

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



MARCH 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, Transitional Minister

It is not quite Lent as I write this article, but it's not far off either. My hope for all of us on our Lenten journey is that we will be deeply nourished and fed by the Spirit, that we experience healing in ourselves where it is needed, that we live more out of trust than fear, that we live more in the present moment than in the past or future, that we have an ever-deepening capacity to love, that we become more sensitive to the suffering and needs of others, and that we have more clarity about what is important and what is not. These are not goals we must achieve! Rather they are descriptive of a state of mind which we live into slowly over a lifetime, not just a forty-day period we call Lent.

May I present some suggestions that you may find helpful as you seek to come into the presence of God. Again, they are not goals you must strive toward or achieve, but pathways to your deepest, hungriest places where God more likely may be encountered.

Rediscover silence. When was the last time you allowed yourself some "free time" without thinking/doing anything in particular, letting your thoughts take you wherever they want to go? Meditate, ruminate, and dream.

Slow down. Be content. Breathe deeply. Turn off all your electronic devices and take a social media holiday once in a while.

Take care of your body (God's temple!) Get enough sleep. Exercise.

Live in beauty. Music, art, gardens—whatever moves you—fill your life with it.

Look at life through the eyes of another. This profound spiritual exercise will tame your ego and allow for peaceful relations.

Keep Sabbath. Set aside time to rest, renew, refocus and time to be with God. Come back to church if you have been away. Engage in daily prayer and devotions.

Practice compassion, forgiveness and mercy. Do justice. Walk humbly with God.

Have some joy and laughter during this Lenten season. Many years ago, I heard a sermon entitled "Laughter for Lent." It made an impression on me. Contrary to popular opinion, Lent is not some dreary, dour time of self-flagellation. God created us in love and wants us to live to the fullest, knowing joy and communion and fulfillment.

Keith

**ANNUAL
MEETING:
MARCH 6**

MARCH CHURCH MEETINGS

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

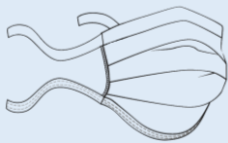
Except for Choir, our meetings are hybrid, in-person AND Zoom, so that you may participate in the way you are comfortable.

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.

FRONT ENTRANCE CLOSED

Please continue to use the State Street and education wing entrances.

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.

MARCH LECTIONARY READINGS

MARCH 1 – 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



MARCH 6 – 1ST SUNDAY IN LENT

Deuteronomy 26:1-11
Psalm 91:1-2, 9-16
Romans 10:8b-13
Luke 4:1-13

MARCH 13 – 2ND SUNDAY IN LENT

Genesis 15:1-12, 17-18
Psalm 27
Philippians 3:17-4:1
Luke 13:31-35 OR Luke 9:28-36, (37-43a)

MARCH 20 – 3RD SUNDAY IN LENT

Isaiah 55:1-9
Psalm 63:1-8
1 Corinthians 10:1-13
Luke 13:1-9

MARCH 27 – 4TH SUNDAY IN LENT

Joshua 5:9-12
Psalm 32
2 Corinthians 5:16-21
Luke 15:1-3, 11b-32

*Create in me a clean heart,
O God, and put a new and
right spirit within me.
Restore to me the
joy of your salvation,
and sustain in me
a willing spirit.*

Psalm 51:10, 12



Howard Thurman grew up during the early 1900s in Daytona, Florida, where educational opportunities for Blacks were limited. There were only three high schools for Blacks in the entire state. The closest private church-related high school was in Jacksonville, about 90 miles away. His community pooled their resources to send him to further his education.

At the train station, Thurman learned he would have to pay extra to ship his rope-tied trunk, and he did not have the money. Alone and dejected, he sat on the steps of the rail station. A stranger, a Black man, asked why he was crying. After Thurman explained his situation, the man paid the extra fare. Before Thurman could thank him, the man walked away, and Thurman never saw him again. The dedication to his autobiography reads: *To the stranger in the railroad station in Daytona Beach who restored my broken dream sixty-five years ago.*¹

Thurman went on to become a renowned scholar and theologian and influenced the likes of Martin Luther King, Jr. The stranger saw a young man in despair and his generosity made a difference—he expected nothing in return; he just saw a need and responded. The man may or may not have thought of his gift as an act of love, but it changed the trajectory of Thurman’s life.

This is what One Great Hour of Sharing does for people across the planet—it restores broken dreams, resurrects hope, and carves a path into the future.


FCC will collect gifts for OGHS during the month in March.

¹ With Head and Heart: The Autobiography of Howard Thurman (New York: Harcourt & Brace, 1979), dedication page, 24-25

DEACONS

- March 6 - Communion, Rev. Keith Bowie
- March 13 - Rev. Keith Bowie
- March 20 - Rev. John MacDuffie
- March 27 - Rev. Keith Bowie

The Deacons continue to reach out and care for our congregation. Please contact us with any need you have, a concern, or if you just need to talk with someone.

Ash Wednesday Service 
March 2 at 6:30 p.m.

We begin our Lenten Journey on March 2, Ash Wednesday, with an evening service in our sanctuary. We will worship together with the Ellsworth Falls congregation.

On Wednesdays March 9, 16, 23, and 30, Rev. Bowie will lead a weekly study of lectionary readings at 6:30 p.m. This will take place in the parlor and on Zoom. We hope that many of you will be able to participate.

