

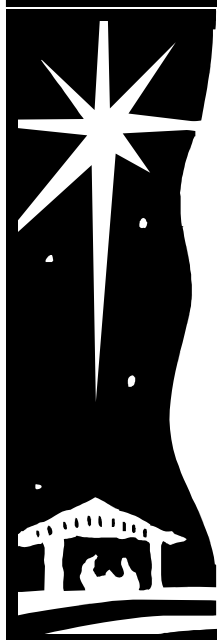
THE UNION COURIER

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

220 Main Street
Groton, Massachusetts 01450



December 2015



An Advent Message from Your Pastor

The Apostle Paul wrote a letter to the church in Thessalonica. In it he said:

How can we thank God enough for you in return for all the joy that we feel before our God because of you? Night and day we pray most earnestly that we may see you face to face and restore whatever is lacking in your faith. Now may our God and Father himself and our Lord Jesus direct our way to you. And may the Lord make you increase and abound in love for one another and for all, just as we abound in love for you. And may he so strengthen your hearts in holiness that you may be blameless before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all his saints.

(1 Thessalonians 3:9-13)

We live in the pull between the past and the future. We live in the now and the not yet. The coming of Advent and the beginning of a new church calendar year provides us an opportunity to reflect on how we live with purpose. Like the Thessalonians, we wait for the promise of Jesus' return, and yet we grow weary of waiting. Paul understands this tension and reminds this fledgling church, and us today, that we don't wait alone and that while we wait there is God's work to be done! Paul prays that love will increase among the people, for God is most fully revealed to the world by love. This love that looks forward, moves us forward, transforms our present reality. Building each other up in love, praying night and day, looking for God's work in the world while we wait, pulls us into the hope of God's promises for newness, forgiveness and mercy through Jesus. (Brigette Weier)

December is a time of waiting and preparing...for more than the presents and the parties. We wait for the proclamation of the Good News that God became human — a stunning thing to contemplate to be sure! And God sent messengers ahead to prepare the people there for his coming. This year we'll look at those messengers and their messages to prepare our hearts, homes, and lives for a renewed relationship with our Lord.

Advent Sermon Series: The Angels of Advent — Not the angels you'd expect!

Dec. 6: Gabriel appears to Zechariah

Dec. 13: Gabriel appears to Mary

Dec. 20: An Angel appears to Joseph

Christmas Eve: The Angels appear to the Shepherds

Dec. 27: Hymn Sing and Story: *The City That Forgot About Christmas*

Jan. 3: An Angel appears to Joseph again



Blessed Advent All! See you in Church!

Gail

Celebrate Advent

Devotions, calendars, wreaths/candles and activities for younger and older children are available in the hallway at church on Sunday.



Our Church Family/Stephen Ministry



Our Ongoing Prayer List: (These names are prayed out loud at Open Sanctuary Time each Wednesday.)

Linda Barrett
Jimmy Breault
Kristen Collins
Becky Cross
Rob Daigle & Jenny Serratore
Harold Gould

Alex Haas
Carol Hess
Jonathan Greenleaf
Xavier Johnson
Sean Koller
Doris Lewis

Maggie Loucraft
Holly Norton
Karen Sands
Rudi Schmid
Dawn Seward
Priscilla Simmons

Alan Smith
Opal Smith
Annik Spencer
Joe Swales
Liz Waggoner

This list will be refreshed on January 1, 2016. Feel free to contact Gail Miller or Carol Zaiatz (978-448-2091 or unioncc@uccgroton.org) if you wish to keep a name on this list, or add a name to it.

Confidential Prayer Chain

Need prayer and need it now? Share your concern with the Confidential Prayer Chain. Simply email prayer@uccgroton.org and your request will go to the confidential pray-ers; or call Lori McElroy (978-448-2841) 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. Want to be a pray-er? Use the same email to let us know and you'll be added to the list. (This email is a private address seen only by the administrators of the prayer chain.)



- Rylan Rosenfeld, recovering from surgery.
- Ed Stratton, having knee surgery on Dec. 16.

