



CENTRAL CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH

United Church of Christ

An Open and Affirming Congregation

VOLUME 70 NUMBER 06

June 2025

JUNE EVENTS

Communion Sunday, Graduation Sunday, New Members Sunday - Sunday, June 1 during worship

Lunch with Lee - Sunday, June 1 | 11:30 AM | The Java Room

Pastor Rich Bench Dedication – Sunday, June 8 after worship, Carson Park

ChristCare - Monday, June 16 | 6:00 PM | Country Creamery and Coffeehouse

ChristCare Men's Group - Sundays | 8:00 AM | 9 Worthen

DEMM Car Wash - Saturday, June 7 | 12:00 – 4:00 PM | CCC Parking Lot

Youth Sunday, All-Church Photo, and All-Church Picnic - Sunday, June 8 after worship

Piano Recital - Sunday, June 8 | 5:00 PM | Sanctuary

CCC Movie Group - Mondays, June 9 & 23 and July 14 & 28 | 7:00 PM on Zoom

KiSeLo – Kindness, Service, Love - Wednesday, June 25 | 1:00 PM | Country Creamery and Coffeehouse

Lunch Bunch - Tuesdays | 11:45 AM | Room 202



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FROM THE PASTOR'S OFFICE

Rev. Lee Atherton

They say, “Time flies when you’re having fun!” That is so true! This church school year has gone by more quickly than I could have imagined. Here we are, celebrating graduations and planning Youth Sunday in just one week. As the year draws to a close, we find ourselves in a season of joyful celebration. We honor the accomplishments of our graduates—young and not-so-young—who have reached important milestones in their journeys. We’ll gather for Youth Sunday, a vibrant reminder of the gifts our children and teens bring to our church family: their energy, their insight, and their gleeful praise to God. We give thanks for parents, Sunday School teachers, and the many other mentors and guides our young people find in the wider CCC community. These moments remind us of the ways God is at work in every stage of life, guiding, growing, and grounding us.

And as we turn the corner into summer, the pace of life begins to slow. The calendar opens up a little. The days stretch longer. We may find ourselves drawn outside more often, soaking in the beauty of creation, embracing rest, or reconnecting with loved ones. This too is sacred time, a season not of *less*, but of *different*. This slower pace is not a pause from God, rather it is an invitation to meet God in a different way. It is a season where God speaks in the quiet, the unhurried, and the in-between.

Author and pastor John Ortberg once wrote about what he called “hurry sickness”—a constant, unexamined rush through life that leaves little room for reflection, connection, or joy. When Ortberg sought spiritual guidance, his mentor told him, “*You must ruthlessly eliminate hurry from your life.*” It’s a phrase that has stuck with me for decades as an important reminder at this time of year. Summer invites us to slow down, to breathe deeply, and to rediscover the presence of God in the ordinary and the unhurried.

Because, even though the busy-ness of the school year may end, our worship doesn’t. Our connection with God doesn’t go on vacation. GOD doesn’t go on vacation! Whether you find yourself in the sanctuary on Sunday morning, out of town with family, or walking a trail in the woods—God is there. Worship may look different in the summer, but it continues. We worship through song and silence, through laughter and rest, through presence and prayer.

So wherever this season takes you, I encourage you to remain open to God’s presence. Bring your whole self, your gratitude, your questions, your joy, and even your weariness. Let the Spirit meet you right where you are.

As we celebrate, rest, and wander into the warmth of summer, may we remember that God goes with us—and ahead of us—always.



OFFICE UPDATE

BEACON ARTICLES

The next submission deadline is **Wednesday, July 23** for the August edition. A reminder will be sent in July. As a reminder, we do not publish The Beacon in July.

WEEKLY ANNOUNCEMENTS

Please submit announcements for the Tuesday email blast by **9:00 AM on Tuesdays**.

SUMMER OFFICE HOURS



Summer office hours are Wednesdays and Thursdays from 8:30 AM to 1:30 PM beginning the week of July 1 through August 15.

The Weekly Announcements email will be sent on Wednesday mornings during the summer schedule. Please continue to send your announcement requests by Tuesdays throughout the summer.

As always, thank you for helping me stay organized.

Peggy Kelly
Office Administrator



FOR YOUR CALENDAR

CHURCH PICTURE

Sunday, June 8 Immediately After Worship



Come one, come all! On Sunday, June 8, immediately following the worship service we will be taking a church picture of the congregation on the front steps of the church. Please make your way to the front steps after worship and find your picture-perfect spot!

YOUTH SUNDAY & ALL CHURCH PICNIC

Sunday, June 8 After Worship



It's hard to believe but our Sunday School year is quickly coming to a close and with that comes Youth Sunday, the day when kids run the service. Our theme this year is Community. In lieu of coffee hour we will be having our annual picnic immediately following the service on **Sunday, June 8**.

Please use the sign-up sheet at Coffee Hour to sign-up in person or follow the link below to the electronic sign-up sheet. The cost is \$2 per person or \$8 per family. The CE committee will provide the main meal of hot dogs, hamburgers, and veggie burgers but we are asking others to sign up and bring a favorite side

dish or a dessert to share. Please remember to **bring your camping chairs and picnic blankets**. **We hope to see you there!**

If you have any questions, please email Samantha Shields at Samantha.Shields@cccchelmsford.org.

