

MARCH 2026 HILLTOP HERALD

Rev. Andrew Harris
Pastor

Mark Omobono
Moderator

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*"Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tested by the devil."
Matthew 4:1*

My fellow pilgrims on this journey,

The Lenten season draws us into the wilderness once again. Our lives lead us into seasons of wilderness – times of change, times of loss, times of starting new, times of seeking, times of questioning, times of doubt. In Lent, we remember and affirm that wilderness times are a part of this journey of life and faith, and we trust that with God we need not be afraid. And so we venture forth into the wilderness courageously and of our own accord.

In each of the synoptic gospels (Matthew, Mark, and Luke), the Spirit drives Jesus into the wilderness after his baptism. There he is tested by the devil.

For a long time, I wasn't sure what to make of the devil. For one, the idea of the devil carries a lot of baggage in our culture. We imagine a red demon with horns, a pointed tail, and a pitchfork. We think of John Milton's Lucifer, a fallen angel, banished to hell for rebelling against God. But this doesn't sound like the devil Jesus encounters in the wilderness.

Once, in college, I remember attending a church down the street from my apartment. I don't remember the denomination, but I remember the preacher talked a lot about the devil. For these Christians, the devil was central to their theology and worldview. The devil was always lurking, tempting, testing, accusing.

I was content to let those kinds of Christians work out what to do with the devil. The devil never made much sense to me and didn't seem to have all that much to do with my day to day life. Only now do I realize the privilege of this position; the privilege I had to ignore and avoid the devil. Now I feel like that fire and brimstone preacher that freaked me out back in college.

Evil is around us in the world. We *are* tested and tempted and tried daily. Many of us fail these tests. Sin wins. Cruelty, violence, fear, and anger run amok. Who is to blame? Are we to blame our fellow humans? As if we are blameless? As if we are better for not having succumbed to the same temptations as those weaker, less morally scrupulous ones? I think not.

I found a place for the devil. I encounter the devil in myself when hatred and anger overpower my will to love and my capacity for mercy. Here in the wilderness, we meet the devil. We can avoid him no longer; ignore him no longer. But we also no longer need to fear him.

In the wilderness, Jesus passes the tests. The devil never stood a chance. Neither does evil today. Evil will lose. Evil was always going to lose. This is our annual journey into the wilderness to face down the devil's tests once again; to vanquish evil and raise high the banner of love.

Peace,
Rev. Andrew Harris



HOLY WEEK



PALM SUNDAY-March 28th

Worship Service at 10:30 am. Please join us for our Palm Sunday service leading up to Easter Sunday. Come early, pick up your palms at the door, get your name tag and welcome each other.

Palm Sunday procession at Noon Join us for a .7 mile walk from St. Mark's parking lot to the UCC church led by Clyde, our mini horse or a goat if Clyde can't make it. All are invited. Water, Lemonade and cookies will be served outside of the church when finished.



MAUNDY THURSDAY-April 2nd

Worship and Fellowship Service at 6:30 pm in Sewall Hall for soup, bread and worship. This is a solemn service not recommended for young Children.



GOOD FRIDAY-April 3rd

Service is being planned at ICE facility by area clergy. More information to come.



EASTER-April 5th

Sunrise Service at the top of the hill at Simonds Park. Perfect way to celebrate the resurrection of Christ as the sunrises. Time will be announce later.



ANNUAL EASTER EGG HUNT

Join us at 9:45 as all of our children will celebrate with a fun egg hunt provided by Christian Education.



EASTER CELEBRATION

Worship Service begins at 10:30am

Join us from 10:15-10:30am as we decorate our beautiful floral cross and listen to music from our guest musicians.



First, we would like to express our gratitude to Marcia Rich and Dave McNeil for their years of service on the Board of Deacons and Welcome Andi Joseph, as a new member. We are blessed to have such wonderful members.

This month the Deacons assisted Andrew with Lenten and Easter plans.

On February 18, Ash Wednesday, Andrew distributed “Ashes to Go” from the church from 7 am to 9 am. Afterward, he then gave out ashes to all those who desired them at the Burlington ICE facility. In the evening a service was held at the church.

Our plans for Holy Week this year will start with Palm Sunday and include on April 2nd, a Maundy Thursday service here at our church with our neighbors from The Presbyterian Church.

On Easter, April 5th we will have a Sunrise Service followed by our regular service including the flowering of the cross and featuring the talents of guest musicians.

The Deacons would like to continue to encourage volunteers to fill the various positions in the worship service. Updated guidelines are available to explain the tasks of lay leader, head usher, greeters, coffee hour hosts, etc. It is hoped that everyone will volunteer at least once yearly.

