

February 2022



THE BEACON



*First Church Congregational
United Church of Christ*

26 Pleasant Street

Methuen, MA 01844-3199

Telephone: (978) 687-1240

Rev. William D. Ingraham, Senior Pastor

pastor.bill.ingraham@gmail.com

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firstchurch.roberta@gmail.com

www.firstchurchmethuen.com



“GETTING PARSONAL”

Rev. William D. Ingraham

Good news! Our sanctuary will re-open for in-person worship on Sunday, February 13th. *Hosanna!* We will practice universal masking throughout the service and everywhere in the building until local COVID-19 infection rates fall below the threshold for universal masking according to CDC guidelines. Following the trends, both locally and internationally, we anticipate being below the threshold that allows us to take our masks off within a few weeks.

I feel both proud of and grateful for the leadership of our Church Board through the challenging days of the last couple of years, and specifically through the last couple of months. In the most uncertain moments of the pandemic, they have been determined to follow the science, tracking infection rates and hospitalizations locally and state-wide, taking into consideration CDC and Massachusetts Department of Health guidelines and recommendations as well as “best practices” among churches, both denominationally and ecumenically. By no means has it been an easy task! Yet their determination has remained undaunted, as has their dedication to our church family. I thank God for them and their hard work.

In these first few days of February, it feels easy to forget how uncertain things were becoming with regards to the pandemic only a month ago. Through the Fall, our congregation had enjoyed

increased freedom from the constraints of the pandemic, especially with regards to worship. But the Omicron Variant of COVID-19 started changing that picture as 2021 drew to a close. To our delight weekly in-person attendance was slowly climbing through December, with the largest crowd we've had since pre-pandemic days gathering in our sanctuary on Christmas Eve. It felt so good!

But as the New Year began, infection rates were exploding both across the country and in our own community. When I read of colleges deciding to suspend in-person classes or activities, my heart sank. It was clear that we were facing the most uncertain times we have known since vaccines had been made available last winter.

In their January meeting, recognizing that infection rates had *flown* past the 50 infections per 100,000 people guidelines of the CDC, the Board decided to suspend in-person worship for the remaining Sundays of January, promising to reevaluate at their meeting on February 2nd. I was heartened by our congregation's response to this decision, supporting the Board and shifting immediately to all-virtual worship. Out of an abundance of caution, we limited presence in the sanctuary to four people weekly: preacher, liturgist, accompanist, and broadcast technician. Carol Sanborn both ran the broadcast and sang the anthem. I sang hymns solo voice. None of us got any closer than 6 feet to each other. Once again, I found myself preaching in an empty sanctuary, addressing a camera on the side wall. I'm grateful that we were able to pivot so nimbly to virtual-only worship when the situation warranted it.

Reflecting the trends in our community and across the nation, a significant number of families in our congregation experienced COVID-19 infections, specifically through the first two weeks of January. Gratefully, none resulted in serious illness, nor did they require hospitalization. As the month progressed the infection rate among our members began to drop, as did the infection rates in the region. As we enter February the trends are looking very good. For this reason, the Board has authorized us to return to in-person worship on February 13th, practicing universal masking for the immediate future.

First Church inspires and impresses me time and again. We have not hesitated to respond to the public health needs of our members or our community, yet all the while has remained steadfast in our dedication to each other and to our God. Each and every day of the pandemic we have remained true to our mission:

Seeking God. Caring for each other. Improving our community.

It is an honor to live and serve among you as your Senior Pastor.

See you in church!

- Bill



This **Sunday, February 6th**, following worship,
please join us, via Zoom, for a

SPECIAL CONGREGATIONAL INFORMATIONAL MEETING

To discuss upcoming building repair and restoration projects,
Including the bell tower, narthex and sanctuary heating.

The meeting will begin a few minutes after the close of the service,
as close to 11:00 AM as possible.

The Zoom link will be emailed with the worship bulletin on Friday, February 4th.

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Sunday Morning Worship



On Sunday mornings, at 10:00 AM, our weekly worship service is in person, for a limited number of parishioners! A registration link will be sent out on in the Tuesday and Friday email blasts, if you would like to attend in person. Or call/email the church office to sign-up to attend.

