



CENTRAL CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH

United Church of Christ

An Open and Affirming Congregation

VOLUME 70 NUMBER 11

December 2025

UPCOMING EVENTS AT A GLANCE

Winter Craft Fair and Festival

Saturday, December 6

9:00 AM – 2:00 PM | Fellowship Hall

Lunch with Lee

Sunday, December 7

11:30 AM | Java Room, 14 Littleton Rd, Chelmsford

Christmas Concert – Worship the Newborn King

Sunday, December 7 | Sanctuary

3:00 PM

CCC Movie Group

Mondays, December 8 & 29

7:00 PM | on Zoom

Pub Theology

Saturday, December 13

7:00 PM – 110 Grill, 116 Chelmsford St, Chelmsford

Secret Santa

Sunday Dec 14: Final Gift Collection

KiSeLo (Kindness, Service, Love)

Wednesday, December 17

1:00 PM | Fellowship Hall

Christmas Trees & Wreaths Sales

Nov 28 – Dec 23 Christmas Tree and Wreath Sales

M-F 1 pm – 7 pm

Sat 10 am – 8 pm

Sun 11:30 am – 8 pm

Lectio Divina Contemplative Gatherings

Sundays

8:45 AM | Room 302

Crocheters & Knitters

Tuesdays

10:30 AM | Parlor

Lunch Bunch

Tuesdays

11:45 AM | Room 202

Christmas Eve Services – December 24

5:00 PM Family Candlelight Service

7:00 PM Traditional Candlelight Service

10:00 PM Traditional Candlelight Service

Christmas Day Service – December 25

Service by Zoom – 9:00 AM

TABLE OF CONTENTS

UPCOMING EVENTS AT A GLANCE 1

FROM THE PASTOR’S OFFICE..... 3

OFFICE UPDATE 4

 Beacon Articles 4

 Pastor Lee’s Office Hours 4

 December worship schedule 4

 Seeking Creative Help..... 4

FOR YOUR CALENDAR..... 5

 Winter CRAFT FAIR and FESTIVAL 5

 Christmas poinsettias 6

 Social Action and Mission (SAM)..... 6

 Annual “we can” make a difference food tree for the open pantry 7

 Christmas concert – worship the newborn king 8

 CCC Movie Group 8

 Ginnie hall meal ministry..... 9

 KiSELO - Kindness, Service, Love 10

 Christmas Tree Season IS HERE... 10

 Rooted in Becoming 11

 Pub Theology 12

 Lectio Divina: Quiet Scripture, Deep Peace 12

 Feeling comfortable 13

UPDATES 13

 CCC Holiday Fair 2025 -happiness isa fun fair! 13

 From the Sunday School Coordinator 14

 Capital Campaign Building Committee 16

 Rental Spaces available at CCC..... 16

Advent 16

 Why This Matters Now..... 16

 Other Ways You Can Bring Meaning to the Advent Season 17

 Personal Devotions and Reflection 17

 Prayer Ministry 18

 Council Corner 18

WE INVITE YOU TO JOIN US! 21

FROM THE PASTOR'S OFFICE

Reflecting the Sacred: Seeing God in Every Direction

December arrives with its familiar mixture of beauty and bustle. Lights begin to glow in windows. Evergreen branches find their way onto mantels. Our calendars fill. Our hearts stretch—sometimes with joy, sometimes with longing, sometimes with both at once.

This Advent, our worship theme, **Reflecting the Sacred**, invites us to slow down and look more deeply—to remember that the Holy is not tucked away in one season or one sanctuary, but woven through every place we pause long enough to notice.

To reflect something is to catch and share its light. Advent reminds us that we are invited to do the same with God's presence. Each candle we light on the wreath—Hope, Love, Joy, and Peace—does more than brighten a room; it teaches us how to see. Hope shows us where God is at work even when the world feels dim. Love helps us recognize the sacred in each person we meet. Joy reveals the glints of grace that show up unexpectedly. And Peace draws our scattered spirits back to center.

My prayer for us this month is that we become people who reflect the Sacred wherever we go. Some of us will reflect God's love through service or generosity. Some will reflect God's peace by offering a listening ear. Some will reflect God's hope simply by getting up each morning and choosing kindness in a weary world. All of it matters.

And as we move toward Christmas—toward that astonishing moment when God chose to dwell among us in flesh and breath—we remember that the Sacred is never far away. It is in the faces of those we love, the stories we share, the burdens we carry together. It shines in the laughter of children, in quiet moments near a candle's flame, and even in the places where shadows fall. Nothing is too ordinary to be touched by grace.

May this season draw you closer to the God who reflects light and love into every corner of life—and who invites you to do the same.

With hope and gratitude,



Rev. Lee Atherton

Christmas Day Service

A live Zoom service will be at 9:00 am on Christmas Day and will be available on Facebook after that. The link for the Zoom is <https://bit.ly/4pBSDxR>

OFFICE UPDATE

BEACON ARTICLES

The next submission deadline is **Monday, December 22** for the January edition.

Margie Dissinger

Interim Office Administrator

OFFICE CLOSED

The office will be closed on December 25, 26 and January 1.

PASTOR LEE'S OFFICE HOURS

Pastor Lee will be in the office Sundays, 8:15 – 1:00; Tuesdays, 9:00 – 2:00; and Wednesdays 9:00 – 12:00. She is also available by appointment.

