

# THE UNION COURIER

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

220 Main Street  
Groton, Massachusetts 01450



## January 2016

### *New Year's Message* FROM THE PASTOR

## New Year — New Endeavors!

As we round the corner into a new year, I'm mindful that this is also a new DECADE for us at church. Last summer, I began my 10<sup>th</sup> year as your Pastor! (June 1, 2016 will be our 10<sup>th</sup> "Anniversary" together.) At milestones like this though, I tend to look forward rather than backwards. And especially with the GPS (God's Purpose Seekers) Task Force winding down and morphing into the next phase of our life together, I am feeling an eagerness for "what's next."

The GPS has had us "try on" the prime directive of *Sharing Christ — Changing Lives*. Everything we do here at church should tie back to that purpose. Next, we asked "How do we share Christ and change lives?" and have articulated three primary ministries:

- Creating a Christian foundation for families
- Learning more about Jesus
- Living our faith beyond our walls

And so what do we (the church) need to live out and into these ministries? To answer that question, the Church Council has formed a **Facilities Steering Team** to begin a master planning process. Those who have been in our church for decades know as well as anyone that there are important issues we need to address in order to fulfill our purpose and mission. A primary issue is accessibility...while the sanctuary screams INaccessible, there is really NO area in our church (or Parish House) that is accessible (stairs everywhere; narrow doorways; small, hard to reach bathrooms...)

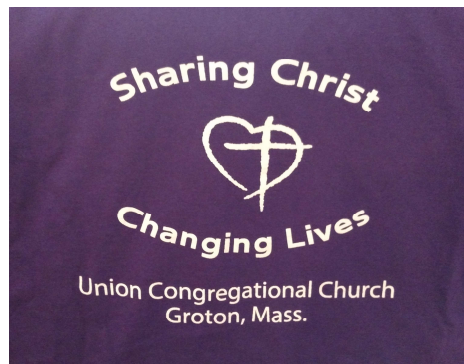
And there are plenty of other hurdles in our buildings and grounds to *Sharing Christ — Changing Lives* when you take the time to look around. That we own two buildings bisected by a road is problematic as well. Ever since I arrived here 9+ years ago, there has been a slow drip of people who ask me, "When are we going to sell the Parish House and build out back?" The quick answer is "I don't know."

What I do know is that it's time to begin exploring possibilities for how we can more effectively and efficiently ***Share Christ and Change Lives by creating a Christian foundation for families, learning more about Jesus, and living our faith beyond our walls.*** And so in the next weeks your Facilities Steering Team will be meeting with realtors to assess the value of the Parish House, meeting with potential architects who could help us develop a master plan, hosting a conversation after church on January 24 to hear your thoughts on all this. (You can follow the progress of these conversations through a link in the weekly email.)

The Christian faith is about becoming new — new every day, every year, every decade.... because in Christ we are given a new identity, we are set apart for HIS purposes. And the church is not the church if we don't point to Christ, and endeavor to make the world a better place. I look forward to exploring what this means for OUR life together in the year to come!

In Christ and His love,

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





# Our Church Family



## Ongoing Prayer List

Beverly  
Alex Haas

G. Keith  
Joe Swales

Evan Vincent  
Sharon & Gary Vincent

**This list has been refreshed as of January 1 (requests received after November 15 have been included here).** If there is a name you would like to put back on this list or if you would like to add a name, please let Gail Miller or Carol Zaiatz (978-448-2091 or [unioncc@uccgroton.org](mailto:unioncc@uccgroton.org)) know.

### Confidential Prayer Chain

**Need prayer and need it now?** Simply email [prayer@uccgroton.org](mailto: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.

### In Appreciation

Thank you to the Groton Woman's Club for the Christmas wreaths on the front door and the greens in the flower pots. These were donated in appreciation for the use of the church for their meetings throughout the year and a workshop for the Greens Sale.



