

# THE BALLARDVALE GAZETTE

NEWSLETTER OF THE BALLARDVALE HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION  
Vol. 22, No. 1 BallardVale, Massachusetts Spring-Summer 2025

## Meet Your Neighbor: Angela, Owner of Bark of the Town

The Vale has a new business, and it's making sure our four-footed fuzzy friends remain clean, and pretty, and handsome. Bark of the Town, a dog and cat grooming business, has taken over the second floor of 195 Andover Street. The owner, Angela, relocated her shop from North Andover in October after renovating the 2,000-square-foot space above Spinners

Pizza, Lulu's Lunchbox, Sunday's General Store, and the Ballardvale Laundry.

"We're real busy and very happy with our new location. BallardVale feels like everyone is family and looking out for each other," says Angela, who purchased the business in 2021 after being a long-time groomer there.

Among the dog services Bark of Town offers are shampoos, brush and comb out, ear cleaning, toenails trimmed and filed, tooth brushing, flea baths, and dematting and furminator treatment.

Angela says it feels a bit like déjà vu for Bark of Town, which got its start in 2003 operating above the Depot House of Pizza near the Andover train station. Now her shop is located above another popular pizza joint and just a minute walk to the Ballardvale train station. She says her business is open from 7:30 to 4:30, Tuesday through Friday, and every other Saturday, although they'll adjust to make it work for pet owners.

She says she has between 400 and 500 repeat customers and has hired four full-time groomers to keep up with the demand for her services, which are by appointment only and regularly booked four to six weeks out. Pricing for grooming depends on the size and breed of the dogs and cats. "When I was in the second or third grade the teacher asked us what we want to be when we

grow up, and I said dog groomer," Angela says. "I knew exactly what I wanted to do and I still love it." To book an appointment, call (978) 208-0029.

## Worshipping in Ballardvale

The three faith communities currently thriving in Ballardvale gather in places of worship dating from the 19<sup>th</sup> to the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century.

### Ballard Vale United Church

If you have ever wondered why there is no church on Church Street, the answer is that a congregation once met at the corner of Church and Andover Streets.

Prior to that location, members of several different churches formed the Ballard Vale Union Society in 1850, which held services in the schoolhouse on the Green. Five years later, they established the Union Congregational Church. In 1876 the new church purchased land on what was then Village Street, and built a church, which is now apartments. The original brick parsonage at 8 Marland Street was sold in 1890, and a new Queen Anne style home for the minister was built at 3 Church Street. That home was the parsonage from 1890 until 1968.

After a 1955 merger with the Methodist Church on Tewksbury Street, the congregation became the Ballardvale United Church. In 1968 they built a new church at the corner of Clark Road and Hall Avenue.



Pastor Patricia Mitchell describes today's congregation as vibrant, open, and affirming. "That means we welcome all people regardless of any labels, and we invite them to participate in all aspects of church life," she explains. For more about the church today, see the introduction to Pastor Mitchell below. Worship services at 10:30 a.m. Sundays are also live-streamed and archived on the church Facebook page.

### **St. Joseph's Church**

Since 1881 St. Joseph's Catholic Church has overlooked the village from High Vale Lane. Before St. Joseph's, Ballardvale Catholics were served by clergy from Lawrence, but in 1866, after St. Augustine's in downtown Andover became an independent parish, Ballardvale came under the pastoral care of the Augustinian Friars. The current pastor of St. Augustine's, Father Peter Gori OSA, says that the mid-19<sup>th</sup>-century clergy were also responsible for a second mission church, St. Thomas-Villanova in Wilmington, and commuted weekly to both via horse and buggy. Both mission churches were expected to grow and become



independent, and while St. Thomas did, population growth in Andover expanded in the direction of St. Robert Bellarmine, leaving St. Joseph's still a mission church. "The three priests at St. Augustine's take turns at St. Joseph's," says Father Gori.

Initially, Mass in Ballardvale was celebrated in the hall of the Boston and Maine Railroad Depot, and when that space became inadequate, an unassuming building was constructed on land the diocese had purchased on High Vale Lane. "The church owns the hill in front too and built the concrete staircase that leads up from River Street," says Father Gori.

Construction on a new, much improved wooden church in the Gothic revival style — with a white marble altar, two side altars, and a choir loft — began in 1881. By 1896 an addition was needed for the growing mill village congregation, and a belfry was added. A new rose window was dedicated in 1982 to mark the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary. As Father Gori points out, St. Joseph's is actually

older than the main church downtown, which was dedicated in 1900.

Now that churchgoers no longer depend on horses for transportation, St. Joseph's isn't really needed, but as Father Gori explains, "People want it. They like the smaller space, the quaintness, and the convenience." The church seats about 100, with typical attendance about 65 to 75, with a Thanksgiving surge. "When I first came to Andover, I couldn't understand why the main church had such low attendance on Thanksgiving Day, unlike every other place I had served," says Father Gori. "We tried different times, but nothing. Finally, I realized it was the Feaster Five making it hard to get to the main church! Now we have that thanksgiving service at St. Joseph's and that made the difference." Besides Thanksgiving, Sunday Masses are scheduled at St. Joseph's at 10:00 a.m. from Palm Sunday to Christmas.

