



The Newsletter
First Congregational Church of Westfield
June 2026

Dear Friends,

The Holy Spirit moves us in all kinds of ways. Sometimes, She calls on us to try new things, put ourselves out there, or keep our hearts open to what we may be called to do. I am a firm believer that the Holy Spirit takes us, moves us, and even shakes us as we go through our lives. We sometimes get settled where we are and even become complacent. We think that when we get to a certain age, change will stop affecting us.

God is full of surprises at every corner of our lives. The Holy Spirit has been at work once again and, after four and a half years, has called me to leave both First Congregational Church of Westfield and Southwick Congregational Church as Pastor. However, I will not leave until the end of August and pledge to work with the leadership of both churches to make the transition as smooth as possible.

When I arrived at both churches, we were still wearing masks indoors and were able to make the transition to more “regular” practices. We then chose to open our doors to the community so that the “Congregational” church would again be the center of the community. In Westfield and Southwick alike, we opened our doors to non-profit civic organizations to use our sanctuaries and halls. In Southwick, we invited the neighbors in for Pizza/Pasta/PotLuck/Picnic with the Pastor. In Westfield, we opened our grounds and doors to establish a partnership with the Westfield Food Pantry to serve our neighbors. We participated in Trail Magic on the Appalachian Trail. In Southwick we welcomed Southwick Community Episcopal Church to share our building. And, in Westfield, we started Blessed Buys Thrift Shoppe which has provided clothing, books, and household goods to those in need. Blessed Buys also has given almost \$15,000 back to the community in donations from our proceeds.

While these are great things, the work in both churches must continue. We must continue to listen to the Holy Spirit and do what we are called to do in order to establish the Reign of God on earth. We are on our way; let us listen to the Holy Spirit and do that to which we are called. I will do what I can to assist you in the next three months.

Peace and love,

Paul

Rev. Paul B. Nesbit
Pastor



A Note from your Executive Committee:

Dear Friends,

Rev. Paul has just announced his resignation as settled pastor at First Congregational Church Westfield and Southwick. We thank him for everything he has done for us these past 4 and 1/2 years and wish him God's Blessings and every success for his new job.

His last Sunday preaching for us will be Sunday August 16, 2026. We will continue to follow our normal schedule of Church events. We are not sure what will happen to the joint services with Southwick after Rev. Paul leaves, but we will keep you updated about this.

We will be organizing a farewell before Rev. Paul leaves, and we will keep you informed as these plans develop.

First Congregational Church Westfield and Southwick will continue to partner/share a minister.

We will be working with and getting support from the UCC and NACCC during this time of transition.

We will be looking to have a temporary minister (Bridge or Interim minister) from when Rev. Paul leaves and when we hire a new settled minister.

Please speak to any member of the Executive Committee if you have any questions, concerns, or ideas, as we face the future together.

The Executive Committee:

Daniel Koehne, Moderator:
koehned@gmail.com (413) 433-7599

Cindy LaPlante, Treasurer
Cindylaplante5@gmail.com

(413)364-6804
Steve Pierce, Chair Budget Committee:
stevendonaldpierce@hotmail.com

(413) 535-0486

Carol Whalen,
Chair Personnel Committee:
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(413) 313-1329

Marc Winer,
Chair Property Committee:
marcwiner1973@gmail.com

(413) 374-5499



Christian Fellowship

June 2026

Spring Luncheon

Tiger's Pride Restaurant

Westfield Technical Academy

Wednesday June 10th

11AM



TICKETS \$14.00
must be purchased in advance.

Deadline for ordering is June 4th
Please see Jean Zimmerman on Sunday
or call the church office 568-2833

Meal Choice: Chicken Francese or
Baked Stuffed Fish with Lobster Sauce

General William Shepard



As our country prepares to celebrate our 250th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence, I want to recognize a church member who played a significant role in that undertaking, the Honorable William Shepard. He was born on Dec. 1, 1737. His grandfather, John Shepard, was born in England, but came to Westfield in 1695. William was the fourth of nine children born to John Shepard and Elizabeth Noble. Rev. John Lockwood, the 9th minister of First Cong. Church, would later comment on the Shepard family's remarkable role in the Revolutionary War. At least 6 of the 7 Shepard sons, all served in the war, most as officers. Even William's oldest son, also named William, served in his father's regiment.

William first enlisted in the French and Indian War in 1754 when he was only 17. He served courageously and was promoted several times. After 6 years, he returned home at the age of 23 and married Sarah Dewey in 1760. In 1774, Captain Shepard was elected as Selectman for Westfield and a year later chosen to serve on the first Committee of Correspondence. This important committee organized communication networks allowing colonial leaders to coordinate opposition to British policy and mobilize resistance. This committee further sought to unite the 13 colonies in protesting British policies.

