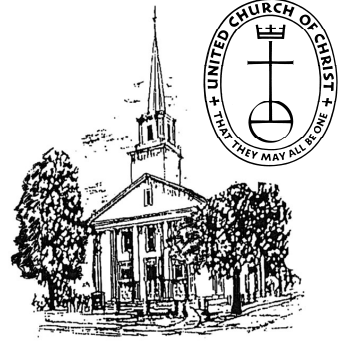


THE UNION COURIER

Union Congregational Church
United Church of Christ

The Rev. Corey J. Sanderson, Interim Pastor

220 Main Street
Groton, Massachusetts 01450



March 2020



The season of Lent is the most introspective time of the entire Christian year. During the forty days that lead up to Easter (not including Sundays), people of faith are encouraged to commit to cleansing the system of their lives. Lent is a time to prune away whatever it is in our lives that is not bearing fruit. It's a time to remove all those things that get in the way of loving God and neighbor. Lent is a time to take inventory of our lives. In accounting terms, it's the time when we are asked to draw a line under the sum of who we are as people, then do the math to ensure that all of our living adds up to what Jesus called 'the abundant life.'

When we enter and participate in the season of Lent with honesty, and then run the numbers, we might discover that moving closer to the 'abundant life' Jesus speaks of is not always achieved by addition. We may not need to add something more to our already accomplished, successful, or overly-busy lives. For many folks, moving closer to 'the abundant life' might best be achieved through the process of subtraction. Sometimes, when we subtract the things that hold us back, we become more real, more transparent, and more aware of our need for God and one other.

The early church decided that forty days was an appropriate time for this season, since Israel had spent forty years in the desert learning to trust God. We also remember the prophet Elijah spent forty days listening to the still small voice of God. Moses, we recall, spent forty days on the mountain as God dictated the Law for the Jewish people. Jesus spent forty days in the wilderness with nothing more than his hungry, lonely, and vulnerable self. Once in the wilderness, Jesus was tested, tried, and badgered by the devil, only to emerge from that experience even stronger and more alive than ever before.

So let us remember that we are called to take some time to clean up the debris that builds up in our lives. Take some time to pray. Make it a point to join our church family for Sunday worship; and, if you are the kind of person that prefers to add something, make sure to attend our sermon series on spiritual practices and even join our Lenten study series Sundays after church as we read through chapters in Richard Foster's powerful book, *Celebration of Discipline* (see p. 4)

May this season of Lent help us remember what it means to live according to God's grace, and not according to what we can do on our own, so that we might find 'the abundant life' waiting for us on Easter Sunday.

Peace,





Our Church Family/Church News



Ongoing Prayer List This list is refreshed January 1 and June 1. If you would like to add or remove a name, please contact Carol Zaiatz (978-448-2091; unioncc@uccgroton.org).

Connie & Bob Brown
Mike Corbett & Family
Tiffany Gibb
Ellen Hargraves

Betty Goulet
Chris Joyce
Frank Kanour
Myrtle Murphy

Betty Sampas
Rudi Schmid
Matt & Mandy Spain
Joe Marchesani

Bill Moeller
Betty & Liz Waggoner
Laurie Waye
Carol Zaiatz



- Anne Cahill and family, in the death of her mother in Florida on 3/3/20.

Confidential Prayer Chain

Need prayer and need it now? Simply email prayer@uccgroton.org and your request will go to the confidential pray-ers; or call Carol in the Church Office (978-448-2091) and she will put your prayer request in motion for you. Prayer requests are held in confidence among those who are praying for you, and you may request that your name be withheld.

March Birthdays

| | | | | | |
|----------------|-------|-----------------|-------|----------------|-------|
| Jim Brennan | 03/03 | Kaleb Larsen | 03/11 | Carl Prestia | 03/23 |
| Jim Daly | 03/03 | Emma Nickerson | 03/14 | John Brooks | 03/26 |
| Christina Daly | 03/06 | Craig Smith | 03/18 | Bob Huguenin | 03/26 |
| Janet Goudey | 03/09 | Bill Townsend | 03/18 | Bonnie Biocchi | 03/28 |
| Wade Majeski | 03/09 | Sheila Mitchell | 03/21 | | |

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?

The Birthday Fund

This is a fun way to contribute above and beyond your regular giving to the church to something above and beyond our normal operating budget. Simply make a donation on (or around) your birthday in the amount of your age (Memo: Birthday Fund)! If everyone participates, this will add up to a significant amount. Please participate and watch our gifts grow!

Church News



Ladies' Lunch

Friday, March 6 (Meet at the church at 11:30 a.m. to carpool)

Olive Garden (address)

All women of the church are invited! Contacts: Janice Owen, Brenda Semienko, or Peg Lloyd.

