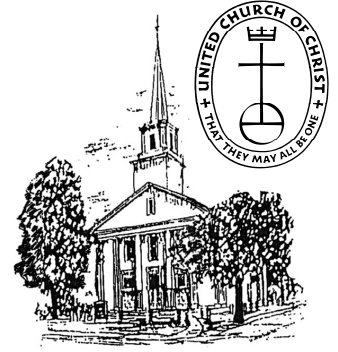


THE UNION COURIER

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

220 Main Street
Groton, Massachusetts 01450



September 2021

Letting Go of Expectations

It was many years ago when I heard author Anne Lamott say, 'Expectations are resentments waiting to happen.' It was one of those pearls of wisdom that has remained with me ever since. Not only have I found these words helpful in my own life, but those with whom I have shared this quote say it has been helpful to them too. Anyone who is familiar with the twelve steps of Alcoholics Anonymous will recognize the sentiment. The Big Book of A.A. puts it like this: 'Expectations are pre-meditated resentments.'

The pandemic experience we have been living through (and sadly, still are) has been full of all sorts of unmet expectations. Nothing has gone anyone's way. It sometimes feels like there's this stream of resentment flowing through so many facets of our lives. When our expectations aren't met, such resentment often arrives disguised as anger and hurt.

I find it helpful to remember that there's a difference between expectations and aspirations. There are many things we come to expect in life that do not occur, yet there are also things toward which we aspire that also never reach fruition. This might sound like splitting hairs, but unmet expectations and unmet aspirations create different responses in us. Unmet expectations often lie behind the anger and hurt we might feel, as well as the desire we might have for power, control, or even manipulation. Unmet aspirations, however, usually seem to create sadness or occasionally grief.

Whenever we have an expectation that is not met, we might end up feeling hurt or angered, distraught or wounded. The difficulty for us arises not when we create an expectation of what might happen, but when we start feeling *entitled* to our expectation being fulfilled. In other words, we get overly attached to the expectation becoming real. While there's nothing wrong with having an expectation, the sense of entitlement that we add on top of that expectation is what causes us a great deal of emotional pain.

Have you ever felt the welling-up experience of 'road rage?' You're driving into Boston for a meeting. Since it's the middle of the day, and not anywhere close to rush hour, you expect it should take you forty minutes. What happens when everything grinds to a halt because of an unplanned traffic jam? You get angry. The longer you sit in traffic, the more your anger festers. You pound the steering wheel with your fists. In your mind, you blame your boss for asking you to go to this meeting. You then resent your co-worker who never offers to drive. You're upset that you're going to be late because you hate looking like you are irresponsible. It's so embarrassing. For the rest of the day, you are little more than a smoldering grouch. When you arrive home that night, you act dismissive toward your spouse and scold your kids.

Where did the turmoil start? Was it with the expectation that it should only take you forty minutes to drive into Boston? Not at all. It started with the attachment to that expectation by thinking that everyone and everything around you was going to behave in such a way that your expectation would become real. You felt entitled to your expectation. Not only did the expectation not occur, but you put yourself into a foul mood and sowed nastiness and anger throughout your relationships and life. It's been said that being angry at another person is like 'drinking poison and waiting for the other person to die.' The pain we might feel at our unmet expectations is more than likely our own doing.

We all are still carrying a whole host of unmet expectations surrounding this pandemic experience. As we continue to regather this Fall, there will likely be times when things may not go as we expect. As a community, we will likely need to shift, pivot, and change course a little as we go. Being flexible, and being able to adjust, is what can really keep us on track.

It was sometime during the early 1980s when my father stopped by the area Burger King for lunch. He was craving a Whopper. As he enters the restaurant, he sees that a line of customers has already formed. Slightly irritated that other people want to eat lunch at the very same time, he takes his position at the back of the line. A minute passes. He thinks to himself, 'Why does there have to be a line when I'm hungry and in a rush?' A second minute goes by. The line shifts forward a little. A third minute now passes. He is now

Letting Go of Expectations (cont.)

shifting his weight from foot to foot, shaking his head back and forth, letting out these deep, bothered sighs. 'Fast food?' he grumbles, just loud enough for others to hear. 'More like slow food.'

