Groton Congregational Church 162 Monument St. Groton, CT 06340 860-445-7409



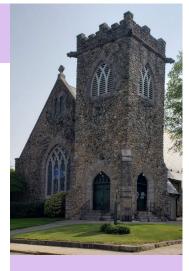
February 2024

The Gargoyle





You Are Always Welcome Here



In This Issue

Deacons
2
Stewardship2
Women's Fellowship
4
Youth Group
5

Highlights

Birthdays2 Five Phases 3 Thank You 4 Holy Week Schedule9 Retirement Party10





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

Deacons

February 2024 already. Lent will be upon us this month with Ash Wednesday coinciding with Valentines Day on 2/14 and ending on Saturday March 30th, with Easter ending Holy Week on the 31st.

Lent is meant to remind us of Jesus' forty days in the desert, fasting, praying, and facing temptation as he prepared himself for his Earthly ministry.

We are called to follow Jesus' example. I think Lent would be a good time to contemplate what more we can each do to create a better world.

Let's pray for a better world and fight for what we believe in.

Please join us for the Ash Wednesday service and of course on Easter Sunday. Peace.

- Kevin Measimer for the Board of Deacons

Stewardship

This year's Stewardship Committee consists of Doris Pulaski (Chair), Sue Stottlemyer, and Emily Miller. We have resolved to meet on the **third Sunday of each month at 12:00 p.m. at the church.**

In addition to the usual Stewardship Committee commitment to run the fall Pledge Campaign and Autumn Stewardship Lunch, we are planning other fundraisers.

We will be doing both a Christmas tree and an Easter tree fundraiser.

We are trying to find enough volunteers to run a Calendar Raffle in support of the Building Fund. Anyone interested should contact either the Church Office or Doris Pulaski.

5 Phases of C&S for GCC

The Board of Deacons is tasked with the process of working with the staff at the Southern New England United Church of Christ Conference office in finding an interim pastor to assist the Groton Congregational Church in moving forward to the final phase which will lead us to the eventual calling of a settled pastor to be our spiritual leader.

This process has several phases. The first phase was to celebrate Rev Lee Ireland's call and the 33 plus years of dedication she has been involved in her call. Rev Lee Ireland is now retired from the Groton Congregational Church.

The second phase is the preparation of an interim document which will allow for trained pastors/ministers to discern and reach out to us in their desire to help lead us through the process of preparing a more detailed document for an Intentional Interim pastor.

The third phase is working with the Intentional Interim pastor who will be our congregational guide through the process of writing a church profile which will be placed on the UCC Ministerial Opportunities website for potential pastors to discern and commit. If there is a feeling of being "called", they can submit their name and profile to the GCC Search Committee (when formed) to discern and potentially set up an interview for further discussion.

The fourth phase is when the Search and Call Committee is formed from church membership chosen by the GCC body at a called church meeting. The Search and Call Committee will be responsible for reviewing and eventual interviews with potential pastors who have reviewed the church profile and feel "called" to GCC.

The fifth or final phase is where it all comes together. The "called" pastor will have an arrival date and the Intentional Interim Pastor will know their last or departure date and continue serving GCC until the arrival date of the "called" pastor.

This outline of the phases of the overall Search and Call process is respectfully submitted and shared with the GCC.

Charles Barnum

Chair, Board of Deacons

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.

Women's Fellowship

Women's Fellowship is in the planning stage for the take-out corned beef dinner. The date will be **March 15th.** More details will be announced soon.

Our Bake Sales take place the second Sunday of every month. The next one will be on February 11th.

Our meeting time has returned to 12:30 p.m. Please bring your lunches. The meetings are always on the second Wednesday of the month. The next meeting will be **February 14th at 12:30.** All women of the church are cordially invited. Hope to see you there.

