

March 2025



THE BEACON



First Church Congregational United Church of Christ

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Worship on Sundays at 10:00 AM

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

Dear members and friends of First Church,

Welcome to March! What will happen in days ahead as we enter the Season of Lent and wait for the official first day of spring on Thursday, March 20th? I am hoping it means for us in the life of the church a period of introspection, reflection, prayer, engagement, repentance, renewal, or, as Joyce Rupp says so well, "leaning a little further into the heart of the Holy."

Please read this wonderful poem for Lent by Joyce Rupp that may tell us something about ourselves and our yearnings for our Lenten journey.

Poem for Lent

*The cosmos dreams in me
while I wait in stillness,
ready to lean a little further
into the heart of the Holy.*

*I, a little blip of life,
a wisp of unassuming love,*

*a quickly passing breeze,
come once more into Lent.
No need to sign me
with the black bleeding ash
of palms, fried and baked.
I know my humus place.
This Lent I will sail
on the graced wings of desire,
yearning to go deeper
to the place where
I am one in the One.
Oh, may I go there soon,
in the same breath
that takes me to the stars
when the cosmos dreams in me.*

This is not just an invitation to a personal devotion life for the Lenten journey, although that is part of it. It is also an invitation to come together and share the desire to “go deeper” with our faith family, friends in Christ, at First Church. In a world of so much disconnection and turmoil, we yearn to know the experience of connection as we “lean into the heart of the Holy.” We need a community where we can talk and listen, a community where we can find understanding, empathy and unconditional love and acceptance. We want our church family to be there for us in our time of need and we want to be there for our church family when we are needed as well.

My prayer is that in our connection, we can talk about how we listen, how we treat one another and how we respond to temptations and frustrations that are part of everyday life. Because this a period in the life of First Church to be prayerfully seeking to call a settled minister, we need the connection to our “circle of life” here at First Church to support one another with our hopes and dreams for the future.

May these words in the form of a prayer from Psalm 145 be our beginning point for connection as we move from the Epiphany season to our Lenten journey:

*“My soul yearns for You, Eternal Flame of Love, longs to reconnect to the Great Mystery!
Every day I will bless You as I follow the Voice of truth.
Great are You, who call us to childlike wonder, to the healing balm of forgiveness.
Each generation must learn anew —the efficacy of silence, the wisdom of turning inward, that your
Light might be their guide to holiness, and your Love nurture them toward wholeness.”*

May God, our Light, indeed, be our guide to holiness as we prepare to journey into Lent this new season of the church year. I continue to thank you for your support of our mutual ministry during this interim time. Don't forget to email, call or text if you need my support.

Grace and peace,
Rev. Dr. Ann Rogers Brigham





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.

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The Sacrament of Baptism will be celebrated in worship on March 16th!

Sacrament of Baptism for Donald Louis Blount III

Born: January 20, 2021

Donnie's Family: Donald L Blount, Jr. & Amy Marie Blount



* * * * *

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, March 12th. And, as always, it's "dutch treat".



January Breakfast with Ann

Confirmation Study for Youth



We will study during March after worship — March 2nd, March 9th, and March 16th. In addition to our classes, we will have field trips and adult mentors to assist our youth in learning about First Church and how we work together as a church. If you are not enrolled in our Confirmation study, it is not too late. Since our first class was cancelled because of the snowstorm in February, we will have our first class on March 2nd. Confirmation books and Bibles have been purchased for our study. We welcome our youth (7th grade and up) to study and prepare for church membership. It is a gift to have opportunity for youth to prepare to be welcomed into the life of the church when they have completed their studies. Please contact Rev. Ann with questions.

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We Welcome You to Church Membership

If you are interested in becoming a member of First Church, please contact one of our deacons or speak to Rev. Ann. You may become a full member or associate member. We will ask for you to fill out a member application, attend an orientation to membership and be present (in person or online) to receive membership in a Sunday worship service. It is our joy to welcome new members to the life of First Church!

* * * * *

Rev. Ann Rogers Brigham will be on Study Leave and Vacation March 22nd - April 4th

Rev. Ann offers her thanks for the opportunity to fly to Northern Ireland to attend The Dialogue for Peaceful Change (DpC) Training, a four-day immersive experience designed to provide participants with practical tools for managing and transforming conflict. It will be held at Corrymeela's Ballycastle Centre, Northern Ireland. Thank you for your prayers for her while she travels for study and some vacation time. Please contact a deacon or the church office if you are in need of emergency pastoral care while she is away.



