



Vestry News

FEBRUARY 2026



Stunning photo by Ginny Harris



OPEN AND AFFIRMING
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

IN THIS ISSUE

| | |
|---|------|
| Pastor's Letter | 2, 3 |
| Lenten Book Study Zoom info. | 3 |
| Photos & Poem; Music Sunday | 4 |
| Congregational Meeting Notes and governance teams | 5 |
| Josh Lunde - Whitler's Ordina- tion | 6, 7 |
| Generosity | 8 |
| Immigration Talks and Study | 9 |
| Kindess Meditation | 10 |



Josh's Ordination

On Sunday January 18, Josh Lunde Whitler was called to ministry. He had been an intern of the UCCB. We had a wonderful ordination ceremony with a good attendance. You will recognize one of the speakers.

To the left, Rev. Nancy Stillman presented a gift on behalf of the deacons. There were 4 beautiful fair - trade stoles made in Guatemala.

Josh will be a full time pastor at Amesbury's Main Street Congregational Church where he was interim.

More pictures can be found on pages 6 and 7.

As we enter into Lent, we take time to reflect on our faith. Faith is a life-time journey. It is a journey filled with questions. It is a journey that changes course. And it is a journey that has moments in which we choose a specific path. When I chose to follow the path of ordination, I chose to expand my faith journey. I chose to not only walk the path of learning, ritual, and transformation individually. I chose to enter into covenant with a faith community, with UCC Boxborough. I chose to be teacher and pastor, loving a community and its members. I believe that walking the faith journey with a community is enriching. It is difficult, and it is enriching. We are individuals experiencing lives separately and we have chosen to walk in community.



It is especially difficult when times are more dangerous. When danger, fear, and suffering come into a community it rarely impacts everyone equally. Our society favors some with privilege. Our society targets some based on bias and power dynamics. And therefore, we are not all experiencing a dangerous moment equally. Nor do we all choose to react in the same ways. It is okay that we are individuals making decisions based on our own life experiences. And as a community in covenant, we should be dedicated to listening to the different experiences in our community and acknowledge the pain and fear, even when we have not felt the same danger in our lives.

We have come to a moment in our community when we are not all feeling the same pain and fear. In this moment, as a community, we need to open our hearts; educate ourselves; and act to protect those who are being harmed. On February 3rd, the Temporary Protected Status (TPS) of all residents from Haiti will expire. TPS is not a path to citizenship. It is not an immigration status. It is a protection statement from the US government saying that a particular country is too dangerous for anyone to be forced to return to. Therefore, people in different phases of the immigration process or people temporarily living in the US can rely on TPS to ensure they can stay in the US until it is safe. We all know that Haiti is not safe. And it is believed that the Federal Government will be surging immigration deportation efforts in Massachusetts when Haitians lose this protection because we have a large population of Haitians in our state.

On Friday, January 23rd, I stood at the Statehouse with 300 colleagues. We prayed for our colleagues in Minnesota who were desperately trying to keep their hearts open; educate themselves; and protect those in harm's way. The sponsoring organization, Massachusetts Communities Action Network (MCAN), delivered a letter to the governor to ask for three executive actions to protect the most vulnerable in Massachusetts: 1) Ensure the Federal Government is adhering to our state constitution and laws; 2) Restrict state departments from cooperating with Federal Government if our state laws and constitution are being violated; 3) Create a department (A Truth Commission) that would track and process any instances of our state laws and constitution being violated to ensure that there is accountability.

We may not all agree with this political action. We may have different opinions about methods and/or interpretations of the law and constitution. And not everyone wants to be involved politically during such times. That is okay. And I want to give those interested the opportunity to be involved. There will be postcards at the church for those who would like to write to the governor to reinforce these requests.

If the surge of violence that occurred in Minnesota comes to Massachusetts, there are other ways in which we can help as a community and as individuals. One way is to simply help the families of those detained and/or help with legal fees for detainees. The Acton/Boxborough area created a network for direct aid and help during the last surge in deportations. We will provide instructions for signing up for that network in the coming weeks.

Are you unsure? Are you looking at what is happening and unsure if laws and the constitution are being violated? Are you wondering about how immigration works and if there are flaws in our immigration process? Would you simply like to know more before you act? If so, there are classes to help explain this very complicated topic. The Massachusetts Immigrant Refugee Advocacy Coalition (MIRA) has a set of online classes coming up. It would be great if a small group attended these classes and brought some information back to the congregation. There is also an education event occurring at the Acton townhall lead by an immigration lawyer. Flyers for both of these opportunities are in the back of the Vestry News.

