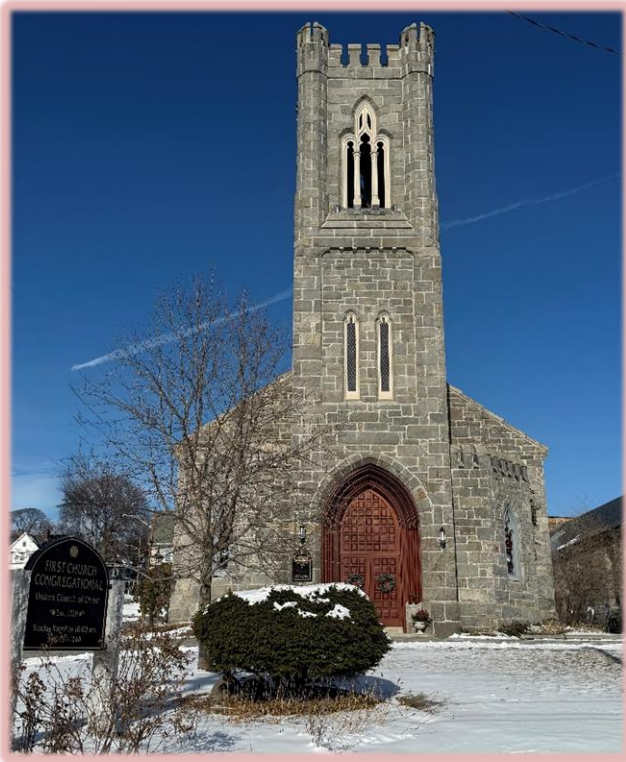


February 2026



144<sup>th</sup> George Washington  
Birthday Dinner  
Saturday, February 21<sup>st</sup>  
See Page 9

# 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](mailto:amrogersbrigham@gmail.com)

Roberta Jurovich, Office Manager  
[firstchurch.roberta@gmail.com](mailto:firstchurch.roberta@gmail.com)

Mike Boutin, Minister of Music  
[boutinerjr@gmail.com](mailto:boutinerjr@gmail.com)

[www.firstchurchmethuen.com](http://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,

February greetings! These cold winter days of the Epiphany season are with us and so are our weekly conversations about God's call to follow the "Light" of God's redeeming presence. We need that light, that warmth, that guidance as the days are cold and dark and, sometimes, we are in cold, dark places in our lives and in our wider world.

We all know the challenges of living in a world where bad news can be upsetting, and we just don't have a place to turn. Where do we turn? Does our faith encourage us to find people and places on this faith journey that will give us perspective and moments to pause and gather our thoughts? How do we foster our "friendship with God" so we can know God is accompanying us on our spiritual journey, our life journey?

Recently, a small group of our parishioners at First Church coffee hour were talking about these cold, dark places in how we view the world around us and the challenge of staying in tune with

what's going on but also needing to break for contemplation, prayer, retreat, refreshment and centering in the Spirit. What came from their conversations and their sharing about personal needs, was a decision for us to provide a space in our First Church sanctuary during the week and on Sundays after service, for quiet moments for reflection and prayer.

Of course, we are glad to open our sanctuary to any who wants a time for prayer at any time in this sacred space. In this case, we thought it good to be intentional about naming a day and time when we can provide an atmosphere of welcome for prayer for those who are interested in coming into our sanctuary for this purpose. Our decision as congregants and as church leaders charged with "caretaking" of our space, was to open our sanctuary at two different times for those who want to take advantage of dedicated quiet moments to sit and think and pray.

Perhaps you have already taken advantage of the opportunities created for us out of this request I described for our sanctuary to be open for prayer. Maybe you are looking forward to utilizing these dedicated times for retreat in our sanctuary. We started it at the end of January and hope to continue through Lent. Come and join us and look forward to quiet sacred music playing in the background, candlelight (battery operated) provided, and a handout available for guided prayers if desired. Besides those aids, the space will be "the space" for sacred reckonings.

When is the sanctuary open? Wednesdays and Sundays. On Wednesdays, from 1:00 – 3:00 PM, for those who want a quiet place to think, to pray, to center, or whatever is needed for wholeness and peace, the sanctuary will be open. Be aware our Prayer Shawl Ministry group is meeting during those hours on Wednesday, so you may see them in the church parlor. They are glad for you to wave "hello." Also, be respectful of our Chapel School in session with our teachers and their students in and around their classroom spaces.

