

The Messenger

March-April 2025

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. Reverend Doctor Holly Norwick 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.



On behalf on the Board of Deacons, I am very pleased to welcome Reverend Doctor Holly Norwick as the 25th Settled Pastor of the First Church of Monson. While our candidate weekend planned for February 8 and February 9 was cut short due to typically snowy New England weather, we were able to condense our “Meet and Greet” with the prerecording of Pastor Holly’s preach to call on Saturday afternoon, followed by a unanimous vote to call and lovely reception in the

Fellowship Room.

Pastor Holly’s tenure with us begins officially on March 1, 2025 for what we expect to be a decade or more of a great collaboration between pastor and members of First Church. Many thanks go to our Settled Pastor Search Committee in doing all the preparation work to create an accurate church profile, interview candidates, and select a candidate who not only suits our needs but whose personal experience and expectations align with us.

Please plan to introduce yourselves to Pastor Holly and her family as we continue to worship together in the upcoming weeks. I know we will find many common threads as we get to know each other better.

Jeanne V. Dill, Board of Deacon Chair

From Pastor Holly - This year for Lent - Be the Church!

There is a long and lovely Lenten history within the evolution of the church that has given us many different kinds of traditions. Some of them may still be important in our lives today. Maybe our grandparents had a Lenten practice that trickled down generations. Maybe we learned a tradition in a church we love. Maybe this is our first year ever walking through Lent together. The good news is that there is no real wrong way to create a tradition around sacred moments.

Much of the time we think that Lent asks us to give up something. That is really only partially true. By giving up something in our lives, whether for Lent or another reason, the consequence of giving something up is actually to create a void that is meant to be replaced by something else. I would submit that Lent is less about giving something up and much, much more about what we take on in its stead. This year, to practice this potentially new way of looking at our Lenten journey, I would like to embark on an intention path of positive connection – with

God, and with one another, in every aspect of our lives. We are at an exciting place in our church family where I believe we are truly ready to explore the question, what is God calling this church to be in this community, in the country, in this world - in my life? We are poised for visioning.

Visioning can be an incredibly exhilarating process; however, the kryptonite of all successful visioning is negativity: “we can’t do that,” “we don’t have the money,” “we don’t know how,” “we’ve never done that before.” The world around us seems to be programmed to begin with the negative instead of the positive. So, in order for us to open ourselves up to the movement of God through the Holy Spirit, we must change our approach; the key to visioning is positivity.

And, I have an idea! I invite all of you to join me this Lenten season in an intentional journey of transition from all things negative, to all things positive. Yes, I know, that is soooooo much easier said than done, and, if you are anything like me, I need a reminder to help me remember. So, be on the lookout for your FCM wristband! I invite everyone to take and wear throughout Lent; allow it to help you remember to speak in positive ways and refrain from speaking negatively. Allow it to remind you of the strength that positivity has, and how a simple, yet challenging, a shift in word and deed can be to open up opportunities to share God’s love in ways you didn’t even realize.

Remember, let’s try not to take it off when we leave church. This means we practice at home, at school, at work, in traffic (yes, even when people can’t hear you), at the grocery store, etc. It will certainly be a challenge! But with every great challenge comes great reward. Pouring our energy into this journey will change our lives, and the life of First Church, in many different ways. This Lenten season, let us decide that, in all.

Blessings! Reverend Doctor Holly Norwick, Pastor Holly

Lent and Holy Week Services

The deacons invite you to take part in Lent and Holy Week activities.

Ash Wednesday, March 5 at 7 p.m.: Ash Wednesday marks the beginning of Lent. Come hear scripture and receive imposition of ashes, commemorating a time for repentance and acknowledging mortality.

Palm Sunday, April 13 at 10 a.m.: Join us for Jesus’ triumphal entry into Jerusalem, waive your palms, and shout “Hosanna!”

Maundy Thursday, April 17 at 7 p.m.: Continue Holy Week observances in this solemn Tenebrae service. Follow Jesus' path of betrayal, arrest, denial, accusation, and death. The Easter miracle is incomplete without this meaningful and touching service.

Good Friday, April 18 at 1 to 3 p.m.: Keep watch at the Silver Street Chapel and reflect on Jesus' crucifixion and death. Battery tea lights will be provided for you to light and pray over.

Easter Sunrise Service, April 20 at 6:15 a.m.: Gather the family on the south Lawn for this dawn-breaking celebration of the resurrection. Watch the sunrise and be reminded of the women who went at sunrise to the empty tomb.

Easter Sunday, April 20 at 10 a.m.: Make this your "must attend" service. Celebrate Jesus' resurrection in inspiring word and joyful song. Hallelujah!



