

THE SPIRE

December 2025

We seek to be a Christian community by worshipping God through prayer, music, and the proclaimed Word. Following Christ's example, we enthusiastically reach out to everyone with compassion, respect, and love so that we may grow in faith and commitment together.

Church of Christ, Congregational, UCC

142 Exchange St., Millis, MA 02054

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An Open and Affirming Congregation

Worship God, Serve our neighbors, Share God's love.



Dear Friends,

It's that magical time of year again—when the air nips at your nose, the last stray leaves skitter down Route 109, and the urge to grab a good book and curl up under a blanket becomes downright irresistible. Yes, winter has arrived in Millis, drawing us inward. (Although, true confession: you'll still catch me carrying my iced coffee, gloves or no gloves. Some habits are just too good to let the cold win!)

I love how the world gets quieter now, creating these rare, sacred silences that nudge us to slow down and listen more deeply—to God, to each other, and even to our own hearts and spirits. This slowing down fits so well with the journey of Advent, doesn't it? Each week, as we come into the sanctuary and see our altar dressed in purple altar paraments and our classic

holiday evergreens, we're reminded that it's the church's time for holy rest—a season when we actively wait, full of longing and hope for the Light that will change absolutely everything.

The themes of Advent—hope, peace, love, and joy—are our acts of faith, alive in the decisions we make every day. Hope calls us to trust even when the news cycles try to steal it away. Peace expects us to roll up our sleeves and mend what's broken—in our own homes and in our wider world. Love dares us to reach out, especially to those at the margins, and dares us to challenge powerful systems that stand in the way of justice. And joy? Joy is that subversive little flame that refuses to go out, even when the wind howls.

Through it all, I am grateful beyond words for you—each person, each family, each weary hand that works to make this community stronger and kinder. Your stories and your presence shape and strengthen our life together.

Speaking of togetherness, I hope you'll join us at our annual Jolly Holly Fair on Saturday, December 6th, from 9AM to 2PM. Whether you come for the cider and laughter, or to help set

up tables at what feels like the crack of dawn, know that you are welcome. This is our chance to lift each other's spirits, reconnect, and remember that we're a true community.

Thank you for walking this Advent path with me: iced coffee, cold mornings, and all. My heart is full of gratitude and hope for what lies ahead. I look forward to every conversation, every shared meal, every new way we discover God together this season.

With hope, peace, love, and joy,

Rev. James



By now you know the Jolly Holly Fair is on December 6th. We need all of you to come and shop for your gifts that day. But we also need helpers to break down the tables and store things away upstairs at the end of the event. That includes any relatives and friends that are handy! Don't

miss out on additional shopping on Sunday the 7th. Come to church and buy more knits, cakes, candy and holiday decorations that we have available. Thank you for your support and have a blessed Christmas.



As we head into 2026, we ask all of you to consider joining a committee of the church—Deacons, Prudential, Trustees or individual positions like Treasurer or Assistant Treasurer. Please contact Susie Sennot, Moderator, or one of the Deacons—Kathy Stevens, Art Payne or Katie Andrews.



Jen Payne and Kathy Stevens are here nearly every Sunday morning at 8:15-8:30 to set up Coffee Hour, and then attend Choir Rehearsal at 9. They would like a bit of a break. They will set up the coffee counter and coffee machine and the tables, and that is where you come in! We need people to bring in goodies—store bought or homemade, and take

over. Bring out creamer and juices, and spread out the food, cut cakes or muffins, open cookie packages etc. Then, close down the kitchen. Wash and put away cups, spoons, coffee pots and lock up the cabinet. Please sign up for advent until Jan 4th. Call Jen or Kathy if you have any questions.



Dedication/Memorial Poinsettias will be available again this year for \$16. Be on the lookout for order forms in the Sunday Bulletins or contact Laura in the office. Last day for orders will be end of service on Sunday, December 21st.



A very special thank you to our sponsors thus far for our Jolly Holly Fair Silent Auction. Ryan's Bowling/Arcade and Eatery has generously donated gift cards to be used at any of their facilities. This

would make a great gift or a special family fun night. Be sure to stop by and place your bid!

