

The Congregational Church of Westborough

UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
57 West Main Street, Westborough, MA 01581

1724 – 2026



Photo: The Wall Street Journal

The Evangel
January 2026

Rev. Betsy Dorsi, Pastor
Joseph Stillitano, Director of Music
Linda Borglund, Director of Faith Formation

A Message from Rev. Betsy...

Phil. 2:6 - I am confident of this, that the one who began a good work among you will bring it to completion by the day of Jesus Christ.

Dear Friends in Christ,

We have come a long way in the last 300 years! Our Church has remained strong and active in ministry because its members have recognized the importance of changing to keep up with the needs and wants of an ever-changing society. Our Church Council (Cabinet) decided it was time to take a look at our current practices and traditions and make plans to change a bit to keep up with today's society. So, we met as a Congregation on November 1st to discuss where we are and where we would like to be as a Church. 43 people devoted their Saturday to this important work to help us decide how we need to change for today's needs. We all agreed that our focus is always going to be on following the teachings and example of Jesus.

The notes from the meeting were taken by Barbara Noeth, and thanks go to her for making sure we know what was said during the meeting. Barbara summarized our Action Plan. I will highlight for you some of the most important points.

Worship and Music

Goals: Offer more diverse, energetic worship experiences

Action Steps:

- Diversify music using more modern music along with some traditional hymns
- Pilot alternative worship times
- Involve Youth more in Worship Service.

Youth and Young Families Engagement

Goals: Increase youth participation; create welcoming, relevant activities

Action Steps:

- Consider hiring a part time minister for youth and families
- Regular youth events
- Work camp and youth missions
- Local missions

Community Outreach

Goal: Strengthen local presence and service

Action Steps:

- Food Programs like a Soup Kitchen, meal packing
- Host open Community Dinners
- Community Service Projects (pie challenge)
- Improve communications

Communication

Goal: Improve engagement via updated and accessible information

Action Steps:

- Regular website updates
- Use social media for youth outreach
- Monthly newsletters with information about upcoming events
- Use age-appropriate language and visuals

Small Group Formation

Goal: Foster inclusiveness, new perspectives, new connections

Action Steps:

- Start new interest based small groups
- Conduct surveys to identify new group ideas

Church Processes

Goal: Streamline bureaucracy, establish clear lines of responsibility, enable innovation

Action Steps:

- Review current processes and governance, simplify where possible
- Eliminate unnecessary committees, teams etc. if existing are stagnant
- Change names of rooms and committees to be understood by younger people (cribbery, vestry, Cabinet)

This is a lot to work on! But we have begun. We have a longer music opening at Worship with upbeat, modern music. We have hymns in the middle of the Service and end with upbeat music after the Benediction. We are changing things in the Worship Service. The Pastoral Prayer is sometimes changed to Prayers of the People and a petition response form of prayer is used. We had and will have more chances for the congregation to participate, i.e. sharing about our Epiphany Stars.

The newsletter will now come out monthly regardless of how many articles are in it. The absolute non-negotiable deadline for articles to be turned in is the first Wednesday of every month.

We began our initiation of small groups with our church wide book club. The groups read Just Mercy by Bryan Stevenson. The groups will meet on February 15th after worship for a potluck lunch and discussion of the book.

We are making progress! We will begin other initiatives soon. We should feel very good about the progress we have made. Just having 43 people come on a Saturday to take hard look at us in so many areas and to discuss change, wow! Some change is already happening. We need you; we need everyone to support the changes. We are in our 301st year as a Congregation and we are dedicated to our future!

Yours in Christ,

Reverend Betsy Dorsi, Pastor



Office Hours:

Monday - Closed

Tuesday - Friday
9am - 1pm

PRAYERS & CELEBRATIONS

Bereavement: Family and friends of Marge Butcher; family & friends of Rev. F. Robert “Bob” Brown.

Continued Prayers: Julia O’Neil-Welsh; Sue Menzel; Bev Hall; Jackie Smith; Adam Beckloff, Linda Birch’s nephew; Betty Gray’s niece Heather; Diane Travers; Judy Ellis’ daughter, Syreeta Peddlesden; Ron, brother-in-law to Betty & Ted; Betty Simino; Donna Morgan’s nephew, Peter Jacunski; The family of Grover Morgan, Jr., Tom’s brother; Debbie Grega – Amy Glennon’s mother; Betty Gray’s niece Heather; Cathie Achorn’s sister-in-law, Lorie Mumby

Prayer requests: You can place prayer concerns on the church’s email distribution list by emailing lisa.coffey@uccwestboro.org.

