



BELL TOWER

A Westhampton Church and Community Newsletter
published by Westhampton Congregational United Church of Christ,
an Open and Affirming Church
SEPTEMBER 2026 Vol. 55 No. 8

Message from Pastor Carol...

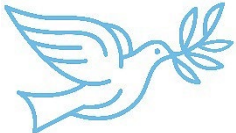
"Community means more than being in the same place. It means sharing a common life." ~ Parker Palmer

A year. How did that happen so quickly? A year ago, I was writing my first newsletter as your new pastor, wondering what this new chapter would hold. Since then, we've shared worship, meals, music, laughter, conversations, celebrations, the challenges of life, and more than a few blueberries! Along the way, I've had the gift of getting to know the people who make Westhampton such a special community.

This summer offered plenty of reminders of what makes a community come alive. We gathered around tables at the Blueberry Supper, shared music and laughter at summer events, and enjoyed a wonderful Community Campfire, with games for our youth, local vendors, Boy Scouts and S'mores for all. On July 30, we welcome(d) friends from Easthampton and Southampton UCC congregations for worship, celebrating connections that reach beyond the walls of any one church.

As worship returns to 10am in September, we begin a new program year — a fitting time to pause, reflect, and wonder what comes next.

In our life together, who are we becoming? As we begin our second year together, that question feels especially important. We've spent this year discovering our shared gifts, hopes, and challenges and now we're beginning to ask how the way we live and work together can help shape what comes next.



One way we're exploring how we want to live together is through our monthly gathering for peace. On the third Sundays, we sing, talk, and pray for peace in our hearts, our community, and our world. This September's theme for International Day of Peace, **"Invest in Peace – For Everyone, Everywhere, Every Day,"** invites us to see peace not simply as the absence of conflict, but as a

daily practice of safety, dignity, opportunity, and cooperation. In a world that can feel divided and uncertain, creating space to practice peace together feels more important than ever.

And that brings us to something that may not sound very exciting: bylaws! Yet at their heart, they are about how we live together: how we make decisions, share responsibility, and put our values into practice. Reviewing them gives us a chance to consider whether the way we organize ourselves reflects who we are and who we hope to become. **Perhaps that's a question worth asking of any community: Do the ways we live together reflect the people we are and hope to be?**



As September brings us into a new season, I'm grateful for all this first year has brought and curious about what comes next and looking forward to discovering it together!

Joy always.

Pastor Carol



Blueberry Supper Thank You!

The Westhampton Women's Fellowship extends a heartfelt thank-you to everyone who helped in any way to make our Blueberry Supper fundraiser a great success. We appreciate all bakers, cooks, workers and diners who made possible a net profit of \$2,012. Special thanks to our town corporate donors, Intervale Farm, Outlook Farm Barn & Eatery, and Ravenous Raven Bakery, for their generous food donations.

Holiday House Fair coming soon on November 21, 2026

Thank you to everyone who helped make last year's Holiday House Fair a successful fundraiser. We're looking forward to another fun and successful fair this year, and we need your help to make it happen. Bakers, cooks, handcrafters, and everyone else, please start thinking about how you can contribute to this worthy event. Proceeds allow us to continue the work of the church by supporting the needs of our neighbors and surrounding communities. **All are invited to bring your ideas and suggestions to a Fair Planning Meeting following worship on Sunday, September 27, 2026** (feel free to bring your coffee hour goodies with you!). For more information about the Fair, please contact Erika Subocz at 413-527-6069(h); 413-297-3780 (cell), or Erika.subocz@gmail.com.

Regular Church Meetings

Sun.	10:00am	Morning Worship in person or via Zoom 321 069 9076 – pw 248423
	6:30pm	Peace Gathering (3 rd)
Mon.	7:00pm	WaS (1 st)
	7:00pm	Property (3 rd)
	7:00pm	Council (4th)
Tues.	1:00pm	WOW (3 rd)
Wed.	5-6pm	Food Pantry
Fri.	11am-12pm	Food Pantry
	7:00pm	AA
Sat.	9-10am	Food Pantry

Women's Fellowship Director

September - Jackie Didier

Greeters

September - ↑ Sue and Richie Small
↓ Paul Aloisi

Coffee Hour

September 6 - Danielle Dennett & Peter Gilbert
September 13 - Julie and Stephen Holt
September 20 - Erika Subocz
September 27 - Pat and Bob Miller

