

THE UNION COURIER

Union Congregational Church
United Church of Christ

220 Main Street
Groton, Massachusetts 01450

The Reverend Gail L. Miller, Pastor (on Sabbatical until April 5, 2014)
Christina Williams, Sabbatical Pastor



February 2014



Greetings,

It hardly seems possible that a month of our Sabbatical journey has come and gone. In my ever-so-brief time here, I have been moved by the depth of your faith, your dedication and devotion to this church, and your passion to keep exploring and growing in your relationship with Christ. The vibrancy I feel here at UCC is palpable at committee meetings, Bible studies, book groups, worship services, coffee hours, and during individual conversations. I already feel blessed by the richness I am finding here in this beloved community.

As our Sabbath journey continues, some of you are already creating Sabbath time in your lives by participating in book groups, Bible studies, or by getting together with someone to pray. In January, I invited you to share your thoughts and ideas for how each of us, and our church community, can create some Sabbath time—holy time—in the midst of our busy lives. Below are the ideas you have shared so far:

- Take time to sit alone, light a candle, and contemplate Jesus, the light of world.
- Turn off the computer devices in your life.
- Participate in reading *Giving to God*.
- Have at least one church potluck supper, maybe at a halfway point during the Sabbatical.
- Eat healthier; get adequate exercise and rest.
- Listen and relax to these hymns, *Relaxation Hymns 1*, *Relaxation Hymns 2*, or *Relaxation Hymns 3*. They can be found on YouTube.
- Honor and recognize the work of volunteers in the church with a luncheon. Perhaps list volunteers and committee members in the bulletin.
- Interview senior members about their church experiences. Share their stories in the Union Courier and archive them.
- Ask people to submit a prayer or poem that has been meaningful and publish.
- In your quiet time, think about what it means to be holy (find some scriptures about this), call upon (pray to) the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is our advocate while Christ Jesus prepares a place for his church.
- Go to your bedroom, close the door, kneel by your bedside, and pray in silence.

Truly, all of these Sabbath ideas are worth pursuing. I invite you to take a Sabbath break and try out some of these ideas. Take time to sit and contemplate Jesus. Turn off your computer devices and play a game with your spouse or kids. Join the book group, reading *Giving to God*, and discover how Giving to God is a deep expression of your faith. Listen to some relaxing hymns to sooth your mind, body, and spirit. Get the whole church community together to share our faith and a potluck feast.

Which of these ideas intrigue you? Which ideas would you like to do as a church community? If you are excited by any of these ideas or have some ideas of your own, I invite you to reach out to the Sabbatical Team: Julie Platt (), Liz McQuillin (), Don Kennedy (), Greg Balligan (), or myself ().

Blessings to all of you as we continue to explore God's gift of the Sabbath—of holy rest.

Yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Christina".



Our Church Family



Ongoing Prayer List

Our prayer list this month reflects your updates. Feel free to contact Christina Williams or Carol Zaiatz at any time with further updates or additions (978-448-2091 or email: unioncc@uccgroton.org).

| | | | |
|-------------------|----------------------|--------------------------|-----------------|
| Marvin Bernstein | Nate & Liz Hunterton | Beth McMinn | Brent Peters |
| Tony Biegler | Gene Innis | Rita McNally | Betsy Pollack |
| Sam Bisson | Jackie Huggins | Heather Meyer | Lib Pollack |
| Kathi Bond | Kayla | Lindsey Meyer | Betty Sampas |
| Dorothy Campbell | Hannah Keenan | Marge Meyer | Karen Sands |
| Lucy Chartrand | Walter Kelleher | Kathy Miller | Rudi Schmid |
| Sue Coulson | Emma Kennehan | Maddy Grace Milot | Betty Sowkin |
| Doug Downen | Barbara King | Linda Morey | Spurling Family |
| Will & JC Dinyes | Scarlett Kostun | Myrtle Murphy | Gayle Tapscott |
| Joslyn Edmunds | Suzanne Lampognana | Shelby Murphy | Bert Tompkins |
| Charlie Elwood | Doris Lewis | Holly Norton | Eloise Van Niel |
| Anne Ford | Lough Family | Lynn O'Brien & Family | Sharon Vincent |
| Paul Fountain | Susan Lucier | Margrit & John Oldenburg | Liz Waggoner |
| Chuck Grey Family | Janet Luttrell | Todd Penniman | Margaret Watson |
| Pat Hoggard | | | |



Sophia and I thank you for the lovely send off you gave us on January 5th. The colors of the South African flag throughout the Fellowship Hall (and on the cake!) were delightful. We also thank you for your kind words and generous gifts to us. Visit our blog to see updates of our trip (<http://revgailmiller.blogspot.com/>). God be with you 'til we meet again!

