

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



MARCH 2023 - THE STEEPLE NEWSLETTER

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

FROM OUR TRANSITIONAL MINISTER

LENT

How do you explain Lent to a person who hasn't the foggiest idea of what you are talking about? That was the question I was bantering about in my head recently. Really, why do we need Lent? What useful purpose does it serve? Then it hit me like a ton of bricks as I was re-reading Matthew's account of Jesus being led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil (Matthew 4:1). Note that the temptation does not begin with God arming Jesus with all powers and weapons so that he can win the battle. No, the Spirit leads Jesus into the wilderness, into solitude, into forsakenness. God removes from Jesus all human and creaturely help. The hour of temptation finds Jesus weak, alone, and hungry. God leaves human beings alone in temptation. God, it seems, is nowhere to be found in the face of temptation. The Psalmist also calls to God again and again: "Do not forsake me ... Do not hide your face from me ... Do not cast me off, O God of my salvation!" (Psalm 27:9).

Here, in temptation, God is a God who is not gracious and near to all. God does not override our freedom to choose between good and evil. As C.S. Lewis wrote, "God leaves the creature to stand up on its own legs." Incomprehensibly, God sometimes withdraws and is quite distant from us. **We are in the wilderness.** Disconcerting? Yes. Scary? Yes. And that is the short answer to why I (we) need Lent. Journey with us these forty days, will you?

Rev. Keith Bowie

FROM OUR MODERATOR

In a world challenged by division and hatred, many, and perhaps all of us sometimes think of Church as that place where we can go to escape the turmoil around us. Surely when we are gathered for worship we come to be filled with hope and yearning for God's presence.

Our Church is about to begin its Pastoral search process. A search committee has been formed and they are at the beginning of a task that is at once difficult and joyous. Their faithful efforts will play a determining role in the future of this Church.

Churches are facing big challenges today. Declining memberships, the lack of young people, ageing and expensive-to-operate buildings are among the many challenges that almost all Churches face. Perhaps the challenge that is most concerning and contentious is defining the mission of the Church and how we go about fulfilling that mission.

In some ways, like all Churches, we have sometimes found ourselves longing for the past. The past after all, can be remembered selectively while the present, at times feels, in some real ways, broken. At those times we need to remember that we are God's own truly beloved and that we are an Easter people. While it is not inaccurate to recognize that some things are in fact dying, we need to understand that something new is trying to be born.

That something new will no doubt take shape in ways that we have yet to imagine. The spirit will, if we are open to it, take us places that will startle and amaze us.

(Moderator's thoughts continued on page 3, column 2)

MARCH CHURCH MEETINGS

- Adult Forum** – Sundays, 8:30 a.m.
- Busy Bodies** – Mondays, 10:30 a.m.
beginning February 13
- Choir** – THURSDAYS, 6 p.m.
(note evening change!)
- Profile Comm** – Tuesdays, 6 p.m. on Zoom
- Music** – TBA
- Missions** – Thursday, March 9, TBA
- Deacons** – Sunday, March 12, 11:30 a.m.
- Trustees** – Thursday, March 16, 7 p.m.
- Christian Ed** – Sunday, March 19, 11:30 a.m.
- Council** – Monday, March 27, 6 :30 p.m.

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 contact the secretary in 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.

MARCH LECTIONARY READINGS

MARCH 5 – 2ND SUNDAY IN LENT

Genesis 12:1-4a
Psalm 121
Romans 4:1-5, 13-17
John 3:1-17 OR Matthew 17:1-9

(No

MARCH 12 – 3RD SUNDAY IN LENT

Exodus 17:1-7
Psalm 95
Romans 5:1-11
Johns 4:5-42

MARCH 19 – 4TH SUNDAY IN LENT

1 Samuel 16:1-13
Psalm 23 (see page 4)
Ephesians 5:8-14
John 9:1-41

MARCH 22 – 5TH SUNDAY IN LENT

Ezekiel 37:1-14
Psalm 130
Romans 8:6-11
John 11:1-45

WITH DEEPEST
Sympathy

to the family & friends of
Alice Lippert
and
Pat Jordan

**A Celebration
of Life**

for Pat Jordan
Saturday, March 4, 2 p.m.



