

The Gargoyle



December, 2020

Founded in 1702 and located near historic Fort Griswold, we are an Open and Affirming Church. While our Hearts and Minds are always open, our doors are temporarily closed due to the pandemic.



The Groton Congregational Church
162 Monument St.
Groton, CT 06340
860-445-7409
www.grotonucc.org

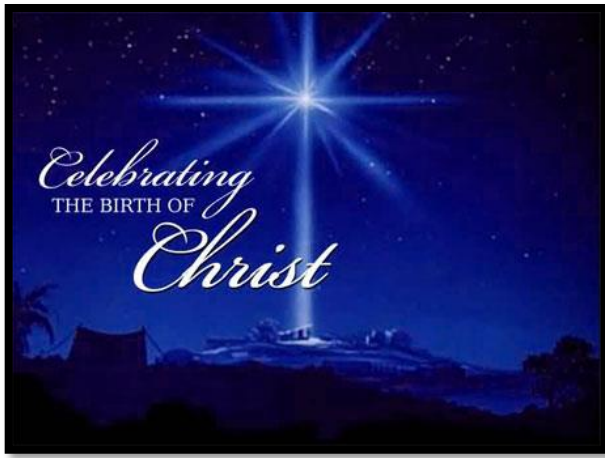


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Join Us On



MESSAGE FROM OUR PARISH VISITOR

If you know of anyone in need of a phone call or a visit, please contact Connie Stoddard or [the church office](#).

December Birthdays

Allison Gregory 12/11

Brett Gullickson 12/02

James Kerrigan 12/28

Kailyn Lambert 12/15

Wayne Shafer 12/25

Paul Shinn 12/22

Bette Thomson 12/20

Anne Venditti 12/02

Jill Wilson 12/22



Worship Watch



December 6th Communion Sunday/Second Day of Advent

Communion Sunday, Second Sunday of Advent

Isaiah 40: 1-11; Ps 85: 1-2, 8-13; 2 Peter 3: 8-15a; Mark 1: 1-8

Sermon Title: "Prepare Ye"



December 13th Third Sunday of Advent

Isaiah 61: 1-4, 8-11; Ps 126; 1 Thess 5: 16-24; John 1: 6-8, 19-28

Sermon Title: "Bring Good News"



December 20th Fourth Sunday of Advent

2 Samuel 7: 1-11, 16; Lk 1: 46b-55 19-26; Rom 16: 25-27; Lk 1: 26-38

Sermon Title: "Nothing is Impossible With God"



December 24th Christmas Eve

Isa 9: 2-7; Ps 96; Titus 2: 11-14; Lk 2: 1-14, 15-20

Sermon Title: "The Humble Manger Scene"



December 27th 2020 First Sunday after Christmas

Isa 61: 10-62:3; Ps 148; Gal 4: 4-7; Lk 2: 22-40

Sermon Title: "A Light for the Gentiles"

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Weekly Events



Sunday Worship Service

December 6th, 13th, 20th, 24th, and 27th

While our doors are closed due to the pandemic, services are uploaded to our [YouTube Page](#) and [our website](#) on Friday morning. Did you know: If you have a flat screen TV connected to the Internet you can watch our services on the YouTube app!



Sunday Coffee Hour

11am via Zoom.

December 6th, 13th, 20th, and 27th



Wednesday Prayer Meeting

5:30pm via Zoom.

December 2nd, 9th, 16th, 23rd, and 30th

Book Study resumes on December 9, 2020 at 6:30pm.



Community Meals Grab n Go

Sundays noon to 12:30pm

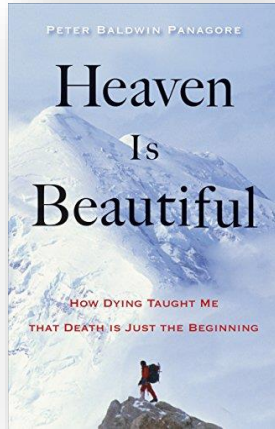
December 5th, 12th, 19th, and 26th

All of the above Zoom meetings are open to Members and Friends of the Church. If you have not been receiving our weekly invitations to these Zoom Meetings please [email the office](#).