RSVP to Margaret Wheeler (mlwheeler33@gmail.com) so we have a head count for reservations.

Church News / Fellowship Hour / Spring Fair

Annual Meeting Summary February 2

The Church held its Annual Meeting after worship in the Fellowship Hall on Sunday, February 2. Rev. Corey Sanderson opened the meeting with a prayer and introduced the purpose of the meeting and some background on Annual Meetings in congregational churches. The minutes from the November 17 (2019) Meeting and 2020 Committee Roster were approved.

Dennis Carey, the Treasurer, gave an update on the final 2020 Budget. With an updated pledge amount, total income for 2020 is expected to be \$283,162. As a result the expenses were reduced to \$282,849 by cutting Missions back from 5% to 3% of total income resulting in overall net income of \$313.

Kelli Hnath, representing the Capital Campaign Team, gave an update on the planning for the Capital Campaign, which will be kicked off on March 8th with a “Celebrating the 20’s” event.

Reverend Corey Sanderson closed the meeting with a prayer.

Church Council Meeting Summary February 25

We shared our thoughts about an essay Rev. Sanderson distributed entitled *Passing on the Faith in the 21st Century*. This shared some parallels with a previous devotion the Council discussed in 2018 called *Multiplying Your Impact* and served as a reminder that while we implemented some initiatives at that time, there are several others that we would like to review and implement still.

We discussed the planned programs and services during the Lenten season which begins on Ash Wednesday (2/26).

All committees presented updates on their current status and initiatives. Notably, the Capital Campaign committee is kicking off their efforts with a celebration planned at the Groton Center on March 8.

Fellowship Hour 2020

April – June Signup

We are scheduled through the end of March for Fellowship Hour. It is now time to start to schedule April – June. There is a link provided in the Friday email, or you can sign up on the bulletin board in the downstairs hallway (and Carol will update the electronic signup accordingly). Please make a note of your chosen Sunday. If you’re unable to serve, we ask that you find a replacement to help with the efforts. As the schedule is filled, the Kitchen Ministry will review and try to fill in any gaps in coverage accordingly. You will receive a reminder email through Sign-Up Genius one week ahead of your scheduled Sunday. We appreciate your willingness to serve!

Kitchen Ministry

—Jean Armstrong

—Greg Balligan

—Randy York

SAVE THE DATE...



15th Annual Spring Artisan Craft Fair
Saturday, May 2
10:00 a.m.—2:00 p.m.

NEEDED: Kitchen Crew for the light lunch.

Bake Table: Help us provide a variety of baked goods again this year.

Contact Bonnie Martin if you can help!

Sermon Series for Lent

Lent began with Ash Wednesday, and we will continue to look to some of the lesser-known spiritual practices during the remainder of Lent. Each Sunday during Lent there is a thematic sermon and each Sunday bulletin includes a related insert for your weekly personal devotion. These inserts have prayers, questions of self-reflection, recommended scripture passages, and topical quotes you can use throughout the week. Below is the list of topics:

Ash Wednesday, February 26

The Call to Reconciliation and Healing

Lent 1: Sunday, March 1

Fasting / How We Can Make More Room for God?

Lent 2: Sunday, March 8

Yielding / How We Can Submit to God's Will?

Lent 3: Sunday, March 15

Meditation / How Can We Listen for God's Voice?

Lent 4: Sunday, March 22

Confession / How We Come Clean To God And Others?

Lent 5: Sunday, March 29

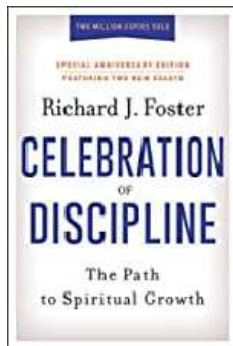
Simplicity / How Can We Find Freedom In God?

Lent 6: Sunday, April 5

Palm Sunday / Passion Sunday

Easter: Sunday April 12

Easter



Expand on the above series – join us for...

Adult Faith Formation

Five Sundays of Lent (March 1 – 29)

12:00—1:30 p.m.

Parish House Front Room

Join Pastor Corey after Fellowship Hour each Sunday during Lent to expand on his sermon series. We will use *Celebration of Discipline, The Path to Spiritual Growth*, by Richard J. Foster. If you plan to participate, please order a copy in whatever format you like (a link is provided in the Friday email.)

