

THE UNION COURIER

Union Congregational Church

United Church of Christ

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

Christina Williams, Sabbatical Pastor

220 Main Street

Groton, Massachusetts 01450



April 2014

A Message from Your Sabbatical Pastor

Can it really be true—April is here, the Passion is near, and the sabbatical is over? On those snowy and subzero days in January, April, Easter, and Pastor Gail's return seemed so far away. When I first started, I could see many of you were missing Pastor Gail. I could see how much her presence and leadership have touched you. It's hard not to notice all the faithful work you have done with her to make this a vibrant community of faith where God's love and presence is always felt. In her absence you have continued to do amazing work with one another in trying to discern where God is leading you individually and communally.

Our sabbatical journey has been a time of holy rest—like the resting of the earth before the growth and activeness of spring. Honoring the Sabbath opens our ears to hear God in new ways and creates space for new growth and new discoveries. Now that we have arrived at the end of our sabbatical journey, in what new ways have you heard God? How have you felt God's Spirit moving through your life and our church? What new discoveries about your faith have you made during the sabbatical? In what ways have you and the church grown during this journey.

You have paused for 90 days to take a holy rest, but soon you will be reunited with Gail, Mike, and Sophia and your life together will begin again. You'll be more than eager to hear Gail's, Mike's, and Sophia's stories, but they'll also want to know what happened in your lives while they were gone. The sabbatical has ended and now you can return to your life together with clear minds, fresh insights, and new wisdom. I sincerely hope this sabbatical journey has deepened your faith, renewed your passion to follow the way of Jesus, and rekindled the desire to share the good news of new life and hope we have in him.

Blessings on this new chapter of your journey; I am grateful to have walked with you on this part of your journey. Even though the sabbatical is over, remember the Sabbath and keep it holy—take time for holy rest.

Many blessings and much love,

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

Welcome back, Gail, Mike, and Sophia!

Please join us in welcoming back Gail, Mike, and Sophia on April 6 at worship and at the pot luck luncheon following worship. – The Sabbatical Team





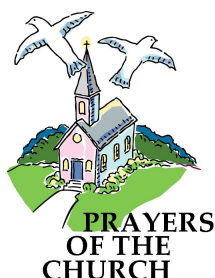
Our Church Family



Ongoing Prayer List

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

Ruth Allen	Charlie Elwood	Diane Mahon	Brent Peters
Marvin Bernstein	Anne Ford	Beth McMinn	Betsy Pielocik
Sue Bisceglia	Paul Fountain	Rita McNally	Betsy Pollack
Kristen Beyer	Chuck Grey Family	The Meyer Family	Lib Pollack
Tony Biegler	Pat Hoggard	Marge Meyer	Betty Sampas
Sam Bisson	Jackie Huggins	Kathy Miller	Karen Sands
M. E. Bluestone	Kayla	Maddy Grace Milot	Rudi Schmid
Kathi Bond	Hannah Keenan	Linda Morey	Betty Sowkin
Virginia Bugbee	Walter Kelleher	Myrtle Murphy	Spurling Family
Dorothy Campbell	Emma Kennehan	Shelby Murphy	Gayle Tapscott
Carolyn Cassidy	Barbara King	Lavon McMurrian	Lucille Temple
Lucy Chartrand	Scarlett Kostun	Holly Norton	Bert Tompkins
Sue Coulson	Suzanne Lampognana	Lynn O'Brien & Family	Eloise Van Niel
Doug Downen	Doris Lewis	Margrit & John Oldenburg	Sharon Vincent
Will & JC Dinyes	Lough Family	Family of Nicholas Palanchak	Liz Waggoner
Joslyn Edmunds	Susan Lucier	Todd Penniman	Margaret Watson
Bruce Elder			



- Friends of Bonnie Biocchi: thanksgiving for a successful surgery for Ruth Allen; comfort for the Grey family in the loss of Chuck; comfort for the Brown family in the loss of Ernest.
- Lisa Gambuzza and family, in the death of her Aunt, Barbara King.



Dylan Scott Hughes was born on February 24. Congratulations to Joel, Elizabeth, Makayla, and Alyssa!

April Birthdays



Stefanie Lempp	04/01	David Evans	04/15
Devin Goudey	04/03	Christopher Rizzo	04/16
John Hitsos	04/04	Chris Clinton	04/17
Jason Hnath	04/04	Shannon Larkin	04/19
Georgia Brooks	04/06	Larry Robinson	04/21
Liz Brennan	04/07	John Gervais	04/23
Michelle Emerle	04/07	Danika Manalo	04/23
Jeff Quinn	04/07	Sally Pratt	04/24
Griffin Caiozzo	04/07	Grace Nickerson	04/29
Georgia Row	04/09		

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 the significant anniversaries in your life — would you share that information with us?

Church News



March 19 Meeting Summary

Lorrie Morgan and Kelli Hnath are putting a procedure in place for disbursement of Endowment proceeds.

