

THE AGAWAM ARROW

February 2026



AGAWAM CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH

United Church of Christ, 745 Main Street, Agawam, MA 01001

A church where the Holy Spirit is alive, uniting people with Christ through:
Transforming ministries, vibrant worship, diligent study, and warm fellowship.

“A place to call home – A people to call family”.

*We are gathering together to worship on Sunday morning. Please join us
in person or livestream on Facebook through our website, YouTube @Agawam
Congregational Church, MA or Ch. 15(the following week at 1pm)*

Church Staff:

Pastor: Reverend Daniel Cohen

Organist/ Choir Director: Ann Tapply

Administrative Assistant: Dawn Stevens office@agawamcong.com

Church Sexton: Dave Christian

Deacon of the Month: Deb Pond

Website: www.agawamcongregationalchurch.com

Office phone: 413-786-7111 **Office hours:** Mon-Fri 8am-12pm



Series Title: **Depolarizing America: One Happier, Humbl**

As a local pastor here in Agawam — and as someone who's married to a Jamaican woman who reminds me daily that difference can be a blessing, however challenging it may be — I've learned that humility isn't weakness. It's strength under control. It's what allows two people, or two parties, to stay in relationship even when they don't see eye to eye. While my columns in this series will focus on depolarizing us — to start the healing process by placing party affiliations in their proper place, reminding us that we are humans first, Americans second and “democrat” or “republican” a distant third — it is not a call for folks to back down from their convictions. If you feel called to act, that is your right, just please don't do it at the expense of the rights of others. In short, I'm not trying to make readers gentler lambs — I'm trying to make them stronger, more self-aware citizens who can stand firm without hate. And while I'm under no illusion that my five-column series will solve the great American divide by itself, I believe it offers some tangible ways for each of us to begin the work of understanding our own biases, the beliefs held by members of the other party, and to start to bridge the gap between us. If you are one of the many who would like to see this experiment succeed — both the experiment of depolarization and the grand experiment that is America itself — I urge you to write in with your comments. As I said, this is just a start. A start that must come one happier, humbler soul at a time.

Column 1 – Step 1: Stop clinging so tightly to our political labels

I am not a Republican. Nor am I a Democrat.

I am neither of these things, because they don't exist.

Not really.

Now you may say “Well, **I'M** a Republican, and I'm proud to be one!” Or “I'M a Democrat and you can't tell me I'm not!”

And, in a sense, you would be right, of course.

In a sense.

You see, my brothers, my sisters, my fellow Americans, what I'm getting at here is that we are not the labels we so readily cling to. The labels we are willing to fight for, die for, and, in some cases, kill for.

But what does it mean to **BE** a “Democrat” or a “Republican.”

Let's examine that more closely.

If we say, for instance, we **ARE** a Democrat, does that mean we believe **EVERYTHING** the Democratic party platform says at any given moment?

I mean even the head of the Democratic National Committee would have a hard time agreeing with that! It would mean that he or she had no core values, because, as we know, the party platform is something that changes over time.

You'll have to agree, the same thing applies to those of us who call ourselves "Republicans."
(We'll discuss the fact that none of us are truly "Independent" later, as we all need each other to succeed as a society.)

Now if you want to counter and say that calling ourselves a "Democrat" or "Republican" really means you tend to vote for the candidate of that party, then I'd agree.

The problem is that we don't stop to think about this most of the time. We are wed to our "tribe" and we have been taught – and are constantly being programmed to think – that the members of the "other" tribe are evil.

I said I was neither a Democrat or a Republican or an Independent. So what am I?

I am a human being who chooses not to identify with any political party's label.

But even before that, I am a Child of God.

As the French mystic Pierre Teilhard de Chardin famously said, "We are not human beings going through a Spiritual experience, we are Spiritual Beings going through a human experience."

Vocationally, I am a Pastor in a Protestant Church. I am a psychotherapist in private practice. And I am an author of a book on humility. A book with 70 "humility paths" or "mental happiness tools" – many of which have the power to depolarize this great nation of ours.

For after being a Child of God – a Jewish Christian with Buddhist tendencies, as I like to call myself – after being a human being, I am and have always been an American.

My fellow Americans, if we are going to come together, as the Beatles sang, we are all going to have to start by looking at the man [or woman] in the mirror. Something Michael Jackson taught us.

For the answer to our polarization problem isn't "out there" but "in here." That is, it has to start with each one of us letting go of our tribal affiliations or at the very least, recognizing them for what they are and are not.

