

First Congregational Church of Westfield

The Newsletter October 2026



"For Everything There Is a Season: What Will We Grow in Ours?" *"For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven."*

— Ecclesiastes 3:1

Autumn surrounds us with reminders of change. The fruits of Summer become the harvest of Autumn. Trees release their leaves, drawing what they need inward toward their roots. And Winter, which can appear dormant, is not simply a season of waiting. Beneath the surface, life is conserving and strengthening; dormancy itself becomes a means of preparation for the Spring of rebirth that will come next.

Stewardship is our response to what God has entrusted to us, woven into every season of this same sacred rhythm.

Jesus often spoke about what God entrusted to us—seeds to scatter, talents to use, neighbors to love, gifts not to bury but to put to work. His challenge was never simply about what people possessed, but what they would do with what they had been given.

The same is true for our Faith Communities today. Nearly all we have, we have inherited from those who came before us. But inheritance alone is insufficient to create the future God envisions for the world. What we do with that inheritance—and what we ourselves bring to it—reveals something about what we believe is worth carrying forward and what we are willing to help become possible.

As followers of Jesus, we are called to look upon the world around us and, through discernment, continually ask what faithfulness requires of us here and now. We ask ourselves: Do we believe something is growing here, in this Faith Community? What is this Faith Community growing in the world? Do we want to be a part of it?

Then, we must ask ourselves what it means to be *fully* a part of it—to be the Body of Christ in this neighborhood, in the city of Westfield, and in the world today.

In this Season of Generosity, let us consider both the responsibility and the extraordinary possibility God has placed in our hands—what has been entrusted to this Body of Christ—and ask what we will do with it.

Peace and Grace,

Rev. Kristie

Family Ministries Newsletter October

The Family Ministries Committee is very busy planning activities for the Congregation and the Community. We started in September with a disc golf activity at Allen Tree Farm all were invited. We also sponsored a luncheon provided by Hamels Catering and game on September 27th.

The Family Ministries Committee will help with the reception for Amy Platts Remembrance Service on Sunday October. 4th at 1 PM

On October 24th from 2 – 4 PM we will host a Halloween Party. There will be games, tattoos, costume parade, goodies and more. **We Need Your Help!!!!!!** Please let Gail or Mara know if you can come and help with the activities. We are also asking for candy donations.

Looking forward to November we are sponsoring a Hockey Night to see the Thunderbirds on Friday November 6th. – Cost is \$19.00. Please talk to Michelle Winer or look for more details in the next newsletter.

Janet St. Jean has several Sunday school lessons prepared to use if any children come to Sunday Morning Service. She will need a helper if any children come. PLEASE let her know if you are willing to help.

There have been ongoing discussions about how to proceed with hiring a Family Ministries Director.

Gail Ives, Co-Chair



SPRINGFIELD THUNDERBIRDS



UNLOCK GROUP SAVINGS

Church outing at the Thunderdome!

First Congregational Church of Westfield

Cheer on the team as you welcome to
them onto the ice!



**Friday, November 6th
at 7:05pm**



**Secure your seat
by Oct. 3rd**

MGM presents:

413 Fridays
\$4 beers,
\$1 sodas,
\$3 hot dogs



**ADD ON
\$5 HAT**
(\$20 VALUE)



Brianna Carroll
Account Executive

(413) 417-2296

SpringfieldThunderbirds.com
@ThunderbirdsAHL

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affiliate
of the



October 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 in the church office 568-2833 or sign up after church.**

Westfield River Elementary School: Your World Service Committee is in touch with the school office to see what First 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 or Ray Salois who are the liaisons to Westfield River Elementary School.



HELO Haiti: World Service Committee has a new mailing address for Elisabeth Kennedy 35 Maplewood Road, Mansfield, CT 06268

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

This month we are highlighting Community Table (Soup Kitchen) and Westfield River Elementary School.

Community Table was started in Westfield by Bob Smith, Gary Johnson, Dick Hansen in 1986 on the Westfield Green. A card table was used, sandwiches and soup were served to all customers the group could find. The Westfield Community Table still serves those in need with dinner and fellowship each night of the week except Saturdays. First Congregational prepares a meal on the 4th Tuesday of the month plus World Service sends a donation each year.



Westfield River Elementary School: World Service Committee uses a Reimbursement system to help teachers with their classroom needs that are not covered by the school budget. This system works very well and is well documented for reimbursements.

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.

World service budget donations going out September 16th are: United Church of Christ, Salvation Army, Kinship, National Military Family Association.

