

PURPOSE
STATEMENT

"We are disciples of
Jesus Christ
committed to making a
difference in the
community and in the
world through service
and invitational
outreach."



The Messenger

First United Methodist Church, Chatham

From the Pastor

God Takes Thankfulness Seriously

The Clocks have gone back, the days are getting shorter, and the whole world seems darkened by conflict. Yet as people of faith, we can still wrestle with God in Prayer.

Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Philippians 4: 6-7

November is the month to celebrate Thanksgiving. God takes thankfulness seriously! Why? Because God needs our gratitude? No: because we need it. Learning to be thankful can be life changing and gives our soul and mind, and yes, in some ways, even our physical bodies renewing strength.

Remembering to be thankful, whether to God or other people, is the best vaccination against taking all the good things in our life for granted. And the less you take for granted, the more pleasure and joy life will bring you.

The Holy Spirit teaches us to be thankful because thankfulness is an empowering personal habit. Scripture teaches this again and again. If we want to do something good, that if we want to have a healthy family, a strong workplace, or

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any other effective group that we need to be sure that appreciation, praise, and thanksgiving are heard at least four times as often as is criticism.

With this keen observation and Holy Scriptures knew this fact and has taught it for thousands of years.

The Judeo-Christian tradition places such emphasis on thanking God. The liturgy is filled with expressions of gratitude. *It is good to give thanks to the Lord*, begins the 92nd Psalm.

As the words of the hymn *Because He Lives* remind us:

*Because He lives,
I can face tomorrow;
because He lives,
all fear is gone;
because I know He holds
the future,
and life is worth the living
just because He lives.*

This Thanksgiving, let's take seriously the Godly practice of giving thanks to God as well as to others every day.

Blessings and Happy
Thanksgiving, Pastor Sonny

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HAPPY BIRTHDAY

11-9—Rev. Dr. Wm. Sissell

11-12—Rebecca Arnold

HAPPY ANNIVERSARY

11-23—Jeanne & Alan
Kuzirian

*“Grace in the ordinary days -
a midweek reflection”*

*by Benjamin Musasizi, Director of Communications,
New England Conference,
in UMCatalyst, 9.24.25*

“We find ourselves in the middle of the week, often caught between the urgency of what has passed and the uncertainty of what lies ahead. Matthew 11:28 reminds us that God meets us not only in the great feasts and Sundays, but also in the quiet, ordinary days of labor, waiting, and perseverance.

[The liturgy readings for the week including 9.25.25] “...invite us to hear again the steady voice of Christ: ‘Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest’” (Matthew 11:28). Midweek is a fitting time to pause, breathe, and remember that our strength is not our own. We are sustained by the Spirit who renews us daily.

“As the psalmist sings, ‘The Lord is my light and my salvation—whom shall I fear?’ (Psalm 27:1). Whatever anxieties linger in our hearts, whatever tasks still remain unfinished, the promise is that God’s presence goes before us, and His mercy is new every morning.

“Take this moment to let your soul be re-centered. Offer to God the burdens you are carrying. Lift your eyes toward Christ, who walks with you into the remainder of the week. And trust that the seeds of grace planted in the small, ordinary moments will bear fruit in God’s time.

Prayer: Lord, draw us back to You. Quiet our restless hearts, renew our tired spirits, and keep our eyes fixed on Your kingdom. Amen. # # #

MISSION DOLLARS

Over and above what we give for Conference apportionments, our Church annually sets aside money for Missions. This money comes in part from our workers in the Thrift Shop, and from Strawberry Festival, Lobster Roll Lunches, and Craft Fairs. This

year we have budgeted \$10,000 for Mission giving. At our meeting in October, Trustees asked Mike Firmin, Jay Thompson, and Pastor Sonny to lead this year’s Mission Committee. As we head towards the end of the year, our Church has \$8,000 still to give.

We are asking for your help in two ways:

1) Do you have a suggestion for a charity or group that would be a good recipient of some of this money? We are especially interested in local (Cape Cod) groups.

