

**PURPOSE  
STATEMENT**

*“We are disciples of Jesus Christ committed to making a difference in the community and in the world through service and invitational outreach.”*



# The Messenger

First United Methodist Church, Chatham

April 2026—Vol. 30—Issue 4

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**AROUND AND ABOUT FUMC**

**OUR COMMITTEES**

“Every United Methodist Church must have a Finance Committee that is responsible for compiling an annual budget, raising funds, ensuring financial accountability, establishing internal financial controls, and securing designated contributions for their intended purpose,” according to the Methodist Book of Discipline (MBD).

First United Methodist Church is fortunate to have volunteers with knowledge and experience that they lend to our two standing committees, the combined Finance & Trustees, and Staff-Parish Relations.

The **Finance & Trustees Committee** is chaired by Alan Kuzirian, and members include Mike Firmin, Pastor Gada, Deb Holt, Diane Kennedy, David Mallowes, Christine Riley, Dexter Smith, Jay Thompson, Toni Wordell and Bruce Wynn.

The Board of Trustees provides security of its funds, keeps accurate records of its proceedings, and cares for the church’s property, both real and personal. The Trustees report to the charge conference. Finance awards our annual scholarships to a Cape Tech senior and a Monomoy senior after their first semester. This is shepherded by Jay Thompson.

Look around you when you are outside and inside the church—almost every item you see is cared for by the Trustees. Our 1849 building requires constant maintenance, especially with the extreme weather conditions we experience. The Trustees have a huge job, and they do it well.

The kitchen upgrade was man-

aged by the Trustees as was the chancel renovation which was done several years ago when the new pipe organ was installed. Parsonage care is also a Trustee responsibility.

The **Staff-Parish Relations Committee (SPRC)** is chaired by Mike Firmin, and its members are Bonnie Freitas, Diane Kennedy, Dave Mallowes, Ruth Norman, Robin Rank, Toni Wordell and Bruce Wynn. Of utmost importance, “the Committee must maintain confidentiality” (MBD).

The Committee develops the church profile in conjunction with the pastor and District Superintendent, and it oversees the staff of the church. Mike tends to his “flock,” with its wide variety of functions, with an even hand and upbeat attitude that they appreciate. He has the qualities of encouragement, shepherding, helping, and leadership required by the MBD. SPRC works with the pastor and staff to “fulfill legal and ethical responsibilities related to staff, and brings all interests of the ministry to the attention of the staff” (MBD).

Annual evaluations of the staff are performed. Mike listens to both staff and people of all ages in the congregation in order to keep a focus on the mission of the church.

In consultation with the pastor and with awareness of the strategy of the church leadership, SPRC recommends needed staff positions and develops written job descriptions. It also recommends financial matters to the Finance Committee.

Per the 2024 MBD, SPRC must “consider the age and stage of the congregation and have an understanding of the feelings and desires within the congregation, as well as consider the culture and needs of the community around the church.”

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*When we see God, it will not be a new discovery. It will be a profound recognition of that heart and soul of yourself that is already in union with God. All contemplation, all true prayer, is an attempt to go back to that place.*

Richard Rohr



## HAPPY BIRTHDAY

4-04—Diane Kennedy

4-09—Jeanne Kuzirian

4-11—Roslyn Coleman

4-11—Nancy Bischoff

4-13—Elaine Trexler

### Pastor's Meditation

#### "REBIRTH and RENEWAL

(Excerpts from: *Earth Gospel, United Church of Canada*)

Greetings Church Family and Friends:

Spring has finally sprung, or at least we are starting to get some rain. Something to get excited about! After a long and dreary winter, it's time to see the sun shining, the flowers blooming, and the birds coming back to build their nests.

As a pastor, I find myself drawn to both the beauty and the symbolism of the season. Easter is at the beginning of April this year and a perfect time for rebirth and renewal. A time when we can reflect on the miracle of God's creation and the hope of new beginnings.

But the main thing I enjoy about every spring, is the miracle of watching the natural world come back to life after a period of dormancy. Watching the trees bud, the flowers starting to bloom, and the birds singing. This is all a reminder of the beauty and wonder of God's creation.

Spring is an annual reminder that no matter how dark and cold winter may be, there is always the promise of new life and growth. Spring is also, as I hinted at the beginning of this article, a season that is rich in spiritual meaning. As we watch the world around us come to life, we are reminded of the power and glory of the creator. That is why we celebrate earth day in April—to care for this beautiful planet that God has given us.

