



# The Gargoyle

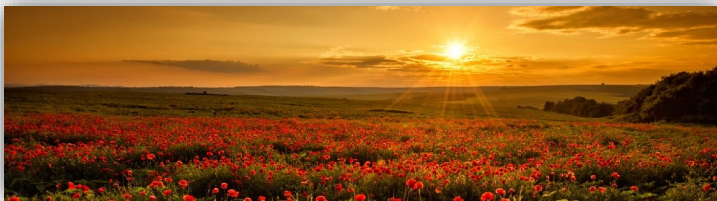
## The Pastor's Musings

By Reverend Lee Ireland

Summer Greetings to you all,

Beginning this Friday, I will move into my summer vacation, during which on next Wednesday, I will most thankfully be with my daughter and her husband to welcome the arrival of a long-awaited grandson. I can't wait to move into the reflections on the joy of his new life entering this world with a heart and spirit to bless all he meets. *I am so curious.* I will be watching and listening...and celebrating. Think about how we all came into this world to offer gifts and learn the way to walk and talk. But I'm jumping ahead. This will be the time to be present in each moment and just live in the wonder. I invite each of you as well, to find some special time to do that this month - maybe at the beach or with family/friends and just observe. Drink in the gifts of those moments. Will you get to a moment where you can say, 'Surely the presence of the Lord is in this place and I didn't know it,' as Jacob said after his amazing dream with God (Genesis 28: 10-19a)? I hope you can.

This past Sunday, we had some extra moments of joy. The Orkney family joined us during part of their Family Reunion Weekend, so we in the Handbell Choir played the beautiful hymn "For the Beauty of the Earth," to give thanks for the wonderful gift of the bells which James Orkney, Sr. donated to our church. The hymn was written by Folliot Pierpoint in 1864,



For the beauty of the earth,  
For the glory of the skies,  
For the love which from our birth  
Over and around us lies—

*Refrain:*

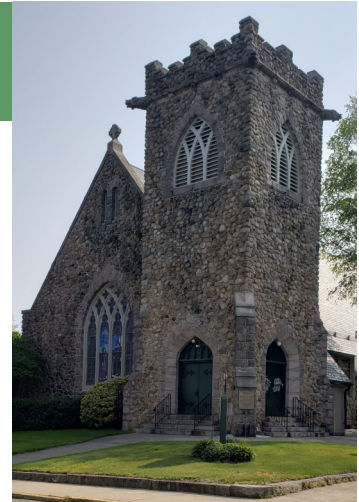
Lord of all, to Thee we raise,  
This our hymn of grateful praise.

For the wonder of each hour,  
Of the day and of the night,  
Hill and vale, and tree and flow'r,  
Sun and moon, and stars of light—

For the joy of human love,  
Brother, sister, parent, child,  
Friends on earth and friends above,  
For all gentle thoughts and mild—

For Thy church that evermore  
Lifteth holy hands above,  
Off'ring up on every shore  
Her pure sacrifice of love—

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Groton  
Congregational  
Church



LEILA BENCKS

LEVI BENCKS

CAROL BROWN

ELIZABETH CHIRILLO

ROB FUNK

MARILYN GOODMAN

JULIE JORDAN

JOAN ORKNEY

KRISTEN POWERS

SALLY TURNER

EMILY TURNER

WENDY WALTHER

## The Pastor's Musings-continued

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By Reverend Lee Ireland

May those words bless you as we go through August and I hope you all will enjoy some time of rest and renewal and be taken by surprise in a few moments as you share your love and thanksgiving with others. We do have several who have some ongoing prayer concerns and I invite you to offer your own prayers as you can. Rev. Janice Kimball will provide Pastoral Care, if you are in need. 860-235-0494.

I'm so grateful for who is offering to lead the worship services while I'm away. I hope that you will be moved by their gifts and wisdom and faith. See the guest list further in the Gargoyle. I'll see you in the office on August 28 and in the pulpit on September 3.

Peace and blessings to you all this day,

Rev. Lee

PS

Looking ahead: Come to "Rally Day" on September 10th, during which we will serve communion. We also invite you to bring a favorite dish or dessert to help create a pot luck luncheon after the service.

## Deacons

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By Kevin Measimer

"Simultaneous sermons at church. The pastor in the pulpit and the chirping bird outside the open window."

This came up in my Facebook memories from a dozen years ago. I love the image. Nature speaks daily about God, the Creator. While we don't worship the creation, we can imagine nature praising and worshiping God. Listen for the sermon in bird song, the beauty of flowers, the colors of the changing leaves, refreshing rainfall, and so much more. Take time to listen and see. May your Summer be blessed.

