



CENTRAL CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH in CHELMSFORD

United Church of Christ
An Open and Affirming Congregation

VOLUME 71 NUMBER 8

September 2026

COMING EVENTS AT A GLANCE

Lunch With Lee

Sunday, Sept. 6 | 12 noon | Java Room

Welcome Sunday & Blessing of Backpacks

Sunday, Sept. 13 | 10:00 AM | Sanctuary

CE Welcome Back Mini Picnic – Hotdogs & Lemonade With Congregation Bringing Snacks

Sunday, Sept. 13 | 11:30 AM | Carson Park

Candidate Sunday & Congregational Meeting

Sunday, Sept. 20 | 10:00 AM | Sanctuary

SNEUCC Annual Meeting

Sept. 25-27 | DCU Center, Worcester

Bakery Day

Sunday, Sept. 27 | 11:15 AM | Fellowship Hall

Women's Retreat

Sat., Oct. 3 | 9AM – 5PM | The Sanctuary at Woodville

Celebrating Our Custodians – Potluck Lunch

Sunday, Oct. 4 | 11:30 AM | Fellowship Hall

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

CCC Movie Group

Mondays, Sept. 14 & 28

7:00 PM | on Zoom

KiSeLo Meeting

Wednesday, Sept. 23 | 1:00 PM | Fellowship Hall

Fall Bible Study on Revelation – 6 Weeks

Wed. Sept. 9 | 10:30 AM | Rm 202

Fall Study on Enneagram - 6 weeks

Thurs. Sept. 24 | 7:00 PM | Zoom

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FROM THE PASTOR'S OFFICE

TURNING THE PAGE: WELCOMING THE RHYTHMS OF AUTUMN

September has a unique way of feeling like the true start of a new year. As the lazy days of summer wind down, our daily routines shift back into focus. We unpack vacation bags, trade beach towels for light jackets, and watch the scenery begin its quiet turn toward autumn.

This month is filled with transitions of all sizes. Students, parents, and teachers are navigating new classrooms and fresh beginnings, while others in our congregation are stepping into quieter homes as children leave for college or start new chapters of their own. Within our church family, a tangible energy fills the air as we pray for our Search Committee and look forward with anticipation to the new pastor God is preparing to lead us.

Change often brings a mixed bag of emotions—excitement for the future frequently walks hand-in-hand with nostalgia for the season passing by. Yet, scripture reminds us that God moves powerfully in times of transition: *"See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it?"* (Isaiah 43:19).

Whether your heart feels eager, anxious, or a little weary this month, remember that you do not navigate these shifts alone. As we gather back together from summer travels, let us lean into one another, pray for our families and leaders, and keep our hearts open to the fresh work unfolding in our midst. Welcome back, church family—let's step into this next season together.



Rev. Lee M. Atherton

OFFICE UPDATE

BEACON ARTICLES

The next submission deadline is **Thursday, September 24** for the October edition.

Margie Dissinger

Interim Office Administrator

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.

FOR YOUR CALENDAR

WARRANT FOR SPECIAL CONGREGATIONAL MEETING

Warrant for a Special Meeting on September 20, 2026

of Central Congregational Church in Chelmsford, United Church of Christ

To the Members and Friends of Central Congregational Church in Chelmsford: A Special Meeting of the Central Congregational Church in Chelmsford, United Church of Christ, will be held on Sunday, September 20, 2026, at 11:15 a.m. in the Sanctuary immediately following the worship service to act upon the following article:

Article 1. To act upon the recommendation of the Pastoral Search Committee to call a candidate to be our Senior Pastor and to approve the terms of the call.

(signed)

Elizabeth Hartigan

Clerk

MESSAGE FROM THE PASTORAL SEARCH COMMITTEE



Candidate Sunday

We are happy to tell you we are moving forward with a candidate for the pastor of CCC!!!

So...save the date of Sunday, September 20, for the sermon and worship service led by the candidate, followed immediately by a Special Congregational Meeting to hear the report and the recommendation of the Pastoral Search Committee!

Information about the candidate remains confidential, but parishioners will have opportunities to meet the candidate in the few days prior to the worship service and congregational meeting. Shortly you will receive a letter by mail (not email) telling you the dates and times of these opportunities.

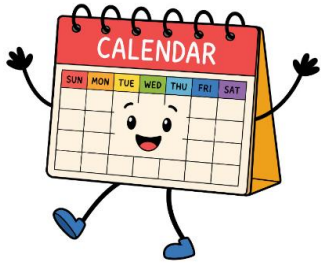
A note about the worship service on September 20: the church service will not be livestreamed, nor will the congregational meeting. This announcement will be made each time the warrant is read, beginning August 30. It will also be in each Sunday bulletin beginning that date, and each weekly email announcement.

