

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



**January 2025 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*

**W**hat in the world is going on with our young and young adult people in the U.S.? On December 4, twenty-six-year-old Luigi Mangione allegedly fired a fatal shot into the back of Brian Thompson, CEO of the health insurance giant United Healthcare, as Thompson was exiting a hotel in midtown Manhattan. After Thompson was down, Mangione fired at least one more shot into his inert body. Investigators believe the motive behind the shooting was animosity toward the health care industry. What has ensued since then has been a shocking outpouring of public sympathy, especially among young people, for Mangione, not for the assassinated father who is survived by a wife and two sons! More chilling was the Emerson College poll released on December 18 indicating that 41% of voters from ages eighteen to twenty-nine believe that the Thompson killing was anywhere from “somewhat” to “completely acceptable.” I beg to differ. Mr. Mangione is not a hero, but a killer who should not be glamorized. Ironically, Mr. Thompson was said to be working on health care reform before he was gunned down.

In my opinion, if you want a hero, look no further than twenty-six-year-old Daniel Penny, a former Marine who was found not guilty on December 9 in the chokehold death of Jordan Neely, a thirty-year-old homeless man with a history of mental illness, who was terrorizing a group of subway passengers in New York. Mr. Penny acted bravely to protect fellow passengers. This case also garnered national attention.

Then there was fifteen-year-old female shooter Natalie Rupnow, who opened fire on December 16 inside a private Christian school in Madison, Wisconsin, killing a teacher and a teen student and injuring six others. Police said Rupnow died of a self-inflicted gunshot wound. In another case earlier in the year, girls only thirteen and fourteen years old in Washington, DC, were convicted in the beating death of an elderly disabled man. They said in one report that they were “bored.”

Something has profoundly changed for America’s youth. What is driving all this? Broken families? Fatherless homes? Guns? Drugs? Young people getting radicalized on-line? Is this, in turn, causing loneliness and depression? Does that lead to rage? How about the constant bombardment of violent images on screens big and small which desensitizes us? Lack of faith and declining church attendance? We need a religious reawakening in the land! At least one person, Cardinal Timothy Dolan of New York City, believes one is coming, that people seem increasingly drawn to finding the light. “There seems to be a newfound appreciation for the role of faith, especially in our country,” he says. Let’s hope he is right.

(continued page 4 beneath the calendar)

## JANUARY CHURCH MEETINGS

- Adult Forum** – Sundays, 8:15 a.m.
- Busy Bodies** – Mondays, 10:30 a.m.
- Choir** – Thursdays, 6 p.m.
- Music** – TBA
- Council** – Monday, Jan 6, 6:30 p.m.
- Search Comm** – Thursday, Jan 9, 6:30 p.m.
- Deacons** – Sunday, Jan 12, 11:30 a.m.
- Christian Ed** – Sunday, Jan 12, 11:30 a.m.
- Trustees** – Thursday, Jan 16, 7 p.m.
- Missions** – Sunday, Jan 19, 11:30 a.m.

### ANNUAL MEETING

– **Sunday, January 26, 11 a.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.

*From the Moderator*

## ANNUAL MEETING SUNDAY, JANUARY 26, 2025

According to Article 13 of the church By-Laws, Annual Meeting takes place after morning worship on the 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday of January. We need everyone who can to attend the meeting to ensure we have a quorum. In addition to the business of our Annual Report for 2024 and budget for 2025, we will vote on changes in the By-Laws. Most changes are based on the fact we have a smaller congregation, like a smaller quorum and the structure of committees. Please read the copy of the By-Laws given to you at the November quarterly meeting or emailed in November. See you there!

Sue Fuller, Moderator

If you chair a committee or board, please submit your report of 2024 activities to Joyce in the church office **before Tuesday, January 14, 2025.** (Gold stars awarded to early birds!)



## JANUARY LECTIONARY READINGS

### JAN 1 – NEW YEAR’S DAY

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

### JAN 5 – 2<sup>ND</sup> SUNDAY AFTER CHRISTMAS

Jeremiah 31:7-14 & Psalm 147:12-20  
Ephesians 1:3-14  
John 1:(1-9), 10-18

### JAN 6 – EPIPHANY

Isaiah 60:1-6 & Psalm 72:1-7, 10-14  
Ephesians 3:1-12  
Matthew 2:1-12

### JAN 12 – 1<sup>ST</sup> SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

Isaiah 43:1-7 & Psalm 29  
Acts 8:14-17  
Luke 3:15-17, 21-22

### JAN 19 – 2<sup>ND</sup> SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

Isaiah 62:1-5 & Psalm 36:5-10  
1 Corinthians 12:1-11  
John 2:1-11

### JAN 26 – 3<sup>RD</sup> SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

Nehemiah 8:1-3, 5-6, 8-10 & Psalm 19  
1 Corinthians 12:12-31a  
Luke 4:14-21

**MASKING is OPTIONAL**  
in the church building.



Please maintain physical distance and respect the space of those who wish to wear a mask. Thank you kindly for your cooperation and understanding.

