

The Newsletter

First Congregational Church of Westfield

July 2026

Dear Friends,

For the past four and a half years I have had the privilege to serve First Congregational Church of Westfield as pastor. I truly believe that the Holy Spirit was at work when you called me to this position. So many wonderful things have happened; I also feel that I have been able to grow as a minister.

This space in the newsletter will be filled by Daniel Koehne or his designee as your church moves forward in the search and call process. Conversations will be had and decisions will be made. Not everyone will be happy but, hopefully, you will work to resolve conflicts to reach a consensus as to what will happen in your immediate future. Please remember to **stop, reflect, pray, and listen.**

We don't know what the Holy Spirit has in store for us unless we stop the conversation, especially if it becomes heated. It is important for us to reflect privately on what is being asked and then to put it to prayer. We can even pray with the person with whom we may not agree; you're both in conversation with the same goal in mind. And then, you simply must listen quietly so that you can hear what the Holy Spirit is saying.

My prayer for this congregation is that you will continue to listen to the Holy Spirit as you grow in service to extend the Reign of God on earth in the Greater Westfield area and beyond. I will cherish my time here with you and, again, I thank you for how you have helped me on my own faith journey. I am around until August 16; reach out if I can help you with anything.

Peace and love,

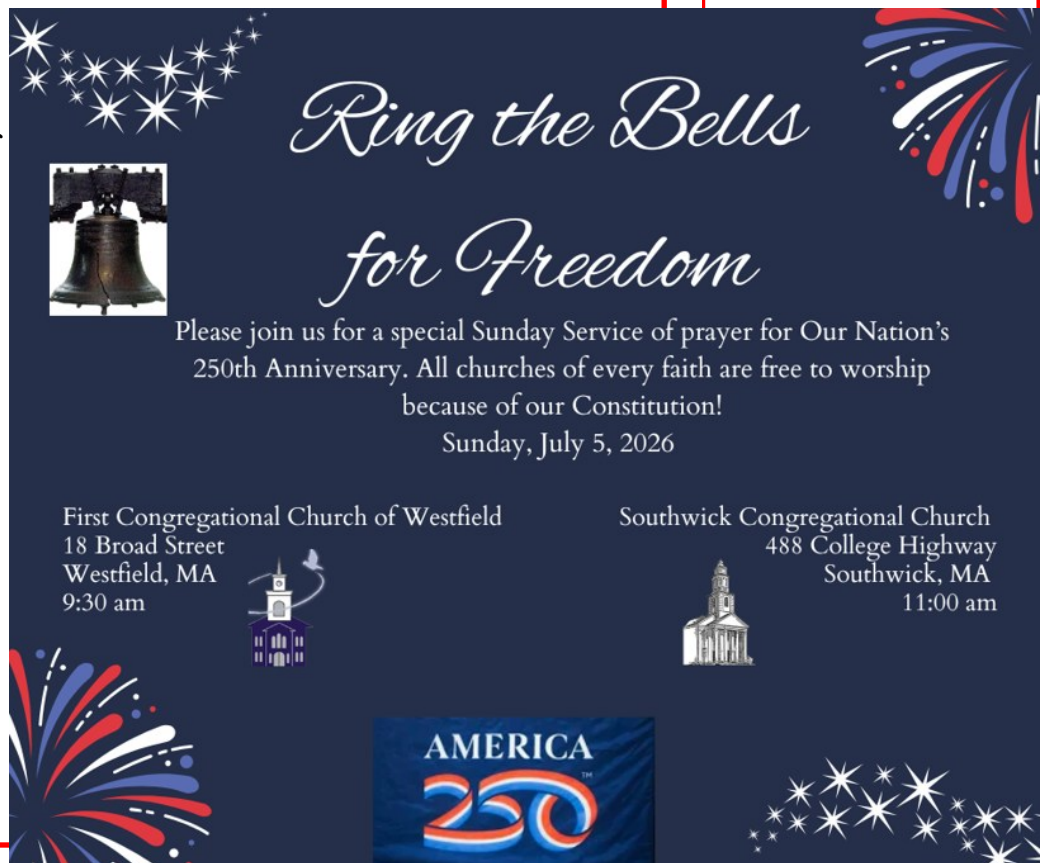
Paul

Rev. Paul B. Nesbit
Pastor





Important Dates:

