

>>> SOUTH CHURCH ANDOVER NEWSLETTER <<<

THE CIRCLE **boldly embodying God's love and compassion**

Somewhere on a dirt road in Vermont this summer, our family stopped counting how many maple creemees we'd had. Cone after cone, dripping faster than any of us could keep up with in the August heat, everyone a little sticky, nobody minding. It was not a restrained summer. It was an abundant one.

I've been thinking about that word all month: abundance...

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South Church in Andover An Open and Affirming Congregation of the United Church of Christ

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A NOTE FROM DANA

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South Church friends,

Somewhere on a dirt road in Vermont this summer, our family stopped counting how many maple creemees we'd had. Cone after cone, dripping faster than any of us could keep up with in the August heat, everyone a little sticky, nobody minding. It was not a restrained summer. It was an abundant one.

I've been thinking about that word all month: abundance. It's our theme for the fall — Abundant Life — and once I started looking for it, I couldn't stop seeing it everywhere. It's in the Giving Garden right now, tomatoes coming in faster than anyone can pick them, zucchini doing what zucchini always does, more than enough to give away. It's in the light, too — these long, golden late-summer evenings that don't seem to want to end, the sun still warm on your shoulders at 7pm. Even the maple trees are already, quietly, getting ready to put on their fall show.



>>> ABUNDANCE, IT TURNS OUT, ISN'T SUBTLE. IT DOESN'T ASK PERMISSION. IT JUST SHOWS UP, MORE THAN ENOUGH, WHETHER OR NOT WE WERE BRACED FOR IT.

I keep coming back to a line from Paul's first letter to the Corinthians: "I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth." Paul wasn't gardening — he was trying to settle a church squabbling over whose ministry mattered more. But I love the honesty of it. Paul did his part. Apollos did his part. And still, neither of them could make anything actually grow. That was never in their hands to begin with.

That's the heart of what abundance means to me this fall — not something we manufacture through sheer effort, but something we notice, trust, and get to participate in. Scarcity says: there's not enough, so hold on tight, control what you can, brace for what you can't. Abundance says: God is already at work growing things I can't fully see or take credit for — so my job is smaller than I think, and better than I think. Just plant. Just water. Let God do what only God can do.

That's what I want for all of you this fall, especially as I head out on sabbatical. I won't be here from September through December, and I'd be lying if I said that doesn't feel strange to write. But I don't want this season to be one of scarcity — of holding your breath or waiting. I want it to be abundant. I want you to keep showing up for each other the way you always do. I want this church to keep discovering, in my absence, just how much growth was never dependent on any one person to begin with.

So this fall, wherever you find yourself — in the garden, in the golden evening light, at a picnic table with an ice cream dripping down your hand — I hope you'll notice the abundance that's already there. Not because you built it, but because God is, as ever, quietly and relentlessly growing something good.

With love & hope,

Dana



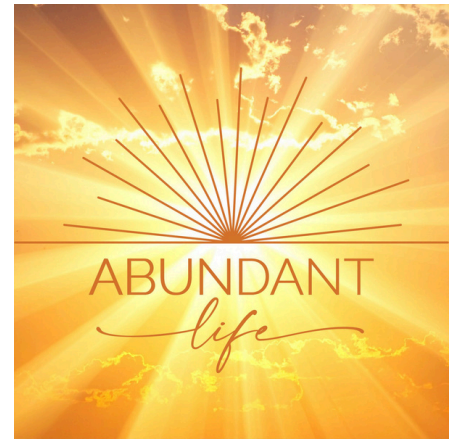
THIS FALL: ABUNDANT LIFE

3

As the season turns, we give thanks for the gift of this good world. Together, we'll explore God's invitation to partner with God and with one another, tending this precious gift so that all may flourish.

We'll gather along the way at some special moments: **Homecoming** kicks off the season as we welcome one another back into the rhythm of church life. Our **Annual Giving Campaign** (Oct. 18–Nov. 1) invites us to put that abundance into practice, giving generously from what we've been given. And as autumn deepens, we turn toward remembrance and gratitude with **All Saints' Day** and our **All Saints' Evening Prayer Service**, honoring those who've shaped our faith and our lives.

Come explore what it means to live abundantly – together.



MESSAGE FROM THE MODERATOR

FROM CAPITAL CAMPAIGN MILESTONES TO HOMECOMING WEEKEND

By Dennis Forge, Moderator

It's August 21st as I write this note and think about South Church slowly coming out of summer mode. (Actually, Eileen and I are leaving tomorrow for one more week of vacation.) Cathy and Taylor have returned from their sabbaticals, hopefully rested and reinvigorated. Various committees are focusing on organizing their work for the coming year. Much work is being put into planning of Homecoming Weekend, Sunday, September 13th. I hope to see you there!

A couple of important updates...

Capital Campaign (As of July 31, 2026 Treasurer Report)

- Amount Pledged: \$3,005,208
- Amount Received: \$2,475,094 82.36%
- Remaining to Collect: \$530,114 17.64%
- Pledge Payment Period: 36 months
- Current number of months: 19 months 52.77%



In summary, we are 52.77% (19 months) through the 36-month pledge payment period and we have collected 82.36% of the amount pledged. This is a great accomplishment. Congratulations! Reaching the entire \$3,005,208 goal will allow us to retire the line of credit and fund the building reserve.

