

SUMMER 2026
AUGUST 26

Herald of Good TIDINGS

Get you up to a high mountain, O Zion, herald of good tidings; lift up your voice with strength, O Jerusalem, herald of good tidings, lift it up, fear not; say to the cities of Judah, "Behold your God!" Isaiah 40:9 RSV

Dear Beloved Church Family,

This has been quite a summer! Our 250th birthday celebration was a colorful event, with momentum from near and far, to honor our church's history. Thank you for all who participated in the planning, from the setup of tables to contacting speakers to inviting Auburn-ites to the homecoming. I especially loved the colonial costumes and the formal Declaration of Independence, a document that had such timeless relevance for us now.

Enjoy the photos and memories from our 250th and know that we will continue to relish our history over the upcoming months. Our Stewardship Committee has commenced their plans, will link to our Legacy of Faith, and continue to share artifacts and tidbits from our church's past story to enlighten our future path.

As August marches on, we are mapping out the calendar of Fall events before us:

- brainstorming about a Saturday Supper with an Autumn theme
- or maybe a pancake breakfast,
- preparing for our yard to be aglow with orange pumpkins,
- and planning our Sunday School programs.

Before that, we are bringing back the **Auburn Walk for Hunger on September 27th**, just after the high-energy **SNEUCC Annual Meeting** buzzes into town.



We will have our great homecoming, **Rally Sunday, on September 13th** to kick-off the Sunday School year, and the following Sunday, expand our homecoming for all educational ministries with a new **Love of Learning Sunday on September 20th**. We will welcome the Here We Grow School, bless the teachers and our Sunday School teachers, bless all the backpacks, and prayerfully launch the teaching of our youngest.

We are thriving, my friends, and our faith is just the needed testimony to keep our community stronger.

With love,
Pastor Julie



The Rest is History – Sermonette by Rev. Dr. Julie Cedrone – July 25, 2026

In the slim volume of our church's history, created for the church's 200th and written in schoolteacher cursive scrawl, it all begins in the summer of 1674 on Pakachoag Hill, Pakachoag, a word that means "delicate spring of water" in the Nipmuc language, with John Elliot preaching the Bible to the people who were already here, complete with a block print showcasing the event of a formal orator on a slope with the natives gathered around. John Elliot learned the language and had the Bible translated – impressive, yes – and whoever made the artwork captured the unease of the moment, as the native listeners did not all look captivated, nor focused. It was just a few weeks ago at the very same Pakachoag Hill where this town gathered en masse, undeterred by rain, for a patriotic fireworks display, with food trucks and live music, and our plush Jesus doll to witness it all, and rather than a translated Bible preached to the "heathen," yours truly laboring over a message of unity in a politically charged climate to a crowd looking for a good time.

It takes some serious historical imagination to visualize the beginnings of this church, and the closest I have come was from the clock tower, where I was taken my first week here, for just that purpose, to imagine what Auburn was before it was Auburn, and actually Ward, a rural outpost of Worcester set on rolling hills. Our history is one of resilience – this church began in a tavern and inn across the street, and in "The Best Room" of that tavern, by 23 determined individuals who had been gifted an acre of land, and later another acre for the burying ground.

As the records say, in that first year of 1776, a congregational church was established here, "An exercise of prayer and religious worship having been attended by the Christian inhabitants of ye new Parish lately set off from Worcester and several towns adjacent..." with the very first Lord's Supper celebrated on June 9th, and the Declaration of Independence recited on the first Lord's Day after it was received. In those first months, a church and a town and a nation, all newborns, all honored here.

Birthered as a church in the same year as our nation was birthed has given us a legacy shaped by the ongoing dance between what it means to be a Christian and what it meant to be an American. Christianity had already been around for 1800 years, more or less, and the nation was discerning what it was, piecing itself together from the ravages of war and new settlements, skirmishes with those who had roots on this land already. Those tensions are far from over.

