



Groton & Conde & Britton UMC

Newsletter

December 2025

906 N 1st St, Groton, SD 57445

...Pastor Rob's Ponderings

"Reading the Bible Better"

For those who missed it, I shared two sermons on the subject of "Reading the Bible Better" earlier in November. (I had attended a couple of pastor conferences on the subject and the material was so good I had to share it.)

One of the pieces of advice in reading the bible better is to "ruminate" on scripture. Ruminating has the same meaning as a cow chewing cud. The process of chewing cud has to a cow having four stomachs and processing their food over a long period of time. If you want to know the exact "cud chewing" process I invite you to visit with a farmer or anyone raised near cattle. I like the picture of "chewing things over" when thinking about scripture. Many people search scripture when they are looking for a particular answer to a particular problem. Other people treat like medicine; they look for a passage they "seem to remember" which once helped them. Still others use scripture for traditional reasons. "We always read from Luke 2 on Christmas Eve." Other than these reasons, bibles are usually left on the shelf.



I have been "ruminating" on something I read a couple of days ago. At the beginning of Matthew 8, a man with leprosy comes to Jesus saying, "If you are willing you can heal me." Jesus responds, "I am willing. You are healed." I've been wondering about the "willing" part of the encounter. I can understand the man saying it but why does Jesus respond the way He does? Why doesn't Jesus simply say, "You are healed. Go show yourself to the priest."?

Is there and implication there might be times Jesus is unwilling to heal? I'm often asked about the physical condition of my left arm and the way I carry myself. An accident occurred during my birth

causing damage to my brain preventing my arm and left side from developing properly. Over the course of my life, this has caused developmental delays in walking and even in speech, but it never resulted in delaying God's call in my life. While at college, there were a couple of times when friends offered to pray for my "healing." While earnest in our desire during our prayers, I was never really surprised at the result. Throughout my ministry the number of children asking about my arm has always brought a smile and an opportunity to talk about the love of Jesus.

As I continue my "ruminating" I'm also reminded of Paul's writing in 2 Corinthians 12 talking

about his "thorn in the flesh" which he prayed for three times to be removed, yet God "allowed it to remain for His glory" demonstrating God's work even in weakness. So, the ruminating continues.

I hope and pray, as we enter this Advent season, you join me in approaching scripture in a fresh way. Don't rush through the Advent/Christmas season. Take some time to "ruminate" on what you are reading. When it comes to the Bible, it's not the quantity of what you read, it's the quality of the time you are spending with God. When you come to a verse, or even a phrase in a verse, that sparks your mind, it's the Holy Spirit saying, "Stop here a moment. Let's ruminate on this."

See you in church!



Pastor Rob
In Office
Tuesday &
Thursday
Evenings
6-8 pm

Monday
Day Off



Oaklynn Marie Daly

Was born November 3, 2025
at 9:39 am weighing 6 lbs 11
oz and 20.25 inches long.
Parents are Tyson Daly and
KayLynn Overacker



The Angels' Song in Three Words

On the very first Christmas Eve, frightened shepherds were suddenly surrounded by light and music. A choir of angels filled the night sky, singing: "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men" (Luke 2:14, KJV). Nineteenth-century pastor Charles Kingsley reflected on how those three simple words — glory, peace, and good will — still capture the meaning of Je-

sus' birth and the hope it brings.

Glory. God's glory isn't shown in dazzling displays of power but in humility and mercy. The baby in the manger revealed God's greatness by stooping low, forgiving, and showing love.

Peace. True peace is more than the absence of conflict. It comes when we follow God's example of selflessness, giving up pride and selfish ambition to live in harmony with one another.

Good will. God's good will toward us is a gift that transforms our lives.

Through Jesus, God invites us out of selfishness and sin into a life marked by love, kindness, and community. The angels' song wasn't meant only for shepherds long ago. It still sings to us today, calling each of us to live in glory, peace, and good will.



