

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



**May 2025 THE STEEPLE NEWSLETTER**

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

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*From Rev. Keith Bowie, Transitional Minister*

**THIS 'N THAT...**

Thank you for a wonderful Easter Sunday service. It was gratifying to see members, friends, and visitors; to sing joyously; and to see the altar area bedecked with lilies and tulips. Many thanks to Lynn, Nancy, and the choir for their wonderful singing and playing; to Michael Hall for being the liturgist; Kathy Schrader for organizing the Flower sign-up and Cindy Sargent for setting them out; to Ken Farkas and Myrna Vallette for manning the Facebook and sound system booth upstairs in the balcony, and Lois Stevens for preparing breakfast for the Sunrise service folks that came back to our church. Most of all, thanks to YOU who came and made this service so special. As I said in the sermon, "He is risen!" is the best news you will ever, ever hear.

May Pope Francis now rest in the arms of Christ, whom he sought so ardently to serve.

Many of you took the time to fill out and send back the recent Worship Survey. Thank you for doing this. The Deacons and I will go over the responses at our next meeting. From time to time, it is always a good idea to consider fresh approaches to make the worship experience as spiritually uplifting as possible.

There is some good news regarding religious trends that was recently made public by the Pew Research Center. It appears America's long march toward secularization is on pause, for now anyway. Over the past few decades, around 40 million Americans left churches and the number of people who say that they have no religion grew to about 30 percent of the country. Now, something is shifting. For the first time in decades, America's religiosity is remaining stable. Many Americans are dissatisfied with the alternatives to religion. They are looking for hope, and help. People want stronger communities and meaningful conversations about belief. Young men, in particular, seem to be in the vanguard of this return to religion. So what does this mean for our church? Stay connected to people, listen to their faith stories, engage people beyond your own circle of acquaintances, invite them to church, pray hard, and be willing to present the "old, old story" in exciting and creative ways.

While surfing the internet back in late February, I stumbled across Vice President J.D. Vance speaking at the National Catholic Prayer Breakfast in Washington, D.C. Vance is the first Catholic convert to be VP of the United States. He is young and very articulate about his faith. Before I knew it, I had listened to his entire thirty-minute speech (you can Google it on YouTube). Not to get too political, but here are two quotes that I wrote down from the speech: "We will listen to people of faith and conscience" and "Grace does not happen instantaneously. Grace is a process. God is transforming me every single day."

Easter blessings to all,

*Keith*

## MAY 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** – TBA

### ★ QUARTERLY CONGREGATIONAL MEETING ★

– Sunday, May 4 after worship

**Finance** – Friday, May 8, 10 a.m.  
**Trustees** – Thursday, May 15, 7 p.m.  
**Deacons** – Sunday, May 18, 11:30 a.m.  
**Christian Ed** – Sunday, May 18, 11:30 a.m.  
**Council** – Monday, May 19, 6:30 p.m.  
**Missions** – Sunday, May 25, 11:30 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.

## QUARTERLY ★ CONGREGATIONAL MEETING ★ May 4, 2025

After worship at 11 a.m.  
Luncheon included.



**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.

## MAY LECTIONARY READINGS

### MAY 4 – 3<sup>RD</sup> SUNDAY OF EASTER

Acts 9:1-6, (7-20) & Psalm 30  
Revelation 5:11-14  
John 21:1-19

### MAY 11 – 4<sup>TH</sup> SUNDAY OF EASTER

Acts 9:36-43 & Psalm 23  
Revelation 7:9-17  
John 10:22-30

### MAY 18 – 5<sup>TH</sup> SUNDAY OF EASTER

Acts 11:1-18  
Psalm 148  
Revelation 21:1-6  
John 13:31-35

### MAY 25 – 6<sup>TH</sup> SUNDAY OF EASTER

Acts 16:9-15  
Psalm 67  
Revelation 21:10, 22-22:5  
John 14:23-29 OR John 5:1-9

