

THE UNION COURIER

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

220 Main Street
Groton, Massachusetts 01450



June 2021



Hello Friends,

This past Sunday, Pentecost Sunday, was our official re-opening since the pandemic caused us to close our doors back in March of 2020. Like a majority of churches across the country, we made the choice to temporarily suspend in-person worship and to shift to an online format. At the time, 62 weeks ago, none of us would have ever imagined how quickly and dramatically our lives were about to change.

We never would have imagined losing friends and family members, co-workers and neighbors, to the terrible pandemic scourge of Covid-19. We never would have imagined the long-overdue national racial reckoning that became a movement following the death of George Floyd. And who among us would have imagined such a difficult and controversial presidential election, capped off by a deadly white-nationalist insurrection of the national's capital? I think we can all agree that it's been a very long year.

The good news is that, according to the latest science, we have endured the worst of the pandemic. That means we can begin pulling back together all the disparate parts of our lives. For our church family, this means that returning to in-person worship can now be a safe experience, provided we all work together during the next few months.

Your church leaders know that not everyone is ready to return to in-person worship. That's totally fine. There are some folks in our congregation who will say it's still too early to regather, while others will say it's been far too late. Wherever you happen to be on that spectrum, we hope you will rejoin us when YOU feel most comfortable doing so. And if you've been worshipping elsewhere during this pandemic pause, we hope you'll return to the UCC Groton family as we recommit ourselves to the mission and ministry and vision that God has set before us as a congregation.

While state, national, and denominational guidelines are all loosening, and finally coming into greater alignment, we are going to take things slowly and carefully as we move through this regathering process.

For now, please plan to wear a mask if you are attending worship. Our mask protocol will likely change in upcoming weeks, but for now — whatever your position happens to be on it — we simply ask that you practice genuine Christian hospitality, concern, and care for others by wearing a mask whenever you are inside. We will certainly get to the place where masks are not needed, but let's just take it one step at a time for the time being. So, as we start up our in-person worship gatherings, let's be patient and accepting of each other by wearing a mask whenever we are inside the church building.

Please know that not everyone is going to be comfortable shaking hands or giving hugs. For the time being, be ready to offer a fist bump, elbow bump, a wave, or sign of peace, like we have all learned to do. So just give folks some time and space to get used to the idea of real human contact. Social graces really do go a long way.

During worship, make sure to give people outside of your family a little space, just a couple of feet or so. Yes, I know fully vaccinated people don't need to be socially distant according to the most recent CDC guidelines, but we don't know who is fully vaccinated, who is partially vaccinated, and who isn't vaccinated at all. So, while you may sit wherever you like in the Sanctuary, do consider giving one another a little space so that no one feels uncomfortable or concerned during worship.

From the Pastor (cont.)

Our Church Family

Maybe you've heard the old late-night adage, 'You don't have to go home, but you can't stay here.' Well, after worship, you won't have to go home, but we are going to ask you to go outside. We are simply trying to limit conversations inside the building. So, after the Postlude, please make your way out to the front lawn and then you can catch up with one another without your masks on, where it is more safe and more comfortable. And if you would like to come to church early and greet one another outside on the front lawn before going inside for worship, that is totally fine too.

During these initial weeks of re-gathering, we won't be doing an official coffee hour, but we are working on how we can best resurrect this important social sacrament. Stay tuned.

During the next several weeks I invite you to practice some Grace — Grace with your church leaders, and Grace with those who are volunteering and helping out on Sunday mornings. If it's helpful, you might even want to think of it like this:

Give people around you some Space.

Let others engage at their own Pace.

And be ready to practice a little Grace.

Peace,



Our Church Family

Ongoing Prayer List

If there is a name you would like to add or remove, please contact Carol Zaiatz in the Church Office (978-448-2091 or unioncc@uccgroton.org).

