



The Gargoyle

The Pastor's Musings

By Reverend Lee Ireland

Greetings to you on this Labor Day Week-end.

I return after an amazing time away with many rich family moments and giving thanks for the wonder of new life and all that a newborn brings into the world - joy and exhaustion, and laughter and tears. But the wonder of the "new life" is an invitation I've heard several times as we look to the fall this year. What are you eager to experience as we come back from our summer events and that slower pace --- and walk together as the body of Christ.

During this time with family, friends and quiet studying time and reflection and then leading the retreat, I've been listening and watching, being silent and engaged in discussions with others, and many times giving thanks and so much more during these past 5 weeks.

We are living in very complex times and the news has not been easy to watch many nights. Natural disasters have struck in Lahaina and CA, as well as in schools and homes and roads and community places.

As we go into this fall, I ask the key question:

"What does it mean to be a church and a faith community in 2023?"

In some ways it is no different than in years past; but then again, it is a harder question than in the 1980s. We know that the population in America has shifted its loyalties to other areas of life which most times does not include Sunday morning worship each week. The sports world has claimed top priority. How do we become realistic about that in our planning and designing of activities and study?

It doesn't change the reality of God in our midst-nor the hunger inside *each person's soul* for spiritual nourishment... and fellowship. Jesus knew this as he walked the earth and saw those caught up in serving other interpretations of what to make as top priorities and chase after many rainbows. How do we see the invitation that is here for real and not get caught up in the eternal chasing after a fantasy of how church "should be"? We all know - we can repeat the past... but those days are gone. Too many churches have had to close their doors and sell their buildings.

In truth, the door is wide open for the new and what we CAN do....

What are you hearing?

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Groton
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SARAH
FULTON

MARY
HOWARD

BRIAN
SHEPHERD

CONNIE
STODDARD

GAVIN
WALL

MARILYN
WRIGHT

JEAN
ORKNEY

The Pastor's Musings-continued

By Reverend Lee Ireland

Check out Kevin Measimer's message in this issue. Where are we bumping our heads against a wall that won't change and not seeing the open door over there or there? I know God is here in our midst every single second. Let's engage in the dialogue with curiosity and trust and love and give time to listen, as Doris shared in her message for all ages a few weeks ago.

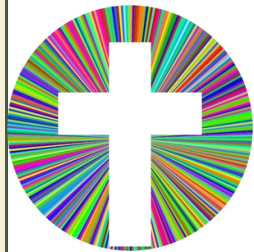
"Do you hear me now?" asks God. In a still, small voice in our hearts and minds - and can be most often heard through the gift of broken hearts and compassionate caring and then in times of wonder. Is it better heard -in earthquakes and floods and car accidents in our own town?

Let's come together on 9/10 for Rally Day and share in a potluck luncheon and go into a conversation and see what we can do this new year.

Blessings to you all this day,
Rev. Lee

Christian Education

By Janice Kimball, pro tem superintendent



I want to thank personally the students who attended my four-session seminar on BECOMING JESUS' PRAYER, based on the Lord's Prayer we share at every worship service at Groton Congregational Church, UCC. Thanks to Deacons Doris Pulaski and Chuck Barnum, we were indeed able to provide Zoom links to members who were unable to come to the program in person.

As posted on the church bulletin board, transitional pastor Rev. Lee Ireland will restart the **Kerygma Bible Study program** in the New Testament section of the scriptures on Monday, **September 11th at 11 AM**. Sessions begin with prayer celebrations and concerns. All are welcome. Please notify the church office if you would like to attend Prayer Group and Bible Study meetings, such as Kerygma, by Zoom so our secretary, Lisa Gorman, can send you a link. Thanks again, Rev. Lee and Lisa!

Watch this and future editions of the GARGOYLE for announcements on intergenerational Christian Education opportunities at Groton Congregational Church, United Church of Christ!

Yours for a living faith,

Janice Kimball, Christian Education

Women's Fellowship

By Sally Turner

We are pleased to announce that Janice Kimball has been elected as Vice President. We thank Marilee Dull for her many years as Vice President and welcome Janice.