### MAY 29 – ASCENSION DAY

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

WITH DEEPEST  
*Sympathy*

*to the family & friends of*

**Julie Bromley**  
who died April 12, 2025

**A Service of Remembrance  
for Wilma “Jeannie” Jones  
takes place at FCC on  
Wednesday, May 21, at 2 p.m.**

# DEACONS

May 4 - Communion, Rev. Keith Bowie  
May 11 - Rev. Keith Bowie  
May 18 - TBA  
May 25 - TBA

May Deacon: Anne Bancroft

From Paul Nickerson's weekly e-newsletter:

## "WHAT HAPPENS WHEN WE ARE IN CRUISE CONTROL?"

Cruise Control is a wonderful thing when driving long distances. You can set a speed and take your foot off the gas. It can make a ride more comfortable.

And while Cruise Control is great in a car, it is a very detrimental thing to have in a church. Setting a speed and taking your foot off the gas looks like the following in a church:

- We settle into a comfortable routine of programs we do every year.
- We know the order of worship by heart because it seldom changes.
- We are very comfortable with our friends, and fellowship is the most important aspect of our church.
- If we can have fairly steady worship attendance, a budget that is reasonably balanced, and at least some maintenance of the building, all is good.

What is missing in "cruise control" churches is:

- An exciting sense of where God is leading us into the future
- A deep understanding of the community around us and who we are going to reach.
- A belief that going out and making disciples is our marching orders from Jesus.
- An urgency that if we don't grow and change we will dwindle.

(continued next column)

I encourage you to have a discussion with your leadership team and analyze if your church has taken its foot off the gas and is cruising. If so, then get out into the community, talk with town leaders, meet people and re-kindle a vision of how your church can be a blessing to many people you haven't even met yet. We are meant for more than just cruise control. ♦

## 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  
Katharine & Robert Schrader  
Betty Tassara  
June Skinner  
Deborah Hodgkin  
Tiffany Raiche (Waugh)  
Daryl & Jean Whitaker  
Abigail Kimball  
Don Knowles & Vivian Wass



Spring is a metaphor for change. Some changes we eagerly await, and some we abhor. Some changes we plan and others arrive uninvited. To all these changes we ask the gift of Your perspective beckoning us to expectation, hope, and rebirth.

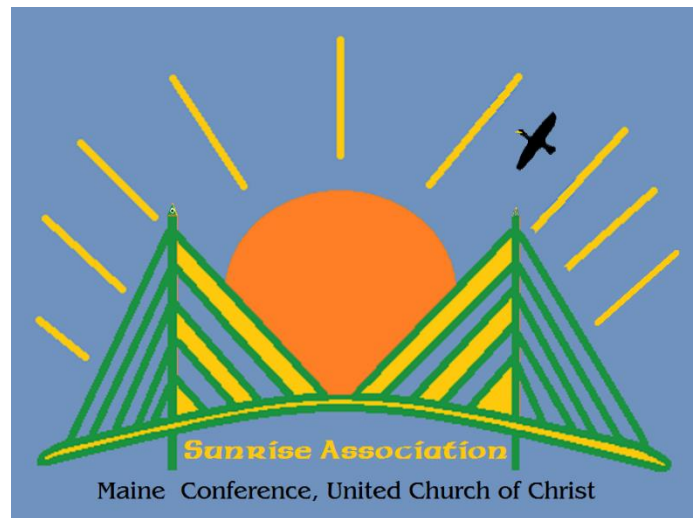
May the sunlight and the rain be reminders that You are at work renewing the earth. As a God of renewal, You are ever at work in our lives, too.

Open our eyes and lives to the needed changes in our lives this Spring. Awaken us to new life and perspective, for we pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

- Found on: <https://www.chausa.org/prayers/prayer-library/general-prayers-and-prayer-services/seasonal-and-holidays/spring-prayer>



This year's theme—**Great and Wide**—honors the diversity of God's creation and how we reflect that in the church. The **Strengthen the Church** offering supports new and renewing churches, youth and young adults, and leadership development across the UCC. These expressions of church don't all look the same and that's a cause for celebration. As God calls our congregations to be the church in new ways, your generosity will plant new churches, awaken new ideas in existing churches, and develop the spiritual life in our youth and young adults.



