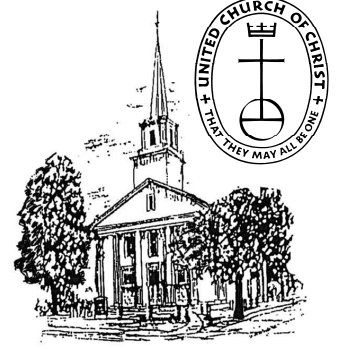


# THE UNION COURIER

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

220 Main Street  
Groton, Massachusetts 01450



## January 2017

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

God was with us in 2016 and will be with us in 2017. This is promised!

When Jesus was born, God revealed the birth of his son in the form of a star to "wise men" or magi from the East. After two years of following the star, they were led to Jerusalem to inquire of the king (a very bad and mean King Herod) where they might find another King, born more recently. Well, Insecure King Herod needed to rid the world of this new rival to his authority, and so ordered all male children under age two to be killed. This sent the Holy Family fleeing — they became refugees. I wonder how their faith fared during these trying times...if they wondered if God was REALLY with them.

An author I like (David Lose) writes about this story (found in the Gospel of Matthew), and the promise of God-with-us:

When you think about it, Emmanuel — God-with-us — wouldn't really mean all that much if it was only God with us during the tender moments, during times of celebration, during the Christmas Eve services of our lives. Yes, those moments of joy are gifts from God and it's right to give God thanks for them. But if we're glad that God is with us in times of rejoicing, we're desperate to know that God is also with us in times of grief, loss, and fear. Yes, this reading is tough to hear a week after Christmas, but for this reason it is also important.

And Matthew goes even further. For God is not only with us, God is also for us, promising to bring us through difficult times to the other side, if not unscathed, nevertheless still victorious. Matthew structures this passage around prophecies, demonstrating that even the darkest portions of Jesus' story turn within a larger narrative of God's providence and protection. This is not to say that all these events are simply part of some larger, if rather dark, "plan," but rather to remind us that nothing that happens to Jesus — or, by extension, to us — is beyond the bounds of God's love and activity and cannot be redeemed and even used by God.

God is with us, even in the darkest times. And God is also for us, promising not only to accompany us through difficult times but also to bring us to the other side that, in time, we might know the fullness of joy that is life in Christ. Not a bad message to hear on this first day of the New Year.

Bless you as we turn the page to a New Year, confident that while some things change with the passage of time, one thing NEVER CHANGES — God is with us!

Together on the journey,

*Gail*



Look! The virgin will conceive a child! She will give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel, which means

*"God is with us."*

Matthew 1:23



# Our Church Family/Stewardship



## Ongoing Prayer List

Kathi Bond  
Jack Cornforth

Donna Sattler  
Rudy Schmid

This list has been refreshed as of January 1 (requests received after November 1 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 ( ) 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.



- Charlene Legge and family, in the death of Charlene's mother, Marlene Byron, on Christmas morning. **A Memorial Service is planned for Sunday, 1/29, in the afternoon.**

- Scott and the Burgess family in the death of Scott's mother, Jane, on December 5.
- Edie Tompkins and family, in the death of Bert on December 2.

## Thank You's!



Thank you to the Handbell Choir and Robert Houde's Boy Scout Troup for the beautiful cross-style wreaths on the front door of the church. Also, to the Groton Woman's Club for the Christmas wreaths they provided in appreciation for the use of the church for their meetings throughout the year and a workshop for the Greens Sale.



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!



We thank Bob Goudey and Dennis Carey for the fresh coat of paint in the Parlor! Check it out the next time you are at church!

## January Birthdays

Jack Horsman	01/01	Megan Mahony	01/11	Jeff Kubick	01/20
Shauna Morrison	01/01	Casey Sjoberg	01/12	Alison Rosenfeld	01/20
Madeleine Bugbee	01/02	Abby Burgess	01/14	Bill Shute	01/21
Janice Owen	01/03	Andrea McDonough	01/14	Kathleen McKenzie	01/22
Chris Sullivan	01/03	Barbara Wyman	01/15	Toni Bond	01/24
Marvin Caldwell	01/05	John Biocchi	01/17	Taryn Emerle	01/27
Bonnie Marchesani	01/06	Matthew Plausse	01/17	Gary Emerle	01/30
Emma Milano	01/09	Reverend Skip Lloyd	01/18	Bruce Wyman	01/30
Gordon Platt	01/09	Catherine Daly	01/19		

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?

