

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



March 2026 THE STEEPLE NEWSLETTER

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

From our Pastor



Lent invites us into a journey. Not a journey of perfection, but one of honesty, reflection, and return. It is a season that gently asks us to slow down, to listen more closely, and to notice where God is already at work in our lives—and where God might be inviting us to grow.

Throughout the Gospels, Jesus returns again and again to the table. He eats with friends and strangers, with the faithful and the doubtful, with those celebrated and those

pushed to the margins. These meals were never just about food. They were about belonging. They were about restoration. They were about reminding people that they had a place in God's story.

As I continue to study the teachings of Jesus it seems to me that Jesus' vision has always been a **crowded table**—one where grace is shared freely and no one is asked to prove their worth before being welcomed.

As we walk through Lent together, we are invited to ask ourselves some gentle but meaningful questions:

- Who is missing from the table?
- Where might we be called to make more room—in our hearts, our lives, and our community?
- What would it look like to practice hospitality not just as an action, but as a way of being?

This Lenten season will lead us toward **Maundy Thursday**, where we will gather for Communion in a unique and intentional way. That evening, we will be invited to experience the table not simply as a ritual we observe, but as a sacred space where we connect with the Messiah on a deeper, more personal level. It is an opportunity to remember that Jesus did not offer bread and cup from a distance, but in closeness, vulnerability, and love.

You are warmly invited to join us for this Maundy Thursday service, at 7 p.m. on April 2, 2026. Whether you come with deep faith, lingering questions, or simply a longing to sit at the table. Come as you are, and take your place among a community seeking to follow Jesus' way of love together.

Communion reminds us that Christ meets us exactly where we are—tired, hopeful, unsure, longing—and says, *"You belong here."*

As we journey through Lent, may we continue working toward the kind of table Jesus envisioned: one that is honest, generous, and wide enough for all. And may we discover, along the way, that there is room not only for others—but for ourselves as well.



Peace and love,
Pastor Andy

MARCH CHURCH MEETINGS

- Adult Forum** – Sundays, 8:15 a.m.
Choir – Thursdays, 6 p.m.
Music – TBA
Deacons – Sunday, March 8, 11:30 a.m.
Christian Ed – Sunday, March 8, 11:30 a.m.
Finance – Friday, March 13, 10 a.m.
Trustees – Thursday, March 19, 7 p.m.
Missions – Sunday, March 22, 11:30 a.m.
Council – Monday, March 23, 6:30 p.m.

Our meetings are hybrid, in person AND Zoom. All FCC Zoom events (meetings and worship) use the same meeting number and password. Contact the secretary in the church office (T-W-Th) for Zoom instructions.



Wednesdays 5:30 PM Watch THE CHOSEN

We continue to watch Season 3 of **The Chosen** in the Parlor on Wednesdays. Bring your own supper and we will eat and watch together. The final episode is on April 1 (Holy Week).

MARCH LECTIONARY READINGS

March 1 – 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

March 8 – 3rd Sunday in Lent

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

March 15 – 4th Sunday in Lent

1 Samuel 16:1-13
Psalm 23
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

March 29 – Palm Sunday

Psalm 118:1-2, 19-29
Matthew 21:1-11



MAUNDY THURSDAY SERVICE April 2, 7 p.m.

Every first Sunday of the month when we celebrate Holy Communion, we remember this night—the night that Jesus shared his last supper with his closest friends. Following the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, we will close with a Tenebrae Service consisting of hymns and scripture readings pertaining to the last hours of Jesus' earthly life. Friends from the Ellsworth Falls UCC congregation will share this service with us here at FCC.

DEACONS

- Mar 1 - Holy Communion, Andy Elliott
- Mar 8 - Andy Elliott
- Mar 15 - Andy Elliott
- Mar 22 - Andy Elliott
- Mar 29 - Palm Sunday, Andy Elliott
- Apr 2 - Maundy Thursday, Andy Elliott
- Apr 5 - Easter & Communion, Andy Elliott

March Deacon: Rev. John A. Lacey

MUSINGS FROM DEACON CHAIR KATHRYN SCHRADER



The season of Lent is upon us and as we prepare for the crucifixion and Resurrection of our Lord and Savior. As we work through this season, many adopt a thoughtful practice of doing something different to better our lives either spiritually, mentally, or physically. Whatever you choose, we hope that you can gain a new perspective on your situation. I added a guided prayer app on my phone, and hope to become more thoughtful in my prayer life. I am always praying for more guidance on what we can do to encourage more individuals to understand the wonders of belonging to a church family. We must be open to many new ideas which we may want to try to let our community understand who we are and how we can support our neighbors.

Remember to be open to all these ideas as we cannot do things as they have always been done. The church worldwide is in the process of change, and we need to be ready and open to the Spirit and the winds as they blow in fresh ideas.

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 & McKinlee Grace
Jerri Holt
Lois Stevens
Genevieve Goebel
Christia Young
James Fernald
Katy Schrader Blackmer
Chris Wilson
Gracelynn, Justine & Lexi Elliott



Seats Open



SEATS OPEN: MEET & EAT MARCH 20 AT CASA JALISCO

We love our new monthly gathering at a local restaurant, *Seats Open: Meet & Eat*. **This month it takes place at Casa Jalisco in Ellsworth, on Friday evening, March 20, 2026, at 5:30 p.m.** We share a meal, conversation, and the simple joy of being together. No agenda. No program. Just open seats, good food, and meaningful connection. Bring a friend.

