



BELL TOWER

A Westhampton Church and Community Newsletter
published by Westhampton Congregational United Church of Christ,
an Open and Affirming Church
FEBRUARY 2026 Vol. 55 No. 2

Message from Pastor Carol...

"Do your little bit of good where you are;

it's those little bits of good put together that overwhelm the world." ~ Desmond Tutu

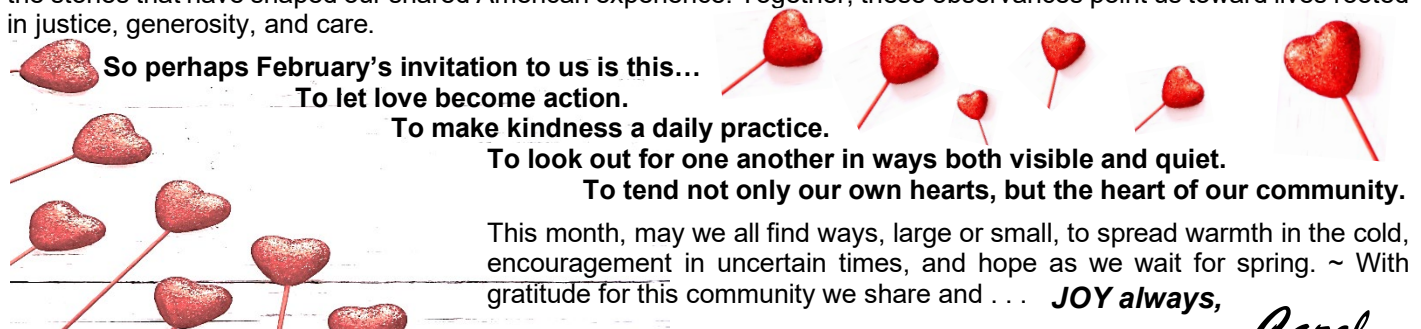
February may be the shortest month of the year, but it rarely feels that way. In just a few weeks, we move from Groundhog Day guesses about spring, to cheering (or groaning!) over the Super Bowl, to watching athletes from around the world gather for the Winter Olympics. We mark Presidents' Day, celebrate Lunar New Year, honor Black History Month, and notice the first subtle signs of light returning, whether in the stirrings of Imbolc, the budding trees of Tu B'Shvat, or the lengthening days themselves. All of this reminds us that February is really about connections across cultures and traditions, and the values that help communities thrive.

Valentine's Day fills February with hearts and cards, but love shows up in many other ways too — friendship, family, neighborliness, and the care we show ourselves and one another. It's there in the simple ways neighbors look out for each other — a kind word, a helping hand, a note of encouragement, a quick check-in. As we move toward Ash Wednesday and the reflective season of Lent, these everyday moments remind us how deeply connected we truly are.

random
Acts of kindness

That spirit comes into focus during Random Acts of Kindness Week, February 9 – 15. It gently nudges us to notice how small acts like holding a door, writing a thank-you note, shoveling a neighbor's walk, or offering patience can make a real difference. None of it has to be grand. Often, it's the simplest kindness that reminds us we belong to one another.

For many, February also invites deeper reflection. Mardi Gras gives way to Ash Wednesday and the Christian season of Lent, a time of self-examination and renewed compassion. Ramadan begins the same day for our Muslim neighbors, calling people to prayer, fasting, generosity, and community. Black History Month invites us to remember and learn from the stories that have shaped our shared American experience. Together, these observances point us toward lives rooted in justice, generosity, and care.



So perhaps February's invitation to us is this...

- To let love become action.**
- To make kindness a daily practice.**
- To look out for one another in ways both visible and quiet.**
- To tend not only our own hearts, but the heart of our community.**

This month, may we all find ways, large or small, to spread warmth in the cold, encouragement in uncertain times, and hope as we wait for spring. ~ With gratitude for this community we share and . . . **JOY always,**

Carol

Joint Ash Wednesday Service at Southampton Church

All are invited to gather at the First Congregational Church in Southampton this year for the Ash Wednesday Service on *Wednesday, February 18 @ 7:00pm*. Easthampton, Southampton and Westhampton UCC churches will come together for this joint service; Southampton's pastor, Rev. Rosemary Dawson will lead worship. Ash Wednesday marks the beginning of Lent, and invites us to turn away from sin and toward the love and mercy of God. We invite you to join us.



