

# THE SPIRE

January 2025

We seek to be a Christian community by worshipping God through prayer, music, and the proclaimed Word. Following Christ's example, we enthusiastically reach out to everyone with compassion, respect, and love so that we may grow in faith and commitment together.

Church of Christ, Congregational, UCC

142 Exchange St., Millis, MA 02054

www.millisucc.org • (508) 376-5034 • millisucc@msn.com



An Open and Affirming Congregation

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



Dear Friends,

Happy New Year and welcome to 2025! I hope this message finds you refreshed and encouraged after a holiday season spent with your loved ones.

This new year marks a time of transition and growth—not only in our personal lives but also as a church community. I know these are challenging times for many of us, as we face economic uncertainty, political shifts, and decisions about the next steps for our church. Yet, I hold onto hope, believing that together, we can move forward with strength and faith. While this path may be difficult, it is an opportunity for us to trust that God will guide us.

I am reminded of the comforting wisdom of Psalm 32:8—“*I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will counsel you with my loving eye on you.*” May we take comfort in knowing that even in

uncertain times, God walks with us, guiding us to a brighter future.

As we enter this new year, I encourage you to stay connected—both to God and to one another. We are not meant to go through life alone. We need each other's prayers, friendships, and support to strengthen our faith and community.

On another note, we have several exciting events and opportunities for connection this January! Join us for our first community event of the year, **Trivia Night on January 10<sup>th</sup> at 6:30PM**. Trivia Night is a great chance for fun and connecting with the wider community. I hope to see you then!

Additionally, we are starting our new book study and reading *Mary Magdalene Understood* by Jane Schaberg and Melanie Johnson-Debaufre. Our first meeting will be on **January 19<sup>th</sup>, after worship**. Please read the introduction and first chapter beforehand, if possible, but all are welcome whether you've started reading or not.

Finally, I ask you to continue keeping the faith strong in this new year, not only for yourself but for our congregation. Your prayers, presence, and support make such a difference as we strive to live out our mission.

Thank you for making our church a place of love, hope, and connection. Take some time to look through this edition of The Spire, mark your calendars for our events, and I hope to see you soon—whether in person or online.

With hope and faith,  
Rev. James



February 9<sup>th</sup> 2025

Our Annual Meeting will be held directly after worship. Please be sure to attend so we have a quorum for voting! Please email your typed reports to Laura ASAP.



Kathy Stevens would like to extend her sincere thanks to everyone who has sent cards, reached out, and kept in touch while she recovers from her medical issues.



January 5<sup>th</sup>  
Epiphany Sunday

**How Dreamers & Diviners  
Defied a King's Power  
(Matthew 2:1-12)**

Journey with us as we delve into the profound story of faith and divine guidance that empowered the Magi to defy King Herod's tyranny. This sermon celebrates the courage of these mystics, who embraced a higher purpose in the face of uncertainty and upheaval. As part of this reflection, all are invited to receive your personal "star word" – a guiding light to inspire and lead us throughout the year.

January 12<sup>th</sup>  
Baptism of the Lord

**The Day Jesus Took the  
Plunge (Luke 3:15-17, 21-22)**

Join us as we explore the powerful moment of Jesus' baptism and its significance in

our own lives. This sermon will reflect on the themes of identity, renewal, and God's affirming love revealed in this sacred act. All who attended will also have the opportunity to reaffirm their baptism and reconnect with their faith in a meaningful way.

**January 19 – Second Sunday  
after the Epiphany**

**Light of the World &  
Life of the Party  
(John 2:1-11)**

Join us for a joyful journey into the Wedding at Cana, where Jesus performed His first miracle in John's Gospel—turning water into wine! This uplifting sermon will celebrate God's overflowing abundance and boundless delight for humanity. Together, we'll reflect on how God invites us to embrace and celebrate Their goodness. You don't want to miss it!

**January 26<sup>th</sup>**

**Rev. Mary Perry preaching**

**Welcome to 2025—A Year of  
Hope and Faith**

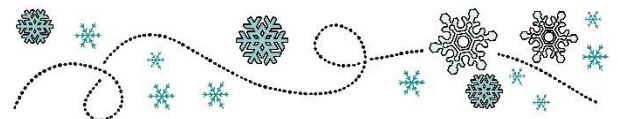
Please stay tuned on updates from Rev. Mary as she joins us on January 26<sup>th</sup>! Rev. James will be away and guest preaching as

Rev. Marge at HA:N United Methodist Church.