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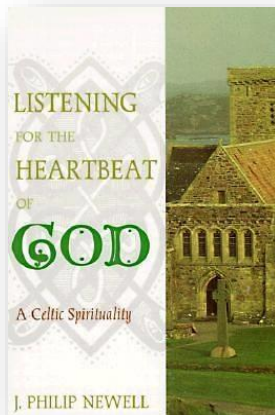


Special Events



An Evening with Reverend Panagore December 2, 2020 at 7pm

Reverend Lee Ireland and the Groton Congregational Church are proud to host Reverend Panagore. He will be joining us via Zoom to discuss his book “Heaven is Beautiful” and his Near Death Experience which led to its writing. This event is open to Members and Friends of the Church. [Take a Look Inside the Book](#). Available in paperback, e-book, and audio.



Weekly Book Study Group On December 2, 2020 6:30pm

This group will begin “Listening for the Heartbeat of God” by J. Phillip Newell. [Take a Look Inside the Book](#).

Books are available from the Church for \$10.00/each. Book Study Meetings are every Wednesday beginning at 6:30pm via Zoom.

Youth Group
December 19, 2020 7pm
Annual Choraling Event (virtual).
It is open to the congregation.
Please contact Miss Rachel
(youthgroupdirector@grotoncongregational.org) if you are
interested!



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Monthly Meetings

Women's Fellowship
Music
Deacons
Trustees

December 9th at 12:30pm in Dutton Hall
January 11, 2021 at 10:00am in Dutton Hall
December 15, 2020 5:30pm via Zoom
December 1, 2020 5pm via Zoom

FREE FLU CLINICS

QUADRIVALENT FLU SHOT
(NOT HIGH DOSE FOR SENIORS)
19 YEARS AND OLDER



FLU MIST (NASAL SPRAY)
AVAILABLE TO ANYONE 19-49
YEARS



**NOVEMBER 29
12-2PM**

**THAMES CLUB
PARKING LOT**
Turn right off of
290 State Street onto
Washington Street
New London

**DECEMBER 5
10AM-12NOON**

**ST. VINCENT de
PAUL PLACE
120 CLIFF STREET
NORWICH**

**DECEMBER 12
10AM-12NOON**

DRIVE-THRU
WHEELER LIBRARY
101 MAIN STREET
N. STONINGTON

LLHD
Ledge Light Health District

860-448-4882

Go to www.llhd.org to
download the consent form to help
get you through the line faster.

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Pastors' Moment



Pastor's Greetings,
Peace and blessings to you all in this unique and challenging year, as we go into this year's Advent season leading to Christmas Eve. I can't believe we're here already, but I think you're probably like me - looking forward to this season, knowing that for many of us, it will bring comfort to go through the rituals that we know and hear the story once again.

Since we've been doing the worship services through YouTube and you've been able to watch them at your convenience, I personally am aching to "see" who all is a part of this body of Christ since I began my ministry in the thick of the 'sheltering-in-place.'

I have talked with the Deacons to see if we can create a special service for Christmas Eve. My hope is that we can have a "Live" Zoom service with some pre-recorded choir and handbell pieces, but with the hope that we can all join together in hearing the Advent Reading for Christmas Eve, light our Christmas Candles in our individual settings and hopefully sing Silent Night together. Stay tuned for the full details.

We are compiling an Advent Readings booklet for you to use at home and we will be sending that to you by email. If you'd like them by mail, please call the office at 860-445-7409. Thank you.

There are also some exciting Adult Educational Opportunities coming up this month.

