



Vestry News

MARCH 2025



Photo by Ginny Harris



OPEN AND AFFIRMING
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

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On February 2, UCCB unanimously called Frances Graveson to be its twenty-ninth pastor! Fran's official start date at UCCB is March 1. She will first lead worship on Ash Wednesday March 5th, at 7 PM, and her first Sunday worship in Boxborough will be March 9th.



We had a lot of snow in February but we also had eager volunteers clearing the snow.

Stop, Breath, Focus our Intentions

As I write this, our birdfeeder in the backyard is busy with bluebirds and blue jays, juncos, finches of all kinds, mourning doves, cardinals, and starlings. One of my favorite things about the winter is watching the birds at the feeders. My concern this morning is that I am not going to be able to fill the feeders for a while since the backyard is just a sheet of ice. I have already fallen twice this winter in my faithful service to our feathered friends. In late February, my mind turns to thawing and the warming of the flower beds. I don't want to make another trek on the ice. Oh, how I long for the first pansies to pop up.



I am sure not all of us are pining for spring. These February storms are good news for our ski friends and the ski lodges. I send ski blessings and hope the snow lasts on the mountains well into March for your enjoyment, as long as my yard sees a thaw and those lovely pansies. ☺

In New England March is that time between seasons, the month that leads to spring. We hope, anyway. And March also brings us the Lenten season at church. I have to admit that Lent is my favorite season. That might surprise some people. In our tradition, Lent has represented sacrifice, darkness, repentance, and sadness for many church goers. I hold this season a bit differently. Perhaps it began in my Catholic upbringing. I honestly don't remember Lent for the restrictions on candy or sorrowful repenting prayers. I remember fish and chips on Fridays. I couldn't understand why God wanted me to enjoy fish and chips all through Lent, but I wasn't going to question a good thing. It was the only time of year my mom would indulge in that wonderful meal of fresh fried fish and French fries. For me, it was a time of joyful Fridays.

Today, I think of Lent as a time of intention. A time when I add to my spiritual life by intentionally considering how my life represents my Christian faith. The scripture stories of Lent provide an excellent review of Jesus' ministry and teachings to his disciples. These weeks are a time to question and to dive into areas of interest in our faith journeys.

I am excited to be joining all of you for this season. It is the perfect time to get to know each other as followers of Jesus, whatever that means to you. I am sure that there is a wide variety of understandings and convictions in our congregation. And as a church geek, I look forward to learning about all of the different ways you approach these stories and our tradition. God is the ultimate mystery at the center of our church life together. And as some smart person said, "our view of God says much more about us than it says about God." So, I hope that everyone feels welcome to share, question, and explore our thoughts and ideas together. Uniformity of intellect is not what holds us together, unity of heart is the center of our worship and service.

We enter into 40 days of Lent representing the story of Jesus leaving everyone to enter into a time of discernment. Just before his ministry began, he stopped, entered the wilderness with maybe some doubts, and took time to define his purpose, his intention, and his direction. He stopped to rededicate his faith in the one who loves us all. He focused on his intentions to ensure that he would not be tempted by the distractions of this world that can cause us to forget to love God and love our neighbor.

Lent is a contemplative tradition of stopping, breathing, and focusing our intention. What a wonderful way to begin our ministry together at UCCB. As we move through this time of focus, I will be taking it all in as I join the congregation on March 1st. Stop by during the week to say "hello." Let me know if you would like a visit. Share with me your prayer concerns and moments of joy. I invite you to join us for a contemplative service on Ash Wednesday. Lent will continue with worship on Sunday and Wednesday night services with neighboring churches. I am looking forward to this time of listening and learning in the transitional month of March: the time of seasonal changes; the time of Lenten reflection; and the time when we look forward to a future filled with God's work in love, mercy, justice and peace. Amen.

Pastor Fran



March Worship

SUNDAY, MARCH 2: Rev. Cindy Maybeck will lead worship.

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 5: Join us a 7PM for a contemplative Ash Wednesday Service led by Frances Graveson. Sound of Peace will Sing.



SUNDAY, MARCH 9 – FIRST SUNDAY IN LENT ...and DAYLIGHT-SAVING TIME begins. Frances Graveson, our new settled Minister, will lead worship.

SUNDAY, MARCH 16 – SECOND SUNDAY IN LENT Rev. Rich Tosh, new member of UCCB's choir and a friend of long acquaintance with George (and Sue) Elenbaas, will lead worship.

SUNDAY, MARCH 23– THIRD SUNDAY IN LENT Frances Graveson, our new settled Minister, will lead worship.

