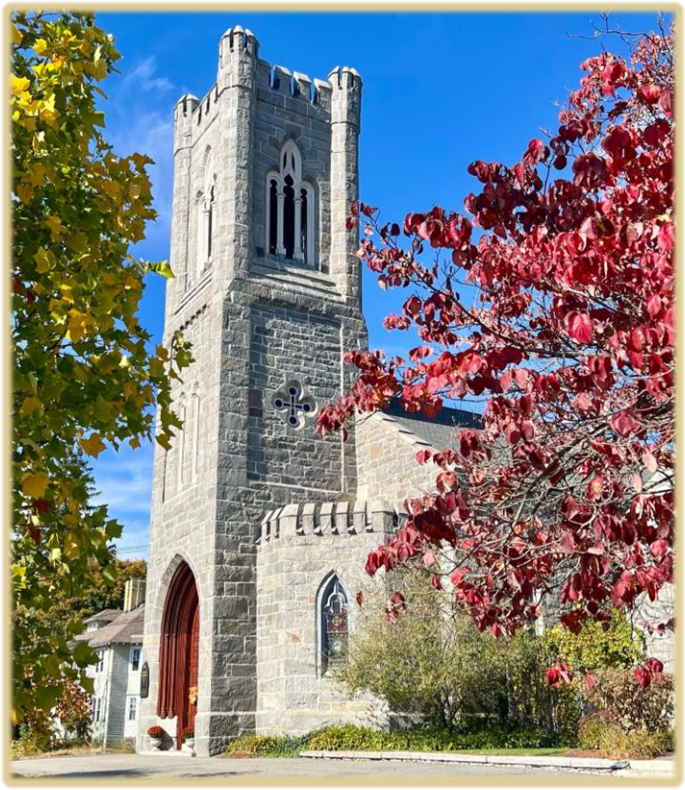


Thanksgiving Donations
for the Tuesday NIN Food Pantry
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NOVEMBER 2026



THE BEACON



First Church Congregational
United Church of Christ
26 Pleasant Street
Methuen, MA 01844-3199
Telephone: (978) 687-1240

Mike Boutin, Minister of Music
boutinerjr@gmail.com

Roberta Jurovich, Office Manager
firstchurch.roberta@gmail.com

www.firstchurchmethuen.com

Worship on Sundays at 10:00 AM
In person & on YouTube Live

* *

More than Musical Musings

As November arrives, I find myself reflecting on how much has been happening in the life of First Church, and how grateful I am to be part of this remarkable community of faith.

These past several weeks have been particularly busy as my responsibilities have expanded beyond our music ministry to include worship planning, preaching, pastoral care, and helping coordinate the many activities that make First Church such a vibrant congregation. It has been both a privilege and a joy to serve in these ways during this time of transition. I am especially grateful to our Deacons, church leadership, musicians, and so many others who have offered their encouragement, support, and willingness to lend a hand. Ministry, after all, is never something we do alone.

And what a busy autumn it has been! Our Blessing of the Pets was a wonderful opportunity to celebrate the special place animals hold in our lives and to welcome neighbors into our church community. Our Ham and Bean Dinner was another tremendous success, bringing people together around good food, warm conversation, and the generous efforts of so many volunteers. These gatherings remind us that some of the most meaningful expressions of church happen beyond Sunday morning worship.

Of course, this season has also brought moments of sadness and remembrance. As we prepare for All Saints Sunday, I find myself thinking especially of Anne Benedix and Marilyn Peck, two beloved members of our First Church family whose lives and contributions have left a lasting imprint on our congregation. Each, in her own way, embodied the faithfulness, generosity, and commitment that make this community what it is today. Marilyn's devotion to our choir and the Organ Restoration Fund, in particular, reflected her deep love for this church, its music, and its people. Both women remind us that the life of a church is built upon the countless gifts of those who have gone before us.

It seems especially fitting, then, that November begins with All Saints Sunday on November 1, when we will remember and celebrate those whose lives have shaped our own. This year, we are creating an *ofrenda*, inspired by the beautiful Mexican tradition of Día de los Muertos (Day of the Dead). Our remembrance table will feature photographs, candles, marigolds, and other symbols of love and memory. It will be a place to remember Anne and Marilyn, along with the many other loved ones whose presence continues to be felt in our lives and in the life of First Church.

I invite everyone to bring photographs of family members, friends, and other beloved people who have died. Please put your name and contact information on the back of each photograph so it can be returned. Our ofrenda will remain in the sanctuary through November 22, offering a visible reminder of the lives and relationships that continue to shape our community.

This is not simply an opportunity to remember those we have lost. It is an invitation to celebrate the ways their lives continue to influence ours—the wisdom they shared, the love they offered, the laughter we remember, and the countless ways they helped make us who we are.

Later in the month, on Sunday, November 22, First Church will host Methuen's Interfaith Thanksgiving Service, a particularly meaningful occasion during our city's 300th anniversary year. We will welcome neighbors from across our community and from different faith traditions to give thanks together. Music will play a central role in the celebration, including the world premiere of *Autumn Prelude*, a new work by composer Katie Lind, commissioned especially for this occasion and scored for three trumpets, timpani, violin, oboe, harp, and organ. As part of the service, we will present the Mayor of Methuen with a signed copy of the score to be preserved in the City's Archives, ensuring that this musical tribute becomes a lasting part of Methuen's history. Along with our choir and congregational singing, this promises to be a memorable celebration of gratitude, unity, and the rich heritage of our community.

