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## CENTRAL CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH

United Church of Christ  
*An Open and Affirming Congregation*

VOLUME 70 NUMBER 01

January 2025

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### UPCOMING EVENTS



21

#### CCC Movie Group

Monday, January 13 & 27 | 7:00 PM via Zoom

#### Six Stone Jars Worship Series

Begins Sunday, January 19

#### ChristCare

Monday, January 20 | 7:00 PM via Zoom

#### KiSeLo – Kindness, Service, Love

Wednesday, January 22 | 1:00 PM | Fellowship Hall

#### Unlocking the Door to Peaceful Endings

Sunday, January 26 | 12:00 PM

#### Lunch Bunch

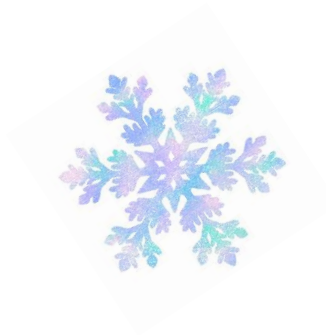
Tuesdays | 11:45 AM | Room 202

#### Open Pantry of Greater Lowell Valentine's Dance

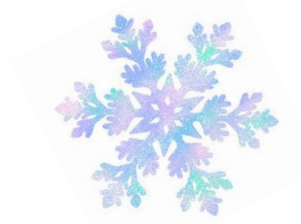
Friday, February 14 | 6:00 PM | Fellowship Hall

#### Super Saturday

Saturday, March 8



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# FROM THE PASTOR'S OFFICE

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## Remembering the Heart of Christmas

Dear Friends,

I pray your Christmas week was filled with many blessings! One of my treasured blessings was spending Christmas Eve with many of you who joined us for worship either in person or virtually. Our children (big kids too!) wiggled and squiggled and “shook, rattled, and banged” their instruments as they heard the Christmas Story!

During the 7:00 service, I was stunned by the beauty of so many candle lights held high in the air as we sang Silent Night, a sight that took my breath away! The peaceful serenity of the 10:00 service sent me home feeling joyful, content, and settled, looking forward to a quiet day of Christmas reflection.

As we stand at the threshold of a new year, our hearts and minds are filled with anticipation and hope for what lies ahead. It is a time not only for setting New Year's resolutions but also a sacred period in our liturgical calendar as we prepare to celebrate Epiphany. It is a beautiful confluence of beginnings and revelations, a time when we are called to reflect deeply on our lives and the divine guidance that leads us forward.

What are your resolutions? As you consider what you want to change, whether related to your health, career, family, or personal aspirations, I invite you to approach your contemplation with a deeper sense of purpose inspired by the spiritual journey of Epiphany.

On January 6<sup>th</sup>, 12 days of Christmas, we mark the Magi's visit to the Christ child. Coming from the East, the Magi represent the Gentile (non-Jewish) world, people of a different status in society coming to worship this new babe and reveal Jesus as Lord and King.

It is a powerful reminder of God's manifest presence in our world and in our lives. Let us be open to the guiding light that shines as brightly for us today as it did for the Wise Men so long ago. Let us be focused on the newborn King and be open to revelations of God's guidance and wisdom.

As we set our intentions for the new year, let us do so individually and as a God's gathered community. What resolutions will you make for your life in the church? What do you hope to see happen at CCC? How will you commit to the life of our congregation? How will you be the hands and feet of Christ in the community and in the world?

Ask yourself how your resolutions align with your spiritual growth and service to others. Whether it's through dedicating time to prayer and meditation, engaging in acts of kindness and charity, or deepening our understanding of the scriptures, let our actions reflect our commitment to living out the teachings of Christ.

As we move forward into the new year, let us do so with hearts open to God's guiding light. Let our resolutions be more than just goals; let them be acts of faith that draw us closer to the divine and to each other. And as we celebrate Epiphany, let us remember the journey of the Magi, guided by

a star, to find the Christ child. May we, too, be guided by the light of Christ as we embark on this new year, ready to receive the revelations that await us.

In this season of new beginnings and divine revelations, may we all find renewed strength, hope, and purpose. Let us embrace the journey ahead with faith, love, and a commitment to living out our resolutions in the spirit of Epiphany.

Wishing you all a blessed New Year and a joyful Epiphany,

*Pastor Lee*

***Rev. Lee Atherton***

## **A CELEBRATION OF STAR WORDS**

***Sunday, January 5, 2025***

During worship on Sunday, we each received a star with a word on it. This is a fairly new Epiphany practice in churches around the world. We know that the Magi followed a star, which ultimately led them to Jesus. Therefore, we, too, use all the resources we have available to us—including creative prayer practices and intention words for the new year— so we too move closer to Jesus..

Star words offer a tool to actively seek and reflect on God's presence among us, both in the moment and in hindsight. Having an intention word to consider allows us to see God in ways we may not have seen God before.

We believe that star words invite a new prayer rhythm of reflection and review that can be a powerful new way to connect with God.

We practice the spiritual task of receiving by allowing the star word to choose us, not us choose a word we like. It is not we who are in control in this moment. Instead, we trust that God is present, and we let go of our desire to cultivate or control.

If you joined us virtually or were not able to worship on January 5, reach out to Pastor Lee or Peggy for your star word.

*Pastor Lee*



## WHY DO WE WORSHIP THE WAY WE DO?

What are you noticing in worship? From small changes to major changes? From things that are added to things we don't see any more? Do you wonder what some piece of worship means? Why do we do the things we do? Do other churches do it the same way? Why do we have to change what's been working so far?

