WITHIN THE PEWS

Monthly Newsletter of the
CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH OF GRAFTON, UCC
Worship & Sunday School 10 am

JULY EDITION
July Special Events:
  July 9 - New Members Meeting at Parsonage, 7:00 p.m.
  July 14 - 28 - Rev. Jane on vacation

A word from our Pastor...

At first I thought it was a cluster of leaves connected to a stick. But the leaves were unusually translucent where the evening sun hit them and the stick bent at a strange angle. A closer look revealed the small pile of leaves and stick lying at the edge of the sidewalk to be a praying mantis. The beautiful mantis was dead and lay with the dignity of a pharaoh reposing in his tomb. There was something noble about the large insect, its spiny forelegs stretched out in supplication. Mantis’ die within a few days after laying their eggs and I preferred to think this one had deposited her eggs on a tree branch, flown around in celebration of new life, and then came to a final resting place on the edge of the walking trail. I gently moved it to the side so no one would unknowingly step on it.

I continued on my walk reflecting upon the praying mantis. I tried to remember everything that I knew about that particular insect. I remembered that praying mantis are survival oriented (they will eat their own limbs if they are starving) and then that they are regenerative (their limbs grow back). It gives the impression of being gentle—almost placid—with its delicate seeming wings and reedy body. Yet, it has a presence of fierceness as well. Myth has it that the praying mantis can magically show a lost child back home and they are often mistakenly called “preying” mantis—a very different image. I also remembered somehow that “mantis” is Greek for seer or prophet. The sight of the dead insect caught my eye and my imagination and stays with me now as I write.

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Rev. Jane Willan, Pastor
Kristen Graham, Admin. Asst., Editor
Organist: Edward Smreczak
Music Director: Donna Blanchard

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Pastor’s email: janewillan@gmail.com
Web Site: www.uccgrafton.com
Jane’s cell 508-581-0786
Jane’s blog: http://uccgrafton.wordpress.com
As people of faith, we are called to stand strong in the face of injustice. Like the praying mantis, we must be always fierce yet gentle, enduring yet renewing, and remember that we were once lost but now are found. This week the Supreme Court made a startling decision of enormous impact. Their ruling in favor of Hobby Lobby and Conestoga will allow corporations to disregard almost any law that they find "incompatible with their sincerely held religious beliefs." The Supreme Court was neither fierce in their love of justice nor enduring in their guardianship of that which is right. They took people—namely, low income women—who had once been found and threw them out for lost again. I can barely let myself think of the long term consequences of this frightening decision.

The beautiful praying mantis flutters to its death with its delicate limbs in the posture of prayer. We need to pray unceasingly for the rights of the lost and we must act tirelessly on their behalf.

See You in the Pews,

Reverend Jane

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Thank you to everyone who did so much for my installation last month. It was a fabulous, joyous, exciting event! I loved it all! Thank you so much for the communion set and the beautiful stole. I will use both throughout my ministry here in Grafton—they were the perfect gifts. All the words that were spoken, songs sung, and prayers lifted up meant so much to me. And what a great party! It was legendary and has totally raised the bar on post-installation parties. Thank you!

Reverend Jane

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**JULY**

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A Special poem written by Henry Poler in honor of Rev. Jane’s installation...

FINDING JANE

A special nine rose from their peers;
A blend of wisdom, skills and years
To set aside their Monday nights
To do God’s work with grace and might.

The group felt sure that they would know
As soon as “Pastor Right” would show.
This confidence would never dim
While energy flowed at the brim.

This group began their awesome task;
A herculean work, if asked,
To find a needle in the hay
And get it done, well, yesterday.

When clouds get dark, the winds can shift
And in the mail came mighty lift
With seeming matches everywhere
And answers to our standing prayer.

To find this person for our parish
Seemed a job a bit nightmarish,
Given all the stuff to read,
Would they ever be agreed?