DECEMBER WORSHIP SCHEDULE

- Dec 7** Sacred People, Baptisms and Communion Sunday
- Dec 14** Sacred Space
- Dec 21** Sacred Knowing
- Dec 24** Sacred Being
- Dec 25** Surprisingly Sacred
- Dec 28** Sacred Doing

SEEKING CREATIVE HELP

Visual Arts for Advent and Christmas

Do you enjoy decorating? Does our worship space nourish your heart, mind, and soul? Would you like to see our sanctuary come to life as we *Reflect the Sacred*?

Worship Design Studio offers wonderful ideas and resources for bringing this theme to life in and around our sanctuary. We just need someone to help implement them. Please let Pastor Lee know you'd like to help.



FOR YOUR CALENDAR

WINTER CRAFT FAIR AND FESTIVAL

Saturday, December 6 | Fellowship Hall and CCC Parking Lot | 9:00 AM–2:00 PM

Join us at CCC's first ever Winter Craft Fair and Festival!

The event will consist of a craft fair inside and festive activities in the parking lot! The combination indoor/outdoor aspect tempts tree-buyers to stop inside for shopping, food, and wreath decorating, and invites fair-goers to purchase a Christmas tree or wreath. There will also be complimentary cocoa and coffee, a bake sale, and a chance to take pictures with Santa!

Stop by and support local vendors on December 6th, and consider donating baked goods! If you would like to donate or volunteer at the fair, contact Sam Shields or communications@cccchelmsford.org.

Local Vendors and Artisans

Come inside and shop! Local vendors will be set up in Fellowship Hall. Expect to find crafters selling everything from handmade pottery to jewelry, gift baskets to sweet treats. One of the vendors is selling food—hot dogs, sandwiches, desserts, and their famous lemonade. You just may find the perfect Christmas gift!

Wreath Decorating

Purchase a wreath outside at the tree sale and bring it inside to decorate on the Fellowship Hall stage! We will have all sorts of festive decor available to enhance an already beautiful wreath. Donations appreciated.

Silent Auction

Similar to the annual CCC Holiday Fair, there will be a silent auction. Most of the vendors participating in the craft fair have generously donated an item to be auctioned off. You may be the lucky bidder who walks away with a work of art!

Bake Sale

There will be a bake sale from 10-2pm outside between the church and tree sales. We are eager for volunteers to staff the sale, and for donations of delicious baked goods!

Festive photo opportunity

Get your picture taken with Saint Nicholas—he will make an appearance from 10-12pm near the Christmas tree sales!

Kids Craft Corner

While grownups shop, children can have fun in the Kids Craft Corner made possible by Whichcraft Art Bar. This local business has partnered with CCC to offer crafting in Fellowship Hall so that parents can more easily shop the fair!

Christmas Tree Sales

CCC will be selling Christmas trees and wreaths in the parking lot from 10-8pm on this day. Trees are priced \$60–\$80 (best price in town!) and wreaths are \$17. Cash, checks, and Venmo accepted.

CHRISTMAS POINSETTIAS



We will be taking orders for Poinsettias on December 7 & 14 in Fellowship Hall. The cost is \$15 each.

Flowers may be dedicated in memory of a loved one or in honor of a special person in your life. You can ask to have them delivered to a church member, or you may choose to take them after the last Christmas Eve service.

If you won't be able to order them in person, please contact Sue Sarafinas to place your order:

4sueh@gmail.com | 617-480-9130. We look forward to a beautifully decorated sanctuary for Christmas!

~Sue Sarafinas, Sanctuary Committee

SOCIAL ACTION AND MISSION (SAM)

December is a busy month for SAM:

Secret Santa is well underway at this point, with both on-line sign-ups and in-person sign-ups in Fellowship Hall. Santa's helpers have a few reminders to help us keep track of this busy event:

- ✓ Please wait until Sunday December, 7th to bring in your gifts
- ✓ Please make sure that each gift has a permanent tag with child's name and "From Santa"
- ✓ Each gift must also have the tracking tag with gift ID # and Family letter that can be easily separated from the gift without tearing the paper (no tape).
- ✓ If your gift is a gift card, please put it in a box or small bag rather than an envelope, so it does not get lost in the piles of presents that get left on the stage.
- ✓ All gifts must be received by Sunday the 14th.
- ✓ If you do not receive an email from the on-line sign-up system, your selection may not have been complete. Try again or email santa@cccchelmsford.org or speak to Cindy Bruetsch or Julie Carney.
- ✓ Note – multiple items listed per gift I.D. indicate either/or selections. You should not provide everything on the line item. All children (including siblings) should be receiving three gifts.

The Christmas Fund – This is a United Church of Christ special mission drive that collects money to support both retired and active UCC ministers, church workers, and their families. For more than a century, The Christmas Fund has been a beacon of love and care – providing direct financial assistance to these essential people, who guide us in our faith journeys. In 2024, the Fund touched the lives of 766 individuals across the UCC. As the cost of living keeps rising, please keep in mind these faithful servants and ensure that they can experience the love of the church in their hour of need. Contributions can be placed in the SAM pew envelopes with The Christmas Fund written on the memo line or the envelope.