SUNDAY, MARCH 30 – FOURTH SUNDAY IN LENT Frances Graveson, our new settled Minister, will lead worship. In the afternoon, the sanctuary will be filled with music by volunteers participating in Music Sunday. See details on page 4.

OUR SERVICES ARE SUNDAY MORNINGS AT 9:30 IN PERSON OR ON ZOOM

To worship via Zoom:

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88306753408?pwd=VlgwZUtlYl05JmVU2VWklHWGtUWExGdz09>

Meeting ID: 883 0675 3408

Passcode: 7387

Please note: our worship services are streamed live via Zoom, and recorded for posting on YouTube (<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCIhayswOH7Ta7LYVK-BcAyA>).

Zoom offers closed captioning subtitles for those who find that helpful.

Blankets for 'Project Linus'

Although they are not collected until Spring, I am putting out the call for anyone who likes to knit, crochet or quilt to spend the intervening time working on blankets for our yearly donation. The blankets bring warmth and comfort to children in need and are much appreciated. For more information contact Ann Marchmont at marchmont922@gmail.com



Congregational Meeting

We had a wonderful congregational meeting on Sunday, Jan. 26, where we celebrated the past year’s activities in Faith in Action, Generosity, Investments Management, and Finance and also passed our 2025 Budget. We celebrated a number of events from 2024, including saying goodbye to Rev. Cindy Maybeck and welcoming our Interim Co-Ministers, Rev. Dr. Jill Edens and Rev. Richard Edens, the Merrie Christmas Fair, the Adult Mission Trip to Downeast Maine, FreeBee Market, and the UCCB’s interim period between pastoral leaders!

We voted new members onto Council, Finance, Nominating, and Pastor-Parish Relations, and gave a hearty thank you to those whose terms are ending. Truly, we are living the vision of **Welcoming All, Caring For the World, and Growing in the Spirit!**

Members newly elected to governance teams:

Peter Senghas	1 year	Moderator
Griet Dehandschutter	1 year	Clerk
Laurel Dickson-Bull	3 years	Council
Darcy Sidwell	1 year	Finance Team
Doug Simmons	Up to 3 years	Finance Team
Todd Waddington	Up to 3 years	Pastor-Parish Relations Team
Ginny Harris	Up to 3 years	Pastor-Parish Relations Team
Griet Dehandschutter	Up to 3 years	Nominating Team



45th Annual MUSIC SUNDAY CONCERT

March 30th at 4:00PM



Come and brighten your day by coming to the 45th annual **Music Sunday Concert** at 4:00PM on Sunday, March 30, in the Sanctuary. This free musical program showcases local talent (instrumental and choral) from UCCB and the community. It will be highlighted with special selections by Choirs plus a variety of music performed by people of all ages. Come one and come all to this special, joyful musical program. Light refreshments will follow the program coordinated by the Fellowship Committee. **NOTE:** Still seeking musicians to perform a variety of music during the concert. All performers please contact Gloria Roe about their song(s) information (title & composer) for the program by Sunday, March 23. There is an Open Rehearsal time for all musicians on Saturday, March 29 from 10:00-12:00 in the Church Sanctuary. For more information contact Gloria Roe 978-502-9625, email gloria.a.roe@gmail.com

Wednesday Evenings in Lent - starting March 26

During this Lenten Season, we will join with our neighbors from the Harvard Congregational Church, and the Acton Congregational Church to share a meal, pray, sing, and meditate. The theme will be *Into the Mystic: Belief Moving to Experience*. We will have three evenings together starting at 6:30PM on the following dates: **March 26, April 2, and April 9**. We will rotate among the three churches, the first dinner being at UCCB. We will again enjoy some homemade soups and bread. **Watch the Friday Flashes for a link to sign up**. There will also be a spot to sign up to make a soup. Thank you!



16th Annual UCCB Folk Coffeehouse

On February 8 we had another great crowd in the Gathering Room for the 16th Annual UCCB Folk Coffeehouse! New performers, young musicians, and a handful of regulars provided a variety of music. Almost 70 people attended – our largest group since 2020! We were able to wrap things up just in time to beat the snowstorm.

Parallel with the Folk Coffeehouse, we raffled four tickets to the Moth Mainstage and The Hanover Theatre on April 25th. During intermission, Lourdes drew the winning ticket...Rick Edens! Given their upcoming move to North Carolina, Rick and Jill debated making a road trip to attend but opted to pass their tickets to Rev. Fran Graveson to UCCB - so generous! In reaching to Fran, she had already purchased tickets to attend the show so she asked for a new winner to be drawn – so generous! Nikki then had the honor of drawing the new winner... Darcy Sidwell! Enjoy, Darcy, and thanks to everyone who participated!

