

CHURCH AT THE CENTER

FEBRUARY 2025



FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH

"CENTER CHURCH"

United Church of Christ

One Church Street

South Hadley, Massachusetts 01075

(413) 532-2262

Email: centerchurch@verizon.net

Website: centerchurchsouthhadley.org/

Facebook: Center Church of South Hadley MA

Instagram: @centerchurchsouthhadley



*ALL ARE WELCOME AT CENTER CHURCH ON THE COMMON,
AN OPEN AND AFFIRMING UCC CONGREGATION,
WHERE THE SPIRIT OF GOD STIRS US TO EMBRACE OUR DIVERSITY,
DEEPEN OUR FAITH IN JESUS, SHARE OUR TEARS AND LAUGHTER,
AND EXTEND GOD'S ABUNDANT LOVE AND JUSTICE INTO THE WORLD.*

Jesus never urges us to become a member of the Democrat, Republican, Green, AfD, or the Nuevas Ideas Party. Jesus does not have time for that. Instead, Jesus urges us to *love one another*. That is going to preoccupy us all, if taken seriously, all our lives.

Let us move ahead of any hatred and division toward God's infinite mercy and grace. We are doing that with concrete action. We were the home church where the Rev. Emily Carle was ordained. Indeed, it was a time of great joy, and celebration of the Holy Spirit. On March 14 we will be working on a Habitat for Humanity home. And on February 23rd, we will welcome Mirza Yawar Baig from the Islamic Center of Western Massachusetts. Many of us have known him for five and a half years as the Imam. He will come to preach and share in a time of conversation following the service.

While one would never try to label Yawar, he is an entrepreneur, runs his own coaching/teaching/mentoring firm, and while living in India and Ghana has handled snakes, unions, and life with grace.

The Muslims worship Allah and we worship God, the same Creator. Below are some of Yawar Baig's quotes:

****Hospitality is a state of heart**

**The truth is not difficult to see. It is difficult to swallow.
**People remember us not by what we consumed but by what we contributed.
**I will not allow what is not in my control to prevent me from doing what is in my control.
**All hatred is fire. All fire burns, and the result is always ash.

Together may we approach 2025 with God's Mercy and Grace as we seek to love one another.

With hope and blessings,
Lori

Mirza Yawar Baig created this Islam 101 video for us to view before February 23rd.
<https://youtu.be/THq3UXcL-e4>

Announcements

Silverlake [Summer Camp](#)

2025 Summer Camp registration opened Friday, January 24!

We run 1-week sessions (Sunday-Saturday) for campers entering grades 4-12. Plus, half-week family camp programs for all ages. [Learn more about summer camp at Silver Lake.](#)

[2025 Open House](#) - Saturday, May 17, 2025; 11 a.m. - 3 p.m. [Learn more](#)

Center Church offers Scholarships up to \$300/ per child – speak to Lori or Thia to learn more

Summer Staff - 2025 [summer staff](#) applications are open now.

Volunteers - Learn more about being a volunteer [Dean](#) or [bunkroom Counselor](#) and complete the [Summer Camp Volunteer Application](#) to indicate your interest in volunteering.



Breakfast and Conversation: Breakfast Conversation: February 12th, 8-9am in Fellowship Hall.
Plan on discussing a relevant topic TBA



Iman Yawar Baig will be preaching at Center Church on February 23rd with a discussion to follow. A video link about Muslim traditions will be sent out at the end of January or early February, to help us better understand this Abrahamic tradition.



A note from Mallory, our Chori Director - Since **February is Black History Month**, I wanted to choose anthems that have connections to Black music history. *Peace Like a River* is an African American spiritual. *The Storm is Passing Over* is a gospel piece written by Charles Albert Tindley, who is recognized as one of the founders of American gospel music. He was a Methodist preacher and is also credited with writing an earlier version of *We Shall Overcome*.And on another "note": Mallory (Ben) Coakley will perform at their **graduate recital on February 21st at 7:30 pm**. [Here is a link](#) with more information. Mallory says "You might notice I'm listed as Ben Coakley on the site, this is because that is the name I use at school. You can call me either, I don't mind! I will provide parking info and a map closer to the recital date."



March 2nd - **Intergenerational Potluck following worship in Fellowship Hall:** Please bring a dish to share and your favorite book, movie, or Broadway Play. We will have a great time together sharing food and what artwork inspires us.

