

SHARING THE LIGHT

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



Volume 2, Number 9

SEPTEMBER 2020 EDITION

Dear members and friends of our Congregational Church of Grafton:

God's steadfast love endures forever. (In Psalm 136, this verse appears 26 times.)

God's steadfast love to you—in this season that feels anything but steadfast. Since late winter and stretching through spring and summer, our lives have been gripped with uncertainty and ambiguity.

Our month of September is traditionally known as back-to-school month. In this season, back-to-school appears exponentially uncertain and ambiguous.

As well, our month of September is traditionally known as “back-to-church” month. In this season, back-to-church appears ironically certain—though it may look exponentially different.

On September 13, Homecoming Sunday, we may regather in our sanctuary for in-person worship. Based on three months of exhaustive research and analyses by our *Onward and Forward Team*, our church Deacons have recommended ways and means whereby we may gather safely in our sanctuary. With care, please read our “Deacons' Letter to the Congregation” that follows this Pastoral Page.

Whatever our season, these ten life lessons offer clarity for all students of life and students of faith:

1. **Kindness builds up, whereas meanness tears down.** One cannot do a kindness too soon.
2. **Treat all persons with respect.** All humans bear the image and likeness of the Divine. Honor the God-reflection within each human.
3. **Praise is a powerful motivator.** When others do something well, tell them. They likely will do it again and try harder when doing it.
4. **Everyone is different.** “Different” is not evil or threatening. Watch and learn how others may be different. Then celebrate the delights of diversity.
5. **Think twice; speak once.** As they cannot be deleted, spoken words may be a gift or a weapon.
6. **Confront bullying.** Bullying seeks to damage and diminish the worth of human life and of natural life. Bullying: Name it; face it; stop it.
7. **Remember the importance of ritual.** Do something twice; it may become a ritual. Do something 21 times, it may become a habit. Ritual feeds and gives order to the human spirit.
8. **Acknowledge the need for sanctuary.** Sometimes humans need a “time out” from others and from themselves. When thresholds of civility and safety are crossed, seek and reside in a neutral territory.
9. **Discern the difference between the urgent and the important.** It may be urgent to arrive at a given location. However, it is important that one takes time to listen—even if one arrives late.
10. **Gossip is poison.** Like poison, do not pour gossip into your mouth or into the mouths of others.

May we live and learn these life lessons with steadfast wisdom.



A Shove from the Dove

Beside you in the journey of faith,

Rev. Dr. Barbara Therese

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Congregational Church of Grafton
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Guidelines for Re-Gathering

Summertime greetings to friends and members of our Congregational Church of Grafton!

Our calendars may say August. However, soon September will dawn. The Deacons of our faith community enthusiastically offer two options for worship beginning on September 13, our Homecoming Sunday: (1) Continue joining our family of faith in our online service, via Facebook Live; or (2) join our family of faith in the sanctuary for in-person worship. Our *Onward and Forward Team* has been diligently researching, planning and adapting in order to ensure a safe and meaningful worship experience in this season of COVID-19. Adhering to recommendations of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts and the CDC, the *O&F Team* has recommended, and the Deacons have endorsed, the following:

- **Social distancing will be practiced.**

Currently indoor gatherings are limited to 25 people. To allow for 5 members of our worship team, 20 people may be seated in our sanctuary. RSVPs to attend our services will be recorded on our church website. We will accommodate additional seating in our Fellowship Hall, as attendance requires.

Certain pews will be cordoned off to ensure safe spacing between congregants. Members of the same household may sit together.

- **Masks will be required.**

Those entering our sanctuary are required to wear a mask at all times while inside our church—unless a medical condition specifically precludes mask-wearing. For children between the ages of 2 and 5, mask-wearing is left to the discretion of their parents/guardians. Children younger than 2 need not wear a mask.

Those entering our sanctuary are requested to bring their own masks. However, a mask will be made available for those who may lack one. Those unwilling to wear a mask are invited to enjoy our online service from home, via Facebook Live.

