THE BELL TREE
AN MCCC PUBLICATION

A Newsletter for
SEPTEMBER 2026

The Mount Carmel Congregational Church
(A United Church of Christ)
3285 Whitney Avenue, Hamden, CT 06518

From the Pastor's Desk…

Greetings, my Church Family

Labor Day falls about as late as it can this year, which means we have one more service on our summer schedule before we return to our ten o'clock start time. Since the first Sunday of the month falls on Labor Day Weekend, we will move Communion to September 13, which will also be our start to the new church year, which we traditionally mark by eating together.

This year, we will also use that meal to officially welcome Matthew Brown as our new Music Director. I am thrilled that he is here and I am looking forward to seeing what he has to offer us as he leads in worship.

I am taking a bit more vacation from September 14-25. Aren Alberico will be preaching on Sunday, September 20. Though I will be gone for around two weeks, I will only miss one Sunday.

Looking ahead, we will have our annual Blessing of the Animals on Saturday, October 3 at 10:00 am. If you have a furry loved one you would like to bring, please put this on your calendar. We are partnering again with the *Where The Love Is* shelter, so any food donations you bring will go to feed their rescue pups.

I am grateful for the hope the Fall holds as we begin a new year together.

Peace,
Milton

SEPTEMBER WORSHIP SCHEDULE

Please join every Sunday at 10am in the Church for service, followed by coffee hour in the Parlor! Note: These are lectionary passages for your own devotional purposes. Weekly scripture readings are subject to change.

September 6, 2026: 9am Service *Fifteenth Sunday After Pentecost* **Scripture**: Exodus 12:1-14 Psalm 149 Romans 13:8-14 Matthew 18:15-20	**September 13, 2026: Homecoming Sunday** **Communion,** *Sixteenth Sunday After Pentecost* **Scripture**: Exodus 14:19-31 Psalm 114 Romans 14:1-12 Matthew 18:21-35
September 20, 2026 *Seventeenth Sunday After Pentecost* **Scripture**: Exodus 16:2-15 Psalm 105:1-6, 37-45 Philippians 1:21-30 Matthew 20:1-16 **Sermon**: Aren Alberico	**September 27, 2026** *Eighteenth Sunday After Pentecost* **Scripture**: Exodus 17:1-7 Psalm 78:1-4,12-16 Philippians 2:1-13 Matthew 21:23-32

SEPTEMBER BIRTHDAYS

Happy Birthday Wishes Go to the Following:

Diane Scott	September 3rd	George Peet	September 21st
Gordon Williams	September 9th	Bev Churchill	September 24th
Lynn Campo	September 12th	Karen Amato	September 24th
Katie O'Neil	September 20th	Lee Campo	September 28th

If you are not on our birthday list and wish to be, please do not hesitate to contact our office!

Welcome Matthew!

As some of you already know, we have recently welcomed our new Music Director, Matthew Brown, to Mount Carmel Congregational Church! Matthew will make his musical debut with us during our Sunday, September 6 worship service, with an official welcome to the congregation during our Homecoming Sunday Luncheon on September 13. We would like to extend our thanks to Valerie Duffy, Tom Duffy, and Diane Scott, who led our search for a new Music Director. We are excited to welcome Matthew to our church family and look forward to all that he will bring to our congregation. Below, Matthew shares a brief introduction and a little about himself.

To the Mount Carmel Community,

I am thrilled to be joining you as MCCC's new organist and music director. Since I began playing for my church in Virginia at the age of eight, communities of faith have been the center of my musical life. I learned to improvise on those Sundays when the celebrant was less than punctual. I learned to compose when instruments joined the choir and needed music to play. Along the way, I worked closely with many directors and took an interest in the ways they built sound and community.

I recently graduated from Ohio's Oberlin Conservatory with my BM in music composition. A highlight of those four years was starting the Now Chorale, a no-audition choir dedicated to works by living composers. Leading them I learned that with enough passion you can tackle very ambitious pieces, even without professional singers. It was also at Oberlin that I wrote and premiered my first opera, This Cold But Golden Morning. I found the liturgical music mindset of adaptability and service to something larger to be just as important in the opera pit. All the while, I served as organist to the sister parishes of Sacred of Jesus and St. Patrick Catholic Churches. Both became a second home to me. As I begin my masters studies in choral conducting at Yale, I'm excited to make that second home at MCCC. All are welcome in my choir. Even if you've never had a music lesson or sang in public, I hope you'll consider giving it a try. Psalm 100 calls us to "make a joyful noise," not a perfect sound. We learn so much when we come together without fear and give our best—and not just about music.

