



WEST CHELMSFORD UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

242 Main Street, North Chelmsford, MA 01863

Rev. Geisa Y. Matos

978-251-4834 | www.wcumc.us | office@wcumc.us

*WCUMC Faith, Family, and Future are the
Cornerstones of this nurturing community.*

FEBRUARY 2026 NEWSLETTER

“Walking the Way of the Cross”

As February unfolds, we stand at the threshold of Lent. Lent is a season to fully participate in Christ’s life, death, and resurrection, not just remember it. We begin with repentance through our Ash Wednesday service, seeking to embrace practices of faith that guide us as we take up our cross and follow Jesus. These practices aren’t ends in themselves; they’re doorways—opening our hearts to discern more clearly what Jesus is calling us to in this Lenten season.

The following message, recently written by Bishop Thomas J. Bickerton, is one such doorway. It is not simply something to read, but an invitation that may stir, unsettle, and clarify how the teachings of Jesus are meant to be lived right now. Rooted in our Methodist tradition, it reminds us that faith is formed both in the transformation of our hearts and in the way that transformation takes shape in the world through love, justice, and compassion.

Shalom (peace and wholeness),
Rev. Geisa

An Open Letter to the People of the New Hope Episcopal Area The New England & New York Annual Conference

I write these words tonight, Jan. 24, 2026, with a very heavy heart.

Her name was Renee Macklin Good. She was fatally shot while in her SUV by an Immigration and Customs Enforcement officer on January 7 in Minneapolis, MN. She was 37 years old.

His name was Alex Jeffrey Pretti. While attempting to assist a woman who had been pepper sprayed, he was shot today by federal border patrol officers. He was an ICU nurse at a Veterans Administration hospital in Minneapolis, MN. He, too, was 37 years old.

My heart is heavy tonight, as it should be, that family members have lost loved ones and lives have been ended prematurely. My heart is heavy tonight, as it should be, because these two fatal shootings should have never happened.

But the heaviness in my heart tonight is more grievous because, in all likelihood, in just a few days or weeks, there will be another name on this list. And then another. And another.

Should I write a letter every time this happens? Perhaps I should. But letters penned from the comfort of my home seem all too shallow and ineffective. The words quickly fade as the stories of unjust and unnecessary acts of violence continue all around us. There must be something more.

Last week I had a conversation with Massachusetts Governor Maura Healey. Our conversation centered on all that is going wrong around us but, more importantly, we talked about how we might find creative ways to unite church and state to mobilize our people and meet the needs of the most vulnerable. It was a necessary conversation, and we pledged to have more—quickly. It was a good meeting. But there must be something more.

Not long ago I found myself in a conversation with another high ranking and experienced politician. We expressed mutual frustration over the very loud silence and ineffective pushback by politicians who oppose what's taking place in our country. I posed a critical but simple and genuine question: Where will the difference be made?

Their answer was also very simple and genuine: If we wait for high-ranking politicians to try to institute the changes necessary, we will find ourselves simply waiting and becoming more frustrated by the silence and the inaction. The answer, they said, is in a movement from the bottom up. The real change will happen when people in towns and communities and municipalities say, "Enough is enough," and rise up to show how much they want to see a different country, a different world.

Tonight, I write an open letter to the people of the New Hope Episcopal Area, the churches, the clergy, and the laity of New England and New York. This is not a statement or a position paper. It is a challenge.

Some of us are protestors. Some of you do it well. It comes naturally to you to participate in organized protests. It is an important action, and it is time for towns and communities to show how many of us are unhappy with the way things are. Training in non-violent resistance is critical and approaching protesting with the right objective in mind is essential. We must bring the core values of who we are as United Methodist Christians, finding ways, clear and intentional ways, to protest in love. Anything less than that is just what some are hoping for – chaos, unrest, and a reason to limit our rights and freedoms. If you protest, do it the right way and consider doing it now. But it's not enough.