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.*

2025 Lenten Services

at

First Church Congregational

United Church of Christ

Wednesday, March 5th:

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

Sunday, April 13th:

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

Thursday, April 17th:

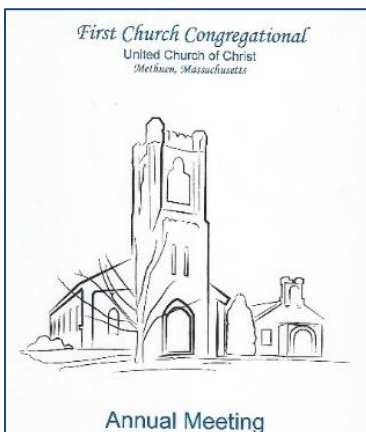
7:00 PM – *Maundy Thursday* ~ Communion and Reading of Passion with Music Responses.

Sunday, April 20th:

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

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Annual Reports are Due



All Committees should submit their annual report to the Church Office **no later than Tuesday, April 1st**. If it is not received, it may not be included in the 2024-25 Annual Report.

Please contact Roberta at 978-687-1240, if there is any issue. You can submit your report electronically to firstchurch.roberta@gmail.com.

The Annual Meeting date will be announced soon.

Thank you for your cooperation.

From the Chair of the Church Board...

Spring is so close, we can almost feel it! As I write this, there is a winter wonderland outside my window. We've had some crazy snow events last month, so I would like to thank all of you for your support in canceling the in-person worship for two weeks straight (the virtual service was wonderful, though!!). It is not an easy call, but I am glad we all stayed safe during the snowy and icy times we've had. However, we will have warm service and fellowship, and 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 have begun 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, there is still time. Please let either Steve Boyko or myself if you'd like to be part of the process. 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 was February 22nd, and what a grand event it was!!! This was the 143rd annual celebration, and I cannot thank the volunteers enough. Between Marilyn's team running a wonderful and efficient dining hall, Pat and Roberta creating a superb ad booklet, and Carol's team making a fantastic meal, it was an unparalleled celebration. Great job, everyone!
- Our Outreach group is hard at work with numerous efforts. This month, diaper drive is running, providing a much-needed product for our community. 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.
- 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 regularly.
- Speaking of child education, our CE group is continuing to create an engaging Sunday school. Confirmation class is starting this month, 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 Ministry Team has completed the hard work finalizing the 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 make 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.

- Mark your calendar – the annual meeting of First Church Congregational is May 18th. I hope you can all attend this important meeting, learn and reflect on the business of the church, and exercise your vote as a member.
- ...and so much more!

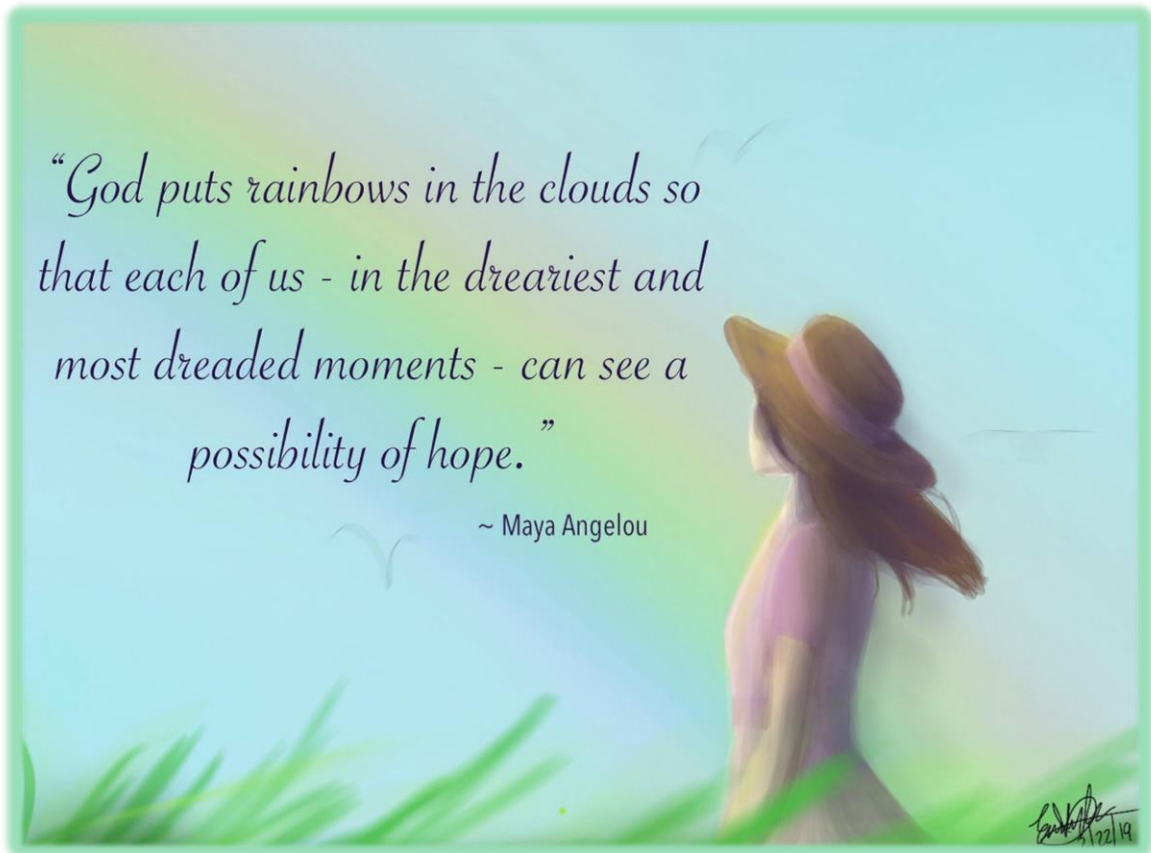
So, if you're looking for some way to help our church and our community, there's plenty of options. Also, there's always the prayer shawl ministry, other outreach projects, singing or ringing in one of our outstanding choirs, or just joining the walking group to help yourself. There are so many new opportunities 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

