



# The Epistle

## September 2025

Dear Saints of God,

Life moves in seasons. From the slowed down summer to the hustle and bustle of September, from childhood through youth into adulthood and beyond, all things have seasons. Our church has seasons as well, seasons of growth, and seasons of decline, seasons of sorrow, seasons of joy, and seasons of renewal.

Isaiah 43:18-19 encourages us:

“Forget the former things; do not dwell on the past. See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it? I am making a way in the wilderness and streams in the wasteland.”

Our second year together will be a season of reflection, revisioning and rebirth. We will take stock of where we are, where we see ourselves going, and where we feel God is calling us. We will find our passions that motivate us, our skills that strengthen us, and our spiritual gifts that enegize us. We will explore our church and community’s needs while discerning God’s direction for us and our church's mission.

The importance of this season of self-reflection, collaboration, and discernment cannot be overstated. Nor can the opportunity we have before us. Nor can having faith that God has plans for us. Keep an eye out for announcements of events in the coming weeks and please join us for every opportunity.

With God's guidance, we will move together in this season of growth and renewal.

Yours in Christ,  
Pastor Russ

*... the whole body, joined and  
knit together ...*



*as each part is working properly,  
promotes the body's growth in  
building itself up in love.*

EPHESIANS 4:16, NRSV

## Upcoming Events



**Apple Pie Baking:** September 25th (Details page )



**Apple Pie and Raffle Ticket Sale:** September 26th (Details page )

**Blessing of the Animals:** October 5th at 1:30pm  
Details coming soon as we plan for this special service with  
St. Edward the Confessor Church.



**Christmas Swag Making:** November 27th - Details coming soon.

**Christmas Swag Sale:** November 28th - Details coming soon.



## Invitation: Book Reading and Discussion Group

Join Pastor Russ in a Fall Book Reading and Discussion Group.

DAYS: Wednesdays at 7 pm      DATES: Oct. 1, 8, 15, 22, 29

To spark our imagination around revitalization, we'll begin by reading *I Refuse to Lead a Dying Church (2nd Edition)* by Paul Nixon - a powerful call to embrace bold, life-giving ministry in today's post-Covid world.

Nixon reminds us that the Church's future isn't fading, it's full of possibility! Through six key choices, he challenges us to lead with courage, joy, and vision:

- Choosing life over death,
- Choosing community over isolation,
- Choosing fun over drudgery,
- Choosing boldness over mildness,
- Choosing frontier over fortress,
- Choosing now rather than later.



We will read the book together and discuss it in a 5-session discussion series where we will explore Nixon's ideas and imagine how it might apply to revitalizing our church. Books are available at Amazon (follow the QR code) \$15.34 for paperback and \$9.99 for Kindle version.

If you would to join in the discussion series, please email [admin@westcong.org](mailto:admin@westcong.org).



## Church School News



### WELCOME BACK!

Church School begins on Sept. 14th with  
the story of *Jonah and the Fish*.

What is the BIG deal with the BIG fish?

Come and find out!

Click [here](#) for registration form.

We received a letter of appreciation  
from Troop 33 for our support as their  
Charter Organization.



BSA Troop 33 Westminister  
Heart of New England Council  
Scouting America

June 12, 2025

First Congregational Church of Westminister  
138 Main Street  
Westminister, MA 01473



**Subject:** Thank you and Donation

Dear First Congregational Church of Westminister Community,

Westminister Scout BSA Troop 33 has been a Scout BSA Troop since 1923 and there have been many accomplished individuals that have come out of our program over the years. The 17 scouts within our Troop are very active and the program is teaching them to be good leaders, contributing citizens of their communities, environmentally responsible, outdoor enthusiasts and kind young men. This would not be possible without the generous support of the First Congregational Church of Westminister serving as our Charter Organization for the past couple of years.

Thank you from the bottom of our hearts to your church community! We can't thank your church community enough for supporting us and believing in us. Thank you for allowing us to use your space for our meetings, for allowing us to have camp-ins and fundraisers at your church and for providing us with space for storing our equipment. Thank you for the wonderful Scout Sunday service, and for the time of your church parishioners serving as our Charter Organization Executive and Charter Organization Representative.

