

SHARING THE LIGHT

Monthly Newsletter of the
CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH OF GRAFTON, UCC
Worship and Sunday School at 10 a.m.



Volume 4, Number 8

AUGUST 2022 EDITION

Dear members and friends of our Congregational Church of Grafton:

Questions and answers. Questions or answers. Questions versus answers.

Throughout the history of human thought, the dichotomy between questions and answers has provoked considerable debate. The Greek philosopher Plato proclaimed:

The right question is usually more important than the right answer.

The American poet and novelist Nancy Willard claimed:

Sometimes questions are more important than answers.

Even Jesus of Nazareth is recalled more vividly for his questions than his answers:

What do you want me to do for you? (Mark 10:51)

Which one was neighbor to the one attacked by robbers? (Luke 10:36)

Who do you say that I am? (Matthew 16:15)

The month of August straddles the season of summer, marked by travels and vacations, and the season of autumn, marked by new academic beginnings and old programmatic restarts.

This month of August is particularly rapt with post-pandemic, mid-nostalgic wonderings for faith communities. Throughout the globe, the faith industry faces more unknowns than knowns. Thus, the bright and bold mission for faith leaders is to listen—intentionally, scripturally and prayerfully—for the questions that our God may want us to ask.

If we are asking: *How do we rebuild our Christian Education Program?*

Perhaps God would have us ask: *What kind of support do students at nearby schools need?*

If we are asking: *Why aren't more people attending worship?*

Perhaps God would have us ask: *Where are people gathering for support and community, and how may we join them?*

If we are asking: *What does our congregation think we should do?*

Perhaps God would have us ask: *What do our neighbors need?*

If we are asking: *Why can't we do this program anymore?*

Perhaps God would have us ask: *Has this program completed its life-cycle? What may we do instead?*

If we are asking: *How do we get back to what we were doing before?*

Perhaps God would have us ask: *What is God inviting us to do for the future?*

The Austrian-American business consultant Peter Drucker cautioned:

The most serious mistakes are not being made as a result of wrong answers.

The greatest danger is asking the wrong questions.

This season, as a family of faith, let's be about the work of asking divinely inspired questions.



Shove from the Dove

Beside you in the journey of faith,
Rev. Dr. Barbara Therese

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Holy Happenings in August!

*Faith-building events in our community
during In-Person and Online Services on Sundays at 10 a.m.*

Join us at: facebook.com/UCCGrafton/

August 7 = Feast for All and “I Am” Sermon #1

Sermon: *Eat More Than Bread!*

Scripture focus: I am the Bread of Life. (John 6:35)

For this first Sunday of the month,
all are invited to engage in our newest Scripture-based sermon series
on the seven “I Am” statements of Jesus of Nazareth,
as recorded in the Gospel of John.
Likewise, we gather together for the Feast for All (aka Communion).

* * *

August 14 = “Surprise Sunday” and “I Am” Sermon #2

Sermon: *Surprise! Jesus Is God!*

Scripture focus: Before Abraham was born, I am. (John 8:58)

For this “Surprise Sunday,”
we engage in the words of Jesus that describe his divine nature
as we study the second “I Am” statement
of our new Scripture-based sermon series.

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August 21 = Thrift Shop Sunday and “The People Speak” Sunday

Speakers: Grafton Thrift Shop Team Members

Sermon: *Gifts from a Thrift Shop*

For this “The People Speak” Sunday,
when we honor the mission and workers of our Grafton Thrift Shop,
members of the Thrift Shop team engage our hearts and minds
with memorable stories from serving in our church's outreach into the community.

* * *

August 28 = Blessing of the Animals and “I Am” Sermon #3

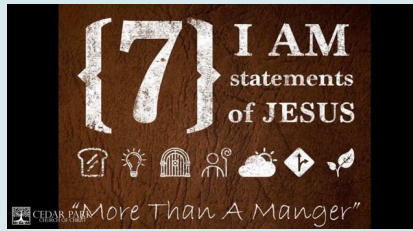
Sermon: *Impostors: Beware!*

Scripture focus: I am the Good Shepherd. (John 10:11)

For this 4th annual “Blessing of the Animals,”
we engage in Jesus' compelling analogy
of “I am the Good Shepherd”
as we continue our “I Am” sermon series
and
as we bless our pets and animals in our outdoor service.
[For more details, see article on Page 3 of newsletter.]

