

January 2026



Holmdel Community United Church of Christ

An Open and Affirming Congregation

FROM THE PASTOR REV. NADA SELLERS

I pray that out of [God's] glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being,¹⁷ so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love,¹⁸ may have power, together with all the Lord's holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ... (Eph. 3:16-18)

The day is coming fast! As I write we are heading into a new year in less than 24 hours and I am amazed at how many of our "firsts" together as congregation and leader have taken place! Lent to Easter; Easter to Pentecost; Summer into Fall and Advent to Christmas and soon...Epiphany, 2026.

This is a pattern we continue to cultivate in our lives and our community, and yet, it's probably not the only one we are familiar with. End of year, school breaks, the ending and beginning of sport seasons (hockey, lacrosse, soccer, baseball, cheering, cross country... so good!); restarting in the next semester, closing in on retirement or the next fiscal year... Another turn of the calendar for special dates, like anniversaries and birthdays; dates of deaths, the demands of letting go, and dates of significance in our country. There are so many transitions to navigate at all ages and stages of being human! Which "happenings" are shaping up for you as we enter January, 2026? Read on for more information about the happenings here at HCUCC!

I find that poets are so often able to give shape to the things I feel

(continued)



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FROM THE PASTOR (continued)

and don't quite have the bandwidth to express. Then there's the way in which their experiences and perceptions offer me the intrigue of seeing something from a very different perspective: *Can I relate, what do they know?; what can I notice?; what is speaking to me?*

Here's a poem about a view from New York and the new year for your reflection...

New Year's Eve 1989

By [Bill Zavatsky](#)

Up on the roof, waiting for the fireworks to begin

in warm winter rain, a moment ago I stepped

from the elevator into the black air

of an almost New Year

and need a minute to catch my breath

at the spread of city open to my eye.

I can't go to the edge; I never could.

The old fear of height still troubles me,

the sensation that nothing can be under me

if I am surrounded by mist and rain

and all of the dark night air we breathe.

Even a glimpse at the treetops in the park,

with its slick crisscrossing roads that plunge

into the jumbled panorama of East Side Manhattan,

hysterical tonight with its own incandescence,

gives me the willies. I feel as if

I were standing on the deck of a showboat of a cloud

as it drifts down some dark river, waiting for it

to bang into some other building's fifteenth floor...

...We check our watches to the screams from swarms

of apartment windows to the west

as the sky lights up with the first furious

bombardment of colored shells. I can see that
red lantern swinging toward the rockets—aha!
So it wasn't a drunk, but the fireworks engineer
preparing to blow the year's last sky
to smithereens for our delight!

I like to follow the tiny spurts of flame
from the launching pad in their heavenward trajectory
as much as I like the rockets' red glare,
the bombs bursting in air, which give proof
to the night that I am still here, hands
jammed in the pockets of my sodden raincoat,
face dripping with rain, hat soaked..

That bump and thud and bump sound everywhere,
more clouds smacking each other head-on.

The flashes of the explosions are close enough
to touch if you wanted to burn your fingers
on the sky, and the glare rocks our shadows back
against the brick, as if chaos snapped
our pictures in the dark...

Found at: <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/148305/new-years-eve-1989>

The poet continues on about his lost love and the loneliness of his New Year's eve "celebrations;" you can read these too, if you'd like. 1989 was a very different time. I'm glad we've made it to 2026!

I have the opportunity to take some time away in the first weeks of January which will be a lovely break. Thank you to all who have helped to support me and my family as we've begun settling in New Jersey. I send my wishes for a wonderful start to the new year, 2026, and pray that God's love and purposes may grow stronger and stronger in your lives and our church as we travel together.

Peace,

Pastor Nada

This time of the year is abuzz with activity, shopping, cooking, concerts, events, parties, and more. During this advent season, let us all remember why all of this activity is happening. I like to remind myself that *Jesus is the reason for the season*, and we can congregate around that theme at HCUCC. Whether it's the music, the message, the mission, or the fellowship, let us embrace each other to make a more United Church of Christ.

