are a community of growth and transformation that is not content with the status quo but a community filled with the love and compassion of Christ, and an overwhelming desire to share that love. We are a community committed to not only praying together, on Sunday mornings, but putting our faith into action daily.



## The Circle Game

September has always felt a little like standing on a threshold. The lazy rhythms of summer begin to give way to the familiar rhythms of the program year. Children, teachers, administrators, and school staff prepare to return to school. Our Christian Education team moves back into full program mode. Choirs begin rehearsing. Committees begin meeting. Calendars fill up. The church begins to feel a little more like itself again.

As I write this, we have just finished a small but mighty Vacation Bible Camp. We have blessed our pets, we are preparing to say goodbye to our church administrator, Susan Vetterlein, who is retiring after ten years of faithful service, and we will soon welcome someone new into her role. Two of our ordained members are serving as intentional interim ministers in Rockport and Marshfield.

And August also brought some tender goodbyes. We blessed three longtime members of our congregation as they made their journey to the heavenly places: Barbara Itz, Lynn White, and Ken Clinton. Each left a mark on this congregation, and each leaves behind memories, friendships, and a legacy that will continue to be part of who we are. We give thanks for their lives and for all they gave to this church.

And somehow, we are already beginning to make the turn from the sweltering days of summer toward the cooler days of fall.

And it makes me think of the old Joni Mitchell song, "The Circle Game."

*"And the seasons they go round and round  
And the painted ponies go up and down  
We're captive on the carousel of time  
We can't return we can only look behind  
From where we came  
And go round and round and round  
In the circle game."*

There is something deeply true about that image for the life of a church.

We go round and round. For nearly 300 years, we have followed many of the same rhythms.

Every year, we say hello to new children and goodbye to others. We welcome new members and remember those who have gone before us.

*(Continued on page 2)*

(Continued from page 1)

We celebrate baptisms and weddings, graduations and retirements.

We gather for Christmas and Easter, Lent and Pentecost. We begin another program year, another school year, another season of ministry.

And yet, it is never quite the same circle.

We are changed by the years. The people sitting beside us may be different. Some familiar faces are missing, while new faces have become familiar. Our congregation changes, our community changes, and the world around us changes.

And yet, the circle continues.

We will welcome someone new. New energy, new ideas, new gifts. That is not a replacement for what came before. It is another chapter.

That is one of the beautiful things about congregational life. We are always inheriting something, and we are always handing something on.

The Christian life is not about standing still. It is about remembering where we have come from while remaining open to where God is calling us next.

So as we begin another September, I hope we will resist the temptation to think of this as simply "getting back to normal." There is no such thing as normal in the life of a congregation. Every September is a new beginning.

Perhaps that is why I love the rhythms of the church year so much. We return to familiar stories, familiar hymns, familiar prayers, and familiar seasons—but we hear them differently because we are different.

We come back around, but we do not come back unchanged.

The children who were once in Vacation Bible Camp will someday be the adults helping with Vacation Bible Camp. The Sunday school teachers who once welcomed us will become memories we carry with us. Those who are new to our congregation today may someday be the people whose presence helps shape its future.

Round and round we go.

And perhaps that is not a trap, as the song suggests. Perhaps it is grace.

God meets us in the turning of the seasons—in endings and beginnings, departures and arrivals, in the people who come into our lives and the people we carry in our hearts.

So, as September begins, let us climb aboard once again.

Let us welcome the children and teachers returning to school. Let us welcome our Christian Education programs back into full swing. Let us sing together again. Let us gather around tables, in classrooms, in worship, and in fellowship. Let us celebrate those who are beginning new chapters and give thanks for those whose chapters with us are changing..

Wherever we are on the circle, we do not travel alone.

May God bless us in this new season—with curiosity for what lies ahead, gratitude for what has been, and faith enough to keep going round and round and round.