Sally Turner



A Message from Janice Kimball



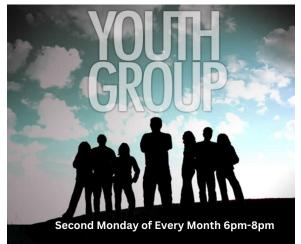
I would like to thank all the GCC church family for their prayer, greetings, visits and phone calls and messages as I have been away with a new diagnosis of myasthenia gravis. Also, thanks to Sue Stottlemyer, the Music Committee, the Board of Trustees, and the entire Council for their special consideration of my Groton music students in the last recital and for this spring term. With appreciation and prayers for our family in Christ, I am overwhelmed with all your kindness.

Youth Group

February, the month of love.

We see Valentine's Day every time we go to the store. Maybe you remember giving out and receiving Valentine's Day cards in class growing up. I love a holiday, and Valentine's Day is no exception.

Valentine's Day is a good time to remember that verse you've heard over and over again, John 3:16. "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish, but have eternal life."



Love is sacrifice. God sacrificed so much for us to show

His love. He sacrificed his Son. Imagine giving your child away so they could help the world, knowing that they will endure pain so others won't.

God sacrificed control. He could have made everyone inherently believe in him, to do good all the time, to always make the right choices. He gave that up and sent Jesus to Earth to help people see His love first hand.

God sacrificed time. What makes you most feel loved? I know I feel loved when I spend time with the people I love and feel supported by them. Jesus spent time with everyone when He was on Earth. Not just the do gooders. He spent time with the broken. He did this out of love.

As God has sacrificed, we should also make sacrifices for the people we love.

"We love because he first loved us." 1 John 4:19

*Youth Group will meet on **Monday, February 11th from 6 pm to 8pm** in the Youth Room. We will have a little Valentine's Day party!

Rachel Candee

Historian

Reflections from the Historian

As your newly installed church historian, I was pondering what I would initially submit while I consider what the position requires (based upon the bylaws) and as I consequently begin to find my way around the historian's office. While in this reflective state, the First Church of New London steeple unexpectantly collapsed, causing what will ultimately be a total loss of the building. I had my writing prompt.

What was not lost was its congregation – it still stands. Have you ever heard the song, "We are the Church"? This first verse goes like this: "The church is not a building, the church is not a steeple, the church is not a resting place, the church is the people."

While we try to live this theme, we still grieve for the loss of their building (despite selling the building in 2015, members of First Church New London still worshiped there). The people and the physical church building are tied to each other and in many respects, defines them.

So: what does First Church of New London have to do with Groton Congregational? First Church of New London is our mother church – it is from her, that Groton Congregational was born.

There are many sources that tell the story of our birth. I am going to share one of them: an excerpt from "The Groton Story, Revised Edition", written by then Groton Town Historian Carol W. Kimball in 1991. In Chapter 7 (Groton Cuts the Apron Strings) of her book she writes:

In colonial days the church WAS the town. It was a serious matter if a person failed to attend church regularly, and only male church members were allowed to vote at the town meetings. No wonder the church building was called the "meeting house."

In New London weekly church attendance was required by law with a fine of five shillings for absence. Therefore settlers living on the east or Groton side had to cross the wide Thames River every Sunday. Joshua Hempstead in his voluminous diary (1711-1758) recalled those irksome crossings:

Dec. 4, 1751--- John Williams of Groton died, a very aged man, He kept the ferry over N. London River when I was a little boy near 60 years ago. He lived in the first ferryhouse and used to bring all the people of Groton to meeting, that came, and to Training, Towns meetings, etc. He used a small scow that would carry four or five horses in which he brought all the men women and children that come to meeting at one time without any difficulty, the number was then so small.

Historian-continued

Those living on the east side wanted their own church, but to establish it meant severing all connections with New London to form a new town which the parent settlement refused to allow. In 1678 James Avery appealed to the General Court at Hartford, reporting that 28 families lived east of the river, many of whom traveled six or seven miles overland before crossing by the ferry. But it was no use. The Court expressed sympathy for their "troublesome passage to the worship off God," but refused their own church until their numbers were large enough to support a minister.

Grudgingly, in 1687 New London allowed east side residents to invite the New London minister to preach on their side of the river every third Sunday of the inclement season. Not until 1702 were they permitted to organize their own separate church and choose a minister.

