

The Gargoyle

A publication of Groton Congregational Church



May 2020



MUSIC DIRECTOR

If anyone is interested in joining the Sr. Choir or the Handbell Choir, please contact me or the office.

Sue Stottlemeyer



May Birthdays

Katherine Chirillo
Carrie Gregory Davis
Leah Robinson
Liz Fernald
Carolyn Hanover

Mike Hodge
Phyllis Meyer
Grace Sommers
Laura Turner
Steve Turner

MESSAGE FROM OUR PARISH VISITOR

If you know of anyone in need of a phone call, contact me or the church office.

Thanks, Connie Stoddard



APRIL UPDATE

In these challenging financial times, we would like to thank all of you who have continued to send in your pledges or a portion of them to keep our church running.

A MESSAGE FROM THE DEACONS

The Deacons send our love and prayers to all as the quarantine and pandemic continues. Many have been able to participate in our prayer meetings and worship services. We are all looking forward to being together in worship again.

Many thanks to Connie Stoddard and Pastor Joan for their many visits to our shut ins and friends during this time as well as their distribution of Easter plants.

Pastor Joan has made scores of calls of kindness during this time as well as becoming an internet/Zoom IT support specialist learning and implementing the tools needed to do “cyber” church.

As always, please remember the Deacons Fund as more requests for help are bound to come as the quarantine continues and beyond with its economic effects and breakdowns in the food pipeline.

Peace to all.

PASTOR'S MOMENT- MAY

The month of May is synonymous with the gifts of spring: flowers, rebirth, sunshine, green grass, and good weather. May reminds us that after the storm, comes the sunshine. While this month of May looks quite different for each of us, we are still your church community, alive and quite active. Here are some ways:

Bible Study Begins again: The Book of Genesis. Friday's at 11:00 a.m. by Zoom. Contact the church office to be placed on the email to receive the link.

Wednesday Evening Prayer and Fellowship: Times vary each week. Join us for a time of scripture and prayer as well as fellowship after.

Sunday morning worship: Try to watch our recorded worship service at 10:00 a.m. together or whenever it is convenient for you. Join us for Zoom coffee hour at 11:00 a.m. Let us know if you want to be added to our email. Or if you prefer a hard copy of the sermon sent to you and do not receive one, let us know.

We will continue our on-line recorded worship services throughout the month of May as we have been instructed not to reopen until after May 31. We have several special services this month. If you wish to participate in any way through music, reading, or have ideas, please let me know.

May 10th is Mother's Day: Please stop by the church and pick up a flower. Every woman in the congregation who is a mother or who is like a mother to anyone is welcome. It is also a great opportunity to turn in your monthly pledge or a check to support the church.

May 24th is Memorial Day Weekend: Please let me know of ways we can honor those who have served or continue to serve our country.

May 31st is Pentecost: We hope to have a few readers who can read scripture in different languages. Please let me know if you are interested in participating in the service and are able to use Zoom to join us.

In order for us to remain an active faith community, I invite you to think of creative ways to stay connected to one another. A few committees are developing programs as you will see in the pages ahead and I am suggesting these ideas:

Children of any age: please consider creating a piece of artwork or writing a card or print out a picture of your family, and send it to one of our older folks, or anyone you miss seeing on Sunday mornings. Many of our older folks do not have computers, are unable to watch worship, or facetime with their family. If you need ideas of names and addresses, just ask me.

Everyone – please consider sending a card to someone in the church you are thinking of, someone you miss seeing on Sunday mornings. For many, receiving mail is the best part of their day. Create a postcard, find old cards in the back of your drawer and send a funny note. Consider sending one to the children and youth of this congregation. Just ask me for names and addresses.

Creative Ones: It is likely when we do open our church once again, we will all need to wear masks. You too can help by making masks: try the link below.

<https://www.craftpassion.com/face-mask-sewing-pattern>

Couples: I am a facilitator for Prepare/Enrich, a spiritual organization who not only guides couples who are getting married, but also helps couples enrich their relationships. This organization presents a weekly blog to help couples at home with issues of pain and grief and stress as partners during this time, as well as finding creative ways to experience date night and other ways to strengthen your relationship. Below is one article. Let me know if you would like to receive more.

