

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



**APRIL 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 friends,

We have survived another Lent during the COVID-19 pandemic. We didn't need to give up some favorite activity or food to make it challenging. The accumulation of a year of anxiety, stress and cabin fever has released a lot of anger. We don't recover from one case of murder and violence before we hear of yet another mass murder. Everywhere there are signs of

Good Friday. Christ's wounded hands will always be there.

So this year, especially, I thank God for Easter Sunday, for hope and faith and Christ's forgiveness of all people whom he encountered after his resurrection.

If we strive to do so, we can see hints of Easter life:

The relief on people's faces when they say, "I got my second vaccine shot."

The beauty of life displayed in the pictures of orchids Bill emailed to me. The anticipation of seeing Cindy's arrangement of palms, and Katharine's arrangement of Easter lilies and tulips in the sanctuary.

The joy of seeing members, friends and strangers gather on Church Street to listen to beloved Easter hymns being sung and familiar scriptures being read at 10 a.m. on April 4.

The promise of better health for our church secretary, Joyce, as well as members and friends on our prayer list.

The joy of anticipating the upcoming **Installation of Rev. T. J. Mack** as Pastor and Teacher of the Union Congregational Church of Hancock, UCC on May 2 at 2 p.m.

The joy of anticipating the upcoming **Installation of Rev. Jon Vogel** as Pastor of St. Andrew Lutheran Church (ELCA) in Ellsworth on June 6 at noon.

The joy of witnessing the refurbishing of the exterior and selected interior rooms of our building as determined by the Trustees.

Happy Easter!

*Cynthia*

**Beginning Palm Sunday, March 28,  
we will re-open the sanctuary for  
worship limited to 25 people.  
Read more on page 3.**

## APRIL CHURCH MEETINGS (ZOOM)

- Adult Forum** – Sundays, 8:30 a.m.  
**Kids Church** – Sundays, 11:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m.  
**Trustees** – Thursday, April 8, 6:45 p.m.  
**Re-Opening** – Thursday, April 8, 7:15 p.m.  
**Deacons** – Sunday, April 11, 12:30 p.m.  
**Missions** – Thursday, April 15, 6:45 p.m.  
**Christian Ed** – Sunday, April 18, 12:30 p.m.  
**Re-Opening** – Thursday, April 22, 7:15 p.m.  
**Council** – Wednesday, April 28, 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.**

## HOLY WEEK SERVICES 2021



### **Palm Sunday, March 28, 10 a.m.**

Celebrate Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem. WDEA, Facebook & Zoom.

### **Monday, March 29, 7 p.m.**

Group Zoom reading of Gospel of Mark, chapters 1-7

### **Tuesday, March 30, 7 p.m.**

Group Zoom reading of Gospel of Mark, chapters 8-13

### **Maundy Thursday, April 1, 7 p.m.**

A Communion Service to remember Jesus' last supper in the Upper Room and the desertion by the disciples.

At home, please prepare some bread or crackers (something to represent the body of Christ) and juice. Facebook & Zoom.

### **Good Friday, April 2, 7 p.m.**

A candlelight Tenebrae service of Jesus' passion, death and burial. Facebook & Zoom.

### **Easter, April 4, 10 a.m.**

Resurrection worship. Chris is risen! WDEA, Facebook & Zoom.

## APRIL 2021 LECTIONARY READINGS

### **APRIL 1 – MAUNDY THURSDAY**

Exodus 12:1-4, (5-10), 11-14  
 Psalm 116:1-2, 12-19  
 1 Corinthians 11:23-26  
 John 13:1-17, 31b-35



### **APRIL 2 – GOOD FRIDAY**

Isaiah 52:13-53:12  
 Psalm 22  
 Hebrews 10:16-25 OR  
 Hebrews 4:14-16, 5:7-9  
 John 18:1-19:43



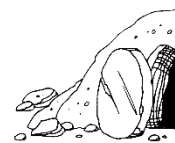
### **APRIL 3 – HOLY SATURDAY**

Job 14:1-14 OR  
 Lamentations 3:1-9, 19-24  
 Psalm 31:1-4, 15-16  
 1 Peter 4:1-8  
 Matthew 27:57-66 OR  
 John 19:38-42



### **APRIL 4 – EASTER**

Acts 10:34-43 OR  
 Isaiah 25:6-9  
 Psalm 118:1-2, 14-24  
 1 Corinthians 15:1-11 OR  
 Acts 10:34-43  
 John 20:1-18 OR Mark 16:1-8