Sincerely,
Matthew Brown

Homecoming Sunday: Service and Luncheon, September 13

The Sunday after Labor Day has long been celebrated as *Rally Day*, a time when we gather after the summer months to begin a new church year together. This year, we hope to carry on this tradition as we welcome you to join us for worship and Communion, then stay afterward for our Homecoming Sunday Luncheon! We will be providing a large deli tray and an assortment of finger sandwiches, but we are looking for volunteers to bring side dishes such as salads, chips, and desserts to complement the meal. If you plan on attending, or if you would like to sign up to bring a cold dish (salads, chips, desserts), please contact Debbie Wooley (ce@mccucc.com) or Aren Alberico (office@mccucc.com) by Tuesday, September 1. We hope to see you there!

-Office Staff

A Special Thank You From Lynda

As we say farewell to our former Music Director and Organist, Lynda Pedersen, we invite you to read this thank-you letter she shared with our congregation following her final service on June 28. We are grateful for the many years of music, memories, and ministry Lynda shared with our congregation. Read below!

Dear Friends of Mt. Carmel Congregational Church,

Thank you for the generous gift and the wonderful luncheon and kind words. It has been my pleasure to serve as Director of Music at the church. I hope the music has enriched your worship experience each Sunday. The organ is a very special instrument, and I feel privileged to have played it for 39 years. I also want to thank those who have participated in the choir and the handbell choir over the years. and instrumentalists who shared their talents. We had a wonderful time creating music for worship and I will miss the process and the people very much. Again. I say thank you.

Lynda Pedersen

Faith Formation

Church School. We are looking forward to resuming Church School on Sunday, September 13. Natalie Baronowski and Katie O'Neil will be resuming teaching duties this year, and we hope to hold classes two times a month. As per past years, children will attend Church with their families for communion on the first Sunday of the month.

ARK Banks. Please don't forget to keep bringing in your ark banks. The monies collected go into a pastor's discretionary fund which can be used to help people in our community who need help. If you have not picked up a bank yet, they can be found in the narthex or in the entrance to the parish hall. Keep your Ark Banks floating!

-Debbie Wooley

Annual Blessing of the Animals

We hope you and your furry (or not-so-furry!) friends will join us for our Annual Blessing of the Animals, tentatively scheduled for Saturday, October 3, at 10:00 AM on the green between the Church and Parish Hall. This beloved tradition has been a part of our church community for many years, and we always look forward to welcoming our animal companions, both old and new! The service is brief, and Rev. Milton will offer an individual blessing for each animal. As always, we will be providing certificates of blessing for your pets, so the sooner you contact the church office with your animal companion's name, the better! Help us spread the word and invite the animal lovers in your life to join us! If you would like to lend an extra hand, consider bringing a bag or two of dog food to donate to our ongoing community partner, *Where The Love Is, Inc.* We hope to see you, and your beloved companions, as we ring in October!

-Office Staff

Shirts and Skirts Auction 2026

Please join Shirts and Skirts for their annual Penny Auction, taking place on Tuesday, September 22 at 6:00pm! Admission is $3.00 per person, which will go towards paying for pizza for the event. We invite you to bring an item or two for our penny auction. In order to ensure that we order enough pizza for the event, we ask that please RSVP with Vera DeAngelo or Bev Jurkiewicz by Sunday, September 20. We hope to see you there!

-Vera DeAngelo

Outreach

Neighbors in Need. Our next special offering will be Neighbors in Need (NIN). NIN is a special mission offering of the United Church of Christ that supports ministries of justice and compassion in the United States. This year, our offering will be held on World Communion Sunday, October 4, 2026. Please make your check out to the church, putting NIN in the memo. Thank you for supporting the wider missions of the church.

-Debbie Wooley

Stewardship

Just a heads up that our annual pledge letters will be going out in the mail starting in October, with Stewardship Sunday being scheduled for Sunday, November 8. Now is the time to think about making your pledge for next year. Remember, pledge only what you can; every amount helps, no matter how big or small.

