

First Congregational Church Weekly Newsletter

East Longmeadow, MA

October 8, 2025

LETTER FROM PASTOR ELVA

Dear Friends,

The New Testament book of Acts is full of encounters between the apostles and all kinds of people, as the apostles spread the good news of God's love in Jesus Christ. One of my favorite encounters is between the apostle Philip and a court official from Ethiopia.

The Ethiopian is traveling back to his country after a visit to Jerusalem. Philip has been led by the Holy Spirit to the wilderness road the Ethiopian is traveling. As the Ethiopian rides along this road in his chariot, Philip hears him reading aloud from Isaiah's prophecy about Jesus.

He calls up to the Ethiopian, asking if he understands what he is reading. The other man replies, "How can I, unless someone guides me?"

Philip proceeds to tell him the good news of God's love in Jesus. The Ethiopian is so excited to hear this good news that, when they come to some water, he wants to be baptized! He climbs down from his chariot, and Philip baptizes him. He then "goes on his way rejoicing," while Philip is called by the Spirit to another place (Acts 9: 26 – 39).

This encounter between Philip and the Ethiopian is brief. There are no long speeches or extended conversations. But both men are brought together and powerfully moved by God's Spirit. Both are touched by God's love in Jesus Christ.

As I conclude my service as your Bridge Minister, I know our time together has also been brief. But in the few months I have served among you, I have felt God's Spirit at work in your congregation. Serving in your midst, I have been touched by God's love in Jesus, and I hope you have as well.

Thank you for all the kindness you have shown me during my time with you. Thank you for your willingness to share your faith journey. Thank you for everything you've done to support our ministry together.

Now we go our separate ways. You move into a new season of ministry with the wise and capable leadership of the Rev. Thomas Hawkins. My prayer is that you will continue to sense God's Spirit moving among you, and that you will be open to God's guidance. May you all be enlivened by God's love in Jesus Christ.

Yours in Christ,
Pastor Elva

FAREWELL RECEPTION

Please join us this Sunday after service in Fellowship Hall for a farewell reception for Pastor Elva Merry. Pastor Elva has been our bridge minister and we are so grateful for her ministry with us. She has been a real blessing and we would like to show our appreciation. Hope you can join us!

CHRISTMAS COLLECTION CRAFT FAIR: November 1, 2025 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. Please reach out to Beth, or for bake sale contributions to Marilyn.

Any day-of fair related questions or concerns to myself, Cindy
Thank you for anything you can do to help! Cindy

MAKING A DIFFERENCE

Your Mission and Outreach team has an opening. This is a wonderful opportunity for you to join Marilyn, Alice, Bobbie and Sandy doing the important work supporting various needs in our community. It is an extremely joyful, rewarding experience. We meet the first Monday of each month at 10:00 in the church library. We are happy to answer any of your questions.

EVERGREENS, PINE & BERRIES

It's that time of year again when I come begging. I really, really need some branches of evergreens from your yard or woods. Think of friends with evergreen trees that would share a few clippings with us. These will be used to fill the cemetery logs that will be sold at the craft fair. We are looking for any kind of evergreen. Examples – spruce, pine, yew, arborvitae, juniper, winterberry, etc. These cemetery logs are very popular. We usually sell out before noon! Please bring these greens to the church by October 15th. You can leave them near the back door of the apartment building. If you have any questions, please call Sandy. Thank you!

NEIGHBORS IN NEED *"Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ." - Galatians 6:2*

Advocacy is essential to participating in God's mission in the world. Gifts to the Neighbors in Need offering support ministries of justice and compassion in the United Church of Christ.

If moved to make a donation, an envelope is provide in the pews until October 26.
Mission and Outreach thanks you for your support.

IT WILL BE GETTING COLD

Remember that you have neighbors who have nothing to keep them warm. We will once again be collecting gently used, clean, warm clothing until NOVEMBER 19 for men, women and children (even infants and toddlers). AND we will also collect CLEAN, warm blankets. Everything will be donated to the critical work of the Springfield Rescue Mission serving your neighbors in the greater Springfield area.

Please place your donations in the box in the breezeway, or the big, blue bin outside. We are accepting warm clothing: coats, sweaters, vests, sweatshirts, hats, scarves, gloves, mittens, boots, etc.. We also ask for NEW socks and underwear. Thank you for caring and taking the time to go through your closets. Your continued generosity will warm the lives of our neighbors in need during the coming, cold winter months. Thank you.

- Mission and Outreach Committee



RECENT CAR WASH

The East Longmeadow Girl's Soccer can't thank you enough for your continued support year after year. Having access to your property to hold our annual fundraising car wash has been critical in our monies raised. We did tremendous this year. To top it off it was a beautiful day. Thank you ELHS Girls Soccer



PRAYER CONCERNS

Prayers and Joys

- From Lois: for healing of her chronic back and leg pain, and for her doctors to find a solution for treatment



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