2) Do you have a couple of hours to help Mike and Jay sort through suggested groups to choose where our Church’s Mission funds should go?

Please contact Mike, Jay, or Pastor Sonny if you have donation suggestions or would be able to help finalize this year’s Mission gifts.

#

*Excerpts from The Beacon, Eastham UMC, 9-25-25
Pastor Wesley Silva’s Letter*

“In John 15:5, Jesus says: *‘I am the vine, you are the branches. Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit, because apart from me you can do nothing.’*”

“Fall, with its harvest, is a perfect time to reflect on what it means to bear fruit in our lives. The farmers’ fields and the backyard gardens around us reveal the results of months of labor, patience, and trust in the growth that God alone gives. In the same way, our spiritual lives show evidence of what we have cultivated; Is it the fruit of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control that Paul describes in Galatians 5:22-23? Or have we, perhaps, allowed ourselves to become disconnected from the vine, distracted by the busyness of life, and left feeling dry and withered? Just as farmers know the importance of pruning and preparing for the next season, Jesus speaks of the Father as the gardener who lovingly prunes us so that we may bear even more fruit. That pruning can sometimes feel uncomfortable—whether it comes in the form of life changes, challenges, or God’s call to let go of old habits—it is always aimed at helping us grow closer to Christ and to live more faithfully.

“Reflect on what it means for you personally to ‘abide in Christ.’ Perhaps it means setting aside regular time for prayer. Perhaps it means becoming more deeply involved in the life of the church. Perhaps it means reaching out to a neighbor in need, or simply being more intentional about gratitude in your daily life. Whatever it looks like, staying connected to Jesus is the surest way to live a fruitful life. # # #



Remembering who we are amid US budget fight

**Commentary by Bishop
Peggy A. Johnson, retired**
Oct. 1, 2025 | Carrollton, Va.
(UM News). **News media contact:**
Julie Dwyer, news editor

Key points:

• **John Wesley, Methodism's founder, insisted on justice for people at the margins of society.**

• **Bishop Peggy Johnson urges United Methodists to remember their Wesleyan heritage as they look at how the proposed U.S. federal budget targets trans- and gender-expansive people.**

• **With the U.S. [in] a government shut-down amid continued budget disputes, she says, United Methodists still have time to advocate for a more just budget.**

"The proposed 2026 federal budget for the United States aims to inflict concrete harm on this community unless changes are made. The budget bars the federal employees' health benefits program from covering gender-affirming care for federal employees and their families; cuts Medicaid and CHIP; adds a definition of 'essential health benefits,' which allows insurers to drop coverage for trans individuals; elimination of diversity, equity and inclusion programs and LGBTQ+ programs; bans funding for gender-affirming care for military service members.

"This fall I am helping to teach a study on the book ["Wesleyan Vitality: Reclaiming the Heart of Methodism Identity"](#) by Dr. Ashley Boggan, the top executive of the United Methodist Commission on Archives and History.

"The thesis of the recently published book is to remind the reader about the roots of Methodism's laser focus on the ministry with those on the margins. It encourages us to re-examine our historical practices to revitalize our churches.

"John Wesley, our 18th century English founder, brought many gifts to the church, but above all else was his insistence on justice for people who were poor, unhoused, addicted, enslaved, sick, uneducated, imprisoned and rejected by society.

"Through the years we "People called Methodists" have been somewhat successful in raising up ministries of justice as well as mercy. But admittedly we have sometimes succumbed to cultural norms of a capitalist society that continues to oppress and neglect our primary mission field: the margins. The 2020/2024 General Conference was a historic moment in which we became officially open to people of all sexual orientations. We [removed punitive, demeaning and damning paragraphs in our Book of Discipline](#) after a decades-long and painful ordeal.

"However, a group of marginalized people, who were so marginalized that they never made it into past Book of Discipline publications, are those on the spectrum of gender identity. These include a wide array of transgender, nonbinary, gender expansive and intersex people (to name a few).