We cannot thank your generous church family for welcoming and supporting our Troop as our Charter Organization. Enclosed please find a donation of \$50 from our Troop to your organization for your generosity to Westminister Scout BSA Troop 33. We know it is only a small donation, but we just wanted to show to you how much we appreciate all your church community does for our Troop.

Thank you!!!

Sincerely,

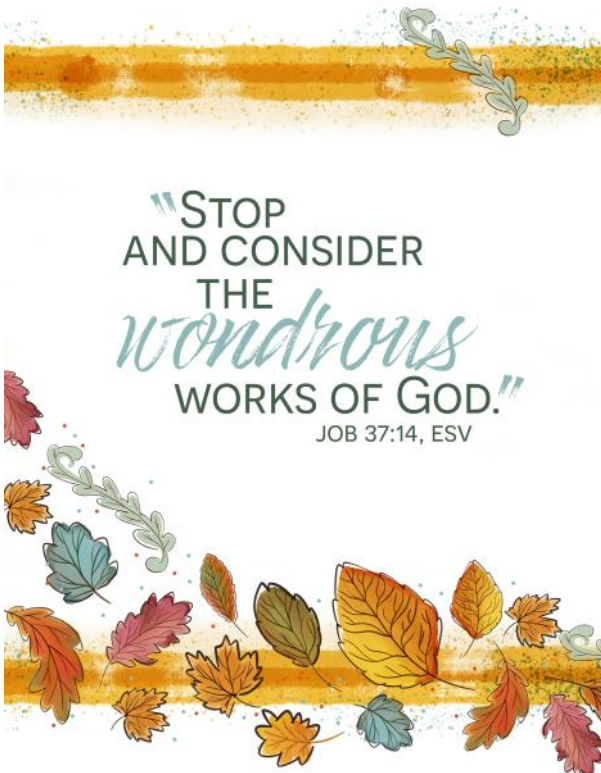
*Heather Layton*

Heather Layton  
Troop 33  
Committee Chair  
Westminstertroop33@gmail.com

*Cheryl Zadra*

Cheryl Zadra  
Troop 33  
Scoutmaster

CC: Matt McGee and John Fairbanks



### Prayer List



For our members, family and friends hospitalized, ill and in need of prayers, may God bless and watch over you:

Melissa C.	Bryan C.
Mary D.	Peter R.
Eunice A.	Paul (Denise's brother)
June and Brian C.	Ted G's brother
Jan G.	Gloria H.
Keith D.	Eddie H.
Tom M.	Kieman
Peter R.	Brody
Paul (Denise's brother)	Family of Theresa D.
Bob A.	All those dealing with health concerns
Lorna D.	
Steve C.	

#### "Prayer List"

If you added somebody to the prayer list, please email Pastor Russ:

[fccw.pastorruss@gmail.com](mailto:fccw.pastorruss@gmail.com)



### Bible Study

**Tuesdays at 11:00 AM**

Let's get together to study the readings for the upcoming Sunday service.

#### September 2

Jeremiah 18:1-11  
Philemon 1-21  
Luke 14:25-33

#### September 23

Jeremiah 32:1-3a, 6-15  
1 Timothy 6:6-19  
Luke 16:19-31

#### September 9

Jeremiah 4:11-12, 22-28  
1 Timothy 1:12-17  
Luke 15:1-10

#### September 30

Lamentations 1:1-6  
2 Timothy 1:1-14  
Luke 17:5-10

#### September 16

Jeremiah 8:18-9:1  
1 Timothy 2:1-7  
Luke 16:1-13

#### October 7, 2025

Jeremiah 29:1, 4-7  
2 Timothy 2:8-15  
Luke 17:11-19



### Office Hours

**Monday—Thursday**

Sunday, November 9th

10:45 AM

Community Room

**Church**  
**COUNCIL**

### Pastor Russ's office hours:

Wednesdays 1:00 PM - 3:00 PM

After hour meetings may be arranged upon request. For Pastoral Care Emergencies, please contact Pastor Russ directly at 774-764-1025.





