# Church Chatter March 2026

A publication of Ledyard Congregational Church, United Church of Christ

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## A Message From Pastor Pat

Reaching Consensus

Put 10 Congregationalists in a room and solicit opinions on any given subject. You are likely to get 13 opinions. It's one thing Congregationalists across the years have embraced; the right to think individually. Getting an entire congregation to agree on anything is a feat in and of itself. Rather than requiring unanimity, churches often go for consensus.

Consensus is a misunderstood concept. Let's start with what it doesn't mean. Consensus does NOT mean everyone is forced to agree (whether they actually do or not). Consensus does NOT mean a simple majority vote. Consensus is NOT to force conformity or suppress minority opinions or ensure that a decision is objectively "correct." Consensus is NOT a passive acceptance of something with which you disagree.

Consensus IS about trying to build a solution, not a competition to create winners and losers. Consensus IS a process of active listening and effort to understand one another, even in disagreement. Consensus IS a process that can make a community stronger.

There are five levels to consensus. First, total agreement with what is being proposed. Second, I'm willing to defer to the wisdom of the group. Third, it's not perfect, but I can live with this. Fourth, I do not

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agree and must object. Fifth, I do not agree and must obstruct.

When a group is largely committed to the same goal, it can be hard for those who do not agree. Part of what is asked of them is that, while they are free to disagree, they are also asked not to undermine the direction of the group. In consensus, we can agree to disagree, but covenant together to support the larger goal of the organization.

We don't always get our way. Resistance to change regarding new directions or leadership is common. Someone once commented that the epitaph of the church will be, "But we've always done it this way."

The church exists in an ever-changing landscape. Being the church is at once very simple and very complicated. Jesus' command to love the Lord with all your heart, soul, mind and strength and your neighbor as yourself seems like it should be easy enough to pull off. It is, however, harder than we expect it to be and we often trip over our own feet as we try.

We keep trying anyways. Being followers of Jesus means striving to love one another and being radically inclusive to all people. This is not just to be politically correct. It is a demand of the gospel that we welcome marginalized populations, those society has judged as less than. It is a justice issue that remains front and center in the life of the church in its varied expressions.

I believe we have the capacity to work together around shared goals while respecting our differences. Let's try for the sake of the church's witness and mission and for the sake of those who are often left behind.

Faithfully, Pastor Pat

*Ledyard Congregational Church wishes the following people happy anniversaries and birthdays and a blessed year ahead!*

## March Anniversaries

| | |
|---|---|
| Ken & Carrie Burger | 3/10 |
| Rob & Sue Burns | 3/10 |
| Ken & Joyce Garstka | 3/10 |
| Ed Lamb & Marlaine Bernier | 3/20 |
| Steve & Kim Williams | 3/22 |

***God places us in the world as workers—agents of transfiguration. We work with God as the injustice is transfigured into justice, so there will be more compassion and caring, that there may be more laughter and joy, that there may be more togetherness in God's world.***
**Desmond Tutu**

## March Birthdays

| | |
|---|---|
| Michelle Damm | 3/3 |
| Jack Allyn | 3/4 |
| Sophie Allyn | 3/4 |
| Vicki DiFilippo | 3/4 |
| Dot Fossett | 3/7 |
| Kadin McCarthy | 3/9 |
| Donna Clark | 3/9 |
| Jeanne Allyn | 3/10 |
| Alicia Rohrer | 3/12 |
| Karen Rhoades | 3/14 |
| Rich Denton | 3/18 |
| Luca DiFilippo | 3/18 |
| Oakley Dunn | 3/19 |
| Kathie Saums | 3/19 |
| Carrie Burger | 3/22 |
| Holly Rust | 3/22 |
| Steve Burger | 3/24 |
| Samantha Barnes | 3/25 |
| Brenda Foltz | 3/26 |
| Ed Lamb II | 3/27 |
| Bill Saums | 3/27 |

## From the Pastor's Desk

**Office Hours**
Wednesdays & Thursday
9:00a.m. — 12:00 p.m.

Other times are available by appointment, please don't hesitate to ask!

Email: pliberty57@gmail.com
Cell: (401) 499-7752

*Please Keep the Following People and Families in Your Prayers*

*Thank you for keeping these people in your prayers this month. It is our intent to continue to review and update the list as the information becomes available. That is where we need your help. If you know of someone who would like to be on the list, or be removed, please contact the church office (860) 464-9926 or Jeanne Allyn (860) 464-9316. Please include the name of the person to be added/ deleted as well as your contact information. Thank you!*

- Doug C.
- Bill Dawson
- Fred
- Family of Dave Foltz
- Joan Jirsa
- Cindy M.
- Johanna Nolan
- Family of Jim Sorensen
- Roy Warren
- Audrey Walker
- Marge Wilson

## Deacons' Fund

Communion Sundays provide an opportunity to contribute to the Deacons' Fund. This fund is set aside for members of the congregation who have a financial emergency. It is also used for people in the local community experiencing an emergency. Envelopes for this special collection can be found in the pews on the first Sunday of the month.

