

The Newsletter March 2024

First Congregational Church of Westfield

While I am one of the rare folks who enjoys winter, I have been more excited to see longer hours of daylight. As we “Spring Forward” with Daylight Savings Time in March this year (could this be the end of turning the clocks?) we can start to come out of our homes for a bit and enjoy each other’s presence.

The concept of communal gathering is even older than the first Christians who followed “The Way.” They knew that they could rely on each other for physical, emotional, and spiritual support as they encountered different things in their lives. Are we much different from the early church? These folks came together to not only to worship, but to draw support from one another.

As we continue through the Season of Lent/Season of Love, we have numerous opportunities to come together at either of our churches. Please look through here for events that take you beyond the Sunday worship experience. Of course, the highlight of our month will be Holy Week with Maundy Thursday service in Westfield and Easter Sunday services at both churches.

May we all continue to grow during our Season of Lent/Season of Love to embrace God’s love for us as we celebrate the Resurrection on Easter Sunday.

Peace and love,

Paul

Rev. Paul B. Nesbit
Pastor



Who Am I?

"He's newly homeless," my colleague said when he came in from patrolling the park. From inside the Holyoke Heritage State Park Visitor Center, we watch the hunched-over fellow on the bench wrap a blanket tighter around himself. "He's jumpy. I haven't seen him before."

Homeless people sleeping in the park are a regular occurrence for me and my colleagues. Music Man, the lady with the chihuahua, Playground Guy, and others know to be on their way before 8:00 when the park opens. Some have shared their downward spiraling story with me: a lasting illness, loss of job, death of family members, no family support, finding solace in drugs. My heart is heavy for all of them. But maybe this one I can help.

I'm aware of my duties here at the park. I conduct tours and programs and develop exhibits to educate and inspire stewardship of our natural and cultural resources. I expected to work with school groups, youth organizations, travelers, and residents of Holyoke when I started this job, and indeed I do. I didn't anticipate homeless folks. "We're not a charity," my supervisor would remind me. Still, he always spoke respectfully and compassionately with our sleepers and occasionally delivered a hot cup of tea to a needy individual. No, Department of Conservation & Recreation is not a charity, but I am a Christian.

I put on my coat and went out to meet this fellow. He flinched when I said hello. I asked if he was okay. His clothes were decent, his youthful face was relatively clean-shaven, and he reflexively touched his rolling suitcase, making sure it was still nearby as he responded, "Yes, yes, ma'am, thank you, I'm okay." I felt bad telling him he couldn't sleep here, but he was welcome to sit on a bench for as long as he liked. "Of course, that's fine, I understand." He was respectful, cogent, and clearly unsure about his predicament.

We had some leftover pizza in the freezer in the visitor center. I went in, heated up a couple of slices, made him a cup of hot chocolate, and wrote down an address. When I went back out, he wasn't there. Luckily, he moved to a different place in the park, and I found him. He was grateful for the pizza breakfast and hot chocolate. I gave him directions to the Valley Opportunity Council. VOC has a homeless housing office within easy walking distance of the park. I hoped they could help him. I never saw this fellow again. I take that as a good thing.

I share this story not to boast, but I mainly wanted to write it for myself, to process this encounter. Since I am hard-pressed to develop a Deacon's Corner piece for this month I thought I'd share it. My processed thoughts: No matter what uniform I wear or the situation I find myself in, I am a Christian first and foremost. First Church provides the spiritual nourishment I need to keep that identity strong. First Church provides examples of generous, hard-working believers that I strive to emulate. First Church feels like home to me. I am privileged to be a member of this Christian support system.

Nancy Condon



Website Update

www.firstcongregationalchurchwestfieldma.org

Please check out our new and improved Church Website.

It is a work in progress and we are hoping to make it user friendly as well as informative.

We would love your feedback!!!

Jack Tozzi

jacktozzi@gmail.com

Cindy LaPlante

fccwestfield@outlook.com



Christian Fellowship

March 13th @6 PM.

