



Vestry News

JANUARY 2026

December Joys

December was a very busy month and we have so many pictures to share! Below, starting from the left, top we have Debbie and Suzanne at the yummy Cookie swap; Advent wreath lit up on Christmas Eve, and the Cantata-a mix of our choir and the Berlin Church choir, and 17 instrumentalists! More pictures will be throughout the newsletter.



OPEN AND AFFIRMING
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

IN THIS ISSUE

Pastor's Letter	2
Annual Meeting; COA Luncheon; Aging Together; Ordination of Josh Lunde-Whitler	3
17th Coffee House;	4
Second Day in Advent Photos	5
December Photos	6
Cantata Photos	7
Parishioner's Reflection	8
NYE Photos	9
Generosity; Christmas Stars	10
Connected; Zoom info.	11

Dear Friends,

This past year has been a whirlwind as I experienced many “firsts” at UCC Boxborough. I enjoyed my first Lenten/Easter season with you; my first mission trip; my first Freebee Market; my first Rally Day; my first Merrie Christmas Fair; and now my first Christmas Eve service.

During the year we also did some things as a church for the first time. We partnered with the Congregational Church of Harvard for joint summer worship; we welcomed our new pianist, Esther Kim; and we distributed Bibles to the children for the first time in a long time.

This is a good time to reflect on the past year. Was it what we expected? It is almost always full of surprises. What did those surprises mean to us? Our lives are full of moments of uncertainty and twists in our journey that we wish we could avoid. The distribution of those twists is not evenly spread. There are years with many challenges and losses. And there are years that provide many unexpected blessings. Over our lives we find both to be important parts in our being, in who we are. As we consider 2025, we give thanks to all that has brought richness and growth to our lives. And we give thanks for the support, strength, and love that has held us in the difficult times.

So, what will 2026 bring? We don't know. And we can put our intentions and wishes out into the world. Let our hopes and dreams dance around with the hopes and dreams of others. Watch the seeds we plant with our talent, time, and treasure grow in our community. Come together throughout the year to be present with each other in whatever comes our way. We are a beloved community; rooted in hope; and called to build, grow, and live life fully together. May 2026 be a year approached with open hearts; creative minds; and graceful hands in our endeavors to Welcome All, Care for the World, and Grow in Spirit together. Happy New Year!

Blessings,
Pastor Fran

Pastor's Reflection



Annual Congregational Meeting - Sunday, January 25th

Please plan on joining us for our Annual Congregational Meeting on Sunday, January 25th immediately following our 9:30 Service. The meeting will be conducted "live" in the Sanctuary, but will also be available on Zoom.

We will be engaging with the Congregation on the following key topics:

- A celebration of our key 2025 Accomplishments and Generosity
- 2025 Investment Update
- A review of our 2025 financials
- Review of and Vote on the 2026 Budget
- Election of Officers and Governance Teams

Your input and vote are important! Please plan on joining us.

Volunteers needed for January COA Luncheon

The Boxborough Council on Aging will host its monthly senior luncheon on Wednesday, January 14th, from 11:30 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. at the Community Center. This month's luncheon is being sponsored by UCC Boxborough and we're looking for 8 to 10 volunteers to help make the event warm and welcoming for our local seniors. Food will be delivered at about 11:45 - no cooking necessary! Volunteers will assist with serving the meal, buffet style. If you are available and would enjoy sharing good food and good company with our neighbors, we'd love to have you join us



Please contact Peter Senghas at pwsenghas@gmail.com or call 978-505-5398 for more information.

Aging Together

Our Aging Together small group will be coming together for lunch on **Thursday, January 8th at noon**. You are invited to bring a brown bag lunch. Our discussion topic will be "What is Home?" There will be an activity to enrich our discussion and plenty of time to share information and ideas about housing as we age. All are welcome!!

Ordination, January 18

We are honored to be hosting the Ordination of Josh Lunde-Whitler at UCCB on Sunday, January 18th at 3 p.m. As you may remember, Josh was a Member in Discernment with us, and UCCB hosted his Ecclesiastical Council, during which he defended his ordination paper and process.

He was called last October to serve as the interim minister at Main Street Congregational Church in Amesbury. After January 18th, he can be officially called Reverend Lunde-Whitler.

