

SHARING THE LIGHT

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



Volume 5, Number 1

JANUARY 2023 EDITION

Dear members and friends of our Congregational Church of Grafton:

Christmas is over. Or is it?
A New Year has begun. Or has it?

Few of us seem to escape the tumultuous hurry-and-flurry of the 38-day season called:

ThanksgivingAdventHanukkahWinterSolsticeChristmasKwanzaaNewYear'sDay

The frenzy of meals and meetings, of concerts and recitals, of parties and pageants may easily transform our hearts, minds and spirits into an unholy whirling dervish.

May we find solace and wisdom in these pair of modern-day proverbs:

Peace is about finding the calm in the chaos. (Donna Karan)

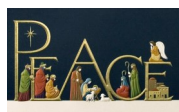
Some lessons we learn best in calm, and some we learn best in storms. (Willa Cather)

With divine deliberation, we may seek and find calm in chaos.

With divine intervention, we may derive strength and resilience in storms.

With prayerful consideration, we may gain practical perspective on what we have done in the past 38 days, and, more importantly, on what we—as followers of Jesus of Nazareth—are called to do in the next 365 days:

*When the song of the angels is stilled,
When the star in the sky is gone,
When the kings and princes are home,
When the shepherds are back with their flock,
The work of Christmas begins:*



*To find the lost,
To heal the broken,
To feed the hungry,
To release the prisoner,
To rebuild the nations,
To bring peace among families,
To make music in the heart.*
(Howard Thurman)



Together, in this New Year, may we engage in the work of Christmas as a strong and resilient family of faith.

* * *



Shove from the Dove

Beside you in the journey of faith,
Rev. Dr. Barbara Therese

Staff Information:

Rev. Dr. Barbara Therese, Minister

Kristen Graham, Administrative Assistant, Editor

Ron Sainio, Church Music Director

Kayson Jones, Minister of Faith-Building

How to contact us:

Office Phone: 508-839-4513

Email: griftonucc@gmail.com

Web Site: www.uccgrifton.org



Christmas Gratitudes

Dear family of faith:

Your love and kindness deeply move my spirit. Thank you for your generous Gift to the Pastor at Christmas. Your “present” and your presence are affirming and oh-so-appreciated.

As a family of faith, we survived, endured and prevailed through a year of calamity and calm, of sorrow and celebration, of sadness and gladness. As your pastor, what a joy and privilege it is to share in your journeys of faith and your stories of faith.

Likewise, in this sacred space, I offer special thanks for the “hands, voices and candle lighters” who indelibly and memorably embellished our Christmas season:

Joyful Noise Bell Choir

Donna Blanchard	Betty Mack
Amy Coldwell	Elizabeth Torres
Barbara Gow	Lynne Flanagan-Tsombakos
Joanne Hable	Kathy Vandenengel
Ron Sainio (Bell Choir Director)	

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Christmas Chorale Singers

Donna Blanchard	Bob McLean
Kris Graham	Maggie McLean
Abby Hise	Lynne Flanagan-Tsombakos
Connie Hopkins	Kathy Vandenengel
Gwen Hopkins	Morgan Whitney
Nina Hopkins	Sydney Whitney

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Christmas Eve Candle Lighters

Lily Drew	Maggie McLean
Gwen Hopkins	Morgan Whitney
Nina Hopkins	Sydney Whitney

* * *

As a family of faith, may we continue to be loved by God and to be loving toward others in the New Year ahead.

With a heart brimming with gratitude,
Rev. Barbara



Gratitude for “Unity in Community” during Autumn

Dear faithful partners in our faith community: *We are only as strong as we are united. We are only as weak as we are divided.* (J.K. Rowling)

This month of January—with its plummeting temperatures—may “freeze” our recollection of our mild-tempered Autumn. However, Autumn 2022—that stretched from September 22 through December 21—overflowed with acts of unity and events of unified strength. In this venerable venue, we honor those whose time, talent and treasure testified to this truth: There is unity in community!

