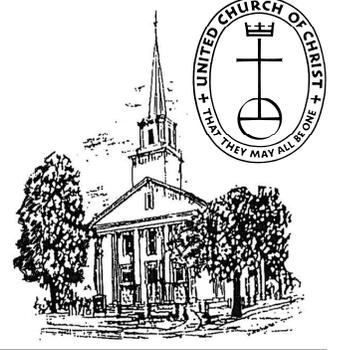


THE UNION COURIER

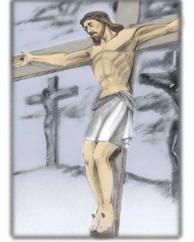
Union Congregational Church
United Church of Christ
The Reverend Gail L. Miller, Pastor

220 Main Street
Groton, Massachusetts 01450



February 2017

*So when we preach that Christ was crucified,
some are offended and some say it's all nonsense.*
~The Bible



Since day one, Jesus has been a controversial person.

From his very birth threatening the reigning king, to the outlandish things he did and said as an adult;
From his torturous death on the cross, to his empty tomb;
From his appearances to the disciples after he'd died, to their tenacity in following him to their deaths.

And what people believe about Jesus is as varied as there are people!
What do **you** believe? Or maybe a better question is, What do you **KNOW**?

It's entirely possible that you **KNOW** a lot, and **DON'T BELIEVE** very much. Or the opposite — you might **BELIEVE** everything, but **KNOW** very little. Or some in-between combination of these!

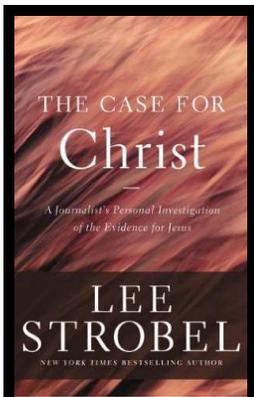
I believe that, whatever you know, whatever you believe, you (we!) can never know enough or believe enough. There is always room for more — more knowledge, more faith.

And so, you are invited — to consider *The Case For Christ!*

The Case For Christ is a book written by Lee Strobel. He is a former atheist, a smart man (Masters in Law from Yale), a journalist (*Chicago Tribune*), who put all his investigative reporting skills into what the Bible says "is offensive to some and nonsense to some" — Jesus.

And he came out on the other side, convinced that Jesus Christ (crucified and risen) is to be believed. And then he wrote a book chronicling his arguments, his research, and his eventual journey to faith. (This is the book that Pete Hnath mentioned in his sermon on January 29.)

In March, we will make our own journeys through *The Case For Christ*, on the five Wednesdays in Lent. (The 7th and 8th graders will be reading the student version of this book at the same time in Sunday School.) This is a series you want to be a part of. We'll read sections of the book, watch a 15 minute video teaching by Lee Strobel, and discuss it all together. This isn't the class you stay away from because you don't know much; this isn't the class you stay away from because you already believe in Jesus. This **IS** the class you go to because the book is interesting and the conversations and fellowship will be rich.



Feel free to order the book now and get a head start. (Order also the *Study Guide* as we'll be working through it together.) We'll have copies available at church in a couple weeks. And block off Wednesday evenings March 8, 15, 22, 29 and April 5 to join together to learn, share, and grow — as individuals and as the Body of Christ!

With you on the Journey!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Gail".



Our Church Family/News



Ongoing Prayer List

Kathy Bond
Jack Cornforth
Harold Gould

Fred Halbritter
Debbie Sampson
Donna Sattler

Rudi Schmid
Liz Waggoner

This list is refreshed twice a year (January and June). If there is a name you would like to put back on this list or if you would like to add a name, please let Gail Miller or Carol Zaiatz (978-448-2091 or unioncc@uccgroton.org) know.



- Charlie Elwood, at Lifecare of Littleton.
- Bonnie Martin and Mark Rzeznikiewicz, in the death of Mark's father, Fred.
- Bonnie Martin, recovering from hand surgery.
- Ron LaPointe (Jen Luth's father), being treated for pancreatic cancer.
- The McElroys, celebrating the marriage of their son, Matthew, to Sara on February 4.

Marvin Caldwell

Marvin Caldwell is serving as the Sabbatical Pastor at the UCC Church in Harvard for February, March, and April. Congratulations and may God bless their time together!

