

February 2022







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PASTOR'S MUSINGS



Winter Greetings to you all,

What a roller coaster ride we've been on! Open? Closed? Open? Blizzard coming! Or will it go out to sea? What a ride! What a way to launch into the new year!

As we go into February, we do so being very conscious of the value of the relationships we have here within this congregation and family of faith: "Blessed be the tie that binds."

I've become so aware of the fragility of life and how suddenly someone can pass, while others travel along with no signs of illness or complications. I am also aware that it is not a matter of punishment or reward by God, but the reality of the genetic makeup with which we have come into the world and our individual body's ability to navigate the viruses, illnesses and obstacles along the way. As we live together in this month that includes Valentine's Day, we're invited to let go of any judgment of one another and listen within for the light, love and grace of God to guide us in how to be a non-anxious presence to one another and help strengthen each other. Having spent time meditating on the words of St. Paul in 1 Corinthians 13: 1-13 for the sermon on Jan 30, I am aware of the profound compassionate power of Jesus' invitation to 'love one another as I have loved you." As we see in this passage, later in his life, Paul wrote: "Love is patient; love is kind; love is not envious or boastful or arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice in wrongdoing but rejoices in the truth. It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never ends."

We each struggle to live into those words in our private lives but how precious they are for our walk together. As we go into February and beyond, I'm so aware that we've been living through this past year as caterpillars in the Covid cocoon and most of us are ready to burst out of them and fly about more freely as we live our current lives. Have you discovered some new talents that were hidden? Have you been learning new things through the books you've read or programs you've been watching on ty?

Due to the contagious reality of Covid, I've not been able to do visits as I have normally done.

Could I ask you to do me a favor? I have not seen some of you for quite a while, and some I've never met. Would you help me to better understand the fuller reality of this congregation and please take some time to write me a note? Would you please share 2 pieces:

- 1) what would you like me to know about your life as we move into February 2022?
- 2) what is one of your favorite memories in your life here at GCC?

We're all hoping that soon we will be able to interact more freely. In the meantime, please enjoy the articles included here by the different boards and committees and hear the hope within and the desire to keep that light of Christ shining brightly!!!

Peace and blessings to you all,

Rev. Lee A. Ireland,

Designated-Term Pastor

DEACON'S MESSAGE



February

This is a month that promises New England residents cold short and very often snowy and icy days in abundance. In my younger days, my brothers, sisters and I spent-time ice skating on the farm pond across the street or we took sleds up the hill behind our house in Charlotte, Vermont. This was paradise even at 10 below zero.

It is also the place our ancestors chose to reflect on Love and the kindness of a 3rd century bishop named Valentine. He distributed much needed treats and care to the street children in his town.

This act of charity has inspired the ages with the spirit of giving and to follow the many scriptures that tell of the need to be generous and to love our neighbors as we would want to be loved.

The verb love covers a multitude of possibilities. From the trivial to the most profound we encounter love in the most mundane and serious ways every day. To begin each day with prayer can be our most profound experience. There is a peace that God imparts to us that helps in all the situations the day brings. The highest form of love, agape, from Greek language is God's love for us.

Mary M. Alapa January 19, 2022



Painting by: Mary Catherine Fish



A 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.



Sanctuary Flowers

Honor that special person or occasion with a floral donation to the Sanctuary.

To do so, please contact Lisa at the church office if you would like to have your floral donation dedication printed in the bulletin and announced at worship.

For more information, please contact Janice Kimball.



FEBRUARY BIRTHDAYS

BILL BLAISDELL

JAMES DOUGHTERTY, JR

BARBARA FRUCHT

JOAN JORDAN

HALEY RODGERS

PENNY SULLIVAN

HOWARD TURNER



STEWARDSHIP





How is it that it's February already? The first month of 2022 is ended and our lives – and the life of Groton Congregational Church – continue, despite all that we are confronted with. Rejoicing that, despite the curve ball that the omicron variant brought upon is, we can at least resume in-person worship services. One step at a time.