Thank you for continuing to hold the Committee in prayer, and please continue to pray for our future pastor. We look forward to seeing everyone at 10:00 a.m. worship on September 20!

Dory Toppan, Pastoral Search Committee Chair

On behalf of the PSC – Martha Chenault, Glenn Dissinger, Sue Houde, John Lamplough, Emmett Lyons, April McCarthy, Barbara Reilly, Dorinda Toppan

MARK YOUR CALENDARS



September 6 – Communion Sunday, Lunch with Lee

September 13 – Welcome Sunday - Blessing of Backpacks & Mini Picnic (See page 5)

September 20 – Candidate Sunday (See page 4)

September 25-27 – Southern New England Conference of the United Church of Christ Annual Meeting (Pastor Lee will be attending and will not be at worship on the 27th)

October 3 – Women’s Retreat at The Sanctuary at Woodville (See page 13)

October 4 – World Communion Sunday

Celebrating Juárez and Beth’s Years at CCC

October 11 Newcomer and Membership Gathering (See page 10)

Recycling Information Seminar (See page 6)

October 17 Diaconate Retreat

October 18 New Member Sunday and DEMM Celebration at worship

Upcoming Worship Themes

September 6 – Labor Day and New Creation Sunday

CHRISTIAN EDUCATION COMMITTEE

Happy Fall from your CE Committee,

As I write this, we are planning for our upcoming for Welcome Sunday on September 13th!

Our Sunday School theme this year is “Helping Hands, Brave Hearts.” At the end of the school year, our students will lead the Youth Sunday Service on that theme.

Youth should bring their backpacks for the annual “Blessing of the Backpacks” as they begin their weekday school year as well.

We will provide hot dogs on the grill directly after church on Welcome Sunday for a Mini-Picnic. We encourage the congregation to bring any snack or dish they would like to accompany the hot dogs and lemonade.

Looking forward to seeing you all on September 13th!

Kristin Strobel for Your CE Committee

SOCIAL ACTION AND MISSION (SAM) – RECYCLING NEWS

Good News! – Recent advances in technology mean that we can now recycle all those coffee cups we’ve long been told not to put in our recycling bins because of their interior plastic lining. The MA Department of Environmental Protection now allows all empty paper cups – those for cold or hot beverages and compostable ones, too – to be accepted for recycling. So let’s all implement this change immediately and start filling those blue bins in Fellowship Hall after coffee hour.

Meanwhile, Social Action and Mission has invited Rebecca Gore of the Chelmsford Recycling Committee to visit us in Fellowship Hall after our service on October 11th. Rebecca will provide information and answer questions on what else can and cannot be put in the recycle bins. The town’s recycling efforts are constantly evolving and often subject to confusion on the part of residents. So plan to stop by for a chat with her for this chance to learn about what more we can all be doing to recycle and reduce the waste stream.

Julie Carney

KISELO

This summer KiSeLo met informally for ice cream, first in June at the Country Creamery and Coffeehouse in Chelmsford, and then in July at Kimball Farms in Westford. One thing we know about women is that we like ice cream! How can we let the last summer month go by without ice cream? We couldn’t!

On the afternoon of August 26th we met in the Fellowship Hall for our traditional, annual Ice Cream Social. The officers and committee members supplied all the “fixins” for “make your own ice cream sundaes”. Everyone brought friendship, fellowship, joyful conversation, and their appetite for ice cream. This served as the perfect introduction to the 2026-2027 KiSeLo year.

All women of all ages of the church are welcome to join us, and if you enjoy, consider becoming a member of a great women’s organization. The next KiSeLo meeting is Wednesday, September 23, at 1:00 pm - come join us!

Need more information? Text me at (603)686-2026.

Karen Banakos

Breaking News:
Paper Cups Are Now Recyclable!

Recycle empty paper cups.
Lids, straws, and foam cups still go in the **trash**.

RecycleSmartMA.org

When in doubt, check RecycleSmartMA.org to see what to recycle

Paper cups are now officially recyclable in Massachusetts!

All cups made of paper, including:

- ✓ paper coffee cups
- ✓ fountain drink cups
- ✓ dixie cups
- ✓ little sippy cups
- ✓ compostable cups

are now accepted at materials recovery facilities (MRFs) serving MA residents.

So, let's recycle our empty paper cups!

Note: Straws and stirrers, foam cups, and the lids that come on hot beverages are still trash.

Help us spread the word by sharing this news with friends and family.

