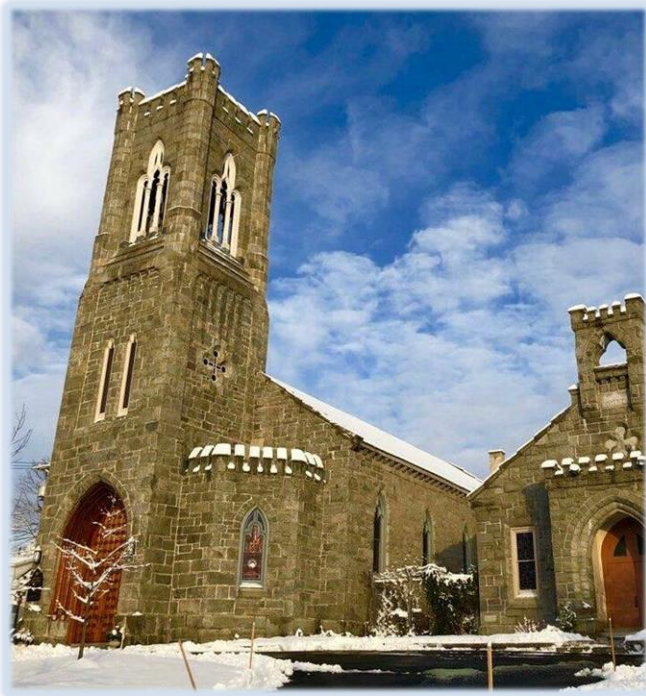


January 2022



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

I was seated in a crowded pew in a small town UCC congregation down river from Detroit. It was in the early 1990s. I say “down river” because *south* of Detroit is Windsor, Ontario, Canada -- the only place in the 48 contiguous US that one looks south into Canada. To go south from Detroit, you first go west, following the Detroit River. Eventually you turn and work your way south. We were about an hour from where I lived and served. The occasion was the retirement of a colleague. I had known him for only a few short years but had come to love and admire him. I was even closer to his wife, with whom I served on a couple of denominational committees.

It was a cold, mid-winter’s day, but even so, I was pulling at the collar of my black preaching robe (the same robe I wear here), wishing somebody would open one of the stained-glass windows. The service was long, but appropriately so. Hymns were sung and prayers were prayed, and a lifetime of service to this and other congregations was marked and celebrated. The service was followed by a church supper with all the trimmings, a combination of German, Polish and Italian food you could depend upon at any UCC church supper in Southeast Michigan.

What brought these memories, and more, to mind was my contemplating a line from the sermon that was preached that day. It was spoken by the Associate Conference Minister for our area, given as a charge to the congregation upon their beloved, long-term pastor's retirement. "This very day," he said, "you find yourselves standing on the edge of a future you do not yet fully know." Those words have bounced around in my head for nearly 30 years now. In fact, I've spoken myself occasionally in a sermon or in a pastoral prayer, even here, and once while preaching to a congregation upon the retirement of their own beloved, long-term pastor -- another colleague of mine, and a friend.

I don't remember anything else from the sermon that day. I remember processing in and out the sanctuary with my colleagues, singing hymns joyfully, and the sweat on my brow as we sat in the crowded pew. I remember the choir all in burgundy robes, giving their all in the anthems they sang. I remember the serving tables, downstairs in Fellowship Hall, heavy laden with roast pork with brown gravy, mostaccioli, stuffed cabbage leaves and more. I even recall standing in the cold, dark parking lot long afterward, talking with a friend after most everyone else had left.

The dawn of a new year is one of the times the line from that sermon always comes to mind. Last year has drawn to a close and is behind us. Next year has just begun and is all stretched out before us. We stand on the edge of a future we do not yet fully know. As we face the coming year, what are your personal hopes and dreams? No doubt health and well-being for ourselves and loved ones is high on our list. We long for the waning of the COVID-19 coronavirus global pandemic, for vaccinations to continue to hold up, and for life to continue to inch back towards normal. We pray for children and teachers to have a successful second half of their year, and for financial stability and a sense of accomplishment in our work. Some of us hope to travel, or to make progress on a special project, or to reach a specific goal. These are a few things that come to mind for me. What are your personal hopes and dreams for the coming year?