Our next meeting in Dutton Hall is **September 13th at 10:00 a.m.** We will be having a brunch before the meeting. There will be more discussion about the **Fall Festival** which is in the planning stage for **November 4th**. We need more "worker bees" to help with this Fall event. Our membership is aging and we really need more volunteers.

There will **not** be a bake sale in September. The bake sales will resume the 2nd week in October.

Crafts will be meeting after church September 3rd to discuss meeting times and to brainstorm ideas. See article below.

Crafters

By Sally Turner



Women's Fellowship is thinking ahead to the **November Holiday Bazaar**. Last year's bazaar was a big success, and we would like to replicate that success this year.

One of the most popular things at our Annual Holiday Bazaar is the Silent Auction. In that light, we are asking the congregation for contributions to this year's Silent Auction.

We have found that themed gift baskets are one of the items people bid on the most. Themed Gift Baskets can have any theme, these are just a few examples; child, youth, games, pets, kitchen, chocolate, tea, coffee, knitting, golf, beach, New Year's, Italian, movie, etc. Anything at all for the most part.

Gift certificates to area restaurants and donations of antique items are also appreciated. We welcome any and all contributions especially those that are holiday related (new items only please except for donated antiques and vintage items).

Crafting sessions will start in September. Our first meeting is on **September 3rd at 11:30am** and it will be a brain storming session to organize and strategize. At that meeting we will pick days and times to meet in the future. Everyone is welcome. Please call Penny Sullivan 860-333-6039 with any questions.



Groton
Congregational
Church

Sanctuary
Flowers



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

Deacons

By Doris Pulaski

How can we know what is good?



When there are so many people trying to convince us to either follow them or give them money, it is good to remember that Jesus gave us a clear and simple rule to help us detect false prophets and other leaders. The story is in Matthew chapter 7, verses 15-20.

Jesus tells us you will know false prophets by their fruits. He says, "So, every sound tree bears good fruit, but the bad tree bears evil fruit. A sound tree cannot bear evil fruit, nor can a bad tree bear good fruit."

Such practical advice! It does not even require special spiritual gifts to be able to follow it.

But it does not offer advice as to how to tell good from bad fruit. Tastes differ, after all. Otherwise, there would not be so many varieties of apples! However, rotten apples are bad, whatever the variety. Perhaps we need to look into this a bit more.

Another authority has a few words that are helpful for discerning good.

My dad always used *The Rotary Four Way Test* and had a copy of it mounted on his desk. For those of you who don't know it, *The Four Way Test* says:

"Of the things we think, say or do:

1. Is it the TRUTH?
2. Is it FAIR to all concerned?
3. Will it build GOODWILL and BETTER FRIENDSHIPS?
4. Will it be BENEFICIAL to all concerned?"

It is a good guide, and served him well. He always applied it, remembering that as Christians, we are reminded that everyone on earth is our neighbor. All for us means ALL.

But I feel the final word on the subject is Micah Chapter 6, verse 8:

He has showed you, O mortal, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?

We should look for the same qualities in people we support as God looks for in us.

Community Meals

By Janice Kimball



Continued thanks to all who contributed fresh and/or prepared foods for our summer bag lunches for Saturday distribution! We shared approximately 48 meals a week by the end of August with community folks, especially those in need of food supplements or shelter.

STARTING SEPTEMBER 2nd, we will be back in Dutton Hall Saturdays, serving freshly prepared hot foods, salads, and desserts to all who come between **12 noon and 1 PM**.

Donations of food, funds, and time are welcome. If you're planning to help with meals, please call me at 860-235-0494 for information on time, needed foods or serving equipment. Donations through the church offerings are much appreciated, too, as they provide the foundation of our weekly menus. Hope to see you soon on Saturday!

Janice Kimball, for the volunteers, Community Meals

God Bringing A New Thing

By Kevin Measimer

Forget the former things; do not dwell on the past. See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it? I am making a way in the wilderness and streams in the wasteland. (Isaiah 43:18-19)

We come to the end of summertime, hopefully rested and renewed by the beauties of sunshine, fresh air, and God's glorious creation. Traditional family vacation time is over. The kids are back to school.