Re. our dinner at Helen's on February 20: we have decided that Donna Shea and Andy Elliott will become a stand-up routine, and, Sue & Ken Farkas will provide views and stories from around the world. The whole table was either laughing or listening to tales from trips and viewing wonderful pictures. We had *a fantastic* time! So please come eat and laugh with us on the 20th at Casa Jalisco.



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 support, OGHS funds comprehensive development programs in areas such as healthcare, education, agriculture, food security, microfinancing, and women's empowerment. 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.

FCC will collect gifts to OGHS through the month of March.

The best way to find yourself is to lose yourself in the service of others.

- Mahatma Gandhi



We had a great Pancake Supper on Shrove Tuesday (Mardi Gras). We invited The Warming Shelter, and they appreciated the meal. One of the women found the “baby” in her slice of King Cake. Some of our church members were there to enjoy the evening. Thank you, Bonnie and Lois, for the wonderful decorations and to Troy and Ruth for saving Kathy in the kitchen by, of course, preparing everything! It was a delightful evening of fellowship and community ministry.



We are planning a **Community Egg Hunt** with another church. Stay tuned for more information.

HOLY WEEK SERVICES 2026

Palm Sunday, March 29, 10 a.m.
We will commemorate Jesus’ triumphal entry into Jerusalem.

Maundy Thursday, April 2, 7 p.m.
We will hold a Communion and Tenebrae Service in the sanctuary. Our friends from Ellsworth Falls UCC will join us.

Easter, April 5
7 a.m. – Join us for a sunrise service on our church steps, followed by breakfast in the fellowship hall.

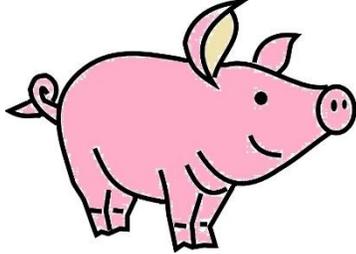
10 a.m. – We will continue our celebration of the Easter good news of the Resurrection. It will also serve Communion at this joyful service of PRAISE.

Please come to all our events and spend time with your Christian family and friends.

Roast Pork Supper

Saturday, March 28, 2026

5:00 to 6:30 p.m.



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.

✂

2026 EASTER FLOWERS ORDER FORM

Easter is April 5. 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, March 29.

Last day to order is Palm Sunday, March 29, 2026.

Flowers are \$8 per plant. Indicate preference and dedication. Please print.

In Memory of: _____

OR

In Honor of: _____

Given by: _____

Write the quantity of flowers in each box:

TULIPS

DAFFODILS

LILIES

March 2026

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1 Lent II Violet 8:15 am Adult Forum 10 am Worship Service, Communion & Luncheon	2 OFFICE CLOSED 10:30 am Busy Bodies activities	3 6 pm Boy Scouts	4 2-3:30 pm Welcome Table take-out 5:30 pm The Chosen	5 9 am Bulletin deadline 4 pm Chess Club 6 pm Choir	6 OFFICE CLOSED	7
8 DAYLIGHT SAVING TIME BEGINS Lent III Violet 8:15 am Adult Forum 10 am Worship Service 11:30 am Christian Ed & Deacons	9 OFFICE CLOSED 10:30 am Busy Bodies activities	10 6 pm Boy Scouts	11 2-3:30 pm Welcome Table take-out 5:30 pm The Chosen	12 9 am Bulletin deadline 4 pm Chess Club 6 pm Choir	13 OFFICE CLOSED	14
15 Lent IV Violet 8:15 am Adult Forum 10 am Worship Service	16 OFFICE CLOSED 10:30 am Busy Bodies activities	17 6 pm Boy Scouts	18 2-3:30 pm Welcome Table take-out 5:30 pm The Chosen	19 9 am Bulletin deadline 4 pm Chess Club 6 pm Choir 7 pm Trustees	20 OFFICE CLOSED 6 pm Seats Open at Casa Jalisco	21
22 Lent V Violet 8:15 am Adult Forum 10 am Worship Service 11:30 am Missions	23 OFFICE CLOSED 10:30 am Busy Bodies activities 6:30 pm Council	24 9 am Steeple deadline 6 pm Boy Scouts	25 2-3:30 pm Welcome Table take-out 5:30 pm The Chosen	26 9 am Bulletin deadline 4 pm Chess Club 6 pm Choir	27 OFFICE CLOSED	28 5 pm Pork supper
29 Palm Sunday Violet 8:15 am Adult Forum 10 am Worship Service	30 OFFICE CLOSED 10:30 am Busy Bodies activities	31 6 pm Boy Scouts	1 2-3:30 pm Welcome Table take-out 5:30 pm The Chosen	2 MAUNDY THURSDAY 9 am Bulletin deadline 4 pm Chess Club 7 pm Tenebrae service	3 GOOD FRIDAY OFFICE CLOSED	4
H O L Y W E E K						



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 7, we advance our clocks by an hour and lose an hour of sleep the next morning. (More caffeine...)

Katharine Schrader is collecting **NEWSPAPERS** for a teacher to use in a classroom. Please leave them in the Choir Room and Kathy will take them to school. This project will last all spring. Thank you in advance if you are able to help.



Sunday Worship Service 10 a.m.

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

Andy Elliott, Pastor
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
Kara Ibarguen, Missions
Bonnie Carter, Music & Christian Education
Council Members at Large:
Marianne Jordan
Rhyne Robidoux



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.