

SHARING THE LIGHT

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



Volume 5, Number 12

DECEMBER 2023 EDITION

Dear friends and members of our Congregational Church of Grafton:

IT...has arrived. Ready or not, IT...is upon us. Whether you love IT or loathe IT, IT...is here. IT...is the crazy, chaotic, commerce-catering corridor of days, beginning somewhere in mid-November and ending somehow in mid-January. IT...is commonly labeled as “the holiday season.” In truth, IT is often “a season of frenzy” aptly described in this adaptation of “Jingle Bells”:

*Dashing through outlets,
On a late November day,
Through the stores we go,
Charging all the way! [Ching...ching...ching.]
Bells on registers ring,
Making credit lines light,
Oh, what fun it is to buy
Everything in sight! [Ching...ching...ching.]*

Refrain: *Jingle bells, jingle bells!
The kids all yell and scream.
To us, it sounds like anarchy.
To them, it's harmony. Hey!
Jingle bells, jingle bells!
The children tip the tree.
Glass ornaments all smashed to bits,
The kids each say, “Not me!”*

We may choose to be swamped and swept up by frenzy. We may choose frenzy.

Or, we may choose to hear and heed the words of an ancient yesterday: “Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy.” (Luke 2:10) We may choose serenity.

In the late 1930s, the American theologian Reinhold Niebuhr penned a prayer that has come to bear the name “Serenity Prayer.” May this be our prayer in this season:

*God: Grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change,
the courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference--
Living one day at a time; enjoying one moment at a time;
accepting hardships as a pathway to peace;
taking, as God did, this broken world, as it is, not as I would have it...*

Throughout the month of December, may you find sacred serenity in our faith community:

On December 3, at 10 a.m. - First Sunday of Advent and the Hanging of the Greens
On December 10, at 10 a.m. - Second Sunday of Advent and a Concert of Bells and Voices
On December 17, at 10 a.m. - Third Sunday of Advent and a Christmas Pageant
On December 24, at 10 a.m. - Fourth Sunday of Advent and An “Amen!” at Christmas
On December 24, at 7 p.m. - A Christmas Eve Candlelight Service
On December 31 at 10 a.m. - “The First Noel” on the Last Day of the Year

May you seek and find serenity this season as you journey to a humble manger.



Shove from the Dove

In the journey of faith,
Rev. Dr. Barbara Therese

Staff Information:

Rev. Dr. Barbara Therese, Minister
Kristen Graham, Administrative Assistant, Editor
Ron Sainio, Church Music Director
Kayson Jones, Minister of Faith-Building

How to contact us:

Office Phone: 508-839-4513
Email: griftonucc@gmail.com
Web Site: www.uccgrifton.org

Holy Happenings in December!

*Faith-sharing events within our congregation
during in-person and online services on Sundays at 10 a.m. and on Christmas Eve at 7 p.m.*

Join online at: [facebook.com/UCCGrafton/](https://www.facebook.com/UCCGrafton/)

December 3 = First Sunday of Advent and Lord's Prayer – Sermon #8

Message: *God Is Great! God Is Good!*

Gather with us on the First Sunday of Advent
when we consider words of a doxology
added to the mainline Protestant version of the Lord's Prayer.
The monthly Sharing-the-Light Food Collection
welcomes non-perishable food items for the Grafton Food Bank.
Also, we share in the Feast for All (aka Holy Communion).

* * *

December 10 = Second Sunday of Advent and Christmas Concert

Theme: *Bells and Voices at Christmas*

Gather with us to hear music performed by hand bell ringers
and carols sung by church singers
to celebrate the Season of Advent and the story of Christmas.

* * *

December 17 = Third Sunday of Advent and Christmas Pageant

Title of Pageant: *The First Christmas: A One-Act Play*

Gather with us to experience the story of the birth of the Christ Child,
through scripture narrative and Christmas carols, and
as performed by children, youth and adults within the faith community.

* * *

December 24 at 10 a.m. = Fourth Sunday of Advent and Lord's Prayer – Sermon #9

Message: *An "Amen!" at Christmas*

Gather with us in the morning of December 24
to learn the meaning of the word "Amen" in the Lord's Prayer
and hear when Mary, the Mother of Jesus, first spoke the word "Amen."

* * *

December 24 at 7 p.m. = Christmas Eve Candlelight Service

Message: *A Four-Letter Gift*

Gather with us in the evening of December 24
to celebrate—with music, scripture and sacred story—the coming of "the Light of the World."

* * *

December 31 = First Sunday of Christmas

Message: *The First Noel on the Last Day of the Year*

Gather with us on New Year's Eve
to relive Christmas one more time,
to sing—verse by verse—each of the five stanzas of "The First Noel" and
to hear the Biblical inspiration for each stanza.

GOD IS GREAT
GOD IS GOOD
Let us thank Him
FOR OUR FOOD
BY HIS HAND
we are fed
THANK YOU FOR
OUR DAILY BREAD.





ORDER YOUR CHRISTMAS POINSETTIAS

Holiday flowers transform our sanctuary into a festive sacred space! You may contribute to this by donating a poinsettia in honor of or in memory of loved ones or in celebration of this season of Light.

