A Publication of the United Church of Christ, Congregational, 6 Lexington Street, Burlington, MA 01803
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MARCH 2025 HILLTOP HERALD

Rev. Andrew Harris
Pastor

Mark Omobono
Moderator

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UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
CONGREGATIONAL
BURLINGTON, MA

Helpless, helpless, helpless

Over the past month, I've talked to several people who are struggling with feelings of helplessness in the face of a deepening inhumanity at the heart of our country and, seemingly, our world. What can we do to stem the tide of evil? To stand up for the poorest and most vulnerable among us who are being explicitly targeted by members of the new government regime? The richest man in the world has stepped in to halt shipments of HIV medication and tuberculosis treatments to some of the poorest countries in the world. Which of our neighbors will they come for next?

These are very real and very serious questions. To ignore them would be to turn a blind eye to the explicit declarations and nazi salutes of people who are currently being appointed to some of our nation's highest seats of power. There's a cloud of evil swirling, whipped up by winds of greed, power, vengeance, and anger. It all feels so far above our heads and out of our control.

Too often, we're made to believe that it's up to us to change the world. The other side of this coin implies that it's our fault the world is the way it is. This myth tells us that we bear the responsibility of this world and its salvation is up to us. This is hubris. The world is beyond our command and control. We can only influence an extremely narrow sphere in our lives and even that is subject to forces far beyond our control.

Although we prefer to believe the myth that we can and should lift ourselves up by our bootstraps; although we might take comfort in the myth that our successes are a result of our own hard work, intellect, and determination and our failures are due to some personal defect; it is just that – a myth. A lie that issues forth from our culture and has come to be established as doctrine. We are made to believe that we control our destinies. Success and achievement are the goals. The only thing to keep us from having all that we want and desire is our own self-determination.

As Christians, we are invited down an alternative path that says we are not the authors of our own salvation. Our gifts are not our own. All that we have comes from God. We may be helpless, yes, but this is actually *good* news. Our lives are in the hands of our creator who loves us, cares for us, and inspires us to work for love, justice, and peace in whatever ways we are able. We alone cannot change the world, but God can, God has, God is, God will.

It's imperative that we continue to act in accordance with God's will. But it is also imperative that we dress ourselves in humility, lay down our burdens, and realize that it is not our personal responsibility to save the world. Have faith that God is doing so. We will not dig ourselves out of this hole by kicking and screaming and flailing against forces beyond our control. We will not, and cannot, dig *ourselves* out at all.

All we can do is have faith and listen. God is calling to us now. If we spend all our energy wailing and flailing we may miss the still small voice offering us words both pastoral and prophetic. If we paralyze ourselves with anxiety, wondering how we are to change the world, we might miss the opportunity to change the world of the person standing right next to us. We must act with love and dignity towards all of our neighbors in all that we do. Acts of love are revolutionary.

Continued..

So friends, as we enter this season of Lent, let us feel helpless together and let us take heart. Lay your burdens down, don your sackcloth and ashes, deck yourselves in humility, and just listen, remembering that there's nothing you or I can *do* to change the world, other than to have faith in God to transform our own hearts and spirits, and through grace the hearts and spirits of all with ears to hear and eyes to see.

Let God's grace shine through you to be a sign of hope for all.

Peace,
Rev. Andrew Harris

MARCH 5, 2025

Come receive ashes at church in the morning between 7-9am. Then from 9-11am, Rev. Andrew will be offering ashes at True North Coffee Shop.

Ash Wednesday worship will take place at 7pm in the sanctuary with Rev. Trina Portillo and friends from the Burlington Presbyterian Church.

AGING WITH GRACE WORKSHOP

From the moment we are born, we begin aging. When we are young, we embrace it. It is the time for discovery and putting our ideas into practice. Life becomes an adventure to be explored and mastered. Everything seems possible and within our reach.

Although aging is a natural process, it slips into the background of our busy lives until we come face to face with mortality. When we deal with chronic pain, fall ill and do not want to become a burden to anyone or we are called to become a long-term caregiver for a loved one, we suddenly become very aware of the quickening pace of the passage of time. Discovery can take a back seat to anxiety, isolation, fatigue, feeling overwhelmed, or a fear of dying. We suddenly seem ill-equipped to accept and embrace change.

Spiritually, Grace is always with us, but we are not in the habit of turning to it until we are dealing with a crisis. What if we actively invite Grace to walk beside us daily and learn how to support each other in the process?

Andrew and I are inviting you to join an **Aging with Grace workshop** for four Sundays: March 9 – 30, after coffee hour at noon in the conference room that will give us the opportunity to explore how Grace can be a transformative practice in our daily lives.

