

SHARING THE LIGHT

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



Volume 2, Number 4

APRIL 2020 EDITION

Dear members and friends of our Congregational Church of Grafton:

Pause. Breathe deeply. Close your eyes.
When you open your eyes, think “Easter thoughts.” What images come to your mind?
Bunnies? Plush, cuddly bunnies?
Bonnets? Stylish, pastel-colored bonnets?
Baskets? Small, medium and large baskets, lined with artificial grass and crammed with everything from crayons to creme-filled chocolate eggs?
Easter—a year ago—may have brimmed with bunnies, bonnets and baskets.
How radically changed our lives are from a year ago, a month ago, a week ago, even a day ago.
A story—minus bunnies or bonnets or baskets—may provide insights into the event called “Easter.”

* * * * *

On September 27, 1941, in a small town in Lithuania, Nazi SS soldiers forced some three thousand Jews from their homes and corralled them to the local cemetery. There the Jews were stripped and shot on the edge of a previously dug pit.

Samuel, a sixteen-year old boy, fell into the pit unharmed—a split second before bullets killed those around him. When darkness fell, Samuel maneuvered his way from under the many corpses and climbed out of the massive grave.

Clothed only in blood stains, the frantic teenager ran and knocked on the door of the closest farmhouse. The farmer opened the door.

Seeing Samuel, the farmer shouted, “Go back to the grave where you belong, Jew!”

Then the farmer slammed the door in Samuel's face.

At the next four houses, Samuel knocked on each of the front doors—only to receive the same response as the farmer gave him.

Samuel recognized that he, an ostracized Jew, would gain no admittance into a non-Jewish house...unless he evoked an image of sovereign power.

Samuel summoned all the strength he could muster from his frail frame. He made his way to the house of a widow whom he knew to be Christian. Her cottage stood near the edge of a forest.

Samuel braced himself in front of the cottage door and cried out, “I am the Lord, Jesus Christ, who has come down from the cross!”

Hearing the cry, the widow made the Sign of the Cross. She opened the door and brought Samuel inside. She bathed him, wrapped him in bed linens and fed him. She placed him in her extra bed.

Three days later, Samuel thanked the widow for her risk-taking hospitality. Dressed in clothes the widow had collected from neighbors, he slipped out of her cottage and into the forest. There he joined underground forces. Samuel survived the war.

* * * * *

Around the year 33 A.D., there lived a holy man—regarded alternately as a hero, a rebel, a miracle worker, a trouble maker, a teacher and a heretic. This holy man was betrayed by a friend, arrested by Roman officials and crucified at the insistence of the people whom he had loved. This holy man died on a wooden cross to which he was nailed. His limp and broken body was removed from the cross, bathed in embalming ointments, wrapped in burial linens, and laid to rest in a grave.

Three days later, this holy man—known to us as Jesus of Nazareth—emerged from the grave.

His emergence gave birth to a truth of Easter—a truth devoid of bunnies and bonnets and baskets:

Love is stronger than death.



A Shove from the Dove

Beside you in the journey of faith,

Rev. Dr. Barbara Therese

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Finding the Cross!

Mission: Find the Cross--in Holy Scripture, in holy worship and in the holy serendipity of life.

Mission accomplished...by Julie Capuzziello: In her jewelry box, Julie found two crosses—one silver and one gold—that she had not worn or even thought about for 20+ years.

* * *

Last month and throughout the season of Lent, all members of our faith community were invited to *find the cross* while meaningfully making their way through Lenten Lessons and the spiritual journey of Lent.

The season of Lent falls on the 40 days between Ash Wednesday and Easter Sunday. Lent commemorates the 40-day fast in the desert that Jesus of Nazareth endured as well as the emotional turbulence that Jesus suffered from his triumphant entry into Jerusalem (celebrated on Palm Sunday) up to his hill-top crucifixion on Calvary (honored on Good Friday).

To faith-seekers, the cross does not so much represent the sorrowful death of Jesus as it signifies the radical love of Jesus.

In the mid-16th century, St. Francis Xavier sought to *find the cross* after he accidentally dropped his own cherished cross into bay waters while traveling by boat. Miraculously, Francis Xavier did *find the cross* while he walked on an isolated beach after disembarking from the boat.

Likewise, Julie did *find the cross* (in truth, two crosses!) while fulfilling a Lenten Lesson: Simplify life; downsize possessions. Says Julie, she now wears one of the two crosses every day.

In a time such as this—in a world-wide health crisis of our 21st century—the cross poignantly represents the radical love of Jesus.

Even after we celebrate Easter and the empty tomb, may we continue to seek and *find the cross* in our journey of faith...every day.

Holy Happenings in April!
Faith-building events for our family of faith
during Live-Streaming Worship Services
on Sunday Mornings at 10 a.m.

Tune in at: [facebook.com/UCCGrafton/](https://www.facebook.com/UCCGrafton/)

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April 5 = Palm Sunday and Feast for All

Sermon: *God and Suffering and God*

For our monthly **Sharing-the-Light Food Collection**,
bring non-perishable food items
to your local supermarket's Food Bank Collection Center.
For our monthly **“Feast for All”** (aka Holy Communion),
assemble portions of bread and cups of grape juice
to share during the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper.

* * * * *

April 12 = Easter Sunday

Sermon: *Three Days Later, the Son Rose*

To honor and celebrate the Resurrection,
gather with your family of faith
for this Facebook Live service
of inspiring music, holy words,
a universal message, and a sacred story.