Do not despair as the more rigid schedules of work and school take over. Or the shortening days. Or the looming winter weather.

God is creating a new thing. The trees will burst out in colorful fall foliage. Winter will bring beautiful blankets of snow. Christmas is coming with its joys and wonders.

God makes a way in the wilderness of cold and dark weather, the loneliness of staying indoors, the humdrum of day-to-day responsibilities.

God is doing a new thing in the cycle of seasons and in the seasons of our lives.

It is about to spring up. Do you not perceive it?

May the Lord's abundance bless you always. In Jesus' name. Amen

- Kevin Measimer

Stewardship

By Doris Pulaski



We are now entering the Autumn Stewardship Drive Season, and as I promised you all, the Stewardship Committee will need all the help we can get!

If you would like to volunteer to help make up our fall mailers, give a testimonial at a church service about how the church had a positive influence on your life, or would like to make soup or a dessert for the Stewardship Lunch, please contact Doris Pulaski at 860-237-0400 or Sue Stottlemeyer at 860-572-0787.

If you have any ideas for Stewardship, we would love to hear them. People who would like to join the committee for the 2024-2025 season are especially welcome!

Youth Group

By Rachel Candee

What a wonderful summer it has been. Youth group took a quick break but will be starting up again for the fall!

Youth Group will meet in the Youth Room on **Mondays 6pm-8pm, starting September 11th.**

I look forward to seeing you there!

If you have any youth in grades 6-12 that are interested, please contact Miss Rachel by email.

youthgroupdirector@grotoncongregational.org



Church Wide Survey

Help us make sure that our church is making your life a little happier!

Now that summer is over, the Stewardship Committee would like to ask you all to tell us what church activities and programs you or members of your family might like to participate in.

We ask that you fill it out and either return it to Doris Pulaski or Sue Stottlemeyer. You may also return it to the Church Office.

I am interested in: (check all that apply)

- ☐ Receiving "The Gargoyle" the church newsletter each month, either by email or post.
New events are listed every month.
- ☐ Joining our Monday Morning Bible Study Class in person or via Zoom.
- ☐ Joining our teen fellowship group.
- ☐ Joining our choir or handbell choir.
- ☐ Fall enrollment in Sunday School for my child or information for a parent I know.
- ☐ Being involved with our Sunday School.
- ☐ Joining the junior choir or junior handbell choir.
- ☐ Helping make and/or serve meals in our Community Meals program.
- ☐ Joining our craft circle.

How may we contact you?

Name: _____

Email or Phone#: _____

GROTON CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH

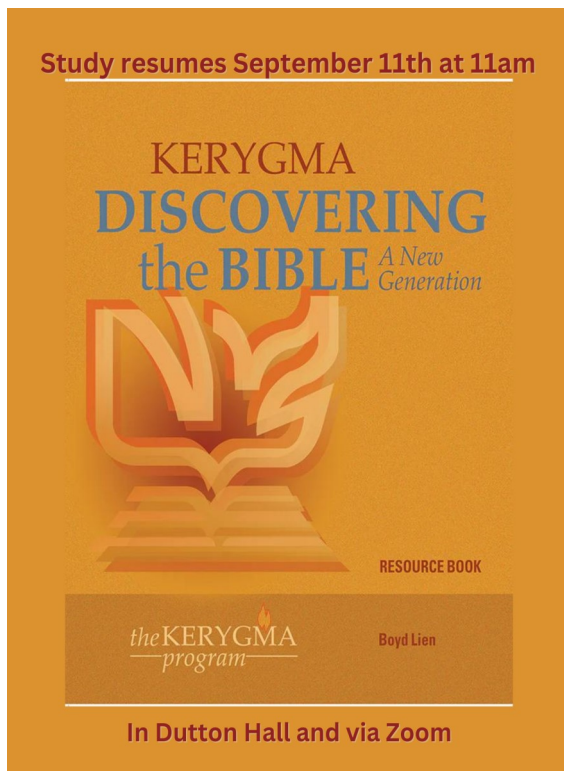
HOMECOMING SUNDAY

Come for the fun! Stay for the fellowship!

