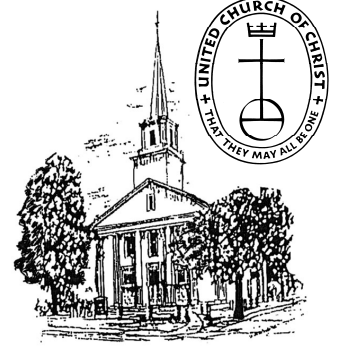


# THE UNION COURIER

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

220 Main Street  
Groton, Massachusetts 01450



## December 2018



*Advent is a paradoxical season: a season of waiting and anticipation in which the waiting itself is strangely rich and fulfilling. It is a season that looks back at the people who waited in darkness for the coming light of Christ and yet forward to a fuller light still to come and illuminate our darkness. For us in the north, Advent falls in winter, at the end of the year, in the dark and cold, but its focus is on the coming of light and life, when the Ancient of Days becomes a young child and says, "Behold I make all things new." (Malcolm Guite)*

This juxtaposition of images and ideas makes this my favorite season of the Church year. Plus, I love the defiance of decorating with purple (Advent's color) when the rest of the world is awash in red and green. What the church says and does should always speak life and love and hope into the world; and this month the message is this: Don't be dazzled by the lights and tinsel. Remember that the birth of Jesus is why any of these lights are hung in the first place. No matter how far the world around us travels away from the origins of it all, we know the real why of it.

And as the pressures mount and the schedules fill, we need a word from the Lord to say, SLOW DOWN.... Look for ME, and you will find me! Pause, take a deep breath. You're in good hands and it's NOT all up to you.

This year the Sundays of Advent here will explore the different members of Jesus' family as they appear in the story of his birth.

Dec. 2 – Jesus' mother: Mary

Dec. 9 – Jesus' father: Joseph

Dec. 16 – Jesus' aunt and uncle: Elizabeth and Zechariah

Dec. 23 – Jesus' cousin: John the Baptist

Find ways to celebrate Advent in your homes by picking up activities and devotions at church this Sunday: We have calendars, wreaths and candles. We have the Manger on the Mantle for the littlest kids. We have a Sticker Book for young kids, as well as a Seek and Find devotion for older kids (think Advent hidden pictures). And, of course, a daily devotion for adults.

And if you have a nativity set, consider having Mary and Joseph make the journey through your house – a few feet every day – from your kids' room to the manger, arriving on Christmas Eve or Day.

With you on the journey as we await the Light which is promised,

*Gail*

### Pastoral Intern: Gary Gumuchian

Gary officially begins his Internship with us Sunday, Dec. 2!  
Be sure to wear your name tags to help him learn who you are!  
He can be reached at: 978-631-7031 or [gary@uccgroton.org](mailto:gary@uccgroton.org)



# Our Church Family/News



**Ongoing Prayer List:** This list will be refreshed again in January. Feel free to contact Gail Miller or Carol Zaiatz (978-448-2091 or [unioncc@uccgroton.org](mailto:unioncc@uccgroton.org)) to add a name to this list.

Megan Bettison  
Joel Eaton  
Peg Elwood  
Ellen Hargraves  
Scott Joyce  
Frank Kanour  
Julie Kenyon

Hillary Lindquist  
Chris Laursen  
Joe Marchesani  
Jan Miller  
Helen Misselhorn  
Bill Moeller

Myrtle Murphy  
Debbie Sampson  
Karen Sands  
Rudi Schmid  
Edie Tompkins  
Karen and Marc Vandembulcke

Laurie Wade  
Connor Welles  
Liz Waggoner

## December Birthdays

Brenda Semienko	12/02	Korbin Larsen	12/18	Hannah York	12/23
Will Nickerson	12/03	Myrtle Murphy	12/18	Ken Lefebvre	12/25
Stephen Cappucci	12/06	Dick Burrier	12/19	Taylor Ansted	12/27
Gail Miller	12/08	Gary Johnson	12/20	Carolyn DiCenzo	12/29
Scott Burgess	12/12	Don Kennedy	12/21	Joe Barreiro	12/31
Dave Woods	12/16	Janet Carey	12/22		

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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?  
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**Leon and Barbara Avey** will be celebrating their **60<sup>th</sup> Wedding Anniversary** on **December 8**.  
Congratulations Leon and Barbara!



**The Knitters and Handcrafters** will not be meeting during December and January. They will resume the first Wednesday in February (2/6/19).



I would like to thank our church family for all the thoughts, concerns, and prayers that I have experienced since my recent vision problem. The cards and offers of help in so many ways has been overwhelming and very much appreciated by both Bob and me. The rides, food, and phone calls have been so helpful. I would especially like to thank Anne Elliott, Julie Platt, Bonnie Marchesani, and Cheryl Townsend for being extremely helpful and patient with me. I've also discovered there are a lot of really good cooks in the UCC! The Reverend Gail Miller's visit and prayers have been invaluable. I am so blessed to belong to such a beautiful, God-centered family.