- **Entering and exiting our sanctuary**

Upon entering our sanctuary, each person will provide their name and contact information to a Deacon/Greeter at the door. A second Deacon will assist in seating each individual, couple or family. The sanctuary will be filled—front to back. At the end of the service, congregants will be dismissed—back to front.

Bulletins will be available along the back pew as congregants enter our sanctuary.

- **Children and Youth**

Child care and Christian Education classes may not be offered at this time.

- **Worship**

Meditative and reflective music will be played during the service. Those who are present are encouraged to "join in" with their hearts, hands and humming. Singing aloud is discouraged at this time.

Offering plates will not be distributed among the pews. On-line giving is urged and encouraged—continuing the spirit of generosity that many have practiced this summer. Two offering plates will be placed at each sanctuary door for those bringing an offering on Sunday mornings.

Communion (aka Feast for All) will be celebrated on the first Sunday of each month. Those who attend are asked to bring their own Communion elements (bread and juice) as has been practiced during our online worship this summer. All elements (bread and juice) will be blessed and then consumed together.

- **Hygiene protocols will be followed.**

Hand sanitizer will be available at each entrance of the sanctuary, with additional sanitizing stations throughout our church.

One bathroom will be available for use: our ADA bathroom nearest our Thrift Shop. As well, Clorox Wipes will be available for wiping any touched surfaces.

Our church will be cleaned and disinfected after each service. Vivian Nichols, our Sacred Space Keeper, will disinfect frequently touched surfaces as well as our bathroom and its fixtures.

Those not feeling well are invited to enjoy our service from home, via Facebook Live.

While beverages and refreshments may not be offered after worship at this time, all are joyfully invited to greet friends outside our church—both before and after our time of worship!

May God be with you and all whom you hold dear.

Faithfully yours,

Sue Howell, Bill Chaisson, Joanne Hable, Craig Peacock, Kim Stewart, Lorraine Swanson, Holly Weitgreffe

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Letter of Gratitude

August 23, 2020

Dear members of my family of faith,

I write to you today, on my final Sunday serving you as your “Tech Magician,” overwhelmed with bittersweet gratitude. Over the past 18 years, you’ve given me so much to be grateful for:

I am grateful for your generosity. Learning that our faith community came together from a distance to put together such a thoughtful gift was an indescribable feeling. Profound thanks to everyone who contributed.

I am grateful for your spirit: Starting the livestream and seeing all the “Good morning!” messages in the chat gave me something to look forward to each week. And seeing your smiling faces on Zoom warmed my heart time and time again.

I am grateful for your support. From the very beginning, when I played *Morning Has Broken* and *Pachelbel’s Canon* on the piano, to my five-month tenure as Interim Church Music Director, you were always there to look me in the eye, shake my hand and tell me how proud you were of me. And recently, undeterred by the pandemic, you’ve sent messages of congratulations on a multitude of platforms.

From the bottom of my heart, thank you for all of this and more!

But this feeling goes well beyond gratitude. This church has been a huge part of my life for years—most especially over the past 14 months. That’s where the bittersweet comes in. I am so incredibly excited to start the next chapter of my life at Tufts. But I’ll miss seeing the Sanctuary, hearing Ron play the organ, and exclaiming “Good morning, Rev. Barbara!” live every Sunday. I’ll miss mowing the lawn, baking pies, and eating far too much of the aforementioned pies. Most of all, I’ll miss the light and love that radiates from all of you!

But this isn’t goodbye. You might see me stop by the livestream on Sunday mornings, or attend worship in-person when I’m in town.

But until then, I wish you all nothing but the best! God be with you until we meet again. But this most certainly isn’t goodbye!

Matthew Torres

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Holy Happenings in September!

Faith-building opportunities for our family of faith during Facebook Live Services on Sunday mornings at 10 a.m. and In-Person Worship, beginning September 13

Join us at: facebook.com/UCCGrafton/

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September 6= “Summer of Psalms” Sermon #6 and Feast for All

Sermon on Psalm 139: *First Comes Fear, Then Comes Wonder*

We are “fearfully but wonderfully made”? What may that mean?