FALL BIBLE STUDIES

Unveiling Hope: Join Us for a 6-Week Study on Revelation

This fall, you are invited to join a six-week small group study on the Book of Revelation—a scripture often misunderstood, yet deeply relevant for our time.

If you've ever associated Revelation with end-times fear or violent catastrophe, this study offers a refreshing shift. Together, we will explore Revelation not as a timeline for destruction, but through its original meaning: apokalypsis, an “unveiling” of truth. Written to small, resilient communities living under the shadow of the Roman Empire, Revelation is a bold critique of systemic injustice, corporate greed, and imperial power—and a radical call to hope, nonviolence, and liberation.

As a progressive, open, and affirming congregation, we will look at how this ancient text speaks directly to our modern struggles for justice, equality, and peace. We will also use these gatherings to reflect on our own identity and vision, as Central Congregational Church prepares to welcome new pastoral leadership.

- Format: Weekly 75-minute small group dialogue
- Focus: Engaging scripture, connecting faith to social justice, and preparing our hearts for transition
- Dates: Wednesdays, 10:30-11:45 am; September 9 & 23, October 7, 21, November 4, & 18 in Room 202.

Whether you are deeply familiar with the Bible or full of lingering questions, your voice and curiosity are welcome at the table. Send your questions to Pastor-Lee@CCCChelmsford.org and contact the church office to reserve your spot!

Discover Your True Self: A 6-Week Journey with the Enneagram

Have you ever wondered why you react to stress the way you do, or why certain habits feel almost impossible to break? Many of us spend years wearing invisible armor—masks built to keep us safe, approved, or in control. But what if God is calling you to lay down that armor and step into the freedom of who you were truly created to be?

Beginning September 17, you are invited to join us for a transformative 6-week study, *The Enneagram: A Christian Perspective*.

Drawing deeply from Franciscan priest Richard Rohr's landmark book, this study approaches the Enneagram not as a trendy personality quiz, but as an ancient tool for spiritual discernment. Together, we will learn how to:

- Unmask the False Self: Identify the hidden compulsions and defense mechanisms that keep us stuck.
- Awaken to the True Self: Discover your original goodness and identity hidden with Christ in God.
- Grow in Compassion: Understand the unique inner struggles of family, friends, and neighbors so you can love them more deeply.

Whether you are completely new to the Enneagram or have been studying it for years, this class offers a welcoming space for prayer, practical reflection, and honest conversation.

Details:

- When: Thursday evenings via Zoom, starting September 17 from 7:00 PM – 8:30 PM
- Meeting dates: September 17, October 1, 15, 29, November 12 & December 3

- Where: By Zoom
<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88126979886?pwd=m8WpabMvFiETA1jDUXmuyRXCJmFg5X.1>
- Format: Weekly 75-minute sessions with group teaching, guided discussion, and practical home reflections.

Ready to step out of the box and into grace? Send your thoughts or questions to Pastor-Lee@CCCChelmsford.org and call the office to let us know you will be attending.

"The Enneagram will set you free, but first it will make you miserable!" — Richard Rohr

CELEBRATING OUR CUSTODIANS – OCTOBER 4, 2026



The House Committee has a bittersweet message for our church family. Our custodian, Juaréz Gomes, has let us know that he and his wife, Beth, will be retiring. Their last day with us will be September 30th. Juaréz has been our custodian for 25 years, and we get Beth for free! Juaréz has done a phenomenal job, and inspectors have commented on the cleanliness of our church. We were truly blessed when we found him.

The church is planning a pot luck luncheon on October 4th, after church, to celebrate the lovely relationship we have had with him and Beth, and to show them our appreciation.

The House Committee will buy a card that will be in Fellowship Hall in September during coffee hour for everyone to sign and express their appreciation.

We are also asking for monetary donations to give Juaréz and Beth as a parting gift. You may give your donation to any House Committee member--Jim Clark, Bill Clarke, Geoff Bryant, Scott Dorman, Bryan Norman, Tim O' Brien, Mary Horne or put a check in the offering plate, please put on the memo line "Custodian gift".

Please mark October 4th on your calendar for a potluck luncheon and a chance to let Juaréz and Beth know how valuable they have been to us.

Mary Horne

A NEW DATE ON THE CHRISTIAN CALENDAR: CREATION IN CHRIST SUNDAY – SEPTEMBER 6, 2026

The Feast of Creation in Christ, also known as the [Feast of Creation](#), has been officially added to the Revised Common Lectionary, with celebrations to begin in 2026. While the traditional date of the observance is September 1, its date in the RCL is the first Sunday of September in line with ecumenical custom and pastoral practicality. The addition was approved by the board of the Consultation on Common Texts, the ecumenical liturgical body that developed and curates the RCL, in coordination with the Feast steering committee led by the World Council of Churches in collaboration with various Christian world communions and the Middle East Council of Churches. This is the first time a new feast has been adopted since the release of the common lectionary in 1974.