Here we are also reminded of the sacrifice and resurrection of Jesus Christ, who conquered death and brought new life to all who believe in him. And we are reminded of the hope we have as the children of God, that even in the midst of darkness and despair, there is always the promise of new beginnings and renewed hope.

I give thanks that our God is a God of Hope. I give thanks for all of you. We are learning to live into Christ's calling on us to be the church that we are, and new life will emerge. I believe this. Do you?

May God Bless you all and keep you this spring and beyond. Pastor Sonny

*Thoughts on Maundy Thursday & Good Friday, Rev. Dr. Edgardo Colón-Emeric, Dean, Duke Divinity School, based on John 13. (Upper Room Disciplines, Holy Week 2025)*

**"For us and for our salvation, Jesus 'returned to his place at the table' . . . John . . . does not include a narrative of the institution of Holy Communion. Instead, he invites us to contemplate the Trinitarian ground supporting Jesus' celebration of his Last Supper and the beginning of his passion—namely, love.**

**"First, Jesus 'got up from supper' in order to serve.** Jesus' holy rebelliousness overturns hierarchies both ancient and modern. By washing and wiping the feet of his disciples, Jesus gives humble hospitality a sacramental stamp. Serving is a means of grace.

**"Second, Jesus returns to his seat.** He has every reason to stay away. He knows he is sowing words in hard ground. He knows his explanation of the foot washing will not make sense until after Easter and Pentecost. Even so, he returns to the table because he loves. Jesus' return to the table is a saving mystery.

**"His table company surprised and disturbed many.** Throughout his ministry, he ate with well-known sinners, and, on the eve of his passion, he washes the feet of Judas. **Jesus returns to the table to save us and give us an example.** As I contemplate this mystery, I think of how his sanctified stubbornness does not give up on people because we are prone to failure.

**"For us and for our salvation, "they crucified him.** It is easy to forget that before the cross became a symbol for Christianity, it was an instrument of capital punishment. Jesus did not simply die. He was tortured and killed as a criminal.

"[Pontius Pilate's mention in the Apostles' and Nicene Creeds]...spotlights the centrality of Roman politics to Christ's passion. **They crucified Jesus because his life and ministry disrupted the delicate, dynamic balance of powers at work in the region.** To spotlight the politics of the Cross does not downplay its saving significance. Instead, it discloses the scandalous surprise of Golgotha. **When 'they crucified him,' God exalted him. 'Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews,' became an unexpected and unwelcome affirmation of Christ's coronation. Its offer of judgment and mercy echoes and expands to a growing case of crucifiers and crucified from Golgotha to Treblinka to San Salvador [and more].**

**"The crucifixion of Christ is a saving mystery.** The contemplation of the crucified God in the faces of the crucified peoples...exposes my sin and promises grace. **I need the grace of Christ crucified to . . . forgive my sins, and to heal their consequences. O Lord Jesus . . . breathe on me your spirit, that I may die to sin and live for you. Amen.**

**Help to Reawaken  
Our Love for Creation,  
by The United Church of Canada**

“Creating God, you have called us to be in loving relations with all the Earth, living with respect in creation, choosing love and seeking justice at all times.

“Instead, humankind has acted in hateful ways, exploiting natural resources, choosing power and seeking wealth in the present over future abundance.

“We need your help to fight for a better future!

“Help to reawaken our love for Creation, that is so magnificent that we, with all our creativity and knowledge, could never articulate it; and so passionate that we with the personal price and communal cost, would still fight for it.

“Help to deepen our relationships and love for each other: Affirming the wisdom of youth strikers, so that we are not discouraged by empty platitude and naysayers; and growing our community of allies, so that we can create a sustainable and faithful response to the imminent climate crisis.

For the sake of your majestic creation, and for the love of all our relations, help us to fight for a better future. Amen.



**Confluence: an  
Earth Day  
Opportunity for  
Connection!**

By Grace Pugh Hubbard, NEAC Climate Care Coordinator

Rev. Ralph Howe approached me at the Creation Care table at last

June's New England UM Annual Conference with an idea and a dream: *what if we created an Earth Day event that would resource churches around our conference to learn about the land around them, and how to connect, celebrate and live in community with the land and with one another.*

We've been dreaming and scheming ever since! Along with visioners Rev. Ingrid Lucas Howe (The Beloved Community of Brattleboro) and Rev. Benjiman Durfee (Trinity Church, Shelburne Falls, MA) a unique event is

unfolding.

**Confluence** is a new Earth Day Celebration intended to awaken our spirits to the call of the earth for care and proper relationships and to begin healing relationships with the earth and with one another. It is a place to begin a process of creating healthy collaborations among religious communities, Indigenous nations, environmental action groups and government for our common responsibility to the earth.