With Hope and Peace,



Rev. Peter Johnston, Senior Pastor



## **Cabinet Meeting Thursday, September 24**

Attention all members of the Church Cabinet:

Please mark your calendars and plan to attend the September Cabinet meeting on **Thursday, September 24, at 7:00 pm in the church Vestry.** If you are unable to attend please send a substitute from your board or committee. Reports from all should be submitted via email by September 18, in order that they may be read by others before the meeting.

Your input is important. Hope to see you on Thursday, September 24, **7:00pm.**

~ Ava Sigsby, Moderator



## Vacation Bible Camp

What a joyful and successful week we had at our Mission Deep Sea VBC! Each day, 20 excited SEAgents, 12 adult leaders and 7 youth leaders gathered to sing fun songs led by Rev. Peter.

The kids donned robes (lovingly made by Sandy A) and role- played the Israelites,

led by the faith of Moses (Bob Cluett) through the waters of the Red Sea. Other children, armed with shields and swords (thank you Ginny) followed a crowned Pharoah in his chariot (Kerstin Adami-Barett) hoping to capture Moses and his people.

Kids were also engaged in a fun puppet show lesson with the story of Jesus Feeds 5000 (Dayna). Lastly, manned with her very large cardboard boat, Rev. Deb involved the kids in the story of Jonah and the Whale.

Riley Hall was alive in excited Bible storytelling! The children made related Bible story crafts, connected with our leaders, and enjoyed many outdoor games and activities. Of course, water balloons, shaving cream beach balls, and the bouncy house were a hit!

Deepest gratitude to the members of the CE Committee (Ginny, Dayna, Louise), to other adult leaders not mentioned above (Linda, Glenda, Marilyn, Elisabeth, Kim, Ken), and to our youth leaders (Gianna, her friend Anna, Nora, Eli, JD, Aiden and Liam) for sharing bright enthusiasm on a daily basis and total involvement with the children. The kids loved the snacks provided by Debbie P., Jessie, and Cindy T.

Many, many thanks to the people who provided Wish List items, and to our entire church family whose generous pledges provide support for our Christian Education program. Thank you to Alex Cook who again donated the bouncy house for the day.

What a blessing it is to be part of such a wonderful church family- one that shares its love of God and its love for children and families!



## Fall's First Sunday September 13:

Fall's First Sunday is September 13 and we'll

welcome and celebrate the presence of children and families who are such an important part of our church community. I'm very excited to begin a new Sunday School year with the kids! This year's theme is **Growing Seeds of Faith**, and together, we'll explore how our faith grows as we hear Bible stories about God's love, kindness, and caring for others.

After worship, we'll head over to Riley Hall for coffee hour and a light breakfast. There will be fun activities for all ages, so dress comfortably!

### Sign Up to Provide Breakfast Fare



Fall's First Sunday is fast approaching! We so enjoyed our light breakfast of yummy quiches last year; we'll do it again this year! Please take a look at the sign-up sheet in the vestry and write your name next to a needed food item. Thank you!

## Youth Group

At The First Congregational Church of Hanover we cherish our young people.

We seek ways to support our children and youth as they discover their gifts and strengthen their call to make a difference in the world.

Our welcoming programs create opportunities for youth to experience God, while being mindful that young people grow in their faith in different ways. Through worship, community, conversation, service and play, our youth come together, each contributing their unique gifts, as they explore what it means to live a life of faith, action and fellowship.

If you have any questions, please reach out to Jenn Bunar at 617-653-2270 or Nicole Conti at 617-823-0465.





First Congregational Church Hanover



# FALL'S FIRST SUNDAY

**JOIN US! SEPTEMBER 13  
WORSHIP SERVICE  
9:30 AM**

**Sunday School Registration  
Backpack Blessing  
God's Back to School  
Survival Kit**

**Enjoy a light breakfast  
Games for kids!**

**Growing seeds of faith  
and friendship**

**Questions?? Contact CE Director  
Janet [jcookie4@hotmail.com](mailto:jcookie4@hotmail.com)**



## **Welcome Kimberly Mills Booker, Church Administrator**

After a summer-long search, we are blessed to announce that Kim Booker will be our church administrator, starting after Labor Day.

