



The Epistle

September 2023

From the Pastor's Pen

While walking with churches facing the uncertainties of the future and asking where God is calling them to be present in the midst of that future, it is increasingly clear to me that it is imperative for us to be a people of Resurrection Faith....

Resurrection Faith is living with the constant awareness that all of this (every aspect of our being as humans walking this planet and as members of the church) was originally God's project. It is surrendering to the reality that it all remains God's—the church and creation. We exist in this world for but the length of time our bodies are capable of being hosts to our souls. Certainly, more recent experiences, as I continue to serve as an Association Moderator in NH—where we are about to propose the unification of all Conference Associations into one (a response to the increasingly diminished capacity of our local churches)—and journey with The First Congregational Church of Gardner through the sale of their building and the dissolution of their congregation, that regardless of the form it takes the church universal will continue forever—even as local churches close. As Rev. Gail Cafferata writes in *Mind the Tiller: Leading a Church to Closure*: “Resurrection Faith is the faith that God is present in the midst of grief. It is faith that God calls us to be good stewards of our blessings [including each other]. It is faith that gratitude for ministry we've shared brings us closer to one another and to the heart of God.” Rev. Jonathan New, while he was the Associate Conference Minister for Stewardship and Financial Development of the former Massachusetts Conference wrote: there “is the special reward that is reserved only for those who are willing to engage [in] a congregation at the deepest possible level with the promise of the gospel – that ours is a God of life and that death doesn't have the final word.” There is great freedom in this...

Being a people of Resurrection Faith means openly facing our fears, naming our realities, and honoring our grief as we adapt to our changing realities. It also means not dwelling on them—looking for hope and embracing possibilities and opportunities. Living a Resurrection Faith is the embracing of risk-taking for the stewarding of God's word and love in the world (beyond the church).

In these past months conversations with members of and participants in the church brought forward several clear ideas to strengthen the church and create opportunities to invite and welcome others into building community with us. These conversations also named the reality that currently the congregation is primarily focused inwardly and that there is a deep desire for broader connection. As well, many continue to worship within this community experiencing a deep sense of belonging while others continue hoping the same will develop for them.

While we step into a writing phase of the Congregational Profile, conversations will continue in order to broaden deep listening within the church and foster the expansion of those desired connections. If you have been absent to the past conversations, you will soon find yourself directly invited into the listening space. As well, we will be stepping into some risk-taking with new programs. Here is the first...

Friday Night Open Table

A monthly gathering for dinner and fun from 5:30-8pm on the following dates:
September 15th, October 13th, November 10th (Veteran's Day), December 8th, January 12th, February 9th, March 8th, April 12th, May 10th, June 14th



This is your invitation to step into this liminal space and in co-creating a new kind of resurrection in our midst.

Pastor Stacey

JOYS AND CONCERNS

For our members, family and friends hospitalized, ill and in need of prayers, may God bless and watch over you:

- | | |
|----------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Roxxe and Chris | Jan Gordon |
| Tariq Malik | James Gallant |
| Bobbie DiBattista | Dot |
| Brian & June Coombs | Audrey Brogan |
| Charlie Snell | Eleanor Brogan |
| Lindsey Kuchta | Lorna Ducharme |
| Steve Collar | Bryan Castle |
| Sally Calhoun | Don McKendry |
| Shirley Saari | Sally Aalto's friend, Marge |
| Eddie Hannula | The Lafferty family |
| Dee Smith | Peter Rakowski |
| Bob Anderson | Dolores Tamulen |
| Mary Dunn | Amanda Arsenault |
| Julie Gagnon | Ellie Grace (Peter's great niece) |
| Tom Casson (Lisa's friend) | Kieman Wilson |
| Bill & Norma Eades | Simari family |

"Prayer List"

If you added somebody to the prayer list, please let us know when to remove their name.

More information can always be shared privately with Pastor Stacey at fccw.pastor@outlook.com or at (603) 903-5621.



Here is your opportunity to help the church!!

Yes we are in a time of change but that means we need your help all the more.

Nominating will begin filling slots soon and we would love for you to think seriously how you can help the church with your time and talents!

Maybe you want to try something new and different, maybe you like where you are or maybe you want to join a committee to make new friends...whatever it is we will welcome you with open arms!!

We would love to share any information on Committees or where you might fit best.

