



BELL TOWER

A Westhampton Church and Community Newsletter
published by Westhampton Congregational United Church of Christ,
an Open and Affirming Church
DECEMBER 2025 Vol. 54 No. 11

Message from Pastor Carol...

Dear Friends,

“Blessed is the season which engages the whole world in a conspiracy of love.” ~ Hamilton Wright Mabie

December is here! And with it comes a season that gathers all of us and our many traditions into a shared longing for light, hope, and renewal. Whether we prepare for Advent and Christmas, light candles for Hanukkah, honor the turning of the year at Yule, or celebrate the principles of Kwanzaa, this month invites us all into kindness, reflection, and community.

Here at church, we mark each week of Advent with the gifts of **Hope, Peace, Joy, and Love**; gifts our world needs as dearly today as ever. As the candles on the Advent wreath grow in number and light, they remind us that even a single flame has power to push back the shadows.

December in Westhampton is full of traditions that bring that light to life:

- The figures in the creche on our lawn gradually take their places throughout the month, a quiet reminder that God often works through slow, steady movement toward joy.
- The **Three Kings** journey through town, traveling lawn to lawn on their way to Epiphany and our receiving of **Star Words**.
- Our **Christmas Pageant** on **December 14**, gathers children and adults to retell a story that never grows old.
- On **December 21**, we'll continue our cherished tradition of **caroling to residents over 80**, carrying music, companionship and treat baskets to those who have carried so much of this community before us.
- Then on **Christmas Eve at 7pm**, illuminaries will guide the way to our traditional **Carols and Candlelight Service** that fills the sanctuary with familiar music and warm light. Everyone is invited to come, lift your voice in favorite carols, and share in the simple joy of gathering in the glow of candlelight. There is always a place for everyone here!

In a busy and complicated world, December gently reminds us that we belong to one another. Each tradition, each gathering, each small act of kindness in all its diverse variety, is part of that “conspiracy of love” that pushes back the cold and brightens our shared path.

May this season bring you warmth, peace, and moments of deep joy. And may the light we celebrate, however we celebrate it, shine brightly among us and through us. ~ **With hope, love, and JOY always,**

Carol

NOEL HALLELUJAH MERRY CHRISTMAS HAPPY NEW YEAR

New Prayer List Policy

As a caring community, we hold one another in prayer through all of life's joys and challenges. Names on our weekly bulletin prayer list will remain on that list for eight weeks, then if needed, names can be moved to our Prayer Tree for continued prayer. Copies of the Prayer Tree are always available on the table in the rear of the sanctuary, and the name of the Prayer Tree will be lifted up in prayer during worship on fifth Sundays. Please let the WOW Committee or Julie in the office know of any updates or changes. We encourage everyone to stay connected with those on the Prayer Tree, in prayer and in person whenever possible.

Church's Snow Cancellation Policy

Occasionally during the winter months it becomes necessary for us to cancel Sunday morning worship for safety reasons. In the event of a cancellation, the announcement will be added to NBC Channel 22's list of cancellations that stream along the bottom of the television screen continually throughout the morning.



Regular Church Meetings

Sun.	10:00am	Morning Worship in person and online...Zoom - 321 069 9076 – pw 248423
Mon.	7:00pm	WaS (1 st)
	7:00pm	Property (3 rd)
	7:00pm	Council (4th)
Wed.	3:15pm	Good Works (3 rd)
	5-6pm	Food Pantry
	6:30pm	WOW (3 rd)
Thurs.	7:00pm	Choir
Fri.	11am-12pm	Food Pantry
	7:00pm	AA
Sat.	9-10am	Food Pantry

Women's Fellowship Director

December - Lynn Willard

Greeters

December - ↑ Janice and Bill Tracy
↓ Pat Miller

Coffee Hour

December 7 - Erika Subocz
December 14 - Julie and Stephen Holt
December 21 - Dolores and Mark Thornhill
December 24 - (Christmas Eve) Marcia Sullivan
December 28 - Mary and John Barber

Flowers

December 7 - Mark Gould
December 14 - Pageant – no flowers
December 21 - Poinsettias
December 24 - Poinsettias
December 29 - Poinsettias

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](https://www.facebook.com/WesthamptonCongregationalUnitedChurchofChrist)

Did You Know?

The Bell Tower can be viewed and downloaded in **FULL COLOR** from the homepage of the church website at westhamptonchurchucc.org. Enjoy!