United Church of Christ: We are grateful for the Southern New England Conference as they send liturgy and worship materials, helpful webinars and video links to help local churches continue to provide meaningful worship services. They have been continuing to guide our Search Committee and offering helpful advice. They have been sending articles from Silver Lake with fun ideas to keep our youth connected. And much more. We are grateful we are connected to a larger denomination which supports us now more than ever.

And please let me if you are in need, emotionally, physically, financially, or if you feel unsafe. We are strong, we are connected.

Be at peace,

Pastor Joan

New Beatitudes by The Rev. Dr. Frances Sink

Blessed are the doctors, the nurses and orderlies, the EMTs, and chaplains, for they are guarding the kingdom of life even as they must shelter the kingdom of grief.

Blessed are the farmworkers, the truck drivers, the warehouse workers, the checkout clerks, the gig workers, deliverers and stockers, providers of food pantries, and bringers of meals, for they are feeding a nation.

Blessed are the public educators for their dedicated and noble work-- may their so generous giving to their students sustain the still growing minds they guide.

Blessed are those whose lives of racial and economic disadvantage, high-density living, working, and commuting conditions place them at extreme risk for infection-- may the human cost of their servitude shame our hardened society into repair.

Blessed are the out of work and the out of money-- may their tireless phone calls for promised aid be answered.

Blessed are the imprisoned, the congregated, and the closely confined-- may they be released into more protected care.

Blessed are those without shelter and those without healthcare and those without a safety net and no right to benefits-- may they too be known as essential to our collective wellbeing.

Blessed are the postal workers, the Zoomers, the multimedia journalists, reporters, photographers, the poll workers and the census takers for keeping communication open and democracy alive.

Blessed are the builders, the supply chain rerouters, and the retoolers of factories, for their relevant and responsive initiative-- may they open new paths out of chaos.

Blessed are the research and clinical scientists whose answers will break this virus' grip-- may their efforts bring success and restore us to health and freedom.

Blessed are the volunteers, the donors, the neighbors, the tireless, and the relentless caregivers for they sustain our confidence in the human spirit.

Blessed are all who now are named essential to our profoundly interdependent lives, whose necessary contributions and just as necessary needs went unrecognized, the failure of our moral imagination and commitment.

May we all now be seen as essential to each other, the wellbeing of each, precious and essential to the life and care of us all.

A MESSAGE FROM OUR ASSISTANT MODERATOR

IT'S ALMOST MAY

Good day, corona warriors for Jesus! I was reviewing my calendar Sunday night for the up-coming week and noticed May was just a hop, skip, and jump away from my grasp. This past Saturday was glorious, sunny, breezy, and with just a touch of coldness to remind my spirit of change. Let us think for a minute of the future and the re-opening of our church.

The Southern New England Conference (SNEUCC) has substantial information on this subject. Go to: <https://www.sneucc.org/coronavirus#re-opening>. The section from the website I want to focus is the Re-Opening section, followed by the article, "24 Questions Your Church Should Answer Before You Return.", by Ken Braddy. This is an article in motion as more ideas are added on a regular basis. I have consolidated this list and sent it to church leadership as a conversation starter. I have come to the conclusion returning to the physical church is going to take time and more importantly, a well thought out compassionate plan.

I think of the preparation I perform prior to going to work. I have the privilege of working for Electric Boat through this virus. EB has been working through the ramifications of employees still working in cramped locations shipboard. This has given us many lessons learned as we continue to work every day with a changing Centers for Disease Control (CDC), state, and federal guidelines. Everyone will feel different about returning to the physical church and that is okay. This is not one size fits all for the physical church re-opening.