What about our church? What hopes do we hold for our congregation and for our community? I have high hopes that in-person attendance will continue its slow but steady increase over the months ahead, all the while maintaining a strong online worship presence. I'm hopeful we'll find a musician to accompany our services and lead our music ministry. I'm hopeful we'll raise money and complete the long-needed repairs to our bell tower, along with restoring the narthex, replacing the heating system and sprucing up the sanctuary. (More details on these projects coming in early 2022!) And I'm eager to resume programming for children and youth. These are just some of the things I look forward to in the coming year. What's on your list of hopes and dreams for our church?

The year 2021, like 2020 before it, was marked by grief and many challenges. Yet there were blessings, too. We have much to be thankful for! As 2022 dawns, with the boundless potential and possibility it portends, I pray God's blessing for us all -- that whatever may come our way, we will strive to live as people of faith and hope, clinging to God's goodness, mercy and love, boldly living as Christ's disciples, today and always.

Happy New Year!

See you in church.

- Bill



Sunday Worship on Facebook Live & YouTube and Virtual Gatherings, via Zoom, during this time of social distancing.

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.

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2022 OFFERING ENVELOPES

The 2022 offering envelopes are available. Please contact the Church Office, at 978-687-1240 or firstchurch.roberta@gmail.com, if you would like to receive some pledge envelopes. We can arrange a time for you to pick-up.



Pledge cards and e-pledging forms are still available.

Thank you.

Prayer Requests/List



To would like someone included on the bulletin prayer list, please let Roberta in the Church Office know at firstchurch.roberta@gmail.com or 978-687-1240. If you have someone listed that no longer needs to be, please let the office know as well.

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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Calendar Updates?



Please help keep the church calendar current. Be sure to let Roberta know of any and all items that should go on the Church calendar. This is the only way the calendar can be kept current and up-to-date. Roberta can be reached at 978-687-1240 or firstchurch.roberta@gmail.com.

Thank you for your continued cooperation.

Stewardship...



As we enter 2022, we as individuals, families and a church community, continue to adapt and change with the pandemic. While there are still challenges and suffering, there continues to be more and more stories of medical breakthroughs, love, compassion, hope and inspiration. The life of our church reflects what is happening in society and our community, and responds in a way that is responsible and respectful. As a family we have endured some heartache at the loss of loved-ones this past year, faced continued challenges of a crumbling building, loneliness as a result of isolation, exhaustion in the daily grind of living, especially for those working in the professions of health care, teaching, parenting and care-giving. But there have also been incredible stories of love, compassion, hope and inspiration from our church family and friends. These have been documented countless times over the past few years and I know everyone in our church family and the wider community are grateful for what they have received.

Our Stewardship Campaign Theme this year was *A New Beginning*. We have shared a variety of stories about how First Church has created new beginnings while keeping the traditions we hold near and dear to our hearts still alive and relevant. Our church has worked towards continuing our missions of Seek God, Caring For Each Other and Improving Our Community while we imagined and continue to imagine new ways of serving each other and making this world a better place for others. I ask you to close your eyes and repeat the words of the caption above, "Trust in the magic of new beginnings". Think about what we have accomplished the past few years and imagine how much more we can accomplish by working together and dedicating our pledges to those missions.

A huge gratitude of thanks to those of you who already sent in your pledge cards. We continue to receive these each week in the mail so if you haven't yet done so, please make a trip to your mailbox with the addressed return envelope. As a reminder, **if you are an electronic giver**, you still need to fill out a new form, even if there is no change of information. If you've misplaced the pledge packet, please contact the church office and we will mail a new one to you. If you have any questions, please contact one of us on the Stewardship Ministry Team.

Stewardship Ministry Team:

Kim Valcourt – chairperson, Rev. Bill Ingraham, Ken Peck, Marilyn Peck, Robyn Sliney, Glenn Sprague



From the Outreach Ministry Team


Supplemental Holiday Food Distribution



Thanks to the generosity of our Church family and friends and several food drives by community groups, we raised enough food to provide an extra week's food distribution to 195 families. So in addition to the Neighbors in Need (NIN) Christmas distribution, we provided another week of supplemental food for the week between Christmas and New Year's when NIN is closed.

Outreach would like to thank the A and B teams of volunteers who regularly staffed the NIN Food Pantry throughout the past year as well as their families for allowing them the time to volunteer. These 35 volunteers faithfully came regardless of whether the weather was hot, cold, raining, or snowing. Many worked in the Parish Hall, but others braved the outside weather each week to greet our guests. We also want to thank everyone who donated food and money to the Food Pantry. Through your commitment we have been able to better serve our guests.

