

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



December 2022 - THE STEEPLE NEWSLETTER

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

Some Simple Things to Pray for During Advent

Pray for attentiveness to what truly matters, without being distracted by trivial things.

Pray for opportunities to learn something new regularly.

Pray for discernment of how God would like you to set your priorities and the ability to focus on them consistently to fulfill God's purposes in your life.

Pray for the grace to be able to rest, become aware of God's presence, and enjoy it.

Pray for strong relationships with other people in the bond of a loving community.

Pray for peace in all situations, no matter what the circumstances.

Pray for an enlivened imagination that helps you contribute to the world in creative ways.

Pray for freedom from all that burdens you—past mistakes, fears, destructive habits, hurts other people have inflicted, and more.

Pray for joy and a sense of humor.

Pray for confidence in God's love for you and trust in God's power to work things out for the best in your life.

Pray for a clear mind and the ability to clearly communicate what you value to others.

Pray for purity so you can grow as a person and encounter God more fully.

Pray for openness to the Holy Spirit's guidance.

Pray for a genuine awareness of God's grace in your life and the humility to extend grace to others.

~ Edited from Whitney Hople's "[Pray for Simplicity this Advent](#)"

Used with permission granted 11.15.22



God bless,

Keith

Rev. Keith Bowie, Transitional Minister

DECEMBER CHURCH MEETINGS

- Adult Forum** – Sundays, 8:30 a.m.
- Busy Bodies** – Mondays, 10:30 a.m.
- Choir** – Tuesdays, 6 p.m.
- Music** – TBA
- Missions** – Thursday, Dec 8, TBA
- Deacons** – Sunday, Dec 11, 11:30 a.m.
- Trustees** – Thursday, Dec 15, 7 p.m.
- Christian Ed** – Sunday, Dec 18, 11:30 a.m.
- Council** – TBA

Our meetings are hybrid, in person AND Zoom, so that you may participate in the way you are comfortable. **All FCC Zoom events (meetings and worship) use the same meeting number and password.** Please call the church office (T-W-Th) for Zoom instructions.



MASKING is OPTIONAL
in the church building.

The Re-Opening Committee suggests you maintain physical distance and respect the space of those who wish to continue to wear a mask.



**CHRISTMAS
EVE SERVICE**
7 P.M.

Everyone is invited to attend the traditional Service of Lessons & Carols, where we hear familiar passages from Scripture and beloved carols. We will conclude with candle-lighting throughout the congregation as we sing "Silent night".

The service will broadcast live through [WDEA](#) AM 1370, [Facebook](#), and [Zoom](#) to worship at home.

DECEMBER LECTIONARY READINGS

DEC 4 – 2ND SUNDAY OF ADVENT

Isaiah 11:1-10
Psalm 72:1-7, 18-19
Romans 15:4-13
Matthew 3:1-12



DEC 11 – 3RD SUNDAY OF ADVENT

Isaiah 35:1-10
Psalm 146:5-10 OR Luke 1:46b-55
James 5:7-10
Matthew 11:2-11



DEC 18 – 4TH SUNDAY OF ADVENT

Isaiah 7:10-16
Psalm 80:1-7, 17-19
Romans 1:1-7
Matthew 1:18-25



DEC 24 – CHRISTMAS EVE

Isaiah 9:2-7
Psalm 96
Titus 2:11-14
Luke 2:1-14, (15-20)



DEC 25 – CHRISTMAS

Isaiah 52:7-10
Psalm 98
Hebrews 1:1-4, (5-12)
John 1:1-14



DEC 31 – NEW YEAR'S EVE

Ecclesiastes 3:1-13
Psalm 8
Revelation 21:1-6a
Matthew 25:31-46





THE CHRISTMAS FUND

has been caring for active and retired clergy and lay employees of the United Church of Christ for over 100 years, providing emergency grants, supplementation of small annuities and health premiums, Christmas "Thank You" gift checks each December to our lower-income retirees.

This year, we rejoice at the opening of possibilities for gathering and worshipping together again, as we anticipate the good news of great joy at Christmas. Still, challenges remain for many of our pastoral leaders who continue to experience loss of income as congregations struggle with budget shortfalls.

Please show your continue gratitude for our active and retired UCC clergy who need our support by giving generously to the Christmas Fund this year. First Church will accept gifts to this fund the entire month of December.

Click this [link](#) to watch a 3-minute video of a personal story about the fund.

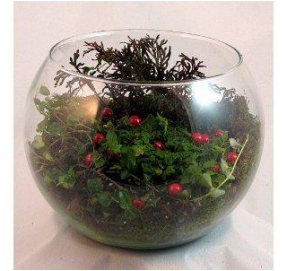
The Christmas Fund

For the Veterans of the Cross and the Emergency Fund

BUSY BODIES

CHRISTMAS CRAFT FAIR
SATURDAY, DECEMBER 3, 2022
9 A.M. – 1 P.M.

