

# FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH OF WESTFIELD

## DECEMBER 2023 NEWSLETTER

Have you seen the memes or cartoons on line when they talk about how dark it is? “What time is it? Is it 11:30 PM?” “No, it is 4:30 PM!”

We are being plunged into darkness. And, I hate to tell you this, it is only going to get worse before it gets better. The sunset time will get earlier and earlier as we progress through the month. But then, we have some hope. Right around Christmas Day, the sun sets a little later each day and we experience less darkness and more light. Do you realize what we have at the end of November we will have at the end of January?

In the meantime, we have all kinds of things that we have to do, even here at the churches. We had photos with Santa, Manger Blessings, Holly Bazaar, Thrift Shoppe, and a big Concert. And this was all before December 2! Personally, I have been trying to help coordinate things in the churches while also being in a show with the Westfield Theatre Group. We also have the New England Brass and a Cookie Sale as well as our Christmas Eve Pageant at 9:30 AM (joint service in Westfield) and services at 4:30 PM (Westfield) and 6:30 PM (Southwick.) We will join again for a December 31 at 11:00 AM in Southwick.

In the meantime, the “season” of Advent can be that time of darkness that we use to prepare for Christmas. It is my hope that all of us can spend a little time in quiet and “darkness” so that we can welcome Christ our Light at Christmas. My prayer for all of us is that we can allow Christ to be “born again” in our hearts.

Peace and love,

*Paul*

Rev. Paul B. Nesbit

Pastor



## Deacon's Corner by Ann Mundy

### Reflection on my faith journey

I grew up on a farm in Hartford, N.Y., about 50 miles north of Albany and 9 miles from the Vt. Border. My dad was an Agriculture teacher in our small K-12 school. Our farm was a gathering place for kids in the community. It was not unusual to have extra kids at our table as mom and dad were sensitive to the needs of the less fortunate. The community really lived "It Takes a Village..."

Both of my parents were raised in families where church was the center of family life.

Church was a huge part of my childhood. In h.s. I had the opportunity to attend 2 Youth Fellowships, one Methodist and the other Presbyterian. We attended Youth Rallies, Summer Camp, Winter Weekends, Mission trips.

I am blessed with two great kids, Janet and John. I now have 3 grandsons and 6 delightful great grandchildren-such joy, joy, joy!

My career as a math teacher at Westfield High was very rewarding. It was a privilege to mentor so many students on their education journey.

I joined this church about 45 years ago. Rev. Quent Peacock was pastor, in every sense of the word. My family benefited in countless ways from his caring spiritual leadership. Basic faith, kindness, not high theology!

In recent years I have attended classes at Hartford Seminary .( Now Hartford International Seminary for Religion & Peace). Christians, Muslims, and Jews from all over the world engaged in interfaith dialogue and social justice issues.

I am grateful for parents who passed on a faith. I am grateful for the "saints" like Margie Allen and Ruth Finney who have walked with me on my journey. I am reminded of the importance of befriending all those who come to our doors. I am grateful for the many saints among us today who are bearers of the LIGHT.

Peace, Ann Mundy

### 2024 First Church Winter Camp

When: 4 pm Friday, February 2, 2023 to 11 am Sunday, February 4.

**Who:** Any high school student.

You are encouraged to bring friends.

**Where:** Noble View Outdoor Recreation Center

635 S Quarter Rd, Russell, MA 01071

**Cost:** Free.

Program provided by Incredible Days (<https://www.incredibledaysgroup.com/>).

This company (Jesse) did the program for us in Feb 2023.

