



The Gargoyle

The Pastor's Musings

By Reverend Lee Ireland

Winter greetings to you all.

I write this after a very full day today with the meaningful worship service and the Visioning Workshop after church. Wow! My heart is full of all that I was able to witness and hear as we engaged in the work of this congregation now.

I know the leaders of the committees and boards were present and listening and we will take much of the shared info into our next meeting on February 13.

I know many of you want to see more concrete actions and no more waiting time...but we are a combination of people now that is new and it's important to engage in the questions so as many as possible can offer their input. We are moving into a new chapter together – remembering those who have done so in the past in their contemporary moments and offering from what they could see, hear and feel were the next rights steps at those times. But now it's our turn. Let us give thanks, and not stop if we are weary, because we are being asked to do this work now. Let's listen and process – and receive info from some new folks as we redesign the way we go forward as a congregation.

Most of us don't enjoy being in moment's like this; this time of doing what I will call the 'inner work' of the church, but there's great value to it. I saw the frustration today, so I offer this message below by Richard Rohr. It's directed more to us as individuals rather than a collective church body, but it speaks to the frustration many of you are feeling. What you may not fully appreciate is that you are collectively in the midst of mourning what you've lost – but at the same time going through the process of birthing the new. Did you know that? Not only because of what is here locally, but because of what is happening within our country and world. Dick Stottlemeyer was sharing with me before church, that he was working with someone in the church on Friday on the computer and security system. This man described how we are walking through the "Second Reformation" of the church – because of the advent of the computer and worldwide web communications. We are learning so much at our fingertips and news sources than any other generation. There is much here. Let's be patient with one another and make a conscious choice to be listening to the workings of the Holy Spirit in our walk individually and collectively. I'm curious to learn what you learn and hear what you hear and see as you do.
(cont. pg 4)



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& More!!



162 Monument St
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WILLIAM BLAISDELL
HEIDI CHAPPELLE
JAMES DOUGHTERY
BARBARA FRUCHT
JOAN JORDAN
HALEY RODGERS
PENNY SULLIVAN

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.

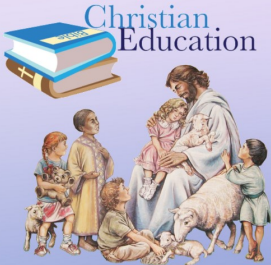


A Message From Our Parish Visitor

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

Current & Upcoming Church Events

FEBRUARY 12, 2023
During Coffee Hour

Christian Education

Share your ideas & concerns regarding the Christian Education programs offered at Groton Congregational Church

WOMEN'S FELLOWSHIP
BAKE SALE
Delicious Homemade Goodies



SECOND SUNDAY OF THE MONTH
THROUGH DECEMBER

Groton Congregational Church
162 Monument St. Groton, CT

February 22, 2023
7pm

**Ash**
WEDNESDAY

CORNER BEEF & CABBAGE DINNER



March 13, 2023
DETAILS COMING SOON

The Pastor's Musings-continued

By Reverend Lee Ireland

Here it is February. Sue Stottlemeyer jokingly said, "Do you know we're only 8 weeks away from Opening Season for Baseball (March 30)?" Ha!

In the meantime, on Feb 22, 2023, we will be entering into the season of Lent. What a rich season in which to do our listening and discernment for the new chapter of our congregation. Let's give thanks for all of those who are with us now and have said, "Yes" to God first and then have come to join with us in the ministry of Jesus in a variety of ways. I celebrate your gifts, hopes, sorrows, questions and gifts of discernment and time and talents.

May God's love and grace pour down upon us because of the work that is here, as we strengthen the shining of the light of Christ to share in this community and beyond.

Peace be with you this day,
Rev. Lee

Stay Where the Pain Is

Jesus on the cross and Mary standing near him are powerful witnesses to transformative spirituality. They return no hostility, hatred, accusations, or malice directed at them. They hold the suffering until it becomes resurrection! That's the core mystery of Christianity. It often takes our whole lives to begin to comprehend this.