July 5th Communion Sunday
"Sunday Worship Service to Pray for our
Country's 250th Anniversary."
July 21st Church Council
July 26th Joint Worship 9:30AM
In Westfield



*Ring the Bells
for Freedom*

Please join us for a special Sunday Service of prayer for Our Nation's 250th Anniversary. All churches of every faith are free to worship because of our Constitution!
Sunday, July 5, 2026

First Congregational Church of Westfield 18 Broad Street Westfield, MA 9:30 am		Southwick Congregational Church 488 College Highway Southwick, MA 11:00 am	
---	---	---	---

AMERICA 250

An update on the process of finding a new settled minister.

While Reverend Paul leaving us is not something we wanted, First Congregational Church has been successfully navigating this process for almost 350 years and I am confident that the search before us now will also be successful.

What can you do to help in this time of transition?

Pray that the Holy Spirit helps us in this search for a new settled minister.

Continue to participate in the life of this Church.

Support First Congregational Church with your time, talents, and treasure.

Speak up and make your opinions and thoughts known.

Participate in any votes that we may have.

We wish Rev. Paul every success and God's blessings for the next step of his ministry.

In 2019, our church held a congregational meeting where we voted to partner with Southwick UCC for our interim and settled ministers. This decision remains in effect, but I would like the congregation, after a thorough and deliberative process, to again vote on whether we want to continue our partnership with Southwick in the Fall of 2026.

It is also my commitment to the congregation that the search process will be transparent for our congregation and the Southwick UCC folks.

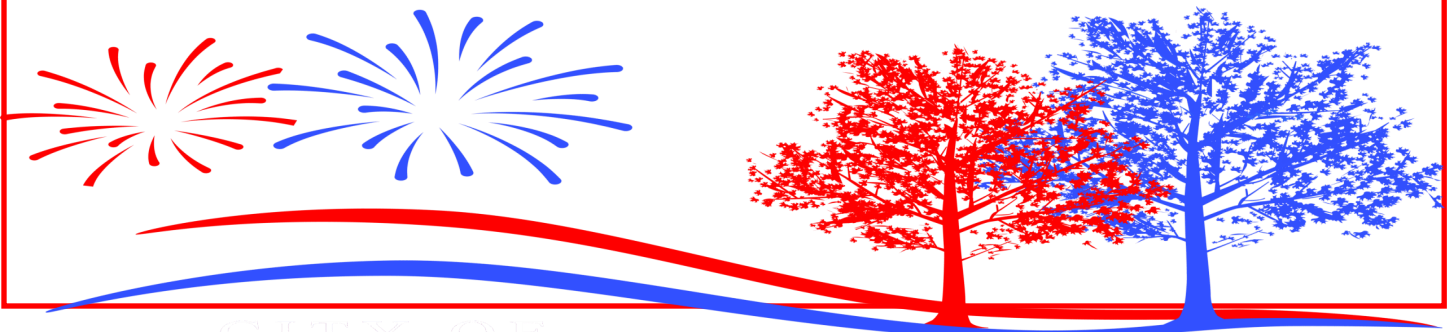
If you have any questions, concerns, or comments, please reach out to myself or any member of the Church Executive Committee :Steve Pierce, Carol Whalen, Cindy LaPlante, Marc Winer.

Bridge Minister search:

The purpose of a bridge minister is to cover the gap between when Rev. Paul leaves and when we find an interim minister.

Terry Putnam (Moderator Southwick) and I are pursuing this bridge minister as a joint appointment between Westfield and Southwick. We both believe that the benefit to both churches by doing this is, we speed up finding a bridge minister and we offer two stipends to preach the same sermon at both of our churches.

