

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



**FEBRUARY 2022 - THE STEEPLE NEWSLETTER**

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

***A message from Rev. Keith Bowie, who has been one of our supply preachers***

I can still vividly remember a horrible and destructive fire that struck the business district of the small mill town where I was raised. This event occurred in the early 1950s, when I was six or seven years old. The fire traveled down one side of Main Street and completely leveled most of the stores on that side. On the other side of the street, which included my father's and grandfather's family grocery business, there was only smoke and some heat damage to the buildings. Those buildings were spared. The stores that had been destroyed were eventually rebuilt.

A few years later my father decided to take his business and move across the street into one of the newly rebuilt buildings. These buildings were now larger and more fire resistant than the old. It was a wise decision because his grocery business was booming at the time and more space was a real need. The irony of all this is that his move across the street probably would never have happened had not there been a fire a few years earlier. Fire created the circumstances and impetus for new life and growth.

Let's now take this concept and apply it to the church. Only this time, instead of fire, which we literally don't want, let's substitute the word "renewal." The word "renew" means to make new or strong again; to bring back into good condition. Many Christians have a love/hate relationship with the idea of renewing the church. Many perceive "the new" to be risky or even dangerous, so they opt instead for nostalgia. Nostalgia is a very natural and powerful emotion, particularly for those of us who are older. But nostalgia has its dangers, too. Nostalgia can make us idealize the past, thus robbing the present of delight and the future of hope. The result? A tired, lifeless congregation if there is too much "looking back." At times the accumulated brush pile of old customs and programs needs to be cleared out so that there is the possibility of new life.

So let us ask: Is there a program or ministry that has outlived its usefulness that can safely be discarded? As we look around at our ways of doing things, is there a way of doing it better or more efficiently? What obstacles are preventing us from bringing new life to our church?

Most importantly, what is God calling us to be and to do? St. Paul reminds us: "No eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the human heart conceived, what God has prepared for those who love him." (1 Corinthians 2:9).

So look back, yes. But lean forward.

*Keith*

**ANNUAL MEETING  
IS MOVED TO  
MARCH 6**

## FEBRUARY CHURCH MEETINGS

- Adult Forum** – Sundays, 8:30 a.m.  
**Choir** – Tuesdays, 6:30 p.m.  
**Music** – TBA  
**Missions** – Thursday, Feb 10, time TBA  
**Deacons** – Sunday, Feb 13, 11:30 p.m.  
**Trustees** – Thursday, Feb 17, 7 p.m.  
**Christian Ed** – Sunday, Feb 20, 1 p.m.  
**Council** – Monday, Feb 28, 6:30 p.m.

Except for Choir, 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.



### COLD WEATHER AND THE FRONT ENTRANCE

Cold weather and wet concrete don't play nicely together. Ergo, the retaining wall we need at the front entrance for the stairs cannot be poured until Spring. So, we ask you to continue to use the State Street and education wing entrances.



## FEBRUARY LECTIONARY READINGS

### FEBRUARY 6 – 5<sup>TH</sup> SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

Isaiah 6:1-8, (9-13)  
Psalm 138  
1 Corinthians 15:1-11  
Luke 5:1-11 \*

### FEBRUARY 13 – 6<sup>TH</sup> SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

Jeremiah 17:5-10  
Psalm 1  
1 Corinthians 15:12-20  
Luke 6:17-26 \*

### FEBRUARY 20 – 7<sup>TH</sup> SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

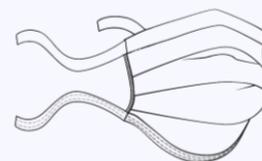
Genesis 45:3-11, 15  
Psalm 37:1-11, 39-40  
1 Corinthians 15:35-38, 42-50  
Luke 6:27-38 \*

### FEBRUARY 27 – TRANSFIGURATION

Exodus 34:29-35  
Psalm 99  
2 Corinthians 3:12-4:2  
Luke 9:28-36, (37-43a)

\* Beginning page 4, please read some **Mission Moments** from the UCC reflecting on the starred passages.

**A mask is necessary for all who gather in the church building.**



The Re-Opening Committee hopes this will serve to mitigate the spread of Covid and enable us to remain open for worship. We will decide on a week-to-week basis if we host a coffee hour after morning worship.

We appreciate your understanding and cooperation in these difficult times. This is hard on all of us.

*Then the King will say, 'I'm  
telling the solemn truth:  
Whenever you did one of these  
things to someone overlooked  
or ignored, that was me—  
you did it to me.'*

Matthew 25:40 (MSG)

## **MINISTER'S DISCRETIONARY FUND NOTE FROM THE TREASURER**

To ensure that our Minister's Discretionary Fund best serves the needs of our congregation and our community, church leadership has elected to participate in the Ellsworth Area Ministerial Association's Fund to serve *community* requests for church discretionary funds. This fund (EAMA Fund) was created by the Association to provide a central point for community members in need.

