

THE UNION COURIER

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

220 Main Street
Groton, Massachusetts 01450



September 2020

What's It Worth To You?

Every now and then, I like to watch *Antiques Road Show* on PBS. If you've never seen the show, the premise is quite simple. People who have inherited some family heirloom, or purchased a piece of art at a yard sale, or have held on to some beloved childhood toy, will drag their 'treasure' onto the live-taped show to have an appraiser assess its value on the open market.

What makes such a potentially boring show so engaging is watching people feel like they have just won the lottery. After carefully looking the item over, the appraiser says, 'You aren't going to believe this, but this Chinese vase dates back to Ming Dynasty. On the market today, considering its condition, you could expect it to sell for \$200,000 at auction.' At this point, the woman gasps before going into a full-blown cardiac arrest right there on the set.

While such surprises are the obvious highlight, I have to confess that I also get just as much enjoyment when things go the other way. Some would-be hopeful arrives on the set, dragging in a vintage styled chair. After careful inspection, the appraiser says, 'You have a really nice Swedish chair here. It dates to around 1998, and can be bought for about forty dollars at your local Ikea.' It's a stark reminder that the only so-called value the chair has is the value that it has for the owner. It has no real value to other people, but it is valuable to you to the extent that *you* value it and use it.

Many years ago, when Nathan was quite young, he was given a very old antique Lionel train set from a relative. The relative had purchased the set many decades earlier but, for whatever reason, had not used it and it ended up in their basement. By the time Nathan received it, the train set was almost 50 years old. While the track was unusable from rust and corrosion, the engine and freight were in near perfect condition. When we went to the local hobby store to purchase a replacement track, the man behind the counter said, 'People are afraid to play with trains that are as old as this one. All they see is what the train is worth. But when I see an old train like this, all I see is a child's toy that is meant for play.'

We've probably all met a few folks in life who seem to care more about their outward appearances and the validation of others than they do about their inner spiritual life and their core values as people. When they polish up their persona with religion, or some public display of personal piety, they can look so perfect that you might be inclined to envy them. But Jesus was not impressed with these kinds of folks. One time, in speaking of the Pharisees and Scribes, the religious leaders of the day, Jesus said, 'Do what they teach, but don't do what they do, for they do not practice what they teach' (Matt 23:1-12).

Part of what Jesus was saying was that the real value of our faith comes down to whatever it's worth to us personally, because no one else is appraising it. The more of ourselves we put into our faith, the greater value it will have for us, and the more fruit it will bear in the world as compassion and justice. Jesus is not impressed by our appearances, or by our outward religiosity, or by what others think of us. We can drag out our rusty and dusty faith and ask him how much he thinks it's worth but, in the end, Jesus wants to know *how much it is worth to us*. Is it something you pull out from time to time, like some old antique? Or, is it something you use every day, like an old chair that will hold your weight without breaking, day-in and day-out, or like an old Lionel train set that is intended to give people joy? The real value of your faith is what *you* put into it; your life, your time, your devotion, your resources, your loyalties and commitments, your words, and your deeds.

May we all hold fast to this truth now and in the days ahead.

Peace,





Our Church Family/News



Ongoing Prayer List

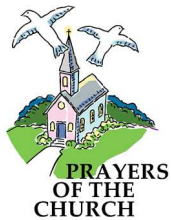
This list is refreshed in January and June. If there is a name you would like to add or remove from this list, please contact Carol Zaiatz (978-448-2091 or unioncc@uccgroton.org).

Peggy & John Blair
Connie & Bob Brown
Mike Corbett & Family
Tiffany Gibb

Betty Goulet Chris Joyce
Myrtle Murphy
Betty Sampas

Rudi Schmid
Matt & Mandy Spain
Joe Marchesani

Bill Moeller
Betty & Liz Waggoner
Laurie Waye



- Nancy Bugbee and family in the death of her mother, Margaret Gould Temple in July.
- The Lienhard family, in the death of Liz Lienhard on August 20.

Confidential Prayer Chain

Need prayer and need it now? Simply email prayer@uccgroton.org and your request will go to the confidential pray-ers; or call Carol in the Church Office (978-448-2091) 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.



Milestone Anniversaries

- **Margaret and Mark Wheeler**, celebrated their **35th Wedding Anniversary** on **August 31**. Congratulations!

September Birthdays

Julie Sutherland-Platt	09/01	Christine Brooks	09/08	Alyssa Hughes	09/21
Gianna Hitsos	09/02	Cheryl Townsend	09/09	Emily Townsend	09/21
Marin Colbert	09/03	Brian LaGasse	09/10	Jillian Coviello	09/26
Hailey Petka	09/03	Hannah Van Pelt	09/17	Kevin Kuliesis	09/28
Paul Meehan, Jr.	09/05	Russell Byron-Kelly	09/19	Nathan Townsend	09/30
Karen Sherwin	09/06	Daniel Flynn	09/20		

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 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)! If everyone participates, this will add up to a significant amount. Please participate and watch our gifts grow!

From the Collector

Thank you to everyone who has sent pledge offerings and donations to the Church Office. Donation Statements as of July 26 were mailed recently. If you did not receive a statement or have any questions or concerns about your pledge, please contact Margaret Wheeler (collector@uccgroton.org).