Unfortunately, our natural instinct is trying to fix pain, to control it, or even, foolishly, attempting to understand it. The ego insists on understanding. That's why Jesus praises a certain quality even more than love, and he calls it *faith*. **It's the ability to stand in liminal space, to stand on the threshold, to hold contraries, until we are moved by grace to a much deeper level and a much larger frame.** Our private pain does not take center stage, but is a mystery shared with every act of bloodshed and every tear wept since the beginning of time. Our pain is not just our own. The normal mind can't deal with that. That's why mature religion always teaches some form of contemplation—to break our addiction to this egoic, disconnected thinking. [1]

CAC friend Rev. Dr. Jacqui Lewis reflects on a friend's wise counsel shared in a time of need. "Stay where the pain is," she said:

Once, mourning the toughness of 2020—a year marked with political upheaval, racial violence, the isolation and death from a pandemic, raging environmental fires, and the fire that took my sanctuary—I was feeling very low and frankly so weighed down with grief, I didn't really know how to move forward. I kept throwing myself into work, running fast to do something about the pain. But, ever wise, [my friend] Lyn said:

"Wait, stay right there. Stay where the pain is, where the suffering is, where the struggle is. Stay there. That's where it's going to come. The insight. The knowing. The wisdom. Right there, Jacqui. It's not here yet, but it's coming. And when it comes, I'll midwife it with you. It will come, we will do it together. Just wait for it. It will come." . . .

*Right where you are, in the hurt and sorrow, that's right where the insight is, that's where the answer is, that's where the wisdom is. **The transformation is there, the rebirth is there. And you're not alone.** Your friend, your lover, your family, your helper—someone from your posse will midwife it with you. The healing will come, and you will emerge, shaped in the merciful womb of the fiercest love. The pain of birth is excruciating. But someone who loves you knows how to reach in and grab you and hold on to you until you make it through. You'll emerge lighter, less encumbered, ready for new stories, transformed by old ones.* [2]

[1] Adapted from Richard Rohr, *A Spring within Us: A Book of Daily Meditations* (Albuquerque, NM: CAC Publishing, 2016), 121.

[2] Jacqui Lewis, *Fierce Love: A Bold Path to Ferocious Courage and Rule-Breaking Kindness That Can Heal the World* (New York: Harmony Books, 2021), 88–89. Italics in original.

Deacons

By Chuck Barnum

E-Mail from God

Good Morning,

I am the Lord, your God. Today I will be handling all of your problems.

Please remember that I do not need your help. If the devil happens to deliver a situation to you That you cannot handle, DO NOT attempt to resolve it. Kindly, put it in the SFJTD (Something for Jesus To Do) Box. It will be addressed in MY time, not yours.

Once the matter is place into the box do not hold onto it or attempt to remove it. Holding on or removal will delay the resolution of your problem. If it is a situation that you think you are capable of handling, please consult me in prayer to be sure that it is in the proper resolution.

Because I do not sleep, nor do I slumber there is no need for you to lose sleep.

Rest, my child. If you need to contact me, I am only a prayer away.

Love eternally,

The Lord, your God.

PS Please pass this along to my other kids.

PRAYER- An instant form of communication at anytime on any day with our Savior. Whether short, like "Lord, help me!"—help with an immediate challenge or a longer petition. Payer is our communication. What a blessing!



Christian Education

By Janice Kimball

We await the results of the Visioning meeting on January 29 to gather ideas related to faith, nurture, and development at Groton Congregational Church.

Further discussion will be at coffee hour in Dutton Hall, after 10 AM worship on **Sunday, February 12th**. Anyone who has concerns or ideas on Christian education at Groton Congregational Church, without requirement to sign up for a committee or a long-term project, is welcome to sit with me and Jean Young and share what is on your mind and heart.

Thank you.

Janice Kimball, superintendent pro term

Stewardship

By Doris Pulaski

The members of the Stewardship Committee, Melissa Beaupre, Doris Pulaski, and Sue Stottlemeyer, invite all members and friends of the church, who have ideas that the stewardship committee could use, to attend our organizing meeting, Sunday Feb. 5th at 11:30 a.m. downstairs in the church library.

We need all the ideas we can get, both to invite the congregation into more meaningful stewardship in general, as well as to learn new ways raise money to meet our budget.

We are not asking for any commitment to the committee from you, just for your thoughts and ideas.