When: Deadline for ordering is Monday, December 11.

ORDER NOW!

How: Complete the Order Form below. Mail or bring it to the Church Office; give it to a Deacon; or leave it in the Office Mail Slot on Sunday mornings.

Cost: \$13.50 per plant. Please issue checks to: Congregational Church of Grafton (Memo line: "Christmas Flowers").

NOTE: You may take your poinsettia with you after our Christmas Eve Candlelight Service.

Poinsettia Order Form

I wish to contribute a poinsettia plant:

DESIRED PLANT COLOR (Indicate quantity of each): _____Red _____White_____Pink

of poinsettias _____ X \$13.50/each = \$_____ total payment.

Please acknowledge this (these) poinsettia(s) in the Christmas Eve bulletin as follows:

GIVEN BY: _____

IN LOVING MEMORY OF: _____

IN HONOR OF: _____



CHURCH CARE COMMITTEE

The Membership Committee is spearheading an offshoot committee to keep us all connected. We are looking for anyone who might be interested in sending out cards or notes to church friends. These could be wishes for a speedy recovery, a thank you, words of encouragement, miss you, congratulations - happy or sad - any reason to reach out!

If you or someone you know could use a card or a note, please let us know! If you are interested in being a card sender, please let Lorraine Swanson know: swanmom924@gmail.com or 508-887-6214.

Together we are the church. Let's take care of one another!



The Membership Committee will once again host our church's Frosty Stop during the town-wide celebration on December 3rd from 1:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.

If anyone is interested in helping out by baking cookies to distribute, serving cookies or hot cocoa, helping to monitor Gaga or helping to clean up, please let Lorraine Swanson know:

swanmom924@gmail.com or 508-887-6214

(Stay tuned for more info on a potluck after church in January!)



DECEMBER UPDATE FROM THE MISSION OUTREACH COMMITTEE

To Members and Friends of the Congregational Church of Grafton:

The Mission Outreach Committee (MOC) extends a heartfelt **THANK YOU** to all who donated food baskets for Thanksgiving! We were able to deliver seven *bountiful* Thanksgiving food baskets to Pernet Family Health Services, along with Gift Cards to purchase turkeys! You have blessed others with your caring kindness.

We would also like to remind you of several important giving opportunities in the month of December! *You* can help to make the holidays brighter for many who are in need.

CHRISTMAS GIVING TREE

Once again, our family of faith wishes to bring some cheer to families and children in Worcester through Pernet Family Health Services and to residents of Crescent Manor Nursing Home in Grafton!

The Giving Tree is set up in the Fellowship Hall. Please take a tag, purchase a special Christmas gift item, and place it under the Christmas tree in the sanctuary by **December 17**. Gifts should be *unwrapped*, or in a *gift bag*, with the *tag attached*. This is a wonderful way to share the joy of the season!

WHITE SOCKS FOR WORCESTER FELLOWSHIP

As the cold weather approaches, homeless and at-risk adults are in great need of clean, dry white socks. These socks protect their feet from getting cold, getting wet, getting blisters, or getting foot ailments that may send them to the Emergency Room. During the months of November and December, we want to collect as many pairs of men's and women's large white socks as we may! We already have received 70 pairs, *and we want to collect 250+ by December 17!* Please help by bringing new pairs of white socks to the church. There is a bin in the church kitchen labeled "Socks for Worcester Fellowship."

NEW COATS FOR VETERANS

The "Buy-Give-Get" promotion has returned to Ocean State Job Lot! Together we may help veterans in need to stay warm by donating new winter coats through "Buy-Give-Get."

Go to any Ocean State Job Lot store and:

1. **Buy** a winter coat for \$40.
2. **Give** the coat you purchased back to the cashier. Ocean State will make certain it is delivered to a veteran in need.
3. **Get** a \$40 Crazy Deal Gift Card – free!

You can then use the \$40 Gift Card any day afterward (not on the same day as the coat purchase) for any items you choose. A veteran receives a brand new winter coat!!

If you cannot shop at Ocean State Job Lot in Westborough or Whitinsville, but you wish to participate, *please put a check for \$40 in an envelope marked Coats for Veterans and drop it at the Church Office. Or give to a member of the MOC. We will purchase the coat and give you the Gift Card.*

Thank you for opening your hearts to share compassion and kindness and to bring the hope and joy of Christmas into the lives of others.

Your Mission Outreach Committee



stewardship

A Reminder and a Thank You from the Stewardship Committee!

We've been **busy**...

Being the Church!

Having a Church!

Going to Church!

Thank you for honoring the practical needs of this church family in order to create space for God's Spirit to work in and through all of us!

Here are TWO easy ways to pledge your commitment to supporting our practical needs:

1. **Send an email** to April Lane, our dedicated Collector at: april5850@yahoo.com
 - State the amount you wish to contribute and whether it will be weekly, monthly, quarterly or annually.
 - Please list your updated contact information.
2. **Bring your Commitment Card to church** and place it in the basket provided at the back of the Sanctuary. Or put it in the mail slot of the Church Office door.