We also wanted to accommodate those who are only at First Church on Sunday and need an after worship service "quiet" space for silent prayers and reflections. Our sanctuary is open on Sundays for any who want to enter our worship space for quiet moments after worship from 11:30 AM – 12:30 PM. (about an hour). Please note that if our choir is needing to rehearse, you'll still be able to come into the space, but rehearsal will be taking place.

What a gift to have these opportunities in place. As we go into the church season of Lent mid-February, the quiet sanctuary space will invite (with guided Lenten readings) continued opportunity for prayer and reflection. Perhaps we will find our desire to enter our sanctuary space for personal prayer aiding our Lenten commitment to friendship with God and God's desire to bring change and transformation to a hurting world.

From Psalm 51:15-17 we read this prayer that expresses the desire for God's companionship, God's friendship:

*O Gracious One, open my lips and my mouth shall sing forth your praise.  
For You do not want sacrifice; you delight in our friendship with You.  
A sacrifice most appropriate is a humble spirit; a repentant and contrite heart,  
O Merciful One, is the gift You must desire.*

This Psalm speaks of friendship with God and how we nurture that friendship with a contrite heart. I envision the sanctuary open for prayer and reflection as an encouragement for our need to find places that help us on this journey find friendship with God. For us, it is the journey with God, the friendship and companionship with the Holy One, that is our focus. In humility, we ask how we become one with God and with God's passion for a transformed world. Christianity is about standing against the domination systems of this world and standing for the kingdom of God. It is the way of life

we choose with focus, commitment and intention. Our Lenten journey invites us to look upon our hearts and pray God will grace us with the blessing of God's guidance and wisdom. (See "A Graced Heart in Lent")

May we find that wherever we are, wherever we are praying, at church, at home, at school, at work, that we journey this season with Jesus remembering his invitation to be his followers, his companions on the Way. May our religious practices animate our social actions as Jesus taught us. May our journeys be a blessing as we experience again the great love of God to redeem a world so desperately in need of salvation. May we live, learn, love and share so that we are enriched by the gift of community in our churches and our circles of care.

God's peace and blessing be upon each of you,  
*Rev. Ann*

\* \* \* \* \*

## 2026 Lenten Services

*First Church Congregational*

*United Church of Christ*



### Wednesday, February 18<sup>th</sup>:

7:00 PM – *Ash Wednesday* ~ The Beginning of Lent and Ashes May Be Received.

### Sunday, March 22<sup>nd</sup>:

10:00 AM – *Fifth Sunday of Lent* ~ Lenten Play, "I Saw Him."

### Sunday, March 29<sup>th</sup>:

10:00 AM – *Palm Sunday* ~ Music Cantata, Children/Youth are invited to join a "Palm Parade" in the Sanctuary.

### Thursday, April 2<sup>nd</sup>:

7:00 PM – *Maundy Thursday* ~ Communion and Reading of Passion with Music Responses.

### Sunday, April 5<sup>th</sup>:

10:00 AM – *Easter Sunday* ~ A Joyous Celebration!



# 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](http://www.youtube.com/@firstchurchcongregationalm1729)). An Order of Worship will be emailed out by the Friday before the service.

\* \* \* \* \*

## Prayer and Reflection Time in the Sanctuary

We welcome you to remain in the sanctuary after worship for quiet moments for prayer and meditation on Sundays, from 11:30 AM. - 12:30 PM. Thank you for respecting those who are looking for the opportunity to sit quietly in the beauty of our First Church sanctuary for personal prayer.



Our sanctuary will also be open for quiet prayer and reflection on Wednesdays from 1:00 – 3:00 PM. We will plan to do this through the Lenten season.

\* \* \* \* \*

## Breakfast with Rev. Ann

**2<sup>ND</sup> Wednesdays at 8:00 AM**

at Ellie's Farmhouse Restaurant, 436 Broadway, Methuen

Breakfast with Rev. Ann will be on Wednesday, February 11<sup>th</sup>, 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.



January Group at Breakfast with Rev. Ann

# 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](mailto: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](mailto:amrogersbrigham@gmail.com) or 978-687-1240.

\* \* \* \* \*

## *In Case of Snow...*

As we enter the snow season, please be advised that on weekdays, if Methuen Public Schools are cancelled, the Chapel School and Church Office will not be open.

