

The Newsletter
First Congregational Church of Westfield

February 2024

A Season of Lent/A Season of Love



I have had the privilege of service as your pastor for a full two years. Sometimes it seems as if I just got here while other times I feel as though I have been here for twenty years. Both are equally good. If I just got here, then I still have the energy to try new things and to step out of my comfort zone. If I have been here for twenty years, then I have had the opportunity to get to know people in the churches. I have been with you to celebrate but to also to say goodbye to members of our church family. Most importantly, I have grown to love both congregations.

This year, Ash Wednesday happens to fall on Valentine's Day, a day in which we celebrate love. Most people do not associate Ash Wednesday with love. Ash Wednesday begins the liturgical season of Lent, a time of reflection and penitence as we work our way through the Passion and Death of Jesus to the glorious Resurrection of Christ on Easter Sunday. Jesus' death on the cross and his Resurrection were the ultimate acts of love for all of us.

Hopefully, all of us will take time to reflect and pray on the different ways that we experience God's love for us as well as the love of Jesus in our hearts, our thoughts, and our actions. This way, we can all feel the love that Jesus has for all of us, not only in the Season of Lent, but in a lifetime Season of Love.

Peace and love,

Paul

Rev. Paul Nesbit
Pastor

Message from the Moderator

Just after our Sunday worship services, the coffee hour in the dining room provides an enjoyable opportunity to chat with our church friends and partake of the refreshments provided. It is a long standing and most valued tradition.

However, once a year it also provides the backdrop for a most important feature of our Congregational heritage: the Annual Meeting of the Church. This year it will occur on February 11 (unless snow forces postponement to February 18).

Church members vote on the most important matters of our governance, especially including the election of officers and committees for the next year as well as the budget for 2024. Both of these items have been prepared by committees but their ultimate adoption depends on the Congregation's review and approval. Since our Bylaws have a requirement of a quorum in order to act (at least 40 members must be present) it is very important as well as desirable for as many members to attend as possible.

The meetings are not usually long but are informative as well as important to our Church. And coffee and the other great refreshments can still be enjoyed!

I look forward to seeing you there in February,

Steve Pierce
Moderator

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



February Coffee Hour
Feb 4th Team 5
Feb 11th Team 6
Feb 18th Team 7
Feb 25th Team 8



CHURCH SCHOOL

The Church School Committee is working with Janet St. Jean on planning activities for the youth. A showing of *Charlotte's Web* is planned for Feb. 17 at 3 – 5 PM. All members of the church are invited and invitations will go out to Franklin Ave, Highland, and Abner Schools. Free drinks and popcorn will be provided. We are also looking forward to planning a game night with the Membership Committee sometime in March. We will start planning activities for the rest of winter and spring at our next meeting on Feb. 5th.

Gail Ives

The Church School had a special guest on January 14 and January 21. Michelle Hamel, artist and photographer extraordinaire, joined us on both Sundays to create mandalas. This circular design is important to all cultures and religions of the world. Michelle was assisted by her daughter, Madeleine.

As in other cultures, the round shape in Christianity represents the universe, and therefore, is seen as a way to connect the earthly and spiritual realms. Whether in the form of windows in a church or as a rosary, mandalas are used to take the time to contemplate the self and the divine.

Our mandalas will be displayed in Fellowship Hall during the month of February. Thank you, Michelle for all of your work in putting this project together!
Janet St. Jean



UPCOMING EVENTS

Lenten Lunch



Fridays

February 16-March 22nd

12 Noon

**First Congregational Church
of Westfield**

18 Broad Street

413 568-2833

Happy Birthday

February Birthdays

02/03 Stuart Gamble
02/07 Cailyn Crean
02/07 Robert Crean
02/09 Russell Klaubert
02/10 Kailey Downs
02/15 James Yesu
02/17 Daniel Koehne
02/19 Darlene Biggs
02/21 Judith McClure
02/21 Jacqueline R. Thayer
02/24 Billy Balzano
02/26 Lesley Lorenzen
02/28 Sandra Chamberlain
02/28 William Reed

Special thanks to Carol Whalen and family for this year's luminaria display.

The best way to survive the cold weather is to put on so many clothes that you don't fit through the door.