Sunday School



March 1

*No Sunday School
Activity in the Fellowship Hall*

March 8

*Abram's Call
Genesis 12:1-4a*

March 15

*Woman at the Well
John 4:5-42*

March 22

*Pool of Siloam
John 9:1-41*

March 29

*Lazarus
John 11:1-45*

Christian Education Committee

—Carl Prestia, Chair

—Bonnie Marchesani

—Amy Nickerson

New Members Joined February 16



Jeff Barbon

Jeff was born and raised in Worcester, Massachusetts. He earned a B.S. in Biology at Worcester State University. He is now a Senior Scientist working at Abbvie in the field of immunology.

Jeff reads history avidly and loves most music, especially classical. Jeff likes to restore old houses (including his own) and furniture to period conditions. He is a fan of the outdoors and enjoys hiking, biking, and water sports with his kids. Both Jeff and Christine greatly enjoy traveling, especially to Europe.

WELCOME
to Our Newest Members!

In his early years, Jeff's church background was Catholic in Worcester and continued so in Groton for a number of years. It was not easy leaving the Catholic tradition after such a long exposure through childhood and adulthood.

Jeff and his wife, Christine, have two children: Alicia (13-years old) and Gregory (11-years old). They were both born in Poland and adopted together six years ago (they are natural siblings). These two have become a bright and delightful part of our church. We love them!

Jeff and Christine came to Groton in 2001 primarily because the town was convenient to both of their jobs, but later fell in love with the town and its beauty. Jeff jokes that the reason he came to our church is the snacks at every Sunday's coffee hour. The real reason the UCC has drawn Jeff is because "it is an amazing place" and the people are open, kind, and giving.

Regarding his future participation, Jeff wants to give back to our church in the way it has given to him. He also wants to grow in his Christian faith, and feels this might be the place for that. Jeff noted that when Rev. Gail left us last year after such a long and productive relationship with the congregation, we did not fall apart. Instead, we all pulled together and supported each other. He characterizes us as a "web of good folks".

Joel and Valerie Meiners

Joel was born in Waterloo, Iowa, and raised in Naperville, Illinois, which is a suburb just outside of Chicago. He did undergraduate work at Houghton College in New York and received a B.A. in Mathematics. He is also a Certified Information Systems Security Professional. Joel is employed with the Endurance International Group as the Manager of Information Technology Risk Management. Joel enjoys taking up new hobbies, the most recent being the restoration of a model railroad set that he inherited. As a child and pastor's kid, Joel usually attended his father's church, wherever that may have been. In later years he attended Grace Chapel in Lexington and, after Valerie and Joel were married, they attended Grace Baptist Church in Hudson for a couple of years.

Valerie was born and raised in Franklin, Massachusetts. She obtained her degree, a B.A. in Physical Education, at Calvin University, a Christian school in Grand Rapids, Michigan. She then earned a Masters Degree in Adapted Physical Education at the University of Virginia. She has further been awarded a Certificate of Advanced Graduate Studies at Boston University in this same area of Adapted Physical Education. Valerie was a teacher in the Andover Public School System at the elementary and middle school levels until she recently decided to take a break from that to be a mom! She loves to travel, is a foodie, and likes very much to read, mainly mysteries and lately C.S. Lewis. She also loves running and all things related to physical activity. Valerie's home church was Medway Village Church growing up. She also attended Whitinsville Christian School in High School, and became very connected to that church community as well.

Both Joel and Valerie welcomed Joy Violet Meiners into their family last year, and she was baptized here at the UCC in June. Originally, they looked for a home in Groton, because it was a convenient location for their jobs, however, once they started learning more about the town they fell in love with its beauty, heritage, and people. They both loved the structure of the service here as it reminded them of the types of churches they grew up in. They were also drawn to Rev. Gail's preaching and her ability to focus her messages on the Gospel of Christ. They felt this would be a great place to plug into a community of believers. Knowing people in the community where they live is a big priority for them. They envision living in Groton for a long time. They are also looking for a place for Joy to grow up, learn about Jesus, become stronger in her own faith, and eventually find a place for herself to call home.

Missions—Opportunities to Serve

Winter Supplies Drive for Syrian Refugees



Do you have any winter clothes you no longer need? Hats and gloves? Sweaters and coats? Maybe a sleeping bag or some extra blankets lying around? A friend of mine runs a non-profit called *NuDay Syria* that helps people living in the Syrian Refugee camps. *NuDay Syria* collects the donations from all around New England, packs and ships them overseas, and has a team of people in Syria that drives the goods straight to the actual camps to distribute them. It's simple and powerfully effective, despite being very dangerous at times.

