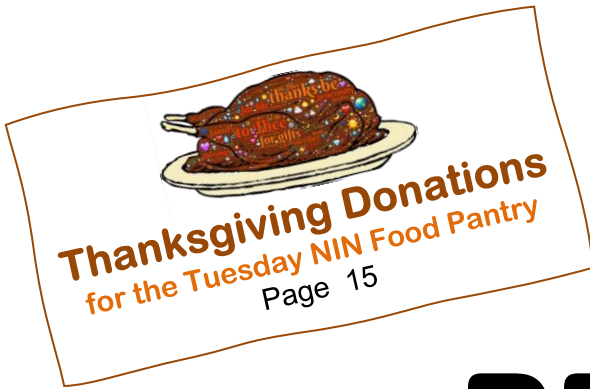
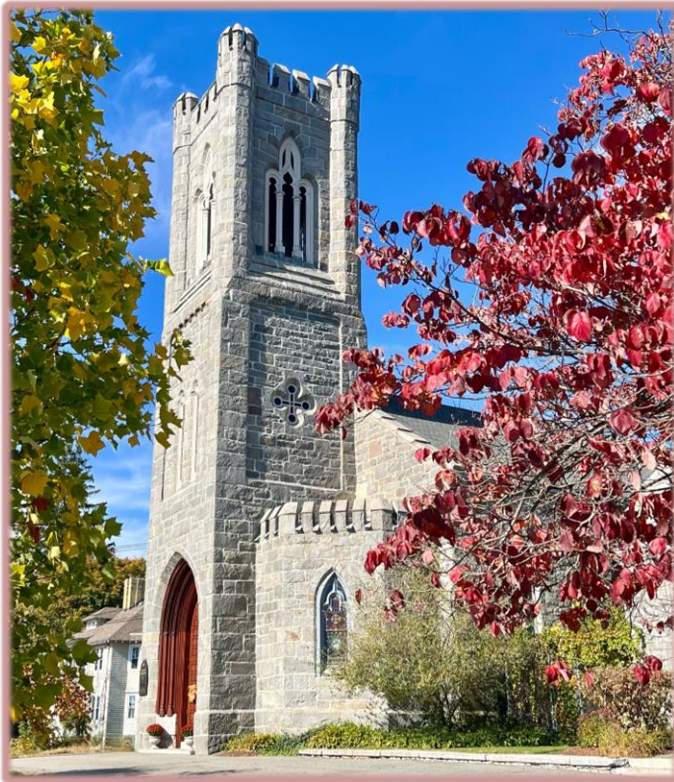


NOVEMBER 2025



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, Interim 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

In-person & on YouTube Live

www.youtube.com/@firstchurchcongregationalm1729



* * * * *

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

Dear Members and Friends,

November, for me, is a time to be invited to pause and give thanks for the gift of life, especially everyday blessings. It is a time to be ready for new spiritual growth and development. At First Church, we have blessings each week to celebrate and opportunities for faith development in weeks ahead.

What are these opportunities? Our traditional Stewardship season at First Church begins with the theme "*Living the Vision Together*," we will host a Community Thanksgiving worship with other Methuen churches on November 23rd and, very important, our food distribution to the wider community

will be held on Tuesday, November 25th. At the end of the month, we go into the *First Sunday of Advent* and prepare our hearts for the coming of the Promised One as we light the first candle of “hope.”

All of what we do in worship and in our gatherings as a church is around our desire to be faithful to our covenant to be friends in Christ and friends to all who need us and count on us. How can we best do this as a community and as individuals?

One way is to be consistent and faithful on the journey of faith development. We can do this in different ways. Sometimes, our faith grows in unplanned spontaneous ways. Other times, it is helpful to do some intentional planning for our personal faith development.

I have found, through the years, that both are needed: spontaneity and intentionality. In this message, please allow me to encourage one intentional practice of study and reflection that gives the benefit of spiritual growth. It may already be part of your daily practice but, if not, you may want to give it a try. It is the practice of “*Lectio Divina*.”

What is *Lectio Divina*? *Lectio Divina* is Latin for “divine reading,” “spiritual reading,” or “holy reading.” *Lectio Divina*, is a slow, rhythmic reading and praying of a Scripture passage. The intention of this traditional monastic practice is to promote communion with God and provide special spiritual insight. It also helps one to be ready for sensing, thinking, feeling, and intuiting the world we live in. It is especially helpful as we commit to serve others with love and compassion through our church and its ministries.