Regular Church Meetings

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

Women's Fellowship Director

February - Lorraine O'Keefe

Greeters

February - ↑ Lorraine and Kevin O'Keefe
↓ Pat Miller

Coffee Hour

February 1 - Rhonda and Jeff Brooks
February 8 - Louise and Mike Raymond
February 15 - Charlotte Wood and Marion Miller
February 22 - Maureen Dempsey and Rick Tracy

Flowers

February 1 - Julie and Steve Holt
February 8 - Sue and Tom Morton
February 15 - Marion Miller
February 22 - Paul Aloisi

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](#)

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's 22News list of cancellations that stream along the bottom of the screen continually throughout the morning.

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



Thank You's

Thank you for the Christmas fruit basket given to me. The caroling is a nice tradition at such a happy time of year and much appreciated. ~ *Lilly Baxter*

Anita and I are very thankful for the visitation by Carolers whose voices warmed our spirits (under very grueling weather) and then to top it off presented a basket of truly yummy delights. Thank you Carolers ! ~ *Dave Goddard*

Thank you for the delicious basket of fruit and cookies delivered to our house. It is very much appreciated. I would also like to thank those who sent cards and expressions of sympathy at the death of my sister Jean Braley on December 16th. The holidays were hard this year but your warmth and kindness made it easier. ~ *Jackie and Larry Didier*

Thank you for remembering me with the fruit and cookies holiday gift basket. It was delicious and I appreciate your thoughtfulness. ~ *Ellie Scott*

We would like to thank the Westhampton Church for the wonderful assortment of fruit in a basket, also the great carolers. Our basket also had some gluten-free cookies my sister Lorraine made...an extra treat. Thanks again. ~ *Joanne and Ted Brooks*

Dear Carolers – thank you for the delightful Christmas singing and the delicious basket of goodies. ~ *Nadine and Fritz Krafts*

Thank you for the Christmas carols and thoughtful basket. Your visit was a blessing during the season. May God bless you for your kindness. ~ *Robert Fondakowski and daughter Brenda*

I would like to thank the Women's Fellowship for the generous Christmas gift. ~ *Mike Raymond*

Women's

Fellowship Events for February and March



Planning Breakfast - The WF planning breakfast will be on *Saturday, February 7 @ 9:00am* at the church. Come enjoy fellowship and breakfast while we plan for the upcoming year.



Women's Fellowship Meeting - The February meeting of the Women's Fellowship will be on *February 10 @ 7:00pm* at Pat Miller's house. This is our Book Meeting so come with any suggestions of books you loved or just come and discover something new for you reading enjoyment. Devotions will be led by Maureen Dempsey and Refreshments will be served by Dolores Thornhill and Pat Miller.

Women's Fellowship Annual Banquet - And here's something we look forward to every year! This year's banquet will take place on *Saturday, March 7 @ 6:00pm* in the church dining room. **Please note that the date changed; it is not the date that was printed in last year's WF Booklet.*



Our favorite gourmet chef, Fletcher Nehring will again delight our taste buds with his delicious meal creations. We never know what the meal will be until that night, but it's always a special treat. The banquet is for women only, who will be pampered and waited on by men of the church, followed by some entertainment following the meal. It's an evening you won't want to miss!

Good Works

The Good Works group got off to a great start in 2026! We were busy making Valentines for some special residents of Westhampton. I hope that some of you reading this are on our mailing list! A reminder that in February we meet on the **4th Wednesday** because of school vacation. We will be working at the library to help with some cleaning and organizing chores. Good Works dates for the remainder of the year: February 25, March 18, April 15, May 20. Email Sarah Madden with any questions or ideas. sjbmadden23@gmail.com.



From Your Stewardship Committee:

Love Your Neighbor

Jesus said, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the greatest and first commandment. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets." ~ Matthew 22:37-40

What a shame that February, the one month of the year with keen focus on love, is also the shortest. We sure could use a lot more love in our world, especially for our neighbor.

