

Minister's Corner

Dear Friends in Christ,

Our first learning module is in the books! We got our sea legs as a learning group and tried out new ways of thinking. I'd like to follow up here with a few takeaways and resources.

First, though, a big THANK YOU to everyone who prepared food! What a delicious and varied spread we had due to many caring shoppers and cooks. A major thank you also goes out to Richard Jesionowski, Eric Fila and Nicole Sirignano who provided behind-the-scenes planning and support for our hybrid success. And thank you to everyone who logged onto Zoom, engaged in breakout groups and were patient as we ironed out the tech.

The slides have been sent via email. They might be a helpful reference.

Rev. Jeffrey MacDonald



Upon review, I hope these ideas also took root:

- Spiritual formation isn't a program to do now and then. It can happen everywhere in church life, from washing dishes to folding bulletins or praying for neighbors.
 Everything we do feels more appreciated and meaningful in this framework.
- We don't need experts or professionals to lead us every time. If we use models, ordinary Christians can do this in every season. All it takes is open hearts and a known process.
- 3) Which model to use in which situation depends on what we're working with, just like ice and snow require different tools at different times (shovels, scrapers, salt, snowblowers, plows, etc.). Examples:
 - a) If we have an activity, such as running the Thrift Shop on a Saturday, then use Act First. The action that goes into running the store is the raw material. Follow up with theological reflection on the values that made that day's work a witness to Christ. Bring scripture, prayer & listening into the conversation. Templates can help if you want to explore using this.
 - b) If people come yearning to feel connected and valued, then use Love First. Here our lives - namely what we choose to share about the ups, downs and looming decisions – can be the raw material for conversation. Follow up with reflection and simple activity that makes participants feel appreciated and feel that they've appreciated others. This is derived from a children's ministry but can be adapted for all ages.
 - c) If we have a learning endeavor, then our common engagement with that content is the raw material. Follow it up with reflection on what each is learning and what it means for our development. Find ways to act visibly on what's being learned. That's Learn First.
- 4) As we gain confidence with integrating spiritual formation, we won't feel as much need to cling to ministry, revenue or governance models whose original premises are no longer tenable. We'll know that we can make faithful progress while experimenting. That counts for a lot.

I'd encourage you to learn more about all models that seem promising for FCCR. Keep in touch with others who express a shared interest and are learning more. Here are two books on topics that resonated last time and one that will undergird Module 2.

Love First: A Children's Ministry for the Whole Congregation by Collette Potts.

Free preview: LoveFirst i-xxii,1-138.indd

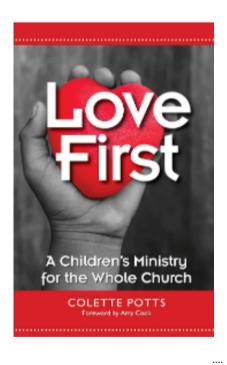
Get the book: ChurchPublishing.org: Love First

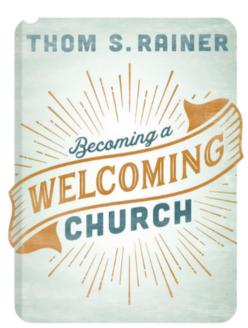
- Becoming A Welcoming Church by Thom Rainier. Several tables said they'd like FCCR to strive to be more welcoming. This book has practical insights worth considering.
 - Becoming a Welcoming Church: Rainer, Thom S.: 9781462765454: Amazon.com: Books
- Part-Time is Plenty: Thriving without Full-Time Clergy by G. Jeffrey MacDonald
 Part-Time Is Plenty Paper G. Jeffrey MacDonald: Westminster John Knox Press

Let's keep talking about models that are gaining traction in your hearts and minds. Speak up about what you need or crave to learn. See you on Feb. 16 at 11:00 for Module 2 on part-time ministry models.

Yours in Christ,

Rev. Jeff MacDonald











Sister Churches to Share Practical Knowledge in Feb. and March

Several priorities in First Congregational Church of Rowley's strategic plan will be among the topics discussed at regional UCC events in February and March.