If a storm is predicted for a Sunday, if there are any changes to the time of worship, or worship is cancelled, please check your email, our church web page ([www.firstchurchmethuen.com](http://www.firstchurchmethuen.com)) or our Facebook page ([www.facebook.com/firstchurchmethuen](http://www.facebook.com/firstchurchmethuen)).



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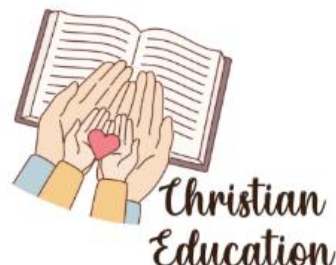
## Christian Education

Sunday School continues with stories from the Bible and Information Lessons on the important days as we celebrate during Lent.

We also hope to do some outreach with the older youth and begin lessons on Heifer in the spring as we plan to raise money to buy a heifer.

As always, we thank you for all your support.

Blessings,  
Mrs. B. and Mrs. P.





# From the Chair of the Church Board...

Ahh... winter! Not sure about the rest of you, but my instinct to hibernate is very, very strong. When it's cold, muddy, icy, and slushy outside, I often feel like hunkering down in my TV room or workshop – anywhere but outside. However, Lisa & I have an 8 month old puppy, so that is not an option. I so wish I had his energy, but right now I am just trying to keep up! However, there is always a lot of energy at First Church. I know that many of our church committees are working on these special elements, events, and programs as well for celebration of our savior's birth, so it will be a wonderful season ahead!

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

- Can you believe that Lent is coming soon?!? Ash Wednesday service will be this February 18<sup>th</sup> to kick off the season. I know the Diaconate, led by Rev. Ann, and choir music, led by Mike, will create several wonderful services. This is always a deeply spiritual time for me, and I pray you experience it as well.
- The search process for our next settled pastor is continuing. We will be bringing in a candidate this month to see if there is a good fit, so stay tuned. 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.
- Our annual George Washington Birthday Dinner is February 21<sup>st</sup>!! It will surely be a spectacular time of fellowship, so please think about volunteering to be part of it. Please talk with Carol Sanborn or Marilyn Peck to see where you can help out. Also, Pat King is working on our annual ad book for the event, so there are several ways that assist. You all make this event shine!
- Our Outreach Ministry Team is hard at work with numerous efforts. I sincerely thank you all for time, talent, and treasure given for those less fortunate. This month, we will begin our tradition of the Souper Bowl of Caring, which will gather cans of soup and monetary donations for those in critical need of food security. You can be part of Team Cans (trying to reach a goal of 750 cans), Team Cash (with a goal of raising \$750), or both! 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, and will begin soon for September, 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.
- The Finance Committee is starting to discuss next year's budget. If there is something you may be interested in pursuing or helping out with, please contact Scott Sanborn. He would love to talk about options, funding, or grants to help our church grow.
- 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 & stay warm!!!

*Josh Ferry*



\* \* \* \* \*



## *Special Worship Opportunities in February*

- **February 1<sup>st</sup> – Fourth Sunday after Epiphany, Service of Word and Sacrament**
  - **Lessons:** Psalm 15; 1 Corinthians 1:18-31; Matthew 5:1-12
- **February 8<sup>th</sup> – Fifth Sunday of Epiphany, Racial Justice Sunday, Speaker: Eddie Najeeullah**
  - **Lessons:** Psalm 112:1-9; 1 Corinthians 2:1-12; Matthew 5:13-20
- **February 15<sup>th</sup> – Transfiguration, Science and Technology Sunday**
  - **Lessons:** Psalm 2; Exodus 24:12-18; Matthew 17:1-9
- **February 18<sup>th</sup> – Ash Wednesday Service (7:00 pm), The Blessing and Imposition of Ashes**
  - **Lessons:** Joel 2:1-12; 2 Corinthians 5:20-6:10; Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21
- **February 22<sup>nd</sup> – First Sunday of Lent**
  - **Lessons:** Psalm 32; Romans 5:12-19; Matthew 4:1-11

