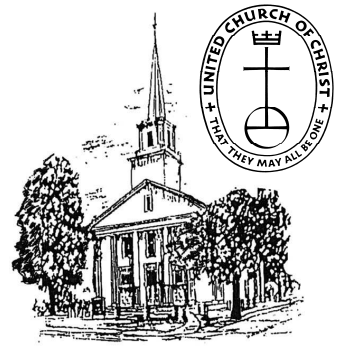


THE UNION COURIER

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

220 Main Street
Groton, Massachusetts 01450



November 2017



Christmas Eve
WORSHIP

Christmas Eve Worship New Times Announced Here!

Christmas decorations have been arriving in stores earlier and earlier each year it seems. Though a couple of stores are making conscious decisions to do one holiday at a time (a shout out to *Nordstrom* on this; and *Target*, who will not have decorations in the front of their stores, though they will have Christmas items/displays throughout).

However, this year at church the "Christmas Creep" began in June when the Deacons and Christian Education Committee began discussing Christmas Eve Worship 2017. (The Church Council also discussed this in August.) Because THIS year (it happened last in 2006) Christmas Eve falls on a Sunday, we discussed how this might affect who comes to church that day and when. (As far back as anyone can remember, Christmas Eve Worship has been at 5:00 p.m. for Children-friendly and 7:00 p.m. for Lessons and Carols.)

Since 2006 a few things have changed for us, and it became really clear last year that changes in worship times might also need to be made. One of the greatest challenges has been that having the two evening services so close together in time has caused an issue with parking — people are arriving for the late service while people from the early service are still at church! Creating more time between the services makes a lot of sense to alleviate this.

Also, with worship at 5:00 and 7:00, both services are at or on the dinner hour. It seems wise to move them so that people can worship and have more time for a more enjoyable Christmas Eve meal.

And so, while keeping the nature of the services the same as always (early worship will be really kid friendly, and late worship will be traditional Lessons and Carols with the Sr. Choir) **the Deacons have decided to move the services to 4:00 and 8:00.** (Both services will have a sermon and the passing of the light while singing Silent Night as usual.)

We are aware that some of you will LOVE the change, some of you will NOT love the change, and some of you won't care! (Which has been people's feelings about our current times for decades — some love it, some don't, some don't care.)

While this change was prompted by the way the date fell on the calendar this year, we can't say if this time change is permanent or not. We will be pleased to hear from you how it goes this year, and will certainly discuss this at our January Deacons, CE, and Council meetings. We may be discussing Christmas all the year round in 2018 (though I hope not)!

If you want to learn more about how we came to land on 4:00 & 8:00 for worship times, find me, any of the Deacons or anyone on the CE Committee, and we'll be pleased to fill you in on the conversations we had.

So.... Now.... Back to our regularly scheduled programming.... NOVEMBER; which begins with All Saints Sunday, is filled with Stewardship stuff and a Congregational Meeting. Read on here to learn more!

Gail

Stewardship



God's Abundant Love—Our Grateful Response

Give thanks to the God of gods, His love endures forever.
(Psalm 136:2)

Earlier this summer, Gail's sermon, *The Dump Truck of God's Grace*, left us with an image of a dump truck full of God's love and grace backing up our driveways with another delivery of his overflowing, unconditional, and enduring love.

Through this love and grace, God has provided us with abundant lives. Everything we have comes from God, including our family and friends, our careers, our possessions, this church, and our church family. How can we not be thankful for all the blessings in our lives? How can we not be content and grateful? This gratefulness should be more than a feeling. It should be an attitude that drives how we live our lives. As stewards of all that God has provided, we are called to live our lives in God-pleasing ways — giving back through worship, service, and pledging. Our giving can be an act of gratitude and thanks. As we approach pledge Sunday, please take a moment to appreciate God's love and all that he has provided and consider what your grateful response to God's love will look like.

Pledge Sunday will be November 19.

The relationship of our Annual Stewardship Fundraising Drive (happening now) to a future Capital Campaign

Q: What is the difference between the Annual Stewardship Drive and a Capital Campaign?

A: The Annual Stewardship Drive is what we do every year to fund our ongoing ministries and operating expenses.

A Capital Campaign is a request for donations from the congregation done periodically to fund a particular project or mission. In a Capital Campaign, you are invited to give to the specific project before us — in this case the Building Project.

Q: Does my 2018 pledge go toward the Building Project at all?

A: No. Your pledge goes to support our Operating Budget. This is what it takes to "operate" the church year-by-year. The 2018 budget will be published on November 5. There will be a line item in there for the work of the Capital Campaign Committee (printing of brochures, mailings, resources and expenses to support the work of the committee), but this is not the building itself.

Q: When will you be asking for money for the Building Project?

