

SHARING THE LIGHT

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



Volume 2, Number 12

DECEMBER 2020 EDITION

Dear members and friends of our Congregational Church of Grafton:

God's always-and-everywhere-powerful-presence to each of you.

It's December! 'Tis the season to be jolly, to string holly, to bring joy, by golly...in ordinary times.

Yet, our times appear to be anything but ordinary.

Even in extraordinary times, certain truths endure:

Light overcomes darkness.

Love is stronger than death.

Story overrides statistic.

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It was a Sunday afternoon in early December. The small mountain church was crowded with parents, grandparents and even a pair of great-grandparents.

Toddlers wandered innocently in the red-carpeted aisle in front of a small wooden stage assembled at the front of the humble sanctuary.

The Sunday School students—ages four to sixteen—were presenting the annual Christmas Pageant. For the finale, the students were reenacting the Christmas Story.

Jesus was a first grader's baby brother. Age? Three months.

This scene unfolded:

A host of six satin-white angels appeared to the shepherds. One of the younger angels lingered behind her winged teammates. She strayed toward the manger that had been positioned to one side of the wooden stage. The distracted angel looked inside the manger. She paused and froze. She was enthralled by the “contents” of the manger.

As one strolling toddler neared the front of the church, the out-of-place angel exclaimed to the toddler, “Look! It's a real baby!”

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Though unscripted and unrehearsed, the words of the wayward angel express the truth of Christmas. The human Son of the Divine came as a real baby: To be born as we humans are born; to experience human emotions of sadness and gladness, of tragedy and triumph; to show us humans how we may live by the Law of Love, rather than by the tyranny of fear.

God was born and lived among us. His life and love became a model of how we may live and love.

In ordinary times and extraordinary times, may we celebrate the birth of that real baby.



A Shove from the Dove

Beside you in the journey of faith,

Rev. Dr. Barbara Therese

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2020 Season of Commitment: Thanksgiving for Today, Planting for Tomorrow

Pastoral Expression of Gratitude

*A community is strongest
when elders plant trees
whose shade they know
they shall never sit in.
(Greek proverb)*

* * * * *

Dear friends and members of our community of faith:

God's loving embrace and my grateful hugs to each of you!

Thanksgiving Day is a still-fresh memory for us. Beyond the elements of food, feast, friends and family that have come to define Thanksgiving Day for many of us, the essence of thanksgiving endures long after the left-overs have been consumed...for all of us.

During most of our formative years, we understand thankfulness as something we “feel” when we receive something: a bountiful meal, a wrapped present, a coveted ticket to an event or a destination.

In our journeys of faith, however, our understanding of thankfulness may deepen. With grace, our sense of thankfulness may mature into gratitude for our ability to give.

To all of you:

Thank you for your trust in God's faithfulness.

Thank you for your voice in our church's story of faith.

Thank you for your commitment to be faithful to our church's work and worship.

To those who have responded to our 2020 Season of Commitment invitation:

Thank you for committing the gifts of your life and livelihood.

To those who may still respond to our 2020 Commitment invitation:

Thank you for what you have given and for what you may still give.

The Commitment Cards included in our “Thanksgiving for Today, Planting for Tomorrow” materials that you received are essential for our church in “planting for tomorrow” and in planning for the immediate future. **As soon as you are able, kindly mail back your completed 2021 Commitment Cards in the envelopes addressed to our Congregational Church of Grafton.**

Together may we continue to be giving thanks for today and to be planting for tomorrow.

Beside you in the journey of faith,

Rev. Dr. Barbara Therese



Holy Happenings in December!
Faith-building events for our faith community
during In-Person Worship and
Online Services on Sundays at 10 a.m.

Join us at: facebook.com/UCCGrafton/

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December 6 = Second Sunday of Advent
Sermon: Wait for the Light!