## Stewardship

### Offering Envelopes

Dated weekly offering envelopes are available (in church on the downstairs hallway table) for everyone who pledged. We also have additional envelopes for anyone else who would like them. If you are interested, please let Bob Goudey know, or the church office ([unioncc@uccgroton.org](mailto:unioncc@uccgroton.org), 978-448-2091).

# 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 15**, two weeks prior to the Annual Meeting (January 29). This report will include an updated balanced budget for your consideration.

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## Feedback Circle: Stewardship

**Sunday, January 22**

### After Worship in the Parish House

This is an opportunity to share with the Stewardship Team your experiences and thoughts around giving and generosity. A sign-up sheet is available in the hallway downstairs. *Leaders: Halsey Platt and Andrea McDonough*

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## Annual Meeting

**Sunday, January 29, After Worship**

All are encouraged to attend (especially church members)! We will approve nominations for Committees and Ministries and approve the Final 2017 Operating Budget. We will also discuss any other business that may come before us.

—*Stefanie Lempp, Moderator*

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## Church Council Meeting Summary December 14

The January 1 worship service will be at 4:30 p.m. followed by a potluck; communion will be on January 8.

Myrtle Murphy is turning 95! Happy Birthday!

Pledges for 2017 are coming in below our goal; there will be a 'Faith' line item of \$6,800 to balance the 2017 budget.

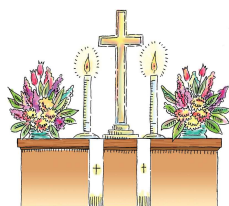
This winter, the Stewardship committee will be sponsoring a new way to give — a Winter Carnival for the women's bathroom. There will be opportunities to help renovate and to buy needed materials for the bathroom; as well as food for the work crews (details on p. 5).

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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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## 2017 Altar Flowers

The 2017 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 2017 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 design or request a particular color (she'll let you know if there is a cost increase). Call Carol (978-448-2091) if you have any questions.

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# New Approach to Fellowship Hour

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## Everyone Takes a Turn

One of the most joyous times in our life together as a church happens after worship every Sunday. The Fellowship Hall is abuzz with conversation and greetings, folks sit at tables catching up on the week, children play and spin on the carpet and the pillar-poles and under the tables.

Creating the environment for this lovely and lively fellowship is an important part of who we are. Visitors and new folk see and experience the warmth of our life together, and we have an opportunity to meet and greet them.

While the church provides (pays for) the coffee / tea / supplies, we (the people!) need to provide the people to make it happen each week. The Kitchen Ministry (anywhere from 4 - 6 people) cannot be expected to be the kitchen workers for the 52 Sundays of the year.

And so, starting in February, we will take turns serving as the kitchen "staff" each week.

**How will this work?** There are 48 Sundays from Feb. 5 - Dec. 31, and so two capable households will be assigned to each Sunday (three households for Confirmation, Easter, Sept. 10, and Dec. 24). This will work out to each capable household serving once or perhaps twice in 2017.

**You mean I have no say in when I serve?** No...Should you prefer to choose your date now to avoid times you know you'll be away/unavailable, please email Carol (unioncc@uccgroton.org) in the church office by January 15.

**What if I can't serve on the date I've been given?** Once the schedule has been made, you will receive the full schedule for the year. Should you need to change your date, you will need to swap with someone or find a replacement; then let Carol know who that will be.

**How on earth will I remember when my turn is when it is weeks/months away?** As your assigned date approaches, Carol will send you a reminder.

**What if something happens last minute and we just can't make it?** Having two households per week will ensure that, if last minute emergencies crop up, there is still someone to show up that morning.

