NeedhamUCC

FOCUS Newsletter • October 2026

VITALITY

During a recent worship service, members of our Membership Growth Initiative (MGI), reminded us that if we want to grow our church membership, we need to make sure we're growing our own faith. To use their metaphor, for all its growth above ground, a tree is only as strong as its roots below ground. And the strongest and most attractive congregation is one that's **vital–connected, committed, and visibly brimming with life**.

So what can we who've been around a while do to help make our church more vital? Well, **keep on doing what you're already doing**: show up, worship and serve together, deepen your personal faith, and support the church with your time, talent, and treasure. **Then do something new.** This fall, we're challenging you to

do one new thing

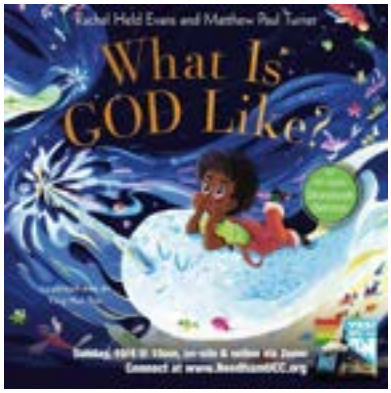
you've never done in the life of our church, or haven't done in a long time. In the pages that follow in this newsletter alone, you'll find lots of suggestions, such as

- Come share a meal at our new monthly **Table to Table Brunch** on 10/11
- Join in our brand new **Church Family Cemetery Walk** on All Saints Day on 11/1
- Participate in our new on-going **Overview Bible Study** Sunday mornings before worship
- Volunteer as a **teacher's aide in Sunday School**
- Decorate a car for our 8th annual **Trunk-or-Treat** on 10/24
- Attend **Men's Fellowship** on 10/18 @ 5pm on-site & online
- Sign up by 10/5 to share in a **small-group potluck dinner** on 10/18
- Join the **Prayer & Care Team** who support and pray for folks in our congregation
- Keep up to date with our wider United Church of Christ connections by signing up for a **Southern New England Conference newsletter**
- Volunteer to be a **greeter or other helper in worship** some Sunday

If we don't practice doing new things in the life of the church now, how are we ever going to be ready to share in the great big new thing God is doing in the world around us? Join me and do something new in church this fall.

In the Spirit of Christ,
Rev. John MacIver Gage

— COMING UP IN WORSHIP —



What Is God Like? An All-Ages Storybook Sermon

by Rachel Held Evans & Matthew Paul Turner, with illustrations by Ying Hui Tan
10/4 @ 10am, on-site & online via Zoom at http://zoom.us/j/907548568

"What is God like? That's a very big question, one that people from places all around the world have wondered about since the beginning of time. And while nobody has seen all of God (because God is far too big for any of us to fully see), we can know what God is like." Thus begins this fun, fantastic, and faithful book for children and others of all ages by beloved former Evangelical turned progressive Christian theologian and writer Rachel Held Evans. What follows is an accessible and intriguing exploration of the character of the God of Jesus Christ and our God–the God who invites us into loving relationship.

God: A (re)Confirming Faith Sermon

10/11 @ 10am, on-site & online via Zoom at http://zoom.us/j/907548568

We can't say everything there is to know about God. All our language about God, even our direct experience of God is as limited as our finite human comprehension. But we can say something, even something true, just at a slant. God isn't a father, but God is *like* a father. God isn't a rock, or a mother hen, or the "ground of all being" or "that than which no greater can be conceived," but God is *like* all these and more. God is always *more*, and the moment we limit God to "our poor reach of mind," we've made yet another idol. Our spiritual ancestors wrestled with this question for millennia. Now it's our turn. Who/what/how/where/when/ is God for you today, and why? (Acts 17:16-34)

Table to Table Brunch

10/11 @ 11:15am, *in the fellowship hall*

Join us for this no-reservation-necessary time for delicious food and fellowship. Maybe try sitting with someone different this Sunday.

