

# First Congregational Church Weekly Newsletter

East Longmeadow, MA

October 29, 2025



## PASTORAL REFLECTION Reverend Thomas Hawkins

### All Saints Sunday: Let Us Praise Those We Love and Remember

This week I received an envelope in the mail. When I opened it, a pile of old black-and-white photographs spilled out. The first few on top were of me. I don't know about you, but it's a little painful for me to look at old elementary school photos. There I am scowling at the camera with a goofy haircut, clunky eyeglass frames, and a string tie around my neck.

Just a month before my mother died last spring, my Aunt had died. She and my mother had been married to my father and his younger brother. They had outlived their husbands and died within a month of one another. My were cleaning out Aunt and Uncle home and thought I would appreciate having a few old family photos. I saw photos of my paternal grandparents as vital, mid-life adults. A couple were of my great-grandparents surrounded by their children and grandchildren. On one photo my grandfather is holding my dad as an infant on a pony. Given my father's age in the photo, it was taken nearly a century ago.



The photos in that envelope are of farmers and farmers' wives. They look the most comfortable in their denim jeans and chambray work shirts, with their aprons and cotton house dresses. In their Sunday best, they appear decidedly uncomfortable. They worked hard. I never heard any of them utter a four-letter word. I don't remember them speaking angrily among themselves. They never burned bridges with neighbors over a difference of opinion. And when my father died before the fall harvest, every neighboring farmer came and harvested our soybeans and corn for us without expecting anything in return. They had simple lives and aspirations. They did the best with the lives they were given; and they hoped to leave the world a better place for generations to come. And they are now, every one of them, gone.

One of the inter-testamental scriptures that is part of the Orthodox, Roman Catholic, and Anglican canon speaks of people like the men and women in these faded black-and-white photos.

*Let us now sing the praises of famous men [and women],  
our ancestors in their generations.  
Some of them have left behind a name,  
so that others declare their praise.  
But of others there is no memory;  
they have perished as though they had never existed...  
But these also were men [and women] of compassion  
whose righteous deeds have not been forgotten;...  
Their bodies are buried in peace,  
but their name lives on generation after generation.  
The assembly declares their wisdom,  
and the congregation proclaims their praise. (Sirach 44:1, 8-10, 14-15)*

On All Saints Sunday, Nov. 2, we remember "those whose righteous deeds are not forgotten." Some are family members; other have been like family to us. Some may have lived long lives. Others have had their lives cut painfully short. And the circumstances of these deaths still lingers in our hearts, wounds only partially but never fully healed.

I don't believe we are ever finished with mourning and grieving for the people dear to us. All Saints Sunday is a time to name once more the grief that takes a lifetime to heal. And in naming it before God and God's people, we open ourselves to a little more grace and the long process of healing our losses and griefs.

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I know it's a busy weekend with the craft fair on Saturday. We'll all be tired. The time is changing (although technically we "gain" an hour this Sunday). I hope you'll nonetheless make the extra effort to gather for worship because it's important for us to call to mind, to remember the lives of all those men and women, adolescents, and sometimes children - all of them that messy mixture of strengths and failings that every saintly soul embodies. They have all shaped us into the people we are. Their gifts to us are worth praising. Their absence from our lives is worth offering up in prayer.

Blessings, Thomas

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

### **BELIEVING AND BELONGING CLASS TO BE OFFERED**

Interested in learning more about First Congregational Church's history, beliefs, and ministries? Pastor Thomas will be offering a class sometime in November for anyone interested in affirming their membership and participation at First Congregational Church/East Longmeadow. Please speak to him this morning or sign up on the poster where we enjoy coffee fellowship after worship. We'll set a convenient time and day when we know who is interested.

### **CHRISTMAS COLLECTION CRAFT FAIR: November 1st from 8:30-3pm.**

It seems impossible that the first Saturday in November is right around the corner! Our Christmas Collection Craft Fair is quickly approaching. This is one of our largest fund-raisers and needs many helpers. There are so many ways to lend a hand.

Any day-of fair related questions or concerns to 525-4121

Thank you for anything you can do to help!

### **ALTAR FLOWERS**



The flower committee invites you to remember, and honor loved ones or offer celebration for a joyous event. November 9, 16, 23 are open dates. Call the church office if you are interested.

### **PRAYER CONCERNS**

Prayers and Joys

### **PRAYER FOR THE WEEK**

Almighty God: We remember with gratitude all those whom we have loved and who have loved us. We give thanks also for those whose love for us was imperfect but yet the best they were able to give. We remember too all those who have loved you, our Creator, in and through Jesus Christ. Keep us in fellowship with all the saints who now rest from their labors. May their example of faithfulness inspire and sustain us in our lives. Amen.



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