Ralph shares, “Our goal of this single day event is that every group of participants leaves the event with a working document, a blueprint, to implement a program of collaboration and creation care, practice healing relationships with indigenous peoples, and cultivate a broad local working group that respects various eco-spiritualities and works for common earth care. Interactive parts of the event will ask participants to fill out a digital or paper dossier that they can take home and put into practice.”

The day will begin at Brattleboro UMC at 9:00am and proceed to The Retreat Farm a short distance away. Transportation will be available, or participants are welcome to walk the short trek. Activities will vary and will be both presentational and interactive for all ages. Local food trucks will be on site for lunch purchase before the afternoon reflections and activities begin.

**Confluence** is sponsored by generous donations from several groups and churches around our New England UM Conference. There is no fee to attend but you are welcome to make a love offering to help offset the cost of the event.

We hope you and members of your church are able to join us for this inaugural event as we gather and collaborate. For more information please reach out to Grace Pugh Hubbard, Climate Care Coordinator,

[GHubbard@neumc.org](mailto:GHubbard@neumc.org)

or Rev. Ralph Howe,

[howerwiii@gmail.com](mailto:howerwiii@gmail.com).





## New England Justice for Our Neighbors News

New England Justice for Our Neighbors would like to express our deep appreciation for the outpouring of support of our organization and of all of our immigrant neighbors over the past year. Together, we have affirmed and continue to affirm the dignity, worth and rights of migrants, immigrants and refugees. The partnership of the Conference, congregations, and countless individuals has been truly invaluable, enabling our work and lifting up our spirits. We enter[ed] 2026 fully committed to our sacred mission and hope and pray that we will soon see a brighter day.

### *At a Glance* by The Barna Group

“Barna’s 2025 findings showed rising spiritual curiosity—[greater openness to Jesus](#), [increased Bible reading](#) and more [faith commitments](#)—among younger generations. Beyond mere curiosity, this trend should lead to tangible church engagement: serving, joining small groups and deeper participation. Are younger adults moving from being curious about faith to actively engaging in church life?

“Barna surveyed 507 Protestant senior pastors from both mainline and non-mainline churches. We asked whether, over the past year, they had observed lower, higher or about the same level of engagement by specific generations, gender and age groups based on what engagement looks like in their church context.

“In many churches, pastors say younger generations are leaning in. Two in five senior pastors say their church has experienced higher engagement among Gen Z (45%) and Millennials (42%), while most pastors say Boomers and Gen X have stayed about the same.

“For decades, church leaders have reported significant obstacles to reaching younger generations,’ says David Kinnaman, CEO of Barna Group. “But something is shifting in what senior pastors are experiencing.

“The research paints a wide-ranging picture of churches, with many growing younger, some stagnant and about one in ten experiencing overall decline. These findings point to an uptick in younger congregants, but

that is not a universal experience of pastors.

“. . . non-mainline churches outpace mainline churches in reporting growth among Gen Z and Millennials. Large churches, both in terms of size and budgets, also report much stronger growth curves among younger audiences.

“One of the most intriguing findings concerns engagement among young adult men. 40% of pastors say engagement among men ages 18 to 35 has increased. At the same time, a significant share report decreases (17%). This makes young men the demographic group [with] the most divergent experiences—more than young women, older men or older women.

“The findings reveal a complex picture. Across the country, pastors report a range of realities. Some describe declining engagement. Others see little change. And, as Kinnaman notes, ‘In some churches, leaders are experiencing a real on-the-ground bump in next generation engagement.’”

“What makes these findings significant is not that engagement is rising everywhere. It clearly is not. Rather, the data suggests that in a substantial number of churches, pastors are seeing real signs of renewed interest and participation among younger generations.

“In many congregations, younger adults are not only expressing curiosity about faith—they are attending, participating and leaning more fully into the life of the church. The story of the next generation and the church is still unfolding. According to pastors across the country, signs of new engagement are beginning to appear.”

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### **HOW ABOUT SOME CHURCH HUMOR!**

“As the pastor, I was giving the welcome and announcements to begin our service. It was Palm Sunday so I was briefly sharing how Jesus rode into town on a donkey, to which I inquired of the audience if anyone had come to church on a donkey. A reply came from a woman in the audience. She points to her husband and says, ‘No, but I came with one.’”

