

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



MAY 2023 - THE STEEPLE NEWSLETTER

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

From Rev. Keith Bowie, Transitional Minister

I am reminded of best-selling author Anne Lamott's autobiographical book "Traveling Mercies." It is an amazing account of a woman in trouble who is found by a loving God. It is the story of Lamott in her alcoholic, drug enslaved chaotic life. It is also the story of a God who is resourceful in coming to her. In the unforgettable account of her conversion, Lamott describes how she "hit bottom," went to the depths of alcoholic degradation. In the middle of the night, she awoke in a stupor to see someone sitting in the corner of the room, watching her. She thought at first it might be her father who often sat up with her during her binges. But it was not her father; it was Jesus. She was not pleased by the specter of Jesus just sitting there, lying in wait for her to relent and come to him.

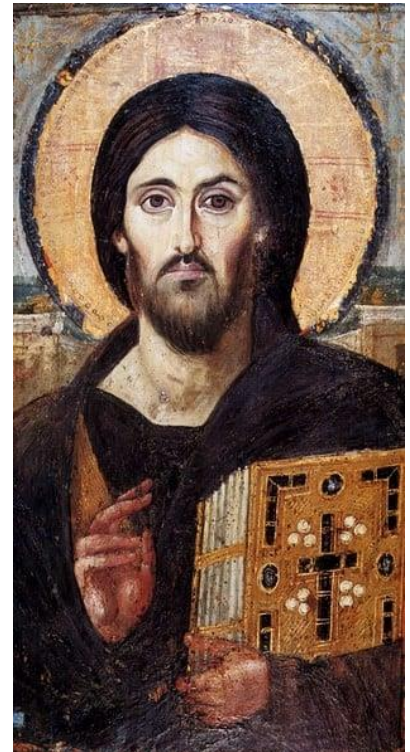
The next day she tried to get the episode out of her mind. She said that she hoped not to see him again. She locked her door more tightly when she knew that, if you feed a stray cat, it will take up residence with you and never leave, so she tried not to encourage Jesus to come to her. Then, on another night, she awoke to see Jesus sitting there in the corner of her room once again. She relented. "Come on in," she said. It was the moment of her conversion, her transformation, the beginning of her Christian life.

We worship a God who is creative and persistent in coming to us, and Scripture says that this God wants us! Let us pray: *Walk with us, O risen Christ, talk to us, be beside us, explain to us the sacred Scriptures. Then appear to us in the breaking of the bread, in the presence of fellow disciples, as shadows lengthen, and evening comes. Stay with us forever. Amen.*

Keith

Rev. Keith Bowie

One of the oldest images Jesus. The different expressions shown on the right and left sides of Jesus' face may suggest his double nature as both human and divine. It was painted on a wooden board during the 6th or 7th century and is currently preserved at the Monastery of St. Catherine on Mount Sinai, in Egypt, one of the oldest monasteries in the world.



MAY CHURCH MEETINGS

- Adult Forum** – Sundays, 8:30 a.m.
- Busy Bodies** – Mondays, 10:30 a.m.
- Choir** – Thursdays, 6 p.m.
- Music** – TBA
- Missions** – Thursday, May 11, TBA
- Christian Ed** – Sunday, May 14, 11:30 a.m.
- Trustees** – Thursday, May 18, 7 p.m.
- Deacons** – Sunday, May 21, 11:30 a.m.
- Council** – Monday, May 22, 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.



MAY LECTIONARY READINGS

MAY 7 – 5TH SUNDAY OF EASTER

Acts 7:55-60
Psalm 31:1-5, 15-16
1 Peter 2:2-10
John 14:1-14

MAY 14 – 6TH SUNDAY OF EASTER

Acts 17:22-31
Psalm 66:8-20
1 Peter 3:13-22
John 14:15-21

MAY 18 – ASCENSION DAY

Acts 1:1-11
Psalm 47 OR Psalm 93
Ephesians 1:15-23
Luke 24:44-53

MAY 21 – 7TH SUNDAY OF EASTER

Acts 1:6-14
Psalm 68:1-10, 32-35
1 Peter 4:12-14, 5:6-11
John 17:1-11

MAY 28 - PENTECOST

Acts 2:1-21 OR Numbers 11:24-30
Psalm 104:24-34, 35b
1 Corinthians 12:3b-13
John 20:19-23 or John 7:37-39



DEACONS

- May 7 - Communion, Rev. Keith Bowie
 - May 14 - Rev. Keith Bowie
 - May 21 - Rev. Keith Bowie
 - May 28 - **Pentecost**, Rev. Matt McDonald
- May Deacon: Katharine Schrader

MUSINGS FROM THE DIACONATE CHAIR

Our year is zipping right by and so many new things are popping up, and I don't mean grass and flowers. We are moving into May, and we have many things happening around us. Work is being done throughout the building, our popular church suppers are back in place, new people are joining us as members of our family, and the birthday of the church worldwide is almost upon us. **Pentecost** is such a special day in the church calendar. This year it is the last Sunday of the month which is also Memorial Day weekend. This is the day we recognize the Holy Spirit descending upon those that believed and they spoke in all languages, and all understood. Please help us recognize this significant day by wearing **Red** on **Pentecost** Sunday! It will also celebrate and remember our service persons that gave their time and some, their lives, to allow us the freedom to worship and live in freedom. Remember to wear your best **Red** outfit for Pentecost and Memorial Day.