Gifts to the Manger

Cindy Bateson decorated the large box in the church crossroads in which you put your Gifts to the Manger this year. Lori Bennett picked up 3 big bags of toys and 1 big bag of wrapping paper on December 15th and delivered them to the Methuen Arlington Neighborhood (MAN) Inc. for children who participate in their programs. Also included was a bag for a specific 10 year old boy with a hat and mittens from the Mitten Tree. 

There were two older boys waiting for Lori. She opened the back of her van and they took everything out and brought it inside for her. She did not go in, but waived to all the kids. Within an hour Ruthie Estes called thanking her for the gifts and excited for the wrapping paper. Ruthie said the parents loved being able to wrap gifts for their children.


The Mitten Tree



The Mitten Tree located in the church crossroads outside the Church Office has been beautifully decorated with warm mittens, hats and scarves. We thank everyone who donated items to the Mitten Tree, especially Chapel parents and the church's Prayer Shawl Group. These items will be donated to children served by the Methuen Public Schools' Family Resource Center at 10 Ditson Place, Methuen. The Mitten Tree is a joint ministry between the Outreach Team and the Chapel School.

2022 Souper Bowl of Caring

The Outreach Team is planning our 2022 Souper Bowl Challenge. Although we were not physically in church last year, the competition between Team Right and Team Left was outstanding! First Church, together with the Chapel School and the community, collected 1265 cans of soup and raised \$1,780 in donations for Neighbors in Need.

We will kick off our **2022 Souper Bowl of Caring** on Sunday, January 16th. In the next four weeks members of the Left and Right Church Teams will be joined by Chapel School parents and teachers in bringing soup cans to the church on Saturdays from 10:00 AM to 12:30 PM and Sundays before and after the church service (10:00 – 11:00 AM). On Sunday, February 13th, we will find out if Team Left or Team Right won the coveted Souper Bowl of Caring trophy in 2022. The real winner will be Neighbors in Need to whom we are donating all the soup. 

Outreach Ministry Team – Marilyn Peck, Chair, Cindy Bateson, Ray Benedix, Lori Bennett, Cynthia Causbie, Barbara Donaghue, DebMaueSprague, Ken Peck, and Becky Smith

From the Outreach Ministry Team



2022 Souper Bowl Challenge

Outreach invites you to participate in the 2022 Souper Bowl Challenge. This year we are committing to reaching a goal of 1,000 cans of soup and raising \$1,000. All cans of soup and any cash raised during this year's Souper Bowl Challenge will go to Neighbors in Need food pantries. Ray is going quackers this year over the new two teams' challenge!

In 2021, Team Right donated 332 cans of soup and \$675 in donations for a final score of 1007, while Team Left donated 851 cans of soup and \$975 in donations for a final score of 1726 to win the First Church Souper Bowl trophy! Will this be the year Team Right takes the trophy? Watch for the soup sales and get ready to bring you're A game. Souper Bowl kick-off is January 16th (1st Quarter) – get ready!!!!

Cans of soup and monetary donations can be dropped off at First Church on Saturdays, January 22nd and 29th, and February 5th and 12th, from 10:00 AM to 12:30 PM, and Sundays January 23rd and 30th and February 6th and 13th, before and after the church service (9:30/11:00 AM). On February 13th, we will find out if Team Left or Team Right won the coveted Souper Bowl of Caring trophy for 2022.

2022 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 6th.

Respectfully,
Outreach Ministry Team – Marilyn Peck, Chair, Cindy Bateson, Ray Benedix, Cynthia Causbie, Barbara Donaghue, Deb MaueSprague, Ken Peck and Becky Smith.

From the Outreach Ministry Team & Chapel School

The Annual Mitten Tree has long been a popular part of our Christmas celebration at First Church and is a joint effort between The Outreach Ministry Team and The Chapel School. And this year was no different! The tree was filled with lots of winter accessories donated by families from the Chapel School and First Church Congregational.



Brandi Kwong, Methuen Public Schools Superintendent, stopped by for a picture with Cindy Mazella, Chapel School Director, and some present & past Chapel children.

All donations of hats, scarves and mittens were given to the Methuen Public Schools Family Resource Center to be distributed to those in need of warm accessories.



*Thank you to everyone who made our tree beautiful
and full of warmth!*

Walking Group for Fitness and Fellowship

Tuesdays in January

Welcome the New Year with a walk at Raymond J. Martin Riverside Park in Methuen on Tuesday mornings. Share in friendly conversation and exercise at your pace. Walk as many loops as you wish (3 loops=1 mile). We will be walking at **10:00 AM** on **1/4, 1/11, 1/18 and 1/25**. We will cancel if the weather is too cold or not safe due to ice or snow.