Finally, we will culminate this preparatory Lenten season with a Maundy Thursday service at the Ellsworth Falls sanctuary on April 14.

LENTEN BIBLE STUDY
Wednesdays March 9, 16, 23, 30
6:30 p.m., Parlor & Zoom

*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.



ADULT FORUM
Sundays at 8:30 a.m., Zoom & Parlor

Tom MacDonald leads this discussion group that welcomes all people to join via computer, phone or in-person in the Parlor. Contact the office to get Zoom information.

*Thank
you*

Dear Friends,

*Thank you for the thoughtful
and yummy gift at Christmas time.
Eleanor's fudge is always a treat.*

*We thought of all of you as we
enjoyed all the Christmas goodies.*

*In Christ,
Lewis & Juanita Higgins*



PILGRIM LODGE NEWS 2022




1. ***WE HAVE A NEW DIRECTOR!*** Liz Charles McGough is a longtime PL staffer, camper, counselor, and dean. The PL community is overjoyed with this decision (visit our social media for evidence!). How blessed we are that our first summer back on the boardwalk in a couple of years will be under Liz's leadership.
2. Registration has started and is going strong! Pilgrim Lodge is Maine's UCC camp and we would love to see you this season! We have programming for children of all ages, adults, and families. Our programming includes *Camp Pride*, *Hogwarts*, *Adult Chill*, *Grandparents & Grandchildren*, *Expedition Everyone*, and many others. We love to welcome new folks! To learn more, please visit: <https://www.pilgrimlodge.org/>.
3. Watch this brief YouTube video to get a glimpse of life at PL:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PaVUdiAn700&t=176s>
4. PL loves our retreat groups! If you are interested in bringing your community to camp, please reach out to our office administrator, Karen, at ksteelhammer@pilgrimlodge.org. We typically host retreat groups in the late spring and early fall, though Karen can help with the specifics.
5. We are compiling worship materials for churches to use in their PL Sundays. These materials may also be useful to campers, counselors, staff, and deans in planning worship this summer. Please consider sending us your favorite worship materials that are related to Pilgrim Lodge, children, Creation, and/or community. Thank you for helping us with this project!
6. We love and need helpers of all sorts! Our summer staff application is currently open (<https://www.pilgrimlodge.org/about-us/jobs/>). Contact office administrator Karen (ksteelhammer@pilgrimlodge.org) if you are interested in counseling (volunteering in a cabin with children for a week) or helping in other ways, big and small.

We continue to be grateful for all the ways that you have supported Pilgrim Lodge. As we reconnect in this new season of ministry, please know you are being deeply and joyfully held.

With gratitude,
Pilgrim Lodge Outreach Committee
Hannah Smith-Erb
Lydia Hoffman
Xander Keiter
Steve Savage

MARCH 2022

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
LOVE REMAINS: We are collecting gifts for the One Great Hour of Sharing offering in March.		1 6 pm Choir	2 2:30-4 pm Welcome Table take-out 6:30 pm Ash † Wednesday Service	3 9 am Bulletin deadline	4 OFFICE CLOSED	5
6 Violet 8:30 am Adult Forum 10 am Worship Service ANNUAL MEETING	7 OFFICE CLOSED	8 6 pm Choir	9 2:30-4 pm Welcome Table take-out 6:30 pm Lenten study	10 9 am Bulletin & Steeple deadlines TBA Missions	11 OFFICE CLOSED	12
13 Violet 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 6:30 pm Lenten study	17 9 am Bulletin deadline 7 pm Trustees 	18 OFFICE CLOSED	19
20 Violet 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 6:30 pm Lenten study	24 9 am Bulletin deadline	25 OFFICE CLOSED	26
27 Violet 8:30 am Adult Forum 10 am Worship Service	28 OFFICE CLOSED	29 6 pm Choir	30 2:30-4 pm Welcome Table take-out 6:30 pm Lenten study	31 9 am Bulletin deadline		

ANNUAL MEETING



**Sunday
March 6**



It will be a hybrid meeting, in-person and on Zoom immediately following morning worship.

Questions?
Contact the Moderator.

Invite Us Deeper – A Lenten Prayer

Almighty and ever living God,
you invite us deeper into your world,
your people, your Lent.
May this time be one of outward focus;
seeking you in those we often ignore.
Help us live a Lent focused on freedom,
generosity, and encounter.
Give us hearts hungry to serve you
and those who need what we have to give.

- Author Unknown

Our purpose,
First Congregational Church, UCC, Ellsworth, Maine:
To embrace the life, ministry and teachings of Jesus Christ
In meaningful and dynamic ways through
creative worship,
supportive fellowship,
compassionate outreach, and
stimulating Christian education for all ages;
To be a faithful community which, led by the Holy Spirit,
expresses hospitality,
nurtures spiritual growth, and
promotes a deep sense of belonging;
To strive to build on commonalities while seeking to
understand, accept, and
celebrate our differences;
To stand as a beacon of hope in a hurting and troubled world by
sharing the Good News of the Gospel, and
practicing God's love as embodied by Jesus Christ.
We welcome all to walk with us on the journey of faith.
As adopted by the Congregation at its Annual Meeting – January 22, 2012



First Congregational Church, United Church of Christ

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