It is very important to note that numerous Church members planned to use the entire 36 months to meet their pledge. Please continue to do so. We greatly appreciate your generosity and commitment to South Church.

2026 Budget

As of the July 30th Treasurer's Report we are slightly ahead of the projected pledge collections and slightly below the budgeted expenses. Anne Hemmer, Treasurer will be tracking this carefully during the fall.

Pastor Dana's Sabbatical

As a reminder, Dana's three-month sabbatical will begin on Tuesday, September 15th. In her absence, there is a detailed coverage plan. Pastor Genna will be doing much of the heavy lifting. However, Nora in her expanded role as Director of Operations and Communications will be addressing the day-to-day operational issues of the church.

I wish you the best for the remainder of the summer. Please feel free to reach out to me if you have any questions. I will provide a more detailed update in September.

WHAT THE CAMINO PROVIDES

SIMPLICITY, PRESENCE, AND 500 MILES OF PILGRIMAGE ACROSS SPAIN

By Taylor Graffun, Minister of Youth & Families

In her book, "Spiritual Disciplines Handbook", Adele Calhoun talks about the spiritual discipline of simplicity saying, "simplicity creates margins and spaces and openness in our lives...It offers us the leisure of tasting the present moment. Simplicity asks us to let go of the tangle of wants so we can receive the simple gifts of life...Sleeping, eating, walking, giving and receiving love, the benefits we take for granted, are amazing gifts. Simplicity invites us into these daily pleasures that can open us to God, who is present in them all."

Do I really need this? It does feel like it weighs an ounce or 2, is it worth it? These are the questions that played through my head as I prepared for my sabbatical trip to walk the Camino de Santiago. The Camino is a pilgrimage across Spain and the route I had chosen to walk was 780 kilometers (about 500 miles) and involved carrying everything I would need for the 40 days of travel.

It was easy to explain why something felt so important. But what if? I might need this or I might need that. But no matter how much I went back and forth – at the end of the day I would have to carry it.

It's not often that we get to choose what we carry. Life often happens at a rate where we just take what we are given to carry and continue with life because there is no alternative. But this trip was different. I had to – I got to choose what I carried.

I remember sitting at the airport thinking about how I wanted to approach this sabbatical. After nearly 10 years of ministry, including 5 years at South Church, I was determined to not waste this precious gift of a sabbatical I had been given. As I mulled it over, I decided my sabbatical intention would be simplicity.

It didn't take long for simplicity to really set in. Starting in France and crossing over the border into Spain, the days consisted of walking, eating, walking some more, and finally sleeping. Then repeat for over 30 days. Everyone I knew was back home. All of my everyday items were back home. My normal rhythm and routine no longer existed. No commute. No meal prepping. No over scheduling... *continued on next page*



WHAT THE CAMINO PROVIDES: CONTINUED

...It was just me, my pack, and the camino.

But what I didn't realize was that simplicity would manifest with simplicity of thoughts, of choices, of conversations. As I walked, I realized simplicity could be found by being present in a moment – looking at every flower and just thinking about that flower – not the next thing on my mental list. Simplicity could look like not rushing for the sake of rushing but going at my own pace that felt good for me and allowed me to enjoy what I was doing. Simplicity could look like using all my senses to take in a meal. Simplicity could mean pausing to actually look around me and notice the people, the plants, the clouds in the sky, the type of ground I was walking on, how my own body was feeling after many miles.

One of the gifts of the camino and my sabbatical was learning to really be present, to let go of the distracting what if's that I thought had taken up permanent residence in my mind. On the camino there are so many possible scenarios of things that could happen and there's no way to plan and try to prevent them all. I just had to go with the flow and see how each day played out. A phrase you hear a lot on the camino is "the camino provides." I was surprised by how true that was. When I wasn't focused on a specific thought, it freed me up to see the ways that God was providing for me: new friends from numerous countries, unexpected hot paella made and served by a local church, passing conversations I had with strangers who I walked 10-30 minutes with and never saw again, smiles from people I saw consistently see along the way, cool drinks during the heat wave, shade in long stretches of sunshine, open churches where I could sit and pray during the day, the hospitality of people along the way who love to care for pilgrims, and so much more.

Simplicity invites presence. Presence notices provision.

This is just one of the numerous lessons learned on the camino. It is my prayer that I continue to seek out simplicity and discover God's provision even when life feels busy with an overwhelming amount of decisions, an overscheduled calendar, and things that distract me from truly being present to myself, all of you, and God.

Thank you for the prayers and the support that made this sabbatical happen and restorative.