Please continue to wear your name tag! There are many new visitors (and old!) that would love to know your name.

EASTER PLANTS for the SANCTUARY



Remember how beautiful the church looked at Easter? If you would like to donate a plant or two for our service this year on April 5th, the form is at coffee hour and in the newsletter. Plants are \$12 each and you can keep your plant, donate, or have the Deacons deliver one to someone who could use a little cheering up. Make payment to *UCC* and please add *Easter Flower* on the memo line. Return form with payment to the church office.

Deadline for ordering is March 22. (Form included)

CHURCH OFFICE HOURS

I will be out of the office beginning March 9th through most of the month. Susan Eby, Donna DeSimone and Jan Costa have offered to cover the office. I will be prepping the bulletins from home (and the Hilltop). The group will print and take care of the day to day functions. Thank you so much for the support everyone. Blessings to all of you!

Bobbie

MISSIONS UPDATE!



RED WAGON-Need for March

- Toilet paper
- Juice boxes
- Canned diced tomatoes
- Ground coffee
- Tea

Bring to worship on March 29th and we will bring all forward during our morning service.

CRAFTING FOR A CAUSE

We will continue to meet in the conference room at 1PM on Thursdays. All are welcome to attend or request yarn from our supply.



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.

MISSIONS FINANCIAL REPORT

This month the 5 members of Missions will each review 2 of the 10 benevolences we supported last year. We'll write a brief summary of the work each non-profit does, along with their annual revenue in 2025. This will help us decide which groups to continue to support in 2026.



WISH PROJECT-CLOTHING NEEDS

Wish Project is still in need of clean winter clothing, free of tears, stains and missing buttons. The bin is labeled and sitting under the coat rack in the Hall. We thank Donna DeSimone for volunteering to help transport your donations to Wish Project in North Chelmsford.

SOCK DRIVE CHALLENGE FOR LENT



Can we, as a congregation, **fill** a bin with socks for the homeless in 40 days?

During Lent we ask you to keep the homeless in your thoughts by donating a pair of adult socks. Socks are one of the ongoing needs of the homeless. These people have no way to get their socks quickly washed and dried when they get their shoes wet. Both new and used adult socks are needed. Used ones need to be clean, free of holes and folded together as a pair. There is a bin outside the office labeled socks for your donations.

LILY JEAN FISHING BOAT CASUALTIES

Missions has received questions about a Mission's donation to help the families of the fishermen lost when the Lily Jean sank recently off Gloucester. At the present time we are not currently thinking about collecting an offering which would go to the funds for these families. Listed below is information about the funds that have been set up for these families. You might like to donate individually to these funds.

A new fund has been created specifically for and will be split equally between the families of victims of the Lily Jean sinking. Which is The Gloucester Fishing Community Preservation Fund that will be Cape Ann Savings Bank. This fund is designed to distribute the proceeds in equal amounts to the families of the seven crew members who perished. Cape Ann Savings Bank will help make sure every dollar goes to the families.

Another way folks can help is [by donating to the long-established Fishing Partnership Support Services](#), a nonprofit by fishermen for fishermen.



THE MUSIC CORNER MUSINGS FROM DEBBIE CLaar

Although the music during Lent can be somber, it can also be quite moving as it reflects the stirring significance and legacy of Jesus's ministry. Over the next month, you will hear the voices of the choir, band, soloists: Donna DeSimone, Sarah Clark, John Getsinger, Julie Lewis, Mark Omobono, Debbie Claar and Lisa Brooke on violin share thoughtful and soulful music that highlight not only the story of Christ but ways in which we have kept his ministry alive in our hearts. I hope you will join us on this journey. When I read a Psalm as lay leader this past Sunday, I introduced the word Selah which means to pause and reflect. It can also mean sharing a prayer through song. So, as we move through this heart-rending season, let us feel from the depths of our souls the essence of Selah.

I also would like to thank a woman who has proven to me that aging with grace is not only possible but inspiring. Aline Beck chooses preludes, postludes, offertory music each week, practices 10 hours a week at a minimum, and brings hymns and anthems alive with her gentle and skillful touch on the piano and organ. It has been an honor to collaborate with her and I am grateful to call her a dear friend. Selah.

NEWS FROM CHRISTIAN EDUCATION



Creating entries to the UCC art contest



Kids and parents at sledding event Simonds park!



February 22, Band Sunday where everyone stays and worships together.

UPCOMING SUNDAY SCHOOL EVENTS

March 22 Our Presbyterian Sunday School friends will join us at UCC for Sunday School. All will make posters for the Palm Sunday Procession

April 5 Annual Easter Egg Hunt 9:45am in Sewall Hall. Hear the Easter Story and then the hunt is on! Sunday School will be in session. The kids will come downstairs after the passing of the peace.