Open Pantry of Lowell – Ongoing Support – On behalf of Open Pantry, SAM extends a big thank-you to everyone who has been answering the call to bring in non-perishable food items to help support needy families in danger of losing their government food support. For newcomers who may wonder why we support Open Pantry of Lowell rather than the Chelmsford Food Pantry, it is because the Open Pantry was the first food pantry to be established in this area, almost 50 years ago, and several of the founders belonged to

Central Congregational Church! Helen Glinos was one and Jane and Alan McKersie were long-time volunteers, Geoff Bryant served as the Director for a number of years, and Becky Wisniewski is the current Board Chairperson. The Open Pantry differs from many other local pantries, in that they do not just hand out pre-packed bags of food to their clients. In addition to staples like canned fruits and vegetables, pasta, tuna and peanut butter, the amount depends on the size of the family – each client receives a bag of fresh produce usually including carrots, onions, potatoes, apples, etc. Most importantly, each family gets to choose from a selection of frozen meats, chicken and fish, soups and chowders, and bags of dried fruits and nuts and other items that the pantry buys from the Boston Food Bank every week. In a very small space, volunteers are currently serving between 40 – 50 families a day, providing these nutritious supplements to their grocery budgets. SAM has voted to give the Christmas Eve collection to the Open Pantry again this year, due to the unprecedented needs for food security, as the cost of food keeps increasing, while government support programs are being cut back.

Thanks again for your support for these various projects from your SAM Committee: *Danielle Albon, Diane Blair, Carol Boucek, Julie Carney, Erin McNally, Ana Reatiga, Wendy Piacenza, Rebecca Wisniewski, Dale Williams*

ANNUAL “WE CAN” MAKE A DIFFERENCE FOOD TREE FOR THE OPEN PANTRY



As we usher in a new season of Advent we welcome back the tradition of the Can Tree to aid in collection for the Open Pantry of Greater Lowell. As we continue this effort, the Christian Education Committee invites the congregation to help build our Can Tree by donating non-perishable food items or monetary gifts. The Can Tree will be back starting the first Sunday of Advent on November 30th during the Advent Festival and will remain out through early January 2026.

Once again, our Sunday School program is joyfully supporting the Open Pantry this season, and we are excited to share that the children have a goal to raise \$350 dollars toward this important ministry! We recognize that that monetary donations can go farther and do more for those in need and wanted to incorporate it into our Can Tree tradition. Monetary donations will be tracked

at the top of the tree as we work together to support our neighbors in need. For every dollar donated we will add a “pom-pom” to the collection bin.

During the Season of Advent, you will find special “ornaments” inside your bulletin. Each ornament highlights one of the most-needed items at the Open Pantry. We encourage you to take this home as a reminder and contribute that item if you are able. You can also bring that ornament back to hang on the can tree as a decoration.

Thank you for supporting the children as they live out the call to serve others and care for our community.

~ Thoughtfully submitted by the Christian Education Committee

CHRISTMAS CONCERT – WORSHIP THE NEWBORN KING



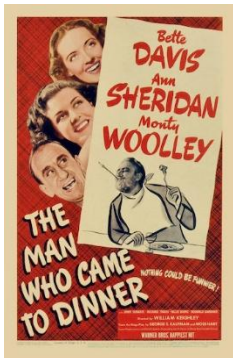
Join us for the church's annual Christmas Concert. Baked items (cookies, bars) crackers and cheese or fruit needed for Christmas concert collation. Please leave in kitchen on Sunday and labeled "Concert Food". Please note if any nuts are in baked goods.

Also, help with clean up and breakdown of tables would be welcome.

Please contact Val King at valking@comcast.net or 978-846-1120 for any questions.

CCC MOVIE GROUP

Mondays | December 8 & 29 | 7:00 PM | Zoom



Monday, 12/8 – “The Man Who Came to Dinner” (1941) Directed by William Keighley, the film is based on the 1939 play by Moss Hart and George S. Kaufman which became a Broadway hit before being adapted for the screen. The story follows Sheridan Whiteside (Monty Woolley), a famous and acerbic radio personality, who slips on ice while visiting the home of the Stanley family in Ohio. After injuring his leg, he insists on staying with them during the Christmas holidays, turning their lives upside down. Whiteside's overbearing personality leads him to meddle in the family's affairs, causing chaos and hilarity as he interacts with various characters, including his secretary Maggie Cutler (played by Bette Davis) and other guests. The film is celebrated for its sharp wit and comedic elements, showcasing the absurdities of high society and the eccentricities of its characters. It highlights themes of self-importance and the impact of celebrity culture on ordinary lives. The performances, particularly by Woolley and Davis, received praise for their comedic timing and character depth. The cast includes wonderful actors Billie Burke, Mary Wickes, Ann Sheridan, and Jimmy Durante as Banjo, a character based on Harpo Marx. Sheridan Whiteside is based on noted theatre critic and personality Alexander Woollcott. Moss Hart and George S. Kaufman were good friends with Woollcott, a famous critic, radio personality, and lecturer at the time. Woollcott requested that they write a play FOR him, but they never came up with a plot. One day Woollcott came to visit Hart unexpectedly and turned his house upside down. Woolcott's overbearing, outrageous, and unbearable behavior included insisting that he would not go to bed unless a milkshake and chocolate cookies were prepared for him, demanding that all the heat in the house be turned off, refusing to sleep in any room other than Hart's bedroom,

accusing the servants of dishonesty, and writing in Hart's guestbook "I wish to say that on my first visit to Moss Hart's house I had one of the most unpleasant evenings I can ever recall having spent." When Hart told Kaufman of the visit, he asked, "Imagine what would have happened if he broke his leg and had to stay?" They looked at each other and knew they had a play.