## March Scripture Readings

### Sunday March 1
**Second Sunday in Lent**

Genesis 12:1-4a • Psalm 121 • Romans 4:1-5, 13-17 • John 3:1-17 or Matthew 17:1-9

### Sunday March 8
**Third Sunday in Lent**

Exodus 17:1-7 • Psalm 95 • Romans 5:1-11 • John 4:5-42

### Sunday March 15
**Fourth Sunday in Lent**

1 Samuel 16:1-13 • Psalm 23 • Ephesians 5:8-14 • John 9:1-41

### Sunday March 22
**Fifth Sunday in Lent**

Ezekiel 37:1-14 • Psalm 130 • Romans 8:6-11 • John 11:1-45

### Sunday March 29
**Sixth Sunday in Lent— Palm Sunday**

Isaiah 50:4-9a Psalm 31:9-16 Philippians 2:5-11 Matthew 26:14-27:66 or Matthew 27:11-54

## PROSTATE CANCER Support Group

The Prostate Cancer Support Group is now meeting at John and Donna Clark's home.

We meet on the third Tuesday of the month from 7:00-8:30pm.

All men are welcome to join us. Spouses are welcome as well!

For meeting location and questions please contact John Clark at 860 464 7651. Thank you.

*Love & blessings for our members & their families who serve our country.*

Troy Hedman
Tye Frazer
Kyle Murphy
Oliver Murphy

## Spring Forward

Don't forget to set your clocks ahead one hour on Sunday, March 8th!

*A message from*

# MISSIONS

### Linda Davis Food Pantry Donations

For **MARCH** the food pantry is asking for **men's & women's shaving cream and lotion**. When you grocery shop, please add a few items for the pantry to your cart. Then bring in your items on Sundays and place them under the table in the front of the sanctuary. You can also drop off items in the tote under the walkway to the church offices or in the box inside the Atrium.

On the first Sunday of each month, we will dedicate all the donations from the previous month as part of our morning offerings and then start collecting a new food item.

### Valentine's Workshop

Thank you to everyone who helped make Valentines at our Valentine making workshop on February 8th. We mailed over 34 valentines to some of our older members and friends who we don't see very often.

### March Community Supper Thursday March 19th 5:30 p.m. in Fellowship Hall

Our March theme is **Celebrating the Potato.** Not to worry, there will be plenty of different foods to

choose from! Come and see what our amazing cooks come up with.

This **FREE** supper is open to all! Come and sit for a while. Enjoy a hot meal, conversation, and community! There is a sign-up sheet for both food items and helpers on the table in Fellowship Hall. Please consider adding your name wherever you can. Then come!

### February Red Cross Blood Drive

Thank you to all our donors and volunteers at our February Blood Drive. Our next drive is scheduled for **WEDNESDAY MAY 13TH** from 11:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. in Fellowship Hall. Volunteers as well as snacks will be needed. More information will be available in the weekly E-Blasts and April & May Chatters. We continue to be committed to holding Blood Drives as an ongoing mission of our church and are grateful for the support we receive from our community and church members and friends.

GIVE BLOOD SAVE LIFE

### One Great Hour of Sharing Special UCC Missions Offering to be Collected March 1st-15th

**The theme for this year's offering is Our Love Offering to the World**

"Our collective giving to **One Great Hour of Sharing** (OGHS) shows up in tangible, practical acts of love, compassion, and care, helping to rebuild lives both physically and spiritually.

- It shows up in places like Thailand to educate and empower young girls.
- In Kenya for those who need access to clean water.
- In shelters all over the world for those displaced by natural disasters.
- In Honduras through agricultural training and support so families and entire communities can not only survive but thrive.
- In places like Ohio, rebuilding tornado-ravaged communities.

**One Great hour of Sharing**, in collaboration with our local and international partners, shows up all over the world delivering your love offering in practical and life changing ways rebuilding individual lives and entire communities with God's love.

We give generously because we have been blessed.

We give cheerfully because we care.

It's our love offering to the world."

*Excerpts from OGHS promotional materials*.

### Easter Baskets for Safe Futures

Once again, we will be providing Easter Baskets for some of the children living in Safe futures housing. We have committed to providing 30 baskets and this is the breakdown:

- 5 boys newborn to 2yrs
- 6 girls newborns to 2yrs
- 5 boys 3-5yrs
- 4 girls 3-5yrs
- 5 boys 6-10yrs
- 5 girls 6-10yrs

We will be looking for donations of any small items a child might like. Suggestions include plastic eggs, pacifiers, small baby toys, socks, maybe soft baby blankets for the newborn to 2 year olds. Card games, hair accessories, crayons, markers, stickers, bubbles and any other items you can think of that would fit into the baskets. **WE DO NOT NEED ANY GRASS!** The Missions committee will purchase those the baskets.

We are collecting items through Sunday, March 29th, Palm Sunday Please bring your donation to church on Sunday and place them in the basket in the atrium or drop off items in the tote under the walkway to the church offices.

### SAVE THE DATE
### Epic Day of Service
### Saturday, May 16th

The Ledyard Rotary is cohosting this event, along with Rotary clubs from surrounding towns for the 4th year. Each year of this effort, the Rotary clubs have grown the event, the number of meals packed, the number of volunteers and community involvement, and therefore also the amount of money needed to fund the food and packaging supplies. The effort is done through a New England chapter out of Massachusetts of The Outreach Project.

This year, they are continuing the trend and will pack 40,000 meals. The completed meals are then donated to United Way's Gemma Moran Food Center for distribution to pantries and support programs in all of New London County, including the Linda Davis Pantry in Ledyard.

The event will take place on the morning of Saturday, May 16, 2026, at United Methodist Church in Gales Ferry, who is also one of the event sponsors. We, Ledyard Congregational Church has also stepped up as a sponsor of the event. What's needed now are volunteers.