We do hope many of you are interested in joining us. If you are, please email me @ deborahsclaar@gmail.com or speak with Andrew or myself by Sunday, March 2 so we know how many are planning to attend.

MUSIC MINISTRY SURVEY

As we prepare to begin the search for our next Director of Music Ministry, we'd like to hear your thoughts on music ministry at our church. If you could take a few minutes to fill out this Music Ministry survey, we would really appreciate it. There will be paper copies at church as well.

Follow this link to fill out the survey: **https://forms.gle/z1MajQdkSMHZt9rz5**

BIBLE STUDY

Join Andrew on Wednesday afternoon at 2pm either in person or Zoom livestream for weekly Bible study.
All are welcome!

Zoom Link:
https://us06web.zoom.us/j/84363847241

PUB THEOLOGY

On the Third Thursday of the Month join Andrew at Goodnight Johnny's, 154 Cambridge Street, Burlington, to chat about scripture, sports, life, and more. Meet at 8pm.

Bring a friend, all welcome!

The meeting began with a welcome to new members Aline Beck and Nancy Todd, followed by a review of the Board of Deacons' responsibilities as described in the church's Constitution. These include 'all forms of corporate worship, the care of members and friends of the parish, and the development of fellowship programs of the church. The Board may consider theological matters and matters concerning the spiritual welfare of the congregation and is charged with the promotion of the spiritual growth of the congregation.' The Constitution also charges the Deacons with administering the memorial funds and the Deacons' Fund. (Love Offering.)

Committee assignments were made within the Board. Deana and Marcia are Co-Chairs, with Deana attending Parish Council and Marcia leading the Deacons' meetings and writing the annual report. Dave McNeil will continue as Treasurer and Bobbie as Secretary. Jan Costa will continue as Memorial Fund Coordinator, with Marcia as her backup; Jan will also be the Called to Care contact and work with Kari on Fellowship; Kari is also the Safe Church representative. Donna Flecchia will monitor coffee hour and Communion supplies. Aline will take Marcia's place on the Special Music Committee, which Deana chairs. Andrew and Marcia are going to work with some interested church members on expanding church membership.

There was extensive discussion on the search process for a new Director of Music Ministries. The congregation will be surveyed as to their music interests for worship and the choir, Special Music Committee and band will be interviewed. Andrew will canvass other churches to learn what their search process was and how it worked. The Search Committee will include a member each from the Deacons, choir, Special Music Committee and band and a church member who is not involved in any of these groups, with individuals to be chosen later. The goal is to have a job description developed by the end of April and a person in place by the end of summer.

After Brian leaves at the end of April, Aline Beck and Debbie Claar will help with the choir. The Special Music Committee will be looking for people to share their talents, whether playing an instrument or singing, over the summer months, so please reach out to Deana or Aline if you would like to share yours.

Debbie Claar told the Deacons her ideas for a Lenten workshop, 'Aging with Grace.' It is scheduled for after church for five to seven Sundays beginning March 9 and is open to anyone who is aging or is currently or potentially a caregiver for a family member or friend. There will be discussion, mediation, prayers, and useful suggestions. This type of help and support has been asked for several times in recent years and could be expanded to monthly meetings if there's interest. If you would like to learn more or participate, please talk to Debbie or Andrew.

Andrew and Rabbi Susan Abramson are planning a gathering at our church for both congregations to help people understand what the Jewish community is going through with the conflict in the Middle East.

Eight people have signed up for new member classes as a step toward considering joining the church.

Andrew is looking for someone to preach only on May 4th; he will lead the rest of the service. If you are interested, please contact Andrew.

Memorial donations have been received in honor of Jean Bastos and Thelma Tibbitts.

MISSIONS NEWS!

RED WAGON

There are a lot of needs at the Pantry:

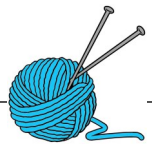
Cereal, oatmeal packets
Sides (rice, noodles etc.)
Individually wrapper kids snacks
Jelly—Pasta—Pasta sauce
Canned beans
Baby wipes

Bring to worship on March 30th or drop off directly to the pantry at 21 Murray Ave, Burlington.

MISSIONS FINANCIAL REPORT

This month the 5 members of Missions will each review 5 of the 25 benevolences we supported last year. We'll write a brief summary of the work each non-profit does, along with their annual revenue in 2024. This will help us to decide which groups to continue to support in 2025.