Kim grew up in Hull, Massachusetts, with her mom and siblings. After graduating from law school, she moved to Central Massachusetts, where she worked for Legal Assistance Corporation of Central Massachusetts (now Community Legal Aid), providing legal assistance to people in need.

After marrying her husband, Michael, Kim and Mike returned to the South Shore. Kim has been a Hanover resident for the past 18 years and has been actively involved in the Hanover community throughout that time. She chaired the Sylvester Feasibility Study Committee, served on the Hanover School Committee and the Center School Building Committee, was a member of the Hanover Club, and served as a den leader for her son's Cub Scout Pack.

Kim and Mike have two sons, Jackson and Liam. When the boys were younger, Kim took time away from work to raise them and be actively involved in their lives. Currently, Jackson is a sophomore in college, and Liam is a high school senior.

Most recently, Kim returned to part-time work as the Meal Site Manager for the Meals on Wheels Program serving the towns of Kingston and Hanover.

In her free time, Kim enjoys walking her dog Griffon, playing Mahjong, attending book club, and watching her children's sporting events.

Kim is grateful for the opportunity to bring her experience, community spirit, and love of helping others to First Congregational Church. She looks forward to getting to know the members of the church and working together to support its mission and ministry. Welcome Kim!



## **Thank You, Susan!**

Also on September 20, we will have the opportunity to thank Susan Vetterlein for her decade of service as our excellent church administrator.

It promises to be a faith-filled Sunday!

## **Flowers to God's Glory**

The colorful shades of autumn are coming soon! Please bring some of that color to our sanctu-



ary by signing up to donate a beautiful bouquet of altar flowers. Write your name next to a particular Sunday on the sign-up poster in the vestry, fill out the form, and send payment of \$25 to the church office. Flowers can be given in to keep your flowers or choose to donate in memory or in honor of a person you care about. Choose for bouquet sales during coffee hour. We are happy to report that \$295 has been realized by bouquet purchases and added to our church fundraiser proceeds. Thank you to all from the Flower Committee!



## **The Chosen Bible Series Continues**

All are welcome to join us for an evening video bible study, featuring the video series, The Chosen. Led by Rev. Dr. Mary Lou Gifford, the series happen on Wednesday nights at 6:30 in the Vestry.

## **Pastor Parish Relations Committee**

PPRC will meet meeting on Saturday, September 19 at 11 am in Rev. Peter's office.

~Laura Delaplain



**Pastor-Parish  
Relations**



# FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH HANOVER

## **REGISTER FOR CHRISTIAN EDUCATION PROGRAMS**

### **Sunday School (Ages 4-11)**

Bible stories, Fun crafts, Songs,  
Make new friends

### **Nursery/Toddler Care (Infants- Age 3)**

Providing loving care during  
worship service



### **Youth Group (Middle-High School)**

Group activities, Service and  
Mission Projects, Bring a friend!



Register with QR code  
or in-person on September 13  
at 9:30 AM worship.  
Contact 781-826-4762 with questions



## The Work of the People: Understanding the Rhythm of Worship

Each Sunday, and at other times, we gather to participate in worship—an act deeply rooted in tradition, community, and faith. The word "liturgy" comes from the ancient Greek *leitourgia*, meaning a "public service" or "public work" done on behalf of the people. Combining *leitos* ("of the people") and *ergon* ("work"), liturgy is literally "the work of the people."

We work very hard at planning each service, so that the scriptures, sermon, hymns and prayers tie to the theme of the service.

While many of us engage in this sacred work week after week, it is easy to fall into the routine without reflecting on *why* we do what we do. Each element of our service carries purpose, guiding us through a shared journey of gathering, listening, responding, and sending.

**Prelude and Postlude:** A musical threshold that transitions us from the busyness of the outside world into a quiet, receptive space for worship. And, a glorious sending forth at the conclusion of the service.

