

United Church of Christ

Groton Congregational Church

Founded in 1702



December 6, 2020



We Gather in Community as God's People



Prelude: "Greensleeves"

Announcements:

Beginning on December 9, 2020 at 6:30pm, Reverend Lee Ireland will lead the Book Study Group through *Listening for the Heartbeat of God a Study of Celtic Spirituality* by J. Philip Newell. Books are available from the Church for \$10.00/each.

Community Meals is looking for 1 or 2 people who are willing to volunteer to distribute meals one Saturday per month. It requires only 1 hour of time between 11:45 and 12:45. Cathy Johnson has volunteered to cover the first Saturday of each month and do shopping once a month, thank you Cathy. Ellen Kerr has been covering the other Saturdays and doing the bulk of the shopping. Please call or email the office if you can help us. As always, pre-packaged food and monetary donations are welcome.

Our Annual Pledge Drive is still in gear. If you have not received your letter from the Stewardship Committee with pledge card please contact the office. You may submit your pledge cards at any time.

Zoom Meetings

- 1- Don't forget about our Zoom Coffee Hour at 11:00am on December 6th
- 2- Our weekly Wednesday Prayer meeting at 5:30pm. If you are not receiving our weekly Zoom invitations, please email the office.

Call To Worship

One: Let us hear what God will speak,
Tender words for a burdened people:

People: Comfort, comfort, my people!
The days of sorrow are ending!

One: Let us hear what God will speak,
Encouraging words for an anxious people:

People: Prepare a way for the Holy One,
Through deserts of despair
build a highway for our God!

One: Let us hear what God will speak,
words of vision for a weary people:

People: Steadfast love and faithfulness will meet;
righteousness and peace will kiss!

ALL: Come, let us worship!

Opening Hymn: "Comfort, Comfort You My People" (CH#122)

1. Comfort, comfort you my people; tell of peace, thus says our God;
comfort those who sit in darkness bowed beneath oppression's load.
Speak you to Jerusalem of the peace that waits for them;
tell them that their sins I cover, and their warfare now is over.

2. For the herald's voice is calling in the desert far and near,
bidding us to make repentance since the reign of God is here.
O, that warning cry obey! Now prepare for God a way;
let the valleys rise in meeting and the hills bow down in greeting.

3. Make you straight what long was crooked; make the rougher places plain;
let your hearts be true and humble, as befits God's holy reign,
for the glory of our God now o'er earth is shed abroad,
and all flesh shall see the token that God's word is never broken.

Prayer of Confession

Oh God, you call to us from the wild places, you call to us from the inner chambers of our hearts. We come in answer to your call. We come to pray, to praise, to learn of your love for all creation. Reveal your glory that we may see it together - inform and inspire us to seek your kingdom on earth in our time. If we pause and put stuffing in our ears so not to hear, or turn our eyes so not to see, move us into a moment in this holy season, when we realize how we've turned from you and turn us around so we align with your Will and engage in the work to continue Jesus' ministry in our time. Amen.

Assurance of Grace

Comfort, comfort, my people,
says the God of Justice and Compassion. You are forgiven your sin, and showered with grace to change your life, and to work toward the kin-dom of the One who is to Come: New heavens and new earth, where righteousness is at home. **Amen.**

Lighting of the Second Advent Candle

The Candle of Peace

Lew Clark

O Holy One, we light this second candle,
A candle offering comfort to weary spirits
After a year of pain and loss.
Let its glow remind us of your tender care
And warm our lives in the Light of Peace.
Let it guide us to your presence in our midst,
Leading us to your Justice and Joy in the service of Love.

People: God be with us in this Light of Peace.



Hymn: "One Candle Is Lit" vs. 2

Come quickly shalom, teach us how to prepare,
for a gift that compels us with justice to care.
Our spirits are restless till sin and war cease.
One candle is lit for the reign of God's peace.

Moment of Silence

-We Express Our Gratitude-

Call To Offering

In struggle and in joy, God is faithful to us.
We bring forth our offerings – our tithes, our treasures, our least coins –to demonstrate our faithfulness to God.

