

SHARING THE LIGHT

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



Volume 7, Number 2

FEBRUARY 2025 EDITION

Good people of the Congregational Church of Grafton:

Seasons appear; seasons disappear. In spring, trees sport eager buds. In summer, trees wave verdant leaves. In autumn, trees flaunt changing hues. In winter, trees stand naked.

However, one season remains—regardless of the trees' wardrobe. It is the season of gratitude. The writer of Ecclesiastes declares:

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

In the apostle Paul's second letter to the Thessalonians, Paul exhorts:

We must always give thanks to God. (2 Thessalonians 1:3)

The season and the time for gratitude are constant.

In this month of February, as winter reaches for spring, I bid farewell to the family of faith at the Congregational Church of Grafton. In late October 2018, I arrived at this faith community as the new Settled Pastor. In late February 2025, I will depart as the former Settled Pastor. Together we have shared six cycles of winter, spring, summer and autumn. Throughout our shared 76 months, I have felt deep gratitude.

The human in me says: Thank you!" The minister in me says: "May the Spirit of God dwell and swell within you." The storyteller in me says: *Once upon a time...*

...a young man aspired to be a great artist. The second of eighteen children, he was born into a large but poor family in 1471 in Nuremberg, Germany. His name was Albrecht Durer.

One of Albrecht's younger brothers also wanted to pursue art—sculpture--and both young men longed to study at the Vienna School of Art. However, given the great number of children in the family, their parents could not afford to send either son to any art school. Thus, the two brothers made an agreement with each other: One brother would work to support the other brother while that other brother studied in Vienna. Once that brother returned from Vienna, that same brother would exchange places with the brother who had been working. The returning brother would labor to support the brother who had earlier worked to support his brother's art studies.

The two brothers flipped a coin. Albrecht won the toss, and he journeyed to Vienna where he studied drawing and metal-engraving for five years. His younger brother worked in nearby stone and marble quarries.

After completing his studies and apprenticeship, Albrecht returned to his home in Nuremberg where his family celebrated his achievements with a lavish feast. During the meal, Albrecht carefully observed his younger brother, who had worked in the quarries almost daily for five years. Albrecht noticed that his brother consistently kept his hands concealed.

Curious, Albrecht asked him, "Brother, why do you hide your hands?"

Ashamed, his brother pulled his hands from the folds of his garments, and he showed them to his older brother. Albrecht Durer saw his brother's hands—calloused and gnarled from the years of toil in the quarries. So moved was Albrecht by his younger brother's sacrifice for him that he immediately strode into his art studio.

That night, with the vivid memory of his brother's worn hands as a model, Albrecht drew the now-famous image of praying hands as an expression of gratitude to his younger brother.

* * * * *

In our collective "once upon a time" together, you have shared your cheers, your tears, your lives and your stories. And I feel profound gratitude to you.



Shove from the Dove

Onward to new beginnings,
Rev. Dr. Barbara Therese

Staff Information:

Rev. Dr. Barbara Therese, Minister

Kristen Graham, Administrative Assistant, Editor

Ron Sainio, Church Music Director

How to contact us:

Office Phone: 508-839-4513

Email: griftonucc@gmail.com

Web Site: www.uccgrifton.org

Bountiful Gratitude for Abundant Benevolence

Good people of the Congregational Church of Grafton:

God's grace and my gratitude for your tremendous kindness and thoughtfulness throughout this winter season.

To all who contributed to the generous Christmas Gift for the Pastor:
My heart-felt thanks!

To all who communicated love, care and prayer during my "Christmas Medical Massacre":
My profound appreciation!

To all who expressed thanks for my pastoral ministry beside you and among you:
My abiding gratitude!

To all who live, love and learn to the glory of God:
My infinite thankfulness for modeling the following actions and attitudes--

On This Day...

Mend a quarrel.

Search out a forgotten friend.

Pause to be in awe.

Write a love letter.

Share some treasure.

Give a soft answer.

Encourage youth.

Manifest your loyalty with a word or deed.

Keep a promise.

Find the time.

Forego a grudge.

Forgive an enemy.

Listen.

Apologize, if you were wrong.

Try to understand.

Examine your demands on others.

Think first of someone else.

Appreciate.

Be kind.

Laugh a little more.

Unite against malice.

Worship your God.

Gladden the heart of a child.

Speak your love.

Speak it once again.

Faithfully and gratefully,

Rev. Barbara

Holy Happenings in February!

Deepen and fortify your faith on Sundays at 10 a.m.!

Join in-person or online!

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

February 2 = Healing Stories of Jesus – Sermon #4

Message: *Be Opened!*

Join us in our Bible Study/Sermon Series
on the healing stories of Jesus,
found in the Gospel of Mark.

The Souper Bowl Canned Soup Drive continues,
with all proceeds benefiting the Grafton Food Bank.
As well, we share in the Feast for All (i.e., Holy Communion).