The community gathers on Sunday to worship around the WORD of God. It is important that all who gather are present to hear that Word as it is proclaimed and preached. This is a fundamental action of all who gather as disciples of Jesus. There is no ministry performed outside of worship that is more important than this. It forms us as disciples and empowers us for our ministry.

Beginning in January, Pastor Lee will answer your questions about worship. Send your questions to her at [Lee@CoachRev.com](mailto:Lee@CoachRev.com) or share them with a deacon (wearing a blue name tag).

### *The Offering*

“Intentional Interim Ministry: A time and process led by a specially trained Interim Pastor who utilizes specially developed materials and procedures to best prepare for the next installed ministry.”

One of the more challenging aspects of the interim time is when the pastor makes changes to things “We’ve done this way forever!” Why do we have to change what’s been working fine?

Recently, Coach Becky and Pastor Lee moved the time of the offering during worship from early in the service to nearer the end of worship. While we do understand appreciation for tradition, and that tradition can be deeply important, especially when it comes to worship, everything we do should be not only informed by years of practice but by solid liturgical guidelines.

Having heard the word of God proclaimed in reading, song, and sermon, we are invited to respond in faith and action – by giving of ourselves, our time, our talent, and our treasure. We offer our gifts to God in public worship and pray God’s blessing on us, the work we do, and those who receive from us.

From an ecumenical and historical perspective, the offering is a response of gratitude to the Word proclaimed, and part of our preparation of Christ’s table. Therefore, it naturally follows the sermon, affirmation of faith, and prayers of the church.

*Pastor Lee*



## FROM COACH BECKY'S DESK

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Friends,

I trust that your Christmas and New Year celebrations brought you closer to family, yourself, and your creator. It is such a special time but I also recognize it can be difficult, so I also lift up all of you who are relieved the holidays are over – for whatever reason.

As we begin this new year the Transition Team is working hard on initiating the Appreciative Interviews with all of you. I hope you have signed up, or soon will, to be interviewed. We will learn so much about each other and the hopes and dreams you all have for the future of your church. It is going to be amazing.

In addition to the work the Transition Team is doing, I have been working behind the scenes, assessing many areas of your congregational life including governance and communication as well as working with leadership. One of the collaborations that is important to your interim success is that between me and Pastor Lee.

As I continue to work with her, I have been encouraging her to more fully embrace her role as your pastor, providing the kind of leadership you might expect from your next settled pastor. One of the primary roles of the pastor is to order worship. This is the thing for which we are specially trained. While each pastor will perform this role differently based on their own spiritual charism and theology, the goal is always to create a worship experience that benefits the entire worship community. This was Pastor Lee's goal when she made the decision – with my support and within her responsibility – to move where in worship the offering is taken.

Change is always difficult. The longer a tradition has been in place, the harder it is to adjust. But this is the work of the interim time. The questions that this kind of change asks the congregation to wrestle with are challenging. Questions like, "How do I respond when something changes? Can I live into the discomfort to see if I can discover how this change might make sense if not be altogether better? Am I open to hearing different points of view? What is non-negotiable for me as a member of a community with so many different opinions and spiritualities? How will I respond if I cannot have everything the way I want it? Can I be comfortable with most of what I want in a faith community if I cannot have everything I want?"

I encourage patience and dialogue as we move through this interim time. There is so much to do, to learn, to discuss, and to dream. I encourage you to stay open to what the surprises the Spirit has in store for you, for us, for this congregation.

In Service,  
*Coach Becky*

# FOR YOUR CALENDAR

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## NEXT BEACON DUE DATE

The next submission deadline is **Thursday, January 23** for the February edition. Thank you!

*Peggy Kelly*  
*Office Administrator*

## CHRISTCARE

*Monday, January 20 / 7:00 PM*



The Monday evening ChristCare group will meet via Zoom on January 6 and 20. We will be continuing our reading and discussion of Six New Gospels: New Testament Women Tell Their Stories.

Please contact Deb Lyons ([deb@dandelyons.net](mailto:deb@dandelyons.net)) if you are interested in joining the group.

## KiSeLo – KINDNESS, SERVICE, LOVE

*Wed, January 22 / 1:00 PM / Fellowship Hall*



Welcome to 2025! KiSeLo wishes you all a very happy, healthy, peaceful New Year! Now that the holidays have passed it is time to unwind and relax.

Join us January 22 at 1:00pm in the Fellowship Hall and do just that. Becky Wisniewski and Jennifer Hart will be the hostesses and the church historian, our own Pat Vondal, will be sharing stories of her time in Africa. In true “Pat” fashion, her presentation will be fun.



Part of the service aspect of KiSeLo is our monthly donations to the Open Pantry of Lowell. This month we are asking for your donations of soup, or any non-perishable food.

**Questions, need information, or have comments about KiSeLo?** Text or call Karen Banakos at (603)686-2026.



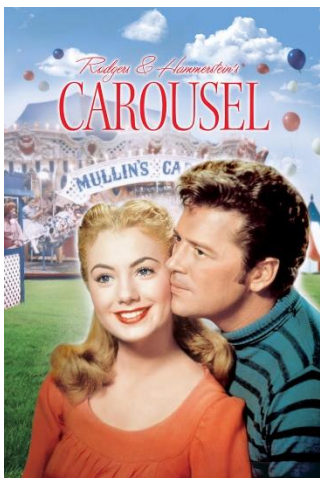
## JANUARY MOVIE GROUP

**Monday | January 13 & 27 | 7:00 PM | Zoom**

The CCC Movie Group is open to all! Watch the movie(s) on your own, then join the group on Zoom at 7:00 pm on “Movie Mondays” to discuss. Please contact Lynn Horton for the Zoom link, if you have questions, or if you have difficulty accessing the movies!