Peggy & John Blair
Mike Corbett & Family
Ralph Finney
Tiffany Gibb
Betty Goulet

William Isaiah Kennedy
Brigid and Brian Klingberg
Cindy McGuire
Betty Sampas
Rudi Schmid

Matt & Mandy Spain
Joe Marchesani
Bill Moeller
Betty & Liz Waggoner
Laurie Waye

June Birthdays

Bill Gale, Sr.	06/01	Hayley Cahill	06/10	Alison Houde	06/24
Andrew Leonard	06/04	Aiden Luth	06/11	Cailidh Houde	06/24
Gerry Cahill	06/05	Sammi Smith	06/11	Kim Burgess	06/25
Barbara Avey	06/07	Grant Howard	06/12	Isabella Meehan	06/27
Jillian Van Pelt	06/08	Amy Nickerson	06/13	Bill Semienko	06/28
Doris Barreiro	06/09			Ed Stratton	06/28

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!

Our Church Family—Recent Events

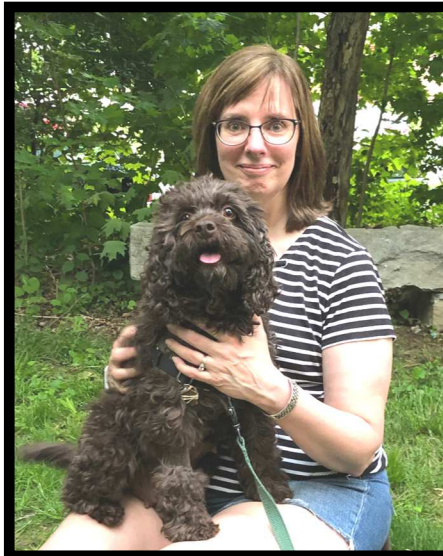
Hike on Sunday, May 16

Steve Legge took 15 of us (and one dog) for a hike on the Oxbow Loop Trail in the J. Harry Rich State Forest. We saw a muskrat swimming near the bank where we were standing and a number of birds flew over. Gregory tried to catch some fish with his pole, but found that a little difficult as we were mostly moving down the trail. Sara looked for fiddleheads (a plant — we did find some). At the end of the hike we were rewarded with a Great Blue Heron fly over. The trek was flat and about two miles long; the weather was beautiful! Many of us had not seen each other for a long time. It was good getting back together again!



Firepit Gathering Saturday, May 22

Last year, right around the time we paused our Sunday public worship, we installed an outdoor firepit in the grassy area behind the Parish House. Thanks to the prompting of Bebe Goudey and the hard-working hands of Bruce Bottamini, along with Tom Hanson and the good folks on Buildings and Grounds, the idea of a firepit became a reality. On Saturday, May 22, we commissioned it with a Pizza Party and some sticky fun with S'mores. In the cool of the evening, adults talked, kids played, and no one left hungry. It was a nice glimpse of what our post-pandemic mask-less life will look like. Special thanks to the organization wizardry of Sara Zambuto, to Carol in the office, and to all who pitched in to help. A good time was had by all!



Church News



Summary for May 26 Meeting

A few people have joined the B&G Committee; Janice Owen has joined the Deacons, but they still need additional members. The CE Committee also has openings.

Dennis discussed the YTD statement (both summary and detail). The “miscellaneous income” includes the new PPE loan, as well as \$6,000 remaining from the first one. We might be able to use the unallocated amount for steeple repair. All the other expenses are as expected so things are looking good.

The Stated Meeting, which we typically have in June, is being pushed back to September 12.

May 23 was the first day of in-person worship since before Christmas. There were 35 people there. Corey said there was good energy and people seemed happy to be back. Pews are not roped off, although we are still doing sign-ups. After May 30, we may do away with signups, as capacity limits are lifted. We also will be bringing back a simplified printed worship bulletin. The jury is still out on singing, but Corey is attending a webinar next week and it would be good to wait until after that to see if we get any more clarity. Our Nursery Attendant is fully vaccinated and the Nursery is available for those who need it. We will probably have to move the kids into the parlor, since we have downstairs worship to consider as well.

Bob Hargraves suggested potentially converting one of the handicapped parking spaces right in front of the walkway into a “loading zone”. He brings Ellen, gets her inside, and then moves his car, but noted that it’s hard to pull in there as often someone has already parked in those spots.