I do not think any of us have the experience of re-opening a church after a global pandemic! But our church does have many, many advantages in our favor. We have so much diverse life experience in large corporations, businesses, and bringing up families. We need that experience, advice, and ideas as we incorporate the guidelines. We need the empathy and sympathy crafting an experience for our whole congregation. This consolidated list I spoke of above will be sent out to you in the next week. Please provide feedback to your committee or small group with solutions or suggestions.

Peace be with you and bring on May!

MISSIONS MOMENT

The Missions Team — Beth Chirillo (chair), Anne Campbell, Phyllis Gregory, Mary Howard, and Penny Sullivan

We hope you are all well during these challenging times.

Thanks to everyone who donated to the Groton Human Services emergency food pantry. As a congregation, we raised \$1,000 in monetary donations and \$300 in gift cards. We also donated three large containers of pantry items. Go GCC!

Many in southeastern Connecticut are struggling during the COVID-19 pandemic. The following nonprofit organizations give assistance to our most vulnerable neighbors. Please consider making a charitable donation to one or more of the following:

- **Gemma E. Moran United Way/Labor Food Bank**, 374 Broad St., New London, 860-444- 8050, <https://www.uwsect.org/give>
- **Groton Human Services**, 2 Fort Hill Road, 860-441-6760, <http://www.groton-ct.gov/depts/humansvcs/>. GHS operates an emergency food pantry for those in need.
- **New London Homeless Hospitality Center**, 730 State Pier Rd., New London, 860-439-1573, <https://www.nlhhc.org/>. The Homeless Hospitality Center assists adults facing homelessness.
- **The United Church of Christ is holding a Strengthen the Church offering** on May 31. Strengthen the Church funds ministry that allows us to benefit from best practices, insights, and innovations across the life of the UCC. Support for this ministry will create new churches, revitalize congregations, and enhance leadership skills. Visit ucc.org/stc to give.
- The Groton Senior Center can always use donations to their meal handout program. Your donation can help those less fortunate to get a meal at no cost. You can send a check to the Senior Center and add in the memo line “Meal Handout Program”.



CANCELLED UNTIL FURTHER NOTICE



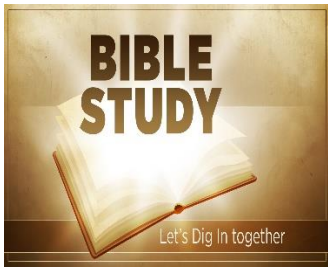
Coffee Hour

We are looking for volunteers to sign-up for Coffee Hour. Our sign-up sheet is in Dutton Hall on the bulletin board. Our Barista, Jim Maynard makes the coffee, we only need help with set-up, a small snack you may wish to bring in, or cookies from our Hospitality Bin. Our Youth Group has volunteered to help with clean up. Please contact Marilyn Wright if you wish to volunteer, or sign-up on the Volunteer Sheet in Dutton Hall.

We are running low! If anyone would like to donate a can of coffee, please leave in the kitchen or drop it off in the office. THANKS.



Due to the current shutdown at our church, the Music Recital presented by Janice Kimball and her students has been cancelled.



BIBLE STUDY

The Book of Genesis. Friday's at 11:00 a.m. by Zoom. Contact the church office to be placed on the email to receive the link.



CANCELLED UNTIL FURTHER NOTICE.



There is a 2020 Flower Calendar on the bulletin board in Dutton Hall for anyone who wishes to provide flowers for the Sanctuary in memory or celebration of a loved one, and event or a day special to you. The flowers can be anything you like. Add your name to the chart or contact the Office.



Don't forget to stop by our Volunteer Board and check out the options to serve in the Church. Help is always needed.