An interview on Skype was set:
Technology was how we met.
Then huge amounts of Q & A
Back and forth to smooth the way.

Vision statements filled the plate,
Debated points were given weight
To see what kind of church were we
To help a pastor us to see.

As Iowa had other picks,
A flight to Grafton came real quick.
A pleasant dinner spread more glue -
The parsonage was loved! Who knew?

It took some time to listen to
The many different points of view
Within this group of people smart
Who raised their bar of work to art.

Who knows the spirit’s deepest power,
So full of love and hope each hour -
You work, you wait, you eat, you pray
So many mysteries crowd the way.

A candle brightened every meeting:
A Holy presence filled the seating -
A light of Faith, a light of Hope
A symbol that they all could cope.

We’ve climbed the mountains, faced the sea,
Wondered what would come to be …
Today we’ve come through sun and rain.
And now for us, we’ve found our Jane!

The weeks grew into months too long,
Assessing files weak from strong,
Consensus wasn’t to be found.
Patience - all would come around.

HENRY POLER
JUNE 8, 2014
Join the Care and Concern Circle by keeping these people in your prayers now and throughout your week. To add or remove a name, speak with any deacon, email the church office at graftonucc@gmail.com or the deacon chairperson at sscsf@aol.com. Thank you!

We pray for recovery, well-being and comfort for:

- Ron Diurba
- Matthew Keiter
- Ron Mack
- Mark F.
- Hank Poler
- Connie Hopkins
- Kelley Lennon-Hopkins
- Sally Jones
- Lindsay
- Worcester Fellowship Church, UCC
- All our service men and women at home and away
- Members of the Daystar Center for Spiritual Recovery

Open and Affirming

Got questions? We’ve got answers. All you have to do is ask.

The Congregational Church of Grafton has embarked on a process of Open and Affirming. The Open and Affirming Leadership Team has begun plans for guiding us along this important journey.

What does it mean to be an “Open and Affirming” church?

A congregation becomes Open and Affirming when it affirms a public covenant that “lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people are welcome in the full life and ministry of the congregation which includes full membership, active leadership, and full employment. Through its covenant, the congregation promises to live out that welcome in meaningful ways in response to Christ’s teaching of radical hospitality.

How will our Open and Affirming covenant make a difference?

Our covenant will make a difference to lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender adults who have personally experienced silence or condemnation in other churches. It will make a difference to LGBT youth who are at higher risk for suicide when they experience bullying or mistreatment because of their sexual orientation or gender expression. It will make a difference to parents of LGBT children whose families need the same affirmation and support congregations offer to other families. It will make a difference to LGBT seniors who are often closeted, isolated or abused in retirement communities and nursing homes. It will make a difference to all Christians who experience a deeper understanding of the Gospel and a stronger commitment to Gospel values when the congregation reaches out in love.

Information taken from http://ucccoalition.org/ona/how/questions/
Fairlawn Christian Reformed Church
To Hold Annual “Choir Fest”

Fairlawn church will be holding its annual “Choir Fest” July 7-11, 2014. Approximately 100 children attend each year, where they learn about God and how to praise Him in song. Class is held 9 am—2 pm (kindergarten dismissal at noon) and includes singing and musical activities, Bible stories, crafts and recreation. The cost is $40 for grades 1-8, $20 for kindergarten. Fairlawn Church is located at 305 Goldthwaite Road, Whitinsville. If you are interested, please take a brochure located on the bulletin board in the hall downstairs or call 508-234-2838, ext. 200.

A very sincere “thank you” goes out to Diane Chaisson for filling in as collector while Connie Hopkins recovered from knee surgery.