Being Holy Means Getting Messy

with special music by The Lincoln Traditional Jazz Band
10/18 @ 10am, on-site & online via Zoom at http://zoom.us/j/907548568

In *If Grace Is True: Why God Will Save Every Person,* authors Philip Gulley and James Mulholland write: "I know a woman who is fanatically clean. Her home is spotless. She dons white gloves and moves from room to room, checking for dust. . . .Sometimes we talk as if God is similarly obsessed," as though to be truly holy means to remove oneself (and one's church) from contact with the less-than-perfect world. But God knows–and Jesus shows–being holy means engaging with the messy world, trusting God's grace to anchor us in justice, peace, and compassion. (Leviticus 10:*selected verses*)

Church member **Peter Wells** and **The Lincoln Traditional Jazz Band** will share special music with us during this service,

Be Not Afraid

An All-Ages Hands-On SermonCraft Sunday

10/25 @ 10am, on-site & online via Zoom at http://zoom.us/j/907548568

Halloween is a time for friendly, fun, imaginary frights. But sometimes actually frightening things happen in our lives. Whenever that happened to people in the Bible, God would encourage them to "Be not afraid"--not because those things weren't actually scary but because God promises to always be with us when things go bump in the night, and God's love is stronger than any scary thing we can imagine. Instead of our usual sort of sermon, this worship service will include an all-ages craft for us to share together.

Held in Love Forever: A Service of Remembrance for All Saints

with guest preacher, Rada Ruggles

& church family cemetery walk to follow

11/1 @ 10am, on-site & online via Zoom at http://zoom.us/j/907548568

Each year on the Sunday closest to 11/1, we join the wider church to observe All Saints Day. We remember all who've gone before us through death into God's eternal embrace, especially those nearest and dearest, in all the complexities of their lives. So we celebrate the gift of life, honor the good and grieve the bad in all of us, and give thanks for those whose love continues to inspire us. Our guest preacher will be Rada Ruggles (they/them), a Member in Discernment in the ordination process here in the Metropolitan Boston Association of the United Church of Christ.

*Once again we'll be putting together an **In Memoriam slideshow** of photos of departed loved ones from our families and our church family to share in worship. If you would like your loved one included, send an email with a photo and your relationship ("Jane Smith, Julie Smith's mother") to* revjohn@needhamucc.org.

About Our Guest Preacher

Rada Ruggles (They/Them) is a Member in Discernment (M.I.D.), that is, someone working with the Committee on Ministerial Formation in the local Metropolitan Boston Association of our United Church of Christ denominational family to discern a call to ordained minister. They are a member of and are sponsored by Eliot Church of Newton, UCC. A graduate of Boston University School of Theology (M.Div.), they ground their ministry in trauma-informed care, God's expansive and extravagant welcome, and the vision of beloved community. They bring this theology to preaching, pastoral care, and congregational life, inviting all to encounter each other as they move forward towards Christ.

Church Family Cemetery Walk

11/1 @ 11:15am, *from the church to Needham Cemetery*

Families with young children and all the members and friends of the church are invited to join in this easy walk to and around the Needham Cemetery. We'll visit the graves of beloved members of our church and others and hear stories from those who hold their memories dear. We hope this will help remind us that death is an expected part of life and God holds us as close and lovingly in death as over our whole lives long.

Drops-Ins Welcome Anytime!

A Six-Week Overview of the Bible for Anyone & Everyone

Sundays 9/20-10/25 @ 8:30-9:30am, on-site in the church library & online via Zoom at http://zoom.us/j/907548568

Have you ever found the Bible hard to understand? Have you ever wished you had a better sense of how its many books, stories, people, and ideas fit together? Or perhaps you simply have questions about the Bible that you would enjoy exploring with other people. If so, please consider joining us for **A Six-Week Overview of the Bible**, Sunday mornings from **8:30–9:30am.**, on-site in the church library (just ask!) and on Zoom. The course will begin **Sunday, September 20**, and conclude **Sunday, October 25**. No prior Bible knowledge is required. Our goal will be to explore the Bible's big picture together—what it is, how it is organized, the story it tells, and some of the questions it raises. Church members and Board of Deacons members **Clark Curtis, Avery Casper-Filbin, and Sue Turner** will co-facilitate the course. And for those joining us in person, we'll provide tasty breakfast pastries each week! We hope you'll join us for an opportunity to get to know the Bible—and one another—a little better.

Stewardship 2027: *There Our Hearts Will Be*

"Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."

—Matthew 6:21

On October 18th, we'll kick off our annual Stewardship Campaign!