Thanksgiving invites us to consider what it really means to count our blessings. Certainly, we give thanks for family, friendship, health, and the comforts of daily life. But gratitude also asks us to recognize blessings we might otherwise overlook: the kindness of a stranger, the generosity of a neighbor, a familiar hymn, the quiet strength of someone facing difficulty, or the simple gift of belonging to a community that cares.
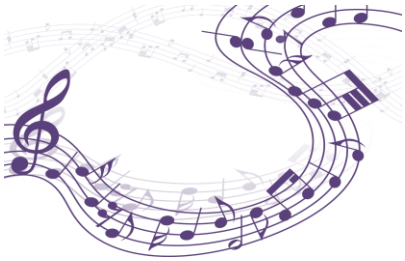
And perhaps the most meaningful expression of gratitude is what we do with it. When we recognize how richly we have been blessed, we are called to become a blessing to others. Every week, our church's ministries remind us that gratitude is more than a feeling. It is something we put into action through generosity, compassion, hospitality, and service.

As we move through this season of remembrance and thanksgiving, I hope we will take time not only to remember the blessings of the past but also to recognize the blessings unfolding around us today.

Whose life are you especially grateful for? And how might your own life become a blessing to someone else?

With gratitude,

Mike Boutin
Minister of Music



* *



Special Worship Opportunities in November

- **November 1st – *Twenty-third Sunday after Pentecost – All Saints Sunday (Remembrance of the Dead), Service of Word and Sacrament, Stewardship Sunday***
  - Leader: Mike Boutin, Minister of Music
  - We will build an altar with pictures of our deceased loved ones.
  - Stewardship Season begins at First Church with theme *"Practicing Generosity Together."*
  - Lessons: Ephesians 1: 11-23 and Luke 6: 20-31

- **November 8th – *Twenty-fourth Sunday after Pentecost – Stewardship Sunday***
  - Leader: Rev. Mark Allman
  - Lessons: 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 and Matthew 25:1-13

- **November 15th – *Twenty-fifth Sunday after Pentecost – Stewardship Sunday, Pledge Dedication in Worship***
  - Leader: Mike Boutin, Minister of Music
  - Stewardship Luncheon following service
  - Lessons: 1 Thessalonians 5:1-11 and Matthew 25:14-30

- **November 22nd, 10:00 AM – *Twenty-fourth Sunday after Pentecost – Reign of Christ, Thanksgiving Sunday observed***
  - Leader: Mike Boutin, Minister of Music
  - Lessons: Ezekiel 34:11-16, 20-24 and Matthew 25:31-46

- **November 22nd, 2:00 PM – *Community Thanksgiving Service***
  - Join this interfaith gathering, here at First Church, sponsored by the Methuen Clergy Group and underwritten through a generous grant from the Castle Fund. Music presented by the combined choirs of area churches, featuring a special music commission by composer, Katie Lind. Offering and food gifts will be given to Neighbors-in-Need Tuesday Night Methuen Food Pantry.

- **November 29th – First Sunday of Advent – *Lighting of the Candle of Hope***
  - Leader: Mike Boutin, Minister of Music
  - Lessons: Isaiah 64:1-9 and Mark 13:24-37



Sunday Worship
10:00 AM
We hope you will join us!

We like to see you in the congregation on Sunday mornings, but for those who cannot attend in person, worship will be broadcast each Sunday, at 10:00 AM, on YouTube Live (www.youtube.com/@firstchurchcongregationalm1729).

An Order of Worship will be emailed out by the Friday before the service. If you do not receive this email, please let the church office know at firstchurch.roberta@gmail.com.

* *

Weekly Bulletin Prayer List

We print a Prayer List within each Sunday Worship bulletin. To have someone included on the bulletin prayer list, please let Roberta, in the Church Office, know by emailing her at firstchurch.roberta@gmail.com. Thank you.

If you, or someone you know, is in need of a pastoral visit, please contact Mike Boutin or the church office at 978-687-1240.

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FCC Breakfast with Friends

Our next ***FCC Breakfast with Friends*** will be held on Wednesday, November 11th, at 8:00 AM. Join a group of friends from First Church Congregational at Ellie's Farmhouse, 436 Broadway in Methuen, to enjoy conversation and breakfast.

All are welcome to this fellowship time. No reservation needed.



Breakfast Group from October

Methuen Community Thanksgiving Service

in Honor of the 300th Birthday of the City of Methuen

Date: Sunday, November 22nd

Time: 2:00 PM

Place: First Church Congregational, UCC

26 Pleasant Street, Methuen

Leaders: Methuen Area Clergy

Rev. Nathaniel Burnes, First Baptist Church
Fr. Marcos Peňa, St. Lucy & St. Monica Parish
Rev. Eleanor Prior, St. Andrew's Episcopal Church
Rev. Gregory Vozzo, St. Theresa's Church, Our Lady of Good Counsel Parish
Rev. Peter Gori, OSA, St. Augustine, Andover

Music presented by the combined choirs of area churches

featuring a special music commission by composer, Katie Lind

Contact Mike Boutin, FCC Director of Music, to participate at boutinerjr@gmail.com



Offering will go the Neighbors in Need Food Pantry.