The last 12 months have been particularly hard. Currently in very short supply, more love for neighbor would go a long way in helping us to solve our problems. Love for neighbor is integral to not only good discipleship, but also good stewardship. The greater the "love for neighbor" factor in our lives, the better stewards we will be of every blessing God provides: creation, time, relationships, money, possessions, health... to name just a few. By cultivating love for neighbor we will also enjoy a happier life and promote a healthier and more civil society. The opposite is also true. Cultivating enmity for neighbor leaves us sour, selfish and cynical, while also making our nation angry and selfish.

This year make February "Love Your Neighbor" month in your personal devotions and your congregational life. Give the concept breathing room in your life. Keep it in your thoughts, sow it in our hearts, talk about it to your family and friends. Pray for God to teach you what it means to love our neighbor. Pray for God to give you the strength and will to live it. And watch as love heals and invigorates your life... and our world. ~ Copyright © 2021, Rev. Robert Blezard



LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR
AS YOURSELF.

MATTHEW 22:39

	Final 2025 Actuals	2025 Annual Budget
Pledged Local	109,044	98,822
Non-Pledged Local	14,738	9,000
Other Local	11,654	28,202
TOTAL LOCAL	135,436	136,024
Mission Pledged	10,148	10,724
Special Offerings	8,873	6,736
TOTAL MISSIONS	19,021	17,460

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.* Please visit www.westhamptonchurchccc.org to volunteer or for more information.

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...January 28 this month. To help, visit www.tinyurl.com/takeandeat.

From Your Energy Advocate

Happy February, Westhampton! In our second installment of *Why Electrify?*, we're focusing on what heat pumps are, and how they can help make upgrading your home heating system more cost effective. You may think of heat pumps only as those space-age looking things on the wall. In reality, the term heat pump is a general term for a mechanism that moves (pumps) heat from a cooler place to a warmer place. Refrigerators, dehumidifiers, and air conditioners are all a type of heat pump!

The cool thing about heat pumps is that they're one of the most efficient heating and cooling technologies available today (often 2 - 4 times more efficient than furnaces or boilers) because they move heat rather than create it. Paired with weatherization and insulation, they often use much less energy to heat or cool your space. Efficiency Maine has a great Residential Heating System Cost Calculator, which will help you compare the cost of heat pumps to your current system. You can access that calculator at this link: <https://www.efficiencymaine.com/at-home/heating-cost-comparison/>

While heat pumps can have higher upfront costs than traditional systems, incentives make a big difference. Mass Save rebates can substantially reduce installation costs, and the State of Massachusetts has recently introduced a reduced electricity rate during the heating season for those who have a heat pump in their home. If you're curious whether upgrading your heating system makes financial sense for your home, reach out to Westhampton's Energy Advocate, Hannah Davis, at 413-529-1400 x 781 or visit masssave.com/community-first/hampton to explore options, incentives, and next steps.

Council on Aging

February COA Luncheon

All are welcome to partake in a delicious homecooked potluck luncheon on *Thursday, February 12 @ 12noon* at the church. Kudos will go to the newly and almost-60-year-olds who come to mingle with the luncheon veterans.



HRHS Life Skills Class: Soup for Seniors

The HRHS Life Skills Class is proud to give back by making and delivering delicious homemade soup to seniors in our community. High school life skills students are cooking and delivering homemade soup to Westhampton residents that are 60+ years of age. Each delivery brings not only a warm meal, but friendly conversation and a reminder that no one is forgotten. This program helps reduce social isolation for seniors while teaching students the value of service, empathy, and community connection. Together, we're building a stronger, more caring community, one bowl at a time.

How it works: Order soup and have it delivered right to your home by HRHS students! Place your order by *Monday, February 9* by contacting Julia Lennen at 413-537-9880 or jslennen@gmail.com for your delivery on *Friday, February 13*.

Save the Date – 4th Grade Talent Show!

As reliable as the earth rotating around the sun, Ms. Overstreet and her talented 4th graders step out in March to entertain us with their clever skits, unusual jokes and many talents. Mark your calendars and be sure to join us on Thursday, March 12 @ 12noon in the church dining room.

Sand... Winter is NOT Over!

