



The Courier

Monthly Newsletter

September/October 2024

Worship

September 15th -
Seventeenth Sunday
after Pentecost

September 22nd -
Eighteenth Sunday
after Pentecost

September 29th -
Nineteenth Sunday
after Pentecost

October 6th -
World Communion
Sunday

October 13th -
Twenty-first Sunday
after Pentecost

October 20th -
Twenty-second
Sunday after
Pentecost

October 27th -
Twenty-third Sunday
after Pentecost



From the Pastor

Dear Friends,

This past Sunday we had a great start to our program year as we returned to our Sanctuary after the summer months. Most churches don't take a break such as this, and I've been reflecting on what this means for us since I've arrived at MHCC. It certainly gives the church a set of seasons. In the natural world we see how the seasons impact life and growth. Things grow at certain times, and they hibernate in others. They give us a sense of time and give us new moments to reflect. The summer is a good time to be renewed by the beauty in the world, and the fall is a good time to see the harvest come to fruition and to prepare for another year. I'm excited for where this year might bring us.

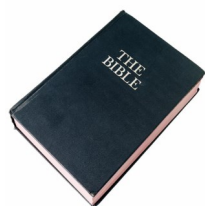
This year, we are focusing on the theme of "Growth". I've noticed that in the past twenty or so years that I've been doing ministry that there's been a consistent question in the church about whether it's possible in today's climate for the church to grow. Measured in numbers of people it's true that the mainline protestant churches are shrinking. The church doesn't hold the place that it once did in our culture. Many people that I've pastored over the years have been discouraged by this fact. We might long for the "good old days" when the church was full and felt like it was really at the center of everything. And yet, contrary to popular belief, the church isn't dying. World wide, the total number of Christians has gone up by over 700 million since 2000. There are about three times as many Christians in the world now as there were in 1970.

continued

The question isn't whether we can keep Christianity alive (the Holy Spirit is doing that work!) instead it's whether we can grow our spiritual lives and our work of service, justice, and inclusivity in a way that transforms people's lives in our small part of the world. I'm looking forward to teasing out ways that we can further grow the work that MHCC has done over the years and ways that we can find new life in our own spirit.

May each of us find the growth and transformation that God calls us to.
Blessings and peace,

Pastor Chris



Book of Isaiah Bible Study: join us!

Our Bible Study meets on Tuesdays at noon via Zoom, so that people can participate on their lunch break. This is a good supportive group and a way to delve deeper into scripture. Everyone is welcome whether you have studied the bible for your whole life or are cracking open a bible for the first time. This fall we are looking at the book of Isaiah, detailing the life of this prophet who was pivotal in the Hebrew Scriptures and laid the groundwork for our understanding of Christ. Please email Pastor Chris (pastorchris@mhcc-ucc.org) if you'd like to get connected and he will get you the materials for the study.

"Images of God" - Adult Ed Conversations

Join us for our Fall Adult Ed study directly following worship (after a short stop over at coffee hour!) We'll explore a wide variety of different ways of "imaging" and imagining God as we reflect on the way that God is presented in art, scripture, poetry, and theology. We'll look at the ways that these images impact us and also talk about the way that we see and experience God in our own lives. Pastor Chris will lead the discussions which will include audio and visuals.

We begin the five week study on September 22, and continue through September 29, and October 6, 20, and 27.

From the Desk of the Moderator

Ten years ago, my family and I walked through the doors of MHCC for the first time and began one of the most important spiritual journeys of our lives, one that has helped shape who we are today. Acquaintances became friends and then friends became family. We've experienced some of the most important moments of our lives with you, and shared in many of yours, as well. In that time, I've had the honor of getting to know you all and work with you to help make MHCC the loving, supportive community that it is today.

And as we begin a new church year, I feel that same sense of excitement that I get every September. Once again, I felt that familiar rush of joy as I entered the sanctuary on Regathering Sunday. And once again, I'm inspired by how many of you are jumping in to help in as we move into the 2024-25 church year. As usual, we've got lots planned for the weeks and months ahead, which means we need all the help we can get to make it all happen: coffee hour coordinators, liturgists, ushers, worship deacons, youth group volunteers, handypersons, Fall Fair planners — there's never a shortage of opportunities to help keep our church running smoothly and moving forward. (Special shout-out to Val Bowden for stepping up to be Interim Sunday School Coordinator!)

I am truly grateful for this church community and everyone in it, and I'm always inspired by the hard work and devotion you all show throughout the year. And I'm especially grateful for that warm welcome Gail Parente gave us when we first walked into the church a decade ago.

Warmly,
John Swanson

Looking for Coffee Hour Volunteers!

We're looking for volunteers to host Coffee Hour! It's very easy and all the supplies are already there, but you are welcome to bring your own goodies too if you'd like. Please use our Sign-Up Genius to grab a date and we'll send you instructions before your Sunday on how everything works. Thank you so much for giving your time to Fellowship and our church community !

Calling All Liturgists, Ushers and Greeters (aka "you")!

As church resumes, we are always looking for more people to help make the service meaningful and welcoming! We have a great group of people who are already helping, but love bringing new folks into the mix. Anyone of any age can help! If you can read, you can be a liturgist. If you can say "hello!" you can be a greeter. If you like to have a task, serving as an usher could be a great fit.