John Lowary
Nov 2, 2025



Church Information

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906 N 1st St Groton, SD 57445

Safe Sanctuaries

As Christians, we are called to create a safe sanctuary in our churches. They must be holy, safe and protective communities for all of God's children, regardless of age or ability.

In order to provide this kind of Christian community in our church, the Groton United Methodist Church has adopted a "Safe Sanctuary" policy outlining how all the ministries of the church promote a "safe place" for all people who take part in these ministries.

Our policies do things like ensure proper supervision is maintained for our ministries, and making sure training is done for our volunteers who minister in our church.

These policies are always kept on file in the church office. If you would like a copy, or would simply like to read through them, contact Pastor Rob for more information.

Conde MISSION STATEMENT

"The Conde United Methodist Church is seeking to satisfy the spiritual and physical needs of all."

Blue Christmas Tree

The Groton UMC Caring Team will be putting up a Christmas Tree for the church family to be able to put an ornament on it in memory of a loved one. Please place the person in memory of on the ornament or on a ribbon tied to the ornament. Below is the description of a Blue Christmas from Wikipedia. Blue Christmas is observed during the end of Advent, before Christmas Day

Blue Christmas (also called the Longest Night) in the Western Christian tradition is a day in the Advent season marking the longest night of the year. On this day, some churches in Western Christian denominations hold a church service that honors people that have lost loved ones and are experiencing grief. These include parishes of Catholicism, Anglicanism, Lutheranism, Methodism, Moravianism, and Reformed Christianity. The Holy Eucharist is traditionally a part of the service of worship on this day. This worship service is traditionally held

on or around the longest night of the year, which falls on or about December 21, the Winter Solstice.

There is an interesting convergence for this day as it is also the traditional feast day for Saint Thomas the Apostle. This linkage invites making some connections between Saint Thomas's struggle to believe in Jesus' resurrection, the long nights just before Christmas, and the struggle with darkness and grief faced by those living with loss.

The worship often includes opportunities for expression of grief, pain, and heartbreak as well as an opportunity to focus on the promise of hope found in Christ. Candles, arranged as an Advent wreath, may be lit during the service, and empty chairs may be reserved as a way of commemorating those lost during the previous year. The images of the winter solstice, including the beginning of increasingly longer days, are a significant part of the imagery used in this worship event.



The Groton United Methodist Sunday School presents

"Elf - The Search for the Joy of Christmas"

Sunday, December 21, 2025

9:30 a.m.

Brunch will follow the program



Join Buddy the Elf, Betty the Elf, and friends find the Joy of Christmas. From the North Pole to New York City to Bethlehem – a festive adventure for all.



Christmas Card treasures



Turn old Christmas cards into beautiful keepsake ornaments! It's a fun, simple way to give new life to cards you've received and add a handmade touch to your tree.

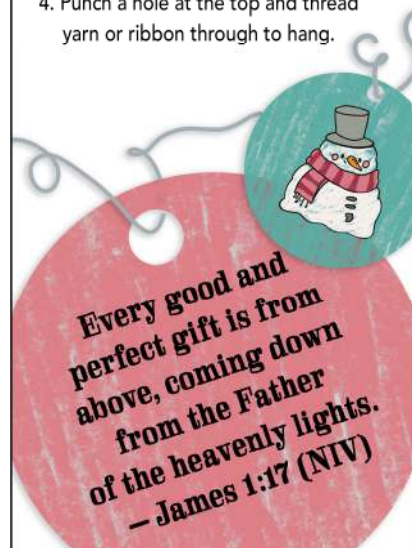
What you need:

- Christmas cards
- Scissors
- Glue
- Circle pattern (cut from cardboard or trace around object)
- Hole punch
- Yarn or ribbon
- Glitter (optional)



