

# First Congregational Church Weekly Newsletter

East Longmeadow, MA

November 14, 2024

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## PASTOR'S REFLECTION Reverend Denise Terry

Dear Friends,

**“You Can’t Out-Give God!”** That’s what a friend of mine’s Father always told him, from the time he was a little boy, and trying to decide how much of his allowance he should put in the offering plate at church – to the day he breathed his last breath on this earth – “You Can’t Out-give God!”

Rarely a day passes that I don’t think of those words – when I’m tired at the end of a long day, and I just want to go home, and relax before going to bed, rather than making a few phone calls to check on people – when I’m depositing my paycheck, and deciding what bills to pay – when I’m invited to make a contribution to something after I’ve already written my tithe check to the church. I think of those words – “You Can’t Out-give God!”

We’re in the middle of the “Season of Generosity” in our church this month, and we’re being invited to share with the Board of Business and Finance our “Estimate of Giving” for 2025. I’ve been thinking about the future of the church, and the question, “How do we nurture generosity in a culture that is fearful of scarcity.” For decades now, congregations have wrestled with “The Myth of Scarcity amid the Reality of Abundance.” Much of the media, and perhaps our own financial advisors would have us focus on our fears of running out of money, or not having “enough,” and that can make it really difficult to focus our attention on the God of Abundance that all of our scriptures bear witness to.

I say “for decades” we’ve been wrestling with this problem, but really, it’s a problem that is practically as old as God’s people. Walter Brueggemann, noted UCC Old Testament scholar and theologian, reminds us that the fear that there will not be enough has been a prevalent response throughout the history of the Christian experience, and is directly linked to our history as a Biblical people. But whereas fear and anxiety mark our response as human beings, the God behind all of creation is one of overwhelming, breathtaking abundance and generosity!

In an article titled, “The Liturgy of Abundance, the Myth of Scarcity,” Brueggemann tells us that “the Bible starts out with a liturgy of abundance. Genesis 1 is a song of praise for God’s generosity. It tells how well the world is ordered. It keeps saying, ‘It is good, it is good, it is good, it is very good.’ It declares that God blesses the plants and the animals and the fish and the birds and humankind. It is this sense of fruitfulness and abundance that dominates Genesis all the way from the 1st until the 47th chapter.

“It is in that 47th chapter,” Brueggeman tells us that “Pharaoh dreams that there will be a famine in the land. So Pharaoh gets organized to administer, control and monopolize the food supply. Pharaoh introduces the principle of scarcity into the world economy. For the first time in the Bible, someone says, ‘there’s not enough. Let’s get everything.’” The notion of scarcity has been introduced into biblical faith. The Book of Exodus records the contest between the liturgy of generosity and the myth of scarcity – a contest that still tears us apart today “ (Christian Century, March 24-31, 1999, pp. 342-343)

“In the memory of Israel,” Brueggemann continues, “Pharaoh is famine-driven, always worried about lack of crops and loss of food, always gathering and storing to have enough.” Pharaoh is afraid that there won’t be enough! But in response, God says to the Israelites and to us, “I am the God who defeated Pharaoh, who eliminated the policies of the Pharaoh, who overcame the scarcity of Pharaoh, and who nullified the anxiety of Pharaoh. The choice for Israel (and us) is the either of Pharaoh or the God of manna” - the God who provided just enough manna to feed the Hebrews in the wilderness and promises to always provide enough for us all. (*The Word That Redescribes the World*, W. Brueggemann, pp. 159-160)

In this Season of Generosity, let us reflect on all the blessings and abundance of our lives, and remember that “You Can’t Out-Give God!”

With thanksgiving, Pastor Denise

**SUNDAY WORSHIP** in the sanctuary or livestream link: <http://www.facebook.com/churchontherotary/>

## **WE WILL BE DECORATING THE CHANCEL FOR ADVENT/CHRISTMAS THIS YEAR!!**

If you have an artificial Christmas tree, of any size, that you would be willing to loan to the church for the season, would you please let Denise know by November 24th, so we can arrange to receive it. Denise can be reached at 860-471-7727 or by email at [pastor@churchontherotary.org](mailto:pastor@churchontherotary.org)

## **NOTE FROM THE MODERATOR**

Hello members and friends of the First Congregational Church of East Longmeadow/UCC!

To follow up from our congregational member vote on Sunday, November 10, it was moved and passed to authorize the Board of Business and Finance to market and sell the parsonage, at 239 Porter Road, East Longmeadow.

This decision was not easy. As we have learned through our work with Partners for Sacred Places, our ability to evaluate, look, listen and discern difficult decisions that lead to significant changes, can be challenging. Through a year's worth of looking at viable options, issues, concerns, markets and our overall financial status, the decision was reached.

Next steps are to engage with several realtors to get appraisals and to discuss the realtor options that are in the best interest of the church. Even though we have some very talented and successful realtors in our midst, and certainly have appreciated their counsel, we will not be utilizing anyone directly connected to the church to maintain full transparency and avoid untoward impressions.

As we move forward we will keep everyone updated. Thank you to all who stayed after service last Sunday to partake of this informed group decision. Enjoy your week!

Peace, Olan

## **THANKSGIVING FOOD COLLECTION**

Once again, we have a Thanksgiving food collection. You are invited to take a grocery bag in the breezeway or use your own to collect some non-perishable food items that we will use to serve the families in need at Kensington school.

Some examples of items you could put in your bag are:

rice, pasta, pasta sauce, peanut butter, jelly/jam, soups, crackers, cookies, cereal, tuna or canned chicken, canned vegetables or fruit, snack cups of fruit/applesauce, etc.

Please bring the bags back to church by Sunday November 24 and place them on the altar. The staff at Kensington and the families we serve are so appreciative of our help. We all have much to be thankful for at this time of the year. One of the things I am thankful for is this caring and supportive church family. Seems like I am always coming to you with a request for something and you never disappoint me. Thank you so much for your continued support. Peace, Sandy Burns

## **Mission & Outreach Committee continues to COLLECT WARM CLOTHING**

Thanks to your caring generosity...12 bags of warm clothing were delivered to the Springfield Rescue Mission. We will deliver **again** just before Thanksgiving so keep your donations coming. Especially in need of gently used CLEAN children's clothing. Thanks, M & O

## **PRAYER CONCERNS**

- for Julius' mother who had a medical emergency last Wednesday and is now home recovering.
- for Mary dealing with medical issues
- for Lauren dealing with medical issues



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