There will be a service in the church sanctuary and a time of fellowship and refreshment in the Dining Hall afterward.



DAYLIGHT SAVING TIME BEGINS MARCH 12

This is a friendly reminder of the not-so-very-friendly time change coming soon! When we go to bed on Saturday evening, March 11, we advance our clocks by an hour and lose an hour of sleep the next morning.

DEACONS

March 5 - Communion, Rev. Keith Bowie

March 12 - Rev. Keith Bowie

March 19 - Rev. Terry Phillipa

March 26 - Rev. Keith Bowie

March Deacon: Anne Bancroft

LENT

Lent began the last Sunday of February. We observed Ash Wednesday with the imposition of ashes. We changed our liturgical colors from Green (ordinary time) to Purple, the color of royalty. This is because purple cloth was very expensive during biblical times.

Lent is a time of preparation, penance, and sacrifice. Most of us are thinking of how to prepare for Holy Week (April 2-9). In this time of reflection, how can we gain insight and grow spiritually, and what can we do to help our neighbors or our church family?

Some people make a pledge to give up something in their life to make themselves a better person or to help themselves. When I was growing up, I would gather coins or change to participate in the One Great Hour of Sharing, and this was a way as a child I gave something up—either candy or soda, but it made me remember that I was doing something more for God. What other ways can we ourselves and the church during this time of preparation? Or you could take on something during Lent—volunteer to be a greeter, usher, or liturgist. Contact a Deacon.

Remember that if you have an idea about something for the church, please reach out to the Deacons.

Prayer Calendar names

As we attempt to pray for our entire church family over the course of a year, the Deacons ask that you please include these names in your daily prayers during March:

- Julie Allen
- Victoria Church
- Jerri Holt
- Jon Rosemeier
- Lois Stevens
- Genevieve Goebel
- Christia Young
- James Fernald
- Katy Schrader Blackmer

(Moderator's thoughts continued from the front page)

Becoming open to what God intends has seldom been the priority for big cross-sections of the human endeavor. Many of us are content to conform, to a greater or lesser extent, to the prevailing social norms that have shaped us.

We are at a time of decision. We can stay firmly anchored in the past or we can put our shoulders to the wheel, lift our prayers for larger hearts and more faithful understandings to the one who loves us all, and become the foundation of a new and vital way of being the Church together. There will be tensions—tensions do not have to be destructive, in fact they can be and often are opportunities for growth.

We need to rethink what we understand covenant to be and what kind of covenant into which we can all become imbedded. When we can do that, even the most contentious of conversations are not only possible but also windows into better understandings of each other, and, most importantly, of God's call to us as a gathered community of faith.

No one individual among us has all the answers. Together, loving God and loving each other, we can make great strides toward being all that we have been called to be and bringing joy to the heart of God. ♦

THE GOOD SHEPHERD

You, Lord, are my shepherd. I will never be in need. You let me rest in fields of green grass. You lead me to streams of peaceful water, and you refresh my life. You are true to your name, and you lead me along the right paths. I may walk through valleys as dark as death, but I won't be afraid. You are with me, and your shepherd's rod makes me feel safe. You treat me to a feast, my enemies watch. You honor me as your guest, and you fill my cup until it overflows. Your kindness and love will always be with me each day of my life, and I will live forever in your house, Lord.

Psalm 23, Contemporary English Version

2023 EASTER FLOWERS ORDER FORM

Easter is April 9. Take care of your Easter flowers now and order with this form! Or see Katharine Schrader after church at coffee hour on Sundays through Palm Sunday, April 2.

Flowers are \$7 per plant. Indicate preference and dedication. Please print.

