



Dear friends,

Right now we find ourselves here in Southeastern Connecticut in the middle of a deep freeze, along with more snow than we have had in several years. I know some of you may love the snow and the cold, but right now I am longing for Spring: the green, the flowers, the birds. Spring also brings once again a reminder of the hope of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ. And Spring will be here before we know it.

This year, February 18th marks the beginning of the church season of Lent. Lent is the 40 days (not including Sundays) set aside for deep reflection and prayer, leading up to Easter. It can be a time of fasting and of 'giving up' something that brings you pleasure or joy, with the idea that you will be able to turn your heart and mind toward God without so many distractions. Giving up something may be difficult or even unhealthy for some of us. Instead I invite you this Lent to take something up for Jesus. Take on a spiritual discipline, volunteer at a charity, commit to praying and reading the Bible every day. Whatever you decide to do remember that anything you do should be designed to bring focus and glory to God, and to deepen the relationship you have with God and your fellow members of the Body of Christ. There will be several special things happening during Lent, and I invite you to participate in all or some of them:

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 18TH AT 7:00pm - ASH WEDNESDAY worship in Dutton Hall. This is a time to mark the beginning of Lent with a remembrance of who we are as frail human beings, and how we belong to God alone. You will have the opportunity to receive an imposition of ashes on your forehead during this service if you so wish. But whether you receive ashes or not, please come to this beautiful and meaningful way to mark the beginning of Lent, the beginning of the journey toward the cross and on to the Resurrection.

ADULT LENTEN STUDY - Mondays at 1:00pm in Dutton Hall

I will be leading a Lenten study for all who are interested. Each session will be 45 minutes to an hour. The dates for the study will be: February 23, March 2, March 9, March 16, and March 30th. We will skip March 23. We will be using a study called "Qualities of Discipleship," written by Marianne Blickenstaff. This study will focus on identifying several traits of discipleship, such as perseverance, learning and devotion, the faith to take risks, the ability to work with others, and humility. Each session is designed to challenge adults to ponder the characteristics of those who follow Jesus and to look for ways those qualities can be included and strengthened in our own faith journeys. You will be able to receive a handout the week before the study, so that you will have time to look it over. Bring a notebook and a pen, the handout you

have received the week before, and your Bible (if you have one; if you don't let me know and we will find one for you.) Come once, or come several times, or every week. You are all welcome!

During HOLY WEEK we will have several special worship services, designed to continue to bring us closer and closer to the cross and ultimately to the Resurrection:

Sunday, March 29 is PALM SUNDAY where we will have our regular time of worship at 10:00am, focusing on Jesus' triumphant entry into the city of Jerusalem, where he will ultimately be put to death and rise up three days later.

Thursday, April 7 in the sanctuary we will commemorate the last supper Jesus shared with his disciples before he is arrested. This service will include a celebration of the Lord's Supper. Time to be announced. In our tradition this is called MAUNDY THURSDAY. Some traditions call it Holy Thursday. The word, "Maundy" comes from the Latin word "mandatum" which means 'command' or 'mandate.' It refers to the commandment Jesus gave his disciples to "love one another as I have loved you," in the gospel of John when he washed their feet. The washing of the disciples feet and the institution of the Lord's Supper both happened at the same time and the same place on that Thursday before Jesus was arrested.

Friday, April 8 is GOOD FRIDAY. There are no plans right now for any worship service or events on Good Friday. This may change, so keep your eyes out for any announcement about that. Good Friday is the day Christians mark the crucifixion and death of Jesus Christ. It is a day marked by fasting, prayer, and reflection. It is a day of mourning. And, of course, this can happen whether you are in the church building or not.

SUNDAY, APRIL 5 at 10:00am we will celebrate the joy of the Resurrection on EASTER SUNDAY. After a long time of penitence, prayer, and fasting during Lent and Holy Week, we come to the most important day in the Christian calendar. Easter is a time of joy, hope, music, beautiful flowers, and celebration. It is also a time when we see many folks we have not seen since Christmas time attend our worship service. Remember to be especially welcoming and kind to all our visitors on Easter. Maybe your kindness will spur them to return after Easter!

One more thing: I will be taking some vacation time in March. I will be away March 18th through March 24th. Should you have any pastoral needs during this time you may contact a member of our wonderful Board of Deacons: James Kerrigan, Jean Young, Sadie Beatrice, Chuck Barnum, Sally Turner, Doris Pulaski, and Lew Clark.

I wish you all some peace, as well as energy and renewal, during our time of Lent, as well as we all deal with difficult situations in our country and in our world. We know that God is with us, always, even when we despair about things happening around us, or to us, or to our friends and family, and neighbors. Just because you may not be able to 'feel' God's presence does not mean that God isn't there. God is in every tear, every shout of anger, every moment of fear. God weeps with us and for us, and God brings us shreds of hope when we think we cannot go on. I pray for you always, and I ask that you pray for me as well.

