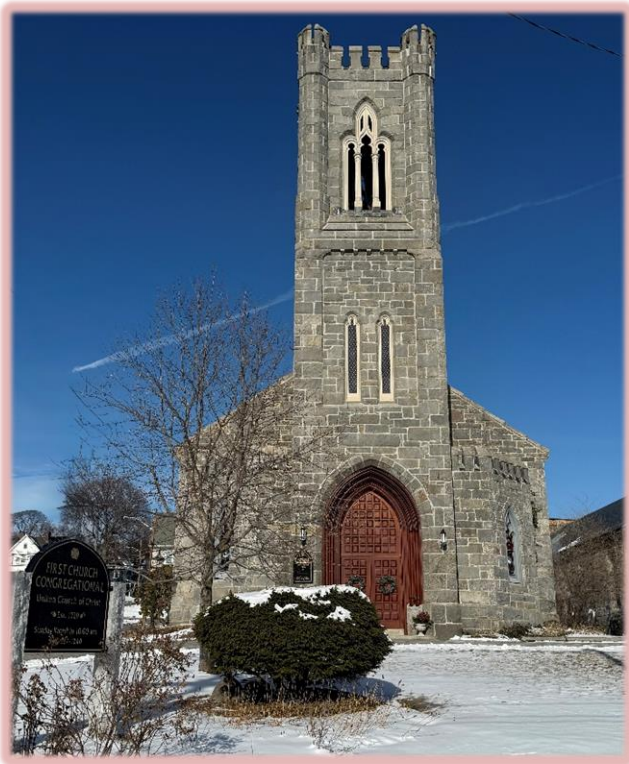


February 2025



143rd George Washington
Birthday Dinner
Saturday, February 22nd
See Page 10

THE BEACON



First Church Congregational United Church of Christ

26 Pleasant Street
Methuen, MA 01844-3199
Telephone: (978) 687-1240

Rev. Dr. Ann Rogers-Brigham, Senior Pastor
amrogersbrigham@gmail.com

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

Mike Boutin, Minister of Music
boutinerjr@gmail.com

www.firstchurchmethuen.com



Worship on Sundays at 10:00 AM



Minister's Message ***Rev. Dr. Ann Rogers-Brigham***

Dear members and friends of First Church,

We enter the beauty of February days grateful for blessings of faith, community, connections, and perspectives. We enter these days aware that much has changed in our country, our world, even our church and life together since we picked up our last Beacon to read the news.

What do we do with those changes and how do they change us? Does our faith offer words of hope for moving forward?

A starting place to answer this question may be for us to look closely this month at our gospel lessons for two Sundays in February (Feb. 16 and 23). Luke's gospel in chapter 6 gives us the "Sermon on the Plain" or the "sermon on the level place."

The word "level" in various scripture passages often refers to places of corpses, disgrace, idolatry, suffering, misery, hunger, annihilation, and mourning. The word "level" is used by Luke to tell

us that Jesus understands the realities of a world of sorrow and pain. This was true in first century life, and we witness it as, certainly, true in our world today.

I think of those returning to cities in Gaza and finding nothing left. Or those in areas of Los Angeles returning to their homes where fires have engulfed and destroyed all they had. In many places all over the world, people are recovering from the devastation of war and its destruction.

Our hearts continue to be heavy as we hear of the ongoing violence and war against the people of the Ukraine. The island country of Haiti is a short distance away, yet the news of chaos and violence sinks our hopes for those living in fear on a daily basis. We also think of those in recovery from flooding, fires, and earthquakes in other parts of our world. In our families and communities, we know suffering be it personal or a collective in nature.

Jesus spoke of this anguish and suffering in the “Sermon on the Plain” so that we may acknowledge a life of “blessings and woes” (a title given to these teachings), ups and downs, good days and bad days, or, as we sometimes say, “good news and bad news.”

I discovered an illustrated book for children recently addressing the positives and negatives in life. In GOOD NEWS BAD NEWS, Jeff Mack from western MA introduces us to a rabbit and a mouse going on a picnic. One is all about bad news and the other is all about good news. We start identifying with their different dispositions very early in the story. We start asking ourselves about our approach to life. Are we good news people or bad news people. Are we both?

Those who follow Jesus are to live as God lives, mercifully and generous beyond expectation, beyond comprehension. The gospel calls us to be “good news” people. We can find plenty of bad news in life and in the church, but we ask how can we focus on the good, the positive.

This quote from essayist Brian Doyle captures a bit of that invitation for our covenant to be a “good news” church: *You do your absolute best to find and hone and wield your divine gifts against the dark. You do your best to reach out tenderly to touch and elevate as many people as you can reach. You bring your naked love and defiant courage and salty grace to bear as much as you can, with all the attentiveness and humor you can muster. This life is after all a miracle and we ought to pay fierce attention every moment, as much as possible.* (ONE LONG RIVER OF SONG)

This life is a miracle, isn't it? We enter February days reading about those “miracles” in our biblical lessons each week and we hope we may, as Brian suggested, do our absolute best to bring naked love and defiant courage and salty grace to every moment as much as possible.