“Paddle For Water”

Canoeing across America

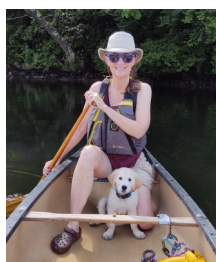
Nancy Condon



Bring a Dessert to Share

All ARE WELCOME!

Please call the church office 568-2833 if you need a ride.



Volunteers Wanted For the Westfield Farmers Market

Volunteers wanted!

Westfield Farmers Market is looking for volunteers to help us host the 10th season of this amazing and essential community event. We have a number of roles available: setting up and taking down the Market, greeting customers and answering questions, processing SNAP & credit card sales, and more. Volunteering at WFM is a great opportunity for anyone who loves the outdoors, is passionate about supporting local businesses, and is enthusiastic about connecting community members to local farmers, food producers, and artisans. The market is open every Thursday 12pm-5pm from June 6 thru October 17. Email the Market Manager at farmersmarketwestfield@gmail.com for more information. We look forward to hearing from you!

Lisa Zlody
Manager- Westfield Farmers Market
farmersmarketwestfield@gmail.com
<https://www.farmersmarketwestfield.org/>

March Newsletter - World Service Committee - God's Love in Action

To help the poor is to honor God. Proverbs 14:31b

THANK YOU's

Franklin Avenue School students say Thank you for the warm boots, jackets, hats, and mittens that you have donated. They are happy to be warm on these cold days.

American Red Cross says Thank you for your continued support.

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

Easter is March 31st. We will be collecting our Annual Easter Mission offering on that day. A letter and an envelope will be sent to you in mid-March. There will also be envelopes in the pews if you forget your envelope.

March, 17, 2024 - Feed the Hungry Sunday - 3rd 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, Sugar.

Community Table/Westfield Soup Kitchen - We need desserts for our meal on **March 26th**. 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. On Tuesday, March 26th 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 LaPlante 68-2833 to learn how you can help and when to arrive. Thank you!!

Please **PRAY** for:

Individuals and families in this country and in other countries who have been affected by horrible storms, tornadoes, flooding, earthquakes, and other natural disasters.

Children and adults who live where violence and hate are common in the United States and in countries throughout the world.

The people of Haiti especially those at HELO Haiti. Violent gangs are still an issue in that country, but HELO continues to thrive. See the updates on the World Service bulletin board.

Pray that God guides our new World Service Committee in their activities this year.

Your World Service Committee,

Ray Salois, chair, Shirley Anderson, Nancy Condon, Gail Ives, Jean Zimmerman



Palm Sunday Service
 March 24th 9:30AM
 First Congregational
 Church of Westfield



Maundy Thursday Service
 March 28th 7:30PM
 First Congregational Church of Westfield



Easter Sunrise Service
 6AM Southwick Congregational Church



Easter Sunday
 Celebration
 March 31st
 9:30 AM
 First Congregational
 Church of Westfield



Easter Lily and Tulip orders form



The cost of plants this year is \$10.00.

Orders need to be placed by **Monday, March 25th** .

I would like to order ____ Easter Plants at \$10.00 each

Given By: _____

In memory/honor of: _____

Please make checks payable to "First Congregational Church"

Please return form to:

First Congregational Church

18 Broad Street Westfield MA 01085



Come together with friends, family, and neighbors for an unforgettable potluck event filled with laughter, connection, and mouthwatering dishes!

BRING A DISH AND A GAME TO SHARE

SATURDAY, MARCH 16, 4-6
1st Congregational Church



- 3/02 Ann Mundy
- 3/04 Jimmy Salzer
- 3/08 Lois Nason, Joey Crean
- 3/09 Ella Hamel
- 3/10 Steven Grimaldi
- 3/12 Elizabeth Cincotta,
Albert Reynolds
- 3/14 Norma Woodruff
- 3/15 Shirley Anderson
- 3/20 Carrie Salzer, Shay Towart
- 3/22 Jim Salzer, Mara Winer
- 3/26 Bonnie Miller

Summer Camp

2024 registration is open!

We run 1-week sessions (Sunday-Saturday) for campers entering grades 4-12. Plus, half-week family camp programs for all ages.