"Last year's General Conference [did add to the Social Principles in the Discipline](#) that the denomination supports "the equal rights, liberties, and protections of all people, regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity."

"Our Social Principles state that people of diverse gender identities are 'disproportionally impacted by social stigmas, discrimination, coercion and violence.' It calls on churches, the government, businesses, and civic organizations to 'do all in their power to combat unjust treatment and to promote equal rights and protections.' (Paragraph 163, page 145, 2020/2024 Book of Discipline).

"Remember who you are, United Methodists! Our founding father is John Wesley.

"What can you do? Speak out against this continuing effort to scapegoat and devastatingly harm people on the gender identity spectrum; come alongside families with children who are trying desperately to get help for a child, whose survival depends on the health care that is being torn away by governmental threats of monetary withholding; learn all you can by checking out resources on the [Reconciling Ministry Network website](#). A helpful tutorial titled ["Made in God's Image: A Fresh Perspective on Gender Difference"](#) can be found there; affirm and welcome people in your community and churches who are gender diverse; learn all you can by checking out resources on the [Reconciling Ministry Network website](#).

Bishop Peggy Johnson, retired, served as interim bishop of the New England Conference in 2023-24.



A message from Bishop Bickerton

"It's been a while. I have not written much these past few months. At times, given the rapid succession of events in our country and world, there have been no words. At other times, when words did form in my mind, they did not find their way to paper simply because of the rapid passage of time.

"My intentions have been good. I've thought: *"I'll write after the Annual Conferences are over, I'll write once vacation has passed, at the beginning of the Fall season, or when, surely to goodness, there will be a break where I can think and breathe."* Yet, each well-intended thought has vanished in an air that is as thin as time is short.

"In an attempt to provide as much transparency as possible without causing undue harm to anyone, I sit at my computer and pen these words.

"Over the years, I have been moved by the inspirational story Jesus tells of the shepherd who went after the *one*, leaving the ninety-nine behind. However, it's only recently have I discovered how difficult it is to follow that directive. For to be sure, my time these days has been consumed by the passions, decisions, motives, and needs of *one* that have taken precedence over the needs of the *many*.

"This summer, I had the debilitating and ugly task of closing a church because of the action of *one*: An awful act of sexual abuse against a child that could only be reconciled through a lawsuit that led to a settlement that could only be paid by closing the church and selling the property in order to pay the mediated agreement. On the day we deconsecrated the church, I stood in front of the congregation and feebly attempted to preach in the midst of their unchecked tears and sadness.

"They were losing a place that had meant so much to them as a result of an event that took place over five decades ago. I too found myself with tear-filled eyes as I looked at a pastor who worked so hard to care for his flock, yet felt somehow that he had failed them. It was sad and sobering. I hated my job that day – spending time dealing with the grim effects that *one*, just *one*, can have on *many*.

"This fall I had the opportunity to do a very different job, the one I signed up to do some forty years ago: being a father. For years, I have jokingly said that when my daughter calls and says, "Dad," I settle in for some of the most amazing conversations on leadership that I have had with anyone, let alone my own flesh and blood. But when she calls and says, "Daddy," I get out my checkbook! But this time, the word "Daddy" was followed by the words: cancer, surgery, and the need for help. A need to be there to cook, clean, get the guys to and from school, provide some needed encouragement, and offer

a whole bucketload of love. I spent several weeks in the heart of the fall kickoff, a time when work can be described as critically important, doing what I agreed to do a long time ago, be a Daddy. It was purposeful, enlivening, and essential. I loved my job those days – spending time supporting *one* I love so deeply, when that *one* needs to know just how deeply you care.