Some of us are providers. Some of you do it well. It comes naturally to you. In nearly every town in this Northeast corridor there is someone who is afraid, so afraid that they do not come out. They are not working or grocery shopping or attending school. They fear their home will be invaded and are terrified every time a whistle blows. They need someone to know their name, someone to have empathy, someone who is willing to help provide for their basic needs. Someone to be a friend. These personal connections offer a sense of hope amid great fear. Every church has some capacity to collect food, cook food, deliver food, take a child to school, check on a neighbor, and make a difference. If you are a provider, provide, and consider doing it now. But it's not enough.

Some of us are community organizers. Some of you do it well. It comes naturally to you. The ability to pull communities together from different denominations or individual agencies is of critical importance in these days of uncertainty and fear. To embrace the concept that we are stronger together is to pool our passions and our resources in a way that will provide a greater impact for the people who need it most. The need is glaring in some settings, more subdued in others, but it is present everywhere. If you are a community organizer, organize, and consider doing it now. But it's not enough.

Some of us are pray-ers. Some of you do it well. It comes naturally to you. Believing in and evoking the presence of God during times when there are few or no answers is of critical importance. In my last local church, one of our most influential leaders suffered a crippling stroke. When I visited with her, she lamented over how she would not be available to our church in what was a critical time for leadership. In our conversation I reminded her that perhaps her role was changing and that she could become our chief "intercessor" in prayer. She had the capacity to pray us through. And she did. I am convinced that her prayers bolstered and blessed the leaders of that church at one of the most important times in our history. If your gift is praying, it is time for you to pray, intentionally pray, and consider doing it now. But it's not enough.

All of us are residents of the United States of America. Those of you that are happy with the current state of affairs will not appreciate this letter. Perhaps you have already stopped reading it.

But for those of you who are not happy with the way things are going, it is time for us to do something that is of critical importance. Whether we are Democrat or Republican, progressive or moderate or conservative it is time to declare that something is not right in our country.

Any time that anyone anywhere is shot, whether by an ICE official or a mass shooter, something is wrong. Any time injustice emerges, pain is inflicted, harm is done, there will be debate and disagreement. But here’s the bottom line: If you do not agree with the current direction of our country, dividing ourselves politically and theologically will not help. We must demonstrate to ourselves and to the world that different people who think differently can work together for the common good. As residents, it is time for us to say, “Enough is enough” and pull together to make a difference now when a difference is desperately needed.

Throughout this letter I have said that any particular step by itself is not enough. It’s not enough because we need everyone’s gifts and abilities to impact the change we long for.

Protesters criticize those that pray and those that pray criticize those that organize. Providers are called naïve and politicians are accused of being cynical. And I believe that’s just what some want – disagreement, chaos, and disunity. As long as that continues internally, the change so many of us long for externally will never take place.

Please do not point the finger at those who respond in different ways. Point the finger at the problem and stay centered on the issue. Focus intentionally on how your gifts can be used in collaboration with others to get the job done. That’s leadership. That’s focus. That sets the stage for making a difference. That’s embracing the reality that none of us can solve this alone. But together we might just stand a chance to recreate a “more perfect union” that, as the founders of our country wrote, “would establish justice, ensure domestic tranquility, provide for the common defense, promote the general welfare, and secure the blessings of liberty to ourselves and our posterity.”

That’s not unlike what Jesus himself prayed, “The glory that you have given me I have given them, so that they may be one, as we are one. I in them and you in me, that they may become completely one, so that the world may know that you have sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.” (John 17:22-33)

Hearts are heavy this night. But in the midst of our heaviness, let us band together as one body, bound in purpose, conviction, and love to make the difference we can make.

