



Under the Dome

**Dunbar United Church of Christ
767 Benham St, Hamden, CT 06514**

Phone : (203) 288-2342

Email: office.dunbar@gmail.com

www.dunbarchurch.com

An Open & Affirming Congregation

Weekly Services

Sunday Mornings @ 10:00 A.M.

Saturday Evenings @ 5:00 P.M.

September 2025

Pastor's Report, September 2025

Who knows where inspiration finds us? I was in Kohl's with Annie to return something from Amazon. Janet ordered the wrong-size case for her I-Phone and I was returning it. There was a line of a few people in front of us and this catchy song I'd never heard was playing on the storewide piped-in music system. It got my attention — especially the lyrics that this woman in a husky voice sang: "I don't really know a lot about love, a lot about love, a lot about love, but you're in my head, you're in my blood, it feels so good, it hurts so much....."

As the title suggests, the song is "About Love." So of course I'm interested because that's exactly the answer you'd give if somebody asked you, "What's the Bible about?" You'd say, "It's about love." The woman who sings the song is Welsh, like Tom Jones, and just goes by the name Marina. (Are all people from Wales born with incredible singing voices?)

Here are more of the lyrics of the song: "Started in the strangest way, didn't see it coming
Swept up in your hurricane, wouldn't give it up for nothing
Now I'm all caught up in the highs and the lows
It's a shock to my system
I don't wanna run away, so I stayed."

I think Peter said something like that to Jesus, didn't he? In the Gospel of John when a crowd of people following Jesus decided to leave him because they thought he was getting too weird — Jesus said they had to eat him and drink his blood. The crowd said, "We're outta' here!" And Jesus asked the disciples if they were going to leave too and Peter said something like Marina sings in that song — Peter said something like, "Yeah Jesus, you're a shock to my system but I don't want to run away — where would I go? — so I'll stay."

So I'm listening to this song over the Kohl's sound system waiting in the Amazon returns line with Annie standing next to me. I asked her, "Annie — do you know this song?" She said, "No — I've never heard it before — but I hate it. But I can find the name for you if you want." She found it for me. I also liked the song's driving beat — it

had something like a techno-disco beat — something that made you want to dance. In fact, when I looked it up on Wikipedia, it's described as having "a danceable beat." This happened two or three days ago and I'm still hearing the tune in my head.

But look how God — the Holy Spirit works. I'd just finished reading a book by the Roman Catholic priest (who died a few years ago when he was just 64) called *The Return of the Prodigal Son*. And this song by the young Welsh singer Marina, "About Love," turned my thoughts to Henri Nouwen's book which was also about love. Of the over fifty books he's written, this one about the Prodigal Son was one of his last. Nouwen said something in this book so interesting I keep thinking about it. He said Jesus' story of the Prodigal Son is not about either of the two sons — it's really about the father — God. And Nouwen said the point Jesus made wasn't just that God loves us no matter what we do, or no matter how rebellious we are or how resentful and self-righteous and mean-spirited we are. God's constant, unconditional love for us is a given. God loves us no matter what. But Jesus' main point of the story is that **WE MUST BECOME THE FATHER**. In other words, **WE MUST BECOME GOD**. In the Gospel of Luke Jesus says, "Be compassionate just as your Father is compassionate."

This sounds crazy, right? — becoming Jesus — becoming God. But Jesus commands us to love one another, and be compassionate — **LIKE GOD**. As if Nouwen knew he was going to die soon, he repeated this message over and over in the last chapter of this book (*The Return of the Prodigal Son*): "Becoming like the heavenly Father is not just one important aspect of Jesus' teaching, it is the very heart of his message." But how? Our time here is limited, our time to accomplish this goal of our faith grows shorter each day. How do we become God? There are three ways, says Nouwen, to be compassionate like God: through grief, forgiveness, and generosity. Marina sings love feels so good and hurts so much. To be love and compassion, God must give us the gift of pain. When we see another suffer, it is a great gift to suffer with them, to feel their sorrow. Grief is the rain that makes compassion grow in our hearts. Jesus said to be with him we must pick up our cross and follow him. The cross is

the pain of the world. Pick it up. Embrace it, Jesus says. Open your heart. Love. Become God.

With love from Kohls, Marina,
the Holy Spirit,

George

Contact Pastor George @

Phone: (203) 287 -8106 or

revonweb@sbcglobal.net

H.O.P.E.

H.O.P.E. would like to thank those that have donated this past month:

George and Janet Braen

Heather Sibley

Barbara Gengareilly

John and Charlotte Sroka

This past month we have donated to Church on the Rock Food Pantry which serves 80-90 families with food needs, clothing and toiletries. We also donated to the International Church at Yale which serves dinner twice a week to those students from foreign countries who are adjusting to American food and culture. This church does not receive any funding from Yale and the students are very alone. These dinners are like having family around. The church is planning on bringing some students to our Apple Festival on October 18.

