



# The Newsletter

First Congregational Church  
of Westfield  
January 2024

## “First and Ten, Do It Again”

Even though the Patriots are not playoff contenders this year, many of us may still follow the team and pay attention to what happens on the field. If the Patriots aren't going to score, at least we can root for a “first down” and see if maybe, just maybe, they will get on the board. If you follow football, you know that subsequent first downs will lead the team down the field to a touchdown or at least field goal position. The old cheer, “first and ten, do it again,” exhorts the team to keep moving the ball.

Sometimes, we need to be reminded to “do it again” when it comes to our actions. As we started the New Year of 2-23, I asked all of us to consider random acts of kindness. So many of our members followed this advice and, as a result, so many wonderful things happened not only in our church but also in our community. Countless people have been fed and clothed due to our donations to the Food Pantries in both Westfield and Southwick. Dinners with the Pastor in Southwick have provided a vehicle for all to gather in New Fellowship Hall while Westfield hosted the Food Pantry's Food Truck every Monday and Thursday throughout the spring, summer, and fall. This culminated with the Thanksgiving luncheon in First Church's Fellowship Hall and the return of the area-wide Ecumenical Thanksgiving Prayer Service.

As we begin 2024, may we have a resurgence of energy to continue to be Christ in the community as we continue to answer His call to serve those in need. May our blessings be many as work together to bring the Reign of God to fruition here in the Southwick-Westfield area.

Happy New Year!!

Peace and love,

*Rev. Paul*

**HAPPY NEW YEAR  
2024!**

## Deacons Corner

The end of a year is always cause for reflection on the year past and an imagined year ahead. 2023 was an amazing year for First Church. As Senior Deacon, I found myself enmeshed in the everyday life of the church and observed the deep commitment to our spiritual life by so many in our church family. Rev. Paul's presence as our settled pastor has encouraged many to join in the life of the church, not only as Sunday worshipers but also as enthusiastic church community members. Our doors and our hearts welcome in new members as we grow and change. It seems like only yesterday the dwindling number of Deacons prayed that our small group could manage the responsibilities with so few willing to serve. Our prayers were answered and although we would still welcome more members, our dedicated group has grown and met many challenges. I am so grateful for the dedication of all our Deacons.

In reflecting on the growth and change in the church, our new and successful approach to encouraging youth and young adults has been wonderful. Not wanting to miss anyone, I won't name names, but hope each church family member knows who they are. Seeing an excited group leave the sanctuary for church school on a Sunday morning is both heartwarming and reinforces hope for our church's future. Thank you to all who have worked so hard to make this new beginning a reality.

Outreach into the community has been offered in several different ways. Blessed Buys, the Thrift store idea started by a handful of dedicated women, has become not only an income source but a Ministry. Open two days a week, it is an inviting place for many to visit not only for the bargains, but also for the conversation and interaction found when they are there. I have personally enjoyed getting to know our "regulars" and listening to their stories is always a highlight of my week. Our store volunteers model God's kindness and unconditional love to all that enter our doors. It truly is a Ministry!

As we enter 2024 with wars raging and a contentious election ahead, I am so grateful for the love and caring of our church family. Here in the warmth of Gods love let us all find peace, and continue to extend ourselves to caring for others. May the greatest gift of all, God's spiritual presence in our lives, be with you today and always. MERRY CHRISTMAS and HAPPY NEW YEAR!

Barbara James , Senior Deacon

### **From the Personnel Committee**

The Personnel Committee will be working with the Church School Committee to notify the congregation about the opening for a Director of Faith and Family Ministries. At the same time, we will be advertising the position online and in other pertinent outlets. A job description will be available in the Church Office for those interested in applying for the position.

# Church School

As I sit writing this, it is 62 degrees out and a week before Christmas. My grandson, Shay, wants to know when it will be white outside, and if we'll be sledding and making snowmen. I remind him that winter hasn't officially begun.