BEING “WISE AS SERPENTS AND INNOCENT AS DOVES” IN THE AGE OF THE INTERNET

Rev. Liz Garrigan-Byerly, Executive Minister for Area Conference Ministry, writes:

Last week, I was sitting on the beach with my mom when she received this email from her pastor:

Hello, I hope you're doing well. I wanted to reach out to see whether you might have some time for a brief conversation. There is a matter I would like to discuss that requires discretion and careful consideration, and I would greatly value your perspective. If you're open to continuing the conversation over email, I would truly appreciate it.

It was a little out of the ordinary, but not by much. Her pastor tends to be formal, so the message made sense, and my mom is someone who others turn to for wisdom and support (and I don't just say that as her daughter!). She wrote back that yes, they could continue over email since she was on vacation with her family. The response was immediate: I need Apple gift cards for a sick member. It's a surprise so please don't tell anyone. I'll pay you back with cash or check soon.

Sounds familiar? It was spam. We recognized that immediately and had a good laugh, even as we felt silly for falling for it. She gave me permission to share it broadly, because it's a great example of how seemingly legitimate these have become. The “voice” of the original email was very similar to how her pastor writes; the pastor's name was spelled correctly, and the signature matched his normal emails. When we looked more closely, we noticed some classic signs: the email was not personalized to my mom; the sending address was a Gmail address, not the church's email address; and that last sentence was a bit awkward.

Sadly, we have grown accustomed to spam and phishing emails. Conference staff now take quarterly cyber security trainings and receive stealth fake phishing emails to test our attentiveness. Even with all of that, I thought the email from my mom's pastor was legit. A recent training I took reiterated that we are more susceptible to scams when we are distracted (like sitting on the beach chatting with family). None of us are immune. How many times has your church had to send out an email to members stating that your pastor will never ask for financial help while on vacation?

It's not just email either. Several churches have recently experienced a disturbing trend: someone posting on the church's worship livestream that they were feeling suicidal. This is a scam to entice individuals to enter a private chat with them where they can then eventually ask for financial support. The danger is not just that someone gets “hooked” into financial loss, but that it could increase vulnerability for those who struggle with self-harming thoughts and behaviors.

And it's not just bot farms and financial schemes. There are times when someone known to a church will email anyone connected to the church – members, neighboring churches and pastors, Conference staff— about an unsubstantiated grievance. These often include inflammatory language, come across as authoritative, or warn you of some imminent danger. The latest version of this has reached some of you this week.

What bothers me most is that these prey on our trust, which is already in short supply in this cultural moment rampant with skepticism, reactivity, and tribalism. And they prey on our practice of one of the core tenets of Christianity—care for the most vulnerable among us.

What are we to do as people of faith? I hear Jesus' words to the disciples: “Be as shrewd as snakes and as innocent as doves” (Matthew 10:16). We need to be in the world but not of the world; that is, we need to

know what's going on and respond but not let it change who we are as disciples of Christ. We need to keep our hearts open without letting all our defenses down. That is no easy task! It takes spiritual fortitude, discernment, and above all, community. Thank God we have each other!

I offer these guidelines and welcome you to share others that you and your community have found valuable.

- Use extra caution when an email/post has a sense of urgency, uses a lot of legal language, insists on a specific action, or makes it seem like you are the only one who can help.
- Take an extra look at who sent the email; do you know the person? If so, is it the normal address they use?
- Pay attention to your body. Has your heart rate increased? Do you feel extra fidgety? Do you have a gut feeling? Your body may be signaling that something is not quite right.
- If anything feels off, contact the real person using the phone number or email you know is theirs and check with them.
- If it is a scam, let others know (my mom's pastor sent an email to the entire church within an hour of learning about the scam). If it's a new style of scam, or references the wider church in any way, let your [ACM](#) know so we can support you and others.
- Have a plan for responding to disruptive behavior during worship (onsite and online).
- Share the ["Power of Hello"](#) with your church. It is a practical guide on how to bring situational awareness to greeting church attendees while prioritizing hospitality and welcome.
- Double down on connecting with others and being in community, things that strengthen your sense of trust and ground it in lived experience.
- Double down on your practices of caring for the most vulnerable among us, including each other and ourselves when we get hooked by one of these scams.

Siblings in Christ, be as wise as serpents and innocent as doves as you read your email and respond to social media posts and engage with the world.

"BAKERY DAY" RETURNS ON SEPTEMBER 27

We are happy to announce the return of "Bakery Day" on Sunday, September 27!

