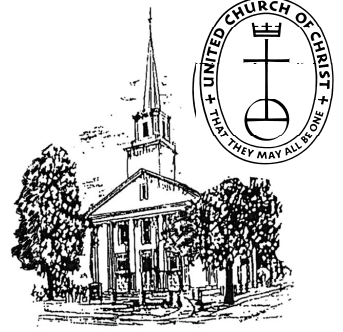


THE UNION COURIER

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

220 Main Street
Groton, Massachusetts 01450



February 2021

A Message from Your Pastor

In just a few weeks, we will begin our journey through the season of Lent. This year, I will be leading interested folks in a Bible Study on *The Gospel According to Mark*. We are going to explore Mark's Gospel not as a religious treatise, but as a story.

Stories are powerful, aren't they? We read them in novels and watch them in movies. We hear them in operas and Broadway musicals. We tell stories to our friends and we listen to the stories they tell. Whenever a loved one dies, telling stories is part of how we heal.

The Gospel According to Mark is a story too. Mark's Gospel is a story full of conflict and suspense, with surprise reversals and strange ironies, and enough riddles and hidden meanings to make *The Di Vinci Code* seem trite.

Years ago, when I was in seminary, I listened to the entire New Testament on cassette. Every Sunday morning, as I drove from Boston to my field education site in Nashua, New Hampshire, I listened to The Jesus Story. I was amazed at the larger narrative arc of the Gospels. All sorts of new things jumped out at me. I quickly began to realize how much was lost when a sermon focused on just one scene, a few sentences, or even a phrase. I began to see how sermons were actually chopping up and killing the very story they should instead be telling!

Mark's Gospel is not a simple story where virtue trumps vice and good wins out over evil. Nor is it a collection of spiritual teachings or wise moralizations about life. Jesus, the hero of the story, is the most surprising character. His story revolves around life and death, good and evil, human triumph and human failure. For instance, what appear to be simple teachings end up becoming difficult pronouncements full of irony and paradox.

If you want to be the most important, you need to become the least.

Nothing is hidden, except for it to become known.

To enter God's Realm, you first need to become like a child.

When you read through the Gospel, you can see how the characters think they know what is going on. Yet everything they assume gets flipped upside down. The disciples expect to follow Jesus to glory and fame, but instead find servitude and death. The authorities kill Jesus to preserve their traditions and authority, but in doing so they end up dooming themselves. When the women come to anoint Jesus' body after his death, they learn that he is among the living.

The *way* the story is told is what helps readers *experience* The Jesus Story. The approach of this Bible Study is to read the story of Jesus like we would read a short story or novel. That means we will pay close attention to the role of the narrator, the differing points of view, style (phrasing, sentence structure description of episodes, etc.), plot, settings, characters, etc. The narrative of the Gospel consists of the stories that Mark tells, but the *way* the story is told is what creates the impact and spiritual experience that, hopefully, leads to some faithful response.

All are welcome. This is 100% free. You will need to be able to use Zoom and email. ***We do need folks to sign up for this series, as there will be a number of things emailed out before we start and different resources to help you each week. Please mail Carol at unioncc@uccgroton.org to sign up ASAP and don't forget to mark your calendars now.***

Peace,

The Gospel of Mark as a Story
Tuesdays (February 23, March 2, 9, 16, 23, 30)
7:00 - 8:00 p.m. (via Zoom)



Our Church Family/Church News



Ongoing Prayer List

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

Peggy & John Blair
Mike Corbett & Family
Tiffany Gibb

Betty Goulet
Brigid and Brian Klingberg
Betty Sampas

Rudi Schmid
Matt & Mandy Spain
Joe Marchesani

Bill Moeller
Betty & Liz Waggoner
Laurie Waye

Prayer Request

Dorcas Brule is requesting prayers for her friend, Jess, who is struggling with COVID-19/pneumonia. All prayers are appreciated.

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.

February Birthdays

Tony DiCenzo	02/01	Mark Wheeler	02/14	Lily Burgess	02/23
Ryan Carey	02/02	Travis Bugbee	02/16	Dylan Hughes	02/24
Carl Haas	02/04	Arianna Boucher	02/19	Arianna Barker	02/25
Rebecca Brennan	02/06	Steve Flynn	02/21	Jessica Plausse	02/25
Henry Richardson-Irvin	02/07	Lily Dabritz	02/22	Ryleigh Cunningham	02/28
Emily Howard	02/10	Charlotte LaGasse	02/22		
Charlene Legge	02/14	Clarissa LaGasse	02/22		

If we missed your birthday, it is not in our database. Please email unioncc@uccgroton.org to give us your birthday. We would also 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!