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 May:

- Barb Ameen
- Ginny Davis
- Joyce Johnston
- Cathy & Jack Lacey
- Katharine & Robert Schrader
- Betty Tassara
- June Skinner
- Deborah Hodgkin
- Tiffany Raiche (Waugh)
- Daryl & Jean Whitaker
- Abigail Kimball
- Don Knowles & Vivian Wass

CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

Members of the Christian Ed committee want to know if there are any vetted nursery workers in the congregation. Please speak with Bonnie Carter if you meet this criterion.

From the Moderator

Without a doubt the world around us has changed and continues to change leaving more than a few of us struggling to adapt. Most of us have been around long enough to know that in addition to death and taxes, change is a constant in life. There is no escaping the winds of change.

The season of Easter should serve to remind us that in the Resurrection of Jesus is the promise of new life. Life that is not tied to the dynamics of the past. Life that is liberated from brokenness and filled with the joy, love and

challenge of faithful discipleship for all who make themselves open to God's gift of grace.

The question for all of us has always been, and continues to be, are we willing to make ourselves open to the invitation that God has extended through the life and ministry, death and resurrection of Jesus or are we going to place the various imperatives of the world around us ahead of that grace filled invitation?

Who is our leader, who is the head of our faith community? Is it Jesus or is it another or multiple others?

We all state that Jesus is the head of the Church, as well we should. Yet, as often as not, when we are confronted with challenges, we sometimes revert to worldly ways to resolve those challenges. Rather than love each other we occasionally seek to establish blame rather than accepting our own responsibility for conflict be it large or small. Instead of turning the other cheek we choose to raise our voices and our defenses. Rather than going the extra mile, we retreat to our comfort zones.

The Church is not a club. What the Church aspires to be is that entity that advances the kingdom of God. As a community of believers in the way of Jesus when we deal with each other our efforts should be consistent with our most idealistic understanding of what it means to live together in Christian love.

Yes, that is a high bar to reach. Why would we consider lowering the bar? If we can't live up to it here, then where?

The simple truth is that there is far more joy and far more peace in striving for a perfection in loving each other than there ever has been or ever will be in efforts to cause things to conform to the "ways of the world".

We are called to be a community committed to the ethic of Jesus. We, in that thinking have good news to bring to a world split wide open in a cauldron of deceit and hate.

Let's choose love and compassion every time. Let's choose to imbed ourselves in the way of Jesus. In doing that we not only grow in our faith and multiply our joy, we bring joy to the heart of our creator. How does it get any better than that? ♦



PENTECOST PRAYERS


*Mighty God, you breathe life into our bones, and your Spirit brings truth to the world. Send us this Spirit, transform us by your truth, and give us language to proclaim your gospel, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.***

Welcome Holy Spirit,

In the silence of a still night's
fearful thought you come
Comfort in the sleepless worries
Gentle in the rising doubts
Forgiving all our handmade hurts
Patient in our pointless hurry
Counseling as the waves come crashing,
"Be still and know that I am God"
Wonderful counselor, comforter,
God with us
You will never abandon us
You will always be with us
Your promises are sure
Help us to give like you,
forgive like you,
live for you

Amen

MAY 2023

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	1 OFFICE CLOSED 10:30 am Busy Bodies activities	2	3 1-4 pm Bowie office 2:30-4 pm Welcome Table take-out 6:30 pm Book study	4 9 am Bulletin Deadline 4 pm Chess Club 6 pm Choir	5 OFFICE CLOSED	6
7 White 8:30 am Adult Forum 10 am Worship Service	8 OFFICE CLOSED 10:30 am Busy Bodies activities	9	10 1-4 pm Bowie office 2:30-4 pm Welcome Table take-out	11 9 am Bulletin Deadline 4 pm Chess Club TBA Missions 6 pm Choir	12 OFFICE CLOSED	13
14 White 8:30 am Adult Forum 10 am Worship Service 11:30 am CE	15 OFFICE CLOSED 10:30 am Busy Bodies activities	16	17 1-4 pm Bowie office 2:30-4 pm Welcome Table take-out	18 9 am Bulletin Deadline 4 pm Chess Club 6 pm Choir 7 pm Trustees	19 OFFICE CLOSED	20
21 White 8:30 am Adult Forum 10 am Worship Service 11:30 am Deacons	22 OFFICE CLOSED 10:30 am Busy Bodies activities 6:30 pm Council	23	24 9 am Steeple deadline 1-4 pm Bowie office 2:30-4 pm Welcome Table take-out	25 9 am Bulletin deadline 4 pm Chess Club 6 pm Choir	26 OFFICE CLOSED	27 5:30 pm Church supper
28 Pentecost Red 8:30 am Adult Forum 10 am Worship Service	29 OFFICE CLOSED 10:30 am Busy Bodies activities	30	31 1-4 pm Bowie office 2:30-4 pm Welcome Table take-out			

Roast Turkey Supper

Saturday, May 27, 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.

Sunday Worship Service 10 a.m.

Church office hours:

Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, 9 a.m. – 2 p.m.

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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