SEPT.
10
11:30AM

POTLUCK LUNCH
IN
DUTTON HALL

Bring Your Favorite Dish



Kerygma Bible Study returns Sept. 11th at 11am. All are welcome as we move into the 15 weeks of the New Testament section of the Kerygma study program.

Join us in Dutton Hall or via Zoom.

Please contact Reverend Lee for more information.

Community Meals returns to serving hot, fresh, and delicious sit-down meals in Dutton Hall on Sept. 2nd from Noon to 1pm. Volunteers are always appreciated. Please contact Janice Kimball for more information.

Choir & Handbell Rehearsals will begin soon. First Choir Practice is Sept. 7th at 7:30pm. First Handbell Practice is Sept. 14th at 6:30pm. Please contact Sue Stottlemeyer for more information.

What the World Needs is People Who Have Come Alive

By Making Disciples

This month's **Spotlight on Service** is on [Boston-North Backyard Mission](#), a service experience mission of the [Second Congregational Church of Boxford](#). Coordinated by **Betsey Guest-Natale** (Christian Education Director), Boston-North Backyard Mission introduces its participants to the myriad ways in which they can use their skills to serve their community and the communities around them. The ministry takes inspiration from African American theologian and civil rights activist Howard Thurman, even quoting so far as to include the following quote from Thurman on their homepage:

*“Don’t ask what the world needs.
Ask what makes you come alive, and go do it.
Because what the world needs are people who have come alive.”*

I had a chance to ask some questions of Betsey about this ministry via email; this is what she had to say about the state of her ministry, how it effects its participants, and how your congregation might get involved with Boston-North Backyard Mission.

Sean: What is your role and what got you started on this ministry offering?

Betsey: Youth Ministry has been my vocation and passion for over 20 years. I have led youth mission trips for as many years. From experience, I know how transformative these extended service experiences can be.

The idea of hosting youth mission trips was brewing at Second Congregational Church of Boxford even before I came to serve as their Christian Education Director. The volunteers who work with our youth as mentors on the mission trips imagined that we could host youth groups and provide service opportunities in our community, just as other hosts have done for us.

In 2019, a team of advocates from Second Church explored the logistics of such an endeavor. We have a wonderful church campus with a large parish hall for sleeping, an industrial kitchen, and outdoor worship space. We also have relationships with many local service organizations. We don't yet have showers, although a decade ago, some forward-thinking members added outdoor faucets to a building on our church campus in hopes that they might be used for showers someday.

The vision for Boston-North Backyard Mission was presented at our church annual meeting in February 2020 and received overwhelming support. It was a win, win, win situation. We would be able to provide experiences for youth groups, our community would benefit from the work of the volunteers, and the church building would be utilized in the summer months when it is often vacant. We could even employ a summer intern. With joy and hope, **Boston-North Backyard Mission (BNBM)** was born.

We were prepared to welcome guests in the summer of 2020. Then, of course, COVID-19 disrupted everything. We were finally able to welcome our first youth groups to BNBM this summer. A committee worked hard to ensure that our church and building were ready. My role is as volunteer coordinator involved working with various local service agencies to provide them with volunteers and to prepare them to welcome our groups in a meaningful way.

Sean: Who are some of the partners and what is the work that youth will do at BNBM?

What the World Needs is People Who Have Come Alive

By Making Disciples

Betsey: We are unique in that we can offer experiences in both urban and rural settings with a variety of experiences. Some of the rural experiences include [Windrush Farm](#), one of the first therapeutic equine riding centers in the United States, and [the Giving Garden at Rolling Ridge](#), an organic farm growing fresh vegetables for food pantries. More urban experiences include [Cor Unum Meal Center](#) in Lawrence and [Somebody Cares Food Pantry](#) in Haverhill. Youth could be picking vegetables in the morning and handing them out at a food pantry the next day. They could be clearing a horse trail for the sensory garden in the morning and sorting through children's clothing in the afternoon.

We work with our groups to allow them time to explore the area if they want. We had a group from Wisconsin arrive a day early so that they could go on a whale watch, and we arranged for a service opportunity closer to Boston on the day when our group from Vermont planned an evening Red Sox game.