How is your stewardship plant doing? Have the roots reached deep as you continue to care for it? Just like you care for that plant, we care for our congregation.

If you've read the Report of the Acting Treasurer, you know that we're not where we thought or hoped we'd be, financially. The figures relayed are based upon pledges made to date. Perhaps you meant to submit your pledge card but were caught up in day-to-day responsibilities of living and just forgot. Maybe you are awaiting end-of-the-year financial information in order to determine what you can offer in support of the church. Whatever the reason, it's *never* too late. If you've misplaced your pledge card, there are more at the church or you can call the office and have one mailed to you.

Sometimes we need reminders, and that's okay.

Thank you for your continuing support in not only pledging, but in fulfilling your pledges. Perhaps consider making a donation to the church in a loved-one's honor as a Valentine gift or for one's birthday or anniversary or just "because." Put a note in a card to let them know that you've done this. We're sure it will be graciously appreciated in the same manner in which it was given – in love.

God's blessings be upon you. Your Stewardship Committee,

Cathy Johnson Sue Stottlemyer Phyllis Meyer Doris Pulaski

MISSIONS



We have received some nice thank you letters from different organizations. There are some especially nice ones from the Child and Family Agency with pictures of the children showcasing their new jammies. They are all posted on the midway bulletin board for your enjoyment!!

We are bringing back the red wagon!!! Items will be taken to Groton Social Services. They are requesting canned and non-perishable items as they are continually putting together food bags for local households. They are always in need of spaghetti sauce, rice and pasta mixes, juices of all sorts, peanut butter, jelly, mac n' cheese mixes, chunky soups, tuna, and canned fruits and vegetables.

Your Missions Committee,

Anne, Beth, Penny



Sharing wisdom from a food bank volunteer:

- 1. Everyone donates Kraft Mac & Cheese in the box. But it needs milk & butter which is hard to get from food banks.
- 2. Boxed Milk is a treasure. Kids need it for cereal, which they get a lot of.
- 3. Everyone donates pasta sauce & spaghetti noodles.
- 4. Canned Foods should be Pop Tops OR donate Can Openers.
- 5. Oil is a luxury needed for Rice a Roni which they get a lot of.
- 6. Spices, Salt & Pepper are a real gift.
- 7. Tea bags & Coffee are caring gifts.
- 8. Sugar & Flour are treats.
- 9. Important are fresh produce donated by farmers & grocery stores.
- 10. Seeds are great in spring & summer because growing can be easy for some.
- 11. Rarely is there fresh meat.
- 12. Tuna & Crackers make a good lunch.
- 13. Hamburger Helper goes nowhere without ground beef.
- 14. They get lots of peanut butter and jelly but NEED sandwich bread.
- 15. Butter or Margarine are good.
- 16. Eggs are a commodity!
- 17. Cake mix & Frosting makes it possible to make a child's birthday cake.
- 18. Dishwashing Detergent is very expensive & is always appreciated.
- 19. Feminine hygiene products are a luxury & women will cry over them.
- 20. Everyone loves Stove Top Stuffing.

Bonus: CASH makes it possible for the Food Bank to buy what's missing and buy in bulk.





WOMEN'S FELLOWSHIP

Will meet next on February 16th in Dutton Hall at 12:30pm to discuss plans for the upcoming take-out dinner in March.



Handbell Choir

Will meet on February 3rd in the Sanctuary for practice at 6:30pm

Choir Rehearsals

Will begin some time in February. Please stay in touch with the choral director for up to date information.

YOUTH GROUP MESSAGE



January called for a little break. A break from all the positive chaos of the holidays. A break from the notion that we "must" do certain things. It also called for a little bit of a restart, in whatever that means for each person.

Now is a time for a new beginning. Maybe you set a new year's resolution and it didn't go as planned. It is okay to start again. Start a new healthy habit, throw away a bad habit. Be patient with yourself and be kind to yourself. This is something I have learned over the last month and maybe you needed to hear it, too.