Regular Town Meetings/Office Hours

Mon.	8am – 3pm	Town Coordinator – Town Hall
	7pm	SelectBoard (bi-weekly) - Town Hall
Tues.	8am – 3pm	Town Coordinator – Town Hall
	8am – 4pm	Town Clerk – Town Hall
	5pm – 7:30pm	Board of Assessors - Annex
	6pm	Fire Dept (1 st , 3 rd) – PSC
	6pm	Friends of the Library (1 st) – Library
	6pm	Library Trustees (2 nd) – Library
	7pm	Planning Board (2 nd) Town Hall
	7pm	Zoning Bd of Appeals (2 nd) Town Hall
Wed.	8am – 3pm	Town Coordinator – Town Hall
	8am – 4pm	Town Clerk – Town Hall
	6pm – 8pm	Transfer Station hours
	7pm	Conservation (1 st , 3 rd) – Town Hall
Thurs.	8am – 3pm	Town Coordinator – Town Hall
	8am – 3pm	Board of Health - Annex
	10:30am-1:15pm	Board of Assessors – Annex
	12noon	COA (1 st) via Zoom
Fri.	8am – 2pm	Town Coordinator – Town Hall
	7pm	AA (weekly – Westhampton Church)
Sat.	9am - 3pm	Transfer Station hours
Sun.	10am – 12noon	Martial Arts – Town Hall

Doug Finn, Town Coordinator
Town of Westhampton
1 South Rd. Westhampton MA 01027
413-203-3086
administration@westhamptonma.gov
www.WesthamptonMA.gov



Do You Enjoy the Bell Tower?

The Bell Tower is a church and community newsletter whose intent is to inform and inspire. It promotes the identity, programs and events of the Westhampton Congregational United Church of Christ, and also provides community news and events to all town residents. We do have to spend a bit of money for postage and production costs, so once a year we make this request for donations.

To Church Members and Westhampton Residents - Your Bell Tower is free. But if you appreciate the *Bell Tower* and are moved to do so, *we welcome and appreciate your voluntary donations* to assure that we can continue this service far into the future.

Out-of-Town Mailing List Folks - To those of you who do not live in Westhampton but have expressed a desire to stay connected through the Bell Tower, *we request a minimum subscription donation of \$25.*

Town Organizations - Several town organizations and groups submit items for publication regularly throughout the year. *The fee for this service is \$200 per year, or \$20 for a single submission request.* You may expect an email from Julie Holt soon for this request for the 2026 calendar year.

Please mail all Bell Tower donations to:
Westhampton Congregational UCC,
1 Tob Road, Westhampton, MA 01027.
Checks payable to the church and write *Bell Tower* in the memo. Thank you for supporting and loving the Bell Tower!



Bell Tower Donations

From Your Stewardship Committee

Dreaming God's Dream

NO GIFT TOO SMALL, NO DREAM TOO BIG.

What a blessing it was to gather on Stewardship Sunday and be "Dreaming God's Dreams" together! We celebrated our gratitude for the role this congregation has played in our lives now and in the past, and dared to share hopeful dreams of the future. We are so appreciative of all who have continued to partner in the ministry of this congregation over the past year, and thank everyone who has already made a commitment to support the church financially in the coming year. If you have not been able to do so yet, you are still welcomed and encouraged to submit a commitment card for 2026 either in person on Sunday morning, or by mail to the church office.



One time gifts as well as recurrent giving can also be done online using this QR code. The work of our church can happen because of the generous financial and volunteer support of our community. No gift is too small, and no dream is too big!

Thank you for all you do, and thank you for walking alongside us as a part of the Westhampton Congregational United Church of Christ.

When Giving Is All We Have

by Alberto Rios

*One river gives its journey to the next.
We give because someone gave to us.
We give because nobody gave to us.
We give because giving has changed us.
We give because giving could have changed us.
We have been better for it,
We have been wounded by it—
Giving has many faces: It is loud and quiet,
Big, though small, diamond in wood-nails.
Its story is old, the plot worn and the pages too,
But we read this book, anyway, over and again:
Giving is, first and every time, hand to hand,
Mine to yours, yours to mine.
You gave me blue and I gave you yellow.
Together we are simple green. You gave me
What you did not have, and I gave you
What I had to give—together, we made
Something greater from the difference.*

About this Poem...

"This is a poem of thanks to those who live lives of service, which, I think, includes all of us—from the large measure to the smallest gesture, from care-giving to volunteerism to being an audience member or a reader. I've been able to offer these words to many groups, not only as a poem but also as a recognition. We give for so many reasons, and are bettered by it." ~ Alberto Rios
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~ Your Stewardship Committee: Lynn, Larry, Sue



THANK YOU, THANK YOU, THANK YOU!

