

# The Gargoyle

## The Pastor’s Musings

By Reverend Lee Ireland

Happy New Year to you all,

What a beautiful Christmas Eve and Christmas Day celebration we had after such an active Advent Season. I give thanks for all who helped to make it so meaningful this year! Thank you to Sue Stottlemeyer and the choirs for their gifts of music with the Cantata that was almost magical. And for Ingrid Measimer’s gift of the Christmas Play, Part I. Part II will be part of our Epiphany Service and we hope you’ll come and enjoy.

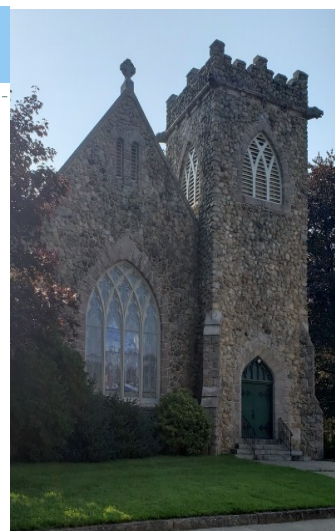
We now go into the new year of 2023 with a stronger sense of who we are as a congregation and the invitation that is here for us as we continue the ministry of Jesus with compassion, forgiveness, perseverance, and love. We are still facing the challenges of Covid and other viruses, so perseverance seemed like an important word to include there.

We will continue our many offerings through January as usual with the Bible Studies on Monday mornings and our other committee activities. I know the weather may be a roller coaster ride, but I look forward to being with you in new ways during these winter months. Stay tuned.

At the last leaders’ meeting, we discussed setting up a Vision Gathering on Jan 29 after church with a soups and breads luncheon.

Sue Blaisdell and I have talked about how to include the biblical symbolism and message of “the remnant” as described in several of the Old Testament stories after the Exodus. That became a very significant symbol for me to use with congregations who had gone through a split in the church over how to “be” the church, especially if a pastor left with hard feelings or as we are experiencing now- with the impact of Covid and the change in our culture with sports activities and work requirements - but also because of what people can do on Sunday mornings knowing they can watch our services at another time.

There is a strong remnant here at GCC who loves being together on Sunday mornings and wouldn’t chose any other place to be. The biblical image of the remnant is a very significant one - because it is the people who have learned that God is in their midst and blessing them to carry forward the messages and traditions and liturgies for future generations. Some thought it meant they were the “chosen ones”, thinking they’d have special blessings, which in some ways they did. But they also had the “Calling” to be the bearers of God’s light into the world with the message of love and grace, peace and hope so that future generations could receive the Word and all could find a way to choose love and not fear as they lived and cared for one another. As John tried to explain in his Gospel, Jesus “became flesh and lived among us,” to learn the realities of being human in the presence of other humans. (Con’t pg. 3)



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- CARLOANDRE AGUILLAR
- SADIE BEATRICE
- JOSHUA BRYTE
- SONJA CAMPBELL
- LANNIE CLARK
- MARILEE DULL
- JOSEPH NICHOLAS JOLICOEUR
- KEVIN MEASIMER
- COURTNEY MYERS
- DONALD MYERS
- SUSANNE STOTTLEMYER
- ABIGAIL TUCK
- ROSE MARY WARD
- GRACE WOODRUFF
- STACY WRIGHT

**Sanctuary Flowers**

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

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



**A Message From Our Parish Visitor**

If you know of anyone in need of a phone call or a visit, please contact the church office at the number above.

## The Pastor's Musings-continued

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By Reverend Lee Ireland

In order to help us all learn that God does not discount our trials or sufferings, but also knows the joys and celebrations. The Incarnation- what an expression of love. I pray you will spend some time now that we are beyond Christmas morning and consider all that was revealed and is still being revealed today. In the UCC we have a mantra, "God is still speaking."

A neat question follows: "Are you/we listening?"

If so, what are you hearing?

Let us come on January 29th and see what is being revealed in our time.

For this day, may you give thanks for the ways in which you are free to live and love here in this part of the world. May we never lose sight of the gift of that freedom, and all that is here for us to experience and share and care.

Blessings to you all this day,

Rev Lee A Ireland  
Transitional Pastor

## Dear Human

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Courtney A. Walsh

Dear Human:

You've got it all wrong. You didn't come here to master unconditional love. That is where you came from and where you'll return. You came here to learn Personal love. Universal love. Messy love. Sweaty love. Crazy love. Broken love.