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Musical Musings

I'm hoping that by the time you read this, winter and the long cold stretch of arctic weather will be long behind us! I admit to being really tired of all this cold and snow!

All that cold and snow also meant that we missed two weeks of church...and for the choir, two weeks of rehearsals! You may not realize it, but every Sunday, our amazing choir arrives at 8:30am on Sunday mornings to rehearse music for the coming weeks. At this time of the year, a big part of that is getting ready for the annual Palm Sunday Cantata, Holy Week, and Easter Sunday. Missing two weeks of rehearsals is A LOT, so our choir will not only be rehearsing before worship for the next few weeks, but a couple of times, AFTER worship too. Now that's dedication, for you!

Speaking of the Palm Sunday Cantata, I REALLY hope you are going to be there in person because it is going to be AMAZING! In addition to our stunningly gorgeous Chancel choir, we will be joined by our special Schola, a small group of our very best singers who learn and perform more challenging music, our handbell choir, and guest instrumentalists, including trumpet, flute, African djembe drums, and cello. Musical highlights include Mozart's Ave Verum in latin with cello, the African American spiritual Soon Ah Will be Done by Dawson, Sim Shalom in Hebrew with flute by Lopes, South African freedom song Hosanna Nkosi Phezulu in Swahili with djembe, a gorgeous setting of Were You There, a modern classic Ubi Caritas by the Norwegian composer Ola Gjeilo, and the African American contemporary Christian anthem Total Praise by Richard Smallwood.

You really don't want to miss this musical worship experience, and take advantage of the opportunity to invite your friends and neighbors to be there too....and please: be there in person. Your choir works SO HARD to do these big musical events and it's really hard to be motivated in an empty church...so show up...in PERSON and support their amazing efforts. You'll be happy you did.

Peace and all good things,

Mike Boutin



Stewardship Ministry Team...

Nominating Sub-Committee

After a successful pledge campaign for 2025, the Nominating subcommittee of the Stewardship Team is now turning to the task of filling roles on the board and other committees of the church. We can all be stewards of our church; taking care of our organization and its property; giving of our time, talent and material possessions for the service of God; doing as well as giving.

As we begin the work of filling open positions on our board and committees, of particular need is the Trustees of Property. This group oversees the care and maintenance of the church, and use of the facility for all outside activities as well as worship. This team needs at least two additional participants and is open to friends as well as members of the church. Would you be able to oversee the clean-up and locking of the sanctuary and parish hall on some Sundays or be available to open and close the church when there is a funeral or wedding or be willing to help with various other projects as needed. This team urgently needs your help. Are you concerned about Finance, planning and reviewing our budget and spending, caring for our invested funds and other relevant financial matters This team needs another member. Our Outreach Team does a fantastic job of Improving Our Community. Do you have ideas to share that will increase our presence in our neighborhood. This team welcomes you.

There are many other ways we can be stewards. Become a Deacon and assist with the spiritual welfare of the church, welcoming parishioners and ensuring that there are ushers and liturgists each week or being on hand as a greeter when there is a wedding or funeral. Our Christian Education program is also an important ministry of our church; join the team and teach a Sunday School class, lead a book club or adult Bible study. Our Safe Church Team needs new members. This group is tasked with reviewing our Safe Church Policy and ensuring that all activities conform with it.

