THE PARISH NEWS

OCT 2026 THE CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH OF LITTLETON, UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

Finding God in the Seasons of Change

Dear Friends,

One of the ongoing silly debates in our house is this: Which season is the best?

My husband, Rob, is firmly on Team Autumn. He makes a pretty good case. The weather is just right—warm days and crisp nights, perfect for sleeping. Activities are starting up again, there's apple picking, the leaves are showing off, and, perhaps most importantly in his argument, hockey is back on TV.

I, however, remain firmly on Team Spring.

I love watching the days grow longer and seeing the first buds burst into color. I love the greening of the earth and those first unexpectedly warm afternoons. And spring carries the anticipation of summer rather than the descent into winter darkness.

No matter how hard we try, or how many arguments we have offered over the years, neither of us has managed to sway the other.

But recently it occurred to me that there is something interesting about our choices: we both love the seasons that bring the most change.

Maybe there is something in that.

Change is inevitable. Enjoying it is optional.

As we move deeper into this changing season—watching the leaves turn, feeling the temperatures drop, noticing how much earlier darkness arrives—I wonder what other changes you are experiencing.

What is different in your life now than it was six months ago or a year ago? Perhaps something has changed because you chose it. Perhaps

See SEASONS on page 3









Our **Legacy Tree** took root thanks to the generosity of Colby Field of CJF Excavation, who donated the funds for the tree and installed it. These photos capture both the installation and the September 13 dedication ceremony, where Susan James, Sandy Clyde, and Rev. Jen spoke about the importance of honoring the past while nurturing a legacy for future generations.

OCTOBER SPECIAL EVENTS

3	Concord Prison Giftbags
3	Ballroom Dance Night
7	Bible Study (Session 1)
12	Indigenous People Day - Office Closed
14	Bible Study (Session 2)
16	Men's Breakfast
21	Navigating the Caregiving Journey
21	Bible Study (Session 3)
25	Stewardship Inspiration Sunday
28	Bible Study (Session 4)

Concord Prison Outreach Gift Bag Project Returns October 3

On **Saturday, October 3**, volunteers from CCOL will once again partner with Concord Prison Outreach to assemble holiday gift bags for incarcerated individuals.

Thank you to everyone who has already signed up to help. Through this annual project, simple items such as toiletries, writing materials, and greeting cards become meaningful reminders of dignity, hope, and care.

If you're interested in volunteering or would like more information before Saturday, please speak with Rob (robnathans@verizon.net) or Shannon (shangan172@gmail.com).

Financial contributions to support the **Holiday Gift Bag Project** may also be made through Concord Prison Outreach or by scanning this QR code (https://concordprisonoutreach.org/donate/)

Thank you for helping share compassion in a practical way.

Top 5 Reasons to Give Online

1. **Convenient & Flexible**
   Give anytime, anywhere, 1-time or recurring.
2. **Stay Consistent**
   Your gift supports church life even when you can't be at church
3. **Secure & Easy**
   Safe, encrypted and takes less than a minute
4. **Trackable**
   Access your giving history anytime for peace of mind
5. **Helps the Church Plan**
   Steady support means stronger ministries & outreach

On-line Giving

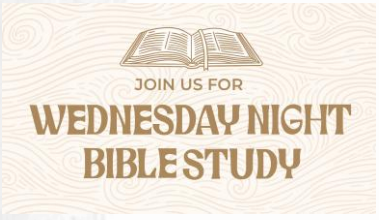
To donate online, scan the QR code or click the "**GIVE NOW**" button at the top of the church website!

Jesus / The Bible said WHAT?

Join Larry Starr for a six-week Bible study beginning **Wednesday, October 7, at 7 pm.**

Some passages in the Bible inspire and comfort us. Others challenge us, puzzle us, or seem difficult to embrace. Together, we'll explore six biblical teachings that can be hard to understand and apply. Through discussion and reflection, we'll wrestle with what these passages say, why they matter, and what believers can take away from them today.

All are welcome! Attendance at every session is not required, so feel free to join whenever you can for thoughtful conversation and deeper exploration of Scripture. We will meet in the **Conant Room**.





Contact the church office at:978-486-3245 or office @ccol.org.

We don't want you to miss any happenings at CCoL!

CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH OF LITTLETON, *United Church of Christ*

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Church Office Hours
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Tim Potter
Handbells Director

SEASONS continued from page 1

change was thrust upon you without your permission. Maybe it is something wonderful that you have been hoping for, or maybe it is something you would give almost anything to undo.

Some changes arrive with excitement and possibility. Others arrive carrying grief, or fear. Most of the significant changes in our lives probably contain a little of both.

And then there are the changes happening around us—in our families, our church, our communities, and our world. Sometimes it can feel as though the ground beneath us is constantly shifting. We barely adjust to one new reality before another comes along.

As people of faith, we remember that God is the constant. God remains with us throughout all the changes we experience.

But I don't think that means God simply stands still while everything around us changes. Scripture tells a story of a God who is constantly creating, calling, transforming, and making things new. God meets people in moments when the future is anything but certain. Faith is about learning to look for God within the changes.

As you notice the leaves changing this fall, take a moment to notice what is changing in you. What new thing might be beginning? Where might God be inviting you to grow, stretch, or see something differently?

We don't have to love every change that comes our way. We don't even have to pretend that every change is good. But we can trust that we will not walk through it alone.

The seasons turn. Leaves fall. Winter comes. Spring returns.

And through every season, God remains.

With you on the Journey,

Rev. Jen



Ballroom Dance Night - October 3

On **Saturday, October 3rd at 7 pm**, join us for an Intergenerational Ballroom Dance Night.

We'll begin with a lesson and then enjoy an evening of dancing, fellowship, and fun together. No experience is necessary, and all ages are welcome.

Our dress code is **"Pajama Formal."** So whether you arrive in pajamas and pearls, dressed to the nines, or somewhere comfortably in the middle, you'll fit right in.

There is no charge for the event. A suggested donation of **$10 per person** is appreciated to help cover expenses.

Caregivers Support Group

*The Caregivers Support Group will meet on **Wednesday October 14th, 7-8:30 pm** in the Parish Hall.*

Caring for the Caregiver

This is a support group for people of all ages who have the responsibility for the welfare of a family member or friend. It is a safe space in which to share needs and resources. This is open to all in the Littleton community and nearby towns and is NOT limited to CCoL members. Please invite friends, family and anyone who may benefit from this program.

The meeting is facilitated by Dianne Ledder and Martha Shethar. Refreshments will be offered.

You can attend worship in the following ways:

"LIVE" via YouTube: live-youtube.ccol.org

"LIVE" via Facebook: live-facebook.ccol.org

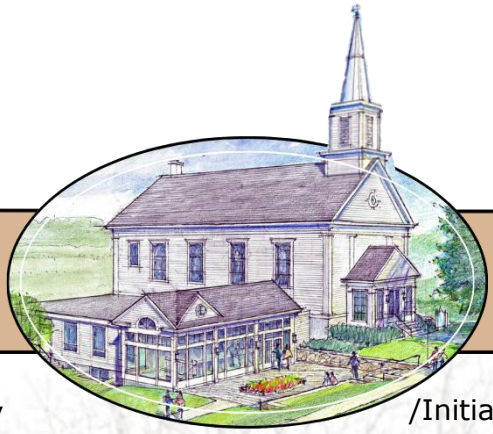
And of course … In person every Sunday at 10 am in our sanctuary

We recommend YouTube as it has the best audio, fewer glitches and people can chat with one another during the service.

Closed–captioning is also available on YouTube after the Sunday 10 am service, usually later in the day.

September 10, 2026

CHURCH COUNCIL



Rev. Jen opened the meeting by reading *Listen to What God is Saying to Us* and following it with prayer.

Pete Scantlebury reported that an effort has been made to compile all that Property does, along with forms and vendors for future Property members. Any future changes in the committee necessitate having information readily at hand when needed. He also said that the town will now inspect emergency lights. Work on the steeple will start soon, possibly September 16, weather permitting. Work on the HVAC system in the Sunday School area has been held up by Balancing Technologies as their new hire must reassess the project.