Blessings

Rev. Christine



As we haven't seen each other in a few weeks (and as a prelude to composing this article), I googled questions about worship when you can't get to Sunday Service. While I'm not a big proponent of AI, the overview that resulted was, I think, spot on:

The Bible indicates that worship is not limited to a physical church building, as believers are considered temples of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor 3:16). Jesus taught that true worship is a matter of the heart—in "spirit and truth"—that can occur anywhere, anytime. Worship is a lifestyle, not just a Sunday activity, and can take place in homes, daily life, or nature.

I hope you have been able to worship in this manner as we have been physically away from each other.

Having said this, the "business" of Groton Congregational Church does continue. In our absence from one another, we ask that you do your best to keep up with your pledges and donations.

As relayed by the Moderator, our Annual Meeting has been rescheduled for Sunday, February 15, 2026. Please plan to attend this important meeting – everyone has a place at the table.

Submitted in love,

Cathy Johnson
Chair, Board of Trustees

The Annual Meeting will now be on Sunday, February 15 at 12 noon in Dutton Hall. There will be a meal before the meeting. All are needed to come and vote on the budget and the new slate of board and committee members.

Hope to see you there.

**ANNUAL
MEETING**



Choices in Lent

Even though there are deep snowdrifts outside, it is time to start planning for Lent and Easter. Ash Wednesday falls on February 18 this year, but before that, Mardi Gras will be celebrated in New Orleans, Carnival will be celebrated in Rio, and the Pączki (pronounced pohneh-kee), traditional Polish donuts, enriched with eggs, deep-fried, and filled with jam, fruit, or custard, will disappear from our Groton Big Y grocery.

Pączki were originally made to use up all the extra rich items in the Polish kitchen before the fasting of Lent. Poland was a very Catholic country, and giving up things for Lent was a serious business for Catholics. Butter, eggs, cream and sweets were not to be eaten during Lent, so thrifty cooks used up all the kitchen stores that might spoil during the forty days of Lent in an excess of rich, sweet donuts.

When I was a youngster growing up in Groton, Groton Congregational Church did not celebrate Ash Wednesday at all, and we children were not encouraged to give things up for Lent. You would only notice Lent by the presence of Lenten devotionals in the church foyer, and a different selection of hymns.

We only knew of Ash Wednesday because our Catholic friends at school would arrive at school with a black smear of ashes on their foreheads, telling stories of what they were giving up for Lent. Giving up candy was a favorite choice. It was all quite strange to me, but the idea of doing something for forty days to mentally prepare for Easter had its attractions.

In 2026, GCC will celebrate Ash Wednesday with a service on February 18th. You can mark the day with us, receive your ashes, and make your own private Lenten resolutions. Your resolutions do not have to be related to pastry. Even medieval Catholics occasionally had other choices. The Tour de Beurre, (Butter Tower) part of Rouen Cathedral, was built with money people donated in return for being allowed to eat dairy products during Lent.

So perhaps you, too, might choose to donate to some worthy cause in honor of Lent.

Or perhaps you might look in your own heart and might decide to try to give up anger or hate. Or you might decide to embrace doing some positive thing every day. When you are praying, or reading the Bible, God may give you a hint of what Lenten choices are right for you.



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

We would like to thank everyone for their support during 2025. We could not have done it without you, especially our volunteers. We wish you all a very Happy New Year

We will be planning to serve throughout February 2026.

We need extra large and medium Nitrile powder-free gloves and apple juice!



Women's Fellowship recently met. Some of our hopefully future plans include a Ladies Tea in April.

A yard sale in May to coincide with the Groton Citywide yard sale. Our bake sales will continue on the 2nd Sundays of the month through May. Our monthly meetings continue to start at 12 Noon. Dates and events will be announced. We would like to have a Corned beef dinner in March. We can only do this if we have at least 35-40 people commit to coming.

Women's Fellowship

A sign up sheet will be available in the near future.

