



BELL TOWER

A Westhampton Church and Community Newsletter
published by Westhampton Congregational United Church of Christ,
an Open and Affirming Church
APRIL 2026 Vol. 55 No. 4

Message from Pastor Carol...

If March is the threshold, then April is the doorway opening. As this month begins, we are already several weeks into spring, a season of renewal and quiet welcoming of new life into the world. Poet Lynn Ungar captures this beautifully in her poem *Camas Lilies*, inviting us to imagine pausing, stepping out of our hurried schedules, and noticing what is beginning to bloom in our lives:

*"And you – what of your rushed and useful life?
Imagine setting it all down –
papers, plans, appointments, everything –
leaving only a note:
'Gone to the fields to be lovely.
Be back when I'm through with blooming.' "*



Persian poet Hafiz writes, *"Spring and all its flowers now joyously break their vow of silence. It is time for celebration."* In this season, the ordinary world begins to feel quietly sacred again.

In the Christian calendar, April carries us through the final days of Lent and into the celebration of Easter, a story centered on hope, renewal, and the enduring promise that life can emerge even from the most difficult places. Whether one observes Easter as a sacred story of faith or simply as a symbol of spring's renewal, its message resonates widely: new beginnings are possible, and light continues to break through darkness.

Throughout history and across cultures, spring reminds us that life is resilient. Seeds hidden beneath the soil begin to grow. What once seemed dormant begins to stir again. Perhaps April invites us to notice those signs around us and within us.

***Where do you see new life appearing in your days?
What small hopes are beginning to take shape?***

At the church this month, we will walk through these themes during Holy Week. On **Maundy Thursday at 7:00pm**, our friends from Southampton UCC will join us for a quiet service of readings and hymns. As the candles are gradually extinguished, we remember the ancient story of the disciples' fear and the passion of Christ, leaving the sanctuary in silence as we keep watch in our own way for the coming dawn.

Early on Easter morning we gather out on the hillside at **6:00am for a Sunrise service**, greeting the day as the light returns. Later, at **10:00am**, we celebrate together in the church with music, joy, and the bright promise of resurrection.

Whether you join us for worship or simply enjoy the beauty of the season unfolding around you, my hope is that April brings you moments of renewal, connection, and quiet wonder.

The doorway is opening.

May we step through and discover renewal, connection, and wonder.

Joy always,

Carol

Holy Week and Easter Services...

- Maundy Thursday Service, April 2 @ 7pm
 - in the church dining room; Southampton UCC invited
- Easter Sunrise Service and Breakfast, April 5 @ 6am
 - on the hill above the church on Tob Road
- Easter Morning Worship, April 5 @ 10am .
 - in the church sanctuary



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

April - Ilene Lorow

Greeters

April - ↑ Kevin and Lorraine O'Keefe
↓ Marion Miller

Coffee Hour

April 5 - Sarah Madden
April 12 - Jonah Jeffords
April 19 - Grace Linscott Willard
and Lynn Willard
April 26 - Bill and Janice Tracy

Flowers

April 5 - Easter Flowers
April 12 - Jean Webster
April 19 - Cheryl and Steve Malinowski
April 26 - Mary and John Barber

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.	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



Westhampton Special Town Election on Proposition 2½ Override – April 11

The Westhampton Selectboard has scheduled a Special Town Election for Saturday, April 11, at which voters will be asked to consider a Proposition 2½ override for Fiscal Year 2027. The proposed override would allow the Town to increase its property tax levy beyond the limit otherwise permitted under state law.

Proposition 2½, enacted in 1980 and effective beginning in 1982, is a Massachusetts state law that limits the amount a municipality may raise in property taxes each year. Under the law, a town's total property tax levy may increase by no more than 2.5 percent over the previous year's levy limit, plus an allowance for new growth. This restriction is commonly referred to as the "levy ceiling." A community may exceed that limit only if voters approve an override at a regular or special election.

If approved, the proposed override would permanently increase the Town's levy limit, and future property tax calculations would be based on that higher amount. If the override is not approved, the Town would be required to operate within the existing levy constraints established under Proposition 2½.

The Selectboard and Finance Committee will host informational meetings at the Town Hall on March 25, March 31 and April 9 to review the Town's current revenues, projected expenses, and the potential impacts of approval or disapproval of the override.



Easter Egg Hunt

- **WHEN:** Saturday, April 4 @ 10am
- **WHERE:** Town Center – by church and Town Hall
- **WHO:** Children in Westhampton ages 1 thru 6th grade

YOU are invited to an Easter Egg Hunt! Parents, bring your children and their own basket for gathering. There will be different “hunting” areas separated for each age group. In case of inclement weather, the hunt will be held inside. Come and enjoy this fun activity provided by the WOW Committee of the Westhampton Church. If you would like to volunteer to help, call Pat Miller at 527-2404.



