

First Congregational Church Weekly Newsletter

East Longmeadow, MA

March 26, 2025

Join us for Soup & Bread Luncheon and Partners for Sacred Places Webinars during Lent!

We'll gather at Noon in Fellowship Hall, for soup and bread, and at 12:30, we'll watch a video presentation by Partners for Sacred Places, which will help us move forward with the work you have already done related to sharing our facilities with groups and organizations in the wider community. We'll have brief discussion following each presentation.

The topic is **Successful Communication – Wednesday, April 9th** We'll learn the best ways to work with our space-sharing partners to prevent and navigate potential (inevitable) misunderstandings and disagreements. We'll also explore some generational differences in terms of communication styles, venues, finances, and expectations.

As we use this Season of Lent to think creatively, and also practically, for the new life that God is creating in, through and with our church and congregation, YOUR thoughts and ideas are most welcome!!

MODERATOR'S NOTE

Hi Everyone,

I would like to give you an update on the parsonage. As you recall, last year the congregation voted to authorize the Board of Business and Finance to move forward with the marketing and sale of our parsonage at As we know all too well, there were decades of "deferred maintenance" on the house and only emergency repairs were conducted as issues arose. The decision was made to make improvements to existing components before we engaged a realtor. To date, the cost for the materials was approximately \$26,000 with an additional \$16,000 for the roof replacement, bringing the total cost to well above \$40,000. This is where the blessings of our congregation come into play. I want to highlight the "major players" in this effort, with the caveat statement that MANY hands were part of this endeavor overall. Over this time there were tons of emails, texts and phone calls between a lot of folks asking opinions on colors, next steps, and guidance in many areas including paint and cabinet colors. I am not sure who had the chance to see the parsonage over the years, but it needed significant repair and upgrading including all the floors, walls painted, BRAND NEW bathrooms, kitchen & appliances among countless other smaller fixes and upgrades, too numerous to mention. The work is finished, and the roof is being replaced this week.

Here is a small sample of some "before pictures". Yes, we need to do a better job of digitally recording our journey but thank you Marilyn for the pics!



I don't even know where to begin on how thankful we all are for their expertise and the enormous amount of work that I assure you included blood, sweat and tears. The masterful level of work turned an average, worn out house into a very beautiful property. At the end of the day, our hope and prayer is that by the sale of the parsonage we will realize a reduction to our risk management profile, insurance cost, utilities and maintenance costs. The proceeds from the sale will greatly help stabilize our current financial situation and allow us to complete high priority projects. The realtor posted the parsonage last week, and within a couple hours she had showings scheduled. This past weekend we signed off and accepted an offer. Note: We had several valid offers to review over the past week! That is why the website link

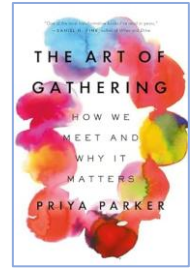
shows it as "off the market". We will keep everyone updated on the status leading up to the anticipated closing at the end of April. More important than the mechanics of the business side of this process, is the fact that we would not have this opportunity, not even remotely, if we didn't have the people with the know-how, talent, ability and willingness to step up and provide this Labor of Love.

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

BOOK DISCUSSION

Please plan to join me after worship, from 11:30 – 12:15, in the youth room during through Palm Sunday, April 13th, for a lively discussion of the book “The Art of Gathering: How We Meet, And Why It Matters,” by Priya Parker.

Sign up on the sign-up sheet in the breezeway at the church, or by calling or emailing the church office.



TECH TIP CORNER

Tech Tip #2:

Additional tips to avoid being scammed:

- Amazon, the IRS, your bank and other legitimate businesses, will never ask you to share your password, account sign-in One-Time Password (OTP), or verify sensitive personal information over the phone. Hang up and call the business back on a phone number that you know is correct. Don't rely on the number that called you!!!
- If you accidentally disclose your password, try logging into the website asap and change your password right away.
- Next week we will go into detail on “best password policies”

TRYING SOMETHING NEW... “COFFEE HOUR TEAMS”

The idea is that each team will be responsible to set up and clean up coffee hour for 3 months/year. (see list) Only 2 team members are needed each week, usually arriving by 9:30. All that is needed to set up is kept on the rolling cart. Baked goods are welcome, but not necessary. Depending on the number of members on your team you might only need to do it once a month.

The team leader (*) will organize volunteers for each week within their months. Contact anyone of them to let them know your availability.

READING OPPORTUNITY

Would you like to be a scripture reader at the Tenebrae Service on Maundy Thursday? There will be several readings, and we are looking for volunteers. Please contact any of the Deacons.

SEARCH COMMITTEE UPDATE

The Ministerial Search Committee has been meeting for the last year. Over those 12 months, we have received 4 profiles. We have had talks with 3 of the individuals. We are continuing our search, and are grateful for your patience and prayers.

the Search Committee

BALDWIN ORGAN

Anyone interested in a Baldwin Organ please contact the church office. A church member is hoping to give the organ a new home.



First Congregational Church

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