– David

“As told in *Funny Church Stories Pastors Will Never Forget*,” by *Ministry Pass*



### ***EASTER BASKETS OF PLENTY!***

A big thank you to those who donated items and helped fill many Easter baskets that were delivered to the Chatham Housing Authority recently. The baskets will be given to the elderly and families with children.

“Many thanks,” said Kathryn Whaling, Resident Services Coordinator of Homeless Prevention Council in an email to Pastor Sonny, “for thinking of CHA residents. When I think of how happy this will make our residents, it makes me smile! I look forward to visiting [your] Food Pantry when you have time to show me around.”

Beside Pastor Sonny, the “committee” that filled the baskets included Michael Firmin, Bileejo Kendrick, Diane Kennedy, Christine Riley (shown at left with the baskets), Jay Thompson, and Toni Wordell.

**Easter blessings to all!**

“The National Faith + Climate Forum is one of the nation’s largest and most diverse gatherings at the intersection of faith and climate. Each year, it brings together **more than 2,000+ participants** across **80+ in-person host locations**, representing more than **550 congregations and 30 faith traditions and denominations**. Clergy and congregational leaders of all ages come together to learn, collaborate, and implement meaningful climate solutions in their communities.

“Join us on **Saturday, April 25, 2026**, at a host location or from your home or office for a powerful hybrid event featuring **live-streamed program**. This year’s theme, **The Future We Choose: Faith in Action for a Thriving Tomorrow**, invites attendees to imagine and build the world that becomes possible when people of faith lead with courage, care, and conviction.”

*“Participation is FREE! Attend in person at one of our host locations, or online from the comfort of your own home or office.”*

**“Register online at NATIONAL FAITH + CLIMATE FORUM 2026”**

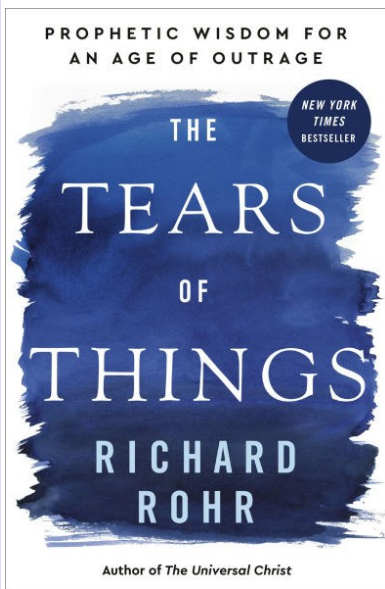
## **Keynote Speaker Announced!**

**Dr. Ayana Elizabeth Johnson**

Author of *What If We Get It Right?*,  
co-founder of *Urban Ocean Lab*,  
co-editor of *All We Can Save*, and  
co-creator *How to Save a Planet*.



*From UM News Digest - March 20, 2026*



Richard Rohr has a wonderful way with words and thoughts; e.g. his quote on the bottom left of the front page of this newsletter.

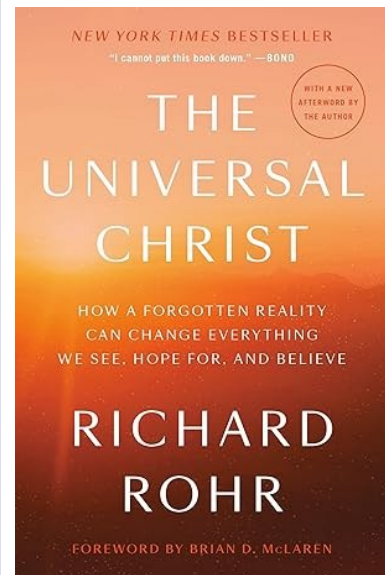
“*The Tears of Things* offers wonderful insights and discussions of the Hebrew Prophets, their indictments of their own times, and how it speaks to us today. There is inclusion of John the Baptizer and Jesus, as well. It is entirely relevant to our divisive, cruel, and unjust culture.

“A total of 10 chapters offers specific reflection of prophets including Amos, Jeremiah, Isaiah, Ezekiel, Elijah, Jonah, John the Baptizer, as well as analysis and synthesis of patterns and themes. As Rohr states: Analysis without synthesis is often useless, unhelpful, or far too critical. Synthesis without analysis is often false comfort and even untrue. The prophets showed they were masters of both. What prophets do and how they do it—particularly in the context of every community’s tendency toward idolatry (making anything

other than YHWH represent God) and external safety (relying on weapons, money, lies, and power to keep themselves safe and in control)—includes the community’s spiritual growth and maturity.