You may also bring these non-perishable items: Peanut Butter, Tuna Fish, Shelf Stable Milk

If you have any questions, please call First Church Congregational at 978-687-1240

Sponsored by the Methuen Clergy Association
Underwritten through a generous grant from the Castle Fund

Greetings from the Chair of the Church Board…

As autumn brings fresh colors to our community, October brought its own reminders of the warmth, generosity, and shared purpose that make First Church special. On October 3rd, our volunteers welcomed our neighbors and shared the story of our church at Methuen Day. The very next day, we celebrated World Communion Sunday together and hosted our second annual Blessing of the Animals. This past Saturday, we welcomed 188 of our members, friends, and neighbors to our annual Ham & Bean Dinner. Thank you to Carol Sanborn, Becky Smith, Mike Boutin, Josh Ferry, and everyone else who gave generously of their time and talents to make these events such a success.

Alongside these joyful gatherings, we have also shared in sorrow. Over the past few months, we have lost two of our most beloved friends and devoted members, Anne Benedix and Marilyn Peck. Anne and Marilyn gave selflessly of their time and talents to support the ministries of our church, and both will be sorely missed. Please continue to keep Anne's and Marilyn's families in your prayers.

Our church is also navigating a transition in pastoral leadership. Since Rev. Ann's farewell on September 27th, Mike Boutin has stepped forward to lead worship and provide pastoral care. Mike will continue to lead the choir and our music program with support from Kathy Romano at the organ. Beginning on October 25th, Rev. Mark Allman will lead worship for us on four music-filled Sundays through the end of the year. I am deeply grateful to Mike, Mark, Kathy Romano and our Deacons for the care and creativity they have brought to worship during this season.

In recognition of Mike's expanded role, the Board approved an arrangement for Mike and Rich to make our parsonage their home. Over the next six months, the church will make long-overdue improvements to the parsonage, including updates to its kitchen and bathrooms. Once the work is complete, Mike and Rich will rent the parsonage at a discounted rate, providing the church with a modest source of income and ensuring that this important property is well cared for in the years ahead. We are excited to welcome Mike and Rich to the neighborhood.

Looking ahead, our search for pastoral leadership has taken an important step forward. With guidance from Rev. Katie Omberg, our Area Conference Minister, we have completed our profile for a Designated Term Minister. Thanks to Sue Newton's efforts, our profile was approved by the UCC and is now posted on the UCC Ministry Opportunities website. Our profile focuses on three priorities: preparing First Church for its next settled pastor, strengthening our Christian Education and family ministries, and deepening our connections with the wider community. In keeping with those priorities, we have also begun recruiting a Part-Time Minister for Children, Youth & Families from local seminaries.

To support these ministries and other church priorities, we continue to pursue grants. In September, we submitted our application for a Congregational Assessment, Support and Advancement (CASA) grant with an endorsement from Rev. Katie Omberg. We also have grant applications pending for security upgrades, solar panels, a community arts program, and restoration of our organ.

Alongside these grants, we are planning for the care and accessibility of our historic building. Our Trustees are scheduling a building envelope assessment with Building Envelope Technologies to help us plan for our church's long-term maintenance and restoration needs. We are also exploring a safer and more accessible ramp at the back entrance of the parish hall to support our weekly food pantry. I thank Bob and Sue Newton for their willingness to help fund this improvement. To help more people connect with First Church, Roberta has refreshed our website with content highlighting baptisms, funerals, and weddings. We are also developing a new page on our website to promote rentals of our hall.

There are many more opportunities to serve and gather in the weeks ahead. Our Outreach team is collecting gently used children's clothing through November 8th for the Methuen YMCA's My Kids Closet. Our weekly food pantry also offers a meaningful way to serve, and we welcome anyone who can lend a hand on Tuesday evenings to help our neighbors put food on the table. Please reach out to Sue Newton if you are interested in joining the team.

Please also mark your calendars for our Interfaith Thanksgiving service on Sunday, November 22nd, at 2:00 PM. The service will celebrate Methuen's 300th anniversary. During the service, we will present Methuen's mayor with a signed copy of the score for *Autumn Prelude,* a new piece by local composer Katie Lind commissioned for the occasion. We expect this will be a joyous and memorable event for our community.

As we serve our wider community, let us also continue to care for one another. Please let a member of our Diaconate or REACH team know of anyone who is ill, grieving, or could benefit from a card, phone call, or text message. Please also feel free to reach out to me or any other member of the Church Board with your questions, feedback, or ideas. We would love to hear from you.

Thank you for all that you do in service to God, our church, and our community.

Steve Boyko

* *



Are you interested in learning more about First Church and becoming a member? Did you become an associate member or friend of First Church and want to become a full member?

We are delighted to invite new members into our life here at First Church. If you have interest in becoming a member, please speak to Becky Smith or any other member of the diaconate. We will provide an orientation to membership after church, at a future date to be determined.

