



# First Congregational Church of Westfield

## The Newsletter July/August 2024

Dear Friends,

How many of us like to cook or prepare food? What is your favorite thing to cook and/or bake in the summer? Do you follow a recipe? When I make a version of my mother's macaroni and tuna salad, I tend to simply guess as I add things to it. My mother was not a fan of cooking; she left us no recipes or instructions on how to do anything. Perhaps it varies from person to person.

I recall an episode of *Everybody Loves Raymond* where Marie agrees to teach Debra how to prepare her favorite meatballs. She brought over all of her spices and had the recipe to give to Debra. However, she set Debra up to fail as she replaced the "basil" (that is what the label said) when it was really tarragon.

You wouldn't think that one little ingredient would change something but it certainly did with those meatballs. The same thing can happen with a mustard seed. Remember, Jesus compares the beginning of faith to one little mustard seed. If you haven't seen a mustard seed, they are tiny. But this tiny mustard seed can grow into a beautiful bush or tree. In turn our faith can do the same.

Often times, we think that we don't make a difference in how we live our lives or how we can share our faith. Other times we wonder what impact we can have on people around us—even complete strangers. As we discussed in a recent sermon, this can be one of our "mustard seed moments." We don't know the impact we can have on another person until we have dropped or planted that seed.

As we enjoy the next few months ahead, I invite all of us to pay attention to the small things that we do for each other. Let someone go ahead of you. Tell the clerk, "I hope you have a great day." Try not to judge people and simply let them be. Pay attention to the ingredients you use in your speech and actions. Oh, and don't forget to come see us on Sundays when you're in town.

Peace and love,

*(Rev.) Paul*

Rev. Paul B. Nesbit  
Pastor



## Blessed Buys Thrift Shoppe

I want to tell the story of our Blessed Buys Thrift Shop in Old Town Hall.

In order to do that I do have to step back many years to describe the formation of this shop. In the past our church has participated in fundraising to support church programs. Historically the women of the church held fundraisers to provide funds for various church related projects. The Women's Fellowship created annual events that brought money in to cover the cost of items not covered by the church budget. One of the favorite challenges was the maintaining of the church parlor. Often they were called upon to pay for things like floor replacements, painting the sanctuary, or items that were needed in the church kitchen.

When I retired I was invited by my church friends to help with these activities. The Candy Cane Fair, the rummage sale and annual dinners were activities that occurred each year. I found that after each sale many items that had not sold were returned to the maker or stored for future sales. Many items sat in the church basement for several years and eventually had to be discarded. It became apparent that we were missing an opportunity by only doing these fundraisers once a year. The rummage sale was increased to twice a year with no items stored for future use but given to local charities.

In 2015 the tenants of Old Town Hall after many years moved out and the building was left vacant. Sometime later the property committee offered that building for a rummage sale. This opportunity had many advantages. More space! More storage! More days to prepare for the sale and breakdown after the sale!

During the spring sale in 2022, Cindy Gaylord said we should start a Thrift Store. I said "Go ahead". I will help but not be in charge. So plans were started. With setup already in place from the rummage sale, reorganization happened and teams volunteered to work on Thursdays and Saturdays. We identified four people to head up the operation and so it began. Little did we realize what we had taken on.

Today we continue to be open two days a week four hours each day. The process is a smooth operation. Our stock comes in as donations from church members, community friends, and customers who ask "Do you take donations?" "Of course we do." We are fortunate to have a consignment shop, who also gives us her product that she is taking off her floor.

Donations come in the front door and the items are carried behind the curtain. The sign says: "The wizard has left and is no longer behind the curtain". Behind the curtain magic happens. Bags, boxes, and bins are emptied and the items are sorted. Clothes, kitchen ware, and items too numerous to name are sorted for Blessed Buys, Salvation Army and some clothes are bagged and donated to the Episcopal Church for their clothing collection box. Since we started, we have added many drop-off locations including children's clothes that are donated to the Village Closet Donation Center in Huntington where residents from surrounding communities can shop for free. And the list would not be complete until we note that we also make donations to Trinity Church as well.

Many volunteers with specific talents and skills staff our shop. Once the items are sorted they are delivered to rooms in the building that are identified for certain storage areas. There they are priced before being put out on the sales floor.