Flowers

September 6 - Danielle Dennett & Peter Gilbert
September 13 - Stacey and Tom Jenkins
September 20 - Marcia Sullivan
September 27 - Chuck Horn

Westhampton Congregational United Church of Christ Pastor - Reverend Carol Smith

Office Hours:

Tuesdays and Fridays @ 9am – 12noon
Available anytime for pastoral emergencies

Pastor Carol's contact info:

carolbsmith12@gmail.com
860-798-7771

Church Office contact info:

westhamptonchurchucc@comcast.net
413-527-4204

Website: www.westhamptonchurchucc.org

Facebook - [Westhampton Congregational
United Church of Christ](#)

Regular Town Meetings/Office Hours

Mon.	5:45pm	Town Offices Closed
		Board of Health (2 nd) – Town Hall and Zoom
Tues.	9am-5pm	Town Administrator – Town Hall
	9am-9pm	(weekly alternating work hours)
	12pm – 6pm	Town Clerk – Town Hall
	5pm – 8pm	Assistant Assessor - Annex
	6pm	Fire Dept (1 st , 3 rd) – PSC
	6pm	Friends of the Library (1 st) – Library
	6pm	Library Trustees (2 nd) – Library
	6pm	Planning Board (2 nd) Town Hall
	7pm	Board of Assessors (bi-weekly) - Annex
	7pm	SelectBoard (bi-weekly) - Town Hall
Wed.	9am – 5pm	Town Administrator – Town Hall
	12pm – 6pm	Town Clerk – Town Hall
	6pm – 8pm	Transfer Station hours
	7pm	Conservation (1 st , 3 rd) – Town Hall
Thurs.	9am – 5pm	Town Administrator – Town Hall
	10:30am-1:15pm	Assistant Assessor – Annex
	10:30am -	COA (3 rd) – Westhampton Woods
Fri.	9am-5pm	Town Administrator – Town Hall
	9am-9pm	(weekly alternating work hours)
	7pm	AA (weekly) – Westhampton Church
Sat.	9am - 3pm	Transfer Station hours

New Town Administrator – Patrick Grigsby

administration@westhamptonma.gov

www.WesthamptonMA.gov



State Primary Election – September 1

Election day in-person voting Tuesday, September 1. Polls are open from 7:00am – 8:00pm at the Westhampton Town Hall, 1 South Road.

NEW Town Administrator and Town Clerk

The Town of Westhampton is excited to announce the appointments of Patrick Grigsby to the position of Town Administrator and Daniel Gilbert to the position of Town Clerk. Patrick just moved to Massachusetts in August with his wife Regan after completing his PhD at Texas A&M University. They are looking forward to getting to know the community, exploring local hiking trails, and experiencing seasonal weather after years of being too hot! Dan joined Westhampton as Town Clerk in July after spending many years volunteering in multiple roles for the city of Easthampton in addition to running his own business. A graduate of Hampshire College, he has also held the job title of "genius" for the Apple Store in Holyoke. We are thrilled to have them both as new members of the municipal staff and are excited for residents to get to know them. Please come find them at Town Hall and *welcome them to Westhampton!*

Westhampton Shares

Westhampton Shares has been officially approved as a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization. We help provide temporary financial assistance to Westhampton residents experiencing hardship. Westhampton Shares was founded on the belief that strong communities care for one another.

Westhampton Shares is organized by Westhampton folks, for Westhampton folks. We plan to raise money through tax-deductible donations from residents who want to help the community stay strong by helping their neighbors. All funds will be dispersed through an application process that strives to preserve applicant dignity and anonymity. Whenever possible, assistance will be paid directly to the service providers or vendors. We will soon be establishing an interest-bearing bank account. If you are interested in becoming involved, please call 413-527-1731. An informational and pledge paper will be available soon.

*Westhampton Shares was founded on the belief that strong communities care for one another.
Westhampton Shares is organized by Westhampton folks, for Westhampton folks.*

Morning Worship returns to 10am

Our regular Morning Worship hour returns to 10:00am on Sunday, September 6.