For more information or questions contact: Daniel Koehne - 413-433-7599

Jim Yesu - 413-356-2229

## Christmas Shopping at Blessed Buys

“We have everything you need for your Christmas shopping. Come see our newly decorated shop for the holidays. New jewelry, clothing, books, toys, decor, and too much more to list! We hope to see you there in Thursdays and Saturdays, 10-2.” Also after church on Sunday Dec 3rd, 10th and 17th



Special thank you to all who helped with the reception For Hampden Association Annual Meeting on October 29th. And to all who contributed to our traditional Sunshine Basket Sunday by adding a delicious array of goodies to the well stuffed bags. Thank you so much to all who helped continue this long standing First Church tradition. A Happy Thanksgiving to all. We are so thankful for our church family.

Barbara James, Senior Deacon

TO: MEMBERS OF FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH

SUBJECT: SPECIAL CONGREGATIONAL MEETING

In accordance with the by-laws of the First Congregational Church, Westfield, MA, Article VIII, Section 3, a Special Congregational Meeting has been called on Sunday, December 10, 2023 at 10:30 AM. The purpose of the meeting is: Amend the By-Laws as approved by Church Committee on October 10th. By-Laws changes were discussed in a forum on November 12th,

Copies are available in the church office. 3

Janet St. Jean, Clerk

## Meet our New Members



New Members: Rev. Paul Nesbit, Robert Waldorf, Jennifer Waldorf, Kelly Gonzalez, Joseph Gonzalez, Tina Dunlop, Janice Longstreeth, Ken Longstreeth, Norma Cagney and Ray Silois

**Jennifer Waldorf** was born and raised in North Carolina. She grew up in a Southern Baptist church and made a profession of faith when in college. She moved to South Dakota after graduating college, where she met and married her husband Bob. Bob was in the Air Force, so they moved to several different places, her favorite of which was six years in England.

Bob and Jennifer moved to Mass last year to be closer to their daughter, Gretchen who moved to Boston. They both work at the Retreat at Norwich Lake, which is a Christian Camp and retreat center.

Jennifer enjoys crafting and reading, and is looking forward to spending more time exploring New England!

My name is **Bob Waldorf**. I was born in Minnesota and grew up on the family farm in central Minnesota. I entered the United States Air Force in 1988, and completed a 25 year military career in 2013. Upon military retirement my family and I relocated to Western North Carolina, close to where Jennifer grew up. Our daughter Gretchen moved to the Boston Area in July of 2022 and we all desired to be close together, so Jennifer and I relocated to Western Mass about a year ago.

I am a facilities director at Timothy Hill Ranch, Retreat at Norwich Lake. I Christian based camp and retreat center in Huntington, MA.

A few of my interests are watching sports, DIY and crafty things.

### **Ken and Janice Longstreeth**

Ken and Janice Longstreeth live in Hatfield and are both retired music teachers. Ken grew up in Pittsfield and had previously taught in Westfield, Agawam and retired in 2017 after being the band director in the Hatfield schools for 17 years. Janice grew up in Hatfield and also retired in 2017 after being an elementary music teacher here in Westfield for 37 years. They met at Westfield State in 1975 and lived in Westfield from 1980 until 1993 when they built their house in Hatfield.

They have two sons. Luke is 31 and has his own home in Hatfield while David is 27 and lives in Somerville, MA. Ken continues his work as a professional musician playing trombone in the New England Brass Quartet, The Bad News Jazz and Blues Orchestra as well as several other area instrumental groups. In his free time he enjoys biking and cooking new recipes. Jan spends her time taking various drawing and pastel classes as well as working out at the Y and caring for her father. She is also a member of the Hampshire Choral Society.

Ken and Jan are very happy to be returning to First Congregational Church in Westfield where they were previous members from about 1982-1993. They have both performed and sung for Allan Taylor for many years and are very glad to be singing for him again in the fabulous choir here at First Church.

**Tina Dunlop** grew up in West Springfield and moved to Chicopee when she married Bruce. They moved to Westfield in 1991 with their two children, Erin and Jeffrey. Tina was a stay at home mom until 2001 when we took a teaching position at Papermill Elementary teaching 4th grade. I retired from Papermill in 2021 and in my free time I enjoy taking classes in aerobics and Yoga, reading, gardening and spending time with my granddaughter, Sunnie. I have felt like a member of First Congregational for the past 15 years and look forward to continue building relationships with all you wonderful people .

