

SHARING THE LIGHT

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



Volume 5, Number 7

JULY 2023 EDITION

Dear members and friends of our Congregational Church of Grafton:

You know it is Summer in New England--

- when birds start chirping at 4:30 a.m.;
- when the sun rises just after 5 a.m.;
- when grass, flowers and weeds appear to grow several inches overnight;
- when thunderstorms are louder, longer and fiercer;
- when squirrels, bunnies and chipmunks declare the landscape as their playground;
- when the words "lush green" acquire new meaning...again;
- when insects of every order seem to proliferate on the ground and in the air;
- when 97+ degrees in July delete the memory of -12 degrees in February;
- when crickets perform outdoor concerts at dusk;
- when the rhythm of the day feels mystically but discernibly slower;
- when the sun sets after 8:30 p.m.;
- when the Buck Moon shines blindingly brighter than the other full moons.



The signs of the season of Summer are audible, visible and tangible to our human senses.

Nature offers us four seasons: Spring, Summer, Autumn and Winter.

Life offers us seasons too numerous to count and too complex to label.

Even so, Wisdom Literature in the Old Testament seeks to give a name to sixteen unique seasons of the human soul:

*For everything there is a season, and
a time for every purpose under heaven. (Ecclesiastes 3:1)*

Since late April and continuing through early September, our faith community wholly engages in these "seasons of the spirit" as described in the Book of Ecclesiastes, Chapter 3:1-8.

In our Summer Worship venue of Fellowship Hall (You know it is Summer when our upstairs sanctuary is 40 degrees warmer than our downstairs Fellowship Hall), our times of faith-sharing invite us to explore the depth and breadth of these seasons...and of other vibrant seasons:

July 2 – T-Shirt Sunday: *A time to read; a time to reply*

July 9 – Thrift Shop Sunday: *A time to keep; a time to throw away*

July 16 – Seamstress Sunday: *A time to tear; a time to sew*

July 23 – Christmas in July: *A time to recall; a time to respond*

July 30 – Friendship Sunday: *A time to be "friended"; a time to befriend*

Each Sunday morning, throughout this month, gather with our family of faith for our dual Bible Study/Sermon Series on seasons and times recorded in Ecclesiastes 3. The potential outcome of this sacred time together? Hope, healing and spiritual growth.



Shove from the Dove

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

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Springtime Gratuities for the “Gardeners” of Faith, Hope and Love

Dear friends and members of our family of faith:

Life is like a garden—we reap what we sow. Moreover, life is like a flower garden: Each flower with its own bud, stem and leaves; each with its own seed; and each with its own way of growing.

Each of you is a “gardener” of God's good gifts within the garden of our faith community. Thus, in this “sacred plot of space,” we name and thank those who have shared their time, talents and resources in “God's Garden” at 30 Grafton Common throughout the past three months—the season of Spring:

Robust thanks to our **Board of Trustees:** *Erik Coldwell; Jon Filippone; Joanne Hable; Amy Koskinen and Bob McLean.*

Warm thanks to our **Worship Team and Deacons:** *Ron Sainio; Andrew Tsombakos; Amy Coldwell; Joanne Hable; Connie Hopkins; Sue Howell; Craig Peacock; Kim Stewart; and Lorraine Swanson.*

Vibrant thanks to our **Outdoor Rainbow Chair Provider:** Lorraine Swanson.

Abundant thanks to our **Thrift Shop Team:** *Elaine Allen; Susan Filippone; Barbara Gow; Joanne Hable; Amy Koskinen; Diane Lalone; April Lane; Hope Miller; Melanie Peppard; Kim Stewart; Lorraine Swanson; Lynne Flanagan-Tsombakos; and Megan Webber.*

Enduring thanks to our **Church Calendar Keeper/Administrative Assistant:** *Kris Graham.*

Continuing thanks to our **Cabinet members:** *Donna Blanchard; Erik Coldwell; Joanne Hable; Connie Hopkins; Sue Howell; Tracy LeMaire; Rob Lane; Craig Peacock; Lorraine Swanson; Elizabeth Torres; and Kathy Vandenengel.*