## The Women's Fellowship: A Year in Review 2024-2025

*The mission of Women's Fellowship of the First Congregational Church of Westminster is to create opportunities for women to connect to God, church, community and each other through diverse programs, service and fellowship and by recognizing the gifts of all women of the church, to aid in the response of the material, spiritual and social needs of others.*

As we look to the coming church year, the Women's Fellowship has been underway planning activities. Part of this process is always a reflection on the previous year and a review of the programs that brought us together. In addition to welcoming our new pastor in the fall of 2024, we held another successful apple pie sale at the Farmer's Market in September.



Members of the congregation visited the Barre Cross in October, where the Ten Commandments come to life and the trees spell out a message visible only from above. Pathways lead visitors to quiet places for meditation and scriptures abound on surrounding stones, a place to see and feel God's majesty. Afterwards everyone gathered at Stone Cow, a 1,000 acre dairy



In October we also reorganized the kitchen – cupboards emptied, dishes washed, and decisions made. We were a small group and grateful for the help of Bob Ruberti and Sammi Dawley, who transported unwanted items to a local consignment store as a potential source of revenue.

December brought sixteen women together for lunch at Monty Tech. Our gathering was enhanced by our Christmas Mission Project -- the collection and donation of items for the Westminster Food Pantry. We more than filled a few car trunks, and we were happy that our new pastor stopped by to greet us. The new year opened in January with a presentation on world religions by Pastor Russ. Twenty members of First Congregational and another five or six individuals from local churches participated. What a wonderful learning opportunity this was, even more meaningful in today's world.

And then we were on to some great opportunities for creative expression. On a Saturday in March we met in Fellowship Hall to create Lenten crosses out of natural and found materials, and in April we tested our artistic skills in a painting activity led by Bob Ruberti. Amazingly, we each produced a “work of art” to take home.



A Couple of Our Lenten Crosses



Painting with Bob

May led us to Doyle Community Park in Leominster where we enjoyed a nice walk on a beautiful day followed by lunch together.



Doyle Community Park

In June thirteen of us gathered for dinner at the Blueprint Restaurant to celebrate another year of fellowship. What an evening of conversation and laughter we shared, made more enjoyable with Pastor Russ and Karen Reitter having joined us.



Dinner at the Blueprint Restaurant

The Women’s Fellowship was successful in maintaining our connection during this past year with interesting and well-attended programs. We look for the same in the months that follow. Our programs are open to all women of the church. Young and older alike, we always enjoy one another.

## Survey Says...

A few different surveys have been prepared to gather your thoughts and hear your voice on a variety of topics. Please be sure to watch your email for these upcoming mailings. Printed copies will always be available. Just stop by or call the office at 978-874-5790.



## Coffee and Fellowship Hour



Available slots are open to host our weekly coffee hour following Sunday worship.

Our long-time tradition has been to have coffee and fellowship after our Sunday service. We've recently had a few weeks where no one signed up to host coffee hour. Fellowship is never cancelled, but it's nice to have it with coffee and a snack! Please consider signing up to host a coffee hour. It doesn't need to be fancy, just offer a snack to enjoy with our fellow congregants. The sign-up sheet is located outside of the church office.



*You fed me when I was hungry.... whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me."*

(Matthew 25:40)

The Food Pantry is looking for someone to lead this critical community service.

For more information please call Dorcas Hurd at (978) 874-2350.



## Construction Update

Look at the brick they found in the old town hall!







### **Apple Pie Baking and Pie Sale**

For several years women of the church have gathered to bake apple pies that are sold at the Westminster Farmer's Market. The proceeds of the pie sales help to support the church and local missions.

You are invited to join in the fun as we peel apples, roll out crusts, mix up filling and watch to make sure no pies burn! While we do all this "work" we will also chat, laugh and get to know each other. Please join us on Thursday, September 25th any time between 9 am and 3 pm to help make 40 pies!