### **APRIL 11 – 2<sup>ND</sup> SUNDAY OF EASTER**

Acts 4:32-35  
 psalm 133  
 1 John 1:1-2:2  
 John 20:19-31

### **APRIL 18 – 3<sup>RD</sup> SUNDAY OF EASTER**

Acts 3:12-19  
 Psalm 4  
 1 John 3:1-7  
 Luke 24:36b-48

### **APRIL 25 – 4<sup>TH</sup> SUNDAY OF EASTER**

Acts 4:5-12  
 Psalm 23  
 1 John 3:16-24  
 John 10:11-18

## Mandatory guidelines for public worship at First Congregational Church beginning March 28, 2021:

1. Face coverings or face shields must be worn. *Please double-mask if you have not been vaccinated.* Masks will be available at the door. Thank you in advance for bringing your own.
2. You must use the hand sanitizer at the door.
3. Temperatures will be taken at the door – if you have a temp, you cannot come in.
4. Congregational attendance will be recorded by name.
5. Non-congregational members will be asked to write name and phone number on a card which will be sealed in a dated envelope—if no one here contracts Covid-19, we won't have to contact the visitors and those envelopes will be shredded.
6. We will limit attendance to 25 people.
7. Physical distancing will be accomplished by using every third pew, families can sit together. Ushers will seat you in the appropriate pew.
8. There will be no congregational singing. A soloist will provide music throughout the service.
9. There are no hymnals in the pews.
10. Bulletins are to be dropped in the basket at the door at the end of worship.
11. The church will be thoroughly cleaned and the sanctuary secured between services.



**PILL BOTTLE DONATIONS** – Matthew 25: Ministries accepts donations of empty plastic pill bottles for inclusion in shipments of medical supplies and for shredding and recycling. The pill bottle program fulfills the dual needs of improving medical care in developing countries and caring for the environment.

Acceptable collection items include

- Prescription and over-the-counter pill bottles
- Large and small pill bottles
- Pill bottles with and without secure caps (child-resistant)

Pill bottles that are not appropriate to include with shipments of medical supplies are recycled and may generate revenue that supports Matthew 25: Ministries' programs. If you wish to prepare bottles for shipment rather than recycling, please adhere to these guidelines:

- Bottles included in shipments of medical supplies must have an all-plastic lid.
- Sort bottles by color and type.
- Remove labels, leaving no glue or residue.
- Wash bottles in very hot water and dish soap; rinse and dry thoroughly.
- Replace lids on clean, dried bottles.
- Place clean, recapped bottles in large ziplock bags marked "Clean Bottles"; these will be blended with medical supplies.



**Contact Lois S. to give her your bagged bottles.**

## HANCOCK COUNTY FOOD DRIVE IS IN APRIL

Kickoff for the annual food drive is Saturday, April 3. Our church will join the Emmaus Shelter at Ellsworth Hannaford that day. You can make donations of cash or canned/dry foods there.

There will be boxes for canned/dry foods donations at the State Street and Church Street entrances. Please send monetary donations to the church and write *Food Drive* on the check memo.



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## SECRETARY ON LEAVE

Pending medical clearance, church secretary Joyce C. will take a leave of absence for surgery and recovery, April 9 - June 7. We are still working out how the office will be covered. To ensure as few things as possible slip through the cracks, please use emails of several people when posing a question. We thank you in advance for your patience!

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**Warning: Scammers use contact lists for religious organizations** to send an email to someone. This email appears to come from another person in that church. However, if you look at the actual email address and not just the name, it normally is a random email/gmail address and not the actual email address of the person they are pretending to be. They request funds for the purchase of gift cards and give the link to use. They are very persistent. If you get any unusual requests, NEVER confirm the request without verifying it with the individual directly via communication methods other than email (e.g. phone, video conferencing, etc.).

## *This Easter Celebration*

This Easter celebration is not like ones we've known. We pray in isolation; we sing the hymns alone. We're distant from our neighbors—from worship leaders, too.

No flowers grace the chancel to set a festive mood. No gathered choirs are singing; no banners lead the way.

O God of love and promise, where's joy this Easter Day?

With sanctuaries empty, may homes become the place we ponder resurrection and celebrate your grace.

Our joy won't come from worship that's in a crowded room but from the news of women who saw the empty tomb.

Our joy comes from disciples who ran with haste to see—who heard that Christ is risen, and then, by grace, believed.