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“I Am” Statements of Jesus: New Sermon Series on Sundays

Question: *How do you describe Jesus of Nazareth?*

Perhaps your answer may reflect the reply to this question: *How does Jesus describe himself?*

The Gospel of John records seven distinct **“I Am” statements** issued by Jesus:

I am the bread of life – John 6:35
Before Abraham was, I am – John 8:58
I am the good shepherd – John 10:11
I am the Light of the world – John 8:12
I am the vine; you are the branches – John 15:5
I am the resurrection – John 11:25
I am the way, the truth and the life – John 14:6

During the past two and a half years, our faith community has engaged in four scripture-based sermon series on:

Psalms Parables of Jesus The Beatitudes “Better...Than” Proverbs

During the months of August, September and October, join our family of faith on Sunday mornings—in-person or online—as we study and reflect on the “I Am” statements of Jesus of Nazareth.

By delving deeper into sacred Scripture, we may grow in faith and faithfulness!

Blessing of the Animals: Sunday, August 28

Calling all pet owners and animal lovers!

All members of our faith community and our greater community are invited to...

*Bring your creatures—great and small—to our 4th Annual Blessing of the Animals
on Sunday morning, August 28, at 10 a.m., outside on our church lawn!*

Each pet will be individually blessed, and a Certificate of Blessing will be given to their owner.

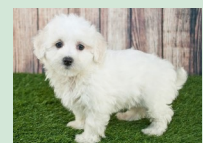
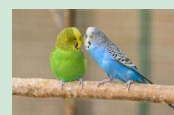
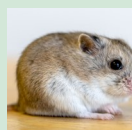
For the safety of all, pet owners are asked to keep their animals leashed or caged.

Photos of pets and stuffed animals are also welcome and will be blessed.

*During our Time of Fellowship immediately after our outdoor service,
appropriate “refreshments” will be offered to the pets...and their owners.*

Animals are not our whole life, but they may make our lives whole.

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Mission Outreach Committee Updates

The Mission Outreach Committee (MOC) has been making tremendous efforts to serve the community of Grafton and other surrounding communities by continuing to support the following initiatives:

1. Donating food items on the “Sharing the Light” Sundays (food items donated to the Grafton Food Bank).
2. Ongoing service at Worcester Fellowship by serving at the “Thursday Café.” (Contact Barbara Gow at 301-580-0628 if you would like to serve at Thursday Café).
3. “Adopt-a-Family” initiative - This is an initiative of the MOC, where the MOC will identify a family each month to help them with current needs by assisting the families with a gift card valued at \$100. The MOC has identified six families who will benefit from this initiative. Three of the recipients are from the Grafton Senior Citizens community and the other three are single-parent families in Worcester.
4. “Operation Backpack” is back! Let’s continue to support this initiative by putting smiles on the faces of the future: the children. Let’s help them to prepare for a new school year. The MOC is now seeking donations of back-to-school supplies to fill at least 30 backpacks. We already have a sufficient number of backpacks to be filled.

The following list contains the supplies needed for “Operation Backpack.”

- Pencils
- Pens (black, blue)
- Crayons (wax, pencils)
- Markers (assorted colors)
- Dry Erase Markers (assorted colors)
- Index cards (ruled, unruled)
- Post-it papers
- School glue (stick, liquid)
- 1-inch binders
- Packs of folder papers
- Folders
- Pencil/Pen cases

Note: Please drop off all back-to-school supplies at our church by August 21, 2022.

For more information, please contact Neston Melville-Jones at nestonmelville@gmail.com.



Harvest Fair and Apple Pie Social 2022

Can you lend a hand?

Mark your calendars and save the date! The 43rd annual Harvest Fair and Apple Pie Social is scheduled for **Sunday, September 25, 2022**. We want to see everyone on the Common for this special event!

In the past, our goals for the Fair have been to “generate funds for the Church’s local and wider missions by creating a Family Fun Event that promotes Fellowship throughout the Church and Community.” This year is no different! We want to bring our community together over apple pie and fun, so let’s do this together!

On the day of the Fair, we will have food: Chili, chowder, hot dogs (and maybe hamburgers!), drinks and, of course, homemade apple pies and crisps! The Common will also see live music and a Yard Sale, with games and a bounce house for the kids.

There are lots of ways you can help:

- Volunteer to help with preparations leading up to the Fair
- Participate in a Pie-Making Workshop
- Donate items for the yard sale
- Prepare a Raffle Basket
- Volunteer to help on Fair Day, September 25

We’d love your help as we plan and want to hear any ideas you may have! Will you attend a Planning Meeting? Will you be able to commit to volunteering on Fair Day? Please let us know in person, by email or give one of us a call. We would love to hear from you!

Let’s do this together!

Joanne Hable, Sue Howell, Barbara Gow, Connie Hopkins, Lorraine Swanson, Kathy Vandenengel



Women's Retreat 2022: Who Wants to Come?

