

# SHARING THE LIGHT

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



Volume 2, Number 7

**JULY 2020 EDITION**

Dear members and friends of our Congregational Church of Grafton:

*Says the Lord, our God:*

*“I will instruct you and teach you the way you should go;  
I will counsel you with my eye upon you.” (Psalm 32:8)*

If God is our instructor/teacher/counselor, then what is the subject matter that we are studying?

In this moment of time, halfway through the year 2020, our global classroom without walls is shaped by a crisis of health, a crisis of economy and a crisis of humanity.

Those who are teachers and instructors by profession are calling this moment in time “a critical learning opportunity.”

If we are facing a critical learning opportunity, then what critical lessons may we learn?

In the month of June, our faith community honored our graduates from high school, college and nursing programs. In this season of crises, commencement exercises have been conducted virtually, creatively and memorably. Most commencement exercises acknowledge that students derive one kind of education in school and another kind of education after graduation. On the average, graduates learn about one critical lesson a year after leaving high school. During crisis-laden years, two or three critical lessons may be learned. Some years, no lessons are learned. After 40 years of age, people tend to forget critical lessons and, thus, they need to relearn them.

The following ten “critical life lessons” have been culled from a dozen commencement addresses heard and overheard during the past two months:

1. *Live by what you trust, not by what you fear.*
2. *The most boring word in any language is “I.”*
3. *Sometimes you gain more by being wrong than by being right.*
4. *People are more important than things.*
5. *Life is so much simpler when you tell the truth.*
6. *People who do the world's real work usually don't wear neckties.*
7. *There are no substitutes for sunshine, fresh air and exercise.*
8. *A smile is the least expensive way to improve your looks—even if your teeth are crooked.*
9. *Commit to live your life so that there is standing room only at your funeral.*
10. *If you don't do anything else in life, love someone and let someone love you.*

May these critical life lessons be worthy of our (re)learning during our critical learning opportunity.

Beside you in the journey of faith,

*Rev. Dr. Barbara Therese*



*A Shove from the Dove*

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## *Moving Forward*

Some people are eager to get “back to normal.” Others are concerned about venturing out. Everyone is wondering, “How is our new phase going to work?”

To answer this question and to decipher information from state and local officials and from the Southern New England Conference of the UCC, our Cabinet authorized the formation of a Task Team. The team, dubbed *Onward and Forward*, consists of Sue Howell, Joanne Hable, Larry Drew, Justin Cotter and Rev. Barbara. Our *Onward and Forward* Team is developing a plan to move forward with the ministry of our church. Our goal is to keep members of our church family and all who enter our building safe and healthy in our new “COVID world.”

Our *Onward and Forward* Team has convened to begin developing a workable plan. Recognizing that any step forward may need to be reversed if public health conditions warrant, our Team proposed a phase-in approach to allow use of the church facility. Our church is not only our place of worship for our congregation, it is also a hub for programs and activities to many groups in our Grafton community. To allow these different groups access in a controlled manner will permit us the opportunity to gauge how effectively our safety measures are working.

Our proposed schedule is:

- Grafton Thrift Shop: to open in early July
- 12-Step programs: to resume in-person meetings in August
- In-person worship in sanctuary: to resume on September 13
- Scouts: to resume in-person gatherings in October

Before each of these timelines is reached, the *Onward and Forward Team* will work with individual groups to develop a plan to keep all participants safe and healthy. With each step forward, we will evaluate the effectiveness of each phase as we remain informed on the public health status of our greater community. We will keep you informed on our progress. As well, we welcome your input.

In the long history of our church, our congregation has adapted to change as history has required. In moving forward, changing “how we are a church” does not change our mission. Wherever people are in their seasons of life and journeys of faith, we welcome them within our faith community.

