



The Epistle

November 2025

Dear Saints of God,

Grace and peace to you in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

After a season of deep prayer, reflection, and discernment, I write to share that I will be concluding my pastoral ministry with you on January 31, 2026. I believe I have fulfilled the ministry to which God called me in this place, and I now feel a gentle but persistent pull toward new settings where I may continue to serve and grow in faith.

This decision has not come lightly. It is rooted in a sense of completion and trust that the Spirit continues to guide both me and this congregation toward new horizons. I am grateful beyond words for the sacred journey we have shared—the joys, the challenges, the transformations, and the grace that has met us in every season.

As with any relationship, we have experienced moments of misstep and misunderstanding. These are not signs of failure, but of humanity. They remind us that covenantal life is not about perfection, but about perseverance, forgiveness, and love. Change, too, often brings resistance—not because we lack faith, but because we care deeply. I honor that resistance and invite us all to hold it gently, as part of the sacred work of transition.

The Apostle Paul writes in Romans 12:10–12:

“Be devoted to one another in love. Honor one another above yourselves. Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord. Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer.”

These words speak to the heart of covenantal living—resilient, loving, and rooted in God’s enduring presence.

In the coming weeks, I will work with leadership to ensure a thoughtful and faithful transition. I also invite you to a meeting on Nov 19, 2025 at 6:00 pm where we can gather to reflect, share, and bless one another as we prepare for what comes next.

With deep affection and abiding hope,

Pastor Russ

Upcoming Events



Honoring Our Veterans—Nov. 9

We will honor our Veteran's on Sunday November 9th with the Color Guard and candle lighting ceremony. If you know a veteran, please invite them so that we may show our appreciation for their service. If you have members in your family who have served in the armed forces who will not be able to attend, we encourage you to bring a photograph of them and share their story during coffee hour.



Church Council—Nov. 9

There will be a Church Council meeting will be on Sunday, November 9th at 10:45 AM in the Community Room.



New Church Members—Nov. 16

We will celebrate new members joining our congregation during our worship service on Sunday November 16th. Please join us to celebrate their membership membership at a special coffee hour.



Annual Election and Budget Adoption Meeting—Nov. 23

The annual election and budget adoption meeting will be held in the Sanctuary after worship on Sunday November 23, 2025.



Advent Workshop—Nov. 23

Please join us to kick off the Advent Season! Open to everyone in the church! Bring friends and family. (Details on page 5.)



Ecumenical Thanksgiving Service—Nov. 23

On Sunday November 23rd at 7:00pm, at St. Edward the Confessor, 10 Church St, Westminster, we will gather to celebrate all we have to be thankful for. The service will be led by Fr. Juan and Pastor Russ, and our choirs will join together in providing the worship music.



Christmas Swag Making—Nov. 28/ Sale Nov. 29

Feeling crafty? Join us in Covenant Hall to help make these beautiful holiday door swags. They will be on sale in front of the church on November 29th.

Church School News



In November, we begin the *Celebrate the Birth of Christ* unit. We remember and celebrate this story every year at this time.

God sent Jesus to teach us about God's love and to show us how God wants us to live.

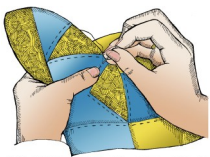


Do you love to sing?

There's always room for more voices in the choir! The choir rehearses Sunday mornings at 10:50 am-12:30 pm in the Sanctuary. For more information, contact Ken Richards, Director of Music at Music@westcong.org.

*Let us come into His presence with thanksgiving;
let us make a joyful noise to Him with songs of praise!*

Psalm 95:2



Quilt Raffle

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

Tickets can be purchased, one/\$1 or five/\$3, at Coffee Hour and at the Christmas Swag Sale on November 28th at the church.

The drawing will take place on
November 28th.





Outreach Committee

“For I was hungry, and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty, and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger, and you invited me in.”

Matthew 25:35

The Outreach Committee would like to begin our Thanksgiving Offering a few weeks early and start collecting food for the Food Pantry on the first Sunday in November. We feel it is important to have November be a Month of Giving, instead of just one Sunday. We will have baskets and decorated containers at the front entrance as well as the side door. Hopefully we can fill the shelves in our church and help those in need fill their pantries and cupboards.



