



The Gargoyle



May, 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

Next time a sunrise steals your breath or a meadow of flowers leaves you speechless, remain that way. Say nothing, and listen as Heaven whispers, "Do you like it? I did it just for you."

*Max Lucado
the word for the day*

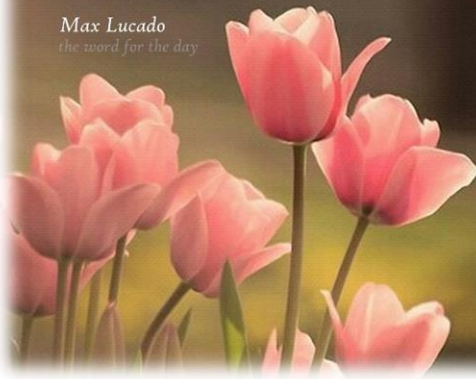


Table of Contents

Weekly Events	<u>3</u>
Worship Watch	<u>4</u>
Pastor's Moment	<u>5</u>
Deacon's Message	<u>7</u>
Music Moment	<u>8</u>
Women's Fellowship	<u>9</u>
Stewardship Message	<u>10</u>
SNEC Moment	<u>11</u>
Richard Rohr	<u>13</u>
New Bible Study Offering	<u>15</u>
April Calendar	<u>16</u>



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.



Katherine Chirillo

Carrie Davis

Liz Fernald

Carolyn Hanover

Michael Hodge

Phyllis Meyer

Grace Somers

Laura Turner

Steven Turner



Weekly Events



Sunday Worship Service

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

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



Sunday Coffee Hour

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

11:30am via Zoom



Wednesday Prayer Meeting

May 5th, 12th, 19th, and 26th

5:30pm via Zoom



Community Meals Grab n Go

[Table of Contents](#)



Worship Watch

Fifty Sunday of Easter May 2, 2021 <i>Sermon: "Abide in Me"</i>	*Acts 8:26-40	Psalm 22:25-31	1 John 4:7-21	John 15:1-8
Sixth Sunday of Easter May 9, 2021 <i>Sermon: "The Holy Spirit Fell Upon All"</i>	*Acts 10:44-48	Psalm 98	1 John 5:1-6	John 15:9-17
Seventh Sunday of Easter May 16, 2021 <i>Sermon: "IN This World but Not OF The World."</i>	*Acts 1:15-17, 21-26	Psalm 1	1 John 5:9-13	John 17:6-19
Day of Pentecost May 23, 2021 <i>Sermon: "The Spirit of Truth"</i>	*Acts 2:1-21 or <i>Ezekiel 37:1-14</i>	Psalm 104:24-34, 35b	Romans 8:22-27 or <i>Acts 2:1-21</i>	John 15:26-27; 16:4b-15
Trinity Sunday May 30, 2021 First Sunday after Pentecost <i>Sermon: "Born of Water and the Spirit"</i>	Isaiah 6:1-8 Psalm 29		Romans 8:12-17	John 3:1-17

[Table of Contents](#)



Pastor's Moment

Greetings to you all on this beautiful spring day,

Today, I hear words of St Francis as we continue to move through this time of the pandemic- knowing soon we will be able to move more freely since more and more of us have been vaccinated. As we remove the restraints imposed to keep us safe, what will we discover? I hope there are more benefits than losses. One I do know- is truly understanding and appreciating the deep value of our close relationships because we couldn't visit as we have in the past. Perhaps one gift is that we have had the chance to discern things we didn't have time for before.

Or maybe – the chance to listen within for God's Voice and guidance?

Today, as I said, I'm hearing within the words of St Francis. When my children were young, I did a cross-stitch wall hanging of his Prayer.

**Lord, make me an instrument of Your peace;
Where there is hatred, let me sow love; Where there is injury, pardon;
Where there is doubt, faith; Where there is despair, hope;
Where there is darkness, light; And where there is sadness, joy.**

**O Divine Master,
Grant that I may not so much seek to be consoled as to console;
To be understood, as to understand; To be loved, as to love;
For it is in giving that we receive, It is in pardoning that we are pardoned,
And it is in dying that we are born to Eternal Life.
Amen.**

How can we be the instruments of God's peace at this time - especially once we have the joy of gathering again in the sanctuary and hopefully move into more active times to be together and do our outreach ministries again?

For this day, I continue practicing "living in the NOW," and appreciating each day to see what it is that God is revealing and also inviting me into seeing and sharing with others. I am sitting here watching some seagulls enjoying the morning and soaring over the beach playing with one another... in a dance with the wind. Some may be looking for food...while others just for a place to gather as they soar and swoop and then land on the sand and seem to chatter with one another.

As I sit in the bright sunlight after yesterday's rain – it is a treat to sit and absorb the sun's rays. *Are you absorbing the "Son's" rays?* Ha! Receiving His beams of love shining upon you? Calling you forward into sharing the love and grace that God offers you each day?