Please contact:

Karen Brighenti 508-331-0896 karenbrig08@gmail.com
Ellen Holmes eholmes.fccw.moderator@gmail.com



The Sign up sheet for coffee hour is hanging outside of Lisa's office on the bulletin board, in which also has updated information posted. There are extra hard copies of the (newsletter) Epistles on the table in the hallway and where Sunday bulletins are displayed.

Please check out our "easy to navigate" website where you can find important dates, sign up for our newsletter (Epistle), stay updated on upcoming events & more @ www.westcong.org.

Thank you Joanna Allen for all your hard work keeping the website updated & all computers maintained!!! You always put the extra mile in and find a way to get it done - and done well.

If you would like to display flowers on the altar during Sunday's worship service, please sign up on the flower chart (back wall) in the Narthex. Please email Lisa @ fccw.westminster@gmail.com as to what you would like printed in bulletin. Here's an example below.

"Flowers on the altar are given by Joe Smith in celebration of fall."



Church School Registration:
Sunday, September 10

First day of church school:
Sunday, September 17

Please be sure to check your email for Church News regarding Christian Education.

From the Moderator

I would like to take a moment to address concerns within the FCCW.

We have been traversing a period of transition, and it has not always been easy. Rarely are such periods easy given the importance of what exists on the other side. Many of you have reached out and asked when we will move to the next phase. The Transition Team completes its congregational conversations in August. I am now asking for members to reach out to me at eholmes.fccw.moderator@gmail.com to express an interest in being selected as a member of our Pastoral Search Committee. My intention is to have the Individuals selected by the October Church Council meeting with a special portion of a worship service following soon after where we hold a Dedication of our Search Committee Members.

In November, we will hold our Annual Election and Budget Meeting. This is an important meeting for the church as we must come together and recommit ourselves to our FCCW family. The first area is the Election of Officers and Board/Committee members. You will be hearing more about this in the upcoming weeks, but I want to highlight a few points. Like a pump, the church needs to be primed, and we are the water to prime it. There are many opportunities for everyone to help, and we need to take full advantage of the great talents EVERYONE can share with us. Beyond those couple of boards which require their participants be members of the church, the majority are open to all and just ask for a willingness to participate. I had one person say to me, "I'd rather be asked so I know I'm somebody they want." My response is for you all: "You are, and consider yourself asked!"

The other important aspect of the meeting is voting on our 2024 Budget. We have discussed the challenges the summer brings with folks being away, and the decline in expected offerings received. However, this is a much more concerning time, though not surprising as we have seen cause for concern growing for a number of years. We have struggled together to meet the financial needs of the church, and have moved from a challenging situation to a growing crisis.

The Financial Advisory Committee was notified by the Trustees that an urgent need existed for a withdrawal of the entire Endowment sum designated in the 2023 Budget for use in our General Fund. This was unusual as we have been able as a church to not need those designated funds until closer to November/end of our fiscal year. However, the church required those funds in order to ensure we could pay our obligations.

Continued from page 3...

The Trustees have reminded us that the cost to hire our next settled pastor will require a significant increase in our overall budget. They face a significant challenge in the development of their recommended 2024 Budget for our meeting. We have significant needs which must be balanced with the reduced number of pledging members able to meet those expenditures

At the recent Westminster Town Benefit, our church family was asked to participate with a Strawberry Shortcake Booth. Throughout the day, we were greeted with smiles of people who remembered the Yankee Street Fair and some of our past members. First Congregational Church of Westminster has a long history of uplifting our community. We need support to continue to uplift FCCW. This is why we need you to be an active participant in planning First Congregational Church's next steps forward. Together as a Family in Faith, we WILL move forward.

WELCOMING COMMITTEE

If you missed the town-wide yard sale, and you have anything you'd like to donate, the Welcoming Committee will be having a yard sale during the Westminster Cracker Festival on Saturday, October 21st from 10 AM—3 PM. We are looking for anyone in the community that would like to participate. Refreshments will be available!!

Proceeds will go to The First Congregational Church of Westminster and 5% of proceeds will go to the Westminster Food Pantry. Please email fccw.westminster@gmail.com if you would be interested.

Stay tuned for more info.!!!

Donations include:

- Bottled Waters
- Home-baked Goods (labeled)
- Handmade Goods
- Attic Treasures
- Kid's Toys
- Clothing
- Used Tools
- No electronics
- Furniture (you will be responsible for drop off & pick up).