Offering

Anthem: "Christmas Communion Song" by Susan Callaway

Prayer of Dedication

O Faithful One, accept these gifts of our hearts and hands. May they be multiplied and magnified as the living presence of Christ in the world. **Amen.**

We Share our Concerns with God and Each Other

Sharing our Concerns

Pastoral Prayer

We Hear God's Words and Guidance for Our Lives

Isaiah 40: 1- 11

God's People Are Comforted

Comfort, O comfort my people, says your God. Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and cry to her that she has served her term, that her penalty is paid, that she has received from the LORD's hand double for all her sins.

A voice cries out: "In the wilderness prepare the way of the LORD, make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be lifted up, and every mountain and hill be made low; the uneven ground shall become level, and the rough places a plain. Then the glory of the LORD shall be revealed, and all people shall see it together, for the mouth of the LORD has spoken."

A voice says, "Cry out!" And I said, "What shall I cry?"

All people are grass, their constancy is like the flower of the field.

The grass withers, the flower fades, when the breath of the LORD blows upon it; surely the people are grass.

The grass withers, the flower fades; but the word of our God will stand forever.

Get you up to a high mountain, O Zion, herald of good tidings; lift up your voice with strength,

O Jerusalem, herald of good tidings, lift it up, do not fear; say to the cities of Judah, "Here is your God!"

See, the Lord GOD comes with might, and his arm rules for him; his reward is with him, and his recompense before him.

He will feed his flock like a shepherd; he will gather the lambs in his arms, and carry them in his bosom, and gently lead the mother sheep.

Mark 1:1-8

The Proclamation of John the Baptist

The beginning of the good news[a] of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. As it is written in the prophet Isaiah, “See, I am sending my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way; the voice of one crying out in the wilderness: ‘Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight,’”

John the baptizer appeared in the wilderness, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. And people from the whole Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem were going out to him, and were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins. Now John was clothed with camel’s hair, with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey. He proclaimed, “The one who is more powerful than I is coming after me; I am not worthy to stoop down and untie the thong of his sandals. I have baptized you with water; but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.”

Sermon: “Prepare Ye”

Communion Hymn: “Jesus, Joy of Man’s Desiring”

Sacrament of Communion

Invitation and Words of Institution

Prayer of Consecration

Sharing of the Bread and the Cup

Prayer of Thanksgiving & Lord’s Prayer

Because the broken bread has meant our healing, because the outpoured cup has meant our life, because our common sharing has meant the communion of our souls, and because we have here been graced by your presence, God, we give you thanks, and pray that our lives may be renewed in the life and love of Jesus Christ, whose life we remembered today.

Bless us now as we join our hearts and voices in repeating the words Jesus taught to us to pray...”Our Father Who Art in Heaven.....” Amen

Closing Hymn “Come, O Long-Expected Jesus” (CH #125)

Come, O long expected Jesus born to set your people free;
From our fears and sins release us, Christ in whom our rest shall be.
You, our strength and consolation, come salvation to impart;
Dear desire of many a nation, joy of many a longing heart.

Born your people to deliver, born a child and yet a King,
Born to reign in us forever, born your gracious realm to bring.
By your own eternal Spirit rule in all our hearts alone;

By your all sufficient merit, raise us to your glorious throne.

Benediction

Go forth into the world energized to seek signs of God's future everywhere: especially in the unruly, unkempt, and persistent voices of Prophets in our midst: calling us to prepare the way in our lives and our world for the Holy One who is coming!
Amen.

Benediction Sung Response

“Go Now in Peace” by Besig

Go now in peace. Never be afraid.
God will go with you each hour of every day.
Go now in faith, steadfast, strong and true.
Know God will guide you in all you do.
Go now in love, and show you believe.
Reach out to others so all the world can see.
God will be there watching from above.
Go now in peace, in faith, and in love. **Amen**



Minister: Reverend Lee Ireland

Deaconess: Doris Pulaski

Advent Reader: Lew Clark

Organist: Sue Stottlemyer

Solo Pianist: Izzy Ash

Videographer: Dick Stottlemyer

Video Editor: Lisa Gorman

The Groton Congregational Choir

The Groton Congregational Handbell Choir