

SHARING THE LIGHT

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



Volume 2, Number 8

AUGUST 2020 EDITION

Dear members and friends of our Congregational Church of Grafton:

We have heard these timely words of wisdom from Old Testament writers:

*For everything there is a season and a time for every purpose under heaven...
And God has made everything beautiful, in its own time. (Ecclesiastes 3:1, 11)*

And we have heard these wise words about time from modern philosophers:

How we spend our time is more important than how we spend our money.

In our season of summer, our season of COVID and our season of change, the element of time has seemingly morphed into different dimensions as we have been unable to use our time in our usual ways.

Even so, have our current seasons—however potent and unpredictable—altered or devalued the commodity of time?

Consider this prayer from the Psalmist:

O God: Teach us to number our days that we may gain a heart of wisdom. (Psalm 90:12)

In light of this prayer, how may we be called to use our time wisely? Or may it be—as the following reflections urge—that we are called to take time, rather than to use time?

1. ***Take time to think. Thoughts are a source of power.***
2. ***Take time to play. Play is an ingredient for perpetual youthfulness.***
3. ***Take time to read. Reading is a fountain of wisdom.***
4. ***Take time to pray. Prayer may be an overcoat of strength in storms of struggle.***
5. ***Take time to love. Loving makes life meaningful.***
6. ***Take time to laugh. Laughter is a melody of the soul.***
7. ***Take time to give. Generosity outperforms selfishness—any time, any day.***
8. ***Take time to do your work well. Pride in your work—whatever it is—nurtures your spirit.***
9. ***Take time to express gratitude. Gratitude turns what you have into enough.***

In the times through which we are now traveling, may we know: Time is the wisest counselor of all.



A Shove from the Dove

Beside you in the journey of faith,

Rev. Dr. Barbara Therese

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From the Onward and Forward Team

The *Onward and Forward Team* has had a busy July, meeting by Zoom early in the month and following up by emails over the last few weeks. This month's task has been to compile the guidelines needed to open our church building for indoor events. While public health officials tell us that it is safer to meet outdoors, we know that summer in New England is a fleeting season. We are preparing now to be ready for the time when we will welcome the shelter of our church building.

The *Onward and Forward Team* has focused on three main fronts:

- Creation of a set of guidelines we have dubbed the Clean it, Bless it, Check it List (the CBC List). The list will be given to each group using the church building. This list also includes a cleaning and a contact tracing log, as mandated by the State of MA.
- Signs to be posted around the church reminding everyone to wear a mask, socially distance and practice hand-washing hygiene. (Also a State mandate.)
- Contacting AA and Al-Anon to inform them that support groups may start meeting in our church again and to communicate with them the guidelines now in place.

Next month, our focus will be how to make in-person worship as safe as possible. We look forward to seeing people in the pews on September 13!

The Onward and Forward Team

Joanne Hable, Sue Howell, Justin Cotter, Larry Drew, Rev. Barbara

Holy Happenings in August!

***Faith-building opportunities for our family of faith
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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August 2 = “Summer of Psalms” Sermon #1 and Feast for All

Sermon on Psalm 23: *The Most Familiar Psalm in the Bible Is...*

What are the most frequently quoted verses in the Old Testament? And why?

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),
please assemble bread and juice for our shared Sacrament of the Lord's Supper.

August 9 = “Summer of Psalms” Sermon #2

Sermon on Psalm 121: *Who's Your Keeper?*

In Old Testament times, faithful ones looked to their God, Yahweh,
to “keep” them from harm and from evil.

In our new times of trial and testimony, who “keeps” you from harm and from evil?

August 16 = “Summer of Psalms” Sermon #3

Sermon on Psalm 8: *What in God's Name Is So Great?*

For thousands of years, faithful ones have said and sung,
“O Lord, our God! How majestic is your name in all the earth!”

But what in God's name is so great?

August 23 = “Summer of Psalms” Sermon #4

Sermon on Psalm 13: *Cling to Faith, Not to Feelings!*

In the face of adversity, human nature is “naturally” fearful.

To face adversity, divine nature offers an alternative to fear.

NOTE: Today marks Matthew Torres' final Sunday as “Tech Magician.”

August 30 = “Summer of Psalms” Sermon #5 and “Blessing of the Animals”

Sermon on Psalm 150: *We Are Born...to Praise!*

Unique from other living creatures, humankind has the capacity to praise. Why?

In tandem with our online Sunday service,

we will conduct a “virtual blessing” of pets and animals.

Viewers may download a copy of “A Certificate of Blessing.”

NOTE: By noon on Thursday, August 27,

please email/text Rev. Barbara the name(s) of your pet(s)

so that their names may be included

in “Blessing of the Animals” on Sunday morning, August 30.

Awesome Additions in August!

Summertime blessings: *Smell the sea and feel the sky! Let your soul and spirit fly!*

To add to the summertime blessings of August,
our faith community celebrates two additional events this month:

“Summer of Psalms” Sermon Series

On all five Sundays in August (i.e., August 2, 9, 16, 23, and 30),
the sermon morning messages will explore five different Psalms from the Old Testament.
In advance of each Sunday, a “Psalm Study Outline” for each selected psalm will be available
as part of our congregation's weekly e-newsletter, emailed on the preceding Thursday.

Let your heart, mind and soul journey with the Psalms this summer!