**Monday, 1/13 – “The Barefoot Contessa” (1954)** Scouting talent for an upcoming film to be shot in Italy, a trio from Hollywood - writer/director Harry Dawes (Humphrey Bogart), producer Kirk Edwards (Warren Stevens), and publicist Oscar Muldoon (Edmond O'Brien) - travel to Madrid, Spain to scope renowned local dancing sensation Maria Vargas (Ava Gardner). Immediately, they are struck by her beauty and presence. In fact, Maria has a profound effect on every man she meets...though the effect is as unique as each man she encounters. Producer Edwards sees a talent to be exploited for all it's worth and publicist Muldoon sees only huge marquees and dollar signs. But Harry Dawes, after a couple of brief but revealing conversations with Maria, sees so much more. Expecting a naive Spanish peasant eager to grab at the brass ring, he finds instead a woman as smart as she is beautiful, whose main motivation is to enjoy the challenge and escape that a Hollywood career might offer a woman who will nevertheless always value the simpler things in life. Even with her innate beauty and uncommon savvy, to Maria's detriment she does not have eyes in the back of her head. Told in flashback, the viewer experiences her success in Hollywood and her quest to find the true love of a man, Count Vincenzo Torlato-Favrini (Rossano Brazzi), that has always eluded her. Written by Joseph L. Mankiewicz who also directed and produced the film, the character of Maria Vargas is said to be based on Rita Hayworth, who was offered the part. Hayworth was a Latina who later married a prince, Prince Aly Khan. Some elements were taken from Ava Gardner's life as well; the stormy relationship between Maria and tycoon movie producer Kirk Edwards based on Gardner's own relationship with billionaire film producer Howard Hughes.



**Monday, 1/27 – “Carousel” (1956)** American drama-fantasy musical film based on the 1945 Rodgers and Hammerstein stage musical of the same name, which in turn was based on Ferenc Molnár's 1909 non-musical play “Liliom.” Starring Gordon MacRae as Billy Bigelow and Shirley Jones as Julie Jordan, the film was directed by Henry King, with a screenplay by Phoebe Ephron and Henry Ephron. As with the original stage production, the film contains some of Richard Rodgers and Oscar Hammerstein's most famous songs and perhaps the most serious storyline of all their musicals. The plot of this story has an “Our Town” quality - Fifteen years after his death, a carousel barker is granted permission to return to Earth for one day to make amends to his widow and their daughter. Frank Sinatra was originally cast to play Billy Bigelow and recorded the songs that he was to sing in the film. It had been reported that Sinatra withdrew from the film in objection to the requirement that each scene



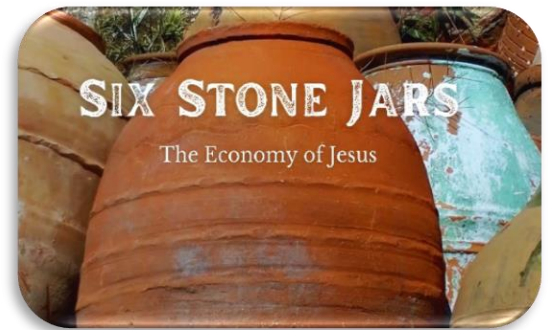
be filmed twice, one for regular CinemaScope and the other for CinemaScope 55, but according to Shirley Jones' 2014 autobiography, Sinatra quit because his wife Ava Gardner threatened infidelity if he failed to accompany her on her film set. Gardner was in the late stages of filming "The Barefoot Contessa."

## SIX STONE JARS

### *Upcoming Worship Series*

A miscalculation has occurred. The wedding guests have drunk all the wine before the party is over. At times, life can feel like we're "running out" of so much, and scarcity is shutting down the party. We are invited to turn to the currency and economy of Jesus. In his economy, the true measure of abundance is fullness for the whole community, not just for some.

Beginning January 19, and for 5 weeks following, we will be exploring some of Jesus' calls to justice.



[Below is a note from the creator of this series, Marcia McFee, PhD]

Friends, we live in a time of anxiety... especially about our wellbeing and sustenance. The rhetoric of late has highlighted that fear reigns, and many are living in an attitude of "taking care of our own." But time and time again, we are reminded that in the Kin-dom of God, those whom we should consider "our own" cross many perceived boundaries. We are called by Jesus to take care of all in need, especially those most vulnerable. The Lectionary Gospel readings point to the topsy-turvy way that Jesus was proclaiming an "economy" in which wealth is redistributed for the good of all.

As with all prophetic leaders, some were unhappy about Jesus' message. *We* might not even be happy about revisiting what Jesus says is the right thing to do when it comes to caring deeply for one another. But his plan was clear from the beginning—an anointing to bring good news to the poor. And as his followers, it is important for us to proclaim this and act on it here and now—for such a time as this. Who will protect the vulnerable? Church, this has been our mission since "day one." If we are looking for a way to be "relevant" in our age, this is it.

I pray that this series will ground us in the teachings of Jesus and offer us a clear vision of how we are called to be the church in this moment. May your stone jars be plenty full of "good stuff" and may we all share extravagantly the resources we have been given with those who need it most.

