

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



April 2026 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 our Pastor

**A**pril doesn't ease us into anything—it pushes us forward. We are on the road to the cross. Not circling it. Not observing it from a distance. Walking straight toward it. This is the part of the journey where faith stops being comfortable and starts becoming real. Where we're asked to let go, to trust deeper, to love louder than we thought we could.

Because the cross isn't just something we remember—it's something that reshapes us.

And still...we don't walk this road without hope. We know the truth that's coming. The empty tomb is ahead of us. Life will break through.

Resurrection is not a maybe, it's a promise.

And that promise is already stirring in us, even now. You can feel it. Our tables are getting crowded. More people. More stories. More energy. More holy disruption. People are showing up not because they have it all figured out, but because something in them is hungry for connection, for belonging, for something real.

And here's the thing, we're not shrinking the table to make it manageable. We're making it bigger. Because the table was never meant to be exclusive. It was never meant to be quiet, tidy, or controlled. It's meant to be full. Loud. Alive. A place where people who never thought they belonged suddenly realize... they do.

That's the kind of church I pray that we continue to become.

And we're not done yet! In the coming weeks, we're kicking off a new Bible study inspired by *The Greatest Showman* a story about outsiders, identity, courage, and what it means to be fully seen and fully known. It's about stepping into who you are and discovering that you were never meant to do it alone.

More details are coming soon—but start thinking about who might need a place like that. Someone who's been on the outside. Someone who's been told they don't fit. Someone who's ready to find their place at the table.

Because this journey to the cross? It's not just leading to an empty tomb. It's leading to a bigger, fuller, more alive community than we ever imagined.

And there is still room. There is *always* room.

Amen!

***The cross isn't  
just something  
we remember.  
It's something  
that reshapes us.***

Peace and love,  
Pastor Andy

## APRIL CHURCH MEETINGS

- Adult Forum** – Sundays, 8:15 a.m.  
**Choir** – Thursdays, 6 p.m.  
**Music** – TBA  
**Deacons** – Sunday, April 12, 11:30 a.m.  
**Christian Ed** – Sunday, April 12, 11:30 a.m.  
**Trustees** – Thursday, April 16, 7 p.m.  
**Missions** – Sunday, April 26, 11:30 a.m.  
**Council** – Monday, April 27, 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.



We welcome our newest member, Glenn Texter, and his fabulous service dogs. He joined our congregation on Palm Sunday through Reaffirmation of Faith.

## APRIL LECTIONARY READINGS

### April 2 – Maundy Thursday

Exodus 12:1-4, (5-10), 11-14  
Psalm 116:1-2, 12-19  
1 Corinthians 11:23-26  
John 13:1-17, 31b-35



### April 3 – Good Friday

Isaiah 52:13-53:12  
Psalm 22  
Hebrews 10:16-25 or Hebrews 4:14-16; 5:7-9  
John 18:1-19:42

### April 4 – Holy Saturday

Job 14:1-14 or Lamentations 3:1-9, 19-24  
Psalm 31:1-4, 15-16  
1 Peter 4:1-8  
Matthew 27:57-66 or John 19:38-42

### April 5 – Easter Vigil

#### Old Testament Readings and Psalms

Genesis 1:1-2:4a & Psalm 136:1-9, 23-26  
Genesis 7:1-5, 11-18; 8:6-18; 9:8-13 & Psalm 46  
Genesis 22:1-18 & Psalm 16  
Exodus 14:10-31; 15:20-21 & Exodus 15:1b-13, 17-18  
Isaiah 55:1-11 & Isaiah 12:2-6  
Proverbs 8:1-8, 19-21; 9:4b-6 and Psalm 19  
Ezekiel 36:24-28 & Psalm 42, 43  
Ezekiel 37:1-14 & Psalm 143  
Zephaniah 3:14-20 & Psalm 98

#### New Testament Reading and Psalm

Romans 6:3-11 & Psalm 114

#### Gospel

Matthew 28:1-10

### April 5 - Easter

Acts 10:34-43 or Jeremiah 31:1-6  
Psalm 118:1-2, 14-24  
Colossians 3:1-4 or Acts 10:34-43  
John 20:1-18 or Matthew 28:1-10



### April 12 – 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of Easter

Acts 2:14a, 22-32  
Psalm 16  
1 Peter 1:3-9  
John 20:19-31

### April 19 – 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of Easter

Acts 2:14a, 36-41  
Psalm 116:1-4, 12-19  
1 Peter 1:17-23  
Luke 24:13-35

### April 26 – 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Easter

Acts 2:42-47  
Psalm 23  
1 Peter 2:19-25  
John 10:1-10

***Rejoice! He is risen.***



## HOLY WEEK SERVICES APRIL 2026

### Maundy Thursday, April 2, 7 p.m.

Our friends from Ellsworth Falls UCC will join us for this service of remembering the Last Supper.