Now I'm not suggesting you give up your party membership. Just that you realize that it's not something you're locked into from birth – like, say, being a human being or even being an American. For while some people actually give up their American citizenship, the vast majority of us have no intention of doing **that** anytime soon.

So let's start just by recognizing we don't ALWAYS agree with EVERYTHING our chosen party stands for. And let's also recognize that those who follow the "other" party – we are essentially a two-party system, after all, independents just being people who can't make up their minds (I'm kidding, of course) – let's recognize that those people on the other side of the aisle ALSO don't agree with everything their party stands for at any given moment.

This is just a start, but I think it is a good one. In future columns I'll suggest a number of ways we can work *on ourselves* to heal our national divide (for, as I said before, the work has to start "within.")

In the meantime I'd like to leave you with an exercise and one question you can respond to

Exercise: Stop and think about how much you attach political labels to yourself and others. Then stop and think about how much more complex you are.

Question to respond to: “If you are more complex than your party affiliation, do you think the same can be said of those who are on the other side of the political divide? Why or why not?”

Daniel Aaron Cohen is pastor of Agawam Congregational Church in Agawam, Massachusetts, and the author of It's Not All About You! The Secret Joy of Practical Humility.

MODERATOR'S NOTE

It's been a tough winter so far with blizzards and extreme cold causing us to cancel two Sunday services and reschedule the annual meeting. As I write this I am recovering from one of the worst colds I've had in a long time and it seems that it will never end. But I think of seeing all of you at church someday when I'm feeling better and the words of the Apostle Paul come to mind:

“I thank my God upon every remembrance of you...” - Philippians 1:3 NKJV

At our January meeting the Executive Board was briefed on the many planned fundraising activities, reviewed financial results for 2025 and made preparations for the annual meeting which was rescheduled to February 22. I expect to be in much better health by then and pray the Lord keep you safe, warm and healthy.

Yours in Christ,
David Bertagnolli, Moderator

ANNUAL MEETING

The annual meeting is scheduled for Sunday, Feb.
22nd. After service. Please plan to be there.

MEN'S FELLOWSHIP

Men's fellowship will meet on Saturday,
February 14th at 7:30 am at
Bobbie J'z

WOMEN'S FELLOWSHIP

Women's fellowship will be Saturday, **February 11th**
at Bobbie J'z at 12:00pm. Please let Sharon Christian
know if you're going.
413-210-4438 or Csharon63Yahoo.com

**Thank you, Marilyn Alexander, for sending
cards and bulletins to the shut-ins. It makes
a difference in people's lives knowing that
they are missed and thought of often as they
so truly are. Any and all donated cards
are welcome!!**

UpperRoom and Our Daily Bread booklets

are available in the the church office. Feel free
to stop by and pick one up and allow the Lord
to refresh your soul as you read the word of
God on a daily basis.

CHURCH LIGHTING

This is a wonderful way to honor a loved one, a
birthday, an anniversary, or any event in your life.
Your generous contribution is used to light
the lower spotlights in the front of the church.

Suggested Donations:

One week: -\$20.00 & One Month: -\$75.00

Parish Cupboard

All types of nonperishable food items.

**Please be sure that items are within "best if
used by date".**

JUNK FOR JESUS

We are now collecting scrap metal to raise funds
for the church. Please contact Dick (413.786.2430)
or Dave (413.854.8416)

***Want to earn Free \$\$ for the church?? Bring your used
INK CARTRIDGES to the church and we recycle them for
money! Leave ink cartridges by the office door. In the
past few months, we have earned 50.00 in free \$\$! This
has helped pay for color ink. Thanks to Dave
Bertagnolli for heading this project up.***

Lending Cupboard Ministry:

We have medical equipment for those in need; please
call the office for more info. We are accepting
donations to this ministry as well. Thank you in
advance for your generosity.

LOAVES & FISHES

We meet every 3rd Monday of the month at 4:00 p.m.
Sauce and **ELBOW** macaroni are always
appreciated! We are looking for volunteers to be
available if needed. Please see Dave Christian or
Lesley Young if you are interested in volunteering.
Thank you for your support in this outreach ministry!

MEMORIAL DONATIONS

Donations were made to the church in
memory of Linda Gagne

PROPERTY COMMITTEE

All property related concerns should be addressed
to the Property Committee first please, not the
Executive Board. Tom Mathes is our Property
Committee chair and
is available to speak with anyone.