April 12 Sunday School and Nursery invite all Congregants to join us after church downstairs in Sunday School for an open house display about Lent and more.

NURSERY SCHOOL

Nursery School/caregiving is held every week 9/7/25 – 6/8/26

YOUTH GROUP

In November UCC brought back youth group in conjunction with Hancock Church in Lexington. The group will be for people in 7th – 12th grade.

Schedule: March 22 at UCC Burlington 4 – 5:30pm - The Labyrinth presented by Debbie Claar

Thank you to Linday and Precious for presenting their moving experience at CityReach with the congregation on February 8th during worship.



UPCOMING INTERGENERATIONAL EVENTS

Sunday 3/15/26 2-3pm Pool Party at the Billerica Boys & Girls Club, 19 Campbell Road, Billerica

The heated pool invites you to: fun playing pool volley ball, swim short laps or just hangout in the warm water. All participants must sign up on the signup sheet at coffee hour or contact Deb at 857-373-9156.

If more than 20 people attend we need to give the pool a weeks notice to provide a 2nd life guard.

Signup no later than 3/8/26

There are changing rooms but no towels. Please bring your own towels.



Palm Sunday

SUNDAY 3/29/26 START PROMPTLY AT NOON PALM SUNDAY PROCESSION

We are just awaiting the approval of the Selectboard to hold our procession led by Clyde the mini horse or a donkey. The walk begins at St. Mark's Church and proceeds .7 miles up to UCC Burlington. Put this on your calendar! Pick up a flyer at church to distribute or post around town



COMMUNITY DINNER AT THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

On January 28th, a hearty, comforting turkey dinner was served. The turkey was baked by the Presbyterians.

Thank you to all from UCC for providing sides and desserts: Jessie, Barbara, Marcia, Aline, Sue, Marge and Deb. Thank you to all for coming out on a cold winter night!

Remember there is a dinner the last Wednesday of each month at the Presbyterian Church. It's a free dinner for all!

JOYS AND CONCERNS

Bev Maher's daughter Kim	Roberta Low
Barbara Naddaff's grandson	Debbie Claar's dear friends Victor and Bob
Sally Willard's sister Vicky	Jan Blandino, her grandson Toby
Congrats on Anna Karwan's mom celebrating her 89th birthday and to Anna's sister for being a wonderful caregiver	David Knowles
Liz Silva's friend has a son overseas with health issues	Elaine Glancy
Christa and Elliot Brown in the passing of their daughter	Ted Brierley
Tonia Egan's Mom and Dad	Andrew's friend Lorenzo
Rev. Cheryl Kerr's son Gabe	Bill Hitchcock
Joyce Carpenter nieces Breanna, MaryJane and brother-in-law Ken	Skip Glancy and sister Dorothy
Bobbie Killilea	Karen Butler's brother-in-law Lenny
Auri Musselman's sister-in-law's family	Barbara Naddaff's friend Mary
Laura Nowell's friend Mary	Shirley Fong's Mom Mary
Sally Willard's sister	Julie Lewis' cousin Alicia
Woody Knowles	Shirley Garside's daughter Lynn
Donna DeSimone's sister Brenda and brother-in-law Rick	Jessy McNeil's sisters Grace and Joyce
Deana Tredeau's great niece Katie Wise	Kelly Sievert
Ryan Clark's co-workers	Ginger Mungillo, daughter Cindy, son Jim
Conrad Fong	Barbara Garland
Bill Livezey	
Kay Shute	
	Fishing boat Lily Jean lost crew members
	California avalanche lost souls
	Our Country
	The World
	Mother Earth

CONDOLENCES:

Our sympathy to Tom Killilea on the recent passing of his brother Rick. Keeping Tom, Bobbie and family in our thoughts and prayer.

BIRTHDAY NEWS

Happiest 90th Birthday to Lynn Tirrell. May the years ahead be as good to you as you always are to everyone else. God Bless You!

MARCH BIRTHDAY WISHES!