If you have an interest in becoming a part of any team, speak to a member of the Nominating Team (Kathy Romano, Marilyn Peck, or Robyn Sliney) or to the Chair of any Church Committee (listed in the bulletin).

It takes all of us together to be good stewards. Please consider joining the team.



From the Outreach Ministry Team

“Pampered with Luvs” Diaper Drive

- The dates for this year’s Diaper Drive are Sundays March 2nd, 9th, 16th, and 23rd.
- Diapers, Pull-ups and Wipes, as well as monetary donations, may be dropped off before/after church (before 10:00 AM and after 11:00 AM) at First Church Congregational.
- Checks should be made payable to **First Church Congregational**, with **Diaper Drive** on the memo line. Mail to 26 Pleasant Street, Methuen, MA 01844 no later than Monday, March 24th.
- Though diapers are essential for babies, they are not systematically covered by safety-net polices. Neither WIC nor food stamps cover diapers.
- The Diaper Drive is held in partnership with Communities Together, Inc., a collaborative group of Churches in the Merrimack Valley.
- You will find a flyer with more information about the Diaper Drive in this issue of The Beacon.
- Jo Crosby and Becky Smith are the Team Leaders for this year’s Diaper Drive.

Souper Bowl of Caring 2025

- Cindy Bateson was the Team Leader for a very, very successful Souper Bowl of Caring. She wrote an article, with all the details, which appears in this Beacon.
- A shout out to The Chapel School who donated over 150 cans of soup.
- Cindy submitted our numbers to the national Tackle Hunger organization which partners with every group throughout the country who holds Souper Bowls of Caring at the same time the National Football League holds their Super Bowl. Tackle Hunger sent us our certificate of appreciation.
- We thank the various team members who helped tally the donations, set up the display in the sanctuary, and move the cans in and out of the sanctuary. They are Neil Bateson, Jo Crosby, Cynthia Bateson, Becky Smith and Ken Peck.
- Thank you to our Team Members who cooked twice for two Souper Bowl Coffee Hours. We were foiled by Mother Nature and her windy, icy and cold weather. We’ll be back next year!
- Rev. Ann and Cindy gave a Children’s Talk in which they spoke about how the Souper Bowl got started and how what we do helps people who are hungry.

Mental Health 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 discussed what topics we might cover this year. We didn’t have a February meeting due to the weather so we are still open to your suggestions of new topics or the possibility of revisiting one of our earlier topics. We would very much welcome any suggestions you have.

Outreach Ministry Team – *Cindy Bateson, Lori Bennett, Cynthia Causbie, Jo Crosby, Barbara Donaghue, Ken Peck, Marilyn Peck, Marie Rubino, Carole Silva, John Silva, and Becky Smith*



2025 “Pampered with Luvs” Diaper Drive



What: The Outreach Team invites you to participate in our **2025 “Pampered with Luvs” Diaper Drive**. You can help us out by donating diapers and wipes, or by making a monetary donation to help purchase them.

Who: First Church Congregational Methuen will be holding the diaper drive 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 Lazarus House, Bread and Roses, Neighbors in Need, and others.

Why: The need for diapers in Methuen and surrounding communities is great, as evidenced by the following facts.

- Families spend \$75-\$80 a month on average to diaper one child, or 8% of a full-time minimum wage salary.
- Though diapers are essential for babies, they are not systematically covered by safety-net policies. Neither WIC nor food stamps cover diapers.

Where and When: Diapers, Pull-ups and wipes, as well as monetary donations, may be dropped off before/after church (before 10:00 AM and after 11:00 AM) at **First Church Congregational Methuen**, at **26 Pleasant Street**, on the following Sundays:

- Sunday, March 2nd
- Sunday, March 9th
- Sunday, March 16th
- Sunday, March 23rd

Notes: Checks should be made payable to **First Church Congregational**, with **Diaper Drive** on the memo line. Mail to 26 Pleasant St., Methuen, MA 01844 no later than Monday, March 24th.

Thank you!

Outreach Ministry Team – *Cindy Bateson, Lori Bennett, Cynthia Causbie, Jo Crosby, Barbara Donaghue, Ken Peck, Marilyn Peck, Marie Rubino, Carole Silva, John Silva and Becky Smith*



The 2025 Ray Benedix Souper Bowl Challenge

Thanks to the generosity of First Church members and friends, we more than doubled our collection goals in the **2025 Ray Benedix Souper Bowl of Caring!** We collected **1099 cans of soup**, and received **\$1215** in monetary donations, well exceeding our goal of 500 cans and \$500! We have received a certificate of appreciation from the national Tackle Hunger organization which promotes the Souper Bowl of Caring across the country. A special thanks to Gina Colarusso, Roberta Jurovich, and the children and parents of **The Chapel School** for collecting **150** cans of soup in the Chapel Train. Our **Tuesday Evening Neighbors in Need Food Pantry** here at First Church will be distributing the cans of soup over the next few months to those in need in our community.


