

SUMMER 2009

Congregation,
Ministers to all

Rev. Donald Remick,
Pastor

Rev. Meg Clapp,
Associate Pastor

Rev. W. Roscoe Riley,
Pastor Emeritus

Chad Weirick,
Minister of Music

Deborah Bowen, Direc-
tor of Christian Educa-
tion

Ed Melchin, Sextant

Stacey Stahl,
Office Administrator

The Mission of the First Congregational Church of Hanover, United Church of Christ, is to make the love of God and the God of love known as both continue to be revealed to us. We welcome all people into the full life and ministry of our church regardless of their age, gender, race, sexual orientation, ethnicity, class or economic standing, because we believe that no matter who you are or where you are on life's journey, you are welcome here. We gather people together in God's love that grounds us in a caring community and transforms our lives of faith. We send people out to make a difference in the world through compassion and justice.



A monthly publication of First Congregational Church of Hanover, UCC

GRIEF AND GRATITUDE

These past few days, weeks and months, people have regularly asked "How are you feeling?" I have often had to pause to think about the answer, because it changes moment to moment as I have sat one more time and one last time with people, programs, and projects. But the answer has always been the same; either a profound sense of grief or a profound sense of gratitude and both were usually mingled together in the same moment.

That certainly was apparent at the celebration on June 21st of the last nearly 15 years we have shared doing God's ministry together. It was a moving day full of laughter, tears, stories, affirmation, and hugs. I was deeply touched by the words spoken and by the words written on so many cards and notes. And in my preparations for the service and as I looked through many photos that I had or that I received, it was wonderful to look back, remember and cherish what God has done among us and through us. I have often spoken of how much love I have for our church where I feel so much love. On Sunday that was particularly and poignantly apparent.

I also want to express my appreciation for all the effort that went into that day (though my words

cannot come close to encompassing all the behind the scenes planning and preparations). The day was as perfect as I could imagine from the decorations, to the special guests, to the words spoken, to the bounty of food, to the music and to the crowd. For all the gifts you gave of time, talent and tangibles, please know that I really can't fully express my thanks or the thanks of my family.

The gift money will certainly be used as we go through this time of transition into a new community and into new job searches for the rest of the family. I will find a place on the walls and desks for the pictures along with all the things crafted and specially prepared. And the pictures that don't fit on the wall will go, along with the cards and notes, in a scrapbook that I can look at when I need to remember this most happiest of times in my ministry.

And as I remember each of you and all of the times we have spent together in God's love and ministry, I will pause and hold you, each of you and all of you together, in prayer.

~ Rev. Don

GENTLE REMINDER

In the midst of your summer fun and travels, we ask that you remember to keep your pledges current. Our mission and outreach continues throughout the summer months. We need your consistent financial support to fulfill our mission of Caring for Children, providing Meaningful Worship, Empowering Leadership and Focusing on Community.

You may mail your pledges to the church if you are out of town:

First Congregational Church, UCC
515 Hanover Street
Hanover MA 02339

REV. DON'S FAREWELL SERMON, JUNE 21, 2009

[turning over the hourglass again]

Last week at Sue's final Sunday farewell in Hingham she took a family hourglass and turned it over. It's a reminder that much time and much has passed like sand in an hourglass. I think it is also a reminder that we can preach on the long side.

A few days ago I picked up a copy of the "History of the Town of Hanover Massachusetts; Bicentennial Edition." I wanted to have a copy to bring with me along with the 12 dozen cartons of books which now line the walls of the parsonage waiting for the movers. In this book I found a poem. It was written by George Dwelley, a school teacher, born in Hanover. He graduated from Harvard in 1853.

The opening stanza of the poem caught my eye:

HOME WEEK

O memory! Fond memory!

From out the storehouse bring to me

Things new and old, both sad and sweet,

As we unroll life's page complete;

Shadows and lights of bygone years

Give retrospect of smiles and tears

This morning I am wearing three stoles, stoles that are full of fond memories sad and sweet, new and old, smiles and tears.

The first stole is one of the first ones I wore here. It came with the church. At the time it was part of the paraments that hang around the sanctuary today. They were the only paraments that the church owned. They were made of green material to honor part of a church season called Ordinary Time. But our time, these last nearly 15 years, has been anything but ordinary.

And let me remind you again, that this day is not about celebrating me and my ministry. It is not about what we have accomplished together in these last dozen plus years. It is about what God has done in and through us as we have journeyed together.

And God has done much.

Now I began to create a list of the things that have been done within our church for the last 15 years...then I thought better of it... It sounded too much like my list of what I thought was important. You all know what our four historic strengths are within this church...right.... (Meaningful

Worship, Empowering Leadership, Caring for Children and Youth, and Focusing on Community) With those in mind, I would rather hear your sense of what God has done with us, within us and through us. IN FIVE WORDS OR LESS!!! So think about those memories and observations - Now. In a moment I'll invite you all to shout them out together.