“Light” is a significant symbol throughout humankind.
“Wait for the Light” is significant wisdom when making key human decisions.
“Wait for the Light” is a significant message in our Season of Advent.
For our once-a-month “Feast for All” (aka Holy Communion),
bring elements of bread and juice to our sanctuary or
assemble bread and juice in your home.

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December 13 = Third Sunday of Advent
Service of Lessons and Carols: “The Sacred Story of the Messiah”

The story of the Messiah—the Promised One of God—is
retold with sacred readings and sacred music performed by guest artists and musicians.

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December 20 = Fourth Sunday of Advent
Sermon: Whatever Your Battle, Make Peace!

Be kind: Everyone you meet is fighting some kind of battle.
But what if you are battling yourself?
How may you make peace within yourself...as you prepare
for the birth of the Christ Child?

* * * * *

December 24 = Christmas Eve Candlelight Service at 7 p.m.
Sermon: Why Are We Here Tonight?

On the eve of Christmas,
we hear the music of Christmas,
we light the candles of Christmas, and
we encounter the power of Christmas
as expressed in “One Solitary Life.”

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December 27 = First Sunday of Christmas and Christmas Carol Fest
Sacred Story: The Tale of Baboushka

Your favorite Christmas carols (Be sure to VOTE! See Page 5 for “Christmas Carol Ballot”!)
will be played joyously in our sanctuary so you may sing joyfully in your homes!

As well, you will hear the story of a humble woman, named Baboushka,
who is visited by three star-following visitors in search of a new-born Infant.
The visitors tell Baboushka that the Infant will grow to be the King of all kings.

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F.A.C.E. Group: Power of Youth to Be Agents of Change

Change is the end result of all true learning. (Leo Buscaglia)

Youth have the power to create change. If youth speak a message of truth, then youth may tell a story of power. The youth of our **F.A.C.E. Group** (Faith And Caring Encounter Group) are learning to speak messages of truth and to tell stories of power—all the while creating meaningful change.

In early November, **F.A.C.E. Group** member **Sophie Coldwell** was voted Senior Patrol Leader of BSA Troop 2019—a pioneering all-female Troop whose charter was founded and approved by our Congregational Church of Grafton in March 2019. As Senior Patrol Leader, Sophie leads her 16-member Troop in monthly meetings, Troop activities, and community service projects.

In late November, **F.A.C.E. Group** members **Sophie Coldwell** and **Abby Hise** performed key roles in the virtual production of “The Headless Horseman of Sleepy Hollow.” The radio drama, presented by the Theatre Department of Grafton High School, wove audio, visuals and theater into a vividly creative performance that revived an art form popular during World War II and the 1940s.

Throughout November, all our other **F.A.C.E. Group** members—including **Nick Coldwell**, **Emma Hise**, **Anne Koskinen** and **Maggie McLean**—continued academic studies, Scouting programs, music lessons, dance lessons and soccer competition through a blend of hybrid education, home schooling, virtual lessons, safely-distanced dancing and COVID-sanctioned athletics.

During December, look for members of our **F.A.C.E. Group** to participate in our “Service of Lessons and Carols” on December 13 as well as to serve as Candle Lighters at our Christmas Eve Candlelight Service on December 24.

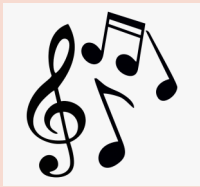
In all seasons, the youthful members of our faith community are showing themselves to be effective agents of meaningful change. Moreover, our youth are grateful for God-imbued courage and for church-given encouragement.

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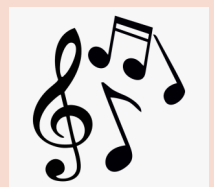
Definition from Wiley’s Dictionary

Manger: A feeding trough large enough to
Hold “the Bread of Life.”





