



**The
Preston
Pilgrim**
the monthly
newsletter of the
Preston City
Congregational
Church

"Gathering in Faith Since 1698"

OCTOBER 2026

Church Office Hours:
Mon– Fri 9AM – Noon
Minister Office Hours:
Mon, Tu, Thu 10A - 2P

CLOSED
OCTOBER 12, 2026
INDIGENOUS
PEOPLES' DAY

Minister

Reverend Thomas, Burke, Jr.
203-297-0254

pastortompccc@gmail.com

Minister Emeritus

Rev. Stan White - 860 303-9622

sewhite3022@gmail.com

**Have a question?
Need help?**

Please call: The Office
860 887-4647 or 860 886-7200

**WORSHIP AND WEB STREAM
INFORMATION**

Worship service is at 9:30A
For those who are unable to
attend in-person, the service
is streamed live. Go to
prestoncitycongregational.org
and click the stream button.
Previous services may be
viewed using the archive
system on the site.



Join us in Halls' Hall
for fellowship, coffee
and punch after our
service.

FROM THE DESK OF REV. TOM...

There is something about October that makes me want to slow down. The air gets a little cooler. The leaves begin to change. The days get shorter. The garden starts to wind down, and the things that have been growing all summer are finally ready to be gathered in.

We call this the harvest season, and I think there is something deeply spiritual about harvest. I may be from Connecticut and watched harvest every fall, but it wasn't until my time in Afghanistan that I could really appreciate the hard work that went into harvest. Watching the farmers all year work to reap and sow, to plant and tend.

For much of the summer, we are focused on growing. We plant seeds, pull weeds, water gardens, mow lawns, and wait. We don't always know exactly what the harvest will look like. Some things grow beautifully. Other things don't grow at all. Sometimes the tomatoes are plentiful, and sometimes the squirrels seem to get to them before we do. But eventually, we gather what has grown.

The Bible talks about harvest quite a bit. Jesus often used seeds, fields, vineyards, and crops to help us understand the kingdom of God. Maybe that's because farming teaches us something we are often reluctant to admit: we are not completely in control. We can plant. We can water. We can tend. But we cannot make something grow. That is true in our lives, too.

There are seasons when we work hard and see very little happening. There are other seasons when we suddenly realize that something we planted years ago has quietly taken root. A friendship. A relationship. A child's faith. A kindness we offered when we didn't think it mattered. A prayer we thought had gone unanswered.

Sometimes the harvest comes years after we planted the seed. And then there is the other lesson October teaches us: harvest is not only about gathering. It is also about letting go.

The leaves don't cling to the trees forever. They turn brilliant colors and then fall to the ground. The garden doesn't keep producing tomatoes and cucumbers forever. The growing season comes to an end. There is beauty in knowing when a season is finished.

I think we sometimes have a hard time with that. We want everything good to last forever. We want our children to stay little, I would love Archie and Thomas to stay this cute forever. We want our loved ones to always be healthy. We want our churches, our communities, and our lives to remain exactly as they are when things feel comfortable. But faith reminds us that God is present not only when things are growing, but also when things are changing.

October tells us that letting go doesn't necessarily mean something is lost. Sometimes it means making room for what comes next. So, as we gather together this fall, maybe we should take a little time to notice the harvest in our own lives. What has God helped you grow?

Who has planted a seed of kindness or faith in you? What blessings have you received that you didn't expect? And maybe just as importantly, what are you being invited to let go of?

The leaves will fall. The gardens will rest. The days will grow shorter. But underneath the surface, God will still be at work. That is the promise of harvest. Even when we cannot see it, something is happening.

So, this October, I hope we take time to give thanks, not just for the beautiful colors outside our windows, but for the harvest of our lives. For the people who have loved us. For the lessons we have learned. For the seeds we have planted. And even for the things we have had to let go.

Because the God who meets us in the abundance of summer is the same God who meets us in the quiet of autumn. And there is still plenty of growing left to do. Happy fall, and may God bless you and your families this harvest season.

God Bless, Rev. Tom

WORLD COMMUNION SUNDAY is October 4th. World Communion Sunday is a celebration observed by several Protestant denominations, taking place on the first Sunday of every October, that promotes Christian unity and ecumenical cooperation. Join us as we gather at His table.

FROM THE CHURCH OFFICE

REMEMBER - INCLEMENT WEATHER CANCELLATIONS can refer to many situations. If you are unsure if the church is open, follow the instructions below. Tune in to Television Channel 3 (WFSB), local radio stations or you may check Facebook, our website prestoncitycongregational.org or call the office. A message will be announced on the answering machine. When Sunday School is cancelled, church is NOT CANCELLED unless specifically announced.