MONTHLY MISSION UPDATE

**THANK
YOU!**

Save Ukraine
\$3,405

BAGLY
\$2,417

Re-Member
\$1,595 (July) August still pending

A SHIFT IN PERSPECTIVE

A SUMMER OF PERSPECTIVE, ADVENTURE, AND GRATITUDE

By Cathy Meyer, Minister of Music

When people hear the word sabbatical, they often imagine a time to rest, write a book, or complete a major project. None of those seemed quite right for me this summer. Instead, I decided to give myself a shift in perspective—to step away from the constancy of my usual routine and make space for adventure, learning, and the things I love.

My eight weeks away from South Church turned out to be full of all three.

My first adventure took me to Kripalu, the yoga and retreat center in the Berkshires, where I attended a workshop called Creating Transformational Workshops. It offered both a wonderful workshop experience and a behind-the-scenes look at how to create experiences that are genuinely transformative for participants. It was the first of a three-part series, and I enjoyed it so much that I'm hoping to return for the second part in October.

From there, I headed to St. Louis for the American Guild of Organists convention. For a week, I heard some of the world's finest organists play some of the region's finest organs. Beyond the sheer joy of listening, I came home inspired with new ideas for playing, new repertoire for choirs and organ, and new connections with colleagues. I also had the opportunity to worship in Episcopal, Lutheran, UCC, and Taizé traditions—a wonderful reminder of the many ways music can enrich worship.

I returned to Kripalu, this time focusing on self-reflection, prayerful contemplation, meditation, and other practices of self-care.

With less than 24 hours between trips, I found myself on Vancouver Island with my husband's family. We spent a week hiking to waterfalls, racing go-karts, exploring beaches, playing games, and eating delicious food. From there, we headed to Seattle to spend time with my family, including watching the Blue Angels and hydroplane races as part of Seattle's Seafair celebrations.

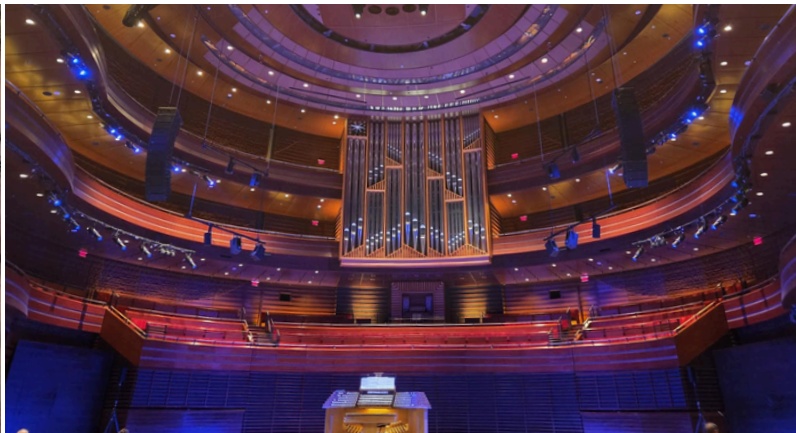
After a week with my husband and kids back in Boston, I headed out on a solo adventure to Philadelphia for the Organ Historical Society convention. There, I heard an average of five organ recitals a day, featuring historic American tracker organs played by some of the finest organists in the country. Highlights included hearing Nathan Laube at Girard College and duo Ken Cowan and Bradley Welch at the Kimmel Performing Arts Center.

Looking back, my sabbatical wasn't necessarily restful in the traditional sense.

➤➤➤ BUT IT WAS EXACTLY WHAT I NEEDED.

It was eight weeks filled with learning, exploration, great music, yoga, good food, travel, family, and new experiences. Most importantly, it gave me the chance to step outside my normal routines and see familiar things—and perhaps myself—with a fresh perspective.

I am deeply grateful to South Church for giving me the gift of this time away. I return with new ideas, renewed energy, a full heart, and a much greater appreciation for the work and community that were waiting for me when I came home. Thank you to everyone who made it possible, especially Dana, the Music Team, and those who provided music for worship!



2026 Youth Music Summer Recap

We had an incredible time running programming for over 40 kids this summer. We debuted our Summer Musical Theatre with an incredible production of *The Little Mermaid JR*, and offered new Sunday Morning Mini Musicals that were a big hit! If you would like to stay connected with us for more exciting music programming for all ages this fall, scan the QR code below!

-Michaela O'Brien,
Youth Choir Director

Join us!



THE SURPRISE OF THE NEW

A SUMMER OF SERVICE, AND WHAT IT TAUGHT ME ABOUT CHANGE

By Laurel Oberstadt-Petrik, Interim Summer Director of Youth Programs

This summer, as people in my life asked me how I was spending my time, I had the distinct fortune of watching their eyes widen and jaws drop when I told them I was directing a summer program in Andover. They were surprised because of the commute, yes, but they were also surprised because most adults don't necessarily choose 12-18 year olds as their conversation partners. But I learned so much this summer, from all the age groups I worked with. One of the moments that sticks with me is being invited to play "wall ball" with a group of middle school boys during one of the afternoon game sessions. For ten minutes we all joyously threw this big beach ball around an empty classroom, while everyone else played a different game around us. It was a reminder that fun can bridge gaps between people, whether gaps of age, gender, or even power.