Welcoming Committee,

Lisa Roberts, Mary Dunn, Carolyn Kalil and Dale Miller



CHRISTIAN OUTREACH

A Word From Christian Outreach: Our Participation in the CROP Hunger Walk



This year, Christian Outreach will be supporting FCCW members in walking the CROP Hunger Walk. We will “co-walk” with members from the Pilgrim Congregational Church in Leominster, MA.

Interested in walking?

The walk will take place on Sunday, October 15 at 1pm. The walk is an approximately 2-mile walk that starts at Pilgrim Congregational Church in Leominster. Reach out to Jessica Caouette at Jessica.l.caouette@gmail.com for more info.

Interested in supporting FCCW members who will be walking?

A team fundraising link will be sent out soon to make a donation to support those from FCCW who are walking! Stay tuned!

Westminster’s Farmers Market

Fridays from the last the last week in October, on Academy Hill from 3:00pm until 6:00pm.



WESTMINSTER CRACKER FESTIVAL

A free event for all. Rain or shine.

Saturday, October 21, 2023
10 Village Square
Westminster, Massachusetts



September 2023

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
					1 Office closed	2
3 9:30 AM Worship Service Communion	4 8:00 AM Meditation (Zoom) Office Closed <i>Labor Day</i>	5 8:00 AM Yoga (Zoom) 10:00 AM Staff (Parlor) 7:00 PM Diaconate (Parlor)	6 8:00 AM Appleseed Open House 6:30 PM Boy Scouts (FH)	7 10:00 AM Appleseed Open House 6:30--7:30 PM Food Pantry Drive-Thru 7:00 Trustee (FH)	8 Office closed	9
10 9:30 AM Worship Service Church School Registration 10:45 AM Church Council	11 8:00 AM Meditation (Zoom) 8:45 AM Appleseed Opening Day	12 8:00 AM Yoga (Zoom) 8:45 AM Appleseed Opening Day 10:00 AM Staff (Parlor) 7:00 PM CE	13 6:30 PM Boy Scouts (FH)	14 5:30 PM Choir Rehearsal 6:30- 7:30 PM Food Pantry	15 5:30 PM Open Table (FH & Kitchen)  Office closed	16
17 9:30 AM Worship Service 9:30 AM First day of Church School (Sanctuary) 10:45 AM Teacher's Gathering & Assistant	18 8:00 AM Meditation (Zoom)	19 8:00 AM Yoga 10:00 AM Staff (Parlor) 5:30 PM Cub Scouts (FH)	20 6:30 PM Boy Scouts (FH)	21 8:00 AM Apple Pie Baking (Kitchen & FH) 5:30 PM Choir Rehearsal 6:30- 7:30 PM Food Pantry	22  Office closed <i>First Day of Autumn</i>	23
24 9:30 AM Worship Service 9:30 AM Church School (Sanctuary) 3:00 PM Women's Fellowship Safety Event (FH)	25 8:00 AM Meditation (Zoom)	26 8:00 AM Yoga (Zoom) 12:30 PM Safe Church 6:00 PM Generous Giving	27 6:30 PM Boy Scouts (FH)	28 5:30 PM Choir Rehearsal 6:30- 7:30 PM Food Pantry	29 Office closed	30

OCTOBER 2023

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1 9:30 AM Worship Service Communion **Last Day to order Mums**	2 8:00 AM Meditation (Zoom)	3 8:00 AM Yoga (Zoom) 10:00 AM Staff (Parlor) 7:00 PM Diaconate (Parlor)	4 6:30 PM Boy Scouts (FH)	5 6:30--7:30 PM Food Pantry Drive-Thru 5:30 PM Choir Rehearsal 7:00 PM Trustee (FH)	6 Office closed	7
8 9:30 AM Worship Service 9:30 AM Church School (Sanctuary)	9 8:00 AM Meditation (Zoom) 7:00 PM Church-wide conversation (zoom) Office Closed <i>Columbus Day</i>	10 8:00 AM Yoga (Zoom) 10:00 AM Staff (Parlor)	11 6:30 PM Boy Scouts (FH)	12 5:30 PM Choir Rehearsal 6:30- 7:30 PM Food Pantry	13 5:30 PM Open Table (FH & Kitchen)  Office closed	14
15 9:30 AM Worship Service 9:30 AM Church School (Sanctuary) 1:00 PM CROP WALK Concord, MA	16 8:00 AM Meditation (Zoom)	17 8:00 AM Yoga (Zoom) 10:00 AM Staff (Parlor)	18 6:30 PM Boy Scouts (FH)	19 5:30 PM Choir Rehearsal 6:30- 7:30 PM Food Pantry	20 Office closed	21 Westminster Cracker Festival 10 am—5 pm Church Yard Sale 10 am—3 pm (side lawn) Circle of Artists Art Show 4:00—5:00 PM (CH)
22 9:30 AM Worship Service 9:30 AM Church School (Sanctuary)	23 8:00 AM Meditation (Zoom)	24 8:00 AM Yoga 10:00 AM Staff (Parlor)	25 6:30 PM Boy Scouts (FH)	26 5:30 PM Choir Rehearsal 6:30- 7:30 PM Food Pantry	27 Office closed	28
29 9:30 AM Worship Service 9:30 AM Church School (Sanctuary)	30 8:00 AM Meditation (Zoom)	31 8:00 AM Yoga (Zoom) 10:00 AM Staff (Parlor)  <i>Halloween</i>				