Attention: Women of Our Church!

The organizers of our annual Women's Retreat
are eagerly preparing for our upcoming women's gathering
on
October 21-23,
from late afternoon on Friday through lunch on Sunday,
at
Edwards House Meeting and Retreat Center
in
Framingham, MA.

Theme for this year's retreat:
PRAY: A Four-Letter Word? Or a Four-Step Event?

Who wants to and plans to attend this year's Women's Retreat?

By Sunday, August 28,
please communicate your interest and intentions
to Mrs. Connie Hopkins
at
508.868.3266
(Call or text)

More information and reservation materials to follow.
Only when we intentionally retreat may we boldly advance.

GRAFTON THRIFT SHOP

VOLUNTEERS FOR AUGUST 2022

Shop Hours: Thursdays, 11 a.m. to 3 p.m.; Saturdays, 11 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Thursday - 11 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Aug. 4 Lynne Flanagan-Tsombakos 11 a.m.-1 p.m.
Melanie Peppard 1 p.m. - 3 p.m.
11 Melanie Peppard
18 Joanne Hable
25 Melanie Peppard

Saturday - 11 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Aug. 6 Kim Stewart
13 CLOSED for vacation
20 Diane Lalone
27 Lynne Flanagan-Tsombakos 11 a.m.-1 p.m.
April Lane 1 p.m.-3 p.m.

For the month of August the Bag Sale returns to the Grafton Thrift Shop! For \$7, purchase a large bag and fill it with as many summer clothing items as you can!

Donations are accepted during shop hours on Thursdays and Saturdays, from 11 a.m.- 3 p.m. If you have any questions about the shop or donating, please contact April Lane at aprild5850@yahoo.com.

Sharing-the-Light Is about Sharing Goodness!

The greatest GOOD is what we do for one another. (Mother Teresa of Calcutta)

As a faith community, we are called to bring goodness to a world plagued by rudeness, selfishness and lawlessness. Through our Sharing-the-Light Food Collection, our family of faith shares goodness by collecting these non-perishable items for our local Grafton Food Bank:

**Canned fruit
Coffee
Peanut Butter**

**Solid white tuna in water
Cereal (Rice Krispies and Cheerios)
Toothpaste (4 oz. and larger)
Toothbrushes (two-pack)**

Members and friends of our church may contribute these identified items on the first Sunday of each month for our Sharing-the-Light Food Collection during our worship service. As well, a large wicker basket—located in our Church Kitchen—accepts non-perishable food throughout the month. Our contributions are delivered monthly to the Grafton Food Bank.

Thank you for being part of the mission to bring goodness to our community!

Giving is not just about making a donation.

Giving is about making a difference. (Kathy Calvin)

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Sharing the Fellowship: A Gesture of Goodness

*Be devoted to one another in love.
Honor one another in fellowship.* (Romans 12:10)

In the realm of spiritual fellowship, our friends are angels, who lift us to our feet, when our wings have trouble remembering how to fly.

Sharing the Fellowship allows church friends and members to lift one another—with physical and spiritual refreshments—during our Time of Fellowship after Sunday worship.

How may you participate in ***Sharing the Fellowship?***

1. On a Sunday morning, arrive at church by 9:45 a.m.
2. Bring: 2 dozen edible treats (example: cookies, muffins, sweet rolls or fruit)
Half gallon of fruit juice (Apple or mixed berry is most popular.)
Quart of Half & Half (for coffee and tea)
3. Place food items requiring refrigeration into the Church Refrigerator.
4. Assist the Deacon-of-the-Day in setting out:
Coffee cups Napkins Condiments
Drink cups Paper plates Pitcher for Half & Half cream

Write your name on our ***Sharing the Fellowship*** Sign-Up Sheets in Fellowship Hall!

*May you bring goodness to our faith community by ***Sharing the Fellowship!****



August Birthdays

Tracy LeMaire 8/3

Megan Torres-Gillin 8/3

Ava McLean 8/8

Lee Paine

8/16

Gail Poler

8/24



CARE AND CONCERN CIRCLE

August 2022

Join the Care and Concern Circle by keeping these people in your prayers now and throughout your week.

If you have a special request for prayer that you want listed in the Care & Concern Circle, please call the church office: 508-839-4513. Your prayer request may be included in the PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE during our online worship service on Sunday mornings.

We pray for recovery, well-being and comfort for:

Liz
Dotty
Max
Matt

Donald
Louise and George
Vidia
Raman
Charlotte

Amanda
Ariana
Greg
William



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WORSHIP SERVICES: SUNDAYS, 10 a.m.