

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



FEBRUARY 2021 - THE STEEPLE NEWSLETTER

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

From our Pastor



Dear beloved family of God,

Thank you for all your prayers, food, prayer shawl, cards and support given to Rev. Nancy during her lung surgery and continuing recovery. As the oncologist recommended, Nancy will not receive chemotherapy or other treatment, but will receive frequent CT scans. She has a great chance of living at least 3-5 years. She looks forward to being again active and visible in the life of the church this Spring. Meanwhile, we must be extremely careful as some of you must be. I have been asked if her surgery will make walking easier; the lung cancer and rare form of MS are unrelated. Physical therapy is helping her.

Meanwhile, *please feel free to contact me* by phone or request a Zoom conversation. I have returned to all pastoral activities. Yesterday (1/27) marked my first anniversary with you. I am thankful for our ministry together.

Typically, in the February newsletter, the pastor writes about Lent. What can I say about it that you haven't heard before now? In 2017, Nick highlighted "This is a Day of New Beginnings" by Brian Wren and suggested you "embrace more intentionally, some aspect of our Christian walk, such as worship, prayer, study, service, doing justice, meditation, living more with less, or creating!" Be more, rather than do more, he urged.

In the January meeting of the Deacons, I suggested that we read together through the Gospel According to Mark on Zoom in Holy Week. Today, I discovered that David had suggested reading one of the four gospels straight through on your own in 2018. That year, David also suggested a book discussion using *Jesus is the Question*. If you want to engage in a book discussion this Lent, use the Zoom ID and password for worship to join in the 8:30 a.m. Forum discussion mentioned elsewhere in this issue of *The Steeple*. Walking around the neighborhood praying for neighbors, praying with a friend on the phone, and reading a biography of an inspiring Christian were his other suggestions. Try these in 2021, too.

I also suggested to the Deacons that interested members of the congregation might write out the Gospel According to Mark as an act of prayer. Members would be given high quality non-acidic paper and pen to print a chapter, the first letter of which would be an illumination. This "Ellsworth Illuminated Gospel" could then be used for decades to come when Mark is read in worship. Let me know if you are interested in this spiritual discipline this Lent.

In the past, we worshiped with Union Congregational Church of Ellsworth Falls on Ash Wednesday. This year, the service will be broadcast from St. Andrew ELCA Church as part of the ecumenical Lenten series; see page 2 for more information. We will host the service on March 3.

Until further notice, the church sanctuary is closed to in-person worship.

FEBRUARY CHURCH MEETINGS (ZOOM)

- Adult Forum** – Sundays, 8:30 a.m.
Kids Church – Sundays, 11:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m.
Trustees – Thursday, Feb 11, 7 p.m.
Finance – Friday, Feb 12, 10 a.m.
Deacons – Sunday, Feb 14, 12:30 p.m.
Missions – Thursday, Feb 18, 6:45 p.m.
Re-Opening – Thursday, Feb 18, 7:15 p.m.
Christian Ed – Sunday, Feb 21, 12:30 p.m.
Council – Thursday, Feb 25, 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.

FEBRUARY 2021 LECTIONARY READINGS

FEBRUARY 7 – 5TH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

Isaiah 40:21-31
 Psalm 147:1-11, 20c
 1 Corinthians 9:16-23
 Mark 1:29-39

FEBRUARY 14 – TRANSFIGURATION

2 Kings 2:1-12
 Psalm 50:1-6
 2 Corinthians 4:3-6
 Mark 9:2-9

FEBRUARY 17 – ASH WEDNESDAY

Joel 2:1-2, 12-17 OR
 Isaiah 58:1-12
 Psalm 51:1-17
 2 Corinthians 5:20b-6:10
 Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21



FEBRUARY 21 – 1ST SUNDAY IN LENT

Genesis 9:8-17
 Psalm 25:1-10
 1 Peter 3:18-22
 Mark 1:9-15

FEBRUARY 28 – 2ND SUNDAY IN LENT

Genesis 17:1-7, 15-16 Psalm 22:23-31
 Romans 4:13-25
 Mark 8:31-38 OR Mark 9:2-9



COMMUNITY *Lenten Services*

We hope you will join the faith community for these worship opportunities in 2021. All services take place on Zoom and/or Facebook this year.



ASH WEDNESDAY SERVICE FEBRUARY 17 AT NOON

The Ellsworth Area Ministers' Association (EAMA) is sponsoring an ecumenical Ash Wednesday Service on February 17 at noon. The host church is St. Andrew ELCA.

Joyce will email you the specific Zoom links for this service the day before. (This service will not use FCC's meeting number and password.) If technology works smoothly, the service will be available on our church's Facebook page after 4 p.m. on the 17th.

ECUMENICAL LENTEN SERVICES *CommUnity in Love*

These cherished EAMA ecumenical worship services will take place via Zoom this year on **Wednesdays at 7 p.m.** Joyce will email you the specific Zoom links for each service the day before.