Youth group did take a quick pause during January as the church was closed to in person meetings and as I mentioned before, we all needed a break. BUT we are starting up for 2022!

Youth group will meet twice in February; days and time to be determined!

Summer 2022 at Silver Lake

Come to Camp!

Registration Opens January 15th!

SUMMER 2022 CONFERENCE DATES:

Pioneer: June 19-25 Week 1: June 26-July 2 Week 2: July 3-9 Week 3: July 10-16 Week 4: July 17-23 Week 5: July 24-30 Week 6: July 31-Aug. 6 Week 7: Aug. 7-13 Save \$50! Register by Jan. 31 and use the code EARLY22 at checkout.









Summer Camp for grades 4 through 12; register online at

WWW.SILVERLAKECT.ORG



Bible Study

We are reconvening Bible Studies on Thursday mornings at 11 AM in a hybrid format. If you would like to join us, we are gathering in my office or you can join us via Zoom and we will send the link each week. We are currently looking at the Lectionary Readings for each week, which you can find in this Gargoyle.

New Members' Classes

Several people have approached me in the past few months and asked what steps they need to take to become members of our Congregation. I shared this with the Board of Deacons and that I like to hold 2 classes for new members. Due to the Covid shutdown in January, we are rescheduling the "Welcoming of New Members" in our Service to February 27.

Therefore, I'd like to invite those who are interested in becoming members to come to a meeting on February 13, 2022, after church. Let's meet in Dutton Hall at Coffee Hour and then we'll go to the Library, which is downstairs past the office and on the right. Some of the Deacons will join us as you are invited to learn more about the history of this congregation and how things are happening now.

Sunday School Classes and Confirmation

I have also had many ask the question — "Can we start a Sunday School program again?" I'm delighted that we've been seeing children returning to our worship services now that the vaccines have become available for them too. I'm not quite sure when we can have the first class, but I would like to know if you have children who would like to participate. We're not yet doing Coffee Hours, but could you either send me an email at the link below or talk to me after a service.

We'll see how to do so and who can help with the teaching.

I was also asked about if we could have a Confirmation Class. If you have a teenager who is 12 yrs older or older who could like to participate, would you please send me an email?

Revlee4@gmail.com.

Thank you.

Rev. Lee Ireland

Metamorphosis - By Doe Zantamata

On the journey between caterpillar to butterfly, the caterpillar encloses itself into a cocoon.

Within that cocoon, the entire caterpillar is broken down into a soup-like mixture.

Just about all of the major structures are broken down and then rebuilt, including the heart.

Soon, the butterfly emerges. Hardly a trace of the caterpillar remains. The butterfly becomes free to fly.

Personal transformation is much the same. Tired of just eating, working, existing, we go within and close off somewhat from the outside world.

We re-examine all of our beliefs; what we were told, what we learned. The process takes much longer than a few days, but sooner or later, we rebuild. We replace false beliefs, held in our minds, with truths, held in our hearts. We shed the old, and begin to emerge anew.

Released from our limitations and negative beliefs, we become...free to fly.









Left top: Pop-up Pageant

Participants.

Left bottom: Children from the Early Childhood Development Center in their Grammies Jammies.

Right bottom: Thank you poster

from the children.







New Directory Will Be Available Soon

CHURCH DIRECTORY Update

Please contact the office with your current information for inclusion

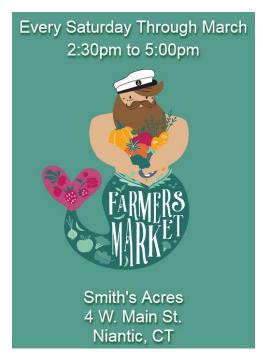


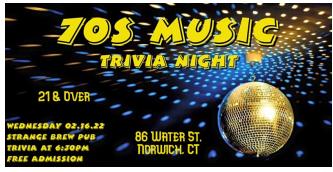














Meet Freddie the Dog 11am-1pm

Powerful Words

1/9/2022 - by: David Cleaver-Bartholomew

Growing up, I remember my parents teaching us the poem, "Five Little Words."