Congratulations to **Joel and Elizabeth Hughes**, who will be celebrating their **15th Wedding Anniversary** on **February 25**. Congratulations!

Helen Misselhorn Contact Information

Karen Sherwin and Helen Misselhorn are in Florida until sometime in May. If anyone would like to call or write to Helen while they are there, her information is below:

Helen Misselhorn
C/O Karen Sherwin
66 Clubhouse Road
Rotonda West, FL 33947

Tel. #941-241-5393

Church News



Church Council

January 27 Meeting Summary

We had a discussion regarding the upcoming Annual Meeting Sunday, 1/31, via Zoom. Church service will be “live” via Zoom at 10:00 a.m., followed by Zoom Coffee Hour at 11:00 a.m. for those who want to attend, and the meeting will begin at 12:30 p.m., also via Zoom. The plan is to make it one extra-long Zoom so that people can come in and out for any or all of the three meetings.

Capital Campaign Committee: For those who have donated, Bebe would like to assure them that, while we are still in a holding pattern, we are eager to restart the fundraising efforts as soon as the pandemic eases. There was a suggestion to contact the person the Endowment Committee uses for investments for advice on how to make that money grow. The Capital Campaign committee is not meeting again until April 12.

Birthday Fund: There was a discussion about allocating the funds. No decisions has been made at this time. We plan to discuss this further at the next meeting.

Groton Non-Profit Council: Bebe thinks it would be worthwhile to have a representative from the church involved. Corey plans to attend the Zoom conference call, which will be held Friday, 1/29. They meet (currently via Zoom) about 3-4 times per year.

Church Directory: Mary asked about how to handle people who have passed away. It feels wrong to just delete them right away, but the primary purpose of the Directory is to connect people with contact info. It was, therefore, decided that the Directory should be up-to-date with current info and people who are deceased should be removed. Steve Legge asked if it was possible to put an In Memoriam page for deceased members? Mary is going to look into whether or not this is possible.

Annual Meeting Summary—January 31

Rev. Corey Sanderson began with prayer. Moderator Jean Armstrong invited all to review the minutes from the Congregational Budget Meeting held on December 6 via Zoom. The minutes, as published, were accepted unanimously.

Pastor’s Report: Corey lifted up the work of the Council and the Deacons during this year of the pandemic. It’s something to celebrate that we have strong leadership in our church community who have worked so hard to keep things going virtually.

Committee and Ministry Member Nominations: Jean explained that we decided to extend the terms of people already serving on committees. It did not seem right to roll people off and introduce new people to committees, all via Zoom. There are still some committees that need members, so we will still be working to fill any vacancies. The roster, as published, was accepted unanimously.

Budget 2021: Treasurer Dennis Carey reviewed the budget creation process that took place last fall. In the end, the 2021 Budget is a repeat of the 2020 Budget, even though we KNOW that certain items are not accurate. We know the pledge amount listed in the budget is too high (i.e., we do not expect to get as much money in pledges as we are putting in the budget, but expect it to be offset by reduced expenditures). We received a PPP loan in 2020 of \$27,650, which helped to offset some of the lower-than-budgeted donations. Dennis is just completing the final application for a second loan from the PPP, and these are loans that do NOT need to be repaid, as long as we use them to pay our employees.

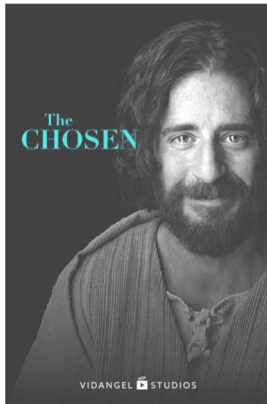
In addition to the Deacons and the Church Council, thanks were given to Corey for steering the ship during this difficult time! The question was asked if Corey would be doing more services via Zoom like we had this morning. He said the Deacons would discuss it, but there is a concern about leaving out people who don’t have access, whereas by sending out the recording everyone can listen. However, we could consider alternating service types, or record the Zoom video and make it available later. People seemed to enjoy connecting “in person” in this way.

