

# THE UNION COURIER

Union Congregational Church  
United Church of Christ

The Rev. Corey J. Sanderson, Interim Pastor

220 Main Street  
Groton, Massachusetts 01450



## January 2022



Dear Friends,

I hope this message finds you all well. I wanted to let you know that church leadership has decided to pause our public in-person worship services for the remaining four Sundays in the month of January 2022. This is a temporary, short-term pause until the Omicron surge dies down and it is safe to resume in-person worship.

All other functions of the church will continue through January. Office hours will remain the same, Board and Committee meetings will continue via Zoom, Confirmation will shift to Zoom, and we will be preparing for the Annual Meeting on February 6, 2022. In terms of pivoting back to online worship for a few weeks, here is an initial, rough-sketch of things.

1. We will begin with two Sundays of Zoom Worship on January 9<sup>th</sup> and the 16<sup>th</sup>. These will be at 10:00 a.m. on Sunday mornings (a link for Zoom will be provided in the Friday email). The links and other info you need will be in the Friday emails.
2. The following two Sundays, January 23<sup>rd</sup> and the 30<sup>th</sup>, will be prerecorded services where Bernard and I will be doing something together in the Sanctuary. The video links to these two Sundays will be emailed out and you can watch the video on YouTube. These two weeks are the start of the upcoming sermon series. The dates for the related book read, which have not been scheduled yet, will also be announced. These will also be on Zoom.
3. All four Sundays in January will have a Zoom Coffee Hour at 11:00 a.m. for those who wish to catch up with one another.

For those who haven't been following the statewide Covid trends, here is a simplified six-month snapshot of where things have been, how they have proceeded, and where they are likely heading. When we regathered for in-person worship this past June, the statewide daily number of confirmed new cases was averaging around 100. By September - thanks to the emerging Delta variant - that number rose into the 1000 to 3000 range. By November we were seeing days top out with between 4000 - 6000 new cases each day. Towards the beginning of December, as the Omicron variant began taking hold, the number jumped up to 12,000 new confirmed daily cases. During the final two days of 2021 (which was less than a week ago), our state was clocking in at more than 21,000 new cases a day.

As you can see, the Omicron variant is the main reason behind the skyrocketing cases. While the Omicron variant is not more dangerous than Delta, it is more contagious. The major problem with Omicron is that it is able to get around the antibodies we have built up from the vaccines. This is why there have been days with 16,000 breakthrough cases - where vaccinated and boosted people are getting infected and spreading it to others. This is why the town of Groton is moving to a mask mandate. As of this writing, the last seven days have had 16,783 confirmed cases in Middlesex County. That is how high the transmission rates currently are.

Here are three simple and good suggestions for those who are interested.

1. Make sure you are fully vaccinated and boosted. This protects you and this will diminish the chance of you passing Covid along to others.
2. Buy some rapid test kits you can use at home. They are simple, easy to use, and cheap. I used them preventatively before, during, and after the Christmas week to ensure I wasn't unintentionally passing along anything to you during worship or taking something home and infecting my family. These at home tests work best in determining positivity if you feel sick or under the weather. Walmart is the cheapest place to order them. *(continued on next page)*

# Pastor's Page

3. Upgrade your mask. Cloth masks are better than nothing, but they aren't very good against Omicron. Disposable surgical masks are good. KN-95 masks are really good, and N-95 masks are the best. Remember, aerosols work like cigarette smoke or cologne; you don't need to be right next to the person to smell and inhale it.

The 'good news' is that many experts are hopeful that the current spike will diminish quite quickly in maybe four to six weeks. While Omicron is skyrocketing, we also have many more tools at our disposal when compared with last year: vaccines and boosters, at home test kits, and better understanding of the benefits of masking.

Again, this four-week pause in public worship is temporary, and we will continue to evaluate things as we go. Your church leadership thanks you for your understanding, cooperation, and patience.

Peace,



## Sunday School

As a result of "pausing" Worship, Sunday School will be postponed until we return to in-person Worship (hopefully on Sunday, February 6). We hope to see you in Sunday School then!

### Christian Education Committee

- Carl Prestia, Chair
- Bonnie Marchesani
- Jenn Coviello
- Amy Nickerson



## Our Church Family/News

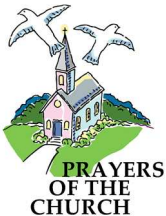


**Ongoing Prayer List:** If you would like to add or remove a name, please contact Carol Zaiatz (978-448-2091 or [unioncc@uccgroton.org](mailto:unioncc@uccgroton.org)).