Help is also needed to sell the pies at the Farmer's Market on the following Friday, September 26th.

If you can help on either of these dates please call or text Sandi Thibodeau at 978-870-4160.



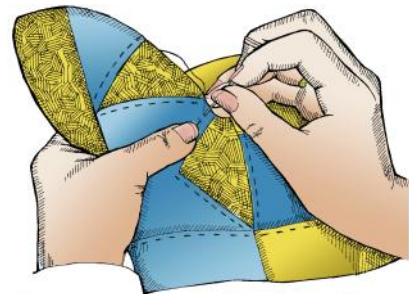
### **Quilt Raffle**

The Women's Fellowship is holding a raffle for a beautiful lap quilt created and donated by Jan Whittman from our congregation.

Tickets can be purchased, one/\$1 or five/\$3, at Coffee Hour, the Apple Pie Sale (September 26 Westminster Farmer's Market), and the Christmas Swag Sale (November 28 at the church).



**Get Your Tickets!**





## FROM THE HISTORY ROOM



For a while I have been curious about where the parsonage of Rev, Elisha Marsh, our first Pastor, had been located. Common sense told me it was probably somewhere in the Meetinghouse Hill (now Academy Hill) area. Our second Pastor, Asaph Rice's parsonage, was located on the site of the home of Clifton Maggs at 3 Foster Street. Parishioners would gather there to warm themselves up before the fire on cold days (remember there was no heat in the Meetinghouse) and to have meetings as it was only a few steps from the Meetinghouse. Cyrus Mann, our third Pastor's home was located to the left of the Town Pound and just across the Common from the Second Meetinghouse at what is now 6 Dawley Road. Sabbath School was held in that parsonage.

The answer came to me (I think) when I consulted my very worn Heywood History of Westminster. Rev. Marsh was given Lot 8 by the town fathers on which to build his parsonage. In looking at the map of Westminster in Heywood's History, Lot 8 appears to be the location of what is now 43 Academy Hill Road and owned by the Zephir family. The house was built by Marshall French in the 1950s and overlooks Meetinghouse Pond and Mt. Wachusett. I spoke with Marianne Zephir and she was unaware of the possibility of it being the site but now we are both interested in solving the question. Betsey Hannula and I have discussed it and are reasonably sure we are on the right track. Will keep you posted!

P.S. On a personal note, as a child during WWII, I lived with my parents in a duplex on the corner of Elliott and Bacon Streets. Sadie French, Marshall's mother, lived in the other side of the duplex. She became a second grandmother, and I loved her dearly. In my late teen years, I babysat for Marshall and Joyce's daughter in the home at 43 Academy Hill Rd.

Next month, an update on 87 Main Street, the Congregational Parsonage in the 1890s.

Historian, Deenie Burgess



We have so many opportunities for you to get involved! If you have yet to learn what each committee does, here is a general list of descriptions. If you would like to join a committee, contact Ellen Holmes at [eholmes.fccw.moderator@gmail.com](mailto:eholmes.fccw.moderator@gmail.com).

## OFFICERS

The **Church Council** is comprised of the Pastor, Moderator, Clerk, Treasurer, Mission Treasurer, Church Historian, CE Coordinator, and then a representative from Deacons, Trustees, CE Committee, Christian Outreach, Music, Generous Giving Ministry, Financial Advisory, Nominating, Pastor Parish Relations, and Welcoming.

The **Moderator** facilitates monthly Church Council meetings and the Annual Congregational Meeting. The Moderator is also well-versed in the church's bylaws and assists with their interpretation when requested by church committees.

The **Assistant Financial Receipts Clerk** fulfills the obligations of the Financial Receipts Clerk in his/her absence, which includes the collection and deposit of contributions made to the Church and keeping records of those monies.