*~Pastor Lee*

## JOIN US IN BRINGING "SIX STONE JARS" TO LIFE

*We Need Your Creativity and Passion!*

As we prepare to embark on an inspiring journey through our upcoming worship series, "Six Stone Jars," we are reaching out to you, our talented and creative congregation, to help us bring this series to life in a way that is both meaningful and memorable.



"Six Stone Jars" promises to be a profound exploration of transformation, faith, and miracles. To make this series as impactful as possible, we are seeking volunteers who are eager to share their gifts and skills in various creative and supportive roles.

### We Need Your Help With:

- **Creative Crafters** If you have a knack for crafting, we need your hands and your heart. We're looking for individuals who can help create engaging projects with easy-to-follow directions that will enhance our series' themes.
- **Sanctuary Decorators** Help us transform our sanctuary into a space that reflects the beauty and depth of the "Six Stone Jars" series. Whether you have an eye for design or simply a willingness to help, your contributions will set the stage for our worship.
- **Children's Message Leaders** The stories and lessons of "Six Stone Jars" are not just for adults. We're looking for volunteers to lead our children's messages, bringing these powerful themes to life in ways that are accessible and engaging for our youngest members. (These aren't DIY messages – you'll have full resources.)

Whether you have a specific skill to offer or simply a desire to help wherever needed, we welcome your enthusiasm and participation.

If you feel called to contribute to the "Six Stone Jars" series in any of these areas—or if you have other ideas for how you can help—please reach out to Pastor Lee ([pastor-lee@CCCChelmsford.org](mailto:pastor-lee@CCCChelmsford.org)).

We are excited to collaborate with you and see how our community can come together to make this worship series truly special.

Together, we can create something beautiful and transformative.

Join us in this creative endeavor as we prepare our hearts and our sanctuary for "Six Stone Jars."

*Pastor Lee*

## VALENTINE'S DAY DANCE AND DINNER

*Friday, February 14, 2025 / 6:00 PM / CCC Fellowship Hall*

Buy your tickets to the Open Pantry's "Open Hearts Dinner and Dance". More awaits you at this enchanting evening! Join us for a memorable celebration filled with delightful culinary creations crafted by the talented Chef Doug Drake. As you savor each delicious bite let the lively music by "Off Our Rockers" invite you to the dance floor, where you can sway the night away. Don't miss the exciting raffle and auction! Complimentary onsite childcare allows for a carefree night.

We hope to see you February 14th! Visit the Open Pantry's webpage or use the QR code on the invitation to buy your tickets today.

For question call Rebecca Wisniewski at 978-319-0503.



THE OPEN PANTRY OF GREATER LOWELL PRESENTS...

**OPEN YOUR HEARTS**  
DINNER & DANCE



\$40 pp. Dinner & Dance  
\$225 Table for six  
\$150 Table for four  
\$15 pp. Dance only after 8PM

**FOOD, DANCE, RAFFLE, AUCTION**

Free babysitting onsite!

**14th**  
FEB. 2025  
6PM EST

BUFFETT  
PROVIDED BY:  
CHEF DOUG DRAKE

1 WORTHEN STREET, CHELMSFORD MA

Scan the QR Code above to purchase tickets or visit  
<http://www.theopenpantry.org/open-your-hearts-to-open-pantry>

<i>"Open Your Hearts Dinner for the Open Pantry"</i>							
		<b>MENU</b>					
♥	♥	♥	♥	♥	♥	♥	♥
<b>SALAD</b>							
<i>Strawberry-Spinach Salad w/ Poppy Seed Dressing</i>							
<b>ENTRÉE'S</b>							
<i>Chicken Picatta</i>							
<i>Sausage, Peppers, &amp; Onions</i>							
<i>Italian Meatballs</i>							
<b>STARCHES/VEGETABLES/SIDES</b>							
<i>Freshly Baked Bread</i>							
<i>Spanish Rice</i>							
<i>Pasta du Jour</i>							
<i>Tomato Sauce</i>							
<i>Roasted Seasonal Vegetable Medley</i>							
<b>DESSERT</b>							
<i>Assorted Festive Desserts</i>							
<b>BEVERAGES</b>							
<i>Sparkling Cider Toast</i>							
<i>Valentine's Punch</i>							
<i>Coffee/Tea/Water</i>							

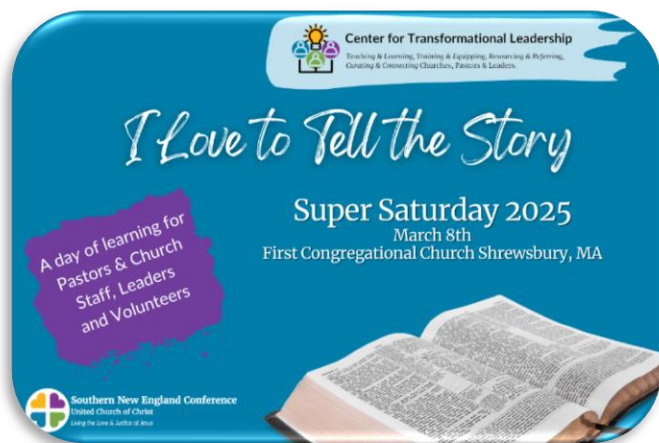
## SUPER SATURDAY

Join Pastor Lee for this year's annual Super Saturday! It's a great time for learning, reconnecting with others, and making new friends from our Southern New England Conference of the United Church of Christ.