Immense thanks to all **Harvest Fair and Apple Pie Social organizers, planners, workers, Scout members and leaders, volunteers, and participants.**

Tremendous thanks to our **Thrift Shop Team:** *Susan Filippone; Barbara Gow; Joanne Hable; Amy Koskinen; Diane Lalone; April Lane; Melanie Peppard; Kim Stewart; Lorraine Swanson; Lynne Flanagan-Tsombakos; and Megan Webber.*

Rousing thanks to our **Communications and Tech Team:** *Larry Drew; Andrew Tsombakos; Mark Tsombakos; and Kathy Vandenengel.*

Enduring thanks to our **Newsletter Editor/Administrative Assistant:** *Kris Graham.*

Bountiful thanks to our **Fire Escape Painting Duo:** *Joanne Hable and Amy Koskinen.*

Hearty thanks to our **Sharing-the-Fellowship Refreshment Providers:** *Elaine Allen; Donna Blanchard; Julie Capuzziello; Jon and Susan Filippone; Barbara Gow; Connie Hopkins; Betty Mack; the McLean Family; Kayson Jones; Neston Melville-Jones; and Lynne Flanagan-Tsombakos.*

Sincere thanks to our **Cabinet members:** *Donna Blanchard; Justin Cotter; Joanne Hable; Connie Hopkins; Sue Howell; Tracy LeMaire; Rob Lane; Bob McLean; Gabrielle McLean; Neston Melville-Jones; Craig Peacock; Lorraine Swanson; Elizabeth Torres; and Kathy Vandenengel.*

Gracious thanks to our **Flower Pot Angel:** *Lorraine Swanson.*

Heart-felt thanks to our **Worship Team and Deacons:** *Ron Sainio; Andrew Tsombakos; Amy Coldwell; Joanne Hable; Sue Howell; Craig Peacock; Kim Stewart; Lorraine Swanson; and Holly Weitgreffe.*

Abiding thanks to our **“The People Speak” Presenters:** *Kayson Jones; Neston Melville-Jones; Katherine A. Keefe; and Erin (of “Happy, Joyous and Free” Twelve-Step Group).*

Beside you with a heart of thanksgiving,
Rev. Barbara

Holy Happenings in January!

*Faith-strengthening events in our community
during In-Person and Online Services on Sunday mornings at 10 a.m.*

Connect with us at: facebook.com/UCCGrafton/

January 1 = New Year's Sunday

Sacred Story: *Where Does God Live?*

On our first day of 2023,
gather with us as we reflect on a Sacred Story
about a traveling gypsy's wisdom on "where God lives."
As well, we celebrate the Feast for All (aka the Lord's Supper).

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January 8 = "Pure Sunday" and "Whatever" Sermon #4

Message: *Whatever Is Pure?*

On our second Sunday of our New Year,
gather with us as we reflect on "whatever is pure"
in our Scripture-centered Sermon Series—the "Whatevers" in Philippians 4:8.
As well, we begin our annual "Souper Bowl" Canned Soup Collection
to support our local Grafton Food Bank.

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January 15 = "Listen, Learn and Live" Sunday

Preacher/Speaker: Mr. Kayson Jones

Guest Drummer: Mr. David Curry

Message: *What New Rhythm Is Calling to Your Spirit?*

On our first "Listen, Learn and Live" Sunday of 2023,
gather with us as reflect on what new rhythm/drum beat
may God be calling us to move, dance and live to.

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January 22 = Mission Sunday

Guest Preacher: Pastor Zach Kerzee

Message: *Want to Make a Difference?*

On our specially designated "Mission Sunday,"
gather with us as reflect on our local mission of Worcester Fellowship
and how we may make powerful difference in the lives of many.

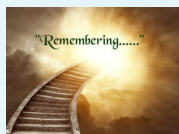
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January 29 = "In Memoriam" Sunday and "Whatever" Sermon #5

Message: *Whatever Is Pleasing?*

On our annual "In Memoriam" Sunday,
gather with us as we honor church friends and members whom we lost in 2022--
Mr. Bill Boelke, Mr. Al Blanchard and Dr. Neil MacKenzie--
while reflecting on "whatever is pleasing,"
in our Scripture-centered Sermon Series—the "Whatevers" in Philippians 4:8.

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PURE



Sharing the Light in the New Year: “Souper Bowl” Canned Soup Drive

January 8 – February 12, 2023

If together we feed those who need, then together we may enrich the world.