"All too often we regard stewardship simply as a matter of our giving to God, but this aspect is secondary. Before we can give, we must possess, and before we possess we must receive. Therefore, stewardship is, in the first place, receiving God's good and bounteous gifts. And once received, those gifts are not to be used solely for our own good. They must also be used for the benefit of others, and ultimately for the glory of God the giver. The steward needs an open hand to receive from God and then an active hand to give to God and to others."—Murray J. Harris

-Debbie Wooley

Fall 2026 Tag Sale – October 24

Mark your calendars! Our annual Fall Tag & Craft Sale is scheduled for Saturday, **October 24**, from **9:00 a.m**. to **2:00 p.m.** Whether you're searching for one-of-a-kind treasures, handmade crafts, or hoping to get a head start on your holiday shopping, you'll find plenty to explore among our many vendor and tag sale tables. Be sure to stop by our church bake sale as well, where you'll find a delicious assortment of homemade baked goods and treats. Table rentals will once again be $20 per space, and registration will be opening soon. Watch for more details and information in the coming weeks!

-Office Staff

FINANCIAL REPORT: MAY 2026

Following is the financial report for May, June, and July 2026. Due to administrative error, the Net Income amount was misreported in our last Bell Tree newsletter for August. If you have any questions, Ellen can be reached at treasurer@mccucc.com.

Income:	Pledges and Offerings:	$7,396.00
	Other Income:	$3,211.00
	Investment Income:	$5,000.00
	Total Income:	$15,607.00
Expenses:	Total Expenses:	$15,245.00
Net Income		$362.00

FINANCIAL REPORT: JUNE 2026

Income:	Pledges and Offerings:	$5,434.00
	Other Income:	$2,442.00
	Investment Income:	$6,000.00
	Total Income:	$13,876.00
Expenses:	Total Expenses:	$15,890.00
Net Income	**(Loss)**	- $2,014.00

FINANCIAL REPORT: JULY 2026

Income:	Pledges and Offerings:	$5,046.00
	Other Income:	$2,355.00
	Investment Income:	$11,000.00
	Total Income:	$18,401.00
Expenses:	Total Expenses:	$20,562.00
Net Income	**(Loss)**	- $2,161.00

GENERAL ANNOUCEMENTS/REMINDERS

Volunteers Needed. We are always looking for volunteers to help with Sunday services, whether as Ushers, Coffee Hour hosts, or by providing Altar Flowers. Signup sheets for all three are posted on the bulletin board at the Parish House entrance. For any questions, please reach out to the Church Office at office@mccucc.com or (203) 248-7408. Please note that if you sign up for Altar Flowers, any and all flowers or decorations must be provided (and taken home) by you, and if you would like to include a message in the weekly bulletin, you must contact the office by the Wednesday prior to your chosen Sunday.

Bell Tree. Do you have an event to announce? A story to share? We would love to hear it! Send us an email at office@mccucc.com by the last Monday of the month to be included!

Joys and Concerns. If you wish to have a joy or concern announced during worship, please forward to them to Aren at office@mccucc.com or call the church office at (203) 248-7408.

Pastoral Support. If you require pastoral support or guidance, feel free to contact our minister, Reverend Milton, by email at Pastor@mccucc.com, or by contacting the Office by email at office@mccucc.com or phone at (203) 248-7408.

Food Bank. Donations for the Food Bank are always needed if you are able to contribute. Non-perishable items such as canned beef stew, hearty soups, canned fish, peanut butter, mac and cheese packages, and oatmeal would be greatly appreciated. Donation bins are located on the stage.

Prayer Shawls. As a reminder, Prayer Shawls (lovingly handknit by members of our Church craft group and blessed by Reverend Milton) are always available to those who need them. If you or anyone you know needs one, please contact the office and we will arrange a shawl for you.

QU Student Parking. Please be aware that the first row of spaces in the gravel lot (closest to Whitney Avenue) has been reserved for Quinnipiac student parking. These spaces are clearly marked with signs, so please use other spots. Thank you for your cooperation!