*The Onward and Forward Team*

Joanne, Sue, Justin, Larry and Reverend Barbara

# *Holy Happenings in July!*

*Faith-deepening opportunities for our faith community  
during Facebook Live Services  
on Sunday mornings at 10 a.m.*

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

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## **July 5 = “T-Shirt Sunday” and Feast for All**

**Sermon: *How Do You Experience God?***

Do you know God? Or do you know about God?

Wear a T-shirt with a spiritual message this Sunday!

**NOTE: Email the message on your T-Shirt  
to Rev. Barbara by noon on July 1  
so that your T-Shirt's message may be included  
in this “community sermon.”**

For our monthly **Sharing-the-Light Food Collection**,  
please see Page 4 for ways to support our local Grafton Food Bank.

For our monthly **“Feast for All”** (aka Holy Communion),

assemble slices of bread and cups of juice

(or scones and cranberry juice!)

for our shared Sacrament of the Lord's Supper.

\* \* \* \* \*

## **July 12 = “Need-to-Know Sunday”**

**Sermon: *How Long...?***

Are you one who has an unquenchable “need to know”?

Do you “need to know” the outcome of books or plays or movies?

How did Jesus of Nazareth respond

to “need-to-know” people when they asked him,

“How long will you keep us in suspense as to who you are?”

\* \* \* \* \*

## **July 19 = “Anti-Loneliness Sunday”**

**Sermon: *One Is the Loneliest Number, But...***

Have you ever felt lonely? Alone? Isolated?

What is the difference among these feelings?

Where is God in times of loneliness, solitude or isolation?

\* \* \* \* \*

## **July 26 = “Christmas in July”**

**Sermon: *Be A Gift from God!***

The narrative of Christ's birth is told again  
with Christmas carols, Christmas colors and a Christmas story!

Wear red and green and Christmas accessories!

## ***Sharing-the-Light Food Collection***

Our monthly Sharing-the-Light Food Collection continues  
each first Sunday of the month.

In our season of COVID,  
our Food Collection is modified  
by these expanded opportunities:

Since the pandemic escalated in March 2020,  
the number of families whom Grafton Food Bank serves  
has increased significantly.

Presently, the Grafton Food Bank serves 140 families--  
100% of whom are residents of the Grafton community.

While the Grafton Municipal Center is closed,  
the Grafton Food Bank, which is housed within the Municipal Center,  
is unable to accept food donations

Currently, the staff of the Grafton Food Bank  
is developing a plan,  
with guidance of the Board of Health and Town Administrator's Office,  
to restock and reopen the Food Bank for distributions in the future.

Meanwhile, please visit the Food Bank's website: [graftonfoodbank.org](http://graftonfoodbank.org)

Cash donations, using PayPal or GoFundMe are welcomed!

Furthermore, donations by check may be made to:

**Grafton Food Bank/Friends of Grafton, Inc.**

**P.O. Box 324**

**Grafton, MA 01519**

\* \* \* \* \*

*As well, to assist community members—in these needful times—Gift Cards to local grocery stores and supermarkets (Stop&Shop, Market 32 and Shaw's) may be purchased and directed to Rev. Barbara, who ensures that they are distributed appropriately and graciously.*

***Small acts of kindness,  
when multiplied by millions of people,  
can change the world.***

\* \* \* \* \*

## *God's Blessings and Our Best Wishes to "Miss Brenda"*

*Faith is not merely a journey for the feet. Faith is also a journey for the heart. (A. W. Tozer)*

Like a historical accordion, our family of faith at the Congregational Church of Grafton has expanded and contracted with a diversity of travelers on their individual journeys of faith.

One such traveler is Brenda Jean Armstrong, known to many as "Miss Brenda."

Seven years ago, Miss Brenda joined with our faith community. This past spring, on Mother's Day and Living Testimony Sunday, we honored Miss Brenda's story of faith with a message titled "Be a Missionary...in Your Own Zip Code!" Brenda's passion for missionary work and compassion for the homeless are her trademarks. This past Sunday, June 28, we honored Miss Brenda with a Quiet Candle certificate to acknowledge her service as a Christian Education teacher, a Worcester Fellowship volunteer and a Grafton Thrift Shop worker—which all testify to God's Light in her and through her.