**What exactly are we responsible for?** Set up - serving - clean up. This will mean arriving a little early and staying a little late. Details / instructions will be sent to you once the schedule is made.

**What if I've never been in the kitchen and have NO CLUE how to do this?** Once the schedule has been made, you will receive instructions for how to set up / serve / clean up Fellowship Hour. If you are new to the kitchen, we invite you to plan to stop in sometime in the weeks ahead of your Sunday and ask whomever is in there to show you the ropes. We will have good instructions by the coffee maker and on the refrigerator so you will know exactly what to do.

**Will there be enough coffee/cream/sugar/supplies?** The Kitchen Ministry is responsible for monitoring and resupplying the kitchen. Carol manages the coffee orders.

**What about the food on the table - where does that come from?** The food offered each week is a combination of items that the church pays for, homemade goodies, and "leftovers" from the prior week or events. Details about this will be in your instructions.

**Tell me again why we're doing it this way?**

- Because Fellowship Hour is extremely important to the life of our church.
- Because sharing in the work of the church by taking a turn is a way we live our faith.
- Because serving each other is what Christ wants us to do.
- Because it feels good to do our part.
- Because a ministry that serves so many should be shared by many.
- Because bringing joy to others is what Christians do.

We thank you in advance for your faithful and joyful service to our church!



# Sunday School /Bible Study/ Bathroom Project



January 8  
*Jesus' Baptism* Matthew 3:13-27

January 15  
*The Lamb of God* John 1:29-42

January 22  
*The Disciples* Matthew 4:12-23; 9:9-13; 10:1-4

January 29  
*The Beatitudes* Matthew 5:1-12

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## Christian Education Committee

—Anne Cahill, Chair  
—Krista Kubick

—Jean Armstrong  
—Diane Landry

—Kelli Hnath  
—Anne Larsen

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**Wednesday Evening**  
**7:30 p.m. in the Pastor's Office**  
Contact: Janet Kennedy

**Thursday Morning Bible Study**  
**10:00 a.m. 26 Court Street**  
Contact: Marvin Caldwell ( )

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## Bathroom Renovation Project

(aka Winter Carnival in/for the Women's Bathroom)

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When new people come to a church, their first impressions are formed by a number of things, including the condition of the bathrooms (believe it or not!). And as many of you have noted, the women's bathroom in the Church building could use some updating. And so from February 2 - 11 we will take on a ten-day work project (aka "Carnival") to overhaul this space. The project will include painting the walls, retiling the floor, installing new fixtures, lighting and stall doors, adding hooks and a fold down changing table (and fixing the door that doesn't stay closed!).

And since we know many of you are handy with home projects, we've decided to keep this in-house and do the work ourselves. Also, since our decision to proceed with this was made after we determined the 2017 operating budget, we need to invite you to make a special gift by purchasing materials for the project.

### ***Here's how you can get involved:***

- **Financially:** Visit our registry (link will be provided in the Friday email beginning Jan. 6, or at the Project Table at Fellowship Hour beginning Jan. 8). You can purchase anything from a toilet paper holder to all the new stall partition/doors.
- **Skills/Time:** We have broken the project into **15 tasks** and will need **nearly 50 volunteers** in varying capacities — from demolition, to making a trip to the dumpster, to painting, to more skilled work of installing toilets/light fixtures. We will also need **people to provide meals** for the workers who will be spending their time at the church over the ten-day period.

Beginning **Sunday, January 8, we will have a Volunteer Board at the Project Table** in the Fellowship Hall. There you can see the full list of the different tasks, exactly what days you'll be needed for these tasks, and can sign up accordingly. (After January 8, the information will also be available online through Sign-up Genius.)

What a great way to support your church and start the new year out by participating in a project that is much needed and will have a lasting impact on our church for decades to come!

