

# THE SPIRE

February 2026

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

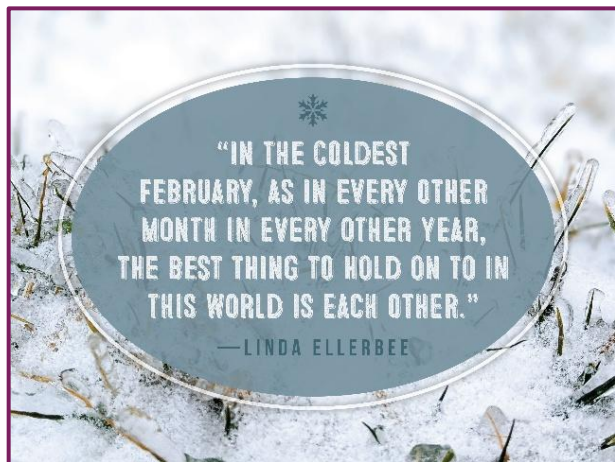
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An Open and Affirming Congregation

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



Friends,

This month, the church calendar calls us out of the ordinary and into a season of reflection. On Ash Wednesday, we will begin our 40-day journey of Lent, a time set apart for introspection, repentance, and a deliberate turning back toward the heart of God.

When we receive the ashes, we are given a reminder: "Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return." It is a radical act of honesty in a world that pressures us to deny our limits and hide our vulnerabilities. The ashes strip away our pretenses, reminding us that we are beautifully and fundamentally human.

While many view Lent as a time to give something up, it's about more than just self-denial. This practice is

only meaningful if it carves out space for something new to grow. This season is an invitation to examine the systems and habits that hinder compassion and obscure love. It challenges us to fast from apathy and to embrace compassion. It asks us what we are willing to let go of to make more room for God's kin-dom of justice and peace in our lives and in our world.

This Lenten journey is not one we walk alone. We walk it together, as a community committed to mutual support and collective growth. I encourage you to look through the announcements in this edition of *The Spire*. You will find several opportunities for study, service, and worship that will help deepen our shared experience of this holy season.

Let us commit to showing up for one another on this path.

## A Prayer for the Journey:

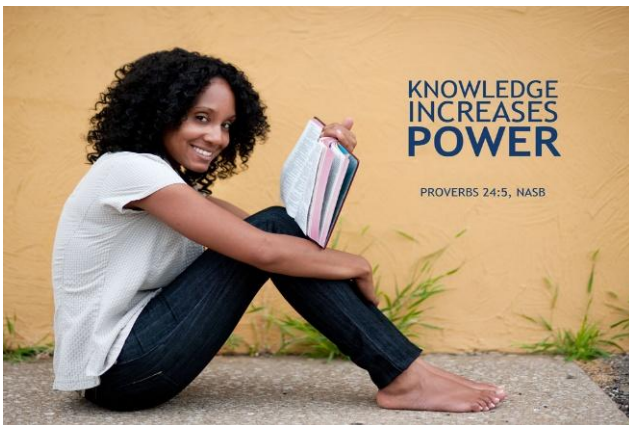
*Loving God,*

*As we enter this season of reflection, quiet our minds so that we may hear your voice. Open our hearts to understand your call for us. Strengthen our hands to do the work*

*of justice and love. May this Lenten path lead us closer to you and deeper into compassionate action for our world. Amen.*

Peace,

Rev. James



## **Understanding PRC**

What is PRC and what is its role? The Pastoral Relations Committee (PRC) regularly meets with Rev. James to foster communication between the Pastor and the congregation, and to support our Pastor in their efforts to connect the church with the community. We seek your feedback and ideas for our church, and assure you a safe, confidential welcome for your closely held concerns. We are striving to be 'One Body in Christ'. Please remember, Rev. James truly welcomes your voice. For ideas, questions, or concerns, please contact any member of the PRC committee:

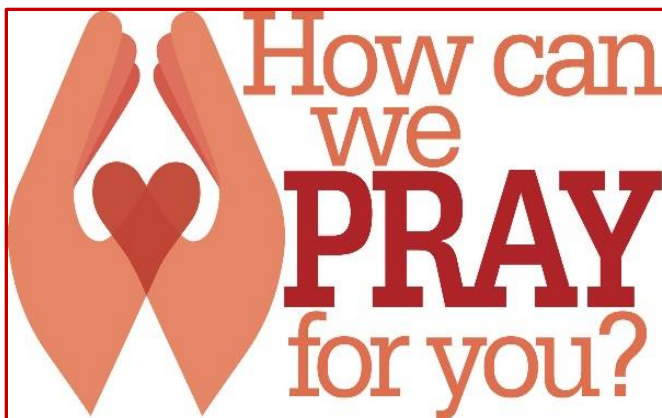
Suzi Sennott, Jo-Ellen Briggs & Maria Melchionda



Our PRC members have been busy this year establishing our Second Chance Closet. Pastor James, together with Millis Fire Department, identified a need in our community for replacement clothes in the event of fire or other significant household disasters. Donations have been generous and volunteers have been at the ready to sort, fold and hang clothes. If you, or anyone you know of, are in need of "shopping" (clothes are free) at our Second Chance Closet, appointments can be made by calling the office, and monthly open hours will be posted as the schedule evolves. Our January Open Closet hours will be Saturday, February 28, 2026 from 10:00am-noon. Everyone deserves to be warm this winter, no proof of hardship or residency required.