All are welcome as churches from all over the Central Mass Association will come together to celebrate Josh's call to ministry.



17th Annual Folk Coffeehouse

Saturday, January 31, 7 – 9 p.m.

Save the date! Nothing could be better than shaking off the dark winter chills and enjoying warm, gentle music in the Gathering Room with friends on a Saturday evening (7 - 9 p.m.).

The Music Committee invites you to enjoy the many talents of our community and perhaps offer some talents of your own in a traditional folk “coffeehouse” setting. This event is intended to slow us down, warm us up, and bring us together as appreciators of music.

Please contact Peter Senghas (pwsenghas@gmail.com or 978-505-5398) or Steve Griffin (sgri617@comcast.net) if you would like to participate or if you have a question about this event.

We need help with snacks and card tables. If you are able to lend us a card table (with a table cloth, if possible) please email Peter Senghas (pwsenghas@gmail.com). If you would like to help out with preparing snacks, please reach out to Gloria Roe (gloria.a.roe@gmail.com).

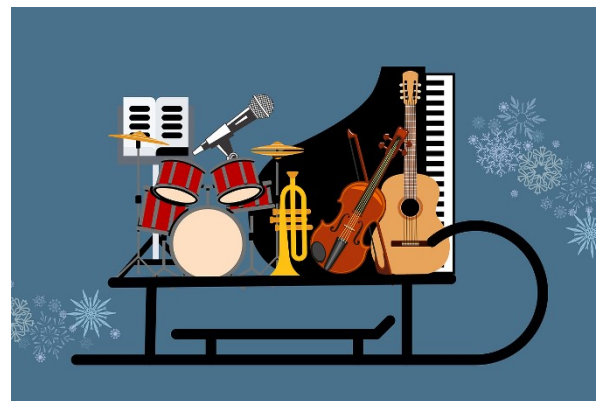


46th Music Sunday Concert

March 1 at 4:00PM

INVITATION FOR SINGERS AND MUSICIANS for annual Music Sunday Concert.

The 46th annual Music Concert is scheduled for Sunday afternoon, March 1 at 4:00 pm. Mark your calendars for this special concert in the Spring! This musical program showcases local talented musicians (instrumental and choral) from UCCB and the surrounding community. Musicians of all ages are invited to perform a selection of their choice. Here is an opportunity to perform a solo, duet, or more! Involve the entire family to play an instrument and/or sing a song together. Invite your musical friends to join in the fun. All are welcomed! For more information about how you can participate in this special musical program, see the poster/sign-up sheet at the church or contact Gloria Roe 978-502-9625 or gloria.a.roe@gmail.com



The Second Sunday in Advent



Family lighting the candles on the Advent wreath.



Sounds of Peace sang beautiful music.



Our guest preacher, Fran Bogle, during a children's message.



About 10 of us joined to share the Christmas Story on a very cold Sunday.



Nancy and her many outfits as shepherds, and the magi with gold, frankincense and myrrh.

More December Joys



Once again, we had CINE (Christmas in New England) move us into the spirit of Christmas.



On the left: Esther's daughter and son are both playing cello as Esther plays piano. The photo above is Esther and her daughter.

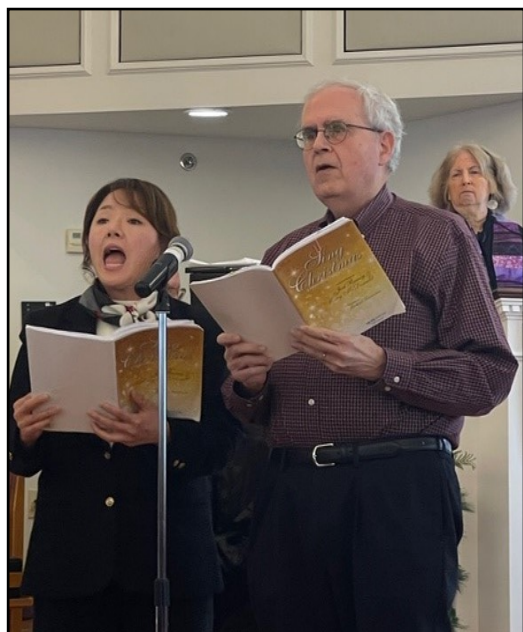


Christmas Eve

Even More December Joys—Christmas Cantata



The Christmas Cantata held on Sunday, December 14th was mesmerizing! In addition to musicians and the Berlin Church Choir, the children sang, plus a quartet, and a duet.