On December 2 at 7 PM, I'll be hosting a Zoom Session with Rev. Peter Panagore, who went hiking in the Canadian Rockies when he was 21 and had a near death experience as he was trying to come down the mountain at sunset and his

rope got stuck. He eventually went to Yale Divinity School to try to make sense of it when he was 40 and published a description of his experience in his book, Heaven is Beautiful. He served as an AP at the Orange Congregational Church prior to me, and I've since invited him to speak at several of my subsequent Interim positions. He's now working on a script with a company who wants to put it into a film. I hope that you can join us. If so, please contact Lisa in the office so you can receive the Zoom invitation.

Then on December 9, I'm looking forward to hosting a Zoom Book Study on J. Philip Newell's amazing book, Listening for the Heartbeat of God: A Study of Celtic Spirituality. I've led a couple of book studies as well as retreats on his message and if you join us, you'll be in for a treat. We have copies of his book in the office for \$10. Give a call if you'd like to join us and send Lisa an email so she can send you the Zoom link.

I also remind you of our regular weekly Zoom Coffee Hours on Sunday at 11 AM, and also the Wed evening Prayer Times at 5:30 PM. Please email Lisa in the office if you'd like to join us.

In this season of Advent and Christmas, may we not lose sight of that most wondrous gift of the Christ child coming to teach us the ways of love and forgiveness, as we do the buying and wrapping of gifts and writing of Christmas cards and watching the holiday specials. May they all lead us deeper into Jesus' and Paul's words, "and the greatest of these is love."

May God's light, love and grace bless you all this holy season,
Rev. Lee Ireland

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Deacon's Message



"Hope is being able to see that there is light despite all of the darkness." Archbishop Desmond Tutu

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ, Advent has always been my favorite liturgical season; the anticipation, the waiting, the building up of anticipation to the Coming of the Christ Child has always filled me with immense gratitude and joy. I watch in Hope as the Shepherds arrive at the stable, I pray for the Peace that God promises us, I sing with Joy as the Angels proclaim His birth, and I am amazed by the Love that God, in the form of a little baby, offers to all who will open their hearts to Him.

Hope is the first candle lit on the Advent wreath and this year; our hope has been fulfilled. A vaccine for Covid-19 has been found and with it the hope that we can again be united in worship together is renewed.

We offer opportunities for all to participate in Sunday worship services. The board is inviting anyone who is willing to be a lector to reach out to one of us via email, or through Reverend Ireland or Lisa in the church office. The recording schedule is normally on Thursday's at 11:00 a.m. in the church sanctuary.

The board still needs an additional deacon. Please consider the call to serve. Again, the journey may be challenging at times, but it will be a fulfilling one.

"Only in Jesus Christ are we one, only through Him are we bound together."

~ **Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Life Together: The Classic Exploration of Christian Community.**

If there are any concerns, suggestions or just the need to reach out and chat, please contact any of the board. We are here to serve you, and with you as we walk this path together.

Light, peace, and love, Sue Blaisdell, Chair
Ellen Kerr, Vice Chair
Mary Alapa, Kevin Measimer, Doris Pulaski, and Wendy Walther

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Music Moment

Many thanks to all those who have ably assisted director of music Sue Stottlemeyer and videographer Dick Stottlemeyer in the presentation of worshipful music for the Sunday services. We would especially like to thank; the members of the handbell choir, Adult choir, and volunteers young and mature!

God bless you and the Stottlemeyers with a joyful Christmas!

Our next Music Committee meeting will be Monday, January 11, 2021, at 10 AM in Dutton Hall.

Respectfully submitted,

Janice Kimball, chair



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Women's Fellowship

Our outdoor bake sale on November 15th was a huge success.

Thank you so much to those that baked, purchased and helped make things go safely and smoothly.

It was wonderful just to be able to see everyone again.

Our next meeting will be on Wednesday, December 9th at 12:30pm in Dutton Hall. A "Yankee Swap" will follow the meeting.

Blessings to all!



Virtual Guided Meditation

Every Tuesday 3:00pm-4:00pm

Each session will include an introduction, followed by 10 minutes of guided relaxation, 24 minutes of guided sitting meditation practice, 5 to 10 minutes of contemplation time, followed by optional discussion.