There are many “hostile spirits” on that “level place” that can hold us captive. In this interim period in the life of First Church, let's be aware of the dangers. While being aware, let's still find healing and mercy in promises kept to one another to be the church at its best on good days and more challenging ones.

Thomas Merton writes in one of my favorite books, LOVE AND LIVING: *Love is our true destiny. We do not find the meaning of life by ourselves alone. We find it with another.*

Oh, may we heed his counsel. May we at First Church let our roots go deep and call upon our best selves to stay strong and connected and be people of God's love and mercy.

In the spirit of St. Valentine, let us remember: *Love is frequently equated with good feelings toward others, with benevolence or nonviolence or service. But these things in themselves are not love. Love springs from awareness. It is only inasmuch as you see someone as he or she really is*

here and now and not as they are in your memory or your desire or in your imagination or projection that you can truly love them. (Anthony De Mello in THE WAY TO LOVE)

May we have a deeper awareness of God’s love working in and through us, here and now, and may God hold us in unity and purpose here at First Church! I am grateful for each one of you and the life we share in Christ. Concerns, prayers, questions? Please be in touch! Let me hear your “good news.”

I look forward to continuing this process of dialogue, active listening and intentional growth with you as the search for a new settled minister begins to take shape in days ahead.

Grace and peace,
Rev. Ann Rogers Brigham

* * * * *

Confirmation Class Informational Meeting



On Sunday, February 2nd, following worship, youth and parents are invited to join me for a conversation about beginning a Confirmation Class at First Church. I invite youth who are in 7th Grade and up to commit to beginning a class.

Let me know of questions. If you can’t be with us for this meeting, I would like to know of your interest.

Thanks! Rev. Ann

* * * * *



INTERESTED IN CHURCH MEMBERSHIP??

Please speak to any of our Deacons or Rev. Ann about your interest in becoming a member at First Church. We welcome you to church membership!!



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 Facebook Live (www.facebook.com/FirstChurchMethuen) and posted after the service on our YouTube channel (www.youtube.com/channel/UCfLSjhXs9UG8yC89aB8evrA). The service can be viewed at any time on either platform.

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

* * * * *

A Meal (Breakfast) with Ann

2ND Wednesdays at 8:00 AM

at Ellie's Farmhouse Restaurant, 436 Broadway, Methuen

Join Rev. Ann and other members and friends for good breakfast and conversation. They will next meet on Wednesday, February 12th. And, as always, it's "dutch treat".



* * * * *

Weekly Prayer List

We print a Prayer List within the Sunday bulletin. To have someone included on – or removed from – the prayer list, please let Roberta, in the Church Office, know at 978-687-1240 or firstchurch.roberta@gmail.com. Thank you.

If you, or someone you know, is in need of a pastoral visit, please contact Rev. Rogers-Brigham at amrogersbrigham@gmail.com or 978-687-1240.



A Winter Prayer

(adapted from a prayer by Joyce Rupp)



O Strengthening Darkness, we are the terminal buds on the tree of life. Waiting, trusting, remaining hopeful – may these valued movements of the heart increase in us. Light-filled days will come again into our lives. As the radiant warmth of springtime unfurls the hidden green in buds whose arms wrapped tightly around themselves, so will surprises of future light awaken and unfurl what has seemed forever buried in our winter’s repose. Let it be. Let me be wrapped in your love, O God. Amen.

* * * * *

A Psalm to Celebrate Divine Love Psalm 147

Praise the Beloved, Heart of all hearts!
We are blessed as we sing praises
To the Beloved
For as we give ourselves in love,
So we receive love.
The Beloved abides in our heart,
In every open heart that
Welcomes Love...Yes, the Divine word
is written on every heart-scroll,
a guide to pilgrims along the way.

~ Nan Merrill,
from her interpretation of "Psalm 147"
in *PSALMS FOR PRAYING*

* * * * *

IN CASE OF SNOW...

As we enter the snow season, please be advised that on weekdays, if school is cancelled, the church office will not be open.

If a snowstorm is predicted for a given Sunday, if there are any changes to the time of worship, or worship is cancelled, please check our church web page, www.firstchurchmethuen.com and Facebook page (www.facebook.com/firstchurchmethuen).



CALIFORNIA WILDFIRES – HELP THROUGH OUR UCC DISASTER MINISTRIES

On January 7, 2025, wildfire activity began in Los Angeles County, California. Immediate reports indicate that this fire has caused substantial damage throughout LA County, making this event the largest fire disaster in the county's history. At the time of this writing, nearly 30,000 acres have been consumed by the blazes. One hundred eighty thousand people are currently displaced from their homes due to devastation or evacuation orders, and these fires continue to spread, causing additional destruction.