From the Collector

Donation statements for 2020 have been mailed. If you have not received your statement, please contact Margaret Wheeler (collector@uccgroton.org).

L.I.L.I.E.S.

All Women of the Church are Invited!



***The Chosen*—Zoom Meetings Three Wednesdays (2/3, 2/10, 3/3)* 7:00—7:45 p.m.**

*These dates were changed due to conflicts with other meetings.

We all need some hope and light this winter! So let's hunker down and "Binge Jesus"! We will be watching Season 1 of *The Chosen* (free on YouTube or the app) in the comfort of our own homes, and then discuss at our Zoom meetings. *The Chosen* is the first ever multi-season TV show about the life of Jesus, and it allows us to see Jesus through the eyes of those who knew Him. It is really well done and something you can watch with the whole family!

Note that **each episode is about 45 minutes long. Regarding the YouTube links: The Pilot Episode** will have some ads; **Episode 1-8** are "livestream" and will have some comments from the Director, as well as some ads. You can skip the ads or fast forward through the Director's comments if you like, but you may also be interested in the Director's comments and listen to those.

Links for the episodes through YouTube or through The Chosen app are provided in the Friday email, as well as a Zoom link for the meetings (same link for all three meetings).

If you have any questions, contact Betsy Bridge (ebridge@goddingcapital.com) or Raquel Majeski (raquelg@gmail.com).

Sunday School

The Christian Education Committee will continue with no in-person or virtual Sunday School Classes for the remainder of the school year. For PreK—6th grade, we have the pamphlets normally handed out during Sunday School. We have five families who have requested to receive the curriculum via mail.

If you have not yet responded and would like to receive these pamphlets 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.

2021 Christian Education Committee

—Carl Prestia, Chair

—Jenn Coviello

—Bonnie Marchesani

—Amy Nickerson

Missions

Christmas Angels—Thank you!

A huge Thank You for the donations to the Christmas Angels this year. Donations went to the RIP Medical Debt fund headed up by the SNEUCC. Donations from our congregation totaled \$2,130, which will eliminate roughly \$213,000 of medical debt to families in need. We are blessed with a loving and generous church family.

2021 Missions Committee

—Julie Platt, Chair

—Krista Kubick

—Stefanie Lempp

—Lynn Manalo

Community News



Groton Interfaith Council

**Groton Interfaith Council Book Discussion
Thursday, February 25
7:00 p.m. (via Zoom)**

Pastor Corey will be leading and moderating the conversation. Here's the blurb from the Interfaith Council:

“Please join the Friends and Members of the *Groton Interfaith Council* as we read and discuss, *The Faith Club: A Muslim, A Christian, A Jew - Three Women Search for Understanding*, on February 25 at 7:00 p.m. via Zoom. *The Faith Club* weaves the story of three women, their three religions, and their urgent and profound quest to understand one another. When an American Muslim woman befriends two other mothers, one Jewish and one Christian, they plan to write a children’s book to educate their children about their respective religions. In their journey, they discover a way to openly discuss, honestly admit, and joyfully share their faith journeys. Their hopeful and positive story is not only a key to understanding people of other faiths and traditions, but it provides a model for dealing with all kinds of differences in our world.”

Get a copy of the book (library, bookstore, kindle, audiobook, etc.), begin reading, and be ready to join the Zoom discussion on February 25 at 7:00 p.m.

This event is being hosted by the Groton Library, and they will be arranging the Zoom meeting. Contact the library ((email: info@gpl.org)) for more information on how to signup.

Lent



**Lent Begins...
Ash Wednesday, February 17**

Easter Sunday is April 4

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

CHANGE SERVICE REQUESTED



DATED MATERIAL
PLEASE DO NOT DELAY

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Please return to your mail carrier.

February Update

We are continuing with online only Worship for the time being. Rev. Sanderson will send out recordings of Worship through our email list.

If you are not currently on our email list, please contact the Church Office (978-448-2091 or unioncc@uccgroton.org) to be added to our list. This will keep you informed on the changing situation.

When it is safe to do so, we will resume in-person Worship again. Please check your Friday emails for updates.

Thank you for your patience as we try to keep everyone safe.

God Bless!

A Lenten Bible Study
The Gospel of Mark as a Story
Tuesdays (February 23, March 2, 9, 16, 23, 30)
7:00 – 8:00 p.m. (via Zoom)
(see p. 1 for more details)