

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



**SEPTEMBER 2020 THE STEEPLE**

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

**From our Pastor**



I read the following nine years ago and, unfortunately, did not footnote the source, but I hope it will be a springboard for self-reflection.

A recent study of congregations and pastors trying to renew and redevelop showed an interesting reality.

A group of pastors had been trained to renew congregations. They learned about door-knocking, introducing new worship services, writing a good mission statement, and all sorts of important ingredients to revitalizing a church. They then went out and did the work. Five years later none had revitalized a congregation.

Trying to discover why this happened, the trainers found pastors who had redeveloped ministries and asked them what the keys were. They talked about door-knocking, introducing new worship services, writing a good mission statement, and all the same important ingredients to revitalizing a church that the original training had included. There was just one addition: The pastors who had revitalized congregations said that the prayer life of the people had reconnected them to a living Christ who not only listened to their prayers but also guided them as they sought God's will.

All the techniques in the world could not revitalize the church. Being connected to Jesus Christ was the key to new life in the church.

*Cynthia*



**Rev. Priem's sermon series on Moses continues in September. Please listen at 10 a.m. on Sundays on [WDEA 1370 AM](#) or watch live on our [Facebook](#) page.**

## SEPTEMBER CHURCH MEETINGS (ZOOM)

- Re-Opening\*** – Thursday, Sept 3, 7 p.m. \*  
**Trustees** – Thursday, Sept 10, 6:30 p.m.  
**Deacons** – Sunday, Sept 13, 12:30 p.m.  
**Missions** – Thursday, Sept 17, 6:45 p.m.  
**Christian Ed** – Sunday, Sept 20, 12:30 p.m.  
**Council** – Wednesday Sept 23, 7 p.m.  
**Re-Opening\*** – Thursday, Sept 24 at 7 p.m.\*  
(\* If needed)

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



### Sunday Morning Adult Study

### ADULT FORUM

Sundays at 8:30 a.m.  
via Zoom

Meet & Greet begins  
at 8 a.m.

The group is discussing Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s *Letter from a Birmingham Jail*. Contact Tom M. for information about the Forum. Contact the office to get Zoom information.



### Sundays via Zoom

Sept 6 at noon - Interactive worship with Rev. Cynthia

Sept 13, 20, 27 at 11:30 a.m. - Kids Church with Cathy.

## SEPTEMBER 2020 LECTIONARY READINGS

### SEPT 6 – 14TH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

Exodus 12:1-14 & Psalm 149  
Ezekiel 33:7-11 & Psalm 119:33-40  
Romans 13:8-14  
Matthew 18:15-20

### SEPT 13 – 15TH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

Exodus 14:19-31 & Psalm 114  
OR  
Exodus 15:1b-11, 20-21  
Genesis 50:15-21 & Psalm 103:(1-7),8-13  
Romans 14:1-12  
Matthew 18:21-35

### SEPT 20 – 16TH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

Exodus 16:2-15 & Psalm 105:1-6, 37-45  
Jonah 3:10-4:11 & Psalm 145:1-8  
Philippians 1:21-30  
Matthew 20:1-16

### SEPT 27 – 17TH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

Exodus 17:1-7 & Psalm 78:1-4, 12-16  
Ezekiel 18:1-4, 25-32 & Psalm 25:1-9  
Philippians 2:1-13  
Matthew 21:23-32



**Welcome Table is now serving takeout meals from 3-5 p.m. Please call the church by 4 p.m. with your meal reservations.**

## FROM OUR MODERATOR, JACK

Much of Paul's thinking as reflected in his letters to the early Church were efforts to address the tensions that had surfaced as people struggled to understand what it meant to follow Jesus. Today we wrestle with adjusting to the realities of the pandemic and what that means to being the Church together in the current context.

As we all adapt to the current circumstance there will be tensions as we work together to discern God's call to us as God's gathered people.

