



The Newsletter

First Congregational Church
of Westfield
January 2026

Gift-Giving

What did you get for Christmas? This was always a question we asked as kids when we returned to school or saw each other during the holidays. Gifts were fun to receive as we would try to guess what was inside each package. What we didn't realize was that not everyone was on the same level of income and some gifts were nicer than others. I could not understand why Santa did not bring those items to our house. When I was older, I understood the financial limitations we had in a family with six children.

The subject of gifts has been on my mind lately. This is important with the coming of Epiphany on January 6 as we celebrate the gifts brought by the Magi. We may not have gold, frankincense, and myrrh, but we have other gifts we can offer our church. While it is important that we offer our financial support, I now turn our attention to the gifts we can offer our church community. Maybe you have a background in finance, building and grounds, education, music, or a host of other areas that may need attention at our church. Perhaps you have a talent that has been hiding that could be of good use to our church community.

The Christmas Hymn "In the Bleak Mid-Winter" has a verse that reads

*What can I give Him, poor as I am?
If I were a Shepherd, I would bring a lamb;
If I were a Wise Man I would do my part,
Yet what I can I give Him, Give my heart.*

As we enter 2026, I hope that all of us can take a few moments to ponder, reflect, and pray on what gifts we have to offer our church community. It may be the gift of simply being present or praying for us from home. Whatever you have to offer, we know it will be from your heart.

Blessings on your New Year! May it be filled with health, happiness, and good will.

Peace and love,

Paul

Rev. Paul B. Nesbit
Pastor

Deacons Corner

HOW TO LIVE YOUR DASH

I read of a man who stood up to speak at the funeral of a friend.
He referred to the dates on the tombstone from the beginning to the end.
He noted that first came the date of birth and spoke the following date with tears.
But said what mattered most of all was the dash between those years.
For that dash represents all the time that he had spent alive on the earth.
And now only those who love him know what that little line is worth.
For it matters not how much we own, the cars, the house, the cash-
What matters most is how we live and love and how we spend our dash.
So think about it long and hard... are there things you'd like to change?
For you never know how much time is left that can still be rearranged.
If we could just slow down enough to consider what is true and real,
And try to understand the way other people feel.
Be less quick to anger and show appreciation more,
And love the people in our lives like we've never loved them before.
Trust each other with respect and more often wear a smile,
Remembering this special dash might only last a while.
So when your eulogy is being read, with your life's actions to rehash,
Would you be proud of the things they
say about how you spent your dash?

Author Unknown

Submitted by Anne Gelinias, Deacon

Winter Lunches at First Congregational Church of Westfield

On Monday, January 12, First Congregational Church of Westfield will begin to host lunches for the Westfield Food Pantry. The lunches will be served on Monday and Thursday in our Fellowship Hall from 12:15-12:45. We do need some assistance with hosting and serving the lunch. The Food Pantry will cook and volunteers from our church and local churches will serve and clean up at the conclusion of the meal. We also have a need for folks to serve as greeters at the Academy Street entrance as well as the ramp.

This will go a long way to answer Jesus' command to feed the hungry. We hope that if you're able to volunteer, you will sign up on the sheet in the hallway. You may also sign up with Rev. Paul or Cindy. Thank you!!

Community Carol Festival

The sanctuary was decorated, rehearsals were done and our annual Community Carol Festival was held. With over 300 in attendance we were able to usher in the Christmas Season in fine fashion. Thank you to the performers, all those that donated, baked cookies, for the reception, ushered and helped in so many other ways. This annual tradition is a mainstay for the Greater Westfield community.

Martha Roman

Family Ministries

What a month December was for church families!

Our Youth group held its second meeting and, amid great hilarity, decorated cookies as only teenagers can. (see picture)

The Christmas Pageant on December 21 was intergenerational for the first time. Participants ranged in age from a 7-year-old angel to three quite mature kings! (again, see pictures).

In January we look forward to a continuation of:

Sunday, January 18 at 4:30 PM – Youth Group

Sunday, January 25 at 4:30 PM – Contemporary Service

We are grateful for all the hard work that has gone into making these events happen. Our Family Ministries Committee has been incredible. They are truly a dream team.

Happy New Year to all!

Janet St. Jean

Director of Family Ministries



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: 3rd Sunday of each month: Each month we bring items for the Westfield Food Pantry. Items that can be used 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. Their needs this month are cereal.

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 1:00pm or take it to the Soup Kitchen at 101 Meadow Street between 4:30 & 5:00 PM. It would be great if you could stay and help. **CALL Cindy 568-2833** to learn how you could help.

Westfield River Elementary School: All is good at school this year, no new requests

Samaritan Inn: World Service Committee has posted a needs list for the Samaritan Inn next to the collection box. Whatever is donated will be delivered by a WSC member. Thank you for all the help for the homeless.

HELO Haiti: HELO was introduced to First Congregational Church of Westfield by Shirley Anderson in 2017. Elisabeth Kennedy from HELO Haiti and your World Service Committee are planning a Trivia night fundraiser on January 10, 2026 at 6:00PM in Fellowship Hall. This to help HELO Haiti with needed repairs for their school buildings classrooms and roofs. The school is used to educate the students to become responsible people that can help grow their country. Please put Trivia night on your event calendar, starts at 6:00pm till 8:00pm. The cost is a FREEWILL donation, HELO Haiti's group will run this event and it will be a fun night for a very good cause. Your World Service Committee will have a flyer posted on the bulletin board at church. You do not have to be a Trivia person to attend and have a great time. Your World Service Committee goal is to raise \$5000.00 for repairs. See where God leads you with this Fundraiser. Thank you

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

This month we are highlighting: **Trail Magic** is a project that meets and greets Appalachian Trail hikers to feed, support and listen to their adventures. Many are hikers that do not have a chance for rest and a warm meal. First Congregational Church has sent a delegation of 4 or 5 people to host this project at a camp site near the trail and offer hot food and companionship while the hikers rest. This usually happens in July for our group.

Thank you all for your donations for this great mission project.

Merry Christmas and a very Blessed New Year in 2026 from your World Service Committee

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



Thank you to everyone who honored or remembered a loved one or a friend by donating towards our Luminaria display on Christmas Eve and Christmas Day. Over 120 Luminaria were displayed on the Old Town Hall steps and at the back and front doors of the church, as well as inside the entrance of the church. This is the fifth year we have welcomed our community to view the Luminaria and at the same time using the Luminaria to make a pathway to our door.
Carol Whalen

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 a few 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 and Thursday’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.

Blessed Buys

Thrift Shoppe

20 Broad Street, Westfield Ma

Open Thursdays & Saturdays

10AM-2PM

Currently accepting donations

Please call the church office 568-2833

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
1/17 Janet Kinney
1/18 Elizabeth Rea
1/22 Nancy Condon
1/29 Sam Yesu



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!

2025 Annual Report

Annual reports are due from all Committee Chairs by January 16th. Please email yours to the church office.

fccwestfield@outlook.com

Reports will be available February 1st



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 19th, for Martin Luther King, Jr. Day

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 8th, 2026 with a snow date of Sunday, February 15th. 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

First Congregational Church of Westfield
18 Broad Street
Westfield MA 01085
(413) 568-2833
Fccwestfield@outlook.com

PLEASE
PLACE
STAMP
HERE