Active members who wish to borrow items from the church (chairs, tables), please check with the office. They may have been requested by someone else! There is now a form to fill out to help keep track of borrowed items.

Thoughts from a Friend...

Maybe it's not about deciding who needs extra kindness, but knowing that everyone does.



Choir is back in session! Ready to sing? We're welcoming back all our returning members and looking for fresh new voices to join the mix. Come check it out—we rehearse in the meeting room after service. See Trish Maerkle, Organist/Choir Director

FROM THE SCARECROW FESTIVAL COMMITTEE



We are having a **MINI Scarecrow Festival** on **Saturday, October 17th from 10A-3P!**

There will be Vendors in Dudek Hall, and the Silent Auction is from 10A – 2P. There will be Food and Children's Crafts. Touch-a-Truck and Classic Cars will be displayed. The quilt and table runner will be displayed and tickets available for the drawing in November. And of course, Scarecrows!

Our volunteer lists are ready for you to sign up! Are you available to help for an hour or two? Check the sign-up sheets to choose your time slots and where you would like to help.

TWO CAN FOOD PANTRY

OUR ITEM-OF-THE-MONTH FOR OCTOBER IS **CANNED VEGETABLES.**



Veggies are always high in demand. They are nutrient-rich and fiber dense. Canned beans whether black, pinto, kidney, or garbanzo are another great option as are canned tomatoes. Think chili, soup, or stew!





THE BEGINNING OF A LIFETIME OF MINISTRY...

I CAME from poor beginnings with very little resources, from a divorced family in which no one wanted the kids. I did, however, eventually end up with a grandmother who couldn't keep me because I cried all the time being uprooted from my sister and brother. I was out on the steps with a bag believing I was going to an orphanage when another grandmother came and picked me up. She was a kind and wonderful woman and I thank God for her every day. I grew up being told not to expect anything because I didn't have a father. BUT I did...

I WILL GET TO THE POINT...my precious grandmother saw to it that I got to Sunday School and the first Sunday I was there, probably about six, the Sunday School teacher told the class that we had a heavenly Father who loved us more than even a human father could. So that became my sure defense and was the bare beginning of God shaping me for ministry. I went to the Newent Congregational Church (now closed) and became a member when I was 13. Very little were my funds, but I gave \$3 a week which was significant money from what I earned babysitting. At that church someone saw to it that I got to **SILVER LAKE CAMP** IN Sharon, Connecticut. I don't know who paid for it or who drove me there, but I remember the great influence it had on me.

MOST RECENTLY, our minister, Rev. Tom, was asked to be a counselor there the week that was their last before being sold. It was established in 1957. Rev. Tom was so surprised when I told him I had been there! They were looking for some pictures to make a memorial banner and I said I had one. I was very surprised to find that our own **Bob Onderdonk** and a few others from this church had been there around the time that I was. The picture that you see on the shirt pictured was one that one of my daughters ordered for my birthday this year to surprise me. And surprise me she did!

PRIOR TO THIS I had attended Vacation Bible School at Jewett City Baptist Church (now sold). I remember vividly that **Bob Coughlin** attended when I did. Mrs. Watson was the Director of that school and she was amazing. I can still hear her singing "He owns the cattle on a thousand hills..." and remember her writing in my autograph book "Keep looking up and someday you will see heaven."

I SURELY KNOW NOW that God was equipping me for the very important ministry I was entrusted to here for 29 years that of teaching and guiding the children. I nearly fell off the chair when **Rev. Stan** told me the Standing Committee had voted unanimously to ask me to come here as your first Director of Religious Education. He said he would give me a week to think about it. I told him that day I would come even though I knew no one here. I have had the most amazing life working for the Lord! And the blessing I've received by three of my own students; first **Hunter Bustamante** as Interim Director of Religious Education followed by **Megan Linevitch** and **Liz Stammel** as our amazing DRE'S. **Patrick Magowan**, so faithful to this church with web streaming and so much else was in our first Confirmation Class. Yes, I am just a little bit proud!!! Those of you who send your children to the Sunday School, may I assure you that getting up on Sunday mornings to come here to this sacred place is the most important thing you could do!

THANK YOU for all the support you give me in my present work. You are "the salt of the earth" and I feel very privileged to work among you.

May the **SON**shine through me, *Sandy Dudek*

SUNDAY SCHOOL UPDATE

What a great start to the Sunday School Year! We are excited to have so many children filling our classrooms!