**Raymond Salois** was born in Westfield and graduated from Westfield Trade. Ray loves football and likes Hockey. I like to promote education for kids and help them in life. Ray also likes plays and music.

Joseph and Kelly Gonzalez have 5 children.

They live in Westfield. Both retired they are plenty busy.

Jacey is 25, Maddie is 14, Joseph Jr. is 12 and Twins Jaxon and Jacoby are 9.

## December Newsletter - World Service Committee - God's Love in Action

Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.

2 Corinthians 9:7 ESV

### **Thank You Notes – Cards and Letters are on the Bulletin Board**

**Kinship Fund:** “Once again, we are humbled and grateful for your continued support of the Kinship Fund. It is difficult to put into words how much the money helps us help kids who often feel there is little hope in the world. The needs have been greater than ever and your donation will help so much.”

**Our House:** “We, at Our House, are so appreciative of your care and commitment to our homeless teens and young adults. We continue to work toward independence with our tenants...and it's working. Thanks for keeping us in your prayers and on your minds.

**Boys & Girls Club:** “Thank you so much for all your continued support. The Club, and our kids, greatly appreciate it.”

**Westfield Food Pantry:** Thank you for your generous gift to the Westfield Food Pantry....I would personally like to thank you for making our work possible. Your kindness supports the distribution of food and assistance to local families at risk of hunger....

**Sarah Gillett Services for the Elderly Inc.:** Thank you for your very generous donation....Your gift enhances our ability to grow the foundation's endowment so that we can continue to support the many local organizations requesting funds for senior programs....

### **Opportunities for Giving of your Time and Resources – The Needs are Great!!**

#### **Franklin Avenue Elementary School**

Snow and cold weather are in the forecasts. Kids may come to school without proper clothing or get their clothing wet while playing outside. The school requests gently used or new winter jackets and snow pants for sizes 10-12, 8-10, and 6-8. If you have a jacket or pants that your children/grandchildren have outgrown and you're looking for a place to donate them, please consider Franklin Avenue School.

**Clothing** is needed for refugee children from newborns to adolescents. The need is great!! Donations are being accepted at the Welcome Center in the School Registration section at the Westfield Public Schools Office, 94 North Elm Street. Lana, the district translator, will take your donations. Refugee children are coming from countries around the world.

**Community Table/Westfield Soup Kitchen:** **YOUR HELP IS REQUESTED!!** We need desserts for our meal on **December 26<sup>th</sup>**. Brownies, cupcakes, sheet cakes, cookies, or any other dessert can become part of the meal. Each donation must serve **24** people. If you are willing to bake a dessert, please contact Nancy Condon, Goodie Guru 413-297-0778 or email her at nancy@paddleforwater.net. On Tuesday, December 26<sup>th</sup> bring your dessert to the church by 2:00 PM or take it to the Soup Kitchen at 101 Meadow St between 4:00 & 4:30. It would be great if you could stay and help.

We need **YOU** to help serve our meal at the Community Table. Please call Cindy or Mayme to learn how you can help and when to arrive. Thank you!!

**December 17, 2023 - the 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of each month- Feed the Hungry Sunday:** Each month we bring items for the Westfield Food Pantry. Items that are requested include Soup, Crackers, Macaroni & cheese, Spaghetti sauce, Pasta, Rice, Tuna fish, Canned veggies: Corn, Green Beans, Peas, Carrots, Cereal, Canned fruit, Peanut butter, Jelly, Cooking oil, Juice, Coffee, Tea, Sugar.