I hesitate to put names in this article but would like to acknowledge so many who work regularly and also those who when asked quickly step up. It is a church effort with more than a list of 32 members who have helped in some way. There is a team who hold it all together starting with Cindy Gaylord who took the original challenge and has worked tirelessly since the beginning. Carol Whalen has taken the responsibility of the money, staffing and books. Dorothy Cichonski and Tina Dunlop keep the stock from kitchen items, housewares and many other categories priced and setup for display. Barb James joined us and works with Cindy on pricing and displaying clothing. Mayme Lajoie, since the beginning, has untangled many necklaces and displayed the jewelry. Doug James, Bob Brownlee and Steve Pierce keep the outgoing stock flowing and the trash moving. Cindy LaPlante helps keep the records of our income and expenses. We have been fortunate to have a group of high school students who chose us to help complete their community project requirements by volunteering at Blessed Buys. That is just a beginning as many more work tirelessly to produce the income that goes many ways. On a quick count each week, five or more work four hours each

day we are open. We require at least three people working to safely open our doors. We usually have more.

The Christian Fellowship depended on the fundraisers for their income and now get funds from this project. There is money to cover some of the expenses of Old Town Hall. From the beginning our goal was to donate a percentage of our profits to local 501c charities. After the first one and a half years of being open, we have donated to six different charities.

What we really hadn't thought about was how much we would be giving directly to the community. The service we give each time we open is too complex to describe. We have offered a new pair of shoes to a homeless community member who couldn't leave the hospital without them, free clothing to a customer in need, and greatly discounted prices on clothing, household items, jewelry, craft items, books and toys to everyone who walks through our front door.

The volunteers benefit by filling a few hours with friends and greeting customers with a smile and offering a listening ear. The stories we have to tell. The people we have met and the life time friends old and new we have made make Blessed Buys a blessing to all of us.

Each donation, whether it is items, time, or support, build our discipleship at First Congregational Church of Westfield.

Written by Mayme Lajoie

*Carol Whalen (in front with the check), second row: Martha Roman, Terri Kutayli, Margaret Terkelson (both from the shelter), Cindy Gaylord, Tina Dunlop, top row: Mayme Lajoie, Barb James!*



First Congregational Church Blessed Buys Thrift Shop is pleased to announce that this quarter's community donation was made to the Westfield Animal Shelter Heroes(WASH), which is the non-profit arm of the Westfield Regional Animal Shelter. It was formally known as Hearts to Paws, but is now WASH with its non-profit status.

This non-profit raises money to be used to cover medical expenses not covered by the animal shelter. This includes emergency medical care for injured or sick animals and surgeries to correct abnormalities that then allow the animals to lead more comfortable lives. Once animals are healthy, they are then placed for adoption. There is no time limit for surrendered animals to stay at the shelter, they stay until they find their forever home.

Blessed Buys is a community thrift shop run by church volunteers. We carry new or nearly new clothing (men's and women's), jewelry, home décor, small appliances, books, toys, shoes, craft supplies, lamps, art, and so much more. All proceeds are put toward church costs as well as community non-profits. We are open Thursdays and Saturdays, 10-2. We will be closed July 4<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup>.

Look for our big 2 Year Anniversary Celebration sale and gift card raffle in July!

Cindy Gaylord

In keeping with our recently updated "Safe Church Policy" we want to inform you that on Sunday Mornings The Academy Street Entries will be unlocked by 8:45 AM. The main (front) entry will be open 20 minutes before the service(9:10AM).

The Academy Street entries will be locked 15 minutes after the start o the service (9:45AM), while the front entry remains open during the service

The front entry will be closed 10 minutes after the conclusion of the service. If you leave the building after that, please use an alternate exit.

Bob Brownlee, Property Committee

**Call or email the Church Office  
about Hospitalizations and  
Prayer List Updates**

**fccwestfield@outlook.com 568-2833**

If you know of someone in the congregation who has been hospitalized, has upcoming surgery or is in need of our prayers, please call the church office so that Rev. Paul knows. Any updates to the prayer list are appreciated.

**Flowers for Sunday Worship**

If you would like to bring flowers for a Sunday Service this summer please call the church office 568-2833 and let us know. There is a sign up sheet outside the church office for dates.

After worship the flowers are delivered with a worship guide to members in need or celebrating a special occasion.

**Summer Office Hours**

Cindy

Monday & Tuesday 9AM-1PM

Or By Appointment 568-2833

fccwestfield@outlook.com

Rev. Paul

Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday

by Appointment 568-2833

revpaulnesbit@ gmail.com

Rev. Paul will be on vacation

July 15th -21st,

Aug 19TH- Sept 3rd

Please call the church office or your

Deacon if you need anything.

