



September 5, 2018

RALLY FOR GRACE

This Sunday is our annual Rally Day celebration, marking the beginning of a new season of church school and ministry programs at the Hills Church! The Chancel Choir and Hills Bells will lead worship, and we will celebrate our community with an ice cream social on the front lawn. I will preach on the healing of a man who had become deaf and mute, a healing story that connects to the wholeness God brings to our spiritual wounds (Mark 7:31-37). Sunday is also the beginning of a Family Promise Hosting Week here, during which families who are enduring homelessness will be welcomed as our guests.

Peggy Bendroth, our friend at the Congregational Library in Boston, tells us that the tradition of a "Rally Day" dates to the first years of the 20th century in New England churches. In writings of the time, Rally Day is described as a celebratory Sunday in September to mark the beginning of a new season of Sunday school, with "strong, vigorous" music in worship and a picnic afterward. If it works, don't fix it. Right?

It was just two Sundays ago that Anne Marie Holloway was called to be our newest minister, and she has hit the ground running with joy and faithfulness. This coming Sunday afternoon, she will host open houses for junior high (7-8 grade) and high school (9-12) youth groups. And Judy Swahnberg returned from her three month sabbatical in mid-July with great stories and fabulous photos of her travels. I am so thankful for these two colleagues in ministry – both of whom embodying an authentic faith and such genuine pastoral care for others.

Sally Tomasetti (Mrs. T) is ready for her ninth Rally Day at this congregation! What a gift she has been to all of us during her nearly decade of ministry here. I am thankful for her passion for encouraging children's faith practices both at church and at home with their families.

And John Finney continues to amaze and uplift me through his mastery of sacred music. After summer travels, I always return home with a new appreciation for how rare it is to receive the gifts of the music ministry in this church, and I look forward to hearing how Kirsten Oberoi, our youth and children's music director, will build on the strong foundation she laid during her exceptionally creative first year with us.

The Congregational Library includes a book that likens Rally Day to a patient who rallies from illness to health, and the rallying of people to a cause, as a captain would rally the troops in a time of need. We rally for the grace of God. All of the gifts of this church come

from God, and they are given in response to God's grace. Grace is what the world needs.
Let's hold a rally.

I'll see you in church.

Peace,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Matt". The signature is stylized with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Rev. Dr. Matthew Wooster
Senior Minister