The Journey Continues, . . .
Thomas J. Bickerton
Resident Bishop, New Hope Episcopal Area

Link to the Original Article
<https://www.facebook.com/NEUMC/posts/an-open-letter-to-the-people-of-the-new-hope-episcopal-area-the-new-england-new-/1322940553195281/>

A United Methodist Presence at each State House in New England
State-Level advocacy groups guided by our Social Principles

The New England UM Board of Church and Society invites you to be part of an organizational Zoom for your state as we live into our newly revised Social Principles [124]. We are comprised of six unique states which provides great opportunities and great challenges to legislative advocacy organizing for sound policy that reflects our social values as United Methodists. John Wesley said, “There is no personal holiness without social holiness”. Please join us for your state-specific Zoom, either at 12:00 PM or 7:00 PM on these dates:

Massachusetts: Tuesday, February 10, 2026, 12:00 PM or 7:00 PM
<https://zoom.us/meeting/register/q3Rps7OGQhiP61m8QMXLXg>

Maine: Thursday, February 12, 2026, 12:00 PM or 7:00 PM
<https://zoom.us/meeting/register/Jz2zKw67Sp6WyBgP3StRrg>

Connecticut: Tuesday, February 17, 2026, 12:00 PM or 7:00 PM
https://zoom.us/meeting/register/iPhw2xP9T0iA_QzvZzZ9vg

Vermont: Thursday, February 19, 2026, 12:00 PM or 7:00 PM
<https://zoom.us/meeting/register/d6mvBuOBRkyLApnO-Vfcaw>

New Hampshire: Tuesday, February 26, 2026, 12:00 PM or 7:00 PM
<https://zoom.us/meeting/register/Fgwelr3eRmyncNOidJsKWQ>

For more information, contact Grace Pugh Hubbard, Climate Care Coordinator, Ghubbard@neumc.org

Prayer List

In the Sunday bulletin under “Let us remember these people in our prayers,” we list those with more acute needs. Our Monthly Newsletter carries a list of more “on-going” concerns to bring to God in Prayer.

We will keep the description you provide as general or specific as you indicate. Please let us know what you would like to include. We also encourage you to clip out these names and keep them in your prayers.

If you would like your name to be added or removed from any of the prayer lists, please contact the church office.

It's never too late for a note, a card, or a call.

Please keep the family of Ruth Wyman in your prayers. Ruth passed away on January 7, 2026. Her Celebration of Life service will be held on Saturday, February 21, 2026.

Those who are at home or in nursing homes:

Betty Chaput – at The Saab Center at D'Youville in Lowell

Alice Howard – at The Residence at Freeman Lake in North Chelmsford

Beverley Jones – at The Residence at Freeman Lake in North Chelmsford

Mary Lynn Weinbeck – at home



Prayer list for on-going health needs:

Judi and Bob Hill

Jen Weinbeck's friends, Mike and Sarah

Lisa Dushais

Inspiration Corner

Six Gifts That Don't Cost a Cent to Give

The Gift...

Of Listening – But you must really listen. No interrupting, no daydreaming, no planning your response. Just listen.

Of Affection – Be generous with appropriate hugs, kisses, pats on the back, and handholds. Let these small actions demonstrate the love you have for family and friends.

Of Laughter – Funny pictures. Share articles, funny stories, and funny greetings. Your gift will say, “I love to laugh with you.”

A Written Note – It can be a simple “Thanks for the help” note or a full sonnet. A brief, handwritten note may even change a life.

A Compliment – A simple and sincere. “You look great in red,” “You did a super job” or “That was a wonderful meal” can make someone's day.

A Favor – Every day, go out of your way to do something kind.



- Anonymous

Lent Devotional

Wow! Easter is April 5th this year, and that means Lent begins February 18th, and it's coming fast. As Christians, Lent is a quiet time away from the chaos of life. I think that we could all use that. It's a time for reflection and a time to focus on our connections with God, through *prayers, fasting, love, and service*.

For many years, WCUMC made their own devotion with a Lent book theme and had their own church family write the ways that God was present in their lives (sometimes what we call God Sightings). It was a way to witness without getting in front of people. It was a great way to connect us to God and to connect to each other. We thought that it would be good to do it again, but time was too short.