CE is energized; Jean Armstrong has joined CE but there is still an opening. They are hopeful that all the teaching positions will be filled through June.

PPRC is considering changing the purpose of their committee; they are looking for discussion and input.

Leslie Row has been hosting several Harvest Fair planning meetings. There is enthusiasm; several areas have chairs and there are some new ideas. All are welcome to join in.

There was a discussion based on a chapter from *The Other 80%*. Ideas on how to include more people in the work of the church were given.

—Lori McElroy, Clerk



Church Spring Clean-up Day

Saturday, April 5 (Rain Date April 12)

8:00 a.m. to noon

You are invited! Outdoor cleanup and raking will be our primary job. More hands make the work fun and go faster. If you can, please bring a rake and a tarp for the clean-up. If you have any questions, contact any member of the Buildings & Grounds Committee or Jeff Kubick (). We appreciate your support.



Welcome Home Gail and Sophia!

Thank You Christina!

Sunday, April 6

After Worship in Fellowship Hall

The Sabbatical Team is planning an All Church Pot-Luck Luncheon celebration on **Sunday, April 6** after church in Fellowship Hall to welcome home Pastor Gail and her daughter, Sophia, and to thank our Sabbatical Pastor, Christina Williams. Please join us!

The Sabbatical Team:

Greg Balligan, Don Kennedy, Liz McQuillin, Julie Platt

Church Assessment Survey

A Message from the GPS Task Force: As we try to discern God's plan for our church, the GPS Task Force feels it is important for us to have a benchmark for where we are as a church now. This moment provides an important opportunity for us all to share together in assessing who we are as a church. To assist in this task we're using a survey that was developed by the Hartford Institute for Religion Research in Connecticut (www.hartfordinstitute.org). They have helped hundreds of churches with surveys over the last 30 years. The survey not only asks several sets of questions about our congregation's current ministry and your own involvement, but also seeks your input on your vision for our future.

Completing this survey ensures that your views have been heard and it will give us a baseline from which to measure whether we are moving in directions that are aligned with God's plan for our church. We ask that each member of your household over the age of 14 complete the survey. You can do so by going to: <http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/uccgroton>

The survey began on Sunday, March 30. There will be a link to the online survey available in the Friday church-wide email as well as the weekly bulletin. There will also be a paper version available downstairs in Fellowship Hall. We'll have a table set up to provide information and answer any questions you may have. If you choose to complete the paper survey please return it to the church so that your responses can be entered into the computer. This survey will take approximately 30 minutes to complete.

It is important that everyone participate in this survey! Your responses are anonymous. Thank you for your cooperation. We hope you will think prayerfully while filling out the questionnaire and that you find this process helpful in reflecting on your faith, the meaning of your church experience, and your hopes for the future.

If you have any questions about the survey, we encourage you to reach out to a member of the GPS Task Force: Bonnie Biocchi, Tim Dumont, Mary Hanson, Pete Hnath, Stefanie Lempp, Halsey Platt and Larry Robinson

Christian Education



Christian Education Committee

—Pete Hnath, Acting Chair
—Diane Landry

—Anne Cahill

—Den Hance



Wednesday Evening Bible Study

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

We return to the *Old Testament* to understand the connections made between David's reign and the lord-ship of Christ; beginning with the promise of David in line and ending with scripture from *Revelation* concerning John's vision in the heavenly court. Everyone is welcome! Join us as we read the scripture and the lesson from *The Present Word* together. Contact: Janet Kennedy

Have You Read



the
GOOD BOOK
Lately?

Thursday Morning Bible Study

10:00 a.m. at 26 Court Street

Hebrews is a fascinating book. It is not a letter, perhaps it is a sermon as it educates, quotes Scripture, exhorts and urges us to live a better way in Christ. As such, it makes for good reading and thinking for Lent. Join us for conversation, tea & coffee and cookies.

Contact: Marvin Caldwell ()

Spring Fair/Harvest Fair Updates



9th Spring Artisan/Craft Fair

Saturday, April 12

10:00 a.m.—2:00 p.m.

Schedule for the Week of the Fair

- **Wednesday, April 9, 6:30 p.m.** Set-up the hall and dining area, decorate, bring boxes from the parish house.
- **Friday, April 11, 10:00 a.m. - noon** and **Saturday (4/12) by 9:30 a.m.** Drop off baked goods.
- **Saturday:** Come to shop and stay for lunch!!
- **Saturday at 2:30 p.m.** REBUILD!! Breakdown the hall and rebuild the nursery.

Contact: Bonnie Martin ()

Next Harvest Fair Planning Meeting

Sunday, May 4, after worship

Please join us at this important meeting—we could use your ideas!

