

The Messenger

February 2018

The First Church of Monson, Congregational/UCC

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**The Church Office is usually open on Mondays, Thursdays, and Fridays
from 9 AM to 1 PM.**

Please visit our website and calendar at www.firstchurchmonson.org.



*This Month
at First Church*

Sunday, February 4 – **Annual Meeting** beginning at 12 noon
Potluck lunch following the worship service
All are welcome to both the lunch and meeting.
Childcare offered from 11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Sunday, February 11 – **Lenten Meditation Booklets** available for pick-up
Valentine's Day Bake Sale by Hearts Willing Club

Sunday, February 11 – **Scout Sunday**

Tuesday, February 13 – **Mardi Gras Party** from 6 to 7:30 p.m.

Wednesday, February 14 – **Ash Wednesday**
Service from 6 to 7 p.m.

Lent, Of Lent and Through Lent



The season of Lent begins on Ash Wednesday, February 14. Ironically, that is also Valentine's Day. At first, we might conclude that the two occasions are mutually exclusive. On further reflection we may see that the love of God, embodied in Jesus Christ, includes the love we share for each other on Valentine's Day. This year, Ash Wednesday and

Valentine's Day are *in Lent*, the first of the 40 days of the season. If you have every counted the days from Ash Wednesday to Holy Saturday, you may have noticed that there are more than 40 days. The reality is not all the days are *in Lent*. Sundays are not included. They are *of Lent*. For those who fasted the forty days of lent, Sundays were feast days, a day off. They are *of Lent*, but not *in Lent*. The Sundays of Lent this year will offer a journey through Lent.

Beginning on the First Sunday of Lent and concluding on the Fifth Sunday of Lent, morning worship will focus on the readings from the Book of Psalms as prescribed in the lectionary with multiple additions. In collaboration with Permie and David Sears, each Sunday will offer a theme based on the readings that is experienced through music, anthems, prayer and preaching. We hope that each Sunday will move us through the Lenten season until we gather on Palm Sunday and journey further into Holy Week.

Our Sundays of Lent are as follows:

1 Lent	Feb. 18	Psalm 19	Proclamation
2 Lent	Feb. 25	Psalm 51:1-12	Mercy
3 Lent	March 4	Psalms 121 & 25	Trust
4 Lent	March 11	Psalms 95 & 148	Praise
5 Lent	March 18	Psalms 136 & 100	Thanksgiving

As you journey through Lent, I would encourage you to experience worship in Lent; Ash Wednesday Service at 6 PM, Maundy Thursday Tenebrae, March 29 at 7:30 PM, and worship on the Sundays of Lent.

Blessings,

Rob Gormbley
Interim Pastor

NEWS & Notes

Open Pantry Challenge for February



The Monson Open Pantry is always in need of non-perishable food items. To stimulate giving, Pastor Rob suggests a challenge. His challenge for February is canned fruits. Please choose a canned fruit with little or no sugar, like applesauce or canned fruits in fruit juice, not syrup. Please also check expiration dates. Open Pantry cannot accept any food beyond its expiration date.

Donation baskets are located in the Narthex. Thank you!

First Church received a \$250 matching grant from UCC Disaster Ministries, allowing us to fill five more Church World Service (CWS) Emergency Clean-up Buckets for a total of thirty! “For families who have lost everything, CWS emergency kits are more than just relief supplies. They are an expression of love and a symbol of hope,” said Zach Wolgemuth, UCC Ministries executive.

Our Office Administration, Lee, would like to update the list of individuals currently serving in the military for the rotating prayer list in the Sunday bulletin. If you have a loved one in the military and would like that person’s name on the prayer list, please contact the Church Office at 413-267-3312 or office@firstchurchmonson.org.



Thank you to everyone who purchased a poinsettia at Christmas time. We were able to send \$83.45 to the Monson Ecumenical Emergency Fuel Fund and deliver plants to many church members and friends thanks to your kindness.

Celebrate Mardi Gras and Support Our Veterans!

The Outreach Committee at the First Church of Monson on 5 High Street is hosting a free Mardi Gras Party on “Fat Tuesday” with delicious food and live jazz music!

Join us for New Orleans style fun and feasting!
All Are Welcome!

Tuesday, February 13, 2018 from 6 to 7:30 p.m.

Come in , get your beads, and enjoy the festivities!

*Wear the Colors of Mardi Gras:
Purple represents justice. Green represents faith.
Gold represents power.*



We will be serving authentic New Orleans king cakes, gumbo, jambalaya, pancakes, and cheese-filled crepes with blueberry, cinnamon apple, and maple syrup as toppings.