Yesterday, I heard someone say we are all "swimming in the ocean of love." What a cool image to play with as I sit here and ponder that! And to hear her say, that "no matter which way we fall, *we fall into love.*" Whoa! Play with that one a bit! Now there's an interesting thought! "No matter which way we stumble or fall, we fall into

the love of God's arms at all times." What does that mean *for you this day*? Does it change your spirit in this moment? Does it offer you more hope? Or increase your frustration?

As we go into the merry month of May as the members and friends of the Groton Congregational Church, I give thanks for your ongoing presence and participation as we walk into each new day and discover all that is here for us as people of faith and followers of the man named Jesus. We are each trying to learn from him and discern how to live more fully into the image of who God created us to be. Not as perfect people, but as real, ordinary people in 2021 wanting to share our lives together and, as we do, knowing that it is through the path of love and forgiveness that we each grow and help strengthen the shining of the light of Christ here as we walk together. May God's peace, grace and love be with you all as we go into May, as we are able to delight in the wonders of creation as we drive around and see the beauty of the springtime in this part of the world.

Blessings to you all,
Rev. Lee A. Ireland
Bridge Pastor



[Table of Contents](#)



Deacon's Message



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

-Charles Kingsley

Greetings to all. We look forward to being together in worship with everyone. Remember the church is the people and we are all part of the body of Christ.

May 2021 sees us celebrating Pentecost. We are familiar with the story of the Holy Spirit descending on the apostles as tongues of fire as they were gathered to celebrate Pentecost and began preaching in various languages which they previously could not speak.

Pentecost is the Greek name given the festival by the Jews of the time living in Greece as it falls fifty days after Passover. Otherwise, it is Shavuot, the Feast of Weeks a harvest festival which falls seven weeks after Passover. It is also considered the anniversary of when God gave Moses the ten commandments on Mount Sinai.

We see in the Exodus story the flame imagery in God's presence on Sinai and in the pillar of fire which accompanied the Hebrew people during their nomadic journey. When they set up camp God's presence would be contained in the tabernacle tent.

God's presence would eventually be considered to be in the holy of holies in the temple in Jerusalem where the people were required to frequent on pilgrimages and to offer their sacrifices.

The Holy Spirit descending upon the early followers of Jesus changes things. We are now each a temple of God called to show his presence to the world. We the people are the church separately and collectively.

May we be together in worship soon. May God's blessings be upon us all.

Kevin Measimer

[Table of Contents](#)



Music Moment

Just a friendly reminder from the Music Committee that singers and other musicians are welcome to contribute their time and talents to the worship of God! Please contact Director of Music Sue Stottlemeyer if you are interested.

We hope to open our meetings to all interested members and friends when open church worship starts again in the church building.

Thanks and God bless us all!

Janice Kimball, chair,
Music Committee



[Table of Contents](#)

SPRING



Fellowship Meal

Friday, May 14, 2021

Groton Congregational Church
162 Monument St, Groton, CT

\$15.00/per person

Menu: Baked Ham, Scalloped Potatoes, Green Beans /w Bacon, Roll, & Dessert

Place your order by calling the Church Office 860-445-7409 or emailing the church office at office@grotoncongregational.org. When emailing please include your name and the number of dinners you are ordering. [Click Here](#) to sign up online.

NO orders will be accepted after May 9, 2021

Pick Up your dinners between 5pm and 6pm on May 14, 2021

Exact Change is much appreciated!

When picking up your dinner(s) please wear your mask and follow all social distancing protocols.



Stewardship Message

“The building may be closed, but the church is not”

Thank you to all who donated to the virtual Easter Lilies! How wonderful it was to see the names of loved ones. We again thank everyone for their continuous and consistent stewardship pledges to Groton Congregational, giving as they are asked and as they are able.

The month of May brings Mother’s Day. The definitions and memories of a mother are different for each of us. Not all mothers are women and not all gave birth to us. What is the same for all of us is that a mother’s love is God’s love. Both watch over us, nurture us, watch us grow. A mother’s heart is God’s heart: comforting and calming; rhythmic; something and someone that you want to hold and hug and be close to that takes away fear. “There is no safer haven than in a mother’s arms” (author unknown).

Your mother may be gone from the physical or they may still be here with you. We suggest honoring your mother (in whatever capacity your “mother” may be) by making a donation to the church. The connection between God and mother is a strong one.

Come by the church on Mother’s Day and take a flower – give it to your mother, that “like a mother” person, keep it for yourself or pass it on to a mom friend.

May God’s blessings be upon you.