I'd like to send a note of thanks to Diane Paquet for identifying and overseeing the emergency electrical work that happened in record time to help our beautiful sanctuary remain electrified and safe for generations to come. Also a big thanks to Ron Cieplensky, our local, go-to electrician who has done so much work around our campus, including helping to teach a new generation of electrician in our own Liam Muhler. This is one of those big projects that we'll never truly "see," since so much of it is behind the scenes and behind the walls. But that makes this no less important or impactful, so thank you to all involved.

I'm looking forward to continued seasonal messages from Pastor Nada and a well-deserved break after this high holiday (like Santa!). I'll be in the pulpit on January 11, and I'm looking forward to that honor again. Each time I do, I think ... how does a pastor do that **EVERY WEEK?**

-Matt



Rally to Protect Trans Health Care

Monday, Jan. 5th @ NJ State House, Trenton

COALITION PARTNERS:

- WVAEIn new Jersey
- uPd
- THE ALLIANCE A JERSEY CITY COMMUNITY
- INDIVISIBLE Cranbury
- SOMA ACTION
- desirainbow
- KNITTY GRITTY social

Contact Pastor Nada for more information: revnsellers@holmdelucc.org

WORSHIP & MUSIC

Carol Schreier, Chair

“The Work of Christmas Begins” Frombach, Courtney

Happy New Year and welcome to January at HCUCC. I hope you had a wonderful Christmas! Our choir sang their hearts out; our children presented a new kind of Pageant despite a snowstorm in the middle of everything. And our free Holiday Recital was an absolute joy. We have so much for which to be grateful.

As we turn our attention to January, I encourage you to keep the spirit of Christmas in your hearts. Pastor Nada will be away on January 11th, and we welcome a guest speaker to our pulpit. Our very own Matthew Snodgrass is planning an intriguing message which I can't wait to hear. And plans have already begun for our Lenten series, “Tell Me Something Good”, which the Worship & Music committee is eager to explore with Nada.

We return to our monthly Food Dedication on the 4th Sunday of the month, January 25th, and Grace Losso Modla leads weekly meditation sessions as well.

Our next meeting is on Wednesday February 4th at 7pm in the conference room of Fellowship Hall. We would love to have you join us! We welcomed a new usher to our group on Christmas Eve, maybe January is *YOUR* time to try something new? We are always looking for folks to read, change slides, serve as ushers, and run the sound board. We offer training and community service hours too! Just give me a call, send me an email, or leave a note on my windshield after church.

Finally, winter is here, and while I enjoy the change of seasons, I am not a fan of cold and flu season! If you are not feeling well, we urge you to stay home and watch services on YouTube. And while you are there, why not check out a “classic” choir video to brighten your day?

Stay well, stay warm, and please accept our thanks for your continued support!

Respectfully submitted,
Carol Schreier
Worship & Music Chair
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Colts Neck Board of Ed Meeting – December 17

As many of you have read, Secretary of Education Linda McMahon made an unexpected visit to the Colts Neck Middle School in December. Her visit was ostensibly to promote the “History Rocks” curriculum developed in consultation with Turning Point USA and other Christian Nationalist organizations. Many objected to this visit because it happened very quickly, and parents were not given the opportunity to participate in the decision-making or attend the presentation. Pastor Nada wrote a letter to the Board of Education, objecting to the visit and the curriculum. At the Board of Ed meeting on December 17, Tom Colella, a Colts Neck resident and high school history teacher, adamantly expressed his opposition to Linda McMahon’s presence in the schools and to the Board’s unwillingness to engage in dialogue. Thank you, Tom!

Advent Giving Boxes for the Village Foster Closet of Holmdel

Coming soon. Very soon. We will soon be sharing space in Fellowship Hall with the Village Foster Closet of Holmdel. This organization provides essential clothing, supplies and resources to families, helping them create a stable and nurturing environment. We dedicated our Advent Giving Boxes to this organization, and would like to thank all who participated. We will be providing more information about this organization shortly.