February 24, 7 p.m.

Hosts: Hancock Union UCC, Rev. TJ Mack

March 3, 7 p.m.

Hosts: First Congo UCC, Rev. Cynthia Priem

The March Steeple will contain information regarding the services on March 10, 17 & 24.

DEACON MUSINGS

Well, it is hard to believe that we have just passed the one-year anniversary of the first identified case of the Covid-19 pandemic. Some days I wonder if we'll ever be able to return to what we call "normal", or, if this is our new way of surviving!?! If you are like me, I absolutely hope that we'll get beyond this and be able to congregare once again in our beautiful sanctuary.

But until then, we hope that you are able to join us on one of our media platforms—Facebook, Zoom, or on the radio at WDEA. Thanks to our Council and Troy, Ruth, Jack, Lois, our musical team, and the many individuals that have been willing to be liturgists, we have been able to continue to be a congregation. But it has been hard. We will continue to pray for the health of our community and country.

The Deacons would like to remind everyone to *please* feel free to reach out to any one of us if you need something. We will work to fulfill your requests. As we prepare for the upcoming Lenten season, the Deacons, would like to support everyone through their preparations. Our prayers for our community will include everyone in our congregation over the Lenten season. Please let us know if you have any concerns that we should include in our prayers.

We look forward to supporting you.

In prayers,
Katharine S.

SUNDAY ADULT FORUM

We are reading the book "Meaning of Jesus" by Marcus Borg and N.T. Wright, liberal and moderate Jesus Scholars. We have completed the first two chapters, Seeing Jesus: Sources, Lenses, and Method, by Marcus Borg., and Knowing Jesus: Faith and History, by N.T. Wright.

In February we'll begin "What did Jesus Teach?".. The Mission and Message of Jesus by Wright and "Jesus Before and after Easter: Jewish Mystic and Christian Messiah by Borg.



ONE GREAT HOUR OF SHARING

**Nobody hungry, nobody thirsty,
shade from the sun, shelter from the wind,
For the Compassionate One guides them,
takes them to the best springs.**

During the early days of the COVID-19 pandemic, it became clear that many of the western world constructs intended to create a sense of safety had actually created a false sense of security. In a global crisis, we were faced with a danger that defied our usual protective hedges. While some were made more vulnerable by economic and geographical factors, everyone was affected by the virus. As it turns out, lines on a map don't stop the spread of disease; a pandemic does not recognize human-made boundaries. Whether we like it or not, our lives are deeply intertwined. Our well-being is bound, inextricably, to that of neighbors close to home, and those halfway around the world. The sooner we recognize that human codependency, the better we are able to let love flow—generously and indiscriminately—to those who need it most.

When water comes to a village, everything changes. It touches every area of life—literally and figuratively! Having clean water close by means that women in Nicaragua don't have to spend their whole day walking to the source, so they might have other opportunities for learning or vocational growth. Children in Kenya no longer spend their days carrying heavy buckets, so they can go to school instead. Improved sanitation slows the spread of disease, so there is less preventable illness. Crops thrive in Vietnam, meaning that food security and nutrition improve in the whole community. Families can spend more time together. People of all ages around the world are empowered to provide for their families today, while also planning for the future of their communities.

Winter 2020

Dear Ones,

The last time I wrote to you we were barely one month into sheltering in place and trying to get use to social distancing and ZOOM meetings, with no idea how long we would be doing these things. Much has happened in these months. We grieve for those we have lost to the pandemic, for face to face worship, potluck suppers, church fairs, and hugs. While, we have seen a loosening of restrictions around social distancing, we move forward with caution and a certain amount of trepidation. But, we in Maine are a fierce and hardy lot. I am continually amazed at the creativity, resourcefulness and determination of our churches to carry on with God's work in our communities. We are blessed with many saints in the Maine Conference, you among them. So it is with heartfelt gratitude and appreciation on behalf of the Board of Directors of the Maine Conference, I thank you for your 2020 contribution to Our Church's Wider Mission (OCWM).

OCWM funds provide direct support to The Maine School of Ministry's (MESOM), Pilgrim Lodge, and for Conference staffing. MESOM class enrollments have increased, consequently Dean Ron Bard's time and compensation has been increased as well. Pilgrim Lodge staff and Leadership Team continue to make improvements to the camp facility, tighten up its budget process, and prepare for next year's camp season. To date, the Resourcing the Local Church Committee has awarded \$22,050 RLC grants to churches and individuals throughout the Maine Conference for capital improvements and programs. The Board of Directors, Conference Resource Teams, and staff continue to meet virtually from all over the state to oversee and carry out this work. Like you, we miss meeting in the same room together, but we are getting the hard work done.