Monday, 12/29 – “Guess Who’s Coming to Dinner” (1967) American romantic comedy drama film starring Spencer Tracy (in his final role), Sidney Poitier, and Katharine Hepburn, and featuring Hepburn's niece Katharine Houghton. The film was one of the first of the time to depict an interracial marriage in a positive light, as interracial marriage historically had been illegal in many states of the United States. It was still illegal in 17 states until June 12, 1967, six months before the film was released, and scenes were filmed just before anti-miscegenation laws were struck down by the Supreme Court in *Loving v. Virginia*. The film was the ninth and final on-screen pairing of Tracy and Hepburn. Tracy was very ill during filming but insisted on continuing. Filming of his role was completed just 17 days before his death in June 1967. Hepburn never saw the completed film, saying it would be too painful for her. *Guess Who’s Coming to Dinner* was released in December 1967, six months after Tracy's death. Be sure to watch for the bust of Spencer Tracy sculpted by Katharine Hepburn herself; it was used as a prop, on the bookshelf behind the desk where Sidney Poitier makes his phone call.

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.

Contact Lynn Horton for the Zoom link, if you have questions, or if you have difficulty accessing the movies!

GINNIE HALL MEAL MINISTRY

As was announced a few weeks ago, KiSeLo has formed the Ginnie Hall Meal Ministry. Ginnie always made sure that those needing a meal, whether they were recovering from hospitalization, were house bound, or were lonely and just needed a meal and fellowship, would receive a nice meal.

KiSeLo will continue Ginnie’s legacy by offering the same.

To request a meal, or to offer to make and deliver a meal, please contact Merri Robison. You will find her contact information in the directory.

KiSeLo – KINDNESS, SERVICE, LOVE

Wednesday, December 17 | 1:00 PM | Fellowship Hall



remarkable patience.

Due to the Thanksgiving holiday KiSeLo met a week early on November 19th . After having delicious pumpkin pie served by hostesses Karen Papenfuss and Shirley Zachry and a short business meeting, we dove into the program. Chrissy Hungate was wonderful and so patient as she showed 6 of us how to make snowmen out of baby socks. The other members who were snowman-making challenged wrote messages in Christmas cards to be sent to the soldiers. KiSeLo would like to thank Chrissy for her time and

Now that the busy Christmas season is upon us, it is important to take some time for yourself. KiSeLo will provide you with a couple of much needed relaxing hours. We will be meeting on December 17th at 1:00 in the Fellowship Hall, be watching a Christmas movie, and we will be eating Christmas cookies. All women of CCC are welcome to join us.

In this season of Advent we will be providing the Open Pantry with \$10 gift cards to Market Basket. If any parishioner also would like to donate a \$10 gift card for the Open Pantry, you can give it to any KiSeLo member before December 17th.

"For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The Mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace."

Isaiah 9:6

Wishing you all a very joyous, peaceful and blessed Christmas.

Karen Banakos

CHRISTMAS TREE SEASON IS HERE...



The trees have arrived, the stand is set up and sales will have started!

We continue to have time slots available to sell trees and we need your help.

There are several ways to sign up:

Sign up online with these 3 easy steps:

1. Click this link to see our Sign Ups on SignUp: <https://signup.com/go/wDiyQEZ>
Review the options listed and choose the spot(s) you like.

Sign up! It's Easy - you will NOT need to register an account or keep a password on SignUp.

Note: SignUp does not share your email address with anyone. If you prefer not to use your email address, please contact me and I can sign you up manually.

2. Sign up on the poster in Fellowship Hall on Sundays
3. Talk with Glenn or Margie Dissinger or email at margie228@gmail.com
OR scan this with your phone and sign up online through your phone



As you all know this is a major fundraiser for the church and ***we need everyone to help*** to make this a successful one! Watch your weekly emails for information and updates.

Glenn & Margie Dissinger, Co-chairs



Thank you to all who helped unload the trees on Monday, November 24. They were Nathan Doyle (grandson of Jane McKersie), Hunter Lyons, Tim Naish, John Carson, Jennifer & Don Delikat, Peter White, Bill White, John Lamplough and Glenn Dissinger. Thanks also to those who volunteered and came but timing didn't work out, Judith Barnes, Tom Long, Dick & Kevin Papenfuss. Many hands made for a quick unloading, many thanks!

Chelmsford Christmas Tree Pickup – Troop 75 is offering Christmas tree pickups in Chelmsford on Jan. 3, 4, 10, or 11. Visit <https://ChelmsfordTreePickup.org> to schedule or email xmastrees@chelmsfordtreepickup.org with questions. A donation of \$10-25 is appreciated. If you would like more information, please contact Cynthia Dorman.

ROOTED IN BECOMING

Saturday, January 10 | 5:30 PM

Come Hungry, Leave Grateful

Thank you to the 9 who came to the *Rooted in Becoming* community event—Gobble and Gratitude—on Friday, November 15. We had a wonderful meal with the dishes that were brought to share. Pulled pork, meatballs, broccoli, sweet potato casserole, cranberry appetizers, wraps, pasta salad, pecan pie, a spiced apple dump cake and whatever I have failed to remember. Thank you for coming together for this event and sharing your stories and what you are Grateful for. Check out our Rooted in Becoming Grateful tree on the 2nd floor!