**Christmas Gifts:** Are you confused about what to buy someone who has everything? Would you like to honor that someone with a unique gift purchase from HEIFER International? Their Holiday Catalog is on the bulletin board, or you can visit [Heifter.org/catalog](http://Heifter.org/catalog). There are items from \$10 to \$5,000. Items include a flock of chickens, a food basket, honeybees, goats, water buffalo, water, schooling for a girl, gift cards and numerous other needed items. Your gift will help a family put food on the table, earn a sustainable income, and create a future full of hope and joy. Heifer will send a beautiful Honor Card telling them about your gift and what your thoughtfulness means to a family.

**Car Needed:** Do you have a car that you no longer need? Shirley Anderson shared that there is an Indian family living at Southwick Village who came to the US two months ago and recently moved to Southwick Village. They really don't have anything. They've bought a couple of little items from Blessed Buys, but need a car. The man works locally, while the woman, who is a professional woman, is at home with their 7/8 year old son who is both blind and deaf. If you have a car to donate, please contact Shirley at [413-998-3054](tel:413-998-3054) or [c.sidesuesews@gmail.com](mailto:c.sidesuesews@gmail.com)

Please **PRAY** for:

adults and children who live where violence and hate are common in the United States and the world  
the people of Haiti where violent gangs are in control.

the people of Israel and Palestine who have been affected by the violence in the Gaza Strip

individuals & families who have been affected by the wildfires, flooding, earthquakes or other natural disasters

**OFFICIAL NOTICE  
November 8, 2022**

**TO: MEMBERS OF FIRST  
CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH**

**SUBJECT: ANNUAL BUDGET HEARING**

In accordance with the by-laws of the First Congregational Church, Westfield, MA, Article VI, Section 9, The Budget Committee has called an open congregational hearing on the proposed 2023 Budget on **Sunday, December 10, 2023** following Worship Service.

This meeting will take place in the sanctuary.

**Soup Kitchen**

December Soup Kitchen

will be December 26th

Please call the church office

if you can help 568-2833

# Christmas Luncheon



Christian Fellowship

Annual

Christmas Luncheon and Yankee Swap

Wednesday, December 13th 11: 30 AM

Tickets \$12.00

Menu:

Turkey Dinner,

Dessert, Coffee or Tea

Please call the office for reservations

Bring a wrapped \$5.00 Gift for the swap



The Property Committee wishes to thank Dennis Billings for filling in for our custodian, Roy Bascom, during Roy's recent knee surgeries and rehabilitation. Dennis' Dad was our custodian for many years and Dennis' fill in was seamless. As of 11/8, Roy is back to his regular hours (Sun, Mon, Tues & Wed from 8AM until noon).

We also wish to thank Marc and Mike Winer for their assistance in removing and storing the air conditioners. Their youthful show of strength is much appreciated by our aging committee members.

Mike Cross, our heating contractor, and I have been working on a part of the heating system located under the Narthex. The air handler there delivers hot air to the two vents located on either side of the glass doors in the Narthex. The bearings in the fan impellor of the air handler completely wore out causing enough damage so that the fan impellor was not repairable. I believe most heating contractors would have recommended replacing the entire air handler, which would have been very expensive. However, Mike came up with a plan for installing a separate fan in a new location in the associated duct work and donated a used fan for the purpose.

Mike and I have installed the fan, made alterations to the air handler and completed applicable wiring. It was started on Sunday Nov. 19<sup>th</sup> and the results are extremely good.

Respectfully submitted by:

Bob Brownlee, Chair Property Committee



# Christmas Poinsettia Order Form



Each year our church is decorated with beautiful Poinsettia plants donated in memory of loved ones. This year "Poinsettia Sunday" will be on December 19th. After the service these plants will be taken to church members who are ill and those in hospitals and nursing homes or have suffered a loss. If you would like to order a Poinsettia, please fill out the order form and return it to the church office.

