



The Newsletter
First Congregational Church of Westfield
September 2025

“Moving Mountains”

There are many times in the past few months that I have relied on my faith to simply not give up on life. The needs of our neighbors continue to pile up, especially those who go without and, seemingly, will go without even more. This is where faith comes in and moves us to action.

In the letter to the Hebrews, the author reminds us that Abraham and Sarah were called upon to do some pretty wild things in the name of faith. While Abraham, Sarah, and their entourage were called to leave their homeland and, by faith, move to a new land, we are also called to move into areas where we may not have yet ventured. Maybe our faith calls us into relationships with our neighbors to assist them in ways that we have yet to experience. Both churches have made some progress in doing more than simply collecting food. But can we do more?

Abraham and Sarah were certainly called to do more. And, given the circumstances of time, place, and age, Sarah and Abraham could have said to God, “Just leave us alone, please. We’re much too old for this.” What a great reminder that, regardless of our circumstances, we are able to put our faith into some sort of action. Everyone can do something, even if we are aging, not feeling well, or working hard just to make ends meet. No one is asking us to leave our homelands, have children in our advanced years (though many grandparents are raising the grandchildren) or take on every issue on its own.

Our faith moves us to this; we are called to do so much more. In that passage from the Hebrews (Heb. 11:1-3, 8-16), we are called to bring a “heavenly home” into reality, right here at First Congregational Church of Westfield and Southwick Congregational Church. As we “begin again”, may our faith resemble that of Abraham and Sarah as we follow the Gospel mess and show us how we can truly move mountains in times of need.

Love and peace,

Paul

Rev. Paul Nesbit
Pastor

**We will have a Blessing of the Animals on
Saturday, October 4
Southwick 10-11 Westfield 11-12**

Family Ministries

We want to see what you have been doing this summer!

Everyone likes to see photos of us, our family and our friends. Our church family is no different. Many of you have been on vacation, gone to camp, performed in concerts, played hard in sports, worked in your garden, celebrated high school and college graduations, gotten engaged or married, and the list goes on.

We want to share these events with our entire church family. In September, we plan to fill the bulletin board on the way to Fellowship Hall with your pictures and stories.

Please send a picture and a description of this picture to:

Janet St. Jean: 413-563-5156 or janetstjean83@gmail.com.

I can't wait to catch up with all of you!

Here is a sample from our Noble View Story Walk in June



9/2 Ray Salois
9/4 Marc Winer
9/4 Madeleine Hamel
9/7 Albert Cincotta
9/18 Samantha Albee
9/19 Diane Bray
9/20 Alicia Marx
9/23 Tracey Gamble
9/25 Elizabeth Niergarth
9/26 Bob Brownlee
9/27 Brad Alm
9/28 Beth Gamble
9/30 Mia Bray-Motley



Ruth

Be a Ruth, loyal in all your relationships, walk the extra mile, and don't quit when things get tough. Someday you'll see why it was all worth the effort.

End of Summer Worship and Celebration

Sunday, September 28, 2025

Stanley Park Beveridge Pavillion

10:30 AM

Cookout to Follow



Rev. Darrell Goodwin
Executive Conference Minister
Southern New England
Conference, UCC
Guest Preacher

First Congregational Church, Westfield
Second Congregational Church, Westfield
First United Methodist Church of Westfield
Episcopal Church of the Atonement, Westfield
Southwick Congregational Church
Granville Federated Church
Feeding Hills Congregational Church
First Congregational Church, Chicopee
Agawam Congregational Church

September Newsletter- World Service Committee

John 6:35 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.

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: 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, Tuna fish, canned vegetables, Cereal, Canned Fruit, Peanut Butter, Jelly.

The **2nd Sunday** in each month your WSC will make an announcement for the items that are in short supply at the Food Pantry. This month they were asking for Pasta and Pasta sauce, cereal, peanut butter.

Our Community Table/Westfield Soup Kitchen - 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 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.

Westfield River Elementary School: The new school year brings more challenges and needs to Westfield River Elementary School with double the students. Your World Service Committee will be in touch with the school office to see what 1st Congregational Church can do to help with their teachers' needs. Thank you for your support for this mission project. Should there be any questions you can ask Nancy Condon who is the direct liaison to Westfield River Elementary School.

HELO Haiti: World Service Committee asked Elisabeth Kennedy to give the sermon message at 1st Church on August 31st. She spoke about the needs of HELO Haiti and how our donations help the children to be educated.

