

SHARING THE LIGHT

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



Volume 3, Number 1

JANUARY 2021 EDITION

Dear members and friends of our Congregational Church of Grafton:

January.

Those seven letters seem printed everywhere now on wall calendars, desk calendars and screen calendars. Did you know...the month "January" is named after Janus, the god of beginnings and transitions, in Roman mythology? Thus, in this month of January, for each of you, I pray blessings of new beginnings.

And, with each of you, I share an interview that I dreamed of having with a different God.

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"You want to interview me?" asked God, taken aback.

I dared to say, "Yes, God, if you have the time."

God smiled. "My time is eternity. So, what questions do you have for me?"

I ventured to inquire, "God, what surprises you most about humankind?"

God breathed deeply. A divine sigh, perhaps?

"That they get bored with childhood, and they rush to grow up. Then they long to be children again.

That they lose their health to make money. Then they lose their money to restore their health.

That, by thinking anxiously about the future, they forget the present. Then, in their anxiousness, they live neither in the present nor in the future.

That they live as though they will never die. Then, they die as though they have never lived."

God paused for a moment. God's hand took mine. Together we were silent for a spell.

Then I asked, "As a parent, what are some life-lessons you hope your children may learn?"

Again, God smiled.

"To learn that it is wise not to compare themselves with others.

To learn that a rich person is not the one who has the most but is the one who needs the least.

To learn that it is not enough that they may be forgiven by others but that they must forgive themselves.

To learn that forgiveness takes practice.

And...to learn that I am with them always."

Gently God squeezed my hand.

And I woke up.

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January is a month of change.

New numbers appear in dates. New policies take effect. New rules are enforced.

In this month of change, may your own journey of faith...change.

May you change from speaking about God to speaking with God.

May you change from talking at God to listening to God.

May you change from running from God to running to God.

In the midst of change, may you hold fast to God's promise that does not change: "Remember, I am with you always." (Matthew 28.20)



A 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

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A Page of Gratitude

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On the occasion of her 95th birthday,
on November 19, 2020,
Bernice Benoit sent the following note:

Dear members of the Congregational Church of Grafton, Rev. Therese and all those who sent me a birthday card,
I want to thank you all—including Sandy, Elaine, Kathy, Connie and Judy Overdorf (from Florida).
Together you helped to make my 95th birthday even happier!

Love,
Bernice Benoit

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On the occasion of the Annual Christmas Gift
from the Congregation to the Pastor--

Dear members and friends of our Congregational Church of Grafton

What a kind, loving and generous family of faith you are!

Thank you—one and all—for your bountiful Pastor's Gift to me this Christmastime. Your thoughtfulness and your generosity in this season are profoundly appreciated.

Likewise, I thank the “Anonymous Elf” who gifted me with “sweet sweets and wondrous winter treats.” Your behind-the-scenes gesture brought abundant and audible delight!

As we begin a new year and as we begin our third year together as a faith community, please know that serving beside you as your Pastor remains a joy and a privilege.

As our Church Staff listing on our Sunday bulletins reads:

You, the church members, are the ministers.

Beside you in the journey of faith, I am your humble and grateful pastor.

With faith, hope and gratitude,
Rev. Barbara

Calling All Commitment Cards!

Calling all Church members and friends:

Thank you for your positive response to our 2021 Commitment Season--
“Thanksgiving for Today, Planting for Tomorrow!”

*So that our Finance Committee may responsibly shape our 2021 Church Budget,
kindly mail your completed 2021 Commitment/Pledge Cards to*

Congregational Church of Grafton

P. O. Box 421

Grafton, MA 01519

Attn: Collector

Your timely response is vital and valued!

Alone we can do so little. Together we can do so much. (Helen Keller)

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***Important Announcement:
Annual Congregational Meeting
in February 2021 to be conducted virtually!***

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WARRANT

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

The members are hereby notified that

on Sunday,
February 7, 2021, at 11:30 a.m.,

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

Vote to accept the 2020 Church Annual Report
Election of Church Officers
Vote to approve sale of the Church Parsonage
Vote to accept the 2021 Church Budget
Adjournment

Quorum of 25 members is required.

The Cabinet of the Church
Bob McLean, Church Moderator
Elizabeth Torres, Church Treasurer

Holy Happenings in January!

**Faith-building events within our faith community
during our Online Services on Sundays at 10 a.m.**

Join us at: facebook.com/UCCGrafton/

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January 3 = “New Year Sunday” and Feast for All

Sermon: God Wants Our Unwanted

As we begin a new year,
God invites us to give up unwanted burdens
so we may embark on healthy new beginnings.
But how may we “give up” a burden that wholly controls us?
For our monthly “**Feast for All**” (aka Holy Communion),
assemble elements of bread and juice in your home.

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January 10 = “Heaven-Sent Sunday”

Sermon: Heaven Ain’t No Myth!

What may heaven look like? Feel like? Sound like?
Scripturally and spiritually,
we explore heaven as a mystery, as an enemy and as a reality.

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January 17 = “Nouvelle Voix” Sunday

Sermon: What New Dreams May We Dream?

Mr. Kayson Jones, our Preacher/Presenter on “New Voice” Sunday,
asks and then answers:

What new dreams may we envision?
How may we transform new dreams into new realities?

**NOTE: Limited in-person attendance in our sanctuary
may be allowed for this event,
pending prevailing COVID-based mandates.**

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January 24 = “Happily Ever After” Sunday

Sermon: Happily Ever After? Or Hope Ever After?