Sunday Walk on the Methuen Rail Trail

Our scheduled Sunday Rail Trail walk in January will be on **1/16 at 12:00 PM**. We will meet at the far end of the MSPCA parking lot in Methuen. A sunny winter day on the Rail Trail can be beautiful and invigorating. Dress warm! Hope you can join us!



Prayer Shawl Ministry

The Prayer Shawl Ministry meets year-round and always welcomes anyone who wishes to be part of this ministry. Knitting or crocheting experience is not a prerequisite to becoming a member. Come for the fellowship and someone will be glad to help you if needed. Please contact or Anne Benedix or Carol Gray for more information.

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

Masks are required while in the building.



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Original Artwork by Emily Jurovich

The Chapel School



January may be cold with short days of sunlight and dreary weather but it's also a time to regroup, reflect and catch our breath from the holidays. Hopefully everyone had a safe and fun filled Christmas. Families and friends were anxious to be together again with the hope that as we return to work and school that it was safe and healthy for all.

The last few months have been stressful. We have had many covid exposures that have kept children home, away from school and most recently shut down entire classrooms too. We are encouraging families to report exposures to us so that we can make the best decisions to keep everyone safe here at Chapel. We work closely with the local board of health and our health care consultant. Everyone needs to be a responsible player in keeping us all safe from the virus. These unsettling times have made us all realize what is important to each of us and how fragile life is.

Parent/Teacher conferences will be coming up soon. The challenge will be how to accomplish that. We may have to be creative so that we can socially distance if we do allow parents into the building or conference over zoom.

Remembering to take care of ourselves during these cold months is so important too. Getting plenty of rest now that the holidays are over should be a priority. Eating healthy too goes a long way in keeping our immune systems strong and able to fight off illness. Staying diligent to good sanitizing and disinfectant practices both at home and when we are out in public will further help us to stay healthy and safe. If we all do our part and make safe choices for ourselves and our families, we will get through this.

We were very grateful to have Brandi Kwong, Superintendent of the Methuen Public Schools, visit with us just before Christmas break to see the Mitten Tree filled with so many warm mittens, scarves, and hats. Our thanks to everyone who donated. Everything was packed up and brought down to the Methuen Public Resource Center for distribution to children in need. She also saw the beautiful display of trees made by the children and their families. We thanked her for her time and her partnership with First Church and the Chapel School in helping children get what they need to stay warm this winter.

Keep making those 2022 New Year's Resolutions. We have to think positive that we will get through these unsettling times and be on our way to making plans for the future. We just need hunker down a little longer. Never stop dreaming and wishing for a better tomorrow.

Cindy Mazella
Director



The Chapel School - Our Own Festival of Trees



Thank you to all our Chapel Families for the beautiful artwork!

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.

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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 -January 2021 (Year B)

Fri., Jan. 1

Ecclesiastes 3:1-13
Psalm 8
Revelation 21:1-6a
Matthew 25:31-46

Sat., Jan. 2

Psalm 148
Proverbs 1:1-7
James 3:13-18

Sun., Jan. 3

Second Sunday after Christmas
Jeremiah 31:7-14 or Sirach 24:1-12
Psalm 98 or Wisdom 10:15-21
Ephesians 1:3-14
John 1:[1-9] 10-18

Mon., Jan. 4

Psalm 110
Proverbs 3:1-12
James 4:11-17

Tues., Jan. 5

Psalm 110
Proverbs 22:1-9
Luke 6:27-31

Wed., Jan. 6

Epiphany of the Lord
Isaiah 60:1-6
Psalm 72:1-7, 10-14
Ephesians 3:1-12
Matthew 2:1-12

Thurs., Jan. 7

Psalm 29
1 Samuel 3:1-21
Acts 9:10-19a

Fri., Jan. 8

Psalm 29
1 Samuel 16:1-13
1 Timothy 4:11-16

Sat., Jan. 9

Psalm 29
1 Kings 2:1-4, 10-12
Luke 5:1-11

Sun., Jan. 10

Baptism of the Lord
Genesis 1:1-5
Psalm 29
Acts 19:1-7
Mark 1:4-11

Mon., Jan. 11

Psalm 69:1-5, 30-36
Genesis 17:1-13
Romans 4:1-12

Tues., Jan. 12

Psalm 69:1-5, 30-36
Exodus 30:22-38
Acts 22:2-16

Wed., Jan. 13

Psalm 69:1-5, 30-36
Isaiah 41:14-20
John 1:29-34

Thurs., Jan. 14

Psalm 139:1-6, 13-18
Judges 2:6-15
2 Corinthians 10:1-11

Fri., Jan. 15

Psalm 139:1-6, 13-18
Judges 2:16-23
Acts 13:16-25

Sat., Jan. 16

Psalm 139:1-6, 13-18
1 Samuel 2:21-25
Matthew 25:1-13

Sun., Jan. 17

Second Sunday after the Epiphany
1 Samuel 3:1-10 [11-20]
Psalm 139:1-6, 13-18
1 Corinthians 6:12-20
John 1:43-51