January Activities

-- Monday, January 5 from 11A to 1P

Pastor Nada is hoping others will join us for this March at the Statehouse in Trenton. Sponsored by WADEIn NJ, this protest is related to a bill in the NJ Legislature which protects necessary health care for transgender people and their providers. If you are able to participate or would like more info, please email Pastor Nada directly: revsellers@holmdelucc.org

MOCA Meeting, Monday, January 12 from 9:30-11:30 AM at Holmdel Library, Bell Works

MOCA (Monmouth Ocean County Action) has its roots in the Monday morning postcarding efforts at Bell Works and is aligned with many local activist groups. They are planning monthly meetings on the 2nd Monday of the month at the Holmdel Library at Bell Works. If you are interested in going on January 12, please let me know. (lizmueller11@gmail.com)

Interfaith Rise -- Highland Park and Asbury Park.

We hope to visit the Highland Park office of Interfaith Rise during the week of January 19. A sign-up sheet will be posted shortly. We also hope to get more involved in their satellite branch at the Abundant Life Church in Asbury Park. Stay tuned for more details.

CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

Allie Colella, Chair
Amanda Spagnolia, Youth Minister

A big “Thank You!” to everyone who participated in our no-fuss, no rehearsal style Christmas Pageant this past Sunday, December 21st. Characters and readers from both our Sunday School program and the congregation did a fantastic job.

Acolyte Ministry

Our Acolyte Ministry has returned! We are not going to be using robes this year, as that seemed to be a reason some children were hesitant about participating. Children Kindergarten age and older are welcome to participate. Training and support from more experienced Acolytes is available. Let Amanda know if interested!

Confirmation



Keep an eye on announcements for meetings in the new year!

Youth Group

Youth Group had an amazing Christmas Party and Gift Exchange on **December 7th with an incredible turnout of 19 kids!** Next meeting date is January 11th - keep an eye out for email updates.

Adult Studies



New Directions Bible Study has completed the first book of the series, Exploring the Bible - The Dickinson Series (Rev A. Robertson, ed., 2nd Edition, MA Bible Society, 2012), a well-respected, readable, grand introduction to our Scriptures. They will be diving into their next piece of literature soon, follow announcements for the next meeting date and updates!

Men's Bible Study meets at 6:00 PM in Fellowship Hall on the last Monday of the month. The next meeting will be Monday, January 26th. All men are invited to participate and may reach out to Bill Liebenow (snaponbill@aol.com) for details if interested.

Visio Divina meditations are held by Grace Modla on Saturdays at 10:00 AM. Contact Lynn at administrator@holmdelucc.org for a link.

MISSIONS

Vacant

Angel Sharing Tree - A heartfelt Thank You for all the generous support given during the special collection for Calico Food Pantry and Cupboard's Christmas gift cards for its families. This year we raised an amazing \$2,570.



Bayshore Lunch Program - On December 22, 2025, 48 meals were served consisting of chicken, stuffing and gravy, broccoli Normandy, kale salad mix and dessert.

A Thank You goes to Marlboro Diner, whose owner, Cara, and her wait staff, Lynn, J.C. and Briana, came out to assist us in preparing and serving this meal. They were wonderful!

The church provides meals on the fourth Monday of the month. The next lunch preparation event will occur on **January 26, 2025**. The location is at the Community Church of Keyport from 10 AM to ~12:30 PM. I would ask that you consider joining our team for this very worthwhile mission. **We need you!** Contact Judy L. Bacon (617-849-2530) for more information.

QUESTIONS ... WANT TO LEARN MORE??? Please contact Judy Bacon for more information about our projects. Phone: 617-849-2530.

The church has a variety of methods for your contributions:



Online: EasyTithe: <https://app.easytithe.com/App/Giving/hcucc>

Text: Just text "test" to (732) 410-5950 to receive instructions on giving electronically.