Worship will continue to 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 out each Friday before the service.

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Sunday Fellowship Zoom

Fellowship Time will be held on Sunday mornings, starting at 11:15 AM, over Zoom, following the worship service above. A Zoom link will be provided via the Friday email to access this weekly gathering.

Prayer Requests/List



We print a Prayer List within the Sunday "Order of Worship" bulletin. To have someone included on the bulletin prayer list, please let Roberta, in the Church Office, know at 978-687-1240 or firstchurch.roberta@gmail.com. No request is too big or too small! Thank you.

If you, or someone you know, is in need of a pastoral visit, please contact Rev. Ingraham at pastor.bill.ingraham@gmail.com or 978-687-1240.

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IN CASE OF SNOW...

As we enter the snow season, please be advised that on weekdays, if school is cancelled, the church office will not be open. If a blizzard is predicted for a given Sunday, if there are any changes to the time of worship, or worship is cancelled, please check our church web page, www.firstchurchmethuen.com and Facebook page (www.facebook.com/firstchurchmethuen).



Changes to worship will also be noted on Channel **WBZ-TV (Channel 4)**, **WBZ NewsRadio 1030**, **WCVB (Channel 5)**, www.TheBostonChannel.com, **WHDH (Channel 7)** or **The CW (Channel 56)** for cancellation notifications.



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2022 OFFERING ENVELOPES

The 2022 offering envelopes are available for those who those who would like them. Note: Pledge cards and e-pledging forms are still available.



Please contact the Church Office, at 978-687-1240 or firstchurch.roberta@gmail.com, if you would like pledge envelopes. We can either mail them out or arrange a time for you to pick-up.

Thank you.

From the Outreach Ministry Team

2022 Souper Bowl Challenge

Becky Smith kicked off our 2022 Souper Bowl of Caring Challenge on Sunday, January 16 by reminding people how we play our Souper Bowl Challenge/Game. There was also information posted on Facebook at the beginning of the service. You will find information on the Challenge in this issue of The Beacon, the church's weekly email blasts, the weekly church service bulletin, and on the Church's Web Site.



For the next four weeks members of the Left and Right Church Teams joined by The Chapel School family will bring soup cans to the church on Saturdays from 10:00 AM to 12:30 PM. Each Sunday at the beginning of the church service we will update you as to the total number of cans collected and \$ amount contributed by each team. Our goal is 1,000 cans and \$1,000, all to be donated to the Neighbors In Need Food Pantries.

Ray Benedix continues as our referee for the 2022 Challenge. Team Left has won the last two challenges. So, Team Right, will this be your year?

2022 Diaper Drive

The Outreach Team invites you to participate in our 2022 Diaper Drive. You can help out by donating diapers and wipes, or by making a monetary donation to help purchase them. There is a flyer in this issue of The Beacon detailing why the need for diapers in Methuen and surrounding communities is great. It also tells you that diapers, wipes and monetary donations can be dropped off in the parking lot behind the church on Saturdays, March 19th and 20th and April 2nd, between 10:00 AM and 12:00 PM.



First Church Congregational, Methuen is holding its diaper drive in partnership with Communities Together, Inc., a collaborative of Protestant and Catholic churches in Andover, Lawrence, Methuen, and North Andover. The diapers collected will be distributed to various social agencies in the Merrimack Valley, including Lazarus House, Bread and Roses, Neighbors in Need and others.

Mental Health Awareness Sunday

With Mental Health Sunday, April 24, 2022, First Church once again is affirming its commitment to open, frank discussion of mental health issues. In 2021 we focused on substance use disorders. One speaker spoke on her personal substance abuse recovery and another speaker spoke on substance abuse as a "family disease." We had no Mental Health Sunday in 2020 because of the pandemic. In 2019 we focused on suicide prevention with speakers from Family Services' Samaritans of Merrimack Valley, located in Lawrence, MA.



This year we are going to focus on promoting mental and emotional health for families and children, especially during the pandemic. We are currently working on securing one or two speakers to speak on this topic. We will let you know who they are when we have secured them.

