



# BELL TOWER

A Westhampton Church and Community Newsletter  
published by Westhampton Congregational United Church of Christ,  
an Open and Affirming Church  
JANUARY 2026 Vol. 55 No. 1

## Message from Pastor Carol...



## EPIPHANY

**"Every day epiphanies encourage us to cherish everything.  
Today a new sun has risen. Everything lives.  
Everything can speak to your soul passionately  
if you will be still enough to listen." ~ Sarah Ban Breathnach**

**When was the last time you had an epiphany?** One of those moments when something suddenly "clicked" and the world felt just a bit brighter. January often invites us into that kind of noticing. It's a month shaped by new beginnings: the turning of the calendar, the slowing of winter days, and the quiet hope that something new might be possible. Sometimes epiphanies arrive in a flash. More often they come as a gentle shift in perspective or a simple moment of clarity when we least expect it.

Across many traditions, January is a time to honor what has been while looking toward what might grow next. It's a season of reflection and intention setting, of embracing change and letting go of what no longer serves us. Even the natural world joins in. On January 3rd, the Earth reaches **perihelion**, its closest point to the sun each year. It's almost as if the planet itself leans in for a warm embrace, reminding us of the steady rhythm of endings, beginnings, and renewal.

In the Christian faith we enter the **Season of Epiphany** which celebrates the light of divine love revealed in new ways. One simple tradition is sharing **Star Words**: everyday words printed on star shapes, invitations to notice small moments of wisdom, wonder, or grace throughout the coming year. They are gentle reminders that meaning often arrives in ordinary places when we stay open to it.



My hope for each of us this January, whatever our background or beliefs, is that we find space to pause, reflect, and listen to our own hearts and to the hearts of those around us. May this new year bring moments of clarity, unexpected insight, and fresh hope. And may we all be surprised by the everyday epiphanies that help us grow in compassion, courage, and joy. **Wishing you light and new beginnings!**

**JOY always,**

*Carol*

- ★ If you would like a Star Word, please call or text me.  
and in honor of Star Words, please look for a puzzle about stars inside!

## Church Annual Meeting



All church members and friends are encouraged to participate in the Church Annual Meeting following worship on *Sunday, January 25*. Please join us for morning worship at 10:00am, then we will gather in the dining room for a Potluck Brunch, organized by the Council. There will be a sign-up sheet at coffee hour for several weeks prior to the annual meeting, but please feel free to bring whatever you wish to share if you are able. After our meal, we will begin the meeting at approximately 12:00noon. Your voice and opinions are important to the discussion and decisions for the church budgeting and programming for 2026. We hope to see you there!

## Church Annual Reports Due

Attention committee chairs / secretaries, please submit your annual reports no later than *Sunday, January 11*, via email to Julie Holt in the church office at [westhamptonchurchucc@comcast.net](mailto:westhamptonchurchucc@comcast.net). The Annual Report will be finalized and available for distribution on January 18, one week prior to Annual Meeting to give everyone ample time to read and review and come prepared for discussion at the meeting. Printed copies of the Annual Report will be available at the church, and will also be made available electronically by email to the all-church email list and posted to the church website: [www.westhamptonchurchucc.org](http://www.westhamptonchurchucc.org).



### Regular Church Meetings

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

### Women's Fellowship Director

January - Jean Webster

### Greeters

January - ↑ Dolores and Mark Thornhill  
↓ Wendy Blow

### Coffee Hour

January 4 - Julie and Stephen Holt  
January 11 - Wendy Blow and Lori Ingraham  
January 18 - Lynn Willard  
January 25 - Council – Annual Meeting Pot Luck

### Flowers

January 4 - Poinsettias  
January 11 - Lori and David Ingraham  
January 18 - Lynn and Bill Jean Willard  
January 25 - Patty & Bob Greene, Bonnie Paton

### **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](mailto:carolbsmith12@gmail.com)  
860-798-7771

#### **Church Office contact info:**

[westhamptonchurchucc@comcast.net](mailto:westhamptonchurchucc@comcast.net)  
413-527-4204

Website: [www.westhamptonchurchucc.org](http://www.westhamptonchurchucc.org)