Sean: What support do you provide for the groups that visit the program?

Betsey: When designing our program, we set out to take the best practices of the places we have served and implement them in our program. If a group needs help with reflections, we can help. Along with our space that includes an outdoor worship space overlooking a pond, we have a basketball hoop and picnic tables. We provide our groups with sleeping mats which are often the bulkiest thing to pack. We host a Wednesday night dinner for each group with a guest speaker from one of the agencies we serve. The dinners are a great opportunity for our congregation to welcome our volunteers and learn more about our local agencies.

We set up all the volunteer opportunities. Groups need to provide their own transportation and food, apart from the Wednesday night dinner. We happen to be within walking distance of [Paisley's Farm](#) and [Benson's Ice Cream](#), which is an added benefit.

Sean: What is the impact on youth?

Betsey: It's fun to listen to the kids after their experiences to see what excited them. Some kids are extroverts and love being around people, while others like to be behind the scenes. That's why offering a variety of work is so important. We are guided by the words from Howard Thurman, "Don't ask what the world needs. Ask what makes you come alive and go do it. Because what the world needs are people who have come alive." We seek to help our youth figure out what makes them come alive.

One of our participants this summer told us, "The week was fantastic, and the accommodations at the church were wonderful. Everyone along the way was so gracious. It was a remarkable experience, and my youth are still talking, and can't wait for the next Mission Trip."

Per Betsey, BNBM's programming generally runs Sunday through Saturday, although "[they] are open to hosting shorter trips to meet the differing needs of churches." BNBM can accommodate up to twenty-five participants comfortably.

More complete information about BNBM's can be found on Boston-North Backyard Mission's web page: <https://www.secondchurchboxford.org/church/backyard/>

5 Years After Greta



By Rev. Dr. Brooks Berndt

She started by herself. She started alone. She started with an action that many politically “astute” adults would readily dismiss as naïve and ineffectual. But on August 20, 2018, a 15-year-old named Greta Thunberg refused to attend the first day of school so that she could sit in front of the Swedish Parliament’s main building with a sign that read, “SKOLSTREJK FÖR KLAMATET” (School Strike for Climate).

Sweden’s General Election was a few weeks away, and the country had just experienced a record-breaking summer of heat and wildfires. Thunberg explained her action at the time by stating, “I am doing this because nobody else is doing anything. It is my moral responsibility to do what I can.” Thunberg’s words and actions provoked a reckoning for many: Am I—are we—doing what we can? In many ways, Thunberg has played for our society the role of the prophet whom the bestselling author Ayana Mathis captured earlier this year in a powerful essay for the *New York Times* entitled, “[The Prophetic](#).” Mathis described biblical prophets as divine messengers who appeared in times of “big trouble,” who held up a mirror to society, and who disrupted “the smooth functioning of society and state to describe a difficult reality.”

While prophets are known to hold us accountable for our misdeeds or inaction, Mathis suggested that prophets do more than this. Their message is not aimed at compelling us to perpetually wade and wallow in guilt. Instead, these prophets call upon the better angels of our nature. They ask us to act as the just and righteous people that we are. Mathis further observed, “The biblical prophets’ laments were most always followed by a vision of what might come after sin and sorrow.” Prophets provoke accountability for the past and present, but they also provoke a dream—a dream of what can be and of what we can do to bring it about.

There is perhaps another further dimension of the prophetic that is worth emphasizing as we reflect back upon the last five years. Prophets, like Thunberg, might begin as “the lone voice in the wilderness”—to evoke Isaiah (Is. 40:3). The power of their message and their defiant action, however, create a social contagion that catalyzes others. Thunberg did not stay alone on that sidewalk in Stockholm. Others joined, and then more joined and more joined and more joined in what would quickly become a global movement.

Of course, not every prophetic action leads to a movement. Rather, the true insight is this: it is the sum of many prophetic actions that make a movement, and each of us can play a part. The truly naïve are those who discount such acts of defiance and resistance with armchair dismissiveness. As we look in the mirror five years later, the question is this: Am I—are we—taking prophetic action? Are we willing to disrupt the world today in order to save it tomorrow?

