

We Remember

Today, both First Congregational Church and Southwick Congregational Church commemorate “Remembrance Sunday.” In Westfield, we have traditionally set aside the first Sunday in November to remember those who have passed away in the past year. As something new this year, Southwick will remember those who have passed away at any time. But how did we decide on the first Sunday in November to do this?

We have to take a look back at the origins of the early Church and how they dealt with pagan celebrations. The celebration of Samhain (SAH-wyn) a pagan religious celebration to welcome the harvest at the end of summer, when people would light bonfires and wear costumes to ward off ghosts. This was the night considered to have the thinnest veil between the living and the dead. Trying to get the early church to not celebrate this pagan festival, the church leaders at the time declared that November 1 would be a day to honor all saints, and thus, All Saints’ Day, or All Hallows’ Day. The night before would be known as All Hallows’ Eve, which, over the years was shortened to Hallowe’en for

October 31. November 1 would be All Saints and November 2 was added for All Souls' Day, a day to pray for or remember those who had died.

It is in this spirit that we now designate the first Sunday in November as a time to remember and honor those in our families and church communities who have gone on to their eternal reward. It is in this tradition that I invite you all to enter into a time of prayer and remembrance.