

UNITED
CHURCH
of CHRIST
NORWELL

WHO *we are*

WHAT *we believe*

HOW *we serve*





UNITED CHURCH *of* CHRIST NORWELL

Welcome to the United Church of Christ in Norwell! We are a Christ-centered, inclusive community, called to ministry. UCC Norwell is an open and affirming church, which means we welcome all people regardless of ethnic background, age, sexual orientation, nationality, marital status, or physical or mental ability.

This book is intended to provide an overview of our theology, ministry, and life together.

At the heart of our life together is our commitment to the ministry of the laity, believing that we are all called to be ministers to the world in our places of work, homes, schools, and church community. We covenant together to support one another in understanding our whole lives as ministry. Please use this guidebook as a point of reference as you discern how God might be calling you to serve within and beyond the church.

Your Sister in Christ,

Rev. Leanne Walt



Leadership + Structure

MINISTRY TEAMS

At UCC Norwell, we are organized around a call-based leadership and ministry structure, whereby we encourage church members and affiliates to serve within this body of Christ in ways that inspire, energize, and fill them with a sense of purpose. We have over 30 Ministry Teams that have emerged as the Spirit moves. Ministry Teams are not appointed committees, they have no term limits, and you do not have to be a member of UCC Norwell in order to join a Ministry Team. Currently, our Ministry Teams focus on Ministries of Prayer + Presence, Mission + Outreach, Worship + Spiritual Life, Faith Formation, Hospitality, Christian Fellowship, and Finance + Administration.

Beginning on page 8, you will find a listing of the various Ministry Teams within the church that meet regularly and minister to our congregation and to the community. These groups welcome new members—contact the cohort lead for more information or to join a Ministry Team.

LEADERSHIP

We are a congregational church. Because the congregation is the governing body of the church, the congregation appoints Officers (Moderators, Treasurer, Clerk, Co-Financial Secretaries) and Council to lead and make decisions on its behalf. Church Council is comprised of the officers of the church, nine members-at-large, and a representative from Building + Grounds. Church Council is convened by the Moderator and meets on the last Tuesday of the month (August through June) from 7:00 - 9:00 p.m. Contact the Moderator if you would like to attend. Council meeting minutes are available through the church office at any time.

The congregation also elects members to the Finance, Human Resources, Safe Church, Endowment, and Building + Grounds Committees on an annual basis in order to ensure that we are serving as responsible stewards of God's resources and providing a safe and nurturing environment for volunteers, staff, and the congregation at large.

We hold a congregational meeting on the last Sunday in January to vote on nominations, the budget, and to discuss and/or vote on pertinent matters that come before the congregation. All are welcome to attend; voting is by members only.

The United Church of Christ

Our local church belongs to a larger denominational body, The United Church of Christ (UCC), a mainline Protestant denomination. Founded in 1957, the UCC is one of the most diverse Christian Churches in the United States. Taking seriously Jesus' commandment to "love your neighbor," the UCC is known for its inclusive welcome toward all people and was the first historically white denomination to ordain an African-American, the first to ordain a woman, and the first to ordain an openly gay man to the clergy.

At Annual Meeting, we nominate delegates to represent UCC Norwell at wider church gatherings. Our delegates attend local denominational meetings and events that consider the call of new clergy through the Pilgrim Association of the Southern New England Conference of the UCC (SNEUCC). Delegates also attend the SNEUCC Annual Meeting. Every other year in June, UCC General Synod gathers—this is the national decision-making body for the denomination.

Through our covenantal partnership with the UCC, we receive resources and support to strengthen a variety of our ministries, such as stewardship, administration, faith formation, and social justice. Perhaps the most valuable way the UCC supports the local church is by helping to facilitate the interim and settled search processes in the event of a pastoral vacancy.

In return for this support, we give an annual financial contribution to the UCC national and local settings based on our membership size and budget. It should be noted that we do not receive any monetary support from the UCC. UCC Norwell is entirely self-funded—supporting the transformative work of our ministries through annual pledge dollars generously given by church members and friends.



The Sacraments

As a Protestant, congregational church, we celebrate two sacraments: baptism and holy communion. The sacraments are symbolic acts of remembrance of the life of Jesus Christ and expressions of his continual presence with us.