CLOTHING DONATIONS! It's close to the end of the winter season so please do not donate any more winter clothing. We will start to collect spring clothing on April 1. ALL CLOTHING must be freshly washed, free of tears, holes and stains. There will be bins for Cambridge Street Closet- sizes kindergarten to adult sizes (high School) These are distributed to children who attend Burlington School. All size clothing can be donated for Wish Project in Chelmsford which distributes clothing to families in the greater Lowell area.



CRAFTING FOR A CAUSE

Weather permitting, we continue to meet on Thursday afternoons in the conference room. On most Thursdays our meetings can be hybrid. Zoom info is:

https://zoom.us/j/93567188274?pwd=TVJ3L2xDODFxeUVSM0dWRnFhelI3dz09

Meeting ID: 935 6718 8274
Passcode: 01803

All are welcome. Recently we were able to donate hand crocheted hats to Wee Care, Cambridge Street Closet and Wish Tree.

Missions wishes to thank all who gave so generously to our special Christmas offering. We collected $8,137. This will be divided with (50%) $4,068.50 going to the UCC Disaster Relief Ministries. The other 50% or $4,068.50 goes to our Church general fund to support all the work our Church does.

Our Church has five special offerings per year. The first of these offerings occurs during Lent and is the One Great Hour of Sharing (OGHS) offering. This year it will be on March 30.

THANK YOU NOTE FOR OUR COAT DRIVE!

Dear Rev. Andrew Harris, Thank you for your generous donations to Coat Boston and The Holiday Shop. Because of you -- along with fellow churches, corporations, and individuals — close to 1,700 children, adolescents, and adults are being warmed by coats, hats, scarves, and gloves this winter. This year we were delighted to be able to provide so many coats—a substantial and heartwarming increase over the 755 we distributed in 2023. An outpouring of toys, games, and sports equipment brightened the lives of children in Boston at Christmas. You made all this possible. This year Coat Boston received requests for coats and toys from 22 recipient organizations. Those organizations represent Boston school children, unhoused families, residents of Boston neighborhoods, outpatients being treated at Boston Medical Center, and immigrant families. On the days that representatives from the recipient organizations arrived to pick up the donations, their gratitude was deeply heartfelt. The air was filled with the joy that the lives of so many people were being blessed by your contributions. Coat Boston and The Holiday Shop are truly thankful that you have gathered together to do good and share with others in such an impactful and meaningful way. Please convey our deepest gratitude to your congregation. Peace, Rev. Dr. Barbara Lea Callaghan Senior Minister, Hancock United Church of Christ, Lexington, MA Coat Boston & The Holiday Shop Steering Committee "And do not forget to do good and to share with others, for with such sacrifices God is pleased" (Hebrews 13:16).

THE ONE GREAT HOUR OF SHARING'S WEBSITE STATES THE FOLLOWING:

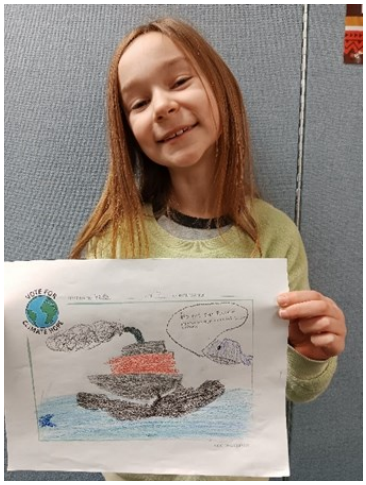
"One Great Hour of Sharing, part of Our Church's Wider Mission, is the special mission offering of the United Church of Christ that carries God's message of love and hope to people in crisis. The UCC works with international partners to provide sources of clean water, food, education and health care, small business micro-credit, advocacy and resettlement for refugees and displaced persons, and emergency relief and rehabilitation. One Great Hour of Sharing also supports domestic and international ministries for disaster preparedness and response. On average, of every dollar given to One Great Hour of Sharing, 95 cents are used directly for mission programming; and 5 cents for interpretation materials.

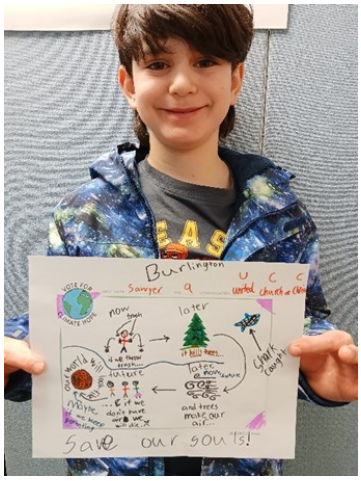
There will be specially marked envelopes in each pew for your donations or on the table outside the office. If you prefer you can send a check to the church office. Please mark the memo line with OGHS. If you would like to give digitally this can be done using Vanco. Information about Vanco can be found the church web site.
The Missions Committee thanks you for your thoughtful gifts.