In February, the "Growing in Vision Together" event comes to our Northeast Area. Together with other UCC churches, we'll hear what's been done to achieve growth and innovation in the wake of the pandemic. The event begins at 9:00 AM Saturday, Feb. 8 at Reading Congregational Church. **Learn more and register at sneucc.org.**

Then on March 8, Super Saturday workshops in Shrewsbury will cover even more FCCR-relevant topics at a hybrid event. Presenters will cover, for example: "Revising Your Church's Bylaws: When, Why and How?"; "Simplifying Church Structure and Governance"; "Sharing the Story with and for All Ages"; and "Planned Giving: Start the Conversation."

Super Saturday registration closes Feb. 17. Be sure to sign up before then as either an online or in-person participant. In-person sessions will be at First Congregational Church of Shrewsbury. **Visit sneucc.org to learn more and sign up**.



As we entered the new year, many of us chalked our door to welcome blessings into our lives and our homes! Check out these smiling faces!







MANY HANDS MAKE LIGHT WORK

After Church Fellowship Assignments

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.



Steeple Notes Entry Schedule



January - Compassionate Care Network February - Missions March - Deacons (including Christian Ed.) April - Finance/Trustees May - Music Committee June - The Thrift Shop July - Pastoral Relations Committee

August - Getting to Know You

September - Golf Tournament & Flower Committee

October - Old Tyme Country Fair

November - Community Dinner Team

December - Pancake Breakfast Team

Welcoming additional entries as needed!



Missions Committee

The Missions team's mission is to provide outreach and fellowship to the church and the community. We support organizations in Rowley and surrounding towns who are serving people in need. We have also continued to facilitate events and activities that bring people together in the community.

We are currently a team of just two people – Pam Sanford and Ellen Barrett – having bid a fond farewell to Holly Ardito during 2024. We are grateful for the frequent assistance we have received from Angie Estevez and others in the congregation who step forward to help support our events – we couldn't do it without you!

During the past year we have:

- ⇒ Revived the Bookworm Café an annual event featuring guest appearances from local authors, used books for sale and home-cooked food. The March 2024 event was a big success, and plans for March 2025 are well underway.
- ⇒ Hosted a Community Café on the last Wednesday of each month.
- Supported a local immigrant family who had recently resettled here in Rowley from Haiti. Ellen provided tutoring to help the family learn English. When they were able to secure a lease on an apartment in southeastern MA, we coordinated the efforts and contributions from the wider congregation to help them move, obtain needed furniture, and reunite them with a daughter who had been living in Florida.
- Supported a senior citizen that was identified through outreach to the COA during the church visioning process; Pam has continued to meet with her weekly.
- ⇒ Sponsored 10 children and teens in our local community for the holiday Giving Tree.

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Missions Committee

...CONTINUED

- ⇒ Collected modest amounts of non-perishable food items for the Rowley Food Pantry. We have been working with a Logan Mysliwy, an Eagle Scout candidate from the Rowley scout troop, on his project to create a larger, more visible collection bin. This should help increase interest in this ministry in the future!
- ⇒ Collected warm hats, mittens, scarves, and hats for Emmaus House ministries.
- ⇒ Sponsored "Mission Walks" as we were able gentle strolls in nature where we can commune with nature and with each other. We have renamed them "Fellowship Walks" and look forward to more walks in the warmer spring weather!

This year we will likely be continuing many of the same activities. The next Bookworm Café will be in March – stay tuned for details

We are always looking for new ideas on how we can be of support to the congregation and the community. We welcome your suggestions.

