

The Messenger

September - October 2024

The First Church of Monson, Congregational/UCC

5 High Street, Monson MA 01057

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The Church Office is usually open on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 9 a.m. to 12 noon. Interim Pastor Jack Kraaz is in the office Tuesday and Thursday mornings or by appointment.

Please visit our website for additional information.

***No matter who you are or where you are on life's journey,
you are welcome here!***

Our Mission

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.

**You are invited to join your church family and friends for any or all of these
September/October Happenings at First Church**

Thursday, September 5 – Choir rehearsal, 6:30 to 8 p.m.

Open to all who enjoying singing, no auditions or try-outs

Thursday, September 5 – Prayer Shawl Ministry, 6:30 to 8 p.m.

Open to anyone who knits or crochets, or wants to learn

Sunday, September 8 – Fellowship after worship returns, 11 a.m.

Sunday, September 15 – Welcome Back Sunday

Let's Eat Breakfast – 8 to 9:45 a.m.

Sunday School – 10 a.m.

Ice Cream Social – 11 a.m. (Sponsored by Pastor Jack)

Wednesday, September 25 – Hearts Willing Dinner, 6:30 p.m.

Picnic-style meal (\$5.00), Open to all with reservations

Thursday, September 26, Main Street Tavern Night from 4 p.m. to closing

Sponsored by Hearts Willing

Sunday, October 6 – World Communion Sunday

“Neighbors in Need” Special UCC Offering received

Wednesday, October 23 – Hearts Willing at 7 p.m.

Program by Sister Dorothy of the Sisters of Providence

“Helping the Women and Children at the Winnebago Indian Reservation”

Open to all interested in this ministry

Thursday, October 24, Main Street Tavern Night from 4 p.m. to closing

Hosted by ONA

Pastoral Search Committee News



The First Church Pastoral Search Committee has, after many months of work, completed First Church's Profile. The Profile has been sent for its final approval to Rev. Terry Yasuko Ogawa, our Area Conference Minister at the SNUCC. Once it has received final approval, our Profile will be forwarded nationwide and available to all ministers looking to come to Monson.

Our next steps will be reviewing resumes and interviewing applicants. We still have a long way to go, but we are turning a big corner. This has been a tedious and complicated process; however, we are confident that it will help us to find the right minister for our church. Please, continue to pray for this committee.

Thank you, Your Search Committee: Lisa, Elaine, Laurie, Roy, Keith, Deb, David, Judy, and Chris

Thank You!

- Bob, for installing the sprinkler system that has kept the Garden of Gratitude watered throughout the summer,
- Charlotte, for adding more lovely plants to the garden this summer, and
- Everyone who contributed to Lisa's "bail" money! The Monson Together group raised over \$5,000 towards Wreaths Across America. On December 14th, you are invited to help place 1,000 wreaths on the graves of our military to honor and remember their service.



Fellowship Time

First Church of Monson offers generous hospitality. One way is by hosting Fellowship after church. After a summer break, Fellowship will start up again on September 8th where we practice hospitality every Sunday, visiting with old friends and making new ones.

Each month there is a sign-up sheet seeking volunteers who can provide and serve light snacks (not a meal!) and stay to help clean up. Teaming up with someone else is a good idea. No one should feel like they need to bring tons of food or spend lots of money. Popular items are cheese, crackers, grapes, cookies, and juice. There are also packaged food items on hand purchased with money donated as well as 1/2 and 1/2, milk, and paper goods. No need to worry about coffee preparation. There will always be help and training. If you have never volunteered for Fellowship, please think about doing so. Unfortunately there won't be Fellowship on Sundays that are blank on the sign-up. Won't you consider doing your part?

"Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling!"

-1 Peter 4:9

“PRACTICE LOVE” IS OUR 2025 STEWARDSHIP CAMPAIGN THEME

We all need and want love in our lives.

- What constitutes love?
- Where do we find love?
- How do we show love to one another?
- Why do we need love in our lives?

The Bible is full of references to love. Pastor Jack speaks of it frequently.

Please join us on our journey this fall to explore what the word “Love” means to you, how it relates to your spiritual life, and your relationship to First Church.

Each week during the campaign, we will be singing a diverse selection of love songs, some religious, some not.