**March 8, 2025**  
**Onsite at First Congregational Church in Shrewsbury, MA**  
**Online via Zoom**

*I love to tell the story of unseen things above, of Jesus and his glory, of Jesus and his love.  
I love to tell the story because I know it's true; it satisfies my longings as nothing else can do.*

*~Arabella Katherine Hankey*



Story is at the very heart of our faith tradition. The Bible is full of stories. Stories from the Hebrew Bible tell of strife, struggle and hardship as well as comfort, joy and care with God's deep abiding presence woven throughout. In the New Testament, stories of Jesus's ministry and the stories he told remind us of who Jesus was and the power of what he embodied. The stories of our faith, told and retold over generations are central to our identity as followers of Jesus. Just as these stories have guided Christians throughout history, they help us find our path forward as individuals and as a collective.

As Anthony de Mello (Jesuit priest and psychotherapist born in India) explains, "...the shortest distance between truth and a human being is a story." The stories of our faith remind us of who we are and whose we are; they are powerful and compelling. Join us for a day of reflecting on the power of sacred stories and how we might use story to tell of the Christian way of living and the power of the work we do as the Church and as people of faith.

### *Workshop Offerings:*

Both online and onsite workshops are organized according to several topic streams. Participants may choose to follow a particular stream or choose workshops from across the various topic streams.

The Online Super Saturday and the Onsite Super Saturday experience are separate but parallel events with distinct registration forms and only a few places of content overlap.

Please contact Pastor Lee Atherton with questions.



## COMING TO THE CROSS OF CHRIST INFO

### *Save the Date*

Come prepare for Lent as we consider the true purpose of these 40 days, explore spiritual practices to deepen our Lenten Journey, and consider how God is calling us into a more meaningful relationship. Women of the church and their women friends are invited to join in fellowship, food, friends, music, prayer, and laughter.



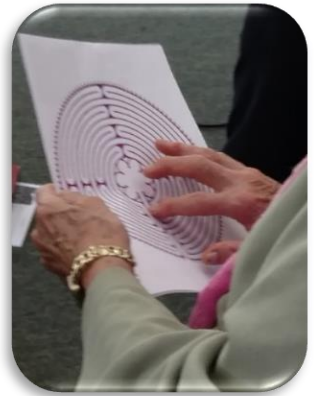
**March 14-16** – late afternoon on the 14<sup>th</sup> to late morning on the 16<sup>th</sup>.

**Grotonwood Camp and Retreat Center**

Led by Pastor Lee

For church members and friends of the church

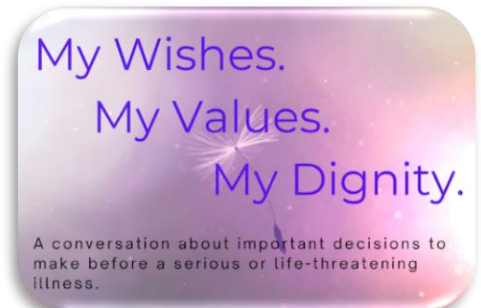
Watch for more information.



## UNLOCKING THE DOOR TO PEACEFUL ENDINGS

*A conversation about important decisions to make before a serious or life-threatening illness or injury*

In the journey of life, there are conversations that we often postpone until it's too late—conversations about our wishes for care at the end of life. It's not just about making decisions; it's about connecting with our deepest values and ensuring our loved ones understand our desires. This is why we are thrilled to invite you to a special 2-hour workshop focused on the Five Wishes, a living will document that speaks to all aspects of end-of-life needs: medical, personal, emotional, and spiritual.



**January 26, 2025**

**12-2 pm (bring your lunch)**

### *About the Workshop*

This workshop is designed to guide you through the process of discovering, documenting, and discussing your care wishes with those who matter most. This interactive session will not only provide you with the tools to complete your Five Wishes document but also offer a space for reflection, discussion, and connection with others on a similar journey.

Friends and Family are also welcome.

*Continued→*

## *What You Will Gain*

- **Discovery** of what each wish is and how you can tailor your answer to reflect your personal, medical, emotional, and spiritual values
- **Understanding** of the Five Wishes legal document
- **Empowerment** in knowing that the choice is yours
- **Confidence** to articulate your wishes
- **Knowledge** to make informed decisions about your future care.
- **Connection** as we share experiences and perspectives with others, fostering a supportive community of understanding and empathy.
- **Peace of Mind** as your completed Five Wishes document becomes a gift of love and clarity for yourself and your loved ones.

## *Who Should Attend*

The short answer is “Everyone!” Whether you are 18 or 105, this workshop is relevant!\*\*

This workshop is open to anyone interested in exploring their end-of-life wishes, regardless of age or health status. I had my children start thinking about their choices when they were teenagers. It's never too early.

Whether you're initiating this conversation for the first time or looking to update your existing plans, this workshop will provide valuable insights and tools.

Registration is required to ensure a personalized and interactive experience for all participants. Please register by January 20<sup>th</sup>.

## *Be sure to mark your calendar and join us on January 26<sup>th</sup>*

Embark on this meaningful journey with Pastor Lee and take the first step toward a future where your wishes are known and honored. Together, let's create a space of understanding, compassion, and peace for ourselves and our loved ones.

For more information and to register, please contact Pastor Lee Atherton:

[pastor-lee@CCCChelmsford.org](mailto:pastor-lee@CCCChelmsford.org)

We look forward to welcoming you to this important workshop and supporting you in expressing your Five Wishes.