If you are interested in any of these roles, please reach out to Joanne, the Deacon of Worship, at joannehartung4@gmail.com. If none of these feel like ways you want to be involved in the church but you're looking for a way to tap in, please let Pastor Chris know and we'll find a great place for your gifts and talents to serve the community. And if you're in a place in life where you are looking simply for a community and church where you can show up and feel God's presence without needing to "do" anything, we are so glad you're here and feel that Holy presence!

Cub Scout Registration

Cub Scout Pack 615 is starting its new Scouting year, and all children in grades K-5 are welcome to join! Contact Lexi Dew Silva (lexi_dew@alumni.tufts.edu) to request more information or visit us on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/melrosepack615/>!

Service & Outreach

A Servants Heart Food Pantry



The Food Pantry continues to see an increased need for groceries and everyday supplies. Please consider picking up a few items for the pantry for September and October. Current list of needs:

September	October
Rice pilaf	Hot chocolate
Knorr or any rice dish product	Spam
Instant oatmeal	Beef stew (no tall cans)
Cookies	Jelly (no large jars)
Cheez-its, Triscuits, Ritz, Townhouse	Kleenex (any size box)
12 oz (only) peaches, pears, fruit cocktail	Mouthwash

Donations can be brought to church on any Sunday or dropped off at Faith Evangelical Church (200 Franklin St. Melrose). You can enter the driveway on the Albion St side of the church and locate a wooden shed to place your items. Thank you for your continued support!

Neighbors in Need

The Neighbors in Need Special Mission Offering will take place on Sunday, October 6th. This year's focus is on Mental Health Justice. You may make a donation at worship or you may donate online via the MHCC website <https://app.easytithe.com/App/Giving/melr355300> or use the QR code below.





SAVE THE DATE!

Highlands Fall Fair

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 16, 2024

Our MHCC Fall Fair will be here before we know it! We could use “all hands on deck”. Here are ways that you could help without coming to any meetings! Please contact Val or Anne if you are able to do any of these tasks:

1. Sort donated jewelry into jewelry boxes so it looks more attractive. Bonus if you know about pricing nicer pieces of jewelry (we have had some great jewelry donated). You could do this at home. We'll provide the boxes and the jewelry.
2. Visit local stores to follow-up on letters we sent asking for donations to our Silent Auction/Raffles. (See Val for stores that could use a visit.)
3. Finish a raffle basket: a) Coffee basket that could use 2 or 3 \$5.00 GC for coffee; b) Snoopy Christmas basket: so far it just has a set of 4 glasses, so use your imagination!
4. Create your own raffle basket to donate to the Fair. We have plenty of empty baskets to fill!

Savers FUNdrive in conjunction with the Fair

Like last year, we will be hosting a Savers FUNdrive at the same time as the Fair. For the FUNdrive, we are collecting “soft” goods: clothing, sheets, towels, shoes, belts, purses, smaller backpacks, etc. *Items must be in sellable condition.*

How can you help?

- 1) Start collecting your donations in plastic garbage bags
- 2) Volunteer to help spread the word about our collection
- 3) Volunteer to pick up donations

Val Bowden: valdalee14@yahoo.com; 774-219-1949 (text preferred)

Anne Gilbert: annegilbert45@comcast.net; 781-367-9508



Timeless Treasures Returns to the Fair!!!!

A chance to clean out your house!

A chance to meet new people!

A chance to be creative!!



Timeless Treasures is a big part of our Fall Fair. Folks come from near and far looking for that “diamond in the rough” – perhaps a priceless piece of art was inadvertently donated – or maybe you or someone you know just got their first apartment and is looking to furnish on a budget with some timeless pieces.

Step 1:

Look around your house and find treasures to donate. Kitchen items, dishes, toys, small furniture, jewelry, tools, Christmas décor – anything in **“like new” condition** that you think someone else might like to buy (no clothing, large items or computer monitors).

Step 2:

Bring your items to the church any Sunday. Need a hand with your items? – contact Anne Gilbert (Cell:781-367-9508) and she will work out a schedule for pick-up.

Step 3:

Come in to help arrange and price the items. We start setting up the Hall on Wednesday 11/13 and create an incredible marketplace before we open the doors at 9:00 am on Saturday. Come in and show us your marketing skills when your schedule allows. All help (all ages) appreciated!

Step 4:

Plan to help out at the Fair. Collect money, wrap and carry purchases, or just man (or woman) a table and smile! It’s a fun day!



Please join us in praying for God's comfort and guidance in their lives and this world, as well as for all those whom you know need God's love and caring.

PLEASE CALL OR EMAIL THE CHURCH OFFICE TO ADD A NAME TO OUR PRAYER LIST.

Nancy Chappel

Judith Coletta (sister/aunt of Keith & Valerie Bowden)

Christyne Daley (Dianne Cheney's daughter)

Mary Edwards

Mary Steele Hartung

Lois Mackey

Jack McLeod

Jill Steeper

Rachel Steeper

Carol Trout

Andy Wescott

Ana Wescott

Our Sunshine List: *Please send cards, visit and hold in your prayers.*

Barbara Kenworthy, The Fitch Home, 75 Lake St., Melrose, MA 02176

Charlotte Swan, Greenwood Nursing & Rehab Center,
90 Greenwood St., Wakefield, MA 01880

Beverly and Michael Harrison, Steele House, One Nason Ave., Apt. 514
Melrose, MA 02176

Isabell Johnston, 416 Main St., Saugus, MA 01906