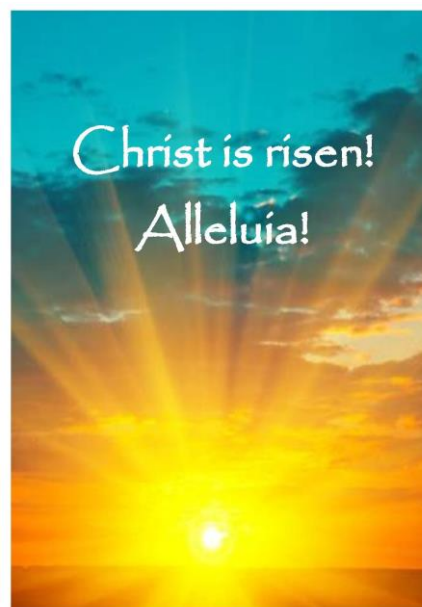
In all the grief and suffering, may we remember well: Christ suffered crucifixion and faced the powers of hell.

Each Easter bears the promise: Christ rose that glorious day!

Now nothing in creation can keep your love away. We thank you that on Easter, your church is blessed to be a scattered, faithful body that's doing ministry.

In homes and in the places of help and healing, too, we live the Easter message by gladly serving you.

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# NO TO RACISM



## RACISM IS A VIRUS

***When one of us suffers, we all suffer***  
**(1 Cor. 12:26)**

The Anti-Racism Resource Team of the Maine Conference UCC urges church members and friends, clergy, and Churches to speak out and stand with the AAPI community in Maine and across our country as Anti-Asian hate and violence has tragically risen 150% according to the Center for the Study of Hate and Extremism at California State University, San Bernardino.

We lift up the families and communities of those who were killed in Georgia, praying for strength and comfort. May our actions and prayers demonstrate every day that hate and prejudice is wrong and that Love will overcome. One way to take action and learn is to attend the online event:

### **RACISM IS A VIRUS:**

#### **Panel Discussion on the Asian American Youth Experience in Maine**

March 3, 7 - 8 p.m.

Panel: Asian-American youth in Maine

To register go to

<https://hrcmaine.org/event/racism-is-a-virus-panel-discussion-on-the-asian-american-youth-experience-in-maine/>

## **NEW DESIGNATED TERM ASSOCIATE CONFERENCE MINISTER**

The Board of Directors unanimously voted to call the **Rev. Alexis Fuller-Wright** as a full-time Designated Term Associate Conference Minister serving the Maine Conference. She will begin her ministry with us in the final week of May. Thank you to the Search Committee: Rev. Nick Davis, Dr. Cynthia Huggins, Allison DiMatteo, Rev. Emily Goodnow, Rev. Dan Hollis, and Betsy Westcott-Keiter.

We are excited for you to meet Alexis when she comes on staff, and we are cooking up some plans for virtual introductions, but, in the meantime, here's a brief bio:

Rev. Alexis Fuller-Wright has served congregations in New Jersey, Maine, and California. Her passions in ministry are helping people deeply connect with the heart of God and empowering congregations to find new and relevant ways to live out their faith in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. She received her Master of Divinity from Pacific School of Religion in Berkeley, California.

Alexis recently stepped away from full-time ministry to help shepherd her family through the pandemic. She is currently doing part-time development work for the Waldorf School of Princeton and training to become a certified spiritual director. She also serves as a member of the pre-ordination committee of the NJ Association, as a board member of HiTops (a local youth sexual health organization), and as the faith community liaison for the Bayard Rustin Center for Social Justice. Alexis is married to Liz, a science writer for Princeton University, and they spend their non-working hours chasing after their kids, Nora (5) and Will (18 months).



# Talking Points about Pilgrim Lodge and Summer 2021



## 1. Is there Camp this summer?

- No. We are not able to host our traditional week-long summer camps at PL this summer.

## 2. Why?

- Based on the state guidance in place at the time of our decision, we could not ensure a completely safe experience for all using our traditional camp model.
- Additionally, given the many COVID-related restrictions, alterations that would be needed to staffing models, and limits on the number of campers, fully opening and staffing PL for this summer does not make good financial sense.