The overwhelming success of our Souper Bowl this year reflects the love and admiration all of us had for Ray Benedix here at First Church. Ray started our involvement in the Souper Bowl of Caring many years ago, and as team leader he was great at inspiring our church members to make donations each Sunday during our Souper Bowl of Caring. Ray would show up every Sunday in his referee shirt, and after finishing his Souper Bowl announcement, he would blow his duck whistle. It was fun to see our Sunday School children blowing their own duck whistles a few weeks ago. Thank you to all of you who supported this year's Souper Bowl of Caring!

THANK YOU!

First Church Congregational Methuen MA

\$1,215 and 1,099 Food Items

Thanks to your efforts this year, more dollars have been raised, more lives have been changed, and the nation has seen the impact of people working together to help those in need. Thank you for working to transform the time around the Super Bowl into the nation's largest celebration of giving and serving.



February 9, 2025

Alison Reese
Alison Reese
Executive Director
Tackle Hunger: Home of the
Souper Bowl of Caring



Walking Group for Fitness and Fellowship

Tuesdays in March

The weather has been a challenge for us so far this winter, but we hope March will bring us some warmer, sunnier weather. We will continue walking at the Loop through March. We will meet in front of the AMC movie theater at **10:00 AM** on March 4th, 11th, 18th and 25th. The walk will be cancelled if the weather is too cold or not safe due to ice or snow. Contact Cindy Bateson to be included in group emails.

Sunday Walk on the Methuen Rail Trail

Scheduled Sunday walks on the rail trail will resume in April.



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“I Feel Lucky” Potluck Fellowship

On Sunday, March 16th, we will be having a potluck brunch during coffee hour. The theme of the brunch is “*I feel lucky*”. Please bring a green or Irish dish to share. During the brunch, we will share our blessings by telling each other what we feel lucky for.



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Don't Forget!!



Sunday, March 9th

Change your clocks and batteries.

First Day of Spring is March 20th!!

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.

Prayer Shawl Ministry will meet in the parlor of FCC.
We invite you to join us – **Wednesdays from 1:00 - 3:00 PM.**



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On Sunday, February 23rd, during Fellowship Time,
Carol Gray was surprised with a birthday cake
on the occasion of her 90th birthday which was on February 14th.



Need a Ride to an Evening Service?



Do you no longer drive at night, but would like to attend our **Ash Wednesday Service** on March 5th and/or our **Maundy Thursday Service** on April 17th? These services begin at 7:00 PM.

If so, please contact a Deacon or Rev. Ann and we will arrange transportation for you to join us.

We look forward to seeing you!

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Drop-In Coffee Hour with Forest Street Union Church

Our Forest Street UCC friends have invited us to their Drop-In Coffee Hour” again. We say thank you! Please “drop in” and bring a friend for refreshments and conversation with our Forest Street friends on **Thursday, March 13th from 10:00 to 11:30 PM.** (No RSVP) Come as you are!



The FSUC address is 15 Forest Street in Methuen.

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I would like to thank everyone for the donations, cards and phone calls since the passing of my husband George. The support means so much to me and my family at this difficult time.

It is appreciated more than you know.

~ Mary Simonian

The Chapel School



Valentine's Day was celebrated at Chapel recently. There are always the adorable Valentine cards the children enjoy passing out to their classmates. The take home treats that were sent in for every child were endless. Everything from stuffed animals to fidget heart toys, stickers, pencils, food treats of every kind, chocolates. Treats for the teachers too included chocolate covered strawberries and more chocolates.

What does LOVE mean here at The Chapel School?.....

We treat each child with love. We respect every family no matter how easy or hard it is. No matter what the situation. We have fun while learning. We emphasize kindness and always encourage "please and thank you". We love what we do here and love every child like they were our own. We bring out the best in each child and provide a loving and supportive environment to learn and grow in. Showing love will never fail you.

We are already starting our registration for the new school year. We have been able to tour many families that are interested in our amazing program. We are looking to have another full enrollment year.

We are excited to have brought back our fundraiser again this year. We are working with MCM Fundraising and their Butter Braid Pastry & Classic Cookie Dough. The fundraiser runs from March 3rd - 17th, with delivery on April 1st. Ordering information is below. Thank you to all who participate, and we hope you enjoy your sweet treats!