Family Fun Bingo Night

Friday, April 10 at 7pm at the church

CE invites you to our rescheduled Bingo Night on Friday, April 10 @ 7:00pm at the church. The event will include multiple bingo rounds and fun prizes. Bring your friends and family and let's play Bingo!

Good Works

Happy Spring from the Good Works group! Good Works was busy for our March gathering. We planted flower seeds (with the help of Maureen Dempsey from Intervale Farm). Maureen will nurture these flowers in her greenhouse and then we will plant them around town in May.



HEIFER
INTERNATIONAL

Heifer Project! We also planned a support project for Heifer Project International in April. We are collecting money to donate a water buffalo. Water buffalo act as versatile "living tractors", providing labor-saving agricultural power, nutrient-rich milk, and fertilizer to farmers in Asia and South America. For over 80 years, Heifer International has helped lift families across the world out of poverty by providing them with animals, tools, and knowledge to help overcome hunger. The children in the Good Works Group voted that they wanted to try and raise enough money for a water buffalo since these animals provide many assets to a family. Good Works is hoping to raise \$250 for the water buffalo. If we raise more than \$250 (that would be so exciting!), the group will decide on other smaller animals (goat, sheep, chickens, bees) that could provide support for families. **Please help us raise \$250 to provide a water buffalo to a family in need! Donation boxes can be found at the Westhampton Church, at the Westhampton Elementary School, or at Outlook Farm until April 14.** The Good Works group will meet right after that deadline on *Wednesday, April 15 @ 3:15 – 4:30pm*, and the final meeting of the year will be on May 20. Email Sarah Madden is you have questions or perhaps other good ideas for future projects at sjbmadden23@gmail.com.

New!

Good Works Teens

Good Works Teens is a non-religious group that will meet monthly to work on a variety of projects centered around caring for our world, our friends, and our neighbors. All teens welcome on Friday, April 17 @ 2:30 – 4:00pm at the church. For questions or for more information, contact Karina Swenson at 413-539-1175, or Sue Tracy Small at suetouchet@email.com.



Women's Fellowship Booklet

This valuable little booklet contains lots of helpful information from April 2026 – March 2027. In it you can remind yourself when you signed up for Coffee Hour or Flowers, who is on the various Women's Fellowship and church committees, when the WF programs are, and special worship and event dates...a very hand resource! Pick up your copy at the church soon!



NOTE – The Women's Fellowship Budget Meeting will take place after worship on Sunday, April 12 at approximately 11:15am in the Ladies Parlor.

2026 Church Directory

The 2026 Church Directory has been updated and printed and are available at the church. Feel free to take as many copies as you wish for yourself, your family and friends.

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 to find more information, please visit www.westhamptonchurchcc.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's turn is on 4th Saturdays, so that means April 25 this month. Visit www.tinyurl.com/takeandeat for more info or to volunteer your help.

From Your Stewardship Committee...

	YTD Actuals 3/20/26	YTD Budget 3/20/26
Pledged Local	23,364	25,747
Non-Pledged Local	1,223	3,000
Other Local	7,803	6,926
TOTAL LOCAL	32,390	35,673
Mission Pledged	2,201	2,893
Special Offerings	1,095	1,470
TOTAL MISSIONS	3,296	4,363

*I have told you these things,
so that in me you may have peace.
In this world you will have trouble.*

*But take heart!
I have overcome the world!*

~ John 16:33



Council on Aging - April Lunch Program

Westhampton Wildlife with Laurie Sanders Thursday April 9 @ 12pm at the church



Westhampton resident Laurie Sanders will talk and take questions about Westhampton wildlife and the importance role our town plays when it comes to wildlife movement on a regional scale. She will also show some of her wildlife videos from the 10+ trail cameras. Laurie has been enchanting Facebook users with her wildlife videos in the "What's Up Westhampton" Facebook Group as well as for Historic Northampton where she is a Co-Executive Director.

Westhampton Firefighter's Association Annual Benefit Pancake Breakfast

April 11, 2026 @ 7am – 1pm

Come support our dedicated volunteers at the annual Westhampton Firefighter Association's Benefit Breakfast at Steve's Sugar Shack on Saturday, April 11 from 7:00am - 1:00pm. Our firemen and EMTs will take your breakfast orders, cook and serve you, and will receive 100% of the proceeds of your breakfast price...AND you will have the opportunity to give additional donations to your heart's content in the jars on each table. Come show your appreciation for these local heroes, who continue to serve us well 24 - 7 - 365!