The EAMA Fund is being administered by [Families First Community Center](#) (FFCC). Community members seeking assistance from FCC who are not members of our congregation will be directed to FFCC for support. Our Church will contribute a portion of our Minister's Discretionary Fund receipts to this community resource.

The remaining portion of your gifts to FCC's Minister's Discretionary Fund will be held in our account to be available to support members of our Church family as needed. Please reach out to Rev. Bowie if you have a need or any questions.

We welcome your gifts to the Minister's Discretionary Fund at any time. Thank you for your generosity.



# DEACONS

February 6 - Communion, Rev. Keith Bowie

February 13 - Rev. Keith Bowie

February 20 - TBA

February 27 - Rev. Keith Bowie

## ***Thoughts from the Chair of Deacons***

We are in the time between Epiphany and the start of Lent and the Eastertide. When I was a child, this time of the church seasons always confused me. We have just finished talking about and celebrating the birth of Christ and recognition of the Wise persons from afar. Now we are moving into the time that Jesus has been preaching and gathering disciples and moving to the Palm Sunday Parade and all the rituals that go along with Holy Week. To a young girl, even though I was a minister's daughter, I didn't understand how we moved from a baby in a manger to riding a donkey, being put on trial, carrying a cross and being nailed to that cross and dying. Then we have the miracle of the empty tomb and the risen Christ. How did we do that in the three or four months between those major holidays? I was so confused. Of course, I have grown up and gained an understanding of how this all works and the miracles that had to happen to be able to make this all come together to create the understanding that we all live by today. I realize that it seems that we have been in massive turmoil for a long time, but our church has been here for over 210 years, and we need to continue to support and believe in the miracle that we will come out of this, too, and we will grow again and maintain a spiritual presence in Ellsworth, Maine for many years to come. I believe this and there are many of you that believe this too! Let's pay attention to the positive, pray for each other and our spiritual guidance, and I believe we will see miracles happen no matter how small, they all mean something! God is working among us! ♦

**A Surprising Catch** - Today's scripture story tells how Jesus called the first disciples to be evangelists or "fishers of people." Although we have our roots in the evangelical tradition, many United Church of Christ congregations shy away from proudly evangelizing. In their book, *Glorify*, published by The Pilgrim Press, Rev. Emily Heath encourages the UCC to reclaim the title of evangelist. In chapter two, they write,

"I sometimes describe myself as a liberal evangelical. I'm sad that the public understanding of the word "evangelical" forces me to use a qualifier, but so be it. I believe in spreading the good news of God's love to all. But how I hope to do that looks very different from what most (at least in our North American context) might expect from an evangelical. To me, evangelism looks like this: marching in the local gay pride parade, growing vegetables to donate to the local food pantry, advocating for fair labor practices, working for peace, protesting racial injustice, providing good quality health care to those who don't have it, and so much more.

All of these things help spread the good news of God's love. All of those things are evangelism. We do them not just because we want to be good people, but more importantly because we are God's people...

When we are talking about evangelism, it's important to make sure we clear up one popular misconception: evangelism is not about church growth.

We do not do the work of evangelism in order to recruit new members for the team. This is not about adding to our membership rolls. And if the only time your church talks about evangelism is as a way to get more money in the offering plates and "save the church," trust me when I say it just won't happen. People will walk into the doors of your church and see the ulterior motivations from a mile away.

The point of sharing the good news is just this: to share the good news."\*

How can you reclaim the title of evangelist and share the good news in your community?

\*Heath, Emily C., *Glorify: Reclaiming the Heart of Progressive Christianity*, Cleveland, Ohio  
The Pilgrim Press © 2016, Pages 26-27, Used by permission.

**Surprising Teaching: Racial Justice Sunday/Science and Technology Sunday** – It is Racial Justice Sunday. If your congregation has not already done so, it is a good time to consider the commitment articulated during the wider church's 33<sup>rd</sup> General Synod gathering in 2021, encouraging every UCC congregation to commit to being an anti-racist church. Last summer, a letter from General Minister and President, John Dorhauer, and Associate General Minister of Justice and Local Church Ministries, Traci Blackmon, paved the way for a new movement in anti-racism in the wider church.