December Birthdays

| | |
|------------------|-------|
| Brenda Semienko | 12/02 |
| Will Nickerson | 12/03 |
| Cameron Robinson | 12/04 |
| Gail Miller | 12/08 |
| Scott Burgess | 12/12 |
| Josie Robinson | 12/14 |
| Alyssa Slade | 12/15 |
| Dave Woods | 12/16 |
| Don Landry | 12/17 |

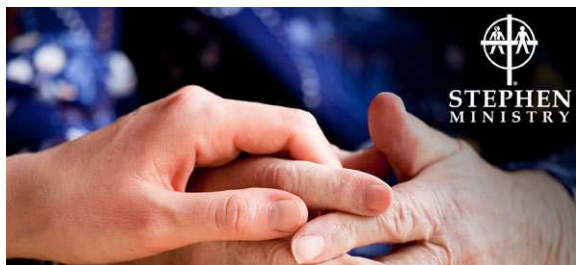


**BLESSINGS
ON YOUR
BIRTHDAY**

| | |
|-----------------|-------|
| Darrion Slade | 12/17 |
| Myrtle Murphy | 12/18 |
| Korbin Larsen | 12/18 |
| Tristan Row | 12/19 |
| Janet Carey | 12/22 |
| Hannah York | 12/23 |
| Taylor Ansted | 12/27 |
| Carolyn DiCenzo | 12/29 |

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?

Stephen Ministry



"It's the most wonderful time of the year"—unless you're hurting

For some of us, the holiday season is a poignant reminder of what we *don't* have. We miss loved ones who have died, we're lonesome for a life partner to share the season with and see in the new year, we're unemployed and have no money to celebrate or buy gifts. Let a Stephen Minister walk with you through this season, and help carry the burden of your

pain. Talk to Pastor Gail or your Stephen Leader, Andrea McDonough () .

Church News

Church Council November 18 Meeting Summary

We approved the process for spending the Birthday Fund and that the 2015 Fund be spent on the church T-shirts and new Christmas decorations, including a new Sanctuary tree.

We discussed the process for the Potential Building Project and spent time brainstorming what is important to us in new or renovated buildings. We will continue this conversation in an all church forum on Jan. 24, 2016. In the meantime, a Steering Committee will be formed to oversee the process.

The Annual Meeting will be on February 7. Agenda: finalize the 2016 budget, important committee updates and the new roster of committees.



Council Conversation Topic: Harvest Fair 2016 Wednesday, December 16 7:30-8:15 p.m. Fellowship Hall

All are invited to this portion of the next Church Council meeting, which will be an open discussion on how we might direct the profits of the 2016 Harvest Fair. We hope you will join us!

Note: A detailed spreadsheet of this year's Harvest Fair income/expenses/profit is available on the tables at the back of the Sanctuary, or by contacting Carol in the church office unioncc@uccgroton.org



CONGREGATIONAL
MEETING

Special Congregational Meeting Summary Sunday, November 22

The preliminary 2016 budget was proposed and accepted. (Available on the tables in the Sanctuary).

The current 2015 budget is on track to finish with expenses favorable to income. Some items in the 2016 budget might be covered by the overage or through Endowment disbursements.

The Harvest Fair is currently a pass-through item, and we've scheduled a conversation on Dec. 16 (see above) to discuss this in more detail.

Conversations have begun at the Church Council about a potential building project. The GPS (God's Purpose Seekers) Task Force is recommending a process for this (see the handout on the back tables in the Sanctuary).



Annual
Committee
Reports
Needed

Annual Report

Deadline December 18

It's that time of year again! In order to have the Annual Report finished by mid-January, we need to collect committee and ministry reports now. Please email your report as a word document attachment to Carol (unioncc@uccgroton.org) by Friday, December 18. Also, if you haven't sent Carol your Committee Meeting notes on a monthly basis, please include in this email your Committee meeting notes for the entire year (12 separate documents for those who meet every month). Thank you!