The Westhampton UCCC Women's Fellowship extends a heartfelt "thank you" to everyone who helped in any way to make our 2025 *Holiday House Fair* another successful fundraiser! Kudos to a great team of workers and donors who made it possible for us to continue supporting the needs of our and surrounding communities. Thank you again, and we wish you good health and peace in 2025. Season's Greetings, and HAPPY NEW YEAR!



Outreach Opportunities

Food Pantry - The Food Pantry is open to all to supplement your needs. You may stop by to pick up what you need, and we invite you to donate items as well. The Food Pantry is located in the basement of the Westhampton Church, accessible from the door facing North Road. *The Food Pantry is open on: Wednesdays 5-6pm, Fridays 11am-12noon, and Saturdays 9-10am.* To volunteer or for more information, please visit www.westhamptonchurchucc.org.

Take & Eat - The Take and Eat program is a non-denominational effort that serves elder and home-bound in need, by preparing and delivering weekend meals for up to 100 clients. Westhampton takes our turn on 4th Saturdays...November 22 this month. To help, please visit www.tinyurl.com/takeandeat.

Looking Ahead to Annual Reports...

Annual reports are due from all committees by email to westhamptonchurchucc@comcast.net *no later than Sunday, January, 2025.* Please note this deadline comes around quickly once the holidays are over, so start putting your thoughts together now. Thank you!

How might you



For your consideration... with Annual Meeting coming up, the Nominating Committee may ask how you might serve your church in in some capacity.

There are so many ways you can participate and share your thoughts and ideas in the life and workings of the church. If you are interested in sharing your talents with the congregation, you don't need to wait to be asked... you can contact any member of the Nominating Committee (Lynn Cooper, Dolores Thornhill, Bill Tracy) and "Yes, I will!" *How will YOU step up and serve our church this year?*

	YTD Actual 11/20/25	YTD Budget 11/20/25
Pledged Local	94,288	90,587
Non-Pledged Local	10,995	8,250
Other Local	7,159	25,852
TOTAL LOCAL	112,442	124,689
Mission Pledged	8,362	9,830
Special Offerings	6,127	6,175
TOTAL MISSIONS	14,489	16,005



Come Deck the Halls!

November 30 @ 11am

On the first Sunday of Advent, November 30 all are invited to stay after worship day to help deck the halls and decorate our church building. The sanctuary will be decorated ahead of time by the Advent Committee, but we still need help setting up the sanctuary Christmas Tree. The Chrismons will be added to the tree as part of the worship service on December 7. All the other decorating tasks need to be done on the first floor and outside. Please enjoy coffee hour, then lend a hand to complete these projects...window candles, placing the figures in the creche, decorating the tree in the dining room, helping with the outside star. And we need LOTS of folks to help fold 1000 illuminary bags...every bag helps!

No-Rehearsal Christmas Pageant

December 14 @ 10am

Calling ALL who would enjoy acting out the beautiful Christmas Story...both children AND adults! This year's No-Rehearsal Christmas Pageant is during worship on Sunday, December 14 @ 10am. Come to church a little early (9/9:30-ish) if you want to get involved. We will have scripts, costumes, and Christmas spirit ready for all! ~ *Christian Ed Committee*

Holiday Basket Work Bee

December 20 @ 11am

The Holiday Basket Workbee will happen on *Saturday, December 20 at 11:00am* in the dining room to assemble the baskets full of fruit and cookies. So all you bakers out there, please plan to donate LOTS OF COOKIES! These are the special baskets that are given out during Caroling the next day.

Christmas Caroling to Westhampton Seniors

December 21 @ 2pm

All are invited to gather at the church on *Sunday, December 21 at 2:00pm* to go Christmas Caroling. We will divide into 3 caravans and cover the entire town of

Westhampton to carol to our seniors and present them with their Holiday Basket filled with goodies. Dress warmly because this festive outing happens snow or shine! Afterwards all will gather back at the church or some other to-be-determined location to warm up with food and fellowship. Join us!

Help Set Out Illuminaries

December 24 @ 3pm



Westhampton teens are particular invited to come help set out 1000 illuminaries on Christmas Eve afternoon... but we need a LOT of

hands to get the job done, so everyone who would like to volunteer some time is welcome! This is a labor of love that has been happening in Westhampton for well over 50 years! Meet in the church parking lot at 3pm! Thank you.

Christmas Eve Candlelight Service

December 24 @ 7pm

Join us for this beloved celebration on Christmas Eve, *December 24 at 7:00pm* at the church. Listen to the Christmas story from the Scriptures and sing your favorite carols and songs as we bask in the candlelight's glow on the faces of our friends and neighbors.