Online Banking: Set up regular payments to "Holmdel Community UCC" via your online banking service.

By Check: Dave Mackey will be collecting checks from the church weekly.

Your generosity to HCUCC throughout the year is always much appreciated!

Can you imagine what Christmas would be like without music? I can't. It's an integral part of our celebration. I am grateful to be in a church with leadership that values music in worship.

And, in addition to music, there were many other ways people made a difference. Whether you were a choir member, an instrument player, a soloist, an organizer, a researcher, a librarian, a creative craftperson, an office volunteer, a supporter, or an appreciator, you all contributed to a beautiful end of the calendar year. Thank you for making this Christmas season extraordinary!

Specifically, thank you, Choir, for how many of you were able to participate in the Christmas Eve service. I appreciate your hard work, extra rehearsal time, flexibility, and commitment to musically supporting our worship experience. You did an outstanding job on our new (and not easy!) Christmas Introit, and our music added special beauty and meaning to the service. I have the BEST bunch of volunteers any Music Minister could wish for.

I want to give a big shoutout to Nada and Amanda for the delightful no-rehearsal Christmas pageant this year! It was so much fun to see the intergenerational participation. I personally loved how many Christmas carols were able to be incorporated into the presentation. The choir was able to share their music and still be able to come down and join the congregation in the pews, and I noticed that some of them even ended up in the act!

The Music Ministry holiday party is on January 3 at 5:00 at Sylvia Allen's home. The party is open to all choir members, members of HUCC Finn, as well as church staff, and their family members/significant others. It's a potluck, so bring something to share. There will also be a cake in honor of Sylvia's birthday.

Join the choir! You don't have to audition; you just jump in. We're encouraging and supportive. We rehearse every Thursday evening from 7:30pm - 9:00pm.

Thank you all for your continued support of our music ministry! I'll see you from my view at the organ bench on Sunday!

Update on the Sanctuary Electricity

The beginnings of HCUCC date back to the 1660s. Around a hundred years later, Benjamin Franklin's famous kite experiment linked lightning to electricity, proving they were the same. And it seems that the electrical system in our sanctuary may date back nearly that far (joking ... mostly).

Well, that aged electrical work had finally caught up to us, creating a potentially dangerous situation for the building. Fortunately, our Buildings & Grounds chair, Diane Paquet came to the rescue and has been coordinating a permanent fix for the electrical issues of our sanctuary. That work began December 9th and ended December 11th!!

Here are some implications to be made aware of:

- There is a new trench dug from Fellowship Hall to the sanctuary, which will break apart part of the pathway between the two buildings. A temporary cover or packed dirt is there until the concrete can be repoured (weather/temperature-permitting).
- Fortunately, the cost of this work (\$12,000) will be covered from a generous bequeathment from the Dugan estate.



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ANNOUNCEMENTS



MEDITATION: VISIO DIVINA “DIVINE SEEING”

Please join our meetings on Saturdays at 10am for a refreshing hour that includes a short, guided meditation, creative prayers, poems, lively discussion on the art-quote-word of the day, and a lot of laughter in a caring space. All are welcome! On zoom. For the link, contact the office at administrator@holmdelucc.org.

JANUARY 2026 FLOWERS

Our sanctuary looked wonderful all dressed up for Christmas, didn't? Let's keep that festive mood with a FLORAL DEDICATION. It's a wonderful way to beautify our church *and* remember a loved one or special occasion.

Simply order a bouquet from our florist **OR** bring in an arrangement your own to share on Sunday. Contact Vera Kradjel with your desired date to secure your spot. You can take your flowers home you after church and enjoy them or deliver them to a friend or neighbor and brighten their day.



Jan 10: The Virgilio family - “In gratitude for a promising and exciting new year ahead”.

You may reach Vera directly at: Vera Kradjel **(732) 673-8588** OR via email verakradjel@gmail.com

Thank you!