Deacon of the Month of February: Deb Pond

Psalm 121

I lift up my eyes to the hill
From whence comes my help
My help comes from the Lord
Who made heaven and earth

He will not allow your foot to be moved
He who keeps you will not slumber
Behold he who keeps Israel
Shall neither slumber nor sleep

The Lord is your keeper
The Lord is your shade at your right hand
The sun shall not strike you by day
Nor the moon by night

The Lord shall preserve you from all evil
He shall preserve your soul
The Lord shall preserve your going out and coming in
From this time forward and for evermore.

This psalm is from the Song of Ascents in the Old Testament. These have also been called Pilgrim Songs. Some of these songs were written by King David and another by Solomon and other songs remain anonymous.

These songs were written to offer encouragement and assurance of God's help and protection to all believers.

While we go through life's journey and our walk with the Lord let us be ever mindful of His word to us. He is always watching over us directing us.
May this psalm be a blessing to us every day as we experience His blessings

Debra Pond
Deacon

FLOWERS

Feb. 1st –

Feb. 8th – In loving MEMORY of NOONEY & KING families, from JAN NOONEY

Feb. 15th – In loving MEMORY of DOTTIE HULSE, from her daughters DIANE & DONNA

Feb. 22nd – in loving MEMORY of AL & SUE PECKHAM, LES MELANSON & JIM MORRISON from DALE MELANSON



Financial update from the Treasurer – Donna Decoteau

Category	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Total Actual	2025 Budget	Actual vs. Budget %
Income from Pledges	35,023	41,520	28,701	26,727	131,971	121,000	109%
Other Income (rent, fundraising, Groups, etc.)	13,558	9,828	3,000	10,829	37,215	30,675	121%
Income from Invested Funds	4,000	5,000	15,000	11,500	35,500	55,395	64%
Total Income	52,581	56,348	46,701	49,056	204,686	207,070	99%
Pastor's Expenses	15,505	26,371	22,031	26,153	90,060	90,942	99%
Other Personnel Salaries	13,576	13,499	13,546	13,461	54,082	55,848	97%
Other Operational Expenses	15,199	13,206	14,827	20,759	63,991	60,280	106%
Total Expenses	44,280	53,076	50,404	60,373	208,133	207,070	101%

MISSIONARY

Firstly, I have to thank our congregation for their hard work either knitting or crocheting during the year and for everyone's donations to the Mitten Tree. I am pleased to report we collected 23 small scarves, 9 large scarves, 4 pairs of socks, 5 pairs of gloves, 1 hat and glove sets, 44 small hat & scarf sets, & 47 hats. These were donated between the local elementary schools, Springfield Rescue Mission, West Springfield Parish Cupboard and the Between Bridges program. THANK YOU for supporting this worthwhile mission.

We shall be collecting soup on our "Souper Bowl" table which will be set up in the narthex during the month of February. These donations will be given to the Parish Cupboard.

Any other donations will be used to support the Loaves & Fishes program.

The Missionary group will be meeting after coffee hour at the church on Sunday February 1st rather than coming out in an evening.

Lesley Young, Chairperson

Pastoral Care

This group will be meeting on Sunday, March 1st after coffee hour. If you have any concerns that you wish to be discussed at this meeting please contact one of the following members with the details. Members are Pastor Dan, Marilyn Alexander, Donna Decoteau, Steve Paul, Warren Tapply & Lesley Young

GIRL SCOUTS

The troops are in the middle of their cookie sale. Any orders taken at the church will be delivered directly, weather permitting!

Dine and Donate

to support
Agawam Congregational Church
at **Nicky's pizza**



On Thursday, March 5th, from 11am-8pm, Nicky's will generously donate 10% of proceeds to Agawam Congregational Church

**** Nicky's only accepts cash payments**

1000 Main St. in Agawam

Bring family, friends, and fellow pizza lovers!



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February 2026

Agawam Congregational Church
745 Main St., Agawam, Ma 01001 Phone: 786-7111

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
1 10am Worship	2 7pm Property	3	4 11:30am Bible study	5 6:30pm Choir	6 4pm Prayer 4:30pm Bible study	7
8 10am Worship Church Without Walls	9 	10	11 11:30am Bible study 12pm Women's fellowship Bobbie J'z 6:30 pm. Deacons	12 6:30pm Choir	13 4pm Prayer 4:30pm Bible study	14 7:30am Men's Fellowship@ Bobbie J'z 
15 10am Worship 11:30 Missionary	16 1pm Trustees 4pm Loaves & Fishes	17	18 11:30am Bible study	19 6:30pm Choir	20 4pm Prayer 4:30pm Bible study	21
22 10am Worship Annual Meeting	23 1pm Exec. Board	24 	25 11:30am Bible study	26 6:30pm Choir	27 4pm Prayer 4:30pm Bible study	28
10am Worship						
						