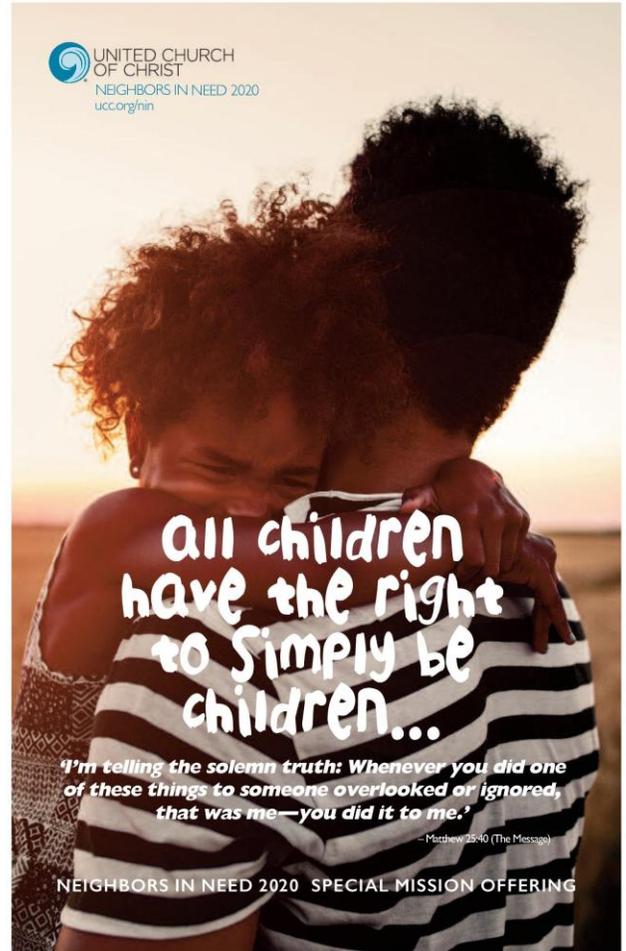
In our tradition the concepts of individual conscience and living together in Love as Jesus commands present not just challenges, but opportunities to grow our faith and our understanding of God's plan for us and all of creation.

Only by remaining open to what God might be trying to do next can we keep those tensions creative.

Let us remember to be thankful for each other. To be grateful for the gifts and talents that we all share. Above all, let us thank God for the gift of God's Love and remember that sharing that Love is sharing our Faith.



The **BEAUTIFICATION COMMITTEE** has completed the new plantings along the church's front walk. Please come and admire the results of the committee's wonderful work! The church is happily accepting donations for this project. Contact Leita if you have questions.

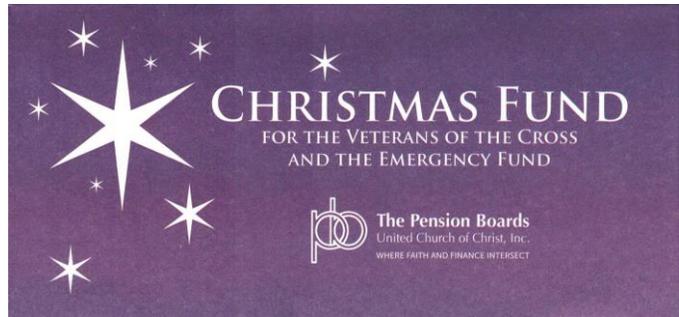


### The Neighbors in Need Offering

which we will receive through the month of September and observe in worship on October 4, supports the ministries of justice and compassion throughout the United States. NIN grants are awarded to UCC churches and organizations doing justice work in their communities. These grants fund projects whose work ranges from direct service to community organizing and advocacy to address systemic injustice. Through [ucc.org/justice](http://ucc.org/justice), the Justice and Witness Ministries continues its strong policy advocacy work on issues such as the federal budget, voting rights, immigration, health care, hate crimes, civil liberties, and environmental justice.

## THE CHRISTMAS FUND OFFERING

The COVID-19 pandemic has created unprecedented levels of need for Ministerial Assistance emergency grants funded by the Christmas Fund offering we gather along with churches across the United Church of Christ. The UCC Pension Boards recently gave the following report.