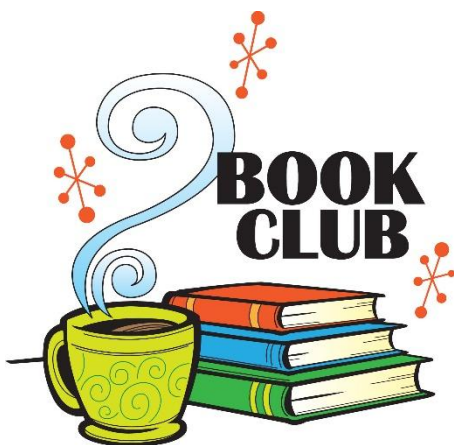


Gentle Reminder: *Spire* content is due by the 20<sup>th</sup> of each month.



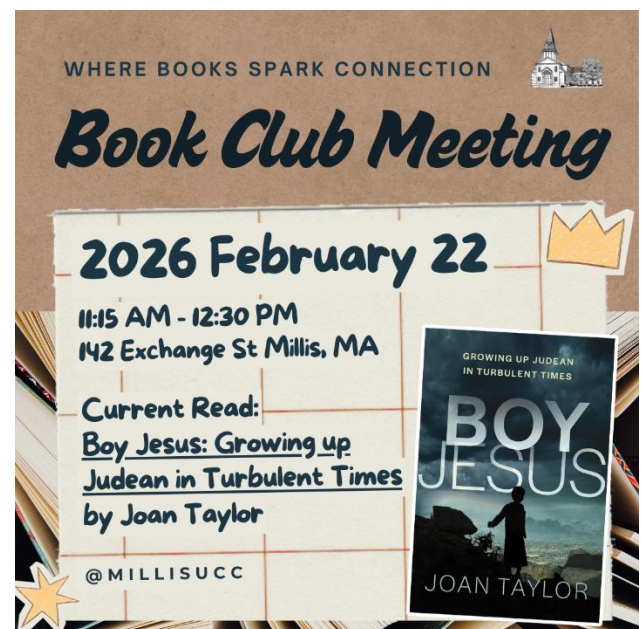
*If you would like to be added to the prayer chain, or if you or someone you know wants to receive prayers for a specific situation, please*

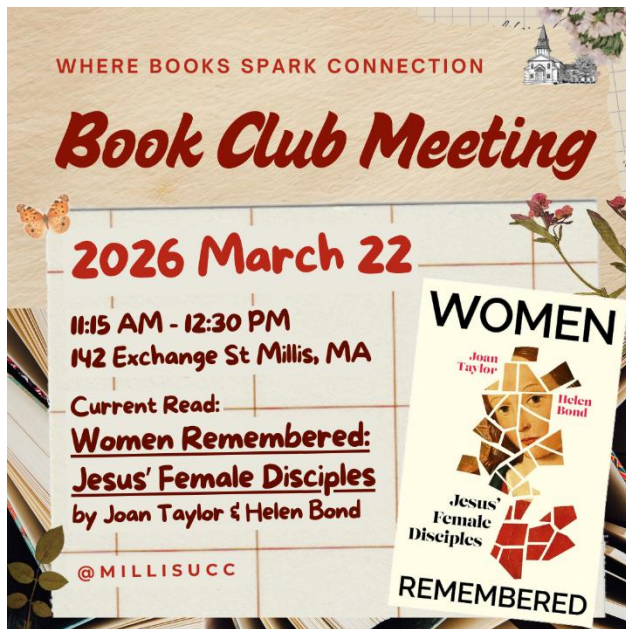
*Contact Mary Jensen.*



Ever wondered what life was actually like for Jesus before he started his ministry? We often think of the nativity or the adult teacher, but

there's a huge gap in the middle. What did it mean to grow up as a Jewish boy in first-century Judea, surrounded by societal turbulence and religious tradition? This January, our book club is diving into *Boy Jesus* by Joan Taylor. It's a fascinating historically grounded look at the childhood that shaped the man. You don't need to be a history buff or a theology expert to enjoy this. Just bring your curiosity! We are a group that loves good books and great conversation, and our table is open to everyone. Whether you've never stepped foot in a church or just haven't in a while, we'd love to have you. Join the conversation!