Baker Jeremy Williams of 'The Do Good Kitchen' will be at Coffee Hour with his mouth-watering selection of baked goods, including macaroons, various flavors of scones, and the popular "brumbles"!

10% of the bake sale proceeds will be donated to the Social Action and Missions Committee (SAM).

Contact Lynn Horton if you have questions.

DISCOVER YOUR PLACE AT CCC: NEWCOMER & MEMBERSHIP GATHERING

Are you curious about our church, interested in the values of the United Church of Christ (UCC), or exploring what it means to become an official member of Central Congregational Church? We warmly invite you to a special informational gathering on Sunday, October 11, from 11:30 AM to 2:00 PM in Room 202.

This informal session is a wonderful opportunity to learn about our congregation's history and vision, ask questions about the United Church of Christ, and connect with others from our church community.

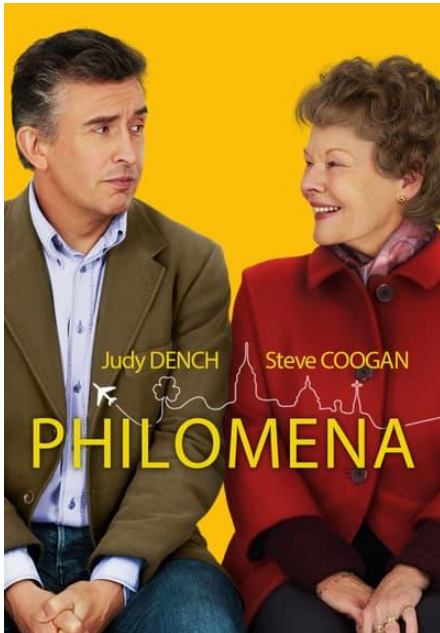
Gathering Details

- When: Sunday, October 11 | 11:30 AM – 2:00 PM
- Where: Room 202
- Food: Grab some treats from coffee hour on your way up! You are also welcome to bring a bagged lunch.
- RSVP: Please call the church office to let us know you plan to attend.

If you have questions about the gathering or are interested in membership but cannot make this specific date, please reach out directly to Pastor Lee. We look forward to getting to know you better and sharing more about our community!

CCC MOVIE GROUP

Mondays | September 14 & 28 | 7:00 PM | Zoom



Monday, 9/14 – “Philomena” (2013) Based on a true story and the 2009 book “The Lost Child of Philomena Lee” by journalist Martin Sixsmith, the film stars Dame Judi Dench as Philomena Lee, an elderly woman who has been searching for her son for 50 years, and Steve Coogan as Sixsmith, who tries to help her find him. In 1951, teenaged Philomena became pregnant by a man she did not know at a county fair, so was sent by her father to Sean Ross Abbey in Roscrea in Ireland. After giving birth, she was forced to work in the convent laundry for four years, with little contact with her son. The nuns gave her son up for adoption without giving Philomena a chance to say goodbye. She kept her lost son a secret from her family for nearly fifty years. London-based journalist Martin Sixsmith is approached at a party by the daughter of Philomena Lee. She suggests that he write a story about her mother, who was forced to give up her toddler son Anthony nearly fifty years ago. Though Sixsmith is initially reluctant to write a human-interest story, he meets Philomena and decides to investigate her case.

The film is based on the scandal of forced adoptions in Ireland, though it employs artistic license with the real-life events. In a 2009 article for *The Guardian*, Sixsmith says that in mid-twentieth-century Ireland, the Catholic church forced unwed mothers in their care to give up their children for adoption. Following pressure to do so, a Commission was formed in 2015 by the Government of Ireland to investigate Mother and Baby Homes.

Monday, 9/28 – “The Dressmaker” (2015) In 1926, in the fictitious Australian outback town of Dungatar, 10-year-old schoolgirl Myrtle Dunnage is blamed for the death of classmate Stewart Pettyman. A sympathetic policeman, Sergeant Horatio Farrat, sends her away. Twenty-five years later, Myrtle, now a couturier-trained dressmaker using the name "Tilly", returns to Dungatar to care for her ailing mother. Tilly remembers nothing of Stewart's death, and her mentally ill mother Molly, living in squalor, does not even remember her. The main cast includes Kate Winslet (Tilly), Judy Davis (Molly), Liam Hemsworth (Teddy McSwiney), and Hugo Weaving (Sergeant Farrat). The film explores the themes of revenge and creativity and was described by co-writer and film director Jocelyn Moorhouse as "Clint Eastwood's 'Unforgiven' with a sewing machine."

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!