### 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. We will also serve Communion.

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

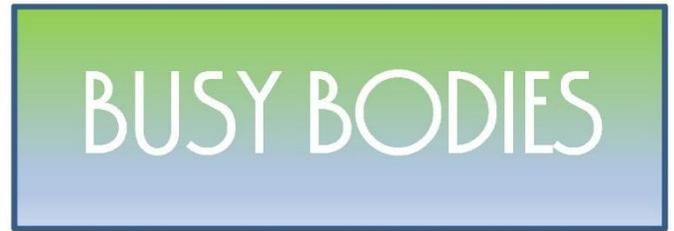


### SEATS OPEN: MEET & EAT APRIL 17 AT GOVERNOR'S

We *LOVE* our new monthly gathering at a local restaurant, *Seats Open: Meet & Eat*. There were 21 of us at Casa Jalisco in March! Great food and great fellowship.

**This month it takes place at Governor's in Ellsworth, on Friday evening, April 17, 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.



The Busy Bodies have made special gifts for anyone feeling lonely or blue, called "love" boxes. These small, empty, gift-wrapped boxes have a comforting verse attached. Please take one for yourself or for someone who may like to know they are loved. Look for the baskets as you enter the sanctuary, filled with prayer squares and love boxes.



# DEACONS

- Apr 2 – Maundy Thursday, Andy Elliott**
- Apr 5 – Sunrise service, Andy Elliott**  
**– Easter & Communion, Andy Elliott**
- Apr 12 – Andy Elliott**
- Apr 19 – Andy Elliott**
- Apr 26 – Andy Elliott**

**April Deacon: Cindy Sargent**

From the weekly newsletters of Paul Nickerson:

## What is the atmosphere on Sunday Morning?

I get the wonderful opportunity to visit many churches on Sunday mornings. When I walk in, I can "feel" the spirit or atmosphere in the church. It is an intuitive sense of how friendly or not the church is going to be. It is a reading of the "buzz" of the place, and particularly first-time guests are keenly aware of that atmosphere.

Here are a few tell-tale signs of a troubled, unwelcoming church and then, in contrast, some very positive signs.

Ways a church sends out some uncomfortable signals to newcomers

- Walking in the door there is no one greeting and I am left to find my way around a building.
- Small groups huddled in the worship center, talking in critical tones about something going on in the church.
- People who stare at me when I enter but don't offer a greeting or a smile.
- Lethargic hymn singing and engagement in worship; are people happy to be in church?
- Doom and gloom messages about finances or lack of volunteers.
- Coffee hours highlighted by small groups with their backs towards me, ignoring the fact that I am there.

These signs indicate to a newcomer that this church may not be a "safe" place. Many first-time guests are already on alert coming into a church,

and those behaviors send off red flags.

However, these are ways a church sends out positive vibes to new people

- A genuine welcome when I enter. Hospitality without smothering.
- A lively spirit in the worship center indicating people are eager for a time of worship.
- Joyful singing, praying, preaching, etc. I have come to hear Good News, and I feel it in the way people are worshipping.
- A specific welcome for those who are new, with worship leaders introducing themselves and encouraging me to sign in.
- A welcome table before and after worship where I can connect.
- A prompt, friendly thank you for visiting via email, text or letter.

Every church has an "atmosphere". Discuss with your leaders what it feels like in your church. Invite a "secret shopper" to come to worship and help you see your church with fresh eyes.