From Your Stewardship Committee

Western Massachusetts gives us so many things to be grateful for. And yet, I have to confess that I sometimes spend more time noticing the potholes in the road than the beautiful scenery around them. I can spend more time complaining about the summer humidity or the winter cold than I do appreciating the many opportunities, people, and places that make this a wonderful place to live. Noticing reasons for gratitude can be hard. Overlooking all the good things that surround us is actually very easy. At the Westhampton Congregational United Church of Christ, I find that prayer, fellowship, community, and our Sunday worship help me slow down and notice. Our time together, and even our pastor's sermons, remind me to look beyond what is difficult or frustrating and recognize the many gifts that are already part of our lives. Growing in gratitude takes practice. I am grateful for a church community that helps me practice it. If you are able, we would love to have you join us on this journey toward becoming more grateful people.

~ Patrick McMahon, Stewardship Committee



Outreach Opportunities

Food Pantry - The Food Pantry is open to all to supplement your needs. All are invited to stop by to pick up what you need, and/or to donate items as you are able as well. The Food Pantry is located in the basement of the Westhampton Church, accessible from the door facing North Road. Visit www.westhamptonchurchcc.org to volunteer. **Food Pantry hours are Wed 5-6, Fri 11-12, Sat 9-10.**

Take & Eat - The Take and Eat program is a non-denominational effort that expands on Meals on Wheels and serves Easthampton, Southhampton and Westhampton elder and home-bound in need, by preparing and delivering weekend meals for up to 100 clients. Westhampton's turn to volunteer is 4th Saturdays: so...September 26. Sign up here: www.tinyurl.com/takeandeat.

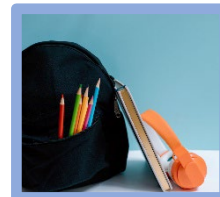
	YTD Actuals 8/20/26	YTD Budget 8/20/26
Pledged Local	75,534	68,659
Non-Pledged Local	6,202	8,000
Other Local	17,181	18,468
TOTAL LOCAL	98,917	95,127
Mission Pledged	7,515	7,715
Special Offerings	2,676	3,920
TOTAL MISSIONS	10,191	11,635

Women's Fellowship Program: Empty Arms

The entire community is invited to the Women's Fellowship meeting Tuesday evening, September 8 @ 7:00pm in the church dining room, where we will welcome Westhampton friend and neighbor Carol McMurrich as our speaker as we learn more about the organization she founded called Empty Arms Bereavement Support. Refreshments will be offered by Lorraine O'Keefe and Pat Miller.

3rd Grade Bibles and Blessing of the Backpacks

Please join us for worship on Sunday, September 13 at 10:00am as we begin a new program year by giving Bibles to 3rd graders, and all children are invited to bring their school backpack to church for the Blessing of the Backpacks to start their school year off right!



Good Works

Community Service Projects at Westhampton Church

Looking for some after school activities for your Kindergarten through 6th graders? Would you like your child to be active in some community service activities? Then the *Good Works Group* is for your family!



This non-religious group will meet monthly and will work on a variety of projects centered around caring for our world, our friends, and our neighbors. Perhaps we'll help with a garden or maybe we'll make cards for the sick or elderly. We aim to spread joy and good will. There will be time for snacks and games as well as projects. Of course, we'll be open to ideas that others suggest, and we surely hope you'll let us know of needs in your neighborhood.

The Group will meet starting on September 16 at 3:10pm and will usually meet on the 3rd Wednesday of every month at the Westhampton Church. All students in grades Kindergarten through 6th grade are welcome to attend and will be able to take the bus from the school to the church. Adults will meet them at the bus and provide a snack before working on projects. Pick-up time will be at 4:30. Mark your calendars now! Questions? Contact Sarah Madden. sjbmadden23@gmail.com 413-884-5819. Dates for the Year: 9/16, 10/21, 11/18, 12/16, 1/20, 2/24, 3/17, 4/28, 5/19.

Pinwheels for Peace... Come Make Peace Visible!

What if something as simple as a pinwheel could become a symbol of our hopes for peace? On Sunday, September 20, the Widening Our Welcome (WOW) Committee invites everyone – children, youth, and adults – to join in making Pinwheels for Peace. During morning worship, we'll take time to create pinwheels together, with all materials provided. Then at 6:00 p.m. on the Town Common, we'll gather for our community Peace Gathering and make more pinwheels as we share our hopes for a more peaceful world. No special skills are needed, just bring yourself and your hope for peace! Come make something beautiful, share in community, and help us make peace visible throughout Westhampton. Mark your calendar and join us!





Many Thanks!