From Your Energy Advocate

Happy April, Westhampton! As the snow melts and the landscape starts to turn green again, it's a good moment to think about the connection between our homes and the environment around us. In this installment of *Why Electrify?*, we're looking at how electrification can help reduce climate pollution.

Many homes in Massachusetts still rely on fossil fuels like oil, propane, or natural gas for heating, hot water, and cooking. Burning these fuels releases carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases that contribute to climate change. In fact, heating buildings is one of the largest sources of climate pollution in our state.

Electric appliances, especially highly efficient technologies like heat pumps, can dramatically reduce those emissions. Unlike fossil-fueled equipment, electric systems can run on energy from an increasingly clean power grid. As Massachusetts continues to add more renewable energy like solar and wind, the environmental impact of using electricity will continue to shrink.

If you're curious about which electrification upgrades make the most sense for your home, reach out to Westhampton's Energy Advocate Hannah Davis at 413-529-1400 x781. For options, incentives, and next steps, visit <https://www.masssave.com/community-first/hamptons>.

HRHS Improv Fundraising Breakfast

April 18 @ 8 – 10am at the church

Improvers Anonymous has been Hampshire Regional High School's improvisational comedy troupe since 2008. It currently features 11 students in grades 9-12, who will perform a variety of comedic scenes based on audience suggestions. The event is on Saturday, April 18 @ 8-10am. The cost is \$10/person (children 5 and under are free) and gets you a hearty breakfast of pancakes, sausage and coffee, plus the entertainment. Proceeds help to pay for the group's annual trip to Boston for workshops and shows at Improv Asylum.



WES PTO

Happy Spring! The WES PTO has been very busy, we had a very successful calendar raffle. We raised over \$2,000. It was one of our most successful fundraisers yet! Congratulations to all the winners who received great prizes throughout the month of March. We also had our Scholastic Book Fair in mid-March and we wrapped it out by hosting a fun family night of Books, Bingo and More! Thank you to all of the students, teachers and parent volunteers who helped to make the night a success. Coming up this month we will be selling flower baskets again, please reach out if you're interested in purchasing one or two. They will be ready for delivery at the beginning of May. Our next meeting will be on Monday April 6th @ 7pm via Zoom. Please email wes.pto.news@gmail.com if you have any questions.

Witherell Memorial Educational Scholarships

Applications for the school year starting Fall 2026 are open! Visit to find the 2026 application on the Westhampton Congregational United Church of Christ's website westhamptonchurchucc.org. In 2018, a bequest was given to the church by Carol Witherell, a former resident of Westhampton. The church was given oversight of the fund designed to help those eligible with higher education expenses. Last year, this fund awarded a total of \$54,000 to 14 deserving recipients!

To apply, you must be, or will be, a high school graduate, a resident of Westhampton and/or an active member of the Westhampton Church. This award is for people of any age for any higher education: 4 year college, community college, trade schools, retraining and certificate programs. If you received a previous award and are still in school, please remember that you can apply again. Completed hard copy applications and supporting documents must be printed and either mailed to the church postmarked no later than April 30, 2026, or may be dropped off at the circulation desk of the Westhampton Library during regular hours, also no later than April 30, 2026. Late or incomplete applications cannot be considered. Apply today!



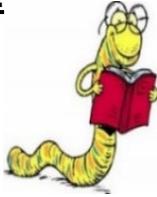
At the Westhampton Library

Hours: Mon/Thurs 2-8pm; Tues/Wed 9am-12pm & 1-5pm; Sat 10am-1pm
Closed April 20 for Patriots' Day

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
- **Scrabble Group** Tuesdays @ 2pm
- **Book Group** – 4th Tuesdays @ 7pm. April is National Poetry Month. You are invited to bring a poem to share with the group.
- **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 @ 10-11:30am
- **Tech Connect drop-in tech help** – 4th Thurs @ 2-4pm



For Children & Teens

- **CFCE Playgroup** - Tuesdays @ 10:30am
- **Storytime with Emily** - Wednesdays @ 10:30am
- **Teen Craft Night** – 3rd Thurs April 16 @ 6pm. This month's craft will be an amigurumi mushroom. Amigurumi is the Japanese art of knitting or crocheting small, stuff yarn plushies. *To sign up, email Emily at ewayne@cwmar.org!