Asking for your prayers and help,

The Stewardship Committee



Missions

“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

A Note from a Private Life

By Connie Stoddard



Connie Stoddard & Penny Sullivan

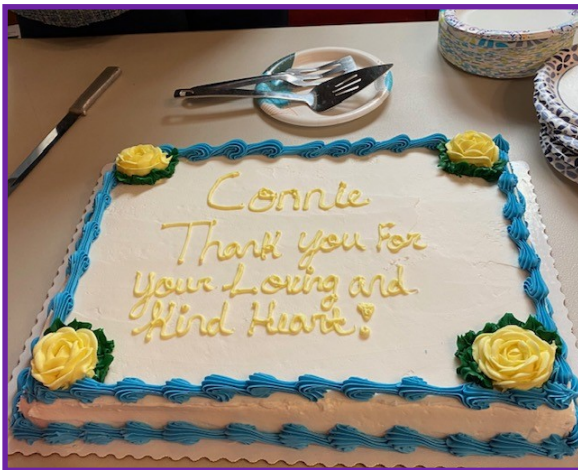
Until I was 3 years old, I did not speak a word. My parents took me to the best specialists from New Haven to Boston. One specialist told my parents, enjoy the peace, when she starts talking - peace no more. At age 3-½, the words began - a new life - and it has been. On top of this situation, I was very shy.

Yes, I was harassed as they call it today, but as I moved through life I was encouraged by my parents to be a Team Player and to communicate with others. To date, I have lived a very enjoyable and interesting life.

Sunday, January 22nd, I was very honored to receive the recognition of Deacon Emeritus from the church. Words can never express my feelings receiving this honor. I was surprised and speechless!! There are many members who truly deserve this prestigious honor.

I **"Thank You"** from the bottom of my heart and will continue to do my best for all the members of our church.

God Bless all.
Connie Stoddard



Connie Stoddard

Women's Fellowship

By Sally Turner

Women's Fellowship will be finalizing plans for the **Take-Out Corned Beef & Cabbage Dinner** to be held on **Monday March 13th**.

Our **bake sales** will be held on **the 2nd Sunday** of the month through December.

Again, thank you faithful bakers and contributors to our sales. It is so appreciated.

😊 Sally Turner 😊



Being the Remnant

By Sue Blaisdell

Last month Reverend Ireland wrote about the Remnant mentioned in the bible. The bible references the remnant many times throughout the Old and New Testaments, and the underlying theme is always the same, the remnant are the survivors of invasions, catastrophes and discourse but are faithful to God in their belief and trust that He is among them and will deliver them from their plight.

When Reverend Ireland and I were discussing the concept of the remnant we both agreed that we here at GCC are a remnant of faithful and trusting followers of Christ. But what does that mean as we envision and discover our future?

I believe this is our opportunity for a new beginning, a chance to reimagine ourselves as a family of faith as doers of the Word for God, to take action and be proactive.

As Reverend Lee wrote, "...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."

When the UCC began the "God is Still Speaking" campaign in 2005 they also included some quotes from famous people. One such quote came from Gracie Allen. She said, "Never place a period where God has placed a comma." Well, here we are the remnant, the "comma" as it were, at GCC. All we need to do is listen for the rest of the message, the message of a new beginning.

2 Corinthians 5:17 says, "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come."

Light, Peace and Love,
Sue Blaisdell

Music Committee

By Janice Kimball

In addition to returning members, we welcome to our committee new member Edward Magowan III who also rings joyfully in Groton Congregational Church's handbell choir. We thank those who have served this committee graciously and now are serving in other areas of congregational life and work.

The next **Music Committee meeting** will be held in the sanctuary on Sunday, **February 12th, 2023** immediately following the 10 AM worship service. Look for us in the pews near the organ, we have great dreams and plans for Lent-Easter and the spring ahead!

Keep making joyful sounds for Christ!
Janice Kimball, member



Community Meals

By Janice Kimball

The Community Meals program is expanding its outreach to Groton through the flyers artistically designed and published by church secretary Lisa Gorman and the frequent communications sent out from the church office to both church-affiliated and wider community folks. Thank you to Lisa and all those who have posted these flyers and told their neighbors about us. We love what we are doing and want to share the joy with as many people as possible!

We continue to open each **Saturday from 12 noon to 1 PM** in Dutton Hall. Offering support need not be an endless commitment- funding can be donated at worship service or in our donations box, donations of food or time are welcome (you are encouraged to check with me for volunteer times and immediate menu needs). Above all, you are welcome to come any Saturday, sit with a neighbor, and enjoy some expertly cooked, balanced food for body and soul. We will announce any changes in schedule on the midway bulletin board well in advance. Thank you for your continued support.

Janice Kimball, for the volunteers, Community Meals

Youth Group

By Rachel Candee

Youth group met three times in January, taking time off for holidays. We continue to develop friendships as we learn about each other while playing games like Sunk, Uno, and Charades. It is such a joy to hear the laughter in the room each Monday evening!