Here are some thoughts to prime the pump

- 8:30 worship
- Church fairs
- Habitat homes
- Evening worship
- Town meeting
- Memorial day parade
- 911 ceremonies
- Talent nights
- Incredible music
- Red balloons at Pentecost
- Labyrinth ministries
- Spiritual practices
- Mission trips
- Greatest commandment
- Open and Affirming...of all people with integrity
- Took a church member from Mass Correctional detention to Mass Conference ordination
- New staffing for an increasingly larger and more complex and busier church

So this morning in gratitude for, as Dwelley put it, the storehouse of fond memories of all that God has accomplished I return this stole to the church, praying that the next person who wears it may enjoy equally rich, poignant, joyful, and faithful memories.

And as I remove it, let me add one thing. I have heard much speculation about why I am leaving. Please know that it is not because I have stopped loving you. And it is not because I have fallen in love with another church or position. It is not because I want to advance a career path. And it is not – It Is Not – because some words were spoken that compelled me to leave. I am not leaving...I am following the path that God has set for me. It is a whisper in my soul that I have heard for several years and it has grown. It has grown because of what you have taught, recognized, affirmed and helped to develop in me. It has grown because God has another chapter in my faith

journey that I must step into...because I heard God's Call, clear and loud, and I must follow that Call.

The second stole is black. It too came with the church. It is rarely worn. And unless you came to Maundy Thursday or Good Friday services, you might never have seen it. It is a Holy Week stole to remember the sacrifice Christ made to free us from our sins, our shame and our guilt. We all carry that. Which is why we need forgiveness. I know that I do.

There have been a lot of changes in this church. We have often faced pivot moments as we encountered crossroads and decisions together. I have moved through those moments with a sense, a discernment, that we were truly doing what was right and faithful by God. And we were genuinely doing what was true to the heart of who our congregation is. But sometimes, we moved painfully and created pain in the wake of our movement. I know I have done that with decisions and processes that created discomfort, confusion, and sometimes, outright hurt for folks in our family of faith.

I know that as we have grown the demands for pastoral care and programs exceeded my abilities such that I sometimes fell short of your needs and your expectations for both.

I know that I have learned much from the feedback, suggestions, critiques that have helped me understand myself better, understand the church better, and continue to shape the way I do and will do ministry. And I have learned that I still have much to learn.

And for all those places where I have failed to be who you expected or needed me to be; for those places where my actions or failure to act have caused you pain...I ask your forgiveness.

And I offer my forgiveness. For there are also times when the actions and failure to act have caused hurt that has gone both ways; to you, to me and my family.

And so I remove this black stole that gives, in Dwelley's words, retrospect of smiles and tears; so that we can both be released from the wounds and guilt that may yet linger and may yet hinder us from the grace of God. Because, in God's love and mercy and embrace, none of it really matters anymore.

And then there is this third stole. It is the

newest one of our church. It came late into our liturgical year as a memorial gift. Knowing that the Ordinary Season of the church year stretches from Spring's planting to Fall's harvest, we decided to add another set of paraments with the colors of Autumn's fruit and ripened grain. It is an affirmation of what is yet to come; the very definition of faith.

I have often heard it said, as I announced my resignation and Call to a new position, that people were not surprised. They had long felt that this church was "Too small for someone like me." That's an odd phrase and I have to confess that even as I feel affirmed, it grates with me. "Small" lies only in your imagination and perhaps your longing. It is not the reality of this church. It is not the view God holds for this congregation and its ministry. God has accomplished so much with this church. There is such a powerful movement of the Holy Spirit within you. Don't ever doubt what is possible in your future as you "walk together in God's Holy Ways" as our covenant describes.

In a time of transition with its stark leavings and unforeseen new beginnings, it is too easy to step back, to step out, stay home and let things slide. And I have heard it said, as is often the case in every process of grieving, "How can we keep things going without Don." The truth is that you are fully able to not only keep things going, but evolve things and let them ripen into what God wants them to become, because the real strength lies within you; within your relationship with God. Much of my ministry as this church grew increasingly complex, has been to show you, to taste and to try on what is possible with God. And I will have failed as your pastor if you let worship slide and programs wither because I am not there. They are not my ideas, programs and projects. You are not my flock, and this is not your church...you are partners with God. And there will be a new harvest just as there will be a new spring.

I did not come here to take care of you and to tend to the church. I came to open new doors to the Holy Spirit and to help you see that with Jesus, you – this church – can have LIFE and have it and share it abundantly.