Kathy Keenan reported on the financial position of CCoL as of the end of August. The church should be 66.64% of the budget. Pledging is at 72.9% which is above the goal and loose cash is above goal at 111.1%. Events are at 66.8% including VBS payments, Pictorial Directory fees, and three rentals totaling $3000. Vanco offset/Visa Rewards /Initial offering/Bank Interest is at 95.4%. Personnel is below the goal at 57% but Property, Finance, and Admin are all at 72.4%. Repairs and maintenance are at 126.39%, well over budget. While the Invested Funds showed a gain of $18,353.86 in August, there is a net loss of $24,773.53 for 2026. The loss was generated by taking $105,589.26 for the yearly withdrawal and $18,174.00 for the HVAC design. The Legacy Tree installed by Colby Field, who also generously paid for it, will be dedicated on September 13. The Tree honors those who have, since the 1800's, given bequests and gifts to support CCoL.

Rob Nathans, reporting for Mission Outreach, announced that on September 20th Curt Logee would be here to speak about Habitat for Humanity's upcoming build in Littleton. Volunteers are needed when Concord Prison Outreach is here on October 3rd to prepare gift bags for prisoners.

Rev. Jen distributed a month-by-month chart for committees to choose a date during their assigned month to explain their responsibilities to the congregation and host coffee hour. A new congregant told Michelle Rawlinson that she would like to know what each committee does. Michelle said that the Welcoming Committee has talked about making a booklet explaining each committee's responsibilities to be put in the narthex and on the website.

The church will be busy in the next few months! Rev. Jen reviewed the dates. September dates included Kick-Off Sunday on the 13th and Pub Theology a guided discussion at Dirigible on the 16th. Concord Prison Outreach will be here with volunteers stuffing gift bags for prisoners on October 3rd. A ballroom dancing instructor will lead us for a fun evening of dancing on the evening of October 3rd. Three events will occur in October including CCoL hosting the UCC Retired Clergy Luncheon on the 8th, the Men's Breakfast on the 16th, and Stewardship Inspiration Sunday on the 25th. We are a busy church!

JOIN THE CHOIR

It's time to take your shower singing to the next level, because Choir rehearsals start on **Monday night, November 2**. If you can carry a tune a short distance, join us in preparing music for Thanksgiving, Advent and Christmas Eve. Questions? Ask Charlotte ccr6273@verizon.net or any Music Committee member.



Deb Austermann

Erin Capozzi

Laurie Drinkwater

Olivia Field

Amber LaSante

Carol Murphy-Keir

Harvest Fair Plans are Taking Shape

Thank you to everyone already sharing ideas and volunteering for this year's Harvest Fair on **Saturday, November 21, from 9 am-2 pm.**

We're currently gathering:

- Basket raffle contributions
- Homemade pies and baked goods
- Soups and beef stew for the Lunch Room
- Craft ideas and craft leaders
- Setup and cleanup volunteers

The Harvest Fair is one of those events that comes together through many small contributions. Whether you're donating a basket, baking a pie, making soup, or lending a hand, you're helping support fellowship events throughout the year.

If you'd like to get involved, please speak with Marilyn, Deb, Murph, or Holly.

Many hands, one Harvest Fair.

Interested in helping create items for the Fair? See the "Crafting with Friends for the Harvest Fair" article elsewhere in this newsletter for upcoming crafting dates and opportunities.



Youth Group Retreat Day - Saturday, October 24

The Youth Group will be gathering for a special **Retreat Day of Planning** on **Saturday, October 24.** We'll begin at 8 am at the church with breakfast and a chance to settle in together.

Our morning will focus on conversation and visioning. First, we'll talk about the topics and faith questions the youth would like to explore this year as part of their spiritual growth. After a short break filled with fun games, we'll return to discuss mission ideas and the ways our youth can serve the community throughout the year.



Mid-day, we'll enjoy lunch and then head out for a hike to recharge and reconnect. We'll end our day by brainstorming how the youth would like to decorate and organize the Youth Room so it feels welcoming, comfortable, and truly theirs.

It will be a full, meaningful, and energizing day together.

Christian Education









Vacation Bible School

We had a fantastic **Snowball Mountain Challenge VBS** this year! The children had a blast singing, dancing, crafting, exploring science, playing games, and hearing Bible stories.

A huge thank you to all the incredible volunteers who made this week possible, from decorating and leading stations to guiding groups. VBS simply couldn't happen without each and every one of you. Your time, energy, and love made all the difference!