Our guide is Pamala Lewis, who teaches guided meditations and Mindful Yoga at the Mystic Y. Please register by calling her 860-514-1760

FREE! No Experience necessary.

[Check out all of the December Events from the Mystic Noank Library.](#)

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Youth Group



Happy December!

This year has flown by. It feels like just yesterday was March! It often feels like this year went to waste; we might feel like we didn't do enough, we rested too much. I want to remind everyone that over the last couple decades the world has wanted everything to be faster and more convenient. This year we rested, and that's okay! We needed and deserved the rest. If you did work on a project or get some housework done, that is awesome! But if you just tried to get through each day that is awesome too!

December is one of my favorite times of year. I love getting together with family, giving gifts, and eating yummy food. Although we all love our holiday traditions, this year is the perfect opportunity to create new traditions with those in your household. Maybe pick a Christmas movie to start off the season and make that the first movie you watch each year. Pick a random food that everyone in your house loves and make that a Christmas Eve dinner tradition. There are so many things you can implement this year to keep going in the years to come.

As for the youth group, we will continue to meet weekly over Zoom. This month we will have our annual caroling event virtually on Saturday, December 19th at 7 pm. This event is open to the whole congregation! If you are interested in participating, please email me (youthgroupdirector@grotoncongregational.org)!

I hope everyone stays safe and healthy. Remember that Jesus is the reason for the season. It is important to wear your mask and stay at least 6 feet apart.

Seasons Blessings,

Rachel Measimer
Youth Group Director



November 1-December 17th

The Riverfront Children's Center

476 Thames Str., Groton, CT (860) 445-8151 x4

Seeking donations of non-perishable foods, gift cards, gifts for young children and more. Wish Lists and Empty Baskets are available upon request.

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Pastoral Search

Pastoral Search Committee Report

After much prayer and discernment, the Pastoral Search Committee has unanimously agreed to suspend the search for a settled pastor until after the first of the year.

The uptick in the virus numbers and the uncertainty of the next few months we feel it is the congregation's best interest to temporarily suspend our search for a settled pastor.

We have met weekly since March; surveying the congregation, tabulating responses, creating a profile that reflected our needs.

We have prayerfully considered the six profiles we have received since October and feel that, due to unprecedented times and the fact that we cannot begin to predict when we might be able to meet in person, it is in the best interest to suspend our search until sometime after the first of the new year.

Thank you for keeping us in your thoughts and prayers.

Respectfully submitted,

Anne Campbell, Chair

Sue Stottlemeyer, Bill Sullivan, Sally Turner, Linda Wagner, Jack Zuliani : members

Barbara Dutton, ex-officio member



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Stewardship Message

“The building may be closed but the Church is not.”

Thank you to all who turned in your 2021 pledge cards!! As this is being written, 36 pledging units have been submitted. Please remember that it is never too late to make a commitment to keep the ministry of our congregation alive and growing.

In a recent message, Reverend Lee stated that “the story of the season is on-going” and indeed it is. Likewise is our individual and collective stewardship to our church. She also asked us to question and ponder how it is that we make a joyful noise and keep an attitude of gratitude amidst all that we are facing in this pandemic. An online article on the subject suggests that being thankful is a feeling and being grateful is an action. Studies exist wherein it is shown that the benefits of regularly practicing gratitude results in more positive emotions, feeling more alive, expression of compassion and kindness and even a stronger immune system. Let us continue to be a grateful congregation in all we do and are.

Merry Christmas, and God’s blessings be upon you.

Your Stewardship Committee,
Cathy Johnson
Sue Stottlemeyer
Phyllis Meyer



FREE
Tech Support for Seniors
East Lyme Senior Center

Every Tuesday from 2:45pm to 3:45pm during the school year
Offers help with computers, laptops, cellphones, and more.

