



The Gargoyle

April, 2021

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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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.



Birthdays

Cynthia Bryte

Amanda Mayersohn

Ingrid Measimer

Carol Shinn

Sarah Turner

Rosalind Womack



Weekly Meetings



Sunday Worship Service

April 4th, 11th, 18th, and 25th

While our doors are closed due to the pandemic, services are uploaded to our [YouTube Page](#) and [our website](#) each week.



Sunday Coffee Hour

April 4th, 11th, 18th, and 25th

11:30am via Zoom



Wednesday Prayer Meeting

April 7th, 14th, 21st, 24th and 28th

5:30pm via Zoom



Community Meals Grab n Go

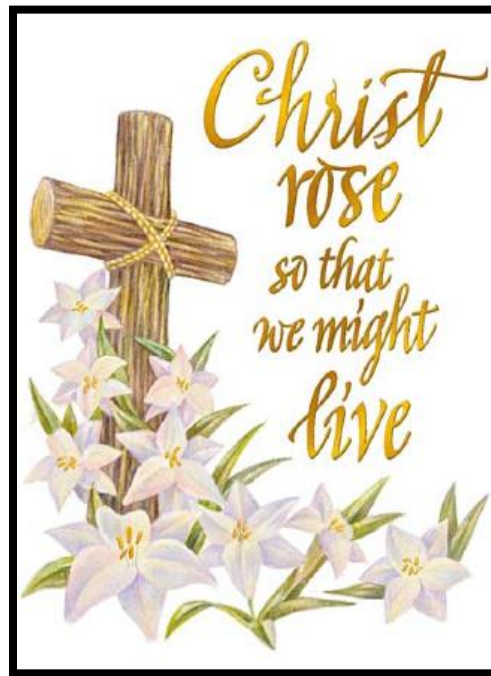
Sundays Noon to 12:30pm

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Monthly Meetings

Women's Fellowship	April 14th in Dutton Hall at 12:30pm
Missions	April 18 th 9:30am
Trustees	April 6 th 5:00pm via Zoom



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Worship' Watch

Resurrection of the Lord April 4, 2021 <i>Easter Day</i> Sermon: "Recognizing His Voice"	Isaiah 25:6-9	Psalm 118:1-2, 14-24	1 Corinthians 15:1-11	John 20:1-18
Second Sunday of Easter April 11, 2021 <i>Rev Mark Porizky</i>	Acts 4:32-35	Psalm 133	1 John 1:1-2:2	John 20:19-31
Third Sunday of Easter April 18, 2021 Sermon: "Eating Fish"	Acts 3:12-19	Psalm 4	1 John 3:1-7	Luke 24:36b-48
Fourth Sunday of Easter April 25, 2021 Sermon: "Laying Down Our Lives"	Acts 4:5-12	Psalm 23	1 John 3:16-24	John 10:11-18

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Pastors' Moment

Pastors Musings for April 2021

Spring Greetings

Christ has risen! Hallelujah!

What a joy it is to be here in this season with this good news once again!

And to be in the season where we're able hopefully!!! to shed our heavy coats and put away the shovels, and delight in seeing the beautiful colors of the spring flowers and the various birds grace the land again.

Such a relief and joy to experience, as well as hearing about all of you who are receiving the vaccines, and feeling like we can visit with our families and loved ones again more freely - even while following some of the precautions. So good when we go through hard times and know they don't last forever.

At the church, though the building has been 'closed', many of us have been hard at work keeping the ministry flowing and helping to create the worship services and offer the care for those who are having challenging times. I am grateful for everyone's choice to stay with the commitments so we can see what we can do. We are having some discussions on when we can safely re-open the church for Sunday worship services. For the moment - we're still in the "not yet" period and ask for your patience and continue to watch our worship services on You Tube. We give great thanks to Dick Stottlemeyer and Lisa Gorman for doing the videotaping and editing of the various parts of the services and weave them together so nicely for us each week.

At this time, words to a favorite hymn can guide us as we do our best to remain patient:

"In the bulb there is a flower, In a seed an apple tree. In cocoons a hidden promise, butterflies will soon be free. In the cold and snow of winter, there's a spring that waits to be; unrevealed until it's season, something God alone can see."

Pondering those words again, did you have a sense of God's revelation in a unique way this year as we went through Lent or especially during Holy Week? Did you go through a moment when it was no longer a matter of having faith, but rather you had an experience where "you know that you know that you know" that God's love is real and can be experienced and even though you can't describe it in words to someone, no one can take away from you that experience? I invite you to pay attention to the words of the Hymn, "Pass It On" when we sing it later this month. For I invite you to pass on to others the wonderful news, that we celebrate, "Christ is risen, he has risen indeed!" And because he has - we learn how it is part of God's revelation - God's desire is for all of us who go through moments of wandering in the darkness, so that we may all come to a moment when we can experience God's love and grace and walk into the new life that Christ brings.