Serving on Committees and Ministries

As we prepare for the Annual Meeting on February 7 (when the "turnover" of committees occurs), you are invited to let us know your interest in serving. *Committee* positions (Buildings/Grounds, CE, Deacons, Missions, Finance) require formal membership in the church and *Ministry* positions (Kitchen, Technology) allow for anyone to serve. The current Committee/Ministry Roster can be found inside the gray Church Directory (available on the tables in the Sanctuary). *Contact Stefanie Lempp (Moderator) or Pastor Miller with your questions or to express an interest in a particular Committee or Ministry.*

January Courier

Please submit items for the January Courier by Friday, December 11, 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.

Silent Night



Each Sunday in December, the children will spend the **first 10 minutes of Sunday School learning a Christmas Carol — *Silent Night***. Bonnie Marchesani will sing with the children in the Fellowship Hall before they are escorted to their classes in the Parish House.



They will then be invited to sing it as a “**Sunday School Chorus**” at the 5:00 p.m. Christmas Eve Worship Service.



Please join us in teaching Christian Carols to our children by listening to and singing these traditional carols at home and in the car throughout the month.



Can You Help?

There are still a number of Sundays going forward where we need volunteers to spend one hour doing some of the most fulfilling work of the church—teaching our children about God's love. Please sign up on the white-board in the hallway downstairs or by email to Carol Zaiatz in the Church Office (unioncc@uccgroton.org). Thank you for helping to teach our children about the Christian faith.

Christian Education Committee

—Anne Cahill, Chair
—Diane Landry

—Jean Armstrong
—Anne Larsen

—Kelli Hnath

Bible Study

Bible Study



Wednesday Evening Bible Study

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

We're finishing the unit on justice with five lessons covering five prophets. Isaiah prophesies about a redeemer. Jeremiah speaks of corruption as a choice between good and bad. Ezekiel calls for confession and repentance. Zechariah speaks kindness, mercy and justice to others. Finally, Malachi tells the people of Israel

that God requires justice and faithfulness. *Contact Janet Kennedy if you are interested in joining.*

Thursday Morning Bible Study

10:00 a.m. at Church (12/3 & 12/10) and at

rest of month

Thursday Bible Study will meet in the church parlor, Reverend Skip Lloyd facilitating, for the first two Thursdays in December. December 17 we'll be back at Marvin Caldwell's home and then off for Christmas Eve and New Year's Eve. Mark's Gospel is on the table for discussion and insight. Mark has much to say about Jesus and his time, as well as our own. *Contact Marvin Caldwell ()*

Stewardship

Missions



Pledge Update

The Stewardship Team would like to thank all who participated in Pledge Sunday (11/15) and to those who mailed in their pledge for 2016. **As of 11/24, we have received 73 pledges for a total amount of \$220,242.** While we are still awaiting a number of pledges, the good news is that so far we have **7 new first-time pledges** for 2016! **So if you have not pledged yet, please mail your card to the Church Office, Attn: Collector (220 Main Street, Groton, MA 01450).**

Year-end 2015 is approaching fast; please make sure all current year pledges are up-to-date no later than Sunday, December 27. If you have any questions, feel free to contact Bob Goudey (). Thank you!



Now That I've Pledged — What's Next?

In late December, the weekly giving envelopes for 2016 will be available at church. They are a handy way to keep track of your weekly giving. Since pledges are made for the upcoming calendar year, we start tracking 2016 pledges in January.

If you would like to begin giving your pledged amount before January 1, 2016, please do, but understand that your gifts will be counted toward your 2016 pledges after Jan. 1, 2016. Please call or email any questions to Bob Goudey).

The 2015 Stewardship Team

—Bob Goudey
—Halsey Platt

—Liz McQuillin
—Craig Smith

—Gail Miller

Missions

CityReach

Did you notice the overflowing piles of clothing and blankets in the corner of the Fellowship Hall last month? The response for donations for the homeless served by *CityReach* was tremendous. The donations were sorted and distributed by members of our congregation on an overnight visit to the *Church on the Hill* last month. Thank you for sharing Christ's love with others.