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“Blessing of the Animals”

On Sunday morning, August 30,
all church members and friends are invited to have their pets and animals
“virtually but visibly” blessed during our online service.

Please email/text the name(s) of your pet(s) to Rev. Barbara by noon on Thursday, August 27,
so that your animals may be included in the “Blessing of the Animals” on Sunday morning.

Animals share with humans the privilege of having a soul.



Sharing-the-Light Food Collection

Our Sharing-the-Light Food Collection continues on the first Sunday of each month.
Our monthly Food Collection supports the Grafton Food Bank, housed in the 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, August 6, and on Thursday, August 20.

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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When you are kind to others, your kindness changes you and the world.



F.A.C.E. Group: Overcoming the Overwhelming

*Although the world is full of suffering,
the world is also full of the overwhelming of it. (Helen Keller)*

In an era when we are acutely aware of our world's suffering, the members of our **F.A.C.E. Group** (Faith And Caring Encounter Group) show themselves to be resilient and adaptable. In spirit and in action, the youth of our faith community exude this truth: *To fight for change tomorrow, we need to build resilience today.* (Sheryl Sandberg)

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

1. Individually assessed the COVID-induced losses and changes in their academic lives, their home lives and their social lives. Each **F.A.C.E. Group** member has acknowledged what they cannot do, and they have grieved their losses. Then, with creative resilience, they each have brainstormed and determined what they can do.
2. With renewed focus on new possibilities, the youth of our congregation are living out these worthy themes:
 - a. *I am not what happened to me. I am what I choose to become.*
 - b. *Challenges are what makes life interesting. Overcoming challenges is what makes life meaningful.*

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

1. Will participate in "Blessing of the Animals" on Sunday morning, August 30, at 10 a.m., during our online Sunday service.

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

Starting in November 2019, Rev. Barbara has planned and led the **F.A.C.E. Group's** core of activities. She is supported by the Christian Education Committee and family members of the **F.A.C.E. Group**. Rev. Barbara and **F.A.C.E. Group** members are grateful for our congregation's recognition and encouragement as we work together to "overcome the overwhelming" in our ever-changing and ever-challenging world.

GRAFTON THRIFT SHOP

VOLUNTEERS FOR AUGUST, 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.

Aug.	6	Diane Chaisson
	13	Diane Chaisson
	20	Diane Lalone
	27	Diane Lalone

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

Aug.	1	Diane Chaisson
	8	Kim Stewart
	15	Lynne Flanagan-Tsombakos
	22	Kim Stewart
	29	TBA

What is Outreach or Mission?

'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you A stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? When did we see you sick or in prison and go to Visit you?'

'Truly I tell you, whatever you did fpr one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.'
Matthew 25:37-40

Our Outreach Committee seeks your input during a time of transition. Before moving to South Carolina, Brenda Armstrong was a mainstay of Mission projects within our church. Her involvement with issues of homelessness and women and children energized Worcester Fellowship, Thursday Café, Dismas House and Pernet Center. These programs are on hiatus due to the COVID Pandemic.

This moment in time gives us an opportunity to learn the interests for Church Mission among our church members. What are your passions? What charities do you support? What talents may you share?

Areas of Interest:

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Hunger | <input type="checkbox"/> Education |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Health care | <input type="checkbox"/> Literacy |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Homelessness | <input type="checkbox"/> International |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Race Relations | <input type="checkbox"/> Environment |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Women's Health Care | <input type="checkbox"/> Refugees |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Children's issues | <input type="checkbox"/> Elder Services |
| <input type="checkbox"/> LGBTQ | <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____ |

Organizations:

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Habitat for Humanity | <input type="checkbox"/> Dismas House |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Planned Parenthood | <input type="checkbox"/> Pernet Children's Center |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Heifer Project | <input type="checkbox"/> Grafton Community Farm |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Worcester & Grafton Food Banks | <input type="checkbox"/> Samaritans Purse/Shoeboxes |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Worcester or Grafton Land Trust | <input type="checkbox"/> Thrift Shop |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Worcester Fellowship | <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____ |

In its 2018 Church Profile, our church identified itself as "mission-oriented." Who are we today in 2020? Your response will guide what programs our Mission and Outreach Committee may plan and support, monetarily and physically, in tandem with your involvement.

Please check what areas are important to you and what organizations you support. Email your response to Diane Chaisson diane@meadowlarks-farm.net or Barbara Gow barbaragow@gmail.com.



***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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Our one-year ***Windows 2020*** Campaign, which began a year ago in July 2019, concluded on July 31, 2020. Abundant gratitude to all who have participated in and who are fulfilling their pledges to our ***Windows 2020 Campaign!***

***To date, the Windows 2020 Campaign has received \$28,881.
Total pledged support—through July 2020—is \$31,483.***

***More than 45 participants (individuals, couples and families)
have supported this vital restoration project
within our sanctuary.***

*Expected completion date
for our three-window restoration project
is late August, 2020.*

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

***Payment of all pledged contributions
will ensure that we have 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 deepest blessings to all who have supported this time-focused Campaign to preserve "the eyes to the soul of our church"!

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August Birthdays

Tracy LeMaire	8/3	Megan Torres-Gillin	8/3	Ava McLean	8/8
Diane Chaisson	8/13	Lee Paine	8/16	Gail Poler	8/24



CARE AND CONCERN CIRCLE AUGUST 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



<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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August

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