

Glad Tidings

*First Congregational Church of
West Brookfield
United Church of Christ
March 2025*



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From Our New Bridge Pastor

S-t-r-e-t-c-h Time

I look forward to “living on the stretch” with you in the coming months!

I come to share a time of Bridge Ministry with First Congregational Church in what I hope and pray might be the final months of your search for a Designated Term Pastor. You have been stretching yourselves for some time now in a self-study and search process; I share your eagerness to be in the final stretch.

I also happen to be coming to work and walk with you right as we enter Lent. “Lent” literally means “lengthening.” It’s God’s little springtime, calling us to live on the stretch. Springtime is hopeful and creative, and has its glimpses of beauty. But it is also dirty and messy, chaotic and uncertain—you just never know how long you’ll have to wait for the new life to spring forth. The forty days of Lent will offer us a window through which we can glimpse change—change of heart, change of perspective, change of focus—so that new life might come to birth in us, and Easter’s resurrection might be found in us. Lent’s jumbled, chaotic journey doesn’t last forever. New life will come to birth, and soon an empty tomb will call us to celebrate the new life that each and all of us are given.

And, although my presence with you will last a bit longer (four-or-so months), your new journey with a long term pastorate will soon come to birth!

In the meantime, here are a few snapshots of the person who will be supporting your spiritual lives and journey of following Jesus in the coming months:

In one July week three-and-a-half years ago, I retired as Settled Pastor of the First Congregational Church (UCC) of River Edge, NJ, married my wonderful partner, Betty (Hogan) on Saturday, and we moved to retirement in Haddam, CT on Tuesday. We are active folks in retirement, enjoying much kayaking, road biking and hiking, along with some part-time work. Betty is a Rosarian at Elizabeth Park Rose Gardens in Hartford; I serve as Chaplain to all retired Reformed Church in America clergy living in New England.

My ordination is in the Reformed Church in America (RCA), rather unknown in New England, but a Formula of Agreement partner with the UCC, ELCA and PCUSA. For forty-some years I served mostly RCA congregations in New Jersey and Michigan, as well as a decade as adjunct faculty at New Brunswick Theological Seminary on the Rutgers campus, teaching worship and church history courses. My childhood was in small-town Wisconsin; early adulthood and education was in West Michigan. Mid-career I was energized by a further graduate degree in liturgical studies at the University of Notre Dame.

We make frequent trips to the Virginia suburbs of Washington, D.C., where my two daughters and their families live. My daughters work in the private sector, their husbands work with federal agencies. My two elementary school age granddaughters are a joy, and I am coming to know my daughter’s two late-teen (recently acquired!) step-children.

We also are much engaged with Betty's New Jersey daughter, son-in-law and three elementary age grandchildren; as well as her son in NJ, and daughter in upstate New York.

I understand my limited role with you to be one of fostering your worship and prayer, providing pastoral care and counsel, and giving some administrative advice and support. I will be on site one or, at most, two days a week. At other times I will be physically two hours away, but in an emergency, or in critical need or counsel, I am available (preferably) by phone or text at (201) 390-5548, or by email at dtebeest109@gmail.com.

See you on the stretch!
(The Rev.) Dennis TeBeest

Ash Wednesday

This week, on Ash Wednesday, all are invited to enter Lent by stopping in at George Whitefield UMC anytime from 3:00 pm - 6:00 pm. This will be an unstructured service using Visio Divina (Latin for "divine seeing"). Visio Divina is a method of praying with art or visual images. Written reflections from Pastor Sandy Dam and our Bridge Pastor Dennis TeBeest will be available. Please enjoy the images from the Hubble telescope, set to music, as you contemplate God and His love for us and use the written meditations as you choose.

You are welcome to sit and pray and come forward to receive the anointing of ashes from one of the pastors whenever the Spirit moves you. The symbol will be in the shape of a cross, and you can choose to have it placed on your forehead or on your hand.

Come for a moment, or as long as you would like, to find yourself on a path of hope in God, and ready to practice the disciplines of the journey.

From our History Committee: Exploring the Land of Jesus

On Wednesday, March 5, Christians around our world will begin to observe Lent. It is a time when many of us Christians focus on learning more about Jesus' life in ancient Israel in order to deepen our understanding of his life and sacrifice and their great significance for our lives. To help you in such a journey, I'll share with you a journal I've written about the pilgrimage to Israel that Chris and I made with parishioners from our Falmouth, MA, church in 1993. Spending more than a week in Israel, we were able to visit a number of the sites that have long been associated with Jesus' life, death, and resurrection.

