

The Messenger

November - December 2024

The First Church of Monson, Congregational/UCC

5 High Street, Monson MA 01057

413-267-3312

office@firstchurchmonson.org

www.firstchurchmonson.org

www.facebook.com/firstchurchmonson

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
November - December Happenings at First Church**

(Most events will be held at First Church Monson, unless otherwise noted*. All are open to the public. For additional information, please see our website**.)

Sundays, starting November 3 – Community Choir for Youth

11:45 a.m. to 12:45 p.m. ~ Open to youth in grades 6 to 12

Professional directors**

Learn, sing, be creative, have fun, and perform!

Sunday, Nov. 17, 8 to 9:45 a.m. – Let's Eat Breakfast

Full breakfast served. Free will donation appreciated but not necessary.

Friday, Dec. 6, 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. - Youth United

Faith-based community group for youth in grades 4 to 12

Free event offering social time and fun activities

*Group meets the third Friday of each month at Saint Patrick's, Monson.

Saturday, Dec. 7 – Time TBD - Breakfast with Santa**

Free continental breakfast ~ Photo ops with Santa and Mrs. Claus

Good food, seasonal crafts, story time with The Grinch

Bring an unwrapped toy for Jess Miller's drive for foster kids.

Sunday, Dec. 8 at 2 p.m., "Winter Wonderland" Concert

Enjoy singing by the Sweet Adelines, an all-female chorus.

Admission: \$5.00 ~ Reception following the concert

Sunday, Dec. 17, 8 to 9:45 a.m. – Let's Eat Breakfast

Full breakfast served. Free will donation appreciated but not necessary.

Sunday, Dec.15 at 3 p.m. – Carol Sing and Seasonal Music

*Silver Street Chapel, 230 Silver Street, Monson

No admission charge ~ Refreshments will be available.

**For additional info please see www.firstchurchmonson.org

Settled Pastor Search Committee News



Good News! Our completed Church Profile has been forwarded to the Southern New England Conference and approved. The conference has now sent out our Profile so that any UCC pastor who is interested in serving at First Church may apply. We have already received three resumes and are currently making plans to interview the applicants. During the last week of October, the Search Committee will meet with Terry Yasuko Ogawa, our Area Conference Minister, regarding these last stages of the search.

Throughout writing the Church's Profile and forming the interview questions, the Committee has been thankful for the contributions made by our church family during the in-home meetings and on the posters in the Fellowship Room those many months ago. Your thoughts and ideas have been the basis of the Church Profile and will have a direct influence during the interview process. Thank you for your help. Please continue to be patient as it may still be some time before we find the right pastor for First Church; continue to pray for our church, for this committee, and for those submitting resumes to First Church.

Your Pastoral Search Committee: Lisa, Elaine, Laurie, Roy, Keith, Deb, David, Judith, and Christian

Special Luncheon on Stewardship Sunday



All are invited to attend a soup, salad, and bread luncheon following the worship service on Stewardship Sunday, November 10, 2024. Members of the Stewardship Committee and Church Council will provide the food. Three different soups and a variety of different breads will be available. Assorted desserts are also on the menu! Please join us.

What exactly is Financial Stewardship?

First Church of Monson is part of the United Church of Christ (UCC). The UCC is composed of several Protestant denominations, one of which is Congregational. Our church is self-sustaining, meaning that we receive no monetary funding from other sources within the UCC. Our budget is supported by our members and friends. We generate some funds in the form of interest from trust funds and investments, fundraising efforts, and cell tower rental space, but a significant amount of the funds needed to maintain the building, provide programs and missions, and pay salaries comes directly from voluntary gifts from members and friends. We call these gifts pledges and donations.

The budget for 2025 must be voted on at the Annual Meeting of covenant members in February. To get there, the Stewardship Committee works with all boards and committees and the treasurer to develop a balanced budget in 2024 that can be presented at that meeting. The most important part of this is pledging. Knowing the total pledges and donation amounts, the committee can then see what funds will be promised for the coming year and budget accordingly.

We strongly encourage all members and friends to prayerfully and carefully make a pledge for the coming year. In mid-October, all members and friends received a letter and pledge card in the mail. Additional letters and pledge cards will be available in the Narthex and in the Fellowship Room. Please bring your completed pledge cards to church on November 10, 2024, Stewardship Sunday. Pledge cards may also be mailed to the church office at 5 High St., Monson, MA. Thank you to all who have pledged generously in the past. If you have any questions about Stewardship or pledging, please see a member of the Stewardship Committee.

We look forward to seeing you on November 10th.