Here are the ways (according to our church bylaws) you can be received: Full Active Member, Associate Member or Friend of First Church. You may come into membership by affirmation of faith, reaffirmation of faith, letter of transfer or confirmation. Membership registration forms are available in the rear of the sanctuary or the "crossroads" near the church office. Please, don't hesitate to contact Becky or one of our Deacons for more info!

* *

Are you in need of support? Maybe you are ill or need somebody to talk to or would like a card or text message. Please don't hesitate to reach out and let us know. You can contact Becky Smith (chair of the diaconate), Judi Boyko or Pat King (the REACH team), Mike Boutin (Minister of Music).



You can also call the church office and Roberta (our office manager) will let Becky, Judi, Pat or Mike know. And if you call after office hours, do not hesitate to use the answering service to leave a message. They will ensure that the church is notified and we will follow up with you.

We Are the Church!

As we enter this season of Thanksgiving—yes, already! Can you believe it?!—I think we could all benefit from a moment of stillness to reflect and give thanks for the many blessings God has placed in our lives.

Thanksgiving is a special time when we gather around tables with family and friends, share meals, remember cherished memories and traditions, and count the gifts that make our lives rich. We give thanks for the people we love, have loved and lost, the communities that sustain us, and the countless ways God's presence touches our lives, often in ways we may not even recognize or even accept.

Thanksgiving also invites us to look beyond our own tables and consider how we live out our gratitude as people of faith. It reminds us that we are the church all the time—not just for an hour on Sunday morning. Our faith is not something we practice only within the walls of our church building. It is something we carry with us into our homes, our workplaces, our neighborhoods, and every interaction we have with others.

So, how can we accept this invitation?

Perhaps it begins with making room for a little more stillness in our busy lives. For me, this season often quickly becomes a whirlwind of shopping, cooking, traveling, decorating, and preparing for the holidays ahead– especially within the church. In the midst of it all, I can easily become focused on my own to-do lists and daily struggles. Even on Sundays we may overlook the person who needs a listening ear, the person who could use a helping hand, or the brand new visitor who simply needs a smile or a kind word. We need to be the church even when the rest of the world distracts us.

Taking time to pause, pray, and reflect can help us recenter our hearts on what matters most. An opportunity for this is our upcoming Interfaith Thanksgiving service when the voices of our choir will join with those of other community churches for an afternoon of reflection and wonderful music. When we recognize the blessings in our own lives, we may become more aware of the needs of those around us. I always feel this deeply when our Thanksgiving Food Drive comes around. Gratitude has a way of opening our eyes, softening our hearts, and reminding us that we are called to share the love we have so freely received. We can also be sure to participate in Stewardship month which, with our pledging contribution, gives our church the resources it needs to help the broader community, and take care of our own church family.

Of course, being the church together is not limited to celebrations, concerts, or service projects. Some of our most meaningful moments as a community come when we experience loss. When a member, especially a long time member, of our church dies, we feel the absence in ways both large and small. We may miss a familiar face in the pew, a particular voice raised in song, a friendly greeting at the door, or a quiet act of kindness that we once took for granted. We remember the stories, the laughter, the conversations, and the ways that person helped shape our shared life. Grief reminds us that a congregation is not simply a collection of individuals who happen to worship in the same place, it is a community and a family with whom we can relate and encourage, and for that I am so truly grateful.

I think the most beautiful thing is that living out our gratitude doesn't have to involve grand gestures or elaborate plans. Sometimes, it looks like checking in on a friend, inviting someone to share a meal, offering forgiveness, volunteering our time for a church dinner, or simply choosing patience and

kindness when life feels overwhelming. As Mike preached last month, it can also mean making space at our tables—and in our lives—for people who might otherwise feel forgotten or alone.

As a church community, we have so many opportunities to put our faith into action. Clothing and Book Drives, Food Drives, Diaper Drives. Every act of compassion, every word of encouragement, and every effort to welcome someone who may feel like an outsider reflects God's love in the world. These small, everyday expressions of faith are part of what makes the church more than a building. They make the church a living, breathing community of people seeking to love God and love their neighbors.

This Thanksgiving season, I hope we give ourselves -and others- permission to slow down, take a deep breath, and notice the goodness that is all around us. May we offer heartfelt thanks for the blessings we have received while remaining mindful of those who may be struggling, grieving, or facing this season with uncertainty. And may our gratitude inspire us to do more than count our blessings—to share them.

As we gather around our own tables this season, let us also remember the wider table God invites us to create: the one with room for generosity, compassion, understanding, and welcome. May we carry the spirit of Thanksgiving with us long after the leftovers are gone and the holiday decorations are put away.

After all, gratitude is more than a feeling. It is a way of living, a response to God's abundant love, and an invitation to be the church wherever we go.

So, accept Thanksgiving's invitation to really examine how we show our gratitude, and to live that- because even in the busiest moments and seasons of our lives: ***We Are the Church***.

Carol Sanborn
Membership Development & Communications Committee



Stewardship Ministry Team…

PRACTICING GENEROSITY TOGETHER*…* is the theme for our Stewardship pledge campaign this year. It is gratifying to realize how generous our church members are with our time, talent, and treasure. During our three campaign Sundays in November, we will give Stewardship Moments on our generosity, our finances and a sermon on how we are generous and why it matters. On the last Sunday of the campaign, we will all bring our pledges forward to be received and blessed during the worship service, after which we will enjoy our Chicken Pot Pie dinner in celebration together.