Initially, this church and this town were the same thing, and then in 1782, there was a vote calling for the distinct separation of church and state, with Sunday collections split between church expenses and town taxes. Then, in 1837, church and town come together, with the town contributing a whopping \$400 towards the total of \$2800 remodel of the building, since the town house would be housed underneath the church. Town and Church were in the same building until a fire destroyed it all in 1896, and separate spaces were constructed, across the street, with a few homes in between, blocking the view.

We continue to have these hearty discussions – where does Christianity blur into Americanism, what is being a good citizen and what is a loyal follower of Jesus? Although the views of this conversation are wildly divergent on Christian practice and American identity, we have always had enough common ground to find unity in the power of love. That has united us as a community, eager to serve, close and far. We always have, always will.

There is something else that I glean from our history – we are resilient – a church that has pivoted, literally, from one direction to another. With a vote, we changed the very ground that we stand on, raising the floor up to make more room below and a sturdier foundation to grow our faith. Our church building has burnt to charred rubble and been rebuilt, added to and added to again. We inherited land from here to Southbridge Street and turned it down, then bought and sold it again and again. We have had half a dozen parsonages, and the horse sheds were the first structure built after the church was lost to flames, because people needed them to do the work of creating community together.

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Historically, we allowed dogs in this sanctuary in the winter....to warm people's feet...and there was a note about the tithingman's pole in our sanctuary, a long wooden stick with a nob on one end and a fox tale on the other, to awaken sleeping congregants ...or establish order when necessary. This note was in the context of worships extending across multiple hours and seemed to be more needed to rouse the weary or bored, but I would be more inclined to bring the tithingman's pole back into fashion to establish order amongst the rowdy, to have beside my much-needed cowbell. Our bell still proudly rings on the hour, all 1400 pounds of it, delivered by rail and costing us \$240....if you look closely, you can still see the inscription to John Green Stone, a sexton here for 40 years.

We have been innovative, too, in our outreach. In 1974, we spent \$6000 on a 12 passenger minibus for the seniors of Auburn....can we do this again? The cost would certainly be a bit higher, and the need is just as pressing. As you have heard, we have sent missionaries from this church to China and Labrador with a few Auburn graduates from the oldest women's college in the nation, Mount Holyoke, established for training women in Christian mission work, and almost two centuries later, I stand here as your 26th settled pastor and the first female in that role, also a Mount Holyoke graduate on a mission to share my mission work in Haiti and the Dominican Republic with you...and you have bravely joined the adventure. As of this writing, we have 10 congregants willing to join the mission trip in February.

Our congregants, women mostly, have been sewing, crocheting, quilting and knitting all along – the sewing society founded in 1866, and continue to create all kinds of textiles: baby blankets, prayer shawls, quilts for veterans, and the sacred quilts at Rose Monahan Hospice House that I knew about long before I knew that they came from this church.

And, we have a prize in the back of our sanctuary that was just lovingly restored, the Last Supper was crocheted by Harriett Mitchell and it took her an entire year to complete. I do not know the year she created it, but I know that we inherited it from her son in 1974, long after she had passed. I have the honor of looking at it every Sunday, and I encourage you to turn around and take a look – the detail work is unbelievable.

Lest you think our new ministries are new, allow me to inform you that most of our offerings are repeats from the past: we held an ecumenical Easter sunrise service with Pakachoag in 1937, and not the first, we had outdoor worship services on Lake Webster church members were transported by electric cars....these outdoor worship services ended not because of disinterest, I suspect, but because of a tragic drowning of a schoolteacher during a church picnic in 1894. Just two years before the church burned down in a tragic fire.

And we came back.

The truth is, the history pamphlets and archives are woefully inadequate – they share the tragedy and triumphs in dates and names, the dollar amounts of money raised for every major project and when it was executed, but I long for the story beneath those facts, and try to imagine it: how terrifying was it to witness this church in flames? What was it like to run a Stewardship Campaign around a building consisting of a pile of ash? How were those first memorial days, decorating the graves of soldiers resting eternally in the acre next to this one? or those early funerals, before the funeral home, when the casket was carried from home to sanctuary and to graveyard? What were those prayers like when land was negotiated, a congregation discerning its formation, the town coming in and then out, a nation being literally structured – what a brave and risky experiment – as this church just tried their best to follow the teachings of Jesus?

