



# The Newsletter

## First Congregational Church of Westfield

### May 2025



## Celebrating Easter for Fifty Days!

*Christ the Lord is risen today;  
Christians, haste your vows to pay;  
Offer Him your praises meet  
At the Paschal Victim's feet.  
For the sheep the Lamb has bled,  
Sinless in the sinner's stead;  
Christ the Lord is risen on high;  
Now He lives no more to die.*

On Easter Sunday, our churches rang out with the cry, "Christ is Risen, indeed!" We had beautiful services with prayerful and joyous music, gorgeous flower arrangements, and attendance figures that we haven't seen since well before the pandemic. (The jury is still out on the sermon .) This is truly a cause for celebration.

The Resurrection of our Lord brought us out of darkness to light and from death to new life. As we celebrate each year, we are reminded that such a celebration continues for fifty days. Every year, we conclude our celebration on Pentecost, which falls on June 8 this year. I hope you will pay attention as we will hear "Alleluias" galore as well as "Christ is Risen—Christ is Risen, indeed!" in each church service throughout the Easter season.

Not only do we have the liturgical season but also some social events that we will celebrate throughout May. Our churches have various and assorted celebrations planned during this season. In Westfield, we have our Four-Score and More luncheon, while in Southwick, we will host both churches for Picnic with the Pastor on May 31.

I encourage everyone to take part in the fifty feast as we bask in the love that God has for us.

*Christ is Risen! Christ is Risen, indeed!*

Peace and love,

*Paul*

Rev. Paul Nesbit  
Pastor

**Picnic with the Pastor" to May 31 Southwick Congregational Church**

## A Note or Two from the Bell Choir by Deb Alm

COVID posed many challenges to communities eager to gather in close proximity, and at First Church, of Westfield the loss of a regular choir on Sunday mornings was deeply felt by both the singers and the congregation. One positive outcome was the rebirth of the Handbell Choir.

I have deep connections to handbells. At one time, my grandmother worked at the Whitechapel Bell Foundry in London, which has been crafting handbells since 1740. The church I attended as a youth in New Hackensack, NY received a gift of four octaves of Whitechapel handbells when I was a high school student and the church supported three excellent bell choirs. My only true stint as a ringer, however, was at a summer church music camp some 50+ years ago, but when asked to play at First Church, I was eager to join.

Allan Taylor was gracious to share some historical information regarding the bells you hear on Sunday mornings, and I am happy to share some of this with you. Longtime members of our congregation may be familiar with this story. According to Allan, the donor of the bells was Bob Arnold, a former choir member. His wife had died, and a few months later, he approached Allan about donating a set of handbells. The initial purchase was a three-octave set of Schumelrich bells, with cases, tables, pads, and folders. This was somewhere in the early 1990's. With his budgeted \$1000 a year, Allan was able to acquire sheet music, and later, when Bob Arnold offered to expand the set to four octaves, more tables and equipment were added.

The choir consisted of some senior choir members, high school aged players and non-choir members. As playing bells is not as easy as it looks, there was some turnover, but the handbell choir persisted with Allan directing. Change happens in all churches, and First Church, Westfield is no exception. When Allan left the church briefly in 2001, the handbells went silent until Covid inspired the movement to play again, behind masks where we felt safe. The overwhelmingly positive response from the congregation meant that the bell choir would regularly contribute to the music ministry.

These days, 11 members (and a substitute) gather weekly at 8am on Sunday mornings, slip on our gloves to protect the metal of the bells from the sweat of our hands, turn on the lights over our music stands, and—in the words of Martha Roman—count or die. Unlike choral singing where a section is singing in unison, each member of the bell choir is a soloist, responsible for 2-4 or more notes on the score. Variations in the technique of ringing that add color and interest to the piece is notated in our scores. As previously mentioned, bell ringing is not as easy as it looks, but ask any of us, and we will unanimously agree that being involved in this community of musicians contributing to the very special musical dimension of First Church of Westfield is so rewarding.

And in answer to that burning question, "What do you call a member of the bell choir?" It is not "ding-a-ling". Ringer will suffice.



## Church School news for May Newsletter

Late March through April has been an exciting time for Church School participants!