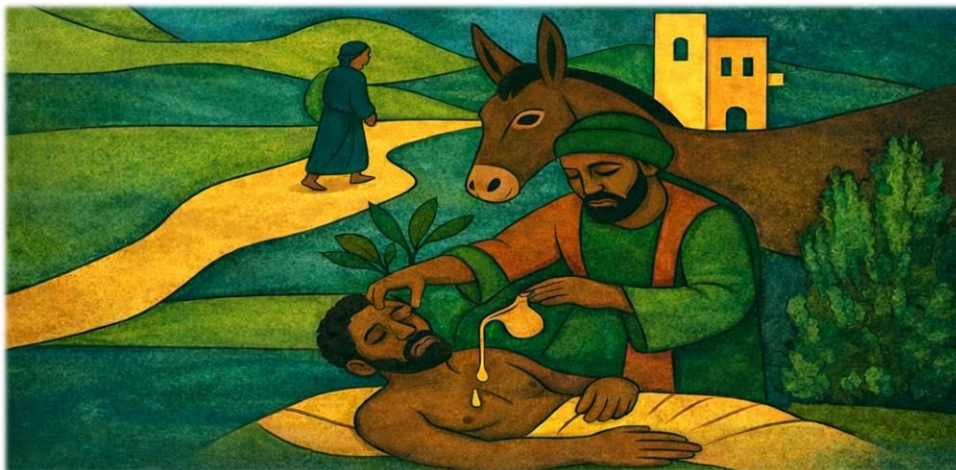
## We Will Observe Racial Justice Sunday on February 8<sup>th</sup>

In our Southern New England Conference, UCC, our Racial Justice Ministres include all those efforts to eradicate racism in our personal, interpersonal, institutional and cultural realms. On the second Sunday in February, we take moments to remember our commitment to address ways we can use resources available for congregations to acquire knowledge and skills in intersectional racial justice advocacy. May we work with other Christian activists to be equipped to:

- Educate others to speak up when people are assaulted verbally and physically
- Advocate for and with historically oppressed and underrepresented communities
- Strategize and organize to eradicate hate speech and shut down white nationalism threats
- Engage in direct nonviolent social actions to correct and eliminate racist policies and behaviors
- Respond and assist families experiencing terrorism and militarized police violence
- Learn and teach from culture-centered biblical and theological resources
- Develop meaningful relationships across interfaith and ecumenical traditions
- Restructure capitalism and create more equitable systems of economic access and sustainability
- Resist patriarchy at all cost and create models of equitable leadership across all gender identities
- Eradicate constructed race categories within the Christian Church and society
- Dismantle economic systems of inequality
- Restore God's human family—equally valuing all identities and people groups.

May we be part of the continued movement of Christian churches here and abroad to be a catalyst for addressing historical and contemporary issues regarding the intersections of race and racism that continues to harm communities of color. The United Church of Christ acknowledges and supports the equality of all humans. In 1993, The Nineteenth General Synod called upon UCC congregations in all its settings to be a true multiracial and multicultural church. Truly, *“God has not given us a spirit of fear, but the spirit of power, of courage and resolution, to meet difficulties and dangers; the spirit of love which will carry us through opposition.”* ~ 2 Timothy 1:7

Come and join us on Racial Justice Sunday at First Church on Sunday, February 8<sup>th</sup> and welcome our guest speaker, Mr. Eddie Najeeullah.





# 144<sup>th</sup> George Washington Birthday Dinner



**February 21, 2026**

*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 Citrus Raisin Sauce*
  - Baked Haddock  
*with Ritz Cracker Crusted*

Fresh Green Salad, Antipasto, Green Beans, Butternut Squash, Macaroni & Cheese, Mashed Potatoes, Stuffing, Gravy, Vegan Chili, Rolls & Butter, and Apple Crisp for dessert!

## **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.*

# Why Do We Observe Ash Wednesday?

The Lenten journey from the ashes of death to resurrected life begins on the first day of Lent, Ash Wednesday, which signifies a time to turn around, to change directions, to repent. This first day of Lent reminds us that unless we are willing to die to our old selves, we cannot be raised to new life with Christ. The first step of this journey calls us to acknowledge and confront our mortality, individually and corporately. In many traditions, this is symbolized through the imposition of ashes — placing a cross on one's forehead. During the imposition of ashes, the words: *"You are dust, and to dust you shall return"* (Genesis 3:19) are repeated again and again. We are to remember that we are but temporary creatures, always on the edge of death.



On Ash Wednesday, we begin our Lenten trek through the desert toward Easter. Ashes on the forehead is a sign of our humanity and a reminder of our mortality. Lent is not a matter of being good, and wearing ashes is not to show off one's faith. The ashes are a reminder to us and our communities of our finite creatureliness. The ashes we wear on our Lenten journey symbolize the dust and broken debris of our lives as well as the reality that eventually each of us will die.