IT WILL TAKE ALL OF OUR PLEDGES TO PRACTICE GENEROSITY

Currently member pledges cover approximately 59% of our budget with the balance coming from endowments and the Chapel School pledge. Inflation as well as rising costs in areas such as staff expenses, utilities, and property maintenance will continue to impact us again in the coming year. We do not have a paid Christian Education Director, and our committee funding is tight. It is important to consider how much we can gain by pledging our annual support. We must all carefully reflect on our annual pledge and how we will strongly support our call to ***Practice Generosity Together*** for the future of our church.

This year's pledge materials have been mailed to your home. If you do not receive yours soon, please contact the church office or a member of the Stewardship Team and we will send it to you. We will celebrate with a luncheon following worship on November 16 which will include the chicken pot pie meal that we have provided monthly for Bread and Roses. We will celebrate ***Practicing Generosity Together!***

Kathy Romano
Stewardship Ministry Team Leader



The Stewardship Ministry Team

cordially invites you to a luncheon

following worship

on

Sunday, November 15, 2026

Come join us as we share a meal together,
prepared by our group that cooks
the Chicken Pot Pie for Bread & Roses each week,
and give thanks for all God's promises and blessings
to us at First Church!



Christian Education Committee

Hello everyone!

All is going well with the youth. Sunday School has been busy, and it was great to see all the youth helping out at the dinner. Fun times.

We will be having a Ladies Craft Evening which Mrs. B will run. Our craft is planned. Please speak to Lori Bennett if you are interested so we can get a date on the calendar.

Blessings, *Lori*

Sunday School Lessons:

- Nov 1st – Matthew 5:1-12
- Nov 8th – Matthew 25:1-13
- Nov 15th – Matthew 25 :4-30
- Nov 29th – Mark 13:24–37
- Dec 6th – Mark 1:1–8
- Dec 13th – Cantata Sunday, ***No Sunday School***
- Dec 20th – Luke 1:26–38

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Gifts to the Manger

This year's ***Gifts to the Manger***, as last year, will be delivered to Methuen Arlington Neighborhood (MAN) Inc. and they will be given to about 150 children in the MAN program. There will be a designated box for your gifts at the Crossroads.

Please bring your unwrapped gift(s), for children between the ages of 8 and 17, to the church on:

- **Sundays 11/22, 11/29, & 12/6, before or after worship (10:00 – 11:00 AM)**
- **Weekdays until 12/4, from 9:00 AM to 1:30 PM.**

Go to the parking lot door, ring the bell and we will meet you at the door.

MAN will also accept wrapping paper, ribbon, bows, and tape.

Whatever you can help with will be appreciated.

The gifts, and other items, will be delivered in time for MAN parents to wrap the gifts for their children. Thank you in advance for your donations. These kids are wonderful children and really appreciate what they receive.



From the Outreach Ministry Team

Fall "Let's Book It!" Board Book Drive

On Wednesday, October 14th, 174 books were delivered to the Methuen Public Schools Early Childhood Center by the Outreach Team. Kelly Blanchette, the ECC special education administrator received the books with some of her staff. They enjoyed viewing the donations and expressed their thanks enthusiastically. Thank you to everyone from First Church who helped make this project a success!

Clothing Drive for YMCA My Kids Closet

The fall clothing drive began on October 11th and will run through **November 8th**. This program will help stock the Methuen YMCA's My Kids Closet. We are collecting "gently used" clothes for children wearing sizes 2T up through adult small and medium. Please place your bags of clothes in front of the clothing drive display in the sanctuary. Please share this news with family and friends who may have children who have outgrown clothing and are looking to donate them. If you have questions, please speak with Team Leaders Carole or John Silva.

Samaritans of Merrimack Valley Walk for Hope

The 2026 Samaritans Walk for Hope took place on **Saturday, October 24th** at **The Park on Chestnut Street in Andover.** Walkers from First Church included Becky Smith and Cindy Bateson. Together they raised $400. Thank you to all who donated. The Samaritans Program is part of the Family Services of Merrimack Valley. They strive to reduce the incidence of suicide through prevention training, support groups and educational programming with youth and adults. You can learn more at www.fsmv.org . Please remember and pass on that **988** is the suicide lifeline phone number.

Neighbors in Need Thanksgiving Food Pantry

Thanksgiving is fast approaching, and we will once again be collecting food and money donations. All the details are in the special flyer printed in this Beacon newsletter on the next page so please refer to that for more information. Food donations can be brought to church on Saturday, November 21st, from 10:00 AM - 12:00 PM, or Sunday, November 22nd, from 9:00 AM - 12:00 PM.