Lastly, for those who want to be on the streets protecting people, LUCE is an organization who is trying to hold people accountable for their actions and protect people from violence. This is not an action for everyone. However, if you would like to be involved in that work you can use this link to apply and be trained: <https://baserow.io/form/yTeJvCrr-OGGwM9Sx-4sdrYHddm6AGltLhx5kqjVeSk>. We also have cards with the LUCE Hotline number in the church lobby, if you want to report activity in your neighborhood.

We are a loving and beautiful church community. These times are unsettling. Times like this can cause many different levels of fear. Let us be kind to each other during this time. And let us discern in what way God's love is calling us to open our hearts; educate ourselves; and protect the most vulnerable. Fear is paralyzing, so let us come together to talk out our fear; share in our love; and take actions that are true to our hearts.

May it be so, my friends.
Pastor Fran.

LENTEN BOOK STUDY

Evening Group
TUESDAYS @ 6:30PM
FEB 24TH TO MARCH 24TH

Morning Group
TBD

Contact Pastor Fran,
uccbpastor@gmail.com for
Zoom info.

THE SABBATH
ABRAHAM JOSHUA HESCHEL

JEWISH SCHOLAR
ABRAHAM HESCHEL HELPS
US TO UNDERSTAND OUR
RELATIONSHIP WITH TIME,
THE SACREDNESS OF THE
MOMENT.

All are welcome

UCC BOXBOROUGH

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=VlgwZUtlYl05jeVU2WklHWGtUWExGdz09>

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/UChIayswOH7Ta7LYVK-BcAyA>).

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



Winged Winter Friends



Photos and poem submitted by
Ginny Harris

Arboreal Sleuth

Nuthatch spirals upside down,
Views life from a different angle

Acting like a circus clown
Looking for a bug to mangle.

Three-toed feet cling tight to trees
In wind and rain he teeters not.

Persistent sleuth of cavities
Each insect to its doom is brought.



46th Music Sunday Concert

May 3 at 4:30PM (note date change)

Come and brighten your day by coming to the 46th annual **Music Sunday Concert** at 4:30 on Sunday, MAY 3, in the Sanctuary. This free musical program showcases local talent (instrumental and choral) from UCCB and the community. It will be highlighted by 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:** All performers please contact Gloria Roe about their song(s) information (title & composer) for the program by April 26. There is an Open Rehearsal time for all musicians on Saturday morning, April 30, from 10:00-12:00 in the Church Sanctuary. For more information contact Gloria Roe 978-502-9625, email gloria.a.roe@gmail.com



Annual UCCB Congregational Meeting – January 25, 2026

Weather-driven inconveniences aside, UCCB had a wonderful congregational meeting on Sunday, Jan. 25. We celebrated UCCB’s ministry in 2025, including Pastor Fran’s arrival, the Merrie Christmas Fair, the Adult Mission Trip to Downeast Maine, FreeBee Market, UCCB’s continued work in the community, and so much more as we look forward to 2026.

During the meeting, leaders reported on the past year’s activities in Faith in Action, Generosity, Investments Management, and Finance. We celebrated the 2025 year ending without an operating deficit and also passed our 2026 Budget and the 2026 Nominating slate.

This year we tried a slightly different format, with having some of the celebrations incorporated into the Worship service. Should you have any feedback for us about the changes to the format of the meeting, please share them with any member of the current Council or Pastor Fran.

Truly, we are living the vision of **Welcoming All, Caring For the World, and Growing in the Spirit!**

Members newly elected to governance teams:

| | | |
|--------------------------------|---------------|------------------------------------|
| Jim Howie | 1 year | Moderator and Council |
| Peter Senghas | 1 year | Vice Moderator, Clerk, and Council |
| Brian Davis | 3 years | Treasurer and Council |
| Susan Appleton | 3 years | Council |
| Mary Pavlik and Lee Biegel | 1 year ext. | Council |
| Darcy Sidwell and Jeff Glidden | 1 year ext. | Finance Team |
| Dave Pavlik | Up to 3 years | Finance Team |

2026 UCCB Council:

Susan Appleton, Anne Chandler, Brian Davis, Laurel Dickson-Bull, Jim Howie, Mary Pavlik, Peter Senghas, and Scott Spalding

