

THE UNION COURIER

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

220 Main Street
Groton, Massachusetts 01450



November 2020



If you were to ask me to name some of my favorite hymns, there's a pretty good chance that most would have been written in the 1800s. I'm guessing you would know many of them; *Abide With Me*, *Fairest Lord Jesus*, *Blessed Assurance*, and *Just As I Am*. There's something about these great old hymns of the faith that carry a level of spiritual depth and emotional intimacy that reaches far beyond the sheer comfort and familiarity we might have in singing them. Through these hymns, I feel God's presence and Jesus' love in profound and powerful ways. Yet right alongside these old chestnuts, I would include a newer hymn; *This Is a Day of New Beginnings*.

Originally penned for a 1978 New Year's Day worship service in Oxford, England, Brian Wren poetically captures what the Christian faith is all about.

This is a day of new beginnings, Time to remember and move on,
Time to believe what love is bringing, Laying to rest the pain that's gone.

For by the life and death of Jesus, God's mighty Spirit, now as then,
Can make for us a world of difference, As faith and hope are born again.

Then let us, with the Spirit's daring, Step from the past and leave behind
Our disappointment, guilt and grieving, Seeking new paths, and sure to find.

Christ is alive, and goes before us, To show and share what love can do.
This is a day of new beginnings; Our God is making all things new.

It's a hymn that moves me to tears almost every time I sing it. For whatever reason, it's pure sacredness to me. It speaks to the letting go of the old and the embracing of the new. This is something we all know a little about, right? There is much we have lost these last eight months, yet there is also so much that is awaiting us in the future.

One of the truths I have learned through the years is that people of faith don't pray for a return to the old. Instead, they find God summoning them to a new world. In prayer and discernment, we can find navigation to help us make our way toward a new world that we cannot yet clearly see. The Bible is full of stories that show this truth. Whenever people find themselves in some liminal space, and it is time to move, the journey always leads forward in unexpected ways. We escape slavery in Egypt by travelling straight through the Red Sea. We journey through the barren wilderness to joyfully reach The Promised Land. Whether it's the Garden of Gethsemane, the Easter tomb, or the road to Damascus, every moment of transition points us ahead to some new experience that we can't quite yet see or even grasp. This is why people of faith are called to walk ahead in trust by following the leading of our God.

Starting Sunday, November 1, we are returning to our weekly, in-person worship gatherings. It's an exciting moment of newness after eight months of being apart. This is a day of new beginnings. As we start out, unsure of where God will lead us, we will notice that many things will be different. Yet the core of who we are, what we do, and why we exist as a church hasn't changed at all. Our vision and mission remain the same.

We hope you will take the time to read through all the pertinent documents, and watch the related videos, so we can make our way through this phasing-in process together, as a community. For your information, we are including the *COVID Covenant of Care* on the next page. We are working to ensure that those who are not able to join us in person will be able to join us digitally. Please feel free to reach out in the days ahead, if you have questions and concerns.

Wishing you all God's Peace,

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

Worship

Union Congregational Church United Church of Christ

COVID Covenant of Care

As friends and members of Union Congregational Church, UCC, I covenant to partner with my fellow church family and friends to keep our community safe and healthy. Therefore, I covenant to . . .

- Wear a face mask at all times as a symbol of love and care for the others around me.
- Sit six feet apart from other people and families, leaving room for God to work in the in-between spaces.
- Clean up and take our personal items from any of the spaces I use because, just like Jesus, germs are everywhere. Parents can bring coloring books from home.
- Honor and respect the sacredness of each person in this space by staying home if I don't feel well, have been exposed to someone who might have COVID, have travelled out of state via air, etc., remembering that God is with us wherever we are, whether inside the walls of the church or out in the world.
- Work together with church leadership in creating a safe and healthy space for everyone so that we can worship as Christ's body, united in God's love.
- Together, we, as the church, covenant to care and love one another in new and different and sometimes challenging ways, as we strive to embrace God's still-speaking voice.
- Recognizing that people are often unaware they have picked up COVID and, because this is a health concern, we will respect people's privacy and be understanding and forgiving if someone does test positive, thereby causing others to quarantine. If you do test positive and have been to Worship recently, please ensure you notify the Church Office (978-448-2091), so we can start the process. Again, please know that we will maintain your privacy.

The leadership of our church is doing their part to ensure your safety, as much as possible, by:

- Providing hand sanitizer stations in various places within the church.
- Keeping doors open in order to minimize contact surfaces.
- Ensuring all surfaces are clean before church.
- Having additional masks available for those who may need them.



Our Church Family



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
Justin Duff

Tiffany Gibb
Betty Goulet
Chris Joyce
Brigid and Brian Klingberg

Betty Sampas
Rudi Schmid
Matt & Mandy Spain

Joe Marchesani
Bill Moeller
Betty & Liz Waggoner
Laurie Waye

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 Anniversary

Bill and Barbara Gale will be celebrating their **65th Wedding Anniversary** on **November 26!** Congratulations and God Bless!