Open House - Sunday, May 19, 1-5pm

For more information about rules and what to expect, go to www.silverlakect.org.

Silver Lake Camp & Retreat Center
223 Low Road
Sharon, CT 06069

WWW.SILVERLAKECT.ORG

The Light Bearer [Scholarship](#) Fund is for the youth of our church who wish to participate in Bible Camp, Religious Retreats or any event that is church related.

If you are planning to attend Summer Camp this year please stop by the church office for a application



www.SilverLakeCT.org/SummerCamp

 Southern New England Conference
United Church of Christ
Living the Love & Justice of Jesus



SILVER LAKE
Camp & Retreat Center

Blessed Buys Thrift Shoppe



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



Like us on facebook:
First Congregational Church
Blessed Buys Thrift Shoppe



Mission of
First Congregational Church of Westfield
18 Broad Street Westfield MA 413-568-2833



Christian Fellowship

March 14, 2024 6PM

“Nancy Condon, Environmental Educator

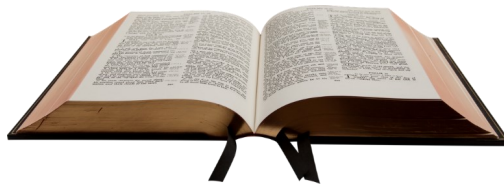
Christian Fellowship will be meeting on Wednesday, **March 13 at 6PM** for a dessert treat and program by our own Nancy Condon. Learn about her 5,000 mile canoe trip across the U.S. and her message about environmental conservation and water preservation. This adventure is way beyond a casual paddle trip on the rivers that Lewis and Clark explored two centuries earlier. It is an inspiring message that everyone will enjoy.

PS -please let us know if you need a ride and we will provide one. Call the Church office at 568-2833.

Lenten Bible Study

“Women of the Bible”

No matter who you are or where you are on life’s journey, you are welcome to join us.



Thursdays

2:30 PM First Congregational Church, Westfield

7:00 PM Southwick Congregational Church

***March 7, *March 14, * Mar 21**

If you miss one, it is ok to join the group whenever you are able. The same session will be in the afternoon/evening so you may attend when you are able on that day.

February 2024 First Church Winter Youth Camp

On Friday February 2, 2024, four youth and four adult chaperones, and the Incredible Days program leader, moved into the Double Cabin at the Noble View Outdoor Center. Our theme for this year's Youth Retreat was:

Moving Though Life with Friends, Faith & Spirit

The 2024 Winter Youth Camp kicked off with a lot of Pizza and team building games organized by Nancy Condon. Everyone really enjoyed Nancy's team building programs, even the chaperones were participating. We then had our first session with the program director from Incredible Days, Jesse, around a warm campfire while making smores and looking at the stars in the night sky.

For those that got up early on Saturday morning, they were greeted with a spectacular sunrise as we looked east across the Pioneer Valley. After breakfast we had another session with Jesse before having free time which meant going tubing down the snow-covered hill in front of our cabin. After a lunch of chili and hot dogs, we were invited to go on a snowshoe hike with an expert animal tracker. No sightings of Big Foot were reported! This was followed by more free time and another session with Jesse. A stuffed potato dinner was followed by more free time, watching the U Mass men's hockey team play, and having another session with Jesse.

Just like Saturday, if you were up early on Sunday morning, you were greeted with another spectacular sun rise. After breakfast on Sunday morning, we began packing up and then Jesse lead a church service, before our Winter Camp ended.

As a chaperone this year, I saw our youth further develop their close friendships, strengthen their relationship to their Church, and grow in their faith.

I would like to thank the Church for providing the funds for this Youth Camp, for the congregation supporting and encouraging us, and a big thank you to everyone that provided us with so much food.

Also thank you to Jesse from Incredible Days, and to our chaperones: Jim Yesu, Jennifer Barkyoub, and Alice Flyte. Without you, this Winter Youth Camp would not happen.

Yours in Christ

Daniel Koehne

Hi Folks,

I wanted to share with all of you a special event that happened last weekend. First Church is alive and well in so many ways. This one warms my heart.... see pictures below.