Special Sunday School Immersive Event
Palm Sunday, April 13, 2025 at 10 a.m.
"Adventure into Holy Week"
Time travel back to the past

Outreach Needs Your Help with Operation Hope Tote

From March 1st to March 31st, we will be collecting hygiene items to be distributed by the Springfield Rescue Mission. We appreciate donations of any item(s) on the list. This is an opportunity to help homeless men, women, and children in the Springfield area. Your donations will be distributed to residents in the mission's Men's New Life Program, guests at their Emergency Shelter and Give Away Center and those they meet through their mobile-feeding program. Donations of NEW items to fill totes may be as follows:

Toothbrush and Toothpaste

*Alcohol-free Mouthwash
Shampoo and Conditioner
Soap/Body Wash and Deodorant
Hand/Body Lotion and Body Powder
Disposable Razor and Shaving Cream
Feminine Products*

Lip Balm, Nail clippers or files, Brush or Comb, Rain Poncho

There will be boxes in the Fellowship Hall and the Narthex to drop off your donations. Thank you for your help with this mission! Why are Hope Totes a good way to help the homeless? A Hope Tote may be the first contact the Mission has with a homeless or needy person. We've found that people feel better about themselves when they are able to shower, shave and change into fresh clothes. When they're physically refreshed, they're more likely to make other, more long-lasting changes in their lives—like getting involved with the education, work training and spiritual counseling *programs we offer here at the Mission.*

St. Patrick's Day Corned Beef Dinner and Concert



On Saturday, March 22, the trustees invite you to a delicious corned beef and cabbage dinner, prepared by Chef David and his assistants. The dinner will begin at 5:00 p.m. in the Fellowship Hall, followed at 7 p.m. by a rousing concert of Irish music in the sanctuary with Sarah the Fiddler. The food and entertainment will be superb. Get your tickets by calling the Church Office 413-267-3312 or seeing Suzanne each Sunday. The last day for dinner reservations is Wednesday, March

18. Cost is \$25 for the dinner and the concert. Concert tickets only can be purchased at the door for \$10.

Prayer Shawl Ministry

The First Church Prayer Shawl Ministry group meets on the first and third Thursday of the month. The meetings are in the Fellowship Room from 6:30 to 8:00 p.m. You are welcome to join us. Yarn can be provided for a first shawl. Learn to knit or crochet. If you need a shawl or know of someone who needs a prayer shawl, please contact the Church Office at 413-267-3312 or office@firstchurchmonson.org

Youth United at First Church

Magical March Dances ~ Friday, March 7, 2025

Grades 4 - 6 from 5 to 6:30 p.m.

Grades 4 to 6 may bring their favorite adult!

Grades 7 - 12 from 7 to 9:30 p.m.

Admission with one snack is \$7.00, Additional snacks \$1 – 2 each

Awesome April

Youth United Meet-Up ~ Friday, April 7 from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m.

Movie Night, “The Passion” ~ Friday, April 11 at 6:30 p.m.

Movie is rated R – Parent Advisory





It is with much enthusiasm and gratitude that your Settled Pastor Search Committee welcomes Reverend Doctor Holly Norwick as the 25th Settled Pastor of First Church. On February 8th our congregation voted to call Pastor Holly to our church, and she graciously accepted our call. Pastor Holly's first Sunday with us will be March 2nd so she will be here to guide us through the sacred Lenten Season.

We look forward to welcoming Pastor Holly and her family to our congregation and to our community.

God's blessings to all from the Settled Pastoral Search Committee:
Lisa, Elaine, Laurie, Roy, Keith, Deb, David, Judith, and Christian

Hearts Willing

Wednesday, March 26, 2025 at 7 p.m.

"Missionary Work to Benefit Children in India"

by Joel Jette, carpenter, personal missionary, and member of the
Wales Baptist Church



Wednesday, April 23, 2025 at 7 p.m.

"The Need for our Beloved Bees"

by Tammy McCaffrey of TT&J Honey



Tammy is a local beekeeper. She will speak about the lives of bees and their importance in our lives. Samples of honey will be available.

Main Street Tavern Nights

Please join members and friends of First Church at the Main Street Tavern on Thursday, March 27 and Thursday, April 24. The tavern is located at 218 Main Street in Monson. First Church earns 10% of all food and beverage sales that day! We greatly appreciate the tavern's generosity.

Let's Eat Breakfast

TWICE in March!

Start with breakfast, Sunday, March 2

**** Pastor Holly's first day ****

The Sunday before Mardi Gras or Shrove Tuesday

We must have pancakes!

and of course, all of the other goodies you are used to.

Our regularly scheduled breakfast

on the 3rd Sunday, March 16

We celebrate Saint Patrick's Day with homemade corned beef hash included.

The 3rd Sunday in April is Easter Sunday so we will

serve breakfast on Palm Sunday, April 13

Daylight saving Time begins.

Spring forward on Sunday, March 9.



Pancake Breakfast and Easter Egg Hunt

Saturday, April 5th, 2025

Pancake Breakfast at 9 a.m.

\$5.00/person - Under 3 free

Free Activities begin at 9:30 a.m.

Story time, Egg Coloring, Arts and Crafts



Easter Egg Hunt at 10 a.m.

Pictures with the Easter Bunny

We appreciate any donations for our Lenten Outreach Mission. Please help the homeless and families in need served by the Springfield Rescue Mission. We are looking for packages of NEW underwear, socks, and t-shirts for men, women, and children.