So, find a time for quiet relaxation, making yourself comfortable and try to clear your mind of distractions. Sometimes it is helpful to take deep, cleansing breaths and repeat a chosen phrase or word several times to help free the mind. Then, follow four steps:

- *Lectio*. Read a Bible passage slowly a few times. Savor and ruminate on each portion of the reading, constantly listening for the “still, small voice” of a word or phrase that speaks to you.
- *Meditatio*. Reflect on the passage and consider how it applies to your life. Pay special attention to the feelings that arise and how God speaks.
- *Oratio*. Respond to the passage by praying and opening your heart to God. This is the beginning of your conversation with God. You may keep a journal to record your thoughts if that is helpful.
- *Contemplatio*. Contemplate all that you learned. Sit in silence, rest in God’s presence, and experience union with Christ.

I was introduced to the practice of *Lectio Divina* on different occasions in my theological studies. But, soon after my husband, Bill, died, I was on a retreat in Avila, Spain, when I really learned about the benefit of the practice for my “grieving” life. I read scripture and I read poetry in a different way. I felt the presence of God giving me comfort and helping me find strength more deeply as I allowed the practice to be part of my daily life.

November is sometimes a month for grieving, isn’t it? We may look around and remember those who are no longer with us during the holidays or with us as they once were, sitting next to us in church, at the dinner table or on a simple car ride. Maybe this method of study will help you, whatever your need. May we cherish intentional study and those spontaneous, unexpected experiences that help us grow in faith. May we always find ways, windows, openings to know God's goodness, God's comfort, God's grace on our spiritual journey of growth and faith development.

This interim time in the life of First Church is filled with possibilities for deep spiritual potential, isn't it? As we covenant to be in relationship to God and to one another, may we take seriously the invitation to take stock of our life as a church and dream about who we might become and how we might grow in the remainder of this year and the year ahead. Prayers for our Search Team and the candidates who may read our profile and discern a call to First Church! Truly, may we *"live our vision together!"*

Grace and peace,

Rev. Ann Rogers-Brigham

* * * * *

Thanksgiving Prayer

We bring our thanks, O God, for the infinite variety of your creation. For uncounted grains of sand, unnumbered stars; for plant and tree and mouse and bird; for minnows and giraffes; for every race of humankind; every color of skin and sheen of hair; for the endless roll of talents, skills and abilities that enrich our lives and by which we can enrich each other; for all the ways of knowing, of looking at our world and understanding it; for those who differ with us, who make us think, and who encourage us to renew and refresh every outlook and opinion; for those who have brought us deeper knowledge of ourselves, of reality, and of truth, by speaking in a thousand different tongues, in pictures we have never seen; and for all those names by which your people call upon you, in whatever language, thought or image.

We bring our thanks, O God, for infinite variety. We thank you, too, that even in the midst of such variety we can belong and find out who we are. We give you thanks that we can turn to you in times of crisis or in a search for a treatment for illness and we find your Spirit guiding us. We thank you that we are set in families, nations, languages, where we can belong and find purpose and meaning in our lives. Make us ever open to your Spirit that runs through all our lives and unites us all together. Makes us grateful to each other, respectful of each other, and thankful for our differences. And, give us once again, the eyes of children so we may look with wonder on the wonders of all your creation. With great thanksgiving for all our blessings, O God, we say thank you. Amen.



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.

* * * * *

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 Rev. Rogers-Brigham at amrogersbrigham@gmail.com or 978-687-1240.



* * * * *



Breakfast with Ann

Breakfast with Ann will resume on Wednesday, November 12th, at 8:00 AM. Join Rev. Ann and friends at Ellie's Farmhouse, 436 Broadway in Methuen, for delicious breakfast and informal conversation! If you have never joined us, we extend a special welcome to you. No reservation needed. If you don't want breakfast, just come join us for good conversation.



Breakfast Group from October

Methuen Community Thanksgiving Service

Date: Sunday, November 23rd

Time: 2:00 PM

Place: First Church Congregational, UCC

26 Pleasant Street, Methuen

Leaders: Methuen Clergy

Rev. Ann Rogers-Brigham, First Church Congregational, UCC

Rev. Nathaniel Burnes, First Baptist Church

Fr. Marcos Peña, 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

Music presented by the combined choirs of area churches

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

From the Chair of the Church Board...