Giving Tree

Tewksbury Hospital Giving Tree

Thank you! All 60 ornaments for the patients were taken. Please return your **unwrapped** gifts with the ornament attached to the box beneath the Missions bulletin board in the Fellowship Hall **no later than Sunday, December 13**, so they can be wrapped and distributed on time. Thank you in advance for your generous support of these patients who are often forgotten during the holidays.

Do you like to wrap?

We'd love to have your help when we meet in the Fellowship Hall to wrap the gifts. Look for the date and time in the green Sunday Bulletin.



234 Barnum Road • Devens, MA
P.O. Box 1 • Ayer, MA 01432
978-772-4627 • www.loavesfishespantry.org

Our Thanksgiving Collection took in 500 lbs of food—thank you!

We continue to receive donations for families in need during the holiday season. On your next trip to the grocery store,

please pick up some canned fruits and/or veggies, cereal, boxed potatoes, soup, flour, olive oil, or tuna. We thank everyone who has donated grocery and personal items this year.

Missions Committee

—Janet Kennedy, Chair
—Julie Platt

—Brenda Barker
—Pete Hnath

—Halsey Platt

Cookies 'N' Carols / Middle School /Christmas

Cookies 'n' Carols

Sunday, December 20, 12:30—3:30 p.m.

This is a wonderful opportunity to increase the affection and fellowship we enjoy as a church, to thank a neighbor, to lift the spirits of a friend, or to simply say Merry Christmas. There are three main components — feel free to participate in one or all!



Order: Nov. 29, Dec. 6 and 13, at coffee hour after worship, you will have the opportunity to buy a "telegram" of Cookies and Christmas caroling to be delivered on your behalf to anyone in the Groton area.

Bake: We anticipate needing 100 dozen homemade cookies; so as you bake this season, consider throwing in an extra batch for us. Bring to church labeled, "Cookies 'n' Carols" and we will store/freeze them; or deliver them fresh to the church on Saturday, December 19, 9:30-11:00 a.m.

Sing and Deliver: Sunday, December 20, 12:30-3:30 p.m. No singing experience necessary! Join us for an afternoon of caroling! This is such a fantastic way to spread Christmas joy! Everyone is welcome to join in the fun. Profits will support our Youth Mission Trip to Queens NY next summer.



Contact: Anne Cahill () or Diane Landry ()
(In the event of a storm, we will deliver the cookies without the carols before Christmas.)

Send a gift of Christmas love to anyone!

Middle School Youth Ministry

December 4-5 (Friday-Saturday)

Journey to Bethlehem (6:45-8:00) (see details below)

Then overnight at St. Matthew's Methodist Church (Acton)

Pick up 10:00 a.m. Saturday; cost \$5.

Sign up in the Church Office.

Contacts: Jean Armstrong (), Janet Cary (), Mary Hanson (), or
Pastor Miller (978-448-2091)



Christmas in the Community



Journey to Bethlehem

Friday, December 4, from 7:00-9:00 p.m.

**Faith Evangelical Free Church in Acton
(54 Hosmer Street)**

Meet at the church in Acton at 6:45 p.m.

This adventure takes you back to biblical times and reenacts the journey a family would have taken to Bethlehem to be counted in the census as Mary and Joseph were. It's not a show, it's a journey that winds through the grounds of the church and can't be described with words. This is appropriate for children of all ages. (Visit the church's website to learn more and see photos <http://www.faithevfree.org/nativity.html>)

Community Christmas (cont.) Adult Education



Sunday, December 6, at 4:00 p.m.

The Groton Interfaith Council will host the annual Groton Christmas Tree Lighting service on our church's front lawn, featuring carol singing, prayers, and seasonal readings by representatives of Groton faith communities. They will also be honoring the Groton Community Dinner Team.

Afterwards all are invited inside our church for warm drinks and goodies. ***We are looking for volunteers to donate refreshments to serve, which can be dropped off in the kitchen after worship that Sunday (12/6).***

For more information, contact Edie Tompkins at

or Judy Nauman at



**Rivercourt
Residence
Craft Show**

Sunday, December 6

1:00—3:00 p.m.