**Welcome and Announcements:** A time to center ourselves as a community, acknowledging who we are together and how we live out our faith beyond Sunday morning.

**Sharing Christ's Peace:** A practice of extending reconciliation and goodwill to one another, preparing our hearts to worship in unity.

**Hymns:** Sacred songs that allow the entire congregation to pray, praise, and profess faith with one collective voice.

**Morning Prayer (Invocation):** An opening prayer that formally invites the Holy Spirit into our presence and focuses our hearts on God.

**Anthems and Service Music:** Choral offerings that enrich the liturgy, using art to deepen our reflection and praise.

**Time for All Ages:** A dedicated moment to share core spiritual truths in an accessible way, welcoming the youngest among us into the full life of the church.

**Scripture Lessons:** Reading the sacred texts that ground our faith, connecting our modern lives to the story of God's people throughout history.

**Sermon:** An exploration of the day's scripture, offering interpretation, context, and practical application for our daily lives.

**Offering:** A tangible response of gratitude, returning a portion of our gifts to support the ministry, outreach, and care of the community.

**Time of Prayer.** We begin with offering our own joys and concerns, bringing the hopes, heartaches, and needs of our congregation, local community, and the wider world before God. Following that, the minister offers a pastoral prayer, and we close with the Lord's Prayer.

**Benediction:** Literally, "good word." A final blessing that sends us out from the sanctuary, commissioned to do God's work in the world.

Watch this space to learn about our Sacraments!



## What Is A Neutral Pulpit?

On Sunday, September 20, FCCH will be hosting a neutral pulpit.

"What on earth is a neutral pulpit?", I hear you cry.

A **neutral pulpit** is an important part in mainline protestant churches, particularly the United Church of Christ, while in the process of searching for and calling a new pastor.

Our church has been asked to host this unusual church service on behalf of one of our sister churches. That means that a search committee from one of our sister churches come to worship with us so that they can listen and watch the candidate that they have selected lead worship in person, but away from their church. **This will happen on Sunday, September 20 during our regular worship service.**

Neutral pulpits provide a place where a search committee can experience their candidate as he or she preaches and leads worship outside of their church and the candidate's church.

A neutral pulpit is not an audition or popularity contest, but part of a process of mutual discernment: the search committee considers whether the candidate is called to serve among them, while the candidate considers whether the congregation is the community where they are called to minister.

Because confidentiality is crucial for churches and clergy who are searching, I can't disclose the church or the candidate. So, come to church and meet a great search committee and hear a great preacher!

-Rev. Peter



The first Prayer Shawl meeting for the 2026-2027 season will be on **Wednesday September 2nd at 6:30 PM**. We will continue meeting in Pastor Peter's Office. You are welcome to come weekly or on a drop-in basis.

Yarn and lessons will be provided to those who wish to test the waters. We have extended this ministry to include shawls, booties, hats and scarves.



## **Welcome Back, Moonlighters! Tuesday, September 15 at 2:00 pm**

The first meeting of Moonlighters will be on Tuesday, September 15, from 2-4pm. We have changed the day of the week and the time for future meetings.

Our first meeting will include a game and prizes. Moonlighters has an assortment of outreach projects that we participate in. If you would like to be included in Moonlighters emails, please contact Glenda Larson ([glendajeanL@gmail.com](mailto:glendajeanL@gmail.com)) or Linda Gilardi ([garygila@aol.com](mailto:garygila@aol.com))

**We love to see new faces, so please join!**



Outreach & Service is very appreciative of the financial donation made to MainSpring House for the August meal. Thank you, Amy Kelly!

A new MainSpring sign-up sheet is in the vestry beside the flower sign-up. September, November and December are currently open. Thank you for considering a contribution!



## **Minister's Tea Wednesday September 9th at 3 pm**

You are invited to tea with Rev. Peter Johnston on Wednesday, September 09. The Tea takes place in the vestry (under the sanctuary) from 3:00-4:30 p.m. This is a time when members of the church can relax while enjoying delicious treats with good company.