Your Stewardship Committee,

Cathy Johnson
Sue Stottlemeyer
Phyllis Meyer

[Table of Contents](#)



SNEC Moment

Let Anyone with Ears to Hear — Sowing the Seeds of Faith

*Some [seeds] fell into good soil, and when it grew, it produced a hundredfold.
(Luke 8:8, NRSV)*



We all understand that the forming of one's faith is influenced by everything we do as a church. Growth in faith is also influenced by one's nuclear family, their particular upbringing, any mentors they are fortunate to have throughout their lives, as well as other circumstances specific to each individual and their unique lives. Thus, is it easy to go about doing what we do as a church community and assume that everything we are offering will take care of the spiritual needs of our people. Yet this is not an assumption we should be making if what we truly desire for our children, youth, and adults is a healthy, vibrant, and mature faith.

It is like [the sower in the parable shared by Jesus](#) where seeds were much more likely to grow where they wouldn't get trampled, where the birds couldn't gobble them up, and where the soil had been prepared to nurture these seeds. This is how it is with our faith formation programming. How then can we ensure that we are properly preparing the soil for our congregations to grow in their faith?

[The Faith Formation Leadership Program](#) of the Southern New England Conference is offering its **Faith Formation 101 class on April 24th** — a perfect opportunity for faith formation leaders, as well as clergy and other interested local church leaders, to gather the tools and resources needed to ensure preparing good, rich soil for planting faith-forming seeds. Creating an inspiring vision; setting engaging goals to meet that vision; creating events, worship experiences, and programs to meet those goals; and researching and gathering the best possible resources will ensure that faith formation in your congregation will go beyond just hoping that it happens organically. By sowing these seeds on intentionally prepared soil, you will be inviting your people to engage in life-giving relationships with Jesus, with each other, and with their God.

Elliott Eisner, a renowned educator and researcher, proposed that there are three forms of curriculum (where “curriculum” is defined based on its Latin origin, to run a course, with a beginning and a goal to be reached):
Explicit — the intentional experiences and lessons prepared to elicit a basic understanding of concepts.
Implicit — what is learned through the relationship with the teacher, the environment, etc., whether intentional or unintentional.
Null - what is learned or assumed by what is not presented or never talked about.

This “curriculum” for the church moves us to ask:

- What kind of people do we want the children and youth in our congregation to be when they reach adulthood?
- What are we doing right now in order to prepare the soil so that they may grow in that way?
- And what are we *not* doing right now that, due to its neglect, will impede growth in these desired ways?

This past year has shifted our practice and understanding of how faith formation programming is presented, in ways that have stretched our traditions as well as our abilities. Without a core group of people to engage with in the church building each week, we have had to re-imagine our delivery systems, each congregation adapting and choosing the best ways to reach their people (and others!) This means that our post-pandemic programming cannot re-emerge looking like it did in 2019. But what should it look like?

The best part about engaging with the other participants in this class setting, alongside [Karen Ziel](#), our instructor, is to examine best practices for how to nurture good soil for our seeds, and what our [return to the church building](#) will need to look like as a result. Together, students share successes (and some not-so-successful experiences), that encourage each other to evaluate the best methods for their particular congregation and its structure.

Judi Wallace, Director of Children & Youth Ministries at First Congregational Church of Guilford, Connecticut, shares that these classes “cover such a wonderful and wide array of topics...every class I took had some wonderful gems for my own learning, and in ways to teach! ”

While it is true that “everything that happens in the church is faith formation,” it is critical that we have the tools and framework that make what we do with and for our people an intentional act of love and hospitality — presenting the gift of growing in one’s faith.

I hope you will [join us](#) in learning “the art of sowing”!

[Debbie Gline](#) Minister of Faith Formation on the Conference’s Faith Formation Ministry Team.

[Table of Contents](#)



Richard Rohr

Greetings all,

As you read through Richard Rohr's meditation here, consider what you hear within and what you sense is the invitation for us here at Groton Congregational Church.

Many thanks,
Rev. Lee Ireland

Richard Rohr's Daily Meditation

From the Center for Action and Contemplation



Week Seventeen: Apocalyptic Hope

This Is an Apocalypse

In April of last year, I was invited by the Call to Unite [1] to share my thoughts about what we might learn from the COVID-19 pandemic. I knew it might be a risk, but I felt a strong urge to speak about the much-misunderstood meaning of biblical apocalypse. Here is a portion of that conversation:

What apocalyptic means is to pull back the veil, to reveal the underbelly of reality. It uses hyperbolic images, stars falling from the sky, the moon turning to blood. The closest thing would be contemporary science fiction, where suddenly you're placed in an utterly different world, where what you used to call "normal" doesn't apply anymore. That perfectly describes this COVID-19 event.

So, hear this word rightly—it is *meant* to shock: this is an *apocalypse*, happening to us in our lifetime, that's leaving us utterly out of control. We're grasping to retake control, by things like refusing to wear masks and defying boundaries at potential super spreader events. But I think we now know in a new way that we can't totally take control.