Continued on Next Page



We have been provided with a list, by the SNEUCC (Southern New England Conference United Church of Christ), of area clergy that are willing to be a bridge minister. This list contains approximately 10 names in a 1-to-1.5-hour travel range from Westfield. We have sent emails to these people and have received two responses to date, one person has another commitment and is not available, and one is interested in the opportunity. On Monday June 22, we had our first zoom conversation with this interested person and will be talking further. Martha (Head Deacon Westfield), and Patti Banasik (Head Deacon, Southwick), have been invited to participate in this interview process. We will also be involving our Budget Committee folks in these discussions at the appropriate time.

Interim Minister Search:

At the last Church Council meeting we appointed Mara Winer and Jim Kinney to be members of the Interim Minister search committee. Since then, Christina Pierce, has approached me and expressed an interest in being on this committee and we will formalize her appointment to the interim search committee at the next Church Council meeting.

If you would like to be on this committee, please contact me at koehned@gmail.com or 413-433-7599, as there is space for one more person if anyone is interested.

The purpose of an interim minister is to be ministering to our congregation while helping us to search for a settled minister. **Per UCC rules, the interim minister CANNOT become our settled minister.**

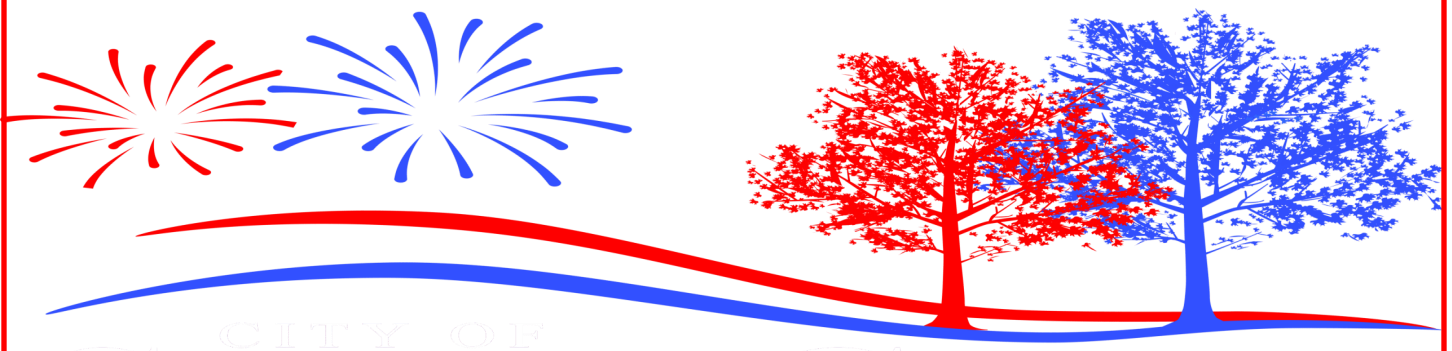
The interim minister search process follows this outline:

Our interim search committee will write a short profile of our church.

This profile is submitted to the SNEUCC and NACCC (National Association of Congregational Christian Churches) for review and publication on their job web sites.

After publication, we wait for candidates to submit applications. These are then reviewed by the Interim Search committee which hopefully leads to the hiring of an interim minister for a fixed term.

Daniel Koehne, Moderator



Family Ministries Wraps up a Year of Change

My role as Acting Director of Family Ministries has come to an end. What began as a temporary commitment has stretched to over 2 years as our committee re-imagined our role in the church.

Our intrepid team of Cindy D'Angelo, Linda Hauk, Gail Ives, Dan Koehne, Amy Platt, Mara Winer, Michelle Winer, and Jim Yesu enthusiastically supported beloved traditional programs as well as creating new programs to serve our congregation and our community. Here are a few highlights:

Halloween Party - Under the leadership of Gail Ives, we welcomed over a hundred people (most of them families with young children) to our spooky space. Games, pumpkin decorating, family pictures, and lots of Halloween treats kept families happy and entertained.