Since the onset of this disaster, the Global HOPE team has communicated with the Southern California and Nevada Conference Minister. The team will coordinate with ecumenical partners and a national network of voluntary organizations active in disasters (VOAD) as it shapes our long-term response. We received confirmation that the fires destroyed the Altadena Community Church, United Church of Christ.

The Global HOPE team is helping to connect Southern California and Nevada Conference staff, churches, and others affected by the wildfires with immediate resources while also preparing to support long-term recovery efforts. As we continue to pray for and support those who experienced unimaginable loss, we invite you to support the UCC's recovery efforts in the following ways:

Donate to the UCC's California Wildfires 2025 Appeal. Your gifts support the community's immediate needs and long-term recovery efforts as we work with local communities to ensure an equitable approach to their long-term recovery. Donate online at <https://support.ucc.org/california-wildfires-2025>. You can also mail a check payable to the United Church of Christ, PO Box 71957, Cleveland, OH 44194. Please be sure to note "California Wildfires 2025" in the memo section of your check.

You may also act by assembling Hygiene Kits and Cleanup Buckets. After a disaster, one of the biggest requests is for cleanup buckets and hygiene kits. UCC congregations interested in assembling hygiene kits and cleanup buckets are eligible for a matching grant through the Global HOPE office.

AND, we pray together:

"A Prayer for Those in the Path of Fire"
by Rev. Shari Prestemon

"Steadfast God, we watch in horror as fires rage in Southern California, and we pause to raise these humble petitions to you. For all those forced to evacuate, who leave so much that is precious behind and know not what the future holds, surround them with your gentle presence in these hours of tortured worry and waiting. For each beloved one who has already realized the unfathomable loss of everything familiar, of homes and schools and places of worship and so much more that was their anchor and community, receive their shock and overwhelming grief and hold them close in love. For those called out to fight the flames, to rescue and to help, for those tasked with leading through the crisis, for hospitals that receive the wounded, and for all those extending care even while they themselves have suffered loss, grant the capacity to withstand all that overwhelms and wearies. And in the uncertain days to come, draw near to all who weep and rage as they begin to sift through the rubble and ash left behind. Stir bits of hope amid despair. Lend strength when exhaustion overtakes them. May they be wrapped in a blanket of grace and healing woven by each act of compassion and generosity we now extend. O God, in your wide and tender mercy, hear our fervent prayers. Amen."

From the Chair of the Church Board...

Cold enough for ya?!? Yeah, I know – sad, old joke. It's these times of low temps, low sunlight, and low energy that make me want to hibernate. However, that just means that the need for sanctuary services, warm fellowship, and community help is at an all-time high. So, for me, focusing on that warms my heart and spirit – hopefully for you too!

Speaking of heartwarming things, as always, we have plenty going on, including:

- We are beginning the search process for our next settled pastor. As much as we love Rev. Ann and are so grateful that she is shepherding us through this interim time, we need to start thinking of the future. It is an involved process, including drafting our church's profile, working with the UCC, and interviewing potential candidates. If you are interested in joining the committee, please let either Steve Boyko or myself. We are looking for a diverse group of our parishioners, so please let us know if you are willing and eager to sign up.
- Our annual George Washington Birthday Dinner is on for February 22nd!!! This is the 143rd annual celebration, and it is shaping up to be as great as always. So, please buy your tickets now – you'll help us scale the festivities and you'll get a price break as well. There's plenty of ways to help, so if you're looking to volunteer please reach out to Marilyn Peck or Carol Sanborn. It's going to be a blast!
- Our Outreach group is hard at work with numerous efforts. This month, the always popular "Souper Bowl of Caring" is running, so bring in your cans of soup and monetary donations that go directly to those in need. More is being planned and there are a ton of other ways to give for the winter season, so please read further to find out how you can help. Between all these focused projects and our continuing food pantry, helping so many in our community, there are numerous ways to make an impact.
- The Chapel School is stronger than ever, and the teachers and children are filling our parish halls with a joyful noise! Enrollment is starting for the 2024-2025 school year, so if there is a family that may need our services, I invite you to connect them with Gina or Roberta as tours are happening often.
- Speaking of child education, our CE group is continuing work to create an engaging Sunday school. This also means we will be starting Confirmation class soon, so please speak with Sarah, Lori, or Rev. Ann for more information.
- Our Membership Development & Communications team is hard at work planning fun events throughout the coming year. They are investigating lots of activities and fellowship times, so stay tuned. If you're interested in their work or helping out, please reach out to Christine Bane for more information.
- The trustees are hard at work, keeping out facilities running smoothly and getting ready for more work on the exterior this spring. They could really use more help, so if you're interested, please contact Allan Barlow or Scott Sanborn.
- The stewardship team has completed the hard at work of our annual pledge drive. For those that have turned in their pledge cards, I thank you! Your commitment ensures that we can continue all of the hard work to making our church, parishioners, and community strong. If you haven't, there is still time to submit it. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to reach out.
- ...and so much more!