The east-siders rejoiced in May 1703 when their meeting house was raised at Center Groton, the geographical center of the proposed new town. In October of that year the General Court granted final permission "to embody themselves into church estate and to call Mr. Ephraim Woodbridge, their present minister, to be their settled church officer."

To achieve separation east side residents had accepted certain conditions imposed by New London. They agreed to pay their share of the town's debt and allowed the west side to retain possession of the ferry and ministry lands. However, the pine swamp in Groton was to be forever common, permitting inhabitants from both sides to cut this valuable timber for masts.

It is not clear who chose the name of Groton for the new town. It was likely used for one of Winthrop's east-side farms, although it does not appear in the records. The new name was not accepted wholeheartedly, for in 1706 a petition asked to call the name of the town Southwork or East London, but Groton it has remained to this day.

(...)

Groton as incorporated in 1705 included 72 hilly square miles stretching from the Sound north to Poquetannuck. The meeting house and school stood in the geographic center of this territory, but it was not long before those living north of Center Groton raised the old complaint about the difficulty of reaching the Sabbath meetings. Then the new town generously allowed a separate ecclesiastical society and the parish of North Groton was incorporated in 1725.

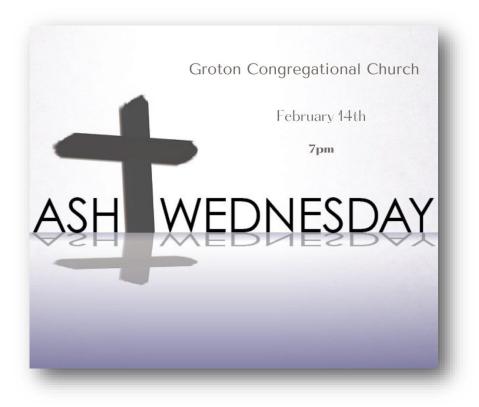
(continued next page)

Historian-continued

For nearly 100 years the North Parish was content to remain part of Groton, but the residents finally petitioned for separation. Groton, having forgotten by that time its own earlier troubles with New London, opposed the division in 1834 and again in 1835. At last, in May 1836 a Town Meeting agreed that the second located Society in Groton should be formed into a new and distinct town with all the privileges and immunities of a town.

The new town was named Ledyard in honor of the Revolutionary War hero Colonel William Ledyard. By the separation of the North parish, Groton lost half its land and many of its people. In 1840 Groton's population was only 2963 in contrast to 4801 in 1830.

And there you have it – the beginnings of our church family history! Cathy Johnson, Church Historian





GROTON CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH 162 Monument St.

Groton, CT

Palm Sunday-March 24th 10:00 AM Worship Service





Maundy Thursday-March 28th 7:00 PM Tenebrae Service

Good Friday Vigil-March 29th Noon-3 PM-Sanctuary Open





Easter Sunday-March 31st 6:00 am Sunrise Service-Fort Griswold 10:00am Worship Service-in church

Reverend Lee Ireland's Retirement Party



Groton Congregational Church "The Gargoyle" Newsletter February 2024

Moderator	- Ingrid Measim	er (24)	Treasurer	- Bill Blaisdell	(24)
Asst. Moderator		(24)	Asst. Treasurer(s	-Rachel Candee	e (24)
	- Sue Blaisdell	(24)	<u>Historian</u>	- Cathy Johnsor	า (24)
Board of Trustees	(3 year)	Board of Deacons	(3 year)	Missions Committee	(2 year)
Ed Magowan Phyllis Myer Barbara Dutton Richard Stottlemyer Marilyn Wright C	(24) (24) (25) (25) (26)	Chuck Barnum C Sally Turner KevinMeasimer Doris Pulaski Mary Alapa Lew Clark James Kerrigan	(24) (24) (24) (25) (26) (26) (26)	Anne Campbell Penny Sullivan Lisa Story JillMartin Beth Chirillo C	(24) (24) (25) (25) (25)
Property Committee	(2 year)	Stewardship Comm	<u>nittee</u> (2 year)	Ushering Committee	(2 year)
Richard Stottlemyer C Greg Hoffman	(24) (24)	Doris Pulaski C Sue Stottlemyer Emily Miller	(24) (24) (25)	Phyllis Myer Emily Miller	(24) (25)
Music Committee	(2 year)	Nominating Coordin	<u>nator</u> (3 year)	<u>Delegates</u>	(2 year)
Joan Jordan Ed Magowan Florence Barnum (Janice Kimball Sally Turner	(24) (24) (25) (25) (25) (25)	Bill Blaisdell (/	25)	Chuck Barnum	(24)