UPCOMING EVENTS



VACATION MOVIE
CHARLOTTE'S WEB

SAT. FEB 17 3:00 PM
FREE POPCORN AND DRINKS

free admission

SPONSORED BY
1ST CONGREGATIONAL
CHURCH

18 Broad Street, Westfield



**Christian Fellowship
Lite Lunch
Wednesday
February 14, 2024
12Noon**

Bring A Friend
Sign up on the bulletin board

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

*Feb 15

*March 7

*Feb 22

*March 14

*Feb 29

*March 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.



Ash Wednesday Service

Wednesday
February 14, 2024 7PM

Southwick Congregational Church
488 College Highway
Southwick, MA
All Are Welcome !

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

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

OPPORTUNITIES FOR GIVING OF YOUR TIME AND RESOURCES

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:

Winter Boots used or new - Girls Sizes: 9, 10, 11, 12, 13

Boys Sizes: 9, 10, 11, 12, 13 & Men's Small

Snow Pants used or new, boys & girls in sizes 8 and above

Mittens for the smaller children and gloves.

Put them in the Colorful Box labeled Franklin Avenue School



Do you have a **JENGA** game that you are no longer using? Reggie Barbosa is a teacher at Franklin Avenue School would love to have it. She uses JENGA to work help students with spatial relationships, balance, science, and a variety of other areas. The student love working with JENGA. Please leave your donations outside the church office.

Clothing is needed for refugee children from newborns to adolescents. Refugee children are coming from countries around the world. The need is great! Donations are 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.

February 18, 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: **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.

DO YOU LIKE TO BAKE!! We need desserts for our meal on **February 27th**. 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, February 27th 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!!

HELPFUL INFORMATION

Westfield Food Pantry Services

Traditional Pantry Grocery Pick Up: Scheduled Pantry open hours allow families to pick up groceries. Appointments can be scheduled in advance or clients can drop in.

Pantry Grocery Delivery: Provides food to Westfield residents in need who are unable to make it to the Pantry. Eligible clients may sign up for home delivery

Food for All Mobile Soup Kitchen and Food Pantry: Distributes prepared meals and/or groceries to local residents by bringing services right into high-need neighborhoods.

Little Free Food Pantry: Provides immediate, anonymous access to food staples. Located at the Church of the Atonement across from their playground.

Brown Bag Distribution

This food commodity program is for senior citizens 55 years of age and over who meet specific low income requirements.

An application must be filled out and mailed to the Western Massachusetts Food Bank, Inc. Applications are available at the Council On Aging; call (413) 562-6435 for more information.

The brown bag distribution is held curbside at the Senior Center, 45 Noble Street on the Wednesday after the 2nd Tuesday of each month from 9 AM. to 10 AM.

Senior Center Companion Program

Frail, homebound adults aged 60 and older who are considered at risk of institutionalization are provided a variety of services through the Volunteer Companion Program so that they may age in place in their own homes. Frailties may include general weakness, visual limitations, hearing deficits, mobility restrictions, reduced balance and coordination, memory loss, disorientation, and oxygen use for breathing difficulties.

Program services include transportation to medical appointments, grocery shopping, errands, companionship, and hazardous weather check-ups.

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 January update from the founder/director, Elisabeth Kennedy on the World Service bulletin board.*

First Congregational Church of Westfield

February 2024

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
				1 10-2 Blessed Buys	2 <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">Historical Society Ghost Tour 6 & 7:30PM</div>	3 10-2 Blessed Buys
4 Worship Service 9:30Am Communion Sunday Coffee Hour Team #5	5 6:30 Church School Comm	6	7 7Pm Diaconate Mtg	8 10-2 Blessed Buys	9	10 10-2 Blessed Buys
11 Worship Service 9:30Am Annual Mtg Coffee Hour Team #6	12	13	14 12 Chistian Fellowship 7:30 Ash Wednesday Service Southwick	15 10-2 Blessed Buys 2:30pm Bible Study	16 Noon Lenten Lunch	17 10-2 Blessed Buys 3PM Vacation Movie
18 Worship Service 9:30Am Snow Date Annual Mtg Coffee Hour Team #7	19	20	21	22 10-2 Blessed Buys 2:30pm Bible Study	23 Noon Lenten Lunch	24 10-2 Blessed Buys
25 Worship Service 9:30Am Coffee Hour Team #8	26	27	28	29 10-2 Blessed Buys 2:30pm Bible Study		