

The Gargoyle

December 2025

A publication of Groton Congregational Church



Dear church family,

From the Pastor
The season of Advent/Christmas/Epiphany is here! Christmas time is my favorite time of the year. But I also know that this season can be particularly hard on those who are grieving (for many reasons) and those who are suffering from mental health challenges, such as depression and anxiety. On Wednesday, December 17 at 7:00pm in the sanctuary we will be having a special Blue Christmas service. This is sometimes called the Longest Day Service. It is a time as deep darkness descends on those of us in the Northern Hemisphere to come together and remember that there is always the light of God, even in the deepest pain. So if you are grieving, or suffering from depression or anxiety, or if you just need a calm and soothing break from all the Christmas hoopla this year, I invite you to come to this Blue Christmas service. I hope it will be a comfort and a respite for all who attend.

There are four Sundays in the Advent season, leading up to the birth of Christ. Advent is a time to reflect and to prepare for this miracle that has come into our lives. The liturgical color for Advent is traditionally purple (although blue is often also used.) This purple represents a time of quiet reflection, a time to draw closer to God, not unlike the season of Lent, which also uses purple as the liturgical color. But on the third Sunday of Advent, often called Gaudete Sunday, we use the color pink. Gaudete is a Latin word meaning, 'rejoice.' This is the Joy Sunday where we take break from the more somber tone of Advent to celebrate the coming of Jesus into our world.

Each Sunday I will be focusing on a different part of the birth story, using both the gospel according to Matthew and the gospel according to Luke. Here are the scriptures and sermon titles for each week, through Epiphany which we will celebrate on January 4, in case you'd like to read ahead:

November 30 - the candle of Hope

Luke 1: 5-13

"We Long for God to Break In"

December 7 - the candle of Peace

Luke 1: 26-39

"We Are Called Forward" Communion Sunday

December 14 - the candle of Joy

A Service of Lessons and Carols

Led by our music director, Sue Stottlemeyer with the choir, handbell choir, and a string trio

There will be no sermon on this Sunday. We will hear the Christmas story in scripture and in song

December 21 - the candle of Love

Matthew 1: 18-25

“Give Me Your Hand”

December 24 - Christmas Eve - worship is at 6:00pm

Luke 2:1-20

“Good News Is Louder Than Fear”

December 28

Matthew 2:13-15, 19-23

“Fleeing in Fear; Returning in Hope”

January 4 – Epiphany

Matthew 2:1-12, 16-18

“Love Leads Us Forward”

We will also receive Star Words during worship - these are a word that you can take with you for the coming year to remember and to meditate on.

I hope you will all join in these worship services to bring the real meaning of Christmas to your hearts and spirits. Rejoice! For Christ is indeed born in Bethlehem!

Blessings to you all,

Rev. Christine





*“Let the message of Christ dwell among you richly, as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom through psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts.” – **Colossians 3:16***

The Trustees are currently focusing on establishing a proposed budget for 2026. Thank you, committees and boards, for your budget requests. A proposed budget will be presented to the voting members of the congregation at its Annual Meeting on Sunday, January 18, 2026. The church office will be sending out a reminder as to the deadline for submittals to be included in the Annual Report. The resulting Annual Report will be printed for distribution and review before the Annual Meeting.

A reminder that if you have any 2025 reimbursement requests, please present them, with receipts, to the Treasurer and designate which budgeted line-item they should be applied to.

Thank you to our Property Committee for its continued monitoring of and actions taken on the never-ending-list-of-things-to-be-done at the physical church. Recent among those items:

- Repair and replacement of one of the ceiling light fixtures in Dutton Hall;
- A yearly, professional cleaning of the grease trap; and
- Attention to the sticky midway door latch (a separate “thank you” to Ludwig Polaski for the product suggestion!).

The Trustees’ next scheduled meeting is on Sunday, December 7, 2025.