Fragrant thanks to our **Patroness of the Flower Pots:** *Betty Mack.*

Profound thanks to our **“Listen, Learn and Live” Speakers:** *Kayson Jones and Paul Miller.*

Genuine thanks to our **Communications and Tech Team:** *Larry Drew; Andrew Tsombakos; Mark Tsombakos; and Kathy Vandenengel.*

Harmonious thanks to our **Music Committee:** *Junya Awata; Alison Balfour; Donna Blanchard; Luke Desautels; Betty Mack and Lynne Flanagan-Tsombakos.*

Hearty thanks to our **Sharing-the-Fellowship Refreshment Providers:** *Donna Blanchard; Donna Caracino; Luke Desautels; Jon and Susan Filippone; Hope Miller; Connie Hopkins; Betty Mack; and Lynne Flanagan-Tsombakos.*

Sumptuous thanks to our **Membership Committee:** *Amy Coldwell; Susan Filippone; Bob Howell; Carrie Peacock; and Lorraine Swanson.*

Beside you with a thankful spirit,

Rev. Barbara

Holy Happenings in July!

*Faith-deepening events in our family of faith
during in-person and online services on Sundays at 10 a.m.*

Connect with us at: [facebook.com/UCCGrafton/](https://www.facebook.com/UCCGrafton/)

July 2 = T-Shirt Sunday

Message: *When Jesus Writes in the Sand*

Join us for our annual T-Shirt Sunday
when the sermon is shaped by messages printed on t-shirts worn to church.
Our monthly Sharing-the-Light Food Collection
receives non-perishable food donations for the Grafton Food Bank.
As well, we celebrate the Feast for All (aka the Lord's Supper).

* * *

July 9 = Thrift Shop Sunday and Ecclesiastes 3 – Sermon #9

Message: *Time to Keep, Time to Throw Away*

Join us for Thrift Shop Sunday
when we honor our Thrift Shop Team leader and members
with a relevant message from our *Ecclesiastes 3* sermon series
on “keeping and throwing away.”
As well, Thrift Shop Team members share personal “Thrift Shop stories.”

* * *

July 16 = Seamstress Sunday and Ecclesiastes 3 – Sermon #10

New Members are welcomed!

Message: *Time to Tear, Time to Sew*

Join us as we welcome new members into our faith community.
As well, we honor those who sew, quilt, knit and/or crochet
with a fitting message from our *Ecclesiastes 3* sermon series
on “tearing and sewing.”

* * *

July 23 = Christmas in July

Message: *The Gift of the Magi*

Join us for our annual “Christmas in July” celebration
when we sing Christmas carols, read the Christmas narrative and
hear a modern rendition of “The Gift of the Magi” by O. Henry.
Wear red and green Christmas accessories!

* * *

July 30 = International Friendship Day and “Listen, Learn and Live” Sunday

Message: *So, Is God Your Friend?*

Preacher: Mr. Kayson Jones, Minister of Faith-Building

Join us for our fifth “Listen, Learn and Live” Sunday of 2023
when Mr. Kayson Jones reflects on the theme of friendship
through the lenses of three key Biblical verses from Holy Scripture.



New Members Class

New Member Classes and New Member Sunday in July

1. Interested in learning more about the Congregational Church of Grafton?
 2. Interested in comparing and contrasting the history of the United Church of Christ (UCC) and of other faith denominations?
 3. Interested in becoming a member of our faith community?
- If any of these topics interest you, then you are warmly invited to:

***Our two New Member Classes
on July 2 and July 9 at 11:30 a.m. in the Fireplace Room***

* * * * *

These two after-church sessions will:

1. Encourage attendees to share highlights of their own story of faith;
2. Consider the background of the United Church of Christ (UCC);
3. Explore the history of the Congregational Church of Grafton, including a tour of the church.

