

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



**March 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*

### **A WORD FROM THE LORD?**

**M**uch has been said and written about the Right Reverend Mariann Budde's sermon that she offered at the National Prayer Service the day after President Donald Trump's Inauguration. The service was held at the Washington National Cathedral, the beautifully sculpted, limestone, crown jewel church for Episcopalians in the Washington D.C. area. Budde is Episcopal Bishop of the Diocese of Washington. The church has hosted the state funerals of American presidents of both parties, including most recently former President Jimmy Carter's state funeral on January 9th. Reaction to Budde's sermon was swift and furious, coming in predictable fashion across the theological-political divide. Liberals lauded the sermon as "timely and prophetic," while conservatives blasted the sermon as blatantly partisan and in poor taste. After listening to the entire fifteen-minute video of her sermon and not just the controversial portion at the end where she addressed the President personally, which drew the ire of conservatives, here are some of my thoughts and reactions to the sermon:

Budde started well, stating that "we have gathered to pray for unity as a people and a nation, not for agreement, political or otherwise, but for the kind of unity that fosters community across diversity and division, a unity that serves the common good." Unity is not partisan, she noted. Rather, "unity is a way of being with one another; it encompasses and respects differences, teaches us to hold multiple perspectives as valid and worthy of respect that enables us to genuinely care for one another even when we disagree." Budde acknowledged that unity in this sense is largely aspirational and that, in a democracy, not everyone's hopes and dreams can be realized. But she believes, with God's help, that unity is possible, but not perfectly, for we are imperfect people. We should care about unity, she said, "because the culture of contempt that has been normalized in this country threatens to destroy us." Was Budde hinting at President Trump here? I don't know for sure, but I would hope not because leaders of both parties, unfortunately, routinely mock, discount, demean, and demonize those with whom they differ. Remember Hillary Clinton's infamous "basket of deplorables" remark, referring to Trump supporters? At any rate, Budde was right on target here in her analysis, and her prescription "to seek common ground, when possible" was laudable. All things considered, I give Budde high marks for her sermon content for the first twelve and a half minutes of her message. Her sermon delivery seemed to me to come across as very serious, more like a lecture. I was hoping to see a glimmer of humor from Bishop Budde, but that was wishful thinking on my part. The chances are slim to none that she is ever going to warm up to President Trump. She had previously criticized President Trump in 2020 after Trump spoke in front of St. John's Episcopal Church near the White House holding a Bible in hand. She denounced the use of tear gas to clear the churchyard of demonstrators and had declared that she was "outraged." *(Continued on the bottom of page 6.)*

## MARCH CHURCH MEETINGS

- Adult Forum** – Sundays, 8:15 a.m.  
**Busy Bodies** – Mondays, 10:30 a.m.  
**Choir** – Thursdays, 6 p.m.  
**Music** – TBA  
**Search Comm** – Sunday Mar 2, 11:30 a.m.  
**Deacons** – Sunday, Mar 9, 11:30 a.m.  
**Christian Ed** – Sunday, Mar 9, 11:30 a.m.  
**Trustees** – Thursday, Mar 20, 7 p.m.  
**Missions** – Sunday, Mar 23, 11:30 a.m.  
**ONA** – Sunday, Mar 23, 11:30 a.m.  
**Council** – Monday, Mar 24, 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.



## MARCH LECTIONARY READINGS

### MARCH 2 – TRANSFIGURATION

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

### MARCH 5 – ASH WEDNESDAY

Joel 2:1-2, 12-17 OR Isaiah 58:1-12  
Psalm 51:1-17  
2 Corinthians 5:20b-6:10  
Matthew 6:16-16-21



### MARCH 9 – 1<sup>ST</sup> SUNDAY IN LENT

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

### MARCH 16 – 2<sup>ND</sup> 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 23 – 3<sup>RD</sup> SUNDAY IN LENT

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

### MARCH 30 – 4<sup>TH</sup> SUNDAY IN LENT

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



## A S H WEDNESDAY

**MARCH 5, 6 P.M. SERVICE  
AT ELLSWORTH FALLS UCC**

Everyone is invited to an Ash Wednesday service at the Ellsworth Falls church. The imposition of ashes will be offered to those who wish to observe this ancient tradition. This is a day of new beginnings as we start our 40 days of Lent.