This month's Calico Cat Food Pantry collections: **toilet paper, paper towels and laundry detergent**. We will dedicate food on the 4th Sunday, January 25th. On that Sunday, we encourage everyone to bring forward their offerings to the worship table and kids can stay down front for the Children's Message that immediately follows.

We all love Coffee Hour! It's a vital part of fellowship and a nice way to meet people. We need some new team members as well as substitutes. If you can help, or would like more information, please contact Regina at regcris35@gmail.com or (732) 320-6210.



ANNOUNCEMENTS *(continued)*



FREE UCC courses online: <https://frontlinefaith.org/>

We have a clothing/shoe bin that provides \$100/month to the church just for the right to be on our property. The only requirement is that the clothes have been washed.

Check it out next to the Book Donation Bin in the parking lot and help fill it up!



Do you want to join us?

We always need ushers, readers and folks to handle the sound board and change slides. And we offer training!

We are collecting eyeglasses for New Eyes. Please place old eyeglasses in the labelled blue bins located in Fellowship Hall kitchen. Here is the link for donations <https://neweyes.ddock.gives/?showBg=>



Any questions, please ask Pru Frechette.



Legal Books Book Bin – All books with an ISBN code in good readable condition can be placed in the bin. This includes hardcover, paperbacks and textbooks. Books without an ISBN code, encyclopedias, magazines and water damaged books are not accepted. It is suggested that the books be put into the bin individually and not in a bag. All books that are donated would be either resold or recycled.

Virtual Sunday Worship 10:00 a.m.

We will start live streaming the service at 9:55 a.m. via this link:

<http://bit.ly/hcuclive>. We start early, so that you can be sure your technology (internet connection, audio, video) is working properly. We'll display our pre-service announcement slides for five minutes until the service starts, at around 10am.



Look for us on Facebook and “like” us often!

Please follow our YouTube channel as well.

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCtmDSw0RSSbtDPqXfZaLuuw>



to lessen the work of the Coffee Hour teams, we are looking for people to clean and put away coffee urns after Coffee Hour on Sundays. It is a small job, but it will help a lot! Please see Gina if you are interested.

CAUGHT ON CAMERA

12/01/25

Elves decorating Fellowship Hall!!

Below Diane Paquet

Right: Karen Swift & Sue Field



12/14/2025: I confess Susan!
I stole this beautiful picture
from your Facebook page.
Thank you!



Susan F. Davies's Updates

12/21/2025



L to R: Reverie Cazel, Vera DeMeo (angel) and James Puryear (shepherd)



L to R seated: Brayden DeFelice (shepherd), Carol Schreier, Amie Cazel, Victor DeMeo (reindeer), Lila DeMeo (Mary) and the 3 Wise Men (Matthew Salzano, Austin McGoldrick and Wyatt LeMeune)



L to R: Brayden DeFelice, Madison DeFelice, Samantha Radcliffe, Vera DeMeo (angel), Reverie Cazel, James Puryear (shepherd); Choir Members: Carol Schreier, Judy Bacon & Kiff Barnes; Sam Beck-King (The Star); Amie Cazel (seated manger animal) & Amanda Spagnolia with Cue Cards



Matt Snodgrass smiles big for the camera with James Puryear (shepherd), Madison DeFelice (Innkeeper) and Brayden DeFelice (shepherd)

12/26/2025:
Pastor Nada's
Christmas Tree



12/24/2025:
Christmas Eve Service



12/24/2025:
Accompanied by Susan
Davies, Don Pope sings
“Joseph’s Lullabye”