Those who attend these sessions are invited to join the membership of our church on:

“New Member Sunday,” July 16, at 10 a.m. in our Fellowship Hall!

“If you love one another, others will know that you are my followers.” (John 13:34)

* * * * *



The Joy Jar: A Year-Long Experiment in Sharing Joy

Once upon a time, twelve months ago, a Joy Jar—a small Mason jar decorated with blue and yellow ribbons—occupied a place of honor atop the upright piano in Fellowship Hall of our church.

The Joy Jar's purpose?

To dispense messages of joy, insight and wisdom to those who received its messages.

The Joy Jar's residency?

One year—from July 1, 2022 to June 30, 2023.

The Joy Jar's contents?

Over the course of one year, more than 500 small cards—blue and yellow in color—bearing more than 250 different messages. The themes of the messages ranged from divinity to humanity. Topics addressed spirituality and theology.

The Joy Jar's distribution?

Hundreds of church members, friends and visitors who lingered longer during the Time of Fellowship on Sunday mornings—from July 3, 2022, to June 25, 2023.

The Joy Jar's efficacy?

Those who received the messages from the Joy Jar overwhelmingly responded with joy, intrigue or affirmation. Only two recipients reacted with, “Nope! I want a different card!”

The Joy Jar's future?

Perhaps in a year or two, the Joy Jar may resume its mission.

For now, may those who received joy from the Joy Jar be inspired to share the joy.



“Operation Backpack” is back!

Yes, school has just ended for this year, but we’re asking all of you to start keeping an eye out for items now to fill backpacks for the fall.

We will be collecting donations of backpacks and school supplies for children in need. Our hope is to fill at least 30 backpacks. We will be having another Y.E.S. (Youth Engaged in Service) community event in late August. Watch for details! Here is the list of needed items:

- Box of #10 pencils
- Pkg. of ball point pens (black, blue)
- Box of crayons
- Box of colored pencils
- Pkg. of dry erase markers
- Pkg. of index cards (ruled/unruled)
- Multipack of Post-it Notes
- Pkg. of glue sticks
- Pkg. of lined loose-leaf paper
- Pocket folder
- Pencil case
- Backpack

A Signup Genius will be shared with you in the coming weeks. Please drop off items no later than Sunday, August 20th. A large bin for collection of these items will be in the Church Kitchen. We need at least 30 of each, and more would be most welcomed!

In addition, the Mission Outreach committee will be contacting several local retailers to ask for Donations. We will keep you updated.

For more info, please contact Sue Howell (508-596-7366 or suehow6oak@aol.com).

WAMS Gathering (Worcester Area Mission Society)

On Sunday June 11, Barbara Gow and Sue Howell attended a gathering of 25 UCC representatives from several Worcester County churches. It was sponsored by WAMS, the Worcester Area Mission Society, to share and discuss community mission work and ways to strengthen it.

We met contacts from other churches for future collaboration and came away with some interesting new ideas. The group identified some common areas of need for mission Work. These were mostly centered around food and housing insecurity, providing educational resources for low-income children, support for immigrants, and LGBTQ advocacy and support.

A report of the discussions will be sent to us. We will share the highlights with you so that we can work to share God's grace and blessings with others in our community and beyond!



Save the Date for the 44th Annual Harvest Fair and Apple Pie Social!
Sunday, September 24, 2023 from 11:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.

Attention: We need YOUR help NOW to make this the best Harvest Fair ever! Please reach out to one of the Committee members listed below to help us with the Harvest Fair preparations. The fair is an awesome way to Celebrate, Connect, Affirm and Share our faith with our Community. Please join us!

The Signup Genius will come out later this summer for volunteer openings on the Fair Day itself.

Thank you!

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

Sharing Light Brings Healing

It is when we start working together and sharing with one another that real healing takes place. (David Hume)

The Mission Statement of our church aspires to achieve many goals, including this one: “Share healing.”

