



The Newsletter

First Congregational Church
of Westfield
January 2025

The Last Year of the First Quarter of the Twenty-first Century

Happy New Year! How did we ever make it to 2025? How many of us remember the hoopla that surrounded when the calendar would read 2000? Think of all the different things that have happened in the past twenty-five years. Can you believe that we are near the end of the first quarter of the 21st century?

I have thrown a lot of questions at you, but these have caused me to reflect on what we need to do to get ready for the second quarter. We still have a year to go and we can get a great amount finished in the year. However, it is not always how much you get finished, but what you *do* that is important. This coming year presents us all with a few challenges.

Our challenges will be to take a good look at what we have accomplished in the first quarter, see what we can do in the year that remains, and then to plan for the second quarter. Now, if the second quarter is anything like the first quarter, we will be in for numerous surprises. But, let's take a look at what we can control, even if life and world events throw more curve balls at us.

What we want to avoid is to plan and put things into place that not be of any help to those who come after us. What is knowledgeable now may not be the wisdom that exists in 2050. So, we must ask ourselves: Are our missions in good order to live out the Gospel message? Is our church building in a position to serve people correctly in the next twenty-five years? Is there something that we can do in the next five years that will help us face the next twenty-five?

While we are uncertain as to how much time God plans to give us on this earth, I would like us all to think about what we have in our church and how that can sustain us for the Second Quarter of the Twenty-first century. We must equip our church to meet the demands of spreading the Gospel message in the next year as well as into the next quarter of the century.

We've had a great year; let's not rest on our laurels but keep up the good work that we have begun as we enter into the last year of the first quarter of the 21st century!

Peace and love,

(Rev.) Paul

Rev. Paul B. Nesbit
Pastor

Deacons Corner



My father Eric had one sibling, his older brother Maurice. Uncle Maurice and Auntie Marcia had three children, Philip, Jonathon, and Joanna. We lived about 100 miles from them growing up, so didn't see them very often (a few of times a year), but we were close, a similar age spread to my sister Debbie and I, and kept in touch as we grew up. Philip joined the Royal Marines as a bandsman, travelled the world, and played for the Queen on several occasions, eventually studying as a jazz percussionist at Berklee and making a successful career as a session musician. Joanna went to art school, married a chef, and had a family. Jonathon, the middle child, trained to be a printer, married, and emigrated to New Zealand.

Over the years everyone moved around, and I lost direct touch with my cousins, although we knew of each other's progress through life via our parents. When my father passed away, Philip and Joanna were able to come to the funeral, and we re-connected. Meanwhile Jonathon had made a successful career in the printing industry in New Zealand, and had a family.

For my 60th birthday my partner Nevert took us to Australia. While we were planning the trip, we heard on the grapevine that Jonathon and his wife had separated, and Nevert and I decided that we would make a weekend detour to Auckland, the largest city in New Zealand, where Jonathon lived (4 hour flights each way from the nearest point in Australia!). We duly made the detour, and both Jonathon and I wondered privately whether we would recognize each other after 35 years. Of course we did, and Nevert and I had a wonderful few days with him. The intervening years had given us perspective on our childhoods, and Jon and I spent hours discussing the complicated family dynamics (both my father and Maurice were estranged from their father). It was wonderful to reconnect.

After a couple of years Jonathon and his girlfriend Jo, who became his wife, came to the UK to celebrate Philip's birthday, we were able to be there also, and Nevert and I planned another trip "down under" to spend a couple of weeks in New Zealand.

Then lightning struck, and not in a good way. Jonathon, who had always been by far the fittest of all the cousins, suffered a seizure which almost killed him, and was subsequently diagnosed with an aggressive and incurable brain tumor. He was not expected to survive more than a year. To make things more difficult, within weeks of his diagnosis COVID halted all travel to and from New Zealand, so Jonathon and his family were not able to get together.

Fast forward to today. Since Jonathon's cancer diagnosis, he had surgery twice and several courses of chemotherapy. A year turned into two, then three, and still he was able to function pretty normally. His doctors were amazed, and he was in the very small percentage of patients with his condition who survived that long. COVID travel restrictions eventually lifted, he was able to make it to the UK with Jo to revisit his childhood haunts and his siblings, and Nevert and I were able to make our delayed visit to New Zealand and spend precious time with him and Jo. Finally, in the last few months his health declined, and he passed away today (Christmas Eve NZ time). I told Jonathon when we visited that he was on our prayer list. He was very touched, and said that he knew others were doing the same thing, and he felt supported and blessed to have so many people thinking of him.