Fairy tales and Hallmark TV specials and animated Disney films
often end with “And they all lived happily ever after.”
However, newspapers, TV news and un-retouched reality
depict a grave, grim and gritty world.
How may we reconcile fiction, fact and faith?

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January 31 = “Trust Sunday”

Sacred Story: Lion’s Whisker

How may you gain the trust of another who sees you only as a threat or an enemy?
What if the one who distrusts you is a lion in the wild?
What if the one who distrusts you is a child?

* * * * *



F.A.C.E. Group: Sharing the Light...and More

When you possess light within yourself, others see it externally. (Anais Nin)

“Darkness cannot drive out darkness. Only light may do that. Hate cannot drive out hate. Only love may do that.” (Martin Luther King, Jr.)

In this month of January, which includes a national holiday honoring the birthday of Martin Luther King, Jr., youthful members of our **F.A.C.E. Group** (**Faith And Caring Encounter Group**) continue to share the light of faith and of care within our faith community and greater community.

In early December, **F.A.C.E. Group** member **Nick Coldwell** was voted Senior Patrol Leader of BSA Troop 107—a long-standing troop of 30+ members for whom our Congregational Church of Grafton holds the Charter. As Senior Patrol Leader, Nick leads his Troop members in monthly gatherings, Troop activities, and community service projects.

In mid-December, **F.A.C.E. Group** member **Abby Hise** shared her musical gifts as a guitarist in our faith community's Service of Lessons and Carols, titled “The Sacred Story of the Messiah.” Abby joined our church's Joyful Noise Bell Choir, Church Music Director Ron Sainio and two other guest musicians—Mr. Scott Arnold and Mr. Ben Arnold—to perform and present seven different carols and three other Christmas-themed musical pieces.

On December 24, **F.A.C.E. Group** members **Abby Hise**, **Anne Koskinen**, **Gabe Koskinen** and **Maggie McLean**, as well as two other youthful members of our congregation—Megan Gillin-Torres and Ava McLean—shared the Light of Christmas at our Christmas Eve Candlelight Service. At the same event, **F.A.C.E. Group** member **Emma Hise** shared her own vibrant, internal light.

As our New Year of 2021 dawns, look for **F.A.C.E. Group** member **Sophie Colwell** to present a light-filled Message of Advocacy on YOUTH*SPEAK Sunday, February 14, 2021, within our sanctuary.

Whatever the time, whatever the season, the youth of our faith community may confidently claim: “Occupation? An aspiring beam of light.”

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Updates from the Mission Outreach Committee

Pernet Family Center:

Thanks go to church members for providing Christmas gifts for twelve children this Christmas and to Girl Scout Troop 30186 who made and stuffed an additional twelve stockings for the Center. Barbara Gow delivered the twelve gifts to the Pernet Center on December 16. Girl Scout Troop 30186, Leaders and Scouts Elaine Urban, Nicole Houston, Trinity Petnezelli, Olivia Buffone, Cheyanne Houston and Heather Brawn also donated stockings to the Center as a service project as well.

Crescent Manor Nursing Home:

Thanks go to church members who provided gifts for sixteen residents without close family ties. Diane Chaisson delivered the gifts to the Home on December 21. The Crescent Manor staff was pleased to have actual gifts provided.

End-of-year Charitable Donations:

After the results of the Mission Outreach Survey, Barbara and Diane designated gifts to organizations in the following amounts that supported the issues identified:

Community Harvest Project	Hunger	\$200
Dismus House	Reentry program	\$300
Grafton Food Bank	Hunger	\$200
Habitat for Humanity/Worc.	Housing	\$200
Heifer Project International	International	\$600 (Sponsored Farm Animals)
Refugee Artisans of Worcester	Refugee support	\$250
UCC Wider Mission	UCC Missions	\$300
World Vision	International Poverty	\$150
Worcester Fellowship Café	Homelessness/Hunger	\$125
Church Food Cabinet purchases	Hunger	\$235





New Year Blessing

*At the sound of the tolling of the midnight bell,
a whole new year will begin.*

*Let us raise our hopes in a confident toast
to the promise it may usher in.*

*May your battles be few, your joys be many,
your dreams and visions fulfilled.*

*May resilience stand in the face of loss,
and give you strength to rebuild.*

May peace of heart fill all your days.

May serenity grace your soul.

*May tranquil moments bless your life,
and keep your spirit whole.*

GRAFTON THRIFT SHOP

VOLUNTEERS FOR JANUARY, 2021

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.	7	Diane Lalone
	14	Diane Chaisson
	21	Diane Lalone
	28	Diane Chaisson

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

Jan.	2	Sandy Cooper
	9	Kim Stewart
	16	Sandy Cooper
	23	Kim Stewart
	30	Lynne Tsombakos

CHRISTMAS HALF-PRICE SALE

With Christmas passed and the arrival of 2021, **ALL THINGS CHRISTMAS** are on sale for the month of January. We look forward to selling as much as possible! Plan ahead for that perfect gift for next year. Attractive Christmas décor (decorated wreaths, lights, ornaments, stockings, Christmas dishware, glasses, mugs and a lot more) are available.

Diane Chaisson, Sandy Cooper, Diane Lalone, April Lane, Kim Stewart and Lynne Tsombakos - Thrift Shop Volunteers



January Birthdays

Gabrielle McLean	1/3	Lynne 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 2021

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
Fiona
Amanda

Joan-Beth
Walt
Louise and George

Ron
Sara



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<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCD6O7WxciXwlrx1Ho1GVngg/videos>

<https://twitter.com/GraftonUCC>

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

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WORSHIP SERVICES: SUNDAYS, 10 a.m.