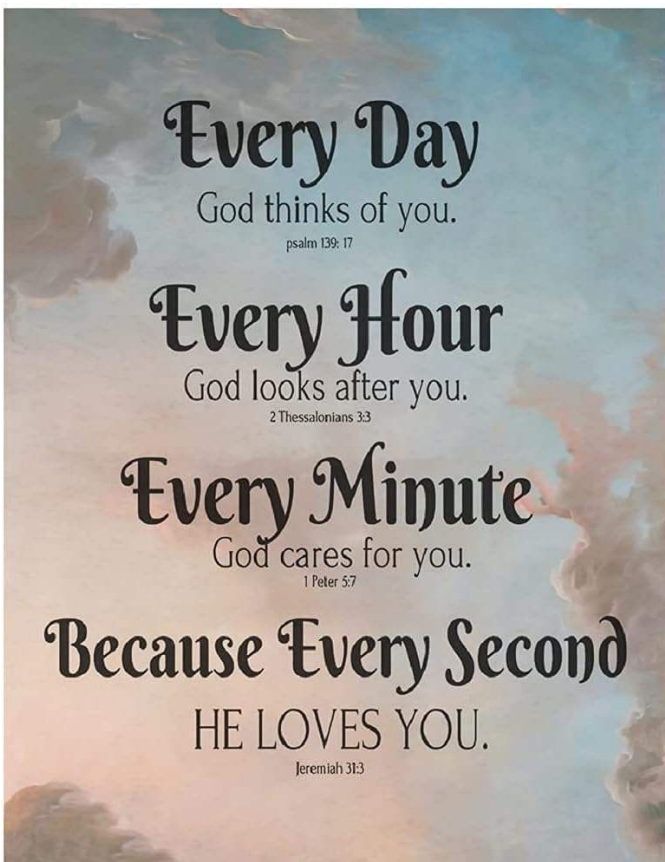
What you do:

1. Trace a circle onto two Christmas cards.
2. Cut out the circles and glue the backs together.
3. Decorate the edges with glitter or ribbon for extra sparkle.
4. Punch a hole at the top and thread yarn or ribbon through to hang.



Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights.
— James 1:17 (NIV)





12 Christmas PRAYERS

1.Expectation

Fill us with hope, knowing that God kept his promise to send his Son to earth. (See *Isaiah 9:6-7.*)

2.Wonder

Just as the angel's message left Mary in awe, remind us of the joyful news of Jesus' coming. (See *Luke 1:31-33.*)

3.Humility

Like Joseph, make us willing to trust God and humbly care for others. (See *Matthew 1:20-21.*)

4.Obedience

On our earthly journey, teach us to follow your commands, just as Joseph and Mary obediently traveled to Bethlehem. (See *Luke 2:4-5.*)

5.Provision

Thank you for meeting all our needs, as you provided a stable and manger bed for Baby Jesus. (See *Luke 2:6-7.*)

6.Peace

Fill us with your perfect peace, which the angels proclaimed when Jesus was born. (See *Luke 2:13-14.*)

7.Praising

Remind us to follow the shepherds' example of celebrating and sharing the good news of Jesus' birth. (See *Luke 2:16-18.*)

8.Grateful

Keep us thankful for God's greatest gift, which Mary treasured on the first Christmas. (See *Luke 2:19.*)

9.Saved

May Jesus' precious name remind us of his power to save us from our sins. (See *Matthew 1:21.*)