Our fair will feature our popular Berry Bowls, crafts, jewelry, knitted and crocheted items, puzzles, books, baked goods, fudge, attic treasures, and more. Craft donations for the fair are appreciated and can be left at the church. Baked goods can be left on Friday afternoon December 2, from 12-3 o'clock or early Saturday morning.



If you have questions, please contact Louise Emerson (667-4414) or Sue Fuller (610-1626). We can't wait to see you at our Christmas Fair!



DEACONS

- Dec 4 - Communion, Rev. Keith Bowie
- Dec 11 - Rev. Keith Bowie
- Dec 18 - Rev Dr. David Henry
- Dec 24 - Rev. Keith Bowie
- Dec 25 - Rev. Keith Bowie

December Deacon: Katharine Schrader

Prayer Calendar names

In December, please include these names in your daily prayers:

- Gale & Bill Caddoo
- Lynn & Michael Hall
- Betty & Jim Kimbrell
- Elizabeth Palmer
- Marshall Smith
- Leita Zeugner & Bill Hodges
- Jennifer Allen
- Olivia Robidoux
- Pam & Rev. Keith Bowie
- Dylan Lacey
- Dan & Shirley Rhodes

ADOPT-A-CHILD FOR CHRISTMAS PRESENTS

For information about “adopting” a family at the Emmaus Shelter this Christmas, please contact Lois Stevens (669-2028) immediately to get the wish list and particulars.



SEARCH COMMITTEE

On Sunday, November 13, 2022, the congregation ratified the new Pastoral Search Committee:

- Sue Bedard
- Ginny Davis
- Mike Fuller
- Sue Fuller
- Michael Hall
- Jim Kimbrell
- John Lacey
- Tom MacDonald
- Ruth Tainter
- Troy Tainter, alternate
- Leita Zeugner, *ex officio*



A Special meeting will convene at 2 p.m. Sunday, December 4, 2022.

The meeting will take place using a remote format. Delegates may attend by Zoom (link to be provided).

The Special Meeting is called by the Maine Conference Board of Directors to carry out the following business: **To review and pass the long form of the Clergy Compensation Guidelines.**

This follows the unanimous by the Maine Conference Board of Directors.

Susan E. Burgess, Conference Clerk
Maine Conference UCC

ReLaunching Your Church

On Saturday, October 29, four people from First Congregational Church attended a five-hour workshop on Zoom entitled **ReLaunching Your Church** led by Rev. Paul Nickerson to help pastors and lay leaders build a customized plan to increase energy and engagement in the local church. The team attendees were Rev. Keith

Bowie, Sue Fuller, Bonnie Carter, and Leita Zeugner. About ten churches participated across the Maine Conference. One follow-up individual consultation with Paul has taken place and the first group follow-up coaching call with four other churches is scheduled for Tuesday, November 29. We will be journeying together with Paul for the next six months.

We all know the culture has radically changed, and the old attraction model of people coming to church just by opening the church door is no longer effective. Today, churches of all sizes need to meet and network with people in the community, right where they are. It's all about building relationships!

We will be introducing what we have learned and are continuing to learn in this continuing workshop with Council, lay leaders, and other groups within the church as we go forward. One of the very first things Paul has asked is that we be able to state our primary purpose as a church clearly and briefly. Why do we exist as a church? Can you do it in one sentence that is memorable and easy to share? More to come!! ♦

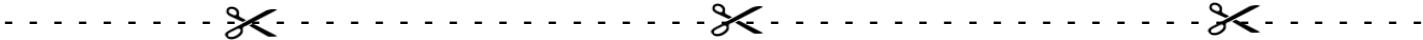
CHRISTMAS POINSETTIAS



If you would like to designate a poinsettia in memory or honor of a loved one, please fill out the form below and mail it to

First Congregational Church, PO Box 12, Ellsworth, ME 04605,

or email the info to office@ellsworthucc.org. The Flower Committee has decided to use the beautiful artificial poinsettias again this year. If you would like to donate to the Flower Committee to take care of flowers throughout the year, that would be wonderful but not necessary in order to list your loved one in the bulletin on the Fourth Sunday of Advent, December 18, 2021. If you decide you would like to donate to the Flower Committee, please write *Flower Comm.* in the check memo line. **Memorial and honorary information needs to be submitted to the church office by Tuesday, December 13.**



CHRISTMAS POINSETTIA DESIGNATIONS 2022

Your name (please print) _____

In Honor of (please print) _____

In Memory of (please print) _____

From Rev. Jonathan Vogel of St. Andrew Lutheran Church Helping a Ukrainian Family

This past December a long-time member of St. Andrew died leaving a \$50,000 bequest to the Church. In consultation with me, the family indicated they would like to see the majority of this used to "adopt" a Ukrainian family, potentially bringing them here to Maine and helping them begin a new chapter in their lives. We hope that this would be an intra-congregational / community effort, not only increasing our ability to provide broad resources to support this family, but also strengthening the ties within our communities.