The Christian Outreach Committee is kicking off our annual Giving Tree project and this year we have decided to partner with the local non-profit agency LUK to bring Christmas cheer to those in need. LUK's mission is to challenge and inspire youth, adults and families to realize their unique potential through community-based prevention, intervention, education, and support services.

You can grant a wish this holiday season! For families already stretching budgets to pay for rent, heat, and groceries, providing a holiday gift is not always possible. LUK collaborates with community organizations throughout north central Massachusetts to provide the youth they serve with gifts that they may not otherwise receive.

Starting November 23rd, there will be a giving tree in the Narthex with tags representing the wishes of some of those local children. We ask that you consider taking a tag and supplying either a toy or clothing item (size provided) for that child.

We are asking that all **purchases be made and dropped off at the church under the giving tree by Sunday December 14, 2025**, to allow for delivery ahead of Christmas. Please do not wrap the presents but do attach the tag to the gift so that we can ensure the correct items go to the correct children.

Thank you for your kindness and generosity,

The Christian Outreach Committee



Advent Workshop
Sunday November 23rd 2-4pm



Please join us to kick off the Advent Season!
Open to everyone in the church! Bring friends and family!

Decorate the Sanctuary
Craft stations
Cookie baking
Drum circle
Decorate a luminary bag
(bring a canned good to hold down the bag and donate to the food pantry)
Wrapping station
Refreshments

We need volunteers to help and people to bring food to share. If you can volunteer or bring something contact Sue Christ at church or at susan.christ@gmail.com.



For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of yourself more highly than you ought to think but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned. For as in one body we have many members and not all the members have the same function, so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually we are members one of another. ... (Romans 12:3-13)



You are hereby notified of the all church meeting of the
First Congregational Church of Westminster, UCC,
November 23, 2025 immediately following worship.

The two items to be voted on are the
Nominating Report/Election for 2026 and the
acceptance of the Budget for 2026.

Prayer List

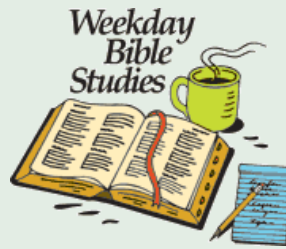


For our members, family and friends hospitalized, ill and in need of prayers, may God bless and watch over you:

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

"Prayer List"

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



Bible Study

Tuesdays at 11:00 AM

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

November 4

Job 19:23-27a
2 Thesalonians 2:1-5,
13-17
Luke 20:27-38

November 18

Jeremiah 23:1-6
Colossians 1:11-20
Luke 23:33-43

November 11

Malachi 4:1-2a
2 Thesalonians 3:6-13
Luke 21:5-19

November 25

Isaiah 2:1-5
Romans 13:11-14
Matthew 24:36-44



Office Hours

Monday—Thursday
Time: 9 am—noon



Pastor Russ's office hours:

Wednesdays 1:00 PM - 3:00 PM

At The Vice

After hour meetings may be arranged upon request. For

Pastoral Care Emergencies, please contact Pastor Russ directly at 774-764-1025.



Pointsettias in Church Chancel

We would like to decorate the Chancel of our church with a display of pointsettias in memory of or in honor of loved ones. For every \$10 donation, you can fill out a slip to recognize a friend or loved one. Order forms are available at the church and orders are due by November 30th. You may also contact the church office if you need help placing an order, admin@westcong.org or call 978-874-5790.

THE FIRST CONGREGATIONAL
CHURCH OF WESTMINSTER'S
WOMEN'S FELLOWSHIP

1st Annual Holiday Door Swag Sale

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 29TH | 10AM-2PM



CRAFTED WITH CARE,
FRESH GREENS,
ASSORTED RIBBONS AND
OTHER PRETTY THINGS!

COST: \$20 EACH

ALL PROCEEDS BENEFIT THE
WOMEN'S FELLOWSHIP TO
FULFILL THEIR MISSIONS
WITHIN THE CHURCH AND
COMMUNITY.

SALE LOCATED ON THE
FRONT STEPS OF THE
CHURCH (138 MAIN STREET,
WESTMINSTER)

**THANK YOU FOR YOUR
SUPPORT!**



Southern New England Conference
United Church of Christ
Living the Love & Justice of Jesus

Body Parts

by [Vicki Kemper](#) | published on Nov 9, 2025

Your body has many parts—limbs, organs, cells—but no matter how many parts you can name, you're still one body. It's exactly the same with Christ. ... I want you to think about how all this makes you more significant, not less. – 1 Corinthians 12:12 & 14 (MSG)

Your body, your church, your community, has many parts. And I want you to think about how all this makes you *less* significant, not more.