# DEACONS

Mar 2 - Communion, Rev. John Fiscus,  
Associate Conference Minister

Mar 9 - Rev. Keith Bowie

Mar 16 - Rev. Keith Bowie

Mar 23 - Rev. Cassandra McDonald

Mar 30 - Rev. Dr. David Henry

March Deacon: Steve Merchant

This was a mailing from Paul Nickerson. Sometimes I think that we think if we could just get more people in the building, we could build our church. Well, after reading this, I think we need to consider some different steps. If you have an idea that may help, please send it to one of the Deacons or Vitality Team. Have a great and thoughtful Lenten season.

## "Generational Differences in experiencing the faith"

A recent Barna research study shows that different generations express and navigate their faith in different ways. These differences present a challenge to churches to customize discipleship systems appropriately.

For example:

- Gen Z (ages 13-28) are the least likely generation to find their faith brings them "Joy", but want their faith to connect with the wider culture.
- Millennials (ages 29-44) value how a relationship with Jesus is relevant to their everyday lives.
- Gen X (ages 45-60) want to see their faith reflected in their words and actions.
- And Boomers (age 60+) find deep joy and satisfaction in following Jesus.

There's lots more data, but my goal is not to bury you in statistics, but to simply make the point that when it comes to discipleship, "one size does not fit

all." Careful planning in a variety of settings is needed.

The Barna report concludes: "Churches can create spaces where different generational perspectives are shared and valued—and where the life and lessons of Jesus are taught and realized in community. The goal isn't uniformity in faith expression but unity in pursuing deeper relationship with Jesus across generational lines."

Every church community will be enriched with discussion and sharing from different vantage points. We can broaden and deepen our faith experiences by strategically setting up conversations between the generations. ♦

## 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
- Katy Schrader Blackmer
- Victoria Church & McKinlee Grace
- Jerri Holt
- Lois Stevens
- Genevieve Goebel
- Christia Young
- James Fernald
- Chris Wilson
- Eilon Zboray

## Wednesdays at 5:30 PM\* Watch THE CHOSEN

We continue to watch **The Chosen** in the Parlor. Bring your own lunch/supper and we will eat and watch together. Season 1 has 9 episodes that will run through April (after Easter.)



\*Except Ash Wednesday, March 5



**ASSOCIATE CONFERENCE MINISTER  
REV. JOHN FISCUS  
PREACHES ON MARCH 2**

Please join us on Communion Sunday, March 2, when the Rev. John Fiscus will be our guest preacher during morning worship. After coffee hour, he will attend the Search Committee meeting.

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



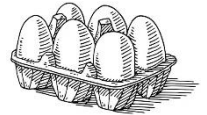
Please maintain physical distance and respect the space of those who wish to wear a mask. Thank you kindly for your cooperation and understanding.



**On Communion Sundays, we ask for donations to the Loaves & Fishes Food pantry.** Your donation may be non-perishable food items or monetary gifts. There are donation and collection boxes at the State Street entrance.

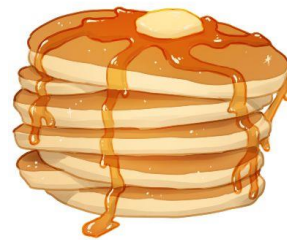


**Loaves & Fishes needs eggs and butter.** They are not receiving them at all. If you have any extra, they can use these two items.



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**PANCAKE SUPPER ON  
SHROVE TUESDAY  
MARCH 4, 2025, AT 5:30 P.M.**



Shrove Tuesday (also Mardi Gras, which means "fat Tuesday" in French) is the night before Ash Wednesday. We will have a family dinner of pancakes, sausage, and bacon. Please come and enjoy the evening fellowship and fun and games.

# A FAITH-FULL PATH FOR CHURCHES IN TODAY'S WORLD

Paul Nickerson

Every church I talk with is rocked by the heated communication swirling around us. The level of vitriol, hatred, and judgement is staggering. And churches are often tempted to jump into the fray, defending various theological and political positions. This discourse only convinces more unchurched people to never come near us!

So, what is our pathway forward in this storm? Jesus said in John 13:34: "*This is my commandment; love each other just as I have loved you.*" No wonder it is called the "narrow" path of faith! It is a lot harder to love than it is to rant and condemn someone else's position.

United Methodist Pastor Adam Hamilton gave a fantastic description of our pathway as Jesus followers:

*"We are to love our neighbors, to love our enemies, and to love one another. This is the defining mark of the Christian life."* Doesn't sound much like all the attacking going on right now, does it?

I have been very inspired by Andy Stanley's perspective. Stanley talks about winning and losing. When our faith is based on excluding someone else, on judging others, and creating winners and losers, we have missed the pathway of faith. For in the Kingdom Jesus has ushered in, everyone wins, because we fight on behalf of others who have no voice, we pray and love people who are on the opposite side of an issue.