10.Fulfilled

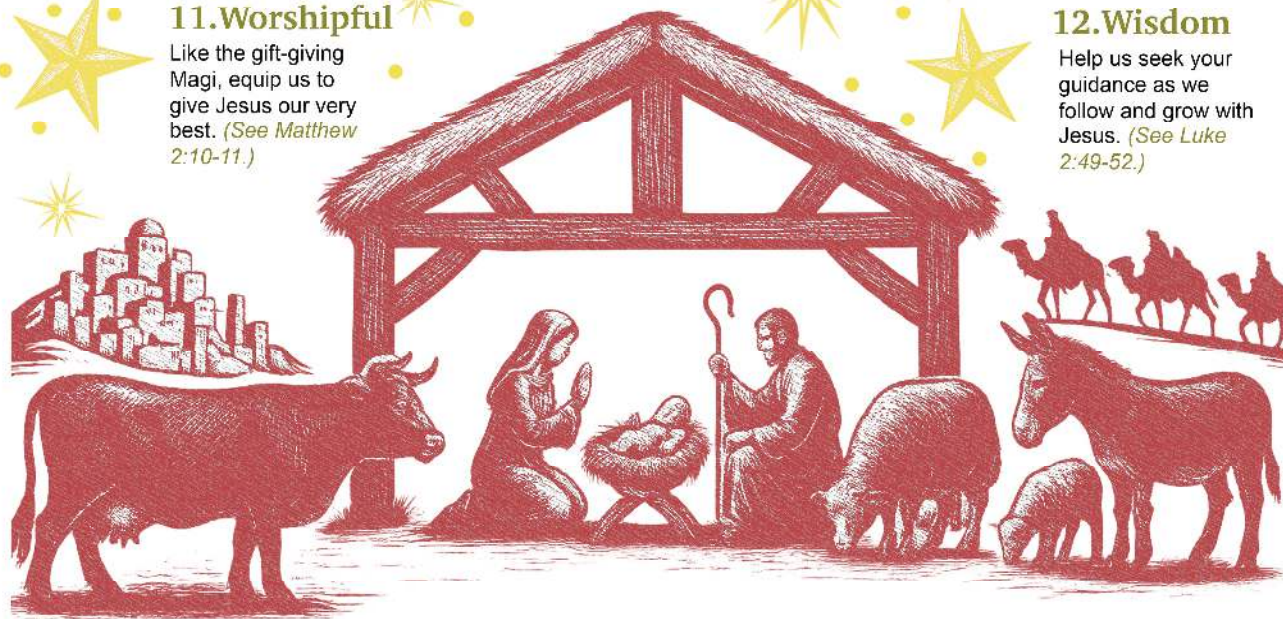
Give us content hearts, just as Simeon and Anna found fulfillment in the promised Savior. (See *Luke 2:28-32.*)

11.Worshipful

Like the gift-giving Magi, equip us to give Jesus our very best. (See *Matthew 2:10-11.*)

12.Wisdom

Help us seek your guidance as we follow and grow with Jesus. (See *Luke 2:49-52.*)



Groton Family Committee - January 2026

Chairpersons

Kami and Tom Lipp
Crystal Strom

Brian Bahr
Val Baker
Angela and Perry Dobbins
Kristin Dolan
Adrienne and Tigh Fliehs
Cheryl Hanson
Sarah and Rick Hofer
Linda and Jay Johnson
Yvonne Lange
Shelly Lerew
Kami and Tom Lipp
Laurie and AM Mitchell
Chuck Padfield
Joey and Sabrina Padfield
Karla Pasteur
Peggy and Harlan Place
Sue and Randy Stanley
Crystal Strom
Todd Thurston

Honorary Members

Marie McClintic & Larry Schnaidt
Ida Hannon
Gloria Pharis
Judy Zeck

- Check Kitchen Supplies for the month
- Check & Clean Oven and Fridge as necessary.
- Coffee Hour workers (make coffee, provide cookies, launder towels, and remove trash)
- 2 Ushers for each Sunday
- Straighten the Sanctuary Pews
- Change the banners as needed as per schedule in back of this book.
- Maintain the Altar Flower Arrangements
- Shovel snow from doorways before Church
- Take down Christmas decorations with all church helping
- If tree lights need replacing, do so before putting them away
- Change decorations on tables in fellowship hall with the seasons

Candles that tell a Story

Lighting its candles each Sunday is a treasured tradition during the four weeks of Advent.

Depending on denomination, churches use different color combinations for the candles. Some place four blue candles around the wreath with a white one in the center, while others use all white. Many light purple candles on the first two Sundays, pink on the third, purple again on the fourth, and then a large white candle on Christmas Eve or Christmas Day. Each part of the wreath carries symbolic meaning:

The wreath: Its circular shape represents the everlasting love of God, having no beginning or end. The green symbolizes eternal life.