For our monthly **Sharing-the-Light Food Collection**, please see Page 6 for ways to support our local Grafton Food Bank.

For our monthly “**Feast for All**” (aka Holy Communion), please assemble bread and juice for our shared Sacrament of the Lord's Supper.

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September 13 = Homecoming Sunday and In-Person Worship

Sermon: *Ready or Not, Our Hour Has Come!*

Ready-or-not situations confront us daily and require our response.

In ready-or-not matters of faith, how do we respond?

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September 20 = “Anniversary Sunday” and Sacrament of Baptism

Sermon: *What Love Is*

In-person, we celebrate an infant baptism.

In our sermon, we celebrate and renew wedding vows.

NOTE: Married couples are invited to participate—virtually-- in a spoken renewal of their marriage covenant.

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September 27 = “Be on Time Sunday” and Sacrament of Baptism

Sermon: *Jesus Is Never Late*

In person, we celebrate an infant baptism.

In our sermon, we consider how Jesus of Nazareth

may seem physically “late” to an event

but his love is “on time.”

What about our tardiness? Or timeliness?



The Mission Committee would like to thank all of the people who have made donations to the Loaves and Fishes Food Pantry. There is still a need for additional food by families in the town of Grafton. There has been an increase in use in recent days as it has been in the paper and a flyer was included in the Food Bank vegetable bags. When you do your regular weekly shopping, try to remember to pick up an additional item or two that would brighten your day if you were in need.

Please return the Mission Outreach survey sent in the July Newsletter before September 13th so that Barbara Gow and Diane Chaisson can make plans for the upcoming year. What societal issues resonate with you? What organizations do you support: for where your money is there also is your heart, and there also could be your hands. God has no hands but ours, so only we can do God's work. What organizations do you want the Mission Committee money to support? We want you to guide where the budget goes.

Sharing-the-Light Food Collection

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

Our monthly Food Collection supports the Grafton Food Bank, housed in our local Municipal Center.

In partnership with the Community Harvest Project,
the Grafton Food Bank will distribute fresh produce to clients at the Grafton Municipal Center,
from 9:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m., rain or shine,
on Thursday, September 3, and on Thursday, September 17.

Currently, the Grafton Food Bank is conducting a "Restock the Shelves Food Drive"
in preparation for drive-up food distributions in September.

Members and friends of our faith community are invited
to visit the Grafton Food Bank's website: graftonfoodbank.org

Cash donations, using PayPal or GoFundMe are welcomed. Donations by check may be issued to:

Grafton Food Bank/Friends of Grafton, Inc.

P.O. Box 324

Grafton, MA 01519

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We rise by lifting others.



***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.***

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On August 12, 2020,
our three restored stained-glass windows
were re-installed in our church sanctuary
by workers from Stained Glass Resources!

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Immense gratitude to all who have supported
and who have pledged support
to our Windows 2020 Campaign!

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To date, Windows 2020 Campaign has received: \$30,932.

Total Windows 2020 pledged support: \$31,407.

Total Windows 2020 pledges outstanding: \$475.

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***Payment of all pledged contributions
will ensure sufficient financial resources
for the total cost of our window restoration project.***

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***

Deep thankfulness to all who have contributed to our faith community's one-year Campaign to preserve "the eyes to the soul of our church"!

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F.A.C.E. Group: Faith Stepping

*Every significant move forward in our lives
begins with a leap of faith and a step into the unknown. (Brian Tracy)*

In our Season of COVID, where “unknowns” exponentially outnumber “knowns,” members of our **F.A.C.E. Group** (**F**aith **A**nd **C**aring **E**ncounter Group) have wrestled with this premise: *It is not so much what we have done or where we have been that matters. What matters, in the eyes of God, is where we are willing to go.*

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

1. Submitted names and pictures of their pets and animals for our virtual “Blessing of the Animals” service on August 30.

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

1. Will be interviewed for “Meet Our Youth” vignettes to be printed in future communications published by our faith community.

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On a Sunday before the end of this year, **F.A.C.E. Group** members will be invited to join the membership of our faith community.