Ahhh... November is here. Personally, this is my busiest month of the calendar year. The reason – and feel free to call me crazy – is that I really try to get all of my Christmas chores complete before the first Sunday of Advent (which is Nov. 30th this year). I know... I know... that's madness! However, I challenge you to try it. You will be amazed how much more the season will mean to you, and there will be a spiritual connection that is very rewarding. Even if you only get half of your projects done, you will be blessedly surprised how good it will feel. So give it a try and let me know what you think. In First Church, I know that many of our church committees are working on these special elements, events, and programs as well, so it will be a wonderful season ahead!

As always, we have plenty more going on, including:

- The search process for our next settled pastor is continuing. Hopefully, by the time this report is published, the profile is online with the UCC, and many prospective pastors are reviewing the position we offer. After that, we will receive their profiles and begin the interviewing process for potential candidates to be our next settled pastor. The committee is meeting virtually and physically, and they are working at a rapid pace to build our future. If you would like to see the final profile, it will be available in the office after worship.
- I hope you enjoyed our annual Ham & Bean Dinner, last October 18th. We served more than 170 people in our community, making this one of the best fellowship events in the area. If you volunteered in any way or purchased tickets to attend the event, I truly thank you for your support. You all make this event shine!
- The A/V system has been completely revamped, and a lot of bugs have been worked out. It was a large endeavor to upgrade our ailing equipment, so I thank you for your patience as we try to move forward. A big thank you goes out to the team for all of their diligence. With the upgrade, it is even easier to run the system, so if you'd like to help out, please see Stacey or Carol for more information.
- Our Outreach group is hard at work with numerous efforts. The book drive was a huge success, providing more than 400 volumes to grateful children! Now that it is November, the Outreach team will be focusing on how First Church can help families this Thanksgiving. More is being planned and there are a ton of other ways to give for the upcoming 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.
- Chapel School is having a great year! The teachers and children are busy in the classrooms and playground, and it is wonderful to hear the joy throughout the church. However, enrollment is still active for the 2025-2026 school year, so if there is a family that may need our services, I invite you to connect them with Gina or Roberta. Tours are happening regularly.
- We are working to have another new member class soon, for those that may have missed it back in the spring. So, if you or someone you know is interested in being a full and voting member of our congregation, there will be more opportunities soon. Please see Rev. Ann or myself 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 Carol Sanborn for more information.
- ...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!!!

Josh Ferry



* * * * *

Interested in Church Membership?



Become
Part of
Our
Church
Family

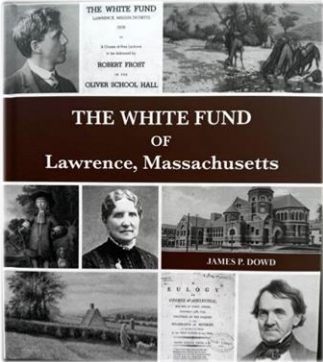
We are delighted to invite new members into our life at First Church. If you have interest in becoming a member, please speak to the Pastor or a Deacon. We provide an orientation to membership. If you are interested in joining an orientation class on November 2nd or 9th, please let us know. We are looking at November 30th for our next Membership Sunday.

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 Rev. Ann or one of our Deacons for more info!

* * * * *

New Book Given to First Church
by Author James P. Dowd

We were recently given a copy of the new book, The White Fund of Lawrence, Massachusetts, by James P. Dowd. This book may be borrowed; it is located in Rev. Ann's office. She's glad to sign it out to you if you'd like to borrow it.





Special Worship Opportunities in November

- **November 2nd – Twenty-first Sunday after Pentecost – All Saints Sunday, Service of Word and Sacrament, Stewardship Sunday**
 - We will light candles for loved ones and call the names of those who died in the past year.
 - Stewardship Season begins at First Church with theme “*Living the Vision Together.*”
 - Lessons: Ephesians 1: 11-23 and Luke 6: 20-31
- **November 9th – Twenty-second Sunday after Pentecost – Stewardship Sunday, Veterans Day Remembrance Prayer and Lighting of Candle for Veterans**
 - Interview with Matt and Rena Caron for our Stewardship Emphasis in Worship using theme, “*Living the Vision Together.*”
 - Lessons: Habakkuk 1:1-4. 2: 1-4, Luke 20: 27-38
- **November 16th – Twenty-third Sunday after Pentecost – Stewardship Sunday, Pledge Dedication in Worship**
 - Stewardship Team delivers sermon on theme, “*Living the Vision Together.*”
 - Lessons: Psalm 98, Isaiah 65: 17-25, Luke 21: 5-19
- **November 23rd, 10:00 AM – Twenty-fourth Sunday after Pentecost – Reign of Christ, Thanksgiving Sunday observed**
 - Lessons: Colossians 1:1-20, Luke 23:33-43
- **November 23rd, 2:00 PM – Community Thanksgiving Service**
 - Join this interfaith gathering, here at First Church, sponsored by the Methuen Clergy Group. Thanks to Mike Boutin for coordinating our music with guest choirs joining our First Church choir. Offering will be given to Neighbors-in-Need and we will collect food gifts to be used by our First Church food pantry. Refreshments will be provided by our Diaconate after the service in Fellowship Hall.
 - Lessons: Psalm 100, Phillippians 4:4-9, John 6:25-35
- **November 30th – First Sunday of Advent – Lighting of the Candle of Hope**
 - Lessons: Psalm 122, Isaiah 2:1-5, Matthew 24:36-44