"Since 1963, the General Synods of the United Church of Christ have voted 12 resolutions, statements, and pronouncements denouncing racism, and in 2003 resolved *that the United Church of Christ is called to be an antiracist church...*

Similar to COVID-19 and as deadly, racism mutates and remains resistant to methods of eradication...Structural racism pervades every institution and every aspect of our society. It has so distorted our biological, sociological, anthropological, and theological perception of "the other" that most people cannot even imagine the anti-racist church and world that we work to bring into being.

**But dismantling white supremacy is not solely about what we must tear down. We must ask ourselves, what must we build in its place?** Over the next biennium, the national setting invites you to imagine with us: *What does a world free of racism look like to you, and how might we work to bring such a vision into reality across every area of church and society?\**

\*From the webpage: <https://www.ucc.org/build-on-the-love-join-the-movement/>  
Find out more about this vital and timely movement at "jointhemovementucc.org".

Dorhauer, John, and Traci Blackmon. "June 9 Webinar to Kick off Reparatory Justice and Reparations Work." United Church of Christ, 7 June 2021, [www.ucc.org/june-9-webinar-to-kick-off-reparatory-justice-and-reparations-work/](http://www.ucc.org/june-9-webinar-to-kick-off-reparatory-justice-and-reparations-work/). Accessed 7 July 2021.

Dear God,

Today, I pray for my enemies.

I do not pray that they will change their ways.  
(Although I secretly believe that they should.)

I do not pray that they become more like me.  
(Although that is a mighty temptation.)

I do not pray, even, that they cease to exist.  
(Although I may, in my heart of hearts, desire this.)

Instead my prayer for my enemies looks a lot like a prayer for myself.

Help me Holy One, to stop drinking poison, hoping it will hurt another.

Help me instead to be more like you.

Truthful. Powerful. Compassionate.

Remind me today and every day

That my prayer for my enemies makes ME—not them—more faithful. Stronger. Whole-er.

Today I pray for my enemies, which is really a prayer that I, myself,  
grow every day more and more into Your Divine Image,  
the Image in which I am created and meant to be. Amen.

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*Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer. - Romans 12:12*

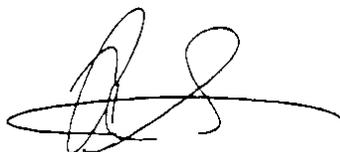
Dear Friends:

Thank you for your generous gift to the CWS Blankets program. As families and communities around the world recover from emergencies and struggle in the face of unprecedented challenges, you are standing with them. Now more than ever, we are so grateful for your generous support.

Your contribution provides warmth, comfort and hope to neighbors near and far. It provides a tangible reminder to migrant families that they are not alone as they seek safety. It wraps refugees in warmth as they arrive in the United States to build a new future. It provides comfort to our neighbors who have lost homes or are struggling in the face of extreme challenges. Around the world, your support means relief and hope.

Because of you, Church World Service is able to respond when disasters occur and support is needed. Thanks to your compassion, we can--and will--change lives.

Sincerely,



Rick Santos  
President and CEO



[cwsblankets.org](http://cwsblankets.org) • [cwsglobal.org](http://cwsglobal.org)

# FEBRUARY 2022

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
		1 6 pm Choir	2 2:30-4 pm Welcome Table take-out	3 9 am Bulletin deadline	4 OFFICE CLOSED	5
6 <b>Green</b> 8:30 am Adult Forum 10 am Worship Service	7 OFFICE CLOSED	8 6 pm Choir	9 2:30-4 pm Welcome Table take-out	10 9 am Bulletin & Steeple deadlines TBA Missions	11 OFFICE CLOSED	12
13 <b>Green</b> 8:30 am Adult Forum 10 am Worship Service 11:30 am Deacons	14 OFFICE CLOSED 	15 6 pm Choir	16 2:30-4 pm Welcome Table take-out	17 9 am Bulletin deadline 7 pm Trustees	18 OFFICE CLOSED	19
20 <b>Green</b> 8:30 am Adult Forum 10 am Worship Service 1 pm Christian Ed	21 OFFICE CLOSED	22 6 pm Choir	23 2:30-4 pm Welcome Table take-out	24 9 am Bulletin deadline	25 OFFICE CLOSED	26
27 <b>Green</b> 8:30 am Adult Forum 10 am Worship Service	28 OFFICE CLOSED 6:30 pm Council	<b>LOOKING AHEAD:</b> <b>Ash Wednesday is March 2</b> <b>Annual Meeting is March 6</b>				



## ANNUAL MEETING Postponed to March 6



The Council voted to postpone the Annual Meeting because of the recent local COVID surge and the desire to offer effective meeting options. It will be a hybrid meeting, in-person and on Zoom immediately following morning worship on Sunday, March 6, 2022.

Questions? Contact the Moderator.