*There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit distributes them. There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. There are different kinds of working, but in all of them and in everyone it is the same God at work.* ~1 Corinthians 12:4-6

Questions? Contact the Stewardship Team: Halsey Platt, Craig Smith, Bob Goudey, Andrea McDonough, Liz McQuillin, Gail Miller

## *Thank You, Thank You!*



**Giving Tree**

Many thanks for all your support in December of The Giving Tree and The Christmas Angels. We provided 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.

### Missions Committee

—Julie Platt, Chair      —Brenda Barker      —Pete Hnath  
—Lynn Manalo      —Halsey Platt

## *Christmas Eve Christmas Pageant*





# Youth Ministry

# Just So You Know

Middle School Ministry	Youth Mission Trip Deadline
<p><b>Youth Group Meeting</b>  <b>Sunday, January 22</b>  <b>5:00 - 6:30 p.m.</b></p> <p><b>Mark your calendar...</b></p> <p><b>Winter Retreat</b>  <b>March 10-12, North Conway, NH</b>            Saturday's activity choices include skiing at Mt. Cranmore, tubing, winter coaster and zip lining. Plan to spend a weekend away with your church friends.</p>	<p><b>Rutland, VT</b>  <b>June 25—June 2</b></p> <p>Youth grades 6 - 12 are invited to serve in mission. Cost: \$300.</p> <p>Indicate your son/daughter's <b>intention to participate by January 29</b>. Your confirmation and <b>payment to secure their spot is due February 10</b>. Contact Pastor Miller with your questions or to let her know your son/daughter plans to participate.</p>

## Just So You Know

Union Congregational Church	Committee/Ministry Contacts
<p><b>United Church of Christ</b>            220 Main Street            Groton, Massachusetts 01450  <b>978-448-2091    <a href="http://www.uccgroton.org">www.uccgroton.org</a></b></p> <p><b>The Reverend Gail Miller</b>  <b>Cell phone: 978-877-2177    <a href="mailto:gail@uccgroton.org">gail@uccgroton.org</a></b>            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.</p> <p><b>Carol Zaiatz—Office Administrator</b>  <b><a href="mailto:unioncc@uccgroton.org">unioncc@uccgroton.org</a></b>            Tuesday—Friday: 8:30 a.m.—3:00 p.m.  <i>(Church Office is closed Saturday—Monday)</i></p> <p><b>Bernard Crane, Music Director</b></p> <p><b>Bonnie Marchesani, Cherub Choir</b></p> <p><b>Cheryl Townsend, Handbell Choir</b></p>	<p><b>Buildings &amp; Grounds:</b>  <b>John Brooks</b></p> <p><b>Barb Lefebvre</b></p> <p><b>Christian Education: Anne Cahill</b></p> <p><b>Church Council Member-at-Large: Pat Woods</b></p> <p><b>Diaconate:</b>  <b>Greg Balligan</b></p> <p><b>Steve Legge</b></p> <p><b>Endowment: Mary Hanson</b></p> <p><b>FaST: Pete Hnath</b></p> <p><b>Kitchen Ministry: Joel Hughes</b></p> <p><b>Missions: Julie Platt</b></p> <p><b>Pastor Parish Relations Committee:</b>  <b>Bebe Goudey</b></p> <p><b>Stewardship &amp; Finance: Liz McQuillin</b></p> <p><b>Technology Ministry:</b>  <b>Mike Smith</b></p> <p><b>Mary Hanson (webmaster)</b></p>
Church Officers	
<p><b>Moderator: Stefanie Lempp</b></p> <p><b>Treasurer: Dennis Carey</b></p> <p><b>Clerk: Lori McElroy</b></p> <p><b>Collector: Bob Goudey</b></p> <p><b>Internal Auditor: Bruce Wyman</b></p>	

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

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## **January Highlights**

### **January 8**

Epiphany Sunday/Holy Communion

### **January 15**

Annual Report and Updated 2017 Budget available in Sanctuary or Church Office

### **January 22**

Feedback Circle: Stewardship (after worship) (see p. 3)

### **January 29**

Annual Meeting after Worship (see p. 3)

### **Also see...**

- New Approach to Fellowship Hour (see p. 4)
- Bathroom Renovation Project (see p. 5)