If you would like a bucket of sand with some salt like what they use of the roads, contact: Julia 413-537-9880 or jslennen@gmail.com to arrange a delivery. Please specify where you want the bucket placed; if you have last year's bucket to exchange, leave it out. Special thanks to the Highway Dept for helping us stay on our feet.

Jessie Krug Honored

at Boston Post Golden Cane Ceremony

On Saturday, January 10, the Westhampton Public Library was filled with warmth, laughter, and heartfelt emotion as the town gathered to celebrate a cherished tradition — the Boston Post Golden Cane Ceremony. Nearly 90 people attended to honor Jessie Krug, age 98, who was recognized as the oldest member of the Westhampton community.

Jessie was presented with the iconic Boston Post Golden Cane, a symbol of longevity and community history. Her name was formally added to the town's Golden Cane plaque, and she also received a Certificate of Recognition from the Commonwealth, presented on behalf of State Representative Lindsay Sabadosa. Family members who were unable to travel joined the celebration from afar via Zoom, making the event even more special.

The ceremony featured stories from Jessie's life, shared by friends and loved ones, that brought both laughter and tears to the room. The reflections painted a picture of a life well lived and deeply connected to family, friends, and community.

In accepting the honor, Jessie shared her gratitude and surprise, saying, *"I grew up knowing about the Boston Post Cane, but I never thought I would be receiving it. I will cherish it. Thank you."*

The afternoon was a touching reminder of the importance of honoring our elders and preserving the traditions that connect generations. The town of Westhampton was proud to celebrate Jessie Krug and her remarkable 98 years (and counting).



At the Westhampton Library

Hours: Mon/Thurs 2-8pm; Tues/Wed 9am-12pm & 1-5pm; Sat 10am-1pm
Library closed Presidents Day February 16

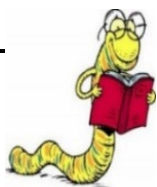
Please check the town website or Facebook or Instagram @WesthamptonPublicLibrary for library updates.

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

To place a request for curbside pick-up, email westhampton@cwmar.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**
Yoga is drop-in, first-come/first-served; registration not required. Please check Facebook and the town calendar for updates on yoga at the library.
- **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
- **Coffee & Chat** – Wed @ 10am-12pm
- **Energy Advocate Office Hours** 3rd Wed @ 1-2pm
- **Tech Connect drop-in tech help** – 4th Thurs @ 2-4pm



For Children & Teens

- **CFCE Playgroup** - Tuesdays @ 10:30am
- **Storytime with Emily** - Wednesdays @ 10:30am
- **Music with Naomi:** Wednesdays – Feb 18, 25 and March 4 @ 3pm. Special thanks to the Friends of the Westhampton Public Library and the Lyn Keating Programming Fund for sponsoring this fun music and movement 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.
 - LEGO Club – 1st Thurs Feb 5 @ 3:30pm
 - Open Crafting - 2nd Thurs Feb 12 @ 3:30pm
 - Switch Happy Hour - 3rd Thurs Feb 19 @ 3:30pm
 - Comics Club - 4th Thurs Feb 26 @ 3:30pm
- **Teen Craft Night** – 3rd Thurs Feb 19 @ 6pm. This month's craft will be open needle felting. *Email Emily at ewayne@cwmar.org to sign up!

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 information, please visit: <https://tinyurl.com/439y6p3d>

Art Reception - Jan Ruby-Crystal "Handmade Paper Possibilities"

Thursday, February 5 @ 5:30 – 7:30pm

Handmade Paper Possibilities will feature artworks made from handmade paper using traditional and non-traditional techniques. The artwork ranges from flat designs to dimensional forms using a variety of materials from dyes to paint, incorporating natural, handmade and manufactured materials.

Author Visit - Patricia Lee Lewis

Thursday, February 12 at 6:30pm

Local author Patricia Lee Lewis will give a talk on her new novel *Thorns of the Mesquite* on Thursday, February 12 @ 6:30pm. All are welcome to attend. Special thanks to the Friends of Westhampton Public Library and the Lyn Keating Programming Fund for sponsoring this event.