I learned that I am capable of stepping into a new church, a new ministry setting, gaining large amounts of knowledge quickly, and operationalizing that knowledge. I also learned the age-old lesson that kids, and people of all ages, like things done the way they seemingly have always been done, and that change is hard. The biggest example of this happened each Monday and Tuesday of Summer of Service. Those are the days we play "run-around" games in the church. However, new community groups in the building, and a new director, meant that the games were different this year. For the first two weeks I witnessed kids struggle with the change. But on week 3 we introduced a brand new to South Church game that I had played in my camp days—Stations. In this game the object is to visit 4 stations hidden throughout the church in a particular order laid out on an index card: all without getting caught. The kids thrived with this game and had a really fantastic time playing it.

It taught me that for all of us, the unfamiliar can be tricky to navigate. We like what we know, even if only because it is already known. When we step out into the new and unknown, we open ourselves up to risk. We risk our comfort, yes, but we also gain the opportunity to experience something new that could, just very might be, tons of fun. It is in the surprise of the new that we grow the most, and what surprised me the most about working at South Church this summer, which was certainly a novel experience, was how much I grew by working with this wonderful group of kids, teens, adults, and mentors. New experiences are hard. They also shape us more than we know. I know that that is something I will carry forward with me as I leave this role and the South Church community.



ALL MEMBERS ARE MINISTERS

PASTORAL STAFF

The Rev. Dana Allen Walsh, Senior Pastor
The Rev. Genevieve Hosterman, Associate Pastor
Sherry Tupper, Minister of Visitation
Cathy Meyer, Minister of Music
Taylor Graffum, Minister of Youth and Families

LAY LEADERSHIP

Dennis Forgue, Moderator
Anne Hemmer, Treasurer

SUPPORT STAFF

Nora Kay Pelt, Dir. of Operations & Communications
Andy Brien, Facilities Manager
Amy Morris, Assistant Office Administrator
Nicole Sirignano, Finance Administrator

DIRECTORS OF YOUTH CHOIRS

Michaela Barczak, Director of Youth Music
Sara Durkin
Shannon Eldridge

MORE THAN A STEEPLE

SUMMER OF SERVICE

By Rika Siegfried, Summer Intern

When I was looking at jobs for this summer, I had no idea I'd be led to working at South Church as an intern for Summer of Service. I grew up in Andover as a faculty kid at Phillips Academy, and attended Bancroft and Doherty. Spending my first 2 years of high school at Phillips Academy, I transferred to Walnut Hill School for the Arts as a Theater Major for my junior and senior year. Going to boarding school at just 16 years old, I feel that I've learned a lot - but also come to appreciate many things about Andover that I didn't before. Like driving up to my house and seeing my dog's head poke out the window, or reuniting with friends over pizza and shirley temples at Otto's, or sitting in my backyard and watching the summer sunset - with South Church's steeple placed perfectly in the middle.

This summer has been an amazing experience, and an incredible learning opportunity. I've always loved working with kids and knew that South Church was a special place that I wanted to be a part of. Being an intern, I got to experience both administrative and hands-on work. It was unlike any leadership position I've experienced before, because I really got to use all the parts of my brain. Whether I was handwriting thank you notes with my fellow intern Arlo, organizing and re-organizing and then organizing again, prepping crafts, games and activities, pulling out my minimal math skills to make bus routes and maps, brainstorming and writing reflections for each day of SOS, or making coffee - as interns do - I couldn't have been more grateful for a real work experience.

When it came time for the actual Summer of Service Camp to start, I learned that working with kids isn't always easy or what you expect. It takes flexibility, leadership, creativity, and most importantly, joy. There were so many moments, like watching a kid realize they were making an active difference, welcoming campers into camp for the first time, failing over and over at 4 square and continuing anyway, harvesting beans with counselors at the Giving Garden, turning on the music of Arlo's and my awesome playlist every morning and afternoon, debriefing the day during counselor debrief, dancing around to the "Clean Up Song", bowls upon bowls of freeze pops, experiencing new worksites every day, finding snails at York Beach, making kids do a dance move so they could get a snack, singing at karaoke, or every little pocket of time I spent working with and talking with kids, that I'll cherish forever.

South Church isn't just a steeple that I see in my backyard view anymore, it's a completely special place filled with memories and new relationships that I hope to continue. Thank you Summer of Service and South Church for giving me the chance of entering a new community to lead, work with, and inspire, and for teaching me the importance of making a difference in the world, even if it feels small. To my SOS campers, counselors, fellow intern, director, and South Church staff - keep making change, inspiring others, and believing in yourself. The world needs more people like you!



"Getting to see the kids really involve themselves in the community around them was the most meaningful for me. From kids daringly cutting back on invasive plants around nature reservations to getting to see three kids beat the record of the Most Bags Packed in the Neighbors in Need warehouse, it is a great experience to see all this intercommunity activity!"
Arlo Klock, Summer Intern

BEHIND EVERY SOS TRIP

WHY CHAPERONE SUMMER OF SERVICE WITHOUT A KID ON THE TRIP?