There are five little words, I would have you to know; They are "Pardon me," "Thank you," and "Please." Oh, use them quite often wherever you go, There are few words more useful as these.

These five little words have a power
That fortune or fame cannot give.
So commit them to memory this very hour
And please use them as long as you live. Thank you!



Perhaps you have a childhood memory of your parent(s) teaching you the importance of saying thank you for a gift received or a kindness shown? Or perhaps as an adult you've witnessed another adult teaching a child to say thank you when that child received a gift, a favor, or a gracious act from someone else? What are your memories and experiences with regard to teaching the importance of saying thank you on the one hand and of being thanked on the other?

The powerful, positive affect saying thank you has is widely known; therefore, it isn't surprising that it is also widely encouraged and taught.

If saying thank you is so important and has such an impact, why is it so difficult and why is it not done more frequently? In my experience with congregations, four reasons immediately come to mind: 1) people are too busy; 2) no one is responsible for thanking people and/or writing thank you notes, so no one does it; 3) church life is hectic, so it simply falls through the cracks; and 4) the attitude that members contributing their time, talent, and treasure are just doing what they are supposed to do as members and hence don't need to be thanked.

This last point is especially problematic in today's religious fundraising environment as people's senses of obligation to and responsibility for supporting the local church with their contributions of time, talent, and treasure has waned dramatically the last few decades. One might even say it has all but vanished.

While I have heard some people say they don't expect or want to be thanked for their contribution(s), I have generally found that it isn't that they truly don't want to be thanked, but that they don't want to be thanked publicly or be the object of attention. Rather, they are just fine with, and in fact appreciate, a personal, non-public, 'quiet' thank you.

Gratitude, or thankfulness, and generosity go hand in hand and are two sides of the same coin. Saying 'Thank you' promptly and regularly is one of the most straightforward and effective practices a congregation can do to reinforce a sense of gratitude and enhance generosity. When people are thanked quickly and regularly, they feel appreciated, valued, useful, and needed. This in turn makes them more inclined to be generous when it comes to supporting the church's ministry with additional contributions and assistance.

Developing a strategy for thanking people is important for the above reasons. In developing such a strategy at least two types of thanking should be considered: general and personal. General thanking is thanking groups of people or the entire congregation at the same time. Personal thanking is thanking another person, either orally or in writing, and can be done publicly or privately.

A comprehensive stewardship program includes a strategy for consistently thanking donors at important times – when someone makes their first contribution, makes or fulfills a pledge, when giving statements are mailed out, or when a special gift, such as a memorial or legacy gift, is made – and in appropriate ways and a timely fashion.

A well-thought out practice of thanking others considers your context and is realistic. Two options may be: 1) the pastor, pastoral staff, stewardship committee, or a group of volunteers setting aside time on a weekly or monthly basis to write and send off a batch of thank you notes or make thank you phone calls; and 2) hosting an annual appreciation event or 'Thankathon' that does *not* morph into an occasion for an 'ask.'

A plan that is too complicated, requires many resources, or is difficult to set up and execute, will not succeed. Design a system that fits your situation so that it can be implemented and lead to a sense of accomplishment and satisfaction. A well-conceived thank you strategy and system develops gratitude and reinforces generosity without being overly taxing.

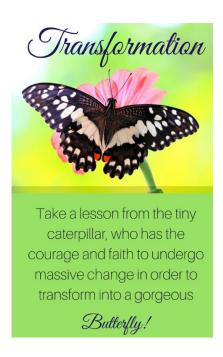
Now, as you send out your church's annual contribution statements, may be an opportune time to begin or more fully develop your church's thank you program. Congregations that want to cultivate generosity and inspire giving thank their givers often and meaningfully. They <u>invite or ask</u> people to give, They <u>tell</u> what impact their gifts have had or will have, They <u>thank</u> people for their gifts.