Mon., Jan. 18

Psalm 86
1 Samuel 9:27—10:8
2 Corinthians 6:14—7:1

Tues., Jan. 19

Psalm 86
1 Samuel 15:10-31
Acts 5:1-11

Wed., Jan. 20

Psalm 86
Genesis 16:1-14
Luke 18:15-17

Thurs., Jan. 21

Psalm 62:5-12
Jeremiah 19:1-15
Revelation 18:11-20

Fri., Jan. 22

Psalm 62:5-12
Jeremiah 20:7-13
2 Peter 3:1-7

Sat., Jan. 23

Psalm 62:5-12
Jeremiah 20:14-18
Luke 10:13-16

Sun., Jan. 24

Third Sunday after the Epiphany
Jonah 3:1-5, 10
Psalm 62:5-12
1 Corinthians 7:29-31
Mark 1:14-20

Mon., Jan. 25

Psalm 46
Genesis 12:1-9
1 Corinthians 7:17-24

Tues., Jan. 26

Psalm 46
Genesis 45:25—46:7
Acts 5:33-42

Wed., Jan. 27

Psalm 46
Proverbs 8:1-21
Mark 3:13-19a

Thurs., Jan. 28

Psalm 111
Deuteronomy 3:23-29
Romans 9:6-18

Fri., Jan. 29

Psalm 111
Deuteronomy 12:28-32
Revelation 2:12-17

Sat., Jan. 30

Psalm 111
Deuteronomy 13:1-5
Matthew 8:28—9:1

Sun., Jan. 31

Fourth Sunday after the Epiphany
Deuteronomy 18:15-20
Psalm 111
1 Corinthians 8:1-13
Mark 1:21-28

Happy Birthday!

JANUARY

04 Deborah MaueSprague
06 Cathy Gable
07 Janet Towler
09 Nicolette Jurovich
10 Roberta Barlow
17 William Ingraham
21 Makayla Berg
23 Melanie Conner-Myers
26 Carolyn Gill
29 Anastasia Yarid



FEBRUARY

01 JJ Silva
03 Christopher Brown
04 Lynn Dewhirst, George King
05 Joseph Yarid
07 Roberta Jurovich

* * * * *



JANUARY

1/6 Robert & Susan Newton

Married 43 years

<div>  <h1>January 2022</h1>  </div>						
Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Worship Service <i>Sundays at 10:00 AM</i> <i>In-Person &</i> <i>on Facebook Live</i> www.facebook.com/firstchurchmethuen						1 
2 Communion 11:15 AM Fellowship (Zoom)	3 6:30 PM Finance	4 10:00 AM Walking Group (Riverside Park) 4:00 PM Food Pantry	5 8:00 AM Breakfast with Bill 1:30 PM Prayer Shawl 6:30 PM Church Board	6	7	8
9 Questions for the Pastor 11:15 AM Fellowship (Zoom)	10 4:00 PM Chapel Staff 6:30 PM Outreach	11 10:00 AM Walking Group (Riverside Park) 4:00 PM Food Pantry	12 1:30 PM Prayer Shawl 7:00 PM Diaconate	13	14	15
16 Souper Bowl Kick-Off 11:15 AM Fellowship (Zoom) 12:00 PM Walking Group (Methuen Rail Trail)	17 MLK Day National Day of Service <i>Chapel School/Church</i> <i>Office Closed</i> 6:30 PM Stewardship	18 10:00 AM Walking Group (Riverside Park) 4:00 PM Food Pantry	19 February BEACON deadline 1:30 PM Prayer Shawl 6:30 PM MDCC	20	21	22
23 11:15 AM Fellowship (Zoom)	24 6:30 PM Finance	25 10:00 AM Walking Group (Riverside Park) 4:00 PM Food Pantry	26 1:30 PM Prayer Shawl	27	28	29
30	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