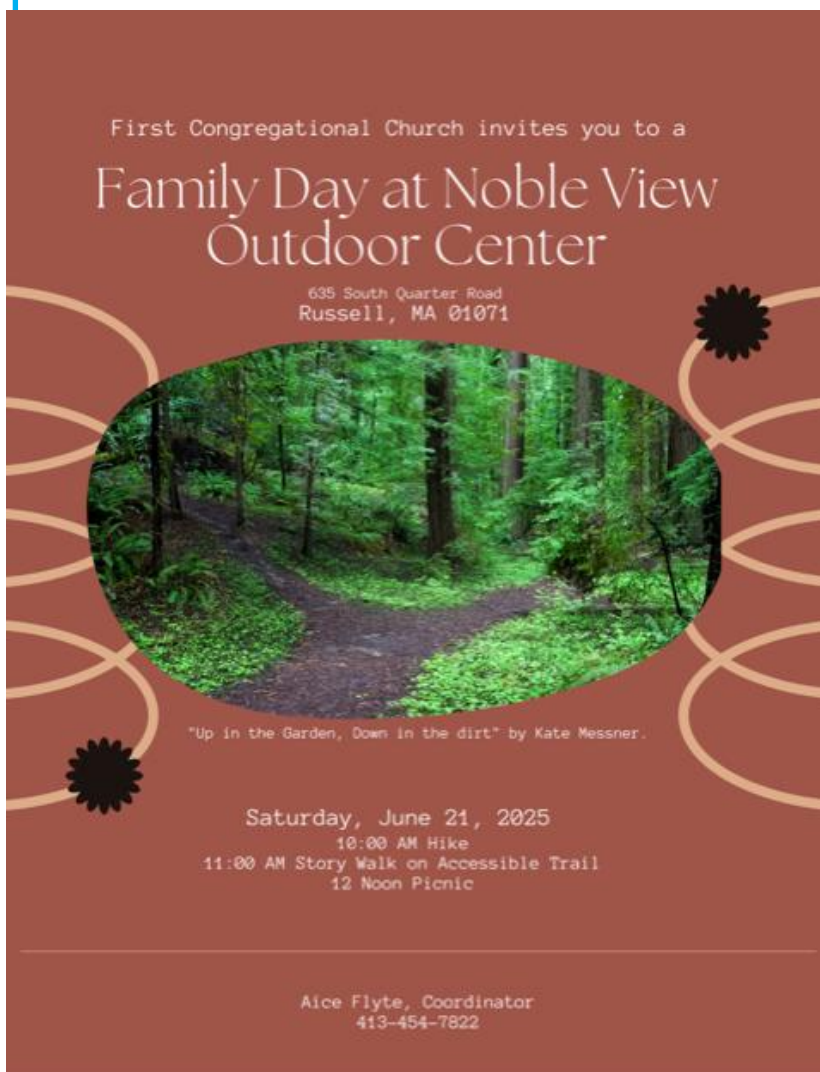
On Sunday, March 30, both the Southwick and Westfield congregations joined forces to donate over 60 packages of underwear and socks to give to those in our community who are experiencing difficult times. Many of these packages were distributed on March 31 to grateful diners at our Monday lunch. With the help of Church School members, the rest of these packages will be handed out on Tuesday, April 22 at The Soup Kitchen on Meadow Street.

On Palm Sunday, Church School members Cierra Lent, Gigi Valentin, Mackenzie Garcia, Ruby Debarge, Shay Towart, Jacoby Gonzalez and Jaxon Gonzalez joined adult members Cindy Gaylord, Marc Winer, Michael Winer, and Dylan Lasante in a dramatic reading of *The Passion of Our Lord according to Luke*. Congratulations to all the participants for a wonderful performance!

Finally, mark your calendars for **Family Day at Nobleview Outdoor Center**. This will be an exciting morning for all ages. More information on this June 21st event in our June newsletter.

Janet St. Jean

Director of Family Ministries



## Christian Fellowship

No meeting this month

June will be lunch at Tigers Pride

Stay tuned for more details



**Celebration of Life  
Service for  
Beverly Gamble  
Saturday May 17th 2025  
11AM**

**Celebration of Life  
Service for  
Betsy Gaylord  
Saturday May 31st 2025 11am**



#### **Four Score and More Luncheon**



The Deacon's will be hosting the  
Annual Four Score and More  
Luncheon on  
Saturday, May 3rd 2025. 11 AM  
Worship followed by lunch,  
to honor all our 80 + members.