GENEROUS GIVING

Living Presence, Right Now

In September, the Generous Giving Ministry will be increasing our annual awareness of what generous giving is for this church and collecting pledges. This year's theme is Living Presence, Right Now. We invite EVERYONE to join us at worship in September and early October to hear more about how we show up, be present and attend to the financial and spiritual needs as a congregation.

Here we are. In the present. The past can inform us, and we can plan for the future, but what we have is the present. And what we have is a church and community that is in its moment of change. We have embarked on a process to deliver us to the present, but our definition of who we are as a church is not yet written in stone for the future.

We need you. Your presence.

We know that people “show up” in many ways. Some physically, at worship on Sunday or as committee volunteers in meetings. Some show up spiritually, having conversations with their families and other church members about God and Jesus, and pray for those who need it in our community. Others show up financially, making their pledges and following through on their commitment to our faith community.

At this time, we need everyone to show up and be present with all parts. Jesus shows us how to be present in our lives and provides the ultimate example of “showing up”: resurrection and new life.

How will you show up in this time of our faith community's need?

We are asking all folks committed to this church to consider making a pledge as a way to bear witness of your presence. And for those who are already pledgers, we ask for you to increase your pledge, as this will not only keep this church surviving, but give us the opportunity to define who we are and what we want for ourselves, our congregation, community and the world this year. **Pledge cards will be shared in September and help the Trustees to craft a budget to support the congregation's plans for the year.**

Your pledge will support the work of this church—during our fall pledge drive, you will hear from committee volunteers about how your support keeps this church working and in what ways. See you then!

The Generous Giving Ministry



Women's Fellowship of the First Congregational Church of Westminster

Please join us at one or all of these upcoming activities!

A casual lunch at Kros on the Common in Templeton! Plan to meet at the church at 11:30 on September 12th so we can carpool to the restaurant. We will enjoy lunch and talk about future plans. Bring your ideas for activities.

A Westminster Firefighter and Police Detective will offer a Be Aware program on Sunday, September 24th at 3:30 pm. Bring a friend to learn about how to avoid sweepstake and phone scams, check whitewashing, caller ID spoofing and more. We will also learn how to use the portable defibrillator that we have at the church.

Join in the fun on September 21 for Apple Pie Baking in the church kitchen! We will begin at 9 o'clock and finish around 2. Come for as long as you can. Help is needed to peel apples, make crusts, mix filling, prepare boxes and more. The pies will be sold at the Westminster Farmer's Market on September 22nd. Help is also needed to sell pies at the Market from 3 - 6 pm. The funds we raised support the church and various missions.

On October 19th at 6:30 pm come and meet Local Poet and Author Karen Elizabeth Sharp as she shares her recent book, Prayer Can Be Anything. We are glad to have this Westminster resident share her talent!



The Women's Fellowship Extends an Invitation to All

The Women's Fellowship, an organization open to all women of the church, has been planning programs and opportunities to commence this fall.

A group met last month for dinner. We were smaller in number than in our gatherings of the past, but what a wonderful evening we shared. In the photo, left to right, back row are Carolyn Hemman, Sandi Thibodeau, Donna Molet, Julie Gagnon, Ellen Holmes, Leslie Collar, Margaret Ann Schick, Sally Aalto and Chloe Wilson. In the front are Jane Collar, Mary Waight and Cindy Brown.

The Fellowship provides a wonderful time for the women of our church to be together in friendship and support. We hope you will join with us.