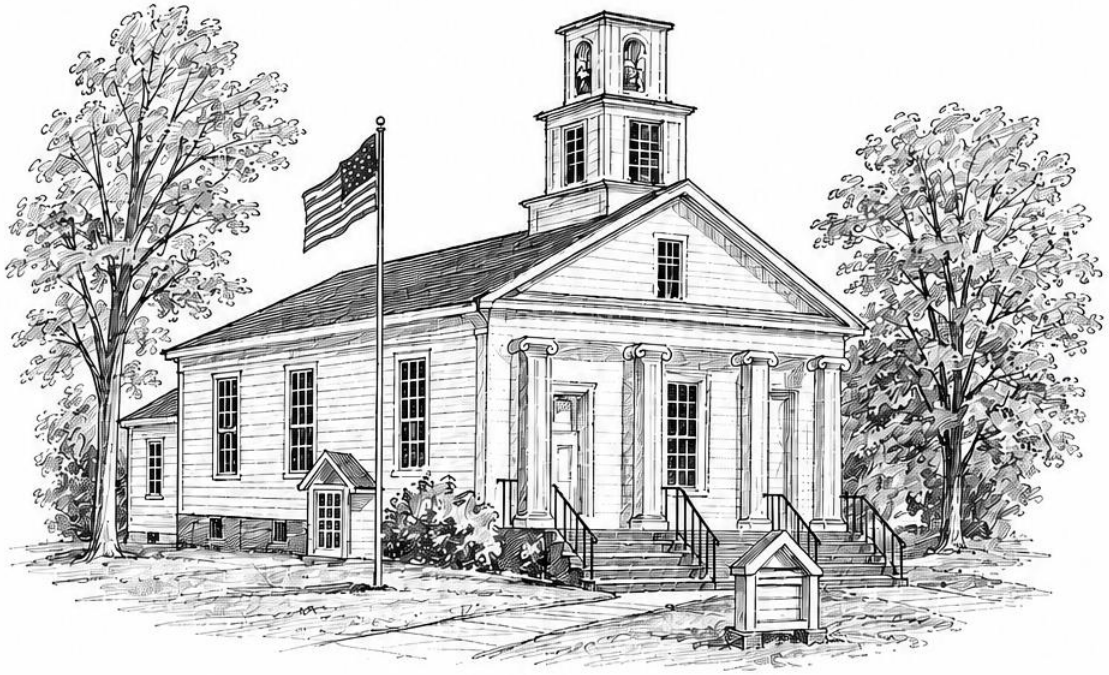
Directories and More. Physical copies of the 2025 Annual Report, 2025 Revised Bylaws, 2026 Directory, and the 2026 Annual Draft Budget are available for pickup in the Church Office. If you would like a digital copy of any of these documents, please contact the office at any time.

Church Pictures. We are always looking for new pictures! If you happen to attend a Church event, please feel free to snap a few pictures and send them to us by email (office@mccucc.com).

Mouse Deterrents. We have installed discreet mouse deterrent devices in key areas of the church to help maintain a clean and sanitary environment. These devices are safe and effective only when plugged in, so we kindly ask that they not be unplugged, even if they appear decorative. Thank you for your cooperation in caring for our shared space.

HOMECOMING SUNDAY

Worship & Communion • Luncheon



Sunday, September 13

Worship followed by Homecoming Sunday Luncheon

Bring a dish to share!

Salads • Chips • Desserts

Large deli tray and finger sandwiches provided.

RSVP / Sign up to bring a cold dish

by Tuesday, September 1

Debbie Wooley — ce@mccucc.com

Aren Alberico — office@mccucc.com

Come home. Gather together. Begin a new church year.

ANNUAL BLESSING OF THE ANIMALS

AT THE

MOUNT CARMEL CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH

Saturday, October 3,2026
10am

Mount Carmel Congregational Church
3284 Whitney Avenue, Hamden CT 06518

The Blessing will take place on the grass in between the Church and the Parish House.

Donations of unopened food and treats for
Where the Love Is Animal Rescue are greatly appreciated.

2 Sons

Read Matthew 21:28-32 (ICB) and check the right answers. Then copy the letter from each correct box onto the first line. Then copy the letters from the wrong answer boxes.

There was a man who had [one E | two C] sons. He went to the [first H | second N] son and said, [`Daughter T | 'Son A], go and [work N | play E] today in my [vineyard G | barn R].' The son answered, 'I [will T | will not E] go.' But later the [son A | daughter H] decided he [should N | should not E] go, and he went. Then the [mother K | father D] went to the other [son B | daughter I] and said, 'Son, go and [work E | play N] today in my [vineyard L | barn G].' The son answered, [`No D | Yes I], sir, [will E | will not O] go and work.' But he did not go. Which of the [two V | three M] sons obeyed his father?" The priests and leaders answered, "The [first E | second] son."