Council on Aging

Christmas Concert

December 11 @ 1pm

The Westhampton Friends of the Council on Aging invite you to a Christmas Concert on *December 11 @ 1pm* featuring Dear Ella. These three talented and seasoned performers hope to bring joy, hope, and resilience through their music. The concert will be held in the dining room of the Westhampton Church. A light snack will be served after concert.



School/Community Gardens

As the food supply becomes more difficult for some, I would love to encourage you to take a raised bed at the HRHS/Community Garden for next year, to grow more of your own. We have increased the number of raised beds at both schools, now numbering 42, twelve of which are used by Community members. This year at HRHS we had a good harvest of garlic, potatoes, carrots, beans, peas, greens, radishes, herbs and pumpkins. Not quite so many tomatoes this year, but perhaps it'll be a better year in 2026.



We have plans to increase the size of the Pumpkin Patch so that we can support the Pumpkin Roll at the Fall Festival next year. We are also considering planting a permanent raspberry bed.

We have fewer beds at the Westhampton Elementary School and this year they were used for potatoes, cherry tomatoes, sunflowers and a pollinator garden. The children really enjoyed eating the tomatoes and so next year we'll be adding some cucamelons, ground- or husk-cherries and corn along with the potatoes, herbs tomatoes and wildflowers. Most of the beds at both schools have been "winterized" with cover crops or garlic. We plan to start planning for the spring in February.



As always our grateful thanks to Dave and Audrey for filling the water tanks, T&J Tree Services for the donated wood chips, and Rose Hill Farm for producing wonderful organic compost. Also, we couldn't have achieved what we did without the continued support of the teachers, Jacob, Jon, Rebecca and Sarah and their students, and Annabel, the librarian. The Pumpkin Patch was thanks to Bill Tracy and Ben Geary and the organic pie pumpkins donated by River Valley Co-op. The project wouldn't have been possible without the financial support from the Hampshire County Food Policy Council and the Collaborative for Educational Services. So as I have said in a previous article, "it takes a village".



If you are interested in taking a bed for next year, contact Sue O'Rourke at 413-203-3165 or sueorourke@comcast.net.

At the Westhampton Library

Hours: Mon/Thurs 2-8pm; Tues/Wed 9am-12pm & 1-5pm; Sat 10am-1pm
Library closed December 24, 25 and January 1

Please check the town website or Facebook or Instagram @WesthamptonPublicLibrary for library updates.

The library is open for in-person browsing and materials pickup as well as curbside pickup.

To place a request for curbside pick-up, please email westhampton@cwmares.org or call 413-527-5386.

Recurring Programs . . .

- **Computer Help** w/ Bob Miller – 2nd/4th Mondays @ 10am-12noon
- **Knitting Group** Mondays @ 6pm
- **Yoga** Mondays @ 6pm
- **Scrabble Group** Tuesdays @ 2pm
- **Book Group** – 4th Tuesdays @ 7pm
- **Walk-in Wellness Clinics: W'ton's Public Health Nurse** 1st/3rd Weds @ 10-11:30am
- **Energy Advocate Office Hours** 3rd Wednesdays @ 1-2pm
- **Coffee & Chat** – Wednesdays @ 10am-12pm
- **Tech Connect drop-in tech help**–Thurs Dec 18 @ 2-4pm



For Children & Teens

- **CFCE Playgroup** - Tuesdays @ 10:30am
- **Storytime with Emily** - Wednesdays @ 10:30am
- **Music with Naomi:** 3 Wednesdays @ 3pm – Dec 3, 10, 17
Special thanks to the Friends of the Westhampton Library and Lyn Keating Programming Fund for sponsoring this program series for preschool aged children and their families!
- **After School Fun** Thursdays @ 3:30pm. Join us for a rotating schedule of after school fun at the library every Thursday at 3:30pm! *All children under 12 must be accompanied by an adult, or sibling 12 years or older.
 - 1st Thurs Dec 4 @ 3:30pm – LEGO Club
 - 2nd Thurs Dec 11 @ 3:30pm – Open Crafting
 - 3rd Thurs Dec 18 @ 3:30pm – Switch Happy Hour
- **Teen Craft Night** – 3rd Thursdays @ 6pm. Email Emily at ewayne@cwmares.org at to sign up! This month's craft will be a needle felted mushroom house.

Tech Connect Devices Available for Checkout!

