

The Journal Register

SERVING PALMER, MONSON, BRIMFIELD, HOLLAND & WALES

A TURLEY PUBLICATION | www.turley.com March 5, 2026 | Vol. CLXXV, No. 6 | \$1.00 www.journalregister.turley.com

MONSON

First Church of Monson celebrates installation of senior pastor

By Abigail McCoy
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MONSON – The First Church of Monson, Congregational, United Church of Christ, marked a momentous occasion this past Sunday, Mar. 1, with the installation of The Reverend Dr. Holly Norwick as Senior Pastor. The celebration recognized not only the union between Pastor Norwick and the congregation but also a full year of ministry, fellowship, and shared vision for the future.

The afternoon began with a welcoming Q&A session with Pastor Norwick at 2:15 p.m., allowing congregants to engage directly with their pastor. Attendees had the opportunity to hear her reflections on the first year of her ministry and her hopes for the church community. “An installation is a celebration and official recognition of a union between a pastor and a congregation,” Pastor Norwick explained. “Today is a celebration of the fact that we found each other.”

Following the Q&A, the Treble Makers, a youth choral ensemble under the direction of Kyle Langlois, performed for the gathered congregation. The group, composed of students in grades 6-12 (including Blake, Bobby, Jolie, Josiah,



Turley photos by Abigail McCoy
Rev. Holly Norwick leads the way down the aisle as the senior choir sings the introduction.

Lili, and Nora) brought vibrant energy and musicality to the afternoon’s proceedings.

The formal worship service commenced, led by Pastor Norwick alongside church leaders and visiting clergy. Among the distin-

guished guests were Rev. Carol Steinbrecher, Area Conference Minister for the North Central Region; Rev. Paul Nesbit, Moderator of the Hampden Association and pastor of the First Congregational Church of Westfield and Southwick Congregational Church; Rev. Gary Grimes, Chair of the Association’s Committee on Ministry and pastor of First Congregational Church of Chicopee; and Rev. Janet Decker Brown, Registrar of the Hampden Association and pastor of Feeding Hills Congregational Church.

The ceremony featured a blessing tree, where congregants were invited to write personal messages to Pastor Norwick on colorful leaves. These leaves were then placed on the tree at the front of the sanctuary as a symbolic gesture of love, support, and communal blessing.

Music played a central role throughout the celebration. Kiel Krommer, Director of Music Ministries, led the Senior Choir of the First Church of Monson, whose

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The Treble Makers, a youth music group that comes from the church, sang after the Q&A with Rev. Norwick.

PALMER

PFD delivers first baby

By Abigail McCoy
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PALMER – In the early morning hours of Feb. 24, a routine emergency call turned into a milestone moment for the Palmer Fire Department, as on-duty EMTs and paramedics assisted in delivering a healthy baby boy inside a Palmer home.

According to Deputy Chief John Fitzgerald, crews were dispatched to a residence at 4:59 a.m. for a report of a woman in active labor. Four personnel, three paramedics and one EMT, were on duty at the station at the time and responded immediately.

From the moment of dispatch, the response was swift. Fitzgerald said the crew arrived on scene within six minutes.

“Paramedics and EMTs responded, assessed mom and delivered a healthy baby boy shortly after arrival,” Fitzgerald said.

Upon entering the home, the crew quickly established priorities, assessing the mother’s condition and obtaining vital signs. It soon became clear that the baby’s arrival was imminent.

“They determined that the safest action would be delivery inside the house,” Fitzgerald explained, noting that attempting to move or

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MONSON



Turley photos by Abigail McCoy
Volunteer head chefs Lucy Sousa and Adrian Keefe.

Bread and Belonging: St. Paul’s revives community meal

By Abigail McCoy
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PALMER – After an eight-year hiatus, St. Paul’s Church has brought back a tradition of hospitality and fellowship with its monthly “Bread and Belonging” community meal, offering residents not just a hot din-

ner but a welcoming place to gather.

Held Feb. 28, the complimentary dinner marked the church’s second monthly meal since the program was revived in January. According to the Rev. Steven Sousa, the renewed effort reflects both a return to roots and a renewed commitment to serving the broader Palmer community.

MONSON

Boards unite to discuss budget

By Abigail McCoy
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MONSON – In a wide-ranging and at times sobering discussion, town and school leaders gathered Mar. 2 for a joint Tri-Board Meeting to confront what many described as a structural financial crisis years in the making.

Led by Town Administrator Jennifer Wolowicz and Superintendent Paul Foster, the meeting centered on a projected \$1.58 million shortfall for fiscal year 2027; a figure that represents the cost of maintaining current services, not expanding them.