The four candles: Mark the four weeks of Advent. One tradition says that each candle also represents 1,000 years, totaling 4,000 years from Adam and Eve to Christ's birth.

Purple candles: in ancient times, was expensive and was considered the color of royalty and kings. On Christmas, Christ is proclaimed King of Kings. Purple also symbolizes humility and penitence. The first purple candle represents Hope; the second, Peace; and the final purple candle, Love.

Blue candles: Blue is another color often used as a symbol of royalty. Some churches use blue candles to symbolize the night sky and the anticipation of the announcement of Christ's birth. Blue also symbolizes the beginning of a new creation as in the waters of Genesis 1.

The pink candle: Lit on the third Sunday, it represents Joy and marks the half-way point of Advent.

The white candle: The large white candle in the center is the Christ candle. Its light symbolizes Christ the Savior — "the light of the world."

The beauty and brightness from the glow of all five candles is a reminder that Christ's life was the light for all earth's people — "The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it" (John 1:5, NRSV).

The Advent wreath is more than just greenery and candles—it's a symbol of watchfulness and growing joy as Christmas draws near.

January 2026						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31



Our Church Celebrations...

Groton

Dec 2 Meri Erickson
 Dec 3 Anthony Sippel
 Dec 4 Darlys Kampa
 Dec 9 Brooklyn Gilbert
 Doris Anderson
 Dec 10 Jett Kurtz
 Dec 13 Melissa Gilbert
 Dec 15 Marjae Schinkel
 Dec 16 Dan Schinkel
 Sage Mortenson
 Dec 18 Dylan Hanson
 Dec 19 Brad Olson
 Dec 20 Lon & Marva Gellhaus
 Dec 21 Bo Fliehs
 McKenna Tietz
 Dec 22 John Padfield
 Dec 23 Marc & Fran Sippel

Dec 27 Emily Overacker
 Karla Pasteur
 Dec 28 Jaden Dobbins
 Dec 30 Alex Graf

Conde

No Celebrations this month

Britton

Dec 10 Matthew Heitmann
 Dec 17 Deena Heitmann
 Dec 17 Adrian Heitmann
 Dec 18 Pat Bolzer
 Dec 20 Troy Hanson
 Dec 25 Carol Bush

Corrections are always welcome.

Gifts for a King

Bring him thy precious things
 And lay them at his feet;
 The gold of love, the hope that
 springs
 The unknown ways to meet.

Bring him thy lovely things;
 The joy that conquers care,
 The faith that trusts and sings,
 The frankincense of prayer.

Bring him thy bitter things;
 The myrrh of grief and fears,
 The aching heart that stings
 With pain of unshed tears.

These for thy gifts to him;
 And for his gifts to thee,
 The comfort of his steadfast
 love,
 His tender sympathy.

—Annie Johnson Flint

GROTON UMC OFFERING STATISTICS

2025 Month	Offering Received	Needed for Budget	Average Attendance	Received for Building Maintenance
January	5,521	9,249	44	255
February	5,753	9,249	42	205
March	8,209	9,249	55	405
April	20,718	9,249	61	505
May	5,964	9,249	65	280
June	5,876	9,249	29	280
July	5,528	9,249	37	280
August	1,287	9,249	37	255
September	5,428	9,249	63	205
October	9,488	9,249	63	255
November				
December				
YTD Totals	73,772	92,490		2925



Groton Ad Council - November

Chairman, AM Mitchell, called the meeting to order. In attendance were Pastor Rob Moorlach, AM Mitchell, Jeanne Wanous, Cliff & Carna Pray, Allen Walter, Jolene Townsend, and Linda Thurston. Pastor Rob shared a prayer prior to the discussion of business.

Both the agenda and the previous minutes were approved on a motion by Jolene Townsend.

Committee Reports

Membership—Anita Lowary: no updates

Memorial: no updates

Missions - Val Baker/Carna Atherton-Pray: Carna shared that the committee is considering joining with the Aberdeen North Highland UMC's Christmas shoe-box gifts to children at Enemy Swim Day School near Waubay, SD.

