SHARING THE LIGHT

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

Volume 8, Number 2
FEBRUARY 2026 EDITION

A Good Word

By Vicki Kemper | published on January 27, 2026

Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path. - Psalm 119:105

What are your go-to scripture passages?

Yes, it can be hard to choose just one, but do you have even one?

When I was lying flat on my back in an ambulance after having been hit by a car, I found myself reciting portions of the 23rd Psalm.

When it feels like the world is falling apart (which happens a lot these days), I often turn to Psalm 46, adapting the ancient language to reflect the details of the latest destabilizing development.

When my car broke down in the middle of nowhere and my dog and I were at rick of heat exhaustion, Psalm 121 gave me hope.

When I don't know how or what to pray, I remember Paul's encouragement to the Christians in Rome: that the Spirit knows the right words and will surely offer them on our behalf.

I've found comfort and strength in many verses and phrases, some in the Bible and some not. I remember the former hostages and prisoners of war who said snatches of scripture and poetry kept them grounded through years of isolation and confinement.

Here's the thing: It doesn't matter what your anchor scripture is. What matters is that you have something - almost anything - to remind you that you are not alone, to assure you there is someone you can trust, to ground you in what is always solid and forever true, to shine a light that reveals that next step on your journey.

Don't know where to start looking? Ask someone else who's searching for meaning, comfort, or just a good word.

Prayer

For good words that keep us going, we praise you.

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Important Announcement

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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 8, 2026, at 11:30 a.m. via virtual meeting (See Attachment A for joining instructions), the Annual Meeting of the Congregation will be held to vote on the following articles:

Vote to accept the 2025 Church Annual Report

Election of Church Officers

Vote to accept the 2026 Church Budget

Adjournment

A quorum of 50% of our active members is required.

Respectfully posted by:

The Cabinet of the Church

Robert Lane, Church Moderator

Elizabeth Torres, Church Treasurer

Lacey's Lunchbox

Community Pet Pantry

Located outside the office door

Please take what you need and leave what you can.

Music News

The choir will be singing during the service on February 15.

Rehearsal will be that day at 9:15.

All singers are welcome!

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!

Interim Search Team Update

As 2025 drew to a close, the Interim Search Team paused to reflect upon and reevaluate progress in the hiring process. The Team has made an important decision about our path. In discussions, with input from Rev. Bert, the Team decided to move in a different direction. With a vote from our Cabinet, we are now going to move forward with searching for a Designated Term Pastor, instead of searching for an Interim Minister. A Designated Term Pastor is a pastor that serves for a specific period of time, usually several years, with the understanding that if the relationship between that pastor and the church works well, they may transition to the Settled Pastor. An Interim Pastor cannot make the transition to Settled. This sets us on a faster path to a Settled Pastor.

Reverend Bert Cote has agreed to come back again as a Bridge Minister beginning May 1st, and stay through December, if needed, while we conduct our search for a Designated Term Pastor. Prior to Reverend Bert's return, during the months of February, March and April, we will have the ministerial help and wisdom of Reverend Linda Michel and Stephanie Page, who will alternate leading our Sunday services. In addition, Reverend Linda Michel will be available each week for any pastoral care needs that should arise.

After the February 8th Annual Meeting, we will move forward with putting together a Pastoral Search Team of 5-7 people that will be a representative cross-section of our congregation. Thank you to all who have already expressed willingness to be on this Team. We welcome others who are interested in being considered. Please contact Joanne Hable if you are interested. We're looking to put together a team that will:

- Define the goal for a designated term pastor
- Update our profile
- Complete the search process for a DTP

Team members should have one or more of these qualities:

- Strong leadership skills
- Organizational skills
- Writing skills
- Listening skills
- Historic/current knowledge of our church
- Spiritual

We are excited to move forward with this plan. Reverend Bert as well as our Conference Area Minister, Carol Steinbrecher, both agree that our church is well-situated to begin looking for a Designated Term Pastor.