May God's peace and grace be with us all as we go into this springtime with renewed hope and trust, and let us share this love with all whom we meet.

Peace,

Rev Lee



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Deacon's Message



"I do not want merely to possess a faith; I want a faith that possesses me."

-Charles Kingsley

The Deacons have been working toward our eventual re-opening. With the congregations' safety in mind and under the guidance of the Church Leaders, we hope to be able to start live services soon, but we do invite you into the sanctuary for our **Maundy Thursday Service at 7 PM on April 1!** We will all have to wear masks and maintain physical distance to stay safe. We are working on a layout in the pews to achieve this objective. It will include entering from the back of the church and filling the pews from the front to the back. So plan your arrival to allow you to sit near where you "usually" sit. The pews will be divided with ropes to indicate open seats. At the end of the service we will dismiss from the back to the front. No coffee hour or prolonged congregating for now.

While many of us are fully vaccinated, thank God, there are others who haven't yet had the opportunity. I believe God is teaching us patience, among other things, in this unprecedented time. We will get through this together!

We are looking forward to seeing many of you at the Maundy Thursday service April 1st at 7 pm in the sanctuary. **Easter Sunday Sunrise service is on April 4th (6:15am arrival for the 6:27 sunrise) at Fort Griswold.** Music will be provided by Marco Fruct on guitar and Janice Kimball on flute. Please bring a chair if you want to sit.

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Music Moment

Thanks to Sue and Dick Stottlemeyer and all our volunteers and community people who have contributed their musical talents to the worship services!

If you would like to participate in a choir or handbell choir, please contact Director of Music Sue Stottlemeyer at the church for more information. Thanks and God bless you all this Easter season with resurrection joy!

Janice Kimball, chair, Music Committee



Women's Fellowship

At our April 14th meeting in Dutton Hall at 12:30pm we will complete the planning for a dinner in May. It will hopefully be a sit-down meal, but it will depend on the COVID regulations at that time. It could also be a Take-Out meal. It was pretty exciting to begin talking about events for the future. More information will be forthcoming.

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Treasurer's Moment



Hello, this is your acting treasurer with a combination financial and history report.

We all know that our finances are such that every penny the church receives in donations and pledge payments is gone as soon as we receive it. There is one penny, however, that we have had with us for over a hundred years and it has been watching over us all that time. The penny pictured above is attached to an ear of one of our gargoyles, placed there by a stonemason when the tower was built. When the tower stone work was renovated in 2005, one of the workers from Columbia Restoration told us about it and I climbed up on the scaffolding to take this picture. Apparently the mason drilled a hole in the stone, soldered a short copper rod on the back of the penny and tapped it into the hole.

These days, however, I cannot promise to hold onto any of your pennies, dollar bills or checks of any amount for more than a few days before they are deposited and used to pay for office expenses, heating oil, staff salaries, etc.

Last month's report ran on kind of long, because it had been a long time since the last previous update, so this time I will make it real brief. I project the balance in our checking account will be dropping by about \$4,000 every month for the next few months. We cannot sustain that rate of depletion for more than a couple more months without making a withdrawal from our investments. Fortunately the majority of pledgers have either kept up their regular giving or have prepaid their pledges for the year, but if you have fallen a little bit behind, please consider catching up as best you can and if your American Rescue Plan stimulus check leaves you with a little windfall on hand, don't hesitate to make an extra donation to the general fund. Hopefully we can get another Payroll Protection Plan (PPP) loan this year. The loan we got last year has been forgiven – in other words, it effectively became a grant. We will be trying to do that again this year.

I thank Pastor Lee, staff, and other members of the congregation for all their work to maintain the spiritual life of the church through recorded worship services, Zoom fellowship, Bible study, etc. It is up to all of us to participate and support their work and to keep the church's finances stronger.

Respectfully,
Bill Blaisdell

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Stewardship Message

COVID-19 changed the way the world interacts, and the church has not been immune to those changes. Amid social distancing and shelter in place orders, Groton Congregational had to cancel in-person worship and moved to recorded services. While Zoom has been helpful and has allowed us to meet and “see” each other, there is nothing that can fully replace face-to-face interactions. Text messages and emails can be misinterpreted, and information missed.

So what can we do until we can be together? We can continue to be the best church and people that we can. We can be a faithful congregation. Part of that faithfulness comes in the form of stewardship. Stewardship applies to everything we have been given. When we consider faithful stewardship, we are paying attention to the ways we can respond to God’s generous love for us with thoughtful and responsive care for all that God has entrusted to us.