3	Cindy Brown	16	Thomas Omobono
5	Stephanie Omobono	17	Jan Blandino
7	Barbara Moran	17	Erika Downing
7	Paul Raymond	26	Libby Samarjian
9	Logan Kelly	28	Alysa (Davis) Johnson
12	Laura Nowell	30	Rev. Andrew Harris
15	Stephen Jacobs	30	Deb Raymond



WORSHIP PARTICIPATION SCHEUDLE

LENT March 1 Communion

Communion Prep: Chris Stahlinski
 Marge Zamanian
 Pastor: Rev. Andrew Harris
 Organist: Aline Beck
 Lay Leader: Sarah Clark
 Head Usher: Dave McNeil
 Usher: Sally Willard
 Greeter:
 Flowers: Bobbie Killilea
 Collector; Dick Butler
 Nursery: Kritika Agarwala
 Sunday School: Deb Raymond
 Donna Ferro
 Coffee Host: Deb Glancy
 Baker/Snack: Deb Glancy

LENT March 8 Worship-Love Offering

Pastor: Rev. Andrew Harris
 Organist: Aline Beck
 Lay Leader;: Sally Willard
 Head Usher: Chris Stahlinski
 Usher;
 Greeter:
 Flowers: Sue Wisniewski
 Collector: Marcia Rich
 Nursery: Kritika Agarwala
 Sunday School: Deb Raymond
 Donna Ferro
 Coffee Hour:
 Baker/Snack: Deana Tredeau

LENT March 15 Worship

Pastor: Rev. Andrew Harris
 Organist: Aline Beck
 Lay Leader: Chris Stahlinski
 Head Usher:
 Usher:
 Greeter:
 Flowers: Chris Stahlinski
 Collector: Lucy Damiani
 Nursery; Kritika Agarwala
 Sunday School: Deb Raymond
 Donna Ferro
 Coffee Host:
 Baker/Snack:

LENT March 22 Worship

Pastor: Rev. Andrew Harris
 Organist: Aline Beck
 Lay Leader:
 Head Usher:
 Usher:
 Greeter: Chris Stahlinski
 Flowers: Marcia Rich
 Collector: Deb Raymond
 Nursery; Kritika Agarwala
 Sunday School: Deb Raymond
 Donna Ferro
 Coffee Host:
 Baker/Snack:

PALM SUNDAY March 28 Worship

Pastor: Rev. Andrew Harris
 Organist: Aline Beck
 Lay Leader: Sarah Clark
 Head Usher:
 Usher:
 Greeter: Marcia Rich
 Flowers: PALMS
 Collector: Joan Zink
 Nursery; Kritika Agarwala
 Sunday School: Deb Raymond
 Donna Ferro
 Coffee Host: Chris Stahlinski
 Baker/Snack: Chris Stahlinski

WORSHIP VOLUNTEERS NEEDED!

If you can volunteer to be *Lay Leader, Head Usher, Usher, Greeter, Nursery help, Coffee Host or Bakers/Snack.*

Here is the link:

<https://signup.com/client/invitation2/secure/567269842043/false?popup=true#/invitation>

March 2026

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
1 LENT 10:30a Communion 2-4 Mike Fay	2 6:30p AA 7p Trustees	3 5p Mike Fay	4 2p Bible Study 5p Mike Fay 7p Choir	5 1p C4C 6:30p Scouts	6	7 11:30-5:30p Kudia Rental
8 LENT 10:30a Worship Love Offering 2-4p Mike Fay	9 6:30p AA	10 5p Mike Fay	11 2p Bible Study 7p Choir	12 1p C4C 6:30p Scouts 7p Deacons	13	14 Open 2:30 Rental 4-7p Noha Rental
15 LENT 10:30a Worship 2-3pm POOL PARTY 2-4p Mike Fay	16 6:30p AA	17  5p Mike Fay 7p PC Meeting	18 2p Bible Study 7p Choir	19 1p C4C 6:30p Scouts 8p Pub Theology	20	21 TBD Davina Baby Shower
22 LENT 10:30a Worship Noon-3pm Birthday Party Rental TBD Mike Fay	23 6:30p AA	24 5p Mike Fay	25 2p Bible Study 7p Choir	26 1p C4C 6:30p Scouts	27 5pm Dan Shea Drum	28 Possible Rental
29 PALM SUNDAY 10:30a Worship  Noon Procession from St. Mark's Church To UCC	30 6:30p AA	31 5p Mike Fay				

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

TO:



MARCH 2026 HILLTOP HERALD

EASTER PLANT ORDER FORM

Given by: _____

In Memory /Celebration / Honor of: _____

No. of plants: **(\$12.00 each)** _____

I wish to keep my plant: _____

I wish to donate my plant: _____

I will deliver a plant: _____

I would like a plant delivered
to a UCC member/friend _____
(Name of Person)



Please return your payment to the church office by March 22nd.

Payment made out to UCC and Easter Plant on the memo line.

EASTER PLANT ORDER FORM

Given by: _____

In Memory /Celebration / Honor of: _____

No. of plants: **(\$12.00 each)** _____

I wish to keep my plant: _____

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