Christian Education & Formation Newsletter
October 2021

If you have been in a store recently, you have no doubt noticed that the countdown to Christmas has already begun. The shelves are filled with decorations, gift ideas, wrapping paper, and cards. Amid all the emphasis on Christmas as a commercial holiday, this month’s newsletter offers some suggestions on resources to help us re-focus on the true meaning of Christmas found in love and the birth of Jesus Christ.

Visit our Website

Featured Resources

Advent and Christmas

Jesus Crisis 2021 Advent-Christmastide Devotional from the Pilgrim Press

"I have not come to bring peace, but a sword."

Jesus enthusiasts likely cringe at his sharp words in Matthew 10:34. We often imagine a child-inviting, good-news-bringing, body-and-spirit-healing Jesus. Alas, this double-sided Jesus is difficult to witness.

Of all the things he could've brought instead of peace, why bring a sword?

Precision.

With a meticulous commitment to justice, Jesus cuts into our world of destruction: he severs oppressive systems, dissects violent divisions, hacks at the hate that poisons our shared divinity.

After a year of one crisis after another, might we embrace the Crisis who arrives in the form of a tiny little baby?

Order/Learn More >>
New Release: Christmas on the Screen
Reviewing the Evolution of American Spirituality

From *Miracle on 34th Street* to *Love Actually*, generations of Christmas films tell us about American spirituality and social values:

- How the Grinch Stole Christmas weighs materialism against community.
- The Polar Express tests the wonder of miracles in an age of cynicism.
- And Die Hard (yes, Die Hard) wrestles with the impact of broken relationships on holiday joy.

In Christmas on the Screen, journalist John A. Zukowski takes readers on a tour of Christmas films and American values, asking the question, “What does Christmas mean to us?”

Order/Learn more >>

---

**New 2021 Advent Study**


A deeper dive into the faith themes in the Christmas classic, *How the Grinch Stole Christmas!* including, how did the Grinch’s heart grow three sizes come Christmas morning? How did Christmas save the Grinch? Could it be that the very thing we think we hate is the one thing that changes our lives? This church wide study includes a DVD, Leader Guide, Book, Worship Resources, Youth Book, and Children’s Leader Guide.

Learn more >>

---

**The Unicorn at the Manger | Animal Stories of the Holy Night (Revised in 2019)**

Master storyteller Roger Robbennolt captures the hearts of people of all ages with magical stories of a hodgepodge crèche. This collection of interwoven tales begins when a ceramic unicorn is added to the manger scene—because, of course, “no one should ever desert a unicorn on Christmas Eve.” With the unicorn’s help, tales unfold: “The Outcast Pig,” “The Goat Who Gave,” “The Gobbling Clown,” “The Ram Who Remained,” and twelve more stories of the roles animals played in the birth and life of Jesus.

Whether you read these imaginative tales to yourself or read them aloud with children, *The Unicorn at the Manger* will bring joy and wonder for years to come.
Illustrated Ministry 2021 Christmas Pageant: Do Not Be Afraid

This resource has been designed to meet Christmas pageant needs, whether you're doing an in-person or virtual pageant. Centered on the narratives surrounding Jesus’ birth from the gospels of Matthew and Luke, this can be used as a traditional Christmas pageant, ready to be performed in person at your church. But it is also designed to be an expandable, shrinkable, pre-recordable, Zoom-able, intergenerational pageant that can be adapted to your setting, no matter what is happening in the world.

Download additional resources >>

Events

Faith Formation Leadership Training and Certification

This program is offered by the Southern New England Conference, however, anyone - both lay leaders and authorized ministers - within or beyond the United Church of Christ and southern New England, may participate with the understanding that the focus will be on ministry within a United Church of Christ congregation.

The current program offerings include:
  - Exploring Curriculum & Digital Resources
  - Engaging Our Sacred Scripture’s Story
  - Exploring the United Church of Christ - Our History, Our Beliefs, Our Identity
  - Boundary Awareness for Faith Formation and Youth Ministry Leaders
  - Serving Together - Mission for All Ages

For more information visit: https://www.sneucc.org/certification or contact Debbie Gline Allen at glineallend@sneucc.org.

Save the Date! New England Association of United Church Educators 2022 Conference
Employment

Local Opportunities

- The **Brookline Community Church** is looking for a part-time **Children's Ministry Coordinator** to provide overall leadership and welcome in the Christian Faith Formation of children, including guidance and resources for all aspects of the Children's Ministry program. Learn more >>

- There is an opening for a part-time **Christian Education Director**, to be responsible for the development and coordination of faith formation for children, youth, and families in accordance with the mission and ministry of the **Stratham Community Church**, United Church of Christ. Learn more >>

- For more local opportunities visit the [Classifieds/Help Wanted](#) section of the NH Conference UCC website.

National Opportunities

Willing to relocate? The [UCC Ministry Opportunities webpage](#) is a great source for Christian Education and Faith Formation openings nationwide.

---

The Word of God

*Make me to know your ways, O LORD; teach me your paths. Lead me in your truth, and teach me, for you are the God of my salvation; for you I wait all day long.* Psalm 25: 4-5 (NRSV)