OPEN INVITATION TO A PIANO RECITAL

Sunday, June 8 | 5:00 PM | Sanctuary



On Sunday, June 8 at 5:00 PM, there will be a piano recital in the sanctuary for a graduating high school senior. Noah Richardson, a piano student of Betsy White, will present a varied program of Bach, Schumann, Chopin and Mozart alongside his sister, Emily, who will join him in a harp/piano duet. Both Emily and Noah have played at our church in the past, and we welcome them back again! **All are invited to attend this recital!**

Betsy White

KiSeLo – KINDNESS, SERVICE, LOVE

Wednesday, June 25 | 1:00 PM | Country Creamery and Coffee House



The year has wound down and summer is here! We had a great year full of fellowship, fun programs, and delicious desserts provided by the hostesses of the month. We even got to meet Nibi, the infamous beaver! Cash donations were made to the Open Pantry of Greater Lowell, as well as Newhouse Wildlife Rescue. We provided monthly non-perishable food donations to the Open Pantry. Lillian Began led the churchwide Backpack Attack with donations given to the Wish Project. We finished the year with a banquet held at Princeton Station.

Join us on June 25

Although the formal year is over, we will get together at the **Country Creamery and Coffeehouse on June 25 at 1:00 PM**. The Country Creamery and Coffeehouse is located at 272 Old Westford Road in Chelmsford. All are welcome to join us!

Ice Cream Social on August 27

An early start to the new year will be an ice-cream social event held in the Fellowship Hall on **August 27**.

First Official Meeting in the Fall

Our first official meeting of the new year will be held on **September 24** at 1:00 PM.

If you are not already a member of KiSeLo (Kindness, Service, Love), please join us on any of the above-mentioned dates and hopefully, once you get to meet us, you will want to be a part of this great woman's group called KiSeLo.

If you have questions, need more info, or have comments, please text or call Karen Banakos at (603)686-2026, or see me at coffee hour after Sunday service.

I wish you all a very happy, safe summer!

Karen Banakos



SUMMER WORSHIP SCHEDULE

June 1 – UCC 101, New Members Joining, Communion, and Graduation Celebration

Join us in celebrating our graduates. We'll also welcome new members and share the Lord's Supper as we learn what it means to be part of the United Church of Christ.

June 8 – Youth Sunday and Pentecost -This fabulous worship service will feature our Sunday School family as they share and lead worship with you. **It's Pentecost Sunday, so be sure to wear red!**

June 15 – Rev. Cynthia Maybeck Preaching (Pastor Lee away) - Reverend Maybeck returns to CCC for Trinity Sunday. Rev. Maybeck is certified in Biblical Storytelling and has a wonderful way of bringing scripture to life.

June 22 – Coach Becky David Preaching - Join us for Coach Becky's third in-person visit with CCC and be a part of our lunch and time of learning with her after worship. Where are we in the search process and what is next?

June 29 – Open and Affirming - Our newly rekindled and inspired ONA Ministry Team will lead us in worship this Sunday.

July 6 – Praying the Labyrinth, Communion – Worship Outdoors - We have a fabulous Labyrinth in Carson Park! Have you prayed the labyrinth? Come learn more about this beautiful spiritual tool for deepening your prayer time and relationship with God. Stay after worship for a guided (or on your own) labyrinth walk.

July 13 – The Wider Church - Every two years, General Synod brings together faithful members of the United Church of Christ for inspirational worship, fellowship, and public witness, including engagement with the church's business. This weekend thousands from across the country will gather in Kansas City, Missouri to discern resolutions of witness, church structure, and function. Come worship with our brothers and sisters in Christ.

July 20 – Worship Out of the Box – Outdoors (in case of rain, worship will be in Fellowship Hall) - Do we worship from a place of being boxed in? This Sunday we'll explore what it means to break the box open and worship from a place of curiosity, community, and courageous transformation.

July 27 – Guest Preacher

August 3 – Guest Preacher, Communion

August 10 – Guest Preacher

August 17 – Lectio and Visio Divina

There are many ways to read, understand, and pray with scripture. While Lectio Divina is a method of praying with scripture, Visio Divina (Latin for "divine seeing") is a method for praying with images or other media. Scripture shows us that imagery has been an important part of God's way of communicating with us.

DEMM CAR WASH

Saturday, June 7 | 12:00-4:00 PM

Want to support the Downeast Maine Mission trip AND have a clean car?

Stop by the church parking lot on Saturday, June 7 between 12:00 – 4:00 PM. Car washing is donation-based.

For more information, please contact Peter White.