This year's theme is *There Our Hearts Will Be* and invites us into an honest, hopeful exploration of how our practices, priorities, and resources reveal what truly claims our hearts. As a church, we have invested significant financial resources the past few years in such meaningful areas as:

- **environmental stewardship:** our new solar panels,
- **better access for all: our** new elevator,
- **a better welcome for all:** our new individual gender-neutral bathrooms, and
- **the youngest among us:** our new Director for Children and Youth.

All of these as well as our wonderful community-building, outreach activities, justice work, music, day-to-day operations, and so much more are made possible by our pledges which are our major source of funding. Stewardship letters will go out shortly, and there are lots of ways to make your pledge:

- **Pledge online** at **www.needhamucc.org/giving/pledging**
- **Paper pledge cards** will be on the table in the sanctuary foyer.You can fill them out and drop them in the black drop box on the church office door.
- Pledge via stock transfer gift of stock. (For more info, contact our Financial Administrator, Cindy Sullivan at **finance@needhamucc.org**)

Thank you as always for your tremendous ongoing support of our community and work, and please remember to pledge early and generously. ***Our goal will be to complete the campaign by Thanksgiving***, but we need everyone's help to get there!

From Our Children & Youth Ministries

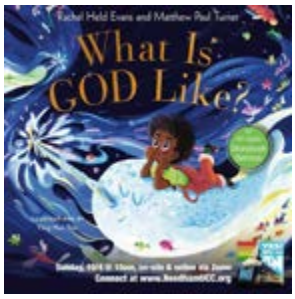
Darlene Wong, *Director*

Christian Education is excited to be back with another program year of fun, learning, and service for children and youth of all ages! We kicked off our first Sunday School this fall by hosting a class of ten that included ages 4 to 14! With an added focus this year on service, during these first few weeks, we've been working on a no-sew blanket making activity, in which we are creating soft, comforting blankets for Project Linus to distribute to children in need, in shelters, and in hospitals. Last Sunday, September 22, as part of many more activities, we completed our first blanket!

Older youth are invited to be classroom helpers and participate as they see fit. Lessons and activities are designed to have access points for different ages. Families can simply join us during the year whenever they are able – whether it be for the first time, occasionally, or as part of a Sunday habit. Come for a visit to check us out, and **register online at https://forms.gle/fc2cUFQSJcSPR84B6**.

Every Sunday we need another adult in the Sunday School classroom to ensure we can gather under our Safe Church policy. Volunteers can help with their simple presence, or they can participate as much as they like in class activities. All that's needed is a quick CORI check. If you can, **sign up at this link: https://docs.google.com/document/d/1ONwEBXFjwykTz8QU58rgAflm4QTkNziHytxxi-E5Qa8/edit?usp=sharing**

Beyond Sunday School, Christian Education has a boatload of activities for children and youth, their families, and friends to enjoy this fall!



Join us for an all-ages **Storybook Sermon service on 10/4**, in which together we'll read the beautifully illustrated book, "What is God Like?," which presents an answer in a way that the youngest among us may better understand.

Following a worship service energized by **live jazz music on 10/18**, everyone (including those in carriages and strollers) are invited to join an intergenerational **Run/Walk-for-Fun** around the surrounding neighborhood, as we get in our steps together in a healthy, outdoor activity! Refreshments will be available before and afterwards.

Worship on 10/25 is a "Be Not Afraid" Sermoncraft Sunday, with an opportunity to enjoy an intergenerational, hands-on craft activity in the sanctuary in lieu of a more usual sermon. In this relaxed setting, we'll enjoy conversation and each other's company. **Kids (and adults) are invited to come in not-so-scary costumes.**

All Saints Day is 11/1 and during our worship that day we'll remember dearly departed friends and family. Afterwards, join us for a **Church Family Cemetery to and around the Needham cemetery** to visit the graves of beloved church members and leave flowers. Our hope is this will help reduce anxiety and stigma around cemeteries, death, and dying.

Need a reminder of our special events? **Print out the church's upcoming events flyer on the next two pages or at https://docs.google.com/document/d/1ONwEBXFjwykTz8QU58rgAflm4QTkNziHytxxi-E5Qa8/edit?usp=sharing**, and forward it to friends and family!

THE CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH OF NEEDHAM
COMMUNITY EVENTS CALENDAR

FALL/WINTER 2026

FREE AND OPEN TO ALL AGES AND GENERAL PUBLIC!