- Tim Dumont, home recovering from a blood infection.
- Liz Smith and family, in the death of her father, Art Smith.
- Brian Keese, in the death of his brother, Larry.
- Ed Stratton, home recovering from knee surgery.
- Liz Lienhart, in the death of her brother.
- Erica Davenport, having knee replacement surgery on January 26.

### Thank You!

Thank you to all who purchased poinsettias for our Sanctuary this Christmas. The Sanctuary looked beautiful — what a wonderful way to add to the celebration of the birth of our Lord!

## January Birthdays

Peg DeBruyn	01/01	Megan Mahony	01/11	Catherine Daly	01/19
Madeleine Bugbee	01/02	Casey Sjoberg	01/12	Alison Rosenfeld	01/19
Chris Sullivan	01/03	Andrea McDonough	01/14	Bill Shute	01/21
Marvin Caldwell	01/05	Abby Burgess	01/14	Toni Bond	01/24
Bonnie Marchesani	01/06	Barbara Wyman	01/15	Taryn Emerle	01/27
Emma Milano	01/09	Matthew Plausse	01/17	Gary Emerle	01/30
Gordon Platt	01/09	Reverend Skip Lloyd	01/18	Bruce Wyman	01/30

If we missed your birthday, it is not in our database. Please email [unioncc@uccgroton.org](mailto:unioncc@uccgroton.org) to give us your birthday. Also, we would 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)! Or make a gift in memory of a loved one on their birthday. Last year we received \$3,014 and used these funds toward purchasing new Christmas decorations and church t-shirts. Please participate and watch our gifts grow!

# Church News

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## Annual Report



## Annual Report

The Annual Report will be available on the tables at the back of the Sanctuary on **Sunday, January 24**, two weeks prior to the Annual Meeting (February 7). This report will include a revised balanced budget for your consideration.

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## COURIER

DEADLINE

## February Courier

Please submit items for the February Courier by Friday, January 15, 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](mailto:unioncc@uccgroton.org). Thank you.

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## Annual Meeting

### Sunday, February 7, After Worship

All are encouraged to attend (especially church members)! We will approve nominations for Committees and Ministries (including formally removing the Flower Ministry as its functions have been assumed by the Deacons, Carol, Tom and other volunteers in the church), and approve the Final 2016 Operating Budget. We will also hear reports from the Endowment Committee, GPS, and discuss any other business that may come before us.

—Stefanie Lempp, Moderator

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## Church Council Meeting Summary

### December 16

Harvest Fair 2016: We discussed where the profits from the 2016 Harvest Fair might be directed (in whole or in part depending on the needs of the 2016 operating budget). If you have thoughts to share about this, please contact Rev. Gail or Stefanie Lempp.

B&G has bought a new stove and hood fan; they will be installed in the new year.

At the Annual Meeting, the Church Council will recommend that the Flower Ministry be removed from the Committee/Ministry Roster. For two years, the duties of the Flower Ministry have been taken on by the Deacons, Carol in the office, Tom our Sexton, and other volunteers in the church.

The Steering Task Force has been formed (Tim Dumont, Pete Hnath, Stefanie Lempp, Julie Platt and Gail Miller) to begin working to produce a Master Plan for a potential building project. On January 24, there will be an open brainstorming session to hear the thoughts and ideas from the congregation at large. Baby-sitting and a light lunch will be provided.

(As of Dec. 16) We have received 93 Pledges for 2016, including 11 new and 39 that increased an average of 21%; however, it is expected that the total will fall \$46K short of our goal. Contact Bob Goudey with your questions.

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## New Nursery Attendant

In December we welcomed Molly Hutchins as our new Nursery Attendant. Molly is a junior at Lowell Catholic and a Groton resident. (She came to us through Jean Armstrong on the CE Committee.)

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## Dream Big Conversation

### Sunday, January 24, After Worship

The Facilities Steering Team (Julie Platt, Pete Hnath, Stefanie Lempp, Gail Miller) want to hear your thoughts on a potential building project to fulfill our purpose of *Sharing Christ and Changing Lives*. Plan to stay after church — a light lunch and childcare will be provided.