A: The fundraising campaign for the Building Project will be a Capital Campaign, which the congregation would authorize at a formal congregational meeting (currently scheduled for January 28 at our Annual Meeting). The Capital Campaign committee would then begin work with our consultant, and would invite your pledges to the Capital Campaign probably sometime in the spring.

Q: Does that mean I should reduce my pledge, so I can give more generously to the Building Project?

A: Both the operating budget and the future building project are important. But remember, our operating expenses do not decrease because we have this other thing on the horizon; in fact our operating budget typically increases by 3% each year. Realizing a modest increase in our pledged income each year is the mark of a healthy church, and through the Capital Campaign and other funding sources we will figure out how to support the building project.

Q: But what does that look like for me?

A: We really can't answer that here. Each household in our church is unique. There are creative ways to give and to understand how our giving to the church can be realized. Pastor Miller and the Stewardship Team can help you think this through confidentially. Feel free to contact any of us.

Stewardship Team

—Bob Goudey
—Halsey Platt

—Andrea McDonough
—Craig Smith

—Gail Miller



Our Church Family/B&G



Ongoing Prayer List: This list is refreshed in January and June. If there is a name you would like to put back on this list or one you would like to add, please let Gail Miller or Carol Zaiatz (978-448-2091 or unioncc@uccgroton.org) know.

Diane Black
Kathi Bond
Megan Bettison
Jack Cornforth

Charlie Elwood
Scott Joyce
Ellie Kennedy

Jack Lyons
Myrtle Murphy
Holly Norton

Debbie Sampson
Rudi Schmid
Liz Waggoner



PRAYERS
of the
CHURCH

- Helen Misselhorn, who is home now.
- The families of the Las Vegas shooting victims and all who suffer the devastation of this tragedy.
- All those who have been affected by the wildfires in California.

Confidential Prayer Chain Need prayer and need it now? Share your concern with the Confidential Prayer Chain. Email prayer@uccgroton.org and your request will go to the confidential prayers; or call Lori McElroy (978-448-2841) and she will put your prayer request in motion. Prayer requests are held in confidence among those who are praying for you, and you may request that your name be withheld.

November Birthdays

Lisa Hitsos	11/02	Krista Kubick	11/08	Kelli Hnath	11/19
Makayla Hughes	11/02	Halsey Platt	11/10	Bryce June	11/21
Caroline Caiozzo	11/03	Jacqueline Gervais	11/11	Robert Rosenfeld	11/22
Karen Sjoberg	11/04	Erica Davenport	11/12	Sally Waite	11/22
Hailey Sullivan	11/05	Samuel Landry	11/13	Anna Moon	11/23
Nina Morrison	11/06	Bob Brown	11/16	Izzy Smith	11/24
Connie Wall-Haas	11/06	Heather Houde	11/16	Briana Manalo	11/25
Liam Colbert	11/07	Kim Daly	11/18	Barbara Gale	11/26
Curtis Prestia	11/07	Leon Avey	11/19	Diana Mendel	11/30

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?

Buildings & Grounds



Church Fall Clean-up Day Saturday, November 18, 12:00—5:00 p.m.

You are invited! Outdoor clean-up and raking leaves will be our primary job. If you can, please bring a rake and a tarp for the clean-up. Contact John Brooks (). Thank you!

Volunteers Needed for Winter Shoveling

Your Buildings & Grounds Committee will be prepared for the upcoming snow, but could use additional help. We'll have shovels, salt, and sand at church — when you finish your driveway, please lend a hand here on Sunday mornings after a storm to clear a sidewalk or two. Contact John Brooks ().



Buildings & Grounds

—John Brooks, Chair
—Bill Gale, Jr.

—Bonnie Biocchi
—Joe Zambuto

—John Biocchi

Church News

Church Council Meeting—October 25

November 19 is Pledge Sunday (watch for further information); as well as our Special Congregational Meeting to approve the Preliminary 2018 Operating Budget (see article below).

On December 3, there will be a presentation and update from the FaST Team on the possible building project.

We spend the bulk of our meeting discussing and approving the proposed 2018 Operating Budget to go to the Congregation for final approval. We also discussed how we will spend the Birthday Fund monies in 2017 (hopefully to be decided at our November meeting), and possible Fellowship opportunities we might offer during the winter.

Special Congregational Meeting Sunday, November 19, in the Sanctuary (after Worship)

Copies of the proposed Preliminary 2018 Operating Budget will be available in the Sanctuary and the Church Office beginning November 5. Then on November 19, after worship, all are invited to a meeting at which the membership will approve a Preliminary Operating Budget for 2018 (to be finalized at our Annual Meeting on January 28). Questions may be directed to our Treasurer, Dennis Carey (DCareyUCC@yahoo.com), Jon Sjoberg (), Stewardship & Finance, Moderator Stefanie Lempp (), or Reverend Gail Miller (gail@uccgroton.org).