Trusting in the "accomplished fact" of Christ's resurrection, however, we listen for the Word of God in the time-honored stories of the church's Lenten journey. We follow Jesus into the wilderness, resist temptation, fast, and proceed "on the way" to Jerusalem and the cross. Our Lenten journey is one of metanoia ("turning around"), of changing directions from self-serving toward the self-giving way of the cross.

\* \* \* \* \*

**Save the Dates – Sundays, March 1<sup>st</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup>, and 15<sup>th</sup>**

**For a Study Series, following Fellowship Time, During Lent**

## Making End of Life Decisions

We are planning to offer three study sessions on the topic *"Making End of Life Decisions"* during the first three Sundays of March. We hope you'll join us to hear different speakers on this subject talk about various aspects of making end of life decisions for one's life. More to come as the series is now in the planning stages.



# *Musical Musings*

I've been thinking a lot about meeting needs in our music program, lately. There are a lot of needs to meet: the choir and making sure that they are growing, and challenged, and happy; the pastor – you always want to make the pastor happy in church work; the Board and its Chair; me – a after all, I need to be happy and fulfilled as a musician in my work; and of course, the congregation. That's the hardest group to meet needs, because music is so much about personal taste and everyone's tastes are so... different. Some people like only to sing music they've sung for years, while other folks hate that stuff. Some folks like learning new music, while other folks hate that stuff. Some folks like classical music, while other folks... OK, so you get the idea. It's nearly impossible to please everyone.

And I honestly don't try to please everyone, since it really is an impossible task. Here's, instead, what I try to do each week with our music. Each week, I try to choose music that is appropriate: in tune with the readings, the liturgical season, what's going on in the world or in the church, and balance familiar and new music, classical and contemporary, and composers of different genders, and races, and backgrounds. In our choir music, I try to balance different styles and emotions. So, for example, last week, our anthem was called Poor Man Lazarus. It was a traditional African American spiritual that was written down by Jester Hairston, an African American composer, who actually was one of the first African Americans to go to my undergraduate alma mater, Tufts, and graduated from there in 1929. It was appropriate for the readings and the theme of the Sunday, and it was fun! The congregation enjoyed it... sometimes, though, the anthem is sad, or quiet, or more reflective. All these different styles and types of music and hymns hopefully accomplish one goal: my hope is that once in a while over the course of a year, you are deeply moved by a hymn, or a choir anthem, or some instrumental music, and in that moment, you can pray. My work is done if I can facilitate that for you once in a while...not always, but at least occasionally.

I'd love to hear what you think....

Peace and all good things,

*Mike Boutin*





## **A Lenten Prayer**

*by Joyce Rupp*

*In the passing of the seasons, phases of the moon, rising and setting  
of the sun, and the stars glowing in the universe,  
may my love deepen and expand.*

*In the twisting, turning, and tumbling of everyday comings and goings,  
in the joys and sorrows that visit me,  
may my love deepen and expand.*

*In the voices of people who have become central in my heart,  
who tame the rough edges of my hidden self,  
may my love deepen and expand.*

*In the faces of strangers and passersby, in each human  
whose spirit joins invisibly with my own,  
may my love deepen and expand.*

*In the lonely, distraught, and disdained persons longing to be  
respected and treated compassionately,  
may my love deepen and expand.*

*In the unity that resides among everything that exists upon  
and within this beloved planet we call "our Earth,"  
may my love deepen and expand.*

*In the moments when the truth of my inherent goodness reveals itself  
and sends me forth to be kind to others,  
may my love deepen and expand.*

*In the silent prayer of my heart when I pause to be in deliberate relationship with you—  
the Holy One who guides my life,  
may my love deepen and expand.*

*In graced situations when the truth of my unfinishedness  
and the lack of being all I could be comes to greet me,  
may my love deepen and expand.*

*In the motivation found inside the journey of Jesus, his compassionate life,  
and the generous way he responded to others,  
may my love deepen and expand.*

*In the heartbeat of hope coming from stories of the Risen Christ,  
a steady Light-filled presence living on within me,  
may my love deepen and expand.*

*In this moment, this day, this place, this time, this body that is mine,  
when I repeatedly open my mind and heart to you,  
may my love deepen and expand.*

*Guide of my life, may I be as present to you as you are to me.  
In giving myself to the process of spiritual growth, I trust you will show the way to live  
as my truest self. In all I am and all I do, my heart rests in your abiding love.*

## Stewardship Ministry Team...

The Stewardship Ministry Team is grateful for all of the pledges we received for the coming year. We achieved a 20% increase over last year. Thank you to everyone who pledged. Remember that you can make a pledge at any time. Contact the church office or a member of the Stewardship Team if you need the pledge materials.

