

Groton Assembly of God

DECEMBER NEWSLETTER 2024

PASTOR'S PEN

God Remembers

Ever try to make sure you couldn't forget something? I've learned to prepare the night before for my departure the next morning. Because I know that I can forget things, such as my church keys, I put them with my wallet the night before. I have found occasionally when I've gotten to church that I forgot both my church keys and my wallet. I've even tried leaving my wristwatch on my wallet. You guessed it: Sometimes I forget the entire pile. Now what I do when I really don't want to forget something is I put my truck keys on the pile. That does it because I can't go anywhere without my keys.

For those waiting to hear that I can't find my truck keys—I know where they are because I lay everything on the dining room table. Penny is very gracious with my pile and doesn't say a word about the clutter or my forgetfulness. And, thankfully, she doesn't move it, or I really would be in trouble.

Would you agree with me that there are some things we don't forget because they are too important, such as our wedding vows, our birthdays, our anniversary. I won't comment on those of you who forget your spouse's birthday or your wedding anniversary. I suspect there is enough said about that already. If not, your spouse should remind you how important those things are. You spouse has my permission to remind you in a way that you won't forget, and that won't jeopardize his or her relationship with Jesus.

Now we know that God does not forget anything. But sometimes we act or

talk as though He does forget, such as when we are going through a challenging time, and we're not hearing from Him or seeing Him answer our prayers. We might think He's forgotten us or forgotten His promise to never leave us or forsake us (Hebrews 13:5). But if we're honest, we will admit He cannot forget us, for He has engraved us on His hand (Isaiah 49:16).

For centuries, God's people waited for Him to keep a promise of sending the messiah, the savior of the world. They waited past their lifetimes, and their grandchildren's lifetimes. But God remembered, and He sent His only begotten Son.

Why do we celebrate Christmas? We celebrate because God remembered His promise to send us a Savior. We celebrate Christ's coming, but we also celebrate our Father's remembering His promises, His love, His mercy, and our preciousness to Him.

You are loved very much. Jesus Christ proves that.



Please join us on Christmas Eve
in the sanctuary
to celebrate the coming
of our Lord Jesus Christ
with **Candlelight Communion**,
Tuesday, December 24,
Anytime between 6 p.m. and 8 p.m.
You will be blessed!



Please join us on Christmas Eve to celebrate the coming of our Lord by joining us for Candlelight Communion, Tuesday, December 24, anytime between 6 p.m. and 8 p.m.

Candlelight Communion is a wonderful time to remember our Savior's birth and gift of life with our family or close friends.

People arrive anytime they wish. One can sit and listen to the lightly playing Christmas music in the dimly lit sanctuary. When they wish, they can approach one of the two pastors in front to be served communion and receive prayer.

If you have other plans that night, come and go as you like and enjoy the rest of your evening with a greater sense of the real reason we celebrate Christmas.

May this Christmas be very special!



Birthdays:

- 2 Charles Bernhardt
- 3 Nayaliz Torres
- 4 Mike McCadam
- 5 Linda VanBerkom
- 9 William Ostrander
- 10 Emilia Moss-Caceres
- 13 Connie Dickerson
- 14 Erica Short
- 15 Elianna Rose Rivera
- 17 Sandra Rivera
- 18 Elias Rivera
Clifton Todd
- 19 Steven Millahn
- 23 Jamie Arnold
- 26 Jennifer Scott
- 31 Brian Twitchell
B.J. Stamp



Anniversaries:

- | | |
|------------|--------------------------|
| 12/8/2017 | Joe & Maureen Fitzgerald |
| 12/18/2004 | Tony & Amy Lanzilotta |
| 12/24/2003 | John & Beth Scott |
| 12/29/1972 | Mike & Karin McCadam |

COOKIES OPEN DOORS

December is a wonderful month to build bridges with neighbors by dropping off cookies with a You Matter card. A quick visit can do wonders to open doors with people we don't know well for later presentation of the gospel.