Caring Team—Jolene Townsend:

Jolene highlighted how our Caring Team was involved with the recent confirmation by helping to gift blankets to the students and organize a cake & coffee reception for all of those in attendance following our church service.

The caring team plans to set up the "Blue Christmas Tree" again for members to decorate with mementos that highlight loved ones who have passed away.

In addition, Jolene shared the joy of four new families who have recently begun attending our Groton UMC services. We are thankful and blessed.

Pastor/Parish Relations: Carna Atherton-Pray shared that this group will meet four times in 2026.

Trustees—Cliff Pray: Cliff reminded members that the boiler won't be turned on until it gets colder. He and Carna are looking into our church insurance property valuation and how that is currently determined to understand increasing insurance costs. More information will be gathered in addition to visiting with UMC Conference officials to prepare for the future.

Treasurer's Report:

Church Treasurer—Jeanne Wanous:

Jeanne asked the members if they had any specific projects in mind for the 2024 Fall Dinner funds of \$1,768.49. After discussion, Linda Thurston motioned to move the Fall Dinner funds to our general fund. The motion was 2nd & passed.

Jeanne also reminded the council that we have funds in the UMYF fund that haven't had any activity for quite some time.

Jeanne also reminded council members that we have camping funds for students, but there hasn't been any recent interest by our youth in attending camp. We may want to do some camping promotion before summertime.

Financial Secretary—Allen Walter: Allen asked what the council would like to do with some upcoming funds that will be donated to the Groton UMC by a deceased member of our church. Carna Atherton-Pray moved to, upon receipt of funds, deposit them to our memorial fund as there is no funding designation from the deceased. The motion was 2nd by Cliff Pray and the motion was unanimously approved.

Pastor Parish—Meri Erickson: no report

Administrative Report: Pastor Rob discussed the following:

Safe Sanctuary Policy: Pastor Rob shared that this is now referred to as Safer Sanctuaries. Pastor Rob has worked with other Groton UMC members to update our policy. Each member in attendance was given a copy to review. Pastor Rob highlighted sections of the policy that have been updated. Council members had time to discuss the changes. After discussion, Allen Walter motioned to approve the updated policy as presented by Pastor Rob. Carna Atherton-Pray 2nd the motion and the motion was unanimously approved.

Confirmation: Pastor Rob felt that the recent confirmation went well. He stated that we would probably be doing a new membership Sunday during our Lenten season.

Old Business:

Approval of Groton UMC 2026 Budget:

Members reviewed a proposed 2026 budget presented by the Finance Committee chair, Roger Rix. After some discussion, the new budget that was proposed was approved on a motion to accept by Allen Walter and 2nd by Cliff Pray. The motion passed.

Social Services Update: Pastor Rob reported that the Social Services is no longer in need of the space we offered them at our church.

New Business:

Sanctuary Window Blinds: Linda Thurston asked the council to discuss replacement of sanctuary window blinds on a few of the upper eastside windows to enhance viewing of the projector screen during Sunday morning services, especially for those running the screen projection program. In discussion, members remembered that those blinds were removed when old windows were replaced. Cliff Pray will follow up on the topic and thought that perhaps tinting the windows would solve the problem.

Snow Removal: Cliff Pray will follow up to see who might be interested in doing this.

Nativity: Cliff will organize the effort to put our nativity scene up.












Dec. Ad Council Meeting?: No Dec. meeting will be held. President, AM Mitchell, felt that if something important comes up, we would discuss it on a Sunday morning, before or after our service.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:26 pm.