* * * * *

April 19 = First Sunday after Easter

Sermon: *Turn Your Scars into Stars*

Transform grave moments
into growth movements.

* * * * *

April 26 = “Because of a Child” Sunday

Sacred Story: *Wilfred Gordon McDonald Partridge*

Listen and learn
as a young child guides an old woman
in finding lost memories.

* * * * *



Letter of Thanks

Dear Friends at the Congregational Church of Grafton,

Thank you for continuing to partner with us on the Clothing Drop-Off Shed Program!

In 2019, roughly 1567 garments of clothing were donated to your shed. This was enough to clothe an estimated 190 people all over the world.

Based on this volume of clothing, your organization received \$456 in 2019.

Thank you for continuing to spread the word about the clothing shed to other community members. We truly appreciate all the support you've given this program.

Sincerely,

The Team at St. Pauly Textile, Inc.

F.A.C.E. Group: Still Faithful in Times Such as These



With faith, hope and enduring spirit, we may triumph. (Lailah Gifty Akita)

The resilient members of our **F.A.C.E. Group** (aka **F**aith **A**nd **C**aring **E**ncounter Group) show themselves to be faithful—both in times of tragedy and in times of triumph. To date, the members of the **F.A.C.E. Group** include: Nick Coldwell; Sophie Coldwell; Abby Hise; Emma Hise; Anne Koskinen; and Maggie McLean.

In March, members of our **F.A.C.E. Group**:

1. Interviewed Rev. Daniel Gregiore, pastor of the Unitarian Universalist Society of Grafton and Sutton, and heard highlights of his story of life and his journey of faith;
2. Planned, organized and led a time of worship in a Simple Church service on-site in our church.

In April, members of our **F.A.C.E. Group**:

1. Will create and video “Faith Moments for Young Ages” to be shared among church families with young children during this season of sheltering-at-home;
2. Will begin planning and preparing for Youth and Children Sunday, with a hoped-for date of June 14, 2020.

* * * * *

On a future Sunday—to be designated as “Confirmation Sunday”—the six youth will be invited to join the membership of our faith community.

Since November 2019, Rev. Barbara has organized and guided the **F.A.C.E. Group** program. She is assisted by Christian Education Committee members and parents of **F.A.C.E. Group** members. Together, Rev. Barbara and **F.A.C.E. Group** members appreciate your support, prayers and encouragement as they seek to be faithful...in times such as these.

A Letter to Ask

Dear people of Light and of love:

Greetings of faith, hope and love to each of you!

In times such as these, may we join together and continue to seek God, see God and serve God as a family of faith. While we are physically unable to gather as a congregation in our sanctuary, we nonetheless continue to carry out the work, mission and worship of our faith community.

Church members and friends are asked please to continue their promised support to our Congregational Church of Grafton and to our Windows 2020 Campaign. Checks may be issued and mailed to:

Congregational Church of Grafton

P. O. Box 421

Grafton, MA 01519

As well, you are invited to send your support to our church's website:

1. Go to uccgrafton.org.
2. Click on GIVE ONLINE on far right.
3. Click DONATE button on top right.
4. Use PayPal, credit card or bank account.

Bless you for your enduring generosity!

Together—in unity and community—we may continue to serve God and make a significant difference in our deeply needful world.

Beside you in faith, hope and love,

Rev. Barbara

Plea for Food Assistance from Dismas House

Dear members of the Congregational Church of Grafton,

I hope this letter finds you and your pastor well! Thank you for your past support for the homeless and former offenders we serve!

During this time, we have lost the support of 40 church groups who prepare dinners for our homeless residents, Monday through Friday, at two of our homes due to social-distancing requirements. This has driven our grocery costs higher. We are reaching out to our friends to seek grocery cards and support for our hunger program. If you are able, grocery cards can be mailed to the P.O. Box noted below.

Though you have many competing interests, I am reaching out on behalf of our residents!

Best regards,

Dave McMahon

Dave McMahon

Co-Executive Director

Dismas House of Massachusetts, Inc.

P. O. Box 30125

Worcester, Massachusetts 01603

(508)799-9389





April Birthdays

Betty Mack	4/1	Curt Paine	4/9	Elliott Capuzziello	4/14
Joanne Hable	4/14	April Lane	4/15	Erik Coldwell	4/18
Lily Drew	4/18	Sean Perrotta	4/19	Joe Holm	4/21
Colin Peacock	4/21	Ron Sainio	4/21	Steven Lane	4/24
Winston Cotter		4/28	Rev. Dr. Barbara Therese		4/28



CARE AND CONCERN CIRCLE

APRIL 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:

Those who suffer COVID-19
 Health-care workers who care for coronavirus sufferers
 Medical researchers who seek to control COVID-19
 Erik Dyrness (son of Kim Stewart)
 Rick Gaylord (brother-in-law of Craig and Carrie Peacock)
 Walt Wietgreffe
 Uncle Bob and Valerie
 Louise and George Henry
 Amanda

Holly's cousin Donna
 Family of Phyllis Stone
 Cameron Coburn
 Jean (sister of Ray Guilmette)
 Fiona (cousin of David Gow)
 Jennifer Sherry
 Tom Parslaw
 Chickie Bunker
 Sara



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

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

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