Summer of Service brings local middle and high school youth out into the community for a week of hands-on service. It cannot happen without a lot of volunteers but the adults who chaperone aren't always parents of participating kids. Chaperones fill a supervisory role on these trips while the hands-on leadership with students comes from the high school counselors. It is a great opportunity to see what our local service organizations are up to! Here's why two of our members said "yes" and what that looked like...

>>> A LAST-MINUTE YES

by Al Timm

My wife, Janna Roop, and I, were asked to fill in as chaperones the evening before, saying there was a shortage for the next day. Because we think the program is so valuable, we agreed to attend.

The group I attended had an indoor assignment because of the smoke from wildfires. The students dusted indoor exhibits at a museum in Lawrence and also swept the floor. When the work was completed, the group watched a video about the Bread and Roses strike, which informed them of the low pay and poor conditions that were addressed by the Bread and Roses strike of 1912.

I thought riding the bus, seeing Lawrence, visiting a local coffee shop, and seeing the museum were all positive experiences for the kids. I can see that by being a regular volunteer you'd get the opportunity to build a real relationship with the kids.

I am thrilled to see South Church introduce kids to the meaning and importance of service to their community. The Summer of Service reminds me of the parable of the sheep and the goats in Matthew 25, where Jesus reminds the nations that even as they serve "the least of these," they serve him.

>>> A CONTINUING STAKE IN THE YOUTH PROGRAM

by Emily O'Hara

I love the South Church Youth Program, so although my kids are now adults, I feel I still have a stake in the youth program and was happy to chaperone for Summer of Service.

Chaperoning over the years shaped my relationship with my own kids and many other kids. Both my kids participated in youth group, SOS, mission trips, and South Church Players, where they served, played, grew into leadership roles, and developed the skill to work alongside other adults, a skill that has served them well.

It was a joy to work with a group of current youth and former youth at the Neighbors in Need warehouse, where Nick Bohrer, an alumnus of the South Church Youth Program, is the manager, and at Uncommon Threads. I encourage parents of youth to chaperone whenever possible to see how they grow and serve and become.



THE LIFE THAT FILLS SOUTH CHURCH

OUR MISSION EXTENDS FAR BEYOND SUNDAY MORNINGS

By Nora Kay Pelt, Director of Operations & Communications

South Church's mission of nurturing connections within and beyond our walls comes alive not just through our own programming, but through the many community groups and individuals who make our building their home throughout the year.

Year-round, our doors stay open to a steady rhythm of community life. Families rely on the **Merrimack Valley YMCA** for childcare, while the youngest among us find a first taste of music and movement through **Music Together**. Seniors gather for weekly exercise classes through **Andover Elder Services**. Music fills our space in different ways too...from **Merrimack Valley Voices**, a community chorus, to the many students of all ages who come through the **Merrimack Valley Community Music School** for lessons. **Alcoholics Anonymous** meetings offer a place of support and recovery, and **PFLAG** provides community and connection for LGBTQ+ individuals and their families.

During the program year, that circle widens further. Learners of all ages pick up new skills, whether it's violin with **Jane Dimitry** or Spanish language with **Maria Montserrat**. **The Art of Living** brings meditation practice into our space, the **Andover Garden Club** cultivates community around a shared love of growing things, and **Scouts Troop 73** continues a long tradition of youth development under our roof. The **New England Classical Singers** add yet another chorus to our building's weekly musical life.

This summer brought its own particular energy. Days filled with the sound of young minds at work during **David Vigorito's** week-long youth chess programs (weekly youth chess classes begin again Sept. 22nd), and a young music student found our parlor a perfect place for daily saxophone practice. The sanctuary filled with candlelight for a fourth **Lumos Live Concert** (with two more planned in 2027) and a violin recital was held in our chapel.

And this fall, that circle of connection grows even further. A **private book club** is finding its home with us, alongside new movement and wellness offerings in **Yang's Martial Arts** Tai Chi (starting September 10th) and **Wild & Rooted Yoga** (starting September 12th). The **Andover Choral Society** will hold a board meeting here, **Oriana Inferrera** brings an immersive concert event in October, and the **Back Bay Ringers** will present a December concert.

Taken together, these programs are a living expression of who we are...a church whose walls hold not just our own worship and ministry, but a whole community of learning, healing, music, and connection. Every class, meeting, rehearsal, and recital is a reminder that South Church's mission extends far beyond Sunday mornings.

If you are interested in learning more about any of these programs, reach out directly to the programs or contact me at Nora@southchurch.com and I will be happy to make the connection!



A STORY OF UNEXPECTED GENEROSITY

SOUTH CHURCH'S NEW HANDBELLS

By Cathy Meyer, Minister of Music

Sometimes fabulous opportunities really do fall into your hands like God-given gifts. The story of how South Church acquired a second set of handbells is one of those stories—and it seems too perfectly orchestrated not to share.

Over the past eight years, our handbell program has grown tremendously. We have welcomed new ringers, expanded our original set with donated bells and chimes, added new music, started the annual Andover Bell Festival, and participated in regional festivals. We now have South Church Ringers, a children's group, and plans for a beginner ensemble. It has been exciting to see where God has been leading this ministry.