So, if you're looking for some way to help our church and our community, there's plenty of options. Also, there's always the prayer shawl ministry, other outreach projects, singing or ringing in one of our outstanding choirs, or just joining the walking group to help yourself. There are so many new opportunities available through our historic congregation, so feel free to seek out what you would like and help our neighbors & neighborhood at the same time.

As always, all are welcome to chat anytime with me. I love to hear your ideas and suggestions. We also have a lot of other activities and missions scheduled, so I would love your input. I know you all work so hard to make our church a blessing to our families and neighbors, and I thank you from the bottom of my heart. Let's keep the energy and drive rolling, continuing to seek God, care for each other, and improve our community.

God bless & stay warm!!!

Josh Ferry



* * * * *



First Church Search Committee

We are creating the search team to find our next settled pastor, and are looking for dedicated volunteers to be part of the process. Duties include:

- Drafting the First Church Congregational profile
- Working with the UCC through the process
- Reviewing Pastor Profiles to find the best fit
- Interviewing candidates to fill the settled pastor role

We are looking for a diverse group of parishioners, so please contact Steve Boyko or Josh Ferry for more information.

Thank you.

Musical Musings

Happy Winter! What? Not happy about winter? I've spent my entire life in New England, and yet, every year, I dread winter. Even as a kid I hated putting on boots, shoveling, or doing anything allegedly fun in the snow. The cold, the driving in the snow, the dark, taking down Christmas decorations and then seeing how drab everything looks....Bah humbug!

But meanwhile, lots going on in the midst of winter. I am SO happy to report that our music library project is complete! We now have a digital catalog of 650 pieces of choral music, all labeled, sorted, and searchable. Want to see what it looks like? Here's the link: <https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1YwwG3JL3lIBhZ0xDrbhE5d8qG41D77DqqdQ84nPO0Bk/edit?usp=sharing> I am so grateful to all those who spent their January Saturdays helping with this project: it will save the church money, since we now have access to all this music without having to buy new music, and it allows me a much broader library to plan from. This is a real accomplishment for the church and will reap benefits for years to come. Thank you!



I have been working hard planning for Lent and especially for our upcoming Palm Sunday Cantata on April 13. These kinds of big musical events take lots of behind the scenes preparation and planning, and weeks of practice for the choir. If you're interested in joining the choir for our next Cantata, feel free to come to any Sunday morning rehearsal at 8:30am, or speak to me directly before or after service on Sunday. We'd love to have you, especially if you're a bass or tenor! And if you know a singer, even if they don't belong to First, invite them to join us. We are always looking for new choir members!

Do you have thoughts about our music program? Hymns you like and haven't heard, or songs you really don't like and would prefer not to hear again? Do you know a choir piece you'd really like us to do? I'm always eager to hear what you think or feel. Reach out directly or email me at boutinerjr@gmail.com.

Peace and all good things,

Mike Boutin



143rd George Washington Birthday Dinner



February 22, 2025

First Church Congregational

26 Pleasant Street, Methuen, MA

Buffet Served
4:00 to 6:30 PM

Buffet Menu

Carving Stations

- Freshly Roasted Turkey Breast
with Cranberry Sauce & Gravy
 - Baked Ham
with Raisin Sauce and Horseradish Mustard Sauce
 - Baked Haddock
with Seasoned Crumbs, Ritz Crackers, Butter

Green Salad, Antipasto, Green Beans, Butternut Squash, Macaroni & Cheese,
Vegan Chili, Mashed Potatoes, Stuffing, Gravy, Rolls & Butter,
Apple Crisp, Coffee, Tea, Lemonade

Tickets

Available at the Church Office (978-687-1240)
and Sundays, following (10:00 AM) worship.

Adults: \$22 (Advance Purchase) or
Adults: \$25 (At Door); **Children 6-12:** \$8; **Under 6:** Free

*If you have a large party of 9 or more, please call the church office
at 978-687-1240 to make a reservation.*

***Looking for a way to support the
George Washington Birthday Dinner?
Have a local business you love?***

Ask them to support First Church Congregational, and our 142 year tradition, by placing an ad in our George Washington Birthday Dinner Ad Book! All proceeds support the mission of First Church.

Every person who comes to the dinner will receive the GWBD Ad Book and that can bring *LOTS* of exposure for anyone who advertises in it.

Placing an ad doesn't need to be expensive either. Our business card ads are only \$25 each and get plenty of attention. This year we need a bit of help, and our church is great at stepping up to the challenge. We're trying to get as many business card ads as possible. Ask your hairdresser, auto mechanic, dentist, favorite pizza place, manicurist, etc.! Small businesses like these benefit from exposure in the community, and our ad book does just that!