STEWARDSHIP

“Dreaming God’s Dream”

No gift too small, no dream too big.

The Stewardship Committee thanks all those who responded to the 2026 stewardship drive for their participation. The figures below are a summary of this year’s campaign through 1/3/26.

Planned expenses for 2026 \$247,446

Total Expenses pledges 79 for \$226,092

Pledge Increases 34

Unchanged Pledges 31

Pledge Decreases 9

New Pledges 1

Potential Follow-up 2 for \$6,000

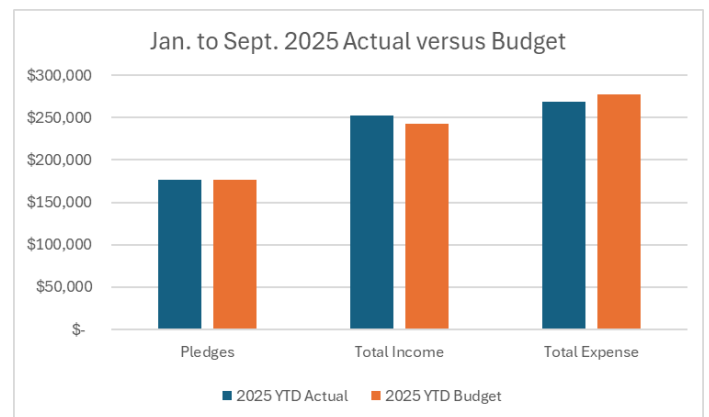
Total Missions Pledges \$32,900

Expenses Pledges for 2025 86 for \$232,315

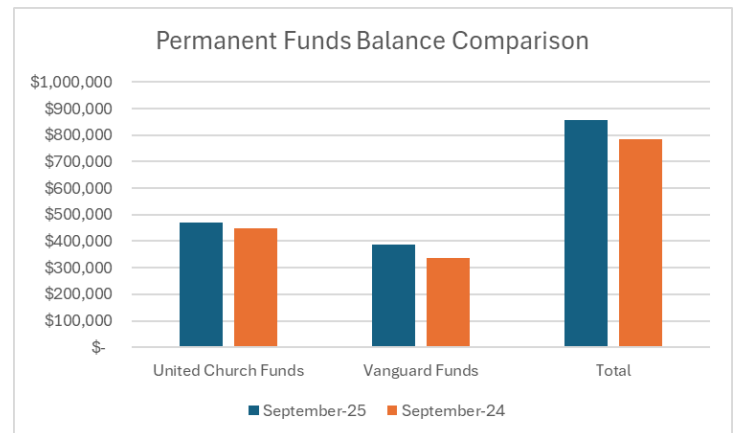
If anyone would like to pledge, please contact the church office or any member of the Stewardship Committee: Neil Bock, Betty Gray, Ted Jaworski, Janice Shaw or Dave Smith.

TREASURER’S MESSAGE

Thank you to all who have faithfully paid their pledge in 2025! As you can see by the graph below, we are over our budget for both pledged and total income in 2025. Our actual expenses are close to budget, which is always good news! Your Trustees meet and review the church’s operating budget every month to make sure we use your pledges responsibly.



Our invested Permanent Funds have weathered the financial market volatility well – total funds have increased \$72,777 or 9% from 2024 to 2025 after withdrawing the budgeted 4% of investments to fund our annual operating budget. Your Investment Committee meets regularly to ensure the investments are appropriate for our church.



MUSIC CORNER

December was such a beautiful time for music in our church - I simply love Advent and the music that comes with it! But guess what, January is also such a beautiful time for music in our church! This month will feature a lovely duet, "All is Well," sung by Roberta and Joe as well as a couple of weeks of our Chancel Choir. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Weekend Service the Chancel Choir is singing a really fun gospel song called "Shine on Me" - consider joining us for a rehearsal or two and sing with us later this month! Remember, Chancel Choir meets Wednesdays in the Music Room, 6:30-8:00pm. No long-term commitment is needed; simply join us for a week or two. I guarantee you'll love it! Joe

WOMEN'S FELLOWSHIP

We gather in joy and in celebration of Christian Fellowship and Service. All Women are invited to join us for these evenings of fellowship. Bring a friend or neighbor.