I will never know the answers entirely, but I can only assume that an absolutely relentless faith must have motivated it all.

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And I now know that I have been completely wrong about something major – I had been feeling like we didn't have a strong vision, not beyond being a close family and being the glowing pumpkin church, two great aspirations, yes, but I had been pushing you for more....and looking back, I can see that the vision has always been there, to determinedly follow the practices of Christianity with service and care, love and relationship, close and far, steadily doing so as faithful people in dialogue with what it means to be strong citizens, too.

And so, when we say **the rest is history**, it is prudent to rest **IN** history and garner truths there to carry with us forward. That doesn't mean that we **rest in history**.... It means that we keep living the story, blessed with a powerful beginning and meaty middle, and nowhere near the end. 🏠



Dear First Congregational Church of Auburn,

Here is the certificate I intended to present to you on your Anniversary Celebration, but left at home.

It was such a joy to celebrate with you – from the reading of the Declaration to the histories uplifted in worship to singing and praying together to the festivities afterwards.

You continue to offer such a faithful witness!

Blessings, Liz

Save the Date!



September 13, 2026

**PUMPKINS ARRIVE
ALL HANDS ON DECK!**



September 19, 2026



September 20, 2026



AUBURN Walk for Hunger

September 27, 2026



To the people of First Congregational Church of Auburn,
The Royal Family KIDS members want to thank you for your
very generous donation! With the support, we were able
to show these awesome kids a wonderful week filled with
fun, love and the Holy Spirit! God Bless You All!

Warmly, Susan Folsom

This is a photo of all the counselors and
administrative staff that make this camp happen.
They are holding homemade posters for each
camper to greet them when they arrive!



**Please SAVE THE DATE and plan to JOIN US on Friday, October 23rd at 7 PM
to hear the music performed by VioLynne!**

Lynne is a professional violinist who will entertain us with a variety of music, singing, and a little bit of history behind some of songs. An hour of upbeat music from patriotic, big band, Disney, and many other genres. Suitable for almost any age. Children now taking violin lessons may especially enjoy her talent and be inspired by her program. Watch for more information about this evening in the September Tidings!

MEMORIES

250th

250 CUPCAKES!

When plans were made for our 250th Anniversary, a birthday cake was first suggested. However, that soon changed to 250 CUPCAKES!

That's a great deal of cupcakes. How could that happen?

Many ladies from the Women's Fellowship signed on to bake a dozen or more more cupcakes! Any flavor, any decoration welcome. Then, Gary came on board!

On the day of the party, he brought pans and pans of cupcakes – certainly more than 100! He and Mona passed them out to everyone.

There were chocolate, red velvet, cinnamon, carrot cake, strawberry, every flavor. Even peanut butter!

More than we ever could eat, but there were plenty for Sunday service and meetings all the next week! What a glorious assortment!

Many thanks to all the cupcake makers. You made the day a delicious treat!



MEMORIES

250th



MEMORIES

250th



MEMORIES

250th



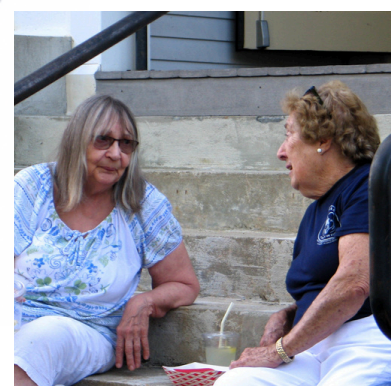
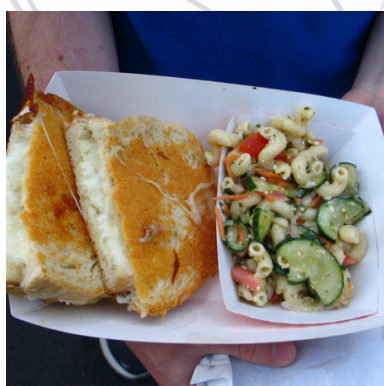
MEMORIES

250th



MEMORIES

250th



Deborah Paranitis, R. N., – Parish Nurse

I hope you are all enjoying your summer! Please make sure you take time for yourself!