In love and friendship,

Your Stewardship Committee, Linda, Laurie, Carolyn, Dan, and Pastor Jack



Special Music

A very special musical event is coming to First Church! Millennium Magic Sweet Adelines Chorus will perform in our sanctuary at 2 p.m. on Sunday, December 8th. The concert features a Winter Wonderland theme. A cookies and punch reception will follow the concert in Fellowship Hall. The cost is a \$5.00 donation at the door.

The Millennium Magic of Sturbridge is only one group of a larger international community known as Sweet Adelines. The Sweet Adelines are a group of women who love to sing. They are dedicated to preserving the unique sound of a capella barbershop harmony. The Millennium Magic Sweet Adelines traveled all over the USA to participate in competitions and have won several honors for their singing. They love to perform and relate to the audience. In fact, after the concert, everyone will have an opportunity to “meet and greet” the performers and learn more about their organization. They are an inspiration to those aspiring to continue our wonderful vocal tradition and special type of harmony.

This program is supported in part by a grant from the Monson Cultural Council, a local agency which is supported by the Massachusetts Cultural Council, a state agency.

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



Loaves and Fishes Coordinators Give Thanks

As we enter the season of Thanksgiving, we would like to thank the members and friends of First Church who prepare meals to be shared through Springfield's Open Pantry Community Services Loaves and Fishes program. The only requirement to have a place at the table is the desire to eat a good meal. No one is turned away.

You can be involved in the Loaves and Fishes program by preparing a main dish casserole or three pounds of cooked carrots. If you opt to make a casserole, we will give you a casserole pan and a recipe. You buy the ingredients and bring the finished casserole to First Church the Sunday before our serving date. To accommodate busy schedules, you can make the casserole or carrots ahead of time and put the item in the church freezer. Just let the coordinators know that the items are in the freezer so we can get them defrosted in time for bringing down to South Congregational Church.

You can also be involved by going to South Congregational Church and helping to serve the meal. We usually travel together from First Church, but servers sometimes meet us at South Congregational at 4 p.m. because that works best in their schedules.

If you are interested in being a part of this program or would like to know more about it contact the Church Office at 413-267-3312 or office@firstchurchmonson.org.

This January will mark 33 years of involvement in the Loaves and Fishes program. That adds up to over 3,000 casseroles, more than 5,000 pounds of carrots and approximately 1,400 pounds of salad ingredients. Wow! You sure have been busy. Wow! We sure have been blessed. Because of you, countless people have been fed.

Thank you,

Loaves and Fishes Coordinators, Trish and Crystal

Thursday, November 21, the trustees are hosting Main Street Tavern Night starting at 4 p.m. There will be holding a Thanksgiving -themed raffle. Church Council is hosting the December tavern night.

Greening of the Church



Greening is the decorating of the church for the seasons of Advent and Christmas. Decorations include an Advent wreath, other small wreaths, garlands, and Christmas trees. The greens symbolize hope, a new life through Jesus.

Greening will be on Sunday, November 24 after the worship service; there are plenty of things to be done and not everyone has to climb a ladder.

The more helping hands, the faster we complete these tasks:

- Bringing boxes down from storage and ladders up (may be done earlier)
- Ironing ribbons and decorating the wreaths
- Hanging the garlands and wreaths
- Setting up the pre-lit trees in the choir area
- Decorating the garlands and trees
- Ironing and hanging the banners
- Testing lights for the window decorations
- Arranging the window decorations
- Setting up crèche in narthex (Baby Jesus is added Christmas Eve.)

Please plan to stay after the worship service to help. Any time you can give would be appreciated!

The Mitten Tree

We will be setting up the Mitten Tree in the narthex for Advent. We are hoping to cover the tree in mittens, gloves, hats, and scarves for men, women and children in need. The items will be delivered to the Springfield Rescue Mission after Christmas. We hope you will support this important mission to keep those in need warm this winter.



Starting on Sunday, November 3rd, the First Congregational Church of Monson is hosting "Community Choir" for youth grades 6 to 12. Participants will have five to six performance opportunities during the year, including an end of the year showcase performance in May. This isn't just any choir. Alison Weber (Youth Music Director) and Erin Wallace (Assistant) strive to inspire and empower participants through relevant, current, and positive music. Participants do not need to have any musical background. Learning basics is built into the program. "We have a chance to be creative and offer a unique opportunity for kids' voices to be heard. We really want the kids to be a part of the creative process and to help build beautiful moments for listeners." states Wallace.