OCT 04 10 AM

ALL-AGES STORYBOOK SERMON: "WHAT IS GOD LIKE?"

JAZZ & RUN-FOR-FUN

OCT 18 10 & 11:15 AM

10 AM The Lincoln Traditional Jazz Band energizes worship with their tunes!

11:15 AM Calling all runners, strollers/carriages & walkers for a group trek outdoors and around the neighborhood!

OCT 24 2 & 3 PM

NOT-SO-SPOOKY TRUNK OR TREAT

2 PM "Sensory-Friendlier"
3 PM "Bells and Whistles"

"BE NOT AFRAID" SERMONCRAFT SUNDAY

OCT 25 10 AM

In lieu of a more usual sermon, we'll share an all-ages hands-on craft activity.

JOIN US! 1154 Great Plain Ave., Needham, MA 02492 / (781) 444-2510

CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH OF NEEDHAM COMMUNITY CALENDAR (CONT.)

NOV 01 11:15 AM

ALL SAINTS DAY

We'll remember dearly departed friends and family as we walk together from the church to Needham cemetery.

ALL-AGES, HANDS-ON COMMUNITY SERVICE

NOV 22 11:15 AM

All are invited to share in this service activity to help feed hungry neighbors.

NOV 29 10 AM

FIRST WEEK OF ADVENT SERMONCRAFT SUNDAY

We'll make Advent calendars to take home as we mark each passing day in anticipation of Christmas.

CHRISTMAS CONCERT

DEC 06 4 PM

Celebrate the joy of the season with favorites old and new from the church choir and guest instrumentalists!

DEC 24 4 PM

CHRISTMAS EVE SERVICE & NO-STRESS PAGEANT

Any child can participate in our no-rehearsal pageant. Just arrive early to pick a costume!

MORE INFO → Visit us at https://needhamucc.org

Trunk or Treat 2026!

- **We are looking for volunteers to serve in the following roles on Saturday, 10/24**
- **Volunteers arrive at 1pm and leave by 5pm**

Trunk Decorators: Let your creative juices flow as you design and execute a themed trunk! Prefer to pick up a pre-made kit from Target or Amazon? That's cool, too! No matter how detailed or DIY, your trunk will be a welcome addition to our roster. Your friendly smile and a treat for the kids (which we'll provide) are really all that are needed to make your trunk a success. And if you need ideas or supplies, let us know in advance and we can help you out!

Runners: If you've ever thought being a personal assistant for a day could be fun, this "all purpose" role is the one for you! You'll help with set-up, clean-up, and everything in between. Your primary job during the event is to distribute and refill treat and candy buckets to our trunks.

Welcome Tablers: An extrovert's dream job – you'll welcome families to our event. Give them a trick or treat bag if needed and thank them for coming. If anyone wants to make a donation to help support the event, you can help them by pointing out the QR code, Square card reader, and donation box. If someone needs a bathroom during the event, you'll guide them inside.

Photo Attendants: Simply ask folks if they'd like you to take a picture of them with their kids. It's that easy.

SIGN UP AT THIS LINK:

https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/19O5WATBu-NYkfOXoMvUbUR-8Bm61s3ou/edit?usp=sharing&ouid=118026036160138802078&rtpof=true&sd=true

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Fall Potluck Dinners

Sunday, 10/18 @ 5pm

One of the best ways to get to know people in our church community is simply to sit down together over a meal. On **Sunday, 10/18 @ 5pm, we'll gather in small groups of 6-10 people in member homes** for our Fall Potluck Dinners. Everyone will bring a dish to share, the host will provide the setting, and we'll provide a few optional conversation questions to help get things started.

The idea is simple: **good food, good conversation, and a chance to connect with people you may know well–or may not know yet.** We're looking for members who would be willing to **open their homes and host a dinner**, as well as anyone who would simply like to attend. You don't need to organize the group; we'll take care of putting the dinner groups together.

If you'd like to **host or attend**, please email **Clark Curtis at clarkcurtis3@gmail.com**. We'd appreciate hearing from you **by 10/5** so we have plenty of time to organize the dinner groups and put you in touch with your host, who will coordinate what everyone brings.

We hope you'll join us for a relaxed evening of good food, fellowship, and connection.