The Outreach Team – *Marilyn Peck, Team Leader, Cindy Bateson, Ray Benedix, Lori Bennett, Cynthia Causbie, Barbara Donaghue, Deb MaueSprague, Ken Peck, and Becky Smith*



First Church Congregational, Methuen
2022 Souper Bowl Challenge

What: The Outreach Team is excited to invite you to participate in the *2022 Souper Bowl Challenge!* Our **GOAL** is **1,000 cans of soup and \$1,000 donated** to tackle hunger in our community by donating soup and cash to the Neighbors in Need Food Pantries serving Methuen & Greater Lawrence.

Challenge Dates: **Sunday, January 16th – Sunday, February 13th**

Who: Two teams, comprised of our church family and friends, compete to see who donates the most cans of soup and money. Scores are computed each week/quarter and announced in the service each Sunday. The First Church Souper Bowl Trophy is awarded on Super Bowl Sunday, February 13th, 2022.

Teams: Pre-Covid-19, if you were attending services in the sanctuary and sat in the pews that face the organ and choir loft, you are a member of **Team Right**. If you sat in the pews that faced Pastor Bill while he preaches from the pulpit, you are a member of **Team Left**.

Where & When: Cans of soup, placed in a bag or box, can be dropped off at parking lot at the rear of First Church Congregation, 26 Pleasant Street, Methuen, from **10:00 AM – 12:30 PM on the following Saturdays:**

- ~~January 22nd (1st Quarter)~~
- ~~January 29th (2nd Quarter)~~
- **February 5th (3rd Quarter)**
- **February 12th (4th Quarter)**

Note: If you are unable to get to the church to deliver your soup, contact the church office (978-687-1240). A member of the Outreach Souper Bowl team will be in touch to schedule a pick-up. For your convenience, monetary donations can be made by completing the form below.



First Church Congregational, Methuen
2022 Souper Bowl Challenge



Print Name: _____

Donation Amount: _____ (Check one) **Team Right** or **Team Left**

Please make check payable to *First Church Congregational*, write "*Souper Bowl*" in the memo line and return no later than Monday, February 7th.

Thank you.

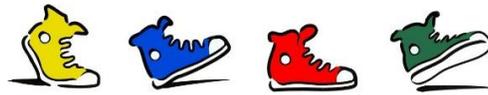
Walking Group for Fitness and Fellowship

Tuesdays in February

This month we will be walking at **The Loop in Methuen** on Tuesdays at 10:00 AM, weather permitting. The sidewalks there are kept clear of ice and snow, so it is a safer spot to walk this time of year. We will meet in front of the AMC movie theater. The dates in **February are 2/1, 2/8, 2/15, and 2/22**. We sometimes make last minute changes to the day or time due to the weather. Call or email Cindy Bateson if you would like to join us this month, and we'll keep you posted of any changes. Hope to see you there! Remember to bundle up!

Sunday Walk on the Methuen Rail Trail

February's scheduled rail trail walk will be on **Sunday 2/13** at 12:00 PM from the MSPCA parking lot, weather permitting. The town keeps the rail trail clear of snow, but we will reschedule if it's icy. A winter day on the rail trail can be beautiful. Please join us!



2022 Diaper Drive



What: The Outreach Team invites you to participate in our 2022 **Diaper Drive**. You can help 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 of Protestant and Catholic churches in Andover, Lawrence, Methuen, and North Andover. The diaper collection will be distributed to various social agencies in the Merrimack Valley, 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 a month on average to diaper one child, or 8% of a full-time minimum wage salary.
- Diaper need remains a common and hidden problem of poverty made worse by job losses and social isolation.
- 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 and wipes, as well as monetary donations, may be dropped off in the parking lot behind First Church Congregational, 26 Pleasant Street, Methuen, on the following dates and times:

- Saturday, March 19th, from 10:00 AM – 12:00 PM
- Saturday, March 26th, from 10:00 AM – 12:00 PM
- Saturday, April 2nd, from 10:00 AM – 12:00 PM

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, April 4th*.

Thank you!

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 Anne Benedix or Carol Gray for more information.

Prayer Shawl Ministry will continue to meet on Zoom for February and March.

We invite you to join us on Zoom, **Wednesdays from 1:00 - 3:00 PM.**

The Zoom link will be provided weekly to Prayer Shawl Ministry members. If you would like to attend, please email the Church Office at firstchurch.roberta@gmail.com for the link.