# DEACONS

Jan 5 - Epiphany & Communion,  
Rev. Keith Bowie

Jan 12 - Rev. Keith Bowie

Jan 19 - Rev. Dr. David Henry

Jan 26 - Rev. Keith Bowie

January Deacon: Anne Bancroft

From Rev. Paul Nickerson's weekly newsletter:

## "Why Don't People Come to Church?"

I so often hear good church people ask, with bewilderment, sadness and confusion: "*Why don't people come to church anymore?*" It feels like the practices we enjoy as church members are not valued by the wider community.

Part of the explanation is that we live in a "different age" today. In the book, **Leading Faithful Innovation**, the authors describe it this way:

Many of us in the church grew up in the "Age of Association". We joined organizations like the church and found our meaning by serving those institutions. My parents lived in the same town for 52 years, and at that time they served on every church board (often several times) and many organizations in the town. They found deep purpose and meaning by serving and maintaining these organizations. This is still very fulfilling for many of our members.

But today we live in an "Age of Authenticity" in which people look inward to find their identities and purpose; how to express their true self. This journey does not necessarily involve an institution. People still have spiritual and life questions, but don't find their meaning serving on boards and committees.

Growing churches have to live in both "ages". They need to continue to nurture those who find meaning in serving institutions, while at the same time showing how the Gospel can answer many of the questions raised in a journey for authenticity.

Just as the Apostle Paul went beyond the synagogues to dialogue with people of faith (see the encounter with Lydia in Acts 16), today we need venture out and start conversations with people right where they live. This approach won't fill out committees, but it will help others find and follow Jesus. ♦


## 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 January:

Bonnie & Tim Carter  
Juanita Higgins  
Alice King  
Mark Remick  
Sue & Ken Farkas  
Mark Berry  
Nancy Johnston  
Leah Remick  
Evan Bedard



# January 2025

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
			<b>1 NEW YEAR'S DAY</b> <b>OFFICE CLOSED</b>	<b>2</b> 9 am Bulletin deadline 4 pm Chess Club 6 pm Choir	<b>3</b> <b>OFFICE CLOSED</b> up	<b>4</b>
<b>5</b> <b>White</b> 8:15 am Adult Forum 10 am Worship Service	<b>6 EPIPHANY</b> <b>OFFICE CLOSED</b> 10:30 am Busy Bodies activities	<b>7</b> 6 pm Boy Scouts	<b>8</b> 1-4 pm Bowie office 2:30-4 pm Welcome Table take-out	<b>9</b> 9 am Bulletin deadline 4 pm Chess Club 6 pm Choir 6:30 pm Search Comm	<b>10</b> <b>OFFICE CLOSED</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>12</b> <b>White</b> 8:15 am Adult Forum 10 am Worship Service 11:30 am Deacons 11:30 am Christian Ed	<b>13</b> <b>OFFICE CLOSED</b> 10:30 am Busy Bodies activities	<b>14</b> 6 pm Boy Scouts	<b>15</b> 1-4 pm Bowie office 2:30-4 pm Welcome Table take-out	<b>16</b> 9 am Bulletin deadline 4 pm Chess Club 6 pm Choir 7 pm Trustees	<b>17</b> <b>OFFICE CLOSED</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>19</b> <b>Green</b> 8:15 am Adult Forum 10 am Worship Service 11:30 am Missions	<b>20 MLK DAY</b> <b>OFFICE CLOSED</b>	<b>21</b> 6 pm Boy Scouts	<b>22</b> 1-4 pm Bowie office 2:30-4 pm Welcome Table take-out	<b>23</b> 9 am Bulletin & Steeple deadlines 4 pm Chess Club 6 pm Choir	<b>24</b> <b>OFFICE CLOSED</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>26</b> <b>Green</b> 8:15 am Adult Forum 10 am Worship Service <b>ANNUAL MEETING</b>	<b>27</b> <b>OFFICE CLOSED</b> 10:30 am Busy Bodies activities 6:30 pm Council	<b>28</b> 6 pm Boy Scouts	<b>29</b> 1-4 pm Bowie office 2:30-4 pm Welcome Table take-out	<b>30</b> 9 am Bulletin Deadline 6 pm Choir	<b>31</b> <b>OFFICE CLOSED</b>	<b>1</b>

(continued from front page)

The news wasn't all bad in December. For the first time since the fire that tore through it and left it half in ruins, bells again tolled from the belfry of Notre-Dame Cathedral in Paris, and the iconic structure officially reopened on December 8. *Merci* to the French people and government for rolling up their sleeves and restoring not only for themselves but for the world a monument to faith and an irreplaceable work of inspired beauty.

May the New Year 2025 bring us true peace and lasting happiness!

That in all things God may be glorified,

*Keith*

**Sunday Worship Service 10 a.m.**  
**Church office hours: Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, 9 a.m. – 2 p.m.**

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*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**

PO Box 12

Ellsworth, Maine 04605

207-667-8321 [office@ellsworthucc.org](mailto:office@ellsworthucc.org) [ellsworthucc.org](http://ellsworthucc.org)

[facebook.com/fccellsworth/](https://facebook.com/fccellsworth/)

Our street address is 2 Church Street, but that is not our mailing address. The Post Office no longer automatically gives us our mail with the street address. You must use the Post Office Box number.