With deep love,  
Ellen Hargraves

# Church News (cont.)

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## Congregational Budget Meeting Summary Sunday, November 18

Dennis Carey (Treasurer) presented a draft budget for 2019. Dennis reviewed any notable changes to the budget and explained that while we are doing a good job managing our expenses, there are several items that fall out of our control (utilities, insurance, etc.). Therefore, we have to make adjustments in other areas to compensate for those things, or we need to increase our income.

Dennis, Moderator Stefanie Lempp, and Pastor Gail Miller responded to a few specific questions about budget items. The proposed budget was approved by a unanimous vote. After the pledges for 2019 are received and accounted for, any adjustments to this proposed budget will be presented to the congregation at the Annual meeting for approval.

Gail announced that a new team has been launched to specifically address the issue of accessibility of our church. This team has a narrow scope, specifically to investigate the cost and design of a proposed installation of a handicap ramp into the church and an elevator to the Sanctuary.



## November 28 Meeting Summary

Gail shared that Confirmation class has started with 16 confirmands and that Gary Gumuchian, our volunteer Pastoral Intern, will be beginning his six-month working time with us on December 2.

The Accessibility Steering Team (Building Project 2.0) has been formed and will begin to meet in December to come up with a plan to make our church building more accessible – particularly providing a ramp and elevator access.

Our collector reported that 58 pledges are in so far and that a number of congregants increased their pledge. We are still waiting to hear from 32 families who pledged last year who have not yet pledged this year.

Church Council agreed to spend the Birthday Fund on replacing the carpet in the parlor/lower sanctuary. It was also agreed to spend available Endowment monies on a new laptop with software, solar lighting for our sign, grading to improve the dirt hill parking and the purchase of 10 more folding chairs. Everyone is encouraged to donate a check in the amount of their age on their birthday to allow the church to buy itself a birthday present around Christmas each year. Bless all of you who contributed!



## Ladies' Lunch Friday, December 7

(Meet at the church at 11:30 a.m. to carpool)

**Parker's Maple Barn** (1316 Brookline Rd. Mason, NH)

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 or Brenda Semienko.

## Shared Fellowship Hour Everyone Takes a Turn

We have been taking turns serving during Fellowship Hour for over a year now. A schedule is put together for the year (two households are assigned to each Sunday), and those who are on the schedule receive it by email, so you can know well in advance when it's your turn. (You will also receive a reminder three weeks prior to your Sunday.) A schedule for 2019 will be coming out mid-December and, if you are on the schedule, you will be receiving an email at that time. The Kitchen Ministry and Deacons are grateful for the wide support and sharing in this excellent ministry. Fellowship Hour is important to us; and sharing in the work of the church is a way we live our faith.



## Serving on Committees and Ministries

In preparation for our Annual Meeting late January/early February (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.

**Committees:** Buildings & Grounds; Christian Education; Diaconate; Endowment; Missions; Pastor-Parish Relations; Stewardship & Finance

**Ministries:** Fair; Kitchen; Technology; Youth and Family

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



Each Sunday in December, the children will spend the **first 10 minutes of Sunday School in the Fellowship Hall learning a Christmas Carol.**

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.

**December 2**  
*A Good Ruler, Jeremiah 33:14-17*

**December 9**  
*Zechariah, Luke 1:68-79*

**December 16**  
*John the Baptist, Luke 3:1-18*

**December 23**  
*No Sunday School*

**December 30**  
*No Sunday School*

## Bible Study

**Wednesday Evening Bible Study**  
**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*



## Stewardship



The Stewardship Team would like to thank all who participated in Pledge Sunday (11/18) and to those who mailed in their pledge for 2019. **As of 11/25, we have received 58 pledges.** *If you have not pledged yet, please mail your card to the Church Office, Attn: Collector (220 Main Street, Groton, MA 01450) or email Bob Goudey (bgoudeyucc@gmail.com).*

Year-end 2018 is approaching fast; please make sure **all current year pledges are up-to-date no later than Sunday, December 23.**

**Now That I've Pledged—What's Next?** In late December, the weekly giving envelopes for 2019 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 2019 pledges in January. Contact: Bob Goudey (bgoudeyucc@gmail.com).

### The 2018 Stewardship Team

—Jean Armstrong  
—Halsey Platt

—Bob Goudey  
—Craig Smith

—Andrea McDonough

—Gail Miller

## Missions



Mary Hanson and Lynn Manalo

### Teen Challenge Banquet

*Teen Challenge* held its annual banquet on November 8 at the DoubleTree by Hilton Hotel in Manchester, NH, and ten from our church attended. The theme of this year's banquet was *Hear Their Cry*. This is based on the scripture from Exodus 3:7: The Lord said, "I have indeed seen the misery of my people in Egypt. I have heard them crying out because of their slave drivers, and I am concerned about their suffering."