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, Dorothy Cichonski, Jennifer Waldorf, Barbara James



First Congregational Church of Westfield

20 Broad Street Westfield, MA 568-2833

Friday October 2nd - 4PM-7PM

Saturday October 3rd 9AM-3PM



Trail Magic July 14, 2026

On July 14, Deb Alm, Julie Kraus, Ann Mundy, Gail Ives and Martha Roman along with two special guests, Martha's granddaughter Abby and Julie's Barry Bones, went to Sheffield, MA to man a Trail Magic site along the Appalachian Trail. Abby thoroughly enjoyed the experience of talking with the hikers and Barry made quite a hit, even being photographed by the hikers. To learn more about Barry – talk to Julie. He has quite the adventurous life. While

waiting for the hikers to arrive, or between visitors, we enjoyed a time of fellowship, some bird watching, looking up an interesting bug that joined us (it was an Eastern Eyed Click Beetle) and discussing world and local issues. First, a little background on the AT and Trail Magic.

The Appalachian Trail or the AT as it is known is an over 2,000-mile-long foot hike only trail running from Springer Mountain, GA to the top of Mt. Katadin, ME. Those starting in GA are north bound hikers, but some hikers choose to start in ME and are southbound hikers. One year we did have a southbound hiker who started when there was still deep snow on the ground in ME and NH. I'm sure you can understand why her trail name was Knee Deep. The AT crosses through 14 states and takes an average of 5 - 7 months to through hike. Hikers wear through at least three pairs of shoes during the hike. A tradition on the trail is that hikers don't use their real names but choose or are given a trail name. Hikers burn an average of 4,000 calories a day when hiking about 20 -25 miles per day. Hikers resupply through mail drops at points along the trail that they have previously arranged and also find convenience stores along the way by arranging a ride off the trail. This still leaves hikers tired and hungry. This is where Trail Magic comes in.

Along the trail at different points, some identified by word of mouth, identified on an app, others just a pleasant surprise along the trail, provide water and food for hikers. A Trail Magic may just be a cooler on the side of the trail with water and snacks or more robust like the one we worked at in Sheffield, MA.

When Paul began with us, he knew of this location and its coordinator, Jill Graham, a minister in the Sheffield area. Several churches in that area coordinate volunteer groups to man the location beginning in mid to late June to the beginning of August, Monday through Saturday from 9:45 – 3:00. Once FCC got on the volunteer list, we have been able to be at the site one day during that time each year. In addition to the days' time commitment, the other ask is that each group pay it forward by giving Jill gift cards to a local grocery store to restock the supplies. Thanks to the World Service Committee that has added this to their budget, \$200. to Big Y was gratefully accepted by Jill.

Our Trail Magic location is about .3 of a mile off the trail as it crosses into Sheffield, MA. We are located at the back of a farmer's field and hikers are greeted by a large structure made of birch logs and covered with a large tarp. This provides some shade for hikers to relax in. Other amenities are folding chairs with a back (a real treat for the hikers,) water to wash hands and cold water to refill water bottles and most important food! A grill is kept in the shed and Jill delivers a cooler stocked with hamburgers, hot dogs, veggie burgers, cheese, condiments, cold watermelon (another big treat) and iced tea, lemonade and soda that people have contributed. There are rolls for the food and both homemade treats volunteers provide and other snacks they can pack to take with them. We added gluten free cookies, thanks Deb, chocolate chip cookies, snacks and some soda. Ann also brought some frozen washcloths that were a real treat to help cool off the hikers. This well stocked location also includes chargers for phones, bug spray, bug nets, extra socks, small tubes of toothpaste and a few other items. The volunteers at the site know that there is no need to limit how much the hikers eat – this group put away 2 hot dogs, 6 hamburgers and a grilled cheese sandwich we were able to make, thanks to Julie's suggestion on how to make a grilled cheese on a gas grill

with hamburger rolls and cheese. And there is a trash bag for them to leave behind any trash they have accumulated since every ounce counts! In the 5 years we have been a part of this we have ranged from no guests to about 15 one year. This year we had 5 hikers visit us – each with an interesting story.

This year's hikers came from Texas, Utah, Washington, Georgia and Minnesota. Two of the trail names were AT, and Dreamer. There were 2 men and 3 women ranging in ages from their 50s to their 20s. Hikers have a variety of reasons for hiking the trail and these were all through hikers meaning they had started in GA, were 2/3 of the way through the trail and were all focused on completing the journey. The hikers didn't know each other when they started (a common thing along the trail) but had matched up at some point and the first 4 were continuing on together. This group were stepping off the trail in Great Barrington for a few days to visit with the friend of one of the hikers, rest up, restock and most importantly, take a shower. At one point on their journey, the son of the hiker from Texas joined him and they hiked together for a bit. An interesting time for father and son bonding. Many are considering career or job changes, using accumulated leave or given leave for the hike.

Dreamer arrived around lunchtime – hiking alone. Gail was particularly impressed with this woman's story and her incredible strength to continue on after an incident. Earlier on her journey, she was accidentally burned on her arm, leg and stomach by some scalding water. One of the other campers at the site was a nurse from Pakistan and quickly got Dreamer to a stream and kept pouring cold water on the burns. The next morning, she hiked out to a road with another hiker, found a ride to a medical center and had her burns treated. A friend of a friend was able to put her up for 11 days to allow the burns to heal a bit. She also stopped in NY to visit with her brother. This time off the trail separated her from the group she had been hiking with, but she was happy to see the nurse that had helped her had passed through this spot earlier so Dreamer knew she was still on track to complete the journey. Dreamer told us she got her trail name from some dreams she had that led her to hike the AT. Dreamer was from Utah, recently moved there from San Francisco and had worked as a dog walker/pet sitter.