Submitted in love,
Cathy Johnson
Chair, Board of Trustees





Evolving Our Childhood Notion of Christmas

Deacons I grew up in Connecticut and with that had a New England notion of Christmas as a child: Christmas Trees and Wreaths, Family Gatherings and Presents, Lots of Decorations both inside the home and out, and of course the chance of a White Christmas in some form with cold temperatures.

It was a shock to the psyche when I moved to Florida and the difference in climate was difficult at Christmas. There is just something unnatural in my mind about putting Christmas lights on a Palm Tree trunk that I don't think I will ever come to accept.

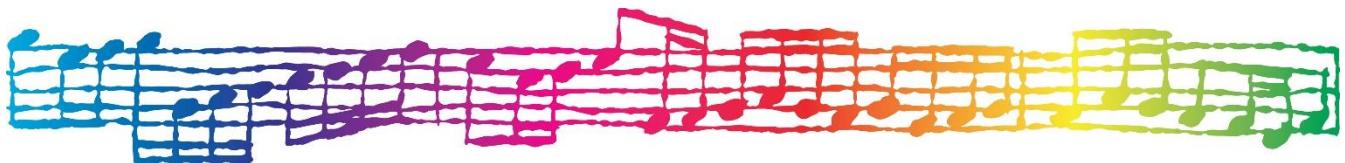
As adults we often find ourselves caught up in the hustle and bustle of the holiday season: Shopping and planning parties and events, often traveling great distances and typically in less than perfect weather conditions which just compounds the travel stress. Perhaps we are fortunate to take joy in the childhood wonder of the Christmas season in the younger generations around us while at the same time regretting the loss of our own childhood wonder and excitement. Many of us will try to recreate this wonder and excitement by surrounding ourselves with the trappings of our own childhood Christmas memories and as a result bemoan the decorating of palm trees with Christmas lights as simply unnatural.

Recently I got into watching the tv series The Chosen. For those of you who have not heard of it or seen it (I encourage you to check it out) it follows the story of Jesus focusing on the people around him, disciples, friends, and enemies. One of the things I like about the show is that it gives context to the story that I often have found trouble understanding through other mediums. It presents a nation of Israel waiting in anticipation for the coming of the Messiah.

Now while a lot of the Israelites were expecting a military leader to overthrow the oppressive Roman occupation they still have an overwhelming sense of expectation and anticipation. Interestingly this is one aspect that is often overlooked in connection to our modern interpretation of Christmas. The expectation and anticipation of the Israelites awaiting the coming of a Savior is very much analogous to our anticipation and often impatience as children awaiting the coming of Christmas morning. Except we as children have an advantage in the form of calendars to tell us exactly how many 'sleeps' until Christmas. (A term I am sure many of you with small children in your lives are aware of). The world waiting in anticipation for a day it knew not when it would come. Even when it did come it was only a select few that knew it had arrived. It would take another 30+ years before more people started to see it had arrived and forever the world looks back on the historical event. A celebration, perhaps the biggest birthday in the history of the world, but we often lose the anticipation, the expectation. We are corrupted by our knowledge. We know the day and we know the outcome. But think for a moment in your mind back into time to our world holding its breath in anticipation. Even after the birth if you were invited to whatever form the first century Jewish community had for a birthday party what would you see. Christmas Trees and Wreathes? Not likely. The very essence of our childhood Christmas memories that we try to capture and surround ourselves with is the entire sum that is not present at the first Christmas. Anticipation with Great Expectation. Do not lose sight of these due to our knowledge of what came after.

As we reflect on the true meaning of Christmas, we are reminded of the miraculous birth of Jesus Christ, a moment that brought hope, love, and light into the world. This season invites us to open our hearts to faith, to embrace the spirit of giving, and to celebrate the profound joy found in God's promise. May the peace of Christ fill your home and guide us all to kindness and compassion throughout this sacred time and into the year ahead.

James Kerrigan
Chair, Deacons



Music Committee

On November 23rd our worship service was enriched by the addition of a trumpet accompaniment played by Kevin Mazzarella. Thank you Sue for arranging this very special and inspiring addition to the music part of our service.