Annual

Women's Ministry Christmas Party

**Saturday, December 14, 2024
4:00 pm**

Menu: Charcuterie Board, Soup & Salad,
Chicken Divan & Beef Stroganoff, Dessert
Bar

Guest Speaker: Gabriella Kress

Annual Cookie Exchange - For those who are interested in participating in the cookie exchange, bring 4 dozen of one kind of cookie to the party. When you go home, you will take 4 dozen of a variety of cookies.

White Elephant Gift Exchange - For those who are interested in participating in a gift exchange, bring a gift to the party. When you put it on the table, put your name in the basket. When your name is called, you will choose a gift from the table. (Gift price range is \$5 - \$10)

Sign up in the foyer
by December 8

to attend and/or to contribute to the meal.



New Adult Life Groups
Beginning December 8th

Sunday mornings at 9:00 a.m.

LG Nursery & Preschool with Penny Hendrickson and Abby Lattin

LGKids with Chuck Hendrickson and Brian Twitchell, K-5th grade

LGs for adults & youth (6th – 12th grade)

- Bait of Satan with Pastor Cliff and Sara Ostrander
- I Want to Trust You, But I Don't, by Lysa Terkeurst, Women's Bible Study with Trude Morse
- 1 Corinthians, The Challenges of Life Together, by Paul Stevens and Dan Williams, with Alan and Gabriella Kress
- The Making of a Man, Men's Bible Study with Pastor Sam

Tuesday evenings 6:30 p.m.

- Wisdom books of the Bible, Adult Bible Study with Steve Chandler



Names withheld Budapest, Hungary

Now that we live and minister in Budapest, Hungary, we take trips back to Ukraine, our former mission field.

In August, when we traveled back to Ukraine, there was a motorcade bearing fallen soldiers that halted traffic. Pedestrians paused and stared, suddenly hushed. A woman next to us shed tears. Another knelt in prayer. In Kyiv, we delivered a home power bank for a colleague because of the numerous power outages. We visited friends (one of whom is expecting her first child), and we recovered some items that we had to leave behind in storage when we evacuated. The current resident of our former home asked us to remove more of our belongings, so we made another trip back in September. Praise God for our friends who carted loads of stuff for us. They heroically minister in villages under reconstruction, with women and children mourning absent fathers and husbands or living in fear with wounded ones with PTSD. Nightly we heard drones being shot down. Twice we heard missiles being shot down close enough to us to make our building shake. Residents live with daily air raid sirens and broken sleep. Pray for Ukraine.

Praise God for our new vehicle, a 2019 Land Cruiser, which has taken us to Kyiv and all over Europe this summer. After an AGWM Eurasia Northwest retreat in Rome, we went to France on our way to Germany for the annual Students-For-Christ Europe Connect Conference. There we taught two workshops, and Eric led a small group for staff men. Pray that more students across Europe will come to Christ.



O Christmas Tree! Ron and Gloria Hanson, Ethiopia

The year was 1976. We had recently arrived in Ethiopia with our sons, Brent and Scott, ages 7 and 6. Our new "home," a country in turmoil, was drastically different from California; there was nightly shooting around our house. Those were years of war and revolution. Because of the danger involved, we didn't allow the boys to leave our compound except to go to school.

One enormous void was the lack of a Christmas tree. Early in the season we had encouraged Brent and Scott to pray that God would send us a tree, and they had been praying for the whole month. But it was now only two days before Christmas, and we still had no Christmas tree. A neighbor had generously shared some of her tree ornaments with us, but they were worthless with no tree to hang them on. We knew it would take a miracle!

That night, as my husband Ron and I sat in our small living room, the boys both sound asleep in bed, we heard a knock on our door. It was already 10 p.m., and we had no idea who it could be. No one came to anyone's house at that time of night; it was simply too dangerous. But when we opened the door, a man stood there, holding a small

Groton Assembly of God

Christmas tree. He offered it to us for sale, an offer we quickly agreed to, thanking God for this miracle. When the boys awoke the next morning, they found the miracle, the tree they had asked God for. To them, that small African tree was the most beautiful tree they had ever seen.

Afterwards, we attempted to find out who this man was, but no one knew, very unusual in a tightly knit African community. It was as if he had disappeared. Could this man have been an angel? We don't know. All we do know is that God answered the prayers of two little boys their first Christmas away from their California home in a new country far away.