Spotlight on VBS









I CAN DO ALL THINGS THROUGH HIM WHO STRENGTHENS ME.
PHILIPPIANS 4:13, NRSV











Beauty, Belonging & a Little Bit of Awkward

The members of the Stewardship Committee are thrilled to share our theme for this year's program of activities: "**Let's Make Something Beautiful!**"

While it's incredibly easy to identify aspects of our church that are already beautiful (the stained glass on a sunny morning, the coffee hours, the gospel we proclaim, the laughter and comfort we share, all of that glorious music, etc.), we're going to spend the three weeks of the Stewardship Season identifying beauty in both expected and unexpected places. We plan to have some fun doing it, too.

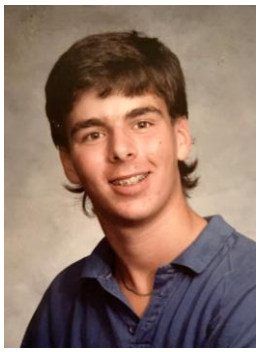
As the weeks unfold, we are going to ask people to share items from their homes that offer beauty to the world. Maybe the beauty is aesthetic. Maybe it's a token related to a beautiful trip or place. Maybe it's a reminder of a beautiful moment or person. We want to know where you see beauty in your lives. To complement these items, we'll have speakers who share from the pulpit their personal stories of finding and creating beauty.

In addition to these more traditional ways of identifying beauty, we're also going to ask folks to contribute photos to a **CCOL Wall of Awkward**. Yep—it's time to share those photographs from high school. Let's see those braces and those bangs!! How about those floral prints and graphic tee shirts? Your mom gave you a perm? Well, Brad's let him have a mullet! Let's laugh a little and rejoice in the fact that we are all beautiful in God's eyes!!

We'll kick off this celebration of beauty on **Inspiration Sunday (October 25th)** and will continue it through **Consecration Sunday on November 8th**. We hope you'll plan on joining us for lunch on Consecration Sunday and that you'll consider contributing a photo or two to our CCOL Wall of Awkward by dropping off physical copies in the church office or by emailing them to office@ccol.org.

Wishing you peace, grace, and beauty,

Kathy, Susan, L.A., and Brad



LET'S MAKE SOMETHING BEAUTIFUL

The Garden at Church Meadows

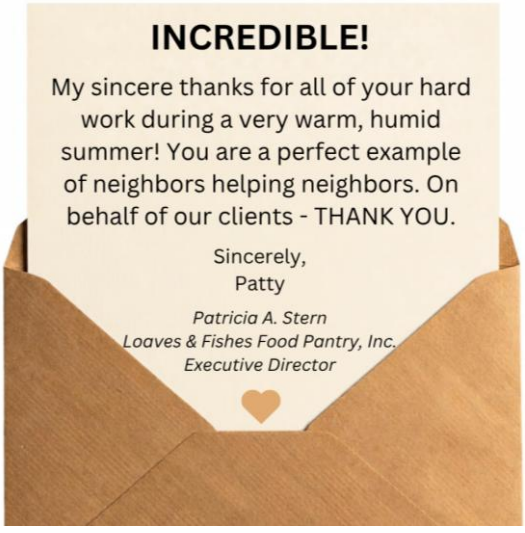
*The Garden at Church Meadows continues to flourish. As of mid-September, we have delivered **1,368.5 pounds** of fresh produce to Loaves and Fishes food pantry at Devens. There are still more tomatoes, green peppers, herbs, and butternut squash to come. We are beginning to wind down the season and could use help weeding and cleaning up as needed. Monetary donations are also welcome. Many thanks to the team of helpers we've had this season. We could not make this special mission happen without you.*

This recent email highlights how grateful the folks at Loaves and Fishes are for our special ministry…

Deb Rosson on behalf of the Garden at Church Meadow's team













Steeple Project Update

The gentlemen from Restco are here! The extra-large lift is on the front lawn for the duration of the project. Please use caution when entering the hall door from the patio.

The steeple project will take about 6-8 weeks to complete. Please Pray for nice weather for this project.

Thank you for your patience during this project.

Our amazing congregation and friends have raised **$51,060** through the steeple fund that will reduce the amount needed from the Invested Funds. The total project will cost $73,900 if we don't have any additional costs.

