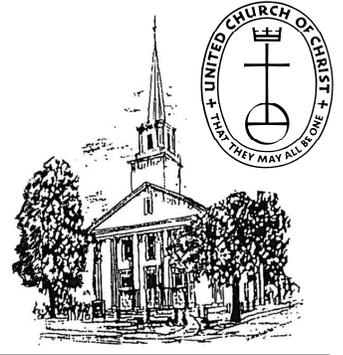


THE UNION COURIER

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

220 Main Street
Groton, Massachusetts 01450



February 2018

FROM THE

We're in the Innovation Business!



PASTOR

I read an article by that title this week that I find so spot on, that I want you to read it as well. Here are a few paragraphs from it.

"Innovation" is a term not typically associated with religious institutions, which tend to be oriented toward conserving and maintaining tradition. Yet at its heart, the Christian church is about innovation - embodying God's new life, hope, and community for the world. It is time to claim this identity amidst powerful disruptive forces in today's world.

The triune God's mission is about innovation. God creates the cosmos from nothing and forms humanity for right relationships with God, one another, and the whole earth. When those relationships fall into estrangement, God patiently reforms community through Abraham and Sarah, Israel, Jesus, and the church. Jesus is the one in whom humanity is reborn (recapitulated). The church is the community of the spirit giving witness to an alternative and hopeful future.

We live in a moment of profound social and cultural change fueled by digital technology and globalization. Organizations of all types are struggling to adapt to new patterns of belonging and participation. Many churches and church systems seem caught and at a loss, unsure what to do as established practices break down and people disengage. Long-treasured ways of connecting and supporting Christian communities do not seem meaningful or accessible to emerging generations or neighbors. Leaders try harder at the old patterns, but feel frustrated and drained by pushing against cultural currents beyond their control.

*The root challenge for Christian communities today is cultivating Christian faith and discipleship in a cultural environment that no longer supports it. It is not so much a question of **church** and culture, but a deeper question of **gospel** and culture: what does it mean to live a life oriented around the gospel of Jesus in contemporary culture? This question gets far less attention than questions of how to do church differently because in some ways it is harder to answer.*

God is the primary innovator and leader of the church. In a secular age, we have lost sight of this. Many congregations have thus lost their source of hope. It is only reentering and reclaiming the deeper stories and practices of God's people in scripture and Christian tradition that we can discover a faithful future. (The Reverend Dwight Zscheile)

I have little to add. I hope that we can engage with each other about Christ and faith in him, and what that means for us as individuals and as his body in the world. That would be wonderful I think!

With you on the Journey!

Full copies of this article are available at church. It is well worth the read.



Our Church Family/News



Ongoing Prayer List

Diane Black
Megan Bettison
Kathy Bond

Charlie Elwood
Joe Marchesani

Myrtle Murphy
Rudi Schmid
Liz Waggoner

This list has been refreshed in January and June. Contact Gail Miller or Carol Zaiatz (978-448-2091 or unioncc@uccgroton.org) if you would like a name added to this list.

- The Morse family, facing numerous challenges.
- Edie Tompkins, at Life Care of Littleton.
- Cindy Smith, in the death of her mother.
- The May family, in the death of Ellie Kennedy on January 20. *In addition to the family members listed in the earlier email, sympathy cards may be sent to Heidi May (Ellie's granddaughter who accompanied her to church), 3 Fox Run Rd., West Townsend, MA 01474.*
- Jeff, Anne, Kal and Korbin Larsen, in the death of Jeff's mother, Mildred on January 20.
- Tom and the Wickham family in the death of Tom's mother, Peggy, on January 29.



February Birthdays

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

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

Church News

Feedback Circle

February 11 after worship

Topic: The Building Project Process

Feedback Circles are a mechanism for evaluating the health of the church as a whole, as we answer the question How are we doing in achieving our church's mission? Periodically small groups (no more than 10 participants) will gather to discuss a particular topic, led by a trained facilitator from within the congregation. Feedback Circles are a way to obtain helpful feedback, and to support healthy habits of interpersonal communications.

Our discussion on February 11 is an opportunity to "look back" at the process of developing the proposed building project, and discerning to "pause" the project for now. To be clear, this is not the "what's next" conversation, it is an opportunity for feedback on "how it went."

You can sign up via the link in the Friday email or the clipboard by the bulletin board outside the kitchen. Should we have more than 10 people who are interested in the conversation, we will hold a second session as soon as possible.

Fellowship Hour

Everyone Takes a Turn

For a year now, we have been enjoying shared Fellowship Hour — taking turns serving as the kitchen "staff" each week. A schedule is put together by the Kitchen Ministry (two households are assigned to each Sunday), and those who are on the schedule receive it by email, so you can know well in advance when it's your turn. (You will also receive a reminder three weeks prior to your Sunday.) The Kitchen Ministry and Deacons are grateful for the wide support and sharing in this excellent ministry. The first part of the 2018 schedule will be emailed to those participating in the next few months. Fellowship Hour is important to us; and sharing in the work of the church is a way we live our faith.

Church News / Sunday School / Bible Study

Church Council Meeting Summary January 10

The first meeting of the new Church Council will be February 28; all committees are asked to send a representative to Church Council meetings each month. Please let Stefanie Lempp know who your representative is so that they receive all Church Council communications.