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# Church News / Stewardship / Stephen Ministry

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## Gathering for New and Newer Folk January 31 (after worship)

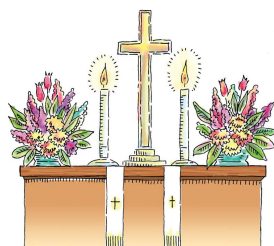
Are you new to our church in the past year or so? Do you have "curiosity questions" about our church? Here's an opportunity to meet other new folk, and to chat with Pastor Miller in an informal setting. You are invited: **On January 31, stay for extended Coffee Hour time in the Church Parlor.** (Child care and snacks provided.) We look forward to getting to know you and welcome you more fully.

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## Sunday Worship in the Event of a Storm

If weather should impede your ability to get to church, know that you are freely released from any responsibilities you had — whether for Sunday School, Choir, worship leading, Fellowship Hour. We will worship as we can with whomever we've got — adjusting the service accordingly and making decisions in real time. If church is cancelled, it will be posted on our website by 8:00 a.m. that morning.

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## 2016 Altar Flowers

The 2016 Altar Flower chart is in the downstairs hallway of the church. Country Florist delivers a center arrangement to the altar on Saturday every week. If you would like to dedicate flowers on a particular Sunday, please: 1) Fill in your name and dedication on the 2016 Flower Chart (so that Carol can include this in the bulletin); 2) send a check for \$25 (made out to the UCC; memo: Altar Flowers) to the church office (220 Main Street, Groton, MA 01450). The church will pay the bill to Country Florist. You don't need to call Lisa at Country Florist (978-433-8974) unless you want to change the arrangement to two bouquets (she'll let you know the cost increase) or to request a particular color or design.

Call Carol in the office if you have any questions (978-448-2091).

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## Stewardship

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### Offering Envelopes

Dated weekly offering envelopes are available at church, downstairs on the hallway table, for everyone who pledged. We also have additional envelopes for anyone else who would like them; please let Bob Goudey ( ) and ( ) or the church office (978-448-2091) know you are interested and we will get them to you.

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## Stephen Ministry

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### New Year's Resolution #1: *Move on!!*

If only it were that simple! You've tried everything you know, but the hurt won't stop aching and the pain is still too sharp.

A Stephen Minister would like to be there for you. As a caring Christian friend, your Stephen Minister will listen as you sort through your feelings, without judging, or "solving," or saying, "Just move on!" Importantly, it's confidential.

To find out more about Stephen Ministry or to receive a Stephen Minister's care, call Pastor Gail Miller or Andrea McDonough, Stephen Leader at Union Congregational Church (email: ; phone: ).

Sometimes you just need  
someone to walk along  
side you for a while







## Teachers Needed

There are a number of Sundays 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](mailto:unioncc@uccgroton.org)). Thank you for helping to teach our children about the Christian faith.

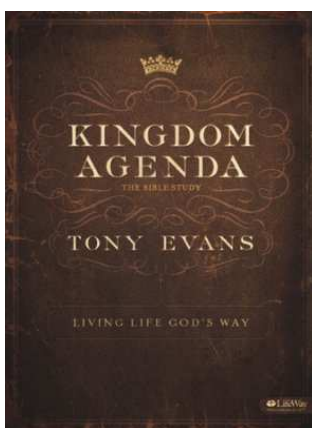
### Christian Education Committee

—Anne Cahill, Chair  
—Diane Landry

—Jean Armstrong  
—Anne Larsen

—Kelli Hnath

## Adult Education



### Small Group Study—*The Kingdom Agenda*

Starting Sunday, January 10 (and 1/24, 2/7, 2/21, 3/6 & 3/20)

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.

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!