December 27: Service of Carols and Folklore



*On the First Sunday of Christmas,
December 27, at 10 a.m.,
you and your family are invited
to sing out your favorite Christmas carols (at home!)
and
to hear the enchanting Czech tale of “Baboushka.”*

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*Vote for your five favorite Christmas carols. (Ballot below.)
The six top vote-earning carols
will be played during the Sunday worship service
that will be livestreamed to your homes.*

* * * * *

NOTE: No in-person attendance in our sanctuary on December 27.

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VOTE for your favorite Christmas Carols!

Christmas Carol Ballot for Christmas Carol Fest on December 27

For our Christmas Carol Fest on Sunday morning, December 27, at 10 a.m., I vote for the following five carols:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

Please email your ballots by noon on Thursday, December 17, to:
Mrs. Donna Blanchard (Music Committee Chair)
at: 011Donna@gmail.com
Subject line: Christmas Carols

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Nouvelle Voix: “New Voice” in the New Year

*If anyone is in Christ, that person is a new creation. The old has passed away.
Behold: They have become new! (2 Corinthians 5:17)*

Our calendars may display “December.” However, a new year is a mere four weeks away. With our new year, our faith community will offer the opportunity for “new voices” of faith to speak.

Beginning in January 2021, and continuing for all twelve months of the year, one Sunday a month will be designated as “*Nouvelle Voix* Sunday.” The words “nouvelle voix” mean “new voice” in French. The name “*Nouvelle Voix*” acknowledges the significant presence of church members and friends of French Canadian heritage within our faith community and greater community.

Looking ahead to our 2021 liturgical year of faith-sharing services on Sunday mornings, we may joyfully anticipate the following speakers/presenters and their topics on *Nouvelle Voix* Sundays:

January 16 – Mr. Kayson Jones - “What New Dreams May We Dream?”

February 14 – Miss Sophie Coldwell – YOUTH*SPEAK

March 21 – Mr. John Roche - “The Divine in a Different Language: What May We Learn?”

April 11 – Mr. David Gow: “Easter Happened! What Now?”

May 9 – Miss Maggie McLean - YOUTH*SPEAK

June 20 – TBA – “Remembering Dad...with Words and Music”

July 4 – Mr. Kayson Jones - “Independence through the Eyes of an Immigrant: What Do I See?”

August 22 – Miss Vivian Nichols - “The Gospel According to Guinea Pigs”

September 19 – Mrs. Carrie Peacock - “I’m a Teacher, and This Is What I’ve Learned about Learning”

October 31 – Mr. Kayson Jones and Mr. Neston Melville-Jones - “See the Need; Be the Change!”

November 22 – Mrs. Julie Capuzziello - “Thanksgiving for Healing”

December 26 – Mr. Kayson Jones - “Caribbean Christmas: How Jamaica Celebrates Baby Jesus!”

In our Season of COVID, our faith community will continue livestreaming our Sunday morning worship services and **pause in-person attendance on Sunday mornings beginning December 27, 2020** for the months of January and February. **However, in-person attendance will be allowed on Sunday, January 16, and on Sunday, February 14,** in order to invite the presence of family and friends of the speakers for those two *Nouvelle Voix* Sundays.

Our journeys of faith—both individual and corporately as a faith community—are inspired, challenged and deepened when we experience faith perspectives spoken by new voices around us.

*Anyone, anywhere, may make a positive difference
in one's own journey of faith.*



Updates from the Mission Outreach Committee

Operation Christmas Child: Thank you to all who donated filled shoe boxes to Operation Christmas Child. We collected and sent off 14 boxes!

Pernet Children's Center: The Center will be sending us a list of families needing support. They are offering opportunities for providing Gift Cards instead of going to stores to purchase toys and clothing. Look for a Sign-Up Genius announcement when the requests are available.

Senior Center: Though not honoring individual gift requests this year, the Senior Center requests Gift Cards that may be distributed through the Center. Gift Cards may be left in the locked mailbox outside the door to the Senior Center. You may bring them to the Church Office (on Monday, Wednesday or Thursday, 8:30 am - 2:30 pm) and a representative from the Missions Committee will deliver them to the Center by December 17. Please see the list of local businesses in *The Grafton News* or the Town of Grafton website for ideas.