CHRISTIAN ED NEWS!

WHAT HAS SUNDAY SCHOOL BEEN UP TO?

On February 23-"Seeds of Hope" Art Contest Sponsored by the UCC Conference to bring our Mission of Environmental Social Justice to the Congress.





Continued…..

LOOK WHAT'S COMING UP IN SUNDAY SCHOOL

3/2 10:30am Go directly to Sunday School (Mardi Gras). Then join worship for Communion
3/5 Ash Wednesday
3/9 All Church Worship-Band Sunday
3/16 No Sunday School-Service Sunday offering Coffee Hour and Bake sale for St. Patrick's Day
3/23 "Seasons of the Spirit" curriculum
3/30 Science Sunday

NURSERY SCHOOL

Care is provided by 2 people for newborns – 4 years old.
Our Nursery Care attendant is Kate Smith. We are so happy to welcome Kate to our family. Kate is a student at Lowell University and also works at Goddard School caring for children. Please say hello to her in the nursery or Coffee Hour.

CONFIRMATION

The confirmation class will meet: 3/2, 3/16, 3/30, 4/13, 5/4.
Confirmation will be part of Sunday Worship on May 18.

MARK YOUR CALENDAR FOR THESE EVENTS

INTERGENERATIONAL SWIM
SUNDAY MARCH 16, 2025 2 – 3 PM

Don't be late! Pool party at Billerica Boys & Girls Club, 19 Campbell Rd. Billerica Ph: 978 667-2193.
All ages invited. The kids get the shallower end, the adults can do short laps in the deep end. There are changing facilities for boys/girls available at the club. **Bring your own towels.**

If there are more than 19 participants, which we hope happens, we need a 2nd lifeguard. **Only 19 people will be allowed in the pool with 1 lifeguard. If there are 20 or more, we need 2nd lifeguard**, so please sign up at coffee hour or RSVP to Deb C: 857-373-9156 **no later than Sunday March 9.**

Please bring your friends. Please sign them up, so we know how many will be in the pool.

PALM SUNDAY PROCESSION APRIL 13 BEGINS AT NOON

Procession begins at St. Mark's parking lot promptly at noon . We will walk up Bedford Street about .7 miles to the United Church of Christ (UCC) lead by Claude the mini Horse. Bring your palms with you.

If you are not inclined to walk, please be at the top of the hill at the UCC to cheer on the procession!

BAKE SALE!

Sunday March 16 - Kids hold a bake sale after church and provide coffee hour.
The kids will meet in **Sewall Hall at 10am** to begin making cookies for the bake sale. They will not attend the church service.

The Bake Sale benefits CE programs. It will be St. Patrick's Day themed with cookies and coffee cake. The Sunday School will not attend church service.

Come get a treat for yourself or as a gift!
Parents are welcome to provide cookies for the sale.

JOYS AND CONCERNS

Bill Hitchcock's girlfriend Denise
Ryan Roitman-Waters
Bob Cuccio and his son Jessie
Nancy Davis son-in-law Michael
Bill Livezey
Donna DeSimone's Brother-in-law
Anna Karwan's mom Irene
Laura Nowell's brother Nick, cousin Nigel, friend Mary
Elaine Glancy
Lynn Tirrell and daughter Cindy
Karen Butler's brother-in-law Lenny
Ted Brierley
Barbara Naddaff's friend Mary
Tonia Egan's Mom and Dad
Claire Simas
Paul Raymond
Shirley Fong's Mom Mary
Kay Shute
Julies Lewis's cousin Alicia
David Leonard's sister Lucinda
Joan Zink's daughter Jen
Tom Killilea's brother Jim
Bobbie Killilea's sister Karla
Chris Stahlinski's sisters
Brian Gionet's Dad
Roberta Low
Shirley Garside's daughter Lynn
Jessy McNeil's sisters Grace and Joyce
Skip Glancy's sister Dorothy
Marilyn Langley's brother Bill
Kelly Sievert
Jan Blandino's grandson Toby, daughter Brenda, son-in-law Rick
Ginger Mungillo and daughter Cindy, son Jim
Barbara Garland

Victims of the Wildfires and Hurricanes
Mother Earth
Our Country!

CONGRATULATIONS to Rachel McNeil for passing her boards as an RN. Wishing you good things young lady!