"In my other job this season, I have been consumed with those who believe that individuality means more than the connection we are a part of and the conviction that we are stronger together than we can ever be apart. The stories are more numerous than I have time to share, but these stand out: an individual who feels that their perceived needs supersede the needs of their colleagues and a church that feels their interpretation of who they are cancels out the reality that as United Methodists, we are part of a connectional church. This individualistic attitude that believes that the feeling of the *one* outweighs the good of the *many* along with a belief that just because *one* feels something it must surely be right, is an attitude that is running rampant throughout our church and our country. It's Us vs. Them, Me vs. You, with little regard for the feelings or the needs of the other. I'm exhausted by my job on those days – spending time defending the good of the whole to those who have no regard for anything except themselves.

"The one-year anniversary of serving multiple annual conferences has just passed. It has been a year of great challenge and great opportunity. While the common needs of both annual conferences have become very clear, the unique needs of both annual conferences have also come into sharper focus. The work is demanding. When I'm in New England, I'm doing New York work and when I'm in New York, I'm doing New England work. Yet the work is fulfilling. Building on 10 years of relationships in one setting, while establishing cherished relationships in another.

"For the past year, I've been juggling two balls and trying to give it my all. The problem is, along the way I discovered that one ball has been left on the ground: my family. Children that are flowering, grandchildren that are growing, and a wife who needs her husband. Lately, in an attempt to find some long-lost balance, I have discovered that in order to find that necessary balance I have to make sure that I'm juggling three balls in the air, not two. I'm challenged by that opportunity on those days – spending time making sure that the *ones* I love do not get lost in midst of the *many* that I love.

"This year I have been struggling with the reality that nearly everything I believe in and everything we publicly stand for as a church is in direct opposition to the way our country is being led. While the public discourse is about making peace abroad, within the bounds of our country there is being sown into the soil acts of retribution, chaos, discrimination, injustice — just about anything

cont'd. on p. 6



For those of you who do not see the timely and informative reports that the Association to Preserve Cape Cod (APCC) generates, I have included here some of 2025's highlights. (ed.)

“Legislation & Policy: This past year, APCC once again led the way in advocating for legislation, regulatory changes, and other policies that would benefit Cape Cod's environment and protect its natural resources. In the state legislature and with state agencies, APCC advocated for: °*Environmental funding in the yearly budget*; °*Improvements to the Cape and Islands Water Protection Fund*; °*Passage of a drought management bill*; °*Renewal of the Conservation Land Tax Credit Incentive Program*; °*Incentives for offshore wind production*; °*Environmental safeguards in a state housing bill*; °*Updates to Wetlands Protection Act regulations*; and °*More restrictive regulations on the harvesting of horseshoe crabs.*

“On the Cape, we: °*Weighed in on a regional housing policy*; °*Commented on proposed development projects, including the Cape Cod Gateway Airport master plan and offshore wind proposals*; °*Supported the efforts of towns to reduce pesticide use*; and °*Alerted our members about wastewater infrastructure Initiatives and other envi-*

ronmental issues appearing on town meeting warrants.

“Cape Cod Regional Pond Monitoring Program...is a comprehensive effort led by APCC in partnership with the Cape Cod Commission and the Center for Coastal Studies to expand and enhance monitoring of the Cape's freshwater ponds, many of which exhibit adverse impacts from past land use decisions. The program follows a rigorous, EPA-approved Quality Assurance Project Plan to collect high-quality pond data, ultimately guiding effective management and restoration strategies.

“In its second year, the program reached its ambitious goal of monitoring 50 ponds monthly from April through October. Including additional off-season sampling in March, November, and December, the program conducted a total of 394 sampling events, providing a more complete picture of pond nutrient dynamics and water quality throughout the year...42 committed volunteers [assisted] APCC staff, [and] the data collected were made publicly accessible through the Cape Cod Commission's Freshwater Data Portal at:

<https://waterquality.capecodcommission.org/pond>, offering a valuable resource for citizens, scientists, and decision makers. APCC staff participated in stakeholder meetings hosted by the Commission, [which helped] inform strategies to protect and restore freshwater ponds. As APCC accumulates more years of data, a broader understanding of seasonal and year-to-year variability across our region's diverse pond ecosystems is being built. APCC is working to preserve the Cape's ability to bounce back from climate change events including flooding from major storm events and tracking projected sea level rise to ensure our restoration efforts are targeted to areas that will be able to adapt to the rise in sea level.”