If you have been following the news, you know that this is the worst humanitarian crisis of our generation. The UN Refugee Agency says, 'Since 2011, the war in Syria has claimed thousands of lives and left 13.5 million people in need of humanitarian assistance. More than half the country's population has been forced to flee their homes, including 5.6 million refugees seeking safety in neighboring countries and another 6.6 million who are internally displaced inside Syria.'

Since it is winter time in Syria, the 6.6 million internally displaced people are sleeping outside in tents in temperatures that often dip below freezing. Four children have recently died in the night of hypothermia. So, if you have any extra winter clothes that you do not need, they would be greatly appreciated for this emergency outreach push. See below for details on what is needed. I will drive things up to the warehouse in New Hampshire

Peace,
Corey

NuDay Syria - Invitation to Donate Fellowship Hall

We will be collecting items for donation to a future monthly shipment on the tables in Fellowship Hall (over by the Prayer Wall). You may also drop items off in the Church Office during the week. As you are doing your Spring sorting and uncluttering, please consider a donation. The following are items that are highlighted on *NuDay's* website, www.nudaysyria.org:

- *Rice, beans, powdered and liquid infant milk, tuna, protein bars, flour, sugar, and cooking oil.*
- *New to like-new clothing, bedding, shoes, jackets, and sleeping bags.*
- *Soccer balls, stuffed animals, crayons, non-battery-operated toys (e.g., play-doh & puzzles!).*
- *Diapers, female pads, soap bars, powdered detergent, toothbrushes, painkillers, and vitamins.*



Hagar's Sisters Fundraiser Saturday, April 4 7:00—10:00 p.m. at Cary Hall (1605 Massachusetts Ave., Lexington)

Hagar's Sisters is presenting its third annual fundraising event, *Spring Soiree* in Lexington, MA. We will support the Benefit with VOLUNTEERS on the day of the event. Join us for fellowship and service to this great cause - if you are interested in helping either with set-up/decoration in the morning or with the live and silent auctions in the evening, please contact Brenda Barker or Stefanie Lempp. No experience is needed! Carpools available. Donations for the auction are also welcome. (See the flyer on the bulletin board in the downstairs hallway at church).

2020 Missions Committee

—Julie Platt, Chair
—Stefanie Lempp

—Brenda Barker
—Sue Lunt

—Krista Kubick
—Lynn Manalo



2020 Easter Plant Order Form

Easter Sunday is April 12!

FORM DUE BY: SUNDAY, April 5

Please return this form and a check made out to UCC (memo: Easter Flowers) to the Church Office:

Carol Zaiatz
Union Congregational Church
220 Main Street
Groton, MA 01450

For the bulletin insert:

Plant is Given by: _____

In Loving Memory of: _____

In Honor/Celebration of: _____

| Qty Ordered | Flower | Cost | Total |
|--------------------|------------------|---------|----------|
| _____ | Double Stem Lily | \$18.00 | \$ _____ |
| _____ | Daffodils | \$ 9.00 | \$ _____ |
| _____ | Hyacinths | \$ 9.00 | \$ _____ |
| _____ | Tulips | \$ 9.00 | \$ _____ |
| Total Order | | | \$ _____ |

After Easter, plants will be delivered to folk in the church who might appreciate a gift of love. If you have a specific person in mind, please enter their information here:

Name _____

Address _____

If you have any further questions, please contact Carol Zaiatz (978-448-2091 or unioncc@uccgroton.org). Thank you very much and may you have a Blessed Easter!



Union Congregational
Church
United Church of Christ
220 Main Street
Groton, MA 01450



DATED MATERIAL
PLEASE DO NOT DELAY

[] PLEASE REMOVE ME FROM YOUR MAILING LIST
Please return to your mail carrier.



COMING TOGETHER • LIFTING UP • REACHING OUT

The UCC Capital Campaign Team cordially invites you
to a Kick Off Event to launch our Accessibility Project.

We hope you are able to join us!

CELEBRATING THE '20s

1820s • 1920s • 2020s

Period Dress/Costumes are encouraged

SWEET & SAVORY RECEPTION

SUNDAY, MARCH 8TH
4PM - 6PM

The Groton Center
163 West Main Street, West Groton, MA

RSVP to UCC Administrator by February 26.
Church Phone: 978.448.2091 | Email: unioncc@uccgroton.org



Youth Mission Trip Fundraiser

Sunday, March 29
5:00-7:00 p.m. (come anytime)
Fellowship Hall

Menu: Pasta and Sauce, Garlic Bread,
Salad, Dessert

Free-will Donations in support of the
Youth Mission Trip will be received.

This June, we will serve in Sumpango
Guatemala doing construction work to
expand church buildings and home
additions and serve in a local orphanage
while getting to know the people we are
serving. Please come support our teens
as they grow in faith and in service.