I am placing my order for \_\_\_\_\_ Poinsettia at \$10.00 each

Given by:

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In memory of:

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Please return order forms to the church office no later than December 13th, with checks payable to:  
"First Congregational Church"

## LOVE & REMEMBRANCE LUMINARIA



HELP US LIGHT A PATHWAY TO OUR  
DOORS WITH LUMINARIA

*As we approach the Christmas Season*  
HONOR OR REMEMBER A LOVED ONE  
WITH A LUMINARIA

\$5.00 EACH

Your name and your loved one's name  
will appear on the Luminaria  
*Luminaria will be on display*  
*Christmas Eve and Christmas Day*

In Memory/ Honor of:

Given By:

\_\_\_\_\_ Quantity @ \$5.00 each = \$\_\_\_\_\_

Total Donation: \$\_\_\_\_\_

Please make checks Payable to:  
First Church

Please return to the Church Office by  
December 18th

# Community Carol Festival

THE NEW ENGLAND BRASS

THE SENIOR CHOIR OF FIRST CHURCH

directed by Allan Taylor

THE HANDBELL CHOIR OF FIRST CHURCH

Saturday, December 2, 2023

3:00 pm

First Congregational Church

18 Broad Street, Westfield, MA

Admission free, donations welcomed

Sponsored by the



Join us for a

## CHRISTMAS Carol Sing

at the Westfield Arbors & Southwick Village

Join singers from First Congregational Church Westfield and the Episcopal Church of the Atonement to sing & bring the joy of the season to local seniors! We'll meet at the Episcopal Church of the Atonement at 1:30pm, sing at the Arbors at 2pm, then sing at Southwick Village at 3:30pm, followed by a reception for all singers.

**Sign up today!**

**SATURDAY, DECEMBER 9, 2023**

**1:30-4:00 pm**

**Kids & Adult Singers Welcome!**





# Spreading holiday cheer with gift cards

From finding the perfect gift to taking a break from the hustle and bustle of the holidays, there's a gift card for every need. Earn for your organization by shopping with gift cards from RaiseRight—the gift that gives back.

**STARBUCKS®**

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THEATRES.**



**Fanatics**



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**SEPHORA**



Shop all brands and categories on [RaiseRight.com](https://www.raiserright.com) and in the mobile app

**First Congregational Church of Westfield**

<https://www.raiserright.com/enroll?enrollCode=2B3C7L7734826>

Or Contact Cindy LaPlante 568-2833 for more information

## Church School News.....

Church School has been busy!!! On Oct 15<sup>th</sup> seventeen brave people went Kayaking on the Conn. River. Thank you Nancy Condon for making this connection for us. On October 21<sup>st</sup> we had a very successful Halloween Party. Over 200 adults and children attended – the dining room was full. Thanks to all that helped set up and decorate and clean up after. The Kitchen crew were great too. I'll forget someone if I name names so please accept my appreciation for supporting this Church School function.

Moving into November the Church School presented a video on what they have learned about Moses using Lego structures and drumming background music. Thanks to Janet St Jean, Rachael Bilodeau, Amy Platt and Jennifer Barkyoub for being in the Sunday School on Sunday mornings and inspiring the children with innovative lessons. The group also made cards for the Sunshine Baskets and helped pack the bags. One November 26<sup>th</sup> Michelle Downs will lead the group in making Chrismons which will go on the Christmas tree in the Sanctuary.

On December 9<sup>th</sup> the Church School group and any adults that want to attend will join forces with the Church of Atonement and go Christmas Caroling at the Arbors and Southwick Village. On Dec 24<sup>th</sup> the children will participate in a pageant at the mornig worship service. Rehearsal will be on Dec 24 with a visit from Santa and cookies and cocoa.

The Fall has been very busy for the youth of the church. Looking forward the plans have been made for a retreat at Nobleview for the older youth the first weekend in February and Janet St. Jean has many other ideas for the New Year.

The Church School wishes everyone a very Merry Christmas and Happy New Year

## Interim Director of Faith Formation and Family Ministry

First, a look at what happened in October and November....

Our Halloween Party on October 21 welcomed over 200 parents and children into the church.. The air was alive with happy laughter. Thank you to all the youth and adults of First Church for their help setting and cleaning up.