Whole love. Infused with divinity. Lived through the grace of stumbling. Demonstrated through the beauty of messing up. Often. You didn't come here to be perfect. You already are. You came here to be gorgeously human. Flawed and fabulous. And then to rise again into remembering. But unconditional love. Stop telling yourself that story. Love, in truth, doesn't need ANY other adjectives. It doesn't require modifiers. It doesn't require the condition of perfection. It only asks that you show up. And do your best. That you stay present and feel fully. That you shine and fly and laugh and cry and hurt and heal and fall and get back up and play and work and live and dies as YOU It's enough. It's Plenty."

Courtney A. Walsh.

## Stewardship

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***“The beginning is the most important part of the work.”***

Plato

Here we are on the cusp of a new year; a new beginning. Perhaps a new job or retirement; a new church year.

This is a fresh opportunity for Groton Congregational Church to discuss and plan and discover who we are and discern who we want to be in the community as well as within our church family.

Stewardship plays a part in this journey. Thank you for your pledges – your commitments and your promises to the church – that will help lead us in the journey. It’s never too late to submit a pledge.

God’s blessings be upon you.

Your Stewardship Committee,

Cathy Johnson, Sue Stottlemeyer, Phyllis Meyer, Doris Pulaski, Melissa Beaupre

## Music Committee

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Congratulations to Sue Stottlemeyer and the choirs for a wonderful Christmas cantata Sunday on December 11th. Also, thanks to all who supported the enthusiastic students at the Holiday Music Extravaganza on Saturday, December 17th.

The next Music Committee meeting will be held in the sanctuary on Sunday, January 15th, 2023 immediately following the 10 AM worship service. Volunteers who play musical instruments would be particularly welcome to attend or to contact a member of the committee.

Wishing you a happy, healthy, and Spirit-blessed 2023,

Janice Kimball, chair

## Missions

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***“A generous person will prosper; whoever refreshes others will be refreshed.”***

(Proverbs 11:25)

The missions committee would like to thank everyone for their amazing generosity at this Holiday season supporting Grammys Jammies, The Adopt a Family and donations to Groton Social Services food pantry. Fifty pairs of pajamas were delivered to Child and Family Early Childhood Development Center on Poquonnock Road in Groton and many gifts were given to help a family with four children celebrate the season.

Heading into the new year, we have decided to continue to support the ECDC children’s center and help them meet their needs throughout the year and not just at Christmas. We have received the following list of needed items and will be leaving donation boxes in Dutton Hall for all who choose to give:

- Diapers and pull-ups size 4, 5 and 6
- Boys underwear and pants size 4 and 5
- Hats and mittens (not gloves)
- Pull on rubber ‘mud’ boots (the ones with the handles on the sides)
- Art supplies are always appreciated.

If there is a mission or need that you think Groton Congregation should support, please let us know. Now more than ever we want to share our light in the community.

There is also room on the committee for those who want to be more involved.

Grateful, Thankful and Blessed!

The Missions Committee

Beth Cirillo, Penny Sullivan, Anne Campbell

## Women’s Fellowship

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Women's Fellowship January meeting will be discussing plans for a corned beef and cabbage dinner in March. Other fund-raising plans will also be discussed.

There will not be a bake sale one the 1st Sunday of January. We will have one on January 8th.

We wish you all a happy and healthy new year.

Sally Turner

## Youth Group

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Youth Group has had a lot of fun meeting on Monday nights. Notably, we had a little Christmas party where we had a gingerbread house decorating contest! Everyone got really creative and we had a lot of laughs.

We will continue to meet on Monday evenings from 6 to 8 pm in the Youth Room. Youth Group is open to 6th-12th graders.

Rachel Candee

## Christian Education

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Come for a spiritual refreshment at Groton Congregational Church, United Church of Christ! On Sunday mornings we offer opportunities for fun and learning for preschool and grade school children as well as spiritual nurturing for youth and adults. Check out the classes open after 10 AM worship led by our interim pastor, Rev. Lee Ireland, and the continuing Bible Study and Prayer group offered in person and on Zoom Mondays at 11 AM. Our Youth Group

Mondays from 6 to 8 PM is facilitated by our youth director, Rachel Candee. Ideas for more opportunities are welcome- please contact me through the church office.