## **Pot Luck Supper**

### **Third Friday in September**

On Friday evening, September 18, a pot luck supper is planned to start at 6:30. Everyone is welcome to join us in the vestry and experience good fellowship. Bring a favorite dish to share. See Ginny Hunt ([hesterbp2@comcast.net](mailto:hesterbp2@comcast.net)) for particulars.

## Our Teaching Parish



In the past few years, First Congregational Church of Hanover has become a *teaching parish*—a place where students preparing for ministry can gain practical experience and discover what it means to serve a congregation.

Given the shortage of ordained clergy, this holy work is crucial to the future of our New England churches.

Through our field education program, we have had the privilege of welcoming three theological students into the life of FCCH. They have preached, led worship, visited with members, participated in meetings and pastoral care, and learned the many things—large and small—that make congregational ministry possible.

But the relationship goes both ways. While our students learn from us, we are enriched by their questions, their energy, their perspectives, their experience, and their emerging gifts for ministry.

It is a wonderful reminder that the church is always learning, growing, and preparing the next generation of leaders.

A teaching parish is, at its heart, an investment in the future of the church. And I am grateful that FCCH is a place where that future can take root and grow.

We are especially proud that two of the students who completed their field education with us have gone on to ordination and ministry in other United Church of Christ congregations.

Their presence among us has been a gift, and we are grateful to have played a small part in their journeys.

## Rev. Lori Bruni (2022-2023)

Lori holds an MDiv (Master of Divinity) degree from Chicago Theological Seminary. She was ordained in October of 2025 at Old South Union church, Weymouth. She is serving as the pastor of the Houghs Neck Congregational Church in Quincy, following a time of pastoral ministry at the Wollaston Congregational church.



## Rev. Kim Engle (2023-2024)



Kim was ordained in October 2024 at her home church, church of the Pilgrimage in Plymouth. She holds a MDiv degree from Boston University School of Theology.

She currently serves as the pastor of two churches: First Congregational church in Lakeville and North Congregational Church of Middleborough.

## Almost Rev. Patti MacLennan (2025-2026)

Patti is currently enrolled in the Clinical Pastoral Education program at Beth Israel Deaconess (Jordan) Hospital in Plymouth.



Educated at Pathways Theological Institute, This is the last leg of her journey toward ordination. We expect to hear great things about Patti in the near future.

Our students are blessed to have such a great church where they can learn from us and teach us. I give thanks to God for that!



## Organ Dedication Service

We invite you to join us at  
**The Houghs Neck  
 Congregational Church**  
 310 Manet Avenue  
 Quincy, MA 02169

**on Sunday, September 13, 2026 at 2:00  
 p.m.**

for the **dedication of the Allen Organ** gifted to  
 us by the Wollaston Congregational Church.

Following the dedication, enjoy a concert to  
 showcase the capabilities of this instrument  
 and then refreshments downstairs in M. Alicia  
 Corea Fellowship Hall.

**In addition to the Wollaston Congregational  
 Church, this gift was made possible by  
 The City of Quincy,  
 the Allen Organ Company,  
 the Rev. Peter Johnston,  
 the Houghs Neck Congregational Church  
 Board of Trustees,  
 and Patty Corea.**

*Parking is available at the Atherton Hough School.*



## Summer Hospitality Packs a Punch

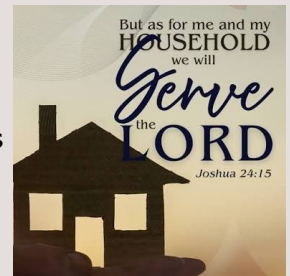
The Hospitality Committee would like to thank  
 all who helped with refreshments following  
 worship during the summer.

Thank you to Karen Tripp for the Sundays she  
 shared her mother's favorite punch recipe. We  
 have enjoyed coffee hours hosted by Joyce  
 Purslow, Hal and Maddie Thomas, Bob and  
 Jessie Berry, Sandy Adami, Karen Tripp, and  
 Dean and Glenda Larson.