Our pledges of support will allow us to **Live Our Vision Together**. We can also fulfill our vision by serving on one of the committees of the church. The Nominating Sub-Committee of the Stewardship Team will be seeking members to serve as chairperson of several committees for our 2026/2027 church year, including Membership Development/Communication, Member at Large, and Trustees. Positions on other standing committees to be filled include Audit, Finance, Safe Church, and Association and Conference Delegates. Consider joining the Diaconate, Outreach, or Stewardship Team. All of these teams working together help us live our mission to “*Seek God, Care for Each Other, and Improve our Community.*” More details about these teams will be posted and talked about in the weeks ahead. If you would like to serve the church on any of these teams, feel free to speak with a member of the stewardship team or chairperson of the team.

Stewardship Ministry Team:

*Kathy Romano – Chairperson*

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

### Living the Vision Together



*Seeking God*



*Caring for Each Other*



*Improving Our Community*

**Your Pledge Makes It All Happen**



## *From the Outreach Ministry Team*

### 2026 Ray Benedix Souper Bowl of Caring

- Outreach kicked off the *2026 Ray Benedix Souper Bowl of Caring* on Sunday, January 11. The 4 quarters for this year's Souper/Super are Sundays 1/18, 1/25, 2/01 and 2/08
- This year we have an exciting, new competition of "*Team CANS*" vs "*Team DOLLARS*". You can support your chosen team by donating either cans of soup or money. We will present team scores at the end of each quarter,
- At the end of the first quarter, we had 78 cans of soup and \$500.
- Our goals this year are 750 cans of soup and \$750.
- On February 8<sup>th</sup> the Outreach Team will host a football themed Coffee Hour with special Souper Bowl snacks.



### "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 for this year's Diaper Drive are Sundays, March 8<sup>th</sup>, 15<sup>th</sup>, 22<sup>nd</sup>, and 29<sup>th</sup>. There will be a flyer in the March 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 Awareness Sunday will be held on May 17<sup>th</sup>.

### 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*





# The 2026 Ray Benedix Souper Bowl Challenge

Get ready for the 2026 Ray Benedix Souper Bowl of Caring Challenge! This year we will have a new and exciting competition, **Team CANS vs Team DOLLARS**! Which team will earn the most points and win the challenge? You can support your chosen team by donating either cans of soup or money. We will present the team scores on Sundays at the end of each quarter on our special scoreboard. Our kickoff was on Sunday, January 11<sup>th</sup>, and the second half will continue 2/1 and 2/8 (Souper/Super Bowl). The Outreach Team will host a football-themed coffee hour on February 8<sup>th</sup> with special Souper Bowl snacks.

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 to continue honoring Ray's memory through our donations of soup and money in 2026. 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.

Cans of soup and monetary donations may be brought to church each Sunday before or after church until 11:45, through February 8<sup>th</sup>. You may also order soup online and have it shipped to the church. Our goals this year are 750 cans of soup and \$750. Please help us feed the hungry in our community by donating to our **2026 Souper Bowl of Caring Challenge**.

Are you going to be on:

**Team Cans... or Team Dollars?**



## 2026 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 8<sup>th</sup>.

Respectfully,  
**Your Outreach Ministry Team**



# Walking Group for Fitness and Fellowship

## Tuesdays in February

This winter has been a challenge for the walking group, but we will continue to try and walk at **The Loop**, as weather permits. There were 2 cold but sunny Tuesdays in January on which a few of us hardy souls enjoyed a brisk walk in good company. We are hoping that February will bring us warmer temperatures. We will meet at **10:00 AM in front of the AMC Theater** on the following Tuesdays in February: 2/3, 2/10, 2/17 and 2/24. Bundle up and join us for exercise and conversation!

## 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 Bobbi Barlow for more information.

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



\* \* \* \* \*



Rev. Ann blessed a new batch of prayer shawls and lap robes knitted by our Prayer Shawl Ministry at their meeting on Wednesday, January 14<sup>th</sup>.