Restructuring Review Team""

Rachel Candee Cathy Johnson Wendy Walther

- · 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
- " Not an Elected committee Team established by the Church Council at their November 2023 Meeting - shown for informational purposes

January 21, 2024



Which Path Are You On? Pt. 3 Transformation

By Charlie Kuchenbrod

This blog series is for churches that are experiencing steady decline, as measured by members, worship attendance and financial support. If your church can no longer balance your budgets and are consuming assets to continue to "do church," this blog series is for you.

In <u>Part 1: Which Path are You On?</u> I named four options: Revitalization, Transformation, Legacy Building and Ministry Completion, and "Path Closed Ahead."

In **<u>Part 2: The Revitalization Mirage</u>** I made the case that revitalization is something of a mirage because we now live in a world where social, cultural, economic, and political forces are all aligned to favor individualism. Individualism and church membership are at odds, as church membership is inherently a community-oriented activity. It is very, very difficult to reverse decline in the current environment.

Recognizing that revitalization is a mirage brings us to transformation. Transformation means reevaluating the ways we "do church" through a discipleship lens and considering changes, even radical changes, that will help us to refocus on what it means to live in the way of Jesus, what it means to be a community gathered around the way of Jesus, and what it means to be a community living in the way of Jesus in our neighborhoods, communities, and larger world[1]. This requires discernment and discernment is hard because it is not about what we want, it is about aligning ourselves with God's purposes in the world. The appropriate discernment question is what does God yearn for?

Most churches experiencing steady decline have focused on membership in a world where fewer and fewer people are interested in becoming members. Transformation is a rejection of the membership model in order to refocus on discipleship. It means rejecting or radically changing our current approaches to facilities, staffing, and programs. It may mean becoming a congregation without a building. It may mean partnering with other organizations to help co-create a more compassionate, just and peaceful world. It may mean identifying people that need to experience God's love and finding ways to incarnate God's love for these people.

We only have glimpses of what transformation looks like. There are no "recipes" for creating a transformed church. The Center for Transformational Leadership has gathered some resources for <u>the</u> <u>post pandemic church</u>. Other resources that might inspire your thinking include <u>sacred.design</u> and the book *Innovating for Love: Joining God's Expedition Through Social Innovation*, by Kenda Creasy Dean. One of the biggest challenges is developing new approaches to funding and volunteer development. We are so embedded in the membership model that we have a difficult time imagining alternatives.

Transformation may not be a viable option for all congregations. The Conference has slide deck and a list of <u>congregational markers</u> [pgs. 24-25—see chart on next page] that can help a congregation discern if they have the capacity for transformation or if the legacy building and ministry completion path is more appropriate.

If you have read my **previous posts**, you know that I don't think that legacy building and ministry completion are signs of failure. Indeed, if we look at the wider church as an ecosystem, we may need legacy churches for the health of the Body of Christ. Churches in the Southern New England Conference collectively own buildings and property worth hundreds of millions of dollars and also have hundreds of millions of invested assets. As God knows our wealth, what does God yearn for?