In his mind he begins plotting out his smart-aleck comment for when he reaches the cashier. He settles on, 'Well, I came here for lunch, but I might as well now consider this dinner!' His frustration and disappointment are heating up to a rolling boil. The person in front of him finally gets their order and then heads to their seat. As my father steps up to the front of the line, ready to dump all his pent-up anger and frustration, he sees that the cashier is a teenage girl with Down Syndrome. In an instant, he realizes his mistake. He pivots and adjusts his behavior. He realizes this young girl is doing a great job. He also realizes how great it is that Burger King hired her.

Sometimes, when our expectations are not met, and our internal personal resentment starts to build, we can miss out on all the beautiful things all around us. The Christian faith is less about our expectations and more about God's aspirations. It's about hope. It's about community. It's about *shalom*. The Christian faith is about helping build the Kingdom of God in this world while we still have breath. It's a full contact way of living where we strive to live lives of faithful devotion, fed by compassionate care, and made real through justice-seeking works.

So, as we venture ahead this Fall, may we focus more on God's positive aspirations and less on our unmet expectations.

Peace,



Our Church Family/News

Ongoing Prayer List

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).

Stephanie Booth
Justin Duff
Kristin Kelly
Rudi Schmid

Matt & Mandy Spain
Joe Marchesani
Bill Moeller

Sakkinen Family
Betty & Liz Waggoner
Laurie Waye



- For Macie Bridge, as she begins her service year in Chapel Hill, NC, with the Episcopal Service Corp.

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

- **Halsey and Julie Platt** are celebrating their 30th **Wedding Anniversary** on **September 7**. Congratulations!



Our Church Family/News



An Update on Cindy McGuire (Edie Tompkin's Daughter)

Cindy's recuperation has been nothing less than a miracle! Would you believe she drove to my house from Mason on August 9. She walks with a cane for safety, but can cross a room without it and manages stairs very well. She is doing things around the house, running errands, cooking dinner. The week of August 16 she and I canned peaches together and made some blackberry jelly. Her surgeons are extremely pleased with her progress and have dismissed her. She spent a few days in Maine with friends where she swam a great deal and took walks. On the phone she sounded almost giddy with excitement.

Cindy always mentions how much she appreciates the ongoing prayers from everyone, so many complete strangers to her. Thank you all.

Blessings,

Edie

September Birthdays

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

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?



Welcome Back Picnic Sunday, September 12, After Worship

Feed Your Soul AND your Stomach! We weren't able to do our usual Welcome Back Picnic last year, but we are back! After the unusual year we have had, let's gather to reconnect as the school year begins again. Plan to stay for good food (sandwiches, hot dogs, and Italian sausages), connect with your church family, and have fun! **RSVP on the link provided in the Friday email or contact Carol Zaiatz** (unioncc@uccgroton.org; 978-448-2091) to confirm your attendance

and/or how you can help (we need some food items plus a few volunteers to setup, help serve, and cleanup). Questions? Please contact Jean Armstrong.

A Note from the Emerle Family

We sold our Groton home and are in the process of buying a home in Hollis, New Hampshire (we are renting in Nashua until October). There is so much that we will miss about Groton, especially UCC. When we returned the key to the church office the other day, 17 years of memories came flooding back - Sunday and holiday services, coffee hours, committee meetings, spaghetti dinners and other fundraisers, Sunday School and adult education series, youth choirs, mission trips, Steve and Charlene's wedding, and, of course, the Harvest Fairs! We could write pages and pages about the inspiring, beautiful, and funny moments we experienced over the years, but we'll keep this short and to the point. We feel blessed to have met so many lovely people who have enriched our lives beyond measure. UCC Groton will remain in our memories and our hearts always.