February Birthdays

Tony DiCenzo	02/01	Travis Bugbee	02/16	Lily Burgess	02/23
Ryan Carey	02/02	Brian Milner	02/17	Dylan Hughes	02/24
Mark DeBinder, Jr.	02/04	Arianna Boucher	02/19	Arianna Barker	02/25
Carl Haas	02/04	Steve Flynn	02/21	Jessica Plausse	02/25
Rebecca Brennan	02/06	Tom Wickham	02/22	Tommy Wickham	02/27
Henry Richardson-Irvin	02/07	Charlotte LaGasse	02/22	Matt Hecht	02/27
Ben Gambuzza	02/13	Clarissa LaGasse	02/22	Ryleigh Cunningham	02/28
Charlene Legge	02/14	Chloe York	02/22		

If we missed your birthday, it is not in our database. Please email unioncc@uccgroton.org to give us your birthday. Also, we would like to recognize significant anniversaries — would you share that information with us?

Bathroom Renovation Project (aka Winter Carnival)

Our Women's Bathroom Renovation Project began on Thursday, February 2, and is scheduled to finish on Saturday, February 11. Thank you to all who have either purchased materials, made donations, or are serving as helpers.



Annual Meeting Summary (January 29)

The 2017 budget still has a gap; all avenues will be reviewed to close the gap. After the Stewardship Team sent an email to the congregation, an additional \$6,400 was pledged - thank you!

The 2017 Committee Roster was accepted. There are still openings especially for Stewardship and Finance; please contact Rev. Gail or Stefanie Lempp with suggestions. It was noted that the Stewardship and Finance Committee is a misnomer as it deals with budgeting, and the Stewardship Team addresses stewardship.

The Feedback Circles held last year worked well and produced some positive changes. Look for more Feedback Circles to come.

Church News/CE—Bible Study/ Super Saturday

Church Council Meeting Summary

January 18

There was much discussion on the 2017 budget gap, pledging, and the charity works of the church.

There are still openings on the Diaconate and Stewardship and Finance. If your talents, or the talents of someone you know, could benefit these areas, please see Rev. Gail or Stefanie Lempp.

The women's bathroom renovation project has been met with much enthusiasm by the congregation. A smaller opportunity has come up: reorganizing the 'table and chair' closet; this involves planning what shelving and other storage options are needed — the execution of the plan is another volunteer opportunity.

Sunday School Schedule



February 5
Salt and Light Matthew 5:13-20

February 12
Jesus Teaches about Anger Matthew 5:21-37

February 19
No Sunday School—School Vacation

February 26
All Sunday School Lesson in the Fellowship Hall

Christian Education Committee

—Jean Armstrong
—Anne Larsen

—Kelli Hnath
—Bonnie Marchesani

—Krista Kubick
—Carl Prestia

Bible Study

Wednesday Evening

7:30 p.m. in the Pastor's Office
Contact: Janet Kennedy

Thursday Morning

10:00 a.m. 26 Court Street
Contact: Marvin Caldwell (978-448-5496)

Super Saturday Registration Open



Super Saturday!

Minnechaug Regional High School (621 Main St., Wilbraham, MA)
8:00 a.m.—3:45 p.m.

March 18

Super Saturday is a full day of workshops, a keynote address, worship, a marketplace of vendors and ideas and an opportunity for UCC people to network with one another. This spring's Super Saturday is being co-hosted by the Massachusetts, Connecticut and Rhode Island Conferences of the UCC. The keynote speaker is Brian McLaren, author, activist, and public theologian. A former college English teacher and pastor, he is a passionate advocate for "a new kind of Christianity" — just, generous, and working with people of all faiths for the common good. *For more information visit the MACUCC website.*



Teen Challenge **Sunday, February 26** **During Worship**

On Sunday, February 26, we will welcome men from *Teen Challenge Manchester* to lead in worship. They will discuss the impact that *Teen Challenge* has made in their lives and the lives of women and men who have struggled with drug and alcohol dependencies. The mission of *Teen Challenge* is "to provide youth, adults, and families with an effective and comprehensive Christian faith-based solution to life-controlling drug and alcohol problems in order to become productive members of society." Programs include Bible study, work projects, social, educational, and recreational opportunities. Following graduation from the program, members are encouraged to join educational and religious organizations. Please join us after worship for a light lunch and an opportunity to talk with our guests. There will be a Sign-Up Genius inviting you to help with the luncheon.



