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December 2009 North Star  
A publication of North Congregational Church, UCC

413-549-0500 Church Office

Web Address: [www.north-church.org](http://www.north-church.org)

Sunday Worship: 10:30 a.m.

An Open and Affirming Congregation

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North Congregational Church  
North Congregational Church, UCC  
PO Box 9613  
North Amherst, MA 01059-9613

***Time Sensitive Material  
Please Open Immediately!***

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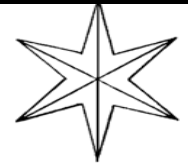
# North Star

North Church – UCC News

December 2009

Unconditionally Welcoming, Decidedly Christian

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## In Our Thoughts...

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Of all the seasons of the Christian calendar year, I think Advent is my favorite – it's a time of beginnings, a season of lights, a chance to re-explore the mysteries and possibilities of an incredibly ironic time in the cycle of things: the Savior is born (in a manger?!)

Here's a sampling of things I've been thinking about lately. Joyous Advent and Merry Christmas to everyone. Please come and be a part of our Christmas Eve service "Journey to Christmas":

**"And the angel left her."** Luke 1:38 by Angela O'Donnell

So there she stood alone amid a stillness  
as loud as any earthquake she had heard,  
the eaves creaking in the absence of wind,  
the hiss and tick of radiators warming  
the house along with a soon-coming sun.  
Her hands touch her belly, swelling already  
like dough cupped close in an earthen bowl.  
She knows it won't be long before she shows.  
What to do with all this sudden silence?  
Phone her boyfriend: *Joseph, I have news!*  
E-mail St. Anne: *Dear Mother, I'm afraid.*  
Drop to her knees, now weak with recognition  
and kiss the space he filled a moment past  
in answer to the question he had asked.

... God greets and addresses us in this hidden place during Advent – that part of us that says awake longing and listening, and reaching out for God even when the rest is too distracted to notice. In Advent, we are invited to learn to be led by our wakeful hearts, to nudge our inner and outer lives into closer alignment, to be kept awake by love.  
(Stephanie Paulsell, in *Christian Century* Dec. 1, 2009 p35)

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## Alternative Holiday Gift Fair

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All of us would have chosen to have nice weather, in order to make it easier for shoppers to park and walk, but, as someone pointed out, this way they stayed around longer so they didn't have to go back out into the rain! Whatever the reason, people definitely stayed and looked, which was a tribute to the quality of items and information our vendors were sharing. Several people commented on the spirit in the room -- here are a couple: "lovely, thoughtful, peaceful and friendly Fair"; "dark outside but full of sunshine within".

Last year we had 13 groups represented, while this year, there were 15. Three were replacements, and two were additions. This year, the total of sales was \$4,167 and last year's was \$3,252. We at North Church are very happy that we could help raise much-needed funding for so many wonderful projects.

Those from North Church working at the fair were pleased to watch as people interacted and learned about the groups represented. The interaction was not only among shoppers and vendors, but among the vendors themselves who learned about each other's projects, which are often international in scope. Each of us was thanked by many people for holding this unique fair.

North Church thanks all its members and friends who made this special event possible.  
- Barbara Jenkins

## Special Offering Alert

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The Annual Christmas Fund of the United Church of Christ, provides financial aid to retired and active ministers and their surviving spouses and children who face overwhelming financial demands. This ministry, carried out by the Pension Boards, is one of 3 special offerings that NCC participates in each year. We will plan to receive your gifts during the offering in Sunday worship on Dec. 20<sup>th</sup>, and during the Christmas Eve Service at 6:30p.

The Theme for the 2009 Christmas Fund is "Prepare the way..."  
Prepare the way...through your participation in the Annual Christmas Fund for the Veterans of the Cross and the Emergency Fund.

God's people have lived through terrible and terrifying times throughout history. There is one constant that remains true even in these times: God has never forsaken the promise to care for the covenant people.



## Did You Know?

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According to the 2009 Congregational Economic Impact Study by Lake Institute on Faith and Giving and the Alban Institute: *(Source: Christian Century, 12-1-09 p.9)*

### GIVING (percent of congregations surveyed):

36.6%	Increased
34.0	Stayed the same
29.4	Decreased

### Budget Changes for 2009:

15.7%	Not increasing salaries
14.5	Conserving to reduce utility costs
13.6	Spending less on programs
7.6	Deferring maintenance costs
6.8	Reducing staff
5.6	Deferring hiring
3.6	Decreasing missions giving

## Gibbles 'n Bits

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According to the General Social Survey, in 1983, 32% of Americans said they attended religious services weekly. In 2006, the figure was 26%.

And, in 1983, 54% of Americans said they pray daily. In 2006, that figure was 59%.

The Barna Research Group survey found that 11% of Americans think that the Bible is just another book of teachings written by men containing stories and advice.

The same survey found that 56% of Americans think the Bible has no errors. Go figure.





## December 2009

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<b>29</b> Stewardship Dedication Sunday Brunch	<b>30</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
First Sunday of Advent		Music Rehearsal 7pm in Sanctuary				
<b>6</b> Celebration of Jewish Music & Food to benefit Project Rehovot @ 4:30pm	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>12</b>
Second Sunday of Advent	Exec. Council meeting 7pm			Book Group meeting at 7pm in Pastor Nada's study		
<b>13</b> 10:30am & 2pm Jason & deMarco in Natick, MA 4pm – 6pm Concert at Goodwin AME Zion Church	<b>14</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>19</b>
	Healing Group meeting/lunch		Bible Study meeting at Patti & Jenna's in Easthamtpon			
<b>20</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>26</b>
				Christmas Eve Service at 6:30pm in Sanctuary Reception of UCC Offering	Christmas Day NCC Office closed	
Deadline for Jan-Feb '10 Newsletter				<b>31</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>27</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>30</b>	New Year's Eve NCC Office closed	New Year's Day	