Mission Outreach Allocations
June 2014

WAMS $500

Scripture Readings for July

July 6: Matthew 11:16-19, 25-30
July 13: Matthew 13:1-9, 18-23
July 20: Guest Preacher, Rev. Bruce MacLeod
July 27: Guest Preacher, Rev. Georgeanne Bennett

GRAFTON THRIFT SHOP
VOLUNTEERS FOR JULY, 2014

Shop Hours: Thursdays and Saturdays 10-4

Thursday 10-4
July 3 Closed for the 4th of July weekend
10 Bernice Benoit, Barbara Bryant & Kathy Schonberg
17 Mary Tulloch, Lee Paine
24 Sandy Cooper, Ann Robinson
31 Bill & Jean Burke, Lois Scott

Saturday 10-1
July 5 Closed for the 4th of July weekend
12 Mary Tulloch, Mary Iram
19 Bernice Benoit, Kathy Schonberg
26 Elaine Hatch, Brenda Armstrong

Saturday 1-4
July 5 Closed for the 4th of July weekend
12 Diane Lalone, Grafton House Girls
19 Elaine Hatch, Grafton House Girls
26 Bill & Jean Burke
I have always loved this church since 1980 when the Hopkins family became members. The church has become family to us that had no other family nearby. This love has only been enlarged over the past few months as I went through knee replacement surgery and endured the recovery. The calls, cards, prayers and thoughts were a strong feeling of support from all of you. Then came the wonderful meals every other day that kept one more task totally out of our minds. I can’t thank you enough for that support as it made us feel loved and special. I am doing well as you have seen since I returned to church and my collector duties. Thank you, Diane, for covering those weeks for me. We have a wonderful church and people and should all feel very blessed as we do. Thank you so much.

In Christian Love,
Mel & Connie Hopkins

THE 35TH ANNUAL HARVEST FAIR
AND APPLE PIE SOCIAL
SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 27TH
(Rain date—Sunday, Sept 28)
The 2014 Harvest Fair and Apple Pie Social is now just 3 Months away!

Returning in August - Worship and Farming at the Harvest Barn

On Saturday, August 9 the Congregational Church and the Baptist Church will share a late afternoon Worship Service at the Community Harvest Barn. We will gather at 2:30 p.m. for opportunity to work at the farm doing a variety of jobs depending on our individual physical abilities. The Barn will provide all the gloves and other tools or supplies that will be needed. The Barn itself is air conditioned so if it works better for you to sit inside, there will be others there for a time of fellowship. This will be followed by a shared Worship Service led by Pastor Phil Goff and Rev. Jane. Donations for the Food Bank will be collected as offering. Worship will be followed by a pot luck supper with a cook-out. Watch the church bulletin for more details. We will have our regular Sunday Worship Service on Sunday, August 10.
“Where people of faith work together to help homeless families.”

INTERFAITH HOSPITALITY NETWORK
OF GREATER WORCESTER
IHN Home, 91 June St., Worcester
Sunday, August 17 - Sunday, August 24

Please consider accepting one of the following roles during our host week:

**Dessert Preparers**
Since the residents prefer to cook their own meals we are only asked to supply desserts. Anyone interested in preparing a dessert should contact *Elaine Hatch at 508-839-3597.*

**Overnight Hosts** (8:30 p.m.—7:00 a.m.)
Two hosts spend the night at the IHN home with the guests. Overnight hosts are available in the event of an emergency. If you can help with this opportunity, call *Gail Poole at 508-839-9667.*

**Supplies and Provisions:**
Monetary donations may be made to help purchase provisions (paper goods, juice boxes, snacks, etc.). Checks should be made out to the church with “IHN Week” in the notation box and left in the church office.

GET INVOLVED WITH THIS PROJECT! Please contact any member of the Mission Outreach Committee to see how you may help with this very rewarding experience.

*Mission Outreach & IHN Committee Members*

- Brenda Armstrong
- Debbie Arey
- Gail Poole, IHN Coordinator
- Elaine Hatch
- Barbara Gow
- Barbara Bryant, IHN Coordinator
- John Stephens
As your Church Delegates, we were privileged to attend the 215th Annual Meeting of the Massachusetts Conference United Church of Christ. This annual meeting was held on Friday—Saturday, June 13—14, 2014 at the Sturbridge Host Hotel and Conference Center in Sturbridge, MA.