—Gail Miller



- Safe travels for Pastor Gail, Mike, Sophia and Gail's Mom.
- Fred, Colby, and Brooke Berren, in the death of Jody, wife and mother, to cancer.
- Susan Houde and family, in the death of her mother, Thelma Crocker

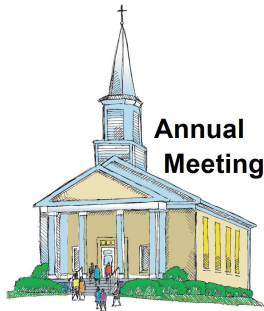
February Birthdays

| | | | |
|-------------------|-------|--------------------|-------|
| Anthony DiCenzo | 02/01 | Arianna Boucher | 02/19 |
| Carl Haas | 02/04 | Kelsey Dumont | 02/20 |
| Rebecca Brennan | 02/06 | Steve Flynn | 02/21 |
| Jon Morgan | 02/07 | Tom Wickham | 02/22 |
| Andy DeBruyn | 02/10 | Charlotte LaGasse | 02/22 |
| Christopher Brown | 02/10 | Clarissa LaGasse | 02/22 |
| Julia Mendel | 02/11 | Lily Burgess | 02/23 |
| Katherine Zaiatz | 02/11 | Jessica Plausse | 02/25 |
| Ben Gambuzza | 02/13 | Arianna Barker | 02/25 |
| Charlene Kelly | 02/14 | Shannon Kilcommins | 02/25 |
| Wren West | 02/15 | Jack Quinn | 02/25 |
| Travis Bugbee | 02/16 | Meg Leonard | 02/27 |
| Kerry Gale | 02/19 | Tommy Wickham | 02/27 |



BLESSINGS
ON YOUR
BIRTHDAY

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?



Annual Meeting Sunday, February 2 After Worship

All are encouraged to attend (especially church members)! We will go over the Annual Report and vote to approve nominations for Committees and Ministries, as well as any updates to the 2014 Budget. We will also hear reports from the Endowment Committee and any other business that may come before us.

—Leslie Row



Meeting Summary January 8

Treasurer Kelli Hnath reviewed the final budget from 2013. Income was slightly above expenses, resulting in a favorable net difference of 5%. Lorrie Morgan distributed Endowment Allocations of 1.5%. This is money to be used outside of the budgeted operating expenses. Liz Smith presented the revised 2014 budget. After discussion, it was unanimously recommended to be presented to the congregation. Martha Dean reported that the following funds from Christmas Angels were distributed: \$545 for the Youth Mission Trip, \$390 for CFCA, \$415 for Heifer International, and \$395 for Loaves & Fishes. The Christmas Eve collection for Veterans of the Cross was \$2,838. A motion to recommend the nominations and appointments of the Nomination Task Force was approved unanimously.



All Church Pot Luck Chili/Soup Supper Saturday, February 8 5:00 p.m. in Fellowship Hall

Come one, come all — for no other reason than it's good to share a meal together! The Sabbatical Team will host a Pot Luck Chili/Soup Supper at 5:00 p.m. on Saturday, February 8, and we'd love to see you there. Sign-up in Fellowship Hall after worship (Feb. 2) for chili, soup, salad, or dessert. The Sabbatical Team will be providing beverages.

—Erica Davenport, Clerk

March Courier

Please submit items for the March Courier by Friday, February 14, in order to be sure they get into this issue. All submissions to the Courier should be emailed to Carol Zaiatz at unioncc@uccgroton.org. Thank you.

UCC Conference



Super Saturday! UCC, Massachusetts Conference Saturday, March 1 Ludlow High School (500 Chapin St., Ludlow, MA) 8:00 a.m.—3:45 p.m.

Join hundreds of pastors and lay leaders from across two Conferences for a day of “Risking Vision” through worship, workshops, forums, networking and a marketplace.

Workshops: A total of 45 workshops are being offered related to various aspects of church life, Mission and ministries.

