

SHARING THE LIGHT

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



Volume 6, Number 8

DECEMBER 2024 EDITION

Good people of the Congregational Church of Grafton:



What a cute Baby! Traditional, religious Christmas cards depict an adorable infant, whose innocent face beams brightly from a rustic wooden cradle.

But what of the story of the birth of the “cute” Baby?

The Gospel of Matthew records the birth this way: *Joseph awoke from sleep, and he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him to do in his dream. Joseph took Mary as his wife. Mary gave birth to a son. Joseph gave the name Jesus to the Baby.* (Matthew 1:24-25)

The Gospel of Luke tells the story of the birth differently: *Joseph went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to the city of David called Bethlehem, because he was descended from the house and family of David. Joseph went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child. While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child. And she gave birth to her firstborn son.* (Luke 2:4-7)

The Gospel of John describes the birth with metaphor: *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God....And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth.* (John 1:1, 14)

Whichever birth story speaks most acutely to our spiritual sensitivities, we all continue to be fascinated by the Baby.

If political powerhouses had been in charge of a Messiah's incursion into earth, their results-driven personalities may have devised a different strategy: A Jewish storm trooper. Or a Robo-Christ. Invincible, authoritative and authoritarian as an NFL coach or an ultra-stern, stereotypical junior high school principal. “We have ways to make you believe!” Baptism before leaving the birthing room. Church membership at puberty. A year of mission service at age 18. A Bible in every room of the home.

Political icons, however, were not consulted. Instead, a Baby. This Baby is the epitome of helplessness and dependency. Without His mother and her kind husband, God would not have lasted a day. At God's hungry cry, a not-yet-20-year old woman nursed her firstborn. A Palestinian teenage girl rocked God to His first sleep.


If ever there were a model of weakness, it lies in this Baby.

Why do we resist following this model? We still try to bluff and bluster, to posture and pout, to threaten our opponents with meanness or muscle or money to achieve our goals—even under the guise of the Baby's symbolism.

In this holy season, may we emulate God's own strategies: gentleness, invitation and vulnerability.

In this sacred time, may we imitate God's pattern in sending a Baby to do a God-sized job...and not just to think that the Baby is cute.

In this Christmastide, may the Light of the Christ Child transform each of our souls.

 *Shove from the Dove*

In the journey of faith,
Rev. Dr. Barbara Therese

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Holy Happenings in December!

*Fortify your faith on Sundays at 10 a.m.
and on Christmas Eve at 7 p.m.!
Attend in-person or join online!*

Connect at: [Facebook.com/UCCGrafton/](https://www.facebook.com/UCCGrafton/)

December 1 = First Sunday of Advent and Ten Commandments – Sermon #8

Message: *Honor Property of Others? How?*

Because character matters,
join us while we study the eighth Commandment:
You shall not steal. (Exodus 20:15)
Our monthly Sharing-the-Light Food Collection welcomes
donations for the Grafton Food Bank.
As well, we share in the Feast for All (i.e., Holy Communion).

* * *

December 8 = Second Sunday of Advent, Christmas Musical Celebration, and Ten Commandments – Sermon #9

Message: *Honor Truth? How?*

Because character matters,
join us while we study the ninth Commandment:
You shall not bear false witness against others. (Exodus 20:16)
As well, the Chancel Choir sings hymns and carols
to celebrate the “truth of Christmas.”

* * *

December 15 = Third Sunday of Advent and Family Christmas Program

Join us as we celebrate the birth of the Christ Child
with the Word and story, with music and costumes.

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December 22 = Fourth Sunday of Advent and Ten Commandments – Sermon #10

Message: *Honor Families of Others? How?*

Because character matters,
join us while we study the tenth Commandment:
You shall not covet the relationships of others. (Exodus 20:17)

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December 24 = Christmas Eve Candlelight Service at 7 p.m.

Message: *Missing Star at Christmas*

Join us while we recall the life-changing event of the birth of Christ
in scripture, in music and in story.

* * *

December 29 = “Join Our Neighbors Sunday” at the Baptist Church of Grafton at 10 a.m.

We join our neighbors on the Common--
the congregation of the Baptist Church of Grafton--
in their sanctuary
as together we celebrate the First Sunday of Christmas
on the final Sunday of 2024.

other
peoples
property





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 Monday, December 9.

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: \$13.50 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 \$13.50/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: _____

“Sharing the Light” May Show the Light of Christ

Let your light shine. If it does, you don't need to tell anybody.

Lighthouses don't fire cannons to call attention to their shining. They just shine. (Dwight L. Moody)

Friends and members of the Congregational Church of Grafton seek to show the Light of Christ—especially during the Christmas season.

Our family of faith “radiates” the Light of Christ through year-round donations to the Grafton Food Bank, who specifically welcomes:

Canned fruit & vegetables
Canned beans
Canned tuna (in water)
Pasta & pasta sauce

Cereal (Rice Krispies, Cheerios, Oatmeal)
Ground coffee & tea bags
Peanut Butter & jelly
Pancake mix & syrup

Throughout the holiday season, the Grafton Food Bank names these Wish List items:

Canned goods (Pumpkin, sweet potatoes and cranberry sauce)
Spices (Cinnamon, garlic powder and vanilla)
Stuffing mix (Boxed or bagged)
Cooking oil (Olive or vegetable)

Each first Sunday of the month, non-perishable food contributions for the Grafton Food Bank are received during the Message for All Ages during the time of worship. Each week, contributions are received in the “Sharing-the-Light” Food Basket in the Church Kitchen. Each month, Rev. Barbara transports all contributions to the Grafton Food Bank.

Bless you for showing the Light of Christ this Christmas season!