### Our Bell

In case you may have missed our informational sermon on February 8<sup>th</sup>, here is a transcript of Our Holbrook Bell by Church Historian, Arthur Payne:

The Holbrook Bell was the creation of Major George Holbrook ( 1767-1846)

for whom Holbrook Square (site of our Church) is named. He was born in Wrentham. In his youth, he was apprenticed to Paul Revere as a machinist and clockmaker and was introduced to bell manufacturing. George Holbrook settled in Brookfield, MA where he made case (grandfather) clocks as most of his production. He cast his first bell in 1804 for First Parish Church in Taunton, MA. After experiencing financial failure in 1812, he left Brookfield for Laconia, New Hampshire, ultimately settling in East Medway (now Millis). Upon arrival in East Medway, his early efforts to establish a bell manufactory were met with skepticism due to his previous business failures and the proposed scale of the enterprise. A new resident who had experienced business failure was looked down upon in Massachusetts as a potential burden on the system of poor relief.

Major Holbrook established his bell foundry in 1816 on the corner of Main and Spring where long time teacher Sybil Enegren would reside. Holbrook, always an enterprising individual, erected a shanty, made of discarded materials and left the sides open to create interest and curiosity. He maintained a warm friendship with his mentor Paul Revere and he soon cast his first bell in the new foundry. In a remarkable coincidence, the First Church of Christ Congregational (our church) sought to be the first church in

the area with a bell tower when the Third Meeting House was constructed on Bullard's Hill (where railroad tracks are off Auburn Road). The 1,280 pound bell was purchased for 535 dollars and hung in the steeple of the Third Meeting House from 1816-1850. (It briefly hung in our current facility from 1850-1853 when it became damaged and was replaced by our current Holbrook Bell in 1855.) The Third Meeting House bell was hung on May 13, 1816. The Holbrook Bell Foundry was on its way to world wide success and reputation. The bells became known for their pure musical tone and vibratory properties and won many national and international awards and put East Medway (Millis) on the map. They are still prized today by those institutions fortunate to have custody of a Holbrook Bell.

Holbrook changed the image of the bell from a noisy machine to a music instrument. He was renowned as a problem solver who welcomed mechanical challenges despite his limited training. In 1820, his son George Handel Holbrook (1798-1875) took over management of the business which in four years was the largest bell manufactory in the world. George Handel Holbrook was an esteemed musician who counted Lowell Mason, George J Webb and piano maker Jonas Chickering, Esquire as his friends and associates and was affiliated with the Handel and Haydn Society. The business

continued until the 1890's. The bell foundry closed in 1882 after Edwin L. Holbrook sold the patents and plans to a San Francisco company and accepted a position with the United States Pension Office. From 1816 to 1882 the Holbrook Bell Foundry cast over 11,000 bells. They were sent to British provinces, Mexico and the Sandwich Islands and throughout the United States. There are three Holbrook Bells in Millis and a Centennial organization adopted their name in 1985. The Chepachet Baptist Church has prepared a national list of Holbrook Bells. Holbrook Church bells were inscribed, "I to the Church the living call and to the grave summons all" and were dated and stamped. You have heard our bell rung today and will see an incredible photo taken by Church historian Dave Carlson during our 300<sup>th</sup> Anniversary celebration in 2014 of Our Holbrook Bell.



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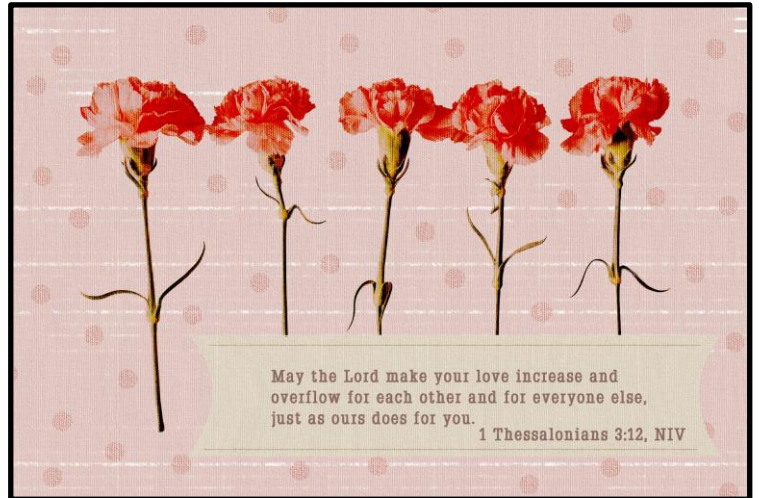
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May the Lord make your love increase and overflow for each other and for everyone else, just as ours does for you.  
1 Thessalonians 3:12, NIV

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