Yes, the standard interpretation of the body-of-Christ-with-many-parts metaphor is that all people are needed and all gifts are valued. We need every gift and each person to make this church thing work.

This is all true. But it has led some of us to conclude that we're indispensable. If we're a foot, for example, a beautiful head of hair will get us nowhere. If we're a collective, each of us has a critical part to play.

Yes, but perhaps not all the time.

When our eyes can't see, our ears increase their sensitivity. When an ankle is sprained, we devise workarounds. A toothache rarely incapacitates; the body manages to carry on.

And so it is with the body of Christ. If you, in your role, have a scheduling conflict or need a break, trust that the other parts of the body (read: people) will step up and fill in. Someone may discover a gift they didn't know they had. Other body parts will get stronger.

I recently skipped a major church event so I could do something else very important to me. The event succeeded without me, the world went on, and I returned refreshed and even more grateful for the amazing people I do church with.

Prayer

Body-building God, thank you for every person and the part they play, and for each person who works harder when another rests.



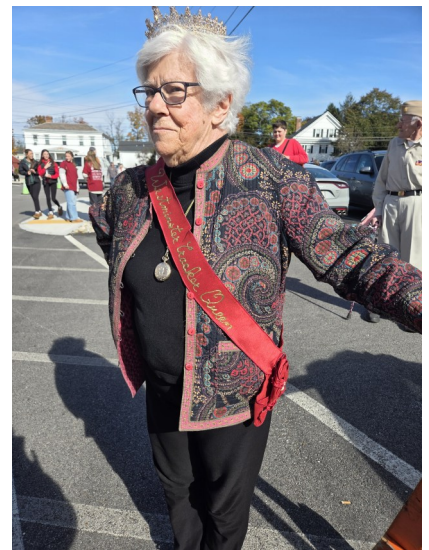
About the Author

Vicki Kemper is the Pastor of First Congregational, UCC, in Amherst, Massachusetts, and a spiritual director.

So wonderful to have pet owners from both congregations come to the Blessing of the Animals. All the animals were doubly blessed as Pastor Russ and Father Juan met each and every one.



Please see our very own member Nancy Sampson Honorary Queen of the Westminster Cracker Festival with WWII veteran and Honorary King 100 year old Hershel Jones.



It was a cold and windy Halloween, and we occasionally had to retrieve our sign blowing down the street, but we got to see smiles on the faces of so many kids. Thank you to everyone who donated candy for us to give out to the Trick-or-Treaters.

A review of our book discussion group,

I Refuse To Lead a Dying Church by Paul Nixon



In our first session we learned about the typical lifecycles of programs and church organizations. During our discussion, we considered where we are as a church on the typical lifecycle, the results of which can be seen in Fellowship Hall.

In our second session we discussed the characteristics of an apostle including “a clear personal experience of the risen Christ that has become the foundation for everything else one does in life”, “a clear, and often amazingly simple, sense of purpose”, “a keen awareness of the ways that organized religion often stops short of living out the Christian good news faithfully” and “the capacity to communicate one’s spiritual experience and vision effectively to others, so that they are persuaded to jump aboard the bandwagon.” We discussed the need to choose life and focus on the living spirit which sparks creativity and passion.

In our third session we discussed choosing Community over Isolation. We explored the neighborhoods we call home, the neighborhood of our church, and the opportunities to become more aware of the needs of both. We listed some of the community needs we see first-hand. We considered the importance of small groups and how they offer the greatest possibility of reaching more people. In our next discussion, we will explore the demographics of our town and neighboring towns to get a better understanding of the neighbors that this congregation serves.



Save the Date—December 6th at 5:00 pm

Get ready to spark some holiday magic! Join us as we light up Academy Hill and the Gazebo for a night full of cheer — with caroling, live music, cozy fire barrels, ooey-gooey s’mores, hot cocoa, cookies, and of course... a visit from Santa himself! A merry night of fun for the whole family!

Construction Update



**The First Congregational Church
of Westminster
United Church of Christ
138 Main Street • PO Box 477**

The Epistle

November 2025

Phone: 978-874-5790

Church office Email:
admin@westcong.org

Don't Miss the
DEADLINE!

November 20, 2025

**For December
Submissions**