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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!



THANKSGIVING FOOD BASKETS



A Big **THANK YOU** to all for the generous contributions to the Thanksgiving Food Baskets! We have received and delivered 6 baskets along with gift cards to Pernet Family Health Services in Worcester. The families who received them enjoyed a wonderful Thanksgiving meal!

WHITE SOCKS FOR WORCESTER FELLOWSHIP

Keep those socks coming!! So far, we have collected 51 pairs during the month of **November!** During the month of **December**, we want to continue to collect as many pairs of men's and women's large white socks as we can! Please help by bringing new pairs of white socks to the church. There is a bin in the kitchen labeled "Socks for Worcester Fellowship."

We have also received a donation of **\$206 from BSA Troop 107** toward the purchase of white socks to add to our total for December! **THANK YOU, Troop 107!**

BAGGED LUNCHESES FOR THURSDAY CAFÉ

Thank you to all of our dedicated volunteers each month who donate items and their time! Watch for a Sign-Up to donate lunch items or volunteer to help make bagged lunches in the Church Kitchen at 10:30 a.m. on **Thursday, December 19.**

CHRISTMAS GIVING TREE

The Christmas Giving Tree will be set up by **Sunday, December 1**, in the Fellowship Hall. Our family of faith wishes to bring cheer to families and children through Pernet Family Health Services in Worcester, and to residents of Crescent Manor Nursing Home in Grafton!

Please take a tag, purchase a special Christmas gift item, and place your gift (unwrapped or in a gift bag with the tag attached) in the sanctuary, under the tree, by **Sunday, December 15**, at noon.

What a wonderful way to share the joy of this Christmas season!

Blessings to all!
The Mission Outreach Committee



Pies, Wreaths, Chili, Chowder and Cheer Was a Rousing Success!

Thank you to our many bread- and pie-makers who baked and made the day a success, as well as Barbara Gow, with her elves, who made the chowder, chili and shortbread. The Bake Sale raised \$530 for the Women's Retreat Scholarship Fund! Thanks to the helpers who worked the tables and to Lorraine and Joanne for their planning and organizing.

The Thrift Shop attracted a big crowd of Christmas shoppers. Thank you, April, for all you do!

Thanks also to BSA Troop 107 for participating with the Wreath Sale.

There are a limited amount of frozen pies and holiday breads that will be for sale after church, on Sundays in December.

Stewardship Reminder!

If you have not sent in your pledge yet, we invite you to do so now.

Please take a moment to reflect on the importance of our church in the community and in your own life:

How does this church connect you to God, feed your spirit and give you comfort?

How does this church connect you to others in fellowship and service?

You can mail it or drop it off in the church office, put it in the offering box or email April Lane (church collector) at april5850@yahoo.com or call/text her at 508-596-8582.

State the amount you wish to contribute and whether it will be weekly, monthly, quarterly or annually. Please also list any updated contact information.

Thank you. And many blessings to you and yours,

The Stewardship Committee

Sue Howell, Lorraine Swanson, Carrie Peacock, Connie Hopkins, Joanne Hable, April Lane



GRAFTON THRIFT SHOP

VOLUNTEERS FOR DECEMBER 2024

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. 5	Joanne Hable 11 a.m. - 1 p.m.
	Lorraine Swanson 1 p.m. - 3 p.m.
12	Joanne Hable 11 a.m. - 1 p.m.
	Lorraine Swanson 1 p.m. - 3 p.m.
19	Melanie Peppard
26	CLOSED - Merry Christmas!

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

Dec. 7	Lynne Flanagan-Tsombakos 11 a.m. - 1 p.m.
	April Lane 1 p.m. - 3 p.m.
14	Diane Lalone
21	Lynne Flanagan-Tsombakos 11 a.m. - 1 p.m.
	April Lane 1 p.m. - 3 p.m.
28	Susan Filippone

Sunday - 2 p.m. to 4 p.m. - Grafton Celebrates the Holidays: Frosty Stop #32

Dec. 8 Lynne Flanagan-Tsombakos

The Grafton Thrift Shop is the place to be in December to find some holiday décor or to pick up a unique gift for someone special. Be sure to stop by on Sunday, December 8, from 2 p.m. to 4 p.m. as part of your Frosty Stops around Grafton and Grafton Common! Warm up with a cup of hot cocoa and enjoy a cookie in the Fellowship Hall hosted by the members of the church. See you soon!

Are you looking for a volunteer opportunity to start off the new year to help with our church's mission and the community? The Thrift Shop seeks new volunteers who may help 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).



December Birthdays

Kim Stewart	12/7	Kathy Vandenbergel	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
		Gabriel Koskinen	12/30		



CARE AND CONCERN CIRCLE *December 2024*

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:

- | | | |
|------------------------------------|---|------------------|
| Nicole | Denise | Richard |
| Mike | Adam | Sally B. |
| Bruce | Darlene S. | Christian |
| Benjamin | Tim M. | Lucyna |
| Donald and Vidia | Amanda | Tori |
| Scott D. | Lynn D. | Jeff F. |
| Ashley S. | Dick F. | Lacey and Cara |
| Steven | Zachary | Barbara and Ed |
| Connor | Paul | LGBTQ+ Community |
| Couple struggling with infertility | Smith Family following tragic accident | |
| One who is battling addiction | For hope with a difficult medical diagnosis | |
| Healing for Charlotte | Employment for Alfred | |



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

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCD6O7WxciXwlnx1Ho1GVngg/videos>

<https://twitter.com/GraftonUCC>

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

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Address Service Requested



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WORSHIP SERVICES: SUNDAYS, 10 a.m.