

**THE FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
OF ELLSWORTH, MAINE
FOUNDED 1812**



JANUARY 2021 - THE STEEPLE NEWSLETTER

First Congregational Church, PO Box 12, 2 Church Street, Ellsworth, Maine 04605 207-667-8321 ellsworthucc.org

FROM OUR MODERATOR

Once again during the Church year we find ourselves unable to gather in person for worship and for fellowship. We are all wondering when, or if all this chaos will end.

In a world determined to divide us, we are finding ways to adapt to our current realities—we will continue to be a gathered body of faithful people bound by our love for each other and our love for God.

None of us would have ever imagined a Christmas season as different as this one has been. Yet, in the midst of all the division and all of the longing for some type of normalcy the season of Christmas arrives.

Christmas, a season of new beginnings, a season of hope. A time to celebrate the coming of Jesus. A time perhaps to remember all the good that God has done for us.

A chance for all of us to rethink what it means to be a Christian, who it is that we are being called to be and how we will go about answering that call.

We all live in a world competing for our attention, our loyalties. To whom should we offer ourselves? With what should we align ourselves?

We all have the freedom to go in whatever direction we choose. We need to choose wisely. Lovingly. Faithfully.

Long ago God made the choice to reach out in a new and different way to humanity. There is no better time than now to open our hearts to all that God intends.

Jack L.

Until further notice, the church sanctuary is closed to in-person worship. We are taking precautions since the spike in the pandemic.



ANNUAL MEETING POSTPONED



Owing to the pandemic, the church Council has voted to postpone the Annual Meeting for 90 days. People currently serving on boards & committees will remain in place until Annual Meeting.

We hope to publish the Annual Report in February. If you chair a committee, please submit your year-end report on 2020 activities to Joyce in the church office as soon as possible. (Gold stars always awarded to early birds!)

JANUARY CHURCH MEETINGS (ZOOM)

- Adult Forum** – Sundays, 8:30 a.m.
Kids Church – Sundays, 11:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m.
Re-Opening – Thursday, Jan 7, 6:45 p.m.
Deacons – Sunday, Jan 10, 12:30 p.m.
Trustees – Thursday, Jan 14, 7 p.m.
Christian Ed – Sunday, Jan 17, 12:30 p.m.
Missions – Thursday, Jan 21, 6:45 p.m.
Council – Wednesday, Jan 27, 7 p.m.

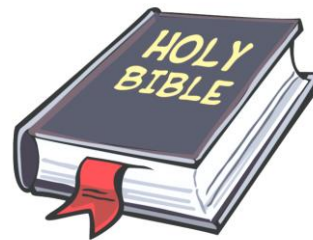
FCC Zoom events use the same meeting number and password. Call the church office (T-W-Th) for Zoom instructions if you need them.

THANK YOU

We appreciated the Christmas cards that members and friends sent to the church in December. The pretty images were cheerful additions to the office.

THE PASTOR IS AWAY THROUGH JANUARY 5.

If you have a pastoral emergency, please call Katharine S., Jack L., or the church office. Clergy on call will be contacted.



JANUARY 2021 LECTIONARY READINGS

JANUARY 1 – NEW YEAR'S DAY

Ecclesiastes 3:1-13
Psalm 8
Revelation 21:1-6a
Matthew 25:31-36

JANUARY 3 – 2ND SUNDAY AFTER CHRISTMAS

Jeremiah 31:7-14
Psalm 147:12-20
Ephesians 1:3-14
John 1:(1-9), 10-18

JANUARY 6 - EPIPHANY

Isaiah 60:1-6
Psalm 72:1-7, 10-14
Ephesians 3:1-12
Matthew 2-12

JANUARY 10 – BAPTISM OF CHRIST

Genesis 1:1-5
Psalm 29
Acts 19:1-7
Mark 1:4-11

JANUARY 17 – 2ND SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

1 Samuel 3:1-10, (11-20)
Psalm 139:1-6, 13-18
1 Corinthians 6:12-20
John 1:43-51

JANUARY 24 – 3RD SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

John 3:1-5, 10
Psalm 62:5-12
1 Corinthians 7:29-31
Mark 1:14-20

JANUARY 31 – 4TH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

Deuteronomy 18:15-20
Psalm 111
1 Corinthians 8:1-13
Mark 1:21-28

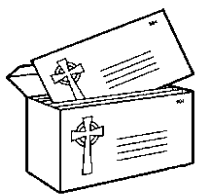
DEACONS

The Deacons hope that everyone made it through the holidays safely and are moving toward a healthy and happy New Year. The Deacons want to make sure that everyone has the items they need to be able to participate in church and services as much as they want to. If you need something specific so that you can participate, please let us know.