Two things coming up:

- **On September 12th**, there is a **FREE Grief Seminar** sponsored by the Miles Funeral Home that will be held **at the Holden Senior Center** located at 1085 Main Street in Holden. Pam Reidy will talk about grief for one hour, then there's refreshments. I will also be in attendance. Everyone attending receives a free book and some other paperwork. **You must register** beforehand so they know how many to plan on for refreshments and handout materials. **Please call to register** at either 508- 829-4434 OR 978-422-0100.
- **There will be a Flu Clinic on Oct 11th, after the Worship Service.** The pharmacist from Auburn Pharmacy comes to the church. I will have the forms and more information as we get closer to the date.

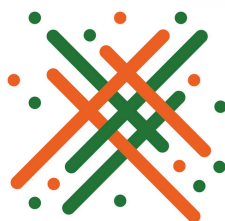
For our new members, and a reminder to everyone, the closet inside the door to the educational wing has DME (durable medical equipment). Wheelchairs, canes, shower seats, etc. They come and go, but if you or anyone you know needs the equipment, and what you need is in the closet, please help yourself – I don't keep inventory! There's also adult pull-ups and pads to protect the bed.

Any questions, please call 508-612-4521.

Debbie Pranaitis, Parish Nurse



Stewardship Committee



**YOUR GIVING
MATTERS**

thank you

Well here we are in the last month of summer. How quickly time goes by. We had a wonderful 250th birthday party for our church. Thank you to all who participated in the 250th anniversary!

Stewardship is going to be much more visible this year. We will be initiating a campaign that you will see in a week or so, to help Raise \$2,500. We will have a thermometer in the fellowship hall and we'll accept any amount of money. Doesn't have to be a big amount. Any amount at all.

So in the coming months, we'd like to propose a challenge for you: Give up one cup of coffee from Dunkin or Starbucks, give up a muffin, give up a candy bar, whatever you want. And put that money in our thermometer in Fellowship Hall. Let's see how much we can come up with.!

Thank you all for your generosity. We wish you the best last month of summer.

The Stewardship Committee

- Sheila Skog
- Stephanie Sanborne
- Bruce Hopper
- Deb Pranitis
- Ron Klaucke



Shannon Hartmann – Director of Religious Education

The lazy, hazy days of summer are nearly in our rearview mirror. I hope you made the most of every moment, soaking up plenty of vitamin D and quality family time! As we look ahead, we can already anticipate cooler nights, changing leaves, the return of school and sports, and—of course—Sunday School! Thank you, Lord, for the changing seasons. We praise Him for giving us the time to rest and recharge so we can give our best to this next chapter. Truly, God is so good! As Ecclesiastes 3:1 reminds us, *There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under the heavens.* (NIV)

With so many wonderful new families joining our program, I want to share a brief summary of what **Rally Day** is all about. Simply put, it is the kickoff for our Sunday School year—but it is truly so much more. While it is the day we register our children for classes, it is also the joyous moment our teachers get to see those sweet faces we have missed so much. Filled with hugs, high fives, and pure excitement, this day bridges generations and solidifies our bonds as a church family.

Parents will have the opportunity to meet the dedicated teachers who will care for and guide their children during sanctuary worship. You will also have the chance to sign up as a classroom leader or helper. We highly encourage this, especially since we are introducing a new program this year that relies on parent and guardian involvement (more details to come!).

Additionally, **Rally Day** reminds children of the importance of Scripture. Any child who does not yet own a Bible will receive one during a special moment of recognition during worship. Our core mission on this day is to help children connect their everyday lives and relationships with God. We are quite literally rallying for our Lord! Together, we will pray for one another as the children share highlights from their summer break. Prayers of gratitude will be in abundance, along with prayers for comfort and healing. We are reconnecting and refocusing.