Which Path Are You On? Pt. 3 Transformation

By Charlie Kuchenbrod

Congregational Markers

Leaning towards Threshold Congregation	Leaning towards Legacy Congregation
Focused on opportunities, confident, positive, cheerful	Focused on problems, anxious, negative, despondent
Outward focus, emphasis on serving others	Inward focus, emphasis on serving members
More faith formation opportunities, new ideas	Limited or no faith formation opportunities, same old/same old
Multiple points of community engagement	Little or no community engagement
Compassion and respect evident in relationships	Anger and blame evident in relationships
New leaders emerge, leaders have energy	No new leader emerging, leaders are tired
Adoption of new technology	Resistance to new technology
Less conflict, conflicts resolved effectively	History of conflict, ongoing conflict
Adequate record keeping, financial affairs in good order	Poor recordkeeping, financial affairs not well ordered
Resilience sufficient to support mission and ministry	Resilience limited to staying open to bury people
Settle pastor with no immediate plans to leave or in orderly process to call new pastor	Pastor departed or departing, no replacement options
Facilities in good condition	Facilities in poor condition
Consuming assets, no short-term risk of exhausting assets	Consuming assets rapidly, can foresee exhaustion of assets in short-term

The Way of Jesus questions come from Mark Tidsworth, a consultant and author. Visit <u>www.pinnlead.com</u>
From Innovating for Love. Keep reading.



<u>Charlie Kuchenbrod</u> Church Legacy Specialist Charlie Kuchenbrod is a resource for all UCC churches that are transitioning to the legacy stage of their lifecycle.



Reclaiming Christianity By Kayla Berkey



'On a frigid Jan. 6, churches, and groups around the state of Massachusetts braved the cold to stand against Christian nationalism.

Bundled in parkas, groups gathered in front of multiple church buildings and public parks and held signs depicting messages like "There is nothing Christian about Christian nationalism."

This was an effort initiated by United Church of Christ Massachusetts congregations on the third anniversary of the Jan. 6, 2021, insurrection event, when supporters of then-President Donald Trump broke into the U.S. Capitol, harming officers and challenging the nation's peaceful transfer of power.

"Christian nationalists want their beliefs to be the official national religion that governs our laws, our education and our families," said David Langston, deacon of First Congregational Church of Williamstown. "They would end the constitutional guarantee of freedom of religion, and as Christians and as citizens, we stand in opposition to forsaking both Christian teaching as well as the Constitution."

Building a countermovement

Langston estimated around 40 people attended the "standout" at the church, which sits amid the campus of Williams College. He and two other speakers gave talks addressing the questions and dangers of movements advocating for the United States to be a Christian nation.

First Congregational Church of Williamstown gather for their third annual Standout Against Christian Nationalism.

Their congregation has joined others in holding a standout event every year since the first Jan. 6 anniversary.

"We need to have a countermovement in the country," Langston said. "We want this to spread. We'd like every congregation in American to stand up and say, 'Christian nationalism is not Christian."

The Williamstown church has also held a book group for the past four years and organized events like these annual standouts, teach-ins and an interfaith discussion forum to raise awareness about the threats posed by Christian nationalism. The congregation is planning a Lenten series that incorporates segments of books on Christian nationalism throughout the season.

Reclaiming Christianity



By Kayla Berkey

Need for religious freedom

For this year's Standout against Christian Nationalism event, Langston said they partnered with the United Church of Christ in Norwell and First Congregational Church of North Adams to host standouts in their respective communities simultaneously. They invited churches around Western Massachusetts from the UCC and all denominations and backgrounds to host their own events.

This is the second year that First Congregational Church of Lee held a standout event in their town.

We are clear that Jesus condemned the use of force and violence in his name — in the garden at his arrest, at the cross — and that he did not demand that people believe in him before he taught them, healed them and ate with them," said the Rev. Marisa Brown Ludwig, pastor at First Congregational Church of Lee. "We are Christians that cannot accept the idea of Christianity being used to exclude or force one way of being American in our land. We know that our freedom to follow Christ is only possible when other people can follow their conscience in freedom, too.

"We stand today as Christians against Christian Nationalism."



Reclaiming Christianity

The upcoming 2024 elections create an added sense of urgency as faith groups address this issue.

"We think the problem of Christian nationalism will get worse before the election — more militant, more dangerous," Langston said, noting that while he hopes they are wrong, they want to be proactive.