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
Andrew Kuliesis	11/03	Erica Davenport	11/12	Robert Rosenfeld	11/22
Karen Sjoberg	11/04	Savannah Kuliesis	11/12	Sally Waite	11/22
Hailey Sullivan	11/05	Kimberly Kuliesis	11/15	Izzy Smith	11/24
Nina Morrison	11/06	Bob Brown	11/16	Briana Manalo	11/25
Connie Wall-Haas	11/06	Heather Houde	11/16	Barbara Gale	11/26
Liam Colbert	11/07	Kim Daly	11/18		
Curtis Prestia	11/07	Leon Avey	11/19		

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!

Church News

Accessibility Project Coming Together - Lifting Up - Reaching Out

How can it be that seven months have passed since we enthusiastically celebrated together at the Groton Senior Center the kickoff of the Church Accessibility Project? With the Covid-19 pandemic, the Capital Campaign Team had to put the next steps we had hoped to take on hold. We want to let you know that the team is meeting (via Zoom) and thoughtfully discussing the best next steps. We invite you to think and pray with us about the project. Please feel free to share your thoughts with Kelli Hnath or Bonnie Biocchi via email or phone call. Thank you and wishing you all blessings and good health!

From the Collector

Thank you to everyone who has sent pledge offerings and donations to the Church Office or donated online. Donation Statements as of October 31 should be mailed in early November, so please keep an eye out for them. If you have any questions or concerns about your pledge, please contact Margaret Wheeler (collector@uccgroton.org).



Give & Take—Children's Clothing In the Parish House

Our UCC *Give & Take* of children's clothing is now well under way and open on the first floor of the Parish House. We continue to ask for donations that have been gently used to flourish our new mission. We have some winter coats, fall and winter clothing in toddler/children/teenager sizes.

We welcome you to stop by (please wear a mask) and visit on Saturday, October 31 from 11:00 a.m.-12:30 p.m. or Sunday, November 1, from 10:30-11:00 a.m., right after the church service. If you happen to know a family who might be interested in "shopping" for their child/children, please feel free to bring them along during our open hours, so that we can share with them as well.

Feel free to drop off your donations this Saturday from 11:00 a.m.-12:30 p.m. at the Parish House or your donations can continue to be dropped off at the Legge Family's house located at 856 Townsend Road, Groton.

Check the Friday email for other Saturdays when *Give & Take* is open.

Please contact Charlene Legge with any further questions.



Virtual Coffee Hour - You Are Invited!

Each Sunday at 11:00 a.m. via Zoom. Grab a cup of coffee or tea and something to snack on and say hello to church folks you might not have been in contact with these last few months. We'll start at 11:00 a.m. and end either when folks are done catching up or at 12:00 noon. Look for the clickable link in the Friday email.

Church News / Stewardship / Sunday School

Stated/Budget Meeting

Sunday, December 6

Copies of the proposed 2021 Operating Budget will be available beginning November 22.

Then on December 6 all are invited to a meeting at which the membership will approve the Operating Budget for 2021. Questions may be directed to our Treasurer, Dennis Carey, Mary Hanson of Stewardship & Finance, or Moderator Jean Armstrong. This meeting will probably be via Zoom—details will follow closer to the date.

A Message from the Stewardship Team



Stewardship — Invitation to Pledge

We are grateful for our church's resiliency this year, when we have had to limit our contact to keep everyone healthy. Our congregation has demonstrated that we are good stewards — protecting each other while remaining faithful givers.

What will happen in 2021 is still unknown, but we trust that God will guide us and keep us close in spirit. This year we will be preparing a budget after Pledge Sunday.

On Sunday, November 15, the congregation will be invited to make their pledges for next year. If you are worshipping in person, you can give your pledge card in the offering box. Pledges can also be mailed or dropped off at the church office.

For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.
Matthew 6:21

Pledge Sunday — November 15



Stewardship Team

—Jean Armstrong

—Rev. Corey Sanderson

—Craig Smith

—Margaret Wheeler

Sunday School

We are not holding in-person or virtual Sunday School at this time. For PreK—6th grade, we have the pamphlets normally handed out during Sunday School. If you have not yet responded and would like to receive these at home, please contact Carol in the Church Office (unioncc@uccgroton.org; 978-448-2091) and she will add you to the mailing list. Please include your child/children's name(s) and their grade so she can send you the correct curriculum for that grade level. The pamphlets will be mailed on a monthly basis.

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.

Christian Education Committee

—Carl Prestia, Chair

—Amy Nickerson

—Jenn Coviello

—Bonnie Marchesani

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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.

Welcome Back to Worship!

(Daylight Savings ends—turn clocks back Saturday night)

Sunday November 1 — All Saints Sunday

Sunday, November 8

Sunday, November 15 — Pledge Sunday

November 22 — Christ the King Sunday

November 29—First Sunday of Advent