Beginning in November 2019, Rev. Barbara has organized **F.A.C.E. Group** events and programming. She is assisted by our Christian Education Committee and family members of the **F.A.C.E. Group**. Rev. Barbara and **F.A.C.E. Group** are thankful for our congregation's support of their taking leaps of faith and steps into the unknown—in our faith community and our greater community.



The 41st Annual Harvest Fair and Apple Pie Social



Good news! Our much-loved community celebration of the New England fall season will take place this year in a different format and on a smaller scale, but with the same spirit of love, connection, and excitement that defines our church family and its annual Fair!

We'll kick off the Fair on Saturday, September 26 with a huge yard sale from 9 am-1 pm in the church parking lot (rain date October 10). After all, hasn't everyone been doing some cleaning and organizing at home these last few months?! Please put aside any donations of household items, book, toys, games, puzzles, and more. Any clothing donations may be given to the Thrift Shop.

Also, the whole community will be excited to learn that we will still be selling our famous homemade apple pies (regular, Dutch-crumble, and sugar-free). All pies will be sold FROZEN for baking at home. These will be ordered and paid for through a link on our website. We will be offering FROZEN apple crisp, FROZEN chili, and our popular fresh corn chowder for online ordering as well. All pre-ordered food items will be available for pickup at the church on each of three Sundays – September 27, October 4, and October 11 – between 2 pm-4 pm, or by appointment. Ordering for pickup must be completed by 5 pm on the Thursday prior.

Watch for news about the apple pie workshops in the near future! Signups will be required, so that the number of people in the kitchen and fellowship hall will stay within maximum capacity guidelines.

Our tradition continues! We need your help to make this a spirit-filled and fun Harvest Fair and Apple Pie Social!

Lots of details are yet to come! Please contact Sue Howell (508-596-7366; suehow6oak@aol.com) or Joanne Hable (508-614-5309; jnhable49@live.com) with questions or more information on how you may help.



Thrift Shop Readies for Fall

All Things Summer is Half Price

The Thrift Shop has a full September to plan for. We will be bringing down our fall clothing and putting away or disposing of our summer items in September. Now is the time to plan for next year and pick up summer clothing for half price.

Our hours are reduced this year due to the small number of volunteers (Thursdays and Saturdays 11:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.)

If you haven't been to the shop lately, please consider stopping in to see what we have in the shop. The quality of many of our items is very high, but the prices are low. Because we are small we have to be very selective. Remind students that the Thrift Shop is a great place to find just that special item to create their own individual style. We are strict about all rules set up for COVID-19. Only three customers are allowed in the shop at a time. Masks are required, hand sanitizer is supplied and we request a name and telephone number be left in a book by the door.

Regular hours will return if we get more volunteers. We would love to have more of you join us as volunteers for the coming year. A three-hour shift once or twice a month on Thursdays or Saturdays would help us greatly in our effort to serve the community. It is a wonderful way to do church outreach together. Shifts are 10:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m. or 1:00 – 4:00 p.m. on Thursdays and Saturdays.

Watch for announcements about an **All Church Yard Sale** at the end of September. The Thrift Shop will be open that day and more items will be prepped for sale as part of that venture in lieu of the Harvest Fair.

GRAFTON THRIFT SHOP

VOLUNTEERS FOR SEPTEMBER, 2020

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.

Sep.	3	Diane Chaisson
	10	Diane Lalone
	17	Diane Chaisson
	24	Diane Lalone

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

Sep.	5	Diane Chaisson
	12	Kim Stewart
	19	TBD
	26	Kim Stewart



September Birthdays

Anne Koskinen	9/2	Andy Deschenes	9/3	Al Blanchard	9/14
Julie Capuzziello	9/14	Meghan Foucher	9/22	Robert Lane	9/24
Lorraine Swanson	9/24	Amy Koskinen	9/29		



CARE AND CONCERN CIRCLE SEPTEMBER 2020

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:

Jennifer
Christian C.
Walt
Amanda
Sara

Fred M.
Donna
Fiona
Louise and George
Ron

Retnamma



<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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Monthly Newsletter of the Congregational Church of Grafton

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