_ _ _ _ _ _ _ _   _ _ _ _   _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _

_ _ _ _ _ _ _   _ _ _ _   _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _

(Jonah 1:1–10)

A Boat Ride to Hide From God

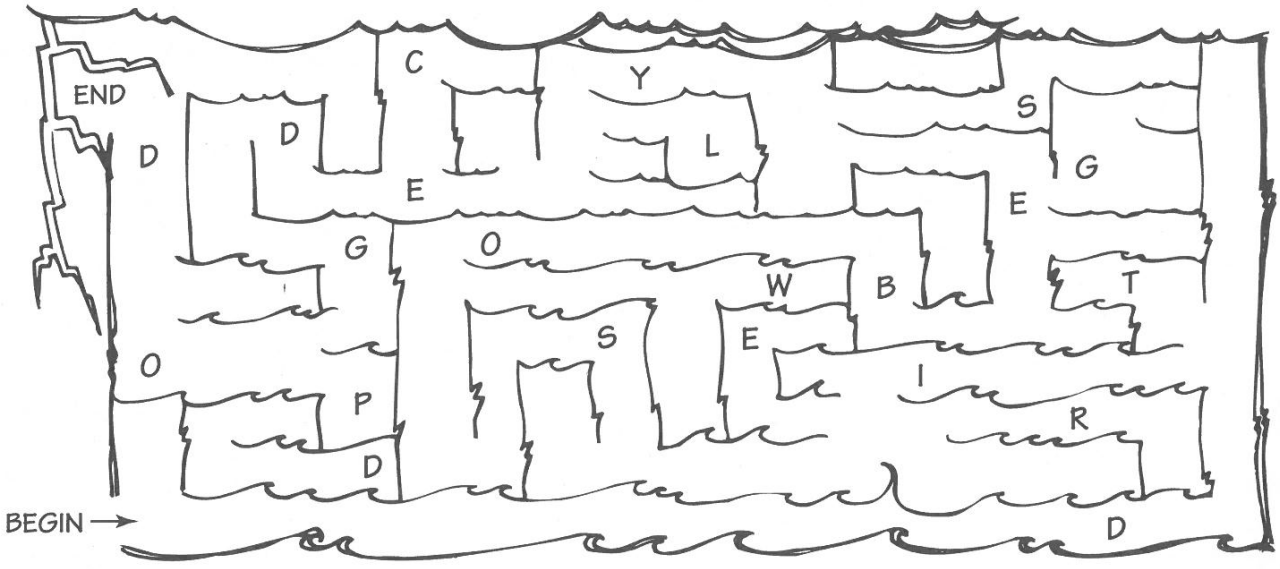
God asked Jonah to go preach in a very wicked city. What was the name of this city? To find out, read each statement below. If the statement is true, circle the letter under "T". If it is false, circle the letter under "F". Then write the letters in the blanks in order.

	T	F
1. God asked Jonah to go teach in Jerusalem.	S	N
2. Jonah did not want to preach in the wicked city.	I	L
3. Jonah got on a donkey and rode to Jerusalem.	X	N
4. He went to Joppa and got on a boat.	E	U
5. Jonah went to sleep below the deck.	V	A
6. The ship hit a sandbar.	R	E
7. A very bad storm arose.	H	C

The wicked city was _____.

Go through the maze and pick up letters along the way. Write them on the lines to finish this sentence: Jonah told the sailors that God had sent the storm because he had

_____ _____.



Did Jonah gain anything by trying to run away from God? What will you gain if you disobey Him? What will you gain by obeying Him?

Mount Carmel Congregational Church
3284 Whitney Avenue, Hamden, CT 06518
Website: www.mccucc.com
Phone: (203) 248-7408

Staff and Officers

Minister:	Reverend Milton Brasher-Cunningham pastor@mccucc.com
Office Admin:	Mr. Aren Alberico office@mccucc.com
Faith Formation:	Mrs. Debbie Wooley ce@mccucc.com
Treasurer:	Mrs. Ellen Amato treasurer@mccucc.com
Music Director:	Mr. Matthew Brown ***Coming Soon!***
Church President:	Eric Grantz egrantz73@gmail.com
Church Clerk:	Sandee Martin sandeemart48@gmail.com
Board of Trustees:	Anna Anderson, Chair aanderson545@gmail.com
Board of Deacons:	Rick Terry, Chair rterry981@outlook.com

As a community of faith, gathered in Christ's love,
we strive to support one another in hearing the Word,
living the Word, and sharing the Word.