Stephanie Booth  
Joe Marchesani  
Matt & Mandy Spain

Mayra Marquez  
Bill Moeller  
Sakkinen Family

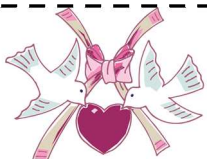
The Sanchez Family  
Betty & Liz Waggoner  
Laurie Waye



- For the family of Terry Anderson, as she died from cancer on 1/6/22. May she rest in peace.
- For Marvin Caldwell and the Schmid family, in the death of Rudi Schmid.
- For the Brown family, in the death of Bob Brown in November 2021.

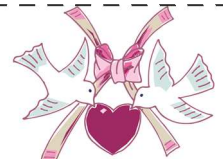
## Need prayer and need it now?

Simply email [prayer@uccgroton.org](mailto: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.



A SPECIAL  
ANNIVERSARY

Congratulations to **Jeff and Krista Kubick**, who will be celebrating their **20<sup>th</sup> Wedding Anniversary** on **January 12**.



A SPECIAL  
ANNIVERSARY



# Our Church Family/News



## January Birthdays

|                   |       |                  |       |                     |       |
|-------------------|-------|------------------|-------|---------------------|-------|
| Shauna Morrison   | 01/01 | Emma Milano      | 01/09 | John Biocchi        | 01/17 |
| Madeleine Bugbee  | 01/02 | Gordon Platt     | 01/09 | Matthew Plausse     | 01/17 |
| Emily Leonard     | 01/03 | Casey Sjoberg    | 01/12 | Reverend Skip Lloyd | 01/18 |
| Janice Owen       | 01/03 | Lauryn Atkins    | 01/13 | Catherine Daly      | 01/19 |
| Chris Sullivan    | 01/03 | Abby Burgess     | 01/14 | Jeff Kubick         | 01/20 |
| Marvin Caldwell   | 01/05 | Andrea McDonough | 01/14 | Bill Shute          | 01/21 |
| Bonnie Marchesani | 01/06 | Barbara Wyman    | 01/15 | Bruce Wyman         | 01/30 |

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 If we missed your birthday, it is not in our database. Please email [unioncc@uccgroton.org](mailto:unioncc@uccgroton.org) to give us your birthday. Also, we would like to recognize significant anniversaries — would you share that information with us?  
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## 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!  
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## Sermon Series

### ***How To Be In The Present. Five Sundays*** **January 23\*, 30\*, February 6, 13, 20**

The Christ Child has been born. The Magi from the East have arrived with their unusual gifts. What will this mean in our lives? Will we even notice? The strange paradox of life is that our very best future depends on how we live in the present. For most of us, we have some work to do. Maybe we are ruminating about the past or worrying about the future. Author, Annie Dillard, says, "How we spend our days is, of course, how we spend our lives." Most of us aren't truly present. We are distracted. We aren't paying attention. We're too busy. This five-week sermon series will help us become more fully present to God, to others around us, and even to ourselves.

*\*Due to the "pause" in Worship, January 23 and 30 will be recorded and emailed to the congregation.*

## Sermon Series Concurrent Book Group

### **Three Tuesdays (February 1, 8, and 15)** **7:00 p.m. via Zoom**

In conjunction with this sermon series, we will be reading Rob Bell's book, *How to Be Here: A Guide to Creating a Life Worth Living*, (HarperOne, 2016). You can pick up a used paperback copy dirt cheap - or click on the link in the Friday email to order through Amazon. It's a good, fun, easy read. See below for the reading schedule.

|             |              |                 |
|-------------|--------------|-----------------|
| Week One:   | Chapters 1-3 | Pages 1-74      |
| Week Two:   | Chapters 4-6 | Pages 75 - 130  |
| Week Three: | Chapters 7-9 | Pages 132 - 201 |

In order to have some meaningful discussion during Zoom, please be sure to read the chapters prior to the scheduled week.

## LILIES – All Women Invited! (Women's Spiritual Gathering)

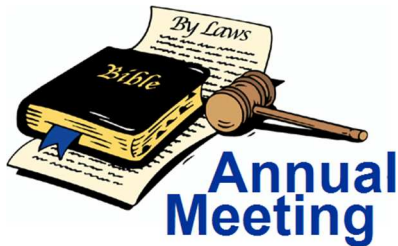
Join LILIES this winter as we get back to basics for a study on prayer! We will be reading *Prayer in the Night: For Those Who Work or Watch or Weep*, by Tish Harrison Warren. We look forward to seeing you in our engaging Zoom Discussions!