BACKPACK ATTACK THANK YOU



Thank you to all who donated to our successful Backpack Attack fundraiser this year! Your generosity supplied backpacks filled with supplies, or just the supplies or a backpack, or checks with funds which I turned into full backpacks. On Wednesday, August 5th, I delivered 78 filled backpacks and 10 calculators to The Wish Project in North Chelmsford. The Wish Project partners with local schools and organizations to help children have what they need so they can succeed in school. This gives both the children and us a better future!

Lillian Bean

AN UPDATE FROM PASTOR LEE ABOUT HER SERVICE DOG JOURNEY

Dear Friends,

Over the past couple of months, many of you have kindly reached out to ask if I will be getting a new dog following Shadow's passing. Your care, prayers, and thoughtful check-ins have meant more to me than I can fully express—thank you for surrounding me with such love during a difficult time.

Because this question comes up often, I wanted to share a quick update on where things stand. Shadow was far more than a pet to me; he was a highly trained Service Dog who provided essential support for my daily life. Finding his successor is a lengthy and precise process.

I had hoped that Phoenix would step into that role, but as sometimes happens in service dog training, Phoenix needed a “career change” and will not be able to fill that role. I am now actively searching for the next right dog to begin this specialized training journey with me.

For those who have asked how to follow along this journey, I share updates through my independent foundation, Phoenix Rising: Service Dogs Saving Lives. You can read more and follow the journey directly at: www.PhoenixRising-SDSL.com/blog.

Because I always want to maintain clear and healthy boundaries between my role as your pastor and my personal medical needs, I do not expect or ask for support from the church community.

Thank you again for your warmth, understanding, and continued support as I navigate this next chapter. I am deeply grateful to serve alongside such a wonderful and compassionate congregation.

With gratitude,

Pastor Lee

WOMEN'S 1-DAY RETREAT – SATURDAY, OCTOBER 3, 2026

Join us for a very special One-Day Women's Retreat on October 3rd, from 9am-5pm at Sanctuary at Woodvale in Hopkinton Massachusetts. The Retreat will be led by Pastor Lee Atherton. It will be a powerful day of reflection, sharing, and “living the creative life with God.”

Feel free to invite female friends and family, but please register soon so we can plan activities. We have quite a few registrations already, but we welcome more to join us.

Scan the QR code or visit this link <https://retreats.coachrev.com/home-page> to learn more about the retreat and to register. Make a check for \$125 payable to CCC (you can mail it to the church or put it in offering plate).

Contact Valerie King [978-846-1120](tel:978-846-1120) or Pastor Lee if you have any questions or need help with registration or carpooling.



DEEPEN YOUR FAITH: JOIN US FOR WEEKLY LECTIO DIVINA

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

Looking for a peaceful, reflective way to ground your heart before Sunday worship? You are warmly invited to join our weekly Lectio Divina group every Sunday morning from 8:45 AM to 9:30 AM in Room 302.

What is Lectio Divina? Lectio Divina—Latin for “Divine Reading”—is an ancient, contemplative practice of reading scripture. Rather than studying the text academically, we listen with the “ear of the heart” allowing God’s Word to speak directly into our daily lives. Each week, we slowly read, meditate on, and discuss the upcoming Sunday scripture passages together in a quiet, supportive environment.

What to Expect

- When: Every Sunday, 8:45 – 9:30 AM
- Where: Room 302
- What to Bring: Just your Bible and an open heart!
- Commitment: Drop in whenever you can—come every week, or just on the Sundays that fit your schedule.

Whether you have practiced contemplative prayer for years or are completely new to scripture discussion, there is a seat saved for you at the table. We look forward to reading, reflecting, and growing alongside you this Sunday!

Pastor Lee

UPDATES

FROM THE SUNDAY SCHOOL COORDINATOR

Creating Faith-filled Disciples Centered in God’s Love

Can Faith Formation at Central Congregational Church be a “Perfection Free Zone!”?

Welcome back to Church!! I have missed you all so much and I hope everyone returns for Welcome Sunday!!!!

September 13

- We will have a Backpack Blessing so bring your backpack or bag you use for school!
 - We will have Sunday School! Please register so we have current information [Sunday School 2026/27](#)
- If you are reading a hard copy of this newsletter look at the weekly emails starting August 20.

I am excited about a new year, always have been! New school year meant fresh crayons, new notebooks, new pencils. When I taught in St. Louis I supplied those new things for the students. I was not allowed to request items from families. It was just expected that teachers would buy the supplies and use the professional money we could get with our taxes - that money was never enough and most parents found the money to make sure their children had new clothes - folders - pencils - markers -crayons!

I hope that all our children and youth have what they need for a new school year, but I also hope that if they don't, parents will reach out to your church family for any help you may need to make sure that learning is fun and engaging.