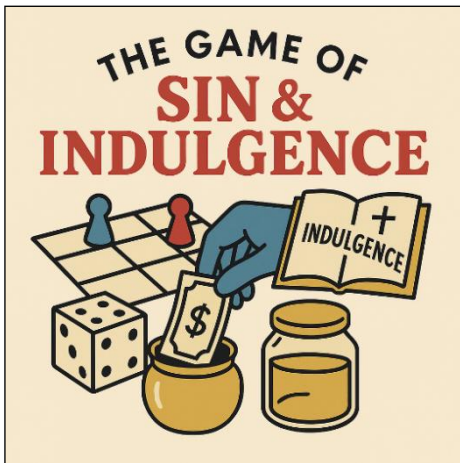
DEMM CAR WASH



SAT, JUNE 7
CCC Parking Lot

THE GAME OF SIN & INDULGENCE

Friday, June 27 | 7:00 – 8:30 PM | Fellowship Hall



Join us for a one-of-a-kind Board Game Night fundraiser with a playful twist—*The Game of Sin & Indulgence*! Players can 'bend the rules' by committing lighthearted 'sins' (cheats) in their favorite games, all in the name of fun and fundraising. But fear not—indulgences can be purchased to absolve wrongdoing or gain an edge!

With themed challenges, a 'Repentance Booth,' and plenty of laughter, this event is a creative way to bring our community together while supporting a great cause: the youth group's Down East Maine Mission (DEMM) trip.

It also serves as a research site for a dissertation exploring how playful experimentation leads to transformation and hope within faith communities.

Please contact Jennifer Hart for more information: jennhart1969@gmail.com.

MOVIE GROUP

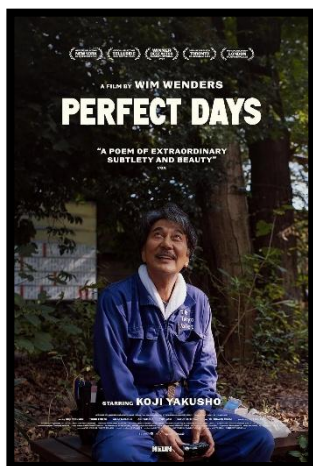
Mondays | June 9 & 23 and July 14 & 28 | 7:00 PM | Zoom

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 (lynn@terpsoft.com) for the Zoom link, if you have questions, or if you have difficulty accessing the movies!

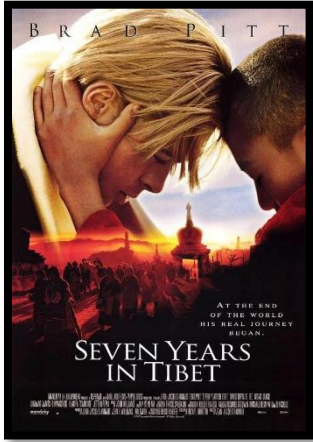
June Movies



Monday, 6/9 – “In the Good Old Summertime” (1949) American Technicolor musical romantic comedy film starring Judy Garland, Van Johnson, S. Z. Sakall, Spring Byington, Clinton Sundberg, and Buster Keaton in his first featured film role at MGM since 1933. Garland's three-year-old daughter, Liza Minnelli, makes her film debut, walking with her mother and Van Johnson in the film's closing shot. The film is a musical adaptation of the 1940 film “The Shop Around the Corner,” which was directed by Ernst Lubitsch, starring James Stewart, Margaret Sullivan, and Frank Morgan, and written by Miklós László, based on his 1937 play “Parfumerie.” For “In the Good Old Summertime” the locale has been changed from 1930s Budapest to turn-of-the-century Chicago, but the plot remains the same. You may know the plot from another remake, the 1998 film “You've Got Mail”, starring Tom Hanks and Meg Ryan!



Monday, 6/23 – “Perfect Days” (2023) Hirayama (actor Koji Yakusho) works as a toilet cleaner in Tokyo. He seems content with his simple life. He follows a structured everyday routine and dedicates his free time to his passion for music and books. Hirayama also has a fondness for trees and photographs them. More of his past is gradually revealed through a series of unexpected encounters. A deeply moving and poetic reflection on finding beauty in the everyday world around us. The nine public toilets featured in the movie were built to help welcome visitors to Japan as part of the planned Summer Olympics in 2020. As the pandemic delayed the Olympics, Koji Yannai, a senior executive for Fast Retailing (known for its Uniqlo brand) sought a way to still make the toilets known internationally and contacted several screenwriters and advertisers, leading to the idea of having a well-known film director produce a documentary about these toilets. Given an invitation to produce the documentary, filmmaker Wim Wenders decided to make a feature instead.



Monday, 7/14 – “Seven Years in Tibet” (1997) Based on the book written by Heinrich Harrer, the film is an autobiographical account of his experiences in Tibet from 1944 to 1951, detailing his time spent with the 14th Dalai Lama and his life at the court of the Dalai Lama. Starring Brad Pitt as the Austrian climber Heinrich Harrer, it portrays Harrer's journey from a British POW camp to Tibet, where he becomes a confidant of the Dalai Lama. Both the book and the film explore themes of friendship, cultural exchange, and personal transformation. Dalai Lama – “We have a saying in Tibet: If a problem can be solved there is no use worrying about it. If it can't be solved, worrying will do no good.”



Monday, 7/28 – “We Bought a Zoo” (2011) Matt Damon gives a heartfelt performance in this delightful film that's based on a true story. Benjamin Mee and his children struggle to move forward in life after the death of their dear wife and mother. When his teenage son gets into trouble, Mee (Damon) gives up a lucrative newspaper job to move his family to the most unlikely of places: a zoo! With help from an eclectic staff, and with many misadventures along the way, Benjamin embarks on a fresh beginning to restore the dilapidated zoo to its former glory, while uniting his family. “We Bought a Zoo” is a wonderful, warm and witty celebration of the human spirit.