Invitation to Serve **Common Cathedral, BostonWarm** **Friday, February 24, 9:00 a.m.**

This program was formed by a coalition of religious leaders who established two *BostonWarm Day Centers*, which opened in January 2015. These centers provide critical practical, personal and nonjudgmental support for hundreds of unhoused neighbors throughout that record breaking winter. The program is coordinated by *Common Cathedral* on Mondays and Fridays from 8:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. Financial support and other donations are welcome and necessary to enable them to keep the shelter open through the long winter months. Your Mission Committee will be taking in socks and Dunkin Donut gift cards to donate toward the cause. If you are interested in joining us, please contact Julie Platt () for more information.

Missions Committee

—Brenda Barker
—Lynn Manalo

—Ellen Hargraves
—Halsey Platt

—Pete Hnath
—Julie Platt

Youth Ministry

Youth Ministry Movie Night **5:30 -7:30 p.m.**

Sunday, February 26
Church Parlor

Movie: The Iron Giant This is an animated film about an alien robot and young boy who finds and helps him. It's a science-fiction comedy-drama action movie...in other words it's got something for everyone! And it even has to do with Jesus! Come find out how! Pizza dinner included.

Winter Retreat

March 10-12, North Conway, NH

Saturday's activity choices include skiing at Mt. Cranmore, tubing, winter coaster and zip lining. Plan to spend a weekend away with your church friends. **Cost:** \$125.00 (make your check payable to UCC Groton, Memo: Winter Retreat) **Deadline:** Friday, February 17

Youth Mission Trip Deadline (Rutland, VT, June 25—June 2)

We are currently taking **sign-ups for Mission Trip 2017** to Rutland, Vermont, **June 25 - July 2** (again serving with YouthWorks). We chose Rutland for a couple reasons:

- We will lead a Children's Day Camp as one of our ministry projects
- Easy access to the amazing Retreat House we stayed at last year

We hope your sons/daughters want to join us again and WILL join us again! **Final deadline is February 10**, at which time we need a check (**\$300** - scholarship available) to secure their spot (families with more than one child attending...\$300 child for #1, \$250 for child #2, \$200 for child #3). Please be sure to put Mission Trip 2017 in the Memo section of your check. *Question: Gail Miller, Pete Hnath, or Tom/Mary Hanson.*



Lent begins...
Ash Wednesday, March 1
Dinner and Worship

6:30 p.m.: Simple Soup Supper

7:15 p.m.: Brief Worship Service/Communion and Imposition of Ashes

Let's begin our Lenten journey together. This year we will be sharing the meal and worship with **Shepherd of the Valley Lutheran Church and their Pastor, Susan Gaeta**. If you can't make it for dinner, come at 7:15 for worship. Families with children are encouraged to attend. (You'll be home by 8:00 p.m.)

If you are coming for dinner, R.S.V.P. to the Church Office (978-448-2091 or unioncc@uccgroton.org) or on the sign-up sheet by the coffee on Sunday mornings.

Just So You Know

Church Officers

Union Congregational Church

United Church of Christ

220 Main Street

Groton, Massachusetts 01450

978-448-2091 www.uccgroton.org

The Reverend Gail Miller

Cell phone: 978-877-2177 gail@uccgroton.org

Tues., Thurs. and Fri.: 9:00 a.m.—5:00 p.m.

Wed.: 2:00—5:00 p.m.

Carol Zaiatz—Office Administrator

unioncc@uccgroton.org

Tues.—Fri.: 8:30 a.m.—3:00 p.m.

(Church Office is closed Saturday—Monday)

Bernard Crane, Music Director

Bonnie Marchesani, Cherub Choir

Cheryl Townsend, Handbell Choir

Moderator: Stefanie Lempp

Treasurer: Dennis Carey

Clerk: Lori McElroy

Collector: Bob Goudey

Internal Auditor: Bruce Wyman

Union Congregational Church
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220 Main Street
Groton, MA 01450

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February Highlights

February 5—Worship and Holy Communion

February 12—Worship

Confirmation Student Reflection during Worship
5:00 p.m. Confirmation Class and Mentor Dinner

February 19—Worship

Confirmation Student Reflection during Worship

February 26—*Teen Challenge* in Worship

Luncheon with Teen Challenge after Worship
5:30 p.m. Youth Group Movie Night (see p. 4)

Lent Begins on Ash Wednesday (March 1) (see p. 5)