With best wishes for a peaceful and Spirit-blessed 2023,

Janice Kimball, superintendent pro tem

## Community Meals

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We are gradually expanding our reach of people who are happily gathering every Saturday from noon to 1 PM for a blessing, a warm meal, and congenial company. You are invited to join, too! Donations of funds for the program are encouraged but not required. Volunteers are welcome, please do call me (860-235-0494) for preparation times before you come. We thank you for your help.

Janice Kimball, for the volunteers, Community Meals

### Every Saint a Past, Every Sinner a Future

by John Dorhauer | published on Dec 5, 2022

On a bit of a lark, I got to hear Dan Tyminski in concert last night. I was just browsing the interwebs when I saw it – Dan was coming to the Kent State concert hall tomorrow and I got nothing on the calendar. I texted Mimi and she said “let’s do it!”

So I bought the tickets, and last night Mimi and I climbed into the car, drove the one hour to Akron where we enjoyed a most lovely evening with some of the most delightful music we have heard in some time.

Now, if you don’t know Dan Tyminski, he’s the lead guitarist and background vocalist for Alison Kraus’ backing band, Union Station. He’s recorded his own music, but rarely has attracted much of a following for that. His biggest hit was recorded with Swedish DJ Avicii, an electric dance music artist of some renown. However, if, like me, you are a fan of the Coen Brothers’ movie *O Brother, Where Art Thou* then you will recognize, if not his face, then his voice. He dubbed the vocals to the song “Man of Constant Sorrow” for George Clooney. And yes, he closed the concert with that song last night.

Born in rural Vermont, Dan is quite known amongst bluegrass fans. Mimi and I happen to love roots music. Getting a chance to spend an idle evening listening to Dan was a treat: a nice surprise on what would have otherwise been a quiet evening watching Jeopardy and then whatever PBS was showing.

The concert was a little unusual in that Dan played without his band. He told us he felt naked on the stage with them, and really missed having the banjo there with him. But this stripped down version of Dan was magical and gave him a chance to play music he had written and recorded but hadn’t sung in years. He brought a young dobro player with him, and the two of them riffed unrehearsed for a solid two hours. Their musicianship, showmanship, and pure raw talent was utterly delightful.

But on to the topic at hand and the reason why I am telling you all of this in this podcast about spiritual centering. Early in the set, he sang a song *Huckleberry* that he recorded early in his career. I had never heard the song. It is a melancholic rehearsal of the ravages of a life lived on rocky pathways, confessing times of hard living made by bad choices. In the refrain, there is a line that stopped me for a couple heartbeats and sent me reflecting on how good songwriting can touch the soul and heal deep wounds.

The line was this: every saint has a past, and every sinner a future.

Dang.

14 years of theological training and 33 years practicing ministry and preaching and I never could write a line as profound and impactful as that.

In a world and within a Christianity that have grown far too judgmental and too quick to condemn, where hatred and superior, self-righteous arrogance displace grace, forgiveness, compassion, and understanding Dan writes a line that reminds us never to cast the first stone,

We are none of us without sin and all of us within the loving embrace of a God with no limit for forgiveness. And how often shall I forgive my enemy? Seventy-times seven times.

Every saint has a past, and every sinner a future.

Walk with grace my friends on this, our journey Into the Mystic.

# Worship Watch

## January Worship Services

**First Sunday after Christmas Day**      Isaiah 63:7-9      Psalm 148      Hebrews 2:10-18      Matthew 2:13-23

**January 1, 2023**

Rev. Jack Shackles  
preaching

**Baptism of the Lord**      Isaiah 42:1-9      Psalm 29      Acts 10:34-43      Matthew 3:13-17

**First Sunday after the Epiphany**

**January 8, 2023**

Sermon: Play

**Second Sunday after the Epiphany**      Isaiah 49:1-7      Psalm 40:1-11      1 Corinthians 1:1-9      John 1:29-42

**January 15, 2023**

Sermon:

**Third Sunday after the Epiphany**      Isaiah 9:1-4      Psalm 27:1, 4-9      1 Corinthians 1:10-18      Matthew 4:12-23

**January 22, 2023**

Sermon:

**Fourth Sunday after the Epiphany**      Micah 6:1-8      Psalm 15      1 Corinthians 1:18-31      Matthew 5:1-12

**January 29, 2023**

Sermon:

**Bible Study** – On Monday mornings at 11 AM, we've been gathering in person and/or via Zoom to create a community of people studying the lectionary biblical readings for the coming Sunday. If you're interested, we hope you can join us and share in the conversations in which we laugh and engage in learning from one another. I personally love listening to other people's insights and wisdom I had never heard before each week. Such a joy! —Reverend Lee





## January 2023

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
<b>1</b> Sunday Worship 10am	<b>2</b> Prayer & Bible Study 10am  Youth Group 6pm-8pm	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b> Handbells 6:30pm Choir 7:30pm	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b> Community Meals Noon- 1pm
<b>8</b> Sunday Worship 10am  Bake Sale	<b>9</b> Prayer & Bible Study 10am  Youth Group 6pm-8pm  Deacons 6pm	<b>10</b>	<b>11</b> Women's Fellowship Noon	<b>12</b> Handbells 6:30pm Choir 7:30pm	<b>13</b>	<b>14</b> Community Meals Noon- 1pm
<b>15</b> Sunday Worship 10am Music Comte. 11am	<b>16</b> Prayer & Bible Study 10am  Youth Group 6pm-8pm	<b>17</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>19</b> Handbells 6:30pm Choir 7:30pm	<b>20</b>	<b>21</b> Community Meals Noon- 1pm
<b>22</b> Sunday Worship 10am  <b>Annual                      Meeting</b>	<b>23</b> Prayer & Bible Study 10am  Youth Group 6pm-8pm	<b>24</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>26</b> Handbells 6:30pm Choir 7:30pm	<b>27</b>	<b>28</b> Community Meals Noon- 1pm
<b>29</b> Sunday Worship 10am	<b>30</b> Prayer & Bible Study 10am  Youth Group 6pm-8pm	<b>31</b>				



## Write A Compelling Annual Report

12/15/2022 - by: Generous Thoughts

### Annual Reports

What story does your annual report tell? I read the annual report of a congregation in preparation for meeting with a church council. The pastor's report started off with a comment about a picture being worth a thousand words. I looked through the 50-page report – not a picture to be found. Instead, every board, committee, ministry, and seemingly 5th Sunday usher wrote up a few paragraphs about what they did in sleep inducing prose.

The congregation missed the opportunity to tell a compelling story.

If this sounds like your congregation, try creating a common story about impact of your ministry.

Instead of collecting a few paragraphs from each committee on what they did, ask them to share 1-3 pictures of the past year and to discuss as team these questions:

When did we see our congregation at its best?

What impact do we make in people's lives?

Where do we find a growing edge or challenge in our ministry?

As a council, reflect on what you hear from your committees to identify shared themes. Based on this discussion, write up the story of your last year as a congregation. Try to speak to the difference your congregation makes in people's lives, name goals for the coming year, and thank 1-3 crucial volunteers. Once the council agrees on a narrative for the year, pick out some of the best photos to intersperse with the text.

Alternatively, hold a council conversation that reflects on the mission statement of the congregation. Name the ways you lived out the mission statement in the last year. Think of what you might try in the coming year. Use this conversation to write up a short reflection for the whole congregation (and don't forget to include some pictures from throughout the year).

Annual reports produced by these processes will tell a common story of why the congregation mattered, how people engaged the ministry, and what impact it made in the community. When we tell a common story, we can inspire people to give (and help make them feel good about the gifts already given).

You will have much more material from committees – comments and photos – than you can use in the annual report. Use the best of these "scraps" to write up quarterly or monthly notes on the impact of your congregation, perhaps sent out with updates on donations or as part of your newsletter.

Overall, move from a laundry list of committee reports to a compelling narrative (with pictures) of your ministry.

Yours in Faith,

Andrew Warner

Author

Generous Thoughts

# Annual Meeting

January 22, 2023

## ALL Reports Due

**NO LATER THAN 10am ON**

**January 3, 2022**

PLEASE SUBMIT FILES TO THE OFFICE VIA EMAIL  
IN .DOC, .DOCX, .RTF. OR .PDF FORMATS

**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.



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**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, Groton Congregational Church, an Open & Affirming 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.**



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