

SHARING THE LIGHT

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



Volume 8, Number 1
JANUARY 2026 EDITION

New Year, Old Me

By Emily Heath

“For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven: a time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck up what is planted.” - Ecclesiastes 3:1-2

It’s that time of the year when every website, magazine, and Twitter feed is selling January 1st-dated potential. Headlines like “New Year, New You” or “Ten Ways to Lose Weight/Get Rich/Find Love/Be the Best Person Ever in 2026.” And, hey, if that kind of inspiration works for you, more power to you. Go with it. May 2026 be your best year ever.

The only thing is, New Years Day, and the companion resolution-making process, has never been all that exciting to me. If anything, it’s always a little depressing. I have made resolutions but, truth be told, I’ve never really felt all that motivated to keep them. I used to think that was a character flaw. Now I just think maybe resolutions tied to the date of January 1st just aren’t right for me.

Really, no significant change has ever happened in my life because I have set a date for it to happen. I fell in love gradually and unexpectedly. And one day in college I decided to trade my law school applications in for seminary ones, not because that day was special, but because it had just come to the point that I knew that was what I needed to do.

The thing about God’s grace, and the changes that it causes us to make, is that it rarely comes on our own schedules, and my guess is that it even less rarely comes on a date that has rather arbitrarily, at this place and this time in the whole of history, come to be the start of a new year. So my guess is that if something big happens in my life this year, it will come because of God’s grace and it will come on some random unexpected time, and maybe all at once, or maybe little by slow.

So, this year I’m not making resolutions. I’ve decided I don’t want a “new year, new me.” Really, it’s taken a lifetime to get to this “me”, and I’m pretty happy with who I am, and all the little graces that have made me me. My hope is next year at this time I’ll be pretty happy to be me too.

Prayer

Dear God, thank you for all the ways you change and shape my life every single day. And thank you for another year. Amen.

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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 for the
congregation this month on
January 11.

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!



Faith Building

Watch for announcements about **New Members Classes**, tentatively planned for January!

Also planned for January/February are group sessions:

- **Online Security Seminar** Sunday, January 25 at 11:30 a.m. in the Fireplace room, presented by Mark Tsombakos.
- **A Grief Group and a Caregiving Group** to be led by Rev. Daniel Gregoire of the UUSGU and Lynne Flanagan-Tsombakos. Details soon.

Lots of opportunities to grow and serve and enrich!

Faith Building Team

Donna, Sue, Joanne, Lynne, Lorraine



Brunch Potluck - January 11, 2026

The Membership Group is hosting a Potluck Brunch on January 11. Join in the fun! All are welcome, whether you can bring food or not!

During and after the brunch, there will be explanations of the breakdown of teams and groups that make up the church structure, as well as a list of a few things each team/group does to keep our church running.

People will be asked to write their name on a sticky note and put it under any task that catches their interest and that they would like more information about.

Come one, come all!

A graphic for an online fraud seminar. It features a blue and white color scheme with a large shield icon containing a padlock, set against a background of binary code and a hand pointing at a screen. The text is arranged in a clean, modern layout.

Online FRAUD SEMINAR

When: January 25th at 11:30 am
Where: Congregational Church of Grafton
All are welcome. No pre-registration required.

What You'll Learn:

- What you can do **NOW** to protect yourself and your loved ones from online fraud
- How to identify the most common scams and fraud tactics
- What to do if you get scammed: recovery steps and minimizing further damage

Seminar led by
Mark Tsombakos

Online Fraud Seminar

Sunday, January 25 at 11:30 a.m. in the Fireplace Room

Church member Mark Tsombakos is offering an online fraud seminar to all who are interested. This is open to the public, so please invite your friends and family who could benefit from learning how to avoid these online scams.

Mark has over 35 years of experience in software and a deep interest in online fraud prevention. He will share practical, actionable steps that everyone can take to safeguard themselves against these threats.



NEWS FROM MISSION OUTREACH

BAGGED LUNCHES FOR THURSDAY CAFÉ

Sign up to donate lunch items or volunteer to help make bagged lunches in the church kitchen at 10:30 on **Thursday, January 15th**. 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 donation of non-perishable items.**

During the month of December, Pack 107 AOL's partnered with us by promoting donations, collecting donations, and bringing them to the Municipal Center each week. **They collected and delivered 123 cans and 199 boxes of food! THANK YOU Pack 107!**

WHITE SOCKS FOR WORCESTER FELLOWSHIP

White socks are still needed! So far, we have collected 270 pairs of men's and women's large white socks! Please help us by bringing new pairs of white socks to the church through the month of January - **there is a bin in the kitchen labeled "Socks for Worcester Fellowship"**.

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.

In the month of December, the Mission Outreach Team made Monetary Donations on behalf of our church to:

- UCC Wider Church Ministries - Designated for Middle East Support
- UCC Wider Church Ministries - Designated for Ukraine Relief
- Church World Service - Designated for Emergency Response
- WAMS (Worcester Area Mission Society, UCC)
- Worcester County Food Bank
- Grafton Food Bank
- Pernet Family Health Services

Blessings to all!

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



GRAFTON THRIFT SHOP

VOLUNTEERS FOR JANUARY 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.

Jan. 1	CLOSED for NEW YEAR'S DAY
8	Joanne Hable 11 am - 1 pm Lorraine Swanson 1 pm - 3 pm
15	April Lane 11 am - 1 pm Lynne Flanagan-Tsombakos 1 pm - 3 pm
22	Joanne Hable 11 am - 1 pm Lorraine Swanson 1 pm - 3 pm
29	Melanie Peppard

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

Jan. 3	April Lane 11 am - 1 pm Joanne Hable 1 pm - 3 pm
10	Amy Coldwell
17	Susan Filippone
24	Diane Lalone
31	Susan Filippone

Thank you to everyone who supported the Grafton Thrift Shop in 2025 - whether as a customer, a donor, or both. Your generosity and support helped make this another successful year, and we are truly grateful. We look forward to continuing to serve our community in 2026!

With January here, it's the perfect time to jump-start those New Year's resolutions - and the Grafton Thrift Shop is here to help. Looking to get fit? Browse our great selection of affordable workout wear to keep you motivated. Hoping to save money this year? Our "nifty thrifty" prices make sticking to your budget easier than ever. Want to give back? We would love to welcome new volunteers to help sort donations or assist our customers. Here's to making this your best year yet - together at the Grafton Thrift Shop!

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).



January Birthdays

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



CARE AND CONCERN CIRCLE

January 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	Debbie A.
A friend in need	Kelli	Kelley

A young adult struggling with a serious health issue
A son struggling with his mental health
The joyful noise of children in church
A mother whose drug trials are working for her cancer
Peace of mind and learning to live in the moment
For safety and health of the monks, during their cross-country Walk for Peace



<https://www.facebook.com/UCCGrafton/>

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

graftonucc@gmail.com

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January

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WORSHIP SERVICES: SUNDAYS, 10 a.m.