Our business card ads are 5½ x 2¾ (1/3 page). Please bring a business card to the church office or to Pat King on Sunday morning.

The deadline to place an ad is Friday, February 12th. Checks should be made payable to: First Church Congregational.

For more information, please call Pat King at 603-898-6335.

If someone would like to place a larger ad, we offer half page ads for \$50 and full page ads for \$100. Please send black and white ads only to firstchurch.roberta@gmail.com in either a .PDF or .JPEG format, or mail a clean hard copy of your ad to the attention of:

**Roberta Jurovich, First Church Congregational
26 Pleasant Street, Methuen, MA 01844**

If advertisers are interested in purchasing tickets for the dinner, they may contact the Church Office at 978-687-1240.

This is a wonderful opportunity for companies, big and small, to promote their business while supporting a worthwhile cause. Thank you for your support and involvement in this year's event. Your generosity of spirit continues to bless the community in which we all live, work and worship.

George Washington Birthday Dinner Planning Team

Note: You can also place an "ad" from you! In memory/honor of someone, as a *Good Luck* to GWBD, etc.

Stewardship Ministry Team...

The Stewardship Ministry Team is grateful to our members and friends for their continuing financial support of our stewardship campaign to **Imagine Together**. We can begin to put in place some of the ways we imagined that we could continue to live in our Mission Statement by growing our membership and our relationship with God, caring for each other and increasing our community outreach. We are thankful for all the pledges that we have received. If you have not returned a pledge card, it is never too late to do so. If you have not received the Stewardship Pledge Materials and would like to make a pledge, please contact the church office at 978-687-1240 and one will be mailed to you. You can also make an electronic donation by following the directions at the end of any monthly Beacon. And if you are an electronic giver, please remember to return an electronic giving form, even if there is no change of information.

There are also other ways to donate to First Church at any time:

- To make a donation, go to the church's website (www.firstchurchmethuen.com) and click on the red Donate button at the top of the Home Page. There, you can make a donation to the Area of Greatest Need or one of the specific funds or projects that you would like to support.
- You can also donate by scanning the QR code in the Beacon or the Sunday bulletin and following the prompts. You will be able to specify how you would like your donation to be used.
- If you would like to change your pledge to an e-giving pledge at any time, contact the church office and ask to have the form mailed to your home. Contact the church office by phone at 978-687-1240 or by email at firstchurch.roberta@gmail.com.

If you have any questions, please contact the church office or any member of the Stewardship Ministry Team.

Stewardship Ministry Team:

Kathy Romano – Chairperson

Rev. Ann Rogers Brigham, Irene Maggio, Marilyn Peck, Robyn Sliney and Kim Valcourt

Imagine Together



Seeking God



Caring for Each Other



Improving Our Community

Your Pledge Makes It All Happen

From the Outreach Ministry Team

Ray Benedix Souper Bowl of Caring

- Thanks to your generosity we reached our goal of 500 cans of soup donated in the First Quarter of this year's Souper Bowl of Caring. You donated 543 cans.
- We are going to continue accepting additional donations of soup for the remaining Three Quarters of the Souper Bowl.
- There is a flyer in this issue of the Beacon telling you how you can donate soup or make a monetary donation, and we will buy the soup for you.
- Neighbors In Need donates the soup you donate back to our NIN Tuesday Evening Food Pantry.
- We are going to hold a Celebratory Coffee Hour on February 9 at the conclusion of the Fourth Quarter. We invite you to join us!

"Pampered with Luvs" Diaper Drive

- First Church will be holding a diaper drive in March in partnership with **Communities Together, Inc.**, a collaborative group of churches in the Merrimack Valley. The diaper collection will be distributed to various social agencies, including Neighbors In Need, Lazarus House and Bread and Roses.
- The dates of this year's Diaper Drive are Sundays, March 2, 9, 16, and 23. There will be a flyer in the March issue of the Beacon with details of how you can donate.
- If you prefer to make a monetary donation rather than buy the diapers yourself, the Outreach Team will gladly purchase them for you.

Mental Health Awareness Sunday

- This year our Mental Health Sunday is May 18th.
- In past years, speakers have covered suicide, substance abuse (alcohol and drugs), grief, loneliness and depression and their effects on mental health.
- At our January meeting we began discussions of what topic we might cover this year. **If you have a topic you would like us to consider or if you would like to revisit one of the above topics, please speak to an outreach member or Rev. Ann.** We would welcome your suggestions!

Do You Have Interest in Outreach Participation?

- Have you ever thought you might like to know more about serving on the Outreach Team or just leading an outreach event that is "near and dear to your heart?"
- If you have, please talk with one of the outreach members listed below or Rev. Ann. We would really like to add several new members to our team.