Important: Our Finance Committee will meet on December 6 to prepare the Budget. They rely on the giving totals to plan for the coming year!

Thank you and blessings to all,

Your Stewardship Committee

Connie Hopkins, Lorraine Swanson, Carrie Peacock, Sue Howell

Sharing the Light Is Sharing God's Love

Choose to shine!

In all seasons, but especially in seasons of increased need, members and friends of the Congregational Church of Grafton assist the local food bank by gathering non-perishable food donations. These food items are distributed to individuals and families by the Grafton Food Bank.

In this Christmas season, the Grafton Food Bank invites these Wish List items:

Canned fruit & vegetables
Canned beans
Canned tuna (in water)
Pasta & pasta sauce

Cereal (Rice Krispies, Cheerios, Oatmeal)
Ground coffee & tea bags
Peanut Butter & jelly
Pancake mix & syrup

Every first Sunday of the month, these items may be brought forward during the Sharing-the-Light Food Collection in the Message for All Ages. During the week, a "Sharing-the-Light" Food Basket in Fellowship Hall receives these contributions. During the month, all donations are delivered to the Grafton Food Bank.

*Great acts of love are done by those
who are habitually performing small acts of kindness.* (Victor Hugo)

* * * * *



Yummy Snacks Needed for Our Fellowship Time after the Service!

There will be a signup sheet available at Coffee Hour.

A Deacon will make the coffee.

Please bring the following: A yummy snack (think muffins, pastry, breads, fruit, cookies) to share with everyone, a small carton of **half & half** and a small container of **juice** or some individual **juice boxes**.

Please arrive 10-15 minutes prior to the worship service to help set up the snack table, then go downstairs about 5 minutes before the service ends to unwrap snacks, put out any refrigerated items and serve cups of coffee.

A Deacon is happy to help you.

THANK YOU SO MUCH!

Questions? Contact Lorraine Swanson (swanmom924@gmail.com)



**GRAFTON THRIFT SHOP
VOLUNTEERS FOR DECEMBER 2023**

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.

Dec. 7	Joanne Hable 11 a.m. - 1 p.m. Lorraine Swanson 1 p.m. - 3 p.m.
14	Lynne Flanagan-Tsombakos 11 a.m. - 1 p.m. April Lane 1 p.m. - 3 p.m.
21	Joanne Hable 11 a.m. - 1 p.m. Lorraine Swanson 1 p.m. - 3 p.m.
28	Melanie Peppard

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

Dec. 2	Susan Filippone
9	Diane Lalone
16	Joanne Hable
23	CLOSED - Merry Christmas!
30	CLOSED—Happy New Year - See you in 2024!

Sunday - 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. - Grafton Celebrates the Holidays - Frosty Stop #25

Dec. 3 Melanie Peppard

The Grafton Thrift Shop is the place to be in December to find some holiday décor or to pick up a unique gift for someone special! Be sure to stop by on Sunday, December 3, from 1 p.m. to 4 p.m., as part of your Frosty Stops around Grafton and Grafton Common! Warm up with a cup of hot cocoa and enjoy a cookie in the Fellowship Hall hosted by the members of the church. See you soon!

Are you looking for a volunteer opportunity to help with our church's mission and the community? The Thrift Shop is seeking new volunteers who want to help out on Tuesday mornings to sort through donations or to work in the shop for 2 or 4 hours on Thursdays or Saturdays, once or twice a month. Please contact April Lane at april5850@yahoo.com or at 508-839-5850 (home) or 508-596-8582 (cell).

Donations are accepted only 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 april5850@yahoo.com or at 508-839-5850 (home) or 508-596-8582 (cell).



December Birthdays

Kim Stewart	12/7	Kathy Vandenengel	12/7	Matt Torres	12/8
John Doherty	12/9	Isabelle Cotter	12/10	Kathryn Anderson	12/13
Owen Roche	12/20	Holly Wietgreffe	12/25	Carrie Peacock	12/26
		Gabriel Koskinen	12/30		



CARE AND CONCERN CIRCLE *December 2023*

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:

- | | | |
|--------------------------------|------------------|----------|
| Levi | Nathan | Linda |
| Mike | Donald and Vidia | Bruce |
| Tony P. | Jen K. | Louise |
| Paul V. | Uncle Peter | Tim M. |
| Mary S. | June | Kelli M. |
| All Jewish people in the world | | |



<https://www.facebook.com/UCCGrafton/>

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCD6O7WxciXwlnx1Ho1GVngg/videos>

<https://twitter.com/GraftonUCC>

<https://www.instagram.com/graftonucc/>

SHARING THE LIGHT

Monthly Newsletter of the Congregational Church of Grafton

Congregational Church of Grafton
30 Grafton Common
P.O. Box 421
Grafton, MA 01519

PLACE
POSTAGE
HERE

Address Service Requested



CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH OF GRAFTON
30 Grafton Common, P.O. Box 421, Grafton, MA; Telephone 508-839-4513
WORSHIP SERVICES: SUNDAYS, 10 a.m.