The weather hasn't stopped the festivities leading up to Christmas though. In Sunday School this past month, we've made Chrismons for our sanctuary tree. We've created LEGO nativity scenes that are both whimsical and true to the Scripture passages. Drumming has been particularly enthusiastic. They have so much energy to share with us!

On December 9, both children and adults joined our neighbors from Church of the Atonement to sing carols for our friends at Southwick Village. We had a blast, and everyone seemed to enjoy singing, including the residents. I extend a heartfelt thank you to both Jerry & Kara Noble for their talent and support.

We are now preparing for our Christmas pageant to be held at the morning service on Christmas Eve. Mary, Joseph, shepherds, and angels will take their place in the front of the sanctuary. Next month I'll have pictures for you.

I wish you only the best for 2024. I look forward to carrying on the spirit of Christmas throughout the year to come.

Blessings to all of you,

Janet St. Jean

## Church School Committee - January

The Church School; committee wishes everyone a very Happy New Year.

Looking forward the committee will finalize details for the retreat to be held at Nobleview on Feb. 2 - 4 2024 at our next meeting in January. We will also start discussing different fund raisers that we can organize or participate in. In the past we have supported Heifer and "socks" for the Samaritan Inn. We are considering doing a fund raiser for the Red Cross.

The Committee will also be working with the Personnel Committee to advertise the new position of Director of Faith Formation and Family Ministries.

**If anyone is interested or knows someone that might be interested please contact the church office to get more details. We appreciate any help that we can get.**



## 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

**UCC** Thank you for believing in the passionate work of the United Church of Christ. Your donation to Our Church's Wider Mission was received. Through your generosity and God's grace, we will continue to build a just world for all

**Franklin Avenue Elementary School** Thank you for your donations of jackets, snow pants, hats, mittens, gloves, socks, and underwear. The children are grateful for your generosity and look forward to staying warm this Fall and Winter.



**Salvation Army:** Thank you for bringing joy and hope to neighbors in need through your support of The Salvation Army. **You are a blessing!** May you and your loved ones have a wonderful holiday as we celebrate the birth of our Savior. Merry Christmas! Thank you for your generosity.

### Opportunities for Giving of your Time and Resources – You Are Called To Help

#### 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 currently needs mittens for the younger children.

**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.

**January 21, 2024 - Feed the Hungry Sunday - 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of each month-:** 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.

**Community Table/Westfield Soup Kitchen: DO YOU LIKE TO BAKE!!** We need desserts for our meal on **January 23<sup>rd</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, January 23<sup>rd</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 568-2833 or Mayme 568-1057 to learn how you can help and when to arrive. Thank you!!

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 both 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

The Pastoral Congregational Relations committee's (PCRC) purpose is to facilitate open communication and the resolution of major issues of concern within the congregation. It functions as a liaison between the pastor and the congregation and conducts an annual review of the pastor.

We welcome any issues that are of concern. You may bring them to any member of the committee and we will address them.

Presently we are unaware of any issues and feel that we are fortunate to have the strong leadership we are experiencing.

Mayme Lajoie  
Gail Ives  
Lynn Brownlee  
Martha Roman  
Jim Yesu

## Memorial Flowers

Each Sunday our Sanctuary is decorated with fresh floral arrangements on the Altar. There are many people and several groups in the Church as well as people from out of town who give flowers as a memorial, special celebration or holiday remembrance. Some have given flowers for many years around the same date or Sunday. Such a beautiful way to think of people! After each service, the Deacons continue to make it beautiful by making smaller bouquets to be given to the sick, bereaved and shut-in members. The cost of flowers is \$25.00.

If you would like to give Altar flowers for a particular Sunday, Please call Cindy in the church office (568-2833) for more information.

## Social Media Committee

The Social Media Committee has been working hard all year updating the churches media presence.

Our new website  
[www.firstcongregationalchurchwestfieldma.org](http://www.firstcongregationalchurchwestfieldma.org)  
is up and running.