He, once again, did not hesitate to serve his country when the American Revolution began. Rev. John Ballentine, third pastor of First Congregational Church at the time would remark about William, "His military talents were known and his country called him to her aid. His native state had become the seat of war, and its Capital was in the hands of the enemy. In the 1775 he accepted the office of Lieutenant Colonel (The original framed commission, signed by George Washington, is in the archives at the Westfield Athenaeum) and repaired to the camp at Roxbury, where he continued under the command and near to the person of Washington till the British retired from Boston."

He was also with Washington on Long Island where the Continental army was surrounded by 20,000 trained British troops. Washington organized the successful nighttime evacuation of close to 9,000 Patriot troops across the East River to Manhattan. Shepard was with the rear guard, tasked with harassing the British soldiers to protect the retreating troops.

In another fierce battle with the British at Pell's Point, Shepard was seriously wounded in the neck. When he finally agreed to see the surgeon, the doctor recalls, Shepard took a long draught of rum from his canteen and found that it flowed freely down his throat. Shepard then said, "It is all right, doctor, stick a plaster on it, I'm going back out again." He tied his cravat over it and returned to the firing line. According to the doctor, he said to Shepard, "An inch more and the ball would have killed you, colonel." To which Shepard replied, "Yes, and an inch the other way and it wouldn't have touched me."

Inscribed on his statue across from the Old Town Hall, it states that William Shepard fought bravely in 22 battles throughout the Revolutionary War. He retired from his Continental Army service on Jan. 1, 1783. He was elected Selectman in the next four years 1784-87. From 1785-1786, he represented Westfield in the Legislature and was appointed major general of the 4th division of the Massachusetts State Militia. In 1787, he was instrumental in quelling Shays Rebellion. (Another interesting story for a future Deacon's Corner)

Shepard would go on to serve Westfield in Congress and on many other boards, committees, and offices. However, he always remained a humble farmer, living in a modest home. He was a loyal town resident and a faithful church member serving as Deacon of this church for 26 years. He was known for his integrity, intelligence, and natural kindness. William Shepard died on Nov. 16, 1817, at the age of 80, a true Revolutionary War hero we should remember and celebrate on our country's 250th birthday on July 4, 2026.

Respectfully submitted, Cindy Gaylord

Family Ministries News

Looking back at Family Ministries (Fall of 2025-Spring of 2026)

My role as Acting Director of Family Ministries for 2025/2026 is coming to an end in June. Here are some reflections on the accomplishments and scope of this intrepid committee.

In the fall of 2025, we were faced with a church school that dwindled from 8 dedicated members to one regular member. Our committee assessed this situation and concluded that we needed to reinvent our role in the church.

We continued with programs that our church and community loved: a hugely successful Halloween party attracting over 100 people (with grateful thanks to the expertise of Gail Ives), an intergenerational Christmas pageant, and a February vacation movie.

Even with these successful offerings, it was time to shift our focus on expanding more programs for all ages. Our members reached out with three experimental community programs, which met throughout the year.

The first, the Drumming Circle, which drew people from the greater Westfield community. Weaving together drum improvisation, Bible passages, remembrance of those who served our country, and stories of inspiration, an eclectic group of between 12 and 20 players, ranging in age from 10 to 80+, shared a unique, uplifting and profound drumming experience.

The second, an alternative, Contemporary Worship Service created an hour of magic and inspiration each month. I am grateful for the combined talents, which I joined on keyboard, of Mara Winer (lighting and sound wizard), Michelle Winer (gifted visual creator), Joey Saraff and Marialaina Gelineau (outstanding singers), Jack Tozzi (kick-butt guitar player), Michael Winer (amazing drummer), and Rev. Paul Nesbit (engaging pastor).

Our third experiment reinvented a Youth program which included young adults in middle and high school. Our new Youth Group welcomed members from First Congregational Church Westfield, Southwick Congregational Church, Church of the Atonement, and Feeding Hills Congregational Church. The highlight of this program was a snow tubing trip to Butternut Mountain, which filled a van with 15 enthusiastic adventurers. An afternoon of bowling in Northampton opened our group to families of all Youth Group members and our greater church family. On June 21, our upcoming adventure, a kayaking trip on the Connecticut River, which will be open to our entire church community.

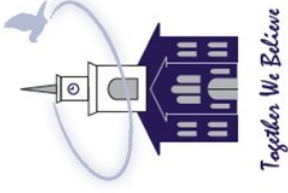
I am grateful for the active help and support of our wonderful committee members: Michelle Winer (chair), Gail Ives, Linda Hauk, Cindy D'Angelo, Mara Winer, Marc Winer, Jim Yesu, Amy Platte, Moderator Dan Koehne and Rev. Paul Nesbit. As they create a vision for future programs, they deserve our heartfelt thanks. It takes a village to shape exciting programs and this village within our church is poised and ready. I extend my heartfelt thanks to one and all.