Last spring, several colleagues told me that a four-octave set of handbells from the recently closed Second Congregational Church of Beverly would be auctioned. I didn't give it much thought—until the day before the auction, when I woke up with a strong feeling that I needed to go. So I did.

The next morning, I met the pastor of the church to inspect the bells, finding them in excellent condition, along with tables, gloves, music stands, and replacement parts. Because they were made by the same company and were similar in age to our existing bells, I knew the two sets would work beautifully together. With the Music Team's blessing, I headed to the auction.

The auction included everything from furniture and Paul Revere silver to stained-glass windows and, of course, the handbells. While I was looking around, a man approached me. He had overheard my conversation with the pastor and said, "I want your church to have those bells. If you make the winning bid, I will give you \$1,000 toward your purchase."

I thanked him, but assumed he was simply being kind.

A few minutes later, he came back and offered \$1,500.

I still had no idea who he was.



The bells were divided into two lots, and I quickly discovered that I needed to win both in order to create a complete set. I won the first lot—and then found myself in a spirited bidding war for the second. By the time the bidding ended, I had spent considerably more than I had planned. The priest I had been bidding against even shook my hand and congratulated me.

Then came the real surprise.

The man who had offered to help walked over, pulled out fifteen \$100 bills, and handed them to me. I was stunned. I thanked him profusely, and he simply offered his blessing on our music ministry.

Later, I asked the pastor if he knew who this man was. He had never met him before. He only knew his first name: Keith. I wish I had gotten his last name or contact information so I could thank him properly.

The very next day, South Church Ringers member John Kiezulas picked up the bells. Since then, several ringers have worked together to repair and prepare the bells and tables for our fall programming.

This second set of bells opens up wonderful possibilities for our ministry. South Church Ringers can rehearse or perform at the same time as our children's or beginner groups, and we will have much greater flexibility in programming and ringing.

What an incredible gift!

And so, wherever you are, Keith: thank you. Your generosity made it possible for South Church to receive this extraordinary gift, and we are deeply grateful.

Sometimes, the right opportunity really does fall right into your hands. I am grateful and am excited to share this with you!

DID YOU KNOW...

MEET THE ABBOTS — NEARLY 500 OF THEM — BURIED IN OUR CEMETERY

By Char Lyons, South Church Historian

...that there are at least 488 Abbots/Abbotts buried in our cemetery? That is over 13% of the 3,700 people buried here. I call them the Rabbits. Why so many? This is a glimpse into the Andover Abbots.

George Sr. (1st generation) and Hannah Chandler Abbot settled in Andover in 1643 and moved to their Central St. garrison house (now an open lot between 48 and 56 Central St.) in the 1650s. They are likely buried within a few hundred yards of the cemetery location, which was part of their farmland. Their son, John (2), gave Abbot land to the South Parish for the location of the meetinghouse and parsonage in 1708, with Joseph Ballard donating his land for the burial yard.

George and Hannah had 10 children who remained in Andover, and 78 grandchildren.

To add to the confusion of the lineage of George and Hannah, there was also a George Abbott of Rowley who settled here. Those lines also intermarried, adding to the gene pool and legacy. To simplify things at the time, this George went by George, Jr., or George of Rowley. George (2, son of George, Sr. and Hannah) was addressed as Capt., as was his son Capt. George (3) and his son Col. George (4).

Somewhere around the 3rd or 4th generations, a second T began appearing in the last name. I heard one descendant say that it was his George (3) who added the T because he was a mathematician and liked the symmetry. It was not a distinction between Abbot/Abbott residing in the different North and South parishes. In the cemetery, we have many examples of T next to TT next to T next to TT, all the same family. Early 20th-century Andover historian Charlotte Helen Abbott (8) insists the proper spelling is TT and attributes the variations to poorly educated ancestors who probably did not know how to read or write.

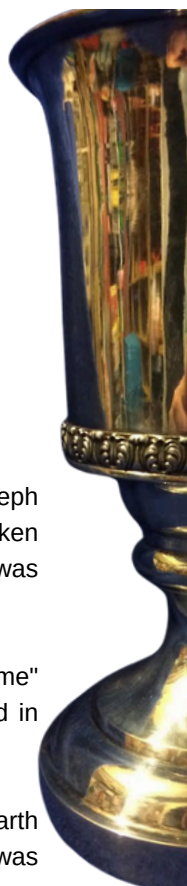
➤➤➤ HERE ARE SOME NOTABLE ABBOT/ABBOTT ANECDOTES IN OUR CEMETERY:

- Fun names: Costello Abbot, Abithiar Abbott
- Addie Abbott married Albert Abbott, and named their daughter Abbie Abbott Abbott.
- Most people on one monument: 21, of which 9 are John Abbot.
- Most popular surname: Abbot (288)/Abbott (200), 488 total; Holt 213.
- Most popular name female: Mary Abbot/Abbott, 34; Sarah Abbot/Abbott, 22.
- Most popular name male: John Abbot/Abbott, 25.
- 32 Abbots are buried here with headstones before 1800 out of 113 stones.
- No headstones of Abbott with 2 t's before 1823.
- The last Abbot buried here was Louise Abbot, in 2024.

