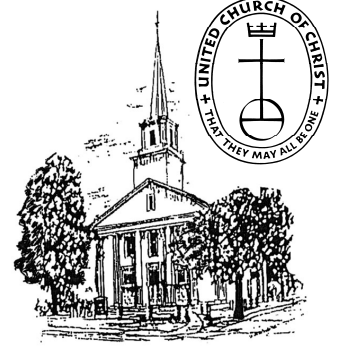


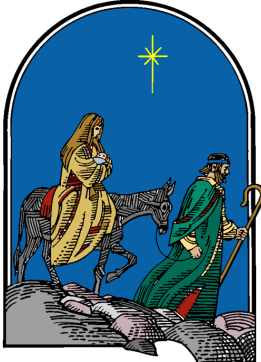
THE UNION COURIER

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

220 Main Street
Groton, Massachusetts 01450



December 2020



ADVENT

One of my all-time favorite preachers, Fred Craddock, tells a story about his old friend, Oswald Goulter. Oswald had been a missionary to China for almost thirty years, from the early 1920s through the later 1940s. During that time, Oswald spent a few of those years living under house arrest. At one point, the Communist government finally agreed to release him, if he promised to leave China and return home to the United States. Oswald agreed and his missionary society wired him the money to cover the transportation costs.

On his way to catch the ship back to the U.S., which was leaving from northern India, Oswald heard that there were lots of Jews sleeping in the warehouse lofts by the piers. They had been denied entrance to every country in the world except India, and so were temporarily living in these lofts. It was Christmas time so Oswald went around to the lofts and said to the Jews,

"It's Christmas. Merry Christmas!"

The people said, "We're Jews."

Oswald said, "I know, but it's Christmas!"

They said, "We don't observe Christmas. We're not followers of Christ. We are Jews."

Oswald said, "I know, but what would you like for Christmas?"

"We don't keep Christmas," was their confused reply.

"I know," said Oswald, "but what would you like? If somebody gave you something for Christmas, what would you like?"

They half-jokingly said, "Well, we'd like some good German pastry."

"Good!" said Oswald and off he went.

Oswald went looking around and finally found some pastry at a shop in the city that could do German pastries. After cashing in his transportation check for the trip home, he took boxes of these German pastries back to the Jews and said, "Merry Christmas!" Then he wired the missionary society again and said, "I need another ticket home."

When Oswald was telling the story many years later, a young seminarian was sitting in the front row and was a bit incensed. He said to Dr. Goulter, "Why did you do that? They don't even believe in Jesus!" And Dr. Goulter said, "But I do."

Being a disciple of Jesus changes how you live your life. Isn't that what we all yearn for as we move into Advent and move toward Christmas? We hope you'll be able to join us for this season of Advent as we prepare for a simple Christmas Eve service at 5:00 p.m. This has been a hard year for us all, so we hope that Advent and Christmas bring you a little peace and joy in these more quiet and reflective services.

Wishing you all peace,

Advent devotions, calendars, wreaths/candles and activities for younger and older children are available in the Parish House. Call the Church Office (978-448-2091) to arrange for pickup or delivery.





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.

Peggy & John Blair
Connie & Bob Brown
Mike Corbett & Family
Justin Duff
Ralph Finney

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.

Thank You!

Dear UCC friends,

Thank you so much for helping to make my BIG BIRTHDAY so special. Receiving the flood of cards, letters, emails, videos, ecards, flowers, balloons has been a humbling and overwhelming experience. I can't recall ever feeling surrounded by so much love. I continued to celebrate until the balloons hit the floor.

Love and blessings,
Edie

December Birthdays

Brenda Semienko	12/02	Korbin Larsen	12/18	Janet Carey	12/22
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

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!

Budget Meeting

Sunday, December 6, at 12:30 p.m.

Copies of the proposed 2021 Operating Budget are available in church, at the Church Office, and electronically via the link provided in the All Church Email. Then on December 6 all are invited to a meeting (via Zoom) at which the membership will approve the Operating Budget for 2021. Questions may be directed to our Treasurer, Dennis Carey; Mary Hanson, Stewardship & Finance; or Moderator Jean Armstrong. *The Zoom link for the meeting will be provided in the Friday email on December 4.*

Church News

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. 16.** Carol will email you last year's to make this process easier. Also, if you have been holding meetings and haven't sent Carol your Committee Meeting notes, please include in this email your Committee Meeting notes for the entire year. Thank you!

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

All Women of the Church are Invited!

L.I.L.I.E.S (Lord Inspired Ladies in Eternal Sisterhood)

Wednesday, December 9

7:00 - 7:45 p.m. (via Zoom)

The L.I.L.I.E.S. will meet virtually to connect, catch up, and plan our next series. New faces are encouraged and welcome! Please use the **Zoom link provided in the All Church Email on December 4.** *If you have any questions, contact Betsy Bridge or Raquel Majeski.*

Give & Take—Children's Clothing Drive

Our UCC *Give & Take* of children's clothing is now supporting *Loaves and Fishes'* clients, as well as our own family and friends. We continue to ask for donations that have been gently used to flourish our mission. For your convenience, feel free to drop off your clothing offerings on Sundays after the church service in the Parish House, or you can continue to drop them off at the Legge Family's house located at 856 Townsend Rd, Groton.

We welcome you to **make an appointment for either a Saturday or Sunday in the coming weeks** to come by and see our clothing room on the first floor of the Parish House. In order to keep everyone safe during this difficult time, we aren't able to accept walk-in visits at this time.

Please contact Charlene Legge with any further questions.