A free will offering will be accepted to benefit Soldier On, a local non-profit organization that provides veterans with shelter and support in an environment that offers dignity, integrity, and most importantly, hope. Their mission is to offer a continuum of care that includes immediate and long-term housing with services delivered where they live. Soldier On’s ultimate goal is to provide formerly homeless veterans with permanent, supportive, sustainable housing- assisting them in their transition from homelessness to homeownership.

The sacrifices made by veterans and their willingness to put their lives on the line to protect the freedoms we enjoy, merit our deep respect and gratitude.

Greetings from your Pastoral Search Committee!



We continue to accept applications from interested candidates for our next settled pastor. Since our profile summary has been listed on the UCC website, we have received a handful of candidate profiles. We are all thoughtfully and carefully reviewing each, and will continue to accept additional profiles as they reach us.

Our current responsibility is to send our full profile, along with other documents (Annual Report, copies of the *Messenger*, bulletins from Sunday worship, programs from special events, information about Monson and the surrounding area), to candidates that we are interested in, so they will get a better picture of First Church.

We are also preparing for the interview process, by continuing to hone our interview questions and holding a “mock” interview in preparation for the actual candidate interviews. Our first round of actual interviews will take place remotely by utilizing the internet, which will decrease the Church expense for each candidate’s travel. Once we decide on a candidate(s) for a second interview, we will use funds to bring them here for an in-person interview.

Please keep us in your prayers as we move forward with our interview process to determine the best fit for our congregation.

At the conclusion of the 2018 Stewardship Drive, 78 families and individuals have pledged a total of \$102,154. Our heartfelt thanks go to all of you who give of your financial resources to support the ministries and programs of First Church. If you are interested in making a pledge or need to change your pledge, please notify the Church Office.

Thank you, Your Stewardship Team

*Hearts Willing Club
February 10, 2018 (Weather date: February 17, 2018)
Fellowship Hall ~ Noon to 2 p.m.*

“Afternoon Tea”



“The tradition of having tea is one life’s most wonderful pleasures.”

-Tea Time (Blushing Rose Publishing)

“Tea Time Traditions”

Light lunch (finger sandwiches)

Desserts & Beverages

All ladies of First Church are invited.

Please bring a favorite or a fancy tea cup, if possible.

Above all, clothe yourselves with love which binds everything together in perfect harmony. And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts.

-Colossians 3:14-15

Winter Weather Cancellations: Watch local stations WFSB Channel 3, ABC 40, FOX 6, WWLP-TV 22 or go to www.wfsb.com, www.WWLP.com, or www.westernmassnews.com to see if worship services or church activities are canceled due to inclement weather.

The Daily Lectionary Scripture References for February can be found at <https://www.macucc.org/files/files/documentsdailylectionary/feb+2018.pdf>

**The Mission of the First Church of Monson is
to praise God through prayer,
to share the Word and love of God by promoting fellowship in the community,
and to serve as stewards of God's creation –
all in a manner that glorifies God and emulates Christ.**



After each Sunday service, members of the congregation meet in Fellowship Hall to catch up with each other, check out various activities being hosted by the church, and to share some delicious coffee or tea with friends.

Each Sunday, a few volunteers host fellowship by serving the coffee and tea and bringing some store-bought or homemade snacks to share. If you can help with that, please sign up in Fellowship Hall. The sign-up sheet is posted on the first bulletin board as you enter the room. If you've never hosted before, please note that in the 'comment' section; the deacons will arrange for someone to meet you and assist you. Hosting is a great way to give to First Church without a large time commitment.

We are currently seeking hosts from March on. Thank you for helping!



Our old Christmas trees went to new homes in January and new trees were purchased. The new trees are 12 feet tall, easy-to-assemble, and pre-lit. The new trees were purchased using \$540 from the Christmas Decorations Fund and generous donations from several individuals. A very grateful thank you to all those who donated the extra money needed to make the tree purchase!



Super Saturday is now a collaborative effort of the Massachusetts, Connecticut and Rhode Island Conferences – a full-day of skill building, networking and discussing best practices with attendees from all three conferences. Each Super Saturday event offers numerous workshops, a keynote address, worship, a marketplace of vendors and ideas, and an opportunity for church leaders, both clergy and lay, to network with one another. The events began in 2010 to serve as supplements to the Conference's Annual Meetings.

Spring Super Saturday

March 17, 2018

Registration: 8 to 9 a.m.

Program: 9 a.m. to 3:45 p.m.

Minnechaug Regional High School

621 Main Street, Wilbraham

The day features The Rev. Dr. Jacqui Lewis, Senior Minister at Middle Collegiate Church, a 900-member multiracial, welcoming, and inclusive congregation in New York City, Co-Founder of The Middle Project, activist, and fierce advocate for racial equality, economic justice, and LGBTQ equality.

Registration is now open. For more information or to register,

<https://www.macucc.org/eventdetail/super-saturday-march-2018-9985355>