The number of recipients of emergency grants and the total dollar amount distributed has risen approximately 300% over the same time last year. Numbers, however, are poor story-tellers. Human needs are met and lives are touched as generous giving is matched with grace-filled receiving.

In the course of a single recent week we assisted six ministers whose congregations were no longer able to pay them because of severe declines in donations. Several chaplains who were laid off due to pandemic-related downsizing received grants—one was a single mother in the process of accessing unemployment insurance. We were there for retirees who depended on income from supply preaching and found themselves in financial difficulty when those opportunities dried up, and for an individual whose search and call process stalled because of the pandemic and who faced an eviction notice.

There have also been a number of non-COVID-19 emergencies that we responded to over the past several months. We assisted with funeral expenses and medical debt. We stood with clergy transitioning from one call to another who were faced with moving expenses, apartment down payments, and gaps in health insurance coverage.

It's often uncomfortable for those serving in the church to ask for help; they typically see themselves and are seen by others as help givers, not help receivers. According to one pastor, *"It wasn't easy picking up the telephone to share with you my present situation. In fact, it was one of the most humiliating experiences of my life, although it reminded me that grace still happens. Sometimes we as clergy persons lose sight of God's grace when the negative stuff comes into our lives."*

Giving and receiving are both acts of grace. As Mr. Rogers put it: "All of us, at some time or other, need help. Whether we're giving or receiving help, each one of us has something valuable to bring to this world. That's one of the things that connects us as neighbors—in our own way, each one of us is a giver and a receiver."

The Christmas Fund for the Veterans of the Cross and the Emergency Fund brings help-givers and help-receivers together for the benefit of all. Thank you to everyone who assists the United Church Board for Ministerial Assistance in making that connection.

Rev. Dr. James M., Executive Director of Faith and Finance Ministries

# SEPTEMBER 2020 EVENTS AT FIRST CONGO UCC

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
		1	2 3 pm Welcome Table take-out	3 9 am Bulletin deadline  7 pm ROC	4 OFFICE CLOSED	5
6 Green 8:30 am Adult Forum 10 am Worship Service Noon Interactive worship	7 <b>LABOR DAY</b> OFFICE CLOSED	8	9 3 pm Welcome Table take-out	10 9 am Bulletin deadline  6:30 pm Trustees	11 OFFICE CLOSED	12
13 Green 8:30 am Adult Forum 10 am Worship Service 11:30 am Kids Church 12:30 pm Deacons	14 OFFICE CLOSED	15	16 3 pm Welcome Table take-out	17 9 am Bulletin deadline  6:45 pm Missions	18 OFFICE CLOSED	19
20 Green 8:30 am Adult Forum 10 am Worship Service 11:30 am Kids Church 12:30 pm Christian Ed	21 OFFICE CLOSED	22	23 3 pm Welcome Table take-out  7 pm Council	24 9 am Bulletin deadline 9 am October Steeple deadline  7 pm ROC	25 OFFICE CLOSED	26
27 Green 8:30 am Adult Forum 10 am Worship Service 11:30 am Kids Church	28 OFFICE CLOSED	29	30 3 pm Welcome Table take-out	*ROC = Re-Opening Committee		



**The Deacons continue to be available** to any member as we cope with the reality of COVID. Please reach out to any one of us for anything in which you need support. Even if you just need to talk to another person, we are available.

The Deacons support Rev. Priem by finding individuals to participate as Liturgists in services. If you would like to do this, please contact one of us. Katharine S. is the Deacon for September and Anne B. is the October Deacon. As of this notice, services are still remote and therefore Communion will continue to be remote.

On a happy note, Rev. Nancy J. and Rev. Cynthia P. will be joining our congregation on September 6<sup>th</sup>. How wonderful to have additions to our special church family!

Your Deacons: Anne B., Irv H., Pat J., Jim K., John L., and Katharine S.