We continue to thank everyone for your continuous and consistent pledged stewardship to Groton Congregational.

The Lord watch between you and me, while we are absent, one from the other (Genesis 31:49).

May God’s blessings be upon you.

Your Stewardship Committee,

Cathy Johnson
Sue Stottlemeyer
Phyllis Meyer

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SNEC Moment

Earlier this month, I posted a blog entitled, "[Post-Pandemic — The Many Faces of Faith Formation](#)." There I reflected on the question, "Given all that has shifted during this past year, what would be the best way to pass on the faith to our children (and youth) at this point in time?" Today's posting should be considered a Part Two — how we might move forward into post-pandemic times as a Church, as congregations, and in our life together as faith communities. My focus in "Part One" was on faith formation. This "Part Two" may appear to have a similar focus; however, the recommendations I offer here will be most effective when approached from the point of view of the life of the entire congregation.

So, what have we learned from the pandemic?

We have learned that family matters, perhaps more than we were previously aware.

Families with young adults saw their grown children return to the "nest," whether for financial, health, or other reasons. Spouses and partners learned new ways to adapt to (and hopefully enjoy) each other's constant presence. Children, often with the help of their parents, tried new ways to connect with their schools and social circles. And many families began to experience and appreciate God's creation more often and in new and creative ways.

As congregations, we can continue to support our families (which come in all shapes, sizes, colors, and configurations) through fostering intentional connections between these families and those who could benefit from having surrogate "families." And we can support parents/grandparents/caregivers in their essential role of passing on the faith to their children and youth, in particular by offering resources that don't add "yet one more thing to do" to their already busy and complex lives. [Traci Smith has several resources](#) that faithfully enhance family routines such as mealtimes, bedtime, and being in the car together. [Faith Inkubators has a great model](#) to use for the bedtime routine. And these conversations and activities can still be shared via Zoom with extended family members! The family will always be the primary vehicle for passing on the faith, and our congregations can offer much-needed support.

We have learned the critical importance of self care.

The fear of contracting COVID-19, the stress of quarantining, the adaptation to total online communications for work and school, the issues of racism, economic disparity, climate change, immigration, and political divisiveness, all came together in a perfect storm of stress, fear, and weakened mental health for many people. The Internet exploded with recommendations for self care and many took advantage of them, experimenting with and adapting them into their daily routines.

As Christian congregations, we have access to a wide variety of self care experiences that have been around for centuries. We call them Christian practices. Perhaps we can now shift our focus from church attendance and committee meetings to intentional, soul-nurturing opportunities for praying together, small group support and

learning, singing together, practicing confession and forgiveness, worshipping together as an intergenerational community of faith — especially by celebrating holidays and holy days with all ages. Many people have learned how to slow down their daily routines in order to practice better self care. How can your congregation support and resource a nurturing and conscientious slowing down in the life of your faith community?

We have learned about the faith-forming capacities of intergenerational ministries.

Worship that has been “Zoomed” and “Facebook Lived” into our homes has caused us to be aware that the participants can range from newborns to great-grandparents. And people who live alone and have been especially susceptible to loneliness and isolation have benefitted from online congregational experiences to connect with others in their faith community. [Relationships matter](#), and we’ve learned that intentional and life-giving (Christian) relationships can happen anywhere and at any time whether we can be together in person or not.

There is no going back. We have no excuse to exclude any of our siblings in Christ from what makes up our life as a community of faith. Whether it be caring for others, celebrating congregational events, engaging in mission opportunities, worshipping together, [celebrating life’s milestones](#), or sharing our Christian Story with each other — everyone is now truly welcome to share their faith together in the events and experiences within the life of your congregation.

I believe that a congregation which puts these three focuses into practice, by virtue of being the Body of Christ together, will grow and strengthen the faith of each and every one of its people in effective and life-giving ways — more than through most of its programs that were in place before the pandemic. In the words of Maria Harris, an internationally acclaimed religious educator who taught at Andover Newton Theological School:

“The church does not have an educational program; the church IS an educational program.”

About the Author [Debbie Gline Allen](#)

Debbie Gline Allen serves as a Minister of Faith Formation on the Conference’s Faith Formation Ministry Team. She also serves as the administrator of the SNEUCC Faith Formation Leadership Program. Her passion for ministry is with children and family.