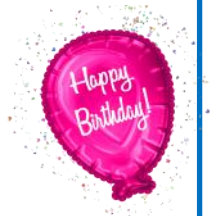
Help is needed to honor these members. Please  
call the church office 568-2833  
or Barbara James (413) 562-3046  
if you can help.

#### **Attention Committee Chairs**

Committee Chairs are reminded to put your  
meeting dates on the church calendar, check  
your mailboxes each week and make sure  
lights are out and doors are locked after your  
meeting . Please remember the newsletter  
deadline is the 18th of each month.

#### **May Birthdays**

5/01 Michelle Hamel  
5/02 Casey James  
5/08 Ami James  
5/09 Louise Thompson  
5/10 Mike Stefanik  
5/12 Janice Longstreeth  
5/16 Joyce Bard  
5/16 Tina Dunlop  
5/18 Martha Scavotto  
5/21 Karen Zenkert  
5/22 Roger Zimmerman  
5/28 Jennifer Barkyoub  
5/29 Barbara James  
5/30 Maddie Sylvester





## First Congregational Church of Westfield

### Continuing Education Fund

The Committee for the Bishop, Seher, Swartz and Taylor, Moore Continuing Education Fund is now accepting applications for the **2025-2026** school year. Please obtain an application from the church office. Completed forms may be returned to the church office. All applications must be returned by **5/31/25**.

Also, should anyone desire to make a gift or bequest to the scholarship fund, please see Cindy LaPlante, or you may pick up an information pamphlet outside the church office.



### Memorial Flowers

Each Sunday our Sanctuary is decorated with fresh floral arrangements on the Altar. There are many people and several groups in the Church who give flowers as a memorial, special

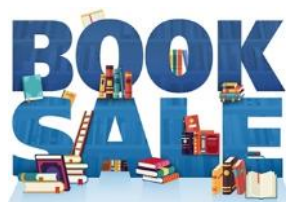
celebration or holiday remembrance. After each service the flowers are made into smaller bouquets which are given to sick, bereaved and shut-in members. If you would like to give Altar flowers for a particular Sunday, Please call the church office 568-2833. The cost of an arrangement is \$25.00.

### Light Bearers Scholarship Fund

*Christian Fellowship of First Congregational Church has a special fund for the youth of the church who are interested in furthering their spiritual education and or experience.*

*The Light Bearers Scholarship Fund, which has been perpetuated by the Christian Fellowship and established by Miss Lucy Gillette, is for the youth of our church who wish to participate in Bible Camp, Religious Retreats, Missions or any event that is church related.*

*Youth who wish to apply for financial assistance may obtain a form from the church office or an officer of Christian Fellowship and submit it along with a letter of intent.*



### The Friends of the Westfield Athenaeum

#### Annual Book Sale

Thursday May 8th through Saturday May 10th  
at the First United Methodist Church,  
located at 16 Court Street in Westfield.

Donations of books for all ages and jigsaw puzzles will be accepted Monday April 21st through Saturday April 26th. MWF 10-1, T & TH 4-7 Sat 9-12 Back Entrance of the Church.

No musty or damaged books, encyclopedias, textbooks, Reader's Digest books or outdated manuals, travel or self-help books will be accepted.

Email us at [info@friendsofwestath.org](mailto:info@friendsofwestath.org). For more information

## May Newsletter- 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: May 18, 2025 – 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** 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 their supply needs. This month they were asking for Granola bars and cereal.

**Our Community Table/Westfield Soup Kitchen – May 27, 2025 -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 27<sup>th</sup> bring your dessert to the church by 1:00pm or take it to the Soup Kitchen at 101 Meadow Street at 4:30. It would be great if you could stay and help. **CALL Cindy LaPlante or Mayme Lajoie** to learn how you can help.

**Westfield River Elementary School:** Your World Service Committee will continue to be in touch with the school office to see what First Congregational Church can do to help with the teachers' and student needs. Thank you for your support for this mission project. Should there be any questions you can contact Nancy Condon who is the direct liaison to Westfield River Elementary school or any member of the World Service Committee.