In February, we will start up our monthly outings/activities again. We will be going to Launch Trampoline Park on February 11th. All youth in 6th-12th grade are welcome. If you have any youth interested, please let me know by Monday, February 6th.

Historical Notes

By Chuck Barnum, Deacon

Greetings and Salutations -

As I began familiarizing myself with the History office, one thing that has jumped out to me is the lack of committee meeting minutes for 2022 meetings. I realize this was the end of being shut down from Covid, and committees were resuming their meetings. If the committee chairs, and you know who you are, could take a few moments and gather their meeting minutes and get them to me or to Lisa in the church office, it would be greatly appreciated.

A thought I have been thinking about for potentially future "Historical Notes" in the Gargoyle is to find and share a small "bite" of Groton Congregational Church history. So, I am curious, if you happen to have something in your desk drawer or in "that" box in the attic or basement and you would like to share it with me for possible inclusion, please contact me by calling the church office and leave a message. I will get back to you!

Thank you for your confidence in voting me the Historian for the Groton Congregational Church.
Peace and Blessings to each of you in abundance.
Chuck Barnum, Deacon & Historian



Mixing Ingredients

Submitted by Rev. Lee Ireland

A while back a friend shared a story of a visiting pastor who attended a men's breakfast in the middle of a rural farming area of the country. The group had asked an older farmer, decked out in bib overalls, to say grace for the morning breakfast.

"God, I hate buttermilk", the farmer began.

The visiting pastor opened one eye to glance at the farmer and wonder where this was going.

The farmer loudly proclaimed, "God, I hate lard."

Now the pastor was growing concerned.

Without missing a beat, the farmer continued, "And God, you know I don't much care for raw white flour". The pastor once again opened an eye to glance around the room and saw that he wasn't the only one to feel uncomfortable.

Then the farmer added, "But God, when you mix them all together and bake them, I do love warm fresh biscuits. So, God, when things come up that we don't like, when life gets hard, when we don't understand what you're saying to us, help us to just relax and wait until you are done mixing. It will probably be even better than biscuits. Amen."

Within that prayer there is great wisdom for all when it comes to complicated situations like we are experiencing in the world today.

Stay strong, dear friends, because God is mixing several things that we don't really care for, but something even better is going to come.

Poetry & Reflections

Submitted by Rev. Lee Ireland

No Longer Waiting

I am no longer waiting for
A special occasion;
I burn the best candles on ordinary days.

I am no longer waiting for
The house to be clean;
I fill it with people who understand that
Even dust is sacred.

I am no longer waiting for
Everyone to understand me;
It's just not their task.

I am no longer waiting for
The perfect children;
My children have their own names
That burn as brightly as any star.

I am no longer waiting for
The other shoe to drop;
It already did, and I survived.

I am no longer waiting for
The time to be right;
The time is always now.

I am no longer waiting for
The mate who will complete me;
I am grateful to be so
Warmly, tenderly held.
I am no longer waiting for
A quiet moment;
My heart can be stilled whenever it is called.

I am no longer waiting for
The world to be at peace;
I unclench my grasp and
Breathe peace in and out.

I am no longer waiting to
Do something great;
Being awake to carry my
Grain of sand is enough.

I am no longer waiting to
Be recognized;
I know that I dance in a holy circle.

I am no longer waiting for
Forgiveness.
I believe, I believe.

Mary Anne Perrone, published in National
Catholic Reporter December 15, 2006.

Beatitudes— for when church is hard.

God says:
I give my love to you who aren't sure what you believe;
I believe in you.
I give you my love when religion breaks your heart,
for I, not religion, will be your comfort.
I give my love to you who are timid
in the face of a domineering church,
for you belong in my arms.
I give my love to you who are hungry for more;
I will feed your soul.
I give my love to you who seek to be loving, not right;
for that is all I ever wanted.
I give my love to you who don't pretend just to fit in;
you see clearly, don't you?
I give my love to you who work for peace:
yes, that's my child.
I give my love to you when people judge you
and kick you out,
for that's pretty much what it looks like sometimes
to follow Jesus.

Deep Blessings,
Pastor Steve
Steve Garnaas-Holmes--Unfolding Light
www.unfoldinglight.net

Community Meals

SATURDAYS
NOON-1PM



GROTON CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH
162 Monument St., Groton

Warm Food & Friendly Folk

Enjoy a nourishing freshly prepared hot sit-down lunch.

Never a charge but donations are always welcome.

Come join us on Saturdays!