BACKPACK ATTACK

KiSeLo will be collecting school supplies now through August 3. We will be working through The Wish Project again this year, which will provide backpacks with supplies to needy children in Lowell and Lawrence.

If you would prefer not to provide supplies, a donation of \$40 is suggested or whatever amount you are able to donate. If you would like to provide supplies but again don't want to do the shopping, let me know and I can shop for you. You can also provide *some* of the supplies from the list and I will fill in the rest.

Continue on next page →



Please return the supplies to me before or after the worship service on Sundays or drop them off at the church office when it's open.

Checks can be made out to the church and can be given to me or sent to the church office. Please write "Backpack" on the memo line of the check.

For more information about The Wish Project Backpack Attack project, visit thewishproject.org/backpack-attack

School Supplies to Provide:

1 new backpack (17" or larger)	1 12" ruler (with inches and centimeters)
3 spiral notebooks	1 metal scissors (kid sized)
3 folders	1 pack markers or colored pencils
1 pack of 10 pencils	2 or 3 glue sticks or 1 bottle of glue
1 pencil sharpener	1 pack of 24 crayons
2 or more black pens	Optional: 1 science calculator for high school students
1 pink style or 6 cap erasers	

Thanks in advance.

Lillian Beean
(lbeean@verizon.net)



UPDATES

FROM THE SUNDAY SCHOOL COORDINATOR

Help Wanted

Central Congregational Church

Help Wanted

TEAM TEACHERS NEEDED

I am happy to welcome Emmett Lyons to our Sunday School teaching team!

We are looking for two more team teachers for 2025/2026 Sunday School year!

CLASSES

PreK-Kindergarten:
Samantha Shields and ?

1st-2nd Grade:
Becky Acheson and Emmett Lyons

3rd-4th Grade:
Kristin Strobel and ?

Holy Cows:
Elmer Lyons and Bonnie McGrath

God Squad:
Will Hargett and Steve Hartigan

Please contact Jennifer Hart
jennhart1969@gmail.com



What a Year!

Wow! What a wonderful year we've had! I am always so happy to work within this community! Our Sunday School year will wrap up on Youth Sunday, June 8. There will also be an all-church picture and picnic after the service. We hope you will join the fun!

Although we do not have a summer program planned for this summer, please come to worship on Sunday mornings and please support our mission trip in August. Look for Welcome Back Sunday announcements in late August.



Looking for Pictures!

I am looking for pictures of our children and youth for the bulletin board outside of my office.

Our children and youth are called by God in so many ways, and I really want to share that with our CCC Community.

Please email your photos to me: jennhart1969@gmail.com

Thank you.

Jennifer Hart
Sunday School Coordinator

CHRISTIAN EDUCATION COMMITTEE

Happy June! Your CE Committee is preparing for the end of the school year festivities. The whole Sunday School enjoyed a glorious morning at Stony Brook Conservation area on our spring hike in May. We enjoyed prayer and fellowship together in the great outdoors. It is perhaps our most beloved Covid-era tradition and the kids look forward to it.

We are busy preparing for Youth Sunday on Sunday, June 8th which will be followed by a picnic lunch. It is a wonderful time to end the school year with celebration and fellowship. On June 8th, the kids will run the service and it is a great way to showcase what they have learned this year. As always, thank you for your support of our youth!

Kristin Strobel

WELCOMING CHILDREN IN WORSHIP & CHURCH EVENTS

A Guide to Grace-Filled Engagement

As a pastor who preaches every Sunday morning and frequently officiates weddings and funerals, I often find myself telling parents, “Don’t stay away. You **and** your child are welcome!” At Central Congregational Church we take pride in our wide welcome and affirm that, “no matter who you are or where you are on life’s journey, you are welcome here.” That includes EVERYONE!

- The babies who cry while they wait for a bottle or a snuggle
- The wiggly, squiggly toddler or youngster
- The teens who don’t fit in at school and count on us to be a safe place
- The neurodiverse adult who doesn’t follow worship in the same ways
- The handicapped person who joins our worship in their wheelchair or needs an extra-large print bulletin.
- The youngster or adult who seems to always be a bit too loud, a bit too restless, a bit too mischievous
- Every generation, even those who challenge the “norms” of another generation.

In every generation, social norms around children's behavior shift. What was once expected may no longer be standard. In church, where traditions run deep and sacredness is felt strongly, these differences can create discomfort and angst.

When you’re feeling uncomfortable with a behavior that is outside what is comfortable for you, take a moment to reflect on where that discomfort comes from. Is it about respect? Routine? Is it about disruption, or simply difference? The way children engage in worship and church events may not always look like what we’re used to, but that doesn’t mean it isn’t meaningful. Let’s be curious before we are critical and be open to the idea that the Spirit moves in ways we don’t always expect.

Practical Ways to Respond with Grace

Choose Curiosity Over Criticism. Ask yourself:

- “What might this child be experiencing right now?”
- “Is this truly disruptive, or just different?”

Practice Hospitality, Not Just Tolerance. A warm smile or kind word can make families feel welcomed.