FaST informed Church Council that, being mindful of the recent shortfalls in the 2017 and 2018 budgets, the Capital Campaign for the proposed addition has been put on hold. The \$16K spent so far (\$12K for architects and \$4K for a Capital Campaign survey) has been covered by an anonymous donor - thank you!

The 2018 budget was discussed in length with many changes to the preliminary budget that was passed in November. Changes include: lower salary increases, the Harvest Fair will profit the church, B&G's repair budget cut by 1/3, CE and the Diaconate each cut more than 1/5, Missions cut to 2.5% of income and more.



Ladies' Lunch

Mariano's Restaurant* (105 Main St., Pepperell)

Friday, February 2, at noon

(Meet at the church at 11:30 a.m. to carpool)

Join your friends from church for lunch (the restaurant varies each month). All women of the church are invited! If you need a ride, contact Janice Owen or Brenda Semienko.

*Recent change from *Elegant Chef*.

Sunday School Schedule



February 4

Jesus Heals Mark 1:29-39

February 11

The Transfiguration Mark 9:2-9

February 18

No Sunday School—School Vacation

February 25

All Sunday School Lesson in the Fellowship Hall

Christian Education Committee

—Jean Armstrong

—Amy Nickerson

—Krista Kubick

—Carl Prestia

—Bonnie Marchesani

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

After a brief hiatus to focus on the *Still Speaking Writers Group's Advent* devotional booklet, we are back into *Matthew*. Appropriate for upcoming Lent, *Matthew* progresses inexorably toward Jesus' passion, death and resurrection. Lent is close ahead so we may digress into the Lenten devotional. In all we do we seek to learn what God is saying to us in the living of our lives, growing closer to Jesus. Join us for deep conversation, tea, coffee, and cookies. Contact: Marvin Caldwell

Youth Ministry—Winter/Spring 2018

Welcome to the Winter / Spring schedule for Youth Ministry at our church! All events are open to kids grade 5 and up (EXCEPT the Youth Mission Trip which is grade 6 and up). You are welcome to invite friends.

We hope you will join in—making friends at church is making friends for life!

February 11th Walk with and for the Homeless/Common Cathedral

Meet at church 7:30 a.m. - Return by noon



The *Winter Walk* is a two-mile march around the Boston Common during one of the coldest months of the winter, shoulder to shoulder, as a housed and unhoused community. After the Walk, we will gather on Copley Plaza for a breakfast and to hear stories from our homeless community.

Be a part of something important that is making a real difference in the lives of the unhoused in Boston. We will receive sponsoring donations at Coffee Hour on January 28 & February 4.

Contact Mary Hanson (mary.hanson@monotypeimaging.com) or Jean Armstrong (jean_armstrong@verizon.net) with your questions, to sign up your son/daughter, or to offer to go along. And visit & share the link to our online fundraising page on the website and in the our Friday email.

Summer Mission Trip Deadline - February 13 (7 available spots)

June 24-July 1, Lynn, MA, \$300/youth (grades 6-12)



We will serve the needy of this city so close to Boston. We will run a kids camp and a kids sports camp, as well as work in feeding and clothing ministries.

February 13th - **Payment due** to secure your son/daughter's spot. (Families with more than one child attending.... \$300 child for #1, \$250 for child #2, \$200 for child #3)

Contact Pastor Miller to sign up or to ask questions. (978-877-2177, gail@uccgroton.org)

March 9th—11th Winter Retreat (5th grade and up...)



Lodging: A Retreat House in North Conway, NH

Cost: \$125/person (covers food and lodging)

Activities at Mt. Cranmore: Extra—though most are approx. \$50 (skiing, tubing, mountain coaster, zipline)

We have room for 9 more kids: Your check for \$125 (to UCCG, memo: Winter Retreat) secures your son/daughter's spot.



March 25th Spaghetti Supper at Church (Mission Trip kids)

Questions / Comments: Mary Hanson, Jean Armstrong, Pete Hnath, Gail Miller



Ash Wednesday/Super Saturday/Just So You Know

Lent begins...
Ash Wednesday
February 14
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. 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), through the sign-up genius link in the Friday email, or on the sign-up sheet by the coffee on Sundays.

Super Saturday Registration Open



Super Saturday

March 17

Minnechaug Regional High School (621 Main St., Wilbraham, MA)

8:00 a.m.—3:45 p.m.

(Registration deadline is March 3)

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. **For more information, visit their website (<https://www.macucc.org>)**

Just So You Know

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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.—4:00 p.m.

(Church Office is closed Saturday—Monday)

Bernard Crane, Music Director

Bonnie Marchesani, Cherub Choir

Cheryl Townsend, Handbell Choir

Church Officers

Moderator: Stefanie Lempp

Treasurer: Dennis Carey

Clerk: Anne Cahill

Collector: Bob Goudey

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Lent



I imagine Lent for you and for me as a great departure from the greedy, anxious anti-neighborliness of our economy, a great departure from our exclusionary politics that fears the other, a great departure from self-indulgent consumerism that devours creation. And then an arrival in a new neighborhood, because it is a gift to be simple, it is a gift to be free; it is a gift to come down where we ought to be.

—Walter Brueggemann
A Way Other Than Our Own: Devotions for Lent



Lent Begins Ash Wednesday, February 14
(see p. 5)