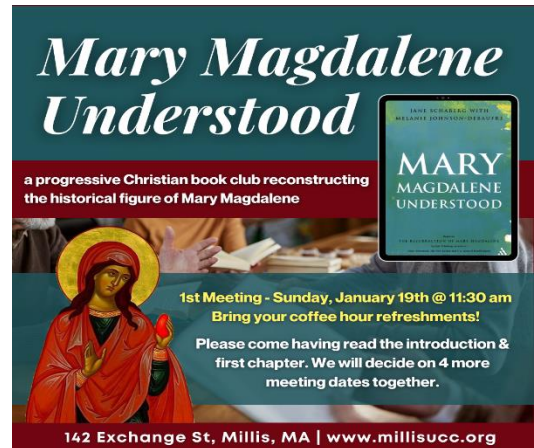
“Merci,” “Gracias,” “Thanks” to all the Candy Elves who helped prepare the Candy Table for the Holly Holly Fair. Nancy Auger, Judie Ackerman, Sue Conte, Nancy Gittens, and Judy Kosinski filled the candy rolls, more than 40 jars, made grab bags and traced and cut fabric jar covers. Rick Jones scrubbed and degunked the jars. He also cut and packaged all the fudge. This year's fudge makers were Myrna Rybczyk, Laura Kohring, and Gail Kendall. Jan Krohn made peanut brittle. Doug Coutts' mother made her fruit candies and donated to the grab bags. Members of our church family donated bags of candy that were used to fill the jars. We are always happy to receive glass jars with lids, preferably without the labels!!

Thank you all again,  
Linda Jones





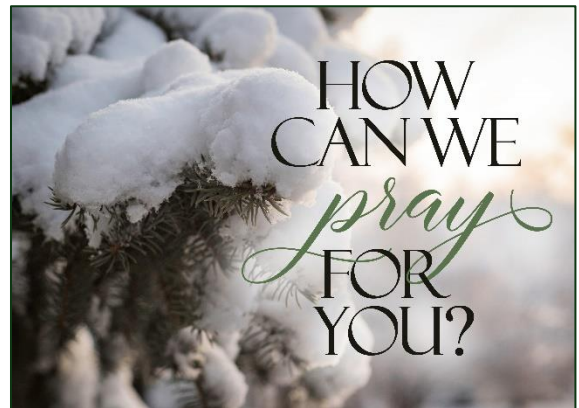
A hearty holiday Thank You shout out to Joe Healy and Willa, who brought great cheer to all our guests at the 2024 Jolly Holly Fair!



**Progressive Christian Book Club**  
 Bible Study in the New Year takes the form of a book club with our focus on Mary Magdalene Understood by Jane Schaberg. Starting Sunday, January 19<sup>th</sup> after worship. Grab a coffee hour snack and meet us in the Parlor.



Articles for the Spire are due by the 20<sup>th</sup> of each month.



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



### M&Ms meet

Mondays, 10-Noon in the Parlor. Bring your handcrafts, or just come to socialize. We'd love to have you join us!



**For anyone unable to Join us for our Christmas Eve Services, Please enjoy this reprise of Rev. James' Christmas Eve Homily.**

### No Room in the Inn? How Love Made Space Anyway!

I invite you now...to close your eyes and imagine that you are standing at the door of an overcrowded inn, the air thick with the smell of livestock, the sound of hurried voices all around. You're exhausted from a long, uncertain journey. The door closes, and you're told, "There's no room."

What does it mean when there's no room? No room for a family in need. No room for a child who will change everything. No room for love to enter.

Perhaps more pressing—what does it mean today, when our own lives can feel just as crowded, leaving love waiting at the door?



### Family Friendly Fun!

Test your knowledge, bring a sack dinner or snack, and prepare to challenge your mind!. Friday January 10<sup>th</sup> at 6:30pm in Fellowship Hall.

We begin in Bethlehem, a small town bustling with activity under the shadow of the Roman Empire. Luke's Gospel tells us that a decree was issued by Caesar Augustus, requiring a census of the entire Roman world. This was no ordinary administrative task—it was a tangible assertion of imperial power over the people.

Beneath this shroud of empire, the Holy Family—Mary, pregnant, and Joseph—journeyed to this ancestral town, seeking shelter. But when they arrived, there was no room. No room for God's anointed one. No room for Mary, carrying the Savior of the World. No room for Love Incarnate.

And yet, in the midst of rejection, love made space anyway—born in a lowly manger, surrounded by hay and animals, the Savior of the world entered into the rubble of human need and suffering.

The birth of Jesus is not just the story of a baby being born; it is the story of God's audacious love breaking through a weary and broken world.

Ancient Israel was made up of a captive people, mourning in exile under Roman oppression. This was just like the empire before—Assyrian, Babylonian, Persian—all having dominion throughout history as told in the Hebrew Bible. Yet Rome had tightened its grip on Israel's people

and land, dictating their lives through violence and control.