## 3. Are there going to be opportunities to come to camp this summer? Yes.

- We are looking at offering day passes to come take a swim, walk the labyrinth or the nature trails, and maybe enjoy some ice cream. This is in the planning stages and official updates via email, social media and pilgrimlodge.org will be posted as soon as possible.
- There may also be opportunities for small groups of volunteers to sign up for work days on site.
- We will remain flexible and consider all opportunities as the summer evolves.
- Follow us on Facebook or Instagram or check pilgrimlodge.org for the latest updates!

## 4. Are you hiring a new director for PL? Yes.

- The Maine Conference and the Pilgrim Lodge Leadership Team are putting together a search committee which plans to undertake the search this spring/summer and have a new director chosen by the late summer/fall.

## 5. What happens to my deposit that was held over from 2020?

- You have two choices for those funds: Apply the camp registration to 2022 or donate your camp payment to support PL as a tax-deductible contribution.
- Please contact Camp Registrar Karen Steelhammer via email at [ksteelhammer@pilgrimlodge.org](mailto:ksteelhammer@pilgrimlodge.org) or by phone at 207-724-3200 to let her know how you would like to proceed. If we do not hear from you by May 1, we will apply your fees as a donation and send you a tax receipt.

## 6. I'm worried about PL's sustainability. I want camp to be there for others to experience for many years to come. What can I do?

- Pilgrim Lodge relies upon the revenue from summer camp fees to not only run the camps in the summer but to support the site and its year-round staff.
- Your donation will be put to use to help ensure PL's presence and programs continue long after this pandemic has passed. Donate online at [www.pilgrimlodge.org/giving/](http://www.pilgrimlodge.org/giving/) or send your donation to Pilgrim Lodge, 103 Pilgrim Lodge Lane, West Gardiner, ME 04345. Donations of any size are appreciated.

## 7. What will be happening at PL while there are no campers this summer?

- Our core staff team will spend this summer maintaining PL, fundraising, and preparing for a return to camp in 2022.

# APRIL 2021 EVENTS AT FIRST CONGO UCC

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<b>28 Palm Sunday</b> <b>Violet</b> 8:30 am Adult Forum 10 am Worship Service 11:30 am Kids Church	29 <b>OFFICE CLOSED</b> 7 pm Group Zoom reading	30 7 pm Group Zoom reading	31 2:30-4 pm Welcome Table take-out	1 <b>Maundy Thursday</b> 9 am Bulletin deadline 7 pm Communion	2 <b>Good Friday</b> <b>OFFICE CLOSED</b> 7 pm Tenebrae	3
<b>H O L Y W E E K</b>						
4 <b>Easter</b> <b>White</b> 8:30 am Adult Forum 10 am Worship Service & Holy Communion 11:30 am Kids Church	5 <b>OFFICE CLOSED</b>	6	7 2:30-4 pm Welcome Table take-out	8 9 am Bulletin deadline 6:45 pm Trustees 7:15 pm Re-Opening	9 <b>OFFICE CLOSED</b>	10
11 <b>White</b> 8:30 am Adult Forum 10 am Worship Service 11:30 am Kids Church 12:30 pm Deacons	12 <b>OFFICE CLOSED</b>	13	14 2:30-4 pm Welcome Table take-out	15 9 am Bulletin deadline 9 am Steeple deadline 6:45 pm Missions	16 <b>OFFICE CLOSED</b>	17
18 <b>White</b> 8:30 am Adult Forum 10 am Worship Service 11:30 am Kids Church 12:30 pm Christian Ed	19 <b>OFFICE CLOSED</b>	20	21 2:30-4 pm Welcome Table take-out 7 pm Council	22 9 am Bulletin deadline 9 am Steeple deadline 7:15 pm Re-Opening	23 <b>OFFICE CLOSED</b>	24
25 <b>White</b> 8:30 am Adult Forum 10 am Worship Service 11:30 am Kids Church	26 <b>OFFICE CLOSED</b>	27	28 2:30-4 pm Welcome Table take-out	29 9 am Bulletin deadline	30 <b>OFFICE CLOSED</b>	31

## DEACONS

This little bit is to check in with our church family and hope that everyone is enjoying the spring weather. I hope that we have moved past the winter weather and, along with

vaccinations and distancing, we can think about how we can move forward beyond the pandemic. Our hope as a board, if you feel safe and you can maintain distance, the sanctuary will open Palm Sunday for services.

We know that some want to return and we want you to feel safe. The Deacons continue to be available to all needs of the congregation. Please feel free to contact us as needed and we will try to help.

-- Katharine S.

Please **wear a mask** when you enter the church building.

Thank you.