Last year, we did a printed kindness calendar and an online reflection with pictures, which was quite nice.

This year, the Congregational Care Committee decided on two ways to provide a devotional for everyone. A free online daily bible devotional app (see below) and "A Sanctuary" Devotional in a printed form, which will be available when they arrive.

We hope you enjoy these selections and look forward to your input on future Lent Activities.

I added the App to my iPhone a week ago and have found it extremely easy to use and very thought-provoking. Every morning, it comes up on my notifications and includes a Daily Bible "Verse of the Day", a "Guided Scripture" video, and a "Guided Prayer".

We hope that you also find it inspiring and perhaps help us, as members, be able to shine our Light for a devotional next year. Start watching for those God Sightings!

Please try to add the app using the following instructions. If you have difficulty, Sue Loiselle, Ellen Celini, or Janice Rutter can help you during coffee hour after the church service. It might require you to add your password, so please bring it with you so that we can complete your connection.

Thank you.

Instructions for the Daily Bible Devotional (The App icon is Holy Bible with a red background)

These instructions may require you to use your password to complete the connection. If you have difficulty, Sue Loiselle, Ellen Cellini, or Janice Rutter can help you during coffee hour after the church service.

- For the Apple iPhone
 1. Go to the App Store on your device
 2. Click on "Search" (looks like a magnifying glass at the bottom of the page)
 3. Type "YouVersion Bible App" by Life Church (HOLY BIBLE -red icon)
 4. Click on "Get."
- For an Android Phone
 1. Go to the Google Play Store on your device
 2. Search for "YouVersion Bible App" by Life Church
 3. Install by tapping "Download" or "Install" to install the app.

Ash Wednesday Service



This year, West Chelmsford UMC will host the Ash Wednesday Service on Wednesday, February 18, 2026, at 7:30 PM.

Refreshments will be available after the service.

St. Paul's Meal

The sign-up sheet for the St. Paul's Meal is now online. To volunteer, please click on the link below. The St. Paul's Meal will be served on **Wednesday, February 25, 2026**. Thank you for your support of this important mission.



<https://www.signupgenius.com/go/9040448A8AB28AAFF2-61903615-stpauls>

Altar Flowers - January 2026

Altar flowers for the month of January 2026 were given to the Glory of God by the following people:

- January 4 – Robin and Peter Orford, New Year's blessings and greetings to all
- January 11 – The Davidson and Stratton families in memory of loved ones
- January 18 – Adrienne Kielsing, "May the God of Hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit." Romans 15:13.
- January 25 – David and Judy Troughton in memory of loved ones

There are openings on the flower calendar in May, July, August, and November. The flower calendar is posted on the wall in the entryway. Select one of the available dates, write your name and phone number on the calendar. The flower arrangement each Sunday is \$30.00. Please make your check available to the church, noting that it is for the altar flowers.

If you have any questions, please contact Diana Bard at 978-692-7668 or Roberta in the church office.

Thank you for making the altar beautiful on Sunday mornings.



Do you know how to raise your issues and concerns in our Church?

If you have a question, suggestion, concern, or complaint, you can talk to any of our Church Leaders, who will help you. We welcome your ideas and will address your concerns within our Christian fellowship. Talk to any of us on the list below.

Pastor: Rev. Geisa Y. Matos

Minister of Music: Karen Leonard

Church Secretary: Roberta Davidson-Stratton

Lay Leader: Kathy Ha

Chairperson Church Administrative Council: Ben Weirich

Chairperson Staff Parish Relations Committee: Elly Evans

Co-Chairpersons Missions Committee: Mark Smith and Rev. Geisa Matos

Chairperson Congregational Care Committee: Lori Evans

Chairperson Worship Committee: Holly Cerullo

Co-Chairpersons Trustees: Adrienne Kielsing, Mark Smith

Chairperson Finance: Angela McAlister

Treasurer: Kimberly Stewart

Financial Secretary: Ellen O'Neill

Children and Family Ministries: Kathy Clark, Harry Johnson

Lost and Found



If you are missing a pair of gloves, a single glove, a hat, or a toy dinosaur, please pick them up in the church office. Your items miss you.