Stewardship Ministry Team...

LIVING THE VISION TOGETHER... this is our Stewardship Theme for this year. You have shared your visions for our church and we thank you. Many of us have a vision of a growing church where we can worship, learn and serve our community together. During our three campaign Sundays in November, Reverend Ann will give a sermon on Stewardship, she will also interview a church member, and the Stewardship Team will offer a sermon about our visions. On the last Sunday of the campaign, we will all bring our pledges forward to be blessed during worship, and after the service we will enjoy our Chicken Pot Pie dinner in celebration together.

IT WILL TAKE ALL OF OUR PLEDGES TO LIVE THE VISION

Currently member pledges cover approximately 55% 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 in the coming year. We no longer fund the position of Christian Education Director, and our committees are mostly self-funded. It is important to consider all that we could gain by pledging our annual support. We must all carefully reflect on our annual pledge and consider making an increase to our pledge that will support how we can *Live the Vision Together* for the future of our church.

This year's campaign materials have been mailed out. 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 provide monthly for Bread and Roses. We will celebrate our ***Vision Together!***

Stewardship Ministry Team:

Kathy Romano – Chairperson

Rev. Ann Rogers-Brigham, Irene Maggio, Marilyn Peck, Robyn Sliney



The Stewardship Ministry Team

*cordially invites you to a luncheon
following worship*

on

Sunday, November 16, 2025

*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!*

Living the Vision Together



Seeking God



Caring for Each Other



Improving Our Community

Your Pledge Makes It All Happen

Confirmation Class Meetings

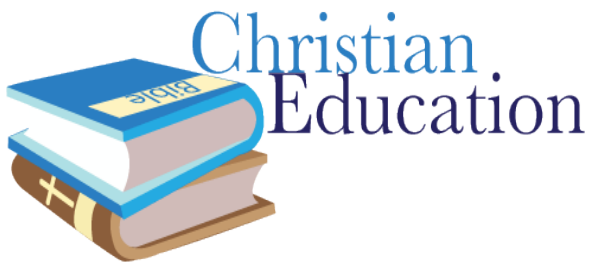
Our class meetings (Sundays after worship) in November are November 2nd, November 9th, and November 30th.

On Saturday, November 1st, we'll have one more "field" learning trip to St. Xenia Russian Orthodox Church in Methuen for their 5:30 PM service. Arrive at 4:50 pm, for a meeting with Fr. Crowley prior to the service. You are welcome to join us! (Please be aware there is a dress code (skirt/head scarf for women, dress shirt/pants for men.)

On Sunday, November 9th, the youth will have a guest speaker to learn about Islam. Thank you to Bella Bane for arranging for her Muslim friend to visit us and learn about Islam together.

Students preparing for confirmation are Bella Bane (Mentor: Judi Boyko), Andrew Pavlenkov Alexis Murray (Mentor: Sarah Pavlenkov), (Mentor: Scott Sanborn), and Haleigh Sanborn (Mentor: Allan Barlow). We are looking forward to meaningful confirmation classes in weeks ahead as we prepare for **Confirmation Sunday on December 7th**.

* * * * *



Sunday School Lessons November 2025

Sharing our Faith on our upcoming Sundays:

- **November 2nd – Communion Sunday**
 - **Bible Story Lesson:** *The Ten Commandments*; Exodus 20:1-7
- **November 9th**
 - **Bible Story Lesson:** *The Battle of Jerico*; Joshua 6:1-20
- **November 16th**
 - **Bible Story Lesson:** *Naomi and Ruth*; Ruth 1:1-22
- **November 30th**
 - **Bible Story Lesson:** *David and Goliath*; 1 Samuel 17:4-11
- **December 7th – Communion Sunday, Service of Confirmation**
 - **Bible Story Lesson:** *Jonah and the Big Fish*; Jonah 1-4

If you need a Sunday School registration form, please see Mrs. B or Mrs. P. Thank you.