The last few months have been a learning and eye-opening experience for everyone. We continue to be amazed at the willingness of individuals to step up and make the church move forward. Please continue to reach out as needs become apparent and we, the Deacons, will try and help to find an appropriate solution.

Deacons are there to support our congregation and its needs. One of these areas is prayer. Our board has lists of our congregation and we hold our congregants up in prayer all the time. We also have a group of individuals that are called upon when specific requests are made. Pat J. has been the contact to make the calls to the Prayer Chain. She has taken care of this very important position for at least two years. If you are interested in being added to this list, please contact either Katharine S. or Pat J. Any time prayers or requests for prayers are needed, please let us know by contacting the office, Katharine S. or Pat J.

We look forward to a great and healthy 2021!



Offering envelopes are available for pick-up, or if preferred, delivery. Anyone with an envelope number above 50 was reassigned a new number this year.

ADULT FORUM REPORT

The Adult Forum read the Gospel narratives of the infant birth stories in Matthew and Luke. This helped remind us of "the reason for the season". We discussed the historical accuracy of the narratives and why they are so different from each other.

We will begin reading *The Meaning of Jesus: Two Visions* by Marcus Borg and N.T. Wright, contemporary liberal and moderate theologians (Nicodemuses). Comments from anyone are more than welcome. I, for one, am always trying to hear the Holy Spirit of truth that I believe is in anyone who believes Jesus is the Christ.

May the Grace of our Lord Jesus the Christ be with you all.

Tom M.



Beloved members of Christ's family,

I am so thankful that God called me to this community of faith. You have graciously and generously supported me during a stressful and exhausting two weeks. Thank you for understanding that a pastor cannot always be an endless supply of care and proclamation.

Rev. Nancy and I thank you for your cards and prayers. During this time of isolation, we are grateful for gifts of time, items/food from and for kitchens (and their delivery), shopping, clean laundry, and gifts that cheered both Nancy and me. Thank you for those who did heavy lifting during this time of relocation from Surry to Ellsworth immediately before Nancy's lung surgery.

I am grateful to Katharine for arranging for preachers as well as to John L., Jack L. and Ruth T. who preached. Christmas and Easter are exceedingly special times for a pastor and congregation and neither was anywhere near "normal" in 2020. Yet the pandemic did not stop us from coming to adore our loving God in our "home pews."

Pastor Cynthia

JANUARY 2021 EVENTS AT FIRST CONGO UCC

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; display: inline-block;">ROC = Re-opening Committee</div>					1 New Year's Day OFFICE CLOSED <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px; text-align: center; margin-top: 5px;">Pastor out</div>	2
3 White 8:30 am Adult Forum 10 am Worship Service & Holy Communion 11:30 am Kids Church <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px; text-align: center; margin-top: 10px;">Pastor out</div>	4 OFFICE CLOSED	5	6 Epiphany 3-5 pm Welcome Table take-out	7 9 am Bulletin deadline 6:45 pm ROC	8 OFFICE CLOSED	9
10 White 8:30 am Adult Forum 10 am Worship Service 11:30 am Kids Church 12:30 pm Deacons	11 OFFICE CLOSED	12 6:45 pm Missions	13 3-5 pm Welcome Table take-out	14 9 am Bulletin deadline 7 pm Trustees	15 OFFICE CLOSED	16
17 Green 8:30 am Adult Forum 10 am Worship Service 11:30 am Kids Church 12:30 pm Christian Ed	18 OFFICE CLOSED	19	20 3-5 pm Welcome Table take-out 9 am February Steeple deadline	21 9 am Bulletin Deadline 6:45 pm Missions	22 OFFICE CLOSED	23
24 Green 8:30 am Adult Forum 10 am Worship Service 11:30 am Kids Church	25 OFFICE CLOSED	26	27 3-5 pm Welcome Table take-out 7 pm Council	28 9 am Bulletin deadline	29	30
31 Green 8:30 am Adult Forum 10 am Worship Service 11:30 am Kids Church	<p style="color: blue;">We ask that you respectfully comply with our request to wear a mask whenever you enter the church building. Thank you.</p> 