We look forward to future music gatherings with Music Sunday on March 30th in the Sanctuary and the UCCB Porchfest on June 1st on the Farmer's Porch. Bring your lawn chairs and sunglasses on 6/1! Contacts: Gloria Roe for Music Sunday (gloria.a.roe@gmail.com) and Steve Griffin for Porchfest (sgri617@comcast.net)



Maricel and Jeff



To the left: Patti who has been a regular for years.

Above and on the right: Alan & Mary R.'s grandson (our youngest performer yet!), Cole and their son, Andrew.





Ecclesiastical Council for Josh Lunde-Whitler

On March 19 at 7 PM, UCCB will host an Ecclesiastical Council (EC) for Josh Lunde-Whitler, a member of UCCB and a Member in Discernment (MID) with the Central Association. UCCB members are invited to attend. You can find the official invitation [here](#).

For a MID, the Ecclesiastical Council is the next-to-last step in the journey toward ordination. Our newly-elected Pastor, Frances Graveson, had her EC in March 2024. Please see the separate article about Fran's ordination.

The Ecclesiastical Council is called by the Board of Directors of the Central Association. Churches in the Association are invited to send delegates. Josh will be introduced by one of his advisers from the Committee on Ministry, and will speak briefly about his ordination paper, which is linked in the official invitation. After that, members of the EC and others attending may ask Josh questions about his paper and about his discernment process.

At that point, Josh and anyone who is not a delegate will be asked to leave the room while the EC debates the question of whether to approve Josh for ordination. Following the vote, everyone is invited back in to hear the result, and all will adjourn to the Gathering Room for refreshments.

A bit about Josh:

Constantly moving and traveling throughout his childhood and early adulthood, Josh has broken bread at the tables of various communities and has been shaped by a wide diversity of experiences. A lifelong Christian, he has been involved in various forms of ministry and mission over the past 19 years, beginning from his seminary days in southern California (at Fuller Theological Seminary). Here he began a journey of listening and learning in which he has moved (and continues to move) from conservative evangelicalism into a progressive, liberating spirituality and ministry. Along the way he has worked closely with the unhoused, led camping ministries, served as a hospital chaplain, ministered to youth, children, and families in various settings, co-pastored a church, led various adult study-action groups, directed a non-profit, led worship using various musical styles, etc.

After a lengthy process, Josh earned a Certificate of Fitness for Ministry in another denomination. But soon thereafter, he came to the realization with his partner Amy that this would not be a suitable denominational home for their family. They came to Massachusetts in 2011 to seek a new spiritual home in the United Church of Christ, and for Josh to begin a Ph.D. program in Theology and Education at Boston College, which he completed in 2018. Josh often teaches courses at a local university, leads seminars for the Conference's Faith Formation program, and teaches and has written courses for PATHWAYS, an online theological educational platform. In addition to Josh's current position as Youth and Community Outreach Minister at Payson Park Church in Belmont (2022-now), he continues to research and develop story- and play-based curricula for various age groups and families.

Josh considers himself blessed to be connected to the UCC Boxborough community, which began in 2018 via collaborations with his partner Amy's ministry at the South Acton Church, and continued after he became the Children, Youth, and Family Minister at Saint Matthews' UMC in Acton (2020-2022). Although he spends most Sundays in Belmont fulfilling his ministerial duties, he continues to pray for Boxborough, and celebrates along with everyone with the arrival of Frances Graveson! He would love to explore ways to stay connected to UCCB going forward, and is exceedingly grateful for the support and encouragement he has received over the past six years from the community.



Ordination of Frances Graveson

On February 2, the United Church of Christ, Congregational of Boxborough voted to call Frances Graveson as its twenty-ninth settled pastor. In doing so, UCCB enabled Pastor Fran to complete the final step in her journey toward ordination. The only thing remaining is the ordination ceremony.

Pastor Fran's ordination ceremony is scheduled for June 1 at 3 PM at the United Parish of Upton, 1 Church St., Upton, MA. Pastor Fran is a long-time member of the Upton church, which has supported her throughout her discernment process.

UCCB folks are invited to come and celebrate this joyous occasion!

Adult Mission Trip to Cherryfield, Maine July 13-18, 2025



Maine Seacoast Mission

For several years, a team from UCCB has been working with Maine Seacoast Mission (MSM) in their Housing Rehabilitation Program for a week each July. UCCB and MSM have developed a close relationship.