Outreach Ministry Team

Lori Bennett, Cynthia Causbie, Jo-Ann Crosby, Barbara Donaghue, Ken Peck, Marie Rubino, Carole Silva, John Silva, Becky Smith, and Marilyn Peck, Team Leader





The 2025 Ray Benedix Souper Bowl Challenge

The Outreach Team will once again be participating in the **Ray Benedix Souper Bowl of Caring Challenge** this year and we hope you can help. Ray Benedix, a long-time church member, initiated our participation in the National Souper Bowl of Caring Challenge and led our team that planned and organized the month-long soup collection for many years. Please help us continue honoring Ray’s memory through our donations of soup and money in 2025. This year we are excited to have the Sunday School children involved as well. The Chapel School will continue to participate by filling their “Souper Bowl Train”.

For 2025, we have set our Souper Bowl goals at 500 cans of soup and \$500 in monetary donations. All cans of soup and monetary donations raised will go to the Neighbors in Need Food Pantry held here at First Church each Tuesday evening.

We will be kicking off the Souper Bowl on Sunday, January 12th with an announcement and introduction to our “score board” that will track our progress. We will then celebrate the 1st, 2nd, 3rd, and 4th quarters on the following Sundays: January 19th and 26th, and February 2nd and 9th by collecting and counting our donations. We will hold a Souper Bowl celebration on February 9th during coffee hour with lots of Super Bowl snacks, and corn hole competition. Don’t miss it!

Cans of soup and monetary donations may be brought to church each Sunday before or after church until 11:45, from January 19th through February 9th. You may also order soup online and have it shipped to the church. During Sunday morning announcements, we will report on the number of cans received, and money collected. In achieving our goals, we will be honoring Ray’s dedication and commitment to the Souper Bowl of Caring Outreach Ministry. 1...2...3...HIKE!

2025 Souper Bowl Challenge

Print Name: _____

Donation Amount: _____

Please make your check payable to ‘*First Church Congregational*’, write ‘**Souper Bowl**’ on the memo line and return no later than Sunday, February 9th.

Respectfully,
Your Outreach Ministry Team

Walking Group for Fitness and Fellowship

Tuesdays in February

We plan to continue walking at **The Loop** on Pleasant Street on Tuesdays in February, weather permitting. We hope to have less frigid temperatures and wind than we did in January. The sidewalks at The Loop are kept cleared of snow and ice. We will meet in front of the AMC Theater at 10:00 on the following Tuesdays in February: 2/4, 2/11, 2/18 and 2/25. Don't forget to bundle up if you venture out! Contact Cindy Bateson if you would like to be added to the walkers email group.

Sunday Walk on the Methuen Rail Trail

Our monthly Methuen Rail Trail walks will return in March.



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 Carol Gray or Debbie Bonfanti for more information.

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



* * * * *



The Chapel School



Enrollment for the 2025 -2026 school year has started. Families have been calling to visit and tour our wonderful little preschool. I say that with the utmost of endearment to our presence here at First Church in Methuen serving the Merrimack Valley! Share the word with family and friends with preschool age children (2.9 - 5 years). Please make sure to complete the registration form and return as soon as possible to secure a spot for next year. We will send out the complete enrollment packet in August!

Parent/Teacher Conferences were held recently to share each child's progress with their parents. The teachers spend a great deal of time preparing for these conferences. They include a report covering all the developmental milestones at this age including a portfolio with samples of their work. The teachers enjoy spending time with each parent reviewing all their growth and accomplishments. It was especially nice to see all the parents and be able to spend quality time with them.

Social media is now our main source of marketing for the school. Parents are seeking out local Methuen pages online to get referrals to just about everything. Positive referrals for quality preschools in the area seem to be at the top of the list for online chats. Even more endearing is the second and third generation of families returning with their own children. Now that is the best referral of all.

February is always a fun month here at Chapel. Not only do we enjoy celebrating Valentine's Day, but our curriculum focuses on healthy hearts and good health. The children enjoy learning how their bodies work and good nutrition to keep ourselves moving and working.

Our Souper Bowl Train is filling up as part of the Souper Bowl of Caring!! The children have enjoyed loading up the box cars with their donations. It will continue until February 6th.

Stay Well!

Gina Colarusso

Director



PLEASE HELP SHARE THE WORD!!



The Chapel School

Where a Lifetime of Learning Begins

Register Now for our 2025-26 School Year



- **For Children 2.9 - 5 Years Old**
 - 2, 3 or 5 Day Preschool Programs
 - Customizable Days to Fit your Needs
- **Half Day Classes (8:30 - 11:30 AM)**
 - Lunch Bunch (until 2:00 PM)
 - Extended Day (7:30 AM - 4:00 PM)

Fun Learning Environment for Everyone!