Facebook - [Westhampton Congregational  
United Church of Christ](https://www.facebook.com/WesthamptonCongregationalUnitedChurchofChrist)

### 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 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 <sup>st</sup> , 3 <sup>rd</sup> ) – PSC
	6pm	Friends of the Library (1 <sup>st</sup> ) – Library
	6pm	Library Trustees (2 <sup>nd</sup> ) – Library
	7pm	Planning Board (2 <sup>nd</sup> ) Town Hall
	7pm	Zoning Bd of Appeals (2 <sup>nd</sup> ) Town Hall
Wed.	8am – 3pm	Town Coordinator – Town Hall
	8am – 4pm	Town Clerk – Town Hall
	6pm – 8pm	Transfer Station hours
	7pm	Conservation (1 <sup>st</sup> , 3 <sup>rd</sup> ) – 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 <sup>st</sup> ) 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](mailto:administration@westhamptonma.gov)  
[www.WesthamptonMA.gov](http://www.WesthamptonMA.gov)

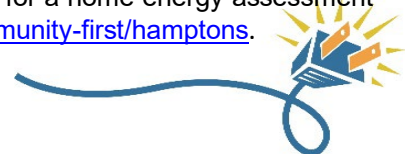


### WES PTO

Happy New Year from the WES PTO. We are starting off the year prepping and planning for a calendar raffle fundraiser, be on the lookout for your chance to win! We are also prepping for our annual family fun night at the Springfield Thunderbirds game which will be coming up in March. More information will be coming soon at our next meeting which is scheduled for *Monday January 5th at 7pm* via zoom. If you're interested in participating or if you have any questions please reach out to us at [wes.pto.news@gmail.com](mailto:wes.pto.news@gmail.com).

### From Your Energy Advocate

Happy New Year! And welcome to a new mini-series, *Why Electrify?*, where we'll take a practical look at why building electrification matters, how it works, and what incentives and programs can help offset the cost of making the switch. This month we're starting with the fundamentals: what can you electrify in your home today? Most people are familiar with heat pumps for space heating and cooling and with electric vehicles. But home electrification extends much further. Technologies like heat pump water heaters, induction cooking, and electric clothes dryers are proven, commercially available, and often more efficient and controllable than their fossil-fueled counterparts. You can even electrify your yard equipment! For more info about where these systems make the most sense, how to sequence upgrades, and what to consider when planning projects, reach out to Westhampton's Energy Advocate Hannah Davis, at 413-529-1400 x 781, and/or sign up for a home energy assessment at this link: [masssave.com/community-first/hamptons](https://masssave.com/community-first/hamptons).



## From Your Stewardship Committee

As we turn the page on the calendar and step into a new year, we're offered a wonderful opportunity to reflect, reset, and recommit ourselves to living as faithful stewards of all that God has entrusted to us. Stewardship is about more than finances — it encompasses every aspect of our lives: our time, talents, treasures, and the care we show for God's creation.

Scripture reminds us that everything we have belongs to God, and it encourages us to use our gifts to serve others: *"Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms."* (1 Peter 4:10) This year, let's take these words to heart and seek to be intentional in how we manage the resources, relationships, and responsibilities entrusted to us.

January is also an ideal time to review your budget and ensure it aligns with your values. Here are a few tips for financial stewardship:

1. **Create a Giving Plan:** Start by determining what percentage of your income you can give back. Even small, consistent contributions can make a big impact over time.
2. **Build an Emergency Fund:** Responsible stewardship includes planning for unexpected expenses.
3. **Reduce Debt:** If you're carrying debt, consider making a plan to reduce it this year. Financial freedom allows for more generous giving.

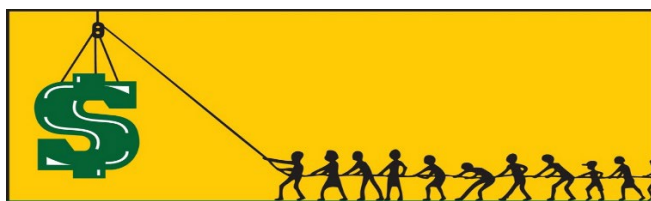


Faithful stewardship is a spiritual practice. It's not just a tactical effort but one that should be nurtured through other spiritual disciplines, like prayer.