Parishioners Reflection

"I went to church this morning."

This is a phrase I did not expect to be saying as much this year as I have been. As a solitary witch and eclectic pagan, my friends tilt their heads a little when they hear this. It always requires a bit more explanation in my social circles of agnostic nerds, atheistic millennials, and crunchy new age hippies.

I didn't make it to church yesterday morning, but I did spend the evening of the Winter Solstice with some new friends at Stargazer Hollow Farm in Fitchburg who invited me to join them for Yule celebrations. We ate chicken pot pie made from the same chickens my family had helped cull a few weeks prior. We crafted wreaths from evergreen boughs harvested from the surrounding farmland. We shared stories around the table of our adventures over the last year.

Last weekend, I was invited by a new friend in Waltham to go wassailing and caroling in her neighborhood. Walking into her beautiful 19th-century New England home was like stepping into a Ghibli film. The kitchen was buzzing with a quartet of busy grandmothers hard at work baking treats and preparing the wassail. One of them brought out an accordion and we began rehearsing carols in front of the hearth, where we would later burn the Yule log after touching our mistletoe branches to it and making wishes for the new year. After caroling around the neighborhood, the grannies brought out the wassail and stacked a pyramid of sugar cubes on a grill balanced over the bowl, then poured rum over the whole thing and set it ablaze. As the blue flames danced over the surface of the wassail, I couldn't help but think to myself, "Is this not witchcraft, too?"

The weekend before that, my household celebrated Saint Nicholas Day for the first time. Frank told me this was a tradition he celebrated as a child with his German father and immigrant grandparents. He wanted to share this tradition with my son, too. Putting our boots outside our bedrooms at night and getting small gifts and treats in the morning sounded fun, so I had no objections. Celebrating saints seems to bear a lot of resemblance to various indigenous traditions involving animal totems and ancestor worship. At the end of the day, what's the difference, really?

As I write this, we are finally moving into one of my favorite parts of the year—that spiritual exhale after the Winter Solstice, the longest night of the year, as the light of the day gradually lengthens and the night shortens. For us pagans, this is a time of somber reflection and rest.

In my personal practices, it is a time of mourning and release, a time to let go of that which has failed to serve me through the year. I like to think of it as "tilling the soil" and recycling the creative energy of the past year into a rich "spiritual compost" that will nourish me in the coming year. Once that pruning is complete, it becomes a lot clearer what should be brought forward into the coming year.

In that spirit, I wanted to take a moment to thank the congregation here at UCCB and all my neighbors here in Boxborough for being such a welcoming and nurturing community over the last several months. I'm looking forward to continuing my spiritual journey with you all in the coming years.

Blessed Be
Phyn



New Year's Eve



“We celebrated the New Year with games, music, conversation, laughter along with a meal of soups, bread, and assorted desserts. The soups celebrated HOPE with recipes inspired by the Haitian celebration of independence and disaster recovery efforts in Afghanistan, using recipes from José Andrés’ World Central Kitchen cookbook. Planting seeds of hope - together. Happy 2026!”

Generosity



Thank you to all who have pledged your financial support to keep the ministries of UCCB vibrant and growing in 2026. 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. Thank you for **all** the ways in which you give generously to this faith community, including with your financial gifts.

New to the idea of pledging? The spiritual practice of generosity arises from nurturing all that God calls us to do as a community. Our donations to our congregation make it possible to turn our mission into a reality. Through our annual commitments to our congregation, we **plant seeds of hope - together**.

You can learn more about pledging and giving options, by visiting UCCB's website (<https://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



Christmas Stars

Thanks to everyone who contributed to the Christmas Stars program. All the beautiful gifts were safely delivered into the hands of Framingham Youth Services in time to make Christmas special for some very needy children.



**Can't get enough of
Connected the Musical?**
**Come to an Official Video
Watch Party!**



with a donation to
**OUT
METROWEST**
UCC Boxborough
723 Massachusetts Ave
Boxborough, MA

January 17, 2026 from 6-9 PM



**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=VlgwZUtlYk05jeVU2WklHWGtUWExGdz09>

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.

January 2026

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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