The garrison house was involved in many skirmishes with Native Americans, with the first murder in town being Joseph (2), age 24, slain defending the house after killing many attackers. His little brother, Timothy (2), age 13, was taken captive. He was returned months later. Timothy never allowed his children to complain of hunger or want, and was known to provide a generous meal.

Benjamin Abbot (2) built his homestead in 1685, and it is located at 9 Andover St. In 1692, he had a "quarrelsome" neighbor, Martha Carrier, and accused her of witchcraft. She was the first Andover person arrested and hanged in Salem. Other Abbots, including his brother John (2), were affected by accusations against their spouses' families.

John (2) built his homestead at 57 Central St. This home has the oldest original room in Andover from 1678, a hearth kitchen. John was our first Deacon and gave his home parlor table to the church for the first Communion table. It was used for 200 years before the current table was donated... *continued on next page*



...Col. George (4) was the Parish Moderator in the years leading up to the Revolutionary War. Our second minister, Rev. Jonathan French, had been in the Army. He practically spoke in code from the pulpit about tyranny. He trained our militias and was a "Praise the Lord, and keep ye powder dry" type of patriot. Coolly, Col. George reminded the townspeople that our quarrel was not with our neighbors, but with the government. Though highly respected, George did hide "fathering" a child with one of Rev. Phillips' slaves, Remas, as they were next-door neighbors...

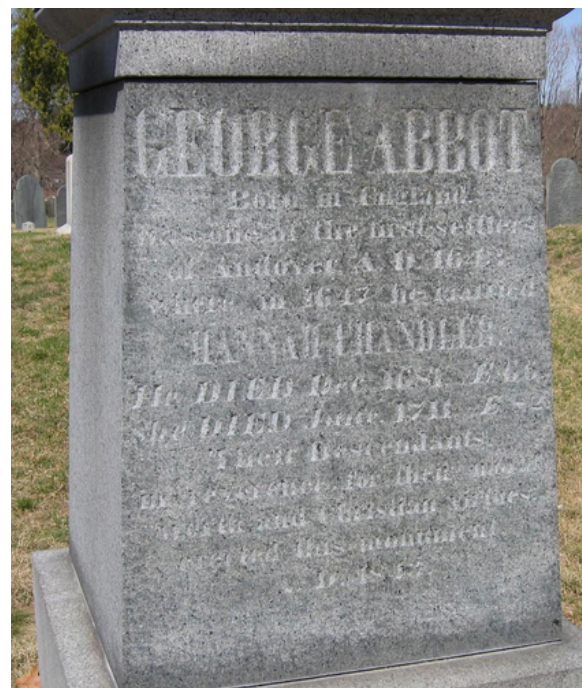
As tensions grew in Boston, Esq. Samuel Abbot (4) moved back to Andover after amassing tremendous wealth in the import/export business. He built his home at 47 Central St. He was the wealthiest descendant of the Abbots. Samuel helped establish Phillips Academy in 1778 and later the Andover Theological Seminary in 1807. His best friend was Samuel Phillips, grandson of Rev. Phillips, and both navigated much of the business of Andover as a center of education. He gave us our current Communion chalices. Over the course of his life, Samuel gave \$110,000 to the Seminary and created the Abbot Chair of Theology, which is the oldest Academic Chair of Religion in the United States.

Deacon Isaac (4) opened his 1680 home at 70 Elm St. as an inn in 1776. He later opened the first post office from this house as the first Andover Postmaster. The Abbot Tavern hosted all prestigious visitors, from President George Washington to the Marquis de Lafayette. Isaac donated the chair to the Seminary in which Washington breakfasted. It is currently in the PA president's house on campus. Washington was so impressed with the Academy that he started a trend of Southerners sending their sons North for their high school education.

We have a picture of Congressman Amos Abbot (6) in the Library. He inherited the Abbot Tavern and was influential in bringing the world's theological scholars to teach, preach, and lead in many of Andover's institutions. In 1828, he helped his cousin Sarah Abbot establish the Abbot Academy for girls. Amos was a noted leader in Town and South Church at all levels of policy. He helped our daughter church, West Parish, Christ Church, Andover Baptist Church, and a Methodist Church all get established legally. His son, Ens. Timothy (7), was taken prisoner of war in the Civil War.

Charlotte Helen Abbott (8) wrote over 100 Andover family genealogies, which are available online via Memorial Hall Library. Her work gives tremendous insight into the history of Andover. In 1913, she noted how many old headstones had broken or had disappeared. Charlotte created a campaign to establish a huge Memorial Rock in the middle of the cemetery, "To remember the Pioneer Dead of the South Parish."

Each year, I field questions from Abbot descendants visiting us. The best is when I ask which line and they say "George." I tend to chuckle and ask that they be much more specific!



>>> CONDOLENCES TO

- Patti Slater on the death of her husband **Stu Slater**, on July 23rd.