World Service Committee is working with Elisabeth on a Fund Raiser at Church for HELO Haiti. WSC will have a meeting on August 31st after church to discuss how and when this event will take place. We will update the congregation when we have the final plan in place. Thank you for your continued donations for HELO Haiti.

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

This month we are highlighting: Our House and The Kinship Program

Our House is located on Broad St in Westfield. The mission is to help homeless young adults' ages 18 thru 24 years of age to improve their lives by offering the skills sets needed to obtain their high school Equivalency Credential and move forward in their lives. Each resident is given an individual apartment with a kitchenette and communal living space so they can learn to live independently.

The Kinship Program is located in Westfield High School. The mission is to help students between 14 to 19 years of age. This group of students could be experiencing trauma and/or financial hardships. The program assists with school supplies, groceries, clothing, medical help, and other essentials needed in life. The program usually has about 30 kids in need of help. The joint effort of Kinship program, Boy/Girls club program and YMCA program have help young people to be able to move forward and stabilize their lives.

YOUR CHARITABLE DONATIONS: QCDs: Do you know what a **QCD** - Qualified Charitable Distribution is? You can use Qualified Charitable Distribution (**QCDs**) if you are aged 70 ½ or older, you can make contribution directly from your traditional IRA to a qualified charity. You can donate up to \$100,000 per year without it being considered taxable income, this lowers your gross income (**AGI**) and you do not have to pay tax on the distribution. You can use google or another search engine on a computer for more information or talk to your financial adviser if you have one.

First Congregational Church is a qualified charity.

This could be a wonderful way to support your church and charitable giving. Pray about it and see where God is leading you.

Prayers: Prayers are needed in so many areas of the World. Please pray for Peace and God's Spirit to touch the lives of country leaders. Pray that peace will be restored.

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

**Please watch for weekly emails from
First Church for an updated calendar of events.**

**If you have not been receiving them or would like to, please let the office know
your email.**

Fccwestfield@outlook.com

Deacons Corner



"If You Are Lucky Enough To Be At The Beach, Then You Are Lucky Enough"

One of the many things that I am grateful for is the time that I get to spend at Cape Cod and the many things that the beach has to offer. No longer a sun worshipper, I enjoy visiting the beach for my walks and appreciate how it changes during the day.

Bright and early I head for the beach and cross the freshly raked sand, walk toward the water, and start my journey along the stretch of beach. My only companions are the seagulls huddled in the sand, some seagulls on the jetties gazing out toward the water, and the ducks floating on the waves all claiming the beach as theirs. The early sun sends its gentle warmth, the rolling surf breaks the silence, and the gentle breeze is filled with the scent of the salt air. As I walk along the shore, I come across the treasures the sea

has offered. On this particular morning there are rocks, seaweed, jelly fish, and hundreds and hundreds of shells. At the last jetty, I turn around and retrace my steps. I walk across the raked sand and sit on my favorite bench. It is dedicated to Mary Carol Grade with the inscription *"If You Are Lucky Enough To Be At The Beach, Then You Are Lucky Enough"*. So true! I sit with Mary, open up my book grateful for the solitude and the beauty before me.

It's late afternoon and I once again head for the beach and I enter a different world. The raked sand is riddled with footprints. Gone are the huddled seagulls replaced by colorful blankets, umbrellas, and sun bathers. Gone are the floating ducks replaced by bobbing heads and floating bodies. The hot sun beats down and the silence is replaced by music, conversation, laughter, and screeching, excited children. The scent of sunscreen overtakes the scent of the salt air. As I walk the stretch of beach there are holes, pails, shovels, sand creatures and sand castles that have been added to the ocean's treasures. At the last jetty, I turn around and head back to my favorite bench. Again, I sit with Mary, open up my book grateful for the life of the beach and the beauty before me.



My last walk of the day is just before sunset. Gone are the visitors. The seagulls have returned. The beach is deserted except for some stragglers and few walkers like myself. The sun is fading, the air cooler, and once again the surf breaks the silence. I slowly walk along the stretch of beach and breathe in the salt air for the last time today. Along the way I see abandoned shovels, half washed away castles and sea creatures all reminders of the visitors that were here. At the last jetty, I turn around and retrace my steps. The light is fading and the sky is transforming. Brilliant colors are starting to appear. I walk across the sand and head for my favorite bench and for the last time today I sit with Mary and witness a beautiful sunset as the words of my college roommate's mother run through my head. "You better take a good look at what God has painted because you will never see this one again!" I stay until the sky is dark, the picture gone, and I head home grateful for the beautiful painting that was.