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Richard Rohr

Happy Easter folks,

For some of you, you have worked with Richard Rohr over the years and learned of his life-giving shift in understanding how to live out his Christian faith. He originally chose to serve as a Franciscan pastor and has since had his heart and mind transformed by his contemporary colleagues and personal experiences which led him to create the Center for Action and Contemplation. He writes daily meditations that I receive, and some are so rich that I love to share them. Considering all that has unfolded this past year and through our Lenten season, I hope you will appreciate his reflections here.

Peace,

Rev. Lee Ireland

Richard Rohr's Daily Meditation

From the Center for Action and Contemplation

Week Eleven: An Expanding Love

Love Is Life-Giving

Religion, at its best, helps people to bring this foundational divine love into ever-increasing consciousness. In other words, it's more about waking up than about cleaning up. Early-stage religion tends to focus on cleaning up, which is to say, determining who meets the requirements for moral behavior and religious belief.

At this point, at least in the United States, it appears that our cultural meaning has pretty much shrunk down to this: *It is all about winning*. Then, once we win, it becomes all about consuming. I can discern no other underlying philosophy in the practical order of American life today. Of itself, such a worldview cannot feed the soul very well or very long, much less provide meaning and encouragement, or engender love or community.

For insight into a more life-giving worldview, we can look to scripture and wise saints such as Julian of Norwich (1342–1416), who wrote that “Love is our Lord’s meaning.” [1] After years of counseling both religious and nonreligious people, it seems to me that most humans need a love object (which will hopefully become a mutual subject!) to keep themselves both sane and happy. That love object becomes our “North Star,” serving as our moral compass and our reason to keep putting one foot in front of the other in a happy and hopeful way. All of us need someone or something, or an animal (did anyone ever tell you that our English word animal comes from *anima*, the Latin for soul?) to connect our hearts with our heads. Love grounds us by creating focus, direction, motivation, even joy—and if we don’t find these things in love, we usually will try to find them in hate. We can certainly see the consequences of this unmet need for love in our society today!

In some ways, the object of our affection is arbitrary. It can begin as a love of golf, a clean house, your cat, or a desire to cultivate a certain reputation for yourself. Granted, the largeness of the object will eventually determine the largeness of the love, but God will use anything to get us started, focused, and flowing. Only a very few actually start this journey with God as the object. That is fully to be expected. *God is not in competition with reality, but in full cooperation with it.* All human loves, passions, and preoccupations can prime the pump,

and only in time do most of us discover the first and final Source of those loves. God is clearly humble and does not seem to care who or what gets the credit. Whatever elicits the flow for you—in that moment and encounter, that thing *is* God for you! I do not say that without theological foundation, because my Trinitarian faith says that God is Relationship Itself. The names of the three “persons” of the Trinity are not as important as the relationship between them. That’s where all the power is—in the “*in between*”!

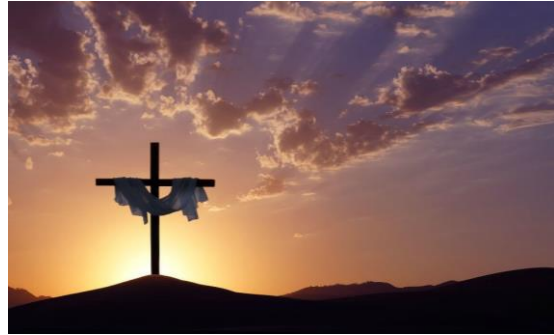
[1] Julian of Norwich, *Showings (Long text)*, chap. 86. See *Showings*, trans. Edmund College and James Walsh (Paulist Press: 1978), 342.

Adapted from Richard Rohr, *The Universal Christ: How a Forgotten Reality Can Change Everything We See, Hope for, and Believe* (Convergent: 2019), 72–74, 75.

Prayer For Our Community

Loving God, you fill all things with a fullness and hope that we can never comprehend. Thank you for leading us into a time where more of reality is being unveiled for us all to see. We pray that you will take away our natural temptation for cynicism, denial, fear and despair. Help us have the courage to awaken to greater truth, greater humility, and greater care for one another. May we place our hope in what matters and what lasts, trusting in your eternal presence and love. Listen to our hearts’ longings for the healing of our suffering world. Please add your own intentions . . . Knowing, good God, you are hearing us better than we are speaking, we offer these prayers in all the holy names of God. Amen.

April 2021



Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
				1 Maundy Thursday 7pm	2 Good Friday	3
4 Easter Sunrise Worship at Avery Point	5	6	7 Wednesday Evening Prayer Meeting 5:30pm	8	9	10
11	12	13	14 Wednesday Evening Prayer Meeting 5:30pm	15	16	17
18	19	20	21 Wednesday Evening Prayer Meeting 5:30pm	22	23	24
25	26	27	28 Wednesday Evening Prayer Meeting 5:30pm	29	30	

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