Thanks to a grant from the Northern Hilltown COAs and Tech Connect: Success for Older Adults, the following devices are now available for a 3-week loan: Android Galaxy Tablet, Casio Keyboard, Kindle Paperwhite EReader, HP Chromebook Laptops. For more info, visit: <https://tinyurl.com/439y6p3d>

Recycled Greeting Card Ornaments

Thursday, December 4 @ 6 - 7:30pm

Join Meaghan to craft handmade ornaments using your old greeting cards! Please bring your own greeting cards from home to recycle. All other materials will be provided by the library. This program is recommended for ages 12 to Adult. Please register at 413-527-5386 or westhampton@cwmares.org.



Holiday Small Works Show

Artists' Reception Thursday, December 11 @ 5:30 - 7:30pm

Westhampton Public Library is holding our first annual "Holiday Small Works Show". Join us to celebrate local creativity this holiday season! Artwork by local artists of all ages will be on display and for sale. 20% of proceeds benefit the Friends of Westhampton Public Library.

Energy Advocate

Happy holidays! As we head into the coziest time of the year, we also approach the last month to take advantage of federal tax credits for residential energy-efficiency upgrades. If you've been considering installing heat pumps, heat-pump water heaters, solar panels, batteries, or other home energy improvements, now is a great time to act. Just getting started with your electrification journey? Don't worry! Massachusetts residents can still access incentives through Mass Save and state tax credits, even after federal opportunities wind down. If you have questions about home energy efficiency, or simply want to learn where to begin, stop by to chat with Westhampton's Energy Advocate, Hannah Davis, during office hours at the Westhampton Public Library on December 17 at 1 PM. If you can't make it or would like more info, give me a call at (413) 529-1400 x 781 or visit masssave.com/community-first/hamptons. Stay warm, stay cozy, and happy holidays!

Sally Lawton's Celebration of Life

December 6 @ 2pm

<https://www.ahearnfuneralhome.com/obituaries/sally-lawton>
As some of you may have heard, Sally Lawton passed away on October 12 at the age of 99. Her daughter Cynthia Lawton-Singer would like to invite her beloved Westhampton community to Sally's Celebration of Life on **Saturday, December 6 @ 2:00pm** at the Unitarian Universalist Society of Northampton and Florence.

Good Works!

The Good Works group is involved in collecting Mittens and Gloves for It Takes a Village during December. The Good Works group will take a field trip to It Takes a Village in Huntington for its December meeting on Wednesday, December 17. We will see all the action going on at this incredible organization and we will drop off our collected mittens and gloves. *If you are able, please drop off mittens or gloves to one of our donation sites: Westhampton Elementary School, Westhampton Public Library, or Westhampton Congregational Church.* Thank you! Happy Holidays!

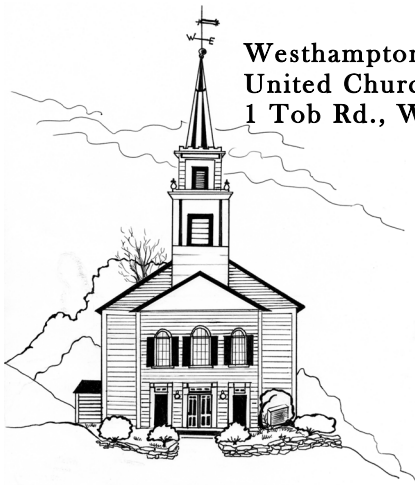


WES PTO

The WES PTO had a very busy fall, we are now looking forward to prepping for fundraisers and family nights after the holiday season. Be on the lookout towards the end of December for your Kindergarten Calendar order. We will be out making deliveries when they arrive. We'd like to wish everyone a very Happy Holiday Season and give thanks to all who help support our organization. Our next meeting will be held on Monday December 1st via zoom @7pm. Our email address is wes.pto.news@gmail.com.

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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.



Christmas Poinsettias Order and Dedication Form

For Christmas, we decorate the church sanctuary with poinsettias. You may order a poinsettia for \$14 per plant and dedicate it in honor or in memory of loved ones. Your dedication(s) will be listed in the church bulletin on Sunday morning, December 21 and on Christmas Eve, December 24. You may take your poinsettia(s) home after the Christmas Eve Candlelight Service. Any poinsettias left at the church after Christmas Eve will continue to grace our sanctuary on December 28 and Epiphany Sunday, January 4. *The deadline to turn in dedications in time to be printed in the bulletin is Monday, December 15.* Checks may be made payable to the church. Please bring your Poinsettia Order Form and payment with you to church and put it in the offering plate, or if mailing it is more convenient, send to 1 Tob Road, Westhampton MA 01027.



Please list my poinsettia dedication in the Christmas bulletins as follows:

In memory or in honor of: (circle one)

Given by: _____ How many? _____ Amt. enclosed: \$ _____