

THE UNION COURIER

Union Congregational Church
United Church of Christ
The Rev. Corey J. Sanderson, Interim Pastor

220 Main Street
Groton, Massachusetts 01450



December 2019



A Message from Your Interim Pastor

Dear Friends,

Jim Wallis, author and founder of *Sojourners* magazine, tells of a time he was volunteering in a church homeless/warming shelter. It was during the Christmas season and the downstairs hall was decked out with banners and decorations. 'Good News!' 'Christ is Born!' 'Glory to God in the Highest!' One of the men who regularly lived on the streets looked around the room and asked, 'What is the Good News anyway?' Wallis noted the long pregnant pause with the awkward silence. No one really knew what to say. Finally, someone spoke up from the very back of the line: "The 'Good News' is that it doesn't have to be like this."

The season of Advent is upon us. The journey we make during these next four weeks reminds us that there is another way. It doesn't have to be like this.

For instance, have you noticed how many people's political affiliations have become their definitive identities? Politics has always been serious business, but it was never understood as one's ultimate identity. As a Pastor, I have watched how party loyalties have taken on this quasi-religious quality and tone. Sometimes we forget who we are, and to whom we belong. Advent invites us to slow down just long enough so that we can remember that we are all beloved Children of God.

As disciples of Jesus, we know that we are called to live a different way. The journey in and through Advent invites us to enter into a threshold experience. It's the liminal space between the old that is fading away and the new that is about to be born. Advent prepares us for Christ's birth, which promises to overturn the powers and principalities of this world. That's why there is longing and waiting during Advent. It's why we're called to keep watch and pay attention for what God is doing in our midst.

While Advent isn't technically a penitential season like Lent, we all have things to let go of. We all need to make space in our hearts and lives for the birth of the Christ Child. My prayer in the days ahead is that we may all find ways to do this work.

I am honored to be journeying with you all during this Advent season and I am filled with gratitude to share in your ministry in the days ahead. I look forward to meeting you all and beginning this journey together.

Peace,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Corey".

The Rev. Corey J. Sanderson





Our Church Family/News



Ongoing Prayer List: This list will be refreshed again in January. Feel free to contact Carol Zaiatz (978-448-2091 or unioncc@uccgroton.org) to update this list.

Ruth Allen
Megan Bettison
Toni Bond
Robina Carestia
Mike Corbett & Family
Peg Elwood

Tiffany Gibb
Betty Goulet
Ellen Hargraves
Frank Kanour
Joe Marchesani

Bill Moeller
Myrtle Murphy
Betty Sampas
Karen Sands
Rudi Schmid
Matt & Mandy Spain

Diane Thorne
Edie Tompkins
Karen & Marc Vandenbulcke
Betty & Liz Waggoner

December Birthdays

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

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?



The Knitters and Handcrafters will not be meeting during December and January. They will resume the first Wednesday in February (2/5/20).



Potluck Meet & Greet Sunday, November 24

On November 24, there was a Potluck Meet & Greet held with our Interim Pastor, The Reverend Corey Sanderson. Approximately 50 people from our church were able to meet Corey and get to know him prior to his first Sunday with us on December 1.

Welcome Corey! Please be sure to be here Sunday, December 1, to have the opportunity to hear Corey give his first sermon with us and also get to know him during Fellowship Hour.

Hope to see you on December 1!

*Rev. Corey Sanderson, Helen Misselhorn, Karen Sherwin,
Barbara Avey, Erica Davenport, and Brenda Semienko*

Church News (cont.)



Congregational Budget Meeting Summary Sunday, November 17

The Congregational Budget meeting was held on November 17. Treasurer Dennis Carey reviewed the Proposed 2020 Budget. While the Finance Committee is forecasting a reduced level of income (based upon actual income for 2019), due to the absence of a Settled Pastor, expenses will also be reduced. The anticipated reduction of overall expenses for the year will allow us to pay for several one-time expenses, which should be viewed as such. Expenses will return to their previous level at such time as we hire a Settled Pastor. The proposed budget was approved unanimously.



November 20 Meeting Summary

Moderator Jean Armstrong opened the meeting with an invitation to share joys and concerns. After the group shared, Mary Hanson answered questions about the new online Church Directory. The email invitation to use the directory went out to the congregation on Monday, November 18, and Mary wants to hear from anyone who didn't receive it.

Our Collector, Margaret Wheeler, gave a brief summary of the 2020 pledge cards received so far. She said that, overall, it looks like we will be on track to meet the budget based on past years' pledging trends.

Craig Smith, representing the Deacons, shared that they are working on adding some comfortable chairs and a small table to Rev. Corey Sanderson's office. Craig also reminded everyone about the "meet and greet Corey" on the afternoon of Sunday, November 24. The Deacons will also be leading a "decorate the church" for Christmas on Saturday, November 30, at 9:00 a.m. The congregation is invited to help decorate and also enjoy a pancake breakfast that morning.