We will continue our tradition of four Stewardship Moments in October and November and conclude our Stewardship campaign with Stewardship Sunday on November 10th.

If you would like to speak to the Congregation about what Love means to you, please contact any member of the Stewardship Committee.

Looking forward to this season of Love, Linda, Laurie, Carolyn, and Dan

The First Church Prayer Shawl Ministry meets on the first and third Thursday of the month from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. in Fellowship Hall. You are welcome to join us. Do you want to learn to knit or crochet? We can help! We pray for

those in need of comfort, healing, and warmth. Please let the Church Office (413-267-3312 or office@firstchurchmonson.org) know of anyone in need of a prayer shawl. Prayer shawls can be delivered locally. Thank you from Charlotte, Carrie, Donna, Ginny, Jane, Jamy, Lyle, Sarah, and Tammy



Hearts Willing: September 2024

Hearts Willing is hosting a picnic-style “Welcome Dinner” on Wednesday, September 25 at 6:30 p.m. for church members and friends interested in the programs and service projects planned for this year. The dinner menu features a veggie appetizer, baked ham, sliced pineapple, homemade baked beans, coleslaw, and brownies with ice cream. The cost is \$5.00 per person which can be paid at the door. Reservations, by Sunday, September 22, may be made by signing up in Fellowship Hall or by contacting the Church Office at 413-267.3312 or office@firstchurchmonson.org.



Thursday, September 26, Hearts Willing is hosting Main Street Tavern Night starting at 4 p.m. We will be holding a fall-themed raffle. We will provide a gift certificate and a fall plant. Donations of small items like a scented candle, autumn décor, and seasonal foods would be appreciated to complete the raffle basket.

Let's Eat breakfast returns on Sunday, September 15th and continues on the third Sunday of the month, from 8 to 9:45 a.m. We offer a full hot and cold buffet with your favorites: scrambled eggs, our signature home fries, quiche of the day, pancakes with real maple syrup, lots of bacon, and coffee, tea, cocoa and juice. There will be fresh fruit and yogurt too! A free will donation is welcomed.



As a service project for this fall, Hearts Willing will be assembling Church World Service (CWS) Period Packs at our November meeting. “Many of our neighbors live in period poverty – lacking access to necessary feminine care supplies. During the menstrual cycle, these hygiene materials are especially important to healthy practices. Not having supplies like sanitary napkins, tampons, wipes, and disposable plastic bags can create challenges that lead to unsafe and unsanitary conditions. The CWS Period Pack gives women and girls the essentials they need to feel clean, be healthy, and live with dignity during the menstrual cycle.” CWS Period Packs are a new addition to CWS relief supplies; they are distributed both nationally and globally as needs arise.

Hearts Willing is accepting donations of the following items:

- Tampons, unscented, regular absorbency
- Tampons, unscented, super absorbency
- Sanitary napkins, unscented, long super ultra-thin
- Wet Ones, travel pack
- Flushable wipes, unscented, 42 count package

Collection boxes are located in the narthex and Fellowship Hall. Completed packs will be brought to the Feeding hills Congregational Church for shipment to the Church World Service distribution site. We appreciate your generosity in helping us with this service project!

World Communion Sunday is held on the first Sunday of October. For more than eight decades, since 1936, it has served as a reminder that Christians around the globe share same meal in remembrance of Jesus.



During the month of August, Kiel Krommer presented the music of French composers as a prelude and/or postlude each Sunday. Featured composers were Langlais, Gounod, Guilmant, Faure and Vierne. The congregations enjoyed this special music, especially the Carillon De Westminster by Louis Vierne (1870-1937) which Kiel played as a postlude on the last Sunday in August.

The Music Committee would like to thank everyone for supporting the raffle in memory of Priscilla Martin. Priscilla was a longtime supporter of the First Church music program as a soloist and as founder of the Music Committee. Tickets were sold at the Taizé service in April and the Wings of Song concert in May. A total of \$500 was added to the Eva Farr Fund and will be used to support maintenance needs for the historic Johnson & Son Organ, Opus 781, 1892.