Planning is underway for our 2025 trip! We've reserved ten spaces for our group. To join us you only need to be 18 or older. While this has been called a "hammer and nails" experience, we also spend time painting, gardening, and listening. All are welcome, regardless of physical ability or expertise.

Please contact Peter or Kellie Senghas if you are interested in joining us or if you wish more information (psenghas@yahoo.com; ksenghas@gmail.com; or 978-263-5508), even if you are just curious!

More about Maine Seacoast Mission:

Maine Seacoast Mission was started in 1905 by two brothers, both pastors, who realized that the spiritual needs of the island residents of far Downeast Maine were not being met. Today Maine Seacoast Mission's focus includes rural education and healthcare issues. While they provide a wide array of support services, they only utilize mission trip volunteers in their Housing Rehabilitation Program. Downeast Maine has an old and decaying housing stock and the need for repairs and weatherization on these homes is constant. With the support of volunteers, Maine Seacoast Mission is able to help their most vulnerable neighbors.

www.seacoastmission.org

Generosity 2025



Thank you to all who have submitted your financial pledge for the 2025 program year. Your commitment to this congregation and community helps fuel all we can imagine and accomplish together. The rainbows in the center stairwell indicate each of the 54 pledges we have received so far - thank you!

The spiritual practice of generosity arises from imagining all that God calls us to do as a community. Our donations to our congregation make it possible to turn what we imagine into a reality. Through our annual commitments to our congregation, we **imagine together** all that we can do. Whether you are someone who has pledged annually in the past or are new to this practice, we invite you to consider how you may contribute financially to UCC Boxborough to keep our lights on in this corner of the world and continue to invest in our community.

It is so wonderful to see the number of total pledges increasing once again as new members and families have joined UCCB in this spiritual practice of generosity. For those who have been considering a pledge, it is never too late to join this practice. Don't hesitate to reach to a member of the generosity team with any questions. You are welcome to submit your pledge at any time by following this [link](#) for access to a confidential pledge form.

Thank you!

Yours in faith,

Generosity Ministry Team: Jeff Glidden, Kellie Senghas, Rev. Dr. Jill Edens and Rev. Richard Edens



UCCB Provides Aid to Single Mother in Crisis

The Faith in Action team was recently informed about a situation by A Friend in Need (AFIN). AFIN is a small, all-volunteer organization that offers one-time financial assistance to people in need in the Acton/Boxborough/Maynard area. This particular situation involved a single mother of three living in Acton who had received funds from AFIN in the past, and thus wasn't eligible for additional assistance. The woman's former partner (and the family's primary earner), had been removed from the household due to domestic violence allegations, and bills for past rent were in the vicinity of \$7000.

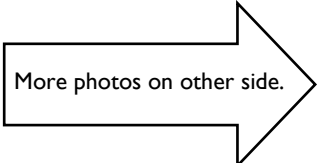
UCCB responded. A total of \$1350 was donated: the Deacons authorized \$500 from the Community Support Fund, the Edens contributed \$250 from the Pastor's Discretionary Fund, a personal donation of \$100 was made, and the Faith in Action team donated \$500. Although this does not wipe out all of the debt, the good faith effort of a \$1350 payment will go a long way to helping the family stay in their home. Thank you to all who came together to make this happen.



Spring Ahead!

Don't forget to move your clocks forward 1 hour on March. 9

Farewell to the Edens!



On Sunday, February 23, UCCB said goodbye to the Interim Co-ministers, Rev. Dr. Jill Edens and Rev. Richard Edens. The children sang on their own and joined with the choir for a special anthem, and a duet benediction with Glynis H and Cindy B completed the service. A banner was prepared by Nicolette W. and the youth of the church. At the reception, Larry W. offered a few words of gratitude for the Edens' ten months with UCCB and reminded everyone of the Edens' commitment to the church. He then presented the Edens with a plaque made from repurposed floorboards from the Old Sanctuary. A lovely basket of New England-themed gifts was presented as well. Dave B. provided a tender version of James Taylors' Carolina in my Mind, with Karen W's and Peter S' help. We'll miss the Edens and wish them well in their retirement in North Carolina!

Should anyone wish to help cover the cost of the gifts for the Edens, please reach out to Peter Senghas.

March 2025

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Vestry News articles, ideas and submissions are welcome and due the 24th of each month. The Vestry News is published prior to the first Sunday of each month.

Please submit to:
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