\*\*Developed by child life professionals, My Wishes (for children) and Voicing My Choices (for adolescents) are also available. See Pastor Lee for more information.

*Pastor Lee*



# UPDATES

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## FLOWER CALENDAR



The new flower calendar for 2025 has been posted on the bulletin board in Fellowship Hall. If you would like to donate the altar flowers for a special Sunday, sign up on the calendar. A week before that Sunday you will be contacted by a member of the Sanctuary Committee for the specific details for the bulletin and to take the flower information before the order is placed.

*~Sanctuary Committee*

## PRAYER MINISTRY



If you have a prayer request, please contact Wendy Perry at [wperry39@comcast.net](mailto:wperry39@comcast.net).

*~Deb Lyons*

## TRANSITION TEAM

Hi CCC,

During this time of changeover, we as the members of the transition team would like to hear your stories. We have a team of 18 interviewers that will be listening to what you have loved and what you would like to see adapted in CCC. As we embark on a new adventure we would love to hear from as many people as we can about what the values are here at this church and how we can tap into those as we look for our next pastor. If you are interested please fill out this interview form below and you will be paired with one of our interviewers. In person conversations are really beneficial to hearing your stories and seeing your passion and emotions but we understand that for everyone that may not be possible so let us know in the form what is best for you. We look forward to meeting with you all and seeing where this journey continues to take us! If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to check in with any member of the transition team after church as well. Sign-ups will also be available in Fellowship Hall.

[https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSeZwfrinxAXr6HSjwp25cXkKiozXHnJ1CnAsJIWh9U1CYGQlQ/viewform?usp=sf\\_link](https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSeZwfrinxAXr6HSjwp25cXkKiozXHnJ1CnAsJIWh9U1CYGQlQ/viewform?usp=sf_link)

*Kelsey Hartigan*  
CCC Transition Team Member

## SOCIAL ACTION AND MISSIONS COMMITTEE

### *Focus on Housing Insecurity*

In January, SAM turns its attention to the ever growing problem of homelessness and housing insecurity that is now becoming a nationwide crisis. The weather right now is cold and bleak – just this morning it was only 10 degrees outside – and it is hard to imagine that anyone can survive outdoors in these conditions. But no matter the time of year, housing insecurity is a terrifying prospect for those who live in constant fear of not being able to make their rent due to a sudden unexpected expense or rent increase, or even to find a livable, affordable apartment at all.

The housing crisis has been well-documented this past year, with numerous news reports about shelters and homeless people in cities across the country. There are a number of reasons contributing to the crisis, from high housing costs that force middle-income people to remain in rental housing, pushing low-income people out of the rental market, to inflationary cost-of-living expenses, to mental health and addiction problems, to conversion of rental units to short-term rentals, and more. But the bottom line is that there are simply not enough housing units available, and this has a ripple down effect on the most vulnerable people in our society.

With your help, SAM supports several agencies in the Lowell Area that work to provide emergency shelter, short term affordable apartments, counseling and legal support, and free household goods to help people with transitioning into long-term housing. These include:

- Community Teamwork, Inc.
- Lowell Transitional Living Center
- House of Hope
- Project Kompass
- The Wish Project
- Habitat for Humanity

While shelters do not solve the housing shortage, they can help to provide “a room at the Inn” and at least temporary respite for those in need.

*Submitted by Julie Carney on behalf of SAM Committee: Jennifer Bellissimo, Diane Blair, Carol Boucek, Kathy Gaphardt, Kathy Lueck, Wendy Piacenza, Dale Williams, Rebecca Wisniewski*



## 2024 CHRISTMAS TREE FUNDRAISER

*Thank you!*

Thank you to all who helped to make this year's fundraiser a success! We made a little over our goal of \$7,500!!!

Thank you to Dick Papenfuss for all his guidance, to the talented Linda Lis for making beautiful bows for the wreaths, Deb Lyons for monitoring the online signups and writing the email announcements and Joe Chapman for setting up the online signups.

Many people helped with the unloading of the trees, taking shifts to sell trees, setting up and taking down the tree stand. Thank you to Lindsay & Shawn Moore, Judith Barnes & Tom Long, Bryan Norman, Don & Jennifer Delikat, Scott & Will Dorman, the Brian Acheson family, the Lyons family, Troop 75, the Viarella family, Tim & Janie O'Brien, the Chapman family, John & Sandra Lamplough, Julie Carney & Richard Tang-Kong, the Holy Cows Sunday School Class, Shaleena & Kia Pullian, Joseph Dion, Will & Arthur Hargett, Gerry & Bonnie McGrath with Anna & Fenn, Amy & Alex McGuigan, the Strobel family, Pat Vondal, Bill Clarke, Mark & Josh Timmins, the McNamara family and Doug Drake.

A special thank you to those who did four or more shifts: Dick, Papenfuss, Bill White, John Carson, Peter White, John Lefebvre, Elmer Lyons, & Glenn Dissinger! You are rock stars! I also thank those who signed up but their shifts were cancelled, Gwen & Scott Bottomly. I thank the rest of the congregation for your support of this fundraiser. I apologize for any that I have missed.

*~Margie Dissinger*

## SECRET SANTA UPDATE 2024

It's a wrap! All of the beautifully wrapped and generous 84 presents for 28 local children were collected by the Chelmsford Housing Authority staff on Monday night. They send their sincere thanks.