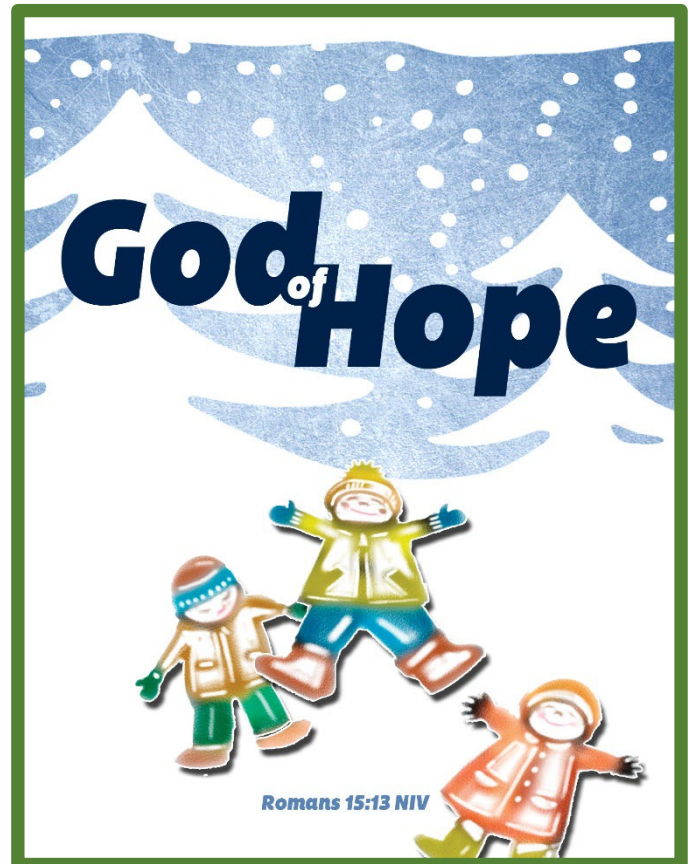
*Loving Creator, thank you for the blessings that have poured into our lives. Help us to be faithful stewards of all that has been entrusted to us. Guide us to use our time, talents, and treasures in ways that honor you and serve others. Amen.*

[Adapted from "Stewardship in the New Year," WUMF 2024 Stewardship Newsletter]

~ Your Stewardship Committee: Lynn, Larry, Sue



	YTD Actual 12/20/25	YTD Budget 12/20/25
Pledged Local	101,941	98,822
Non-Pledged Local	12,207	9,000
Other Local	11,095	28,202
<b>TOTAL LOCAL</b>	<b>125,243</b>	<b>136,024</b>
Mission Pledged	9,514	10,724
Special Offerings	6,127	6,736
<b>TOTAL MISSIONS</b>	<b>15,641</b>	<b>17,460</b>



## Good Works

Throughout December the Good Works Group collected mittens and gloves and we delivered them to It Takes a Village during our December session. We collected a lot of mittens and gloves! Thanks to anyone who donated. It was really good for the group to see all that goes on at It Takes a Village. We got a tour and heard a bit about all that the organization does to help support families in our area. In January, we will be thinking of ways to cheer some of the older members of our Westhampton community. Questions about Good Works? Contact Sarah Madden at [sjbmadden23@gmail.com](mailto:sjbmadden23@gmail.com). Remaining Good Works dates for the rest of the school year are: January 21, February 25 (4<sup>th</sup> Wednesday due to school vacation week), March 18, April 15 and May 20.

## 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 info, please visit [www.westhamptonchurchcc.org](http://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 takes our turn on 4<sup>th</sup> Saturdays...January 24 this month. To help, please visit [www.tinyurl.com/takeandeat](http://www.tinyurl.com/takeandeat).