I compiled this journal in 1993. But in 2024, I revised it significantly, added many color pictures to it, and uploaded it to Archive.org with a Creative Commons license so others could readily access it. Here is a link to it:

<https://archive.org/details/exploring-the-land-of-jesus-2024-showalter>

Here are some sites [and beginning journal page numbers] you might wish to view:

- ~ The Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem is built over a cave, the Grotto of the Nativity, where Jesus is thought to have been born. [30]
- ~ The current "Star of Bethlehem" in the floor of that Grotto replaced the previous one that was stolen in 1847 and became one of the causes of the Crimean War (1853-56) [31]
- ~ Luke's Gospel tells us that after Jesus was born, his mother "laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn." What did that manger likely look like? [19]
- ~ Jesus was baptized in the Jordan River. What does that river look like now? [13]
- ~ Jesus' disciple Peter is thought to have lived in Capernaum beside the Sea of Galilee. What remains now of Peter's supposed house there? [7]
- ~ What did the Temple in Jerusalem possibly look like in the time of Jesus and where was the rock known as Golgotha/Calvary, which Jesus was crucified on? [27]

- ~ What and where are the 14 Stations of the Cross in Jerusalem, which Christian pilgrims have walked along over the centuries in their faith journeys? [70]
- ~ Where do scholars believe Golgotha/Calvary is in our modern day? [80] And how were Chris and I able to touch and feel that limestone rock which has been considered so significant by so many people down through the centuries? [86]
- ~ What accidentally discovered piece of archaeological evidence indicates that Pontius Pilate did, in fact, exist? [23]
- ~ Where is the grave of Jesus, according to tradition and many modern scholars? [88] And where else have some Protestants believed his grave to be, perhaps, in part, because Protestant-led worship services have not been allowed at that traditional gravesite? [109]
- ~ Where on the shores of the Sea of Galilee is the risen Christ thought to have appeared to his disciples after they had been out fishing all night, but without catching anything? (John 21:6-16) And where, nearby, is Jesus thought to have miraculously fed the 5,000? (Matthew 14:13-21) [11]

In addition to visiting noted Christian sites, we also had the very meaningful experience of visiting Yad Vashem, the memorial in Israel to the six million people of the Jewish faith who were killed during the Holocaust in World War II. [98]

Doug Showalter, Church Historian

More from our History Committee: Reflections on President's Day

This article is essentially a repeat, with some slight modifications and one addition, to one written in November 2020, but it seems fitting this President's Day, 2025 to reissue it:

In 1796, having devoted most of his adult life to the creation of a new nation, the United States of America, and having served two consecutive four-year terms as its first President, George Washington announced his retirement from public life in a document which has come to be known as the "Farewell Address". In it he offered a number of warnings and pieces of advice to the newly created democracy, and the following are two of them:

"Beware of Political Party

Let me warn you in the most solemn manner against the baneful effects of party generally. The alternate domination of one faction over another, sharpened by the spirit of revenge natural to party dissension, is in itself a frightful despotism. The disorders and miseries which result gradually incline the minds of men to seek security and repose in the absolute power of an individual; and sooner or later the chief of some prevailing faction, more able or more fortunate than his competitors, turns this disposition to the purposes of his own elevation, on the ruins of public liberty".

"Promote Education

"Promote, as an object of primary importance, institutions for the general diffusion of knowledge. In proportion as the structure of government gives force to public opinion, it is essential that public opinion should be enlightened".

David FitzGerald, Church Historian

From our Boards and Committees

Church Council - The next Church Council meeting will be held on Sunday, March 16th.

COFFEE TIME - The weekly coffee hours have been going great! We all love to fellowship with each other not to mention that the coffee and snacks are great too. In addition to weekly coffee time, on the last Sunday of each month a board or committee prepares treats for us. March will be brought to us by the Missions Committee. Thanks to all for the wonderful treats! Hope to see you at the next coffee hour.





Open And Affirming Exploration Committee

Please mark your calendars for Sunday, March 23rd to hear church member, Stephanie Beland share her testimonial about her family and their LGBTQ connections. During coffee hour of the same day, your Open and Affirming Exploration Committee will present a brief PBS documentary video on becoming an Open and Affirming Church in the United Church of Christ (UCC). Please plan

to join us as we continue our exploration of what it means to be an ONA church.