Secretary, Jeanne Wanous

Groton UMC

December 2025

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<div>30</div> <div></div> <div>1st Sunday of Advent (purple or blue) Advent 8:15am Conde Worship 9:30am Groton Worship 9:30am NO Groton Sunday School 10:30am Coffee Hour 11:15am Britton UMC Worship</div>	<div>1</div> <div>11:00am The Pantry at Groton Community Center</div>	<div>2</div> <div>10:00am Bible Study 3:00pm Common Cents Community Thrift Store Downtown 4:00pm The Pantry at Groton Community Center</div>	<div>3</div> <div></div> <div>9:30am Community Coffee Hour 6:15pm UMYF</div>	<div>4</div> <div>10:00am Sunday Items Due for Secretary</div>	<div>5</div>	<div>6</div> <div>10:00am Common Cents Community Thrift Store Downtown</div>
<div>7</div> <div></div> <div>2nd Sunday of Advent (purple or blue) Communion in Worship (white) 8:15am Conde Worship 9:30am Groton Sunday School Christmas Program Practice 9:30am Groton Worship 10:30am Coffee Hour 11:15am Britton UMC Worship</div>	<div>8</div> <div>11:00am The Pantry at Groton Community Center</div>	<div>9</div> <div>10:00am Bible Study 3:00pm Common Cents Community Thrift Store Downtown 4:00pm The Pantry at Groton Community Center</div>	<div>10</div> <div></div> <div>9:30am Community Coffee Hour</div>	<div>11</div> <div>10:00am Sunday Items Due for Secretary</div>	<div>12</div>	<div>13</div> <div>10:00am Common Cents Community Thrift Store Downtown</div>
<div>14</div> <div></div> <div>3rd Sunday of Advent (purple or blue) 8:15am Conde Worship 9:30am Groton Sunday School Practice 9:30am Groton Worship 10:30am Coffee Hour 11:15am Britton UMC Worship</div>	<div>15</div> <div>11:00am The Pantry at Groton Community Center</div>	<div>16</div> <div>10:00am Bible Study 3:00pm Common Cents Community Thrift Store Downtown 4:00pm The Pantry at Groton Community Center</div>	<div>17</div> <div></div> <div>9:30am Community Coffee Hour</div>	<div>18</div> <div>10:00am Sunday Items Due for Secretary</div>	<div>19</div>	<div>20</div> <div>10:00am Common Cents Community Thrift Store Downtown</div>
<div>21</div> <div></div> <div>4th Sunday of Advent (purple or blue) Newsletter Items Due 8:15am Conde Worship 9:30am Groton Sunday School Christmas Program 9:30am Groton Worship 10:30am Coffee Hour 11:15am Britton UMC Worship</div>	<div>22</div> <div>11:00am The Pantry at Groton Community Center</div>	<div>23</div> <div>3:00pm Common Cents Community Thrift Store Downtown 4:00pm The Pantry at Groton Community Center</div>	<div>24</div> <div></div> <div>9:30am Community Coffee Hour 10:00am Britton Service 5:00pm Groton Service 7:00pm Conde Service</div>	<div>25</div> <div></div> <div>(white or gold) Christmas Day 10:00am Sunday Items Due for Secretary</div>	<div>26</div>	<div>27</div> <div>10:00am Common Cents Community Thrift Store Downtown</div>
<div>28</div> <div>1st Sunday after Christmas Day (white or gold) 8:15am Conde Worship 9:30am Groton Sunday School 9:30am Groton Worship 10:30am Coffee Hour 11:15am Britton UMC Worship</div>	<div>29</div> <div>11:00am The Pantry at Groton Community Center</div>	<div>30</div> <div>3:00pm Common Cents Community Thrift Store Downtown 4:00pm The Pantry at Groton Community Center</div>	<div>31</div> <div></div> <div>9:30am Community Coffee Hour</div>	<div>1</div> <div></div> <div>New Year's Day 10:00am Sunday Items Due for Secretary</div>	<div>2</div>	<div>3</div> <div>10:00am Common Cents Community Thrift Store Downtown</div>

December 2025

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30	31			

Our Church Happenings...

Dec 3 UMYF at 6:15 pm

Dec 21 Groton Sunday School Christmas Program at 9:30 am

Followed by a Brunch

Dec 24 **Britton Service 10 am**

Groton Service 5 pm

Conde Service 7 pm