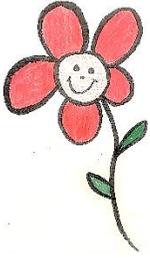


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Original Artwork by Emily Jurovich

The Chapel School



It may still be Winter but somehow by the time February arrives I feel like we are in the homestretch and Spring is not far behind. The groundhog is never wrong.

Winter does get a bad rap as the coldest, most dreary, cold and flu season including Covid now, and least favorite season. We should embrace it more simply by being tough New Englanders.

Winter is all about hot chocolate, playing in the snow, ice skating, skiing, fresh air, making a snowman, cozy slippers, flannel sheets, warm sweaters, flannel pajamas and so much more.

This year especially it's all about the Winter Olympics!! While I admit I'm not a sports fan of any kind, there is something about the Winter Olympics that draws me in and has me glued to the TV for two weeks. Maybe it's more the spirit of community. Bringing the world together for the glory of healthy competition just for the fun of it. Listening to the stories of dedication and family sacrifice to get themselves to the world stage of doing something you truly love. Learning about the country that is hosting this great event. The culture, traditions, the food and most importantly the preparation in building a venue to host the world and showcase not only their country but the amazing athletes who compete.

The media focuses on more positive rather than negative stories about the world at this time. Something we should all be mindful of. Hearing sad news day after day brings us all down. It makes us lose faith in people. Lately we have heard enough sadness. The Olympics gives us a bit of excitement and respite from all the bad press the world usually focuses on.

The children here at Chapel will embrace their own Winter fun. The Parish Hall will be our Olympic venue. Having fun and respecting our strengths and weaknesses in the spirit of healthy competition. Teaching children at this young age builds kindness and compassion. It helps us to recognize the good in all of us while respecting our differences.

To everyone heading off to Beijing, China, let the games begin and to all that will watch and dream of competing in the future, keep working towards that dream. Anything is possible.

February will melt away and the season will change to Spring. We are so lucky to have four ever changing seasons to enjoy.

Cindy Mazella
Director





The Chapel School

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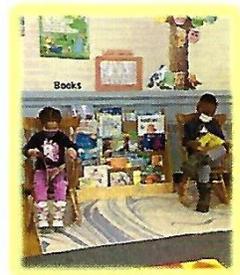
chapelschoolmethuen@gmail.com

www.chapelschoolmethuen.com



Located at:

First Church Congregational
26 Pleasant Street, Methuen



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.

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Need Financial Help?

If you, or another member of First Church you know, is need of some temporary financial assistance, please contact Rev. Ingraham at pastor.bill.ingraham@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.

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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.



Southern New England Conference

United Church of Christ

Living the Love & Justice of Jesus

Daily Lectionary Scripture References – February 2022 (Year C)

Tues., Feb. 1

Psalm 56
2 Kings 5:1-14
1 Corinthians 14:13-25

Wed., Feb. 2

Psalm 56
Jeremiah 1:11-19
Luke 19:41-44

Thurs., Feb. 3

Psalm 138
Numbers 20:22-29
Acts 9:19b-25

Fri., Feb. 4

Psalm 138
Numbers 27:12-23
Acts 9:26-31

Sat., Feb. 5

Psalm 138
Judges 3:7-11
Luke 4:42-44

Sun., Feb. 6

Fifth Sunday after Epiphany
Isaiah 6:1-8 [9-13]
Psalm 138
1 Corinthians 15:1-11
Luke 5:1-11

Mon., Feb. 7

Psalm 115
Judges 5:1-11
1 Corinthians 14:26-40

Tues., Feb. 8

Psalm 115
1 Samuel 9:15–10:1b
1 Timothy 3:1-9

Wed., Feb. 9

Psalm 115
Isaiah 8:1-15
Luke 5:27-32

Thurs., Feb. 10

Psalm 1
Jeremiah 13:12-19
Acts 13:26-34

Fri., Feb. 11

Psalm 1
Jeremiah 13:20-27
1 Peter 1:17–2:1

Sat., Feb. 12

Psalm 1
Jeremiah 17:1-4
Luke 11:24-28

Sun. Feb. 13

Sixth Sunday after the Epiphany
Jeremiah 17:5-10
Psalm 1
1 Corinthians 15:12-20
Luke 6:17-26