Janet St. Jean

Director of Family Ministries



First Congregational Church of Westfield



JUNE 2026

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7 9:30 Am Worship 10:30 Fellowship	8 12:15 Food Truck	9 7:00 PM Church Council	10	11 10-2 Blessed Buys 12:15 Food Truck 6PM World Service Committee	12	13 10-2 Blessed Buys
14 9:30 Am Worship 10:30 Fellowship 2PM Young Singers Concert	15 12:15 Food Truck	16	17	18 10-2 Blessed Buys 12:15 Food Truck	19	20 10-2 Blessed Buys
21 9:30 Am Worship 10:30 Fellowship 2PM Kayaking	22 12:15 Food Truck	23 3:00-5:30 PM Soup Kitchen	24	25 10-2 Blessed Buys 12:15 Food Truck	26	27 10-2 Blessed Buys
28 9:30 Am Worship 10:30 Fellowship	29 12:15 Food Truck	30 6PM Diaconate				



Fourscore and More 2026



On May 2nd, the annual Four Score or More Luncheon was held. Over 35 people were in attendance which started with a worship service held in the sanctuary. Rev. Paul led the service, Janet St. Jean played the piano and Grace Chan sang. Many thanks for their contributions to the service. Following the service guests moved to the dining room. Thank you to Don Weglus for taking photos of the group and individuals. Guests were served a lunch of tossed salad, chicken salad wraps, turkey, bacon and cheese sliders, macaroni and cheese and cream cheese sandwiches and included an assortment of desserts - all prepared by head chef Cindy LaPlante and assisted by the deacons. A big thank you to all who worked to make this annual tradition a success.





Trustee of Invested Funds.....



Our Church has a strong financial foundation—in part due to our being a presence in Westfield since 1679–347 years!—and in part due to the Christian commitment and generosity of countless past members.

This month we highlight an extraordinary gift from and pay tribute to one such long time member who passed away in 2023 at the age of 97.

Phyllis Lindbergh and her husband Alex joined our Church in 1957. She was active in Women's Fellowship and in many other ways over the years, helping in countless Church suppers and Christmas fairs. Her obituary counted among her dearest friends our late and beloved Beverly Gamble and she asked that donations in her memory be made to First Congregational Church of Westfield.

But, she did much better than that: under her will our Church was one of her principal beneficiaries and, as a result, we recently received her bequest of \$590,000 which has been added to our General Invested Fund. As such, it will add to our annual draw from our Invested Funds to support our operating budget.

While few of us, if any, can match her generosity, all of us can certainly consider including the Church in future planned giving no matter how large or small the amount. Toward that end, there will soon be an article in a monthly newsletter providing some options for each of us to consider.

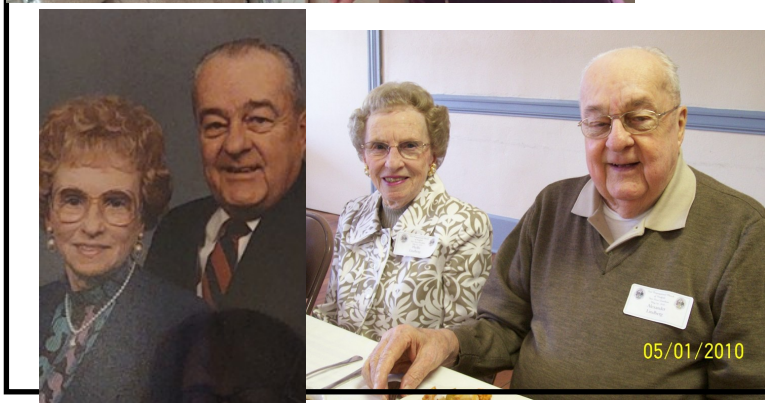
In the meantime, we can give thanks to Phyllis Lindbergh and the countless others in our long history who have contributed to our strong history of Christian faith.



Phyllis Lindberg and Beverly Gamble



Phyllis Lindberg and her Mom, Mrs Ethel Smith



Phyllis and Alex Lindberg

Kayaking on the Connecticut

25 Jones Ferry Road, Holyoke, MA 01040

**Sunday, June 21, 2026
2:00 PM**

for more information on our wonderful location go to:
holyokerows.org

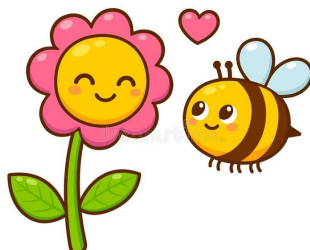
All are invited to join in on the fun!