### **Andover Islamic Center**

The Andover Islamic Center found a home in Ballardvale's most iconic mill building in 2019.

Since then, the congregation has been growing. In fact, this faith community is making plans and raising funds to expand its space at 240 Andover Street for the second time. Education, especially for younger members, is a priority in this congregation, as is participating in the surrounding neighborhood and working toward a safe and harmonious environment for everyone. This congregation is committed to providing community outreach and working to counter hunger and homelessness. For more information on AIC services and community activities, visit [andoverislamiccenter.org](http://andoverislamiccenter.org).



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### **Welcome, Pastor Patricia Mitchell**

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The new pastor of the Ballard Vale United Church, the Reverend Patricia R. Mitchell, has come home to New England. "I grew up in New Hampshire, so living in New England is not a cultural shock," she says, "although I did forget about the horrible traffic!"

After completing her master's of divinity at Bethany Theological Seminary in Richmond, Ind., she was ordained in the United Church of Christ

and began her ministry in Chesterfield, Va., at the First Congregational Christian UCC. “Last October I drove to Andover from Hood River, Ore., to begin a part-time, designated term (three- year) call at Ballard Vale United Church,” she says. “I am slowly finding my way around Andover, enjoying the AVIS trails, and especially Haggetts Pond.”

In Ballardvale she found a congregation with a lot of spirit. “While small in number, the BVUC congregation worships in a big way with joyous music, dramatic readings, and justice-oriented reflections,” she says. “Our children have a special time during worship and then attend Sunday School. A coffee and conversation time is held immediately following worship. And BVUC is fully accessible on all levels!”

She explains that the end of June brings a change of pace. “Summer worship is a relaxed, interactive gathering with food, music, and a variety of spiritual practices for all ages. We worship at 5:00 and eat afterward.”

Members of the BVUC do more than worship together. “This congregation collaborates with two major nonprofit ministries: Village Food Hub and Voices of Hope,” says Rev. Mitchell. Village Food Hub is an extension of BVUC’s original 24-hour food pantry, accessible in the church’s main parking lot. Both shelf-stable and refrigerated foods are available at the self-serve cabinet, replenished by individual volunteers and many community organizations. “One of the most important aspects of Village Food Hub is their successful rescue of thousands of pounds of food from schools, restaurants, and stores that would otherwise end up in the garbage — last month they rescued 40,000 pounds!” says Rev. Mitchell.

“Volunteers use the rescued food to prepare meals for the pantry.”

Also at BVUC, the nonprofit Voices of Hope raises money through their musical theater productions to support cancer research. “They use the sanctuary for rehearsals and their summer youth program,” says Rev. Mitchell. “Their latest production was *Jesus Christ, Superstar* performed at North Shore Music Theater. BVUC also collaborates with VOH for an entertaining dinner theater, offered this year in November. VOH performances have raised over \$1 million!”

Pastor Mitchell is pleased that BVUC recently began two new ministries: the Queer Guild — an opportunity for the LGBTQIA+ community to gather in a safe space and share games, conversation, and snacks — and Community Conversations, topic-oriented gatherings for discussion of current events in Andover and surrounding communities. Both events are LGBTQ+ friendly and open to all who are open to all. For more information contact [connect@BVUC.org](mailto:connect@BVUC.org).

“These collaborations and ministries excite me and fill me with hope for the future of this faith community,” she says. “Ballard Vale United Church lives out Matthew 25:40 ‘doing for the least of these,’” she says. “Along with living out Jesus’ commandments to ‘love your neighbor as yourself,’ doing for the least of these is the essence of following Jesus and living a life of passion and purpose. Ballard Vale United Church is striving to live into these commandments. We’d love to have you join us.”

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### **Ask the BVHDC (Ballardvale Historic District Commission)**

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*Even though Town Meeting declined to repeal the BVHDC, concerns were raised about the approval process. Going forward, how can residents offer comments, concerns, and suggestions?*

The Commission takes its responsibility to the community seriously. As we look at ways to respond to community concerns, we invite your comments. Meetings are usually held on the first Wednesday of the month at the Town Offices, and all are welcome. Meeting dates and agendas are posted in advance at [andoverma.gov](http://andoverma.gov), or email your suggestions to [BVHDC@andoverma.gov](mailto:BVHDC@andoverma.gov).

## **BallardVale Historic District Commission**

Andover Town Offices  
36 Bartlet Street  
Andover, MA 0181

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### **CALENDAR**

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| <b>June 4</b>      | <b>BallardVale Historic District Commission Monthly Meeting</b><br>Town offices, second floor conference room — 7:00 p.m. |
| <b>July 2 or 9</b> | <b>BallardVale Historic District Commission Monthly Meeting</b><br>Town offices, second floor conference room — 7:00 p.m. |
| <b>August 6</b>    | <b>BallardVale Historic District Commission Monthly Meeting</b><br>Town offices, second floor conference room — 7:00 p.m. |
| <b>Sept. 3</b>     | <b>BallardVale Historic District Commission Monthly Meeting</b><br>Town offices, second floor conference room — 7:00 p.m. |