BAPTISM

Baptism is the rite of welcoming individuals of all ages into the care and community of Christ's church. Through baptism we are marked by the love of God and reminded that we are God's beloved children and that though we may falter and stray, God's love will never falter or stray from us. The act of baptism does not itself have saving power. We are saved already by God freely and lovingly reconciling God's self to us in Christ; saved by the very grace of God.

We understand baptism to be a covenant formed between God, the baptized (and/or guardians of the baptized), and the Church. In baptism, the guardians or the individual being baptized commit to nurturing their faith through Christian community. We participate in the act of baptism as a body of Christ gathered in the spirit of worship, remembering that we do not walk alone from the waterside into the costs and joys of discipleship, but that we journey together.

While all baptismal requests are given special consideration, we are especially grateful to baptize those who have found a spiritual home at UCC Norwell.

COMMUNION

The communion table is where our faith and theology are most fully expressed. In the breaking of the bread and drinking of the cup, we remember Jesus' life and celebrate his resurrection, recognizing his continual presence with us. It is called holy communion because at this table we are communing with Jesus Christ himself, his spirit enlivening ours and his life empowering ours to serve others, to forgive, to love, and to offer hope and healing to the world. In this act, we are also communing with each other, acknowledging the two most basic needs we share: food and community.

Membership

Membership is a spiritual and material commitment to continue on your pilgrimage of faith with your sisters and brothers in Christ at UCC Norwell. Joining UCC Norwell means that you feel this community is a place where you can grow in relationship with God, Jesus, and others, as you seek to minister to the world.

We encourage newcomers to attend for a period of at least eight months to one year before committing to membership at UCC Norwell. Take this time to become acquainted with the community at UCC Norwell: regularly attend worship, ask questions, make connections, and even become involved through Saturday Serve days, singing in the choir, teaching church school, or participating in a Ministry Team.

If you decide to become a member of the church, you will be asked to attend one of our new member sessions to learn more about the church and build relationships with others in the community. Typically, the Membership Development Team offers these sessions in the fall and in the spring. The actual new member joining service occurs during a Sunday morning worship, at the conclusion of each new member session. At this time, new members pledge their commitment to growing in faith and discipleship with this particular community of Christians and current members pledge their commitment to support new members in their faith journey. As part of this service, we light candles on the communion table, symbolizing our response to Jesus' call to let our light shine into the world. Receiving new members is a joyful time for the Church and for God!



Children + Youth

Children's Ministry

We offer fun, engaging Christian Formation programming for children Pre-K through Middle School. During COVID, children's faith formation offerings have included monthly Pray + Play events, Faith at Home kits, Park + Praise Church School, and Compassion Camp.

Our programs are rooted in exploring the Bible and empowering our children to find their own place in God's story. We value curiosity, wonder, and play. Our staff and volunteers partner with families to cultivate the spiritual growth and development of our children. Our desire is that through prayer, worship, play, and service our children will develop a personal relationship with God.

Youth Ministry

Every Sunday from 3:00 to 5:00, we gather for Youth Group for youth grades 6 through 12. Together, with our staff and volunteers, we cultivate a space where youth grow in courage and discipleship through games, small groups, Bible study, and service.

Every spring, youth 8th grade and up participate in a week-long service trip to learn more about current realities of poverty and oppression and to find their place in God's dream of justice for all people. Youth Group at UCC Norwell provides a space for youth to be themselves, build community, and to deepen their Christian faith.

Safe Church

As the spiritual home for people of all ages, UCC Norwell takes seriously our responsibility to create an environment that nurtures the faith of individuals within our community, ensures their safety and minimizes their risk for harm. Accordingly, staff and volunteers are required to complete CORI and SORI checks on an annual basis, as well as comply with our Safe Church Guidelines and Procedures. UCC Norwell's Safe Church Guidelines and Procedures outlines shared expectations, practices and procedures so as to ensure the safety and well-being of our volunteers, staff, youth, children and vulnerable populations to whom we are called to minister. Copies are available upon request through the church office.

Ministries of Prayer + Presence

Cohort Lead: *Marybeth Shea (mbsh1@comcast.net)*

Ministry of Caring

Supports church family and friends at times of illness and death with cards and meals. Sends cards to those in nursing homes and other shut-ins, arranges “goodie bags” for the service project and college freshmen, and organizes a note-writing table to thank others for their outreach.