Throughout the regular calendar year, our faith community supports our local Grafton Food Bank by collecting these “wish-list” items:

Canned fruit

Canned beans

Peanut Butter

Coffee

Solid white tuna in water

Cereal (Rice Krispies and Cheerios)

Toothpaste (4 oz. and larger)

Toothbrushes (2-pack)

These items may be donated on the first Sunday of this month (January 1) during our 10 a.m. church service. Also, non-perishable food items may be placed in the Sharing-the-Light Basket in our Church Kitchen at any time during the month. All food donations are delivered to the Grafton Food Bank.

Moreover, during the five weeks of ***January 8 through February 12***, our faith community and our greater community are invited to contribute to our ***5th Annual Souper Bowl Canned Soup Drive***, which also benefits the Grafton Food Bank. A large table in our sanctuary will feature the donations for our five-week ***Souper Bowl Canned Soup Drive***.

Our **goal** for our ***Souper Bowl Canned Soup Drive***? **570 cans of soup**...in light of Super Bowl LVII on February 12, 2023.

The united strength of a society is mirrored in the vulnerable community it feeds. (Wayne Chirisa)



Sharing the Fellowship: Making Room for Love

Food may be symbolic of love when words are inadequate.

Sharing the Fellowship is equivalent to “making room for love” when we share time with one another after our Sunday morning worship services.

How may you “make room for love” by ***Sharing the Fellowship***?

1. On a Sunday morning, arrive at church by 9:45 a.m.
2. Bring:
 - 2 dozen edible treats (example: cookies, muffins, sweet rolls and fruit)
 - Half gallon of fruit juice (Apple or mixed berry is most popular.)
 - Quart of Half & Half (for coffee and tea)
3. Place food items requiring refrigeration into our Church Refrigerator.
4. Assist the Deacon-of-the-Day in setting out:

Coffee cups

Napkins

Condiments

Drink cups

Paper plates

Pitcher for Half & Half cream

Add your name to the ***Sharing the Fellowship*** Sign-Up Sheets in Fellowship Hall!



GRAFTON THRIFT SHOP VOLUNTEERS FOR JANUARY 2023

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.

Jan.	5	Joanne Hable 11 a.m. - 1 p.m.
		Lorraine Swanson 1 p.m. - 3 p.m.
	12	Melanie Peppard
	19	Joanne Hable 11 a.m. - 1 p.m.
		Lorraine Swanson 1 p.m. - 3 p.m.
	26	Melanie Peppard

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

Jan.	7	Susan Filippone
	14	April Lane
	21	Diane Lalone
	28	Lynne Flanagan-Tsombakos

Thank you to everyone who supported the Grafton Thrift Shop in 2022 as a customer or donor or both! 2022 was a success and we look forward to serving the community in 2023!

BAG SALE! Our clothing racks are full. So it's time for an early winter Bag Sale! Stop in to the Grafton Thrift Shop from January 5 through January 14 and purchase a large brown bag for \$10. All women's, men's and kids' clothes are included.

Are you looking for a volunteer opportunity to help with the church's mission and the community? The Thrift Shop is seeking new volunteers who would like to help out 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.

Donations are accepted 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.



ANNUAL MEETING

***Important Announcement:
Annual Congregational Meeting***

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WARRANT

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

The members are hereby notified that

on Sunday,

February 5, 2023, at 11:30 a.m.,

the Annual Meeting of the Congregation will be held to vote on the following articles:

Vote to accept the 2022 Church Annual Report

Election of Church Officers

Vote to accept the 2023 Church Budget

Vote to approve the new church Mission Statement

Adjournment

Quorum of 25 members is required.

The Cabinet of the Church

Bob McLean, Church Moderator

Elizabeth Torres, Church Treasurer



January Birthdays

Gabrielle McLean	1/3	Lynne Flanagan-Tsombakos	1/4	Alison Balfour	1/5
Junya Awata	1/7	Brady Keeler	1/8	Donna Blanchard	1/11
Joey Drew	1/20	Sam Capuzziello	1/26	Ayla LeMaire	1/29



CARE AND CONCERN CIRCLE *January 2023*

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 call the church office: 508-839-4513. 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:

Kathy
Brenda
Kathleen

Donald and Vidia
Louise and George
Family of Carolyn Peacock

Amanda
Kerry
Uncle Peter



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

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