From the Collector

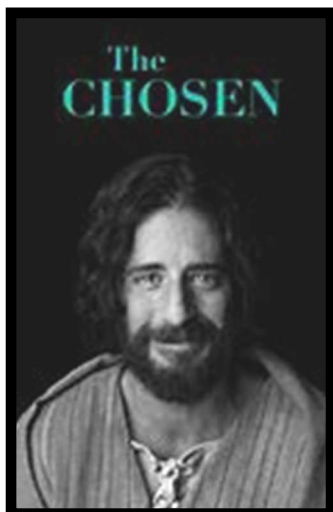
Thank you to everyone who has sent their offerings and pledge donations to the Church Office, or given online through their bank, through the Online Giving link in the weekly email or on the Church's website. If you are considering using online giving and have some questions, please contact Margaret Wheeler (978-692-5401 or collector@uccgroton.org) to see how I can help.



2021 Graduates

Congratulations to all our recent graduates and wishing you God’s blessings for a bright and happy future!

- **Macie Bridge** graduated from Trinity College with a B.A. in English; Creative Writing, and a double minor in Religious Studies and Writing, Rhetoric & Media Studies. Macie plans to spend a service year in North Carolina with the Episcopal Service Corp.
- **Ryan Carey** graduated from Groton-Dunstable Regional High School.
- **Emily Hanson** graduated from Nashoba Tech. She will be attending Fitchburg State University in the fall, majoring in Communications: Media, Film/Video Production, for a B.S. Degree.
- **Alison Houde** graduated from Ayer-Shirley Regional High School. She will be attending Endicott College in the fall.
- **Cailidh Houde** graduated from Ayer-Shirley Regional High School. She will be attending Franklin Pierce University in the fall.
- **Kyle Plausse** graduated from Groton-Dunstable Regional High School.
- **Amy Sjoberg** graduated from Penn State University. She is heading to Tufts Medical School next year.



All Women of the Church are Invited!

LILIES Zoom Discussion

The Chosen Season 2, Episode 1-4

Wednesday, June 9, 7:00 - 7:45 p.m.

As we dive into summer, let's all "Binge Jesus"! Episodes 1-4 of *The Chosen*, Season 2, are now available! Please watch these episodes prior to the Zoom session, then join us for a fun Zoom discussion on **Wed., June 9, 7:00-7:45 p.m.** (Zoom link to be provided closer to the date.)

The Chosen is available for free using "*The Chosen* app" (there are no longer youtube links...please let us know if you are having challenges with the app **link provided in the Friday email**). Once you get into the app (through your phone or computer), you can cast it to your TV and watch it there.

If you did not get a chance to watch Season 1 yet, you can access those episodes through this app also. This is a series you do not want to miss!!!!

Missions



UCC Groton Backpack Drive 2021!

On **August 27, 2021**, we will once again be providing area students with donated backpacks and school supplies at the Community Center in Devens. Here's how you might be able to help:

- **Planning phase of the Drive between now and August 27:** Recruiting and communicating with donors, procuring of backpacks and supplies, recruiting volunteers, planning distribution day logistics, and so on.
- **Seeking new corporate sponsors:** If you work for or know of a company or organization that might be interested in providing high-quality backpacks or financial support, please let us know!
- **Adult and youth volunteers needed to help stuff backpacks with supplies on or around August 23:** We are hoping to make this a fun event for all ages!
- **Adult volunteers needed to help with Distribution Day, August 27:** Setting up tents and tables, stocking tables with backpacks and school supplies, and interacting with recipients.

Please contact **Stefanie Lempp** (stefanie.lempp@msn.com) or anyone on the Missions Team to help with the planning stages of the Drive. Stay tuned in the upcoming months for more information and details about purchasing backpacks and supplies.

Your Missions Team,

Julie Platt, Krista Kubick, Lynn Manalo & Stefanie Lempp

Union Congregational Church
United Church of Christ
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.

We Are Open for In-Person Worship!

Sunday, June 6—10:00 a.m. Worship
Communion will be served.

Sunday, June 13—10:00 a.m. Worship

Sunday, June 20—10:00 a.m. Worship

Sunday, June 27—10:00 a.m. Worship

***Due to the Governor's restrictions being relaxed, there is
NO required signup. All are welcome!***