Healing and Wholeness

Intentionally provides opportunities for community and personal healing and wholeness through worship and prayer.

Health Awareness

Promotes health, healing, and wholeness by empowering individuals to incorporate positive health practices into their daily lives. Provides information, education, and resources so that parishioners may make informed choices, and provides a faith-based support system.

Pastoral Care

Members are invited by the Lead Pastor to assist in meeting the needs of our church family with pastoral visits and calls, generally after an initial contact by a Pastor.

Prayerful Stitches

Knits shawls and baby blankets while praying for individuals in critical need of prayer. Sends shawls to individuals along with CDs, cards of encouragement, support, and prayer on behalf of the congregation.

Secret Intercessory Prayer Partner

A ministry devoted to prayer. A Secret Prayer Partner is someone who is committed to intentionally pray for another person every day for a year. The Partners are drawn by lot and kept a secret for a year, so every Partner will not know who is praying for them. Every spring, the Prayer Partners gather for the “Big Reveal Luncheon” where the participants discover the identity of their Secret Prayer Partner.

WISE Team (Welcoming, Inclusive, Supportive + Engaged)

Seeks to provide a ministry of hope, compassion and caring to those living with mental health challenges or other chronic brain disorders, addictions and trauma. Develops and leads programming for our congregation and the wider community aimed at raising awareness and lifting the stigma that so often surrounds mental illness.

Ministries of Outreach, Peace + Justice

Cohort Lead: Margaret Dawson (margdawson0148@gmail.com)

ASAPROSAR (Salvadoran Association for Rural Health)

Works with the neediest families in El Salvador through health care, youth leadership training, environmental and nutritional education, microcredit, and community development. Priority is given to women, children, and youth in rural and marginalized urban settings. Annually, volunteers from UCC Norwell are invited to travel to El Salvador and participate in the programs of ASAPROSAR. The trip is usually a week in duration and designed with input from the participants.

Community Engagement

Engages and funds new ministries on the South Shore, in association with church members. Invests in ministries that are expansions of our current work at UCC Norwell, as well as newly created projects on the South Shore.

Fair Trade Initiative

Promotes conscious consumerism by educating people on the importance of purchasing goods produced through trading partnerships that respect the rights of marginalized producers, workers, small farmers, artisans, and women. Sells Equal Exchange products after Sunday worship, works to pass fair trade resolutions, and hosts an annual Fair Trade/Local Artisan Alternative Market. Our church received national UCC recognition in 2019.

Mission and Outreach (M+O)

Reaches beyond the walls of the church, locally and globally, to serve the needs of God's world with donations of time, talent, and funds from our congregation. M&O responds to Christ's call to "care for my people."

The Team locates and researches deserving organizations and programs that require care and assistance, especially groups in which members of our church are actively involved. Assistance can be provided in the form of prayer, hands-on help, referral, networking, funding, or any combination. Each organization that requests funding must submit an application describing how they allocate resources, how our funds will be used, and how they might provide hands-on opportunities for UCC Norwell.

South Shore Interfaith Coalition Against Human Trafficking

Raises awareness and provides education about human trafficking in the community—locally, nationally, and globally. Advocates for victims' rights and supports survivors of human trafficking, a modern-day form of slavery.

Ministries of Worship + Spiritual Life

Cohort Lead: *Harry Solis* (harrypsolis@verizon.net)

Deacons

Tends to the sacramental life of the church by assisting with communion, baptism, and other services, and prays for those in need. Oversees the overall safety of the building on Sundays for service and works with other Ministry Teams on sanctuary set-up and functionality.

Flowers

Uses creativity with God's gifts of nature to honor and remember our loved ones and to enhance our visual worship experience. The only requirement of arrangers is to find joy in what they are doing! No experience is necessary. Welcomes new "flower friends" any time; the more, the better variety, and the more fun for all who contribute.

Liturgical Arts

Creates and installs in the sanctuary artistic representations for each of the liturgical seasons in order to visually enhance our worship space and deepen our worship experience.

Memorial Garden

Provides an attractive and permanent place for the burial of the cremated remains of members and friends of the church, as well as a quiet and reverent location for members and friends buried elsewhere to be memorialized.