If you know someone who may like a prayer shawl or lab robe, please contact the church office at [firstchurch.roberta@gmail.com](mailto:firstchurch.roberta@gmail.com), Rev. Ann, or Bobbi Barlow.

# Open and Affirming (O&A) Committee

The following video is from the Oslo Pride. It illustrates how the rainbow symbol represents safety in a time when hatred and bigotry are on the rise. It highlights how small, visible symbols of support, like a rainbow wristband or sticker, signal to LGBTQIA+ individuals that a space is welcoming, they belong, and they are safe, transforming moments of anxiety into relief and affirmation. TRYGG means “safe” or “secure.”



Please take a moment to watch this short YouTube clip: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=UVepoXddTW4](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UVepoXddTW4)



Thank you.

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

\* \* \* \* \*

## “A Graced Heart in Lent”

In the Judaic tradition, the heart is the crucible of a person’s true essence. May we, in our Christian tradition of observing Lent, find this prayer for the “heart” meaningful.

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| 1. <i>Return my heart when it is lost.</i>           | 21. <i>Entice my heart when it is distracted.</i>  |
| 2. <i>Warm my heart when it is cold.</i>             | 22. <i>Ration my heart when it is greedy.</i>      |
| 3. <i>Embrace my heart when it is lonely.</i>        | 23. <i>Focus my heart when it is blurred.</i>      |
| 4. <i>Strengthen my heart when it is weak.</i>       | 24. <i>Encourage my heart when it is dejected.</i> |
| 5. <i>Widen my heart when it is narrow.</i>          | 25. <i>Restore my heart when it is faltering.</i>  |
| 6. <i>Rest my heart when it is weary.</i>            | 26. <i>Beckon my heart when it is exiled.</i>      |
| 7. <i>Open my heart when it is closed.</i>           | 27. <i>Heal my heart when it is ailing.</i>        |
| 8. <i>Caution my heart when it is careless.</i>      | 28. <i>Peace my heart when it is troubled.</i>     |
| 9. <i>Straighten my heart when it is crooked.</i>    | 29. <i>Nurture my heart when it is empty.</i>      |
| 10. <i>Soften my heart when it is hard.</i>          | 30. <i>Raise my heart when it is downcast.</i>     |
| 11. <i>Enlighten my heart when it is searching.</i>  | 31. <i>Urge my heart when it is hesitant.</i>      |
| 12. <i>Repair my heart when it is broken.</i>        | 32. <i>Expand my heart when it is withered.</i>    |
| 13. <i>Call home my heart when it is straying.</i>   | 33. <i>Nurture my heart when it is depleted.</i>   |
| 14. <i>Relieve my heart when it is burdened.</i>     | 34. <i>Embolden my heart when it is fearful.</i>   |
| 15. <i>Engage my heart when it is bored.</i>         | 35. <i>Tame my heart when it is uncontrolled.</i>  |
| 16. <i>Direct my heart when it is disoriented.</i>   | 36. <i>Soothe my heart when it is fretting.</i>    |
| 17. <i>Quiet my heart when it is wrestling.</i>      | 37. <i>Revive my heart when it is parched.</i>     |
| 18. <i>Console my heart when it is sorrowful.</i>    | 38. <i>Assure my heart when it is hesitant.</i>    |
| 19. <i>Unloosen my heart when it is controlling.</i> | 39. <i>Gentle my heart when it is harsh.</i>       |
| 20. <i>Calm my heart when it is anxious.</i>         | 40. <i>Welcome my heart when it is returning.</i>  |

(Easter) Rejoice my heart when it is ready. (Adapted from a prayer by Gail Godwin)



# The Chapel School



Enrollment for the 2026 -2027 school year has started. Families have been calling to visit and tour our wonderful little preschool.

Social media is a 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 generation of families returning with their own children. Now that is the best referral of all.

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.

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.

The Souper Bowl Train is filling up!! The children have enjoyed loading up the box cars with their donations. Many parents have told us how much they have embraced this food drive to teach their children the importance of helping other families in need.

Stay Well!