To all my many Westhampton friends and my many Pine Island Lake friends, near and far – I want to say thank you to all these very dear friends

for sharing in this unbelievable occasion of my 90th birthday! It was so wonderful to be remembered by all of you. I also want to thank my sweet daughter Beverly Montague and her husband Danny, and Debbie, my daughter-in-law for putting this wonderful idea in motion. It was both incredible and wonderful. Thank you Bev and Danny and all my dear friends for your kindness! Love you all. ~ *Jean Alward*

Council on Aging...

Get Ready to Play:

A Unique Game Show Luncheon

Mark your calendars for our upcoming September 10th luncheon, which promises to be an afternoon full of high energy, friendly competition, and plenty of laughs. We are thrilled to welcome Kevin Richman, a self-proclaimed witty game show host who travels to senior centers bringing classic television fun directly to our community. Attendees will have the chance to team up and play beloved trivia games like Jeopardy, Family Feud, Match Game, and Wheel of Fortune. To ensure a completely stress-free and relaxed environment, all games will be played entirely in groups, meaning there is absolutely no pressure on any individual. It is the perfect opportunity to flex your brainpower, cheer on your neighbors, and share a wonderful meal together. Don't miss out on this incredibly unique luncheon experience—come ready to win some great prizes and share a smile!

*See library page for COA Dementia program.

Westhampton Fire Department - Senior Safety

Thanks to our recently awarded Senior SAFE Grant, we have a limited supply of battery-operated smoke alarms and carbon monoxide (CO) detectors available for eligible residents. If you are 65 years of age or older and could benefit from these life-saving devices, please contact us by email at firedept@westhamptonma.gov or by calling our non-emergency phone number at 413-529-7181 to schedule a home visit and installation. Working smoke and CO alarms are among the most important tools for protecting your home and family from fire and carbon monoxide hazards. We are pleased to be able to offer these devices and improve safety for our senior residents.



WES PTO

Welcome back students and staff! It's hard to believe we are already back to school. We hope everyone enjoyed their summer break. We kicked off things with our annual welcome back ice cream social on Wednesday August 26. It's always a great turnout and fun way to get everyone ready for the first day of school. School started on Thursday, August 27.

We will be having our first Zoom PTO meeting of the school year on Monday, August 31. We are always looking for members; please feel free to join us! If you would like the Zoom info, please reach out to us via email at Wes.pto.news@gmail.com.

From Your Westhampton Energy Advocate

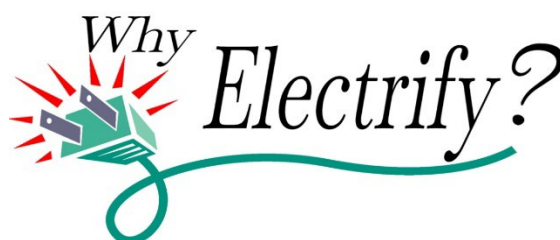
Happy September, Westhampton! Over the past few months in our Why Electrify? series, we've explored how electrification can improve efficiency, reduce pollution, support healthier indoor air, and increase comfort at home. This month, we're focusing on why heat pumps work best when paired with weatherization.

First, what is weatherization? For most homes, it means adding insulation and reducing air leakage. In some homes, there are big opportunities to add insulation where there is none (or very little). In almost every house, there are lots of gaps and cracks -- especially in the attic and basement -- that are accessible and easy for a trained professional to seal. Depending on the condition and age of the house, weatherization can cut the amount of heating needed between 10% and 50% -- but a 20% reduction is typical. The best way to find out what weatherization is appropriate for your house and to secure the incentives to help pay for it is to have a home energy assessment.

Getting started with weatherization is the best way to prepare for colder weather, but air sealing in particular helps even during the cooling season. Reducing unnecessary infiltration of outdoor air, keeps heat and humidity out of the house for longer, making the indoors more comfortable and reducing dehumidification cost. Many homeowners find that they barely need their dehumidifiers anymore after air-sealing their basement.

Once a house is weatherized, it makes sense to convert the heating system to a heat pump. A weatherized house can use a smaller, lower cost heat pump system, since its heating demand is lower. Heat-pumps use electricity to do the work of moving heat from outside to inside, if we reduce the amount of work they need to do, we multiply the energy savings. This is one reason why a properly sized heat pump system can be much less costly to operate than an existing oil or propane heating system that was usually over-sized originally, and may be extremely oversized after weatherization.