Music

Provides people of all ages and abilities with quality music programs that echo our faith and glorify God. Supports the Minister of Music in the development of a music ministry that addresses all facets of UCC's musical life including choirs, education, sustainability, and community outreach. With a diversity of offerings throughout the year, the hope is that listeners and participants alike will experience the transformative power of the Holy Spirit in their lives.

Sound Room

Manages the sound system and video projector during worship services. Provides superior sound distribution and audio recording of Sunday services, makes copies of the recordings for the congregation, and distributes hearing assisted listening devices.

Ministries of Faith Formation

Cohort Lead: Gwen Morgan (gmorgs@comcast.net)

Adult Christian Education (ACE)

Develops and oversees adult Christian Education curriculum and programming. Seeks to promote spiritual and theological development through small group educational offerings, with topics ranging from social justice to theological explorations. You do not have to be on the ACE Ministry Team to lead an ACE group.

Family Ministry Team

Strives to create avenues for kids to care for themselves, others, and the Earth by building intergenerational relationships, cultivating spiritual practices for the whole family, deepening relationships to God, and serving our community. The Family Ministry Team administers church school, Vacation Bible Camp, and other events and programs for the community. During COVID, children's faith formation offerings have included monthly Pray + Play events, Faith at Home kits, Park + Praise Church School, and Compassion Camp.

Gifts & Call

Helps individuals discern their unique gifts and call on the journey toward living their whole lives as ministry in God's world.

H.O.P.E. Puppet Ministry (Helping Our Puppets Educate)

With both youth and adult members, H.O.P.E. spreads God's love and Word through puppetry.

Youth Ministry

Provides our youth, from Middle School through High School (including 8th grade Confirmation), with a welcoming and safe space to explore and discover what it means to serve as ministers to the world. We believe each of us has unique gifts to share with the world, and our Youth Ministry Team is dedicated to helping teens discover how to use their gifts to make a world-changing difference.

Ministries of Hospitality

Cohort Lead: Denise Miller (dechristoforo@gmail.com)

Coffee Ministry Team

Promotes welcoming fellowship by serving coffee and punch after Sunday church services. Members are very flexible to cover each other for absences and occasionally prepare additional refreshments for meetings, choir, etc. The Team always welcomes new members to “serve” with them!

Fellowship

Sponsors and organizes church-wide events throughout the year to improve the congregation’s sense of community and connectedness.

Membership Development

Promotes a welcoming atmosphere at UCC Norwell, encouraging visitors to continue to attend and to become further involved in the church’s ministries. Organizes and runs the new member classes for frequent visitors and strives to help new members “get connected” with the church and with other members.

Ushers

Greets friends and visitors as they enter the sanctuary, distributes bulletins, provides additional seating at the back when needed, and collects the offering. Organized into 5 teams (one for each Sunday of the month, plus the occasional fifth week) and additional “on call” substitutes, our service is centered on the weekly worship.



Ministries of Finance + Administration

Cohort Lead: Allison Hughan (ahughan@uccnorwell.org)

Buildings + Grounds

Ensures the physical plant of the Church provides a safe, secure, multipurpose environment for all staff, congregation, visitors, church ministries, outside groups and the New Nursery School.

Endowment Committee

Oversees and manages the church's investment funds in accordance with our mission and vision. Chaired by the Treasurer.

Finance Committee

Appointed by Church Council, reviews church finances on a continual basis, develops and recommends all budgets to Council and the Congregation, and recommends to Council actions that support the long-term financial health of our church. Chaired by the Past Moderator.

Human Resources Committee

Appointed by Church Council, maintains appropriate working conditions and quality of life for all employees, as well as open communication with the church staff on employment-related issues or concerns.

Stewardship

Raises awareness and understanding of the meaning of Christian stewardship and makes members and friends aware of opportunities to contribute time, talent, and treasure in support of the ministries of UCC Norwell, and oversees the annual stewardship campaign.



Additional Ministries

Food Circle (aka “The Bread Run”)

Regularly picks up donations of bread and baked goods from local stores and restaurants and delivers them to our neighbors in need on the South Shore. New members welcome and needed!

Contact: Laurie Galvin (lbgalvin9@gmail.com)

COVID-19 Community Response Task Force

Administers fund established to support those most affected by COVID-19 within our church community and the surrounding community. Distributions seek to provide comfort, compassion, and access to resources for individuals and communities adversely impacted by the pandemic, as well as to non-profit organizations who provide critical social services related to COVID-19.