**Committee Meetings**

**Church Council**

**August 13th 7PM**

**Please note Church Council will not  
meet in July.**

Special thanks to Nancy Condon for leading  
First Church Paddle on the Connecticut River  
on Sunday June 9th  
Pictures our on the next page





Kayaking on the Connecticut river with some of our church youth. The weather cleared up and it was a beautiful afternoon to go kayaking.





### Church School Comm. – July/Aug Newsletter

The Church School committee wishes everyone a safe and happy summer. We look forward to helping with vacation Bible School – July 8 – 12, 6-8 PM. Please contact Amy Platt (A1723p@gmail.com) if you can help or have a child that would like to attend.

In August a picnic/pool event is being planned – watch the weekly update for more information. During the summer we will be planning activities for the fall – dates will be published in the newsletter and weekly updates.

Sunday School classes will officially start up again on September 22<sup>nd</sup>. Please let Amy Platt know if you are interested in helping with the program in any way.

We have had a great year with all of the activities including drumming, expressing ideas using Legos and how we see ourselves as Disciples of God, the pageant, and intergenerational services. Working together with Janet St Jean and Amy Platt has been a great experience. We look forward to planning more activities for the youth and congregation. Keep a look out for more information.

*-Gail Ives*







**Special Thanks to Cindy Gaylord for the  
Historic Walk of Downtown Westfield  
Sunday, June 9th 1PM**



**Blessed Buys  
Thrift Shoppe**



**Thursday and  
Saturday  
10AM-2PM  
20 Broad Street  
Westfield, MA 01085**

- 7/01-Cindy Gaylord
- 7/01- Emily Salzer
- 7/8-Joe Balzano
- 7/10-Gladys Hedge
- 7/11-Michelle Downs
- 7/15 –Jacoby & Jaxon  
Gonzalez
- 7/17-Carolyn Hunt
- 7/18-Donna Wolanin
- 7/27-Christine Gaugh
- 7/29– Norah James
- 7/31- Lori LaPlante

- 8/02– Debbie Yesu
- 8/07- Fred Nason
- 8/10-Jacob Combs
- 8/12-Bruce Dunlop
- 8/12 Grace Connors
- 8/15-Joseph Gonzalez Jr.
- 8/18-Merritt Andrews
- 8/18-Cindy LaPlante
- 8/22-Donald Manley
- 8/28-Silas Yesu
- 8/29-Kelly Gonzalez
- 8/31-Michael Winer

# July Newsletter- World Service Committee

*John 6:35 Jesus said to them, I am the bread of life; he who comes to me shall not hunger, and he who believes in me shall never thirst.*

## Thank You

**Our Community Table/Westfield Soup Kitchen: Thank You** to each person who has baked a dessert, assisted with meal preparation, delivered meals, and/or assisted in serving the meal. We could not serve the community without your generosity and assistance.



## OPPORTUNITIES FOR GIVING OF YOUR TIME AND RESOURCES

**Westfield Food Pantry: July 21, 2024 – 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of each month:** Each month we bring items for the Westfield Food Pantry. Items that are requested include Spaghetti sauce, Pasta, Soup, Crackers, Macaroni & Cheese, Rice, Tuna fish, canned veggies: Corn, Green Beans, Peas, Carrots, Cereal, Canned Fruit, Peanut Butter, Jelly, Cooking oil, Juice, Coffee, Tea, and Sugar.



The **2nd Sunday** of each month WSC will make an announcement for the items that are in short supply at the Food Pantry. Rebecca Hart will be advising WSC each month of the short supply needs. This month we are asking for Pasta and Mac & Cheese.



**Our Community Table/Westfield Soup Kitchen – July 23, 2024 - 4<sup>th</sup> Tuesday of the month:** We will need desserts for the meal. Cupcakes, cookies, brownies, sheet cakes are greatly appreciated by those who share a meal at the soup kitchen. Each donation must serve **24** people. If you are willing to bake a dessert, please contact **Nancy Condon**, Goodie Guru at 413-297-0778 or at [nancy@paddleforwater.net](mailto:nancy@paddleforwater.net). Tuesday 23<sup>rd</sup> bring your dessert to the church by 2:00pm or take it to the Soup Kitchen at 101 Meadow Street between 4:00 & 4:30. It would be great if you could stay and help. **CALL Cindy LaPlante or Mayme Lajoie 568-2833** to learn how you could help.