I believe this is the way we navigate in the storm; to be as Christ-like as we possibly can. This starts in our own churches and showing a unity and love as a witness to the world. It plays out in the way we talk with people at the grocery store and on the soccer field. It is the way we witness to Kingdom values in our country and the world.

How will you navigate in the storm? How can you be part in ushering in God's Kingdom?

I hope you and your church will wrestle with how to best shine the Light in your corner of the world.



## ONE GREAT HOUR OF SHARING

One Great Hour of Sharing (OGHS) is a vital special mission offering of the United Church of Christ. It connects you to disaster relief, refugee assistance, and development efforts around the globe. When disasters strike, or when individuals are displaced due to violence or poverty, OGHS ensures immediate response and ongoing recovery.

Through your generous support, OGHS funds comprehensive development programs in areas such as food security, microfinancing, women's empowerment, healthcare, education, and agriculture. By partnering with Global Ministries and international response networks, OGHS maximizes its impact. Your contributions help meet urgent needs while addressing the root causes of vulnerability, ensuring long-term, sustainable solutions for affected communities.

When you give to OGHS, you are light for people in need. You offer light when disasters strike, and when chronic conditions threaten families and communities. You are light not just in the immediate future, but also for the long haul. When you give, you restore not only structures but also transform lives. Your gift ensures that, no matter how difficult the situation, light shines.

**Be the light.**

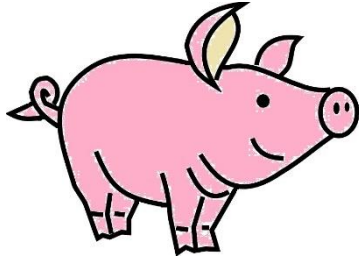
We will accept gifts for OGHS throughout the month of March.



# Roast Pork Supper

**Saturday, March 22, 2025**

**5:00 to 6:30 pm**



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

**\$12 per person ~ \$25 per family (2 adults, 2 children)**

*Great food ~ Great company ~ Great fun*

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

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*(continued from the front page)*

My heart sank as I listened to Budde in the final two and a half minutes of her sermon using her power of the pulpit to single out the President and some of his policies. "Let me make one final plea, Mr. President," she began. Now I strongly believe in freedom of the pulpit. Faith leaders must be free to speak freely from their heart what is on their mind. In 51 years of ordained ministry I must say that the Church has given me that freedom. That is a precious gift. On the other hand, that gift must be used responsibly. Is calling out one particular person in a packed cathedral a wise idea? If it were you, wouldn't that immediately put you on the defensive? Budde then proceeded to deliver a gentle, partisan scolding to Trump's face, mirroring liberal democratic values on immigration and sexuality, all in the context of mercy and being merciful. Budde engaged in hyperbole and ignored how open border policies have contributed to a chaotic environment where women and children are ransomed, sex trafficked, and abused along our border. She failed to mention illegal immigrant violent crime. Where is her mercy for these victims? Sooner or later, even the most idealistic calls to "welcome the stranger" must contend with the hard reality of a sovereign nation to secure its borders and to protect its citizens. President's Trump's response to the service was disappointing as well. "I didn't think it was a good service, no. They could do much better," the president told reporters. If you attend church often enough, you are going to hear many, many sermons and there is bound to be something with which you don't agree. Even Jesus didn't please everybody (read Luke 4: 21-30). If a sermon really bothers you, it's best to take it up with the pastor and start a conversation. A last, burning question in my mind for which I have no answer: Did Bishop Budde and President Trump shake hands at the door upon departure from the cathedral? I hope so. ♦