Cost: \$49 per person or \$39 per person in church groups of 5 or more who register at the same time. Registration deadline is Feb. 20, 2014.

Register online at: <http://macucc.org/events/detail/1458>

Sunday School/Bible Study/Family Ministry



Christian Education Committee

—Patti Kilcommins
—Anne Cahill

—Dena Hance

—Diane Landry

Wednesday Evening Bible Study

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

As we continue to read *Luke*, we encounter Jesus as he teaches about the Sabbath, how to live as God's people, the importance of welcoming all people in relationships, and showing compassion for the poor. Join us — all are welcome! *Contact: Janet Kennedy*

Thursday Morning Bible Study

10:00 a.m.

Many of the shorter Epistles in the New Testament often get overlooked. We're trying to remedy that as they were considered important enough to be included in the established Canon. Already we've discovered valuable insights in Jude and now we're looking at I & II Peter, then heading into Hebrews. Come join us for scintillating conversation, tea & coffee, and cookies. *Contact: Marvin Caldwell*

Family Ministry

Skiing at Crotched Mountain (Bennington, NH)

Sunday, February 9

Meet in lodge at 2:00 p.m.

Join us for an afternoon of skiing on Sunday, February 9 at Crotched Mountain ski area in Bennington, NH (<http://www.crotchedmountain.com/>). We will meet in the base lodge at 2:00 p.m., so that we're ready to begin skiing at 2:30 p.m. Lift tickets from 2:30 - 5:00 p.m. are \$35 and rentals are only \$10/person as part of Crotched Mountain's family afternoon skiing promotion. *Contact: Corissa Robinson* ().



Update on the GPS Task Force

For we are co-workers in God's service; you are God's field, God's building. By the grace God has given me, I laid a foundation as a wise builder, and someone else is building on it. But each one should build with care. For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ. ~ 1 Cor. 3:9-11

We came together as a group for the first time on August 27, 2013. Our purpose is to define the path forward for our church. We have met a total of eight times since then.

We've spent time examining different types of churches and discussed what type of church we are. We learned about the common life cycle of a church and its ongoing need for renewal. We also talked about where each of us felt our church was in the cycle. It's interesting to hear different opinions on these subjects. We've seen that how a person sees the church has a lot to do with their own personal background, as well as the length of time they've been with our church.

We've spent much time in prayer and thought about these questions: 'Why is UCC Groton here?' and 'What is God calling us to do?' We believe that God will lead us to the answers we need. Another step we feel is important is to talk to each of you and hear what you think is important about this church. We're in the process of figuring out how to do that so look for more information on that in the future. In the meantime, feel free to seek out any of us and let us know what you think about your church.

We're currently reading *What's Theology got to do with it?*, by Anthony B. Robinson. So far our discussions have centered on things like what makes a vital and healthy congregation and the role the Bible and scripture have in that. How do you keep energy going in the church? What is our identity? We are finding this book thought provoking and we may share parts of it with you in the future. If you are looking for a book to help you think about our church in a new way, we recommend this one.

We feel that, before we can move forward, we need to determine where we are now. We have spent much of our time on that vital question. We ask that you continue to keep our work in your prayers. There is no tool more powerful for us than that.

Mary Hanson
on behalf of the GPS Task Force

GPS Task Force

—Mary Hanson, Chair
—Pete Hnath
—Halsey Platt

—Bonnie Biocchi
—Stefanie Lempp
—Larry Robinson

—Tim Dumont
—Gail Miller

Fair Ministry



9th Spring Artisan/Craft Fair

Saturday, April 12

10:00 a.m.—2:00 p.m.

Church Craft Table: Need folks to set it up, do sales, pack up for storage, as well as new items for sale! This table profits between \$150 - \$250 for the day. If there are no volunteers by early March; we will rent the space (low profit).

- **Kitchen:** Joel Hughes will head up the kitchen and will need a crew for cooking, serving, clean-up
- **Set-up:** As always, we will need people to set-up the hall and decorate; then break-down/rebuild on Saturday.
- **Bake Table:** Start thinking about 'different'.