Happy Birthday

- → AMY HANSON 2/2
- → GIDGET ROBERTS 2/2
- + ALEXANDRA FLODMAN 2/11
- → PATTI CUMMINGS 2/13
- → HANNAH CONRAD 2/14
- → JAMES SOMERS, III 2/14
- → JOANNE BLOUIN 2/19
- → MARIE GROVER 2/21
- → KEN SANFORD 2/21
- → NANCY HILL 2/22
- → DEDE TODD 2/28



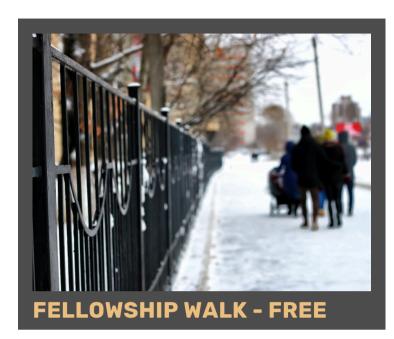


February 18th Gale and Bobby Penton

February 22nd Nicole and Alex Sirignano



EVENTS



FEBRAURY 2ND 2025 - 1:00 PM ROUGH MEADOWS DOWN STACKYARD ROAD ROWLEY MA



FEBRUARY 26TH 2025 8:30A - 10:00A
FREE MONTHLY EVENT TO HAVE
COFFEE, TREATS, AND CONVERSATION
WITH AMAZING PEOPLE



FEBRUARY 7TH 2025 8:00A - 9:30A \$10.00 PER PERSON UNDER 12 FREE!



MARCH 15TH 2025 10:00 AM - 2:00 PM

- 3 AUTHORS TO MEET
- BOOKS FOR SALE
- FREE TO ATTEND LUNCH FOR SALE SEE FLYER FOR MORE DETAILS

We are a church that lives by faith, is known by love... a voice of hope serving the community

PROGRAMS AND TIMES

PROGRAMS



- COUNCIL ON AGING FITNESS MONDAYS & THURSDAYS 9-10:30A
- COUNCIL ON AGING LINE DANCING BEGINNER MONDAY 4:30P – 5:15P
- COUNCIL ON AGING LINE DANCING INTERMEDIATE MONDAY 5:30P 6:15P
- GETTING TO KNOW US WEDNESDAYS 10AM – 12P
- ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS SATURDAYS 7-8PM
- AL ANON FRIDAYS 7-8:15PM

THRIFT SHOP



Hours

Thursdays 3- 6PM Saturdays 9- 1PM

NICOLE'S OFFICE HOURS

Tuesdays and Saturdays 9:00A - 1:00P

Remote hours daily, reach out any time!

firstchurchrowley@gmail.com

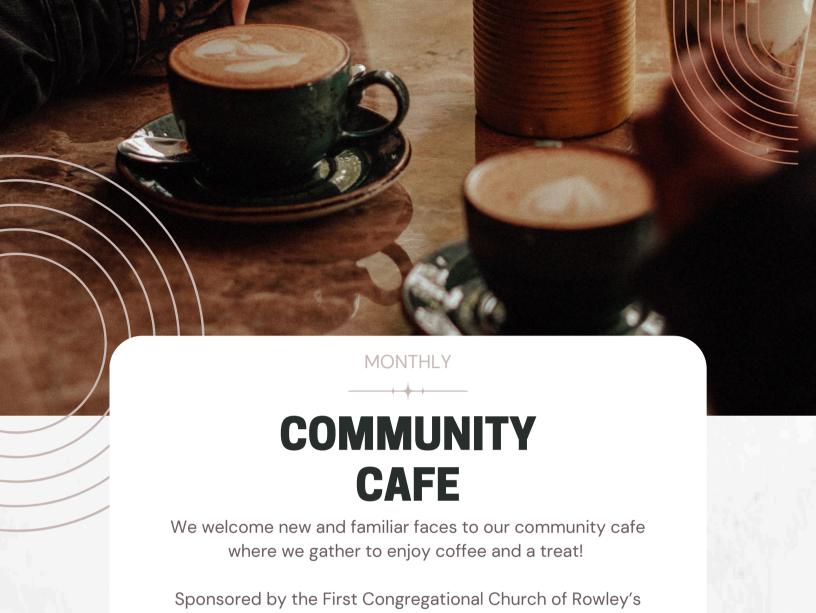
SNOW CANCELLATIONS:

SNOW CANCELLATIONS WILL BE ANNOUNCED ON OUR WEBSITE, BY EMAIL, AND ON FACEBOOK BY 7:00PM ON THE SATURDAY PRECEDING THE SUNDAY WORSHIP SERVICE



TO SUPPORT THE PEOPLE IN NEED AND THE FIRST RESPONDERS AFFECTED BY THE CALIFORNIA WILDFIRES, DONATIONS CAN BE MADE BY

- VISITING REDCROSS.ORG
- CALLING 1-800-RED CROSS (800-733-2767). OR
- TEXTING CAWILDFIRES TO 90999



Sponsored by the First Congregational Church of Rowley's Missions Committee. Treats provided by the Fellowship Thrift Shop!

WEDNESDAY FEBRUARY 26TH 8:30AM - 10:00 AM

Contact us at

- (978) 948 3993
- firstchurchrowley@gmail.com
- www.firstchurchrowley.org





First Church of Rowley

...A voice of hope serving the community

PANCAKE BREAKFAST

SATURDAY FEBRUARY 8TH 2025 8:00AM - 9:30 AM

\$10.00 PER PERSON

CHILDREN UNDER 10 ARE FREE!

Our pancakes are served with coffee, toppings, and other sides!

Contact Us (978) 948 3993 firstchurchrowley@gmail.com www.firstchurchrowley.org



Bookworm Cafe

Saturday
March
15
2025

10am - 2pm

175 Main St Rowley MA 01969

Join us at the Bookworm Café for a special day of literature and food. Meet authors, explore their works, and enjoy a curated book selection with a delicious meal. The cozy atmosphere fosters lively discussions, making it a perfect outing for readers.

Don't miss this chance for inspiring stories and delightful flavors! See next page - "Meet the authors"

Free Admission Menu available with prices during event



FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH OF ROWLEY 175 MAIN STREET ROWLEY MA 01969 (978) 948 3993 FIRSTCHURCHROWLEY@GMAIL.COM WWW.FIRSTCHURCHROWLEY.ORG

MEET THE AUTHORS



DIANNE C. BRALEY

10 AM - 2 PM

A gritty New Englander, Dianne C. Braley found love for the written word early on, reading and creating stories while trying to escape hers, growing up in the turbulent world of alcoholism while living in the tough inner city. After putting her pencil down for a time, she became a registered nurse, finding strength and calm in caring for those who couldn't care for themselves. Still, she never lost her drive to write. Seeing a painting and remembering a visit to Martha's Vineyard as a girl and falling in love when her bare feet first stepped on the sand, she moved there for a time, caring for ailing Pulitzer Prize-winning novelist William Styron until he passed. He not only was her patient but soon became her friend and motivator. He and his books helped her realize she missed crafting stories, and she had some to tell.



L.S LENTZ

10 AM - 2 PM

First-time author, L. S. Lentz, has been an educator for over fifteen years. She is a wife and the mother to two adult children and one large mastiff mutt, Stella. After their move to a rustic farmhouse in Massachusetts, Stella struck up an unlikely friendship with a turtle, Shell. This inspired L.S. to write Stella and Shell.

Coming Soon: Stella and Sarge and The New Adventures of Bacon McBean



ANDRE DUBUS III

12 PM - 2 PM

Andre Dubus III's nine books include the New York Times' bestsellers House of Sand nd Fog, The Garden of Last Days, and his memoir, Townie. His most recent novel, Such Kindness, was published in June 2023, and a collection of personal essays, Ghost Dogs: On Killers and Kin, was published in March 2024. He is also the editor of Reaching Inside: 50 Acclaimed Authors on 100 Unforgettable Short Stories, (Godine, 2023.) Mr. Dubus has been a finalist for the National Book Award, and has been awarded a Guggenheim Fellowship, The National Magazine Award for Fiction, three Pushcart Prizes, and is a recipient of an American Academy of Arts and Letters Award in Literature. His books are published in over twenty-five languages, and he teaches at the University of Massachusetts Lowell.