The Congregational Church of Grafton seeks to “share healing” by collecting non-perishable food and health-care items on behalf of the Grafton Food Bank. We “share healing” by inviting donations of these “wish-list” needs:

Canned fruit
Canned beans
Peanut Butter
Coffee

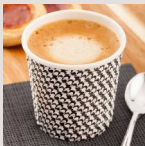
Solid white tuna in water
Cereal (Rice Krispies and Cheerios)
Toothpaste (4 oz. and larger)
Toothbrushes (2-pack)

On the first Sunday of each month, during the “Message for All Ages,” church friends and members are invited to bring forward these requested items. Each week, our large “Sharing-the-Light” Food Basket, positioned in Fellowship Hall, accepts these same donations. Each month, Rev. Barbara delivers all donations to the Grafton Food Bank.

Bless you for sharing Light! Bless you for being a source of healing!



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Sharing Fellowship = Celebrating God's Presence

Being in the presence of other followers of Christ effectively celebrates the presence of God. (Dietrich Bonhoeffer)

The new Mission Statement of our family of faith begins with this cornerstone goal: “Celebrate God's presence.”

Following our time of worship each Sunday morning, ***Sharing the Fellowship*** is an opportune setting in which to “celebrate God's presence.”

How may you “celebrate God's presence” by ***Sharing the Fellowship***?

1. On a chosen Sunday morning, arrive at church by 9:50 a.m.
2. Bring: 2-3 dozen edible treats (example: cookies, muffins, sweet rolls and 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 that require refrigeration into the Church Refrigerator.
4. Add your name to the ***Sharing the Fellowship*** Sign-Up Sheets in Fellowship Hall!

*Joy is not the absence of suffering.
Joy is the presence of God.
Thank you for celebrating the presence of God
by ***Sharing the Fellowship***!*



**GRAFTON THRIFT SHOP
VOLUNTEERS FOR JULY 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.

July	6	April Lane 11 a.m. - 1 p.m. Lynne Flanagan Tsombakos 1 p.m. - 3 p.m.
	13	Joanne Hable 11 a.m. - 1 p.m. Lorraine Swanson 1 p.m. - 3 p.m.
	20	Joanne Hable 11 a.m. - 1 p.m. Lorraine Swanson 1 p.m. - 3 p.m.
	27	Melanie Peppard

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

July	1	Lynne Flanagan-Tsombakos 11 a.m. - 1 p.m. Hope Miller 1 p.m. - 3 p.m.
	8	Diane Lalone
	15	Diane Lalone
	22	April Lane
	29	Susan Filippone

Wednesday - 3 p.m. to 6 p.m.

July	5	Hope Miller
	12	Hope Miller
	19	Hope Miller
	26	Hope Miller

Summer is here and the Grafton Thrift shop has a large selection of Summer clothing and shoes for women, men and kids all at nifty-thrifty prices! The Grafton Thrift Shop will be open on Wednesdays from 3 p.m. to 6 p.m. during the Grafton Farmer's Market season! Be sure to stop by before or after visiting the Farmer's Market on the Common!

Are you looking for a volunteer opportunity to help with the church's mission and the community? The Thrift Shop is seeking new volunteers who would like to help out on Tuesday mornings to sort through donations or to work in the shop for 2 or 4 hours on Wednesdays, Thursdays or Saturdays, once or twice a month. Please contact April Lane at aprild5850@yahoo.com or at 508-839-5850 (home) or 508-596-8582 (cell).

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 or at 508-839-5850 (home) or 508-596-8582 (cell).



July Birthdays

Connie Hopkins	7/1	Barbara Bryant	7/3	Ray Guilmette	7/3
Luke Desautels	7/21	Ken Swanson	7/22	Craig Peacock	7/23
Larry Drew	7/25			Nick Coldwell	7/30



CARE AND CONCERN CIRCLE *July 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:

Donald and Vidia
 Louise and George
 Jen K.
 Tim M.
 Family of Bill Butler

Bruce
 Cara
 Gary
 Mary S.
 Jacek

Uncle Lee
 Kitty
 Uncle Peter
 June
 Paul V.



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