## TRUSTEES

Trustees are a board of 6 members who manage the financial and business affairs of the church. In the words of one former Trustee, "You don't have to be a banker to successfully do this work; it is much the same as the way you manage expenses in your own home. If the church does not bring in as much revenue as our expenses, you do the same as you do at home: you brainstorm what to do about it, except here you get to do it with the help of a group."

## DEACONS

This group of 12 church members works together to assist the Pastor in the work of the church, including assistance with various aspects of the worship services and administration of Communion. Deacons perform their tasks along with at least one other person, so there is always support from the group. Deacons and the Pastor meet one evening each month.

## CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

The Christian Education Committee works with the Christian Education Coordinator to develop and periodically evaluate the educational ministry of the church.

## CHRISTIAN OUTREACH

The Christian Outreach Committee helps engage the congregation in furthering Christian insight and action in local, state, national and international communities and coordinates the gathering of contributions for those missions.

## MUSIC

Being a part of this 4-person committee includes collaboration with the Music Director and congregation to enhance the music ministry of the church.

## FINANCIAL ADVISORY

This committee consists of 3 members along with the chairperson of the Board of Trustees as an *ex-officio* member. The group meets quarterly to review/manage the Church's investments and endowment funds. It provides a quarterly report to the Trustees and an annual report to the congregation on the status of the investments, and reports on new bequests to the Church. This committee also coordinates the Planned Giving program.

## NOMINATING

This group is primarily active during the Fall of each year, as they prepare a list of recommended committee members for the ensuing year. The list of nominees is presented for approval at the annual congregational meeting each November.

## CHURCH LIBARIAN

This person serves a 2-year term and is responsible for the maintenance/oversight of the library of the church.

## WELCOMING

The Welcoming Committee helps to set the tone for visitors, although the work of this group goes beyond what happens with folks who walk in the door; it is an interface with the community. The welcoming committee meets each month to develop a variety of formats to let our town/community know who we are and to welcome them into our congregation.

## CONFERENCE DELEGATES

The delegates represent our church at the Southern New England Conference and Central Association meetings and report back to the Church.

## AUDIT

The Audit Committee is responsible for the audit of the Church's financial records (accounting documents, checkbooks, savings accounts, CD accounts, and other financial documents) by the end of the first quarter of the calendar year.

## PASTOR/PARISH RELATIONS

The Pastor-Parish Relations Committee meets with the Pastor with the purpose of maintaining open lines of communication between the minister and the members of the Congregation. The Pastor has two appointees, and the Church Council has two appointees, with the Vice Moderator serving as Chair.

## GENEROUS GIVING

This group works with Trustees to meet the financial needs of our church by educating the congregation on what is needed to accomplish our mission and to help our congregation see the value of giving. The committee provides organization for the annual Giving Campaign.

## MEMORIAL GIVING

This group works to administer the Memorial Fund, which serves as a memorial for deceased members and benefactors of the church. A member of the Committee acknowledges each contribution, and notice of the gift is sent to the deceased's family.





On Sunday August 24th we hosted Oakmont Regional High School student jazz band *Sixth Avenue Groove*. It was a great concert with some very talented stu-



Volunteers folded concert programs



Band members with their proud parents.



Women's Fellowship gathered flowers on Friday and arranged two altar bouquets for our September 7th worship service.



Annual mum sale is soon approaching. Watch for order forms coming soon.

The First Congregational Church  
of Westminster  
United Church of Christ  
138 Main Street • PO Box 477  
Westminster, MA 01473

The Epistle  
September 2025  
Phone: 978-874-5790  
Church office Email:  
[admin@westcong.org](mailto:admin@westcong.org)

Visit our Website: [www.westcong.org](http://www.westcong.org)

Don't Miss the

**DEADLINE!**

**September 22, 2025**

**For September  
Submissions**

Please email your articles to  
[admin@westcong.org](mailto:admin@westcong.org)

Lord, in my work — whether at a  
job, at home or in a service—

*help me*  
to do it with  
**purpose** and  
**peace.**

Keep me from being  
overwhelmed, and remind me  
that my worth is not in what I  
produce, but in

*who I am in You.*  
Amen.