Steve Legge announced that he needs strong helpers on Sunday, December 8, after worship to help carry the risers up from the basement for the Groton Community Christmas Concert.

Jean reported that the Birthday Fund had close to \$700 and expects there will be about \$900 by year end. The Council brainstormed options for what to purchase with those funds. The decision will be made at the next meeting. Jean reminded committee and ministry heads to start writing their annual reports. The next Church Council meeting will be December 18. The Annual Meeting will be in late January/early February.

Steve Legge closed the meeting with a prayer.



Accessibility Project Capital Campaign Update

The team that will lead the campaign to fund the addition to make our church accessible to all who have physical challenges is shaping up nicely. So far, eight members have volunteered to serve and lead the congregation for this project. We look forward to having Reverend Sanderson's experience and guidance to assist us as we plan the campaign.

The team includes Bonnie Biocchi, Kelly Hnath, Don Kennedy, Halsey Platt, Karen Sherwin, Cheryl Townsend and Bob & Bebe Goudey.

Please stay informed and be involved. Let's do this together!

Ladies' Lunch

Friday, December 6 (Meet at the church at 11:30 a.m. to carpool)

Burton's Restaurant (1 Cornerstone Sq., Westford)

All women of the church are invited! **Contacts:** Janice Owen, Brenda Semienko, or Peg Lloyd

RSVP to Margaret Wheeler, so we have a head count for reservations.

Church News/Stewardship Christian Education

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 Jean Armstrong (Moderator) with your questions or to express an interest in a particular Committee or Ministry.

Annual Report

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 Wed., Dec. 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!

Stewardship



The Stewardship Team would like to thank all who participated in Pledge Sunday (11/17) and to those who mailed in their pledge for 2020. **As of 11/24, we have received 54 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 Margaret Wheeler (collector@uccgroton.org).**

Year-end 2019 is approaching fast; please make sure **all current year pledges are up-to-date no later than Sunday, December 22.** If you have questions about the status of your current year pledge, please email Margaret Wheeler (collector@uccgroton.org).

Now That I’ve Pledged—What’s Next? In late December, the weekly giving envelopes for 2020 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 2020 pledges in January. If you give online and do not need pledge envelopes, please contact Margaret Wheeler (collector@uccgroton.org).

Stewardship Team

—Jean Armstrong

—Halsey Platt

—Craig Smith

—Margaret Wheeler

Sunday School



to the World, in preparation for Christmas Eve.

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 8, 15, and 22, the children will spend the **first 10 minutes of Sunday School** in the Fellowship Hall learning the Christmas Carol, *Joy*

December 1

Communion—Activity in the Fellowship Hall

December 8

God’s Peaceful World, Isaiah 11:1-10

December 15

John the Baptist, Matthew 11:2-11

December 22

No Sunday School—School Vacation

December 29

No Sunday School—School Vacation

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.

Contact: Marvin Caldwell

Missions

Sharing Christ ~ Changing Lives

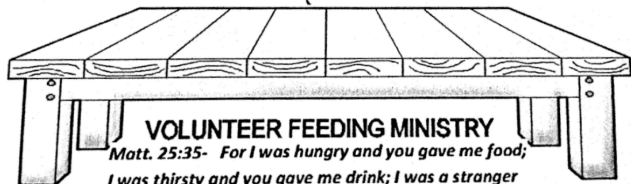
Teen Challenge Banquet

Teen Challenge held its Annual Banquet on November 8 at the DoubleTree by Hilton Hotel in Manchester, NH, and eight from our church attended. *Teen Challenge* offers encouragement and hope to their residents. Residents 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.



Arianna B., Karen S., Teen Challenge participant, Lynn M., Brenda B., Bonnie M., Lisa G. (Lynn's sister), Michael Cordry (guest speaker/comedian), and Bernard C. (who took the picture)

Our Father's Table



VOLUNTEER FEEDING MINISTRY
Matt. 25:35- For I was hungry and you gave me food;
I was thirsty and you gave me drink; I was a stranger
and you made me welcome.

we can provide a simple set of instructions to let you know what to expect! Please contact Julie Platt (julielp@verizon.net) or any Missions member.

Our Father's Table

NEW** *Our Father's Table* needs a Cook's Helper on Thursdays between 1:00 p.m. and 5:30 p.m. If you are interested, let a Missions team member know.

ALSO NEW** Helpers are needed **on any Tuesdays and Thursdays** to serve a buffet dinner and do a light clean-up. The time commitment is 4:00 - 6:30 p.m. (including travel time). No experience is needed and

Loaves & Fishes

Many thanks for all of the food donations to *Loaves & Fishes* for their Thanksgiving Drive.

Your donations of non-perishable food items at the top of the stairs are always welcome. In addition, please let a Missions team member know if you can take donated groceries to Devens during pantry hours from time-to-time. Thank you for your generous donations to our neighbors in need.