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 11/23, 11/30, & 12/7, before or after worship (10:00 – 11:00 AM)**
 - **Weekdays until 12/5, 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.



Musical Musings

It's been an interesting fall: a bunch of work travel for me (more than usual), and choir absences and away weekends for them, too! And through it all, the choir makes beautiful music, week after week... I'm so proud of their efforts and results. We are VERY fortunate to have this caliber choir every week at church!

November is busy, too! Plans for Advent, then the Advent Cantata, then Christmas....lots of music to teach and learn... it's a busy time! I've heard from some of you that you wish we did more Christmas music during Advent. So let me explain: the Church provides us with an Advent season of 4 Sundays to prepare for Christmas: to wait, like Mary, for the birth of her Son. Then the Church gives us a Christmas season: from Christmas Eve until we celebrate the baptism of Jesus: 12 days of Christmas, to rejoice in his birth. This year, the 4 Sundays of Advent are Nov 30, Dec 7, Dec 14, and Dec 21. Our Advent Cantata is scheduled for Sunday, Dec 14 during which we will feature some gorgeous new and old music of the season, and on Dec 21st, we will begin using some Christmas carols as we wait for the birth of Christ in our world today!

It's Festival of Trees time! Last year, we all pitched in together, and built a beautiful tree with a musical theme that won 1st Place in the Traditional Tree category. The beautiful glass tree prize is on the mantle in the parlor for you to admire!

So this year, our theme is *The Twelve Days of Christmas: A Partridge in a Pear Tree*. The twelve days of Christmas are the time between Christmas and Epiphany, Jan 6, and most sources today say that the song was originally a children's memory song. For our tree this year, we wanted to incorporate a few fun elements, including a "where's the partridge" contest with a wrapped gift under the tree to the person who wins the tree and finds the hidden partridge. We will be needing 12 drums or drummers, 11 flutes or pipers piping, 10 lords or jumping, 9 dancing ladies, 8 maids milking or milk cans, 7 swans swimming, 6 geese laying, 5 golden rings, 4 calling birds, 3 French hens, and 2 turtle doves, for a total of 77 different ornaments. Additionally, Rich and I have already bought the partridge, and will also be purchasing pears for the tree, along with ribbon and fillers (and the tree, of course!). So how can you help? Two ways: first, if you'd like to support the effort, you can write a check to the church and put *Festival of Trees* in the memo line. The money will be directed to the fund to support this event. OR, in a week or so, we will be putting up a big poster with a way for folks to sign up to purchase some of those 77 ornaments, so that we don't end up with duplicates or extras. Look for it at the crossroads in the next week or so! And watch the bulletin for more announcements. Rich and I are really excited to see what we can put together again as a church family!

As always, I welcome your thoughts and comments....

Peace and all good things,

Mike Boutin



From the Outreach Ministry Team

Thanksgiving NIN Food Pantry Distribution

- **We need your help!!!**
- There are 370 families coming to the Neighbors in Need Food Pantry at First Church every week. They need as much food as we can donate.
- We are asking you to choose the grocery items you decide to donate from a specific shopping list. The list is published on page 15 of this Beacon, the Sunday Bulletin, and the Weekly Email Blast.
- **Donations** may be brought to First Church on **Saturday, November 22nd from 12:00 Noon to 2:00 PM.** You may also bring them to church on **Sunday, November 23rd either before or after church.** Please place your donations on the tables against the wall in the Parish Hall.
- If you 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 worship on Sunday morning. **Deadline for donations is Sunday, November 23rd.**

“Let’s Book It!” Book Drive for Marsh Grammar School

- On October 13th, Cindy Bateson, Jo-Ann Crosby and Barbara Donaghue delivered over 400 books, donated by you, to the Marsh Grammar School. Jo-Ann and her sister-in-law made and donated 400 handmade bookmarks for the children.
- The Outreach Team and the children of the Marsh Grammar School thank you for your generosity in providing so many wonderful books for them to read.
- See the article and picture from this event on page 23.

Samaritans Walk for Hope 2025

- The 9th Annual Walk for Hope was held Saturday, October 18th at the Andover High Field House. Becky Smith and Jo-Ann Crosby walked and raised \$250.00. The Samaritans held a raffle from which they made over \$2,800.00. The walk raises money for Family Services’ Samaritans of the Merrimack Valley to support the work they do to prevent suicide and support the survivors of suicide.