### Zoom Discussion Dates:

- Wed, 1/19, 7:00-7:45pm. (Chapters 1 - 5)
- Wed, 2/9, 7:00-7:45pm. (Chapters 6 - 10)
- Wed, 2/16, 7:00-7:45pm. (Chapters. 11 - 13)

Copies of *Prayers in the Night* can be purchased on Amazon. A link is provided in the Friday email. Look for the Zoom link closer to the 1/19 date.

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## Annual Meeting Sunday, February 6, After Worship

All are encouraged to attend via Zoom (a link will be provided closer to the date)! The two items seeking approval on the agenda are:

- 1) Nominations for Committees and Ministries;
- 2) The Final 2022 Operating Budget.

Details/content about these, as well as the 2021 Annual Report, will be available beginning January 23 at the Church Office or electronically through a link in the Friday email. Contact Jean Armstrong or Pastor Sanderson ([corey@uccgroton.org](mailto:corey@uccgroton.org)) with your questions in advance of the meeting.

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## A Message from the Stewardship Team

Thank you to everyone who pledged to UCC Groton for 2022. (If you haven't pledged yet and would like to, it's not too late. Contact Margaret Wheeler ([collector@uccgroton.org](mailto:collector@uccgroton.org)) to make your pledge.) For those who wanted the dated, weekly, offering envelopes, there are labelled, envelope booklets on the table in the downstairs hallway of the Church. If you have any questions, please contact Margaret Wheeler ([collector@uccgroton.org](mailto:collector@uccgroton.org)) or the Church Office ([unioncc@uccgroton.org](mailto:unioncc@uccgroton.org); 978-448-2091).

**From the Collector:** End-of-year donation statements will be mailed in mid-January. If you have any questions, please contact Margaret Wheeler ([collector@uccgroton.org](mailto:collector@uccgroton.org)) .

# Just for Fun

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## Epiphany

W X I S Y R A U N A J F N J I I G K W R  
I Y A D S G N I K E E R H T G N U C E S  
N E T H R E E K I N G S C A K E H V R N  
T V Y S F G V R Y M Q V M W T U E L O O  
E E N J E V H O P G M E F H R L G I O I  
R Y A E A S B O Z O H O G C A J N T D T  
S N H S S C E I U T F I H T V C I U E A  
W A P U T N O H F S N S I B A Y G R H N  
I H O S D U K O C H E O C R O Y N G T I  
M P E C A C T S T R N B N R X L I I G M  
M I H H Y I Z F V O U A L C B B S C N O  
I P T R S J L I F Q T H E E U E M A I N  
N E S I M E C G K I D W C P S O Y L K E  
G R V S W E O E O B H I I N I S O A L D  
O S O T S D B N N P N G X Y R P E M A V  
S E H C R U H C N R E T S A E E H D H X  
D L I H C T S I R H C U R M R N T A C L  
C H R I S T I A N S M O T S U C I S N W  
D P L P L O U G H M O N D A Y J O R E Y  
C E L E B R A T E S I O Q U B L B N E W

CELEBRATES  
CHRIST CHILD  
CHURCH SERVICES  
DENOMINATIONS  
EPIPHANY  
FEASTDAY  
INCARNATION  
JESUS CHRIST  
PLOUGH MONDAY  
SINGING  
THREE KINGS CAKE  
TWELFTH NIGHT  
WESTERN CHURCHES

CHALKING THE DOOR  
CHRISTIAN  
CUSTOMS  
EASTERN CHURCHES  
EPIPHANY EVE  
HOUSE BLESSED  
JANUARY SIX  
LITURGICAL  
REVELATION OF GOD  
THEOPHANY  
THREE KINGS DAY  
VISIT OF THE MAGI  
WINTER SWIMMING



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CHANGE SERVICE REQUESTED



DATED MATERIAL  
PLEASE DO NOT DELAY

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*Please return to your mail carrier.*

## January Update

Due to the current rise in Omicron cases, church leadership has decided to take a four week “pause” on public in-person Worship beginning Sunday, January 9, 2022. 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](mailto:unioncc@uccgroton.org)) to be added to our list. This will keep you informed on the changing situation.

We hope to resume in-person Worship on Sunday, February 6. This will also be the day of our Annual Meeting.

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

God Bless! Wishing you all a Happy and Healthy New Year!