February 2nd Meeting

Appetizers at 6 PM Dinner at 6:30 PM
Short Meeting at 7 PM

POTLUCK SUPPER - Bring a main dish, salad, etc. to share

Mission of the Month Monetary donations will be collected for our College Students and Military to let them know we are thinking of them. (See Donna Morgan for details. She will need addresses of the students and Military.)

March 2nd Meeting

Social Time at 6:30 PM Meeting at 7 PM
Program at 7:30 PM

Melinda Mackendrick, Animal Control Officer will educate us about the animals that live alongside us here in Westborough.

Mission of the Month Wildlife Refuge

69th EVERGREEN FAIR



We would like to thank everyone for helping to make the 69th Evergreen Christmas Fair such a success. The Women's Fellowship does a lot of service for the community and for our own Church. This fundraiser not only benefits us but is great fellowship and fun for the whole community of Westborough and surrounding communities. Many look forward to the old fashioned church fair without the commercialism of outsourced craft vendors.

They love our homemade soups and sandwiches. They love having the coffee and donuts when they come in first in the morning. They count on buying their gingerbread, jelly and jams from us. Our Silent Auction was a great success due to several members putting countless hours into it. Grandma's Attic and Upper Attic did very well this year also. Many handcrafts, baked goods, jewelry and origami bring in many shoppers. Upstairs, the children enjoyed shopping, crafting, decorating cookies and talking to Mr. and Mrs. Claus. People are still commenting to me that their wreaths still look wonderful. Thanks to those who worked on decorating the wreaths. The feedback was wonderful. People loved the variety.

People loved that we took credit cards this year. Those who could not help in person donated food items, auction items, grandma's attic items, money, gift cards and they prayed for us. There are too many people to name, but know that we appreciate every one of you. This is a wonderful Church. God bless you all and have a Happy New Year! Your Evergreen Christmas Fair Co-Chairs, Cathie Achorn, Linda Borglund and Sandy Horton

KITCHEN RENOVATION

Fundraising for the Renovation of the Congregational Church Kitchen

Deadline is February 1. ACT NOW as this is the only time to donate until our Spring Yard Sale. Plastic Bags and Boxes may be accepted at Cathie's house up until Feb. 6 if there is room in the trailer. Call or text her after February 1st. The Women's Fellowship is sponsoring this drive of items to be taken to Savers. Clean out your closets to make

room for those new clothes or items that you got for Christmas. Please put useable clothes and shoes in black garbage bags. Bedding, purses, belts in black garbage bags. Other goods such as decor, kitchen, toys and home goods please put in marked boxes, they may be mixed in the same box. Books and media must be in separate boxes and labeled. For info: Cathie Achorn 508-380-8671, call or text.

300TH ANNIVERSARY COMMITTEE NEWS

Stay tuned to your Enews/Sunday Bulletin/Evangel as we will announce when the 300th Anniversary Time Capsule will be sealed. Please let us know if you have any ideas of something you think we should enclose in the Time Capsule. Contact Cathie Achorn by text 508-380-8671 or email camachorn@aol.com

MISSIONS

Food Pantry - For the month of **January**, the Westborough Food Pantry is in need the following: *Maple / pancake syrup, cookies, tea, hot chocolate, toothbrushes - adult and child, toothpaste, dish detergent.* The Westborough Food Pantry has thanked us for our continued support in helping to feed local families in need. Please continue to consider donating additional (non-perishable) food of all sorts to the white box. Thank you. The Mission Team

Dismas House - Do you like to cook for people who really appreciate your efforts? If so, please consider making a meal for the men at Dismas House. The men are working towards re-assimilating back into a normal life with friends and family after time in prison. They really love home cooked meals. If you can cook a meal but can't deliver it, we can probably arrange to bring the meal. If you are a first-timer, one of our team can go with you. You can stay for dinner with the men or simply deliver the meal. Nothing fancy, just a tasty meal. If you can help, please contact Pam Faustine at 978-505-7031 or pfaustine@princeton-ma.us

UPCOMING MISSION PROJECTS

Soup Bowl of Caring
Join us for the "Soup Bowl of Caring" on Sunday, February 8, 2026 (you won't miss the Super Bowl).

There will be a variety of tasty soups and breads. Donations to the Food Pantry will be accepted with details to come.

Meal Packing Event

Save the Date! On Sunday March 22, 2026, we will roll up our sleeves and don our masks to pack 20,000 meals. Some meals will go to our Westborough Food pantry to feed our hungry neighbors, and the rest will go to food pantries around New England. The need is great. There will be a lunch/refreshments room. Bring a friend and share the joy of helping others.