Outreach Ministry Team

Cindy Bateson, Team Leader, *Lori Bennett, Jo-Ann Crosby, Ken Peck, Marie Rubino, Carole Silva, John Silva,* and *Becky Smith*





Thanksgiving Food Pantry
for Neighbors in Need
2026

We need your help! We currently have 400 families coming to our Neighbors in Need (NIN) Tuesday Evening Food Pantry each week. These families need as much food as we can donate. **We are asking you to select the grocery items you choose to donate from the following shopping list. The food will be distributed on Tuesday, November 24th, in addition to the food NIN provides that day.**

You may bring your donations on **Sunday, November 22nd**, before or after the worship service (10:00 AM), and place them on the tables against the wall in the Parish Hall. **We will also accept donations on Saturday, November 21st,from 10:00 AM to 12:00 NOON.** If you would prefer to donate money instead of shopping, you can mail a check to First Church Congregational, 26 Pleasant Street, Methuen, MA 01844, **or** you can drop it off in an envelope marked ***"Thanksgiving Food Pantry"*** at church weekdays (9:00 AM to 2:00 PM) or before or after worship on Sunday mornings. **Deadline for donations is Sunday, November 22nd at 12:00 NOON.**

Shopping List

- **Cranberry Sauce**
- **Gravy**
- **Stuffing Mix**
- **Quick Bread Mixes**
- **Brownie Mixes**
- **Canned Vegetables** – *Corn, Green Beans, Peas, or Carrots*
- **Canned Beans** – *any variety*
- **Canned Fruit** – *Pineapple, Peaches, Pears, etc.*



- **Canned Soup**
- **Macaroni & Cheese**
- **Pasta & Pasta Sauce** (cans)
- **1 or 2 lb. Bags of Rice**
- **Instant/Dehydrated Mashed Potatoes Mix**
- **Festive Extras, Holiday Napkins**
- **Any other non-perishable food items you wish to donate**

Thanksgiving Donation for Neighbors in Need

(Print) Name: _____

Donation: $15 _____ $25 _____ $35_____ $50_____ other $ _____

*Please make your check payable to **"First Church Congregational"**, write **"Thanksgiving Food Pantry"** on the memo line and return no later than Sunday, November 22nd. Thank you!*

Thank you.
The Outreach Ministry Team

Walking Group for Fitness and Fellowship

Tuesdays in November

Come enjoy the last of the fall leaves on a relaxing walk along the Merrimack River. We walk at the Raymond J. Martin Riverside Park at 971 Riverside Drive in Methuen, on a safe, flat looped walkway. We will be walking on the following Tuesdays at 10:00 AM: 11/3, 11/10, 11/17, and 11/24. Hope you can join us!













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Prayer Shawl Ministry



The Prayer Shawl Ministry meets year-round and always welcomes anyone who wishes to be part of this ministry. Knitting or crocheting experience is not a prerequisite to becoming a member. Come for the fellowship and someone will be glad to help you if needed. Please contact Bobbi Barlow for more information.

If you, or someone you know, would like a prayer shawl, please contact the church office at firstchurch.roberta@gmail.com and you will be contacted by someone from the Prayer Shawl Ministry.

*We invite you to join us on **Wednesdays from 1:00 - 3:00 PM**,*
in the parlor of First Church Congregational.

Note: There will be no Prayer Shawl on Wednesday, November 25th,
due to the Thanksgiving Holiday.

* *



The Chapel School

This will be our 4th year participating in Treats for Troops and we hope to collect a TON of candy! We cannot thank you all enough for your donations. The children will color some Veterans pictures, and we will send those along with the candy.

We are all very excited for the Festival of Trees this year. This is the 33rd year for the festival and Chapel's 30th year decorating a tree. Our theme this year is "A Day on The Farm," Tree set up is almost complete and will open to the public on November 21st – Dec. 5th. You can check out all the details at www.methuenfestivaloftrees.com

We are already planning our yummy Turkey Day feast with the children. We will have it on Monday and Tuesday, November 23rd and 24th. We changed the menu last year to be more kid friendly and will continue with that menu again this year!

The school will have a 1/2 day on Wednesday. November 25th. We will close at 11:30 AM. We will then be closed on Thursday and Friday to celebrate the Thanksgiving holiday weekend with our loved ones.

The Mitten Tree will be filling up again during the month of December. All the donations of mittens, hats and scarves will be delivered to the Methuen Public Schools Family Resource Center. The staff will distribute items to children in need. Working together both Fist Church and Chapel School help pay it forward to those who need it the most.

Staying healthy is our number one priority. We need to continue to take care of ourselves, eat healthy and get plenty of sleep so that we can all enjoy the Holidays with our family and friends.

Gina Colarusso
Director



The Chapel School

We will be participating in a candy collection to send to our Soldiers overseas.



Let's make them feel like kids in a candy store!







Did you get candy that your child is allergic to?

Did your child collect so much candy and you don't want it in your house?

Did you not get as many trick-or-treaters as you thought and have bags of candy left over?

We will be collecting candy from Monday, November 2nd – Friday, November 6th

Bring your donations to the school office.

We are excited to see how much we can send!

If you have any questions, please feel free to reach out to the school office at chapelschoolmethuen@gmail.com.

TREATS FOR TROOPS

https://soldiersangels.org/volunteer/special-campaigns/treats-for-troops/

Blessing of the Animals

Saturday, October 4th









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On Wednesday, October 14th, The Outreach Ministry Team delivered 174 books to the Methuen Public Schools Early Childhood Center from our ***"Let's Book It"*** Book Drive.

Thank you to everyone who helped make this project a success!