Church Office Information

- The Church Office is open on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, and Friday from 9:00 AM – 1:00 PM. The office phone number is 978-251-4835, and the email address is office@wcumc.us.
- Rev. Geisa's office hours are Tuesday, Wednesday, and Friday from 10:00 AM – 1:00 PM.
- We have six e-mail addresses:
 - office@wcumc.us – for general church business
 - pastormatos@wcumc.us – for Rev Geisa only
 - music@wcumc.us – for Karen Leonard, Music Minister
 - treasurer@wcumc.us – for Kimberly Stewart, Church Treasurer
 - fin_sec@wcumc.us – for Ellen O'Neill, Financial Secretary
 - trustees@wcumc.us – for the Trustees
- Church Website is www.wcumc.us
- Items for the mid-week email are due in the church office by **Monday morning**.
- Items for the church bulletin insert are due in the church office by **Tuesday morning**.
- Items for the **monthly Newsletter** are due in the church office on the third Monday of each month. **All articles must be signed.** The next submission deadline is **Monday, February 16, 2026, for the March 2026 Newsletter.**





FEBRUARY 2026

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1 9:30AM Worship Service In-Person & via Zoom 9:30AM-Sunday School 10:30AM-Coffee Hour	2 6:45PM-Cub Scout Pack 70 Bear Den Mtg 7:30PM-Jubilee Ringers Rehearsal	3	4 7:30PM-Missions Committee Mtg 7:30PM-Festival Ringers Rehearsal	5 7:30PM-Senior Choir Rehearsal	6 6:45PM-Cub Scout Pack 70 Den Meeting	7 8:00AM-Cub Scout Pack 70 Pinewood Derby 4:00PM-Private Event
8 9:30AM Worship Service In-Person & via Zoom 10:00AM-Sunday School 10:30AM-Coffee Hour 1:30PM-MVR Rehearsal 3:00PM-Westford Girl Scout Troop Mtg.	9 7:30PM-Jubilee Ringers Rehearsal	10 7:30PM-Finance Committee Mtg	11 7:30PM-Festival Ringers Rehearsal 7:30PM-Trustees' Mtg	12 7:30PM-Senior Choir Rehearsal	13 7:30PM-Cub Scout Pack 70 Webelos Den Mtg.	14 Valentine's Day 
15 9:30AM Worship Service In-Person & via Zoom 10:00AM-Sunday School 10:30AM-Coffee Hour 1:30PM-MVR Rehearsal	16 President's Day 7:30PM-Jubilee Ringers Rehearsal	17 7:30PM-Church Administrative Council Mtg 7:30PM-Festival Ringers Rehearsal	18 7:30PM-Ash Wednesday Service at WCUMC	19 7:30PM-Senior Choir Rehearsal	20	21 10:30AM-Ruth Wyman Celebration of Life Service
22 9:30AM Worship Service In-Person & via Zoom 10:00AM-Sunday School 10:30AM-Coffee Hour 1:30PM-MVR Rehearsal	23 6:45PM-Cub Scout Pack 70 Bear Den Mtg. 7:30PM-Jubilee Ringers Rehearsal	24 7:00PM-Christian Ed Meeting 7:00PM-Cub Scout Pack 70 Arrow of Light Den Mtg.	25 St. Paul's Meal 7:30PM-Festival Ringers Rehearsal	26 6:30PM-Cub Scout Pack 70 Wolf Den Mtg. 7:30PM-Senior Choir Rehearsal	27 7:30PM-Cub Scout Pack 70 Webelos Den Mtg	28

2:00PM-Cub Scout Pack 70 Tiger Den Mtg. 3:00PM-Westford Girl Scouts Mtg						
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