“Richard Rohr is a long-running, reliable and wise counselor to many of us and a transformative pastor and teacher. In his new study he considers the prophetic corpus of the Old Testament and its continuing pertinence for us. His ‘theme of themes’ is that mature prophecy is not marked by anger and indignation, but by love and compassion filtered through suffering and tears. Rohr brings to his study his long, discerning reflection, his immense pastoral sensibility, and his capacity for close reading. His book is a welcome entry point for us into an urgent biblical trajectory.”

*Publisher, and Walter Brueggemann, Columbia Theological Seminary*



“This text is thought-provoking, practical, and full of deep hope and vision. *The Universal Christ* is a landmark book from one of our most beloved spiritual writers, and an invitation to contemplate how God liberates and loves all that is.

“In his decades as a globally recognized teacher, Richard Rohr has helped millions realize what is at stake in matters of faith and spirituality. Yet Rohr has never written on the most perennially talked about topic in Christianity: Jesus. Most know who Jesus was, but who was Christ? Is the word simply Jesus’s last name? ‘Too often,’ Rohr writes, ‘our understandings have been limited by culture, religious debate, and the human tendency to put ourselves at the center.’

“Drawing on scripture, history, and spiritual practice, Rohr articulates a transformative view of Jesus Christ as a portrait of God’s constant, unfolding work in the world. ‘God loves things by becoming them,’ he writes, ‘and Jesus’ life was meant to declare that humanity has never been separate from God—except by its own negative choice. When we recover this fundamental truth, faith becomes less about proving Jesus was God, and more about learning to recognize the Creator’s presence all around us, and in everyone we meet.’”

*Center for Action and Contemplation; New York Times best seller.*

## CHURCH CALENDAR

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
			<b>1</b> 11-2 Thrift Shop and Food Pantry OPEN	<b>2</b> 8:30-9:30am Osteo Exercise in Fellowship Hall 9:30—Meditation in Heberton Rm. 11-2 Thrift Shop and Food Pantry OPEN	<b>3</b> 11-2 Thrift Shop and Food Pantry OPEN  <b>4:00PM GOOD FRIDAY SERVICE</b>	<b>4</b> 11-2 Thrift Shop and Food Pantry OPEN  <b>EASTER EVE</b>
<b>5</b> 10am Worship <b>EASTER SUNDAY</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b> 8:30-9:30 Osteo Exercise in Fellowship Hall  9:30—Meditation in Heberton Rm.	<b>8</b> 11-2 Thrift Shop and Food Pantry OPEN  3:00 Finance & Trustees	<b>9</b> 8:30-9:30am Osteo Exercise in Fellowship Hall 9:30—Meditation in Heberton Rm. 11-2 Thrift Shop and Food Pantry OPEN	<b>10</b> 11-2 Thrift Shop and Food Pantry OPEN	<b>11</b> 11-2 Thrift Shop and Food Pantry OPEN
<b>12</b> 10am Worship <b>POT LUCK LUNCHEON</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>14</b> 8:30-9:30 Osteo Exercise in Fellowship Hall  9:30—Meditation in Heberton Rm.	<b>15</b> 11-2 Thrift Shop and Food Pantry OPEN	<b>16</b> 8:30-9:30am Osteo Exercise in Fellowship Hall 9:30—Meditation in Heberton Rm. 11-2 Thrift Shop and Food Pantry OPEN	<b>17</b> 11-2 Thrift Shop and Food Pantry OPEN	<b>18</b> 11-2 Thrift Shop and Food Pantry OPEN
<b>19</b> 10am—Worship	<b>20</b> <b>DEADLINE FOR MAY NEWSLETTER</b>	<b>21</b> 8:30-9:30 Osteo Exercise in Fellowship Hall  9:30—Meditation in Heberton Rm.	<b>22</b> 11-2 Thrift Shop and Food Pantry OPEN	<b>23</b> 8:30-9:30am Osteo Exercise in Fellowship Hall 9:30—Meditation in Heberton Rm. 11-2 Thrift Shop and Food Pantry OPEN	<b>24</b> 11-2 Thrift Shop and Food Pantry OPEN	<b>25</b> 11-2 Thrift Shop and Food Pantry OPEN
<b>26</b> 10am—Worship	<b>27</b>	<b>28</b> 8:30-9:30 Osteo Exercise in Fellowship Hall  9:30—Meditation in Heberton Rm.	<b>29</b> 11-2 Thrift Shop and Food Pantry OPEN	<b>30</b> 8:30-9:30am Osteo Exercise in Fellowship Hall 9:30—Meditation in Heberton Rm. 11-2 Thrift Shop and Food Pantry OPEN		



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