



# FIRST CHURCH CHATTER

November 2023

## Birthdays

### November

- 6 Terry Clark
- 8 Tenley Smith
- 18 Anne Skinner
- 18 Anna Duhan
- 19 Doris McNabb
- 29 Ed Bianchi

### December

- 6 Sam Smith
- 7 Leon Aalberts
- 7 Magnus Bernhardsson
- 8 Lynn Chick
- 9 Betsy Burris
- 21 Karen McComish
- 22 Jina Ford

This is another edition of our church newsletter. We thank those members and friends who contribute stories, biographies, reflections, letters, poems and encourage any who wish to contribute to our church newsletter. As you can read in this edition, we have many talented friends and church members. We would like to get to know all of you better and encourage you to send your thoughts, poems, stories to us to publish. Thanks so much.

The newsletter will be printed during each month and be sent via email to church members and friends, be sent by mail to those who would prefer a written copy and be available in the foyer for all to pick up when the church is reopened. In the meantime, we will deliver the Chatter to those who would prefer paper copy or don't receive email.

---

We are always looking for stories, poems, thoughts to contribute. If you have notices about upcoming events which you would like published, please let Carrie or Jody know and we will try to include. We try to publish by the beginning but realistically often it is sent out by the 10<sup>th</sup> or so.

---

## In Today's Chatter:

[Heard at Church Council 10-16-23.....](#)

.....Margy O'Connor

[Holiday Activities](#)

[Holiday Walk!](#)

[12-02-23](#)

[Live Brass!](#)

[12-19-23](#)

► **New Lock System Installed**

The electronic security system is up and running quite smoothly! Office hours, full church opening on Sunday morning, and scheduled activities are reliably programmed in, and doors are unlocked at the right time. 37 Key cards (or fobs) have been issued to folks who need individual access at other times of the day. This includes keycards for tenants. If you have a metal key to any of the outside doors, throw it out; it won't work anymore. Many thanks to our Office Manager Elayne Murphy and Building Manager Bill Joly who made the installation so successful.

► **From the Emergency Operations Planning Task Force**

We have one cardiac defibrillator in Community Hall, easily accessible for the Education wing. Kyle Tong stated that we need a second one closer to the Sanctuary, for rapid access in case of a cardiac event there. It will be ordered, and the church will sponsor a CPR course for Deacons and other interested folks.

► **A Simplified Pie Paloosa**

□ Carolyn Behr spoke fondly of her many years of organizing this jolly after church pie eating and tasting competition on the Sunday before Thanksgiving. The event also features the donation of even more pies to the Berkshire Food Project's community lunch on the Monday before Thanksgiving. For the last two years our church has donated 60 pies (homemade or store bought), and the Food Project will need our continued support.

□ After lively discussion of the work involved, the voting setup, and the fun of the congregation's party, Cesar Silva suggested keeping the party – "Let's just enjoy eating pie together, but no contests." Council agreed to this. And we'll continue the pie donations of course. Sunday Nov. 19th: Come and party, and bring pies to share.

► **From the Advancing Justice Task Force**

□ Carrie Warra reported that the UCC wants congregations to examine our Open and Affirming covenants to make sure we are keeping up with societal changes. Back in the 1990s First Congo voted to welcome Gay and Lesbian folks (as well as not to discriminate on the basis of race or economic status). By 2024 we should make sure our O and A Covenant takes a stand to include and reach out also to transgender and non-binary people, to non-traditional families, and to other marginalized groups.

□ Advancing Justice, which is an off-shoot of our Outreach Ministry, has sponsored study groups and second hour presentations for several years on such issues. Remember the Afghan Couple who presented the lovely Muslim spring ceremony of Nowruz in April? And the very recent Second Hour "On Books and Belonging," which discussed the importance of including all kinds of people (not just fuzzy animals and white people) in the children's books in our libraries and homes? They were offered to you through our active Advancing Justice group. As we take on this self-examination there will be more opportunities to learn and grow.

► **Spreading the News, Improving our Visibility**

Lynn Chick presented a very helpful printed guide to ways we all can promote church events, and the Church itself. The guide gives detailed information on the how and when of lots of places to announce activities and events that might attract the wider community. It includes press releases,

the Chamber of Commerce weekly newsletter, the church website ( [www.FirstChurchWilliamstown.org](http://www.FirstChurchWilliamstown.org)), the EBlast, your own Facebook or Instagram posts, etc.

This means you and me, all of us who organize group offerings, or want to invite others to come for an event. Lynn will be your consultant, but we all must work to get the word out to the community.

► **Let's Ramp up Food Pantry Donations**

Sally Sussman pointed out that we have neglected the basket in the foyer for non-perishable food donations. Sally had been taking any donations to either the Williamstown Food Pantry at St. Patrick's, or the Al Nelson Food Pantry in North Adams, but now most weeks there's little to nothing. Council wants to see this project revived. We will tie it to Communion Sunday, remind each other to bring in a gift of food on the first Sunday of the month, and bring the basket into the sanctuary for a blessing. There are plenty of people in both towns who rely on food pantries, so you can bring in a jar of peanut butter or a box of cereal on other Sundays too.

► **Sunday School Update from Rev. Deanna**

The Education Team and Rev. Deanna have been working on plans to revive a children's Sunday School, starting with a staffed Nursery (soon), and the single class that Leon Aalberts now leads. Rev. Deanna is very enthusiastic about the quality and range of suggested activities in the new UCC curriculum, which has arrived.

In the 2024 budget the team hopes to fund a trial January-June stipend for someone to coordinate the development of classes and marketing to families who would like a progressive protestant religious experience for their children.

► **Roof Replacement Starting Late November!**

The Williamstown Meeting House Preservation Fund has a contract in hand from Wooliver Roofers for replacing the Church Sanctuary roof and remaining roof portions of Community Hall and the Educational Wing. The work will start in late November, and take about two months, weather permitting. WMPF has the funds for this project. This is a major success, and congratulations are due to Susan Yates and her entire WMPF Board. WMPF Board member Michael Briggs will be the contact person with Wooliver Roofers.

---

### **Upcoming Holiday Activities at First Church**

**11-19 – PiePalooza** – to benefit the Berkshire Food Project. Donated pies will be delivered there and there will be an opportunity for the congregation to taste the pies. Carolyn Behr is hoping you might join us for pie tasting on the 19<sup>th</sup>, as well as helping to pack the pies for delivery.

**12-02 – Holiday Walk** will feature, at our church, the Habitat for Humanity "Christmas Tree Showcase." There will be a raffle of the beautiful trees which have been decorated by local groups and folks and will then be delivered to those who have the winning tickets. Such a colorful holiday event.

**12-02** – Carolyn Behr, of our church's tag sale, will hold a "**Treasure Chest**" selling gifts she selects from our summer tag sale items which are appropriate for the holiday season.

## Las Posadas



### December 2, 2023 5:15 p.m. - Holiday Walk

We are partnering with St. John's to hold a Las Posadas walk and festive gathering at their church afterwards. To participate in the walk meet at Thompson Chapel at 5:15 p.m. To be part of the inn keepers that turn away the holy family be at our church by 5:00 p.m. You can sign up to sing or prepare food below. Questions?  
[pastor@firstchurchwiliamstown.org](mailto:pastor@firstchurchwiliamstown.org)



Our **Sunday morning worship** will feature music for organ and brass instruments. Wonderful Williams student will join Ed Lawrence for a 17th century sonata by Johann Pezel and a stunning fantasy on the hymn, "Now Thank We all Our God" by Sigrfid Karg Elert.