This is open to the public, but allows the residents to do some shopping too. They always have a variety of crafters/artisans, as well as cookies and punch!!



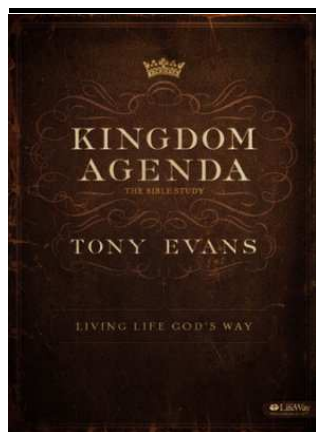
**Sunday, December 13
2:00 p.m. and 7:30 p.m.**

**Monday, December 14
7:30 p.m.**

In Our Sanctuary

Channels of Peace! This is the theme of the 41st Annual Groton Community Christmas Concert. There will be wonderful music of the season, sung by children and adults from Groton and nine surrounding communities. This concert is free (though donations will be accepted at the door).

Adult Education Opportunity - SIGN-UP BY 12/13



**Small Group Study—*The Kingdom Agenda* !
Six Sundays (every other week) Starting January 10
(Jan. 10 and 24, Feb. 7 and 21, March 6 and 20)
4:30—6:00 p.m. at the Robinson's Home
(59 Shirley Street, Pepperell)**

Do you ever wonder what God is really doing? Do you wonder how can God be doing anything in the midst of the chaos of the world? Have you ever wondered what part you, as an individual, play in all of this? ***Well if you have and you are still searching for answers*** this is the group for you.

Beginning on January 10 we begin a six session small group journey called the *Kingdom Agenda: Living Life God's Way*. The message of the Kingdom is sorely lacking today. This is not because people don't speak of the Kingdom, but because too often we speak in esoteric, theological code words that seem unrelated to the realities of life in the here and now.

The Christian message, when communicated from a comprehensive Kingdom perspective, provides an agenda that can stand next to and above all other attempts to define the meaning of life, whether for the individual, the family, the church, or the nation. A Kingdom Agenda is based on God's Word — rather than a secular agenda based on human ideas — is the best way to make all of life work as our Creator intended. This six-session study can serve as a blueprint for the Christian life and as an encouragement to follow Christ. Don't miss it! ***A Sign-up sheet is in the Church Foyer. The cut-off date for sign-ups is Sunday, December 13, in order to allow time for ordering books. If you have any questions, contact Larry Robinson directly (***

Christmas Eve Worship

Poinsettia Orders



Christmas Eve
WORSHIP

5:00 p.m.—Family Worship: Christmas Drama Especially for the Young

We will present a “readers theater” of the Christmas story with simple costumes (directed by Bonnie Marchesani). The childrens’ choirs will sing as usual; and there will also be a sermon, offering, and passing of the light at the end of the service.

7:00 p.m.—Traditional Lessons and Carols More Adult Family Worship Service

This service is more traditional and includes Lessons and Carols, along with a sermon, offering and the passing of the light at the close of the service. There will be lots of music and the full Christmas Story. *If you would be interested in reading scripture at this service, please contact Gail (978-448-2091 or gail@uccgroton.org).*

Please use the order form below to order Poinsettias for our Sanctuary — cut out on the dotted line and mail with your check as instructed below. Thank you!



2015 Poinsettia Order Form

Due by Sunday, DECEMBER 13!

An assortment of red and white Poinsettias will be placed in the Sanctuary on **Sunday, December 20**

Plants will be delivered (after worship on December 27th) 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 _____

Make your check payable to **UCC Groton (memo: Poinsettia)**. Mail form and check to:

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

_____ Poinsettia Plant(s) @ \$15.00 each Total = \$ _____

For the bulletin insert:

Plant is Given by: _____

In Loving Memory of: _____

In Honor of: _____

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

Just So You Know

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

Office Hours

Tuesday and Thursday: 9:00 a.m.—5:00 p.m.

Wednesday: 2:00—5:00 p.m.