Officials repeatedly stressed that the gap is not the result of new programs or spending initiatives, but the cumulative impact of rising fixed costs, mandated obligations, and limited revenue growth.

“This is a mathematical problem”

Wolowicz framed the challenge as a convergence of forces affecting communities across Massachusetts, echoing recent reports from the Massachusetts Municipal Association describing a

PALMER

St. Stan’s annual spaghetti dinner raises money for scholarships

By Abigail McCoy
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PALMER – Community members gathered Mar. 1 at St. Stan’s Polish Club for the organization’s annual Spaghetti Dinner, an event that once again brought residents together in support of the Richard Frydryk Scholarship Fund.

Tickets were sold for \$10 at the bar prior to and on the day of the event. Guests were treated to a hearty meal of pasta topped with meatballs and sauce, salad, garlic bread and a wide selection of

homemade desserts donated by club members. Volunteers worked throughout the day preparing large pans of food, while the dessert table (filled with member-contributed sweets) quickly became a popular stop for attendees.

Melissa Burns, a member of the scholarship committee who has been involved for five or six years, said the dinner is one of the organization’s signature community events.

“This is another one of the wonderful community events that we do,” Burns said during the evening. “It

helps support scholarships for high schoolers here in town...both at Palmer High School and Pathfinder Regional Vocational Technical High School.”

The Richard Frydryk Scholarship Fund assists graduating seniors from Palmer and Pathfinder as they pursue continuing education, whether at a four-year college, community college, trade school or other post-secondary program. Burns said the committee remains deeply committed to

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Turley photo by Abigail McCoy
The masterminds in the kitchen: Stan Fitz, Melissa Burns, and Kaleigh Ferrindino.



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SPORTS

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BASKETBALL

Panthers get win in preliminary round

By Tim Peterson
Sports Correspondent

PALMER – Experience was the difference maker in the Division 5 state boys' basketball preliminary round contest between Baystate Academy and Palmer High School.

Led by five senior starters, who combined to score 58 points, the 23rd seeded Palmer Panthers advanced into the round of 32 following a 63-54 home win over the 43rd seeded Baystate Bulls, last Wednesday night.

"The seniors played really well in our final home game of the season," said Palmer head coach Missy Rocker. "I hope it can carry over to our next game on Friday night."

Palmer (12-10) won a state tournament home game for the fourth time in the past five years.

"We beat Pathfinder in a home state tournament game two years ago. We also beat Holbrook here last year," said Palmer senior Matt Santos. "We had the experience edge in tonight's game and we're able to handle their pressure."

The Panthers also won a preliminary round home game against Hampden Charter in 2022.

Santos scored 14 of his game-high 21 points during the first half against Bay State. He was one of the three Panthers players to reach double figures in the home finale.

Senior Stephen Fredette finished the game with 13 points while senior Dylan Doherty checked in with 11 points. Senior Gavin Smola just missed becoming Palmer's fourth double digit scorer. He finished with nine points.

"I've been playing basketball games in this gym since I was in the seventh grade, so winning my final home game is very special," Fredette said. "We really wanted to win tonight's game."

The trio of Doherty, Smola, and Fredette were selected to play in the 2026 Western Massachusetts Senior High School All-Star Game, which is scheduled to be held at the Basketball Hall of Fame in Springfield on March 20.

The other two Panthers seniors are Chris Stapleton and Adonis Dupre, who made his second start at the varsity level.

"All six of our seniors are

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Gavin Smola is pressured after making a rebound.



Dylan Doherty tries to get the one-hander in the hoop.



Matt Santos sends three-point attempt away.



Adonis Dupree heads down the court.



Stephen Fredette charges toward the hoop, but looks to make a pass.

Turley photos by Gregory A. Scibelli

BASKETBALL

Warriors defeated in Clark tourney

By Tim Peterson
Sports Correspondent

ASHBURNHAM – Sophie Ezzo, Steph Krog, and Jules Petersen are the only remaining members of the Tantasqua girls' varsity basketball team, which captured the 2024 Clark Tournament Large School championship title.

The Lady Warriors exited this year's Clark Tournament a little bit earlier than they did two years ago.

With 14.6 seconds remaining in regulation, sophomore Addie McGrath buried a 3-point shot from the top of the key, which helped the third-seeded Grafton Gators defeat the sixth-seeded Lady Warriors, 49-47, in a quarterfinal game held at Oakmont Regional High School on Feb. 14.

"One of our goals before the start of each season is to qualify for the Clark tournament. If you do qualify, you always want to win the championship game, which we failed to do this year," said Tantasqua head coach Andy Haley. "This is a tough loss, but we're a young basketball team, and it's going to be a very good learning experience for us. We'll start preparing for the state tournament now."