Barbara Gow and Diane Chaisson will meet to distribute Mission funds before the end of the year. If you wish a specific organization to be supported, please contact Barbara and Diane by Sunday, December 13.



GRAFTON THRIFT SHOP VOLUNTEERS FOR DECEMBER, 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.

Dec. 3	Diane Lalone
10	Sandy Cooper
17	Sandy Cooper
24	Diane Chaisson
31	Diane Chaisson

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

Dec. 5	Kim Stewart
12	Lynne Tsombakos
19	Kim Stewart
26	Diane Chaisson

THRIFT SHOP is "ALL THINGS CHRISTMAS"

The Thrift Shop Volunteers wish to thank April Lane and the boys for bringing down all the Christmas items that were stored in the attic. Sandy Cooper and Diane Chaisson, with assistance from Sheldon Cooper, spent three days turning the shop into "All Things Christmas"!

Come browse the shop for ornaments, gifts, dishware, glassware, mugs, baking items and warm clothing. Many are new. Remember: When you purchase items in the Thrift Shop, you support our church and our local charities. When you donate good-quality, gently-used items to the shop, you also support our church and our mission to serve our community.

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



ORDER YOUR CHRISTMAS POINSETTIAS

Holiday flowers transform our sanctuary into a festive sacred space! You may contribute to this by donating a poinsettia in honor of or in memory of loved ones or in celebration of this season of Light.

When: Deadline for ordering is Thursday, December 10.

ORDER NOW!

How: Complete the Order Form below. Mail or bring it to the Church Office; give it to a Deacon; or leave it in the Office Mail Slot on Sunday mornings.

Cost: \$12.50 per plant. Please issue checks to: Congregational Church of Grafton (Memo line: "Christmas Flowers").

NOTE: You may take your poinsettia with you after our Christmas Eve Candlelight Service.

Poinsettia Order Form

I wish to contribute a poinsettia plant:

DESIRED PLANT COLOR (Indicate quantity of each): _____Red _____White_____Pink

of poinsettias _____X \$12.50/each = \$_____ total payment.

Please acknowledge this (these) poinsettia(s) in the Christmas Eve bulletin as follows:

GIVEN BY: _____

IN LOVING MEMORY OF: _____

IN HONOR OF: _____



December Birthdays

Daniel Roche	12/5	Kathy Vandenengel	12/7	Matthew Torres	12/8
John Doherty	12/9	Isabelle Cotter	12/10	Kathryn Anderson	12/13
Owen Roche	12/20	Holly Wietgreffe	12/25	Carrie Peacock	12/26



CARE AND CONCERN CIRCLE DECEMBER 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
Fiona
Christian C.
Amanda

Joan-Beth
Walt
Ron
Louise and George

Family of Fred Medland
Sara
Family of Frank Clark
Family of Malcolm Clifton



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

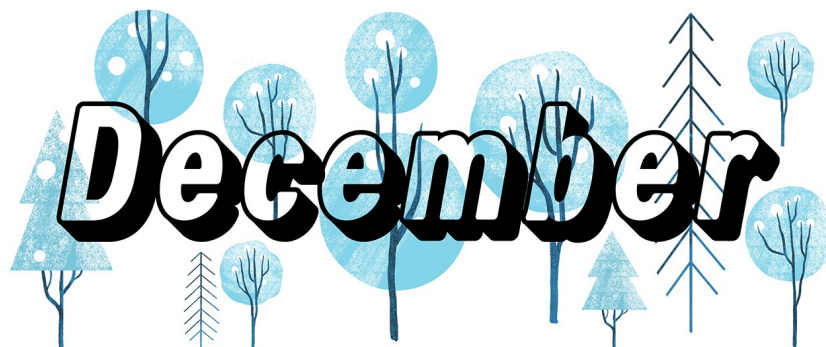
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