In Memory of: _____

OR

In Honor of: _____

Given by: _____



TULIPS



LILIES



IT'S TIME TO SHARE

UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

One Great HOUR OF SHARING

So let's not allow ourselves to get fatigued doing good. At the right time we will harvest a good crop if we don't give up... Galatians 6:9

ucc.org/oghs

Photo Craig Thompson

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Galatians 6:9–10 (The MSG) - *So let's not allow ourselves to get fatigued doing good. At the right time we will harvest a good crop if we don't give up, or quit. Right now, therefore, every time we get the chance, let us work for the benefit of all...* The apostle Paul wrote these words to the church in Galatia to assure them of the power of God's Spirit to strengthen them to persist in the work of being generous in caring for others.


Because you didn't give up or quit, the United Church of Christ has been able to provide support that offered hope when situations seemed hopeless. The UCC has offered food, water, medicines, education, and opportunities for sustainable development.

The gifts you give to *OGHS* are leveraged with those of others across the United Church of Christ bringing a greater impact to the work being done with local and global partners. Your support enables the UCC to respond to a variety of global and local concerns by addressing advocacy, sustainable development, refugee and asylum issues, migration, disasters, and assisting those most in need and vulnerable among us.

Wildfires, earthquakes, hurricanes, and flooding have ravaged communities in the United States and worldwide, leaving families and communities in desperate need of assistance. Some of these disasters have occurred here, or in nearby communities or to friends and neighbors in countries thousands of miles away, across the globe. Strengthened by the power of God's Spirit and your collective generosity, the United Church of Christ continues to work with partners to care for others, and not give up... as together we build a just world for all.

In March, First Congregational Church will collect gifts for the One Great Hour of Sharing.

MARCH 2023

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<h1>LENT</h1>			1 1-4 pm Bowie office 2:30-4 pm Welcome Table take-out 6:30 pm Book study	2 9 am Bulletin deadline 6 pm Choir	3 OFFICE CLOSED	4 2 pm Jordan service
5 Lent II Violet 8:30 am Adult Forum 10 am Worship Service, Communion & luncheon	6 OFFICE CLOSED 10:30 am Busy Bodies activities	7 6:30 pm Profile Comm	8 1-4 pm Bowie office 2:30-4 pm Welcome Table take-out 6:30 pm Book study	9 9 am Bulletin Deadline TBA Missions 6 pm Choir	10 OFFICE CLOSED	11
12 Lent III Violet 8:30 am Adult Forum 10 am Worship Service 11:30 am Deacons DAYLIGHT SAVING TIME BEGINS	13 OFFICE CLOSED 10:30 am Busy Bodies activities	14 6:30 pm Profile Comm	15 1-4 pm Bowie office 2:30-4 pm Welcome Table take-out 6:30 pm Book study	16 9 am Bulletin Deadline 6 pm Choir 7 pm Trustees	17 OFFICE CLOSED 	18
19 Lent IV Violet 8:30 am Adult Forum 10 am Worship Service 11:30 Christian Ed	20 OFFICE CLOSED 10:30 am Busy Bodies activities	21 6:30 pm Profile Comm	22 9 am Steeple deadline 1-4 pm Bowie office 2:30-4 pm Welcome Table take-out 6:30 pm Book study	23 9 am Bulletin deadline 6 pm Choir	24 OFFICE CLOSED	25 Church supper
26 Lent V Violet 8:30 am Adult Forum 10 am Worship Service	27 OFFICE CLOSED 10:30 am Busy Bodies activities 6:30 pm Council	28 6:30 pm Profile Comm	29 1-4 pm Bowie office 2:30-4 pm Welcome Table take-out 6:30 pm Book study	30 9 am Bulletin deadline 6 pm Choir	31	

Roast Turkey Supper

Saturday, March 25, serving 5:00 to 6:30 pm



Roast turkey, gravy, mashed potatoes, glazed carrots, green beans, salad, rolls, beverages (coffee, tea, lemonade) and homemade pies

\$10 per person ~ \$25 per family

We need volunteers to set up, cook, serve, wash dishes, and bake pies. Please contact Ruth Tainter immediately about the ways you can help.

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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