It was a magical weekend at Nobleview Retreat Center for you our youth: Nick Platt, Jacob Coombs, Noah Perkins and Maddie Sylvester. Thank you to Dan Koehne and Jim Yesu for organizing this Youth retreat. Thank you also to Alice Flyte and Jenn Barkyoub for chaperoning and Nancy Condon for leading Friday activities with the kids. Thank you to Jessica Richardson of Incredible Days (UCC) for her expertise and enthusiasm. And finally...a huge thank you to all of those who contributed meals and treats. This is one special church!
Janet St. Jean





**The Greater Westfield
Choral Association**
Marc Winer, *Director*
presents



A Spring Concert

Sunday, March 10, 2024, 3:00 pm
UCC Second Congregational Church
487 Western Avenue, Westfield

This season featuring music of
Mozart, Byrd, Custer, Howells, Parker and Sweelinck.

Admission: \$15 general; \$10 seniors and students

Presented in part by a grant from the Westfield Cultural Council

westfieldchoral.org



Lenten
Lunch

Friday Feb 16 – Mar 23rd

12 Noon \$8.00 ea

\$8.00 per meal

Dine in or take -out

Order ahead via email.

fccwestfield@outlook.com

Order forms available on our website

Firstcongregationalchurchwestfieldma.org

Church School

The big news for our Church School program is the hiring of a new, permanent *Director of Faith Formation and Family Ministries*. We are so grateful to have Amy Platt take on this role. She has been a valued member of The Church School Committee and already has been active all fall and winter with our Church School program on Sunday mornings. I'll be mentoring her through the spring – not that she needs much mentoring. She's a natural. WELCOME AMY!

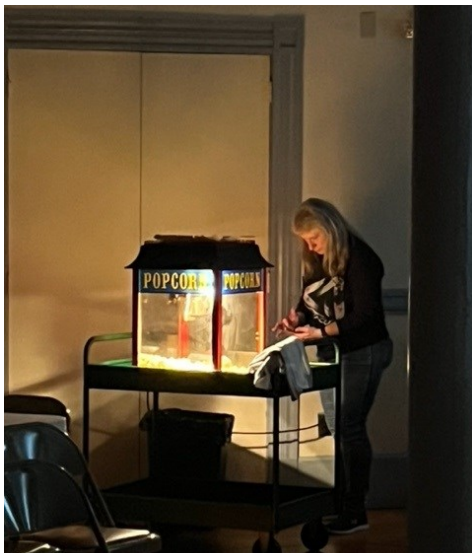
Our *Vacation Movie* was a huge success. We had over 20 enthusiastic kids attend and went through countless bags of popcorn and Capri sun juice. We also inaugurated our new 75" high-def TV. Thanks to Jim Yesu, Gail Ives, Amy Platt, Michelle Winer, Nick Platt, Noah Perkins, and Rev. Paul. They are an amazing crew!

On Saturday, March 16, from 4:00-6:00, the Church School Committee and Membership/ Fellowship Committee will be hosting a potluck/Game social. Bring your favorite board game and favorite meal. We'll provide drinks and dessert. All ages are encouraged to attend. This will be fun!!!!

Finally, I would like to say that, as *Interim Director of Faith Formation and Family Ministries*, I feel honored to have been able to help First Church move forward. And I will always be grateful to the commitment of our Church School Committee. We are so blessed to have the dedicated group we do. And one special shout out to Gail Ives, our fearless leader. Her tireless work has kept this program alive.

Janet St. Jean

Interim Director of Faith Formation and Family Ministries





**First Church Annual
Corned Beef and Cabbage Dinner
Saturday March 9th 2024 5:00PM**



Menu:

Corned Beef - Cabbage - Colcannon
Boiled Potatoes - Carrots – Rolls with Butter
Dessert and Beverage
Adults: \$15.00 per person



Please Call the office for tickets 413-568-2833

**First Congregational
Church of Westfield**

18 Broad Street
Westfield, MA 01085
Office (413) 568-2833
[www.firstcongregationalchurchwestfield ma.org](http://www.firstcongregationalchurchwestfield.ma.org)