Every contribution helps reduce the amount that will be withdrawn from the Invested Funds and demonstrates our shared commitment to caring for our church home for future generations.

If you are able, please help support the Steeple Project through a special donation.

CCoL Steeple Donation

Donations may be made online by scanning this Steeple QR code or by check. Please note "Steeple Project" on the memo line.

Questions? Contact Sandy at sclyde@ccol.org.

Thank you for your generosity and patience.



Blessing Baskets for Veterans Collection Begins October 11

This fall, CCOL is joining the Blessing Baskets initiative to support **Veterans Pathways of New England**, an organization dedicated to helping local veterans and their families find stability, support, and opportunities to thrive after military service.

Beginning **Sunday, October 11**, **empty laundry baskets** will be located in the church lobby near the Loaves & Fishes donation bin. Throughout the month, we'll be filling those baskets with donations for local veterans and their families.

Needed items include:

- Canned corn, green beans, cranberry sauce
- Cream of mushroom soup
- Stuffing mix, mashed potatoes, canned or packet gravy
- Muffin mix, biscuit mix, dessert mix
- New socks
- Toiletries
- Laundry soap
- Pet food
- Small games or cards
- Handwritten cards or drawings





Gift Cards: Market Basket gift cards ($15-$20) should be placed in the offering plate, not in the baskets.

Donation deadline: Sunday, November 8

Learn more at **blessingbasketsnewengland.org**

Weekly Gatherings

Neighborhood Supper
5:30-6:30p

Tuesday

CCoL has hosted Neighborhood Suppers for over 30 years, with cooking duties rotating weekly among 4 Littleton churches. Each church plans the menu and provides a team. Suppers are free — donations are welcome.

Sewing Group – 10a-12p

Wednesday

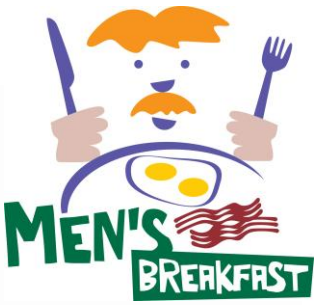
Sewing group meets to create items for those in need. Don't sew? Bring your knitting, crochet, or handcrafts. Sewing? Bring your machine! All are welcome.

Al-Anon – 10a

Friday

Al-Anon is a walk-in support group for those affected by alcoholism. Meetings are held Fridays in the Conant Room.

Men's Breakfast Returns!



Saturday, October 17th, 8am

Good food. Great fellowship. Just $5.

The men are in the kitchen, so you know it'll be memorable 😉 Everyone else sits back, eats well, and enjoys the morning.

Sign up in the Parish Hall!

Save the Date for the 2027 Women's Retreat!



Planning is underway for what promises to be a meaningful and memorable weekend together.

- ***January 29-31, 2027***
- ***Grotonwood Camp & Conference Center***
  167 Prescott St, Groton, MA 01450

*Interested in helping shape the retreat? Join us for a planning meeting on **Sunday, October 11**, after worship. All help is appreciated and everyone is welcome!*

Watch for more details, retreat highlights, and registration information in the months ahead. We can't wait to share this experience with you!

Building Hope with Habitat for Humanity®

We were delighted to welcome **Curt Logee from Habitat for Humanity North Central Massachusetts** to worship on September 20. His presentation provided an inspiring look at Habitat's work in our community, and many members of the congregation signed up afterwards to receive updates and explore volunteer opportunities.

The first Habitat build in Littleton, on Tahattawan Road, is scheduled to begin October 1. While the initial phase will focus on framing, electrical work, plumbing, and roofing, volunteer opportunities are expected to begin in November, weather permitting. At that stage, volunteers may assist with installing windows and doors, insulation, drywall, trim work, and painting.

A second build at Dean Lane in the Cooper Farm Community is expected to begin in January or February, with volunteer opportunities becoming available later in the construction process, when framing, etc. is completed.

If you'd like to get involved sooner, consider Habitat's Critical Home Repair Program, which provides needed repairs for Habitat homeowners and other local residents. Volunteer opportunities are available Wednesday through Saturday. Learn more at ncmhabitat.org.

