

Glad Tidings

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



36 North Main Street, PO Box 371
West Brookfield, MA 01585 508-867-7078
Facebook: First Congregational Church of
West Brookfield, UCC
Website: westbrookfieldcongregationalucc.org

Dear Friends,

Martin Luther King, Jr. Day is coming up on January 20th. Bruce and I always try to mark it in some significant way. My dad was a friend of Rev. Dr. King. They went to school together at Boston University and my dad worked with Dr. King on civil rights matters when we lived in Alabama in the 1960s.

I remember one particular Easter Sunday in Montgomery, Alabama in 1965. It was just after the Selma March had dominated the news cycle, with images of both the exhilarated crowd of marchers and detractors spewing hate. During and after the March, crowds had been whipped into white, hot hate. Three people had been murdered because of their support for the March.

But it was different in our church. On that Easter Sunday, we experienced the first “kneel-in”, where members of black churches visited white congregations to see if they would be seated. AT that time, there were no multi-racial churches in Alabama in the 60s, so it was a radical action.

I was sitting in the pew with my sisters, dressed in my Easter bonnet, and my flowered Easter dress, and my white patent leather shoes. My father was in the pulpit and my mother was in the choir.

Suddenly there was rustling in the back of the church and five African American visitors were at the door. The ushers knew what to do. The church had been talking about this moment for a long time and decided to go against the intense, sometimes violent social pressure and welcome any visitor who came. The governing Board of the church had voted on it at the last meeting.

The visitors were politely shown to the front pew and were handed their bulletins. The shock and exhilaration were registered mutely on the faces of the parishioners. There was hardly a sound. I remember looking up to see my mother's face, flooded with tears and my father dabbing his eyes as he headed to the pulpit.

After the service was over, my dad was jubilant and expansive at Sunday dinner. Maybe this would be the beginning of a wave of love that crashed over us all. Maybe everything would change. But, looking back, we know it hasn't happened quite so quickly or easily. Nothing ever does. However, that moment of courage and audacity in our beloved congregation shaped my notion of what churches can be and do.

We at First Congregational Church, West Brookfield are small, and mighty. I hope and pray that we can be a haven of radical love and compassion in a world that desperately needs safe spaces.

Blessings to all, Beverly

Dear Friends:

Bruce and I are so grateful for the love shown to us since we've been part of the church. Your presence at the celebration this past Sunday was greatly appreciated. The cards with good wishes from so many of you, the delicious food and the time to share together were very meaningful. Thank you, too, for the kind gifts that we will always cherish, the First Congregational Church of West Brookfield Christmas ornaments (I didn't even know those existed.) and the West Brookfield town afghan.

We are so blessed to have the wonderful staff of Terry and Stephen, and so many dedicated volunteers.

It was a pleasure for us to be serving in the pastoral roles for this time. We continue to look forward to continuing our relationship with the church as active members.

Blessings,

Beverly and Bruce



WHITE CHRISTMAS IN W. BROOKFIELD

Thank you to all those that helped to make this a very successful event! Whether you donated something or came and spent some time to help run the show it made for a GREAT fun and profitable day for all.

Total profit was: \$2,942.00

From our Boards and Committees Church Council

The next Church Council meeting will be held on Sunday, January 12th.

Bridge Minister Search Committee

The Bridge Minister Search Committee continues to seek a suitable pastor to join us until our Designated Term Search Committee finds a more permanent person for our church. In January we will be joined by Pastor Gina Colorio for all 4 Sundays of the month. Please plan to help make Pastor Gina feel welcome in W. Brookfield!

As we continue to seek another person, we thank you for your patience.

Your Bridge Search Committee

Mary Deotte, Pat Jackman, Karen Murphy, Angela Carville and Terry Hall

Seeking a Projector Screen

Occasionally there is a need in our church for the use of a projector screen so that presentations from various groups can be shared. If you have a screen that is no longer of use to you, please consider donating it to the church.

Thank you.

Our Supply Pastor for January

Gina T Colorio prefers to be called Pastor T since T is for her middle name, Teresa, T is for the Cross, and T is for Jesus 'last word, τετέλεσται... it is finished!

Pastor T is a native of Worcester, Massachusetts, born to a Calabrese father and a Korcare mother. She has been schooled classically- Notre Dame Academy and Assumption College [both Roman Catholic], and Yale University, M-Div. and is the recipient of a Merrill Fellowship, Harvard University.

Pastor T was ordained by a little congregation in Auburn, MA. She is a contemplative at heart who shepherds others to ponder who Jesus is— grace focused!— and the impact of knowing you are forgiven! on healing, health and peace! This is the Good News Pastor T bestows!

She is married to David Purdy and together they have 19 children (and no more!) and nine grandchildren (and counting!). In Nelson Mandela's words: 'the keenest revelation into the soul of any society is manifested in the manner in which they treat their children.'