And as I remove this stole I am removing myself from that story. It is your God-Story. And I need to make room in your heart, in the heart of this congregation, for another pastor to help you partner with God; help you have and share that abundance. And I

need to make room in my heart for my next chapter with God. Which means, that when my time here ends, I will not be you pastor. I will not come back to do weddings, baptism, funerals. We must let each other go. Don't call or email to seek my opinion. If I have forgotten to tell you where things are like where the Firelight Labyrinth supplies are kept (in the shed) or where the keys to the supply closet are (in the box in the senior pastors desk) or the snow blower (parsonage barn loft) or the Legal Corporate Church Seal (I'm keeping that one – OK... ask Stacey), and if that doesn't work and you still can't find them have your administrative assistant call my administrative assistant. Because the heart of this moment of transition is about making room in the heart for what God has to generously give in both of our next chapters. Will we ever see each other again...perhaps. But remember, it is about our relationship to God and it is both of our responsibilities to let God's story evolve and unfold unhindered.

And finally 'THANK YOU' I wasn't sure my heart and voice could go beyond this point...so I put these final thoughts into a presentation. I heard a song a few years ago from the Broadway musical called WICKED. It is the prequel to the WIZARD OF OZ. In the story, Glinda, (who will eventually become known as the Good Witch of the North) is singing with Elphaba (who will become known as the Wicked Witch of the West) They have a long and complex history. They have been roommates at magic school and have gone from strangers, to rivals, to friendship, to conflict, to understanding and affirmation. This song, called FOR GOOD, is their poignant parting of ways....

ELPHABA

I'm limited: Just look at me - I'm limited
And just look at you -
You can do all I couldn't do, Glinda
So now it's up to you
For both of us Now it's up to you:

GLINDA

I've heard it said That people come into our lives for a reason
Bringing something we must learn
And we are led
To those who help us most to grow
If we let them
And we help them in return
Well, I don't know if I believe that's true
But I know I'm who I am today
Because I knew you:

Like a comet pulled from orbit
As it passes a sun
Like a stream that meets a boulder
Halfway through the wood
Who can say if I've been changed for the better?
But because I knew you
I have been changed for good

ELPHABA

It well may be That we will never meet again
In this lifetime
So let me say before we part
So much of me
Is made of what I learned from you
You'll be with me
Like a handprint on my heart
And now whatever way our stories end
I know you have re-written mine
By being my friend:
Like a ship blown from its mooring
By a wind off the sea
Like a seed dropped by a skybird
In a distant wood
Who can say if I've been changed for the better?
But because I knew you:

GLINDA: Because I knew you:

BOTH: I have been changed for good

ELPHABA

And just to clear the air I ask forgiveness
For the things I've done you blame me for

GLINDA

But then, I guess we know
There's blame to share

BOTH: And none of it seems to matter anymore

GLINDA & ELPHABA

Like a comet pulled Like a ship blown
From orbit as it Off it's mooring
Passes a sun, like By a wind off the
A stream that meets Sea, like a seed
A boulder, half-way Dropped by a
Through the wood Bird in the wood

BOTH:

Who can say if I've been changed for the better?
I do believe I have been changed for the better?

GLINDA: And because I knew you:

ELPHABA: Because I knew you:

BOTH: Because I knew you:
I have been changed for good.

BOOK CONVERSATIONS

Book Conversations will return in August with *The Shack*. Rev. Meg will lead the conversation.

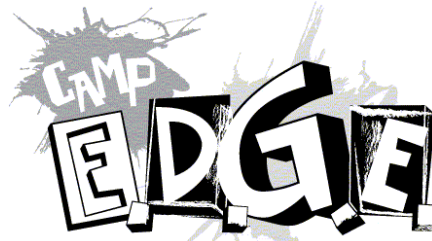
Ranking consistently in the top ten at Amazon.com, barnesandnoble.com, and other booksellers over the past couple of months, *The Shack* has clearly connected with a wide audience . . . and stirred up its fair share of controversy.

At the center of the book is the most difficult of all theological dilemmas: the goodness of God and the problem of evil. Where is God in the midst of pain and suffering? How can a good God allow the kinds of horrific evil that humans and other creatures experience? Why doesn't He do something to stop it? Why does God seem so unconcerned about suffering and injustice? Intense and complex, these questions have almost universal appeal.

The Shack was written by a Christian father for his children, to help them understand his relationship with God. William P. Young explains that he never intended to write a book, but that this story became the means of communicating the real conversations he had with God and with friends and family over several years. Though the story is fictional, it seems pretty clear that Young's claim that the conversations were "all real, all true" is a claim that the words of God found in this book are true. Now, any work which claims to record divine speech needs to be read carefully and critically. Claims to speak for God must be treated with utmost seriousness. Hence, the controversy.

LABYRINTH WORSHIP

The outdoor labyrinth is lit with firelight each Wednesday evening. Summer is a great time to walk the outdoor labyrinth at any hour of the day. It is particularly beautiful when lit up with torches and fire. Each Wednesday night you can come and enjoy the shades and hues of sunset, fireflies sparking out their secret code, swallows looping through the sky and a sky full of stars.