For more information please call 860-445-7409

Moving Beyond Survival

By Richard Rohr

*Folks - this is the message I've been sharing since I arrived in 2020 as I prepare my sermons and offerings. Will you join me in the transition of the dance?
Blessings to you all this day,
Rev. Lee*



Week Five: The First Half of Life

In his talk *Loving the Two Halves of Life*, Richard describes the questions we focus on in the first half of life:

I first read the phrase “first half of life” in the work of Swiss psychologist Carl Jung (1875–1971) years ago. It made sense to me then, but I probably was too young at that point to recognize how true it would eventually become. In short—and this is my layperson’s interpretation of Carl

Jung—he would say that the first half of life is the task that we think is our primary task. The second half of life

is really the task within the task that a lot of people never get to because they’re so preoccupied with the first task, which is all about making money, getting an education, raising children, and paying a mortgage. It’s about tradition, law, structure, authority, and identity. It’s about why I’m significant, why I’m important, why I matter, why I’m good.

Most of us are so invested in these first-half-of-life tasks by the age of forty that we can’t imagine there’s anything more to life. But if we stay there, it remains *all about me*. *How can I be important? How can I be safe? How can I be significant? How can I make money? How can I look good? And how can I die a happy death and go to heaven?* Religion itself becomes an evacuation plan for the next life, as my friend and colleague Brian McLaren says, because we don’t see much happening of depth or significance in this world. It largely remains a matter of survival.

I’m sad to say, after fifty-five years as a priest, I think a lot of Christians have never moved beyond survival questions, security questions, even securing their future in eternity. First-half-of-life religion is an insurance plan to ensure that future. In this stage, any sense of being a part of a cosmos, of being part of a historical sweep, that God is doing something bigger and better and larger than simply saving individual souls (and my own soul in particular) is largely of no interest to us. I don’t think I’m exaggerating. That’s all the first half of life can do.

It’s clear that if someone wants to be elected to a political office in the United States or any country, all they need to do is assure people of safety. Bill Plotkin, who’s been such a wonderful influence on so many people in recent decades, speaks of the first half of life as our survival dance, and the second half of life as our sacred dance. [1] Most people never get beyond their survival dance. It’s just identity questions, boundary questions, superiority questions, and security questions. We would call them ego questions, but they’re not questions of the soul.

The soul moves beyond questions of security and importance because it has discovered that it is absolutely important.

SLATE OF OFFICERS, BOARD AND COMMITTEE MEMBERS FOR 2023

<u>Moderator</u>	~ Ingrid Measimer	(25)	<u>Treasurer</u>	~ Bill Blaisdell	(23)
<u>Asst. Moderator</u>	~ _____	(25)	<u>Asst. Treasurer(s)</u>	~ _____	(23)
<u>Clerk Pro-Tem</u>	~ Sue Blaisdell	(23)	<u>Historian</u>	~ Chuck Barnum	(23)

<u>Board of Trustees</u>	(3 year)	<u>Board of Deacons</u>	(3 year)	<u>Missions Committee</u>	(2 year)
Lew Clark	(23)	Mary Alapa	(23)	Beth Chirillo	(23)
James Kerrigan C	(23)	Chuck Barnum	(23)	Penny Sullivan	(24)
Marilyn Wright	(23)	Sue Blaisdell C	(23)	Anne Campbell	(24)
Ed Magowan	(24)	Sally Turner	(23)	Lisa Story	(25)
Jean Young	(24)	Anne Campbell	(23)	(Lannie Clark	(25)
Sadie Beatrice	(25)	Kevin Measimer	(24)	to be voted in at 2/13 Council mtg.)	
Barbara Dutton	(25)	Doris Pulaski	(25)		

<u>Property Committee</u>	(2 year)	<u>Stewardship Committee</u>	(2 year)	<u>Ushering Committee</u>	(2 year)
Dick Stottlemeyer	(24)	_____	(23)	Roz Wommack	(23)
Greg Hoffman	(24)	Doris Pulaski	(24)	Phyllis Meyer	(24)
Skip Young	(25)	Sue Stottlemeyer	(24)	Emily Miller	(25)
_____	(25)	Melissa Beaupre	(25)	_____	(25)

<u>Music Committee</u>	(2 year)	<u>Christian Education</u>	(2 year)	<u>Memorial Fund</u>	(2 year)
Janice Kimball C	(23)	Jean Young	(24)	<u>SNEC & NL Assoc Del.</u>	(2 year)
Sally Turner	(23)				
Joan Jordan	(24)				
Ed Magowan	(24)	<u>Nominating Committee</u>	(3 year)		
_____	(25)	Bill Blaisdell	(25)		

- The positions of moderator and assistant moderator are 3 year terms
- The positions of treasurer, asst. treasurer, clerk and historian are 1 year terms
- Members of the boards of deacons and trustees must be members of the church
- Only committees that have volunteers are showing as populated on this slate

January 29, 2023

C ~ Chair

The Lights of the City

By John Dorhauer



There is a piece of land that juts out into the waters of Lake Erie. The house I am now renting looks right out onto that spot of land. It's called Lakewood Park. It has a set of walking paths that I amble through almost every evening.