Pastor T's work is extensive with children/youth; families affected by HIV/AIDS; and in parish and hospital/hospice settings. She founded TetelMinistries which encompasses proclaiming the Good News of Jesus Christ; choc 🍓 cookies [profit to benefit the ministry]; and SacredSentenceS [prompted writing to quicken the writer's soul voice]. She volunteers at Gateways Academy as community liaison, and teacher of writing, history and critical thinking.

Pastor T is a basketball coach and referee, rows competitively in a coed eight sweep boat, roasts coffee beans, rides horses, and delights in animals and the out-of-doors, all things 'alternative' health, and elephant lore. She is part of the 'late deaf/hard of hearing' community and has recently been matched with "Mindy" her service dog who will be accompanying her to church.

We welcome Pastor T to W. Brookfield!



Open And Affirming Exploration Committee

Open And Affirming Exploration Committee – Sunday, January 19th

Mark your calendars for a special after church meeting on Sunday, January 19th for an open conversation about our Open and Affirming Exploration process. This will be an open forum where many questions will be asked and answered - by you! This is your opportunity to learn more about what it means to be an Open and Affirming church. We will be joined by ONA Committee member, Beverly Prestwood-Taylor and Kathie Carpenter a representative of the United Church of Christ's Open and Affirming Coalition. In addition to this gathering a member of our church will be sharing a personal testimonial during our service about her experiences with the LGBTQ community.

Questions? See any member of our committee. And again, mark your calendars so you won't miss this very informative gathering!



Your ONA Exploration Committee

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

Parish Board

The Parish Board hopes you had a very Merry Christmas and wishes you a Happy and Healthy New Year.

For your information the Farmer's Market is on Holiday until January 8th.

We continue to ask for your help with snow removal on the church sidewalks, steps and the handicap ramp. Please reach out to a Parish Board member if you are able to help with this winter chore.

We are happy to share the news that our church has received an annual donation from the Irving England Fund of \$10,000. Our thanks to the Irving England Fund for their generosity.

Remember if you see something that needs to be addressed by the Parish Board, **please write it in the book in our mailbox.** **DO NOT** approach a Parish Board member on Sunday mornings unless it is an emergency. Thank you for the consideration and respect of our Parish Board members' time of worship.

Designated Term Pastoral Search Committee

The following report was written by Search Committee Chairperson Doug Showalter for the Church Council. We thought it was interesting enough to share with all of you. Please let Doug know if you have any questions.

Our search committee continues to wait for additional ministerial profiles. We hope to receive some to review in the next couple of months or so as ministerial students moving toward ordination in the coming months and ordained ministers in our denomination begin to take steps to seek out a call to a new ministry in 2025.

As I write this on January 7, I see that currently 41 churches in our Southern New England Conference churches are seeking new clergy. Listed from the date they submitted their search profile to the Conference, those churches range from a submission on 3/10/2020 to the most recent submission on 12/09/2024. A submission going as far back as 2020 seems very unusual to me. I say that because the next earliest submission in that list is dated 6/23/2023.

In that list of 41 churches currently seeking ministers, our church is the 29th church in that list, given its search profile submission date of 6/07/2024. In other words, 12 churches appear in that list as having been searching longer than we have. However, you will recall that our church first submitted a search profile to the Conference on 1/26/2024, and that was for a 1/2-time position. Our more recent, current submission of 6/07/2024 (reflected in the current list) is for a 3/4-time position, as you know.

I find it interesting that of 41 churches seeking clergy now, 21 of them are offering part-time positions.

~ 2 are offering 1/4-time positions

~ 11 are offering 1/2-time positions

~ 8 are offering 3/4-time positions

In addition to our church, here are the locations of the other 7 churches currently offering 3/4-time positions (listed in the order they submitted their search profiles--earliest first):

~ Townsend, MA

~ Lunenburg, MA

[~ Our church]

~ North Adams, MA

~ Agawam, MA

~ Lynnfield, MA
~ Meriden, CT
~ West Hartford, CT

I thought you might find the above information of interest. I began reviewing the ministerial search lists of our Conference back in September of 2023, when our search committee was formed. Since then, that list seems to have had somewhere between 40-55 churches seeking clergy.

The current web page of the SNEUCC notes the following:

"The Conference comprises 570 churches, 1400 authorized ministers and 103,000 members."

So at present, it appears that a little over 7% of our Conference's churches are seeking clergy now through the above list.

In case of interest, I'll add here a link to a 2023 statistical review of the UCC, which appears on the UCC website.

<https://www.ucc.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/2023statisticalreport.viiwebUPDATED.pdf>

Our committee continues to wait patiently for profiles from prospective clergy seeking positions. We will continue to update the congregation with any news or progress as it becomes available. Thank you for your patience as we seek a suitable candidate for our church.

Your DTP Search Committee:

Angela Carville, Linda Barron, Terry Hall and Doug Showalter

Dismas Farm Dinners

Our Dismas Farm dinner will be a potluck on Tuesday, January 14, 2025, at the church, 6 pm. Please contact Deanna or Angela if you plan to attend. Donations of items for the meal would be most welcome.