Pardon me, but if you don't already have one, **please** consider developing a thank you strategy and system in your church and implementing it in 2022. **Thank you!**

Author



David Cleaver-Bartholomew is the Director of Stewardship and Donor Relations for the SNEUCC.





FEBRUARY WORSHIP SERVICES

Fifth Sunday after the Epiphany Isaiah 6:1-8, (9-1 Corinthians 15:1-11 Psalm 138 Luke 5:1-11 13)

February 6, 2022

Sermon: "Hello, God Calling"

Sixth Sunday after the Epiphany Jeremiah 17:5-10 1 Corinthians 15:12-20 Psalm 1 Luke 6:17-26

February 13, 2022 Sermon: "The Beatitudes"

New Members Class 11:30am

Seventh Sunday after the Genesis 45:3-11, Psalm 37:1-11, 1 Corinthians 15:35-38, Luke 6:27-38 15 39-40 42-50 **Epiphany**

February 20, 2022

Sermon: "Love Your Enemies"

Transfiguration Sunday Exodus 34:29-35 Psalm 99 2 Corinthians 3:12-4:2 Luke 9:28-

February 27, 2022

Sermon: "Shining Faces"

Welcome New Members



February 2022



Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
		1	2	Prayer & Bible Study 11am Handbells 6:30pm	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Worship Service 10am				Prayer & Bible Study 11am		
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
Worship Service 10am	~	Deacons 5:30pm Leaders 7pm	Women's Fellowship 12:30pm	Prayer & Bible Study 11am		
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
Missions 9am- Worship Service 10am				Prayer & Bible Study 11am		
27	28					
Worship Service 10am						

Small Towns

1/24/2022 - by: Barbara Kershner - Starting With Scripture

Rev. Barbara Kershner is a retired pastor having served a small-town church in Pennsylvania for 14 years. Currently she is doing pulpit and/or organist supply in western MA and northwest CT.

Scripture: Luke 4:21-30 (NIV)

He began to explain to them, "Today, this scripture has been fulfilled just as you heard it."

Everyone was raving about Jesus, so impressed were they by the gracious words flowing from his lips. They said, "This is Joseph's son, isn't it?"

Then Jesus said to them, "Undoubtedly, you will quote this saying to me: 'Doctor, heal yourself. Do here in your hometown what we've heard you did in Capernaum.'" He said, "I assure you that no prophet is welcome in the prophet's hometown. And I can assure you that there were many widows in Israel during Elijah's time, when it didn't rain for three and a half years and there was a great food shortage in the land. Yet Elijah was sent to none of them but only to a widow in the city of Zarephath in the region of Sidon. There were also many persons with skin diseases in Israel during the time of the prophet Elisha, but none of them were cleansed. Instead, Naaman the Syrian was cleansed."

When they heard this, everyone in the synagogue was filled with anger. They rose up and ran him out of town. They led him to the crest of the hill on which their town had been built so that they could throw him off the cliff. But he passed through the crowd and went on his way.

Reflection: Small Towns

Norman Rockwell pictured the small town as a warm, friendly, charming, and unchanging place. Small towns can be charming, and tourists flock to Stockbridge to experience the beauty and warmth of Rockwell's town, BUT sometimes the avenues of any small town can be as mean as the streets of a big city when faced with something new or unpleasantly true. In ancient Nazareth, an agricultural village, the folks initially were eager to welcome back their 'hometown boy' Jesus, now famous for his healing and preaching powers around Galilee. But maybe it was time to take him down a peg or two, to remind him of his humble beginnings as 'Joseph's son.' As Jesus stood in the synagogue, he noticed the smirks and nods; he heard the snide remarks. "He heals others. But he hasn't done anything special here. Do here in your hometown what we have heard that you did in Capernaum."

In Nazareth, Jesus faced a double challenge, preaching in a small town that was also his hometown. He knew how difficult it would be. "I tell you the truth, no prophet is accepted in his hometown." He gave Biblical examples of others who had tried to tell the truth to those close to home but were far more successful in their ministry to strangers and outsiders. This testimony only aggravated the audience even more. The prophet Jesus was not accepted in Nazareth, and the folks ran him out of town, hoping to throw him off the cliff!