Ron and Gloria Hanson served as AGWM missionaries to East Africa for 37 years. Both Brent and Scott Hanson continue to serve in the region with their families.



A Sense of Urgency **Wilfredo "Choco" De Jesus,** **U.S. Missions Executive Director**

September 11, 2024

Is there not a cause? I find myself asking this question today as I look at the state of the U.S. and the world. I believe the greatest lie is not that there is no heaven or hell; the greatest lie is that there is no sense of urgency. If we as believers are consumed by zeal for the Savior, as David was, is there

not a cause for us to take immediate action in these tumultuous times?

- 150 people die every day from overdose from synthetic opioids like fentanyl. This is why we need **Adult & Teen Challenge, U.S.A.**
- In the U.S. there are approximately 1.2 million people in state and federal prisons. This is why we need **Chaplaincy Ministries.**
- According to the Barna Group, roughly 70% of students entering college as professing Christians will leave with little to no faith. The university is one of the most secular communities in America, and today's student is tomorrow's society. This is why we need **Chi Alpha Campus Ministries, U.S.A.**
- Rural and village churches are being revitalized through church teams at a rate of 48 projects completed this year--an approximate savings of \$10,000,000 per year. That is why we need **Rural Compassion and Church Mobilization.**
- The current influx of immigrants accounts for 13% of the U.S. population. This is why we need **Intercultural Ministries.**
- There are areas in the United States without a consistent gospel witness. This is why we need **U.S. Specialized.**
- 42% of Gen Z has been diagnosed with a mental health condition, the highest levels of anxiety and depression ever recorded in a generation, with 8 out of 10 suffering. In the U.S., there are 45,979 suicide deaths per year, averaging 125 per day. This is why we need **Youth Alive.**

Groton Assembly of God

Is there not a cause for us to reach out to this nation with the good news that Jesus saves, brings hope, and gives peace? We are commanded to follow the example and teaching of Jesus to SEEK and SAVE the lost (Luke 19:10).

Be part of the solution by partnering with U.S. Missions and our core ministries: Adult & Teen Challenge, Youth Alive, Chi Alpha, Intercultural Ministries, Chaplaincy, Church Mobilization, U.S. Specialized, and Seek and Save.

People are the cause. Lost souls are the cause. A healthy Church is the cause. Ushering as many as possible into the kingdom of God is the purpose.



Kent and Judy Anderson, U.S. Missions Rural Compassion Ministry Supported by Groton AG

Rural Compassion is a compassion ministry of the Assemblies of God. It partners with Convoy of Hope to provide hope to people living in rural America.

Pastor Steve and Gwen McBrien in Oswego, Kansas, were introduced to Rural Compassion in 2008 at our training outreach. The McBrien's were looking for

creative ways to reach their community. They immediately began reaching out to the school. Their Oswego Assembly of God church served meals for the football team, and eventually the head coach began to attend the church. Next, they started feeding the basketball team before their games. The church bought school lunches for the kids, provided meals for teachers, purchased sports equipment, and provided backpacks and school supplies. Eventually, Steve began coaching the football and basketball teams. Gwen was the cheerleading coach for seven years, and a paraprofessional for five years. The church reached the parents because of their impact on the kids in the school system. Four out of the five football coaches now attend the church. One Sunday in August, Steve baptized 10 students, four of which are in the sports program. Fifteen local school teachers are now part of the congregation. People who were once school kids are now ministry leaders. Boys coached by Steve now have families of their own, and attend the church. Some of these young men are teaching in the school district. Steve stated, "when you serve your rural town, everyone sees it. No matter what your church looks like, you can do outreach." The church packed 200 family kits to hand out at its annual backpack block party, with food and supplies provided by Rural Compassion. The church has routinely blessed their local firefighters, police, and EMS heroes, provides a food pantry, and is regularly involved in community events. Oswego AG has had a powerful impact on its community of 1,600.

[Kent and Judy Anderson recently conducted a training in Syracuse, NY. 23 churches were represented in the workshop. A semi-load of product was given to the churches.]