I can't wait for all the exciting things our children and youth will do this year. If you can help in any way please let me know. There is so much to explore and so many different ways to explore, follow and carry on the teachings of Jesus!

We will be introducing International Dot Day - Make your Mark. . . It Matters!

I found posters but no graphics I can put in the newsletter so you can check out

<https://www.internationaldotday.org/> Inspired by (Chelmsford native!) Peter H. Reynolds - "The Dot"

Dot Day is:

- A celebration of creativity and art
- A day to make the world a more colorful place
- A chance to splash, shine, share and inspire
- A gallery of inspiration
- A global festival of humans being amazing human beings
- A celebration of human potential

Watch for a chance to meet with the person who might be our next settled Pastor! And come to church September 20 for the Congregational Meeting!

Annual Meeting for the Southern New England Conference is the Weekend of September 25 - 27 in Worcester, with a free event for 6th through 12th graders on Saturday September 26, but you need to register - talk to Pastor Lee or Jennifer Hart!

Our church sends delegates to do the business stuff, but youth get to be part of it for FREE! Youth will do some work at the Worcester Area Mission Society (WAMS) just a short walk from the DCU center.

Other Opportunities offered by the Southern New England Conference

[SNECUCC Calendar](#) to register for any of these events!

October 1 and 15, (need to register by September 25) - a Two part program

- Curriculum considerations and from the Classroom to Intergenerational Events
- Building Classroom Community Neurodiversity, one room schoolhouses, and how we come together \$50 per class or register for both at the same time for \$75

October 22

A Lunch & Learn - People Beyond Sunday: Simple Tech & Digital Ministry for Today's Church Free

October 29 - register by October 26

Beyond Awareness: Building the Future of Mental Health Ministry \$15

Can we be a WISE Church - Like our Open & Affirming designation in the UCC [BECOMING WISE](#)

A Conference Youth Event!!!!

Hallowed Ground: Faith, Saints and the stories that shape us

A retreat for Grades 6 - 12

Aldersgate Camp & Retreat Center in North Scituate, RI

October 30 arrive between 5pm and 9pm through November 1 - Leave by Noon

Only \$125 per person

Faith Formation & Youth Ministry Unconference - November 7, 10 am – 6 pm. (register by October 23) The location is not known right now, but looking at Rhode Island

Jennifer Hart

PRAYER MINISTRY

“Cast all your anxiety on Him because He cares for you.” — 1 Peter 5:7

The CCC Prayer Ministry is here to walk alongside you in both joys and struggles, offering comfort and strength through the power of prayer. When you share a request, our team of 20 prayer partners lifts it up to God with care and confidentiality; only those in the ministry and God know the details.

Whether you’re facing illness, loss, a personal challenge, or simply need strength for the week ahead, know that you are not alone—your church family is praying with you. If you would like prayer for yourself or a loved one, please contact Marcia Cassidy at marciacassidy@comcast.net. It is our privilege to hold you in prayer and remind you of God’s constant presence.



HOUSE COMMITTEE REPORT

In the past month, the House Committee has replaced the missing siding near the rear entrance. Jim has been cleaning out the shed and basement of 9 Worthen St. The gas pipeline into the church had to be rerouted with several shrubberies removed. Jim replanted new shrubs where the ones removed had been. There is a new church freezer in the kitchen, and the kitchen license has been renewed. The toilet seat in the family restroom on the second floor was replaced. The gas furnace at 9 Worthen passed inspection.

Yet to be done is repair of the front porch at 9 Worthen St. which will be done in late September. When the weather is reliably cool, the caulking of gaps in the granite curb will be done. The ceiling of the hall outside the furnace room door needs to be primed and painted. A minor leak in a first floor faucet will be attended to. The hallway lights on the third floor have been blinking and will be fixed or replaced.

Our custodians, Juaréz and Beth will be retiring; their last day with us will be September 30th. Juaréz has been with us for 25 years, and his wife, Beth, comes with him to help out. He has done a phenomenal job and inspectors and families here for weddings have remarked upon how pristine our church is. The House Committee will be working on interviewing and hiring a new custodian. There will be a potluck lunch after church on October 4th for Juaréz and Beth. Please come to let them know how much we have valued them. We will present them with a monetary gift as a parting gift. Please give a donation to any House Committee member (Jim Clark, Bill Clarke, Geoff Bryant, Scott Dorman, Bryan Norman, Tim O’Brien or Mary Horne), or put it in an envelope in the offering plate clearly marked “Custodian gift” on the envelope and the memo line of the check.