In a long horse-shoe shaped coastline that extends to the east about five miles, you can stand on the shores of this jut of land and look across the water at the Cleveland skyline. Because we are now in the season of long winter nights, by the time I finish my evening meal and begin my walk it is dark. And because it is dark, I can see the city lights dancing on the water and adorning the silhouetted buildings in what is really a stunning view.

I love to walk to the far west end of the park and take the pathway from there that leads directly to the east. Between the branches of the deciduous trees that have long since dropped their leaves and that line the pathway, you can see that city skyline and its stunning array of lights.

I learned not long ago that this view, that of the city skyline of Cleveland from the west and looking east across that little horseshoe shaped bay, is the third most photographed cityscape – behind only New York and LA. What a treat that each night I can walk out my front door, amble down the park paths through wooded bluffs, and take in that view. It really is breathtaking – whether seen from the shoreline at the bottom of the bluffs or from the edge of the bluff above. Google a photo of the Cleveland skyline at night – and you will know why it is so captivating.

I used to sing a hymn whose refrain went like this:

I can almost see the lights of the city, shining down on me.

I can almost see the lights of the city, forever Lord I shall be free.

In a life and a world crowded with noise and work and busyness and anxiety and fret and concern and worry and fear and – well, you get the point: in such a life and such a world a quiet evening walk through a city park from which the lights of the city can be seen in their spectacular glory in order to quiet the soul at the end of the day – well, that's a gift.

I receive that gift with deep gratitude.

Where is it you find your quieting place? Is it found in the lights of the city? Is it experienced on the rock by the stream in the heart of a near wood? Is it in the back pew of an empty church with deep shadows?

Wherever it is, go there often. Be at peace. Find the quiet. And rest in the comfort of knowing your soul and spirit can be healed on this, our journey into the Mystic.

Mystic Congregational Enjoys Long-Time Korean Partnership

1/17/2023 - by: [Greg Stone](#) - [Justice and Witness](#)

The Korean Partnership, one of [four global partnerships](#) supported by the Southern New England Conference UCC, would like to hear from those who may have an interest in partnering with progressive churches in South Korea for the purpose of cultural exchange, understanding and support. The Partnership plans an informational zoom program so those interested can learn more (date TBA). To sign up for updates on this program, please [use this form](#).

Reflection by Greg Stone:

One summer day some 30 years ago, my wife Shinny and I went on an overseas search for a partner church in South Korea. Our guide was a Korean minister by the name of Kim, Jong Oh, whom we had met earlier when he visited our church in Mystic to introduce us to the Connecticut Conference UCC's new Korean Partnership initiative. Karin Stuart, a leader in the church, had introduced the idea out of consideration of her long friendship with Shinny, a Korean American and the only non-Caucasian in the congregation. Shinny and I had been married when I was serving in the Army in Korea in 1969.

We were guests in the Kim, Jong Oh home in the national capital of Seoul for several days while we were on a family visit. Turns out one of the churches he took us to was located in an area east of Seoul where Shinny had grown up. It occupied a handsome, modern building in Hanam, a town that would soon grow into a city. It was called the Dongbusunlin Church. Hanam is located in a scenic spot on the Han River and reminded me of Mystic. It had been the site for the crew races in the 1988 Summer Olympics. The riverside was lined with rental swan boats now.

It was love at first sight. The members and church leaders greeted us warmly and before the day was out, friendships were formed that have lasted for decades. One of the church leaders attended our son's wedding in 1999. It was as though we had walked into a Korean version of our church in Mystic, a vibrant and young congregation that shared our values and outlook on the role of the church in society, a place that would turn out to be a home away from home for any of us visiting Korea.