* * *

February 9 = Scout Sunday and Healing Stories of Jesus – Sermon #5

Message: *Get Up!*

Join us in our sermon series on healing stories of Jesus
and
in our celebration of our chartered Scouting organizations--
both Boy Scouts of America
and
Girl Scouts of America.

* * *

February 16 = Vision Sunday and Healing Stories of Jesus – Sermon #6

Message: *Can You See Anything?*

Join us as we study the final healing story
in our six-sermon series:
Healing Stories of Jesus.

* * *

February 23 = “Walking Sunday”

Message: *Walking in New Direction*

Join us as we reflect
on the significant role of “walking”
in the ministry of Jesus of Nazareth
and
in our own journeys of faith.



ANNUAL MEETING

Important Announcement

Annual Congregational Meeting

* * *

WARRANT TO THE MEMBERS OF THE CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH OF GRAFTON, MASSACHUSETTS:

The members are hereby notified that on **Sunday, February 9, 2025, at 11:30 a.m. via virtual meeting** (See below for joining instructions), the Annual Meeting of the Congregation will be held to vote on the following articles:

- Vote to accept the 2024 Church Annual Report
- Vote to approve an Amendment to the Bylaws
- Election of Church Officers
- Vote to accept the 2025 Church Budget
- Adjournment

A quorum of 25 members is required.

Respectfully posted by:
The Cabinet of the Church
Robert Lane, Church Moderator
Elizabeth Torres, Church Treasurer

ATTACHMENT A – ANNUAL MEETING ELECTRONIC AND TELEPHONIC LOGIN INFORMATION

Meeting ID: 912 6631 1179

Passcode: 540482

You may join by any of the following means:

On a browser on your computer, tablet or phone by clicking on the following link: <https://blueprintmedicines.zoom.us/j/91266311179?pwd=9GQ8N69c776t907phCMv7tqNhQdOpO.1>- OR -

On a browser on your computer, tablet or phone by going to <https://app.zoom.us/wc/join>, entering the meeting ID above and following the prompts.- OR -

- 1. On a connected device by opening your Zoom app and entering the meeting ID above and following the prompts.- OR -**
- 2. On your phone by dialing (646) 931 – 3860 and following the prompts.**

If you have trouble logging in, then you may call Rob Lane at 508-981-9850.

IF YOU ARE NOT SPEAKING, WE ASK THAT YOU PLEASE MUTE YOURSELF SO AS TO AVOID THE BACKGROUND NOISE.



Update from the Capital Campaign Steering Committee

Since our \$120,000 successful request for funds in 2024 and successful \$50,000 church capital campaign in the same year, the church engaged the services of a carpentry subcontractor (through the painting company). The goal was to review the existing conditions of the church and to provide a more detailed and accurate quote for any restoration or repair work.

The church paid for a high-reach lift to access the exterior of the steeple. The carpenter observed more carpentry work area, as well as other areas of the main section of the church, that required repair and replacement. All of the anticipated additional budget costs relate to the restoration of the old part of the building.

Due to an estimated \$100,000 in increased carpentry costs, the Steering Committee needs to extend our church and community Capital Campaign into 2025. Letters have been mailed to church members and friends that kindly request their support with a goal of raising \$25,000.

In addition, we have nearly completed a \$70,000 application for funding from the Grafton Community Preservation Committee due February 1. We are confident the project will begin (and hopefully end!) construction this year. The project will address necessary safety repairs to the front granite entrance and walkway, exterior paneling repair as needed, and painting of the entire church exterior.

Sharing the Light (aka Souper Bowl Canned Soup Drive) Continues!

The Light you bring into this world is beautiful, irreplaceable and needed. (Twloha)

During January and February of 2025, our congregation and the groups who gather within our church facility (Scouting organizations, Twelve-Step Recovery groups and the Voices of God Ministry) are collaborating to support the Grafton Food Bank with a short-term mission:

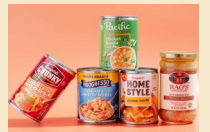
Our monthly Sharing-the-Light Food Collection
has transformed into
a 7-week Souper Bowl Canned Soup Drive!

Now and through February 17, please bring donations of canned soup into the sanctuary for the Sharing-the-Light Food Collection on Sunday morning, February 2. Or bring donated cans of soup from February 3 to February 17 to the Grafton Food Bank Collection Basket located on the counter in the Church Kitchen.

***Bless you for helping us to meet our goal
of 300 cans of soup!***

Within you is the Light of a thousand suns.
(Robert Adams)

* * * * *



CHURCH CARE GROUP

The Membership Committee has organized a Church Care Group to keep us all connected with our church family. Please contact Lorraine Swanson if you know someone in need of a card.