The choir and bell choirs are working hard on the preparation of music for the December 14th service of lessons and carols. We are looking forward to this lovely mid-advent service being planned by Reverend Caton and Sue Stottlemeyer. This is always a joyful and inspiring part of our journey through the advent season.

May you all have a wonderful and blessed Christmas.





Thank you to all who made the Stewardship campaign a success. Also to all who contributed to the potluck luncheon after church on Stewardship Sunday.

If you haven't done so already, you can still turn in your pledge cards. The Trustees need them to work up our budget for next year.

This Christmas, remember loved ones by purchasing a memorial ornament. This year our choices for memorial ornaments for the tree in the sanctuary are gold, silver, and blue stars; snowflakes, and, new this year, we have small and large angels.

All donations will go to the general fund unless a donor requests otherwise.

If you have questions see Doris Pulaski.

(Pictured is the large angel ornament. The other ornaments are flat.)



We will resume hot meals on December 7 at noon.

All are welcome to come share a meal. This is not only for those who might have food insecurity. This is a chance to sit with your neighbors and share a meal and a warm word. These are tough times and we all need a little help to get through it. Come have a meal and maybe start a friendship with us on Saturdays at noon.

Help to brighten Mary Alapa's day. Take time to drop a card or letter to her.

Mary Alapa
235 Lestertown Road Rm 116A
Groton, CT 06340



*Shut-in
Outreach*



Women's Fellowship

Women's Fellowship will be meeting on December 10th at 12 Noon. There will be a brief business meeting before our potluck lunch and a Yankee Swap. Gifts should not exceed \$20. Everyone is invited to come & share a fun afternoon. Hope to see many of you there. Sally Turner

Can't make it to church on a Sunday morning? You can watch the service on your computer, tablet or even phone. Services on Sunday mornings are livestreamed on Facebook at 10 am.

Miss a service? Want to hear the choir's anthem one more time? Or maybe you want to hear part of the pastor's sermon again. Past services are posted on YouTube.



PASS IT ON!

Want to help promote the church? If you are on Facebook or Instagram, make sure you are following our church. Then when you see the posts for the church service or events happening at the church, like the post and more importantly repost the post. The more we interact with the posts, the more FB and IG will show people these posts. When you repost them, your friends will see the posts. If you repost events then we might bring more people to the event. Social media is a way for us to be seen in the community and lets people know we are still here and active. Think of it as planting seeds.

The holidays will never be the same –
and they don't have to be.
They can be differently beautiful.
Differently reflective.
And differently sacred.

They can be softer.
Quieter.
More nostalgic.
Less fancy.

And they can be sad.

Grief can share a heart
with gratitude.

ullie-kaye



This season can be difficult
Joy can be hard to find
Come be with others who understand

Blue Christmas Service

A reflective and hopeful alternative
to traditional holiday celebrations

Wednesday, December 17
at 7 pm





DECEMBER

2025

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
	1	2	3	4 6:30p Bell Choir 7:30p Choir	5	6 12n Community Meals
7 2nd Sun of Advent 10a Worship 11:15a Trustees 	8 6p Deacons	9	10 12n Women's Fellowship	11 6:30p Bell Choir 7:30p Choir	12	13 12n Community Meals
14 3rd Sun of Advent 10a Lessons & Carols 	15	16	17 7p Blue Christmas	18 6:30p Bell Choir 7:30p Choir	19	20 12n Community Meals
21 4th Sun of Advent 9a Missions 10a Worship 11:15a Music 	22	23  Gargoyle Deadline	24 Christmas Eve 6p Worship 	25  Christmas	26	27 12n Community Meals
28 10a Worship	29	30	31  New Year's Eve			



Groton Congregational Church

Bring Your Family to Our Family

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 worshipers from all walks of life. We embrace the belief that no matter who, no matter what, no matter where you are on life's journey, you are invited and 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.

**The Reverend Christine Caton
Sunday Worship begins at 10 am
Stay for Coffee Hour After Worship**

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 the tradition of caring, comfort, and support for all those within the Groton Congregational Church family.

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Office Hours
Monday, Tuesday, and Thursday
9 am to 2 pm