- **September - June**
 - Affordable Rates
 - Non-Denominational
- **Over 60 Years in Methuen!**



Contact us for more information or to schedule a tour:

978-689-8414

chapelschoolmethuen@gmail.com



www.chapelschoolmethuen.com



Located at:

First Church Congregational
26 Pleasant Street, Methuen





THE CHAPEL SCHOOL

26 Pleasant Street
Methuen, MA 01844
(978)-689-8414

20__ - __ School Year

Preschool Registration Form (Please Print)

Mornings (8:30 - 11:30 AM)

- ___ **5 Days**, Monday – Friday (4-5 years)
- ___ **3 Days**, Typically* Mon, Wed & Fri (4-5 years)
- ___ **2 Days**, Typically* Tues & Thurs (3-4 years)
- ___ **Add Lunch Bunch (until 2:00 PM) →→→→**

*Contact the School Office if other days are needed

Full Days (7:30 AM – 4:00 PM)

- ___ **5 Days**, Monday – Friday (4-5 years)
- ___ **3 Days**, Typically* Mon, Wed & Fri (4-5 years)
- ___ **2 Days**, Typically* Tues & Thurs (3-4 years)

How many days for **Lunch Bunch**? _____
Please circle: M Tu W Th F

Child Information:

First Name: _____ M.I. _____ Last Name: _____

Gender: [] Male [] Female Date of Birth: _____ Home Phone: _____

Address: _____

Allergies: _____

Parent/Guardian 1:

First Name: _____ M.I. _____ Last Name: _____

[] Mother [] Father [] Other: _____ Cell Phone: _____

Email: _____

Parent/Guardian 2:

First Name: _____ M.I. _____ Last Name: _____

[] Mother [] Father [] Other: _____ Cell Phone: _____

Email: _____

You will be receiving additional forms to complete – Information & Authorization, Medical and Developmental.

The Chapel School employs a policy of non-discrimination in all its services to children and their families. We do not discriminate based on race, religion, cultural heritage, political beliefs, national origin, marital status, sexual orientation, or disability. Our registration policy is on a first-come, first-serve basis.

Parent Agreement

I hereby agree to enroll my child in the Chapel School and I understand that tuition payments must be paid as per the parent handbook. A registration fee of \$75.00 must be paid with this agreement. This fee is non-refundable. I understand that one month's notice will be required to withdraw my child from the Chapel School.

Parent/Guardian Signature: _____ Date: _____

Please return your completed form as soon as possible. Thank you.

Thank You Notes...



Methuen Public Schools

Superintendent

9 Branch Street, Methuen, MA 01844

Brandi L. Kwong, Ed.D.
bikwong@methuen.k12.ma.us

978-722-6001
FAX 978-722-6002

Mitten Tree

January 14, 2025

Gina Colarusso
Chapel School
26 Pleasant Street
Methuen, MA 01844

Dear Chapel School:

On behalf of the Methuen Public Schools students and families, we thank everyone at your school for your extremely generous donation of winter items. These items will be very much appreciated by many families in our school district.

Our students and families greatly benefit from these types of large-scale donations. They help us support a strong school and community atmosphere displaying Methuen's motto of Spirit and Pride.

Again, thank you so much for your donation and support. Wishing you all the best in the New Year!

Sincerely,

Brandi L. Kwong, Ed.D.
Superintendent of Schools

BK/mas

"Committed to Excellence"

Methuen Arlington Neighborhood

M.A.N. Inc.

141 Tenney Street
P.O. Box 715
Methuen, MA 01844

(978) 691-5357
Fax: (978) 691-5645
Methuenarlington@yahoo.com

January 7, 2025

Lori and Bill Bennett
7 Spring Valley Road
Methuen, MA 01844

Dear Lori and Bill,

The Methuen Arlington Neighborhood, Inc. would like to express our deepest gratitude for your incredible generosity in participating in our Adopt A Family Program by providing gifts for such deserving children. Your thoughtful, kind-heartedness has made a significant difference for working and low-income families in the neighborhood, offering much-needed relief during this stressful time of year.

Thanks to your kindness, our families didn't have to worry about whether there would be presents under their tree on Christmas morning. This heartfelt gesture allowed them to focus on enjoying time with their loved ones without the added burden of affording such an expensive holiday season.

As you know, many families in Methuen, particularly in the Arlington Neighborhood, are facing financial challenges. Rising costs of utilities, food, and rent have stretched budgets to the breaking point. Your support during this time of need has been a beacon of hope and has been a reminder that our community truly cares for one another. For more than 32 years, we have worked tirelessly to bring joy to children and families during the holidays with help from people and organizations like yourself.

One single mom Emily stated, "I was struggling through the holidays as I lost my job and decided to go back to college and work part time to have more stability for my children. I would like to thank the person or persons that helped my family and put a smile on my children's faces Christmas morning. Thank you." Another mom said, "Thank you so much for giving my family this opportunity. We were struggling to provide our children with gifts this year. The gifts my family received not only warmed their hearts, but made me cry. It's been a tough year, but thanks to you we were able to see the joy on our children's faces when they opened their gifts."