PLEASE KEEP THE FOLLOWING PEOPLE IN YOUR PRAYERS

Continual:

Joan Duffy
Martha Guild's mother, June
Eileen Halkyard
Tom Hazen
Eunice Howes
Phyllis Lacoste
Fay Paquette
Art Stanley
Nikki Wolf, Linda's granddaughter
Those struggling with addiction



Situational:

Karen Anderson, following surgery
Sharyn Kovalesky
Leila Mulder, attending boarding school
Joanne Santos grandfather, Edwardo,
with cancer
Kendall Johnson-Smith, Preston Smith's
daughter, with cancer
Joyce Tomlinson, former Center Church member
Family and friends of Tom Vlack, cousin to
Karen and Estelle Anderson, who died Dec. 30

Call to the Annual Meeting - February 2, 2025

**The Annual Meeting of the
First Congregational Church of South Hadley Massachusetts,
aka Center Church, will be held on February 2, 2025 at approximately 11:30 AM.**

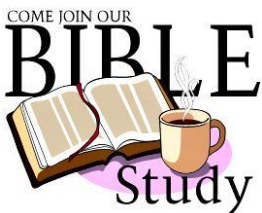
Business shall include, but not be limited to, the hearing and acting upon reports of appropriate church committees and teams; hearing and determining the budget for 2025; and other matters relevant to the church body. All members of the church are encouraged to attend this meeting.

Copies of the Annual Report will be available at the meeting.

Adult Christian Education

Bible Study: February 13, 20 and 27

We will continue with Genesis
and its chapters of explaining the meaning of God!
Join us for study, fellowship, and fun from 10-11am,
in the Conference Room
at Loomis Village.
All are welcome.



CHILDREN'S FAITH FORMATION

The curriculum unit for the month of February is "Worship God". We will focus on ways we come together as a community in worship. The four main themes of this unit include: Gather, Participate, Follow Jesus, and Bless God. A key aspect of this unit is the focus on community. Worship is a way we gather as a community, and we seek to nurture that experience in unique ways through various aspects of worship and fellowship. In perfect harmony with the conclusion of this unit on Sunday, March 2nd, we will gather as a community to share a meal and fellowship following worship. Everyone is welcome!

Blessings, *Kate Hoffman*

Confirmation: We are preliminary looking into a Confirmation Class for youth 13-18. The intention is to explore one's spiritual journey to see if the youth wants to join Center Church, UCC. *Please let Lori know if your youth is interested.* Church members will assist in sharing their passions in context to their own spiritual journeys. This is a hands-on approach desiring to capture the youth's imagination questions, and quest.

Youth Corner



In Sunday school, the youth have started a series of classes reading different passages of scripture and learning about God's vision for justice in the world. We will also continue to discuss ways that the youth might play a role in the church service and other activities outside of Sunday school.

Stewardship 2025

Our annual financial pledge campaign continues into February! Members and friends of Center Church have pledged more than \$130,000 toward our \$150,000 goal. Thank you! If you pledged for 2024 and have not yet pledged for 2025, you probably received a reminder pledge packet in the mail in mid-January. We encourage you to make a generous pledge to your capacity to Center Church for 2025. If you want to make a financial pledge, but have not received a pledge information packet, please contact the church office! Your generosity makes this church go! We appreciate your contributions, so Center Church can do the work locally & globally to spread God's love, create compassionate Christian community, and work for a just world for all!



In other news, our new website is up and running! Please visit <https://www.centerchurchsouthhadley.org> and share with your friends and neighbors!

We're always looking for pictures and stories of our church being the church. Email content and content suggestions to centerchurch@verizon.net.

News from the Trustees for February 2025

The trustees had their first meeting of 2025 on January 8 when we heard the usual updates from Pastor Lori and our final 2024 financial figures. We are still working on the heat for Fellowship Hall and the Park St. door's walkway issue. We heard the good news, which you will hear at the Annual Meeting, that our 2024 total income actually came in at 101.22% of the expected amount. Huge thanks go to the work of the Activities Team who added \$13,600 to that dollar total!! The miscellaneous income total was 172.17% higher than 2023. Total expenses came in at 100.23% of what we had projected, with some lower ones counteracting a few higher ones. After discussion about those figures, we voted to cover the **-\$28,873.61** from our United Church Funds restricted other account so that we could start 2025 in the clear. As reported in last month's CAC, we spent the majority of our meeting on the 2025 projected budget to be ready for the February 2 Annual Meeting.