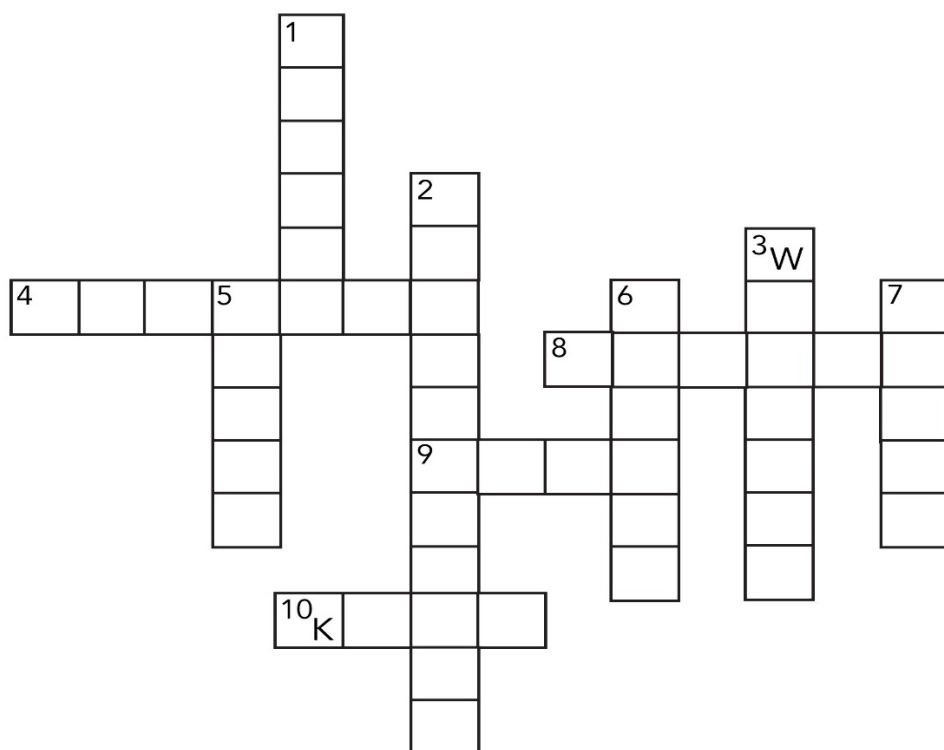




# THE WONDER OF STARS

The heavens display evidence of God's great power.  
What else does the Bible say about the sky?

*Directions: Use the clues and Bible references (all NIV) to complete the crossword.*



## DOWN

1. The sun, moon and stars do this to God. (Psalm 148:3)
2. God made these as numerous as the stars. (Genesis 26:4)
3. Don't do this to the stars and sky. (Deuteronomy 4:19)
5. What do the heavens declare? (Psalm 19:1)
6. The moon and the stars do this at night. (Psalm 136:9)
7. When we're pure, we do this like the stars. (Philippians 2:15)

## ACROSS

4. The heavens are the work of these. (Psalm 8:3)
8. On what day did God create the stars? (Genesis 1:14-19)
9. God calls each star by this. (Isaiah 40:26)
10. A star announced the arrival of him. (Matthew 2:2)

## At the Westhampton Library

Hours: Mon/Thurs 2-8pm; Tues/Wed 9am-12pm & 1-5pm; Sat 10am-1pm

Library closed New Year's Day January 1 and MLK Jr. Day January 19

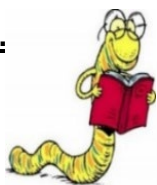
Please check the town website or Facebook or Instagram @WesthamptonPublicLibrary for library updates.

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@cwmares.org](mailto: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  
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
- **Energy Advocate Office Hours** 3<sup>rd</sup> Wed @ 1-2pm
- **Coffee & Chat** – Wed @ 10am-12pm
- **Tech Connect drop-in tech help** – 3<sup>rd</sup> Thurs @ 2-4pm



### For Children & Teens

- **CFCE Playgroup** - Tuesdays @ 10:30am
- **Storytime with Emily** - Wednesdays @ 10:30am
- **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.
  - No LEGO Club due to holiday
  - Open Crafting - 2<sup>nd</sup> Thurs Jan 8 @ 3:30pm
  - Switch Happy Hour - 3<sup>rd</sup> Thurs Jan 15 @ 3:30pm
  - Comics Club - 4<sup>th</sup> Thurs Jan 22 @ 3:30pm
  - Drop-in Games – 5<sup>th</sup> Thurs Jan 29 @ 3:30pm
- **Teen Craft Night** – 3<sup>rd</sup> Thursdays @ 6pm – Jan 15.  
This month's craft will be a Moth and lunar phases wall hanging. \*Email Emily at [ewayne@cwmares.org](mailto:ewayne@cwmares.org) at 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>