Miss Brenda's journey of life and journey of faith now carry her to South Carolina where her younger son lives.

To Miss Brenda, we bid God's blessings of hope and love as she continues her journey of faith.

## ***F.A.C.E. Group: Making a Vital and Visual Impact***

*Life is about making an impact, not an income.*



The youthful members of our **F.A.C.E. Group** (**F**aith **A**nd **C**aring **E**ncounter Group) and family members applied effort, energy and enthusiasm to meet this challenge: *What you do makes an impact. You decide what kind of impact you want to make.* (Jane Goodall)

In June, **F.A.C.E. Group** members:

1. Engaged their bodies, minds and spirits in our "Make Sense of Our Fence" Project. On Saturday morning, June 13, five youth (Nicklaus Coldwell, Sophie Coldwell, Abby Hise, Gabe Koskinen and Maggie McLean), three parents (Amy Coldwell, Rebecca Hise and Amy Koskinen) and one pastor (Rev. Barbara) painted our church's historic fence along Church Street in historic time: Two hours and four minutes!
2. While consuming pizza, donated to the church Youth Group by Pepperoni Express, the youth reflected aloud on observations made and lessons learned while sheltering at home .

During the summer months, **F.A.C.E. Group** members:

1. Will engage in a Historical Walking Tour of the four "steeple" located on or near the Grafton Common.
2. Will convene with leaders/spokespersons of local Native American tribes to hear of the customs, traditions and beliefs unique to their people.

\* \* \* \* \*

On a Sunday in November, **F.A.C.E. Group** members will be invited to join the membership of our faith community.

Since November 2019, Rev. Barbara has organized and facilitated the **F.A.C.E. Group** program and activities. She is assisted by the Christian Education Committee and parents of **F.A.C.E. Group** members. Rev. Barbara and **F.A.C.E. Group** members deeply appreciate our congregation's support during this season as they exercise their faith and their care in order to make an impact in our community and our world.



***Windows 2020:  
Our Stained-Glass Window Renewal Campaign***

*Eyes are the windows to the soul.  
Our stained-glass windows are eyes to the soul of our church.*

\* \* \* \* \*

Our year-long ***Windows 2020*** Campaign, which began in July 2019, will conclude on July 31, 2020. Immense gratitude to all participants of our ***Windows 2020 Campaign!***

*To date, the **Windows 2020** Campaign has received  
total payments of \$27,257.*

*Total pledged support—through July 2020—is \$29,658.*

*Anticipated completion date  
for our three-window restoration project  
by Stained Glass Resources, Inc.  
is late August, 2020.*

*At that time, the window panels  
will be returned and re-installed in our sanctuary.*

*Payment of all pledged contributions  
by the end of this month (July)  
will ensure sufficient financial resources  
to cover the costs  
of our window restoration and re-installation.*

Payment of pledged support as well as additional contributions may be made to our ***Windows 2020*** Campaign. Checks may be issued to:

***Congregational Church of Grafton***

*P.O. Box 421*

*Grafton, MA 01519*

Memo line: ***Windows 2020***

God's abiding blessings to all who have supported this timely Campaign to preserve "the eyes to the soul of our church"!

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## July Birthdays

Connie Hopkins	7/1	Barbara Bryant	7/3	Ray Guilmette	7/3
John Baker	7/4	Ken Swanson	7/22	Craig Peacock	7/23
Larry Drew	7/25	Declan Keeler	7/25	Nick Coldwell	7/30



## CARE AND CONCERN CIRCLE JULY 2019

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 text Rev. Barbara on her cell phone: 860-705-7907. As well, 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:**

James	Jennifer
Rick	Donna
Walt	Fiona
Amanda	Donna (II)
Mary	Sara
Louise and George	



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

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July 

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WORSHIP SERVICES: SUNDAYS, 10 a.m.