Be sure to like us on our facebook page.  
First Congregational church of Westfield.

The Church office email is [fccwestfield@outlook.com](mailto:fccwestfield@outlook.com)  
Weekly email reminders go out on Wednesday  
Please let the office know if you would like to receive them.



# Christian Fellowship

Will not meet in January. The next meeting will take place February 14th at 1:00 in fellowship hall.

## The Upper Room

First Church has a Monthly subscription to The Upper Room (a Daily Devotional Magazine) if you would like a copy please contact your deacon.



Please be aware that First Congregational Church of Westfield, Ma. has health assistance equipment available for those who need means of mobilization.

Call the office 413-568-2833 and ask what equipment is available.

The Masonic Lodge at 72 Broad Street has a program called HELP. (Hospital Equipment Loan Program). Saturday morning from 9:00 to 12:00 they are available to loan out equipment, most having been donated. They are located behind the Lodge building. No need to phone.

The Senior Center at 45 Noble Street has health assistance equipment. Call phone number 413-562-6435 for their list of what is available.

Submitted by Anne Gelinias



## Church News

Thank you to everyone who honored or remembered a loved one by purchasing a luminaria for our display on December 23, 24, and 25. The luminaria will be placed at the Old Town Hall and at the church entrance. We appreciate your support of this tradition. Special thanks to Cindy LaPlante and Bob Brownlee for their help with the display. The Creche scene displayed was made by Lisa Crean.

Carol Whalen

### New Year's Resolution

Smile a little bigger

Laugh a little louder

Give a little more

Forgive a little quicker

Love a little deeper

Ride through life a little slower

The Church office is open now Monday through Wednesday, 9am-1pm. Rev. Paul is available Monday and Tuesday in Westfield. Please call to arrange a meeting with him.

The office is closed Monday, January 1st, for New Years Day and January 15th, for Martin Luther King, Jr. Day



### January Birthdays

1/04 Rick Gaylor

1/04 Robert Waldorf

1/05 Janet St. Jean

1/07 Jennifer Waldorf

1/16 Deb Alm

1/17 Anne Gelinas

1/18 Elizabeth Rea

1/22 Nancy Condon

1/23 Nancy Stucenski

1/29 Sam Yesu



Pledge Envelopes are available for those who requested them. Please find them outside the Treasurer's Office. Please call Cindy if you have any questions. Thanks  
568-2833

### 2023 Report

Annual reports are due from all Committee Chairs on by January 16<sup>th</sup>. Please email yours to the church office.

[fccwestfield@outlook.com](mailto:fccwestfield@outlook.com)

Reports will be available February 4th

### Winter Storm Cancellations

If you think a church worship service or large event may be cancelled due to a storm, please tune in to TV22 or log on to WWLP.com or WGGB.com for cancellations.

Small meeting cancellations and rehearsals will be handled by email and phone calls.

## OFFICIAL NOTICE

**To: Members of First Congregational Church**

**Subject: First Congregational Church Annual Meeting**

In accordance with the by-laws of the First Congregational Church, Westfield MA., Article VIII, section 2, The Annual Meeting of the Church shall take place during the month of February upon a date designated by the Church Council. This year's Annual meeting will take place on Sunday, February 11th 2024 with a snow date of Sunday, February 18th. The meeting will take place following worship service. The reports of all Officers Committees and affiliated organizations shall be made in writing and accepted at this meeting. Officers of the Church and Committees shall be elected at this meeting. Nominating Committee shall prepare a ballot nominating one person for each position to be filled at the Annual Meeting of the Church. The right of a member to make nominations from the floor shall always be recognized. This ballot shall be accepted by the church at this meeting. At the Annual Meeting of the Church, the members of the Church will vote on the budget as a single intact entity.

Janet St. Jean, Clerk

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PLEASE  
PLACE  
STAMP  
HERE