- Say: “It’s good to hear kids in worship—it reminds me that the church is alive.”
- Say: “I know it’s not always easy. I’m glad you’re here.”

Redirect Gently, Not Harshly. If a child’s behavior needs to be addressed:

- Get on their eye level.
- Use calm, respectful language: “Let’s save our running for after worship, okay?” or “I imagine you’re pretty curious about this. Let’s see how we can explore it safely.”

Model Patience and Presence. Let your body language and facial expressions reflect openness. Children will often follow your emotional lead.

Shift from 'Should' to 'Could.' Instead of: "Children should sit still," try: "How could we help them feel more included?"

- Consider children's bulletins or activity bags.
- Offer space for quiet play or movement.

Remember Your 'Why.' Ask yourself: "Why do we want children here?" Is it to keep the room quiet, or to build up the next generation of faithful people?

Let us be the kind of church that welcomes the joyful noise, the wandering feet, and the growing spirits of children — for theirs is the kingdom of heaven, too.

Pastor Lee Atherton

CHRISTCARE SMALL GROUP

Central Congregational Church has **two** ChristCare small groups:

- One is specifically for men.
- The other has traditionally consisted of women.
- Nonbinary folks are welcome to choose whichever group is the better fit for them.

Men's ChristCare is led by Glenn Dissinger. Contact him for information about joining the group.

Women's ChristCare typically meets over Zoom at 7:00 PM on the first and third Mondays of each month. We meet less frequently and in person during the summer months. Ice cream is usually involved in the summertime, along with sharing deep thoughts, laughter, and prayer. New members are welcome at any time.

Contact Deb Lyons ([978-930-6830](tel:978-930-6830)) for information.



CONGRATULATIONS GRADUATES!

Central Congregational Church offers joyous congratulations to our 2025 Graduates and their families.

High School Graduates

Katherine Morin is graduating from Chelmsford High School. She will be attending the University of New Hampshire College of Health and Human Services in Durham, NH, to earn a degree in Nursing. Kat is also hoping to play club hockey and lacrosse.

Haley Papenfuss, granddaughter of Dick and Karen Papenfuss, graduated from Neocity Academy, Kissimmee, Florida. She will be coming north to study Art History at Suffolk University in Boston.

College Graduates

Nicholas Bottomley received his Bachelor of Science degree from the University of Connecticut, Storrs, CT, with a major in Microcellular Biology and a minor in Bioinformatics on May 11, 2025. Nick will begin graduate studies in Bioinformatics at Northeastern University in the fall.

Nathan Doyle, grandson of Jane McKersie and the late Alan McKersie, and son of Kate and Toby Doyle, graduated Summa cum Laude in February, 2025, from UMass Lowell with a Bachelor of Arts degree in Peace and Conflict Studies. Nathan has been working at Mahoney's Garden Center for many years, during a gap year he'll be working there full time and has lots of trips planned as well...all while he decides on what's next for him, whether furthering his education or a job more aligned with his degree/interest.

Jeremy Hargett graduated from Framingham State University with a Bachelor of Science degree in Psychology on May 24, 2025. He is very proud to be a first-generation college graduate! Jeremy will be working toward a Master's degree in Behavioral Therapy with a focus on Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA). Jeremy is employed at Key Connections ABA Services in Westford.

Andrea Celeste Loew graduated Summa cum Laude from the University of Vermont in Burlington, VT, on May 18, 2025, with a Bachelor of Science degree in Nursing. Andrea plans to go to southern Spain in September to teach English for a year before starting her nursing career. She is interested in travel nursing. Andrea has been working in the ER of the hospital in Montpelier part-time for four years and will continue to work there over the summer.

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Joshua Walsh graduated on May 18, 2025, from the University of Massachusetts, Amherst, with a Bachelor of Science degree in Natural Resources Conservation. Josh is currently working as a seasonal laborer with the Amherst Department of Conservation; his next plans are to become a Park Ranger. While at UMass, Josh participated in the Pep Band, the University of Massachusetts Minuteman Marching Band, and served as the University's mascot, Sam the Minuteman!

Post Graduates

Natalie Fay, daughter of Tony and Jennifer Bellissimo and granddaughter of Brian and Linda Lis, graduated from American University Washington College of Law in Washington, DC on May 17, 2025. Following graduation, Natalie will be working for the Baltimore Court system in Maryland.

Kelsey Jane Hartigan graduated on May 17, 2025, from the Westbrook College of Health Professions, University of New England, Biddeford, Maine, with a Master of Science degree in Athletic Training. She will be working at MaineHealth Orthopedics and Sports Medicine in Biddeford.

Madeleine Morin graduated from Stonehill College, Meehan School of Business, Easton, MA, on May 18, 2025. She earned a Master of Science degree with a concentration in Marketing. Maddie's future plan is to find a job in Graphic Design or Marketing.



TRANSITION TEAM NEWS

Since Coach Becky's March visit, the Transition Team has been very focused on and busy with completing the Profile. The Team has had to reach out to many members, committee chairs, and the office administrator of CCC, plus contacts from the Southern Conference to research answers to the Profile before completing each section. Now that the Annual Meeting has been held, other sections containing financial, budgetary, and other analytical data can now begin to be completed. The various committee reports submitted for the Annual Meeting have also proven to be beneficial.