**HELO Haiti:** Prayers are needed for Peace in Haiti. God is good and Prayer works.

**JUNE DONATIONS:** World Service Committee on June 18<sup>th</sup> sent donations to the following organizations: Heifer, Springfield Rescue Mission, Sarah Gillet, Salvation Army and Samaritan Inn.





**Monthly Highlights:** Each month your WSC will highlight one or two of our missions.

This month we are highlighting: **Behavior Health Network -Kamp for Kids**

BHN's mission is to help individuals, families and communities improve the quality of life for those with behavioral and developmental challenges. All BHN programs offer support, guidance and tools that help individuals make positive, life-altering changes. Whether a person has intellectual or physical disabilities, struggles with drug or alcohol addiction, or is challenged by mental illness, BHN helps people develop more fulfilling lives.

**YOUR CHARITABLE DONATIONS: QCDs :** Do you know what a **QCD** - Qualified Charitable Distribution is? You can use Qualified Charitable Distribution (**QCDs**) if you are aged 70 ½ or older, you can make contribution directly from your traditional IRA to a qualified charity. You can donate up to \$100,000 per year without it being considered taxable income, this lowers your gross income (**AGI**) and you do not have to pay tax on the distribution. You can use google or another search engine on a computer for more information or talk to your financial adviser if you have one.

First Congregational Church is a qualified charity.

This could be a wonderful way to support your church and charitable giving. Pray about it and see where God is leading you.

**Prayers:** Prayers are needed in so many areas of the World. Please pray for Peace and God's Spirit to touch the lives of country leaders. Pray that peace can be restored.

**World Service Committee,** Ray Salois, Nancy Condon, Gail Ives, Jean Zimmerman, Dorothy Cichonski, Jennifer Waldorf



**Save the Date !**

**Sunday September 15th 10:30Am**

**Stanley Park Beveridge Pavilion**

**End of Sumer Worship Celebration**

**Cookout to follow**

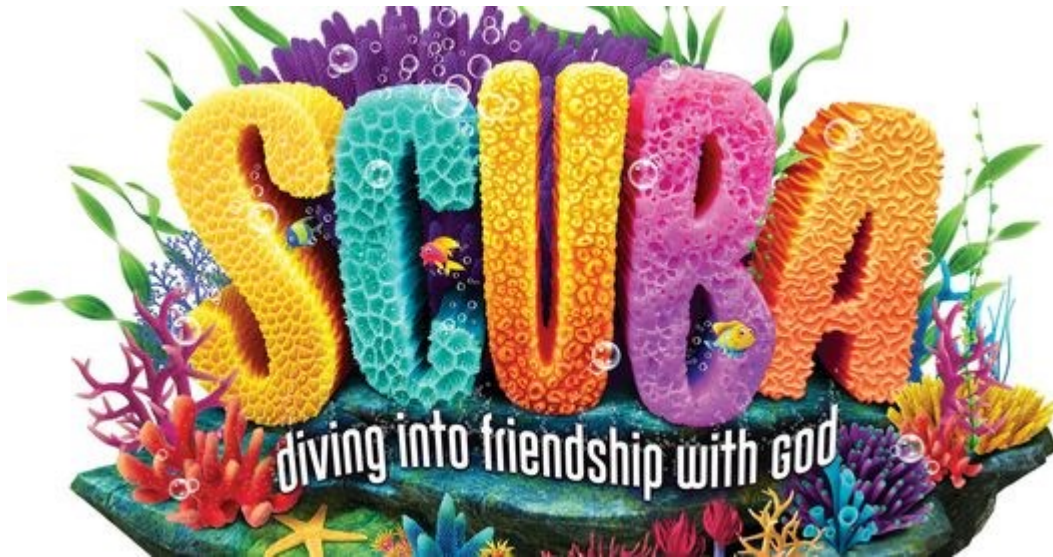
First Congregational Church of Westfield, Southwick Congregational Church,  
First United Methodist Church, Church of the Atonement,  
Second Congregational Church, Agawam Congregational Church,  
Feeding Hills Congregational Church , First Church of Chicopee, Granville Federated Church ,  
First Congregational Church of West Springfield



**First Congregational Church of Westfield**

**Vacation Bible School**

**July 8<sup>th</sup> - 12<sup>th</sup> 6 – 8 PM.**



**First Congregational  
Church of Westfield**

18 Broad Street  
Westfield, MA 01085  
Office (413) 568-2833

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