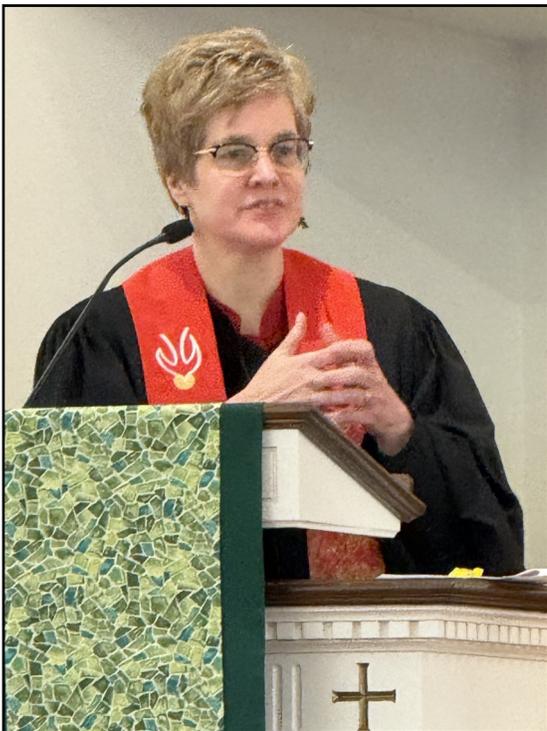
Josh Lunde-Whitler's Ordination



Rev. Ginger Bove, pastor at the Parish in Bolton and a member of the Central Association Board of Directors



A lay member from Amesbury church shares gratitude. Josh will become a full time Pastor at this church.



Rev. Cindy Worthington-Berry gave the sermon



Rev. Carol Steinbrecher, Area Conference Minister of the Central Association, declares Josh as an ordained reverend.



Josh's wife Amy Lunde Whitler and their son Joe pray together



Rev. Fran, Rev. Cindy W-B, and Josh enjoy some snacks



Their son Joe gives a wonderful off the cuff speech



Nancy helps place the new stole on Josh

Generosity



Thank you to all who have pledged your financial support to keep the ministries of UCCB vibrant and growing in 2026. With 5 new pledges received, we have once again increased the total number of pledges received to 55 so far, with others outstanding still considering at this time. With your pledged support, we are able to plan the year ahead with more confidence as we **plant seeds of hope – together**. Thank you!

As we reflect on the past year and look ahead, we do so with peace, joy, love, and **hope** for ourselves and our neighbors, near and far. This year, we constructed a tree of hope in the upstairs lobby, inviting everyone to write on a leaf their hopes and dreams - for ourselves and the world. It was beautiful to see the tree grow with these collected thoughts! We collected those hopes and dreams and created a word cloud to commemorate and carry with us throughout the year.



Check out this image posted in the church as well:

Thank you for **all** the ways in which you give generously to this faith community, including with your financial gifts.

You can learn more about pledging and giving options, by visiting UCCB's website (www.boxboroughucc.org/giving/). If you would like to pledge via a secure online form, follow this [link](#).

Thank you for being part of this journey and our faith community.

Your Generosity Ministry Team: Griet Dehandschutter, Rev. Fran Graveson, and Kellie Senghas



Virtual 

Intro To Immigration

Spring Training Series **2026**

This four-part virtual lunch hour series will present relevant, up-to-date, and accurate information on immigration topics. You can attend all 4 trainings, or choose individual sessions. This series is open to all individuals who would like to increase their knowledge of immigration-related topics and learn about helpful resources for practice with immigrant populations.

- Thursday, February 12: *ABCs of Immigration*
- Thursday, February 26: *Rights, Resources and Benefits for Immigrants*
- Thursday, March 12: *Immigration Policy Updates and the Work Ahead*
- Thursday, March 26: *How You Can Show Up for Immigrants*




Margaret Kennedy
Social Justice Initiative
presents:

RESTORING THE PROMISE
IMMIGRATION POLICY
AND THE PATH FORWARD

WITH IMMIGRATION ATTORNEY
ANTONIO MASSA VIANA

ACTON TOWN HALL
ROOM 204
472 MAIN ST

SATURDAY
FEBRUARY 28, 2:00 PM



 REGISTER FOR
VIRTUAL OPTION

 LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS
OF ACTON AREA

 MASSA VIANA

Flyers above will be available at the church

February 2026

www.boxboroughucc.org

978-263-7387

boxborochurch@verizon.net

Vestry News articles are due starting the 24th of each month. Please submit your article or pictures to hmatthew25@verizon.net and boxborochurch@verizon.net

Loving Kindness Meditation

An invitation to pause, breathe in goodness; breathe out hope—
from the Loving Kindness meditation offered in worship 2
weeks ago by Pastor Fran

May you be safe

May you be happy

May you be healthy

May you live in peace, no matter what you are given

May your heart be filled with love and kindness