Oh, and did I mention how much fun we have planned? Those who have been with us for a while can sum it up in three delicious words: "Ice cream sundae!" **The Board of Christian Education (BOCE) will provide ice cream and toppings** for a special Sunday School snack.

If your child has any allergies at all, please let Shannon Hartmann know ASAP so we can provide a safe, alternative treat for them!

The Sunday following Rally Day marks our **Love of Learning Sunday**. This event is a beautiful tradition with a fresh new title. It is a morning dedicated to meeting and praying over all of our educators. This includes our inspiring **Here We Grow (HWG)** teachers and our nurturing **Sunday School** teachers. HWG students and their families are invited to join us for a "**Blessing of the Backpacks**" led by Pastor Julie. Our sanctuary will be filled with blessings as the new school year begins. Please spread the word to any teacher or student you know—this event is for absolutely everyone, and **all are welcome!**

When we experience Sundays like these, I find myself deep in prayers of gratitude. I am so thankful to our Lord that I am part of a church community, led by a wonderful pastor, that deeply values our youth. In the New Testament, Jesus repeatedly emphasizes the importance of children. He reminds us in Matthew 19:14, *Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these.* (NIV) In fact, He tells us that we should strive to have faith just like them!

While we will not have a formal Confirmation Class this year, we look forward to an active **Youth On a Mission (YOM)** program. This group of teens gathers for worship, praise, fellowship, and community outreach. If you have a teenager, please keep an eye out for upcoming meeting dates and events. We have an exciting vision for them! Finally, keep your eyes peeled and your ears open for another new initiative: **BOCE is currently working on putting together a First Communion program** for this year.

Speaking of gratitude, I want to express a deep, heartfelt "Thank You" to **Jan Nowicki and Mary DeCoursey**. These two wonderful women led our Bible story and craft sessions every Sunday throughout the summer. Although attendance was light due to summer travel, you have beautifully planted a seed for future summers. As Galatians 6:9 encourages us, *Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up.* (NIV) Thank you, Jan, for taking the lead, and thank you, Mary, for providing the vital support needed to make this program happen!

I love you all so much and cannot wait to see you on **Rally Day!**

Peace,

Shannon Hartmann – Director of Religious Education



Paulette LaBarre – Organist/Choir Director

One of my favorite nature Psalms is Psalm 19.

It begins like this,

*The heavens declare the glory of God,
and the firmament proclaims God's handiwork!*



(There's an organ piece by Marcello that I've played for you many times that reflects those verses.)

Certainly summer is a time where the "glory of God" can be seen in the beauty and power of nature. The garden is giving up its bounty and the summer flowers are giving way to late summer early fall blooms. How the days fly by! Here we are looking toward the beginning of fall, when all activities of school and church ramp up again.

Soon choir, and bells, and children's choir (yes, we will have bells and children singing this fall!) will be adding their beauty to our worship services.

I'm looking at **starting Chancel Choir rehearsals on Wednesday September 16th at 6 PM**. We always welcome new members. If you're interested, please see me or another member of the choir to ask questions and other concerns you may have.

There will be announcements in September regarding dates and times for **Bells** and the **Children's Choir**.

In the meantime, enjoy the rest of the summer. Another one of my favorite verses is from Psalm 46: *Be still and know that I am God*. So rest, relax in the arms of God every day and let the God who loves us without measure restore and strengthen you for the work of your world.

Peace,
Paulette



ALMOST TIME FOR PUMPKINS!

On September 19, 2026 at 8 AM (although they have been known to arrive *earlier*), the PUMPKINS are coming!

All Hands On Deck to unload the Pumpkin Truck. RAIN or SHINE. Many hands make light work.

THANK YOU!