Your ONA Exploration Committee

Karen Murphy, Angela Carville, Doug Showalter, Pat Jackman, Stephanie Beland and Terry Hall

Designated Term Pastoral Search Committee

We are pleased to tell you that our search committee has been very busy. That is because we are currently in the process of conducting interviews with prospective candidates for our church's 3/4-time DTP position. We are looking for a candidate who will be a "good fit" for our congregation and serve it well as we move into the future.

Respectfully submitted,

Doug Showalter, Terry Hall, Linda Barron, Angela Carville

Parish Board

- The big room downstairs has been emptied so that "Project Sharing Cupboard" can be underway. The folks of the Sharing Cupboard are doing an incredible job with the transformation of the space. Be sure to head down and take a look! Thanks to all that are involved.
- Due to all the snowstorms that we have had, Michael Preston has been hired to handle the shoveling and sanding of the church walking areas. The goal of course is to keep things safe for those who enter and exit the building.
- As you may know by now, we have hired Dave Steltzer to work as the church's handyman to help with the upkeep of our aging building. Please keep in mind that Dave does not take directions from anyone EXCEPT the Parish Board. If you find something that needs to be addressed, please continue to write it in the book in the Parish Board mailbox.
- Also, it is very much appreciated that our Parish Board members and our handyman be allowed to have their time of worship on Sunday mornings - unless it is an emergency.

Board of Deacons

We said goodbye to Pastor Gina Colorio, (Pastor T) on Sunday, February 23rd. We have all enjoyed her and her children very much. We will have a new Bridge Pastor, Rev. Dennis TeBeest who will be joining us starting March 9th. We look forward to working with Pastor Dennis to set up our services for the season of Lent.

The service schedule containing, Liturgists, Deacon(s) and Coffee Hour volunteers has been posted on the bulletin board in the Fellowship Hall. If you should need to change your assigned date for any reason please try

to fill it with a replacement and mark it on the schedule. If you can't find a replacement, please contact Karen Murphy via kmurphy718@charter.net or text 508-801-7692 so that your spot can be covered.

Dismas Farm Dinners

We'll be hosting the gents from Dismas on Tuesday, March 11 at the church for a potluck dinner. Please come and join us for fellowship. If you are able to bring a dish (main/side/salad/ dessert) that would be lovely. Our dinner begins at 6 pm.

If you are able to make it to **the dinner please** let Deanna or Angela know what you are bringing. Let's make the gents feel welcome! They do enjoy coming and visiting with us.

Dismas Volunteers:

Deanna Randall - 413-436-7849 or drandall444@comcast.net
Millie Gushue - 413-436-7125; or gush00@comcast.net
Angela Carville - 508-347-1148 or angelacarville67@gmail.com

Thank you for your support of this important ministry!



Heather Cole – 8th

Pat Jackman – 13th

Dee Blanton – 16th

Wyatt St. Germain – 20th

Ginny Bailey – 26th

Juan Bacigalupi – 28th

Bev Anderson – 31st



Al & Deanna Randall – 4th

Richard & Linda Griffing – 13th

FCCWB has gone **Green!**

Please note that we are now using washable coffee cups, plates and utensils during coffee time. Our thanks to the Board of Deacons for bringing us this healthy-for-the-environment change! And please remember to recycle your bulletin each week. Thank you.

CONTACT INFORMATION FOR YOUR CHURCH OFFICERS & CHAIRS

Moderator: Dee Blanton – deebanton86@gmail.com

Deacon Chair: Karen Murphy – kmurphy718@charter.net

Parish Board Co-Chairs: Wally Hall – terryle56@yahoo.com & Mike Murphy – kmurphy718@charter.net

Treasurer – Mary Deotte – hombai@yahoo.com

Collector: Deanna Randall – drandall444@comcast.net

Clerk: Terry Hall – terryle56@yahoo.com

Church Phone: 508-867-7078

From Our Church Office

Church Secretary – Bonni Holmes – fccwbworship@gmail.com

Office Hours – Friday 9 am – 11 am

Please note – The *Glad Tidings* deadline for April is Sunday, **March 23rd**.

SOCIAL MEDIA CONNECTIONS

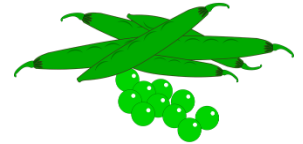
Website: westbrookfieldcongregationalucc.org

Facebook: First Congregational Church of West Brookfield, UCC

Instagram: Search @firstcongwestbrookfield

Sharing Cupboard

The Sharing Cupboard is in need of canned peas. Please leave your donations in the box that is available in our narthex. Thank you!



Did You Know?....