In the meantime . . .Mark Your Calendars

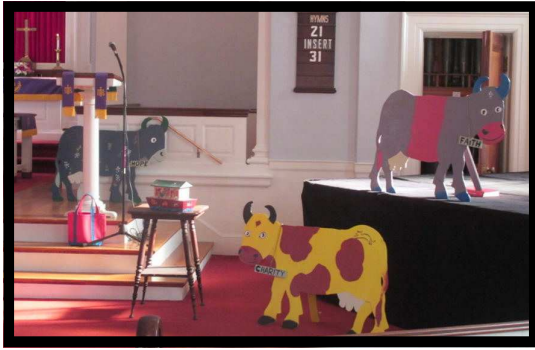
Harvest Fair

Saturday, October 4

- **Spring Cleaning?** Do you have children's clothing in clean and good condition? Do you have any books, CDs, DVDs, or VHS you would like to "clean out" and donate to the church for the fall fair? Boxes are available for you to bring them in now and clear up that space; there's no need to wait. Just put them in the boxes under the bulletin boards outside of Fellowship Hall.
- **Children's Clothing:** Clean and in good condition
- **Books:** All kinds, we need a new supply (no textbooks please)
- **Silent Auction:** It's never too early to start thinking about this year's Silent Auction — that masterpiece painting, the throw blanket, the doll house, baby clothes etc. Whatever your talent or hobby, please consider making an item for the auction. The following items are always crowd pleasers... tickets to sporting events, concerts, performances and vacation house weekends. The Silent Auction is always a great success and we can make it even better this year with your generous contributions! (Contact Kristin Ansted,)
- **Handmade Items/Woodworking:** Keep us in mind this summer as you are busy creating new things!

Missions

Heifer International Project



During the Lenten season, you may have seen the traveling cows, Hope, Faith and Charity adorning the snowy landscapes in the vicinity of our church. For a donation that is directed to the Heifer Project International, these cows may be reserved and delivered to any local family in Groton and neighboring towns. There is a map posted on the Mission's bulletin board showing the locations of the cow visitations. To learn more, see the Missions table at fellowship hour, or contact Rev. Marvin Caldwell for more details.



Thank you to all the families collecting coins during March and into Easter Sunday. The Missions committee will meet to decide which animals will be purchased to help in achieving Heifer International's goal of ending hunger and poverty in a sustainable way.

And some pictures from our Overlook Farm Pancake Breakfast on March 8!



Teen Challenge USA

On Sunday, April 27, we will welcome representatives of *Teen Challenge USA* to take part in our service. 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 USA 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.

One Great Hour of Sharing

Thank you to everyone who donated to this special collection — we received \$750 in donations! This is one of four special mission offerings of the United Church of Christ, providing hope to people in more than 80 countries. The UCC works with international partners, and together provide support to health, education, refugee, agricultural, and emergency relief initiatives.

Missions Committee

— Tony DiCenzo — Janice Flynn — Janet Kennedy
— Larry Robinson

Big House Youth Group

Just So You Know

Join Us!



Big House Youth Group Open to Students in Grades 8-12

Sunday, April 6 (SOV—The Grange)

7:00-8:30 p.m. *Celebrate Passover with a Sader Dinner*

Sunday, April 27 (UCC)

7:00-8:30 p.m. *What Does It Mean to Serve God on a Mission*

Note: All UCC Mission Trip Youth required to attend.

Just So You Know

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220 Main Street

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978-448-2091

www.uccgroton.org

Christina Williams, Sabbatical Pastor (4/1-4/6)

Cell phone: 978-877-2177

christina@uccgroton.org

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

The Reverend Gail L. Miller, Pastor (4/6)

Cell phone: 978-877-2177

gail@uccgroton.org

Tuesday—Friday, 10:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.

Carol Zaiatz—Office Administrator

Tuesday—Friday

9:30 a.m.—4:00 p.m.

(Church Office is closed on Mondays)

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

April Deacons

Cassie Sampas/Erica Davenport

Committee Chairs

Buildings & Grounds Committee:

Jeff Kubick

Christian Education Committee:

Pete Hnath (Acting Chair)

Church Council Member-at-Large:

John Gervais

Diaconate Committee:

Tim Dumont

Endowment Committee:

Lorrie Morgan

Missions Committee:

Janet Kennedy

Music Committee:

Sheila Mitchell

Pastor Parish Relations Committee:

Bebe Goudey

Stewardship & Finance Committee:

Liz Smith

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April Highlights

Sunday, April 6

All Church Pot Luck Luncheon after Worship (see p. 3)

Welcome home to Gail and Sophia — thank you to Christina

Holy Week

April 13 at 10:00 a.m.

Palm Sunday Worship

Senior Choir



Palm Sunday

April 17 at 7:30 p.m.

Maundy Thursday/Tenebrae Worship

Holy Communion and the Extinguishing of the Light

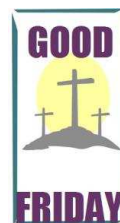


Maundy
Thursday
SERVICE

April 18 at 12:30 p.m.

Good Friday

We gather to read the biblical account and reflect on Jesus' death.



April 20 at 10:00 a.m.

Easter Worship

Music includes: Children and Adult Choirs
Holy Communion will be celebrated



Easter
Sunday