Ham & Bean Dinner

Saturday, October 17th

October 17th was an amazing night at First Church Congregational. We welcomed and served 188 guests from our community!

As guests entered the Parish Hall there were royal purple tablecloths on each table, accented by gold placemats and napkin-wrapped silverware bundles wrapped by our Prayer Shawl Group. Centerpieces were wonderful Autumn themed crafts made by the students of Chapel Preschool.

Our host Tom McGuirk, assisted by Lori Bennett, took our guests' tickets and gave them their table assignments. Their wait staff greeted them, took their beverage order and invited them to go to the buffet table. If anyone needed assistance through the buffet line, they were helped by Bobbi B.

The buffet table offered fresh green salad, potato salad, coleslaw, baked beans, macaroni & cheese, hot dogs, baked ham, brown bread and rolls & butter. These were served by Scott S., Sue N., Bob N., Christine B., Bella B, and Matt C. Since this dinner is a buffet, guests were free to go back for seconds.

All this delicious food was prepared by Chef Carol S. and her kitchen team of Josh F., Sue R. Rich R., and Lisa F. Carol's team was assisted by Jason C., who ran the dishwasher, and Stacey M. and Pat W., who washed the pots and pans. One of the features of this dinner is we use real dishes and silverware, not plastic ones.

Our wait staff consisted of youth as young as age 7 and adults as old as, well we'll not say. They were Judi B., Kathy R., Henry S., Lexi M., Caroline C., Shauna C., Kathleen, Becky S., Jo C., and Amy D.. Their bus person was Scott S., but everyone pitched in and made it such a success!

When guests finished their meal, their wait staff cleared the table and invited them to have dessert of an ice cream sundae, with or without whipped cream and hot fudge. Our beverage and dessert table was manned by Sheila D. and Rena C..

Pat K. and Teri P. sold tickets that night and reported we sold 188 tickets. We were thrilled to have so much enthusiasm and support from our greater community. Once we have tallied our ticket receipts and expenses, we'll let you know how much we made.

Allan B. was our Trustee on duty who helped operate the wheelchair ramp when it was needed. With the passing of our beloved Marilyn P., our Front of the House Coordinator job was taken care of by many people who stepped in when help was needed. Her presence was still felt that entire evening in all of the heartfelt welcome and volunteer work. Our own photographer, Ming L., took lots of pictures, some of which you will undoubtedly see in this issue of The Beacon.

Team Leader Carol S. wants to thank all our volunteers who helped with a variety of tasks and without whom we could not host this dinner. Our Parish Hall was filled with our church family and their friends, as well as members of the surrounding communities. A special evening of fellowship and good food was enjoyed by everyone!

If this article sounds like it was written by Marilyn, that's because it was. Due to her incredible dedication to our church, we were able to refer to an entire binder filled with all of the responsibilities and information needed to run a successful Ham and Bean dinner. We are so incredibly grateful to her

and her years of service to our wonderful church. She continues to be a blessing to us even now, and we are so honored to continue her legacy through these spectacular events. We love and miss her terribly.

Carol Sanborn
Ham & Bean Dinner Leader

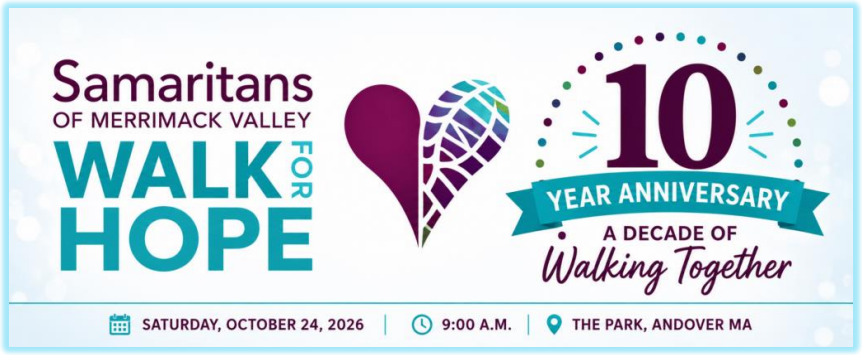














Thank you to our FCC walkers, Becky Smith and Cindy Bateson.









On October 25th, Rev. Mark Allman and the FCC Diaconate Welcomed 2 New Members –

Emile "Mike" R. Boutin, Jr. and Richard Rolón.





* *



Children's Moment with Rev. Allman

Sunday, October 25th





Rejoice and Come Home…

Advent & Christmas 2026

First Church Congregational

Methuen, MA

Sunday, November 29th:

10:00 AM – Worship – *1st Sunday of Advent (Hope)* – ***"Keep Awake"***
Scripture Readings: Isaiah 64:1-9 and Mark 13:24-37

Sunday, December 6th:

10:00 AM – Worship – *2nd Sunday of Advent (Peace)* – ***"Prepare the Way"*** ~ *Communion, Service of Confirmation, Gifts to the Manger*
Scripture Readings: Isaiah 40:1-11 and Mark 1:108

Sunday, December 13th:

10:00 AM – Worship – *3rd Sunday of Advent (Joy)* – ***"Good News for All"*** ~ *Advent Cantata*
Scripture Readings: Isaiah 61:1-4, 8-11 and Luke 1:46b - 55

Sunday, December 20th:

10:00 AM – Worship – *4th Sunday of Advent (Love)* – ***"Let It Be"***
Scripture Readings: 2 Samuel 7:1-11, 16 and Luke 1:26-38

Thursday, December 24th:

7:00 PM – *Christmas Eve Service* ~ *Lessons, Carols and Candlelight Service*

Friday, December 25th:

Merry Christmas to All!