I am very grateful that you have been so generous as to pray for someone with such a tenuous link to our church, and I wanted you to know how much it meant to Jonathon, and of course to me. I believe that it shows the value importance of our love and care for each other, however distant and fleeting our connection.

Neville Crabbe

Church School

December has been a joyous month, packed with events for our families: In church school, our children created colorful and sparkling Chrismons for the sanctuary tree. These join the beautiful ornaments which have been created for over a quarter of a century.

We also decorated incredible cookies for Coffee hour.

Finally, over a dozen children prepared for our annual Christmas pageant on December 22.

Many members of our choir are planning to share Christmas carols on Sunday December 22. We will join members of Church of the Atonement to sing at The Arbors.

The Church School Committee and I look forward to 2025. Stay tuned for future events.

Janet St. Jean,
Director of Family Ministries

A Lock-In is being planned for Jan. 31st for one night for the older youth. We are planning on inviting the youth from the Feeding Hills Congregational church to join us. On Sat. Feb. 1st we are planning on taking the group to Butternut Ski Area for tubing as a fun way to end the lock-in.

Gail Ives



World Service Committee

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. John 6:35

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: January 19th – 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, and Sugar.

The **2nd Sunday** in each month your 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 short supply needs. This month they were asking for anything we can donate.

Our Community Table/Westfield Soup Kitchen – January 28th 2025-4th 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. Tuesday January 28th 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 or Mayme** to learn how you could help.

HELO Haiti: Prayers are needed for Peace in Haiti.

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

This month we are highlighting: Trail Magic is about churches helping Appalachian Hikers by talking and listening, serving food and drinks. This happens in Sheffield, MA It is a Corner of Kindness the the hikers really appreciate.

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

From the Property Committee

- When using our church parlor, please return it to the condition in which you found it.
- If you are participating in a church function in which additional chairs and/or tables are used from the dining room closet, please return them as found. Instructions for stacking of chairs are on the inside of the closet doors: two together with backs up, with one group in one direction and the next group in the other direction. Only older chairs with no seat padding get stacked – newer chairs with padded seats get left at the ten tables as shown on diagram with six chairs per table.

January Birthdays

1/04 Rick Gaylord
1/04 Robert Waldorf
1/05 Janet St. Jean
1/07 Jennifer Waldorf
1/16 Deb Alm
1/17 Anne Gelinias
1/18 Elizabeth Rea
1/22 Nancy Condon
1/23 Nancy Stucenski
1/29 Sam Yesu



Pledge Envelopes?

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

The Upper Room

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

Thank you to everyone who honored or remembered a loved one by purchasing a luminaria for our display on December 24. The luminaria were placed at the Old Town Hall and at the church entrance. We appreciate your support of this tradition.

Carol Whalen

SNOW/WEATHER POLICY: If the schools are closed during the week, the church office will also be closed. (Rev. Paul and Cindy will work from home.) If church is cancelled due to weather, it will be listed on the local stations, Facebook, and a possible email blast. Phone calls may be made as well. If you are concerned about the weather, please err on the side of caution, stay at home, and pray for us there!

Volunteers Needed

Greeters are needed for before church each Sunday. Please see sign up sheet outside the church office if you would like to help.

Coffee Hour— We are still looking for 8 people to help with our coffee hour rotation. Please see sign up sheet outside the church office if you would like to help.

First Congregational Church will once again be hosting "Lunch" for the Food Pantry. This will take place on Monday's during the winter. Help is needed from 11AM-1PM Please see Rev. Paul if you can help or sign up outside the church office.

2024 Annual Report

Annual reports are due from all Committee Chairs on by January 26th. Please email yours to the church office.

fccwestfield@outlook.com

Reports will be available February 4th

OFFICE HOURS

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 January 1st, for New Years Day and January 20th, for Martin Luther King, Jr. Day .

OFFICIAL NOTICE

To: Members of First Congregational Church
Subject: First Congregational Church Annual Meeting
Special Congregational 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 9th, 2025 with a snow date of Sunday, February 16th. 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. Church Council has recommended changes to the By-laws to be voted at the Annual Meeting. Copies of these changes are posted outside the church office and are available in writing in the church office. Please pick up a copy.

Janet St. Jean, Clerk

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PLEASE
PLACE
STAMP
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