Sally Turner

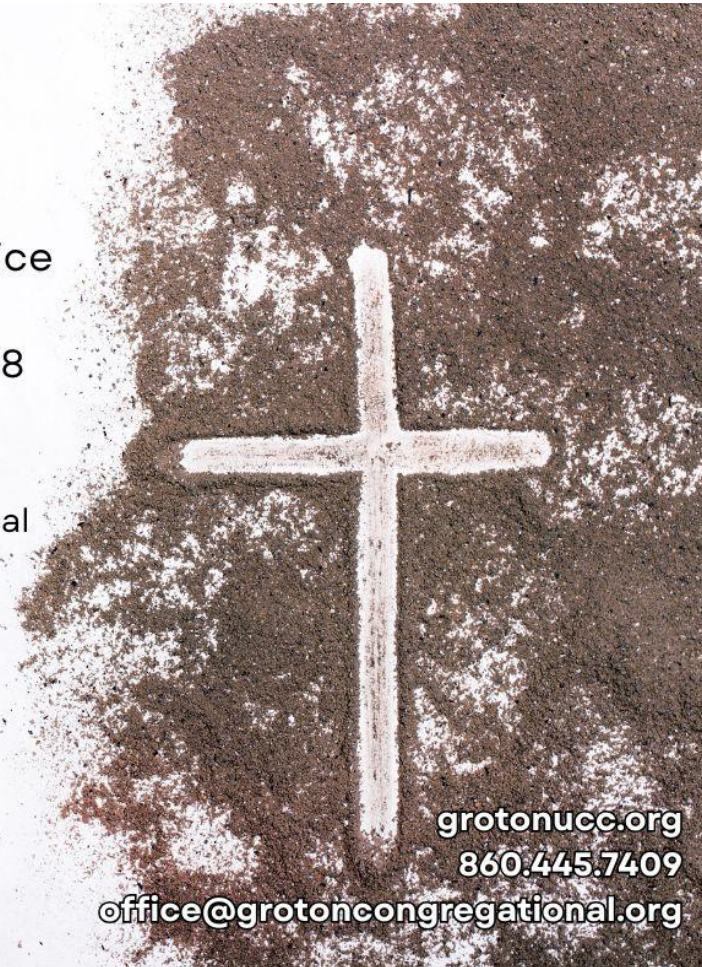
Ash Wednesday Service

Wednesday, Feb 18
at 7 pm

Groton Congregational
Church, UCC

162 Monument Street
Groton, CT

All are welcome

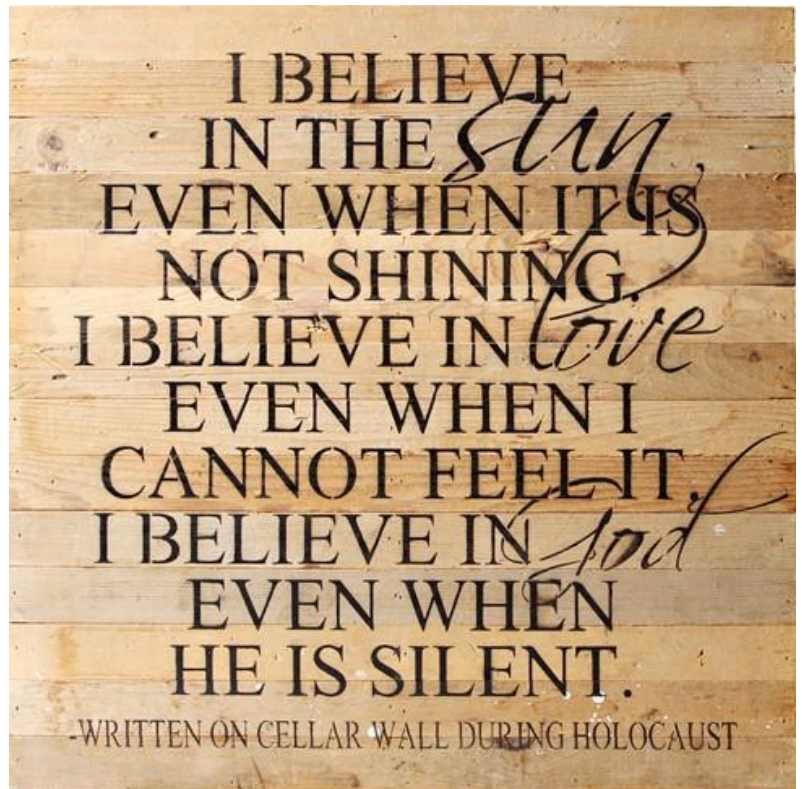


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I BELIEVE

“I believe in the sun
even when it is not shining
And I believe in love,
even when there’s no one there.
And I believe in God,
even when he is silent.
I believe through any trial,
there is always a way
But sometimes in this suffering
and hopeless despair
My heart cries for shelter,
to know someone’s there
But a voice rises within me, saying hold on
my child, I’ll give you strength,
I’ll give you hope. Just stay a little while.
I believe in the sun
even when it is not shining
And I believe in love
even when there’s no one there
But I believe in God
even when he is silent
I believe through any trial
there is always a way.
May there someday be sunshine
May there someday be happiness
May there someday be love
May there someday be peace....”
– *Author Unknown*



It was Holocaust Remembrance Day recently and I was reminded that a number of years ago our youth choir sang an anthem titled, “ I Believe in the Sun.” A sweet little anthem until you learn the back story.

The anthem used part of a poem found on a cellar wall in Cologne, Germany where Jewish people were hiding from the Nazis during WW2. It symbolizes faith and hope despite immense despair and darkness. We don’t know who the author was or what became of them, but they still had hope.


May we always have hope, no matter how dark it may get.

Ingrid

FEBRUARY



2026

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
1 10a Worship	2  GROUNDHOG DAY 6 pm Deacons	3	3	5 6:30p Bell choir 7:30p Choir	6	7 12n Community Meals
8 10a Worship	9	10	11 12 p Women's Fellowship	12 6:30p Bell choir 7:30p Choir	13	14 12n Community Meals
15 10a Worship 12 Noon Annual Meeting	16  PRESIDENTS DAY Office Closed	17..00	18  ASH Wednesday 7 pm Service	19 6:30p Bell choir 7:30p Choir	20	21 12n Community Meals
22 10a Worship	23 1 pm Bible Study	24  Gargoyle Deadline	25	26 6:30p Bell choir 7:30p Choir	27	28 12n Community Meals



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