Contact: Carl Isihara (hisihara2002@gmail.com)

Racial Justice Task Force

Prayerfully discerns pathways for how our congregation will embody our commitment to racial justice throughout the life of our church including our worship and spiritual life, educational programming, community outreach, and systems of operation and mission.

Contact: Jack Spurr (jack@awperry.com)

Office Angels

Help in the church office with collating bulletins, special projects, or filling in when the Minister of Parish Life is out of the office.

Contact: Debbie Wheeler (office@uccnorwell.org)

A Simple Gesture-Norwell

Collects food 5-6 times a year (door to door) from registered donor households using volunteer drivers. The food is distributed to food pantries in the Norwell area to provide a steady supply of food to those in need throughout the year. This group was launched at UCC in 2015 with many of the church's members contributing regularly.

Contact: Karen Farmer (karenfarm@gmail.com)

Additional Ministries

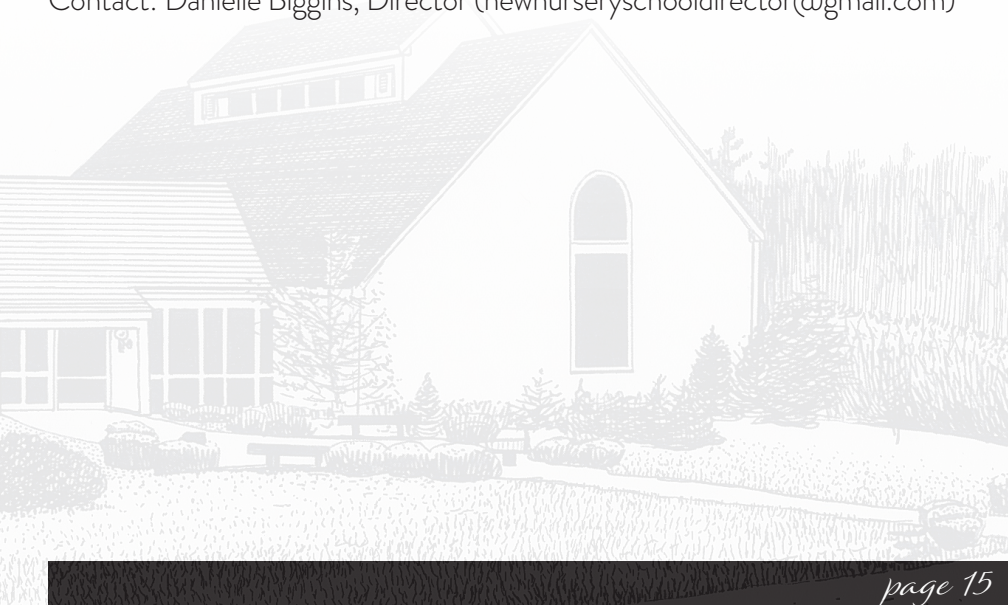
The Linden Ponds Community Church

The Linden Ponds Community Church (LPCC) began in 2014 as a community engagement mission of the United Church of Christ in Norwell. LPCC provides a vital and inclusive Christian church experience for residents of Linden Ponds, a senior living community, through weekly worship, pastoral care, and mission and outreach opportunities. Initially financed by UCC Norwell's Community Engagement Fund, LPCC is now a growing, self-funded church of UCC Norwell, with 80-100 worship participants. Contact: Rev. Deborah Spratley, Pastor (dspratley@uccnorwell.org)

The New Nursery School

The New Nursery School of UCC Norwell was founded in 1977 as a mission of the church. The school is operated by a Parent Advisory Committee made up of church members and parents. The school is nondenominational and is licensed by the Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care.

New Nursery provides a warm and nurturing environment for children ages 2-5 years old, where the spirit of discovery is encouraged through activities appropriate to children's developmental levels. Small class size and low teacher/child ratios allow children to develop socially, emotionally and intellectually in a setting where they are valued and respected as individuals. Contact: Danielle Biggins, Director (newnurseryschooldirector@gmail.com)





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A faded, grayscale photograph of a church building. The building is white with dark shutters on the windows. A prominent feature is a white tower or steeple with three crosses on its facade. The church is surrounded by trees and greenery.

UCCNORWELL.ORG
email: office@uccnorwell.org