We sincerely thank you for your support and for all that you do to help families who are less fortunate. Your kindness continues to strengthen our community. Thank you.

Sincerely,



Linda Soucy
Grant Writer/Founder

"Building a Better Community"



Heifer International gratefully recognizes

First Church Congregational Methuen

for your contribution of healthy animals and training
 in their care to help struggling families overcome a life of hunger and poverty.
"The Earth is the Lord's, and the fullness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein." Psalm 24:1

Christy Moore

July 2024

Heifer International

Date



0000056

CONCERT

* * * * *



In the rhythm of life,
 Break free from the norm,
 Embrace each new day,
 Let your spirit transform.
 Be present with all,
 In their laughter and tears,
 For in shared experiences,
 True connection appears.
 Let each sunrise awaken
 Your soul's gentle glow,
 AS you dance with the day,
 Let your spirit flow.
 ~ Lil' Groundhog

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 -- Reliable, Engaging, Able, Caring and Heartfelt support.

Contact Judi Boyko or Pat King for more information.

* * * * *

Need Financial Help?

If you, or another member of First Church you know, is need of some temporary financial assistance, please contact Rev. Ann at amrogersbrigham@gmail.com or 978-687-1240.

Due to the generosity of Thomas Longworth, through his estate plan, there are some funds available for short term financial assistance of our members.

* * * * *

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 "Ways to Donate" page.

Thank you for your support.

Happy Birthday!

FEBRUARY BIRTHDAYS

- 03 Christopher Brown
- 04 Lynn Dewhirst
- 05 Joseph Yarid
- 07 Roberta Jurovich
- 14 Carol Gray, Thomas Jurovich, Leslie Shea
- 16 Brenda Killourie, Terry Romano
- 17 Rick Buck
- 20 Caelin Buck
- 23 Melina Gable
- 24 Kyle Brown
- 27 Lisa Ferry
- 28 Kim Valcourt



MARCH BIRTHDAYS

- 01 Charlene Bunting
- 03 Thomas Savastano
- 06 Haleigh Sanborn, John Silva

* * * * *



MARCH ANNIVERSARY

- | | | |
|-----|--------------------------|------------------|
| 3/4 | Larry & Robyn Sliney | Married 30 years |
| 3/6 | Patrick & Rebecca Wright | Married 20 years |

						
Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<p>Worship Service Sundays at 10:00 AM <i>In-Person & on Facebook Live</i></p> <p>www.facebook.com/firstchurchmethuen</p>						1
<p>2 Communion 8:30 AM Chancel Choir 11:15 AM Fellowship</p>	<p>6:30 PM Finance</p>	<p>4 10:00 AM Walking Group (The Loop) 4:00 PM Food Pantry</p>	<p>5 1:00 PM Prayer Shawl Ministry 6:30 PM Church Board</p>	<p>6 6:30 PM First Church Bells</p>	<p>7</p>	8
<p>9 Souper Bowl of Caring Ends 8:30 AM Chancel Choir 11:15 AM Fellowship <i>Souper Bowl Celebration</i></p>	<p>4:00 PM Chapel Staff</p>	<p>11 10:00 AM Walking Group (The Loop) 4:00 PM Food Pantry</p>	<p>12 8:00 AM Breakfast with Ann (Ellie's Farmhouse) 1:00 PM Prayer Shawl Ministry 7:00 PM Diaconate</p>	<p>13 6:30 PM First Church Bells</p>		15
<p>16 8:30 AM Chancel Choir 11:15 AM Fellowship</p>	<p> 17 Church Office & Chapel School Closed 1:00 PM Cook for Bread & Roses 6:30 PM Outreach</p>	<p>18 Chapel School Closed GWBD Prep 10:00 AM Walking Group (The Loop) 4:00 PM Food Pantry</p>	<p>19 March BEACON deadline Church Office & Chapel School Closed GWBD Prep 1:00 PM Prayer Shawl Ministry</p>	<p>20 Church Office & Chapel School Closed GWBD Prep 6:30 PM First Church Bells</p>	<p>21 Chapel School Closed GWBD Prep</p>	<p>22 4:00 - 6:30 PM George Washington Birthday Dinner</p>
<p>23 8:30 AM Chancel Choir 11:15 AM Fellowship</p>	<p>24 2:00 PM Stewardship</p>	<p>25 10:00 AM Walking Group (The Loop) 4:00 PM Food Pantry</p>	<p>26 1:00 PM Prayer Shawl Ministry 6:30 PM Open & Affirming Committee</p>	<p>27 6:30 PM First Church Bells</p>	28	

Dates and times are subject to change

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

Address Service Requested