Call to register 860-739-5859

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Poetry for Christmas

First Coming

By Madeleine L'Engle

He did not wait till the world was ready,
till men and nations were at peace
He came when the Heavens were unsteady
and prisoners cried out for release.

He did not wait for the perfect time.
He came when the need was deep and great.
He dined with sinners in all their grime,
turned water into wine. He did not wait

till hearts were pure. In joy he came
to a tarnished world of sin and doubt.
To a world like ours, of anguished shame
He came, and his Light would not go out.

He came to a world which did not mesh,
to heal its tangles, shield its scorn.
In the mystery of the Word made Flesh
the Maker of the stars was born.

We cannot wait till the world is sane
to raise our songs with joyful voice,
for to share our grief, to touch our pain,
He came with Love: Rejoice! Rejoice!

The Work of Christmas

Howard Thurman, from "The Mood of Christmas, p. 23

When the song of the angels is stilled,
When the star in the sky is gone,
When the kings and princes are home,
When the shepherds are back with their flock,
The work of Christmas begins:
To find the lost,
To heal the broken,
To feed the hungry,
To release the prisoner,
To rebuild the nations,
To bring peace among all,
To make music in the heart.



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A Visit from St. Nicholas a/k/a 'Twas The Night Before Christmas

By Clement Clarke Moore

'Twas the night before Christmas, when all through the house, not a creature was stirring, not even a mouse;

The stockings were hung by the chimney with care,
In hopes that St. Nicholas soon would be there;

The children were nestled all snug in their beds,
While visions of sugar-plums danced in their heads;
And mamma in her 'kerchief, and I in my cap,
Had just settled down for a long winter's nap,

When out on the lawn there arose such a clatter,
I sprang from the bed to see what was the matter.
Away to the window I flew like a flash,
Tore open the shutters and threw up the sash.

The moon on the breast of the new-fallen snow
Gave the luster of mid-day to objects below,
When, what to my wondering eyes should appear,
But a miniature sleigh, and eight tiny reindeer,

With a little old driver, so lively and quick,
I knew in a moment it must be St. Nick.
More rapid than eagles his coursers they came,
And he whistled, and shouted, and called them by name;

"Now, DASHER! Now, DANCER! Now, PRANCER and
VIXEN! On, COMET! On CUPID! On, DONNER and
BLITZEN! To the top of the porch! To the top of the
wall! Now dash away! Dash away! Dash away all!"

As dry leaves that before the wild hurricane fly,
When they meet with an obstacle, mount to the sky,
So up to the house-top the coursers they flew,
With the sleigh full of toys, and St. Nicholas too.

And then, in a twinkling, I heard on the roof
The prancing and pawing of each little hoof.
As I drew in my hand, and was turning around,
Down the chimney St. Nicholas came with a bound.

He was dressed all in fur, from his head to his foot,
And his clothes were all tarnished with ashes and soot;
A bundle of toys he had flung on his back,
And he looked like a peddler just opening his pack.

His eyes -- how they twinkled! His dimples how merry!
His cheeks were like roses, his nose like a cherry!
His droll little mouth was drawn up like a bow,
And the beard of his chin was as white as the snow;

The stump of a pipe he held tight in his teeth,
And the smoke it encircled his head like a wreath;
He had a broad face and a little round belly,
That shook, when he laughed like a bowlful of jelly.

He was chubby and plump, a right jolly old elf,
And I laughed when I saw him, in spite of myself;
A wink of his eye and a twist of his head,
Soon gave me to know I had nothing to dread;

He spoke not a word, but went straight to his work,
And filled all the stockings; then turned with a jerk,
And laying his finger aside of his nose,
And giving a nod, up the chimney he rose;

He sprang to his sleigh, to his team gave a whistle,
And away they all flew like the down of a thistle.
But I heard him exclaim, ere he drove out of sight,
"HAPPY CHRISTMAS TO ALL, AND TO ALL A GOOD-NIGHT! "





*The Groton Congregational Church
Wishes You & Yours the Merriest of Christmases
And a Most Joyous New Year*