From the Prayer and Care Team

The purpose of the Prayer and Care team is to attend to the needs of our elders and to those in challenging circumstances, such as health concerns or experiences of loss, through prayer and helping out in more practical ways. We are always looking for people to join our team and/or to volunteer to make meals, drive people to church, etc.

If you are interested, or if you know of anyone in our church community who needs support, please let one of us know at **prayerandcareteam@needhamucc.org**. Our current members are: John Baldwin, Sue Cotton, Martha Lamb, Dibby Moder, Stephanie Oddleifson, and Joanne Seiden.

Men's Fellowship

Sunday, 10/18 @ 5pm, on-site & live via Zoom at
https://zoom.us/j/93975548873?pwd=S3AydjcxQjdjUGhUaW8rM0dlQnpvUT09
Meeting ID: 939 7554 8873 Passcode: 152434

All men of the church are invited to gather for scripture-based conversation and fellowship at **5pm (NOTE NEW TIME) o**n the third Sunday of the month. Meetings are hybrid (on-site & ZOOM) and include a light breakfast & coffee. We meet in the small dining/conference room by the office.

From the Music Team

Special thanks to the dedicated group of people who helped update the choir music library. Stephanie Oddleifson helped organize Judy Ferretti, Erin Kelly, Randy Kreml, Carol Oberle, Isabell Wells, and Rob Dunlavey to spend many hours sorting, numbering, cataloging, and filing more than 150 music titles. Thanks to their hard work, our Music Director, Valerie Becker, now has an up-to-date digital catalog of the music owned by the church, making it much easier for her to select music for our worship services. Thank you, all!

From the Outreach Committee

Save the date–Sunday, 11/22–for a new hands-on volunteer opportunity to benefit the clients of our local Needham Community Council Food Pantry. In the meantime, please continue donating shelf-stable proteins for our Baby Basics Groceries distributions in early October and early December. October's ask is large cans of chicken breast, but all proteins are welcome at any time: large jars of peanut butter, dried beans of any kind, tuna and chicken.

From the Property Team

Please note that on Monday, 10/12, we will be having trees removed and pruned in the playground as the children who attend programs in our building will be out of the building that day in observance of the Indigenous Peoples Day holiday. We need to keep the parking lot clear. Please park out on Great Plain Ave if you need to come to the building that day. Thank you as always for your continued support!

From the Environmental Ministries Team

5 Benefits of Using Fallen Leaves in Your Garden

One of the best things you can do for wildlife, the environment, and even your wallet is to intentionally use the fallen leaves and other organic matter in your garden. Discover all of the benefits provided by leaving the leaves!

1. It Helps Wildlife.

There are so many wildlife species that depend on fallen leaves. From **moths, butterflies,** and **fireflies** that often overwinter in the leaf layer to **reptiles and birds** that use it as a foraging location. When you use the fallen leaves in your garden, you are providing wildlife with vital habitat that they need to survive!

2. It Benefits Your Soil

You can take advantage of nature's oldest recycling system when you add fallen leaves to your garden beds. There's a whole ecosystem of insects, arthropods, fungi, and microorganisms that will break down these leaves into rich fertilizer that replenishes nutrients in your soil. Skip the store bought stuff and let nature do the hard work for you!

3. It Reduces Waste

In one year alone, Americans disposed of over 35 million tons of yard waste, roughly the equivalent of 1.4 billion standard-size yard wastebags! And you might be surprised **how much of this ends up in the landfill**. When you use the fallen leaves in your garden, you're reducing the amount of waste you produce.

4. It Can Suppress Weeds

Using fallen leaves as mulch in your garden beds can help prevent weeds from growing. A thick enough layer of leaves (we recommend a leaf layer of 3-5 inches) will block the sunlight and prevent weed seeds from growing. Plus, these leaves will eventually decompose and add nutrients back into your soil.

5. It Saves You Time and Money

There are lots of ways that using your fallen leaves benefits your schedule and wallet, from saving you time bagging up leaves and carting them to the curb, to reducing the need for you to buy store bought fertilizer and mulch.

Discover How to Leave the Leaves

To get the most out of your fallen leaves, make a plan for how you're going to use them. We recommend moving leaves off of pathways and turfgrass and using them in the following ways:

- As mulch in your garden beds
- Beneath native trees
- In the compost to make a natural fertilizer

From the Open and Affirming Ministry Team

National Coming Out Day is October 11

What is "coming out"? (Thoughts from Planned Parenthood)

Coming out refers to the process that people who are LGBTQ+ go through as they work to accept their sexual orientation or gender identity and share that identity openly with other people. Not everyone comes out in the same way. And not everyone comes out to everybody in their lives, or comes out to everybody at the same time. There's no one right way to come out.