Kevin Measimer for the Board of Deacons

## A Word of Thanks

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By Janice Kimball

Heartfelt thanks to SIERRA BRYTE, who has served Groton Congregational Church, UCC with care and dedication as our nursery attendant this program year. As a class of 2023 high school graduate, Sierra is going on to college out of state, but will first continue to supervise the church nursery the four Sundays in August. May our prayers and best wishes in Christ follow your future endeavors, Sierra!

Janice Kimball, Christian Education committee representative

## Women's Fellowship

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By Sally Turner



Will meet at Shennecossett Beach Club on **8/9/2023 at 12 noon.**  
Any member who hasn't let me know they are coming needs to do so no later than 8/8/2023. Thank you.



Groton  
Congregational  
Church

### August Meetings

- Trustees
- Deacons  
August 14th  
5:30pm
- Council
- Missions
- Stewardship
- Women's  
Fellowship  
August 9th  
Noon  
Shennecossett  
Sanctuary  
Flowers



Honor that special person or occasion with a floral donation to the Sanctuary. Contact the church office 860-445-7409 .

## Community Meals

By Janice Kimball



Heartfelt thanks to all who have contributed funds or food to the summer bag lunches for Community Meals! We will continue through August to provide fresh sandwiches and/or wraps , along with fresh veggie nibbles or salad, drink, and dessert to anyone who comes to the church parking lot

between 12 noon and 12:30 PM. We have been distributing over 40 meals, including deliveries to those members who cannot easily come, this past month, and interest is gradually rising. If you would like a lunch but cannot come at the scheduled time, please call me at 860-2235-0494 or see me at Sunday worship. God bless us all!

Janice Kimball, for the volunteers, Community Meals

## Christian Education

By Janice Kimball, pro tem superintendent

During July, the Prayer Group and Bible Study class has been led by guest moderators, the Rev. Jack Shackles on faith in action and Ms. Lydia Blacker on faith development through life. We concluded with a session on dreams with our transitional minister, Rev. Lee Ireland.

As a transition to the resumption of the Kerygma Bible Study, in the New Testament phase, I have the honor of moderating a newly conceived 4 week program on the Lord's Prayer, called Becoming Jesus' Prayer from a recently published book through Pilgrim Press.

Held every Monday at 11AM these sessions are:

“Invitation to the Holy” on Monday, August 7

“Jesus’ Prayer Teaches Faith” on August 14

“Jesus’ Prayer Calls Us to Forgive” on August 21

“Jesus’ Prayer Makes Community” on August 28

I hope to provide opportunities for music, prayer, discussion, some laughter, and recognition of faith in a loving God.

We aim to have Zoom connections available at the August studies for homebound members and friends; please ask the church office if you need a link. There will even be a “door prize” for the first 12 attendees, suitable for use in the study program, so plan to come to Dutton Hall early for the first 11 AM hour session! See you at 11 AM on Monday, August 7<sup>th</sup>. Janice Kimball, CE

History Notes by Chuck Barnum, Historian

Who remembers this?

It appears to be a bookmark

with a prayer.

It appears to be a bookmark

to hang on your bulletin board.

It appears to be a bookmark

with a prayer for reflection.

It appears to be a bookmark

with a prayer for strength.

It appears to be a bookmark

with a prayer to "walk with".

It appears to be a bookmark

with a prayer for/to \_\_\_\_\_.

What do you think it might be?

Amen.



*Our Father in Heaven  
and here with us on  
Earth,*

*We have been your  
people on this hill in  
Groton for long, long  
years, going that extra  
mile, taking those extra  
steps, working that extra  
hour, giving that extra  
dollar.*

*If men stood on  
this hilltop and gave  
their lives for it so many  
years ago, then let us  
fight to hold fast to this  
piece of ground known  
as the First Church of  
Christ, Congregational  
because so much of our  
lives have been invested  
here in this building.*

*So gird us with  
strength and fortitude.  
Walk with us as we  
strive to find your way,  
knowing that you are  
with us and we will  
stand fast in your Holy  
Name. Amen.*



## I'm Not So Sure I Agree With You

By Jeff Michael Gallagher

### **Scripture: Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43 (NRSV)**

He put before them another parable: 'The kingdom of heaven may be compared to someone who sowed good seed in his field; but while everybody was asleep, an enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat, and then went away. So, when the plants came up and bore grain, then the weeds appeared as well. And the slaves of the householder came and said to him, "Master, did you not sow good seed in your field? Where, then, did these weeds come from?" He answered, "An enemy has done this." The slaves said to him, "Then do you want us to go and gather them?" But he replied, "No; for in gathering the weeds you would uproot the wheat along with them. Let both of them grow together until the harvest; and at harvest time I will tell the reapers, Collect the weeds first and bind them in bundles to be burned, but gather the wheat into my barn." '