*Keith*

# March 2025

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
						1
<b>2</b> <b>Green</b> 8:15 am Adult Forum 10 am Worship Service & Communion 11:30 am Search Comm	<b>3</b> <b>OFFICE CLOSED</b> 10:30 am Busy Bodies activities	<b>4</b> 10:30 am Meditation group 5:30 pm Pancake supper 6 pm Boy Scouts	<b>5</b> <b>ASH WEDNESDAY</b> 1-4 pm Bowie office 2:30-4 pm Welcome Table take-out	<b>6</b> 9 am Bulletin deadline 4 pm Chess Club 6 pm Choir	<b>7</b> <b>OFFICE CLOSED</b>	8
<b>9</b> <b>DAYLIGHT SAVING TIME BEGINS</b> <b>LENT I</b> <b>Violet</b> 8:15 am Adult Forum 10 am Worship Service 11:30 am Deacons 11:30 am Christian Ed	<b>10</b> <b>OFFICE CLOSED</b> 10:30 am Busy Bodies activities	<b>11</b> 10:30 am Meditation group 6 pm Boy Scouts	<b>12</b> 1-4 pm Bowie office 2:30-4 pm Welcome Table take-out 5:30 pm The Chosen	<b>13</b> 9 am Bulletin deadline 4 pm Chess Club 6 pm Choir	<b>14</b> <b>OFFICE CLOSED</b>	15
<b>16</b> <b>LENT II</b> <b>Violet</b> 8:15 am Adult Forum 10 am Worship Service 11:30 am Missions	<b>17</b> <b>OFFICE CLOSED</b> 10:30 am Busy Bodies activities	<b>18</b> 10:30 am Meditation group 6 pm Boy Scouts	<b>19</b> 1-4 pm Bowie office 2:30-4 pm Welcome Table take-out 5:30 pm The Chosen	<b>20</b> 9 am Bulletin deadline 4 pm Chess Club 6 pm Choir 7 pm Trustees	<b>21</b> <b>OFFICE CLOSED</b>	22  5 pm Ham supper
<b>23</b> <b>LENT III</b> <b>Violet</b> 8:15 am Adult Forum 10 am Worship Service 11:30 am Missions	<b>24</b> <b>OFFICE CLOSED</b> 10:30 am Busy Bodies activities 6:30 pm Council	<b>25</b> 9 am Steeple deadline 10:30 am Meditation group 6 pm Boy Scouts	<b>26</b> 1-4 pm Bowie office 2:30-4 pm Welcome Table take-out 5:30 pm The Chosen	<b>27</b> 9 am Bulletin Deadline 6 pm Choir	<b>28</b> <b>OFFICE CLOSED</b>	29
<b>30</b> <b>LENT IV</b> <b>Violet</b> 8:15 am Adult Forum 10 am Worship Service	<b>31</b> <b>OFFICE CLOSED</b> 10:30 am Busy Bodies activities	<b>1</b> 10:30 am Meditation group 6 pm Boy Scouts	<b>2</b> 1-4 pm Bowie office 2:30-4 pm Welcome Table take-out 5:30 pm The Chosen	<b>3</b> 9 am Bulletin Deadline 6 pm Choir	<b>4</b> <b>OFFICE CLOSED</b>	5



**DAYLIGHT SAVING TIME BEGINS MARCH 9.** This is a friendly reminder of the not-so-very-friendly time change coming soon! When we go to bed Saturday evening, March 8, we advance our clocks by an hour and lose an hour's sleep the next morning. (More caffeine...)

## SHORT LENTEN PRAYERS

Short Lenten prayers are an easy way to go from *desiring* to pray more during Lent to actually doing so. When we're not in worship, sometimes we just need short, simple prayers to remain close to God during our busy days.

Lent is no different.

Here are some easy prayers you can say to feel connected to God during Lent this year:

- God, may Your light guide my day, and your spirit bring me peace. Amen.
- May I stand in solidarity today with all my brothers and sisters around the world who are suffering. May we be united in your love, and may I work to build your kingdom here on earth. Amen.
- Gracious God, I'm truly sorry for the moments today where I missed the mark. I ask for your forgiveness and the strength to better follow Your call tomorrow. Amen.
- God, I lift up (name of the person you'd like to pray for) today. I ask that you bless them abundantly today and throughout Lent. Amen.
- God, help me to be kind and gracious to everyone I meet today. Amen.

Adapted from [hallow.com/blog/lent-prayers/](http://hallow.com/blog/lent-prayers/)

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### Sunday Worship Service 10 a.m.

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

Rev. Keith Bowie, Transitional Minister  
Joyce B. Cornwell, Secretary  
Lynn Hall, Organist  
Nancy Sargent, Choir Director  
Sue Fuller, Moderator 610-1626  
Tom MacDonald, Vice Moderator  
Myrna Vallette, Clerk  
Ken Farkas, Treasurer  
Mike Fuller, Asst Treasurer  
Jennifer Ashmore, Bookkeeper

Sidney Emerson & Lynn Hall,  
Financial Secretaries  
Troy Tainter, Building Maintenance Director  
Katharine Schrader, Deacons 266-2541  
Ginny Davis, Missions  
Bonnie Carter, Music & Christian Education  
Council Members at Large:  
Joyce Johnston  
Rhyne Robidoux



**First Congregational Church, United Church of Christ**

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[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.