Ezzo (5 points) and Petersen are the Lady Warriors only seniors this season. Krog, who's a junior, didn't play in the quarterfinal loss.

"I'm disappointed that we lost on a last second shot, but I'm very happy that we were able to qualify for the Clark Tournament for the second time in my high school career," Ezzo said. "This loss is going to make us work a little bit harder in the state tournament."

Two years ago, the Lady Warriors celebrated a 40-29 win over Northbridge High School in the Clark Tournament Large School finals, which took place at the Kneller Athletic Center located on the Clark University campus in Worcester.

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HOCKEY

Amherst-Pathfinder co-op hockey falls in WMass tournament

By Tim Peterson
Sports Correspondent

AMHERST – Senior assistant captain Andrew Holton had a team-leading 13 goals and 12 assists for the Agawam hockey team this winter. Holton's final high school goal was very memorable.

The Western Mass. Class B quarterfinal match between the fifth-seeded Brownies and the fourth-seeded Amherst Hurricanes was tied 4-4 a minute into overtime. That's when Holton received a pass from junior Kaeden Clifford before firing a shot into the net past Amherst senior goalie Jason Kim (34 saves), which gave the Brownies an exciting 5-4 victory at Orr Rink located on the Amherst College campus on Presidents Day, Feb. 15.

"I've never scored a game

winning goal before and it's just an amazing feeling," said Holton after celebrating with his teammates. "We worked very hard in tonight's game."

Holton, who joined the varsity squad as a freshman, described his first career game-winning goal.

"After Kaeden passed me the puck, I cut to the middle of the slot and fired a shot. I just knew that the puck was going into the net," said Holton, who also assisted on two goals. "This was one of the best hockey games that I've ever played in. We're now hoping to win another Western Mass. title this year."

Agawam, who wrapped up the regular season with a 4-3 overtime loss against Chicopee two days earlier, posted a 6-1 victory over Taconic in last year's Class B finals.

Unfortunately, the Brownies (3-15) didn't make it back to the championship match again this year. Their season came to an end 24 hours later following a 5-2 semifinal loss to top-seeded McCann Tech at the Olympia Ice Center in West Springfield.

The other seniors listed on the Brownies hockey roster are Jackson Lariviere, Noah Beavis, Joey Wilikinson, Gavin Ogorzalek, Nick Brown, Brady Blanchette, Casey Thomas, who's an assistant captain, and team captain Anthony Barbarini.

"We have a total of nine seniors on this year's team," said Agawam head coach Todd Rowley. "We had an up and down season, but those guys never quit. They work very hard at practice and in every game. I'm very proud of them.

It took a total team effort to win tonight's game."

Blanchette, who's the Brownies starting goalie, was credited with a total of 17 saves against Amherst.

The Hurricanes finished their season with a 6-12-2 overall record. They tied Chicopee (4-4) and Taconic (2-2).

"I thought my players played very well in tonight's game, but it just came down to one shot in overtime," said Amherst head coach Michael Rousseau. "That was the difference maker."

The Hurricanes senior captain is Ethan Mooney, who's a defenseman. He was credited with three assists in the quarterfinals.

"Ethan joined our hockey team as a sophomore and it's been a pleasure watching him grow during the past couple of

years," Rousseau said. "He's the leader of our hockey team."

Mooney, who attends Pathfinder Tech, plays hockey for Amherst as part of a co-op.

The other hockey players from Pathfinder Tech listed on the Amherst hockey roster are sophomore Noah Latulippe, sophomore Landon Lukasik, sophomore Nolan MacTavish, freshman Mason Sadusky, freshman Lincoln Auclair, and freshman Landon LaCroix.

Agawam and Amherst split the regular season series for the second year in a row.

The Hurricanes took a 1-0 lead in the quarterfinal match following an unassisted goal from junior Sawyer Ferro at the 10:46 mark of the opening period.

Less than a minute later, Brown scored the equalizer for Agawam.

The Brownies took the lead for the first time four minutes into the second period when junior Braden Parrelli banged home a rebound shot.

The scoring spree continued with a goal from Grahm Arguin tying the score at 2-2 with 10:13 remaining in the second period.

The contest was also tied at 3-3, entering the final 15 minutes of regulation. Parrelli and Ferro scored their second goal of the match during the final eight minutes of the second period.

The Hurricanes retook the lead following a goal by freshman Brody Palmisano 28 seconds into the third period.

Holton scored a short-handed goal with ten minutes remaining in regulation before becoming the hero of the game a minute into overtime.