Then he left the crowds and went into the house. And his disciples approached him, saying, 'Explain to us the parable of the weeds of the field.' He answered, 'The one who sows the good seed is the Son of Man; the field is the world, and the good seed are the children of the kingdom; the weeds are the children of the evil one, and the enemy who sowed them is the devil; the harvest is the end of the age, and the reapers are angels. Just as the weeds are collected and burned up with fire, so will it be at the end of the age. The Son of Man will send his angels, and they will collect out of his kingdom all causes of sin and all evildoers, and they will throw them into the furnace of fire, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Let anyone with ears listen!

### **Reflection: "I'm not so sure I agree with you . . . ."**

During my first year of Seminary, I worked as an adjunct faculty member of the English Department at the-then Salem State College, now Salem State University, in Salem, Massachusetts. While I enjoyed my time teaching, it honestly wasn't the most fulfilling job. Getting asked to teach a course the day after the semester started and then trying to get business majors to care about reading Dante will do that.

Since I've been serving the church, however, I've found the fulfillment that I had hoped to get in the college classroom through our church's weekly book study group. Engaging at a high level with the likes of Rachel Held Evans, Marcus Borg, Nadia Bolz Weber, and even struggling with John Shelby Spong, the group has become less something that I lead and more something that I participate in, where I get as much from the group—maybe more even—than they get from me.

And my favorite part is when someone begins a sentence with, "I'm not so sure I agree with you . . ." because what then follows is a conversation that usually results in all of us seeing the text in a new light.

The English professor in me welcomes this because this is how I approach all literature—the Bible included. I try to see the text through my own eyes, others' eyes—in so much as that's possible, and I certainly don't want someone trying to interpret the text for me . . . hello there, Matthew.

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## I'm Not So Sure I Agree With You

By Jeff Michael Gallagher

In the first half of this week's lesson, we have the parable of the weeds among the wheat—a text ripe with interpretations to be harvested from it. But then, as we move into the second half, we see that Matthew has decided to interpret what we've just read for us. (Now, notice I didn't say Jesus' interpretation, as these are Matthew's words, attributed to Jesus, since no one was following Jesus around with a tape recorder to document exactly what he said.)

So, this is what Matthew thinks the parable means. He may be right; he may not be right. But what isn't right is when we read this text and assume that Matthew's interpretation is the only way to understand this text.

For I am led to see this text not about wheat and weeds representing two different types of people; rather, I see the wheat and weeds referring to two different crops seeking to take root within us. As such, each one of us is a field, and in that field—in us—seeds of both wheat and weeds are planted from all we experience and encounter in the world around us. Both of those then grow together, making us the people that we are: people capable of producing wheat that will benefit the world and also weeds that can make it so hard for that wheat to grow.

As the imperfect wheat and weed producers that we are, this is how we live our lives. And then, when those lives end—when our harvest day comes—God will take what's inside of us, remove the weeds from the wheat, and welcome our weed-less souls into that eternal barn that is promised to us all.

That makes this, for me, a text of hope: less vengeful God, more loving God.

Is that what Jesus meant? Maybe. Would Matthew agree? I'm not sure. Do you? All I know is that's a conversation I would welcome.



Rev. Dr. Jeffrey M. Gallagher is the Senior Pastor of the United Congregational Church of Tolland, Chaplain of the Tolland Fire Department and Connecticut State Police, author of the book *Wilderness Blessings: How Down Syndrome Reconstructed Our Life and Faith*.

## PRAYER

Holy God, no matter what parables and stories we use to try and understand you, we know that you understand us to be the wheat and weed producers that we are. Help us to grow a little more wheat than weed this week, and remind us that no matter how fruitful the harvest, you love the one doing the growing. Amen.

# Karen Georgia Thompson

By Tiffany Vail



The General Synod of the United Church of Christ made history Monday, July 3, when it elected the Rev. Karen Georgia Thompson as the first woman, and the first Black woman, to lead the denomination as General Minister and President.

Rev. Thompson is the third woman nominated for the post, after the Revs. Yvonne Delk (in 1989) and Barbara Brown Zikmund (in 1999), but the first to be elected. A Jamaican immigrant, Thompson is the third person of African descent to serve as leader of the denomination.

“Today, United Church of Christ, we created a first together,” she said after the vote. “It won’t be the last first.”

She thanked Delk and Brown Zikmund, stating that they “kicked in the doors,” paving the way for her election.