Help us make the guests feel welcome!

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!

Coffee & Celebration!

Each month a different committee or board from our church offers a time of coffee and treats for all to enjoy. Coffee hour is held on the last Sunday of each month. Extra goodies are always welcome!

Coffee Time for January 26th: Music Committee



Board of Deacons

Our Advent Season celebrations were incredible, with the lighting of the Advent Wreath, the pageant and the candlelight service. Thank you to all that helped with the many parts of each service. It is always so much more enjoyable when we come together to celebrate the birth of Christ.

We would like to thank Beverly Prestwood-Taylor for being with us these past several months as our Bridge Minister as well as Bruce Prestwood-Taylor for filling in when Beverly wasn't available. They will both always be a part of our church family.

In January we look forward to worship with Pastor Gina Colorio, also referred to as "Pastor T". Please join the Board of Deacons as we welcome Pastor T to our Sunday services.

COVID 19 GUIDELINES: We ask that if you are not feeling well, or test positive for COVID please stay home and take care of yourself as well as your church family.

If you have questions, please reach out to a Deacon.

From Our Church Treasurer

Our New Heating System... By The Numbers

It has been a little over a year since we had our new heating system installed so we are now able to look at the electric and oil costs over 2024 and compare them to past years to see the financial impact of our new mini-splits.

Year	Electric Cost	kWH	Oil Cost	Total
2018	\$5,073	20,787	\$3,811	\$8,884
2019	\$4,621	19,682	\$3,377	\$7,998
2020	\$4,666	19,021	\$3,084	\$7,750
2021	\$5,230	20,348	\$3,353	\$8,583
2022	\$5,528	21,093	\$4,295	\$9,823
2023	\$5,024	18,907	\$2,614	\$7,738
2024	\$8,775	30,391	\$ 155	\$8,930

So at first glance, we see that we're using about 50% more electricity since we installed the new heating system. BUT... when you add in the cost of the heating oil and look at the total amount, we're right about the same as in past years. I found this interesting so I thought I'd share it with the congregation.

Mary Deotte
Treasurer

HAPPY
BIRTHDAY

January: 5th - Robert Bents 5th - Cheryl Howard 9th - Linda Daskowski 11th - Cory Spencer
31st - Kaitlyn & Justin Howard



January 18th - Leander and Martha Giguere

Thank you and Good-bye for now....

On Sunday, December 29th we said thank you and good-bye to our wonderful bridge minister, Rev. Dr. Beverly Prestwood-Taylor and her husband Rev. Bruce as they move on to embrace life in their new winter home in Philadelphia. Beverly has served as our bridge minister over the past few months and her service was very much appreciated. When Beverly wasn't available Sunday mornings were blessed with Bruce and always held delightful humorous moments! Although they will be sorely missed we wish them well and are looking forward to their return to W. Brookfield.



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 – Terry Hall – terryle56@yahoo.com

Office Hours – Friday 12 pm – 3 pm (Most Fridays, but not all. Call first – 508-867-7078)

Please note – The *Glad Tidings* deadline for February is Sunday, January 24th.

SOCIAL MEDIA CONNECTIONS

Website: westbrookfieldcongregationalucc.org

Facebook: First Congregational Church of West Brookfield, UCC

Instagram: Search @firstcongowestbrookfield



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.*

JANUARY

<u>SUNDAY</u>	<u>MONDAY</u>	<u>TUESDAY</u>	<u>WEDNESDAY</u>	<u>THURSDAY</u>	<u>FRIDAY</u>	<u>SATURDAY</u>
			1 Sharing Cupboard CLOSED HAPPY NEW YEAR!!	2 Sharing Cupboard 7 – 8 pm	3	4
5 Worship 10 am Pastor T Parish Board Meeting	6	7	8 Sharing Cupboard 10 – 11:30 am Farmer's Market 3 - 6	9 Sharing Cupboard 7 – 8 pm 9	10	11 Deacon's Meeting
12 Worship 10 am Pastor T Church Council	13	14 Dismas Farm Potluck dinner at the church 6 pm	15 Sharing Cupboard 10 – 11:30 am Farmer's Market 3 - 6	16 Sharing Cupboard 7 – 8 pm	17	18
19 Worship 10 am Pastor T ONA Meeting Glad Tidings Deadline	20 Martin Luther King Jr Day	21	22 Sharing Cupboard 10 – 11:30 am Farmer's Market 3 - 6	23 Sharing Cupboard 7 – 8 pm	24	25
26 Worship 10 am Pastor T Coffee Hour: Music Committee	27	28	29 Sharing Cupboard CLOSED – 5 TH Week Farmer's Market 3 - 6	30 Sharing Cupboard CLOSED – 5 th Week	31	

First Congregational Church of W. Brookfield, UCC
 PO Box 371
 36 N. Main St
 W. Brookfield, MA 01585
 January 2025