*Gina Colarusso*

Director



**PLEASE HELP SHARE THE WORD!!**



# The Chapel School

*Where a Lifetime of Learning Begins*

**Register Now for our 2026-27 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!*

- **School Year Program** (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](mailto:chapelschoolmethuen@gmail.com)**



**[www.chapelschoolmethuen.com](http://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.*



# Epiphany Sunday

## 1/4/26

### *Arrival of the Three Kings, Children's Moment*



\* \* \* \* \*

On Saturday, January 24<sup>th</sup> & Sunday, January 25<sup>th</sup>, two of our youth, Caroline Colby and Nicolette Jurovich, performed in ***Alice in Wonderland, Jr.*** at the Center for Performing Arts in Methuen. Rev. Ann even took in a performance! Both girls did a great job – Caroline as the Doorknob/Card Guard and Nico as a Cheshire Cat.



# 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](http://www.firstchurchmethuen.com)  
and click the **"Donate"** button.

*Thank you for your support.*



# Happy Birthday!

## FEBRUARY BIRTHDAY

04 Lynn Dewhirst  
05 Joseph Yarid  
07 Roberta Jurovich  
14 Carol Gray, Thomas Jurovich, Leslie Shea  
16 Brenda Killourie, Terry Romano  
23 Melina Gable  
27 Lisa Ferry  
28 Kim Valcourt



## MARCH BIRTHDAY

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

\* \* \* \* \*



## MARCH ANNIVERSARY

3/4 Larry & Robyn Sliney  
3/6 Patrick & Rebecca Wright

Married 31 years  
Married 21 years

		<h1>February 2026</h1> 				
Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<b>Worship Service</b> <i>Sundays at 10:00 AM</i> <i>In-Person &amp;</i> <i>on Facebook Live</i> <a href="http://www.youtube.com/firstchurchmethuen1729">www.youtube.com/firstchurchmethuen1729</a>						
<b>1 Communion</b> 8:30 AM Chancel Choir 11:15 AM Fellowship 11:30 AM - 12:30 PM Silent Prayer & Reflection	<b>2</b>  6:30 PM Finance	<b>3</b> 10:00 AM Walking Group (The Loop)  4:00 PM Food Pantry	<b>4</b> 1:00 PM Prayer Shawl Ministry 1:00 - 3:00 PM Silent Prayer & Reflection 6:30 PM Church Board	<b>5</b>          <b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	
<b>8 Souper Bowl Ends</b> 8:30 AM Chancel Choir 11:15 AM Fellowship <b>Souper Bowl Celebration</b> 11:30 AM - 12:30 PM Silent Prayer & Reflection	<b>9</b>  4:00 PM Chapel Staff  6:30 PM Outreach	<b>10</b> 10:00 AM Walking Group (The Loop)  4:00 PM Food Pantry	<b>11</b> 8:00 AM Breakfast with Ann (Ellie's Farmhouse) 1:00 PM Prayer Shawl 1:00 - 3:00 PM Silent Prayer & Reflection 7:00 PM Diaconate	<b>12</b>          <b>13</b>	<b>14</b>  10:00 AM Historical	
<b>15</b> 8:30 AM Chancel Choir 11:15 AM Fellowship 11:30 AM - 12:30 PM Silent Prayer & Reflection	<b>16</b>  <b>Church Office &amp;</b> <b>Chapel School Closed</b> 1:00 PM Cook for Bread & Roses	<b>17</b> <b>Chapel School Closed</b> <b>GWBD Prep</b> 10:00 AM Walking Group (The Loop)  4:00 PM Food Pantry	<b>18 BEACON deadline</b> <b>Church Office &amp;</b> <b>Chapel School Closed</b> 1:00 PM Prayer Shawl 1:00 - 3:00 PM Silent Prayer & Reflection 7:00 PM Ash Wed Service	<b>19</b> <b>Chapel School Closed</b> <b>GWBD Prep</b>	<b>20</b> <b>Church Office &amp;</b> <b>Chapel School Closed</b> <b>GWBD Prep</b>	<b>21</b> 4:00 - 6:30 PM <b>George Washington</b> <b>Birthday Dinner</b>
<b>22</b> 8:30 AM Chancel Choir 11:15 AM Fellowship 11:30 AM - 12:30 PM Silent Prayer & Reflection	<b>23</b>  2:00 PM Stewardship	<b>24</b> 10:00 AM Walking Group (The Loop)  4:00 PM Food Pantry	<b>25</b> 1:00 PM Prayer Shawl Ministry 1:00 - 3:00 PM Silent Prayer & Reflection	<b>26</b>          <b>27</b>	<b>28</b>	

Dates and times are subject to change

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

**Address Service Requested**