If you're interested in learning more or scheduling a home energy assessment visit masssave.com/community-first/hamptons to explore options, incentives, and next steps.



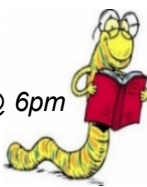
At the Westhampton Library

Hours: Mon/Thurs 2-8pm; Tues/Wed 9am-12pm & 1-5pm; Sat 10am-1pm
Library closed September 7 – Labor Day

Please check the town website or Facebook or Instagram @WesthamptonPublicLibrary for library updates.
To place a request for curbside pick-up, email westhampton@cwmar.org or call 413-527-5386.

Recurring Programs . . .

- **Computer Help** w/ Bob Miller –
2nd/4th Mondays @ 10am-12noon
- **Knitting & Crocheting Group** Mondays @ 6pm
- **Yoga** Mondays @ 6pm
- **Scrabble Group** Tuesdays @ 2pm
- **Book Group** – 4th Tuesdays @ 7pm.
- **Walk-in Wellness Clinics w/ Westhampton's Public Health Nurse** 1st/3rd Weds @ 10-11:30am
- **Coffee & Chat** – Wed @ 10am-12pm
- **Tech Connect drop-in tech help** - 4th Thurs @ 2-4pm
**Please call ahead to ensure that Tech Connect is meeting.*



For Kids & Teens

- **CFCE Playgroup** Tues @ 10:30am
- **Storytime w/ Emily** returns Wed Sept 30 @ 10:30am
- **Kids Thursday After School Programs and Teen Craft Nights** resume in October.

In the Community Room Gallery

The Hilltown Plein Air Painters exhibit is up through the end of September. This group of local artists has been painting together since 2003, exploring the Hilltowns and beyond. Weekly outings are planned for morning paint outs with helpful support, critiques, and friendship. Plein air painting in a natural setting captures the beauty of this area that continues to inspire our work.

Myco Marty's Mushroom Mania - A Fun Guy Shares His Wisdom

Thursday, September 17 @ 6pm



Easthampton's Marty Klein is a wild mushroom expert, with decades of experience foraging, identifying, learning and teaching about these amazing organisms. An award winning photographer and artist, Marty's stunning images of fungi will be projected throughout the talk. Topics

will include: some notable local species, the lives of mushrooms and their ecological roles, foraging, edibility/toxicity, and tips for beginners. The talk will be followed by a Q&A session. (*Pick my brain but leave my mushrooms alone!*)

COA Program: Support for the Journey:

An "All In" Talk About Dementia

Saturday, September 19 @ 10:30am – 12:30pm

Caring for a loved one with dementia is a deeply meaningful journey, but navigating the daily challenges and systemic hurdles can often feel overwhelming. To support our local caregivers, the Westhampton Council on Aging invites you to a comprehensive program, **An "All In" Talk About Dementia**, on Saturday, September 19 from 10:30am - 12:30pm at the Westhampton Library. This supportive discussion will offer practical guidance on managing brain changes and common daily challenges, while also addressing essential legal, financial, and healthcare navigation strategies. The session will be led by Heidi Zahra, MSN RN, a faculty member at the Elaine Marieb College of Nursing at the University of Massachusetts and an RN case manager at Cooley Dickinson Hospital. Caregivers are encouraged to bring their questions to this open, collaborative session. It truly takes a village to care for a loved one with dementia, and this program is a reminder that you do not have to walk this path alone. All are welcome.

Community Silent Reading Party

Thursday, September 24 @ 6:00 – 8:00pm

Please join us for a peaceful evening of reading for pleasure at the library! Bring a book or check one out from our collection. All ages are welcome and audiobooks are reading too — just be sure to bring headphones. Tea, hot cocoa, and snacks will be provided.

*According to a recent study by the National Institute of Health reading for pleasure amongst the aged 15+ population in the United States has declined by about 3% per year between 2003 and 2023. The study's introduction reports that more significant declines have occurred amongst young adults aged 17–18 in the nationally representative Monitoring the Future survey, with the proportion who read a book or magazine every day decreasing from 60% in the late 1970s to 16% by 2016.

*Bone, Jessica K, et al. "The Decline in Reading for Pleasure over 20 Years of the American Time Use Survey." *iScience*, Cell Press, Aug. 2025, pp. 113288–88, Accessed 4 Aug. 2026
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.isci.2025.113288>.