Gifts to the Manger and Adopt-a-Child

- This year the dates for Gifts to the Manger are November 1 to December 7. There will be a box in the Crossroads where you can donate unwrapped toys, for children 7-18 years old, which we give to the Methuen Arlington Neighborhood, Inc. Parents are invited to choose a toy and then wrap it for their children. Those children in need of extra care are “adopted” and their wish list is fulfilled.

Outreach Ministry Team

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





Thanksgiving Food Pantry

for Neighbors in Need

2025

We need your help! We currently have 370 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 25th, in addition to the food NIN provides that day.**

You may bring your donations on **Sunday, November 23rd**, 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 22nd, from 12:00 NOON to 2:00 PM.** 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 23rd.**

Shopping List

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



- Canned Soup
- Canned Tuna or Chicken
- Macaroni & Cheese
- Pasta & Pasta Sauce
- 1 or 2 lb. Bags of Rice
- 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 23rd. Thank you!

Thank you.

The Outreach Ministry Team

Walking Group for Fitness and Fellowship

Tuesdays in November

Join us for exercise and conversation. We will continue walking along the river in the month of November, if weather permits. We will be walking at **10:00 AM** on the following Tuesdays in November: 11/4, 11/11, 11/18 and 11/25. We walk at the Raymond J. Martin Riverside Park, 971 Riverside Drive in Methuen. You can walk as many loops as you want (3 times around equals 1 mile) and walk at your own pace. Hope you can join us!



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 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 26th,
due to the Thanksgiving Holiday.*



* * * * *



Our Prayer Shawl Ministry wrapped all the silverware
for the Ham & Bean Dinner during their meeting on October 15th.
Thank you, Ladies!!



The Chapel School

This was our third 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 send those along with the candy.

We are all very excited for the Festival of Trees this year. We extend a HUGE thank you to Cindy Mazella and our Chapel staff for all their efforts to make this year's tree amazing as usual! Our theme this year is **"The Very Hungry Caterpillar,"** Tree set up is almost complete and will open to the public on Saturday, November 22nd - Saturday, December 6th. 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 24th and 25th. 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 the 26th of November. We will close at 11:30 AM. We will then be closed on Thursday and Friday to celebrate with our loved ones.

The Mitten Tree will be filling up 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 First 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.

TREATS FOR TROOPS



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 3rd – Friday, November 7th**

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/>

Open and Affirming (O&A) Committee

The following article is from the United Church of Christ web site. Please consider how we as a congregation can continue to discover how to live as a church that welcomes and embraces everyone who comes through our doors.

What Matters to Us

written by Sidney D. Fowler

https://www.ucc.org/who-we-are/about/general-synod/general-synod-resolutions-regarding-environmental-justice/vitality/vitality_boost-your-vitality/vitality_what-matters/vitality_what-matters_we-are-people-of-extravagant/

“Jesus didn’t turn people away, neither do we.” When you’re gutsy enough to make such a claim, it’s not always easy to make good on it. Following Jesus’ lead, the United Church of Christ strives to keep doors open to all. By God’s grace—in the past and today—we do what needs to be done to be bold people of God’s welcome.

Jesus lived and breathed gracious hospitality. Even though there were powerful people who opposed Jesus’ extravagant welcome, he still embraced those who were often shunned. In the reign of God that Jesus spoke of, he declared there is room for all—children (Luke 18:15-17) and those who are hungry, thirsty, homeless, ill, poor, grieving, persecuted, and in prison (Matthew 25: 31-46 and Luke 6:20-26). Jesus put faith and hospitality together: “Whoever receives one whom I send receives me” and those who received Jesus, embraced God (John 13:20).

This kind of hospitality is characteristic of both God’s faithfulness and, at our best, our faithfulness. God welcomes, and also feeds the hungry, forgives sins, stands with those who are poor and oppressed, comforts the suffering, and becomes home for those who wander. In gratitude, faithful people welcome strangers. A surprise in the Bible is the way you welcome a stranger expresses how you embrace the very presence of God (Genesis 18:1-8 and Luke 23:28-35).

The church, since its beginning, continues to “extend hospitality to strangers (Roman 12:13).” The church, after all, is a blessed company of strangers held together by the grace of God.

UCC churches express God’s extravagant welcome in a variety of ways. Our welcome embraces both those we invite to participate in our congregations, as well as those outside the church, with whom we work for God’s justice and compassion. That is our prayer, our hope.