Lent begins on Wednesday, March 5 (Ash Wednesday) and runs through April 17 (Maundy Thursday). *Lent* comes from a word that means *spring*, and spring is “springing” soon. May our faith spring up in new life as well.



The Stewardship Committee would like to thank all who pledged for the 2025 campaign. There are 56 pledging units, broken down as follows:

- \$50 to \$250 ~ 6
- \$250 to \$500 ~ 8
- \$500 to \$1000 ~ 11
- \$1000 to \$2000 ~ 14
- \$2000 to \$3000 ~ 12
- \$3000 and above ~ 5

The total pledged for 2025 is \$86,304. This does not include plate offerings. And, as always, at any time during the year, any extra is always greatly appreciated!

With Love and Gratitude, Linda, Carolyn, and Dan

One Great Hour of Sharing (OGHS): Be the Light – Sunday, March 30, 2025

Our giving to One Great Hour of Sharing is one way we can heed that call. When we participate in One Great Hour of Sharing, we shed light in places where circumstances make it difficult to imagine a future with hope. We create possibility for people forced to flee their homes in search of safety and new promise. We support life-giving recovery efforts when disasters devastate communities and overturn lives. We empower partners around the globe in their labors to build sustainable futures. We plant seeds of peace where war has wrought despair and destruction.”

Checks can be made payable to the First Church of Monson with OGHS 2025 in the memo.



Our Johnson Organ is currently under repair by the firm of Czelusniak et Dugal. Because of the generous grant of \$52,000 from the Monson Preservation Committee, the Swell Division is being restored and renovated. This project is due to be completed by June. The Music Committee has planned a celebratory concert with recitalist Robert Greene to be played on Saturday, September 13th. The performance is supported by the Monson Cultural Council. Please

mark your calendars and look forward to this event.

On Sunday, February 23rd, we welcomed Alison Weber as our guest musician. Alison is Director of the Treble Makers Youth Choir at First Church. She received an Associate Degree from Bard College at Simon's Rock in 2023 and has studied organ performance and music education at the College Conservatory of Music at the University of Cincinnati. Alison has taught piano to children of all ages, including children in underprivileged areas. We thank her for sharing her talents.

On Sunday, April 27th, at 3 p.m., the Jazz Bones, under the direction of David Neill, will perform a concert in our sanctuary. This performance features all types of brass instruments, including trumpet, coronet, French horn, trombone, and tuba. Members of the ensemble will play favorite jazz pieces sure to delight the audience. The concert is free and open to the public. Monson Cultural Council awarded a grant to the Jazz Bones to support this event. First Church is once again honored to offer a venue for this musical group. A cookies and punch reception will follow the concert.

Kiel and the Music Committee are planning a special Music Sunday in May; the date will be announced in the next *Messenger*. The service will feature women composers from many eras and will include compositions for prelude, postlude, hymns, and anthems. Watch for details! Be sure to invite your friends to come to this special service.

Opportunities to serve at First Church

Join a Standing Committee (two year term, can re-up for a second term)

- **Christian Education Committee** (2 vacancies)

Responsibilities include helping to promote an effective program of Christian education for all ages and overseeing the work of the Sunday School Superintendent.

- **Stewardship Committee** (1 vacancy)

Responsibilities include conducting the annual pledge campaign, organizing the Annual Budget, and promoting stewardship education.

Serve as a Greeter/Usher (one Sunday per month)

Duties include welcoming attendees, distributing the Sunday bulletins, collecting the offering, and assisting anyone needing help. Please see any deacon if this opportunity speaks to you.

Please contact the Church Office if you are interested in finding out more about these opportunities.

Volunteer as a Fellowship Host

Fellowship time offers members and friends a chance to visit together while enjoying a beverage and light snack. Volunteers are needed to host fellowship after Sunday worship services. Hosts provide the food (ex. cheese, crackers, cookies, grapes, and juice). Coffee, tea, half and half, and milk are provided by the church; there are some pre-packaged food items available in the kitchen. No need to worry about coffee preparation. Help is available if this is your first time hosting. There is a sign-up sheet in the Fellowship Room. Please consider being part of this hospitality ministry.



The Dorcas Society H. Leonora Stiles Thomas Educational Trust is offering scholarships to members or affiliates of the First Church of Monson who meet the following two qualifications:

1. Member of a current high school graduating class
who has been accepted at a school of higher learning,
2. Member or affiliate of The First Church of Monson
who has provided some type of meaningful service to
the programs of The First Church of Monson.

All applications must be completed and returned to a Dorcas Society Trustee by **11:00 am on the second Sunday of April**. Scholarship payments will be made in two equal parts. Part one will be paid upon receipt of student's first semester college grades and part two will be paid upon receipt of student's second semester grades.

Applications may be obtained from the *Messenger* mail slot, First Church's website <http://www.firstchurchmonson.org>, or from one of the Dorcas Trustees.

Trustees are Elaine, Crystal, Trish, and Carol

The H.C. Sanderson Family Scholarship is for covenant members currently enrolled in some type of post-secondary education. This multi-year scholarship was established by Judith (Sanderson) Gerrish in memory of the Sanderson family.