Treasurer John Hoffman has done a great job of keeping us supplied with excellent financial spreadsheets and graphs all year so we can track all sorts of numbers. We are still waiting to hear from a few members who have not yet made pledge commitments for this current year but we are expecting that some of those will come in. We continue to be very thankful for the already pledged amounts by many of you. Please know how much we appreciate your confidence, especially for all of you who made increased commitments for 2025! With that in mind and reflecting on how miscellaneous income did in 2024 as well as our permanently restricted funds whose interest income we pull out twice a year, we are projecting a budget of \$264,800, with total expenses of \$296,668.49, giving us a projected deficit of **-\$31,868.49**. Any changes in these amounts will be reported to everyone at the meeting on 2/2.

2024 and 2025 trustees include: Karen Anderson, Eliot Chartrand, Bill Giles, Cindy Morrell (non-voting), Mary Nelson and Randy Purinton plus ex-officio members John Hoffman, treasurer and Lori Souder, pastor. We all look forward to serving the church in this new year.

Cynthia J. Morrell, secretary

Notes from Church Council

The Council met virtually on Tuesday, January 7. Corinne Chartrand of Activities was the Lead pro-tem. The meeting was opened at 7:03 p.m. and Kate Hoffman led us in devotions. She read lyrics from the hymn "I am the Light of the World." Treasurer John Hoffman gave a preliminary year-end report of the 2024 church budget. His total report will be printed in the Annual Report. The Council had a further discussion about inter-generational planning with a possible potluck breakfast on March 2. It is hoped that the youth will participate in the preparations for the breakfast. Lori has been in touch with the Imam of the West Springfield Muslim congregation to come and preach at Center Church. The Imam also has a video to share with us. Council asked that the list of teams and what they do be printed in the Sunday bulletin. It is hoped that this will engender some involvement on the part of the congregation. Rachel Alldis reported that she is looking into a New York City musical theatre bus trip for Center Church. It was **MSV** unanimously to accept the monetary scholarship arrangement for Silver Lake registration. Brian Lapis accepted the position of temporary moderator for the Annual Meeting on February 2. Our next Zoom meeting will be Tuesday, February 4, with Kate Hoffman as Lead pro-tem and Rachel Alldis leading devotions.

Deacon's Notes

The major role of the deacons happens on Sunday morning. We have a few chores that are done before the service starts such as putting the hymn numbers up and filling the candles with oil. Then when worship is over, a few more chores to do such as locking the doors, turning off lights and cleaning up. These are some of the mundane tasks of the deacons. At our meetings, one of the discussions revolves around upcoming worship services. We are very pleased that on February 23, Mirza Yawar Biag will be preaching. Lori has a special relationship with him over several years. We encourage you to listen to his message. In our ever-changing world, we look forward to his words and how we can apply them in our daily lives.

Outreach Team

Granby To-Go

Providing food, clothing, and resources

Since early January, the Outreach Committee has been collecting warm clothing for local donation to **Granby to Go**, an organization that serves families of school children in Granby and in South Hadley. Early on, your donations have been so very generous, resulting in much appreciated deliveries and in continued thanks from the Outreach Committee. We will accept donations at least through February in the bin located at the Church Street entrance.



The **Operation Backpack container** has remained downstairs by the side door along with the Neighbors Helping Neighbors and Granby-to-Go containers. School supplies have continuously been put into them.

A monetary donation from the Outreach Team will soon be made to Sheila Adams at Operation Backpack, and the supplies donated will also be taken to her. As the second part of the school year begins, she always receives calls to replenish items for children.

So anything else you can add will certainly be appreciated. Thank you for all you do to help our community.



The **devastation caused by the California wildfires** has left countless families without homes, communities in mourning, and landscapes forever changed. As the smoke clears, the work of recovery begins – and it's a long road ahead.

Your support can bring lasting hope to those affected by this crisis. Donate **to the UCC's California Wildfires 2025 Appeal** - Your gift will support the community's immediate needs and long-term recovery efforts as we work with local communities to ensure an equitable approach to their long-term recovery. Your gift will help provide resources including emotional and spiritual care to families in need. It will also support long-term recovery efforts, ensuring communities can rebuild stronger and more resilient.

When disaster strikes, the United Church of Christ responds. Together, we can show God's love in action. Will you help us meet this urgent need?

Thank you for standing with California's communities during this time of unreal hardship. Your generosity will make a difference.

In hope and solidarity,

Rev. Kent Siladi, Interim Director of Philanthropy, United Church of Christ

P.S. 100% of your donation will go directly to disaster relief efforts. Every gift matters. You may give through Center Church - writing "California Wildfires" in the memo of your check.