The Transition Team holds weekly Zoom meetings to assist each other in completing each section and offering ideas on who to turn to if necessary. The Team has also used these meetings to summarize Coach Becky's activities from the March meeting and the Pastoral Survey conducted at the Annual Meeting in May.

Coach Becky will return to CCC on **Sunday, June 22** for a church meeting immediately following the service to review the "Hopes and Dreams" presented at her March meeting and have the members decide which are worth pursuing, along with other planned activities. We would like to have a family potluck to enjoy during the meeting. Please bring a main dish or dessert to share. Please label any dish with the name of the food and any known allergens such as nuts, soy, milk, etc. The dishes can be placed in the kitchen before church. Beverages will be provided. The Transition Team will meet with a few members of the Council beforehand to coordinate Coach Becky's visit.

John Lamplough, Transition Team Chair

SOCIAL ACTION AND MISSIONS COMMITTEE (SAM)

SAM's last major activity for the year is coming up on June 30 when we will be serving a meal for the St. Paul's Kitchen at Eliot Church in Lowell. With the weather turning warm, we plan to serve chicken salad sandwiches as the main course. Using Jeremy Williams' special recipe, these have proven to be very popular in recent years. SAM will be looking for donations of fruit (for fruit salad) and brownies to round out the meal, so please watch for the sign-up sheets in mid-June.

SAM has also been making final donations to local non-profits and missions, including to our own CCC DownEast Maine mission trip and the Lowell Transitional Living Center's Steps to Home annual walkathon fundraiser. Thank you for all your support that enables SAM to carry out these missions.

SAM Committee: Jen Bellissimo, Diane Blair, Carol Boucek, Julie Carney, Kathy Lueck, Wendy Piacenza, Rebeca Wisniewski, Dale Williams, and new members Erin McNally and Danielle Albon

DON HARBISON'S PAN MASS CHALLENGE



For 2025, I will be riding the historic 186 mile two-day route from [Sturbridge to Provincetown](#). I have started my training, which is a good thing since I have not ridden this route since 2016. I know what I'm in for.

I've updated my [Profile Page](https://profile.pmc.org/dh0129) [https://profile.pmc.org/dh0129] with all the great news that Kit and Jenna are both doing very well! From stage IV cancers to 'no cancer present' in Jenna's case! And in Kit's case her oncologist stopped her immunotherapy treatments since he believes her cancer cells are dead. They will both be monitored by quarterly scans for the next several years, otherwise it feels like a huge success. [Learn how your donations impact the quality of care and research and development](https://www.pmc.org/impact) [https://www.pmc.org/impact] at Dana-Farber. All of this made it possible for my wife and daughter to survive and thrive after the harrowing experiences of metastatic cancers.

Thank you!

Don Harbison

CCC GIFT CARD MINISTRY



Kayla (not her real name) is a young mother who has reached out a few times over the past year for help with grocery store gift cards. Her face lights up when she speaks about her 3-year-old daughter, whom I'll call Haley.

Haley is non-verbal, autistic, and currently in foster care. Kayla sees her for only two hours each week. During that precious time, she's learning to connect with Haley in new ways—through sign language and assistive communication technology, which Haley's caregivers are using to help her express herself. Kayla is doing everything she can to learn these tools too, determined to be part of her daughter's world. After two long years apart, Kayla remains hopeful that she'll soon be reunited with Haley.

In the meantime, would you please keep Kayla and her family in your prayers?

The Pastor Rich Gift Card Ministry exists because of your kindness and generosity. Donations can be made by cash or check payable to CCC with 'Gift Card Ministry' on the memo line. Thank you for continuing to support this important ministry. ❤️

Peggy Kelly

BREAKING THE SILENCE:

Mental Health, Faith, and Becoming WISE

On Mental Health Sunday, our sanctuary was filled not only with song and prayer but with truth-telling. We heard from Sam B., whose courage in sharing his story invited us to listen more deeply, more compassionately. Pastor Lee spoke candidly about her own journey with suicide—reminding us that faith and mental health are not opposites, but companions. In doing so, they broke the silence that too often surrounds mental illness, grief, and despair.

We sang. We wept. We named the pain and the resilience. Together, we proclaimed that church should be a place where no one has to pretend they're okay when they're not.



As part of this worship, we participated in the *Litany of Naming*, acknowledging both the struggles and the strength of those living with mental health challenges. We celebrated God's presence in neurodiverse bodies and brains, in those navigating depression, anxiety, addiction, trauma, and beyond. We claimed that the God we follow—the God who loves without limits—is a Disabled and Neurodiverse God, dwelling among us.

The United Church of Christ invites congregations like ours to go deeper by becoming a WISE church—Welcoming, Inclusive, Supportive, and Engaged for mental health. This means not just holding one powerful Sunday but committing to long-term culture change: offering mental health education, peer support, and advocacy, and becoming a spiritual home where mental health is treated with the same care and dignity as physical health.

Are you curious about what that might look like for us? Do you have your own story, or a call to support others? If you're interested in learning more about becoming a WISE congregation, please talk to Pastor Lee. Your questions, your ideas, and your hopes are all welcome.