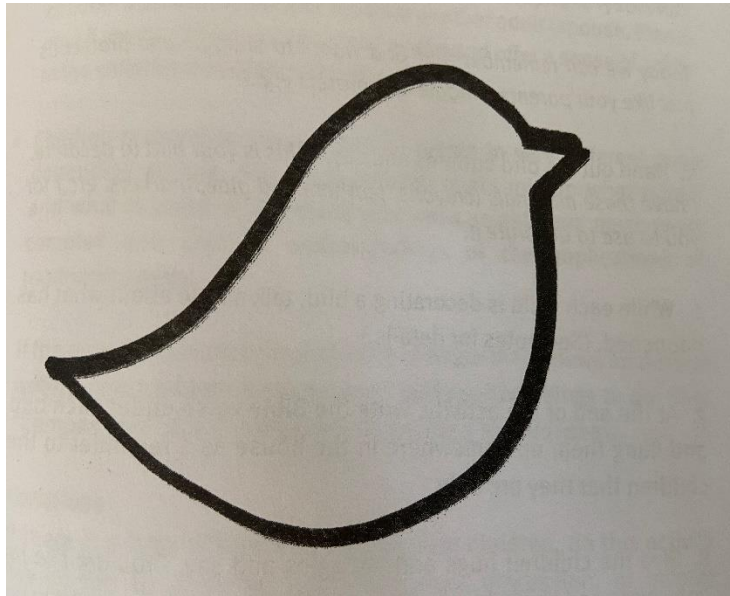
We are hoping we will be able to get together for a ladies night in June.





Just a reminder – There is a Children’s Time each Sunday in our On-Line Service.

This activity will bring families together in a time when things are feeling overwhelming and we cannot find the answers that we are looking for. The beauty of this activity is that families can then talk about their feelings and create a feeling of safeness.



Here is a copy of a bird. The bird is going to help us understand our feelings regarding the virus that is all around us. I want you to know that you are safe and protected. This time period makes me want to snuggle my children regardless of how old they are. It reminds me of a verse in the bible from Ps 91:4a

God will cover you with feathers and under God's wings you can hide.

Today we need to remember that God wants to snuggle and protect us from the things that do not make sense to us. This bird will remind us that God will always protect us.

- 1) Trace the bird or cut the bird out
- 2) Color the bird with whatever material you want to. Make it as colorful as possible. You can use markers, crayons, pencils, fabric, etc.
- 3) Write the above verse on the bird wherever you would like.
- 4) Hang the bird somewhere in your house to remind you that you are safe in God's Love.

Follow me with a prayer: God when sad things happen you are sad too. You Understand. Thank you, God, for always hearing us. Help us to be kind and peaceful always. We look at the bird to be reminded of your love for us all. Written by Traci Smith

Lisa Lambert
CE Director



It feels like we have almost gotten used to the way we have been living for the last six weeks. We have online schooling, work from home, even youth group online! Everyone is wearing masks. In the beginning this may have seemed scary, but now is normal life. Although the world around us has changed for our safety, we should remember those that have been directly affected by this virus. Those who have been hospitalized, or has had someone close to them hospitalized, and pray for them. To heal their mind, body, and spirit.

The youth group has continued to meet online, hanging out and playing games! We played Bible Jeopardy, which was a lot of fun!

In these times, it often seems hard to trust that God has a plan for all this. That he is present everyday while we feel like the world is falling apart. There are two things I like to think about and remember when I start feeling like this.

First, during the Holocaust, many people felt like this. Written in a cave that Jewish people were hiding in, they carved "I believe in the sun, even when it is not shining. | I believe in love, even when I do not feel it. | I believe in God, even when He is silent."

Second, I like the words in the song "Even If" by Mercy Me.

"I know You're able and I know You can save through the fire with Your mighty hand, but even if You don't my hope is You alone."

We may not know what God's plan is, and sometimes his answer to our prayers is "not yet" or "no." But God is working all things out and hope will not be cancelled.

Rachel Measimer
Youth Group Director

youthgroupdirector@grotoncongregational.org

STEWARDSHIP COMMITTEE

We are all in the same boat. We are not all in the same storm.

For some people, it's sprinkling. This is a break. It's a breather. It's a pause in the "normal." It's a time to reconnect with family and slow down. Honestly, it's kind of peaceful.

For some it's a storm. It's a bit scary. It's disruptive. It's enough to make you stay up and watch the news and worry.

For some it's a hurricane. It's tearing at the boards and pulling off the roof. It's washing them out to sea. It's dark and unknown. Its life changing.