The greater church to which it belongs is the ecumenical Presbyterian Church of the Republic of Korea, or PROK, a reform church that broke off from the fundamentalist Presbyterian Church in the country. The PROK is progressive in a country that is conservative. It had taken the lead in the ordination of women in ministry and is widely thought today to be the most likely institution in Korean society to advance the cause of LGBTQ rights. The only thing holding them back is the fear of alienating older and more conservative members in a nation where being gay is taboo. But as a member of our church's Open and Affirming Committee, I know that shouldn't stand in the way. In fact, the partnership dialogue could hasten such development.

The Korean Partnership has been an experience in learning from each other in the context of our faith and growing in perspective. The international relationship that sprouted from that visit 30 years ago has thrived in ways I never would have imagined:

Generations of our teenagers and Korean kids have shuttled back and forth in an exchange known as Sacred Journeys.

Four ministers from our church have traveled to Hanam and preached at our partner church.

Delegations of members from both churches have exchanged visits.

Their two ministers over that time have made repeat visits.

We pray for each other as we would pray for family. We care for each other. For as long as I can remember, our friend and partner in Korea, Y.J. Kang, has been on speed dial with us and still is constantly in touch. He's visited numerous times. When we share our prayers, he prepares the manuscript in Korean and English so that they can be read during services in both languages.(cont. pg. 14)

The partnership has heightened our awareness of Korea and its relevance to our lives, existing as it does at the doorstep of the most dangerous military frontier in the world left over from the Cold War. We've learned firsthand of the anguish this ongoing conflict has caused and we pray together for peace in Korea. But our understanding and prayers go deeper than that. In Korea, attitudes toward the war (it hasn't officially ended) divide generations, adding to the cruelty. Koreans like my wife, who lived through the war, don't tend to see a peaceful end to the conflict, while younger Koreans wonder why the U.S. military is still there and are angry at us.



Elizabeth "Shinny" Stone presents a prayer shawl to the Rev. Chung, Kye Tak,

I've learned to understand. The long standoff doesn't make sense to them. But I believe our partnership has fostered a more nuanced and sympathetic outlook in both our churches. As an editorial writer, I benefited from this insight. It informed my writing on the Korean situation.

We have become not only a faith community, but a cultural meeting place. Our church is decorated in art and symbols from Korea. We have conversations about Korean drama and music. We are more aware of Korea in its vast American diaspora.

From my standpoint, one of the most valuable benefits of the partnership has been the Sacred Journey exchanges among our teenagers. It's only too bad several of the key players are no longer around. I refer to the Revs. Chang, Ho Jun and Gordon Rankin, who collaborated in the programming for these kids at Silver Lake. Both were gifted, charismatic youth leaders.

I still remember the Korean drum performances American and Korean teenagers put on for us in the backyard of Karin and Peter Stuart's house during picnics that marked the end of a summer exchange. We still have the drums in our basement awaiting another cultural exchange. Considerable thought needs to take place to restore meaningful programming for that exchange.

Right now, the church partnerships that remain are emerging from several years of inactivity due to the pandemic and looking for a home in a new and larger conference. Here in Mystic, we're examining ways not just to save our partnership but to bring in new blood and make it even better. I've always thought that partnership was something like the computer keyboard I'm typing on right now, with all these functions I've never used and have no idea what they do.

Church committees could explore programs with partner churches. PROK churches are prodigious missionaries and there could be mission exchanges, for example. Christian education could build upon the partnership in the area of faith formation. There's a lot we can learn from Christians who go to church at 4 o'clock in the morning, underline and take notes during Bible study, and live on the frontline of a conflict we are deeply engaged in.

Now that everyone has learned to use Zoom, we can engage electronically and get rolling again.

As a Deacon of my church, I've taken on the task of not only reviving but expanding participation in our partnership. I believe it's just waiting to happen. All these years it's been largely a labor of love of Karin Stuart and Shinny. But whenever the occasion arose, others pitched in to help and take part because it was such a good idea to begin with.

It is no less a good idea now than it was 30 years ago. It just needs to come out of hibernation.



Greg Stone is a deacon at Mystic Congregational Church (CT) and member of the SNEUCC Korean Partnership. He's retired as deputy editorial page editor of The Day in New London, Conn. and adjunct professor of journalism at the University of Connecticut

UCC NEW ENGLAND WOMEN'S CELEBRATION XI



March 17, 18, & 19, 2023
DoubleTree by Hilton, Manchester, NH

From God's fullness we have all received, grace upon grace. John 1:16

The New England Women's Celebration takes place every four years at various locations in New England. It is held over (or near) the weekend of Mothering Sunday, the 4th Sunday of Lent, which is traditionally a time when the strict observances of Lent were relaxed for a day so church folks could return to the Mother Church of their roots.