From the Church Historian – February 2025

SYCAMORES A VERITABLE TREASURE



Going north on Route 116 in town is the historic 1788 home of Col. Ruggles Woodbridge (1739-1819). The Col. was the son of our second minister John Woodbridge. The house is considered one of the “most impressive Eighteenth Century house in South Hadley...and also in the entire Connecticut River Valley.” It is considered a Georgian style mansion which the Col. chose as its’ architecture. It was done to reflect his position and affluence. The mansion was built on the grounds of the family farm. Sycamores is on the National Register of Historic Places.



Col. Woodbridge “was South Hadley’s wealthiest resident” when he built Sycamores. He led a regiment at the Battle of Bunker Hill and was also a field surgeon in Washington’s army. He owned parts of various mills in the South Hadley vicinity. Col. Woodbridge became a representative from South Hadley in the State legislature. He eventually turned his home into a boarding school for boys from as far away as Hartford and New York City.

Sycamores was acquired by the South Hadley Historical Society in 1999 from Mount Holyoke College for \$1.00! The College had used the building for a dormitory from 1916-1965. It then became the restoration project of retired Mount Holyoke Professor of Chemistry Kenneth Williamson. Ken’s wife Louise was the “unofficial co-chair and enabler.” Both Ken and Louise were long-time members of Center Church. He took on the massive renovation and started with the first floor which eventually cost \$ 270,745.33.



Louise and Ken Williamson

In October 2005, the Rawson House was acquired and moved from 40 Woodbridge Street back to its original location at 28 Woodbridge Street. This house was our first minister’s home built in 1732-3. The house is post and beam construction. With its inclusion attached to Sycamores, the complex has “made it an educational and cultural asset” as well as a landmark and a “living museum” for the community.

We are grateful for all the many volunteers and donors (and members of Center Church) who endeavored to restore and maintain this beautiful historical edifice. Also, many thanks go to those who took on and completed the efforts it took to have the museum become a National Register of Historic Places!

If you would like to visit the Sycamores Museum, call 413-322-9026, for days and times it’s open.

Tell Me the Stories - February 2025

Our first hymn from the December ones sung is *In a Lowly Manger Born* (NCH 162). Although we have sung it before, I have never featured it here. The text was written by Kō Yūki in 1923 as part of his Poems on the Life of Jesus which was published in 1929. It is said to be very popular all over Japan. Born in Sakaiminato, he took courses in biblical science, theology, and French literature at Kwansei Gakuin University in Osaka and received a PhD from there. He was named pastor emeritus of a Tokyo church in 1971 where he had served for 50 years. He has written or translated some 500 hymns. This is his only hymn in the NCH. The bottom of the hymn page says he is known as a “Christian educator, Pascal scholar and prolific hymnwriter.” The tune “Mabune” composer Seigi Abe, also Japanese, comes from the same era and was born in Sendai six years before Yūki. This tune was composed in 1930. The word itself means “manger”. First published in 1931, it is the “one of the best loved and most widely sung hymns in the Japanese community.” He came to the NE Conservatory of Music (Boston) from 1913-1926, studying sacred music, voice, piano and composition. After receiving his degree, he went back home and taught at a Presbyterian boys school there from 1927-1948. This is his only tune in the NCH as well. This is one of a number of Japanese written/composed hymns included in the NCH. It is also noted that the translator Vern Rossmans served as an American missionary to Japan.

Our second hymn *Let Justice Flow Like Streams* (NCH 588) is placed in the NCH “justice and peace” section. The text was written by Jane Parker Huber in 1984 who wrote it as a message to “measure up” to God’s standard especially for a consultation on economic justice for women when the two Presbyterian denominations, which had been divided since the Civil War, reunified in 1984. It is one of our shorter hymns but has a very clear message and is based on *Amos 1-9*. This consultation was “initiated by racial-ethnic women who saw economic justice as it impacts on the lives of women and children as an issue on which all the women’s groups could unite.” Huber was born in China where her missionary parents were stationed and spent most of her life at Hanover College, Indiana where her father served as president from 1929-1958. She is affiliated with a total of ten hymns in the NCH and has none in the PH. Huber says she chooses tunes which fit into the mood of her words. “St. Thomas” an anonymous melody was part of Aaron Williams’s The Universal Psalmist, but it also appeared in another collection of tunes in 1770. The actual composer is not known. Williams was a music engraver, publisher, and teacher in London in the mid-to-late 1770s. (CAC 9/16, 11/16)