It is a big step for someone who may have little faith background or a previous bad church experience, to visit on a Sunday morning. Help them to find a warm welcome and a loving spirit on that day. ♦

## May First Church in Ellsworth present a life-giving atmosphere!

### 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 in April:**

- Bruce Becque
- Kara Ibarquen & Brendan Minear
- Charlie & Cindy Sargent
- Ruth & Troy Tainter
- Belva Scott, Caleb & Cameron
- Jacqueline Goebel
- Catherine Engel
- Barbara Rolleston
- Kristin Kimball
- Glenn Texter

## ***PULL UP A CHAIR***

We speak often of the table—  
the table of grace,  
the table of love,  
the table where all are welcome.

We gather around it,  
stand near it,  
reach toward it—  
a place of hope set before us.

But what if,  
instead of standing,  
we pulled up a chair  
and stayed a while?

What if we noticed  
not just the table,  
but the chairs that surround it?

The empty one waiting quietly.  
The worn one that has held many stories.  
The one slightly pulled back—  
as if someone almost sat,  
but wasn't sure they belonged.

Because it takes courage  
to pull up a chair  
at someone else's table.

To wonder—  
Is this seat taken?  
Is this space meant for me?  
Will I be welcomed here,  
or simply tolerated?

Is this chair too small  
for who I am?  
Too big  
for who I feel like today?  
Too uncomfortable  
to stay?

And how do I know  
if I truly belong?  
So when we set the table,  
when we speak of invitation,  
we must remember the chair.

Is there a place ready—

A chair that is steady,  
that won't give way  
under the weight  
of someone's story.

A chair that says,  
without words,  
"You can rest here.  
You are safe here.  
You are wanted here."

*Because a chair  
is not always wood and legs.*

Sometimes it's a blanket  
spread across summer grass.  
Sometimes it's the bench  
outside our church building.  
Sometimes it's the space beside you  
in a crowded store line.

*Maybe the chair  
it's simply you.*

*Maybe the table  
it's simply you.*

So is it about the chair?  
Or is it about the table?  
Or is it about us?  
Is it about you?  
Is it about me?

Because we can build tables,  
fill them high,  
and set them beautifully—

But if we are not the ones  
who make room,  
who offer welcome,  
who extend grace without condition—

Then the table is empty,  
and the chairs  
are just furniture.

*But when we become  
the welcome,  
when we become  
the grace,  
when we become  
the love—*

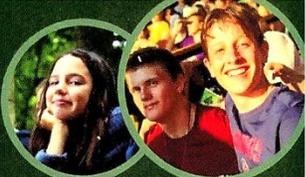
*Then every place we go  
becomes a table.*

*And every space we hold  
becomes a chair.*

- by Amber Elliott, as read in  
church on March 22, 2026



# PILGRIM LODGE Summer 2026



<p>April 24 - 26 <b>JUMP START WORK DAYS</b> All Ages (Youth with Adults)</p>	<b>WEEK 1</b>	<b>JUNE 21-27</b>	<b>CAMP PRIDE</b>	<b>7TH-12TH &amp; POST GRADS</b>		<p>June 18 - 20 <b>OUR WHOLE LIVES TRAINING</b> Ages 21 +</p>
<p>May 8 - 9 <b>CONFIRMATION RETREAT</b> 8th-12th grade + Mentors</p>	<b>WEEK 2</b>	<b>JUNE 28 - JULY 4</b>	<p>6/28 - 7/1 <b>PATH FINDERS</b> 2ND-5TH</p>	<p>7/1 - 7/4 <b>EXPEDITION EVERYONE</b> ALL AGES</p>		<p>Aug 7 - 9 <b>PRIDE ACROSS THE AGES</b> All Ages</p>
<p>May 22 - 24 <b>SABBATH, STORIES, &amp; S'MORE!</b> All Ages!</p>	<b>WEEK 3</b>	<b>JULY 5-11</b>	<p><b>ELEMENTARY ADVENTURES</b> &amp; <sup>NEW!</sup> <b>MIDDLER + SENIOR ADVENTURES</b> 4TH-6TH 7TH-12TH &amp; POST GRADS</p>	<p><b>MIDDLER + SENIOR ADVENTURES</b> 7TH-12TH &amp; POST GRADS</p>		<p>Sept 4 - 7 <b>FRIENDS &amp; FAMILY CAMP</b> All Ages</p>
<p>June 5 - 7 <b>WOMEN'S SPRING WKND</b> Ages 18 +</p>	<b>WEEK 4</b>	<b>JULY 12-18</b>	<b>MIDDLER SPIRIT</b> &	<b>SENIOR HIGH</b> 10TH-12TH & POST GRADS		<p>September 6 <b>ALUMNI DAY AT CAMP</b> All Ages</p>
<p>June 17 - 19 <b>LIFEGUARD TRAINING</b> Ages 18 +</p>	<b>WEEK 5</b>	<b>JULY 19-25</b>	<b>MAGICAL MYTHICAL ADVENTURES</b> &	<b>JUSTICE TOGETHER</b> 9TH-12TH & POST GRADS		<p>Sept 25 - 27 <b>WOMEN'S FALL WKND</b> Ages 18 +</p>
<p>June 17 - 20 <b>LIGHTEN UP LOOSEN UP</b> Ages 18 +</p>	<b>WEEK 6</b>	<b>JULY 26 - AUG 1</b>	<b>FULL WEEK MIDDLER ISLAND CAMP</b> &	<b>7/26 - 7/28 GRANDPARENTS &amp; GRANDCHILDREN</b> AGES 5 +		<p>Oct 2 - 4 <b>FALL HOMECOMING</b> Grades 6-12</p>