### Paint Night with Mary Cleary Thursday, January 22 @ 6 – 8pm

Please join Mary Cleary at the library for a watercolor workshop. Access your inner artist by learning watercolor techniques to compose a unique work of art. Supplies provided. Bring your creativity! Please sign up at the Westhampton Library as space is limited. **Register by calling 413-527-5386 or emailing [westhampton@cwmares.org](mailto:westhampton@cwmares.org).** Special thanks to the Friends of Westhampton Public Library and the Lyn Keating Programming Fund for sponsoring this program.

### Golden Cane

#### Presented to Jessie Krug Saturday, January 10 @ 11am

The Golden Cane is an honor given to the oldest resident in Westhampton. Sally Lawton held that honor since May 2023, and with her passing in October, our oldest resident is now Jessie Krug. All are invited to the Westhampton Library on *Saturday, January 10 @ 11am* when the Golden Cane will be presented to Jessie. This ceremony is a way for the town to publicly express its appreciation and celebrate her remarkable life and contributions. Do join us!

#### Julia Volkman on her TedX Talk Thursday, January 29th at 6pm

Hear local educator, Julia Volkman, discuss her recent TEDx talk on how common teaching practices inadvertently work against the brain's natural learning systems. Julia is an educator, researcher and mentor who has been teaching students and mentoring educators in both private and public school settings since 1997. She is a faculty member of the Brain Health Initiative, a guest lecturer for Harvard University's Neuroscience of Learning course, and the founder and president of Maitri Learning, an educational project devoted to evidence-based and child-centered learning. Julia earned her AMI 3–6+ diploma from the Montreal Montessori Training Centre, a bilingual program, and her master's degree from Harvard University, where her graduate research on the Montessori movable alphabet earned the Harvard Dean's Prize for Outstanding Research.

#### Peace & Joy Workshop w/ Roslyn Malkin Saturday, January 31st from 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](http://liveyourgreatness.net). Light refreshments will be provided. Optional: Bring a small object to help create our sacred space. **To register: call 413-527-5386 or email [westhampton@cwmares.org](mailto:westhampton@cwmares.org).**

### Council on Aging

#### I've Got a Secret! January Soup and Salad

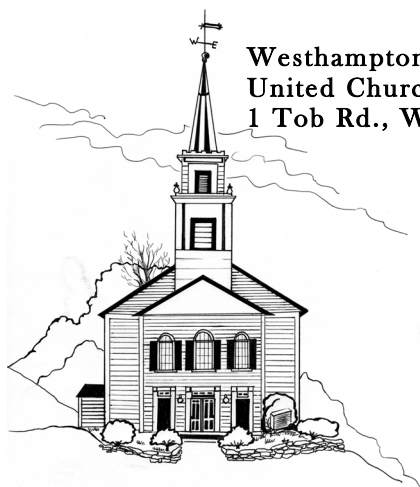
Is there a little-known fact about you? Do you have a "secret"? Perhaps you held a different kind of job or maybe you have an interesting family tree. Your secret can be silly or serious, the choice is up to you. Join us on January 8th, 2026 for the COA luncheon and find out something interesting about your friends and neighbors. Please bring your "secret" along with your name in an envelope and after a delicious lunch of soup, salad, bread and dessert, we will try to match the secrets with right person. We will have envelopes and paper at the luncheon in case you forget.



You're  
Invited!

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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](mailto:westhamptonchurchucc@comcast.net) no later than the 15<sup>th</sup> 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.

*"If we had*  
**NO WINTER, THE SPRING**  
**WOULD NOT BE SO PLEASANT.**  
*if we did not sometimes taste*  
*of adversity, prosperity would*  
*not be so welcome."*

—Anne Bradstreet