Intergenerational Christmas Pageant - This December, for the first time, we included members of all ages, from 6-year-olds to octogenarians. Our Senior Choir enhanced the Christmas story with beautiful Carols.

Contemporary Services - This was truly a labor of love. Mara Winer was masterful with lighting and sound. Rachel Forbes and Michelle Winer created powerpoint presentations for a visual guide of the service. Our band of singers, Marialaina Gelineau and Joey Saraff, drummer, Michael Winer and bass guitar, Jack Tozzi, were second to none. This will not be the last you hear of them. And, finally, Rev. Paul Nesbit and Rev. Chris Davies designed moving services.

African Drumming - Once a month, 15-20 players created exciting, improvised sounds in our own First Church Drumming Circle. This will continue in 2026/2027.

Ecumenical Youth Group - My favorite activity to arrange was a snowboarding trip to Butternut Ski Resort. Under the enthusiastic leadership of Jim Yesu and Dan Koehne, 15 youth ranging in age from 11 to 23 barreled down the mountain on a snowy afternoon.

Book Discussion - Jennifer Waldorf, masterful facilitator, led a winter discussion of *Compassion and Conviction: A Guide to Faithful Civic Engagement*. I always felt I left understanding the workings of society a little bit better.

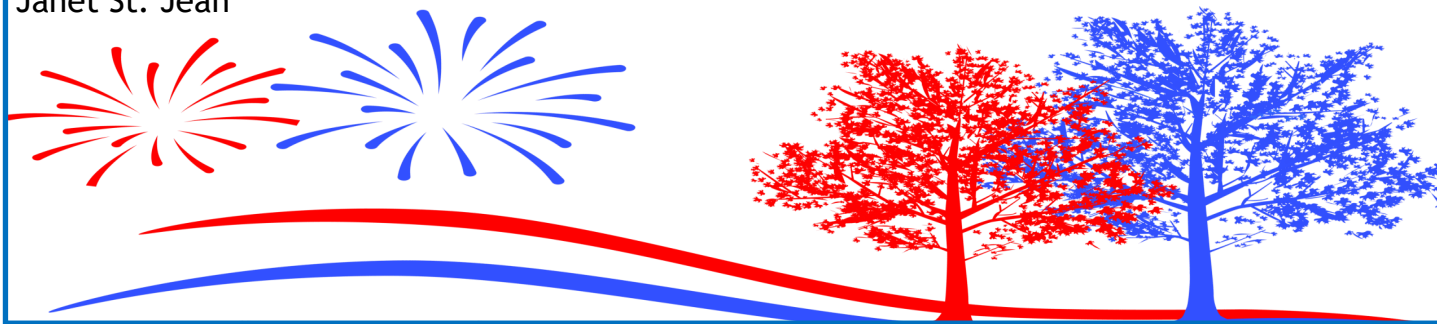
Family Bowling - All I can say about this is FUN! Families of all ages gathered at Spare Time Bowling in Northampton. Our skill level varied from mostly gutter balls to quite a few strikes and spares (I would be in the gutter ball category).

Hockey Night with The Thunderbirds - Michelle Winer took the reins to arrange this popular event, which included a ride on the Zamboni!

Kayaking on the Connecticut - As of this writing, kayaking is still in the future (June 21). But, if it is like past trips, a dozen people plan on floating down the Connecticut River. A big thank you goes to Nancy Condon for coordinating this trip with Holyoke Rows.

I want to extend a heartfelt THANK YOU to these wonderful people. They are a joy to work with. And they have helped bring this church alive for all of us.