Packing meals is a hands-on opportunity to make a tangible impact. The event entails a 1 or many hour commitment for almost any age, including as young as 4 years old and including people who need to sit during their shift. There will be 2 shifts for food packing. 8 am – 9:30 am and 9:30 – 11 am. Anita Merando along with Lisa Curtis are going to encourage Sunday

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school families to participate, but we are reaching out for more members of our congregation to participate as well. Please contact Meredith if you would like to be involved.

Your Mission's committee continues to be amazed and grateful for the ongoing support from our church family in all our outreach endeavors.

We continue to meet and define our mission and brainstorm new ideas. We welcome any ideas/suggestions. You can contact Meredith Schuft at chrisandmeri@gmavt.net (802) 363-3808 and/or Jill Thorne at gbthorne@sbcglobal.net (860) 912-0924.

## Key-Code and/or FOB Holders

If you have a key-code and/or FOB, you are expected to let yourself into the building. Durning office hours, use the ring camera just to let Bridney know you are here, then let yourself in.

## All Visitors

Please ring the door chime and our admin will respond as quickly as possible. Please be patient. Thank you

## LCC's Social Justice Team Invites You to the Constructive Dialog Workshop

**Date:** Saturday March 14, 2026 (Janet's birthday)
**Time:** 9:00 a.m.-1:30 p.m., light lunch included
**Presented by:** John Holdridge, from Waynflete High School, Portland, Maine

Are you wondering why a Constructive Dialog workshop?

In her loving and inclusive way, through the Janet Barnett Legacy Project grant, as well as Ledyard Congregational Church, Janet is providing this opportunity for all of us to come together to have those conversations that aren't always easy.

Facilitated by John Holdridge, we will learn about and practice ways of listening and responding that will ensure our conversations are constructive, even when we don't necessarily reach agreement. Using the Story Exchange Model and other processes, we will both encourage and build empathy. Learning about the brain science that promotes constructive conversations will provide a better understanding of how we hear and respond to one another.

What an appropriate follow-up to our Peace and Reconciliation workshops, as well as a fitting way to celebrate Janet's birthday, which happens to be on the date of this workshop. As was Janet's way, there is a spot for all of us. We hope to see you on March 14th.

Pre-registration is requested. A sign-up sheet is outside Pastor Pat's office and will be available Sundays during coffee hour in Fellowship Hall.

*John Holdridge is a professional educator and director of Third Thought Initiatives for Civic Engagement*

## Name Tags

We are all encouraged to wear name tags on Sundays. If you need a name tag or have misplaced yours and would like a new one, please contact Beth Smith. (fraugurusan@yahoo.com). Thank you!

## Worship Readers

If you would like to be added to the list of volunteers to be a worship reader please contact Beth Smith (fraugurusan@yahoo.com).

## Caps & Lids Updates for Our Rainbow Bench

Thank you to everyone who participated in our **Sorting Party** on Saturday, February 14th.

On Sunday , February 15th we held our second weigh-in with the help of our Sunday school children. After recording the weight of all the bags that had not been previously recorded, which included 15 bags, our total came to 217 lbs., which surpassed our initial goal of 200 lbs. Ellen Seeman then asked what we thought about trying for 250 lbs. to upgrade from a 6ft. bench to an 8 ft. and the congregation overwhelmingly agreed, especially when Ellen told us that Leslie Stasko had commented that we would be able to invite one more person to sit with us.

So, keep those caps and lids coming! Not sure if a cap or lid is acceptable? Check out the large chart on the table in Fellowship Hall and be sure to take a flyer with you to refer to at home. PLEASE MAKE SURE ALL CAPS AND LIDS ARE **CLEAN! ALSO, SOLO LIDS ARE NOT ACCEPTABLE.**

Big thanks you goes to Pat B has been taking home numerous bags to short and clean and to Ellen Seeman who brought us the idea for this project! The involvement from our church members, community members and lots of our family members has been truly rewarding!

Thank you from Missions and Faith Formation

## Fellowship Hall Air Conditioning Project

With all this cold weather, who's been dreaming of the summer months? Hot, humid weather sounds good right now, doesn't it?

Good news! The congregation voted at the Annual Meeting to install permanent air conditioning units in Fellowship Hall to support All Access services in the summer, as well as Pancake Breakfasts, and other Church and community activities. In addition, air conditioning will enable Ledyard Congregational Church to offer space to the American Red Cross for summer blood drives.

The Trustees have secured a proposal to install two ductless mini split systems in Fellowship Hall for approximately $25,000. These units are quieter and more efficient than window units. Plus, we already have a $10,000 donation from an anonymous and generous person! Donation forms are available in Fellowship Hall.

- Completed forms along with your check made out to Ledyard Congregation Church, Attention: Assistant Treasurer can be left in the Treasurer's mail slot.

or, they can be sent to:

- Ledyard Congregational Church (Fellowship Hall Air Conditioning)
  722 Colonel Ledyard Hwy.
  Ledyard, CT 06339

You can also make an online donation in Breeze.

- On the dashboard you will find a option labeled **Online Giving.** Under that click on **Give a Gift**. Enter the amount you would like to give and then click on the down arrow on **Give to General Fund** and click on **Give to Fellowship Hall AC Fund Raiser**. Click on **Continue** and complete the required information.

Thank you from the Trustees!