To register or ask questions about this program, please call or email Erin at the First Church Office at 413-267-3312 or office@firstchurchmonson.org . You can also register using the link <https://forms.gle/sxXaWhGysKLx591z9>. On-going regular rehearsals are Sundays from 11:45 a.m. to 12:45 p.m. Participants will receive a schedule with performance dates at the first rehearsal.

Let's Eat breakfast 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 appreciated but not necessary.

Hearts Willing

November 20, 2024

7 p.m.

Outreach Night: Service Project & Cards



Service project ~ Assemble Period Packs for Church World Service

"Filled with hope. Packed with Love"

Outreach project ~ Write Thanksgiving cards to homebound friends.

"There's no better compass than compassion." -Amanda Gorman

December 18, 2024

6:30 p.m.

Christmas Social

Potluck: Appetizers and Desserts

Please bring an appetizer or dessert to share.

Sign-up sheets will be in the Fellowship Room.

Beverages will be provided.

Hostesses: Program Committee



If you are able, please bring a donation of non-perishable food for Monson Open Pantry.

Thank you!

Hearts Willing will host a **bake sale** on Sunday, November 24, 2024. Assorted goodies for the fall season and Thanksgiving will be available in the Fellowship Room.

As a service project 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. 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.”

Thank you all for your donations of sanitary supplies; at this time, we have plenty. We could still use travel packs of Wet Ones and 42-count packs of unscented flushable wipes. Collection boxes are located in the narthex and Fellowship Hall. We are thankful for your ongoing generosity!



At October meeting of Hearts Willing, Sister Dorothy of the Sisters of Saint Joseph described the plight of the Winnebago Native Americans living in Northeast Nebraska. Years ago, the Winnebagos were forced to leave their ancestral land through a series of wars and treaties. The tribe was moved to this remote location where the soil is poor. Most members of the tribe live in poverty and crowded living conditions

We were able to provide Sister Dorothy with a tote full of crocheted hats, wraps, and booties made with love and care by Elaine and Charlotte. Deb blessed our gifts of warmth as they left First Church to start their journey to Nebraska (before winter arrives).

Sister Dorothy and Maureen marveled at our beautiful sanctuary and impressive organ. They were pleased to see our mission collections for Church World Service Clean-up Buckets and Period Packs. I wouldn't be a bit surprised to see them back at First Church sometime in the future.

Thank You from the Outreach Committee!

After Hurricane Helene devastated Florida, Georgia and North Carolina, Hurricane Milton battered the west coast of Florida, “Church World Service (CWS) has been on the ground responding to both disasters, providing critical supplies to the hardest-hit areas. Thanks to the generosity of donors who support these life-saving programs, CWS was able to respond quickly, delivering 4,196 Emergency Cleanup Buckets, 7,480 Hygiene Kits, 500 Menstrual Hygiene Kits, and 3,750 Blankets in Florida and North Carolina. These essential supplies help families start the long journey of recovery by providing them with basic tools to clean up their homes and restore a sense of normalcy.”

<https://cwsglobal.org/blog/hurricane-relief/>



On October 6, Outreach asked the congregation to donate items to fill ten Emergency Clean-up Buckets. The response was overwhelming! We reached out to the churches in the community and collected items and donations from the community on October 17th. Our brothers and sisters at the Unitarian Church and the Methodist Church were happy to donate. These contributions helped fill 3 more buckets for a total of 13! Pastor Jack blessed the filled buckets on November 3rd before they leave First Church. Jeff Lord has kindly offered to deliver the buckets to Meriden, CT where they will be distributed to areas in need.



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.

A Special Thank You

The Music Committee would like to thank all those who helped to make the Estey Reed Organ Fest event on September 27th a success. Over 100 people were served a luncheon at noon. This was followed by an organ concert given by our Director of Music Ministries, Kiel Krommer. Several Estey participants remained for much of the afternoon and chose to play the Johnson & Son organ. Allen Meyers, Chairperson of the Festival, wrote a note of gratitude to all of our participants. A donation from the proceeds will be made to the Eva Farr Organ Fund.

United Church of Christ Special Offering: Christmas Fund

On December 1st, we will have envelopes in the bulletins to collect for the 4th special offering of the UCC, The Christmas Fund for Veterans of the Cross. "The Christmas Fund has been caring for active and retired clergy and lay employees of the United Church of Christ for over 100 years, providing emergency grants, supplementation of small annuities and health premiums, and Christmas "Thank You" gift checks each December to our lower-income retirees. Your care and compassion will be especially appreciated by those servants of the church who are facing a time of need. Thank you!"