New England weather is always changing which makes predicting snow amounts even harder. Even the best weather forecast can change frequently. When calling a snow day, we try our best to make sure we are making the safest decision for the children we care for.

Gina Colarusso

Director



Order online at

<http://my.mcmfundraising.com/signup/9JP6>

or Scan QR code below



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



143rd George Washington Birthday Dinner

Great Success!!!

It Takes a Lot...

It takes a lot of people, resources and time to celebrate a George Washington Birthday Dinner! It takes a huge shopping trip for food and supplies by Carol and Josh. It takes three full days of Carol, Josh, and Stacey preparing the ingredients. On Saturday they are joined by Rich, Mike and Lisa in the preparation and cooking that gets done on the day of the dinner.

It takes Stacey and Pat W. washing every pot and pan used; Steve and his crew running the dishwasher, keeping up with the dishes that needed to be used again. Seven people and 2 carvers served on the buffet table. It takes a kitchen crew pushing out delicious food for 2½ hours for 241 guests to make a successful dinner!

It takes the Prayer Shawl Ministry group to wrap 300 knives and forks in napkins, Allan, Pat R. and their helpers to set up the hall, and 4 people to set the tables with tablecloths, wrapped silverware, and placemats. Our Parish Hall looked beautiful when they finished! Kerri added a festive note with a spectacular red, white and blue balloon arch on the front of the stage.

It takes Deb B. and Paul greeting our guests, dressed as George and Martha Washington, and giving out our Ad Books. It takes our hostess Maureen to take tickets and assign our guests tables, with other staff helping to seat them. The Parish Hall is set with 15 round tables and 3 rectangular tables, seating 150 guests at one time. It takes 12 waitstaff serving our guests, each team of two responsible to serve 3 tables. Our Beverage and Dessert table is headed up by Becky W. and Sheila and their staff. Scott bused the dirty dishes to the dishwashers. All of our dining room staff provided great, friendly service to our guests.

It takes Marilyn ably supporting Chef Carol by overseeing tickets, banner, publicity, volunteers, and all aspects of the dinner that are not involved with food and the kitchen. Chef Carol expressed her appreciation and gratitude to Pat R. for teaching her everything she needed to know to oversee food preparation for the dinner.

Income, Ticket Sales, Ad Booklet, Donations & Expenses

We sold 164 adult tickets in advance for \$22.00 each, 7 child tickets in advance for \$8.00 each, 8 adult tickets at the door for \$22.00 each, 39 adult tickets at the door for \$25.00 each, 1 child ticket at the door for \$8.00 and 22 adult tickets from Zeffy on-line for a total of 241 tickets. Sunday remaining food Sales were \$418.00. **Total income** from ticket and Sunday sales was \$5,725.00. Given the cold, icy, windy weather two weeks prior to the dinner, we are pleased with the response of people to the dinner.

The income from our **Ad Book** increased from last year because Pat K. went out and hustled some new ads to replace some that didn't renew. We had 22 full page ads @ \$100, 13 half page ads @ \$50 each, 21 one third page ads @ \$25, and 34 parishioner names @ \$15. The total Ad Book revenue is \$3,885.00, \$80.00 more than last year.

Monetary donations made in conjunction with ticket sales are \$397.00, donations in conjunction with Zeffy online sales are \$78.00, and donations in conjunction with the Ad Book are \$367.00, for total monetary donations of \$842.00. This income goes straight to our bottom line. We are grateful to Pat

K. and Roberta for our larger, beautiful, more profitable Ad Booklet. We encourage you to support our advertisers!

Material Donations also help our bottom line. We are very grateful for the “**In Kind Donations**” from Mann’s for again donating the Apple Crisp and to parishioners who donated our banner, tickets, balloons, and George & Martha’s costumes. The total income from ticket sales, Ad Book, and donations is \$10,452.00. Once all of our expenses are collected and deducted from our income we’ll announce our profit in church.

Advertising and Publicity

As we did in 2024, we took an ad package with *The Eagle-Tribune* that gave us 4 color ads which were published on February 13, 15-16, 20 and 21. In addition to our color ads, in the weekend edition issue February 8-9 and on Wednesday February 19 in *The Eagle-Tribune*, under “*Merrimack Valley in a minute*, under Methuen,” were big, bold headlines saying “*George Washington Birthday Dinner Feb. 22 in Methuen*”. We also had color ads in the February issues of *Salem Life* and *Methuen Life*. *Methuen Life* also ran a color picture of Pat and Becky Wright from the year they were Martha and George. It’s clear from conversations with guests that when people see these ads, they are reminded to get their tickets for the dinner. Thanks to Carol we also had good social media presence.