UMass Entomology Collection Visit

Saturday, September 26 @ 10:30am - 12:30pm

Have you ever held a praying mantis in your hand? Now is your chance! See a sampling of live and preserved insects up close. UMass students will be on hand to share information about the bugs and to answer questions.

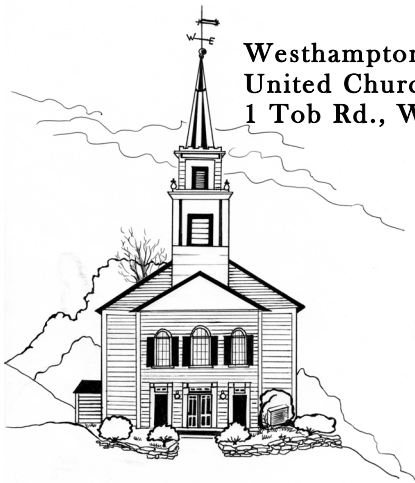
Save the Date: Fall Festival 2026

Fall Festival 2026 will be held on *Sunday, October 4*. The library will be open on October 4 and then closed on Monday, October 5 as well as Monday, October 12. We apologize for any inconvenience this may cause.



BELL TOWER

A Westhampton Church and Community Newsletter
Published by the Westhampton Congregational UCC
SEPTEMBER 2025 Vol. 52 No. 8



Westhampton Congregational
United Church of Christ
1 Tob Rd., Westhampton MA 01027

NON-PROFIT
ORGANIZATION
U.S. POSTAGE PAID
EASTHAMPTON, MA
PERMIT No. 6

The Bell Tower is a church and community newsletter whose intent is to inform and inspire. The Bell Tower shall promote the identity, programs and events of the Westhampton Congregational United Church of Christ. As an added service, the Bell Tower shall also provide information on community news and events to the residents of Westhampton. We invite you to join us for Sunday Morning Worship at 10:00am. Submissions to the Bell Tower for church and community articles and announcement may be sent to Julie Holt at the church email address westhamptonchurchucc@comcast.net no later than the 15th of each month prior to the upcoming Bell Tower issue.

Westhampton Congregational United Church of Christ Mission Statement

With God as our witness, we of the Westhampton Congregational United Church of Christ, commit to our Savior Jesus Christ as our model and guide. While cherishing our heritage, we look to the future, accepting ourselves and each other as individuals uniquely created in God's image. We covenant together to grow in our understanding of God's will. We nurture each other in faith so we may be empowered to serve in our community and the world.

We are called to love our brothers and sisters as God loves us, freely and without reservation. Our unconditional love is inclusive of all God's people. We denounce acts of discrimination and violence against any person. As an open and affirming church, we joyfully welcome all people into our community of faith, regardless of age, gender, race, sexual orientation, ethnic background, socioeconomic status or physical/mental abilities. Each person is invited and encouraged to participate in all aspects of our church life and ministry.



Westhampton Elementary PTO Community Calendar Order Form

The Community Calendar has been a long tradition in Westhampton to keep us connected and celebrate our neighbors. Each year the calendar features a photo of the Westhampton Elementary Kindergarten class as well as information on some local businesses. **All community members are invited to include their special dates.** For over 60 years the Westhampton Women's Club has carried on this tradition which was passed to the Westhampton Elementary PTO in 2021. All proceeds support the students, teachers and families in our elementary school. **Calendars are \$10 and include 20 listings to share your birthdays, anniversaries, meetings and in-memory dates. \$8 for any additional calendars. 25¢ for each listing over 20.** Just fill out the order form to the right and send your orders in. All orders need to be in by **October 17**. Checks should be made out to the **WES PTO** and can be mailed to Sarah Kalmakis at 286 Southampton Rd., Westhampton, MA 01027. For questions contact Sarah at 413-281-8271.

Please support this fundraiser and community tradition!

Name: _____

Street Address: _____

City-State-Zip: _____

Phone: _____

Email: _____

Calendars: ____ # Listings: ____ \$ collected: ____

Listing Type: (B) - Birthday (A) - Anniversary
(M) - In Memory (E) - Meeting/Event

MM/DD	See above	listing characters limited to 28
Date	Type	Listing Information (Name)

*Your listings will be carried over from the previous year
unless changes are noted above.*