Coming out is a very brave thing to do, and it's extremely personal and different for everyone. Your emotions when coming out may range from scared and anxious to elated and relieved. It can feel better to be open and honest about your sexual orientation than to hide it, but there are many factors to consider before coming out. Coming out isn't a one-time thing. Because many people assume that everyone they meet is straight, coming out is a constant process. Every time an LGBTQ -identified person meets someone new (friends, co-workers, nurses and doctors, etc.), they have to decide if, when, and how to come out.

The coming-out process can be freeing and can bring you closer to the people you love. But it can also be stressful or even risky or dangerous. You may feel safer not coming out in certain situations. You don't have to be out everywhere, all the time. You can decide what's best for you. You, and only you, are in charge of your coming out experience. It's up to you to choose how, where, when, and with whom to be open about your sexual orientation and gender identity. It may feel safer to start by being open with other people who also identify as LGBTQ+.

In the words of the late beloved Dolly Parton, "Find out who you are and do it on purpose!"

LGBT Asylum Task Force Annual Gala, "We Persist"

Saturday, 10/10 @ 5:30-11pm, *Mechanics Hall, 321 Main St, Worcester, MA*

The LGBT Asylum Task Force, a ministry of Hadwen Park Congregational Church, UCC, in Worcester, provides housing, food, clothing, financial and personal support as well as legal assistance to LGBT folks seeking political asylum in the United States to escape oppression and violence in their home countries. Their biggest and most important fundraiser of the year is their annual gala, this year themed, appropriately, "We Persist." Won't you consider buying tickets and attending in support of the incredible work they're doing? **Tickets are on sale now at this link: https://givebutter.com/c/tfgala26.** When you purchase your tickets, please let our own Kathie Carpenter know **via email** so she can keep track of our congregation's support for these new neighbors in need.

From the Guatemala Partnership

Guatemala Yard Sale Recap

At 9am on Saturday, 10/19, a long line of eager shoppers surged into Fellowship Hall to discover the treasures that awaited them at the annual Guatemala Yard Sale, now in its 35th year. Some folks headed straight for the jewelry table, while others browsed the huge selection of puzzles, children's items, housewares, vintage and collectible items, and the framed art section that included 25 oil paintings and prints donated by women from outside the church who wanted to support our partnership with Santa María Tzejá! The fun and joyful spirit of the gathering was contagious and uplifting, and our many

volunteers who staffed the sale clearly enjoyed the opportunity to connect with other church folks and people from other communities.

The proceeds at day's end was a very gratifying $8,300 (and counting), representing the extraordinary effort by the 45-50 people who donated and/or priced items over 5 days, staffed the sale, and packed up the leftovers and delivered them to Savers where they will reach shoppers at an affordable price and thus continue to be utilized. Thanks to all who contributed in large and small ways to this effort, and I hope you'll plan to join us again next year. With much gratitude from the Guatemala Partnership team and our sister community of Santa María Tzejá.

Great Big Thank You!

A great big thank you to Brenda Metzler, who has always done an outstanding job putting this yard sale together year after year to support the community of Santa Maria Tzeja. We would also like to thank all of the volunteers for their endless time pulling this all together.

Southern New England Conference
United Church of Christ
Living the Love & Justice of Jesus

7th Annual Meeting Re-Cap

The Southern New England Conference of our United Church of Christ denominational family had record attendance at its 7th Annual Meeting Sept. 25 - 27 at the DCU Center in Worcester, MA, and online. At least 800 people attended in person despite the nor'easter, and more than 200 were online.

Business

On Saturday, delegates were asked to consider three separate motions accepting the legal mergers of the historic Rhode Island Conference, the historic Massachusetts Conference, and the Missionary Society of Connecticut into the Southern New England Conference. Each historic board and the SNEUCC Board had previously approved the proposed mergers. Approval by SNEUCC's voting membership was an additional required step.