# Ledyard Congregational Church Social Justice Team

Bishop Desmond Tutu once said, "If you are neutral in situations of injustice, you have chosen the side of the oppressor. If an elephant has its foot on the tail of a mouse and you say that you are neutral, the mouse will not appreciate your neutrality." It is not enough for us to say, "I'm not sexist" or "I'm not homophobic" or "I'm not racist" or I'm not any other descriptor for oppressing a marginalized group. If we do not take a stand with our words and our actions to oppose systems, people, and policies that are doing harm, we are not neutral; we are not absolved; we are not appreciated; we are part of the problem. What does non-neutrality look like? It is being anti-racist, being an LGBTQ ally, advocating for the poor, and voting for policies and people that will ease inequality, create equity, and pursue justice in the areas of age, gender, race, national origin, faith background, marital status and family structure, mental and physical ability, economic and social status, and educational background. At home, at school, at work, at church, help the mouse!

Upcoming Events:

- **Constructive Dialog Workshop:** Saturday, March 14th (9 am – 1:30 pm) in the Fellowship Hall. Hosted by John Holdridge, this is an opportunity for our church family to hone our skills in empathy and communication. More information can be found in the article on page 6.
- **Dialog Sermon with Elanah Sherman** on Spirituality, Justice, and Disability: Sunday, March 15th.
- **Pop-In Prayer:** Thursday, March 19th at 5 pm in the Lester Room.
- **Race Workshop:** Saturday, April 25th from 1-5 pm in the Fellowship Hall.

## LCC Social Justice Team Next Meeting, March 19th @ 4:00-5:00 p.m.

The LCC Social Justice Team meets the 3rd Thursday of every month from 4:00 -5:00 p.m. in the Holdridge Library followed by the Pop-In Prayer in the Lester room and a Community Supper in Fellowship Hall.

**Pop-In Prayer:** Thursday, March 19th from 5:00-5:30 pm in the Lester Room. The theme for March is Prayers and Reflections on the Constructive Dialog workshop.

Image from: https://www.kirklees.gov.uk/beta/health-and-wellbeing-strategy/shared-outcomes-and-key-priorities.aspx

# Women's FELLOWSHIP

**Our Tuesday, February 10th Meeting**

Women's Fellowship held a traditional **English Tea** on February 10 in Social Hall, catered by Joanna Thomas of Twisted Sugar Cake Design. Tables were set with antique linens, teacups and teapots, courtesy of Marlaine Bernier, Beth Smith and Jill Thorne. Joanna's delicious tea sandwiches and pastries were enjoyed by 15 attendees. We all learned about brewing authentic English tea. A good time was had by all!!

**March Meeting**
**Tuesday, March 10th**
**1-2:30 p.m.**

Women's Fellowship will be gathering on Tuesday, March 10th to assemble **Spring Cheer Baskets** for people we believe would enjoy them and appreciate being remembered. All materials will be provided. We will just need the baskets to be put together and be ready to be delivered. If you are able to deliver one or two, you can take the baskets with you. We have now done this for the last few years and it has been heartwarming to see how much the baskets are appreciated.

**Tuesday, April 14th**
**7:00-8:30 p.m.**
**Social Hall**

Elahna Sherman with the Avalonia Land Conservancy will be our guest speaker. She is currently the Board Secretary, Advisory Council Chair, and Ad-hoc Education and Outreach Committee Chair. "She is working with Avalonia on developing a disability access agenda that is seamlessly integrated into all programs and activities. A resident of Norwich, she has an equally strong interest in seeing Avalonia establish a greater presence in distressed communities."

**Avalonia's Mission** "We preserve natural habitats in southeastern Connecticut by acquiring and protecting lands and communicating the value of these irreplaceable resources."

Avalonia Land Conservancy, currently has 7 preserves in Ledyard among its holdings in Southeastern CT. This meeting is open to anyone who would like to join us. Come and find out more about these gems right here in our back yards!

**Tuesday, April 28th**
**Luncheon Out**
**11:30 a.m.**

On Tuesday, 14th we are planning for a luncheon out. Details are still being worked out so look for more details in the April Chatter and in the weekly Eblasts.

**Tuesday May 12th Meeting**
**6:00-7:30 p.m. Note Time Change!**
**Social Hall**

Our Tuesday meeting is our year-end meeting where we gather earlier for a light supper of salads and desserts! This is also a time when we spend some time brainstorming possible programs and activities for the upcoming year. We can call it our "chat and plan" meeting!

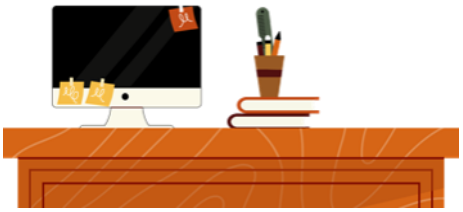
**Save the Date for our May Bake Sale Saturday, May 16th.**

We are making plans to hold a bake sale during the Ledyard Garden's Annual Plant Sale on **Saturday, May 16th**. We have been able to resume this activity after a few years off due to Covid and they have proven very successful both with our customers and in profits of over $1,000! Watch for more details to follow.

The Program Committee for 2025-26 is Beth Smith, Meredith Schuft, and Jill Thorne. Please contact any one of us if you have a program idea you'd like to suggest. Watch for more updates in the monthly Chatter, weekly E-blast and emails!

Women's Fellowship is open to anyone who would like to join us for any of our activities. You do not need to be a member or even a regular attendee of LCC. Feel free to bring a friend! **All are Welcome!**

# From the Historian's Desk



At the February meeting it was agreed to hire Samuel Seabury, a young man of the Groton community who had recently graduated from Harvard and had not yet settled into a job. Samuel was to preach ten weeks for twenty shillings a week at three different homes. It appears that they deliberately scattered those ten services in fairness to those who would have to travel a distance. At least one might be nearby! Captain William Morgan seems to have lived near the intersection of Gallup Hill and Spicer Hill Roads, near the current high school. William Morgan, Jr., lived at what is now referred to as the Avery Homestead, near the corner of Avery Hill Road and Route 214. Ralph Stoddard, Sr., probably lived in what we now call Gales Ferry somewhere near the river on some of the grant given to his grandfather.