Mon., Feb. 14

Psalm 120
2 Kings 24:18–25:21
1 Corinthians 15:20-34

Tues., Feb. 15

Psalm 120
Ezra 1:1-11
2 Corinthians 1:12-19

Wed., Feb. 16

Psalm 120
Jeremiah 22:11-17
Luke 11:37-52

Thurs., Feb. 17

Psalm 37:1-11, 39-40
Genesis 43:16-34
Romans 8:1-11

Fri., Feb. 18

Psalm 37:1-11, 39-40
Genesis 44:1-17
1 John 2:12-17

Sat., Feb. 19

Psalm 37:1-11, 39-40
Genesis 44:18-349
Luke 12:57-59

Sun., Feb. 20

Seventh Sunday after the Epiphany
Genesis 45:3-11, 15
Psalm 37:1-11, 39-40
1 Corinthians 15:35-38, 42-50
Luke 6:27-38

Mon., Feb. 21

Psalm 38
Genesis 33:1-17
1 Corinthians 11:2-16

Tues., Feb. 22

Psalm 38
1 Samuel 24:1-22
1 Corinthians 11:17-22, 27-33

Wed., Feb. 23

Psalm 38
Leviticus 5:1-13
Luke 17:1-4

Thurs., Feb. 24

Psalm 92:1-4, 12-15
Proverbs 13:1-12
Romans 5:12–6:2

Fri., Feb. 25

Psalm 92:1-4, 12-15
Proverbs 15:1-9
1 Thessalonians 4:13-18

Sat., Feb. 26

Psalm 92:1-4, 12-15
Isaiah 30:8-17
John 16:1-4a

Sun., Feb. 27

Eighth Sunday after the Epiphany
Sirach 27:4-7 or Isaiah 55:10-13
Psalm 92:1-4, 12-15
1 Corinthians 15:51-58
Luke 6:39-49

Mon., Feb. 28

Psalm 1
Jeremiah 24:1-10
1 Corinthians 16:1-12

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Happy Birthday!

FEBRUARY BIRTHDAYS

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



MARCH BIRTHDAYS

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

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MARCH ANNIVERSARY

- | | | |
|-----|--------------------------|------------------|
| 3/4 | Larry & Robyn Sliney | Married 27 years |
| 3/6 | Patrick & Rebecca Wright | Married 17 years |



February 2022



Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Worship Service <i>Sundays at 10:00 AM</i> In-Person & on Facebook Live www.facebook.com/firstchurchmethuen		1 10:00 AM Walking Group (The Loop) 4:00 PM Food Pantry	2 1:00 PM Prayer Shawl Ministry (Zoom) 6:30 PM Church Board	3	4	5 10:00 AM - 12:30 PM Souper Bowl of Caring Donation Drop-Off
6 Communion 11:15 AM Fellowship	7	8 10:00 AM Walking Group (The Loop) 4:00 PM Food Pantry	9 1:00 PM Prayer Shawl Ministry (Zoom) 7:00 PM Diaconate	10	11	12 10:00 AM - 12:30 PM Souper Bowl of Caring Donation Drop-Off
13 Souper Bowl of Caring Ends 11:15 AM Fellowship 12:00 PM Walking Group (Methuen Rail Trail)	14  6:30 PM Outreach	15 10:00 AM Walking Group (The Loop) 4:00 PM Food Pantry 4:30 PM Chapel Staff (Zoom)	16 March BEACON deadline 1:00 PM Prayer Shawl Ministry (Zoom) 6:30 PM MDCC	17	18	19
20 11:15 AM Fellowship	21 Chapel School Closed  6:30 PM Stewardship	22 Chapel School Closed 10:00 AM Walking Group (The Loop) 4:00 PM Food Pantry	23 Chapel School Closed 1:00 PM Prayer Shawl Ministry (Zoom)	24 Chapel School Closed	25 Chapel School Closed	26
27 11:15 AM Fellowship	28 6:30 PM Finance					

Dates and times are subject to change

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

Address Service Requested