12/28/2025: Bell Sunday

Karel Boresma & Matt Almeda



Janice Liebenow &
Kiff Barnes



Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
Font Color Key: Conference Room Fellowship Hall Zoom or Other Sanctuary				1	2 7:00-9:00pm Hall Rental	3 10am Visio Divina Meditation with Grace
4 10am Service with Communion	5	6 7:15-9:15pm Scouts	7 2pm Care Team 7pm Worship & Music 8pm Lifeline Group of AA	8 7:30pm Choir	9 7pm-9pm Hall Rental	10 10am Visio Divina Meditation with Grace 5pm-10pm Hall Rental
11 10am Worship Service 5:00pm Youth Group	12 7:30pm Council	13 7:15-9:15pm Scouts	14 8pm Lifeline Group of AA	15 7:30pm Choir	16	17 10am Visio Divina Meditation with Grace
18 10am Worship Service 11:15am Pancake Breakfast	19	20 7:15-9:15pm Scouts	21 7:30pm Justice & Peace 8pm Lifeline Group of AA	22 7:30pm Choir	23 7pm-9pm Hall Rental	24 10am Visio Divina Meditation with Grace
25 10am Worship Service with Food Dedication	26 10am-12:30pm Bayshore Lunch Program 6pm Men's Bible Study & Fellowship	27 7:15-9:15pm Scouts	28 2pm Care Team 8pm Lifeline Group of AA	29 7:30pm Choir	30	

"We invite you to pray for your neighbor, the county and the world, using this prayer from our partners at Global Ministries:

Our Lord, our God, and our Savior Jesus Christ, we lift our hearts to you with overflowing gratitude for all your countless blessings and for your abundant love that You have granted us even before our creation, and for your image which you placed within us (Genesis 1:26–27). We ask you, O gracious God, to complete your work in us and with us, so that we may truly become your sons and daughters—your ambassadors and fellow workers (1 Corinthians 3:9)—being made one body in You (1 Corinthians 12:12).

We pray for the whole world and for its peace: that destruction and war may cease everywhere, and that your peace may fill the earth, so we may glorify You who look down from the heights of heaven. We also pray for Egypt, which you have blessed with your presence, that You may fulfill Your good will for Egypt's prosperity and growth, and make Egypt a source of blessing to the whole world, as it was in the days of Joseph (Genesis 41). We pray for our neighbors, our region, asking that your peace may dwell among them.



We pray for the Bishopric of Public, Ecumenical and Social Services (BLESS), and its ministry extended throughout Egypt: that all its work may be according to Your will, and that all those who serve within it may be perfect in You (Colossians 1:28). So, that this ministry may be a source of blessing and growth for them in every aspect of their lives—bearing fruit that pleases You, thirty, sixty, and a hundredfold (Matthew 13:23).

We remember, too, those who support this ministry with their time, effort, or resources. Bless the little they have, and reward them with a heavenly recompense.

To you be all glory forever. Amen.

Written by Fr-Lazarus, Program Development Advisor at BLESS

Cookie Caper Feb 8, 2026

Let's remind our on-campus college students that we care. Our **Cookie Caper** crew will send care packages to them for Valentine's Day.

Want to help?

- Contribute non-fragile, home-baked or purchased goodies. Wrap them in groups of 4 to 6 and deliver to Fellowship Hall before service on Sunday, Feb 8th. Clearly label if there are known allergens in your recipe (e.g. nuts).
- Help to pack the boxes during Coffee Hour on Sunday or deliver them to the post office on Monday.
- If you have a student away at school who would appreciate a care package, email their name and address to Val (valthansen@gmail.com) or Lynn Nelson (lenelsonhome@yahoo.com).

"Let all that you do be done in love."

1 Corinthians 16:14



CHURCH LEADERSHIP

Pastor
Moderator
Head Trustee
Treasurer
Council Secretary
Pledge Secretary
Christian Care

Christian Education
Fellowship

Rev. Nada Sellers
Matthew Snodgrass
William Field
Judy Bacon
Lynn Nelson
Dave Mackey
Valerie Hansen
Kiff Barnes
Allie Colella
Regina Criscione

Justice & Peace
Missions
Pastoral Support
Personnel
Worship & Music
Buildings & Grounds
Trustee
Contracts & Insurance
Trustee
Stewardship Trustee

Liz Mueller
- Open -
Tracy Mackey
Carrie Virgilio
Carol Schreier

Diane Paquet

Brian Yesalonis
Don Pope