WORDS OF APPRECIATION

The following organizations have acknowledged donations/contributions from our church:

<i>SNEUCC Proportional Giving</i>	<i>\$3,016.55</i>
<i>Neighbors in Need</i>	<i>\$ 570</i>
<i>Food donated</i>	<i>1860 lbs.</i>

CONTACT INFORMATION

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Church Website
www.UCCwestboro.org

www.facebook.com/TheCongregationalChurchofWestborough

CHRISTIAN ED – CHRISTMAS PAGEANT – “THE 12 SYMBOLS OF CHRISTMAS”

On December 21, 2025, the youth performed a Christmas Pageant during worship service. It was titled “The 12 Symbols of Christmas”. Linda Borglund has described the meaning of the of the 12 Symbols. She hopes you enjoy reading them and the reflecting on the true meaning of Christmas.

The meaning of symbols of Christmas:

Making cookies is a favorite pastime for most families during the Christmas season. Cookie cutters are used to turn ordinary dough into edible masterpieces. God doesn’t use cookie cutters when He creates each one of us. He makes every one of us so special and unique that He would have to break the mold after just one use. He is the potter and we are His clay. He wants to mold us into His masterpieces. We only need to be moldable and willing to follow His lead. “Behold, like the clay in the potter’s hand, so are you in my hand, O house of Israel.” (Jeremiah 18:6)

An evergreen tree has a very appropriate name. It is ever green – always green. It does not become dormant in the winter as other trees do. The color green represents new life, and the needles of the evergreen always point up – heavenward. It symbolizes our everlasting life with Jesus Christ. We should be as the evergreen tree – always full of life, never becoming dormant in our life with Christ as our arms are lifted heavenward. *“The bread of God is the One who comes down from heaven. He gives life to the world.”* John 6:33

Ornaments are used to decorate Christmas trees each and every year. People look for the perfect ones to fit on their tree. Our Christmas tree just wouldn’t seem complete without our ornaments. Ornaments can symbolize the blessings in our lives. Our lives just wouldn’t be complete without God’s blessings. Everything that we have is due to God loving us so much that He wants to shower us with His blessings. Just as ornaments are all different shapes and sizes, blessings are all different as well. God picks and chooses each blessing for us so that it will be just right. The next time you decorate your tree, and as you put up each ornament, think of a blessing that God has given you. I think you’ll find that you’ll run out of ornaments before you can run out of blessings! *“Every man shall give as he is able, according to the blessing of the LORD your God that He has given you.”* Deuteronomy 16:17

Lights and candles are used to give light. When a room is full of darkness, it is dark. But, if you light a single match in a dark room, the room is light. There may be more darkness, but the light overpowers it. We are that light. We can be the single light in a world of darkness. We must share our light with the world so that the light increases. *“You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house.”* Matthew 5:14-15

The bell rings out to guide the lost sheep back to the fold, signifying that all are precious in the eyes of the Lord. Jesus is our shepherd and He laid down His life for us so that we may spend eternity with Him in heaven. He is calling us to follow Him through His Word. Are you going to listen? *“If a man has a hundred sheep, and one of them has gone astray, does he not leaven the ninety-nine on the mountains and go in search of the one that went astray?”* Matthew 18:12 *“I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.”* John 10:11

The Candy Cane symbolizes multiple things. If you hold it upright...it looks like a shepherd’s crook. The shepherds were some of the few people who were able to see the baby Jesus in Bethlehem. If you turn the candy cane upside down...it looks like a “J”. Jesus starts with the letter “J”. The colors of the candy cane are also symbolic. The red represents the blood that Jesus shed for us on the cross and the white represents the purity of Jesus. There are candy canes with three small red stripes running around it. These stripes symbolize the Trinity – God

the Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit. Who knew that this delicious simple candy was so profoundly symbolic of our Lord Jesus Christ and His simple birth? *“And she will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name JESUS, for He will save His people from their sins.”* Matthew 1:21

The star is a heavenly sign of prophecy fulfilled ages ago, the shining hope for all mankind. The star led the wise men to find the baby Jesus. These wise men traveled many miles following a star in the sky. The star was their “guiding light” to the Savior. God was the wise men’s travel agent, in sorts, leading them to the greatest destination known to man – the Savior. We now have His Word as our “guiding light” to lead us to be with Him in heaven. Are you going to follow Him? *“And behold, the star which they had seen in the East went before them, till it came and stood over where the young Child was. When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceedingly great joy.”* Matthew 2:9b-10