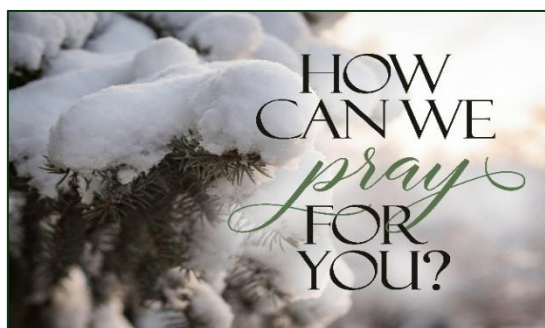
Know someone who likes the really practical gifts? What's better than a Roche Brothers gift card? Perfect for off setting the cost of your holiday party snacks, or a great gift for anyone who enjoys saving money on groceries. Thank you Roche Brothers for your donation.

Experience family-friendly hands-on exhibits and make new discoveries, indoors and outdoors, at the EcoTarium. Inspiring a passion for science and nature, the EcoTarium offers three floors of interactive exhibits, daily Science Discovery programs, live animal habitats, hikes through forest and nature trails, a train ride around the grounds (seasonal), and more. The museum is located at 222 Harrington Way, Worcester, Massachusetts and is open Tuesday through Sunday from 10am to 5pm. Admission is \$19 for adults, \$14 for children 2-18 and students, and \$15 for seniors. Free for members. Call (508) 929-2700, or email info@ecotarium.org for more information. Parking is free. For details, visit ecotarium.org. Another great gift idea for the nature lovers in your life! Be sure to place your bid and check back often on this pack of 2 adult & 2 kids tickets.

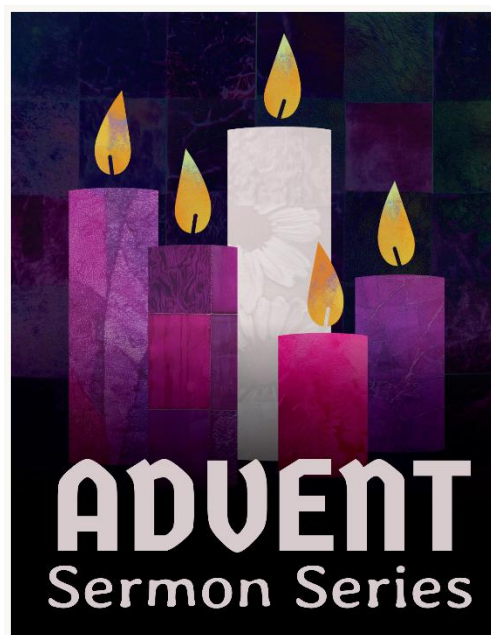
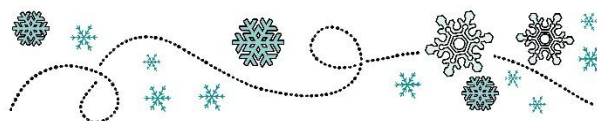
Thank you to our sponsors so far and we look forward to other great auction items as they arrive in time for the fair.



This year we plan to have a “Mitten Tree” in the Sanctuary during Advent. While you are shopping for presents for friends and family, please consider buying mittens, gloves and scarves for people in need. Stop at the knits table on 12/6, Fair Day, and stock up for gifts for those on your family list and share some things with the “Mitten Tree” in the Sanctuary.



*If you would like to be added to the prayer chain, or if you or someone you know wants to receive prayers for a specific situation, please
Contact Mary Jensen.*



November 30—“Hope on the Horizon”
(Isaiah 2:1-5)

Hope is a discipline; it is the courageous trust that God is actively shaping a future of wholeness and justice for all people, even when the present looks bleak. When fear and headlines threaten to overwhelm us,

we are called to do more than just wish for a better world. What would it mean for us to embody hope as a practice? Join us as we explore Isaiah's prophetic call to root ourselves in a defiant hope, becoming a beacon of possibility in our community as we seek God's promised transformation.

December 7—"Tis the Season for Peacemaking" (Matthew 3: 1-12)

We often think of peace as tranquility, but what if true peace is brought about by disruption? John the Baptist's call to "prepare the way" was a radical demand to clear a path for justice. Are we willing to have our comfort disturbed for the sake of God's vision for the world? This week, we will confront the challenging idea that repentance is not simply a private confession, but an active, public journey toward reconciliation. Let's explore how we can participate in the authentic peacemaking our world so desperately needs.