Sundays from July 5-August 9

CAMP E.D.G.E - Experience and Discover God Everywhere! Kids are invited to group summer church school on July 5, 12, 19, and 26 and August 2 and 9.

CAMP E.D.G.E. Summer Church School 2009 takes your children to an extreme adventure camp where they Experience and Discover God Everywhere!

CAMP E.D.G.E. is not your typical stroll through the woods. It's an action-packed, adrenaline-filled expedition that teaches kids their strength and might come from God. Through rockin' contemporary music, larger-than-life recreation games, mind-boggling science activities, and cool, challenging crafts, you'll show your kids how to live on the E.D.G.E. in their faith.

CAMP E.D.G.E. 2009 Pledges:

1. **Trek to First Congregational Church.** Intro to Camp E.D.G.E.
2. **Trek to the Promised Land:** God is with me. I will stay close to God.
3. **Trek to Bethlehem:** God guides me. I will follow.
4. **Trek to the Pharisee's House:** God teaches me. I will learn.
5. **Trek to the Upper Room:** God loves me. I will love God and others.
6. **Trek to Galilee:** God sends me. I will go.



Kids, join Sparx the Raccoon for a fun-filled summer of learning about God and how to follow Him!

SUMMER CALENDAR

SUNDAYS EVENTS

Worship:

9:30 am

Communion:

July 5 and August 2 at 9:30 am worship

Summer Sunday School

July 5, 12, 19 and 26 and August 2 and 9. Bring your kids at 9:30 am and pick them up when church is done.

MONDAY EVENTS

Moonlighters Craft Nights:

7 pm at Riley Hall in Room 5

Habitat for Humanity every other Monday - moved back to the Vestry to make room for the Moonlighters

WEDNESDAY EVENTS

Labyrinth Firelight Walks

7:30 pm, weather permitting

THANK YOU FOR A PRODUCTIVE YEAR

As summer breezes in, our church calendar slows down and we can take a moment to reflect on the many, many hours of service this year at the hands of our church members.

Thank you to everyone who serves in on a board or committee or elected position. Many thanks to everyone who coordinates volunteers to serve as lay readers, greeters, acolytes and flower donations. Many hands make light work and your leadership and teamwork are a reminder of our strength as a congregation to EMPOWER LEADERSHIP.

Thanks to those who say "YES" when called upon to serve as communion assistants, lay readers, greeters, acolytes and who give donations to purchase flowers to beautify the sanctuary each Sunday. Your service reminds us that we are church that provides MEANINGFUL WORSHIP.

Thank you to those who serve as our Director of Christian Education, members of the CE Committee, Church School teachers and summer group Church School leaders, Nursery Caretakers, Youth Fellowship leaders. Your service is the tangible reminder that as a church we value CARING FOR CHILDREN & YOUTH.

Thank you to everyone who donates time and financial support to the outreach ministries to serve people in our church and community and world. Our strength to FOCUS ON COMMUNITY shines through you.

First Congregational Church United Church of Christ

Where God is still speaking

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Laura's Country Church Fair

The Moonlighters are making themed Gift Baskets for our 2009 Laura's Country Church Fair. In addition to the filler items listed below we are in need of baskets (all shapes and sizes), wired ribbon for decorating the baskets, and large handled shopping bags for transporting. Here are some suggestions for filler items (donation box in the coat room):

All occasion cards
Pretty pens and pencils
Markers, crayons
Story books, activity books
Small children's games
Bird books
Bird seed/suet
Bird feeders
Suet holders
Bird cards or ornaments
clay flower pots
gardening gloves

Potting soil
Seed packets
Gardening books
Small garden tools
garden sign
Shears
boxed tea bags
cocoa mix packets
cup/saucers
coffee mugs, pretty tea
gourmet coffee pkgs.
Quick bread mixes/cookie or muffin
Aprons
Microwave popcorn
Napkins, placemats
Kitchen towels
Tea towels
Wooden spoons, spatulas, etc.,
Potholders
Seasonings
puzzles, playing cards
crossword/Sudoku books
Packaged candy
Paperback novels, new
Scented candles
Baby layette items, new
Baby toys, new
Stuffed animal toys, new
Small toys
Small picture frames
Bath sponges or scrubbers
Shower gel, bubble bath

Scented soaps
Body lotion
Body glitter
Barrettes, hair clips
Hanover items
car care items
winter theme items
golfing items
Christmas items
Brush/comb sets
Headbands
Hair care items
Eye shadow compacts
Facial masques
Lip gloss
nail care items, polish
items to take on a trip
signature items like Hannah Montana or
High School Musical
Beach or Picnic Items
Birthday Party items
Clear basket bag wraps

Any food items should have "Best Used By" dates no earlier than 12/31/09.

~ Judy Blodgett