Over 512 delegates, clergy and guests attended this lengthy but well organized, uplifting meeting. The theme of this year's annual meeting was expressed and based on scripture: John 14:12..“Very truly, I tell you, the one who believes in me will also do the works that I do, and in fact, will do greater works than these.” This annual meeting told the common story that is driven by the covenant that unites the Mass Conference and its member UCC churches in the ministry and mission of devoting their God-given gifts to our shared mission to make God’s love and justice real.

The meeting this year continued the Friday evening-Saturday format. This format makes it easier for more delegates to attend and allowed the Planning Committee and the Board of Directors to keep the annual meeting both financially accessible and faithful to the necessary business of the Massachusetts Conference.

We were honored to have the Rev. Yvette Flunder as our keynote and worship speaker. She spoke at both the Friday and Saturday worship services. Rev. Flunder is founder and pastor of City of Refuge United Church of Christ in San Francisco, CA, a thriving inner-city congregation which celebrates the “radically inclusive love of Jesus Christ.” The works of this congregation include extensive ministries in the area of HIV/AIDS.

Our meals together provided valuable times to talk with each other and meet new people. A “Marketplace” engaged the gathering in mission, education, and resources for ministry.

Friday’s Opening Plenary included the following:
1. Worship (song, scripture, and celebration)
2. Introductions, appointments, elections
3. Testimonies of Church Outreach
   A. “Bridge Building”
   B. Generosity
   C. Social Justice
   D. Prayer

Friday’s Second Plenary included:
1. Presentation on the budget and United Church Mission Proposal
2. Keynote address by the Rev. Yvette Flunder
3. Installation of the Rev. Kelly Gallagher as Associate Conference Minister
The Saturday morning session included:
1. Experimental Worship Options
2. Hearing and Forums
3. Plenary III
   A. Minister and President’s Address
   B. Budget Actions
   C. Actions related to United Church Mission Proposal
4. Recognition of new clergy, new churches, and Speaker from the Mass Council of Churches

The Saturday afternoon session included:
1. Celebration of the life and ministry of Andy Gustafson, Associate Conference Minister for Stewardship and Financial Development
2. Board of Directors Report
3. Action on Clergy Compensation Guidelines
4. Celebration of 30 years of being an Open and Affirming Conference
5. Closing Worship—The Rev. Yvette Flunder preaching

In summary, the Massachusetts Conference is made up of 370 active churches with a total membership of 67,195 people and includes 11 Associations within the Mass Conference. Holding standing in these are:
A. 851 UCC Ordained Ministers
B. 20 Licensed Ministers
C. 5 Commissioned Ministers
D. 21 Clergy with Partnership Standing—Disciples of Christ
E. 83 Members in Discernment

The Massachusetts Conference UCC remains committed to providing all of our members with the tools needed to continue building our churches as well as God’s spirit within and beyond our communities. The job of our churches is to stay involved: to join, learn, and share in the life of our Mass Conference of the United Church of Christ

Respectfully submitted,
Lee & Curt Paine
Delegates to the Mass Conference, UCC
## July Birthdays

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<td>Carter Ajamie</td>
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## SILENT AUCTION CAN HELP YOU DECLUTTER AND RECYCLE

Please consider donating to the Silent Auction at the fall Harvest Fair as you declutter this summer. Also, keep us in mind if you’re planning a move in the near future.

For Silent Auction, previous years’ donations have included antique tables and chairs, bar stools, antique beds, adult bicycles, vintage toys, framed art and photography.

You can bring items (other than furniture) to the thrift shop and mark “for Silent Auction” or call us and we’ll arrange a pick up. Our answering machine is always on should we be out: 508-839-4618.

Thank you in advance, to all our new contributors—and to all of you in the past, who have helped make this event so successful.

Sandy and Sheldon Cooper