Who is welcome? Our churches are among those whose doors are open to God’s children of different cultures, races, genders, ages, sexual orientations, abilities, economic situations, and theological traditions. It isn’t always easy to be so open. Each UCC congregation prayerfully discerns and expresses how wide their doors and arms are open. Some state it this way, “We are a multicultural and multiracial, open and affirming and just peace church.”

Once one enters the door, it’s not a matter of “sit back, be quiet, speak only as we do.” You, your heart’s questions and your gifts, are vital to the congregation. Both we and you grow together in faith and witness. Your distinct story of faith joins with centuries of stories that make up the Church, and specifically the United Church of Christ. In God’s grace, you change: we change. We make a holy difference in each other’s lives, and, together, in the world.

In gratitude, because God welcomes us, we are called to make bold stands. In behalf of and along with those who remain oppressed, suffering, alienated, and poor in God’s world, we speak and act. “It’s not an extravagant welcome to an ‘anything-goes’ religion, a comfortable form of Christianity,

but to a costly form of discipleship,” says John Thomas, current president and general minister of the UCC. Thomas calls this kind of discipleship “evangelical courage.” It’s the other side of the “extravagant welcome” coin. You see this risky faith expressed throughout our history that at times has been hidden. Inspired by God’s gift of hospitality, we work for God’s welcoming world of love and justice.



ONA Committee – Sue Newton, *Chair*, Irene Maggio, Christine Bane, Josh Ferry *Ex officio*

* * * * *

I Give Thanks

by Harriet Kofalk, from the song "Awakening"

Awakening in a moment of peace

*I give thanks
to the source of all peace
as I set forth
into the day
the birds sing
with new voices
And I listen
with new ears
and give thanks*

*nearby
the flower called Angel's Trumpet
blows
in the breeze
and I give thanks
my feet touch the grass
still wet with dew
and I give thanks*

*both to my mother earth
for sustaining my steps
and to the seas
cycling once again
to bring forth new life
sun-fire
the dewdrops
become jeweled
with the morning
sun's fire
and I give thanks*

*you can see forever
when the vision is clear
in this moment
each moment*

I give thanks

Blessing of the Animals

Saturday, October 4th



“Let’s Book It” Book Drive Donations Delivered

The Outreach Team is happy to announce we collected a total of 438 books in our fourth annual book drive!! This year our book donations were given to the Marsh School in west Methuen.

On Monday, October 20th, Joann Crosby, Barbara Donaghue, and Cindy Bateson delivered the boxes of books and handmade bookmarks (thank you Jo Crosby!) to the Marsh. The books were received with gratitude by Literacy Supervisor Jennifer Connolly. She gathered up some of the books and led us to Mrs. Pellegrino’s Kindergarten classroom where we were met with smiles and curiosity. A group picture was taken and all of students were allowed to pick out a bookmark. Following our classroom visit, Ms. Connolly indicated that the books which we donated will be divided into books for classroom libraries, and books to be given away to students who have few books at home.

From the Outreach Committee, thank you to everyone who donated books, or money to purchase books. Your generosity was much appreciated.



Samaritans Walk for Hope 2025



Ham & Bean Dinner

Saturday, October 18th

Thank you! You rock! It takes a congregation to host a dinner and as always you came through First Church. Many of our guests not only praised the food but had high praise for everyone working the dinner. They were impressed with how everyone was smiling and how relaxed and easygoing everyone was during the meal.

Special thanks to our friends from the community who lent a hand. Ming and Amy Ding, Tom McGuirk, Mo Patel, and the members of the Prayer Shawl Committee.

We couldn't have done it without YOU!

Deb MaueSprague & Marilyn Peck



Ham & Bean Dinner

Saturday, October 18th

A huge and heartfelt thank you to EVERYONE who helped make our Ham & Bean Dinner such a wonderful success! Whether you prepped, cooked, served, cleaned up, donated ingredients, or simply came to share a meal and fellowship, your efforts were truly appreciated.

The Ham & Bean Dinner, as well as the George Washington Birthday Dinner, remind us how blessed we are to belong to such a caring and generous church family. Year after year, we pull together and make these fantastic events happen, showing our community our enthusiasm and dedication to serve.

Thank you, thank you, thank you for continuing to support our church's mission and we look forward to February, and our 144th George Washington Birthday Dinner!

Carol Sanborn





First Sunday of Advent is November 30th!

As we long for God's presence and prepare our hearts for Advent, let us pray for God's light in days of prayer and contemplation.