In a world where many suffer in silence, let us be a church that listens. A church that makes space for truth. A church that loves with open arms. Together, may we become WISE.

Pastor Lee

SIX REASONS YOU SHOULD GO ON A RETREAT THIS YEAR

By Pastor Lee Atherton

A retreat is an opportunity to get away from the clamor and chaos of life and focus on yourself.

A retreat offers sacred time to look beyond our day-to-day schedules and obligations and rediscover what lies beneath the surface – those things we truly value that guide our choices, attitudes, and relationships. Retreats help us to remember what is most important and what we've forgotten in the midst of all the roles we fill and the expectations of who we think we should be.

Here are six reasons to consider retreating:

Take Care of YOU!! We give so much of ourselves in our daily lives that it can be difficult to really take a moment just for ourselves. But let me ask you, "How can you keep quenching other people's thirst if you never refill the well?"

Renew Your Sense of Self. It's time to drop all the roles society wants you to be: mom, sister, daughter, wife, friend, employee. One retreator put it this way: "People need to be reminded that we are actually individuals, human beings, as opposed to 'human doings.'" Self-renewal is a crucial piece of your overall well-being.

Destress! In this crazy, fast-paced world, being still and quiet can actually be uncomfortable, or even scary. But our souls, our spirits NEED quiet. Alvin Toffler, an American Futurist concluded that "humans could not keep up with the rapid accelerating pace of change. We need time to ponder, to realize, to learn, to listen to our deeper, truer self."

Have Fun & Laugh! How often in life do you truly surround yourself with the fun things and people in life that you just can't stop that deep, roaring belly-laugh from escaping? Society tells us all the "right" ways to express ourselves and far too often, we stifle one of the very things that easily brings wellness. After all, laughter is the best medicine!

Help Others. Yup! Not only is a retreat good for you, but it's also even good for the people you spend time with. Who doesn't want a more relaxed, patient, happier, rested person in their lives?! People see a new you and are motivated to make more positive changes in their own lives. It's like the pebble in the pond – the ripples continue to spread.

Detox your body, mind, and spirit. Everyone needs to unload, clean out and empty their mental briefcase. At a retreat you are unplugged, eating well, meditating, being in nature, resting, gaining insight, and renewing. Retreat is a time to learn the sound of your own soul, to tap into the wisdom you have within, and to listen to the precious voice of the One who knows you.

OPEN AND AFFIRMING (ONA) MINISTRY

Voting to become an ONA congregation was just the first step in our commitment to growing into a welcoming community of faith. The ONA Ministry has been revitalized to continue to educate, support, and grow in our understanding of all those who in the past have been disenfranchised. We are working to increase our community involvement as well.

May saw a focus on mental health awareness. June is Pride Month, a time to recognize, celebrate, and honor the history of our LGBTQ+ members including non-binary and intersex individuals. There will be many events across New England and the United States during the month of June. UCC World Pride 2025 will be held in Washington DC from June 6-8. "Pride matters now more than ever," says Rev. Derek A. Terry, the acting executive director of the UCC ONA Coalition. Boston Pride for the People will start at 12:00 on Saturday June 14, beginning at Copley Square, through the South End, and ending on Boston Common. Lowell Pride Day will be from 12-4 on Saturday June 7th at DCR Lowell Heritage State Park on Pawtucket Boulevard. June 29th will be Pride Sunday in our church. We hope you will join us in church on that day to witness to God's inclusive love.

Studies have shown that attempted suicide rates and suicidal ideation is significantly higher in the LGBTQ+ population than the general population. Currently, the USA has a suicide and mental health crisis hotline accessed by dialing 988. In the event that this public service is discontinued, Canada has established a US toll free number so that help is available anytime at no cost. This number is 1-877-330-6366.

Visit Our Tables

Please visit our tables in Fellowship Hall after church starting June 1st through the 29th. We will have:

- Slips of papers that can be used to request the addition of your pronouns to your name tags. Why do pronouns matter? Pronouns are a key part of how people express their gender identity and how they wish to be referred to. Normalizing the sharing of pronouns shows respect, creates a more inclusive environment, and validates a person's identity. By sharing your own gender pronouns, you are helping to create a safer environment for those who may be apprehensive to share their own, especially the LGBTQ+ people in our church community and LGBTQ+ visitors.
- Ribbons in the awareness shapes in both rainbow and trans colors. These can be attached to your name tag or clothing.

Thank you.

Mary Horne

BUILDING COMMITTEE

The online application to renew our Chelmsford Board of Health permit for the kitchen has been submitted. We are a non-profit organization and therefore will not be billed for the renewal. Another inspection of the kitchen may be needed.

Any group or individual who wants to use the kitchen for preparing and serving food should have some basic training in Food Safety and use of appliances. Please reach out to Valerie King 978-846-1120 for training.