Jim Clark will be on vacation from September 5th until October 3. If there are any issues, please call Mary Horne at (978) 729-5632.

GINNIE HALL MEAL MINISTRY

To request a meal, or to offer to make and deliver a meal, please contact Merri Robison, 978-937-5403 or meredithrobison@comcast.net. The Ginnie Hall Meal Ministry is a service of KiSeLo.

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 and complete the online Rental Inquiry Form](#).

COUNCIL CORNER

A Monthly Update on the Activity of the CCC Council

News from the August 12, 2026, meeting:

- Treasurer Dick Papenfuss reported that as of June 30 we have completed Fiscal Year 2025-2026. Total pledge income for the year finished \$12,000 under budget at 96%. Unpledged income ended at 97% after a strong June. Our total income for the fiscal year ended below budget at 95%. Total expenditures were finalized at 92% of anticipated spending. Dick was pleased to announce that the budget surplus for FY 2025-2026 is \$12,580!
- The members of Council voted to transfer \$3000 of the surplus funds to Social Action and Mission (SAM) and \$8646 to the Carryover Account.
- As voted at Annual Meeting, \$11,300 of the Carryover Account funds are designated for the 2026-2027 budget.
- Council voted to use \$934 of the surplus to provide the final funds necessary to give 3% salary increases to staff. Added to the money contributed by the congregation, the total funding will cover the increased staff salaries and related expenses for 2026-2027, retroactive to July 1, 2026.
- The Council voted unanimously to approve a 3% increase in salary to each of the church staff members for fiscal year 2026-2027.
- Dick Papenfuss will present the updated 2026-2027 budget at the September 9, 2026, Council meeting.
- The Nominating Committee presented Wim Nijenberg as a nominee to join the Diaconate. The members of Council voted unanimously to elect Wim to serve a 3-year term as a Deacon.
- Pastoral Search Committee Chair Dory Toppan shared the exciting news that the PSC has identified a settled pastor candidate! The candidate will preach in worship on Sunday, September 20. A Congregational meeting will be held immediately following the worship service at which time the members of CCC will vote on the Pastoral Search Committee's recommendation that we call the Candidate to serve as the next settled senior pastor of Central Congregational Church.

- Due to confidentiality for the candidate, the September 20 worship service will not be live streamed. All members of the church must be present on September 20 to cast their vote in person. There will be opportunities to meet the candidate prior to September 20, dates to be announced.
- The Council voted unanimously to approve the Warrant for a Special Meeting on September 20, 2026, of Central Congregational Church in Chelmsford, United Church of Christ, which reads as follows: To the Members and Friends of Central Congregational Church in Chelmsford: A Special Meeting of the Central Congregational Church in Chelmsford, United Church of Christ, will be held on Sunday, September 20, 2026, at 11:15 a.m. in the Sanctuary immediately following the worship service to act upon the following article: Article 1. To act upon the recommendation of the Pastoral Search Committee to call a candidate to be our Senior Pastor and to approve the terms of the call. (signed) Elizabeth Hartigan, Clerk.
- Jennifer Hart, Sunday School Coordinator, and Bonnie McGrath, Safe Church Advocate, updated the Medical Release Form to incorporate more inclusive language for both adults and youth. Pastor Lee Atherton, Council President Lynn Horton, and Interim Office Administrator Margie Dissinger assisted in revising the document. The Council voted unanimously to approve the amended health form. The updated version will replace existing copies across all physical and digital platforms.
- Pastor Lee encourages CCC members and friends to sit with those who may be sitting alone in service (unless you know they like to worship alone) or other events. Accompany them down to coffee hour and be sure to introduce visitors to others!
- The CCC Community Yard Sale held on August 1 was a great success, raising \$1100 for CCC programs and ministries.
- Our church custodian of 25 years plans to retire at the end of September. Juarez Gomes and his wife Beth have kept our facilities sparkling, and they will be difficult to replace. Jim Clark, House chair, and the House Committee will seek a new custodian. A special potluck lunch to celebrate Juarez and Beth will be held on October 4.
- John Carson, Chair of the Board of Trustees, noted that Beth Jarok designated in her will a gift to CCC of \$50,000. The Trustees, in conversation with Beth's sons Geoff and Jon, have decided to use the funds to upgrade the church elevator. Specifically, the PLC elevator control system that uses a programmable logic controller as the central "brain" to manage elevator operations, ensuring safe, efficient, and flexible control of motors, doors, and passenger interfaces. John Carson expressed gratitude to Beth and her sons for this bequest, and for their trust in us to use the funds wisely.

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, September 9, 2026, 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

WE INVITE YOU TO JOIN US!

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

Interim Pastor:	Rev. Lee M. 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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