Sue Howell, Joanne Hable, Lorraine Swanson

NEWS FROM MISSION OUTREACH

BAGGED LUNCHES FOR THURSDAY CAFÉ
Watch for a Sign-Up to donate lunch items or volunteer to halp make bagged lunches in the church kitchen at 10:30 on **Thursday, February 19th.** These are delivered to Thursday Café in Worcester, which serves at-risk and homeless adults by giving them a hot meal, a bagged lunch to take, a sense of community, and a warm, safe place for a few hours.

GRAFTON FOOD BANK
Please remember our neighbors in need, especially at this time when many families are struggling to make ends meet. **There are baskets in the fellowship hall and near the Thrift Shop, designated for donations of non-perishable items.**

WAMS COLLECTION FOR IMMIGRANT NEW NEIGHBORS
The WAMS collection of diapers, wipes, and feminine hygiene products for our immigrant new neighbors in the Worcester area is ongoing. These items will be delivered to the distribution center each week.
There is a collection bin in the church kitchen marked for WAMS.

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 March. The event will include packing toiletry kits, prayer, song, gaga game, food (pizza!) and fellowship! All are welcome, especially children and youth!

Blessings to all!

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

From Rev. Ethan in Northbridge:

I'm writing to highlight a unique volunteer opportunity and need here in our local community. **The Blackstone Valley Emergency Shelter** (BVES) is in desperate need of volunteers. Located at the Parish Center of St. Patrick's Church in Whitinsville on East Street, the shelter is a community supported non-profit open on the harshest nights to provide a safe space for those in need. And this year, the shelter is experiencing an unprecedented growth in men, women, and children seeking shelter and assistance in these cold winter months. To quote a message I received from VCC Member and shelter volunteer, Betty Smith:

"...the shelter at Saint Pat's is doubling in size with guests these days because of the need and the weather and we are desperate for overnight help... We have been getting people from Worcester and Milford because their shelters are full and we have been getting whole families too. I had a 2 month old on my shift the other day and tonight I'm supposed to have a one year old... We don't have a lot of volunteers for staying, to begin with, so now we are really feeling it. There are laws, if we don't have enough volunteers, that we would have to close and turn all these people away. Once a person does a shift, they really see how easy it is, and how great the need is."

The shelter is open from **9:00 PM to 7:00 AM** on nights when it is below freezing. They are seeking volunteers to staff two shifts: **9:00 PM - 2:00 AM** and **2:00 AM - 7:00 AM.** If you feel an immediate call to volunteer, please e-mail **bv.emergency.shelter@gmail.com**, or contact John Lapointe at **508-254-3974.**

And if you would like to learn more about the shelter and what volunteering there is like, Betty would like to encourage you to reach out to her by either email (jejoc1@gmail.com) or phone (**508-641-0224**). Another great resource is VCC Mission's Chair and BVES Board Member, Charlie Hill.

Your assistance can make all the difference. I hope you will consider joining other members of our church and wider faith community here in Northbridge and the Blackstone Valley as we together work to meet the need for warmth and shelter of our most vulnerable neighbors.

www.bvemergencyshelter.org/volunteer
May God bless and keep you all.

Prayerfully,
Rev. Ethan

GRAFTON THRIFT SHOP

VOLUNTEERS FOR FEBRUARY 2026

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.	5	Joanne Hable 11 am - 1 pm
		Lorraine Swanson 1 pm - 3 pm
	12	April Lane
	19	Joanne Hable 11 am - 1 pm
		Lorraine Swanson 1 pm - 3 pm
	26	Melanie Peppard

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

Feb.	7	Diane Lalone
	14	Amy and Sophie Coldwell
	21	Susan Filippone
	28	Lynne Flanagan-Tsombakos

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

Are you looking for a volunteer opportunity to help with our 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 (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 2026

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:

Steven	Lynn	Adam
Donald and Vidia	Nicole	Kelley
A friend in need	Kelli	
Nikki, Chris, James and Wyatt		
Nancy, to heal and get out of the hospital		
A young adult struggling with a serious health issue		
A son struggling with his mental health		
The joyful noise of children in church		

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