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

The Rev. Dr. Brooks Berndt is the United Church of Christ’s Minister for Environmental Justice and the author of [Cathedral on Fire: A Church Handbook for the Climate Crisis](#). On September 13th, he and the Rev. Michael Malcom will cohost a webinar entitled, “[The Climate Strike 5 Years Later](#).”

View this and other columns on the [UCC’s Witness for Justice page](#).

[Donate](#) to support Witness for Justice.

[Click here](#) to download the bulletin insert.

TWELVE COMMANDMENTS FOR SENIORS

#1 - Talk to yourself. There are times you need expert advice.

#2 - "In Style" are the clothes that still fit.

#3 - You don't need anger management. You need people to stop pissing you off.

#4 - Your people skills are just fine. It's your tolerance for idiots that needs work.

#5 - The biggest lie you tell yourself is, "I don't need to write that down. I'll remember it."

#6 - "On time" is when you get there.

#7 - Even duct tape can't fix stupid, but it sure does muffle the sound.

#8 - It would be wonderful if we could put ourselves in the dryer for ten minutes, then come out wrinkle-free and three sizes smaller?

#9 - Lately, you've noticed people your age are so much older than you.

#10 - Growing old should have taken longer.

#11 - Aging has slowed you down, but it hasn't shut you up.

#12 - You still haven't learned to act your age and hope you never will.

... And one more:

"One for the road" means peeing before you leave the house.

Worship Watch

September Worship Services

Proper 17 (22)

Fourteenth
Sunday after Pentecost
September 3, 2023

Exodus 3:1-15 Psalms 105:1-6, 23-26, 45b Jeremiah 15:15-21

Psalms 26:1-8 Romans 12:9-21 Matthew 16:21-28

Proper 18 (23)

Fifteenth
Sunday after Pentecost
September 10, 2023

Exodus 12:1-14 Psalms 149 Ezekiel 33:7-11

Psalms 119:33-40 Romans 13:8-14 Matthew 18:15-20

Holy Cross

September 14, 2023

Numbers 21:4b-9 Psalms 98:1-5 **or** Psalms 78:1-2, 34-38

1 Corinthians 1:18-24 John 3:13-17

Proper 19 (24)

Sixteenth
Sunday after Pentecost
September 17, 2023

Exodus 14:19-31 Psalms 114 **or** Exodus 15:1b-11, 20-21

Genesis 50:15-21 Psalms 103:(1-7), 8-13 Romans 14:1-12

Matthew 18:21-35

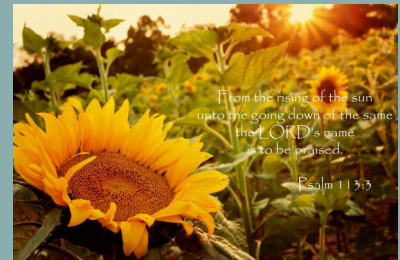
Proper 20 (25)

Seventeenth
Sunday after Pentecost
September 24, 2023

Exodus 16:2-15 Psalms 105:1-6, 37-45 Jonah 3:10-4:11

Psalms 145:1-8 Philippians 1:21-30 Matthew 20:1-16

September 2023



Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
					1	2 Community Meals Noon to 1pm
3 Worship 10am Crafters 11:30am	4 Labor Day Office Closed	5	6	7 Choir 7:30pm	8	9 Community Meals Noon to 1pm
10 Worship 10am Homecoming Sunday 11:30am	11 Prayer & Bible Study 11am Deacons 5:30pm Youth Group 6p-8p	12	13 Women's Fellowship 10am	14 Handbells 6:30pm Choir 7:30pm	15	16 Community Meals Noon to 1pm
17 Worship 10am	18 Prayer & Bible Study 11am Youth Group 6p-8p	19	20	21 Handbells 6:30pm Choir 7:30pm	22	23 Community Meals Noon to 1pm
24 Worship 10am	25 Prayer & Bible Study 11am Youth Group 6p-8p	26	27	28 Handbells 6:30pm Choir 7:30pm	29	30 Community Meals Noon to 1pm

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

PLEASE
PLACE
STAMP
HERE

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