*Longing for light, we wait in darkness.
Longing for truth, we turn to you.
Make us your own, your holy people,
light for the world to see.*

*Christ be our light! Shine in our hearts. Shine through the darkness.
Christ, be our light! Shine in your church gathered today.
Longing for peace, our world is troubled.
Longing for hope, many despair.
Your word alone has power to save us.
Make us your living voice.*

*Longing for food, many are hungry.
Longing for water, many still thirst.
Make us your bread, broken for others,
shared until all are fed.
Longing for shelter, many are homeless.
Longing for warmth, many are cold.
Make us your building, sheltering others,
walls made of living stone.
Many the gifts, many the people,
many the hearts that yearn to belong.
Let us be servants to one another,
making your kingdom come.*

~ (Christ, be our Light, Bernadette Farrell video with song)

HOPE



Rejoice and Come Home...

Advent & Christmas 2025 *First Church Congregational* *Methuen, MA*

Sunday, November 30th:

10:00 AM – Worship – *1st Sunday of Advent (Hope)*
Scripture Readings: Psalm 122, Isaiah 2:1-5, Matthew 24:36-44

Sunday, December 7th:

10:00 AM – Worship – *2nd Sunday of Advent (Peace)* ~ *Communion, Service of Confirmation, Gifts to the Manger*
Scripture Readings: Psalm 72, Isaiah 11:1-10, Matthew 3:1-12

Sunday, December 14th:

10:00 AM – Worship – *3rd Sunday of Advent (Joy)* ~ *Advent Cantata*
Scripture Readings: Psalm 146:5-10, Isaiah 5:7-10, Matthew 11:2-11

Sunday, December 21st:

10:00 AM – Worship – *4th Sunday of Advent (Love)* ~ *Children/Youth Pageant*
Scripture Readings: Psalm 122, Isaiah 2:1-5, Matthew 24:36-44

Wednesday, December 24th:

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

Thursday, December 25th:

Merry Christmas to All!



Sunday, December 28th:

10:00 AM – Worship – *1st Sunday after Christmas* ~ *Carol Sing and Christmas Readings*
Scripture Readings: Psalm 148, Isaiah 63:7-9, Matthew 2:13-23



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



NOVEMBER BIRTHDAYS

10 Christine Gatulis
25 Kacey Buck
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 16 years
11/8	Michael & Jennifer Borislow	Married 39 years
11/24	George & Caroline Rollins	Married 40 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**earfelt 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 2025					
Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
2 Communion <i>Daylight Savings Ends (Fall Back)</i> Stewardship Sunday All Saints Sunday 11:15 AM Fellowship Time 11:30 AM Confirmation Class	3 6:30 PM Finance	4 Election Day Church/School Closed 10:00 AM Walking Group (Meet at Riverside Park) 4:30 PM Food Pantry	5 1:00 PM Prayer Shawl 6:30 PM Church Board	6	7
9 Stewardship Sunday Veterans Sunday 11:15 AM Fellowship Time 11:30 AM Confirmation Class	10 4:00 PM Chapel Staff 6:30 PM Outreach	11 Veterans Day Church/School Closed 10:00 AM Walking Group (Meet at Riverside Park) 4:30 PM Food Pantry	12 8:00 AM Breakfast with Ann 1:00 PM Prayer Shawl 7:00 PM Diaconate	13	14
16 Stewardship Sunday 11:15 AM Stewardship Luncheon	17 1:00 PM Cook for Bread & Roses	18 10:00 AM Walking Group (Meet at Riverside Park) 4:30 PM Food Pantry	19 December BEACON deadline 1:00 PM Prayer Shawl 6:30 PM MDCC	20	21
23 Thanksgiving Sunday Thanksgiving Donations Due 11:15 AM Fellowship Time 2:00 PM Community Thanksgiving Service	24 Chapel School Thanksgiving 2:00 PM Stewardship	25 Chapel School Thanksgiving 10:00 AM Walking Group (Meet at Riverside Park) 4:30 PM Food Pantry Thanksgiving Distribution	26 Chapel School Closes at 11:30 AM	27 Thanksgiving Church/School Closed	28 Church/School Closed
30 First Sunday of Advent 11:15 AM Fellowship Time 11:30 AM Confirmation Class	Worship Service Sundays at 10:00 AM In-Person & on YouTube Live www.youtube.com/@firstchurchonagregationalm1 729				
					1 5:30 PM Confirmation Class Field Trip
					8
					15
					22 10:00 AM - 12:00 PM Thanksgiving Donation Dropoff
					29
					

Dates and times are subject to change

First Church Congregational

United Church of Christ

26 Pleasant Street

Methuen, MA 01844-3199

Address Service Requested