There were no more society meetings until early May, but we can infer that young Mr. Seabury's Sunday services began in mid-February and continued through the month of April. What were services like? Did Samuel "preach all day" as the New London settled minister Mr. Adams was doing each Sunday? We don't know if they brought their own benches, sat on the floor, or had some other arrangement. Even wealthy homeowners did not usually have such an array of chairs as to accommodate an entire congregation. Parishioners were generally expected to stand for the prayers. According to Alice Morse Earle, who wrote an entire book on "The Sabbath in Puritan New England," "Dr. Lord of Norwich always made a prayer which was one hour long," and others prayed at greater length.

Typically for churches at the time there would be a morning service, followed by a meal and an afternoon service, although we don't know just how they were operating at this time. Were the host families expected to provide a meal, did others share in bringing food, or did each family bring along their own cold lunch? I suspect that our long heritage of sharing food began with this early church, as they had learned from their mother church in Groton and grandmother church in New London.

The Sunday gatherings were more than just a religious occasion. The service was an opportunity for couples wishing to marry to "publish" their intensions through a public announcement. Certainly, in addition to the messages and prayers, people learned of happenings locally and in the region and must have been talking over the midday meal about the prospects for a settled minister, construction of a meetinghouse and where to locate it. While the society was made up only of men, the women were an important part of the church and would have been part of the general discussion.

**Getting to Know our Church Ancestors**

Please Save the Date – Sunday afternoon, **March 29**, when we will gather to learn about some of our members from 1725 and through the years and share a pot luck meal. There is still time to pick an "ancestor" to research and present, but please let me know soon if you'd like to do so.

Carol Ganz, Church Historian

## Monday Morning Bible Study

Each week we meet on Monday morning from 10:30-11:30 a.m. in the Holdridge library and discuss the scripture for the upcoming Sunday in a relaxed and fun setting.

All are welcome!

## LCC Search Committee

**Save The Date**

**Sunday March 8th**

The Search Committee is pleased to announce that Reverend Leslie Jackson will lead us in worship, followed by a Church meeting, on Sunday, March 8th. Reverend Jackson will facilitate a conversation about the Search and Call process and answer your questions. It is because of your participation in the Church Survey, and engagement with the three essential questions at our Small Group meetings, that we will have initial information to share with you about our church profile. Your continued participation is essential to the Search and Call Committee's success. Thank you for taking time to share your vision for who we are, who our neighbors are, and who God is calling us to be. Feel free to reach out to members of the Committee. We always look forward to hearing from you.

Your Search Committee: Ken Burger, DeeDee O'Donnell, Sarah Hansen, Vicky DiFilippo, Beth Smith, Brian Johnson, Bonnie Denton, Anita Merando.

## Did you Know?

We have new hearing assistance devices to assist the hearing-impaired during worship services. See the Tech Team before worship to try one!

*Please let the church office know if someone is ill, hospitalized or in need of a visit or phone call! 806-464-9926.*

*Thank you!*

## LCC Church Calendar

Our church calendar is on our website: ledyardcongregational.org and also on Breeze! The calendar is updated frequently so be sure to check it out often. All board and Committee chairs make sure that you update all your upcoming meetings and events!

UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)
IN THE UNITED STATES AND CANADA

Global Ministries
*Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and United Church of Christ*

***A Joint Statement on the Venezuelan Takeover by the United States***
*January 4, 2026*

The United States attack on Venezuela continues a troubling pattern of unlawful U.S. military activity, including the December 25, 2025, airstrikes in Nigeria. We condemn all forms of government aggression—whether directed at one's own people or imposed upon another country. When fundamental rights are threatened, nonviolent, lawful, and consensus-based solutions must take precedence.

The military operation that resulted in the removal of Venezuela's de facto president, Nicolás Maduro, and his wife on January 3, 2026, from Venezuela stands in direct contradiction to the principles of international law enshrined in the United Nations Charter. Article 2(4) clearly states that nations must refrain from the use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any state. The additional decisions by the U.S. government to "run Venezuela" supports a colonial narrative and U.S. occupation. We affirm the right of countries and communities to shape their own futures without coercion or military intervention.

As members of the World Council of Churches, we affirm and support the WCC's statement condemning the actions of the United States. We join the global ecumenical community in calling for restraint, respect for sovereignty, and renewed commitment to peaceful, multilateral engagement. We recall Jesus' teaching in Matthew 5:9: *"Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God."* His teachings compel us to work tirelessly for peace, justice, and reconciliation.

We offer our prayers for all communities impacted by the recent unilateral and unlawful decisions of the United States to attack sovereign nations. As churches committed to the gospel of peace, we grieve the loss, fear, and instability these actions have caused globally. These actions do not create the conditions for a safer or more peaceful world.