Dedicated Volunteers

After reading this article, it’s clear that “*It takes*” hours of time from dedicated, committed volunteers to put on our annual George Washington Birthday Dinner. The Dinner Planning Team and its Team Leaders want to thank the over 60 volunteers who worked on the dinner and who gave our guests such a delicious meal, friendly service, and wonderful evening.

142nd George Washington Birthday Dinner Planning Team

Allan & Bobbie Barlow, Josh & Lisa Ferry, Pat King, Pat Romano, Becky Wright, and Carol Sanborn and Marilyn Peck, Team Leaders



143rd George Washington Birthday Dinner Fun Night!!!



143rd George Washington Birthday Dinner

Thank you to all our volunteers!!!





2025 Easter Giving



If you would like to donate and/or order a plant for Easter, please use this form and return it to the church office by **Sunday, April 6th**. Please note: We will need time to order the plants. All donations and orders received by this deadline will be listed in the "Easter Giving" bulletin pages.

Plant Order

All Easter plants at **\$18.00 per plant**, please indicate quantity below:

Easter Lily _____*
(white lily)

Tulip _____*

Mona Lisa Lily _____*
(pink & white lily)

Please print

Given in Loving Memory of _____

In Celebration/Honor of _____
(circle choice)

Given by _____

**After the Easter service, all plants will be delivered to a homebound member or friend of the church*

Donation

BUILDING MAINTENANCE _____ OPERATING EXPENSE _____

ORGAN RESTORATION _____ OUTREACH _____

OTHER _____

Please print

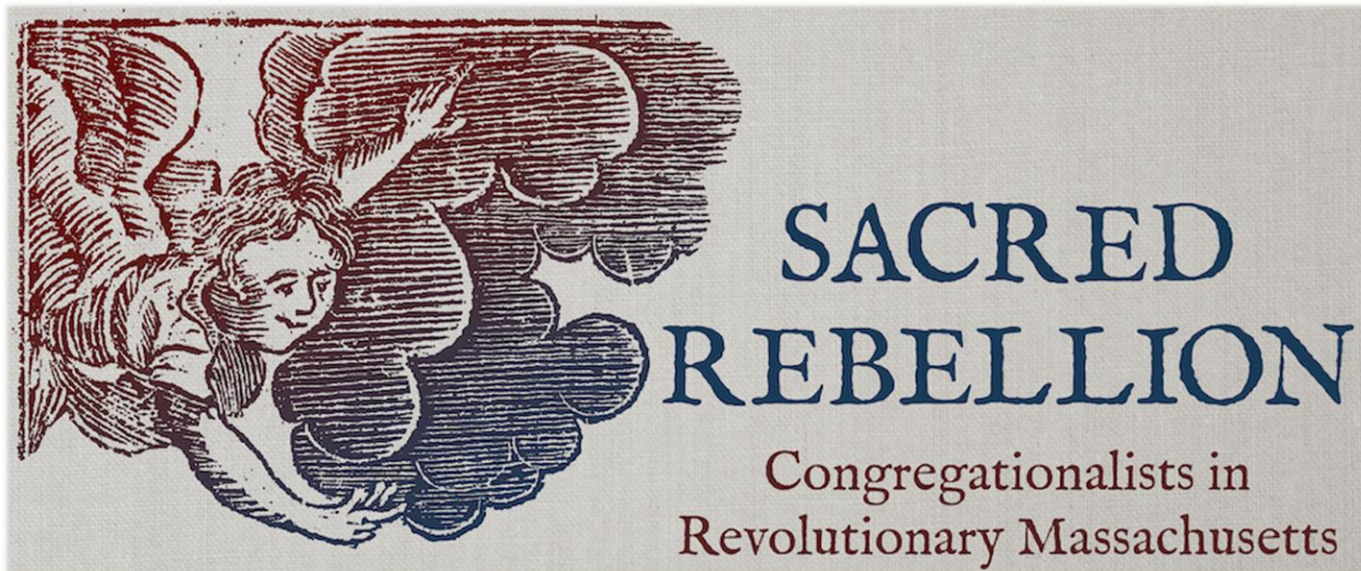
Given in Loving Memory of _____

In Celebration/Honor of _____
(circle choice)

Given by _____

Please make check payable to: *First Church Congregational ("Easter Giving" in memo)*

Thank you and Happy Easter!