Our next event is Frankin-sense and Nonsense w/desserts on January 10. Time to clean up after the Holiday Fun. Bring the sweets you just have not gotten to and share them with everyone. Or make something new to share. Bring a gift that was not quite right for you for the Yankee Swap or buy something small if you have nothing in your house that needs a new home. We are talking about a \$5 limit on new gifts. It might be hard in this market, but I am sure you can find something.

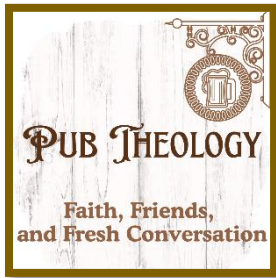
In February we will be sharing poetry, it can be an original or a favorite.

If you'd like to help plan this or future events, come see me or Pastor Lee—your ideas and energy help this ministry keep growing strong.

Jennifer Hart

PUB THEOLOGY

Where Faith Meets Conversation



Pull up a chair—Pub Theology is back on December 13! 🍻 ✨

What if church wasn't just something that happened in a sanctuary on Sunday morning... but also around a table, with a burger to munch, a favorite drink in hand, and a circle of people talking honestly about life and faith?

That's exactly what Pub Theology is all about.

On **Saturday, December 13**, we're gathering once again for an evening of **good conversation, good company, and good questions**. No sermons. No pop quizzes on the Bible. Just real people wondering together about real life.

This month, as Christmas draws near and our calendars fill up, our guiding theme will be:

"Finding the Sacred in the Holiday Chaos."

We'll wrestle with questions like:

- Where do you actually feel closest to God in December?
- How do we handle grief, stress, or loneliness during "the most wonderful time of the year"?
- What might it look like to slow down and notice the holy in ordinary things—twinkling lights, shared meals, or even long checkout lines?

You don't have to have all the answers. In fact, it's *better* if you come with questions. Pub Theology is a judgment-free zone where:

- You can speak honestly, or simply listen.
- You can bring a friend who might never walk into a traditional church service.
- You can show up exactly as you are—doubts, curiosity, and all.

We'll meet on **Saturday, December 13 at 7 p.m. at the 110 Grill in Chelmsford**. Food and drinks will be available for purchase, and the conversation is on us. 😊

Bring a friend, a neighbor, or that coworker who always asks the big questions at lunch. This is a perfect, low-pressure way to introduce someone to our church community and to the idea that faith can be thoughtful, compassionate, and—yes—fun.

Come ready to laugh, to think, to share, and to discover: God shows up in surprising places... even at the pub.

LECTIO DIVINA: QUIET SCRIPTURE, DEEP PEACE

Sundays | 8:45-9:30 AM | Room 302

Before worship each Sunday, join us for a gentle time of prayerful Bible reading. In this simple practice, we read a short passage several times, listen for how God is speaking, and—only if you wish—share a few words with the group. Come as you are, come when you can. Coffee welcome, materials provided. *Call Pastor Lee for more information.*

FEELING COMFORTABLE



“You know you’re doing a good job at church when kids feel this comfortable during worship! keep up the good work, everyone. CCC truly is a welcoming to all congregation”

UPDATES

CCC HOLIDAY FAIR 2025 –HAPPINESS ISA FUN FAIR!

Our Annual Holiday Fair on Saturday, November 22, was a fantastic day in Fellowship Hall – there was a buzz of excitement and happiness in the room, and cheerful smiles on the faces of every shopper and Fair volunteer! A drizzly morning meant no stampede at 9:00 am, but business was steady throughout the day with a few rushes at unexpected times. The Fair is a great place to gather with CCC friends and community members while finding special things to purchase and having a good chat. Many people enjoyed coffee, warm apple crisp, pulled chicken sliders and/or a bowl of chili to fortify themselves to keep shopping! I’m so thankful to my family members (Hayley, Jack, and Sally) for their willingness to run the **Lunch Café** this year, and to our reliable volunteer Jessie Buchanan for taking lunch orders and payments. A tremendous thank you to Therese Burdo and Christine McNamara for reviving the **CCC Apple Pies** tradition that has been absent for the past five years! The new kitchen was humming on Friday morning as crusts, apples, cinnamon, and sugar for 60 pies were prepared and baked by the apple pie team! The smell was amazing and the pies were delicious!

Throughout Saturday, curious shoppers kept each of the areas of the Fair busy, and the CCC volunteers were cheerful and friendly as they helped one and all! Grateful thanks to the chairs of each of the following: **Crafts** led by Karen Papenfuss, **Baked Goods** led by Dory Toppan, **Jewelry** led by Judith Barnes and Sandy Lamplough, the **Christmas Room** organized by Julie Carney, Linda and John Carson, Hayley Horton, and Jack Morin, and run by Betsy and Peter White, the **Books, Music, Games and Puzzles Room** organized and run by the God Squad, and to ALL of the individuals that worked at each of these tables or rooms!

Our **Specialty Shoppes Vendors** were a mix of guests and CCC members again this year! Dick Papenfuss demonstrated and shared information about any item in his innumerable collection of handcrafted “Pappy’s Pens,” Amy Provencal’s collection of vintage and holiday décor was a trip down memory lane and made for interesting gift finds, and creative Maddie Knight delighted everyone who saw the clever details in her individually designed birdhouses. Jody Cross-Hansen’s woven trivets and pottery pieces showed Jody’s artistic talent and eye for design in multiple crafts. “Wooden It Be Nice” cutting boards and charcuterie boards, as well as scented soaps, by Paul and Barbara Sampson, and “Keith’s Leather Goods” by Lindsay Moore’s father-in-law, returned to the Fair and were very welcome once again. The children of CCC Sunday School held a

special sale of their hand-painted pottery ornaments, painted cross ornaments, bracelets, and crafts, and raised over \$300 to donate to The Open Pantry of Greater Lowell and Heifer International. The enthusiasm of the children and their eager desire to help others added a wonderful energy to the Fair!