Christine Williams

COUNCIL CORNER

A Monthly Update on the Activity of the CCC Council

News from the May 14, 2025, Meeting

- Treasurer Dick Papenfuss reported that as of April 30 we are 83% of the way through Fiscal Year 2024-2025. Pledged income continues to be below budget expectations at 80% Year-To-Date, unpledged income is at 57%, and total income YTD is at 81% of budget. It is anticipated that parishioners will fulfill their 2024-2025 Stewardship pledges in May and June. Thank you to all who donated to the Special Offering for Easter, \$522 was received. Total Expenses are at 77% YTD. We have had mostly conservative spending this year, which means we are likely to have a surplus amount at the end of June. The solar panels continue to offset the cost of electricity: our entire bill for the month of April was \$18.37! The income we have received for ten years from the SREC program (Solar Renewable Energy Credits) will be coming to an end in the next month. The final payment to Coach Becky David has been remitted.
- The Finance Committee submitted proposed updates to Policy 15 in the CCC Policies and Procedures Manual. Policy 15, "Counting Process and Control Procedures" delineates the procedures followed by the Finance Committee Counters each Sunday as they process the offering and other monies received by the church. The members of Council unanimously approved the updated document.
- The Communications Committee requested that each CCC committee create an "elevator pitch," a short description of their church committee and what it does. The Communications Committee would like to highlight each committee in the monthly newsletter and on the church website. Some committees may be appropriate for "outward facing" PR on the CCC Facebook page as well. Contact Samantha Shields for more information.
- The Nominating Committee proposed Bonnie McGrath to serve as CCC Safe Church Advocate; the Council unanimously approved the appointment. Bonnie has served as a Sunday School teacher for our middle school youth for many, many years and considers the safety and well-being of our children to be paramount.

Continued →

- The Council also approved a request by the Ramps for Neighbors mission group (a joint effort of CCC and All Saints' Episcopal Church) to use a storage shed on CCC property to secure their tools and building materials. The shed was previously used by Troop 74.
- The Nominating Committee presented the proposed Slate of Officers and Committee Nominees 2025-2026. Council unanimously approved the draft slate to go to Annual Meeting on May 18, 2025, for a vote by the church membership.
- Dick Papenfuss presented the proposed church budget for 2025-2026 and reviewed each line item, with explanations given for any increase or decrease to the categories. The Council approved the draft budget, and it was then to be presented to the churchwide membership for a vote at Annual Meeting on May 18, 2025.
- The Capital Campaign Building Committee and the Trustees reported that paving of the church parking lot is still anticipated for this summer while the Co-Op Nursery School is not in session. We are waiting for the town to resolve some pipe issues that run below our lot. The Trustees noted that the UMass Lowell underground structure survey identified some areas that will also need to be addressed before the paving project is done.
- The Transition Team reported that they are working diligently to fill in the information in the church profile which will be used in the upcoming Pastoral Search.
- Following the Annual Meeting, all committees are requested to send the names of their committee chairs and representatives to Council for 2025-2026 to Peggy Kelly, church office administrator.
- A reminder to all committees to post their committee meeting dates and other activities on the church calendar.

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, June 11, 2025, 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 (978) 256-8524

Please note there is no meeting of the church Council in the month of July.

GOD ON THE GO

A Flat Stanley-Inspired Faith Adventure

Summer is almost here! The days are growing longer, and many of us are turning our thoughts toward sunshine, beach days, and summer vacations—or simply taking time to pause and catch our breath. Whether you're headed across the country or staying close to home, this season offers all of us a beautiful chance to reflect, reconnect, and renew.

You might remember *Flat Stanley*, the beloved children's book character who, after being accidentally flattened by a bulletin board, decided to make the best of things by traveling the world. For years, children have taken Flat Stanley on adventures far and wide—snapping pictures, writing stories, and imagining where he might go next.

This summer, let's take that idea and give it a sacred twist.

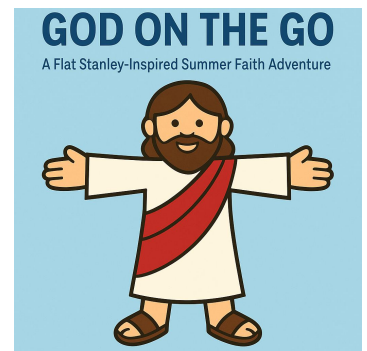
Introducing God on the Go—a Flat Stanley-inspired faith adventure for all ages.

The idea is simple: create a flat, portable image of “God's presence”—a cross, a heart, a dove, a flame, or a friendly figure that represents God to you. Decorate it. Name it. Personalize it. Then take God with you—on walks, road trips, errands, hikes, visits to grandparents, or even to the quiet places where you seek rest. (Well, God is *always* with us – but this is a wonderful reminder!)

Where will God on the Go show up in your life?

Maybe in the kindness of a stranger. In the beauty of a sunset. In the laughter of children or a hard conversation. Maybe in the silence. Or maybe in the moments when you needed God most.

As you go, take a photo with your “God on the Go.” Write a reflection, or a few words about what you noticed. Share your adventures with us—through photos, short stories, or prayers. We'll be gathering and posting them on a community board throughout the summer, in our newsletters, and online.



At the end of this newsletter, you'll find a template to get started—perfect for kids, adults, and families alike. But feel free to be creative and make your own.

This summer, let's remember that God doesn't stay behind in the sanctuary. God journeys with us—into every corner of our lives.

Let's go with God. And let's watch for all the ways God shows up.

With joy for the journey,

Pastor Lee

WE INVITE YOU TO JOIN US!

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

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