“APCC is redefining Salt Marsh Restoration...[which has brought the] **Sesuit Creek** marsh in Dennis...to significant recovery of native *Spartina alterniflora* [a native salt marsh plant] by restoring tidal flow through improved culverts, enhancing native vegetation through planting, and conducting monitoring to assess project success and identify further needs. With sea level rise accelerating and many of Cape Cod's salt marshes in a severely degraded state, traditional methods such as removing tidal barriers are no longer enough. Additional tools—like runnels [shallow drainage enhancements] are needed to help jump-start recovery and improve long-term resilience. At **Weir Creek** in West Dennis and **Oyster Pond** in West Falmouth, APCC is working closely with town staff, regulatory agencies, the Cape Cod Conservation District, the NOAA Restoration Center, consultants, and other local stakeholders to improve tidal exchange and prepare the upstream marsh for increased tidal flow. At **Chase Garden Creek** along the border of Yarmouth and Dennis, APCC [helped] deploy sediment traps to measure the amount of sediment that settles onto the marsh surface. This method has been used in cutting-edge salt marsh research in our region, providing critical information. Encouraged by the [Sesuit Creek] success, [2026 plans are] underway for an expanded planting.

you can imagine to pit us against one another. I have always taken great pride in being a spokesperson for our theology as United Methodists, always beamed when I wove words like grace, hope, justice, joy, and love into sermons and articles and speeches.

“But now, those words are negated, discouraged, and even scorned as weak and irrelevant. The attacks are constant. The targets are the *ones*: the immigrant, persons of color in leadership positions, members of the transgender community, the institutions that emphasize diversity, equity, and inclusion, even those who dare to stand up to exercise free speech, defend democracy, and disagree. I’m frustrated by my job on those days – constantly confronting how the good of the whole is being suppressed by the will of the *one*.

“One day when he was confronting the misguided, self-centered attitude of certain individuals, Jesus told the story of a shepherd who left the ninety-nine sheep behind to hunt for the *one* that was lost. As with any biblical story, there is a lot left unspoken or unknown. Was the *one* rebellious and bent on creating chaos? Or was the *one* independent and only able to see the world with selfish eyes? Was the *one* in need of special care or had the shepherd neglected the *one* at the expense of the *many*? We will never know. What we do know, though, is that the shepherd sought out the *one*. Regardless of whether it was a joyful search or a burdensome one, the shepherd went willingly into the

unknown to do what needed to be done.

“As I have walked through these last several months, I have discovered that this search for the *one* has been my work. Sometimes it is pleasant and gratifying. Other times it is time consuming and exasperating. All the time, it is essential. It’s been my work but truth be told, shouldn’t it be our work as well?

“It is no surprise to you that I end all my writings with the word “journey.” Whether it’s the good, the bad, or the ugly, it is a journey that must continue as long as we have heartbeat and breath.

“With a strong sense of call in our hearts and a God-given purpose in our steps, we venture into the unknown hunting for ways in which the *one* needs to be confronted, the *one* needs to be held accountable, the *one* needs to be connected, and the *one* needs to be loved.

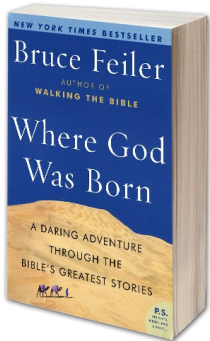
“And through it all, in the midst of it all, may these words guide our steps: “*So let us not grow weary in well-doing, for in due season we shall reap, if we do not lose heart.*” (Galatians 6:9, RSV)

“The Journey Continues, . . . “



Resident Bishop, New Hope Episcopal Area

READING ROOM



“The acclaimed bestselling author of *Abraham* and *Walking the Bible* takes readers on a heart-racing adventure to the frontlines of Israel, Iraq, and Iran and discovers an unexpected source of hope. The collision of politics, geography, and faith has dominated nearly every story in the Middle East since the birth of writing. It also dominates the greatest story ever told. Nowhere is the struggle between faith and violence described more vividly, and with more stomach-turning details of ruthlessness, than in the Hebrew Bible. Yet nowhere is it described with more humanity and hope.”