>>> WE CELEBRATE

- the baptism of **Thomas Zemlin**, child of Zach and Ashley
- the baptism of **Colette Maher**, child of Philip and Andrea

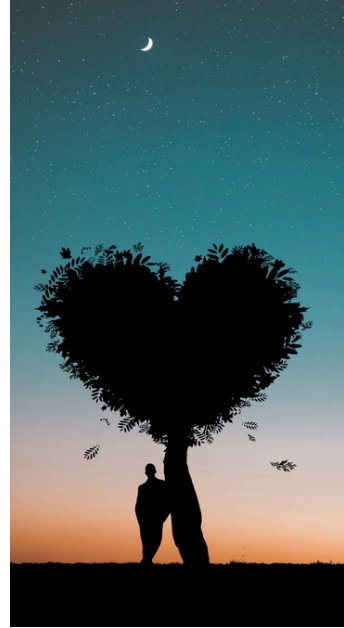
>>> IN GRATITUDE

On behalf of the immigrant communities that we serves, thank you so much for your generous gift which helps people access justice and free legal services so they can find safety. *Sincerely, Anita P. Sharma, PAIR*

Thank you for your support and confidence in our work of building new homes so deserving families can build new lives. *Sincerely, Kevin J. Hudson, Essex County Habitat for Humanity*

Thank you for your gift! We can now say that half the houses in Plan Grande have water and a San Jose water delivery system is compete. *Blessings always, Bill Briggs USA Coordinator, Honduras Hope*

Huge thank you to the Care & Calling Team and all of South Church for the kindness in sending cards and food while I was in the hospital. It was wonderful to receive the love while not being at my best. *Ben Pelt*



FOLLOW THE YELLOW NAMETAGS

A PRIMER ON THE SOUTH CHURCH WORSHIP DEACONS

Since the beginning of Christianity, there has been a role in church life known as the “Deacons”--Paul talks about them in his letters all the way back in the New Testament! The word “Deacon” comes from the Greek word diakonos, which literally means “servant” or even “waiter.” At its core, Deacons are hosts of the church, who look after church life and shepherd their community. But the details of what exactly this entails varies from community to community.

Even within South Church history, the role of Deacon has meant many things--some of you may remember when the Deacons were responsible for some of the pastoral care of our congregation! Much of that work is now in the hands of our wonderful Care and Calling Team, but our Deacons are still responsible for attending to the needs and concerns of our community.

This past Spring, our Deacons wrote a mission statement:

>>> “CULTIVATING CHRISTIAN LOVE THROUGH SERVICE, DISCIPLESHIP, AND LEADERSHIP.”

Our Deacons also went through a re-structure this year--for a more detailed description, [click here](#). Currently known as the “Worship Deacons”, our Diaconate is responsible for the worshiping life of our community-- for example: setting the communion table, working with staff on special worship services, and ensuring that South Church maintains a wide and accessible welcome to all. Worship Deacons work alongside our pastors, and speak on behalf of the congregation, to tend to the spiritual needs of our community.

If you have a question about worship, church life and culture, or the beliefs and practices of our community, the Deacons are here to help. You can contact them at deacons@southchurch.com. You can also look for people with yellow nametags in worship--these are current and former Deacons, who will be happy to help! [For a list of current Deacons, click here.](#)

One thing that never changes: the work of the church is only possible because it is held by many hands. What a gift it is to labor together on the work of this wonderful community!



south church presents

16

WITCH ANDOVER WHICH ANDOVER

Fear, division, and the witches of Andover



Must be
16
or older!

6:00PM Doors Open | 7:00PM Event

Wed., Oct. 21st

Oak & Iron Brewing Co.

SAVE THE DATE!

SAVE THE



DATE

NOVEMBER 14TH, 2026

DAY OF SERVICE

Our annual South Church Day of Service will be on November 14th. Whether you want to work indoors or outside, whether you are young, old or ageless, there will be plenty of opportunities for you. We had over a hundred volunteers participate in 2025 on 11 projects, followed by a warm and convivial dinner full of fellowship and good cheer and we expect a similar event this year. We are exploring a few new partner organizations and projects.

If you are interested in helping in any way, please reach out to David Strong at strongde@gmail.com.

Co-Leads:

Chris Dunn & David Strong

THE STEEPLE IS LIT IN LOVING MEMORY OF

>>> IN SEPTEMBER

Charles and Jennie Carey

by Lynda and Roy Paris

**Our son, Hooks III,
who shared his light with the world**

by Susan and Hooks Johnston

>>> IN OCTOBER

**Gertrude & Fraser Colpitts and
their daughter Priscilla Colpitts Taber**

by Robert F. Colpitts and Nancy Colpitts Aceti

Faith M. Look & Robert E. Look

by their daughters Linda Look & Deborah Hyde

Bruce S. Taylor

by his wife Charlotte and family

>>> IN NOVEMBER

Margaret and William Philips Foster

by their children Rachel, Bill, Karen and Cheryl

**Our parents and
to honor our children and grandchildren**

by Laura & Dale Lattanzio

*Please let us know if you would like to "light the steeple" in
memory of one of your loved ones.*