Janet St. Jean



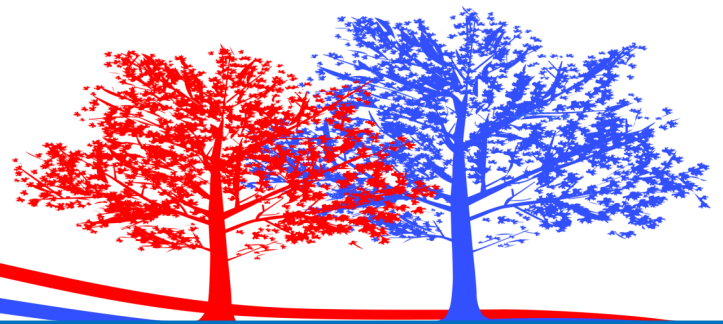
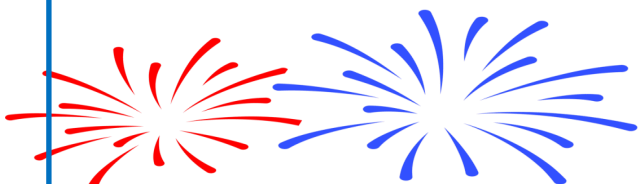
Blessed Buys

The response to Blessed Buys Thrift Shoppe in our new location in the lower level of the church has been amazing. We hear many compliments from our customers every day we are open noting how nice each of the showrooms are set up. They also recognize how much work went into our new home. For all of us who volunteer, it is a refreshing and bright place to be.

Blessed Buys continues to donate to local non-profits each quarter. The most recent recipients were Westfield Animal Shelter Heroes which is the non-profit part of the Animal Shelter. The Heroes was formed by volunteers to raise funds to allow injured pets to receive emergency care, and give them a second chance through adoption. Also, a donation was made to the students in the National Honor Society at Westfield High School. Several of the students came to help with our move to our new location. They worked hard and always with a smile. Some of the money we donated will help them with their Community Project of buying food to serve at the Soup Kitchen.

Thank you to everyone who has stopped in to shop or just to check out Blessed Buys. We hope you will all take advantage of this mission of the First Congregational Church.

Carol Whalen



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: July 19, 2026 - 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.

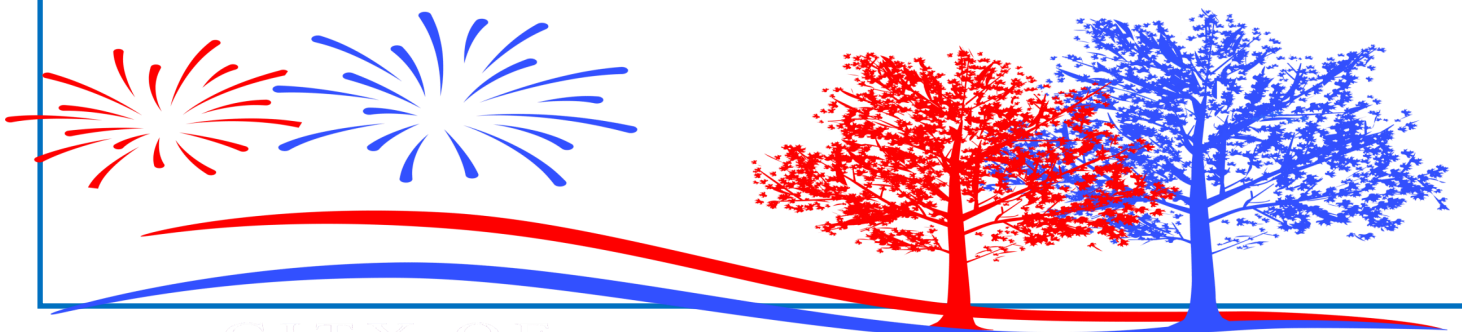
The **2nd Sunday** in each month your WSC will make an announcement for the items that are in short supply at the Food Pantry. The requested items for this month are snack items for children such as graham crackers, fruit snacks, granola bars, etc.

Our Community Table/Westfield Soup Kitchen - July 28, 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 568-2833** to learn how you can help.

Westfield River Elementary school: The Westfield River school has recently opened a food pantry for students. In addition to assisting with payment for school supplies, last month we also reimbursed the school for supplies to celebrate the opening of this food pantry.