“As I stand here before you as your newly and duly elected General Minister and President, I stand here as a Jamaican immigrant woman, a mother and a grandmother, a sister and a friend to many,” Thompson said. “... The enormity of this moment will be with me for many years to come.”

Her election took place at the UCC’s 34th General Synod in Indianapolis, with 626 delegates voting for her election, 43 against and seven abstaining. She will start her new role Aug. 1, taking over from the Rev. John Dorhauer, who has served for the past eight years.

In a prayer after the vote, surrounded by her family, she recalled Synod’s theme, quoting Revelation 21:5 — “Behold, I am making everything new.”

## **Locally rooted, globally focused**

As the denomination’s current Officer for global concerns and interfaith relations, Thompson speaks frequently about building connections on all levels.

“Being church means we are locally rooted and globally focused, connecting the issues we see in ways that allow us to bring justice to the world,” she has said.

In speaking to the UCC Board before her nomination, she emphasized that dismantling oppressive systems everywhere is necessary for both communities and congregations, internationally and domestically, to thrive.



# Karen Georgia Thompson cont.

By Tiffany Vail



## Looking ahead

In her nomination speech to General Synod on June 30, Rev. Thompson spoke about the hope she sees springing forth within the UCC.

“Here is the place where we have seen the Spirit of God poured forth among us in many ways. Here is the place where we continue to identify the many accomplishments of the ancestors. Here is where we honor the resilience of those who came before us, took risk and oftentimes did more with less than we currently have. And here is the place we identify as now, as we ponder the call of God to be salt and light to the world,” she said.

Thompson has been serving as Associate General Minister for Wider Church Ministries and Co-Executive for Global Ministries since 2019. She has served in the National Setting of the United Church of Christ since 2009, previously as minister for racial justice and minister for ecumenical and interfaith relations. Prior to joining National Setting staff, Thompson served on staff of the UCC’s Florida Conference, as a church planter in Florida and in family ministries in New York.

Thompson holds a doctorate in ministry, with a dissertation in religious multiplicity among African Caribbean people, from Seattle University; a Master of Divinity degree from Union Theological Seminary; and a Master of Public Administration degree from North Carolina Central University.

The UCC Board will name an interim Associate General Minister to serve in Thompson’s vacated position until the following General Synod 35 in 2025.

Author--Tiffany Vail, a General Synod newsroom volunteer, is the director of media and communications for the Southern New England Conference.

# Worship Watch

## August Worship Services

Proper 13 (18) Tenth Sunday after Pentecost	<b>Genesis 32:22-31 Psalm 17:1-7, 15 Isaiah 55:1-5</b>
<b>August 6, 2023</b> <b>Rev. Joan Cianci</b> <b>Guest Preacher</b>	<b>Psalm 145:8-9, 14-21 Romans 9:1-5 Matthew 14:13-21</b>
Proper 14 (19) Eleventh Sunday after Pentecost	<b>Genesis 37:1-4, 12-28 Psalm 105: 1-6, 16-22, 45b</b>
<b>August 13, 2023</b> <b>Rev. Joan Cianci</b> <b>Guest Preacher</b>	<b>1 Kings 19:9-18 Psalm 85:8-13 Romans 10:5-15</b>
	<b>Matthew 14:22-33</b>
Proper 15 (20) Twelfth Sunday after Pentecost	<b>Genesis 45:1-15 Psalm 133 Isaiah 56:1, 6-8 Psalm 67</b>
<b>August 20, 2023</b> <b>Charity Dell</b> <b>Guest Preacher</b>	<b>Romans 11:1-2a, 29-32 Matthew 15: (10-20), 21-28</b>
Proper 16 (21) Thirteenth Sunday after Pentecost	<b>Exodus 1:8-2:10 Psalm 124 Isaiah 51:1-6 Psalm 138</b>
<b>August 27, 2023</b> <b>Chuck Barnum</b> <b>Guest Preacher</b>	<b>Romans 12:1-8 Matthew 16:13-20</b>

# August 2023



Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
		1	2	3	4	5 Community Meals 12:30pm
6 Worship Service 10am Rev. Cianci	7 Bible Study 11am Trustees 6pm	8	9 Women's Fellowship Noon at SBC	10	11	12 Community Meals 12:30pm
13 Worship Service 10am Rev. Cianci	14 Bible Study 11am Deacons 5:30pm	15	16	17	18	19 Community Meals 12:30pm
20 Worship Service 10am Charity Dell	21 Bible Study 11am	22	23	24	25	26 Community Meals 12:30pm
27 Worship Service 10am Chuck Barnum	28 Bible Study 11am	29	30	31		

### 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.**  
**Stay for After Worship Coffee Hour**

PLEASE  
PLACE  
STAMP  
HERE

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