One of the hikers shared some wisdom another hiker had said early on in their journey. The AT has three parts – the first is physical, the middle is mental and the last is spiritual. As hikers begin on the trail, their bodies need to adjust to the physical demands of the hike – hiking long distances each day, carrying heavy packs and being away from home. We've heard that parts of PA are particularly difficult, not the elevation of the hike but the sharp rocks that are the main part of the trail. One hiker shared that at the end of the day their feet feel bruised, but they head out to do it all again the next day. The middle part now requires the hiker to push through the long journey, stay focused on the goal and continue on their way. The last section has the goal in sight, they are more than 2/3 of the way, their bodies have adjusted to the physical part, and they have usually found kindred souls to help them in the journey. Why do people hike the AT? There is no one answer, but it comes down to 'Because I wanted to.'

Most of us will probably never take on a challenge like this in our lives. However, thinking about our own life, when was our life a physical challenge, a mental challenge and a spiritual journey. How can we prepare our bodies for the long journey, stay focused on our goals, meet up with kindred souls and reach the time that our lives are enriched by a spiritual journey?

Thank you for the opportunity to serve these hikers and pay it forward for the next group to do the same at the Trail Magic.

Matha Roman

Organ Re-dedication

On Sunday, October 25 at 3:00 pm



Organists Scott Bailey and Allan Taylor will present a recital to mark the completion of the organ renovation project. The concert is open to the public, and will last about an hour followed by a reception in the Dining Room. The music will demonstrate all of the amazing sounds of our beautiful and unique instrument.

September Special Congregational Meeting Results

On September 20, 2026, 53 members attended a special congregational meeting to discuss and vote on how the church should proceed in its search for a new pastor.

The vote results were:

- 4 VOTES I WISH TO CONTINUE TO PARTNER WITH SOUTHWICK
- 49 VOTES I WISH TO SEARCH FOR A FULL-TIME SETTLED MINISTER FOR FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH

Stay tuned for the dedication of the Search Committee

First Congregational Church of Westfield



Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
				1 10-2 Blessed Buys 12:15 Food Truck	2 4-7 PM Rummage Sale	3 9-3 Rummage Sale 10-2 Blessed Buys
4 Communion Sunday 9:30AM Worship Service 10:15 AM Fellowship 1PM Remembering Amy	5 12:15 Food Truck	6	7	8 10-2 Blessed Buys 12:15 Food Truck	9	10 10-2 Blessed Buys
11 9:30AM Worship Service 10:15 AM Fellowship	12 12:15 Food Truck	13 7PM Church Council	14	15 10-2 Blessed Buys 12:15 Food Truck	16	17 10-2 Blessed Buys
18 9:30AM Worship Service 10:15 AM Fellowship	19 12:15 Food Truck	20	21	22 10-2 Blessed Buys 12:15 Food Truck	23	24 10-2 Blessed Buys 2-4PM Halloween Party
25 9:30AM Worship Service 10:15 AM Fellowship	26 12:15 Food Truck	27 3-5:30 PM Soup Kitchen	28	29 10-2 Blessed Buys 12:15 Food Truck	30	31 10-2 Blessed Buys

STEWARDSHIP MOMENTS

What is Stewardship?

Peter 4:10 Like good Stewards of the manifold grace of God, serve one another with whatever gift each of you has received.

Stewardship is defined as using Time, Talents and Treasure for God's Will to be done on Earth. Let's think about TREASURE!

God said, "For where ever your heart is, there your treasure will be also" (Matthew 6:21.

Whatever our passions are reveals what our treasure is and how we use it.

We all have Treasures but we may not be sure how to use them. Praying with others may help us to identify how God wants us to use them. The extent of our earthly items which may include money, can be enormous. Talking with God in prayer may help you to identify and use your treasures.

You may choose to donate your Treasures to an organization such as your church, local food pantry, or other organization that promotes God's will and your desire to do God's will.

Treasure can be used in some of the following ways:

- Sharing your Treasure by giving your earthly items to others who are mentally and/or physically in need.
- Donating money or items that could help other people feel God's love and caring through you.
- Donating to your church, food pantry, shelters for homeless are just a few places you could use your Treasure. Pray for God to lead you.

God Bless you all

Stewardship Committee: Ray Salois, Ken Longstreeth, Jennifer Barkyoub



Blessed Buys
Thrift Shoppe
Fall SALE
18 Broad Street (Lower Level)
Westfield Ma
Open Thursdays and Saturdays 10AM-2PM
A Mission of First Congregational Church of Westfield

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