United Church of Christ
1300 E. 9th Street, Suite 1100
Cleveland, OH 44114-1500
216-736-3202

Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)
P.O. Box 1986
Indianapolis, IN 46206-1986
317-713-2551

**Our Commitment to Justice**

- **We Call for Truth,** rejecting simplistic narratives provided by those who benefit from war and extraction of natural resources.
- **We Demand Sovereignty,** standing in solidarity with the people of Venezuela and Nigeria in their right to govern their countries and manage their own resources without foreign interference or "undercover" attempts at regime changes.
- **We Seek Discernment**, praying for the Holy Spirit to grant the church the wisdom and courage to see and refute systemic evils and the adversity of Empires.
- **We Urge Action**, calling on members to raise awareness and increase their advocacy in response to the actions of the US government.
- **We Invite Prayer**, calling on churches, partners, and ecumenical companions to join in praying with the people of Venezuela, Nigeria, and all communities affected by violence and instability.

May our collective witness and vision for peace inspire leaders to choose diplomacy over domination, cooperation over coercion, and peace over war.

Moving toward wholeness together,

Rev. Dr. Karen Georgia A. Thompson
General Minister and President/CEO
United Church of Christ

Rev. Teresa Hord Owens
General Minister and President
Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)

Rev. Shari Prestemon
Associate General Minister
United Church of Christ
Co-Executive, Global Ministries

Rev. Dr. LaMarco Cable, DMin
President and CEO
Disciples Overseas Ministries
Co-Executive, Global Ministries

United Church of Christ
1300 E. 9th Street, Suite 1100
Cleveland, OH 44114-1500
216-736-3202

Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)
P.O. Box 1986
Indianapolis, IN 46206-1986
317-713-2551

# Faith Formation and Sunday School

Many People, Many Faiths

This winter, our two older Sunday School classes (ages 8–11 and ages 12 and over) combined for a special unit focused on learning about religions other than Christianity.

Last Fall, we began our Sunday School year by examining our own values and religion. We talked about what it means that we are Christian, Protestant, and Congregational UCC. We reflected on how we gather in a church, use the Bible as our sacred text, worship God and Jesus, and celebrate major holidays such as Christmas and Easter. We discussed how we identify ourselves, what we honor, how we worship, and the traditions that shape our faith.

After taking a thoughtful look at who we are, we felt it was important to recognize those same components in other religions. Studying different faiths helps us better understand both our similarities and our differences. It encourages respect, builds connection, and gives us language and understanding for beliefs and practices we may hear about and see in our community and beyond. It also helps us gain an understanding of our own traditions and beliefs.

Our first guests were Saheeka and Ibrahim Hasson, the daughter-in-law and grandson of Ray and Judy. Saheeka and Ibrahim identify as Muslim and practice Islam, and they have participated in many events and celebrations here at LCC.

The class learned that Muslims worship in a mosque with leadership from an Imam and use the Qur'an as their sacred text. They observe Ramadan and celebrate Eid. We heard about Muhammad and the prophets, and about guiding principles in Islam that are very similar to the Ten Commandments. The children were especially impressed to learn that Ibrahim has memorized more than 600 pages of the Qur'an and recites them during Ramadan, and they learned why this practice is meaningful. They also learned about praying five times a day—how it is done and why it is important—and what wearing a hijab means to Saheeka personally.

We discussed how Islam, like Christianity, emphasizes treating one another well, practicing gratitude, and recognizing God's love. When asked what she loves most about being Muslim, Saheeka shared that no matter what her day brings, her regular prayer times bring her back to God. Prayer grounds and humbles her and reminds her of God's unconditional love. Ibrahim reflected that no matter what choices you make in life, you can always return to God and be forgiven, accepted, and loved. He also encouraged the students by reminding them that anyone can memorize something at great length if they put their minds to it. Ibrahim now serves as the Imam at The Islamic Center of Preston. They welcome visitors to the mosque and invited us to join them anytime.

In the coming weeks, we look forward to welcoming additional guests who will teach us about Buddhism (yay, Bonnie Denton!), Judaism, Sikhism, and Hinduism. Be sure to check out our comparison chart posted on the Social Hall wall to see what we're learning!

Through this unit, our hope is not only to deepen our understanding of our own faith, but also to grow in respect, curiosity, and love for our neighbors.

The Board of Faith Formation meets the second Wednesday of each month in the Holdridge Library. Our next meeting is **Wednesday, March 11**, 11:00 a.m. for Adult Faith Formation, and 12:00 p.m. for Sunday School Faith Formation.

All our welcome to join us!

## Calling all Infants and Toddlers

We'd like to remind everyone that there is childcare available every Sunday in the crib room. Kristie provides a happy and safe environment for the children so that parents can participate in the morning worship in the sanctuary, so feel free to bring your children to the crib room before church. This childcare is for children under four years of age.

Please direct any questions to Anita (amerando@gmail.com) or anyone on the Board of Faith Formation.

A Future with Hope
2026 CLIMATE HOPE ART CONTEST

Below is the information from Sue Mueller, Lead Climate Hope Organizer, United Church of Christ.

*For the fourth straight year, we are conducting a Climate Hope Art Contest. The theme this year is "A Future with Hope." Children and youth are invited to draw, paint, or color works of art that bring this theme to life.*

*Our theme comes from Jeremiah 29:11 which says, "For surely I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord, plans for your welfare and not for harm, to give you a future with hope."*

***We'll accept art submissions from through March 20th.***

*An online award ceremony for finalists will be held in April. In the ceremony, we will have winners for different age groups and an overall winner who will receive an all-expense paid trip to visit Washington, DC with a parent or guardian. The winner will advocate with the offices of their congress members, tour the Capitol, and learn how they can bring their faith values to life in the halls of power. The winning art will additionally serve as the 2026 artwork for the advocacy postcards of **Climate Hope Affiliates**, a joint program of the United Church of Christ and Creation Justice Ministries that involves ecumenical chapters throughout the country.*

Please ask your Sunday School teacher for more information.