The Chief of Tilton Police was the guest speaker and spoke of his first-hand reliance on *Teen Challenge* for a place of change and refuge for addicted men. A few of the men shared their testimony in a detailed and moving way. The night was filled with praise, joy, and blessings. *Teen Challenge* offers encouragement and hope to their residents. They are shown a highly successful, faith-based way to deal with the struggles of addiction. God willing the Missions Committee plans to sponsor a table at the same event again next year and will be offering tickets on a first-come basis. It is a truly memorable night.

### Loaves & Fishes

Many thanks for all of the food donations to *Loaves & Fishes* for their Thanksgiving Drive. We contributed 145 pounds of food!



### Tewksbury Hospital Giving Tree

The Giving Tree is located in the back of Fellowship Hall at church. Please consider taking a patient's "wish" gift from the tree, signing the itemized list at the Missions table, and **returning your gifts unwrapped and with the tag attached to the designated box by December 9.**

**Tewksbury Hospital** operates a 370 bed Joint Commission accredited hospital. The hospital provides comprehensive treatment, care, and comfort to adults with medical and/or mental illnesses who have been denied care at other facilities.

### Missions Committee

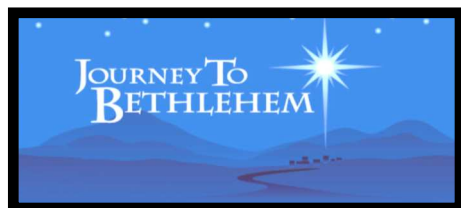
—Julie Sutherland-Platt, Chair  
—Lynn Manalo

—Brenda Barker  
—Halsey Platt

—Ellen Hargraves

# Christmas Events

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## ***Journey to Bethlehem***

**Friday, November 30**

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

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

This adventure takes you back to biblical times and reenacts the journey 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. Look for the Gail and Sophia so we can go through as a group.

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## **Decorate the Sanctuary**

**Saturday, December 1, 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!



## ***Groton Community Tree Lighting***

**Sunday, December 2 at 4:00 p.m.**

Hosted by The Groton Interfaith Council and held on our church's front lawn. Music will be provided by members of the Groton Brass Ensemble and the Nashoba Valley Concert Band. There will be seasonal readings by representatives of Groton faith communities, as well as the singing of Carols. Afterwards all are invited inside our church for warm drinks and goodies. The event is free and open to the public.

*We are looking for volunteers to donate refreshments to serve, which can be dropped off in the kitchen after worship that Sunday (12/2).*

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## ***Groton Community Christmas Concert***

**Sunday, December 9**

**2:00 p.m. and 7:30 p.m.**

**Monday, December 10**

**7:30 p.m.**

Come and enjoy the 44<sup>th</sup> 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).





## Christmas Eve WORSHIP

### ***Christmas Eve Candlelight Worship***

#### **4:00 p.m.—Family Worship**

##### **Especially for the Young**

Worship will include a dramatic interpretation of the Christmas story “as if you were there” (delivered by Bonnie Marchesani). There will also be a sermon, offering, and passing of the light at the end of the service.

#### **8:00 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](mailto:gail@uccgroton.org)).*

*Please use the order form below to decorate our Sanctuary — cut along the dotted line and mail with your check as instructed. Thank you!*



## **2018 Poinsettia Order Form**

### **Due by Sunday, DECEMBER 16!**

An assortment of red and white Poinsettias will be placed in the Sanctuary for Christmas Eve Worship, December 24

**Please make your check payable to *UCC Groton (memo: Poinsettia)* and mail the form and check to:**

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

**For the bulletin insert:**

**Plant is Given by:** \_\_\_\_\_

**In Loving Memory of:** \_\_\_\_\_

**In Honor of:** \_\_\_\_\_

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

*After Christmas, plants will be delivered 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* \_\_\_\_\_

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

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

**CHANGE SERVICE REQUESTED**



**DATED MATERIAL**  
**PLEASE DO NOT DELAY**

[ ] **PLEASE REMOVE ME FROM YOUR MAILING LIST**  
*Please return to your mail carrier.*

## **Advent/Christmas**

### **Dec. 2 – Advent One!**

Holy Communion  
Senior Choir  
4:00 p.m.—Groton Community Tree Lighting (p. 6)

### **Dec. 9 – Advent Two!**

Senior Choir  
Gary Gumuchian (Pastoral Intern) Preaching  
Christmas Concert — 2:00 and 7:30 p.m. (p. 6)  
and 7:30 p.m. on Monday

### **Dec. 16 – Advent Three!**

Senior and Handbell Choirs  
New Members Join  
Poinsettias Orders Due (p. 7)

### **Dec. 23 – Advent Four!**

Poinsettias decorate our Sanctuary  
Senior and Youth Choirs

### **Christmas Eve Candlelight Worship** (p. 7)

4:00 p.m.—Especially for the Young  
8:00 p.m.—Lessons and Carols

### **Dec. 30—Christmas Carol Sing**

Story for the Children