On November 5, the Church School wowed members of the congregation with their video production of Moses. Using LEGOS, narration and sound effects, our youth produced an Oscar worthy movie.

Now, on to December.....

On Saturday, December 9, all ages are invited to sing Christmas carols at The Arbors and Southwick Village. See the flyer included, and sign up to join us!

On the morning of December 24, our morning worship will include a re-telling of the Christmas story, including lambs, angels, shepherds, kings, Mary, Joseph and Baby Jesus. This is one service you won't want to miss!



## Christmas Services at First Church

**December 2nd 3:00 PM Community Carol Festival**  
at First Congregational Church

**December 3rd Celebration of the Advent Wreath Worship Service 9:30AM**  
First Sunday of Advent Candle of Hope  
Communion Sunday

**December 10th Celebration of the Advent Wreath Worship Service 9:30AM**  
Second Sunday of Advent Candle of Peace

**December 17th Celebration of the Advent Wreath Worship Service 9:30AM**  
Third Sunday of Advent Candle of Joy  
-Christmas Sunday – Poinsettia Sunday  
New England Brass

**December 24th Celebration of the Advent Wreath Worship Service 9:30AM**  
Fourth Sunday of Advent -Candle of Love  
Youth Pageant

**December 24 Christmas Eve Service 4:30PM**  
Lessons and Carols Candle Light Christmas Eve Service  
with our Youth and First Church singers  
**Luminaria will be on display**

Celebrate and share God's love with your neighbors.  
Don't forget to invite someone!!!





## December Birthdays

- 12/04 Rachel Bilodeau
- 12/08 Alice Flyte
- 12/09 Barry Plumley
- 12/10 Jean Zimmerman
- 12/12 Judy Lyon
- 12/13 Tim Marx
- 12/13 Bob Rising
- 12/14 Christina Pierce
- 12/15 Jessi Albee
- 12/16 Donna Barnes
- 12/18 Nancy Osowski
- 12/20 Lorraine Jackson
- 12/22 Amy Platt
- 12/23 Carly James
- 12/29 Grace Chan
- 12/29 Doris Ammirato





# 2023

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
					1	2 10-2 Blessed Buys 3:00 PM Carol Festival
3 9:30 Worship Service Communion Sunday 1st Sunday of Advent 10:30 Blessed Buys	4	5 10:30 AM Tuesday Morning Music Program	6 7:00 PM Deacons Mtg	7 10-2 Blessed Buys	8	9 10-2 Blessed Buys 1:30-4 Christmas Carol Sing
10 9:30 Worship Service 2nd Sunday of Advent Special Cong. Mt. Budget Hearing Following Worship 10:30 Blessed Buys	11	12 7:00 PM Church Committee	13 11:30 AM Christian Fellowship Christmas Luncheon	14 10-2 Blessed Buys	15	16 10-2 Blessed Buys
17 9:30 Worship Service 3rd Sunday of Advent Poinsettia Sunday 10:30 Blessed Buys	18	19	20	21 10-2 Blessed Buys	22	23 10-2 Blessed Buys
24 9:30 AM Worship Service 4th Sunday of Advent Christmas Pageant 4:30 Lessons and Carols	25	26 3-5:30 PM Community Table	27	28 10-2 Blessed Buys	29	30 10-2 Blessed Buys
31 9:30 Worship Service						



**Christmas Eve Services at  
First Congregational Church  
Of Westfield**

**Sunday, December 24th, 9:30AM**

a re-telling of the Christmas story, including lambs, angels, shepherds, kings, Mary, Joseph and Baby Jesus.

**Sunday, December 24th, 4:30PM**

Lessons and Carols,  
Candle Light Christmas Eve Service with  
Our First Church Choir

First Congregational Church of Westfield  
18 Broad Street  
Westfield MA 01085  
(413) 568-2833

PLEASE  
PLACE  
STAMP  
HERE