Friday: 9:00 a.m.—3:00 p.m.

Carol Zaiatz—Office Administrator

unioncc@uccgroton.org

Tuesday—Friday

8:30 a.m.—3:00 p.m.

(Church Office is closed Saturday—Monday)

Music Director: Bernard Crane

Cherub Choir: Bonnie Marchesani

Handbell Choir: Cheryl Townsend

Church Officers

Moderator: Stefanie Lempp

Treasurer: Dennis Carey

Clerk: Lori McElroy

Collector: Bob Goudey

Internal Auditor: Bruce Wyman

December Deacons

Various/Various

Prayer List: Feel free to call the church office to add or remove names from the prayer list.

Booking Events: When planning meetings, please call the church office to be sure the space is available and give dates/times to Carol so she can input them into the calendar.

Sermons: Copies of Pastor Miller's sermons are available on the website.

Weekly News Email: We now send this email through MailChimp.

Name Tags help us become friends. Please wear yours. Sign up on the nametag list on the small table in the vestibule, call or email the church office. You can use one of the blank name tags in the basket on the table until yours is ready.

Committee Chairs

Buildings & Grounds:

Chris Sullivan

Christian Education:

Anne Cahill

Church Council Member-at-Large:

Pat Woods

Diaconate:

Tim Dumont

Endowment:

Mary Hanson

Missions:

Janet Kennedy

Music:

Sheila Mitchell

Pastor Parish Relations:

Bebe Goudey

Stewardship & Finance:

Don Kennedy

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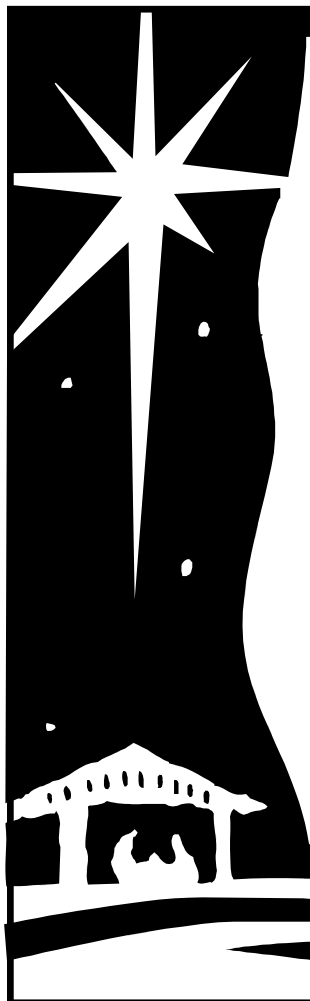
CHANGE SERVICE REQUESTED



NONPROFIT ORGANIZATION
U.S. POSTAGE PAID
GROTON, MA 01450

DATED MATERIAL
PLEASE DO NOT DELAY

[] *PLEASE REMOVE ME FROM YOUR MAILING LIST*



Advent/Christmas Worship

Nov. 29 – Advent One! *Advent Lessons and Carols*

Senior Choir
Pick-up Advent Devotions, Calendars, Wreaths/Candles for use at home.

Dec. 6 – Advent Two! *Gabriel Appears to Zechariah*

Gabriel appears to Zechariah

Senior and Junior Choirs
4:00 p.m.—Community Tree Lighting at our Church (p. 7)

Dec. 13 – Advent Three! *Gabriel Appears to Mary*

Gabriel appears to Mary

Senior and Cherub Choirs
Poinsettia orders are due!

Dec. 20 – Advent Four! *An Angel Appears to Joseph*

An Angel appears to Joseph

Senior, Cherub, and Handbell Choirs
Poinsettias decorate the Sanctuary (p. 8)
12:30 p.m.—Caroling (see p. 6)

Dec. 24 – Christmas Eve Candlelight Worship (p. 8)

The Angels Appear to the Shepherds

5:00 p.m.—Family Worship
7:00 p.m.—Lessons and Carols (If you would like to be one of the readers for this service, please contact Gail.)

Dec. 27 – Hymn Sing

The City That Forgot About Christmas