On September 27, 2024, the Reed Historical Organ Society's Estey Fest will be coming to First Church to enjoy the sounds of our organ. Kiel will give a demonstration and Bill Czelusniak will take the group on a tour of the "pipes" and give a historical presentation to enlighten the guests. The Music Committee will be serving a luncheon at noon to at least 100 people. Help is needed for preparation, serving, and clean up. If you can help on September 26th or 27th, please contact the Office at 413.267.3312 or office@firstchurchmonson.org.

According to Bill Czelusniak of Czelusniak et Dugal, Inc., our organ is in need of maintenance in addition to being tuned on a regular basis. Specifically, the pipes of the Swell Division need a thorough cleaning. There is significant dust and dirt which permeated the pipes due to the work which was done in the sanctuary after the tornado and after the initial cleaning of the pipes. The organ is clean with the exception of 12 ranks of flue pipes, i.e. two stopped wood ranks and III Cornet mixture stop as well as the surrounding and supporting wood work. This will involve evacuating and then replacing the pipes to the "tune" of \$48,000. The Music Committee will submit an application to the Community Preservation Committee asking for a grant to assist in this work. That committee has thanked us for being faithful stewards of our organ, a historic resource of the Monson community.



We know you love to sing, so we are inviting you to join our adult choir. Add your voice to the angels who lead our hymns, sing our anthems and introits, and embrace the power of music in worship. Choir rehearsals are Thursday evenings from 6:30 until 8 p.m. in the Julia Sprague Chapel upstairs under the direction of Kiel Krommer, Director of Music Ministries at First Church. We hope you will take this opportunity to use your talent to enrich our worship through song. There is no need to audition or sign up, just come.

United Church of Christ Special Offering: Neighbors in Need

Neighbors in Need (NIN) is a special mission offering of the United Church of Christ that supports ministries of justice and compassion in the United States.

In 2024, the Neighbors in Need theme is “Mental Health Justice For All!” In 2015, the General Synod of the United Church of Christ (UCC) passed a resolution to become **WISE** (**W**elcoming, **I**nclusive, **S**upportive, and **E**ngaged) for mental health.

A just world for all is a world where human rights and well-being for people with mental health challenges are respected, no matter who you are or where you are in life’s mental health journey.

On World Communion Sunday, October 6, we will be collecting for the UCC Neighbors in Need special offering.

Summerfest 2024

First Church has had a strawberry shortcake booth at every Summerfest since 1995. This year was quite successful. We made \$2,205, thanks to the efforts of many people! Trish, Pastor Jack Kraaz, Judy, Crystal, Keith, Roy & Lyle, Donna, and Jean donated money for the purchase of supplies. Suzanne donated the fees for both booths and the popcorn for the fireworks. Carolyn donated the biscuit mix; she, Judy, and Linda made delicious biscuits for the event. Mike and Elaine bought the strawberry mixture, paying for half of it.

On July 4, Summerfest was back on Main Street. Our booth in front of Adams was in a great location, but the crowds were thin, perhaps due to the quality of the vendors. We had a steady stream of customers but not as many as we had hoped.

On the morning of the 4th, Chris and Kevin helped Doug & Suzanne set up the booth. Roseann & Nick, Janice, Mary, Joseph, Sarah, Carolyn, and Trish & her granddaughters made and sold strawberry shortcake throughout the day. Suzanne & Doug took everything back to the church at the end of the day and washed coolers, bins, etc.; leftovers were repackaged. On Sunday, Suzanne sold biscuits, berries, and whipped cream after church.

David spearheaded the parking of cars in our lot prior to the parade on the 4th. Working with Nashim, Joseph, Chris, and Jean, he raised over \$700 in two hours!

The fireworks were rained out on June 22 and 23, but they were held on July 13 under cooperative skies. Due to a prior commitment, Doug & Suzanne were not able to set up the booth, but they organized everything in Fellowship Hall for Roseann & Nick and Gary to take up to Quarry Hill School. Gary provided the generator, courtesy of Dave Ervin. David, Joseph, Laurie, Linda, and Matthew sold popcorn as fast as they could make it and sold out every beverage. Gary brought everything back to the church after the fireworks. Doug & Suzanne picked up everything on Monday to clean and store for next year. Profit was \$526, the most a fireworks booth has ever made.

Many thanks to all who helped to make this fundraiser a great success!

- Suzanne