On the stage, the **Silent Auction** had over 60 items available for bidding! Marcia Cassidy and your Fair Chair extend a heartfelt Thank You to all the generous donors and eager bidders for supporting the Silent Auction!

Happiness is... working together to make the Annual Holiday Fair possible, and my sincere thanks and immeasurable gratitude go to all the CCC members and friends who participated in 2025. Thank you to the entire congregation for your prayers and encouragement, and for your donations and purchases. I extend an extra word of thanks to the following individuals and families who especially helped by sharing their time, treasure, and talents:

Sophie and Ben Albon, Pastor Lee Atherton, Judith Barnes, Arlene Belleville, Monique Billingsley, Cindy and Jim Bruetsch, Cynthia Bryant, Jessie Buchanan, Therese Burdo, Judy Buswick, Julie Carney, John and Linda Carson, Marcia and Mike Cassidy, Linda Catalano, Carolyn Chapman, Jody and Alan Cross-Hansen, Jennifer Delikat, Janet Glinos Deteran, Margie and Glenn Dissinger, Cynthia and Scott Dorman, Shirley Ehrhardt, Linn Flint, Kathy Gaphardt, Will and Arthur Hargett, Mary M. Harrison, Jennifer and Lucas Hart, Steve Hartigan, Hayley, Walker, and Sherman Horton, Sally Horton, Sue Houde, Beth Jarok, Peggy Kelly, Alisa and Maddie Knight, John and Sandy Lamplough, John Lefebvre, Kathy Lueck, Deb and Elmer Lyons, Emmett Lyons and Madison Lauricella, April, Justin, Finley, and Emmett McCarthy, Bonnie and Gerry McGrath, Lila McNally, Christine and Ed McNamara, Carrie and Eric Meikle, Jean Montgomery, Keith Moore, Lindsay Moore, Jack Morin, Charlotte Mulholland, Meghan, Tim, Lucy and Ella Naish, Karen and Dick Papenfuss, Janet Paton, Ruth Pergola, Ray Peterson, Wendy Piacenza, Amy Provencal, Shaleena and Kai Pulliam, Barbara Reilly, Paul and Barbara Sampson, Sue Sarafinas, Samantha, Patrick, Declan, Gavin, and Brendan Shields, Anne, Lora, and Kristin Strobel, Nancy Swain, Virginia and Mark Timmins, Dory Toppan, Janine Viarella, Betsy and Peter White, Christine Williams, and Shirley Zachry. (My sincere apologies to anyone I failed to mention by name.)

The current unofficial total amount raised by the Holiday Fair and donations is **\$6562** for the annual church budget, so we look poised to meet and exceed our goal of \$6500, and that brings a feeling of true happiness!

Thank you, CCC Family!

Lynn Horton, Your Fair Chair

FROM THE SUNDAY SCHOOL COORDINATOR

December, 2025 is coming to a close and we wonder what mysteries 2026 will have for us. I want to say 'buckle up' things are going to get busy, but in reality Central Congregational Church is always busy and the people who make this place what it is are always busy with many activities at home and in the community where the life of Christianity really happens. I think our Sunday School teachers are good at helping the children and youth of our congregation look outside the walls of our church for Jesus at work and how they can make the world a better place with simple acts.

The end of November brought us all together to share a meal and make some Christmas crafts as we began the Advent Season of Preparation. We prepare for the birth of Jesus Christ, we prepare for family and friends coming together, we prepare for a new year of wonder.



Help Wanted

CCC needs at least one new Sunday School Teacher. You can set your schedule with your grade level team members.

Other Openings are:

- **Nursery Coordinator** - be a welcoming face for our youngest friends!
- **People willing to substitute** or be a floater are always welcome!

Please reach out to me at 5ofharts@chris-jenn.net or call/text 610-781-2074.

Training and all the help you want will be given to you free of charge! CORI background checks will need to be completed, so please volunteer NOW!!! The Safe Church Policy is always followed in our Sunday School and Youth Program.

The Baptismal Font will be set up on December 7th as two children with family history at Central Congregational Church practice one of the Sacraments of the United Church of Christ. I know that families move out of the area and move back, but I am still thankful and amazed when moving back brings them back to their home church. All Classes will start off in Worship and leave after the Children's Message - Baptism.

The Music Committee's Christmas Concert is also December 7th and our children will have the opportunity to share their musical talents. I hope you will come to the 3:00 Concert, I am sure you will be helping with set up, or food or clean up.

December 21st will be our Christmas Pageant - Our children and youth will share the story of Mary and Joseph's journey and Jesus's birth in a stable used to protect the animals.

Make sure to come to one of the Christmas Eve Services on December 24:

5:00 Family Friendly Candlelight

7:00 Traditional Candlelight

10:00 Traditional Candlelight

There is no Sunday School on December 28, but we will be back in full swing come January 4, 2026. This will be a Communion Sunday so PreK-4th grade will start off in Worship, Holy Cows, 5th - 8th grade will start off in class and the God Squad, 9th - 12th grade will stay in Worship and not have Sunday School Class.