Updates forthcoming!!! Contact: Bonnie Martin (

)

Missions

Christmas Angels

Your generous response to December's Christmas Angel appeal collected:

| | |
|--------------------|--------|
| Youth Mission Trip | \$545* |
| CFCA | \$390 |
| Heifer | \$415 |
| Loaves & Fishes | \$395 |

**An additional \$387.30 was donated to the 2014 Youth Mission trip from the Mission Budget.*

Also, the Christmas Clergy Fund, providing aid to retired and disabled clergy, received \$2,837.65 collected on Christmas Eve. Thank you!!

And Coming in March...



Heifer Coin Drive (...stay tuned)

**Pancake
Breakfast**



Starting with our... Overlook Farm (Heifer Project)

Saturday, March 8

9:30 a.m. Reservation

It's Pancake time at Heifer Farm!! Start our Lenten drive for Heifer's work in ending hunger and poverty, while caring for the earth with a trip to the fabulous Heifer Farm in Rutland, MA. On Saturday, March 8, eat your fill of homemade pancakes and sausages doused with real maple syrup made from home grown ingredients; visit the Global Village; and relearn why Heifer's work in the U.S. and around the world really does work. *Sign-up at the Missions bulletin board starting February 16.*

Missions Committee

—Tony DiCenzo

—Janice Flynn

—Janet Kennedy

—Larry Robinson

Church World Service Blanket Drive

February 2 and 9

Consider showing your love by giving a "Valentine" blanket in honor or memory of someone special. These blankets will serve people in a disadvantaged region of the world. Stop by the Missions table during coffee hour, where valentines will be sold for \$5 each to cover the cost of one blanket used for warmth, shelter, transporting goods and other functions.



Youth Ministry

Big House Youth Group

Open to Students in Grades 8-12

Sunday, February 9 (at UCC)

6:00—7:00 p.m. *Mission Trip Kick-off Meeting:* Orientation meeting for parents and youth

7:00-8:30 p.m. *Big House Youth Group*

Friday (evening) February 28—Sunday (afternoon), March 2

Youth Ski Retreat Weekend: Skiing, sledding, skating and games. Great food too!

Trip cost: \$130/person <http://www.calumet.org/youth-group-ski-weekends>

Contact: Pete Hnath ()

Next Month



Begins with. . .



Ash Wednesday, March 5 Dinner and Worship

6:30 p.m.: Simple Soup Supper

7:15 p.m.: Brief Worship Service/Communion

Let's begin our Lenten journey together. If you can't make it for dinner, come at 7:15 p.m. for worship. Families with children are encouraged to attend. (You'll be home by 8:00 p.m.) **If you are coming for dinner, please 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

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United Church of Christ

220 Main Street
Groton, Massachusetts 01450
978-448-2091
www.uccgroton.org

Christina Williams—Sabbatical Pastor

Cell phone: 978-877-2177

christina@uccgroton.org

Tuesday and Thursday, 10:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.

Carol Zaiatz—Office Administrator

Tuesday—Friday

9:30 a.m.—4:00 p.m.

(Church Office is closed on Mondays)

978-448-2091

unioncc@uccgroton.org

Office Hours

Tuesday - Friday, 9:30 a.m.—4:00 p.m.

(Church Office is closed on Mondays)

unioncc@uccgroton.org

Month Deacons

Brenda Semienko/Kim Peters

Music Director: Bernard Crane

Cherub Choir: Bonnie Marchesani

Handbell Choir: Cheryl Townsend

Church Officers

Moderator: Stefanie Lempp

Treasurer: Kelli Hnath

Clerk: Lori McElroy

Collector: Bob Goudey

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Lectio Divina

A Lenten Devotional Series

Tuesday Evenings, March 4—April 1
7:00—8:30 p.m. in the Parish House
(Hosted by Christina Williams)

Lectio divina (Latin for divine or sacred reading) is an ancient Christian practice of contemplating scripture. It is a holistic, experiential way of reading scripture that uses our minds, emotions, imaginations, senses, and prayer. When we practice lectio divina we allow a particular scripture passage or story to soak deeply into us as we interact with it. Lectio divina is the art of listening prayerfully for what God wants to communicate to us through scripture.

I invite you to join this devotional series as a way of deepening your Lenten journey. The scriptural focus for this four-week session will be on the Gospel of Mark. **This lectio divina series will run four consecutive Tuesday evenings starting March 4 through April 1 from 7:00–8:30 p.m.** Call or email me (978-877-2177 or Christina@uccgroton.org), or flag me down after worship to let me know if you are interested.