CONDOLENCES:

Our deepest sympathy to Molly Kyokunda and her family on the passing of her brother who resides in Uganda.

Our deepest sympathy to Deana Tredeau and her family on the passing of Deana's sister-in-law.

Our deepest sympathy to Joyce Carpenter on the passing of her brother Bob. He is donating his body for Parkinson research. Bless him!

MARCH BIRTHDAY WISHES TO:

3 Cindy Brown
7 Barbara Moran
7 Paul Raymond
9 Logan Kelly
12 Laura Nowell
14 Josie Ursino
15 Stephen Jacobs
16 Thomas Omobono
17 Jan Blandino
17 Erika Downing
26 Libby Simarjian
28 Alysa Johnson
30 Rev. Andrew Harris
30 Deb Raymond

WORSHIP PARTICIPATION

MARCH 2 Communion

Communion Prep:	Chris Stahlinski
	Marge Zamanian
Pastor:	Rev. Andrew Harris
Organist:	Brian Gionet
Lay Leader:	Debbie Claar
Head Usher:	Dave McNeil
Usher:	Carol Downing
Greeter:	Tonia Egan
Collector:	Marge Zamanian
Nursery:	Kate Smith
Sunday School:	Deb Raymond
	Donna Ferro
Coffee Hosts:	Andie Joseph
Baker:	Marcia Rich

March 8 Turn Your Clocks AHEAD before bed!

MARCH 9 Worship-Love Offering

Pastor:	Rev. Andrew Harris
Organist:	Brian Gionet
Lay Leader:	Chris Stahlinski
Head Usher:	
Usher:	
Greeter:	
Collector:	Deb Raymond
Nursery:	Kate Smith
Sunday School:	Deb Raymond
	Donna Ferro
Coffee Hosts:	
Baker:	Deana Tredeau

MARCH 16 Worship

Pastor:	Rev. Andrew Harris
Organist:	Brian Gionet
Lay Leader:	
Head Usher:	
Usher:	Chris Stahlinski
Greeter:	
Collector:	Joan Zink
Nursery:	Kate Smith
Sunday School:	Deb Raymond
	Donna Ferro
Coffee Hosts:	Sunday School
Baker:	Sunday School

MARCH 23 Worship

Pastor:	Rev. Andrew Harris
Organist:	Brian Gionet
Lay Leader:	Marcia Rich
Head Usher:	Chris Stahlinski
Usher:	
Greeter:	
Collector:	Lucy Damiani
Nursery:	Kate Smith
Sunday School:	Deb Raymond
	Donna Ferro
Coffee Hosts:	
Baker:	

MARCH 30 Worship-Red Wagon

Pastor:	Rev. Andrew Harris
Organist:	Brian Gionet
Lay Leader:	
Head Usher:	Dave McNeil
Usher:	
Greeter:	
Collector:	Marcia Rich
Nursery:	Kate Smith
Sunday School:	Deb Raymond
	Donna Ferro
Coffee Hosts:	Chris Stahlinski
Baker:	

March 2025

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
						1
2 10:30a Communion Worship Noon Music Mtg Conf Room Conf. Class	3 **6:30p AA** 7p Trustees	4	5 **Ashes to go!** **7-9am at UCC** **9-11a at True North** 2p Bible Study 7p Worship Service	6 1p C4C **6:30p Scouts**	7	8
9 10:30a Worship Love Offering Noon New Members Class **Noon Aging With Grace**	10 **6:30p AA**	11	12 2p Bible Study 7p Choir	13 1p C4C **6:30p Scouts** 7p Deacons	14	15 **Mumtaz Rental 12-5pm**
16 10:30a Worship **Noon Aging With Grace** **2p Swimming Event** Conf. Class **Razia Rental 4pm setup 5-9:30p**	17 **6:30p AA**	18 7pm PC Meeting	19 2p Bible Study 7p Choir	20 **First Day of Spring!** 1p C4C **6:30p Scouts** **8p Pub Theology**	21	22
23 10:30a Worship **Noon Aging With Grace** Conf. Class	24 **6:30p AA**	25	26 2p Bible Study 7p Choir	27 1p C4C **6:30p Scouts**	28 **Noha Maher Rental Setup 6p 7-11pm**	29
30 10:30a Worship Red Wagon **Noon Aging With Grace** Conf. Class	31 **6:30p AA**					

UCC Congregational
6 Lexington Street
Burlington, MA 01803
Address Service Requested

TO:

MARCH 2025 HILLTOP HERALD NEWSLETTER