SAVE THE DATE



The 2026 Auburn Walk for Hunger

SIX MORE WEEKS until the Auburn Walk for Hunger on Sunday, September 27th (revived by FCCA, Grace Lutheran, and St. Joseph's Churches)! Watch for the blue signs that will soon be scattered around town to advertise the walk. And soon there will be sign-up sheets available for walkers to list sponsors and donations (clipboard in Fellowship Hall). **Walkers registration is at 12:30 PM, and the walk begins at 1:00 PM.**

There are **many ways you can contribute** to filling the AYFS and Kateri's Kitchen pantries:

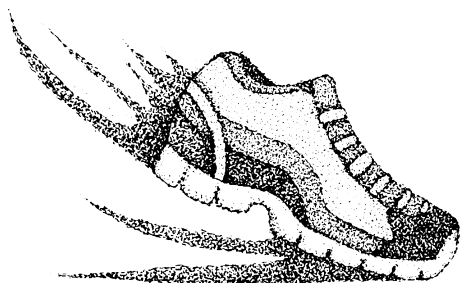
- You can **ask for people to sponsor** your walk
- You can **donate directly by scanning the QR code** on the blue signs (also found to the right) →
- Also, the Deacons have kindly agreed to pass the Celtic Family sneakers and donate the September Deacons Fund to the walk. *Please make checks payable to AYFS*
- You can **drop off nonperishable food to AYFS**. They accept almost anything even dog and cat food! Healthy snacks are especially needed when school starts.



Walkers are asked to bring a nonperishable food item. The walk is safe. **All walkers must sign in and out at the registration table.** It is a 3½ mile walk that starts and ends at the Auburn Youth and Family Services and takes place in the Bryn Mawr neighborhood. A police officer will cross us at Auburn Street and an EMT will be on duty. Two cars will drive a continuous loop in case anyone needs assistance. Refreshments will be served after the walk.

AYFS and Kateri's food pantries are very grateful for all the Auburn community support. Thank you so much for helping to keep Auburn families well fed.

If you have any questions please contact Sue Campbell, FCCA Representative (508-799-2718) OR Michael Schillinger (508-832-9043) from the Board of Outreach.



September 2026

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
		1 ACB 9a Bible Study 12:30p AA-Green Room 5p	2 Cub Scouts 6:30p	3 ACB 9a Boy Scouts 7p	4 Cadets #65038 4:30p	5
6	7 LABOR DAY OFFICE CLOSED NO SCHOOL	8 ACB 9a Outreach 10:30a Bible Study 12:30p AA-Green Room 5p	9 B.O.C.E. 6:30p Cub Scouts 6:30p	10 ACB 9a Women's Fellowship 10a Boy Scouts 7p	11	12
13 RALLY SUNDAY Stewardship 11:30a	14 HWG Board 6:30p	15 ACB 9a Bible Study 12:30p Music 2p AA-Green Room 5p Parkinson's/Dementia Support Group 6p	16 Chancel Choir 6p Cub Scouts 6:30p	17 ACB 9a Boy Scouts 7p Trustees 7p	18 Cadets #65038 4:30p	19 PUMPKINS ARRIVE Volunteers Needed 8:00 AM!
20 LOVE of LEARNING SUNDAY <i>Eagle Scout Ceremony 2-5 PM Sanctuary & FH</i>	21 Cadets #65016 4:30p	22 ACB 9a Bible Study 12:30p AA-Green Room 5p PAINT NIGHT! 7p	23 Chancel Choir 6p Cub Scouts 6:30p	24 ACB 9a Boy Scouts 7p Church Council 7p	25	26
27 SNEUCC@ DCU Ctr Worship 10 AM Auburn Walk for Hunger 1 PM	28	29 ACB 9a Bible Study 12:30p AA-Green Room 5p	30 Chancel Choir 6p Cub Scouts 6:30p		SNEUCC Annual Meeting @ DCU Center	
August 2026 S M T W Th F Sa 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31 October 2026 S M T W Th F Sa 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31 						

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First Congregational Church in Auburn, UCC - 128 Central Street - Auburn, MA 01501

Sunday Worship - 10:00 AM Church Office Hours: Mon-Fri 9:30 AM-2:30 PM Phone: 508-832-2845

www.auburnfirstucc.org