*If you have not signed up but are interested, contact Larry Robinson directly ( ; ).*

# **Bible Study/Cookies 'n' Carols/Family Ministry**

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## **Wednesday Evening Bible Study**

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

Join us as we begin to study the book of Acts in *The Present Word, The Christian Community Comes Alive*. As Christians we'll discuss: What forms a community? How is a community sustained after its initial enthusiasm ebbs? How is a community protected from internal and external threats to its existence? The Acts of the Apostles tells us that the church is called to be a community of witnesses. The first unit examines ways the people of the early church community lived and shared their faith in Jesus, which built the foundation for future growth. *Contact Janet Kennedy if you are interested in attending.*



## **Thursday Morning Bible Study**

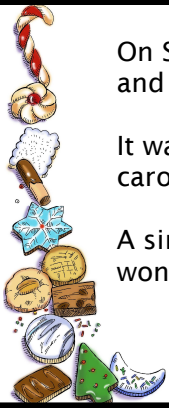
**10:00 a.m.**

We return to the Gospel of Mark after the Holidays. May they have provided you with inspiration and sustenance for the coming year. Mark has been described as a passionate Passion story with a long introduction. Mark crafts his stories so they inform and augment each other adding layers of meaning. Join us for spirited discussions leavened with laughter and profound insights, and for tea, coffee and cookies. *Contact Marvin Caldwell ( )*

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## **Cookies 'N' Carols**

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On Sunday afternoon, December 20, 28 people (of all ages) sang and delivered 54 plates of cookies.

It was a joyful experience, as we shared more than cookies and carols; we shared God's love!

A sincere thank you to the cookie bakers, singers and helpers who participated in this wonderful event. We made \$422.30 to go toward the Youth Mission Trip this coming summer.



—Anne Cahill and Diane Landry

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## **Family Ministry**

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### **Family Ministry Sledding**

**Saturday, January 23**

**2:00 — 4:00 p.m.**

*Let it Snow, Let it Snow, Let it Snow...* Weather permitting (snow, snow, snow), we will meet behind the library to go sledding and have hot cocoa. Bring your sleds! Drop by anytime between 2:00 and 4:00 p.m. for some family sledding fun! All ages welcome! If you have questions, contact Corissa and Larry Robinson at (cell).

### **Family Ministry Skiing at Crotched Mountain Resort**

On Sundays from 2:00-5:00 p.m., it's family ski time at Crotched Mountain! The area offers discounted lift tickets, discounted rentals, and free ski tips. It would be great to get a group together to enjoy an afternoon of skiing. Contact Corissa Robinson ( or ) to let her know if you are interested and she will coordinate a date (or perhaps dates!).



# Missions

## *Thank You, Thank You, Thank you...*



### Giving Tree

Many thanks for all your support in December of The Giving Tree and The Christmas Angels. We provided over 40 gifts for patients at Tewksbury State Hospital, individuals often forgotten and many without family support. Thank you to our team of gift wrappers and to Cassie Sampas for organizing this mission effort. Thank you for your generous support of the organizations selected to be a Christmas Angel.



234 Barnum Road • Devens, MA  
P.O. Box 1 • Ayer, MA 01432  
978-772-4627 • [www.loavesfishespantry.org](http://www.loavesfishespantry.org)

Our Thanksgiving Food Drive netted an impressive 659 pound of food for *Loaves & Fishes*. Well done! On your next trip to the grocery store please pick up some canned fruits and veggies, cereal, boxed potatoes,

soups, tuna, or other staples and leave the bag on the landing on the stairs. The York family has generously offered to take up where the Deans left off, delivering our donations to L&F. (Thank you, Bill and Martha, for transporting our donations to Loaves & Fishes during your time here.)

## *Hagar Sisters and Teen Challenge*

On behalf of the congregation \$1,000 each was given to *Hagar Sisters* and *Teen Challenge*. *Hagar Sisters* works to end domestic abuse of women through the transforming power of God. *Teen Challenge* is a Christ-centered, faith-based solution for youth, adults, and families struggling with life-controlling problems, such as addiction.

Did you know that you can support *Teen Challenge New England & New Jersey* by shopping on Amazon? It's easy. Just go to [smile.amazon.com](http://smile.amazon.com). Find *Teen Challenge New England Inc.* on the Amazon List and click "select." Now on qualified purchases, Amazon will donate 0.5% to *Teen Challenge New England & New Jersey*.