I won't dwell on the frustrations we have initially encountered in seeking guidance and support for this work. The gist is that the need is overwhelming and any immigration into the United States is governed by both the Department of Defense and Homeland Securities. While some individuals have had success through bringing Ukrainians in through Mexico and Canada, we did not feel that it was appropriate for congregations to follow this path.

More recently, St. Andrew leaders and I have been in contact with Kasey Dillon from WelcomeNST. <https://www.welcomenst.org/>. With their guidance and support we have reached out to other congregations in Ellsworth and MDI. The four Episcopal congregations on MDI are now on board, as well as members and leaders of the Community in Christ Church in Ellsworth. We are hopeful that these connections will continue to expand. Another family in one of these congregations has now matched that initial gift, so we have \$100,000 in startup funds. We are currently in the process of creating an independent 501(c)(3) organization, tentatively entitled Hancock County NST (Neighborhood Support Team).

With WelcomeNST moderating, we have interviewed three Ukrainian families as possible matches. Of the two families that seem the most likely, one consists of a mother who is a physician, a 21-year-old son who teaches English and is studying in the medical field, and a 9-year-old daughter. The second family is a husband and wife with three children, ages 17, 15, and 5. With the latter, the 17-year-old son and the 15-year-old daughter are fluent in English, and several other languages. The 5-year-old daughter is already quite an artist and loves to dance.

We are currently forming a board of directors and approving bylaws. One of our (many) next steps is to create sub-committees for areas such as housing, welcome and household set up, services and benefits, employment, and, given the ages of the children, education. One of the huge challenges for this ministry will be housing in the Ellsworth or MDI areas. We hope that members of area congregations or the larger community will be willing to share their gifts and interests through serving on one of these teams.

We are very excited not only for supporting these families in need, but of the witness to our larger community of God's people coming together to serve in this ministry. Please contact us with your interest:



St Andrew Lutheran Church
PO Box 145
Ellsworth, ME 04605
207-667-7641 standrew@gwi.net

[St. Andrew](#) is an ELCA congregation in Ellsworth, Maine.

DECEMBER 2022

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
				1 9 am Bulletin deadline	2 OFFICE CLOSED 12-3 pm Fair setup	3 9 a.m.-1 p.m. Christmas Fair
4 Advent II Violet 8:30 am Adult Forum 10 am Worship Service & Communion	5 OFFICE CLOSED	7 5:30 pm Acadia rehearsal	9 2:30-4 pm Welcome Table take-out	8 9 am Bulletin deadline TBA Missions	9 OFFICE CLOSED	10
11 Advent III Rose 8:30 am Adult Forum 10 am Worship Service 11:30 am Deacons 12:45 pm set-up for... 3 pm Acadia choral concert	12 OFFICE CLOSED 10:30 am Busy Bodies	13 6 pm Choir	14 2:30-4 pm Welcome Table take-out	15 9 am Bulletin deadline 7 pm Trustees	16 OFFICE CLOSED 10 am Finance	17
18 Advent IV Violet 8:30 am Adult Forum 10 am Worship Service 11:30 am Christian Ed	19 OFFICE CLOSED 10:30 am Busy Bodies	20 6 pm Choir	21 2:30-4 pm Welcome Table take-out	22 9 am Bulletin deadline	23 OFFICE CLOSED	24 Christmas Eve 7 pm Service
25 Christmas White 8:30 am Adult Forum 10 am Worship Service	26 OFFICE CLOSED	27 9 am Steeple Deadline 6 pm Choir	28 2:30-4 pm Welcome Table take-out	29 9 am Bulletin deadline	30 OFFICE CLOSED	31 New Year's Eve

Lord Jesus, Master of both the light and the darkness, send your Holy Spirit upon our preparations for Christmas. We who have so much to do and seek quiet spaces to hear your voice each day, We who are anxious over many things look forward to your coming among us. We who are blessed in so many ways long for the complete joy of your kingdom. We whose hearts are heavy seek the joy of your presence. We are your people, walking in darkness, yet seeking the light. To you we say, "Come Lord Jesus!" Amen.

- Henri J.M. Nouwen

Acadia Choral Society Concert

Sunday, December 11, 3 p.m.
 First Congregational Church UCC
 Ellsworth, Maine

Tickets are sold for
 a suggested donation of \$20

ACS requests that
 the audience wear masks