Your OCWM supports all of this vital work! So it is with gratitude and sincere appreciation, I thank you

Most Sincerely,
Kathy Woodside
Maine Conference Board Member

*May... many
thanks for
your support!*

P.S. I am a member of the Bar Harbor Congregational Church, UCC and the Sunrise Association which serves Hancock, Waldo, and Washington Counties.-



Maine Conference
United Church of Christ

Search Process Launched for Designated Term Associate Conference Minister

Our Interim Associate Conference Minister, the Rev. Dr. Deb Jenks, plans to retire in May. We cherish her gifts among us and look forward to opportunities to offer her our abundant gratitude for her ministry. The search process is just beginning to bring a full-time designated term Associate Conference Minister to the Maine Conference staff.

Our Personnel Team has formed a Search Committee with six members. Please do hold these six servant leaders in your prayers as their holy work begins:

- Rev. Nick Davis (MEUCC Personnel Committee; member of Union Congregational Church, Hancock)
- Allison DiMatteo (MEUCC Board of Directors; First Parish Congregational Church, Saco)
- Rev. Emily Goodnow (First Congregational Church, Bridgton)
- Rev. Dan Hollis (First Parish Church, York)
- Betsy Westcott-Keiter (First Congregational Church, South Portland)
- Dr. Cynthia Huggins (MEUCC Board of Directors; Centre Street Congregational Church, Machias)

Our Personnel Team has done creative work to shape innovative ministry portfolios for a full-time designated term ACM and a full-time settled Conference Minister. The designated term ACM will have primary care and connection for congregations among us served by full-time pastors and a charge to curate the culture of generosity among us. You can read more about the designated term ACM position on the [UCC Ministry Opportunities Website](#)

Might the Holy Spirit be stirring you toward this ministry? Might the Holy Spirit be prompting you to nudge someone you know who has gifts for this innovative portfolio?

Come, Holy Spirit!

Jonna

SAVE THE DATE: February 28, 2021 MESOM Sunday in the Maine Conference UCC

The Maine School of Ministry (MESOM) offers affordable fall and spring courses taught by qualified faculty designed for

- Students seeking spiritual formation
- Exploring a call through alternative pathways
- Developing church leadership
- Ordained clergy seeking quality continuing education
- All persons seeking spiritual and educational enrichment




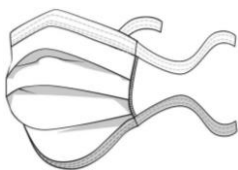
As the vision and reach of MESOM expands, workshops are being offered in collaboration with local churches here in Maine and beyond.

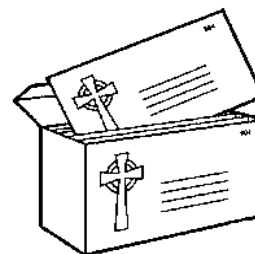
Sunday February 28, 2021 has been designated in the Maine Conference UCC as MESOM Sunday. Please help spread the good news about MESOM- what it offers and how you/your church can support it.

Please contact the Rev. Dr. Ron Beard, Acting Dean of MESOM if you would like a MESOM student to join your worship service. This Mission Moment can be by Zoom or a pre-recorded video of your choice on Sunday February 28, 2021. We hope that you may consider a special offering for the work of the Maine School of Ministry at that time.

The Rev. Dr. Ron Beard, Dean of Maine School of Ministry
Maine Conference, United Church of Christ
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(Please use the cell number during Covid. Thank you.)

FEBRUARY 2021 EVENTS AT FIRST CONGO UCC

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	1 OFFICE CLOSED	2	3 3-5 pm Welcome Table take-out	4 9 am Bulletin deadline	5 OFFICE CLOSED	6
7 White 8:30 am Adult Forum 10 am Worship Service & Holy Communion 11:30 am Kids Church	8 OFFICE CLOSED	9	10 3-5 pm Welcome Table take-out	11 9 am Bulletin deadline 7 pm Trustees	12 OFFICE CLOSED 10 am Finance	13
14 Transfiguration White 8:30 am Adult Forum 10 am Worship Service 11:30 am Kids Church 12:30 pm Deacons 	15 OFFICE CLOSED	16	17 <i>Ash Wednesday</i> 3-5 pm Welcome Table take-out	18 9 am Bulletin deadline 9 am Steeple deadline 6:45 pm Missions 7:15 pm Re-Opening	19 OFFICE CLOSED	20
21 Lent I Violet 8:30 am Adult Forum 10 am Worship Service 11:30 am Kids Church 12:30 pm Christian Ed	22 OFFICE CLOSED	23	24 3-5 pm Welcome Table take-out	25 9 am Bulletin deadline 7 pm Council	26 OFFICE CLOSED	27
28 Lent II Violet 8:30 am Adult Forum 10 am Worship Service 11:30 am Kids Church	<p>We ask that you respectfully comply with our request to wear a mask whenever you enter the church building. Thank you.</p> 					



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.