Sunday School

The Christian Education Committee has decided to continue with no in-person or virtual Sunday School Classes through the Winter curriculum. For PreK—6th grade, we have the pamphlets normally handed out during Sunday School. Right now, we have five families who are receiving the curriculum via mail. 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 be sure to send you the correct curriculum for that grade level. The pamphlets will be mailed on a monthly basis.

Christian Education Committee

—Carl Prestia, Chair

—Amy Nickerson

—Jenn Coviello

—Bonnie Marchesani

New Member / Stewardship / Advent Material

Welcome to Our Newest Member

Susan Walko became a member of our church on **Sunday, November 29**. Susan moved to Groton in November 2019 and was drawn to our church by the Community Christmas Concert held in the Sanctuary. She was raised in the Congregational/United Church of Christ faith. As a young child she remembers sitting in church with her dad, making pies with her mom and the ladies, and hanging around UCC camp while her parents lead youth in retreat. In the past, she has been involved with Christian Education, trustees, fundraising, hospitality and music.

Susan is married and has four grown children. The oldest was married earlier in November this year and the youngest is in college. She enjoys music and has been taking Zoom voice lessons so she can be better prepared to sing in choir when we resume in person. She also enjoys all types of needle work and has been attending the Groton Public Library knitting group. She is very active and tries to go hiking, biking and exploring Groton as much as she can. She owns her own Professional Organizing business and has recently published her first book on "Life Organizing".

Having been a member of her prior church in Methuen for about 30 years, she was leery about getting to know new people. That changed the minute she walked in the door. So far everyone she has met has really made her feel welcome, even during this pandemic time. Since we don't have traditional coffee hour in which she can get to know you, do not hesitate to reach out to her.

Stewardship Update



Pledge Update

The Stewardship Team would like to thank all who participated in Pledge Sunday (11/15) and to those who sent in their pledge for 2021. **As of 11/29, we have received 48 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 2021 is approaching fast. Please make sure **all current year pledges are up-to-date no later than Sunday, December 27**. 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 2021 will be available. They are a handy way to keep track of your weekly giving. Since pledges are made for the upcoming calendar year, we start tracking 2021 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

Advent Material

Advent Material

Parish House Front Room

CE has put together small bags of Advent material, if you are interested. Some bags have Advent wreaths and candles, as well as Advent calendars, etc. If you are interested in picking one up or having one delivered, please contact Carol in the Church Office (978-448-2091 or unioncc@uccgroton.org) to arrange a day/time. Please specify whether you would like a bag with a wreath or without. We also have lots of Advent candles, if that is all you need.



Christmas Eve WORSHIP

Christmas Eve Worship at 5:00 p.m.

There will be one Worship service for Christmas Eve this year. **Due to our limited capacity, sign up is required.** You can sign up with the link provided in our Friday email; or you can contact Carol in the Church Office (978-448-2091; unioncc@uccgroton.org) and she will sign you up. Please be sure to include the total number of people in your family who will attend. This will be a simplified Christmas Eve Worship service (no candlelight, singing, etc), but at least we will be able to be together to celebrate the birth of our Lord.

For those who are not comfortable attending in person, we will have an audio recording available, but we are also working on an alternative way for people to participate (if successful, details will follow closer to the date).

Please remember that masks must be worn at all times while in the church building. Thank you.

Missions

The Missions Committee had a budget of \$8,495.00 to spend for 2020 and outlined a plan in February 2020. All was upended when the pandemic reached our state. We refocused our budget to support local food security, home safety, and the unhoused population.

Money has been spent on the following:

Hagar's Sisters	\$3,300.00	Organization that is dedicated to ending the cycle of domestic abuse.
Backpack Drive	\$2,000.00	Our church organizes this local backpack drive annually.
Loaves & Fishes	\$1,500.00	Local organization that helps with food security and distribution.
Teen Challenge NE	\$ 600.00	Provides faith-based, long-term residential care for those who struggle with substance abuse.
Common Cathedral	\$ 478.06	Boston-based organization that supports the unhoused in Boston. We purchased items on their Amazon "wish list".
Unbound	\$ 360.00	Ongoing support of Carlos, a youth from El Salvador.
CityReach	\$ 79.00	Organization where the youth and adults of our church went to Boston to support the unhoused population.

Many of these organizations have been the focus of Missions for a number of years, and our conversations regarding decisions were driven by the desire to help in a practical yet impactful way that would make a difference during these unprecedented times.

Help Available/Where You can Help

If you need help this season or into the New Year, or if you know someone who needs help, we invite you to please contact one of us on the Missions Committee.

There are local resources available that may not be affiliated with our church that have been established to support our community in Groton during times of need. If you are so moved to help with a donation or if you need help there is a comprehensive list on the Groton Public Library website.

Groton Community Resource Guide: <http://gpl.org/services/groton-links>

Town of Groton Commissioners of Trust Funds/Community Children's Fund: This fund was created to provide financial assistance for residents of Groton. Families in need of Christmas gifts and toys are supported through this local fund. Their address is: 173 Main Street, Groton, MA. 01450

Missions Committee

—Julie Sutherland-Platt, Chair
—Lynn Manalo

—Krista Kubick

—Stefanie Lempp

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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

(Signup* is required due to limited capacity.)

Dec. 6 — Advent Two! — 10:00 a.m.

Dec. 13 — Advent Three! — 10:00 a.m.

Dec. 20 — Advent Four! — 10:00 a.m.

Thursday, Dec. 24 — Christmas Eve Worship
5:00 p.m.

Dec. 27 — Worship — 10:00 a.m.

Masks are required at all times while in the church building.

**To signup, go to our website (www.uccgroton.net) or call the Church Office (978-448-2091).*