I would like to thank you our congregation for your support. This is truly a team effort, and it could not have succeeded without your generous help. The Secret Santa process starts in the fall. The housing authority provides us with the wish lists. Bryan Norman, Joe Chapman and Sherm Horton transform that information into the online lists. Sign-ups typically start around Thanksgiving. Final gift collection in 2024 was on December 15th. Central Congregational has organized the Secret Santa mission for over 30 years.

Thank you to Julie Carney, Peggy Kelly, Bryan Norman, Sherm Horton and Joe Chapman for their patience and technical assistance. Thank you to all the SAM members for your time and support: Wendy Piacenza, Dale Williams, Becky Wisniewski, Carol Boucek, Jen Bellissimo, Kathy Lueck, Kathy Gaphardt and Diane Blair.

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Thank you to Lynn Horton, Will Hargett, Bernie Boucek, Andrew Baker and Kylie Bellissimo. I sincerely apologize if I left anyone's names out.

Sincerely,

*~Your Social Action Committee with Cindy Bruetsch, Julie Carney, Wendy Piacenza, Dale Williams, Carol Boucek, Jen Bellissimo, Kathy Lueck, Kathy Gaphardt, Becky Wisniewski and Diane Blair*

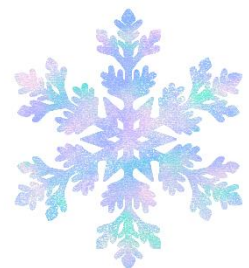
## CHURCH FIRE SAFETY

In September, the church held a fire drill during the Sunday service. In accordance with our Safe Church Policy, everyone needs to know how to react if there ever is a fire during the time the church is in use. Everyone needs to know what to do in order to efficiently get the building evacuated and accounted for during such an emergency.

1. All of the Sunday School teachers have been trained how and where to get the children to safety as quickly as possible. The children will be led out of the church to an assembly spot in the parking lot near the dentists building next door.
2. Volunteers have been assigned to help with the nursery evacuation.
3. Members of the congregation should exit the church through the front doors and proceed around to the parking lot assembly area. Here you can meet your children and report if anyone is missing.
4. Members of the congregation **SHOULD NOT** attempt to go to the classrooms for their children. This will only add to the confusion of getting everyone safely out of the building.
5. A member of the church has been assigned to check the entire building to make sure everyone has been evacuated before exiting himself.
6. Assuming time allows, the minister will remind the congregation from the pulpit to leave by the front doors and not go to the classrooms.

There will be another unannounced fire drill in the spring to fulfill the requirement of our Safe Church Policy to have two fire drills annually.

*Dick Papenfuss*  
Council President



## CHRISTIAN EDUCATION COMMITTEE

Happy New Year from your CE Committee. We began December with an amazing Advent Festival. It featured some fantastic crafts, kids singing, bands playing, and a community joyfully celebrating together again. It was a wonderful experience for our youth, and we hope that the young at heart in attendance enjoyed it as well.

The traditional Christmas Pageant in December is always a big hit with our youth. Each year there is a great deal of discussion among the group about which are the optimal roles and which roles are an indication that they have grown up over the past year. The God Squad and the Holy Cows helped to sell Christmas trees, celebrated during a Christmas party, and some of our youth participated in the family Christmas Eve Service.

Looking ahead, the youth groups are planning a Super Bowl Sunday Food Pantry Drive, so please help support our local food pantry and our youth by bringing in some supplies for February. Here is to slightly longer daylight hours!

*~Your CE Committee*

## FROM THE NURSERY COORDINATOR

We are always looking for volunteers to help in the nursery.

Please feel free to email me directly, [kelsey.hartigan2020@gmail.com](mailto:kelsey.hartigan2020@gmail.com), or you can sign up by scanning this QR code or on this google sheet: [https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1UmjuG7rF5SJ6IlG692D5R0UI59UwO-anxT2pID6Y\\_1E/edit?gid=0#gid=0](https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1UmjuG7rF5SJ6IlG692D5R0UI59UwO-anxT2pID6Y_1E/edit?gid=0#gid=0).

Also, if you know of any families who are looking to bring their children to the nursery, please direct them my way as I would like to make this space as welcoming and nurturing as possible.

Thank you!

*Kelsey Hartigan*



## SOUTHERN NEW ENGLAND CONFERENCE OF THE UCC

A recent letter from the Executive Minister of the SNEUCC, Rev. Darrell Goodwin, reminds of the good works done by the conference. It is inspirational to individual churches as well. Here is an excerpt:

“In January, we will celebrate five years as the Southern New England Conference. The vision that brought us together in 2019, combined with the support you have made to enhance existing programming and develop creative and energizing new ministries, is allowing us to:

- **Make God’s love and justice real** by loving our neighbors, children, and all of creation through our collective work, such as seeking racial, economic, environmental, and LGBTQ justice.
- **Understand that the local church exists to make disciples of Jesus** by welcoming all people unconditionally to share in this calling.”

Rev. Goodwin continues: “Our dedication to the practices of hope, such as promoting social good through economic and racial justice, springs from the bedrock of SNEUCC.”

These are important words to keep in mind as we consider who we are as a church in this time of transition at Central Congregational Church of Chelmsford, UCC. Indeed, it is good to be reminded of the importance of spreading hope in our community and the world.