Whether it's wishes for a speedy recovery, a thank you, words of encouragement, miss you, or congratulations, who doesn't like receiving a caring card in the mail?

swanmom924@gmail.com 508-887-6214

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



White Socks for Worcester Fellowship – Here is our FINAL COUNT! During the months of November, December, and January, over 700 pairs of white socks were collected! There were 105 pairs donated by our congregation, and 213 donated by Cub Scout Pack 107. In addition, we received a monetary donation from Boy Scout Troop 107, which allowed us to purchase 385 pairs! Thank you to ALL who participated!

Bagged Lunches for Thursday Cafe - February 20th is the next date for providing bagged lunches to homeless and at-risk adults in Worcester. Watch for a Sign-Up soon to provide needed items and/or to volunteer to pack the lunches. Volunteers meet in the church kitchen at 10:30 a.m., and once the lunches are packed, a member of the Mission Outreach Committee will bring them to All Saints Church in Worcester for the Thursday Cafe.

NEXT Y.E.S. Event - Watch for information about our next Y.E.S. (Youth Engaged in Service) Event! We are in the planning stages and hoping to have a date in early March. The event will include a Mission project (such as packing toiletry kits), prayer, song, gaga game, food (pizza!) and fellowship! All are welcome, especially children and youth!

Thanks and blessings to all,

The Mission Outreach Committee
Barbara Gow, Sue Howell, Donna Caracino

Joys and Concerns



The Deacons will update the names on the prayer lists in the bulletin and our newsletters for those in need of our prayers. As of March 1st names will be removed unless we hear from you that you have someone you want to keep on the list.

Please reach out to any deacon with prayers needed for someone. Also watch for our new Joys or Concerns Prayer Cards coming in March!

Craig Peacock
Sue Howell
Kim Stewart
Amy Coldwell
Joanne Hable
Connie Hopkins



News From the Nominating Committee

For many years, the Nominating Committee has come to the Annual Meeting and asked that the number of members required to form a committee and the term limits for members on these committee be suspended before officers and committee members can be voted into position. This year, rather than suspending the bylaws to fit the needs of our congregation, we took a close look at who we are and how we work and made recommendations to Cabinet to change those parts of the bylaws that no longer fit our congregation. Specific details of the changes can be seen on the Warrant for the Annual Meeting. The list below is a quick reference of the changes recommended.

1. Committees and Boards have been redefined as Teams and Groups. Many of the edits made change "committee and boards" to read "teams and groups."
2. Term limits and number of members for Teams and Groups have been eliminated. Note: Officers of the Church still have a 3-year term limit.
3. Members of Teams and Groups will no longer be elected. This should make it easier to expand (or contract) a Team and will allow for easier movement between Teams. In other words, this will provide a more fluid structure to meet the needs of the church and each individual. Officers of the Church will remain as elected positions.
4. The Teams and Groups have been organized into 3 areas of purpose and intent: Worship, Church Life, and Core Support.
5. Some of the Team names have been changed to better reflect what it is they are doing: The Board of Trustees will now be called the Building and Grounds Team. Membership and Mission Outreach committees have been combined and will now be called the Fellowship and Service Team.

If you have any questions or comments, please let us know.

The Nominating Committee,

Joanne Hable, Lorraine Swanson, Sue Howell



GRAFTON THRIFT SHOP

VOLUNTEERS FOR FEBRUARY 2025

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.

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

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

Feb.	1	Amy Coldwell 11 a.m. - 1 p.m. Susan Filippone 1 p.m. - 3 p.m.
	8	Diane Lalone
	15	Amy Coldwell 11 a.m. - 1 p.m. Susan Filippone 1 p.m. - 3 p.m.
	22	Lynne Flanagan-Tsombakos 11 a.m. - 1 p.m. April Lane 1 p.m. - 3 p.m.

Love is in the air at the Grafton Thrift Shop this month! Stop in to pick up some Valentine's Day decor or a gift for your sweetheart! You'll fall in love with our nifty thrifty prices!

Are you looking for a volunteer opportunity to start off the new year to help with our church's mission and the community? The Thrift Shop seeks new volunteers who may help 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 aprild5850@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 aprild5850@yahoo.com or at 508-839-5850 (home) or at 508-596-8582 (cell).



February Birthdays

Mark Tsombakos

2/8

Lois Scott 2/9

Andrew Tsombakos

2/12

Bob Howell 2/27



CARE AND CONCERN CIRCLE

February 2025

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

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

Nicole

Mike

Bruce

Benjamin

Donald and Vidia

Scott D.

Ashley S.

Steven

Charlotte

Sally B.

Denise

Adam

Darlene S.

Tim H.

Amanda

Lynn D.

Dick F.

Barbara and Ed

For hope with a difficult medical diagnosis

Richard

Gracie

Lynn

Lucyna

Tori

Jeff F.

Paul

The Elder Family



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

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

<https://twitter.com/GraftonUCC>

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

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

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30 Grafton Common, P.O. Box 421, Grafton, MA; Telephone 508-839-4513
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