Even today, in your hometown or elsewhere, small-town churches still present their unique challenges to pastor and laity.

It is likely that the pastor was trained in a seminary located in a big city where the focus is on urban ministry and the diversity, energy, challenges, and resources present in a metropolitan area.

In reality, small-town and rural churches make up the majority of congregations in the US and around the world. If you are called to serve a rural or small-town church; if you are a member of such a congregation, where do you find resources and training for your unique and vital ministry?

Small-town congregations are often made up of extended family and friends who have known each other since kindergarten. Small towns have long and sometimes unforgiving memories. Small towns have social and political systems geared to maintain the status quo. Woe to the pastor who dares to challenge the system. Woe to the prophet who proclaims the year of the Lord's favor that includes a wider circle beyond the familiar, familial small town. Woe to the one who's truth clashes with town tradition.

Sometimes ministry can still feel like you're being pushed off a cliff! But the reaction of smalltown Nazareth didn't silence Jesus nor stop his ministry. "He walked right through the crowd and went on his way." Jesus continued healing and teaching and welcoming and freeing those who wanted to receive, who wanted to be transformed, whether they lived in the countryside, or in villages, in towns or big cities. Jesus calls us to continue on our way and to remain faithful to the gospel, while trusting the results to God.

3 Easy Ways for Sparking Change In Your Life

Wondering how to create real, meaningful change in your life? Rabbi Sherre Hirsch shares three simple rules for getting unstuck.

By Sherre Hirsche

1. Shift your focus.

There's a story from the Jewish tradition about a man who says to the rabbi, "I'm overwhelmed. I've got a wife, a house full of kids—I can't handle it." The rabbi says, "Bring your chickens inside to live with you." Then he tells him to bring in a goat. Then a cow. Just when the man's *really* going crazy, the rabbi tells him to let all the animals out. The next day, the man comes back and says, "Life is so sweet!" Of course, it was the exact same life he had before. The only thing that had changed was his mindset.

2. Start small.

God began the creation of the world with a *ruach*, a wind—like taking a huge breath. It was something so simple, but that one breath allowed God to turn darkness into light.

3. Believe.

Often people can't make a decision because they think the outcome has to be perfect. If we took *perfect* out of our vocabulary, we'd heal the world. You may not get exactly what you want, but this decision will lead to the next, and one day they'll add up and you'll think, "Now it makes sense." It's about faith, which isn't the same as optimism. Optimism is believing that everything will always turn out great. Faith is staying in the game.

Rabbi Sherre Hirsch is the Chief Innovation Officer for American Jewish University and the author of two books. Her latest is Thresholds: How to Thrive Through Life's Transitions to Live Fearlessly and Regret-Free.



Our Vision

To continue our three-hundred year tradition of spiritual presence and service to the community

To live and grow in the spirit of Jesus Christ

To share our time, talents and resources in support of community and other missions, through which Jesus Christ might be made known to others

To welcome into the Groton Congregational Church family all those who share our love of Jesus Christ and our mission of community service.

To continue a tradition of caring, comfort and support for all those within the Groton Congregational Church family.



162 Monument Street Groton, CT 06340

860-445-7409 www,grotonucc.org office@grotoncongregational.org

Bring Your Family to Our Family. We are here to celebrate Jesus Christ with you.

Located near historic Fort Griswold, by the banks of the Thames River, The Groton Congregational Church welcomes you with open hearts, minds, and arms. We offer a warm and progressive environment for worshippers from all walks of life. Our motto is; *No matter who you are or where you are Life's Journey you are always welcome here.*

If you want to know the love of God and the wonderful plans God has in store for you, come and celebrate the love of Jesus with us through the spoken word and the joy of music.

Sunday Worship begins at 10am.



PLEASE PLACE STAMP HERE

Mailing Address Line 1 Mailing Address Line 2 Mailing Address Line 3 Mailing Address Line 4 Mailing Address Line 5