### SPRING MEETING, MAY 17

The Trinitarian Congregational Parish of Castine will host. There will be a continental breakfast at 8:30 a.m. with our meeting from 9 a.m. to noon followed by lunch.



Pilgrim Lodge's mission is to emphasize spiritual and outdoor exploration, personal growth, and authentic self-expression in a safe environment and intentional community to affirm individual sacredness.

A sojourn at Pilgrim Lodge offers a break for time or renewal in nature. It provides the soil for spiritual growth. You can slow down, relax, and reflect.

We hope you will join us for a camp session. If you want to help others attend, you can assist with donations to camperships.

[pilgrimlodge.org](http://pilgrimlodge.org)





*The second is this: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no commandment greater than these. Mark 12:31*

Dear Friend in Christ,

Because of your congregation's generosity during your CWS Blanket Sunday this past winter, [neighbors in Columbus, Ohio](#)—seeking refuge from winter storms—received warmth, dignity, and care.

Thanks to your support, people in temporary shelters received **CWS Blankets, hygiene kits, period packs** and other **essential supplies**. You offered more than warmth—you offered hope. ❤️

I am deeply grateful for the love and compassion you've shared with our neighbors.

With heartfelt thanks,

Matthew Stevens  
CWS Congregational Team

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# Turkey Supper

**Saturday, May 24, 2025**

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




*Roast turkey, gravy, mashed potatoes, rolls, glazed carrots, green beans, salad, 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 Lois Stevens immediately about the ways you can help.**

# May 2025

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
				1 9 am Bulletin deadline 4 pm Chess Club 6 pm Choir	2 OFFICE CLOSED	3
4 White 8:15 am Adult Forum 10 am Worship Service 11 am Qtrly Cong Mtg	5 OFFICE CLOSED 10:30 am Busy Bodies activities	6 6 pm Boy Scouts	7 1-4 pm Bowie office 2-3:30 pm Welcome Table take-out	8 9 am Bulletin deadline 4 pm Chess Club 6 pm Choir	9 OFFICE CLOSED 10 am Finance	10
11 White 8:15 am Adult Forum 10 am Worship Service 11:30 am Deacons 11:30 am Christian Ed	12 OFFICE CLOSED 10:30 am Busy Bodies activities	13 6 pm Boy Scouts	14 1-4 pm Bowie office 2-3:30 pm Welcome Table take-out	15 9 am Bulletin deadline 4 pm Chess Club 6 pm Choir 7 pm Trustees	16 OFFICE CLOSED	17
18 White 8:15 am Adult Forum 10 am Worship Service	19 OFFICE CLOSED 10:30 am Busy Bodies activities 6:30 pm Council	20 6 pm Boy Scouts	21 1-4 pm Bowie office 2 pm Jones memorial service 2-3:30 pm Welcome Table take-out	22 9 am Bulletin Deadline 6 pm Choir	23 OFFICE CLOSED	24 5 pm Turkey supper
25 White 8:15 am Adult Forum 10 am Worship Service 11:30 am Missions	26 OFFICE CLOSED 10:30 am Busy Bodies activities	27 9 am Steeple deadline 6 pm Boy Scouts	28 1-4 pm Bowie office 2-3:30 pm Welcome Table take-out	29 9 am Bulletin Deadline 6 pm Choir	30 OFFICE CLOSED	31

## QUARTERLY CONGREGATIONAL MEETING

**Sunday, May 4, 2025, at 11:30 a.m.**

It will be a hybrid meeting & luncheon, in-person and on Zoom,  
Questions? Contact the Moderator.

**Sunday Worship Service 10 a.m.**

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



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

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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.