December 14—"All You Need Is Love" (Matthew 11:2-11)

Love is often sentimentalized, but in the ministry of Jesus, love is the very heartbeat of a faith that intentionally centers those at the margins. How do we move beyond simply talking about love and begin practicing a deep, transformative compassion? We'll reflect on Jesus' challenge to embody

a love that heals, restores, and dares us to trust in God's power to bring real change, starting with our own actions and community.

December 21—"Joy to the Whirled" (Matthew 1:18-25)

What does it mean to find joy when life feels like it's spinning out of control? This week, we examine the story of Joseph, whose world was completely turned upside down by God's plan. "Joy to the Whirled" is a call to find God not in the absence of chaos, but right in the middle of it. God's plan arrived on Joseph's doorstep, disrupting every expectation and forcing a choice between fear and faith. As we approach Christmas, we must ask ourselves: could God's interruptions in our own lives be invitations to a more resilient faith? Perhaps the profound joy we seek is waiting for us, not in perfectly calm moments, but within life's unpredictable whirlwinds.



The Church Office will be closed for the Holidays starting Thursday December 25th through Thursday January 1st, 2026.



Revisiting Jolly Holly Fair's History

By Art Payne

As the first Saturday in December approaches, that can only mean one thing – it is time for the Jolly Holly Fair! The Jolly Holly Fair is the longest running annual fair in Millis and offers something for everyone – crafts, gift baskets, raffles, attic treasures, fabulous food, children's activities and of course – a visit from Santa Himself! The fair had its beginnings in the early 1960's and was then known as simply the Christmas Fair. Inspired by the popular Burl Ives song Holly Jolly Christmas, the fair was renamed in 1963. Concerned with copyright issues led to the reversal of Holly Jolly to give the fair its name. This was revealed to me by Judy Ackerman, who provided baby sitting services at the December 7, 1963 Fair. The 1963 Fair was organized by the Women's Fellowship Group and was chaired by Mrs. Henry Bogins and Mrs. Roger (Peg) Smith. Movies were shown for the kids and unusual flower arrangements were offered. Evelyn

Anderson ran the Country Store, Honey Whitney led the decorating committee and the snack bar was chaired by Barbara Hansen. Preparation for the early fairs began at the end of July and was duly noted in local newspapers.

The 1964 Fair was held on December 5th, and was chaired by Renee Todd and Betty Bicknell. The men of the Church sponsored an auction with the legendary Earl Merkle serving as auctioneer. Popular tables were the apron and doll's clothes – these items being handcrafted by work bees in the months leading up to the Fair.

The 1965 edition of the Jolly Holly Fair was held on December 4th and was chaired by Elaine Woods and Sheila Bowman. Popular features were a religious articles table, antiques table, and for the kids, movies and pony rides (weather permitting)! Free baby sitting was provided by the Pilgrim Fellowship whose members included current Moderator Jan Krohn.

Chairs for the 1966 Fair, held on December 3rd, were Marian Boodry and Flora Leontie. Evelyn Anderson requested donations of old Christmas cards to be made into gift tags.

An interesting feature of these early years was the parcel post table. This was the concept behind this – People of the Church would encourage friends, relatives and neighbors to send parcels to the Church, designating them as for lady,

gent, boy or girl. These would be sold unopened on the day of the Fair, providing many surprises!

In preparation for the 1967 Fair, Wayne Hansen and Newell Bicknell decorated the Church grounds with a lighting display. The newly renovated Sanctuary would be dedicated at Christmas Services that year.

Marian Boodry chaired the December 7, 1968 edition of the Fair which provided a welcome respite from the tumultuous events of that year. The 1969 Fair offered trays and boxes decorated by a photo-engraving process. Fair-goers could bring a glossy photo and have these personalized for gifts.

The Jolly Holly Fair has been a holiday tradition for Church and Community in Millis for over sixty years.

I am interested in compiling a comprehensive history of the Jolly Holly Fair. I invite those who have participated in past fairs to share artifacts and memories with me.

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