There is a giveaway in all of the apocalyptic sections of the three Synoptic Gospels. In Matthew 24:8, hidden there in the middle of the wars and earthquakes it says, “All this is only the beginning of the birth pangs.” Apocalypse is for the sake of birth not death. Yet most of us have heard this reading as a threat. Apparently, it’s not. Anything that upsets our normalcy is a threat to the ego but in the Big Picture, it really isn’t. In Luke 21, Jesus says right in the middle of the catastrophic description: “Your endurance will win you your souls.” Falling apart is for the sake of renewal, not punishment. Again, such a telling line. In Mark 13, Jesus says “Stay awake” four times in the last paragraph (Mark 13:32–37). In other words, “Learn the lesson that this has to teach you.” It points to everything that we take for granted and says, “Don’t take anything for granted.” An apocalyptic event reframes reality in a radical way by flipping our imagination.

We would have done history a great favor if we would have understood apocalyptic literature. *It’s not meant to strike fear in us as much as a radical rearrangement.* It’s not the end of the world. It’s the end of *worlds*—our *worlds that we have created*. In the book of Revelation (also called the Apocalypse, or Revelation to John), John is trying to describe what it feels like when everything falls apart. It’s not a threat. It’s an invitation to depth. It’s what it takes to wake people up to the real, to the lasting, to what matters. It presents the serious reader with a great “What if?”

Our best response is to end our fight with reality-as-it-is. We will benefit from anything that approaches a welcoming prayer—diving into the change positively, preemptively, saying, “Come, what is; teach me your good lessons.” Saying yes to “What is” ironically sets us up for “What if?” Otherwise, we get trapped in the negative past.





New Bible Study

For those interested in a rich Bible Study, please join us on Wednesday evenings in May at 6:30 PM to learn what Richard Rohr has shared in his amazing book, [Falling Upward](#).

(May 5, 12, 19 and 26). I'll be ordering 10 copies of the book that will range between \$3-5. Let me know if you'd like to purchase one, but you can read it on your Kindle or computer version or acquire a copy for yourself. I'll be glad to order more. I offer a description of his book below. I know many have been reading his daily meditations, but it will be helpful if more of you have a chance to see his invitation here for us in 2021 to hear his insights into Christianity that are impacting the world, especially now through his Center for Action and Contemplation in Albuquerque, NM.

Wikipedia offers this description of Rohr if you've not heard of him before: "**Richard Rohr**, [OFM](#) (born 1943), is an American author, spiritual writer, and [Franciscan friar](#) based in Albuquerque, New Mexico. He was ordained to the [priesthood](#) in the [Roman Catholic Church](#) in 1970. [PBS](#) has called him "one of the most popular spirituality authors and speakers in the world."

I *very much* look forward to this study with you,
Rev. Lee Ireland

Here is the description of his book, [Falling Upward](#), on Amazon:

In *Falling Upward*, Fr. Richard Rohr seeks to help readers understand the tasks of the two halves of life and to show them that those who have fallen, failed, or "gone down" are the only ones who understand "up." Most of us tend to think of the second half of life as largely about getting old, dealing with health issues, and letting go of life, but the whole thesis of this book is exactly the opposite. What looks like falling down can largely be experienced as "falling upward." In fact, it is not a loss but somehow actually a gain, as we have all seen with elders who have come to their fullness.

- Explains why the second half of life can and should be full of spiritual richness
- Offers a new view of how spiritual growth happens/loss is gain
- Richard Rohr is a regular contributing writer for Sojourners and Tikkun magazines

This important book explores the counterintuitive message that we grow spiritually much more by doing wrong than by doing right--a fresh way of thinking about spirituality that grows throughout life.

May 2021



Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
						1
2 Worship Service 10am Coffee Hour 11:30am	3	4	5 Prayer & Bible Study Meeting 5:30pm	6 National Day of Prayer	7	8
9 Mother's Day Worship Service 10am Coffee Hour 11:30am	10	11	12 Women's Fellowship 12:30 pm Dutton Hall Prayer & Bible Study Meeting 5:30pm	13 Ascension Day	14 Women's Fellowship Grab n Go Ham Dinner	15 Armed Forces Day
16 Worship Service 10am Coffee Hour 11:30am	17	18	19 Prayer & Bible Study Meeting 5:30pm	20	21	22
23 Worship Service 10am Coffee Hour 11:30am	24	25	26 Prayer & Bible Study Meeting 5:30pm	27	28	29
30 Worship Service 10am Coffee Hour 11:30am	31 Memorial Day					

Copyright May 2021

The Gargoyle is a publication of the Groton Congregational Church
An Open and Affirming Church



162 Monument St, Groton, CT 06340

www.grotonucc.org

office@grotoncongregational.org

860-445-7409