Building Project Informational Meeting Sunday, December 3, after Worship

This will be a "your questions answered" meeting, so if you have lingering questions that you've not yet brought to a meeting or a person (Gail or anyone on FaST), please find one of us sooner rather than later so we can provide the best information possible on December 3. We will share the findings of the Feasibility Study and outline next steps and possibilities in light of our discoveries through our meetings with the town.

FaST: Stefanie Lempp, Julie Platt, Pete Hnath, Gail Miller

Others who've been helping with these recent steps: Dennis Carey, Bob Goudey, Halsey Platt, Craig Smith, Mike Smith



Ladies' Lunch

The Bamboo Restaurant (Westford)

Friday, November 3

Meet at the church at 11:45 a.m. to carpool

Join your friends from church for lunch. (The restaurant varies each month.)

All women of the church are invited! If you need a ride, contact Janice Owen () () 193) or Brenda Semienko ().



Decorate the Sanctuary

Saturday, December 2 at 9:00 a.m.

Start the season with the Deacons for the annual decorating of the church Sanctuary for Advent and Christmas. Bring the whole family for a festive morning of beautifying the church. There will be hot cocoa and coffee available. Everyone is welcome—please join us!

Committees / Sunday School / Youth Ministry



Serving on Committees and Ministries

As we prepare for the Annual Meeting on January 28, 2018 (when the “turnover” of committee members occurs), the Church Council invites you to let us know your interest in serving on Committees and Ministries. *Committee* positions require formal membership in the church and *Ministry* positions allow for anyone to serve. The current Committee/Ministry Roster can be found inside the Church Directory (available on the back tables in the Sanctuary).

Feel free to approach Stefanie Lempp (Moderator) or Pastor Miller with your questions or to express an interest in a particular Committee or Ministry.

Sunday School Schedule

November 5—All Saints Sunday
Be Humble Matthew 23:1-12

November 12—*Ten Bridesmaids*
Matthew 25:1-13

November 19—*Parable of the Talents*
Matthew 25:14-30

November 26—Carols and Crafts
Fellowship Hall

Christian Education Committee

—Kelli Hnath, Chair
—Anne Larsen

—Jean Armstrong
—Bonnie Marchesani

—Krista Kubick
—Carl Prestia

Youth Ministry



Youth Group (and their families) Dinner

Sunday, November 19

6:30-8:00 p.m. in the Fellowship Hall

There will also be information about the upcoming 2018 Summer Mission Trip. See you there! Questions? Contact Pastor Miller (gail@uccgroton.org)



Youth Mission Trip 2018

June 24—July 1

Lynn, MA

Middle and High School Youth (Grade 6 and up)

We will clean/repair homes, visit in nursing homes, lead a kids camp.... And through our serving we will share Christ's love and grow in our own knowledge and love for the Lord. While we will travel and serve as one youth group, we will split into two groups (middle school and high school) for our evening youth group time. We will also spend two days of R&R at a retreat house in Bennington, VT. Cost to families is \$300/youth (scholarship available — see Gail). We are excited to offer this opportunity to so many in our church. **Your payment (\$300 --> UCC, memo: Youth Mission 2018) secures your child's spot.** Questions? Seek out Mary and Tom Hanson, Pete Hnath, Bonnie Marchesani, Carl Prestia, or Gail Miller.

Harvest Fair/Missions



Harvest Fair

A big "Thank You" goes out to all who participated in the Harvest Fair on September 30. Despite the weather, the fair was a big success, thanks to many of you! Our combined efforts raised nearly \$7,000 for our friends at *Teen Challenge*, which topped last year's number of just over \$6,000.



We would also like to acknowledge and thank all the businesses and individuals who so graciously donated to the Silent Auction:

Anthony's Coal Fired Pizza, Bailey's Bar & Grille, Lois Berge, Blackbird Café, Connie Brown, Paul Brown, Bruno's Pizza, Janet Carey, Country Butcher and Deli, Courtyard Marriott (Littleton), Tracey Smith/Facets, The Farmhouse Café, Filho's Cucina, Gervais Ford, Gibbet Hill Grill, Bob Goudey, Groton Hair Inc., Joanne Hanson, Ellen Hargraves, Ixtapa, Jack O'Lantern Wine & Spirits, Johnson's Restaurant & Dairy Bar, Lavender, Barb Lefebvre, Steve and Charlene Legge, Luth's Family Karate, Brian and Brenda MacDonald, Bonnie Marchesani, Mariano's Restaurant, Bonnie Martin, Gail Miller, Moison's Ace Hardware, Nashoba Valley Dance Academy, New England Corvette, Patriot Pizza, Salt & Light, Sheila Smith, Skip Lloyd, Tavern in the Square, Margaret Wheeler.