### Welcome New Members!

**Please welcome all our new members who were received on Sunday, February 1, 2026. Kathy & Marty Gomez, Karen Stockton, Sam Holdridge, Katie & Justin Austin, Leslie Stasko & Aric Wellman**

## FREE! Pancake Breakfast

Join us the first Saturday of each month in Fellowship Hall from 7:30-10:00 a.m. Enjoy a delicious breakfast of fresh hot coffee, orange juice, pancakes, sausage, scrambled eggs, and chip beef!
Come and sit for a while.
Enjoy conversation and fellowship!

Each month, all profits from the free-will donations will go to support the featured organization.

**Saturday, March 7th**
Our sponsoring organization will be the **Ledyard High School Misic Boosters**. This is always a fun and lively breakfast that you won't want to miss!.

**Saturday, April 4th**
All donations will go to help fund the **Ledyard Camp Scholarship program**.

**Saturday, May 2nd**
All donations will go to help fund the **Ledyard Congregational Church music program**.

Thank you for your continuing support for all the organizations!

**ALL ARE WELCOME. JOINS US!**

## Adult Faith Formation Team

**Are you wondering what God is calling you to do in your life?**

As a follow-up to the work of the Adult Faith Formation Committee which assembled after the last Peace and Reconciliation Workshop, the Board of Faith Formation has assembled an Adult Faith Formation Team. This team is open to all who are interested in joining us as we look for opportunities to deepen our personal and congregant faith. We meet on the second Wednesday of each month at 11:00 AM in the Holdridge Library. Can't attend a meeting? Reach out to Pastor Pat or Anita Merando with your ideas for meaningful Faith Formation Study.

**What has Faith Formation at LCC looked like in recent months?**

We have gathered in a variety of studies, including Bible, Book, Advent, Lenten, and Bible 101. We celebrated Pride Sunday, and held a Dialog Sermon with Jessica Patterson -Kibbe from Safe Futures. Small Group meetings have begun. Monthly Pop-In Prayer continues before Community Supper.

**What have we planned for the future?**

We realize that you may not be free to attend a study group in person. Pastor Pat will provide a monthly devotional guide to be sent out through the e-blast. We invite each of you to engage with this devotional with prayer and reflection.

Other ideas we are exploring are the importance of mindfulness and meditation as spiritual practice, and becoming familiar with other religions.

**Additionally, please plan to attend the following:**

- Constructive Dialogue Workshop, March 14th, 9:00 a.m.-1:30 p.m. (including lunch)
- Dialog Sermon with Elanah Sherman on Spirituality, Justice and Disability on March 15th
- Pop-In Prayer on March 19th, 5:00 p.m. in the Lester Room
- Racial Justice Workshop, April 25th, 1:00-5:00 p.m.

## New London Homeless Hospitality Center

On Sunday, February 8th, Annah Perch and James Thompson joined Pastor Pat for a dialog sermon about the work of the New London Homeless Hospitality Center (NLHHC). For many years LCC, through the Board of Missions, has supported the Center on many levels. From delivering pizza monthly for years, holding winter clothing drives, creating welcome home baskets for those moving into their own apartment, to cash donations, LCC has a long-lived relationship with the NLHHC.

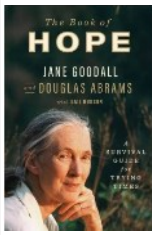
When the Social Justice Team invited Annah to speak at worship, it was with the intention of gaining deeper appreciation and understanding of both the evolving need and the comprehensive services offered by the Center. We learned that the NLHHC's primary purpose is to move individuals from crisis to stable housing. They are the key resource in New London County for those needing immediate shelter, especially during extreme cold weather. In addition to basic shelter, the center provides a place for clients to receive mail, obtain healthcare, and access transportation. It provides meals, work training, eviction prevention counseling, and acts as an affordable landlord providing adult and veteran housing. A dedicated team performs street outreach by offering immediate assistance to those living on the street.

Southeast Connecticut has seen a surge of homelessness in 2024-2025. The number of people living in their cars and on the street in Connecticut jumped by 45%. At NLHHC, seniors make up approximately 40% of the nightly homeless population. Federal and state funding through HUD provides almost 50% of the total operating budget. Changes in Federal funding priorities have made that funding source inconsistent, though recently it has stabilized. The remainder of the funding comes from private philanthropy. corporate partnership, and community driven fundraising.

Annah and James shared stories of reaching into the margins of society to do, as Pastor Pat affirmed, both old and new testament command to love our neighbors. Their story was uplifting as they shared that almost 95% of clients who transition to permanent housing remain housed long-term. Their love of their work demonstrated that there is real power in serving others.

Homelessness is closer than most people realize. As Annah and James told us, a long-time home healthcare aid whose patient passes can suddenly find themselves unhoused. One unexpected life change can throw folks into an unexpected housing crisis. Yet, we at LCC are part of a solution that affirms the dignity of all of our neighbors. You can learn more about NLHCC at their website: https://www.nlhhc.org

### WEDNEDAY NIGHT BOOK STUDY GROUP 7:00-8:00 p.m. in the Holdridge Library




Our book group has chosen Jane Goodall's book, **The Book of Hope**. In this urgent book, Jane Goodall, one of the world's most famous naturalists, and Douglas Abrams, the internationally bestselling co-author of **The Book of Joy,** explore through intimate and thought-provoking dialogue one of the most sought after and least understood elements of human nature: hope. In **The Book of Hope**, Jane focuses on her "Four Reasons for Hope": The Amazing Human Intellect, The Resilience of Nature, The Power of Young People, and The Indomitable Human Spirit."