Community spotlight: Concord Piecemakers Quilt Show

*The **Concord Piecemakers Quilt Show** is just around the corner on **October 16-17** at **St. Matthew's United Methodist Church in Acton**.*

Whether you're an avid quilter, enjoy handmade crafts, or simply appreciate creativity and craftsmanship, the show offers something for everyone. Highlights include beautiful quilts, vendors, boutique shopping, a fabric sale, raffle baskets, a raffle quilt, and a silent auction.

*Admission is **$10**, with free admission for children under 12.*

Learn more at Concord Piecemakers (www.concordpiecemakers.org).

Gemini OpenAI Claude Copilot perplexity

A Note about Artificial Intelligence from Rev. Jen

The use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) has sparked much debate and discussion. For the sake of transparency, I want to share with the congregation the boundaries I've set for myself around the use of AI in my ministry:

I do not use generative AI to create a sermon, write a newsletter or produce any other written document from scratch. While the abilities of generative AI are astounding, the moving of the Holy Spirit is a required part of sermon preparation. AI cannot know the community the words are tailed to and for and the intuitive nature of public proclamation is the responsibility of the one called to preach.

I will use AI to tidy up or enhance an already written document or to suggest a phrase when I need alternate words. In short, I use AI as an editor and not co-author.

As we navigate this technology and the impact it has on every aspect of life, I am sure we will have additional conversations. I welcome your thoughts.

Navigating the Caregiving Journey

Caring for a loved one with Alzheimer's disease or another serious illness can be challenging, emotional, and sometimes overwhelming. You don't have to navigate that journey alone.

Join us on **Wednesday, October 21, at 7 pm** for **Navigating the Caregiving Journey**, a community presentation led by **Joanne Fontaine, RN**, Geriatric Care Manager and founder of Pro-Active Eldercare.

Ms. Fontaine will offer practical guidance for supporting individuals and families, planning care strategies, and understanding available resources. There will also be time for conversation, questions, and sharing experiences in a welcoming and supportive environment.

The program is free, open to the public, and refreshments will be served.



Joanne Fontaine, RN (Pro-Active Eldercare)





Crafting with Friends for the Harvest Fair

Join us for fun, fellowship, and creativity as we prepare handmade items for the Harvest Fair! No crafting experience is needed, and all are welcome.

- **October 15, 6-8 PM**: Decoupage plates and sea glass art
- **October 22, 6-8 PM**: Work in progress and finishing projects
- **October 31, 10 AM-12 PM**: Halloween crafting fun. Wear your favorite costume, just for fun!
- **November 14, 10 AM-12 PM**: Make M&M Turkeys and complete final crafts

Pie Plate Collection: We're also collecting empty pie plates, new or used, for our Harvest Fair pie bakers. Please bring your pie plates to church by **November 1** to help us prepare pies for sale at the Fair.

Come for an hour or stay for the whole session. We'd love to craft with you!

*To learn more about the Harvest Fair and other ways to contribute, see the **"Harvest Fair Plans are Taking Shape"** article elsewhere in this newsletter.*

Monthly Meetings

Mission Outreach
First Sunday, 11am

Deacons
First Monday, 6pm

Christian Education
First Tuesday, 7:30pm (Online)

Music Committee
First Tuesday, 7:30pm (Online)

Caregivers Support Group
Second Wednesday, 7pm

Welcoming Committee
First Sunday, 11:30am

Property
First Thursday, 7:30pm

Church Council
Second Thursday, 7:30pm

Digital Media Committee
Third Thursday, 7:30pm (Online)

Knitting for Others
Fourth Thursday, 7-9pm

The Congregational Church of Littleton
United Church of Christ

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A Friend

At The Congregational Church of Littleton
All are welcome, and ALL means ALL.

The Congregational Church of Littleton, UCC



You Are Welcome Here

No matter who you are or where you are on life's journey, you are welcome here.
We affirm each person as a child of God and worthy of God's love.

This includes YOU:

Whether you are tall or short, whether you wear denim or silk, whether you were raised in a church or have never been in one before, whether you are a family of one or many, whether you can bound up the stairs or need to use the elevator, whether you were born yesterday or are working on your second century; Whatever the color of your skin, your sexual orientation, your gender identity, your politics, your income, your education, your mental or physical health, or anything else that distinguishes you, we want you to feel included.

Our mosaic is made more beautiful with every additional shape, size and color.

At this church, all are welcome, and ALL means ALL