Michelle, Gary, Brent and Taryn Emerle

Church News

WooSox Game Thursday, August 19

We had 17 people from our church attend the WooSox game. Despite ominous weather predictions and the possibility of canceling the trip, the rain held off and fun was had by all! Enjoy the pictures below:



Missions — Backpack Drive 2021

THANK YOU!

Thanks so much for your amazing efforts in making the Backpack Drive a success! It is a blessing to be able to give backpacks and school supplies to area families and we could not have done it without your donations and the many hands you provided in filling backpacks and distributing them. Despite temperatures in the 80s and a short and windy downpour, we managed to have a fun-filled Distribution Day on August 27!

Once again, we served about 40 families with 140 stuffed backpacks. Two dozen backpacks went to families currently living at Transitions through Our Father's House in Devens and deliveries of additional backpacks and supplies will be made to local schools in the next few weeks. Several hundred pre-filled backpacks will go to military families in the area through Clear Path for Veterans New England. A few boxes of backpacks are still available at the church for pickup.



Missions — Backpack Drive 2021 (cont.)



New Sermon Series

We Belong to Each Other Seven Weeks Beginning September 5 (through November)

Among all the things we have missed during this unexpected season of the pandemic, it's the loss of community that has been one of the most difficult to endure. As we are trying to make our way out of this pandemic, we have all been reminded how crucial community is to our overall health and well-being. Whether it is spending the holidays with our families, going out with our friends, or coming to church on Sunday mornings, we all need some experience of community in our lives. While family is generally defined by bloodlines, and friends by our interests, church community is defined by our faith. Mother Teresa once said, 'If we have no peace, it is because we have forgotten that we belong to each other.' We hope you'll be able to join us during these upcoming seven weeks, as we explore how we can intentionally belong to one another in community.

Sunday School and Nursery Care News



With the recent surge of the Delta variant, and the vaccine not approved yet for the younger children, the Christian Education Committee is reaching out to families of Sunday School children and the Nursery. Communication with the families for feedback and decisions regarding Sunday School and the Nursery are being made. Families are urged to check their email regularly due to the rapid and ever-changing conditions for the most up-to-date information.

We thank everyone for their patience and understanding during these unpredictable times.

Your Christian Education Team



Christian Education Committee

—Carl Prestia, Chair

—Jenn Coviello

—Bonnie Marchesani

Music

Senior Choir

Rehearsals Thursdays (begins 9/9)
7:30—9:00 p.m. in the Sanctuary

All are welcome! We can certainly add more to all vocal parts. High school students are invited also. If you like to sing, please join us. It involves only an hour and a half rehearsal on Thursday, and coming a little early on Sunday, to warm up and run through our music. Come and join other supportive singers who love to sing and worship God. *Any questions, please contact Bernard Crane, Director.*

Handbell Choir

Rehearsals Monday evenings (begins 9/13)
6:30—8:00 p.m. in the Sanctuary

UCC Faith Ringers are so eager to be returning to ringing! We look forward to sharing our music with you as we come together to worship. We will be playing on 9/26, 10/24, 11/21, and 12/19. *Any questions or interest, please contact Cheryl Townsend, Director.*

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Welcome to Church!

Sunday, 5—Worship at 10:00 a.m. (Labor Day Weekend)

Seven-Week Sermon Series Begins—*We Belong to Each Other* (see p. 7)

Sunday, 12—Worship at 10:00 a.m.

Week two of Sermon Series—*We Belong to Each Other*

Welcome Back Picnic after Worship (see p. 3)

Sunday, September 19—Worship at 10:00 a.m.

Week three of Sermon Series—*We Belong to Each Other*

6:00 p.m.—Informational Meeting for Confirmation Students and Parents (Fellowship Hall)

Sunday, September 26—Worship at 10:00 a.m.

Week four of Sermon Series—*We Belong to Each Other*

The Handbell Choir will play during Worship

Harvest Fair

Due to the continuation of Covid-19,
the Harvest Fair has been cancelled again this year.