Jennifer Hart

CAPITAL CAMPAIGN BUILDING COMMITTEE

For those of you who couldn't join us for the Capital Campaign celebration dinner, here is the link to the slide show prepared by Val King that highlights all our projects and the work to complete them. <https://cccc.one/ccss>

We hope to receive the remaining pledges to close out the campaign by the end of December.

Christine Williams, Val King, Jim Clark, Shirley Zachry and Kenny Pantuso

RENTAL SPACES AVAILABLE AT CCC

CCC has a variety of spaces that are available to rent. Our facilities are perfect for music or dance recitals, hobby group meetings, classes, community group meetings, weddings, birthday parties, large family gatherings, and memorial services.

For-profit, non-profit, and member rates are available. More information may be found on our website: <https://www.cccchelmsford.org/about-us/renting-our-facilities/>. There is also an online Rental Inquiry Form on the website page.

Please contact the church office (office.admin@cccchelmsford.org or call 978-256-5931) for more information or [click here complete the online Rental Inquiry Form](#).

ADVENT



"The Christ mirror fully knows and loves us from all eternity, and reflects that image back to us."
— Richard Rohr, The Universal Christ

WHY THIS MATTERS NOW

In a season that often races toward consumption, perfection, and surface-hustle, "Reflecting the Sacred" offers a counter-rhythm. It invites us to **pause**, to **see**, to **be present** — to glimpse Emmanuel, "God with us," not just in the manger, but in every breath, every waiting space, every ordinary encounter.

Especially considering our community's mission — rooted in healing, hope, service — this theme aligns beautifully. We know that transformation happens when the sacred meets the everyday — when service dogs

offer presence, when stories of grief become stories of resurrection, when we hold hands in brokenness and rise together in hope.

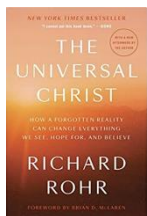
OTHER WAYS YOU CAN BRING MEANING TO THE ADVENT SEASON

Reflecting the Sacred, A Companion Journal for Advent

As we enter this season of *Reflecting the Sacred*, we invite you to take time each week to pause, pray, and notice God's presence in your everyday life. We've created a **Printable Advent Devotional Journal** — a companion for your personal reflections throughout the season. The journal includes thoughtful prompts for each week of Advent, as well as **Christmas Day** and **New Year's Day**, guiding you to explore where the sacred is shimmering in your own story. You may **request a PDF copy** by emailing **Peggy**, or **ask for a printed version** if you prefer. We kindly encourage you to consider our environmental footprint and printing costs when making your choice. May this simple tool help you slow down, breathe deeply, and reflect on the sacredness that surrounds us this Advent and Christmas season.

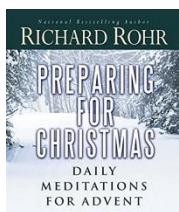
PERSONAL DEVOTIONS AND REFLECTION

As a companion to *Reflecting the Sacred*, you might choose to read one of the following books.

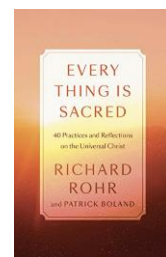


The Universal Christ is Rohr's theology steeped in an incarnational worldview. Drawing on scripture, history, and spiritual practice, Rohr articulates a transformative view of Jesus Christ as a portrait of God's constant, unfolding work in the world.

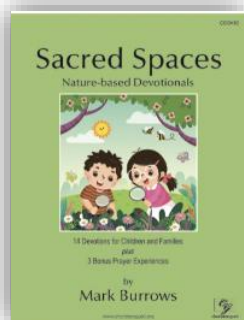
Every Thing is Sacred, is a companion to *The Universal Christ*. Richard Rohr and Patrick Boland, offer 40 reflections and practices exploring what it means to live "In Christ."



For daily reading, Richard Rohr wrote a book of devotions for Advent and Christmas several years ago called *Preparing for Christmas*. Concepts of his book *The Universal Christ* are evident in this book.



For Our Children



Children's expert, Mark Burrows, wrote a resource called *Sacred Spaces* that invites children to connect with treasures of nature to experience a sense of the sacred reflected there. The theme of "Time, People, Space, Knowing, Being, and Doing" will offer wonderful ways for children to engage their natural "wonderer" skills for seeing ordinary things as extraordinary reflections.

PRAYER MINISTRY



If you believe in the power of prayer and would like to participate in this ministry of our church, or if you would like to offer up a person or situation about which you would like for members to join you in prayer, please contact Marcia Cassidy: marciacassidy@comcast.net.

Submitted by Shirley Zachry

*Do not be anxious about anything,
but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving
let your requests be made known to God.
And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding,
will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.*

PHILIPPIANS 4:6-7

COUNCIL CORNER

A Monthly Update on the Activity of the CCC Council

News from the November 12, 2025, meeting:

- Treasurer Dick Papenfuss reported that as of October 31 we are 33% of the way through our fiscal year. Total pledge income year-to-date is close to budget at 32%. Unpledged income is at 26%. Our total income as of October 31 is 28%, which includes all income sources. Total expenditures are also at 28%. Expenditures for boiler maintenance and electricity have been higher than budgeted, but we expect to recoup some of the electricity costs after the new year. It is suggested that we increase our boiler expense budget line next year. The upcoming Holiday Fair and Christmas trees sales should help strengthen the income balance. All CCC special account funds are being transferred from various institutions to one consolidated location at Northern Bank and Trust. This bank offers better services and better rates for savings etc. and is already the bank where CCC holds a checking account.
- The Trustees presented a revised and updated Office Administrator Duties and Responsibilities document for Council approval. Office Administrator Peggy Kelly, Pastor Lee Atherton, and the Trustees contributed to the review and editing of the job description and the Trustees incorporated the suggested revisions. The members of Council unanimously approved the updated document.
- Office Administrator Peggy Kelly will be leaving her position on November 25th. Margie Dissinger will serve as Interim Office Administrator until a permanent replacement is hired after our next settled pastor comes and is established. It was discussed that any "church business" requiring Margie's attention should be addressed during her working hours and not during non-work hours or church

events. Margie will be in the church office Monday – Friday, 9:00 am to 1:00 pm, beginning December 1. Thank you for taking on this role, Margie!

- The Greater Lowell Interfaith Leaders Alliance (GLILA) is seeking a location for an event on Thurs. December 18, 2025, 6:00 -9:00 pm. They are looking for a church to host a unique one-day event that will be free and open to the public and will showcase the Mevlevi (Whirling Dervishes) Master Abdulkadir Dikici. Potential challenges could be parking availability for other church meetings/choir rehearsals held on that same date and noise interruptions. Also, the anticipated attendance is very large: up to 200 people. It was decided that these concerns are not insurmountable and that we will offer our church for this event, with a request to pay the church rental fee.
- The Council discussed the subject of seeking or accepting corporate sponsorship of our public fundraising events. There is an opportunity to partner with a local business who is interested in sponsoring the November 22 Holiday Fair. Potential sponsors would pay a fee to the church, and their name would be listed as a sponsor in print and other media. After some discussion it was decided that we could consider this as revenue source, but we need to be sure that any advertising is consistent with our church's mission to the community. Events that are more closely related to CCC (i.e. Holiday Fair and concerts) would be excluded from corporate sponsorship. (Note: the local company was offered the opportunity to sponsor the Winter Craft Fair on December 6.)
- The Safe Church Task Force is progressing well with the review and updating of our Safe Church Policies. Bonnie McGrath, Safe Church Advocate, has been leading the work on this project.
- CCC 150th Committee update - Pat Vondal, CCC Historian, presented some ideas for celebration activities including a theatrical presentation about our church history. Valerie King is asking for volunteers to assist with a celebration in Spring of 2026. (Date to be determined.)
- In response to congregational requests, there have been some updates to the "Donate to CCC" button on our website. There are new options to customize your donation: Pastor Rich Gift Card Ministry and Capital Campaign; West Virginia Mission was changed to Ramps for Neighbors. Thank you, Patrick Shields, Tech Committee. Look for links to this Donate button in future Beacon (electronic) newsletters and church announcement e-mails. Note: there is a fee charged to CCC for each electronic transaction. You may wish to add a small amount to your donation to help cover the cost of this convenience. Thank you!
- Council discussed the challenges facing local food pantries currently. Some are reaching storage capacity, even as the need has increased. CCC will continue to collect donations for the Open Pantry in Lowell and encourages members to consider making cash donations as this allows the Pantry to fill gaps in their inventory. The Open Pantry was the first food pantry in Lowell, founded in 1981 by local church groups that saw a need for short-term food assistance in the community. CCC and specifically the late Helen Glinos were key to the establishment of the Open Pantry.

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, December 10, 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

House Committee

The past month for the House Committee has had many plumbing problems to fix: sinks in the pre-school and janitor's closet and a first floor toilet. All the tables and chairs in Fellowship Hall should have caps on the legs now. Two parking spaces in the middle of the first row have "S's painted on them indicating the spots are for seniors or handicapped individuals; the paint is very light and will be painted more vividly in the spring. The boiler at 9 Worthen has been fixed, and the boiler in the main building had a dysfunction due to someone turning off a switch to the water reservoir. Please don't turn on or off any switches unless asked to by a member of the House Committee. Jim Clark is in the process of teaching the members of the Committee how to care for and problem solve with the boiler. We're in the process of throwing out old paint and cutting the Eagle Scout plaque down to size. The lawn mower has been repaired we think. The gas will be drained and we'll see how it goes next spring. The snowblower is fixed and serviced and is ready to go. MapCon, a computer app that keeps track of routine and seasonal activities, as well as a list of vendors, is back up and running. The wall in the north stairwell has been scraped and painted, and the metal cover for the outside windowsill will be replaced. Storm windows in the Sanctuary have been lowered, and we're in the process of figuring out who is responsible for upkeep and maintenance in the kitchen. So far no mice have visited us, but we'll keep an eye out for them.

WE INVITE YOU TO JOIN US!

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

Interim Pastor:	Rev. Lee Atherton	508-308-7116	pastor-lee@cccchelmsford.org
Director of Music:	Tudor Bota	978-772-3173	tudorbota@gmail.com
Interim Office Administrator:	Margie Dissinger	978-256-5931	office.admin@cccchelmsford.org
Sunday School Coordinator:	Jennifer Hart	610-781-2074	jennifer.hart@cccchelmsford.org
Custodian:	Juarez Gomes		
Church Address:	One Worthen Street	Chelmsford, MA	01824
Church Phone:	978-256-5931		
Church e-mail:	Office.admin@cccchelmsford.org		
Church Website:	cccchelmsford.org		
Conference Website:	www.sneucc.org		

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