Missions Committee

—Julie Sutherland-Platt, Chair
—Sue Lunt

—Brenda Barker
—Lynn Manalo

—Stefanie Lempp
—Halsey Platt

Christmas Events

Decorate the Sanctuary

Saturday, November 30, at 9:00 a.m.

Start the season with the Deacons for the annual decorating of the church Sanctuary for Advent/Christmas. Bring the whole family for a festive morning of beautifying the church. After decorating is done, stay for pancakes, hot cocoa, and coffee. Everyone is welcome—please join us!



Groton Community Tree Lighting Sunday, December 1 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 (12/1).



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 15.**

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.



Journey to Bethlehem

Friday, December 6

Faith Evangelical Free Church (54 Hosmer Street, Acton)

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

Join your church 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. This is a journey that winds through the grounds of the church and can't be described with words. Appropriate for children of all ages.

Please RSVP with the link in the Friday email; or use the signup sheet in the hallway downstairs.

Please be sure to include how many from your family will attend (this way we will know how many will be going and also who to wait for).

If you are planning on going and would like to lead the group, please contact Mary Hanson or Carl Prestia.

Christmas (cont.)



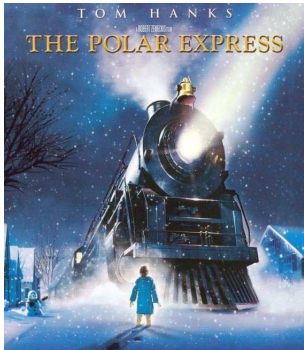
Groton Community Christmas Concert

Singing with the Angels

Sunday, December 15
2:00 p.m. and 7:30 p.m.

Monday, December 16
7:30 p.m.

Come and enjoy the 45th 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).



Polar Express Party

Friday, December 20

4:00 – 8:00 p.m. in the Fellowship Hall

Kids of all ages welcome! Pizza, refreshments, games, and the movie. Kids are welcome to wear their pajamas and/or bring a pillow. Please sign up online (link provided in the Friday email) or in the hallway downstairs (bulletin board) so we know how much pizza to order. **Contact:** Carl Prestia or Amy Nickerson

Cookies and Caroling

Saturday, Dec. 21, 3:00-5:00 p.m.

Fellowship Hall

Come join your church family and bake cookies in preparation for Caroling on December 22.



Sunday, December 22

1:00 - 3:00 p.m.

Meet at Church

Join us as we deliver cookies to various people/locations and sing Christmas Carols as an expression of God's love.



Christmas Eve WORSHIP

Christmas Eve Candlelight Worship

4:00 p.m.—Family Worship

Especially for the Young

Worship will include a Christmas story for the children, 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 Carol Zaiatz in the church office (unioncc@uccgroton.org; 978-448-2091).*

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



2019 Poinsettia Order Form

Due by Sunday, DECEMBER 15!

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). Thank you very much and may you have a Blessed Christmas!



Be a Christmas Angel!

Images of Angels are a familiar symbol of Christmas. The Bible tells us in the Book of Luke that the Angel Gabriel "stands in the presence of God" and is sent by God to share good news. The Angel visits Mary and Zechariah and lets them each know that they are "highly favored," that the Lord is with them and that God hears their prayers.

In this season of celebrating God's gift of Jesus, we give generously in a variety of ways: gifts of fellowship with each other, gifts of food, gifts of meaningful tokens of our appreciation and of our love for each other.

How can we be God's Angels this Christmas season and into 2020? What if we each pledged a gift of our time, in service to God and in Christian love for each other? This can look different for each of us, depending on our gifts and abilities. No matter how we give to others in service, we stand in the presence of God, we share the gift of God's love, and we let others know the Lord is with them always!

With joy in my heart, I pledge two hours of my time in service as God's Angel to:

- ☐ **Good Shepherd Network** - arranging a meal for a family in need
- ☐ **Loaves & Fishes** - transportation of groceries to L&F Pantry
- ☐ **Our Father's Table** - serving food on any Tuesday or Thursday evening
- ☐ **Logistics support** for a UCC service trip (e.g. grocery shopping, van pickup)
- ☐ **Provide companionship/caregiver** relief to a church friend
- ☐ **Give a ride to a doctor's appointment** for a church friend
- ☐ **Other:** _____

Please contact anyone on the Missions Committee to let us know how you would like to serve and the best way to contact you about upcoming opportunities.



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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. 1 – Advent One!

Holy Communion
Rev. Corey Sanderson is with us!
4:00 p.m.—Groton Community Tree Lighting (p. 6)

Dec. 8 – Advent Two!

Dec. 15 – Advent Three!

Poinsettias Orders Due (p. 8)
Groton Community Christmas Concert (2:00 & 7:30 p.m.)
Monday at 7:30 p.m.

Dec. 22 – Advent Four!

Poinsettias decorate our Sanctuary

Christmas Eve Candlelight Worship (p. 8)

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

Dec. 29—Christmas Carol Sing