All Women of the Church are Invited!

LILIES

Beginning the week of September 21 we will kick off a four-week focus. Can any of you relate to the following?

*Has 2020 caused you to feel a bit annoyed and honestly angry that God isn't answering all of your prayers or showing up at the exact moment that you feel is right? Are you disappointed by God's apparent silence? If you can relate, please join us for a four-week series as we read **It's Not Supposed to be This Way**, by Lysa Terkeurst, and tackle these feelings and questions.*

The discussions will be virtual and we plan on nailing down specific times and days once there is more clarity about school schedules, etc. But feel free to order the devotional and begin reading. **YOU WON'T BE DISAPPOINTED!**

*If you have question or would like more details, please contact **Raquel Majeski** or **Betsy Bridge**.*

An Invitation

To our Groton church family,

Come join us every Tuesday evening at 6:45 p.m. on zoom for a few minutes to join together for a brief time of prayer and fellowship. Every Tuesday we will meet for 10-15 minutes sharing in God's peace and prayer. We hope this time will provide a chance for our church family to briefly be together in fellowship during these more challenging times. We will include a link in the Friday All Church Email soon. We hope you will be able to join us!

Joel and Valerie Meiners

Sunday School

The CE Committee has decided NOT to hold any in-person or virtual Sunday School this fall. What we would like to do is to mail the SPARK pamphlets that we use in class to any family that is interested in receiving them. This is for grades PreK to 6.

An email has been sent to the Sunday School families asking who would like to receive the pamphlets. Once Carol has heard back from the various families, she will mail these out to any families that wish to receive them. Our plan is to send them monthly so that people can go through the lessons at their leisure or on the particular Sunday designated for that lesson. We will include the schedule so that you can match the lesson to the Sunday easily.

Please notify Carol (unioncc@uccgroton.org or 978-448-2091) if you wish to be put on the list to receive the pamphlets.

As the fall season comes to an end, CE will reevaluate for the winter season and let everyone know what the plan will be. Thank you for your patience during this unusual time.



Bible for Third Graders

This is a gift from the church!. The Christian Education Committee will be delivering the Bibles to the homes of any third graders at the end of September.

As of mid-August, our records show the following students entering third grade this year: **Ryan Dabritz and Abigail Howard**

It is important to us that we not miss anyone, so if your son or daughter is not listed, please contact Carol in the Church Office (unioncc@uccgroton.org; 978-448-2091) so that we can make sure they receive a Bible.

Also, if you are new to the church and have children in the upper elementary grades who don't have a Bible and would like one geared toward children (3rd—8th graders), please let us know.

Christian Education Committee

—Carl Prestia, Chair
—Amy Nickerson

—Jenn Coviello

—Bonnie Marchesani

Music

A Message from Our Music Director

Friends,

Singing – we are “in a whole different ball game” with the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. Although I wish we were singing as choirs and as a congregation, we have to be sensitive to the fact that we might not be able to for some time.

It is my desire to get back to it as soon as it is safe to do so. In the meantime, we will carefully explore the potential use of soloists, duets, and smaller groups. We can always practice and prepare separately so we are ready when the time comes.

If you would be interested in joining in that participation in whatever form it might take, please let me know by phone, email, or at worship (when we start worshipping in-person again).

Looking forward to working together toward the expression of our love for God in song.

Blessings,

Bernard



Faith Ringers

We all lost a special person on August 20, when Liz Lienhard lost her battle with cancer. What was amazing about Liz was that no matter how much she was suffering, she had an infectious spirit and smile that got her through her challenges. She was such a joy to have as a friend, a fellow ringer, and she will be missed.

Musically, we had the opportunity in June to play for Liz at her home, playing *Dona Nobis Pacem* with cello. You may have heard it on one of the Sunday morning services with Corey. This will always be a special memory for us, which we are so grateful to have.

As a choir, we will attempt to practice — socially distanced — this Fall. Plans are still in the works for this. We look forward to ringing in person when we are able to be together. In the meantime, love to you all and stay safe,

Cheryl and the Faith Ringers

Missions — Backpack Drive 2020

THANK YOU!

Thanks so much for your amazing efforts in making the Backpack Drive a success! Being able to give backpacks and school supplies to area families is a blessing! We could not do it without all of your donations and the many hands you provided in filling backpacks and distributing them on August 21. Over the course of the afternoon, we served over 50 families with about 124 stuffed backpacks and kits. We expect that a few more families will be in touch this week to pick up backpacks they couldn't receive on distribution day. In addition, 35 filled backpacks and kits went to 15 families who are currently living at *Transitions* through *Our Father's House* in Devens. The remainder of our filled backpacks and several hundred kits will go to local schools in Leominster, Ayer, Shirley and Groton for distribution to students who need them. Another 150 kits and about 400 unfilled backpacks will go to military families in the area through *Clear Path for Veterans New England*.



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CHANGE SERVICE REQUESTED



DATED MATERIAL
PLEASE DO NOT DELAY

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



Harvest Fair News

Due to Covid-19, the Harvest Fair has been cancelled for this year.