But God's love defies Imperial power and arrogance. God didn't choose to arrive surrounded by palaces and splendor. God did not arrive in the city of Jerusalem, the center of political and religious power. Instead, God chose to enter this world through the margins—a stable, a poor displaced family, and shepherds living in fields, keeping watch over their flock by night.

The angelic announcement didn't come to the powerful, but to these shepherds, the lowest of the low, as theologians tell us, the class of people who were historically considered to be lower than peasants. The angels tell us that God's love is for everyone, and most especially those pushed aside by society.

Among our other visitors, the Magi—astrologers who could interpret the meaning of a star—traveling from the east, bearing gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. They saw what any person with good eyesight could see up in the sky. Not a drone or an orb, but a star. Yet only they understood its cosmic significance—the birth of King of the Jews—news so profound that it was written in the heavens.

And so it is quite awkward when they show up asking King Herod, *where is*

*the child who has been born King of the Jews?* It's kind of like show up and asking, "So we have seen the star and we're looking for your replacement!" And yet, King Herod, consumed by fear of losing his power, responded with trickery & violence.

This is the paradox of Christ's birth. While empires and power-hungry rulers strive for peace through domination, violence, & victory, God inaugurates peace through justice, vulnerability, and love.

Now, let us ask ourselves—where is the inn in our own lives?

How often do we find our hearts crowded with distractions, or our priorities dictated by today's empires around us?

Today, the empire looks a bit different than Rome. It manifests in overworking, consumerism, systemic injustices, and the struggle to "make it." Many of us live paycheck to paycheck, burdened by rising costs of groceries and medicine. We live under the shadow of an American empire—750 military bases in over 80 countries, perpetuating cycles of violence and conflict globally.

While some of us struggle to survive, others unwittingly comply, too busy or too exhausted to truly pause, and ask critical questions. The truth is that it's difficult to organize for change, or for

another way of living, when we're too busy focusing on how to survive.

But despite all of this, the message of Christmas calls to us: What happens when we find no room for God's love in our lives? What happens when we're too consumed by fear, or too distracted by our priorities, or too weary to accept the profound gift of God's presence among us?

The question we face tonight is whether we, like the innkeeper, will turn them away, or whether we'll open the doors of our hearts.

The good news is, even when it seems there is no room, God's love continues to make space anyway. God meets us right where we are—in our exhaustion, our struggles, and in our longing for something better.

What would it look like for us to make space for love in our lives today? Perhaps it's through practicing forgiveness—especially when it's hard, or standing boldly for justice in the face of oppression. It could even be as simple as taking time to reflect on where your heart is too crowded, asking God to guide you towards grace and renewal.

And if you're seeking a community to walk this path with you, know that this church stands ready to be that space. Together, as a congregation, we join Jesus' call to participate in building a

new world—not just a spiritual world, but a material world—where love and justice continue to shape our lives for the better.

We remember the words of Mother Mary, who proclaimed in the Magnificat that empires would fall because of her baby. We remember the fear of Herod, who slaughtered innocents because of this baby. The child born in Bethlehem was—and is—the light that breaks the darkness and is God’s living promise of a world made new. Its values are not domination, control, or violence, but love, empathy, and peace. It is a world where we are no longer stuck in bondage, held captive by the powerful, but set free by the light of God.

*“Joy to the world, the Lord is come! Let earth receive her King. Let every heart...prepare him room.”*

Are we willing to prepare room for God? Are we willing to prepare room for love?

Are we willing to rearrange our lives, to unburden our hearts, and to make space for the transforming light of Christmas?

Let us pray together.

Loving God, tonight we give thanks for the sacred birth of Jesus, a reminder that your love enters even

the darkest corners and the most hopeless circumstances. Help us to make room in our hearts for your love, to live as agents of compassion, and to build beloved communities of justice. Guide us to be participants in your vision of a new world, where love conquers fear and light dispels darkness.

May it be so. Amen.

## Upcoming Events!

millisuce.org

# SAVE THE DATE!

Messages from Beyond:  
An Evening of Mediumship

May 10th  
7PM

tickets on sale  
in the new year!

**KAY REYNOLDS**  
psychic medium, bestselling author,  
& spiritual mentor

AS SEEN ON:

NBC abc FOX  
CBS OM Times Radio



**Church of Christ  
142 Exchange St.  
Millis, MA 02054**

Phone:  
508-376-5034

E-Mail:  
millisucc@msn.com



---

*We're on the Web!*

*Visit us at:*

**[www.millisucc.org](http://www.millisucc.org)**

---



We seek to be a Christian community by worshipping God through prayer, music, and the proclaimed Word. Following Christ's example, we enthusiastically reach out to everyone with compassion, respect, and love so that we may grow in faith and commitment together.

Church of Christ, Congregational  
142 Exchange Street  
Millis, MA 02054