*Deb Lyons*

CCC Delegate to the SNEUCC

## COUNCIL CORNER

### *A Monthly Update on the Activity of the CCC Council*

News from the December 11, 2024, meeting:

- Treasurer Dick Papenfuss reported that we are 42% of the way through Fiscal Year 2024-2025. Pledged income is under budget at 38% Year-To-Date, and total income YTD is 37%. Total Expenses are at 40% YTD. Income from the Holiday Fair and Christmas Tree and Wreath Sales fundraisers, and end-of-year pledge fulfillment, will bring an increase to the church funds as 2024 comes to a close.
- The Transition Team is working with Coach Becky David to train and prepare for the Appreciative Interview Process. Their plan is to begin holding one-on-one interviews with members of the congregation in January to gather input that will help the Team to create the Church Profile that will be used to seek our next Settled Pastor at Central Congregational Church.

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- The Nominating Committee proposed Gwen Bottomley for the position of Safe Church Advocate. Gwen brings experience from her many years of leadership in Scouting and oversight of similar BSA safety protocols. Gwen has also served as CCC liaison to the scout troops and as a CCC Deacon. Council unanimously approved the appointment.
- Pastor Lee has prioritized seeking Safe Church resources and training sessions for CCC's staff and volunteers. Samantha Shields, CE chair, reported that she has been looking into training modules that could be used for Sunday School teachers and other church groups regarding issues like abuse and neglect reporting and social media protocol. Dick plans to follow-up in February with the Chelmsford Police CRASE program discussed last year. (CRASE - Civilian Response to Active Shooter Events. *"The Chelmsford Police Department offers CRASE classes to businesses and places of worship within our town year-round. As part of our commitment to fostering a secure and well-prepared community, we are extending an invitation to any businesses or places of worship that might be interested in learning more about workplace safety, and responses to attack events."*)
- John Carson, Chair of the Board of Trustees, presented some additional changes to Policy 13 "Use of Church Facilities." Previous amendments to the policy had been approved in October; the additional edits were proposed based on the realization that a blanket damage deposit of \$300 was excessive for low rent/low damage probability usage – for example, use of a classroom as compared to use of Fellowship Hall and the Kitchen. Council unanimously approved the Trustees' recommended changes.
- Christine Williams of the Capital Campaign Building Committee reported that we are still waiting on the new drapes for the stage and chair surround in Fellowship Hall. She emphasized that it is important for people to receive training on the various new kitchen appliances. Christine also noted that the new LED light for the church sign at the back entrance to parking lot does not appear to be sufficient. An additional light may need to be purchased and installed.
- Samantha and Patrick Shields are working on setting up a Google Drive digital document repository for important church records, such as the Organizational Practices Manual (OPM), Personnel Manual, Committee Lists, etc. Samantha asks committees to think about any important committee documents to be included.
- Christmas Concert recap – 205 performers and audience members attended the December 8 concert, and \$1250 was collected in the freewill offering.

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## *Excerpts from the CCC Constitution – Article VII - Council*

The Council shall be the executive body of this church. It shall be composed of the Ordained Minister(s), two members of the Board of Trustees elected by that Board, Clerk, Moderator, two Deacons elected by the Diaconate, Treasurer, three Members-at-Large, and one member from each of the following committees, elected by that committee: Christian Education, Communications, Finance, House, John R. Carson Memorial Park, Music, Nominating, Pastor/Parish Relations, Sanctuary, Social Action and Missions, Stewardship, and Technology. The Council shall be the policy-making body and shall be responsible for directing and coordinating all affairs, activities, responsibilities, and interests of the Church.

The next Council Meeting will be held on **Wednesday, January 8, at 7:30 PM, via Zoom**. Anyone from CCC is welcome to attend! Contact Lynn Horton if you would like the Zoom link information. [Lynn@terpsoft.com](mailto:Lynn@terpsoft.com) (978) 256-8524





United Church of Christ  
1 Worthen Street, Chelmsford, MA 01824

*An Open & Affirming Congregation*

*"A Community of Faith, Hope, and Love, Growing through Worship and Service"*

## WE INVITE YOU TO JOIN US!

**Worship is on Sundays at 10:00 a.m.**

<b>Pastor Pro Tem:</b>	Rev. Lee Atherton	508-308-7116	<a href="mailto:pastor-lee@cccchelmsford.org">pastor-lee@cccchelmsford.org</a>
<b>Director of Music:</b>	Tudor Bota	978-772-3173	<a href="mailto:tudorbota@gmail.com">tudorbota@gmail.com</a>
<b>Office Administrator:</b>	Peggy Kelly	978-256-5931	<a href="mailto:office.admin@cccchelmsford.org">office.admin@cccchelmsford.org</a>
<b>Sunday School Coordinator:</b>	Jennifer Hart	610-781-2074	<a href="mailto:5ofharts@chrisjenn.net">5ofharts@chrisjenn.net</a>
<b>Nursery Coordinator</b>	Kelsey Hartigan	978-770-8984	<a href="mailto:kelsey.hartigan2020@gmail.com">kelsey.hartigan2020@gmail.com</a>
<b>Custodian:</b>	Juarez Gomes		
<b>Church Address:</b>	One Worthen Street	Chelmsford, MA	01824
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<b>Church e-mail:</b>	<a href="mailto:Office.admin@cccchelmsford.org">Office.admin@cccchelmsford.org</a>		
<b>Church Website:</b>	<a href="http://cccchelmsford.org">cccchelmsford.org</a>		
<b>Church Fax:</b>	978-250-3565		
<b>Conference Website:</b>	<a href="http://www.sneucc.org">www.sneucc.org</a>		

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