Our third hymn is *As We Gather at Your Table* (NCH 332). Carl P. Daw, Jr. wrote the text in 1989 for the 30th anniversary of an Episcopal church in Virginia Beach. The text is a prayer which can inspire us as we come to the communion table. Carl was actually inspired to begin writing hymns during his time on the Standing Committee on Church Music as the Episcopal Church began work on The Hymnal in 1982. Daw is affiliated with eight other NCH hymns. The tune “Beach Spring” however first appeared in 1844’s The Sacred Harp. It was either written or adapted by Benjamin F. White. He was a singing school teacher and a self-taught musician working in the South. He had 13 brothers and sisters, he being the youngest, and he, in turn, produced 14 children. This particular harmonization was done specifically for the NCH in 1992. (CAC 3/09, 4/19)



Cindy Morrell, Associate in Music

Resources used: Jane Parker Huber’s A Singing Faith, (1987); The New Century Hymnal Companion, ed. Kristen Forman (1998).



- 03 Kate Hoffman
- 04 Ryan Gage
- 05 Bill Giles
- 07 Paula Lane-Major
- 11 Judy Hemingway
- 12 Brittany Bryan
- 20 Kiki Tipton
- 24 Suzanne Cordes
- 26 Aaron Sabbs



South Hadley United Methodist Church
 Holyoke, South Hadley, and Granby
 30 Carew Street, South Hadley, MA 01075-2705 413.532-0500
 e-mail: office@UMCSouthHadley.org www.umcsouthhadley.org

December 24 2024

Center Congregational Church,

Thank you for your donation of gifts and more.

Thanks to your donation, along with the many others who donated money, gifts and time to the Secret Santa mission, we were able to give 140 children from 65 families a Merry Christmas.

Donated hats, mittens and books were included with the gifts. Without help from people like you, many of these children would not have had any Christmas at all. You helped to brighten their holiday.

Included in the gifts for each family was a 'Thank You' listing groups who made our churches Secret Santa program possible. A copy of the handout is included.

Happy New Year!

With appreciation,

Secret Santa Committee
 South Hadley Methodist Church

Pastor Hwang Heo
 Pastor

Dr. Heather Reichgott
 Minister of Music

Ann Felsentreger
 Secretary

Neighbors Helping Neighbors
 Food Pantry
 413-437-7593

Cathedral in the Night
 867 North Pleasant Street
 Amherst, Massachusetts 01002

cathedral
 IN THE NIGHT

www.cathedralinthenight.com
 info@cathedralinthenight.org

January 3, 2025

First Congregational Church
 One Church Street
 South Hadley, MA 01075

Dear friends,

Thank you for the contribution of \$400 in the fourth quarter of 2024. We are so grateful for your gift and we truly value your commitment to our work.

We look forward to your continued support for the mission of Cathedral in 2025. Your contribution enables us to serve all God's children who come for a warm meal on Sundays in Northampton and to proclaim a message of God's love. It also helps us serve our wider community, not just on Sunday but throughout the week.

Thank you again.

God's Peace be with you.

Nat Larson
 Treasurer
 Treasurer@cathedralinthenight.org

www.cathedralinthenight.com
 Mailing address: 867 N. Pleasant St., Amherst, MA 01002
 Pastor Stephanie Smith cell: 413-575-0845 email: pastorstepsmith@gmail.com

Pursuant to Internal Revenue Service requirements for substantiation of charitable contributions, no goods or services were provided in return for these contributions.

THE MINISTRY AT CENTER CHURCH

Ministers: All Church Members
Senior Minister: Rev. Lori J. Souder

Christian Education Program

Children: Kate Hoffman, Julie Burke, Emily Mulder

Youth: Kenneth Mulder

Nursery Caregiver: Annabelle Burke

Music

Organist: Larry Schipull

Choir Director: Mallory Coakley

Associate in Music: Cynthia Morrell

Office Administrator: Cynthia Jubinville

Sexton: Robert Farman



[Look through the Summer Camp 2025 Sessions](#)

2025 Summer Camp registration opens Friday, January 24 at 9am!

[Download the 2025 Summer Camp Calendar flyer \(PDF\)](#)

We run 1-week sessions (Sunday-Saturday) for campers entering grades 4-12. Plus, half-week family camp programs for all ages.

2025 Standard Program* Tiered Pricing: \$940 / \$850 / \$760

**Some programs may have slightly different pricing, or an additional program fee.*

Early Bird Discount

Save \$75 off each summer camp registration made before March 1, 2025.

Use code: **Early25**

[Learn more about tiered pricing and additional camper financial support information.](#)