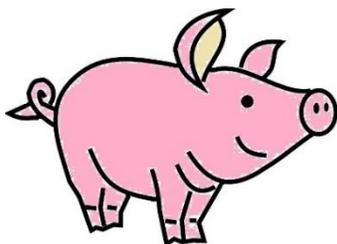
VISIT [PILGRIMLODGE.ORG](http://PILGRIMLODGE.ORG) AND REGISTER FOR CAMP TODAY!

Camping for all ages at Pilgrim Lodge! [Ctrl-Click for more information.](http://PilgrimLodge.org)

# Ham Supper

**Saturday, April 25, 2026**

**5:00 to 6:30 p.m.**



Baked ham, 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.**

# April 2026

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
			1 2-3:30 pm Welcome Table take-out	2 <b>MAUNDY THURSDAY</b> 9 am Bulletin deadline 4 pm Chess Club 7 pm Service	3 <b>GOOD FRIDAY</b> <b>OFFICE CLOSED</b>	
5 <b>EASTER</b> 7 am Sunrise Service & breakfast 8:15 am Adult Forum 10 am Worship Service	6 <b>OFFICE CLOSED</b> 10:30 am Busy Bodies activities	7 6 pm Boy Scouts	8 2-3:30 pm Welcome Table take-out	9 9 am Bulletin deadline 4 pm Chess Club 6 pm Choir	10 <b>OFFICE CLOSED</b>	11
12 8:15 am Adult Forum 10 am Worship Service 11:30 am Christian Ed & Deacons	13 <b>OFFICE CLOSED</b> 10:30 am Busy Bodies activities	14 6 pm Boy Scouts	15 2-3:30 pm Welcome Table take-out	16 9 am Bulletin deadline 4 pm Chess Club 6 pm Choir 7 pm Trustees	17 <b>OFFICE CLOSED</b> 6 pm Seats Open at Governor's	18
19 8:15 am Adult Forum 10 am Worship Service	20 <b>OFFICE CLOSED</b> 10:30 am Busy Bodies activities	21 6 pm Boy Scouts	22 2-3:30 pm Welcome Table take-out	23 9 am Bulletin & Steeple deadlines 4 pm Chess Club 6 pm Choir	24 <b>OFFICE CLOSED</b>	25 5 pm Ham supper
26 8:15 am Adult Forum 10 am Worship Service 11:30 am Missions	27 <b>OFFICE CLOSED</b> 10:30 am Busy Bodies activities 6:30 pm Council	28 6 pm Boy Scouts	29 2-3:30 pm Welcome Table take-out	30 9 am Bulletin deadline 4 pm Chess Club 6 pm Choir	<p><i>We are an Easter people!</i></p>	

*We pray O Lord,  
that you would grant us  
a season of peace  
at this time of Easter gladness.  
Easter Blessings*



Katharine Schrader continues to collect newspapers for a teacher to use in a classroom. Please leave them in the Choir Room and Kathy will take them to school. 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**

PO Box 12, Ellsworth, Maine 04605

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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.