We see holly as decorations during the Christmas season. But do we really understand what holly stands for? The leaves represent the crown of thorns that were placed upon Jesus’ head as He was being crucified. The berries symbolize the blood that He shed for us. He endured criticism, excruciating pain, and embarrassment... all for you and me. The next time you see a decoration with holly on it, remember what was done for you so that He could spend eternity with you. I know that I will. *“And twisting together a crown of thorns, they put it on His head and put a reed in His right hand. And kneeling before Him, they mocked Him, saying, “Hail, King of the Jews!”* Matthew 27:29

The wreath has its evergreen branches bent in a circle so that the ends touch, having no beginning or end, just as there is no beginning or end of Jesus’ eternal love for us. Just as the wreath looks the same throughout and seems to not change, so He will always be the same. *“Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.”* Hebrews 13:8

These days, the world has forgotten the reason for Christmas. Most people seem to think that getting presents is the greatest thing about Christmas. Other people seem to think that presents have nothing to do with Christmas. Well, they are both wrong. The wise men came to visit Jesus as a young child and gave Him presents. They have His gold, frankincense, and myrrh. They offered Him gold, as a King, paying Him tribute; frankincense, as God, for they honored God with the smoke of incense; and myrrh, as a man that should die, for myrrh was used in embalming dead bodies. These men...these wise men...saw this child and knew that He is a King, is God, and that He would die for the sins of the world. How can anyone, with the knowledge that we have now, not believe? *“The Wise Men went to the house. There they saw the child with His mother Mary. They bowed down and worshipped Him. Then they opened their treasures. They gave Him gold, incense, and myrrh.”* Matthew 2:11


Many people spend hours wrapping all their presents during Christmas time. They use ribbons, garland, and bows to make sure that their presents are as beautiful as possible. What they don’t realize is that the items that they use to complete the outside of the gift have more meaning than the actual gift inside. The bow ties our present with a beautiful ribbon, just as Jesus ties us as Christians together in His love. We may not be in the same family, but we are all in the family of God. Jesus is the ribbon that binds us together. *“And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony.”* Colossians 3:14

Imagine...you are a lowly shepherd, watching over your sheep. This night seems no different than any other. Then all of a sudden an angel of the Lord is in the sky above you...telling you of the Savior’s birth. You, a shepherd? Why did God send an angel to tell shepherds? Because the message that God had about the birth of Jesus was for all people! Not just for the right, not just for the Jew...EVERYONE! God chose His #1 messenger to tell the lowest of people (in the world’s eyes) of His Son’s birth! God looks at the heart – not what the world looks at – thank goodness! *“And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone ‘round about them: and they were so afraid. And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David, a Savior, which is Christ the Lord.”* Luke 2:9-11

Here are some pictures from "The 12 Symbols of Christmas"



~ February 2026 ~

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
10am Worship Service COMMUNION	6:00 pm WF Meeting/Vestry Church Office Closed	6:30 pm – Building Committee/ Kerygma Rm 7:00-8:00 pm - Bell Rehearsal	3:30 - 4:30 pm - Journey Home Singers/Choir Rm 6:30 - 8:00 - Choir Rehearsal EVANGEL DEADLINE			
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
10am Worship Service 11:15 am – ANNUAL MEETING SOUPER BOWL	7:00 pm- Trustees/Kerygma Rm Church Office Closed	10:30 am – Whitney Place Service 7:00-8:00 pm - Bell Rehearsal	9:30 am Called to Care 11:00 am – Staff Meeting 3:30 - 4:30 pm - Journey Home Singers/Choir Rm 6:30-8:00 – Choir Rehearsal		4-5:30 - Scouts/Fellowship Hall	9:00 am – Men’s Breakfast 
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
10am Worship Service Noon -Book Club Discussion	Noon-2:pm – PCCM/Fellowship Hall 7:00 - pm Cabinet/Kerygma Rm Church Office Closed	6:30 pm – Building Committee/ Kerygma Rm 7:00-8:00 pm - Bell Rehearsal	7:00 pm – Ash Wednesday Service/ Sanctuary	6:00 pm – Pride Connections		
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
10am Worship Service	7:30 pm – Missions/Zoom Church Office Closed	7:00-8:00 pm - Bell Rehearsal Dinner/Dismas House	11:00 am – Staff Meeting 3:30 - 4:30 pm - Journey Home Singers/Choir Rm 6:30-8:00 – Choir Rehearsal			
		