PIE BAKING!

Join your church friends in baking pies for the Women's Fellowship!



On Thursday, September 21st, we will join together in the church kitchen to peel apples, roll out crusts, bake pies and chat and laugh while we do this!

The pies will be sold at the Westminster Farmer's Market on Friday.

Join us any time between 9 AM and 2 PM in the church kitchen.

Help is also needed Friday, 3-5, to sell the pies at the Farmer's Market.

Can you donate any of the ingredients we need to make 45 pies?

- 10 lb bags of King Arthur Flour (3 needed)
- 3 lb cans of shortening (3 needed)
- 4 lb bags of sugar (4 needed)
- 2 bottles of nutmeg (2 needed)
- 2 bottles of cinnamon (2 needed)
- 45 pie plates

A basket for your donations is in the church kitchen.

Contact Sandi Thibodeau

(call 978-874-0734, text to 978-870-4180 or sandrathib@aol.com)

for more information or to let her know how you can help with this fundraiser.

Mum Display on the Church Steps

We would like to decorate the church steps with our annual fall display of chrysanthemum plants given in memory or in honor of loved ones. For every **\$8.00** donation, you may fill out a slip recognizing a friend or loved one. The mums will be displayed on our church front steps for all to enjoy. The annual Westminster Cracker Festival will be on October 21st. Mums can be picked up on Sunday, October 22nd. Use the form below. Additional forms are available at the church.

A memorial list will be printed in the bulletin on Sunday, October 22nd.

Plant given by : _____

In Loving Memory of : _____

In Honor of : _____

Please make checks payable to "First Congregational Church" and note "plants" on it. You can mail your order or drop off it at the church. If no one is at the church, leave it in an envelope in the black mailbox outside the side door near the church office.

First Congregational Church, P.O. Box 477, Westminster MA 01473

Thank you.



Last Date to order Mums is Sunday October 1st.

Adopt A Bill

As another way to raise funds for the church, the Trustees are suggesting that some people might want to Adopt a Bill to ease the strain on the church budget. The idea would be that you would select a bill and reimburse the church for that item. Below are a few suggestions.

- | | |
|-------------------------------------------|----------|
| * AED Maintenance | \$570.00 |
| * Elevator Pre-Inspection | \$860.00 |
| * Installment payment on church insurance | \$952.75 |
| * Monthly payment on copier lease | \$207.00 |
| * CCLI license | \$308.00 |
| * Central Mass Assoc. | \$385.00 |
| * Monthly payment on phone/internet | \$148.00 |
| * Piano Service | \$162.00 |
| * Palms | \$43.00 |
| * Roll of Stamps | |
| * Boxes of copy paper | |



RESOURCES FOR FAMILIES

This month we have a simple fun way to create faith forming tradition in your home with your children or grandchildren or any other children you find yourself putting to bed a night. As you practice this in your home, remember that prayer is a direct conversation with God and that God knows our heart, in all of its heaviness and lightness, and that no words are wrong words with God. God can handle our anger and our joy. Words may seem simple to us...when we allow ourselves to fully feel them we go to their depths. Consider simply saying; "Thank you, God."

BEDTIME BOX PRAYERS for children

collect items below to utilize for the box prayer

- *small box, container or basket (shoe box, kleenex box)
- *photographs of loved ones
- *small item that is symbolic of each family member
- *stone (fist size) draw or paint heart on it or use sticker
- *feather or small piece of cotton
- *decorate box (optional)



PRAYER:

Dear Loving God,

Hear my prayers before I go to sleep.

1) I ask for blessings upon all my loved ones.

pause: take out photos and look at them, pray for happiness

2) I ask for special prayers for :

pause: hold symbolic item of family member in palm, say their name

3) I ask You God, to hold my heavy heart of concerns.

pause: hold rock, name concerns, pray: Help me God, Hold me God.

4) I ask You God to release my worries and fears.

pause: hold feather or cotton in palm and blow out of palm

5) I thank you God.

pause: close eyes, say "thank you" 3 times, open eyes, return items to box

AMEN

**The First Congregational Church
of Westminster
United Church of Christ
138 Main Street • PO Box 477
Westminster, MA 01473**

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Phone: 978-874-5790

Email: fccw.westminster@gmail.com

Visit our Website at www.westcong.org

Don't Miss the
DEADLINE!

**Wednesday,
September 20, 2023
by 5:00 PM**