“At a time when America debated its values and the world braced for religious war, National Public Radio commentator and PBS presenter Bruce Feiler traveled 10,000 miles through the Middle East—Israel, Iraq, and Iran—and examines the question, ‘Is religion just a source of conflict or can it be a source of peace?’

“Part wartime chronicle, part archaeological detective story, part personal spiritual exploration, *Where God Was Born* takes readers to biblical sites not seen by Westerners for decades and uncovers little known details about the common roots of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam.

“In his intimate, accessible style, Feiler invites readers on a never-in-a-lifetime experience, retracing the Bible through the bloodiest places on the planet, from the Garden of Eden in war-torn Iraq to the rivers of Babylon just south of Baghdad; from David’s conquest of Jerusalem to Queen Esther’s face-off with the King of Persia.

“At each site, Feiler discusses the Bible with local characters, from archaeologists to army chaplains, and draws lessons for fostering reconciliation in our time. Beginning with a daring helicopter ride over the West Bank and climaxing with a hair-raising airlift into Baghdad, Bruce Feiler redefines some of the greatest stories ever told, including Joshua’s conquest of the Promised Land, David’s showdown with Goliath, and Jonah finding God in the whale. *Where God Was Born* is a powerful, inspiring story, sure to make headlines, that offers a rare, universal vision of God that can unite members of different faiths into a shared allegiance of hope.” *Publisher*

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
FIRST	UNITED	METHODIST	CHURCH	CALENDAR		1 11-2 Thrift Shop Open 2-4 Annual Charge Conference at Northside UMC
2 10am Worship/ Communion.	3	4 8:30 Osteo Exercise in Fellowship Hall 9:30—Meditation in Heberton Rm. 10-11:30 Faith Study in Peace Room	5 11-2 Thrift Shop Open 5:30 Finance & Trustees	6 8:30-9:30am Osteo Exercise in Fellowship Hall 9:30—Meditation in Heberton Rm. 11-2 Thrift Shop Open	7 11-2 Thrift Shop Open	8 11-2 Thrift Shop Open
9 10am Worship POT LUCK LUNCHEON	10	11 8:30 Osteo Exercise in Fellowship Hall 9:30—Meditation in Heberton Rm. 10-11:30 Faith Study in Peace Room	12 11-2 Thrift Shop Open	13 8:30-9:30am Osteo Exercise in Fellowship Hall 9:30—Meditation in Heberton Rm. 11-2 Thrift Shop Open	14 11-2 Thrift Shop Open	15 11-2 Thrift Shop Open
16 10am—Worship	17	18 8:30 Osteo Exercise in Fellowship Hall 9:30—Meditation in Heberton Rm. 10-11:30 Faith Study in Peace Room NOVEMBER NEWSLETTER DEADLINE	19 11-2 Thrift Shop Open	20 8:30-9:30am Osteo Exercise in Fellowship Hall 9:30—Meditation in Heberton Rm. 11-2 Thrift Shop Open	21 11-2 Thrift Shop Open	22 11-2 Thrift Shop Open
23 10am Worship <hr/> 30 10am Worship	24	25 8:30 Osteo Exercise in Fellowship Hall 9:30—Meditation in Heberton Rm. 10-11:30 Faith Study in Peace Room	26 11-2 Thrift Shop Open	27 	28 9-3 Holly Jolly Christmas Bazaar 11-2 Thrift Shop Open	29 9-3 Holly Jolly Christmas Bazaar 11-2 Thrift Shop Open



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