The following appeared in the newsletter of the Worcester Area Mission Society (WAMS). We thought it would be of interest to those of you who remember Fran Graveson, one of our bridge ministers from 2024.

We wish her well in her new position!


Dear Friends of WAMS,

As you may know, we have had the blessing of having Fran Graveson in the position of Migrant Project Coordinator for most of the last year. But Fran has had wonderful news that makes it necessary for her to leave WAMS. She has been called as the settled Pastor for the United Church of Christ Congregational, Boxborough. We are thrilled for her, but very sad for WAMS. She has done an amazing job, and we thank her from the bottom of our hearts.

New Church Secretary

Earlier in February the Parish Board joyfully welcomed Bonni Holmes of N. Brookfield to our church as our new church secretary. Bonni's work experience includes treasurer at Barre Congregational, treasurer at Hope Armenia Ministries in Worcester, and secretary and treasurer for Christ Memorial Church in N. Brookfield. She is currently serving in all of these capacities on a part-time basis. She is a member of N. Brookfield Congregational Church, is married and has home-schooled all 5 of their children. Bonni has been training with Terry over the past few weeks and will be ready to "go solo" soon! She will be working 5 hours per week for us with two of those hours being in the church office on Friday mornings from 9 am – 11 am. Please join Terry and the Parish Board by making her feel welcome in our church!

MARCH

<u>SUNDAY</u>	<u>MONDAY</u>	<u>TUESDAY</u>	<u>WEDNESDAY</u>	<u>THURSDAY</u>	<u>FRIDAY</u>	<u>SATURDAY</u>
						1
2 Worship 10 am Pastor Doug Showalter Parish Board Meeting Coffee & Fellowship	3	4	5 Ash Wednesday 3 pm-6pm GW Methodist Church Sharing Cupboard 10 – 11:30 am Farmer's Market 3 - 6	6 Sharing Cupboard 7 – 8 pm 9 ?	7	8
9 Worship 10 am Pastor Dennis TeBeest Deacon's Meeting Coffee & Fellowship	10	11 Dismas Farm Potluck dinner at the church 6 pm	12 Sharing Cupboard 10 – 11:30 am LAST Farmer's Market for this season! 3 - 6	13 Sharing Cupboard 7 – 8 pm	14	15
16 Worship 10 am Pastor Dennis TeBeest Church Council Coffee & Fellowship	17 St. Patrick's Day! 	18	19 Sharing Cupboard 10 – 11:30 am	20 Sharing Cupboard 7 – 8 pm	21	22
23 Worship 10 am Pastor Dennis <i>Glad Tidings Deadline</i> ONA Exploration Video & Meeting & Coffee	24	25	2 Sharing Cupboard 10 – 11:30 am	27 Sharing Cupboard 7 – 8 pm	28	29
30 Worship 10 am Pastor Dennis Coffee Hour: Missions Committee	31 Also on March 30th: Asparagus Festival Committee --	-- Planning Meeting				

The Five Items Below are Free to a new home.

1. Double Bed with frame and Maple Headboard and Footboard.

This bed is in exceptionally good condition and has had one owner for the past 50 years. At this time, we have no use for it so we are looking for a new home for someone who will enjoy it as much as we did.

2. Queen bed with metal frame, box spring and covered mattress. This bed served our guests for ten years, but it has not gotten much use recently. It is incredibly good condition and is looking for a new home.

3. Cradle with mattress and yellow bumper pads. Discovered in my father's attic in the early 1970s. He cleaned it up, fixed any areas that needed TLC and gave it to me for my first born in 1977. I used it for my three children at birth. As the children grew, they became too heavy for the cradle, therefore a wooden pin in the frame kept it from rocking because at times I just wanted it stationary as they slept. It was a perfect addition to our home.

4. Dining room/Kitchen table which seats six people comfortably. It comes with two leaves to extend the table to seat eight. It is in good condition despite a mark on the tabletop due to our dad who tried to use it as a work bench! OOPS! The table is robust, substantial, and built to last for an extended period. It comes with six chairs to match the table. The table is light brown (maple??) color.

5. Three feet by four 1/2 feet slate chalkboard from old schoolhouse. This is very heavy and will need extra hands for removal.

If you would like to enjoy these items in your home, please contact Debbie at 508-826-3503 or email to Debs619@gmail.com



Our Mission and Vision Statement: *We are a church where all are welcome to worship together, to share in fellowship and to grow spiritually in our journey with Christ. We value justice, diversity, and freedom of expression. We strive to serve our community and all God's creation and to spread the love of God to all people.*

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