If you would like to make a donation, you can do so by visiting our website or send a check to Dunbar UCC with Hope in the memo.

Thank you,
Debbie Laffin

Women's Fellowship

Apple Festival is collecting for Grandma's Attic, the Jewelry table and the book sale! Please donate your better than Goodwill items such as small appliances, kitchen utensils, pots and pans, dishes, glassware, knick knacks, books, toys, puzzles, tools, jewelry, weird stuff and more!

If you're feeling crafty, make something for our bazaar table! Test recipes out for something great for our bake sale! Donate new items for our raffle baskets! Jams and Jellies is always looking for new ideas! Think about how you would like to volunteer this year! We need everyone's participation to have another great Apple Festival.

Save the date: Apple Festival Saturday, October 18, 9am - 1 p.m. rain or shine.

Save those Target bags, we need them for frozen pies and Grandma's Attic.

We also need paper bags for hot pies. Please leave in kitchen anytime.

Welcome Back Cafe Church is on Sunday, September 14! If you have discovered a favorite summer recipe, please make it to share at our Welcome Back Cafe Church! We will be having our breakfast items along with a few surprises! We will have food ready at 9:45 with service starting at 10a.m. Help cleaning up is always appreciated.

Debbie

203 281-3241

Board of Missions and Concerns

Hi Everyone,

Missions will be donating to the North Haven and the Keefe Center food banks. Also we will be donating to Continuum of Care , Inc. They have a new program REST-Rapid Evaluation, Stabilization and Treatment Center. (It's for adults with mental health and/or substance abuse issues.)

Take care,

Donna and The Missions Committee

Trustees

The Trustees do not meet physically during July and August, but continue to monitor budget, income and expenditures, all of which are within expected limits.

Guided by Kathy Straka, the board has authorized an update and redesign of our website to enhance outreach. Work on this is ongoing. We are also exploring issues related to the Parish House and planning on securing proposals for a new roof and windows prior to organizing an ad hoc committee to work on internal renovations and planning for usage.

The Board is discussing a proposal to redesign the corner sign and garden area to reduce maintenance and make signage more visible. We also continue to facilitate needed access to the buildings for repairs, inspections, etc.

Respectfully submitted,

John Donohue

Deacons

Dear Congregation,

Warm greetings from your UCC Deacons.

We want to express our heartfelt commitment to supporting every member of our community during times of need. Please know that we are here for you, ready to lend a listening ear or a helping hand.

We have been incredibly blessed to have Reverend Brett with us on Sundays while Reverend George enjoys a well-deserved vacation. His perspectives and compassionate approach to worship have truly enriched our experience together.

Respectfully yours,
Kitty Donohue

Christian Education

We are looking forward to another fun and educational year of Sunday School! Classes will begin on Sunday, September 14th and happen each week until mid-June.

We like to have the children participate in active displays of love. Last spring's service project of growing tomato seedlings was a wonderful success. We look forward to expanding that project again this year. We will also have our annual Advent Workshop in early December. If you have a suggestion of how the children can help in our community, please let me know.

Janet Manukas

IT'S PIE MAKING SEASON AND WE NEED YOU!

Pie making starts September 10 at 9:30 a.m. and continues every Wednesday until the festival.

We need peelers, rollers, clean up crew and more. Please join us for this fun mission!

Since the apple prices did not go up and we preordered pie tins, we are keeping the pie prices at \$12 for a whole pie and \$6 for a mini pie.

If anyone would like to order pies, please call 203 281-3241 and leave a message. I'll get back to you to confirm.

Looking forward to seeing many faces on September 10!

Debbie Laffin

Sunday Service 10am every Sunday is also available online via Zoom

Meeting ID 658 791 9474

Password 503008

To join by telephone, dial 929-205-6099 and enter the meeting ID. If prompted for a password, enter 503008.

Saturday Service every Saturday at 5pm
In person only—Starting September 13th

Bible Study every Wednesday via Zoom—Starting Sept. 10th

Meeting ID 658 791 9474

Password 503008

To join by telephone, dial 929-205-6099 and enter the meeting ID. If prompted for a password, enter 503008.

Dunbar UCC Open & Affirming Statement

We, the members of Dunbar United Church of Christ, want Jesus to be the center of our lives. Our mission is to practice the New Commandment that Jesus gave us: to love one another as he has loved us (John 13:34). We seek to follow God's will by loving our neighbors, friends and enemies alike. We seek justice for all.

We celebrate the image of God in every person. As an Open and Affirming Church, we welcome all persons into the full life and ministry of our church, and affirm that the grace of God, known especially through Jesus, is a gift meant for people of every race, color, age, ability, gender and sexual orientation. Worship, leadership, ministry, and employment are open to all.

We are on a journey of faith and invite all people to join us. No matter the church or community where your journey began, you are welcome here.

Mission Statement

“We believe that Jesus calls us to love each other, serve our neighbor, and nurture God's spirit within us.”