On Sunday, November 5, the annual Thanksgiving Food Drive to benefit *Loaves & Fishes* will take place. Please help make the holiday feast a memorable one for local families. See the list below for most-needed Thanksgiving items.

Supermarket Gift Cards (\$15 & \$20)	Olives & Pickles
Stuffing Mix	Canned Yams
Turkey or Chicken Gravy	Canned Pumpkin
Turkey or Chicken Broth	Canned vegetables
Cranberry Sauce	Coffee/Tea/Cocoa
Holiday Snacks (fancy crackers, nuts, candy)	Juice

Turkeys (over 14 lbs.), hams (3 lbs., 5 lbs. and larger), and frozen fruit pies are needed also; but these items need to be dropped off at *Loaves & Fishes* during open pantry or food collection hours. Check out there website (www.loavesfishespantry.org) for more information. **Drop your (non-perishable) food items off on the landing at church.**



Missions Sunday November 12

During worship, the Missions Committee will be sharing information about the different missions supported by our Congregation. There will also be a table set up downstairs in the Fellowship Hall on each mission. After worship, please plan on taking a few minutes to stop by. This day gives us the opportunity to learn about the organizations and projects our church supports through your generous pledges.

Donations for *CityReach* (Boston)

We will be heading into Boston for an overnight with *CityReach* on Friday, November 10 (returning November 11). **We invite your donations of:**

- Winter Jackets and Hoodies
- Sturdy Shoes and Boots
- New Socks and Underwear (Men's and Women's)
- Toiletries

Please drop-off your donations by Thursday, November 9, in the Fellowship Hall under the *CityReach* sign (near the Prayer Wall). Thank you!

Upcoming Christmas Season

Advent Swag

Sunday, November 26

Each year we make available to you candles to light, calendars to open, devotions to read, and stickers to stick for the children — all to help you experience the journey to Bethlehem more deeply. ***Be sure to visit the table downstairs at church on November 26.***



Journey to Bethlehem

Friday, December 1, 7:00-9:00 p.m.

**Faith Evangelical Free Church (54 Hosmer St., Acton)
Meet at the church in Acton at 6:45 p.m.**

Join Pastor Miller and her family on this adventure, which 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. (visit the church's website to learn more and see photos www.faithevfree.org/nativity.html). This is appropriate for children of all ages.



Christmas Pageant

Christmas Pageant on December 24 10:00 a.m.

Rehearsals will take place the mornings of:

Saturday, 12/16

Saturday, 12/23

Performance will be at the 10:00 a.m. Worship Service

This year's drama looks at the Christmas story from the perspective of the donkey and the camel! Again, our own Kathleen McKenzie will direct it. ***Sign-ups and more details on the exact time for rehearsals will be available before or just after Thanksgiving.***

Contact Kathleen McKenzie (

) with your questions.



Christmas Eve Worship

New Times

4:00 and 8:00 p.m.

(See p. 1 for details)



Sunday, December 3 at 4:00 p.m.

We invite your donations for a reception in our Fellowship Hall afterwards.

Groton Community Christmas Concert

**Sunday, December 10
2:00 p.m. and 7:30 p.m.**

**Monday, December 11
7:30 p.m.**

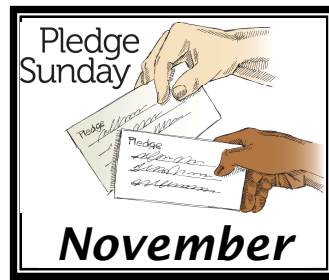


Love Came Down

Come and enjoy the 43rd Annual Groton Community Christmas Concert. There will be wonderful music of the season, sung by children and adults from Groton and 11 surrounding communities; Edie Tompkins, Director. This concert is held in our Sanctuary and is free (though donations will be accepted at the door).

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

CHANGE SERVICE REQUESTED



**DATED MATERIAL
PLEASE DO NOT DELAY**

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Please return to your mail carrier.

November Highlights

Friday, November 3— Ladies' Lunch (see p. 4)

Sunday November 5—All Saints Sunday (Daylight Savings Begins)

- ◆ Holy Communion
- ◆ We name out loud those who have died in the past year.

Sunday, November 12—Missions Sunday (see p. 6)

Sunday, November 19—Pledge Sunday

- ◆ We bring our Pledges forward in worship as an offering to God
- ◆ Senior and Handbell Choirs
- ◆ Congregational Budget Meeting after Worship
- ◆ Youth Group/Family Dinner at 6:30 p.m.

November 26—Christ the King Sunday

- ◆ Advent calendars, activities, and devotions will be available to take home.

December 3—First Sunday of Advent

- ◆ Building Project Information Meeting after Worship (see p. 4)
- ◆ Christmas Tree Lighting at 4:00 p.m.



**Annual
Stewardship
Campaign**