It's not wrong to be enjoying the sprinkles or enduring the storm, but please don't negate the difference. Rest with family, but don't minimize the hurricane engulfing your neighbor. Laugh at a meme but get on your knees for your friends. Get in someone else's storm.

The foregoing comes from a Facebook post. Its author is unknown, but it speaks to our varied circumstances and situations during this time.

A huge "thank you" to those that have been able to keep up with their pledges and donations; we understand that not all are in a position to do so. Either way, know that you are a beloved part of Groton Congregational Church.

Not surprisingly, our treasurer reports that pledges and donations are down almost 50% of what has been budgeted. Please keep in mind the various options available to get your pledge and donations to the church, such as automated payments. Contact Gay Lambert for account information (the church's account is with Charter Oak Federal Credit Union) and/or assistance in setting-up the payments (treasurer@grotoncongregational.org or call the office and leave a message - (860-445-7409).

There are other ways to remember to make your pledge; here are a few suggestions:

- While watching Sunday Service on YouTube, stop the video at the time of the offering and write your check and put it in the mailbox or make that online payment. You can then hop back on and watch the remainder of the service and you won't have missed any of it.
- Drive or walk by our beautiful church; gaze at our stones and windows and slip an envelope in the door slot.
- Are you a member of Charter Oak Federal Credit Union? Call and make a telephonic transfer. You can then send our treasurer an email or leave a message at the church that you did so with the date and amount.
- Would you like someone to pick up your offering? Let us know and we will make it happen. We can visit from a distance!

Concerning our reduced pledges and donations: had you planned on having flowers in the sanctuary on a particular Sunday? Had you planned on buying a ticket for a church fund-raiser event that had to be canceled? Would you have purchased goodies from Women's Fellowship from their bake sale? Have you been able to save money by not having to buy gas? Would you have taken your mom out for Mother's Day (May 10, by the way!)? If you are in a position to do so, consider supplementing your pledge and allocate what you would have spent on these items and send that amount to the church to help our general/operational fund.

We end with a song of stewardship:

We give Thee but Thine own, whate'er the gift may be:

all that we have is Thine alone, a trust, O Lord, from Thee.

Thank you, and God's blessings be upon you.

Your Stewardship Committee,

Cathy Johnson
Sue Stottlemyer
Phyllis Meyer

MUSIC COMMITTEE

Thanks to our Director of Music, Sue Stottlemeyer, Burt Turner, and members of our Adult Choir for providing music for the online worship services led by Pastor Joan. We look forward to celebrating Christ together in times to come.

Respectfully submitted,

Janice Kimball, Chair

A MESSAGE FROM OUR HISTORIAN

Recently Kathy Johnson suggested that it would be interesting to know how the church and church family fared in the flu epidemic of 1918-1919. What happened? How did they manage? Did members die? How did the church figure in their lives at that time? How did they figure in each other's lives during that time?

As we are now in "lock down", I cannot access any records and do not remember having seen any files dedicated to that kind of information. However, it would be interesting to know.

What we are going through right now as a church family is part of our church history. So, to enlighten our church's family of 50, 80 or 100 years from now, I am suggesting and requesting your stories for a 2020 church family record of this pandemic for the history record of our church. Many of us are in our homes and not able to go anywhere except for essential reasons. Take some time to tell your story of this time. It is not over yet! And many of us look for things to do. I realize, also, that some of us are essential workers and out in the "zone". I have family that goes to work every day. God Bless them all.

So, tell your story and leave a small personal history for our church's history for future church family. Send your story now or after this crisis is over.

Respectfully submitted,

Janice Maranda, Historian

OUR PASTORAL SEARCH & CALL COMMITTEE

The Search Committee is finalizing a survey for selecting our settled pastor and hope to send it out to the membership sometime next week. We will be asking that it be returned to the church office by May 29th. A self-addressed stamped envelope will be included.

Respectfully Submitted,

Sally Turner, Secretary

CHURCH PHOTOS – DURING OUR LOCKDOWN