Here are some upcoming events & if you need some more information, just reach out to Megan and Liz!

- We are having a trick or treating event with apple cider and doughnuts on 10/24! Kids can decorate trick or treating bags and trick or treat throughout the Sunday School. We are accepting donations of candy and are also looking for volunteers to pass out candy!
- Operation Christmas Child will be starting soon - listen for announcements during the church service from our teens and look for the boxes during coffee hour.
- The Christmas Pageant will be held on Sunday, 12/13 during the worship service. Permission slips went home with Sunday School families on Sunday, but please reach out if you need more information!
- The Christmas Bazaar is on 11/14 and we are accepting donations for the basket raffle. You can sign up here to donate a basket, which supports the activities within our Sunday School! <https://www.signupgenius.com/go/10C0F4AA9A823A6F8C61-66026872-christmas#/>

BOARD OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION NEWS

On Sunday, September 27th, the Board of Religious Education honored Hunter Bustamante for filling in as interim director (twice!!) over the last couple of months in our Sunday School. He is now furthering his education, pursuing a certificate in youth ministry.



MEN'S GROUP The Men's Group next meeting is Saturday October 3rd at 10A.

WOMEN'S FELLOWSHIP UPDATE

Book Club

The Book Club is currently reading "The Memory Garden" by Jessica Brody. We will meet in November for our discussion.



Food Pantry Birthday Bundles

Each October, we create "Birthday Bundles" for the Food Pantry, and it is never too soon to start collecting items. Please place your donations in the wooden chest located in the hallway between Halls' Hall and Dudek Hall. What is a Birthday Bundle? A birthday bundle is a package containing all the essentials a family needs to bake a cake and celebrate a child's or family member's special day.

Standard Bundle Contents

- **Boxed cake mix** and a container of frosting
- **12 oz can of soda** (like Sprite or ginger ale), which replaces eggs, oil, and water in the mix
- **9x13 disposable foil pan** to hold the items and bake the cake
- **Birthday candles**
- **A small note** or recipe card explaining the soda-substitution trick

There are also sugar-free cake and frosting mixes available, as well as gluten-free cake mix!

FALL RETREAT

This year's Women's Fall Retreat at Camp Monadnock is Oct. 16-18th. The cost is \$250. If you have any question about the retreat or the camp please see Bridget Park, Koren Jopson or Donna McClimon. Please consider joining us. The camp is a short 2-hour drive from Preston. The link below will take you directly to their website. Bridget Park monadnock.camp/womensretreats



STRAWBERRY PARK BINGO Come join the fun!

Our sessions are winding down but, help is still needed selling the cards the players use.

Thank you to those who signed up to assist and continued to make this a successful mission for our church.

THE FALL YARD SALE



THANK YOU TO ALL WHO PARTICIPATED!

Whether donating, shopping, setting up or cleaning up, you made this mission a great success!!



THE CHRISTMAS BAZAAR



We are gearing up for our Christmas Bazaar on Saturday, November 14 th . On

Thursday, November 12 th we will be setting up tables and chairs for the vendors who will be coming in on Friday, November 13 th . Steve Orlomoski will be organizing this setup to be at 4pm on November 12th. If you are able to help with set up, please contact Steve and let him know you will be available. It goes very quickly with all the helpers.

Our biggest money makers are donations from you, our church members for the bake sale and the gift room. Please help by donating baked items. Especially with the loss of the Scarecrow bake sale, we are in need to try and make up what has been lost.

The gift room was a big success last year with all the donations we received from you. Again, we are looking for lovely Christmas decorations, new craft items, baby toys and items that look like new. Also items that makes a pretty gift and is like new, but you are trying to downsize, please save it and donate it to our gift room. We will be accepting these items and more on Thursday and Friday, November 12 and 13 th from 4 till 6 pm at the church in the meeting room. Please hold onto your items till then since we don't have any room to store it here at the church. If you have any questions, please call Nancy Obreiter at 401-206-3881. Thank you for all your help.

THE NOMINATING COMMITTEE will begin seeking candidates to fill the many positions in our church. Now is time to ask yourself "How can I help to keep my church moving forward?" "What talents do I have that can be shared with my church?" It takes many people to keep our church running smoothly throughout the year. Please consider serving in one of the open positions when they are announced. The current list of Boards and Committees can be found on our website and what they do can be found in our bylaws or by talking with a member of the committee you are interested in. Ask them what they do! There are positions that our friends may fill as well, where church membership is not required. We welcome everyone!



Daylight Savings Time ends November 1st!
Remember to set your clocks back one hour Saturday night.