## Groton Community Dinner

### Save the date: Friday, February 26 — Our Turn to Serve

It's our turn to host the Groton Community Dinner at the First Parish Church by cooking, setting up, cleaning up, and serving. More information will be provided later in January.

#### Missions Committee

—Janet Kennedy, Chair  
—Julie Platt

—Brenda Barker  
—Pete Hnath

—Halsey Platt

## International Mission Opportunity: Africa

### Information Session: January 17 at 1:30 p.m.

#### Crossway Christian Church (503 Main Dunstable Road, Nashua, NH)

Have you often wondered how you can experience God in a whole new way? Have you ever really wanted to see God move? Have you wondered if serving abroad might be exactly what God is calling you to do, but you are unsure? Well, have we got the event for you!

Since 2008, Crossway has been working with Missions of Hope International (MoHI), which is a Christ-centered, non-governmental organization that reaches out to orphaned and vulnerable children and their families in the Mathare Valley slums of Nairobi, Kenya. **Projects include:** Vacation Bible School, Classroom Teaching, Special Education, Home Visits, Microfinance & Small Business, Pastor Training.

Contact Larry Robinson (  
joining him on this trip.

or

) if you're interested in learning more or

# Youth Ministry

## Middle School Ministry — Mark Your Calendars!



### Sledding and Dinner

Sunday, January 31

3:00 p.m. - Meet at Church

5:00 p.m. - Family Dinner

We'll meet at church and carpool to a sledding hill at Devens. Then at 5:00 we'll gather at the Sjoberg's home (a potluck supper. (All weather permitting of course!)



) for

### Coming in February...

#### Winter Retreat

February 26-28

North Conway, NH

Saturday's activity choices include skiing at Mt. Cranmore, cross country skiing, snowshoeing, games at the Retreat House. Plan to spend a weekend away with your church friends.



## Youth Mission Trip Deadlines



Queens, NY  
June 28—July 3



Youth grades 6 – 12 are invited to serve in mission to Queens, NY (June 28 – July 3).

Cost: \$300 (scholarship available, contact Gail)

Our first deadline is January 14, when we need to know who **intends** to join us on this trip.

Our FINAL deadline is Feb. 10, when need to know who **WILL be going**.

Contact Pastor Miller (978-448-2091 or [gail@uccgroton.org](mailto:gail@uccgroton.org)) with your questions or to let her know if your son/daughter plans to participate.



# Just So You Know

## Union Congregational Church

### United Church of Christ

220 Main Street  
Groton, Massachusetts 01450  
978-448-2091  
[www.uccgroton.org](http://www.uccgroton.org)

### The Reverend Gail Miller

Cell phone: 978-877-2177

[gail@uccgroton.org](mailto: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](mailto: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

## January Deacon

Andrea McDonough

**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

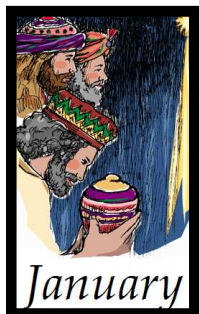
**Missions:**  
Janet Kennedy

**Pastor Parish Relations:**  
Bebe Goudey

**Stewardship & Finance:**  
Don Kennedy

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Groton, MA 01450

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## **January Highlights**

### **Sermon Series: The Master's Plan—The Master Plan**

**Texts from the book of the Acts of the Apostles**

**January 10—The Foundation**

**January 17—Growing in Knowledge**

**January 24—Serving in Love**

#### **January 23 (Saturday)**

Family Ministry Sledding (see p. 6)

#### **January 24**

Annual Report and Updated 2016 Budget available in Sanctuary or Church Office  
*Dream Big Conversation*—after worship (see p. 4)

#### **January 31**

New Folk Discussion After Worship (see p. 3)  
Middle School Sledding (see p. 8)

#### **February 7**

Annual Meeting after Worship (see p. 3)