From the publisher, Levellers Press: Dona Rose Willis's life on a vast West Texas ranch in 1938 is shaped by hard work, a starkly beautiful landscape, and a loveless marriage. Everything shifts when her orphaned niece Annalou arrives, and Samuel Washington, a Black man, seeks refuge from a lynch mob, thrusting Dona into a dangerous fight against brutal prejudices. A powerful and timely tale of historic fiction, *Thorns of the Mesquite* paints a stirring portrait of a woman's awakening — of love and the resilient spirit demanded to fight for what's right against staggering odds.

Peace & Joy Workshop w/ Roslyn Malkin

Saturday, February 28 @ 10:30am - 12:30pm

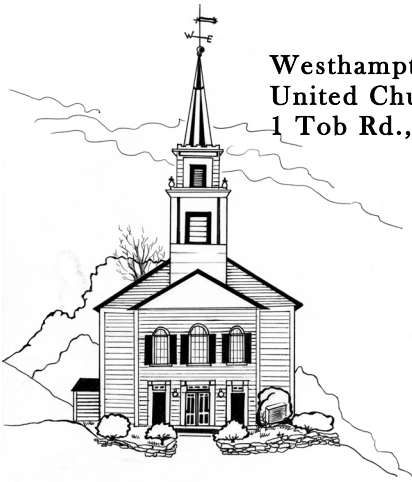
Come and discover with Roslyn new ways to use writing, drawing, humor, self-compassion and more to bring greater peace and joy into your life and relationships. With guest appearances by the dolphins and whales! This workshop will be presented by Roslyn Malkin, Ph.D. Roslyn is a personal and spiritual mentor, author, family business consultant, world traveler, and lover of bad puns. Visit: liveyourgreatness.net. Light refreshments will be provided. Optional: Bring a small object to help create our sacred space. **To register:** email westhampton@cwmar.org or call 413-527-5386. Special thanks to the Friends of Westhampton Public Library and the Lyn Keating Programming Fund for sponsoring this event.

WES PTO

- The PTO has been prepping for a calendar raffle that will be held during the month of March. The calendars will be available for sale during the month of February. They will be \$10 and each day in the month of March a name will be chosen as a winner for the prize of the day! If you're interested in purchasing one please reach out to the PTO @ wes.pto.news@gmail.com. We'd like to send a big thank you for all the generous donations of prizes to make this raffle successful.
- The PTO is working with Scholastic Books to hold a Book Fair in March.
- Our next meeting will be held on Tuesday Feb 3rd this month via zoom.

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Westhampton Congregational
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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.

How to Apply for a Burning Permit

Brush burning season is allowed in Westhampton between January 15 to May 1. The Town of Westhampton only allows burning on Saturdays and Sundays between the hours of 10am - 4pm with a valid permit and approval. **To obtain a burning permit, you must submit the request ONLINE** at <https://westhamptonma.gov/departments/fire-department/>, the Fire Dept's section of the town website (or from the home page, you can find the Fire Dept under the Governance tab). There you can read rules and regulations about open burning, **but the Request an Open Burning Permit tab will ONLY be visible and available on Saturdays and Sundays between 7 – 10am.** Click that request tab, fill in your contact info, agree to the rules and regulations, then click Submit. You will see an immediate response online, but no email will be sent. Information will be posted on the Fire Department's homepage as to whether or not burning is allowed that day.



IF you can't do this process online, there is a phone call option ONLY between 7 - 8am the morning you wish to burn, you call the Fire Department non-emergency number - 413-529-7181. Permits will not be issued by phone to anyone calling after 8am.

The Department reserves the right to inspect any burning site at any time and to revoke the permit if terms and conditions of outdoor burning are not being followed.

SWEET Benefit Breakfast for Habitat for Humanity

Saturday, February 21 @ 7am – 1pm



Westhampton's annual opportunity for a seasonal treat combined with the sweet feeling of helping others is almost here. Steve's Sugar Shack will again host this SWEET Benefit Breakfast on opening day, *Saturday, February 21 from 7am - 1pm* on behalf of the Westhampton Congregational United Church of Christ. Steve will donate a portion of every breakfast sold to Pioneer Valley Habitat for Humanity. And there will be donation jars on the tables to accept additional more meaningful donations as well. Thank you for supporting Habitat year after year!



SWEET!