The Rhode Island motion was considered first. A proposal to postpone consideration for one year, with conditions concerning additional listening and healing, did not pass. Delegates then voted on the merger itself. In total, 381 delegates voted yes, 259 voted no, and there were 19 abstentions. Because the resolution required approval by a two-third margin, it did not pass.

Delegates next considered the Massachusetts motion, with amendments and further amendments offered during discussion. During a pause in business, the SNEUCC Board decided to withdraw both the Massachusetts and Connecticut merger motions from further consideration, meaning neither merger proceeded to a final vote.

On Friday, delegates approved the election of the new slate of officers and Board of Director members. **That slate, which includes our own Rev. John Gage as Moderator of the Conference, can be seen at the following link: https://www.sneucc.org/files/annual+meeting+documents/snec+nominating+slate+2026+updated+9-23.pdf**

Rev. Raphael Warnock

U.S. Senator the Rev. Dr. Raphael Warnock spent an hour with the 35 youth attending the Woven Youth Collective program on Saturday morning, gave a rousing keynote address on Saturday afternoon and participated in a book signing, and on Sunday preached at Conference-wide worship service. That service was livestreamed, and was viewed by more than 1,100 people on Vimeo and the SNEUCC website - in many of those cases, the viewing was by congregations and groups - and was seen by another 3,400 people on Facebook.

The recording is available here: **www.sneucc.org/worship**.

Rev. Warnock's address received press coverage in the Worcester Telegram & Gazette, an article ("Georgia Sen. Rev. Warnock says nation lacks moral will to help poor") that can be seen on Yahoo News at the following link: **https://www.yahoo.com/news/politics/articles/georgia-sen-rev-warnock-says-144958729.html**

Strategic Vision Report

Delegates heard a presentation by the strategic planning consultants Yvette Wynn and Dr. Edith Guffey, who walked through the four priorities for the SNEUCC moving forward that they said surfaced most among participants in listening sessions and a survey. A detailed article about the report **can be found at this link https://www.sneucc.org/postdetail/19960493**, and the report itself here **https://www.sneucc.org/strategic-plan**

Other Highlights

Other highlights of the meeting included a busy Marketplace, a screening of *Walking the Journey with You: Imani Village*, a packed house for a storytelling event, and multiple workshops. Delegates also received our annual Impact Report documenting the life and impact of our Conference over the last year in Southern New England and beyond. You can download your own copy here: **https://www.sneucc.org/files/about+documents/2026-impact-report-final.pdf**

Executive Conference Minister the Rev. Darrell Goodwin and outgoing Board Chair Persephone Hall also gave addresses. Recordings, transcripts, videos, articles and other materials about the meeting will be posted as they are prepared at the following link: **www.sneucc.org/2026AM**.

But Wait, There's So Much More…

Subscribe to our other Conference newsletters covering ministries, initiatives, and opportunities to learn and grow in faith and justice at the following link

https://sneucc-email.brtapp.com/!EHEhEjdFup0uKkN6-O8Jm8L6Qt8kmmajpeoi0b1AMpMcmMWzWcAsvF9VcqXOrAXOg

FOCUS newsletter contributions are always welcome!

Our next issue will cover events for November

The next deadline is Monday, 10/19. Please submit materials to **office@needhamucc.org**

Someone held the door open for you.
Now you can help hold the door open for others.

Sign up to be a worship greeter (or another Sunday helper) at the link below or in the weekly email:

https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1wr_xTvZrZts_er7lihTg_Ql9mrfFQEMyAxKOwaYQhJI/edit?usp=sharing

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Rev. John MacIver Gage, *senior minister*	revjohn@needhamucc.org
Valerie Becker, *music director*	musicdirector@needhamucc.org
Darlene Wong, *director for children & youth*	childrenandyouth@needhamucc.org
Robin Bevilacqua, *operations manager*	office@needhamucc.org
Cindy Sullivan, *finance administrator*	finance@needhamucc.org
Board of Directors	board@needhamucc.org
Tom Mollerus, *moderator*	moderator@needhamucc.org
Board of Deacons: Avery Casper-Filbin & Rob Dunlavey, co-*chairs*	emaildeacons@needhamucc.org
Pastoral Relations Committee	prc@needhamucc.org

The Congregational Church of Needham (MA), United Church of Christ

1154 Great Plain Ave, Needham MA 02492

Tel 781.444.2510 • www.NeedhamUCC.org • Instagram @NeedhamUCC