Tina Dunlop

Update on the Status of Sale of Old Town Hall

As most First Church members are aware, we have been engaged for some time with Domus, Inc., a Westfield based, non profit affordable housing developer to sell the Old Town Hall (OTH) and would like to provide an update as to where things stand.

This year actually marks a full decade since our long term tenant, a local mental health agency, moved out! Since then we have pursued numerous possible solutions: renting space to a Westfield real estate firm; applying for a historical grant to help the church finance important renovations; possible sale or lease to the Westfield school system; meetings with Westfield officials (including the then Mayor) to try to gain their interest; seeking a lease and then a sale to a regional non profit, Work Opportunity Center; and listings with several realtors. While these efforts consumed many meetings and approximately seven years, they bore no fruit.

Finally in 2022 there were two very promising developments. First, a group of dedicated church members began Blessed Buys which has occupied the OTH in a vibrant and productive way both for the community that it serves and the church and we owe them much appreciation. Second, we entered into discussions with Domus which, though it has taken much time, seem to be soon to reach a successful conclusion.

Those discussions resulted in an agreed sales price of \$410,000 and an agreement made in June, 2024 under which Domus holds an option to purchase at that price. That agreement was to expire in June of this year but we agreed with Domus to extend it for up to another year. Under the terms of the agreements Domus has already paid us \$70,000, at least some of which is nonrefundable if, by some chance, the sale is not concluded. (The extended agreement also obligates Domus to pay the Church \$8,000 by October 1, 2025 to help cover our property insurance on the OTH; this amount is separate from the purchase price and is not refundable.)

The reason the sale process with Domus has already taken almost three years is that they are developing affordable housing: that is an extraordinarily complicated process involving securing funding at the federal, state and local levels of government, enlisting private investors and meeting a variety of standards relating to historical restrictions, building and safety codes and many others. The good news is that Domus informs us that they have finally secured almost all of the funding that they need and they anticipate exercising their option to close on the sale early next year.

A good deal remains to be done but we are hopefully in the closing months of this ten-year process. The effort at the outset was under the leadership of Phil Zych. For the time since then the Old Town Hall Committee has consisted of Rick Gaylord, Bob Brownlee (who has overseen the building's use and upkeep for many, many years) and myself. Please contact any of us if you have any questions and we will provide further updates to the Church Council and the Congregation as we get closer to a sale. When (and if) that happens there will be an extended construction period of course before the OTH is converted to 18 residential units.

We are trying to be vigilant in seeking to protect the Church's interests but we are also confident that our relationship with Domus in this potential new use of the OTH will work well. The OTH was built some 30 years before the present Church building was constructed in 1860 and it was Westfield City Hall until the Church purchased it in 1962 so we have been close neighbors for a very long time and we look forward to continuing that relationship in the future.

Steve Pierce

Church Lighting



Over the past ten years all four of the halogen lights that illuminate the choir loft burned out, making it difficult for singers to see their music. The challenge was to get access to the lights in order to determine if they simply needed new bulbs, or if they should be entirely new fixtures. The lights are about 32 feet above the floor.

In the end Ed LaPlante and Allan Taylor set up a ladder in the balcony in the same way Bob Brownlee did many years ago, footing it against the outer wall and leaning it against the beam on which the fixtures are mounted. Ed was able to reach through the ladder to remove the old lights, and to install new LED fixtures, one each per side. Ed described it as

one of the weirder things he's ever done.

While they were at it, they also removed the dome lights mounted beneath the beam, each of which had three 60 watt incandescent bulbs. These were changed to LED bulbs specifically rated for enclosures. The new bulbs are brighter, put out less heat, use far less electricity, and should last a very long time. The domes were also cleaned. Look up the next time you are in the sanctuary – it has made a welcome difference.

The last step of the project will be to replace the two mercury vapor lights that illuminate the pulpit area. We plan to install the same LED flood lights used for the choir loft, all of which will be controlled by dimmers. These will be available for occasions such as lectures and performances.

Please join in offering a hearty word of thanks to Ed and Allan for their much-needed solution to a dodgy problem.



Christian Fellowship Meeting
Wednesday, September 10th 1PM



Let Chat!!

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SEPTEMBER
newsletter