Ellen Koteen - Art Reception

Thursday, April 23 @ 5:30 - 7:30pm

Taking photographs of nature gives me joy and a sense of peace. Capturing the beauty of a flower, animal or landscape in a photograph allows me to hold on to that joy and to share it with others. I delight in and am inspired by the detail, design and colors contained within a single flower, an animal or scene. I have a sense of losing myself in the experience of trying to preserve the incredible beauty and harmony of nature and the light and shadows of any given moment. Hours fly by in this pursuit. The opportunity to show my work is a gift. ~ Ellen Koteen, Photographer

Author Visit - Maureen Groden, RN

Thursday, April 9 @ 6pm



Meet local author and hospice nurse Maureen Groden, RN and hear about her new book *When a Loved One is Dying: Conversations About Care, Connection and Coping*. When faced with a loved one's serious illness, many

families find themselves overwhelmed, uncertain, and afraid. In this compassionate guide, hospice nurse and educator Maureen Groden, RN, offers a sympathetic and deeply human glimpse into one of life's most challenging passages. Copies of the book will be available for purchase at the event. Stop by the library and receive a 30% coupon code for the book if you wish to purchase it ahead of time.

*Special thanks to the Friends of Westhampton Public Library and the Lyn Keating Programming Fund for sponsoring this event.

The Klines: Appalachian Traditional Songs

Monday, April 13 @ 1:30pm

Michael and Carrie Kline's lives are inspired by Appalachian music and culture. Their performances travel from ancient caves to kitchen music. Their voices carry the songs with truth and authenticity, and their guitar accompaniments and haunting harmonies get you where you live. As folklorist-musicians, the Klines weave songs and stories, evoking the times that really matter, time with family and friends, spiritual times, wrapped in a patchwork quilt of vivid imagery. You can smell the biscuits baking. The band also features two Valley greats: Joe Blumenthal, known widely for his upright bass accompaniment in Klezmer, Arabic, Balkan, Bluegrass and Old-Time settings and Jim Armenti, a beloved name in Western Mass, known as a band member for the Young At Heart Chorus and the Lonesome Brothers. Here he performs his dynamic mandolin work.

*Special thanks to the Friends of Westhampton Public Library and the Lyn Keating Programming Fund for sponsoring this event.

Katie LaFond and Judee Wayne

Flute Concert

Saturday, April 18 @ 11am

Enjoy beautiful flute music performed by Westhampton's own Katie LaFond and Judee Wayne. Light refreshments will be served.

*Special thanks to the Friends of Westhampton Public Library and the Lyn Keating Programming Fund for sponsoring this event.



Lara Tupper Writing Workshop:

Mary Oliver as Muse

Saturday, April 25 @ 10:30 – 12pm

Beloved Massachusetts poet Mary Oliver (1935 – 2019) wrote of self-compassion and the natural world. In this writing workshop, Lara Tupper will help you explore these themes in Oliver's poems and in brief writing exercises. No writing experience or prior knowledge of Oliver necessary, just a willingness to be curious on the page. All adults are welcome to attend. Please bring a notebook, a pen, and any writing tools that serve you. Registration is required. Please register with Lara at <https://www.laratupper.com/contact>.

*Special thanks to the Friends of Westhampton Public Library and the Lyn Keating Programming Fund for sponsoring this event.

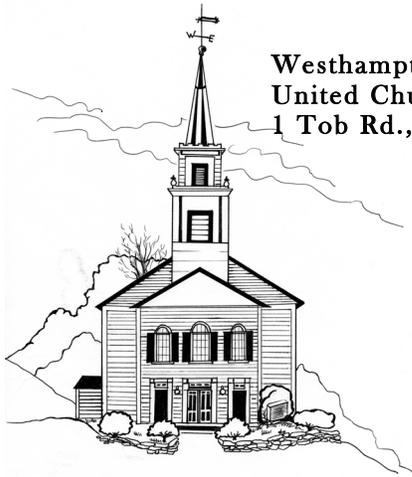


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APRIL 2026 Vol. 55 No. 4

Westhampton Congregational
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1 Tob Rd., Westhampton MA 01027

NON-PROFIT
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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.



Mother's Day Blanket Dedications



Please make a contribution of \$5.00 to help bring the warmth and comfort of a blanket to those in need through Church World Service for Blanket Sunday, which is on *Mother's Day*. You may dedicate your gift in honor of or in memory of a special mother figure in your life. Dedications will be listed in the Sunday bulletin on *Mother's Day*, May 10, 2026. Contributions and dedications will be accepted until Sunday, May 3. Please turn in this form along with your donation by bringing or mailing to the church at 1 Tob Road, Westhampton MA 01027. Checks should be made payable to Westhampton Congregational UCC.

List my dedication as follows:

In memory of: _____

In honor of: _____

Given by: _____ Amt. enclosed: _____