"The threat of Christian nationalism has been growing over the past several years and has received a boost with the election of Rep. Mike Johnson as Speaker of the House," said Betsy Burris, Williamstown church moderator. "Johnson, who is second in line to the presidency, actually claims that the separation of church and state is a misnomer and defines his 'worldview' as 'the Bible.' That may be his personal perspective, but it is wholly inappropriate for a public official serving a diverse democracy."

The responsibility to vocalize an alternative, inclusive view of Christianity, in relation to the state, is a pressing issue within the Christian church, standout organizers believe.

"Reclaiming Christianity as a religion of love and equity, inclusiveness and justice, is the job of congregations like our own," said Sherwood Guernsey, an activist at the Williamstown church.

Worship Watch

February Worship Services

Fifth Sunday after the Epiphany February 4, 2024	Isaiah 40:21-31 Psalm 147:1-11, 20c 1 Corinthians 9:16-23 Mark 1:29-39
Transfiguration Sunday February 11, 2024	2 Kings 2:1-12 Psalm 50:1-6 2 Corinthians 4:3-6 Mark 9:2-9 2
Ash Wednesday 7pm February 14, 2024	Joel 2:1-2, 12-17 or Isaiah 58:1-12 Psalm 51:1-17 2 Corinthians 5:20b-6:10 Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21
First Sunday in Lent February 18, 2024	Genesis 9:8-17 Psalm 25:1-10 1 Peter 3:18-22 Mark 1:9-15 1
Second Sunday in Lent February 25, 2024	Genesis 17:1-7, 15-16 Psalm 22:23-31 Romans 4:13-25 Mark 8:31-38 or Mark 9:2-9

February 2024



Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
				1 Handbells 6:30pm Choir 7:30pm	2	3 Community Meals Noon-1pm
4 Worship Service 10am	5 Bible Study 11am	6	7	8 Handbells 6:30pm Choir 7:30pm	9	10 Community Meals Noon-1pm
<i>11</i> Worship Service 10am W.F. Bake Sale	<i>12</i> Bible Study 11am Youth Group 6p-8p	13	14 Women's Fellowship 12:30p Ash Wednesday 7pm	<i>15</i> Handbells 6:30pm Choir 7:30pm	16	17 Community Meals Noon-1pm
<i>18</i> Worship Service 10am	19 Office Closed	20	21	22 Handbells 6:30pm Choir 7:30pm	23	24 Community Meals Noon-1pm
25 Worship Service 10am	26 Bible Study 11am	27	28	29 Handbells 6:30pm Choir 7:30pm		



COMMUNITY MEALS

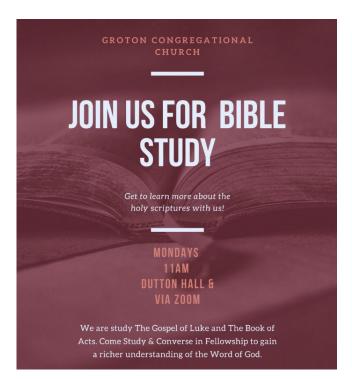
Every Saturday from Noon to 1pm in Dutton Hall. Warming the heart, body, and soul with nourishing food and fellowship. Everyone welcome! If you would like to volunteer for this program please contact the church office.

MONDAY MORNING BIBLE STUDY

Has resumed! Come join us on Mondays at 11am in Dutton Hall. If you can't come in person, join us via Zoom. Invitations are sent out every Friday afternoon.

We are studying the Gospel of Luke and the Book of Acts.

Please note, Bible Study will not take place on February 19th as the church office will be closed in observance of President's Day.



February Board & Committee Meetings

Trustees	February 13th 6pm
Deacons	February 11th 11:30am
Missions	February 18th 9am
Stewardship	February 18th Noon
Music Committee	February 18th 11:30am
Church Council	February 25th 11:30am



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.



I62 Monument Street Groton, CT 06340 860-445-7409 www,grotonucc.org office@grotoncongregational.org

Bring Your Family to Our Family. We are Here to Celebrate Jesus Christ with You.

Located near historic Fort Griswold, by the banks of the Thames River, 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