Come on Friday, April 4th to celebrate the opening of the Congregational Library & Archives' new in-person exhibition, [Sacred Rebellion: Congregationalists in Revolutionary Massachusetts](#).

By the time the American Revolution began, many Congregationalists in Massachusetts had embraced a theological justification for war and revolution. They believed that God favored them and that their cause was a morally justified, sacred rebellion.

Through sermons, books, poems, songs, and letters, Congregationalists shared their stories, reflected on their moral obligations to each other, and debated questions of liberty and loyalty. But consensus was elusive, and implementation proved difficult and unsatisfactory to many, especially those on the margins.

These discussions shaped the legacy of Congregationalism and the way the Revolutionary War is remembered today, 250 years later.

The exhibition, which will be open Fridays and Saturdays from 11:00 AM – 4:00 PM, April 5 to June 21, 2025, highlights the stories of Massachusetts Congregationalists drawn from the CLA's important collections.

[RSVP to join us for the exhibition opening at 14 Beacon on Friday, April 4th from 5:30-7 PM EDT.](#)

The evening will feature an opportunity to visit the exhibition and curator's comments from New England's Hidden Histories Project Director and *Sacred Rebellion* curator, Dr. Tricia Peone. Drinks and light snacks will be provided.

The event is free to all, but [registration is required via Eventbrite](#).

After registering, you will receive a confirmation email containing information about attending the reception.

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. Rogers-Brigham 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!

- 01 Charlene Bunting
- 03 Thomas Savastano
- 06 Haleigh Sanborn, John Silva
- 08 Heather LoCicero
- 10 Richard Dewhirst
- 12 Nicholas Jurovich
- 14 Dominic Alaimo
- 15 Dennis Michaud
- 17 Patrick Romano, Rebecca Smith
- 19 Kate Dockham, Adam LoCicero
- 22 Abigail Boyko, Alexander Boyko
- 24 Jack Napier
- 25 Carole Sanborn
- 28 Jessica Borislow
- 29 Emily Jurovich
- 31 Ray Valcourt



APRIL BIRTHDAYS

- 03 Hanson Causbie
- 05 Michael Alaimo
- 07 Justin Hodgkins

* * * * *






MARCH ANNIVERSARIES

- | | | |
|------|--------------------------|------------------|
| 3/4 | Larry & Robyn Sliney | Married 30 years |
| 3/6 | Patrick & Rebecca Wright | Married 20 years |
| 3/15 | Bill & Lori Bennett | Married 45 years |
| 3/28 | Stephen & Judi Boyko | Married 33 years |



March 2025

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Worship Service Sundays at 10:00 AM <i>In-Person & on Facebook Live</i> www.facebook.com/firstchurchmethuen		 10:00 AM Walking Group (Riverside Park) 4:30 PM Food Pantry		 6:30 PM First Church Bells		
2 Communion Diaper Drive Begins 8:30 AM Chancel Choir Rehearsal 11:15 AM Fellowship 11:30 AM Confirmation Class	6:30 PM Finance	10:00 AM Walking Group (Riverside Park) 4:30 PM Food Pantry	1:00 PM Prayer Shawl Ministry 7:00 PM Ash Wednesday Service	6:30 PM First Church Bells		
8:30 AM Chancel Choir Rehearsal 11:15 AM Fellowship 11:30 AM Confirmation Class	2:00 PM Nominating Committee 4:00 PM Chapel Staff	10:00 AM Walking Group (Riverside Park) 4:30 PM Food Pantry	8:00 AM Breakfast with Ann (Ellie's Farmhouse) 1:00 PM Prayer Shawl Ministry 6:30 PM Church Board	10:00 - 11:30 AM Shared Coffee Hour at Forest Street Union Church 6:30 PM First Church Bells		
16 Baptism 8:30 AM Chancel Choir Rehearsal 11:15 AM "I Feel Lucky" Potluck Brunch 11:30 AM Confirmation Class	 1:00 PM Cook for Bread & Roses 6:30 PM Outreach	10:00 AM Walking Group (Riverside Park) 4:30 PM Food Pantry 6:45 PM Cantata Rehearsal	19 April BEACON deadline 1:00 PM Prayer Shawl 7:00 PM Diaconate			
23 Diaper Drive Ends 8:30 AM Chancel Choir Rehearsal 11:45 AM Fellowship	2:00 PM Stewardship	10:00 AM Walking Group (Riverside Park) 4:30 PM Food Pantry 6:30 PM Cantata Rehearsal	1:00 PM Prayer Shawl 6:30 PM ONA	6:30 PM First Church Bells		
	31					

Dates and times are subject to change

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

Address Service Requested