The purpose of the Celebrations is to reach women in the pews and to involve them in learning and sharing their faith beyond the local church and Conference setting. It is organized by women from United Church of Christ (UCC) congregations across New England; however, women from all denominations and religious traditions are welcome to attend.



Register now for Celebration XI

Early Bird Pricing

\$125 - Full registration* (Friday, Saturday, and Sunday)

\$100 - Saturday-only registration*

After February 1

\$150 - Full registration* (Friday, Saturday, and Sunday)

\$125 - Saturday-only registration*

Worship Watch

February Worship Services

Fifth Sunday after the Epiphany February 5, 2023 Sermon: "The Disciples Learn"	Isaiah 58:1-9a (9b-12)	Psalms 112:1-9 (10)	1 Corinthians 2:1-12 (13-16)	Matthew 5:13-20
Sixth Sunday after the Epiphany February 12, 2023 Sermon: "Wake Up and Live"	Deuteronomy 30:15-20 or Sirach 15:15-20	Psalms 119:1-8	1 Corinthians 3:1-9	Matthew 5:21-37
Transfiguration Sunday February 19, 2023 (Last Sunday before Lent) Sermon: "Stunned into Awe"	Exodus 24:12-18	Psalms 2 or Psalm 99	2 Peter 1:16-21	Matthew 17:1-9
Ash Wednesday February 22, 2023 Sermon: "Humbling Ourselves"	Joel 2:1-2, 12-17 or Isaiah 58:1-12	Psalms 51:1-17	2 Corinthians 5:20b-6:10	Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21
First Sunday in Lent February 26, 2023 Sermon: "The Devil Left and Angels Came"	Genesis 2:15-17; 3:1-7	Psalms 32	Romans 5:12-19	Matthew 4:1-11

NEW Book Study Begins February 6, 2023
The course explores biblical people, events, ideas and places through reading, reflection, discussion, creative expression and discovery.

KERYGMA
DISCOVERING
the **BIBLE** *A New Generation*

Study Group Meets
Mondays 11am
in-person & via Zoom

Price per book
\$30.00 or what you can afford

RESOURCE BOOK

the **KERYGMA** program
Boyd Lien

See Rev. Lee or contact the church office to sign up.

NEW BOOK STUDY February 6, 2023

Throughout this 30-week course we will study the people, places, and stories of the Old and New Testaments to discover where The Story lives in your story! Through an interactive process of reading, reflection, discussion, and creative expression, both the first-time learner and the lifelong student will find this engaging encounter with Scripture to be a rewarding experience that will greatly deepen their knowledge and understanding of the Bible.

To get your copy of "Kerygma: Discovering the Bible-A New Generation" contact Reverend Lee or the church office.

A second class is being offered on Sundays beginning, February 12th at 11:30am.

February 2023



LENT

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
			<i>1</i>	<i>2</i> =Handbells 6:30pm Choir 7:30pm	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i> -Community Meals Noon-1pm
<i>5</i> -Worship Service 10am	<i>6</i> -Prayer & Bible Study 10am Trustees 6pm Youth Group 6pm-8pm	<i>7</i>	<i>8</i> -Women's Fellowship Noon	<i>9</i> -Handbells 6:30pm Choir 7:30pm	<i>10</i>	<i>11</i> Community Meals Noon-1pm
<i>12</i> -Worship Service 10am Christian Education  BAKE SALE	<i>13</i> -Prayer & Bible Study 10am Deacons 6pm Leaders 7pm Youth Group 6pm-8pm	<i>14</i> <i>Valentine's Day</i> 	<i>15</i>	<i>16</i> -Handbells 6:30pm Choir 7:30pm	<i>17</i>	<i>18</i> Community Meals Noon-1pm
<i>19</i> -Worship Service 10am Music Comte 11am Mission 9am	<i>20</i>  <i>Office Closed</i>	<i>21</i>	<i>22-Ash Wednesday 7pm</i> 	<i>23</i> -Handbells 6:30pm Choir 7:30pm	<i>24</i>	<i>25</i> Community Meals Noon-1pm
<i>26</i> -Worship Service 10am <i>First Sunday in Lent</i> 	<i>27</i> -Prayer & Bible Study 10am Youth Group 6pm-8pm	<i>28</i>				

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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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, 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.
Stay for After Worship Coffee Hour

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