Please consider signing up for a Sunday in the  
 Fall—it's a great way to celebrate our  
 welcoming church here at FCC Hanover!  
 ~Sandy Adami

## Serving in God's House

First Congregational  
 Church of Hanover has lots  
 of opportunities to  
 participate in the various  
 ministries of the church:



**Lay Reader:** Share God's Word

**Greeter:** Welcome and provide bulletin

**Coffee Hour Host:** Make the coffee and provide  
 a snack. Get a friend to help set up and clean  
 up!

**Flowers:** Remember and honor someone by  
 underwriting the chancel flowers

**Mainspring:** Purchase and deliver the fixings  
 for a meal for 140 to MainSpring in Brockton

**Tech Deacons:** Learn to operate the cameras  
 and livestream the worship service. Speak with  
 Rev. Peter if you are interested.

Please let us know how you would like to help  
 by filling out a SERVE card, found in the pews,  
 or adding your name to the lists found at coffee

# SEPTEMBER

| Sunday                                                              | Monday                      | Tuesday                            | Wednesday                                                                                                 | Thursday                             | Friday                  | Saturday                                                                 |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------|------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|-------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                                                                     |                             | 1<br>7:00pm<br>Scouts<br>Troop 38  | 2<br>10:00am -<br>2:00pm<br>Thrift Shop<br>6:30pm -<br>7:30pm<br>Prayer<br>Shawl<br>7:00pm Big<br>Book AA | 3<br>6:30pm<br>Prayer<br>Shawl       | 4                       | 5<br>10:00am -<br>2:00pm<br>Thrift Shop                                  |
| 6<br>Meml Fund<br>Comm Mtg<br>9:30am<br>Worship                     | 7<br>8:00am -<br>9:00am AA  | 8<br>7:00pm<br>Scouts<br>Troop 38  | 9<br>10:00am -<br>2:00pm<br>Thrift Shop<br>7:00pm Big<br>Book AA                                          | 10<br>4:00pm CE<br>Mtg Riley<br>Hall | 11                      | 12<br>10:00am -<br>2:00pm<br>Thrift Shop                                 |
| 13<br>Fall's First<br>Sunday<br>9:30am<br>Worship                   | 14<br>8:00am -<br>9:00am AA | 15<br>7:00pm<br>Scouts<br>Troop 38 | 16<br>10:00am -<br>2:00pm<br>Thrift Shop<br>7:00pm Big<br>Book AA                                         | 17                                   | 18<br>6:30pm<br>Potluck | 19<br>10:00am -<br>2:00pm<br>Thrift Shop<br>11:00am -<br>12:00pm<br>PPRC |
| 20<br>8:30am -<br>9:30am<br>Choir<br>Rehearsal<br>9:30am<br>Worship | 21<br>8:00am -<br>9:00am AA | 22<br>7:00pm<br>Scouts<br>Troop 38 | 23<br>10:00am -<br>2:00pm<br>Thrift Shop<br>7:00pm Big<br>Book AA<br>7:00pm<br>Troop 1 Com<br>Mtg Rm1     | 24<br>7:00pm<br>Cabinet<br>Meeting   | 25                      | 26<br>10:00am -<br>2:00pm<br>Thrift Shop                                 |
| 27<br>8:30am -<br>9:30am<br>Choir<br>Rehearsal<br>9:30am<br>Worship | 28<br>8:00am -<br>9:00am AA | 29<br>7:00pm<br>Scouts<br>Troop 38 | 30<br>10:00am -<br>2:00pm<br>Thrift Shop<br>7:00pm Big<br>Book AA                                         |                                      |                         |                                                                          |



To submit items for the church calendar, bulletin or the Spire, please email fully composed articles (and pictures!) to [Office@FCCHanover.org](mailto:Office@FCCHanover.org)



**The Spire**  
First Congregational Church of Hanover  
United Church of Christ  
17 Silver St., Suite 201  
Hanover, MA 02339



**Summer  
2026  
Fun at  
FCC  
Hanover**