The Group meets in the Holdridge library on **Wednesdays at 7pm.** We are on hiatus for Lent but will resume on April 8th when we will watch a documentary with Jane that was done shortly before she died to be aired after she passed away. Our discussion of the book with start the following week.

# Lenten Study Group

Join us for a **Lenten Study Group. Thursdays at 7:00 p.m.** We will meet in the Holdridge Library.

Each week we will explore a different topic starting with "the season of Lent is less a discipline of denial and more a discipline or orienting ourselves toward justice". We will continue with "God has little patience for oppressive systems or those who benefit from them". Week three's topic centers around "God's love is bigger than words or rules that try to shut people out". Four, "we can trust real shepherding refuses to pit people against each other for profit or use them as pawns in a pursuit of power. Faithful leadership encourages us to turn towards each other and imagine the healing made possible when we commit to each other's flourishing". Week five, "we participate in a world to which we sometimes make concessions. But we belong to the reign of God, which asks for our whole hearts, honoring and empowering our full selves". Palm Sunday's message is "the invitation to friends of Jesus long ago is still ours today: bring your palms, your signs of life, and lay them down; let them make a path we might all walk on towards our hope" and culminating with the Easter message "each time we choose compassion over fear, we live resurrections".

## Holy Week Services at Ledyard Congregational Church United Church of Christ

**Palm Sunday** • March 29th 9:30 a.m.
**Maundy Thursday** • April 2nd 7:00 p.m.

**Easter Sunday** • April 5th
**Sunrise Service** • 7:00 a.m. in the Outdoor Chapel on Rte. 117 opposite Church Hill Rd. Breakfast to follow in the church Fellowship Hall
**Easter Celebration** • 9:30 a.m. with Sunday School and childcare.

# Winter WEATHER

## LCC'S WINTER WEATHER GUIDLINES

During the winter months, should our Sunday worship service be canceled due to inclement weather, please watch for an email from the church office and/or check the church website: ledyardcongregational.org

## Help Needed for Church Council!

We are in need of a secretary to Church Council. The duties of this volunteer position involves taking notes at the Church Council meetings and distributing to Council members for review.

The Council typically meets on the second Sunday of the month in the Holdridge library following our morning worship service and social time, but if you cannot attend a particular meeting, there are always people happy to fill in.

It's a great way to know first-hand what's going on at church, too!

If you could help out, please contact either Chris Schuft: chrisschuft@gmavt.net or Bill Barnes: iambarnes@gmail.com.

Thank you!S

## Issues of the Church Chatter Are Available on the Church Website

Did you know you can find this issue of the Chatter plus the past two months on the church website?

Just go to: ledyardcongregational.org and click on the Chatter drop down box.

## Looking for Greeters for Sunday Morning Worship Service

We are looking for people to help with greeting people to our Sunday morning wordship services. It's a great way to lend a hand in welcoming everyone.

If you are interested being one of our happy and friendly greeters on Sundays, please speak with Beth Ayer after church or contact her via email: girlsmomX3@comcast.net or by phone: (860) 608-5951.

Just a friendly reminder...

**APRIL** Chatter Deadline is **SUNDAY, MARCH 15th.**

Please email your article to me by the 15th at: chrisandmeri@gmavt.net.

As a reminder, putting the Chatter together is like trying to put a puzzle together without knowing how many pieces or what the size of those pieces will be until I get everyone's submissions.

The Chatter has increased from 12 to 20 pages , which has added significant time to the production time!

Thank You, Meredith Schuft

## Easter Flower Order Form — 2026

Would you like to help adorn the sanctuary with Easter flowers on Easter **Sunday April 5th** in honor of or in memory of a loved one? To do so, simply fill in the information below and make a check out to **Ledyard Congregational Church with Easter Flowers on the memo line**. Due to pastor Pat's allergy to lilies & hyacinths, a variety of potted spring flowers will be purchased at $17.00 each. Mail the completed form along with your check to Ellen Seeman, 8 Darrows Ridge Rd., East Lyme, CT 06333 or leave it in the Clerk's mailbox outside the church offices. Orders must be received by **MARCH 29th.** Order forms are also available on the table in the Fellowship Hall.

Your Name(s):_____ Phone #:_____

Name(s) to be remembered:

_____ _____

_____ _____

Name(s) to be honored:

_____ _____

_____ _____

Numbers of plants ordered: _____ Check enclosed for $ _____ (made out to: **Ledyard Congregational Church**)

Please indicated whether you will be picking up your plant after the Easter service _____ or wish to donate it _____.

# Church Chatter March 2026

*A publication of Ledyard Congregational Church, United Church of Christ*
*Whoever you are, wherever you are on life's journey, you are welcome here!*

**Church Office Hours**
**Monday through Thursday**
**8:30 a.m.-1:30 p.m.**
Phone: 860-464-9926
Email:
ledyard.cong.church@gmail.com
**Website:**
www.ledyardcongregational.org

**Ledyard Congregational Church**
**722 Colonel Ledyard Highway**
**Ledyard, CT 06339**

**Sunday Worship 9:30 a.m. in the Sanctuary, also via Zoom and FaceBook.**
**Along with Sunday School, and Nursery/Childcare**

## March 2026

UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

**Time Dated Material**
**Return Service Requested**