**HELO Haiti:** World Service Committee is still able to send donations to help the students be able to have an education. Elisabeth Kennedy is our contact at HELO Haiti. Jennifer Waldorf is direct liaison if you have questions about HELO Haiti. Prayers are needed for Peace in Haiti. Check the bulletin board for the latest pictures. Jennifer is working on getting information together for a WSC meeting in May or June about how we could have a funds raiser to support HELO Haiti.

**Monthly Highlights:** Each month we highlight one or more of the missions we support. This month are the Boys & Girls Club of Greater Westfield and The Springfield Rescue Mission. The Boys & Girls Club nurtures young people's self-esteem by offering programs that give youth a sense of belonging, usefulness, influence and competence. They have many programs afterschool and in the summer to help strength young people's mind and body.

Springfield Rescue Mission's goal is to meet the physical and spiritual needs of the hungry,

homeless, addicted, and poor by introducing them to Jesus Christ and helping them to apply the Word of God to every area of their lives

**EASTER OFFERING:** World Service Committee mailed out donation letters on April 8<sup>th</sup>, we want to thank you for your generous donations for God's work.

**World Service Committee:** We mailed out funds on March 10<sup>th</sup> to the following organizations: Our Community Table, Westfield Food Pantry, Our house, Westfield River Elementary School, Kamp for Kids and HELO Haiti. Thank you for your continuing support for First Congregation Church's Mission Projects.

**Trail Magic:** Thank you for your interest in Trail Magic again this year. We have our date of July 15, 2025 . Ray will be in touch with the five people as soon as he gets more information. The event is being held at a new area this year due to conflicts with park service.

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



Blessed Buys Thrift Shoppe volunteers are pictured while making a donation to the Kinship Fund at Westfield High School. Each quarter a donation is made to a local charity. Since opening in July of 2022 over \$10,000 has been donated from the income from the Thrift Shop. The remainder of the money is turned over to the church with a small amount of money paid out for items needed for Blessed Buys.

The list of recipients of monetary donations includes: Abner Gibbs Elementary

School, Franklin Avenue School, Westfield Food Bank, "Our House", Westfield Animal Sanctuary, St. Vincent DePaul, WHS National Honor Society, "PAWZ", Amelia Park, Link to Libraries, First Church Kitchen Restock" and The Kinship Fund.

Blessed Buys volunteers continue to greet new shoppers each week, as well as many customers who have become our repeat customers. If you haven't already visited Blessed Buys, we hope you will take advantage of coming to see what we have to offer. We are open from 10-2 on Thursdays and Saturdays. We are also open on some Sundays for an hour after church.

Carol Whalen

**First Congregational  
Church of Westfield**  
18 Broad Street  
Westfield, MA 01085  
Office (413) 568-2833

[www.firstcongregationalchurchwestfield.ma.org](http://www.firstcongregationalchurchwestfield.ma.org)

# MAY 2025



Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
 4 Communion Sunday 9:30 AM Worship 10:30 AM Fellowship Coffee Hour Team # 3	5 12:15 Food Truck	6 7PM Church Council		1 10-2 Blessed Buys 12:15 Food Truck	2	3 10-2 Blessed Buys 11:00 AM Four Score and More
11 9:30 AM Worship 10:30 AM Fellowship Coffee Hour Team # 4	12 12:15-Food Truck	13	14	15 10-2 Blessed Buys 2:15-Food Truck	16	17 10-2 Blessed Buys 11:00AM Memorial Service for Beverly Gamble
18 9:30 AM Worship 10:30 AM Fellowship Coffee Hour Team # 5	19 12:15-Food Truck	20	21	22 10-2 Blessed Buys 12:15 Food Truck	23	24 10-2 Blessed Buys
25 9:30 AM Worship with Southwick 10:30 AM Fellowship Coffee Hour Team # 6 & #7	26 Office Closed *** <b>MEMORIAL DAY</b> 	27 3-5 Soup Kitchen	28	29 10-2 Blessed Buys 12:15Food Truck	30	31 10-2 Blessed Buys 11:00AM Memorial Service for Besty Gaylord 5:00 Picnic at Southwick Cong.



# Blessed Buys Thrift Shoppe

**Thursday and  
Saturday  
10AM-2PM**

**20 Broad Street  
Westfield MA 01085**



Mission of:  
First Congregational Church  
Of Westfield  
(413) 568-2833

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