June Birthday's



- 6/01-Nancy Rowe
- 6/02-Karen Lajoie
- 6/03-Donald Kinney
- 6/04-Linda Hauk
- 6/05-Gretchen Shepard
- 6/10-Maddie Balzano
- 6/11-Emery James
- 6/12-C.J. Crean
- 6/13-Cynthia Reynolds
- 6/16-Karena Davignon
- 6/18-Nancy Chamberlin
- 6/20-Joyce Andrews
- 6/21-Ed LaPlante
- 6/28-Joyce Piper-McLean
- 6/28-Debbie Grobe



SPRING CONCERT

**Sunday, June 14,
2026 at 2:00 PM**

First Congregational Church of Westfield
18 Broad Street, Westfield, MA

Young Singers of Greater Westfield

Kerry Cipoletta, Artistic Director

with The Choir and Handbells of First Congregational Church,
Allan Taylor, organ and piano four-hands,
and Scott Bailey, piano four-hands



www.ysgw.org

Event is free and open to the public.
(Donations gratefully accepted.)

June 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: June 21st– 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 their supply needs.

Our Community Table/Westfield Soup Kitchen – June 23, 2026 -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 24th 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 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 information for a WSC meeting June 3rd about how we could have a fund raiser to support HELO Haiti. Jennifer is also reporting on a Mini Food Pantry box at our church.

Monthly Highlights: Each month we highlight one or more of the missions we support. This month are Food Pantry and United Church of Christ

The Westfield Food Pantry provides food to Westfield residents in need. Our church supports the program with donations of non-perishable food and with an annual financial donation. Your World Service Committee thanks you so much for your continued generosity.

The United Church of Christ funds are used for natural disasters and emergencies. They also support mission schools, prepare leaders, provide for and uplift local churches.

EASTER OFFERING: Your World Service Committee says **Thank You** for your generous donations for God's work thru the Mission Committee. Our congregation generously provided \$2272.25 through the Easter Offering.

The Local and World needs are many, we will pray for God's guidance in using these funds wisely. **Thank you** again for so much Caring and Love.

World Service Committee: We will mail out mission funds on June 21th to the following organizations: Boys and Girls Club, Samaritan Inn, and Springfield Rescue Mission. Thank you for your continuing support for First Congregation Church's Mission Projects.

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

Blessed Buys Move and Grand Re-Opening

After months of planning, cleaning, polishing, painting, and moving, it finally happened! The grand re-opening of First Congregational Church's Blessed Buys Thrift Shop took place May 14th and 16th. We had two remarkably successful days of sales and received many compliments from all who visited. We know this could not have occurred without help from our church community and we thank each person who so generously gave of their time and effort to make this move a reality.

First, thank you to Doug James, Bob Brownlee, and Roy Bascomb who spent countless hours repairing, fixing, building, scraping, painting, hanging, and all the other jobs that needed to be done. Thank you to Tyson James for stripping, refinishing, and polishing our floors and eliminating any mold for us.

Thank you to our fearless band of volunteers including Rick Gaylord, Greg Hamel, Jim Yesu, Mark, Mike, and Michelle Winer, Jim Kinney, Dan Koehne, and Ray Salois who spent an entire day moving heavy furniture, displays, cartons, books, etc. from the Old Town Hall to our new location. They had no idea what they were getting into when they agreed to help! We also had volunteers from the WHS National Honor Society come to help on three different Saturdays.

We cannot thank Cindy LaPlante enough for all the effort she has put into helping us facilitate this move. She kept us organized, on time, thought of all the logistics that needed to happen, made signs, and kept us sane. Cindy, you made this happen! Ed LaPlante also installed a whole new security system for the church, as well as Blessed Buys to keep us safe. Thank you so much, Ed.

Of course, our dedicated team of weekly workers put in more hours than any of us care to count, but it was all worth it. Mayme Lajoie, Carol Whalen, Barb James, Tina Dunlop, Dorothy Cichonski, Christina Pierce, Anne Gelinas, Debbie Finney, Gail Ives, Linda Hauk, Martha Roman, Julie Kraus, and Sharon Billings. We make a wonderful team! Pastor Paul, your continuous support, promotion, cheerleading and cheerfully modeled purchases have encouraged us all along the way. Of course, the support and donations from our church family and beyond are so appreciated and vital to our success. We have many other Friends of Blessed Buys we want to thank, as well.

We had no idea four years ago that we would be where we are today. Thank you from the bottom of our hearts. Visit us if you haven't already! We have a display of many of the other non-profit organizations we have given donations to. We are open Thursdays and Saturdays 10-2 and occasionally after church.

Respectfully submitted, Cindy Gaylord



Blessed Buys Thrift Shoppe



Thursday and
Saturday
10AM-2PM



Lower Level 18 Broad Street
Westfield MA 01085



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



First Congregational Church of Westfield

18 Broad Street
Westfield, MA 01085
Office (413) 568-2833



June