Sunday, December 27th:

10:00 AM – Worship – *1st Sunday after Christmas* ~ *Carol Sing and Christmas Readings*



Worship will continue to be broadcast each Sunday, at 10:00 AM, on YouTube Live (www.youtube.com/@firstchurchcongregationalm1729).


FIRST CHURCH CONGREGATIONAL METHUEN
CHRISTMAS CRAFT FAIR
Get in the gift giving spirit!
SATURDAY, DECEMBER 5TH
26 PLEASANT ST
METHUEN MA
10:00AM – 3:00PM
Our community Christmas Craft Fair is just around the corner, offering unique, handmade holiday gifts, beautiful decorations, and festive fun for all ages
WHAT TO EXPECT
• 20 Unique hand-selected vendors
• Artisan gifts & decor
• Festive holiday treats & cozy beverages
• Christmas music
• ALL of the Christmas Spirit
EMAIL
CRAFTFAIR.FIRSTCHURCH@GMAIL.COM
FOR INFORMATION
Join us to celebrate the season, support local makers, and find that perfect holiday gift!



NOVEMBER BIRTHDAYS

10 Christine Gatulis
26 Amanda Gable, Peter Koop, Glenn Sprague
30 Lyn Kimball

DECEMBER BIRTHDAYS

01 Mary Simonian
04 Michelle Wright
06 Neil Bateson, Susan Kerr

* *



NOVEMBER ANNIVERSARIES

11/7	Josh & Lisa Ferry	Married 17 years
11/8	Michael & Jennifer Borislow	Married 40 years
11/24	George & Caroline Rollins	Married 41 years

What's the REACH Ministry?



Do you know of someone facing surgery, recovering from surgery or living with a long-term illness? Do you know someone who has recently lost their job or could use financial support? Do you know someone who suffers from depression or is often down in the dumps around the holidays?

Maybe this person is you?

If so, we can help. Our new **REACH** Ministry wants to make sure that members of our community have a place to turn for support in their time of need. The term **REACH** stands for -- **R**eliable, **E**ngaging, **A**ble, **C**aring and **H**eartfelt support.

Contact Judi Boyko or Pat King for more information, or speak to our Pastor.

* *

Would you like to make an electronic donation to the church?

Use your smart phone or tablet by scanning this QR code!

Or visit our website at www.firstchurchmethuen.com
and click the **"Donate"** button.

Thank you for your support.

November 2026

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1 **Communion** *All Saints Day* *Stewardship Sunday* 8:30 AM Chancel Choir 11:15 AM Fellowship Time	2 6:30 PM Finance	3 *Election Day* Church/School Closed 10:00 AM Walking Group (Meet at Riverside Park) 4:30 PM Food Pantry	4 1:00 PM Prayer Shawl 6:30 PM Church Board	5	9	7
8 *Stewardship Sunday* *Clothing Drive Ends* 8:30 AM Chancel Choir 11:15 AM Fellowship Time	9 4:00 PM Chapel Staff 6:30 PM Outreach	10 10:00 AM Walking Group (Meet at Riverside Park) 4:30 PM Food Pantry	11 *Veterans Day* Church/School Closed 8:00 AM FCC Breakfast with Friends (Ellie's Farmhouse) 1:00 PM Prayer Shawl 7:00 PM Diaconate	12	13	14 10:00 AM Cook for Stewardship Luncheon and Bread & Roses
15 *Stewardship Sunday* 8:30 AM Chancel Choir 11:15 AM *Stewardship Luncheon*	16	17 10:00 AM Walking Group (Meet at Riverside Park) 4:30 PM Food Pantry	18 *December BEACON deadline* 1:00 PM Prayer Shawl	19	20	21 10:00 AM – 12:00 PM Thanksgiving Donation Dropoff 10:00 AM – 12:00 PM Combined Choir Rehearsal
22 *Thanksgiving Sunday* Thanksgiving Donations Due 8:30 AM Chancel Choir 11:15 AM Fellowship Time 12:00 PM Chancel Choir 2:00 PM *Community Thanksgiving Service*	23 Chapel School Thanksgiving 2:00 PM Stewardship	24 Chapel School Thanksgiving 10:00 AM Walking Group (Meet at Riverside Park) 4:30 PM Food Pantry Thanksgiving Distribution	25 Church Office/ Chapel School Closes at 11:30 AM	26 *Thanksgiving* Church/School Closed	27 Church/School Closed	28
29 *First Sunday of Advent* 8:30 AM Chancel Choir 11:15 AM Fellowship Time	30	**Worship Service** *Sundays at 10:00 AM* *In-Person & on YouTube Live* www.youtube.com/@firstchurchcongregationalm1729				

Dates and times are subject to change

First Church Congregational
United Church of Christ
26 Pleasant Street
Methuen, MA 01844-3199

Address Service Requested