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.

Monthly Highlights: Each month we highlight one or more of the missions we support. This month is BHN Kamp for Kids. Kamp for Kids is for children and young adults with and without disabilities. This summer program offers an opportunity to experience inclusion, growth and fun in a camp setting that includes a spray park, expressive arts, outdoor education, arts & crafts and non-competitive sports. Call Anne Benoit at 413-562-5678 for more information



EASTER OFFERING: Your World Service Committee says **Thank You again** for your generous donations for God's work thru the Mission committee. This year collection was \$2272.25.

The Local and World needs are many; we will pray for God's guidance in using these funds wisely.

World Service Committee: We mailed out mission funds in June to the following organizations: Community Table, Salvation Army, Samaritan Inn, Trail Magic, Springfield Rescue Mission, Boys and Girls Club. Thank you for your continuing support for First Congregational Church's Mission Projects.

World Service Committee: Ray Salois, Nancy Condon, Gail Ives, Dorothy Cichonski, Jennifer Waldorf, Barbara James.

July Birthdays

7/01-Cindy Gaylord

7/08-Joe Balzano

7/10-Gladys Hedge

7/11-Michelle Downs

7/15-Jacoby & Jaxon
Gonzalez

7/17-Carolyn Hunt

7/27-Christine Gaugh

7/28-Dorrie Stewart-St. Onge

7/29-Norah James

7/31-Lori LaPlante



August Birthdays

8/02-Debbie Yesu

8/07- Fred Nason

8/10-Jacob Combs

8/12-Bruce Dunlop

8/12-Grace Connors

8/15-Joseph Gonzalez Jr.

8/18-Merritt Andrews

8/18-Cindy LaPlante

8/28-Silas Yesu

8/29-Kelly Gonzalez

8/31-Michael Winer



Call or email the Church Office about Hospitalizations and Prayer List Updates

fccwestfield@outlook.com 568-2833

If you know of someone in the congregation who has been hospitalized, has upcoming surgery or is in need of our prayers, please call the church office so that Rev. Paul knows. Any updates to the prayer list are appreciated.

Summer Office Hours

Cindy

Monday & Tuesday 9AM-2PM
Or By Appointment 568-2833
fccwestfield@outlook.com

Rev. Paul

Monday-Tuesday by Appointment 568-2833
revpaulnesbit@gmail.com

Please call the church office 568-2833 or your Deacon if you need anything.





Special thanks to Nancy Condon for leading First Church Paddlers on the Connecticut River on Sunday June 21st.

Summer Coffee Hour Schedule

July 5th –Team #4

Jim Kinney, Dorothy Cichoski, Ann Mundy, Rick & Cindy Gaylord

July 12th—Team #5

Lori LaPlante, Michelle Winer, Mara Winer, Janice Longstreeth

July 19st –Team #6

Bob and Jenniifer Waldorf, Elizabeth and Al Cincotta, Nancy Condon, Anne Houlihan

July 26th—Team 7 & 8

Martha Roman, Alice Flyte, Julie Kraus, Nancy Chamberlin, Brad and Deb Alm, Carol Whalen, Joyce Bard, Michelle Downs, Karen Lajoie Martha Scavotto

Aug 2nd –Team #1

Bob Brownlee, Steve Pierce, Christina Pierce, Anne Gelinias.

Aug 9th Team #2

Tina Dunlop, Linda Hauk, Gwen Newton-Denton and Doug James.

Aug 16th Team #3

Gail Ives, Jim Yesu, Joyce Bard, Cindy D’Angelo, Cierra Lent

Aug 23rd Team # 4

Jim Kinney, Dorothy Cichoski, Ann Mundy, Rick & Cindy Gaylord

Aug 30th Worship in Southwick @ 11AM

The July 2026 Newsletter First Congregational Church of Westfield

18 Broad Street

Westfield, MA 01085

Office (413) 568-2833 Email :fccwestfield@outlook.com

wwwfirstcongregationalchurchwestfieldma.org

