

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



May 2026 THE STEEPLE NEWSLETTER

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

From our Pastor

As spring unfolds around us, it feels as though creation itself is giving us a quiet sermon. What once seemed dormant from what seemed like a winter that would never end is stirring again. Trees bud, the ground softens, and light lingers longer into the evening. Everywhere we turn, there are signs of new life, gentle reminders that God is always at work, bringing renewal in ways both seen and unseen.

This same spirit of newness is alive among us.

In these past few months, I have been especially moved by the life that is emerging within our church. In the simple act of gathering—sharing meals, lingering in conversation, making space for one another—something meaningful is taking root. What begins as small moments of connection is growing into something deeper. Stories are being shared more freely. Laughter is coming more naturally. And relationships are forming in ways that feel both genuine and lasting.

There is something sacred about choosing to sit with one another, to listen, to be present. Not everything is planned or polished, but perhaps therein lies the beauty. In those ordinary, unhurried moments, we begin to see one another more clearly and to recognize the quiet work of grace unfolding among us.



As we move into May and look ahead to the summer months, we do so with gratitude for what is already growing, and with hope for what is still to come. This season invites us to remain open. To continue showing up. To continue welcoming. To continue creating space where connection and belonging can flourish.

Summer will bring its own rhythm, as it always does. Schedules will shift, and routines may loosen. But the opportunity remains before us: to stay rooted in community, to extend invitations, and to carry this spirit of presence into whatever spaces we find ourselves in.

There is still room to draw near. Still space to be known. Still reason to believe that even the simplest moments shared together can become something life-giving.

And so we move forward together. Attentive to one another, open to the Spirit, and trusting that even now, something beautiful is growing among us.

Peace and love,
Pastor Andy

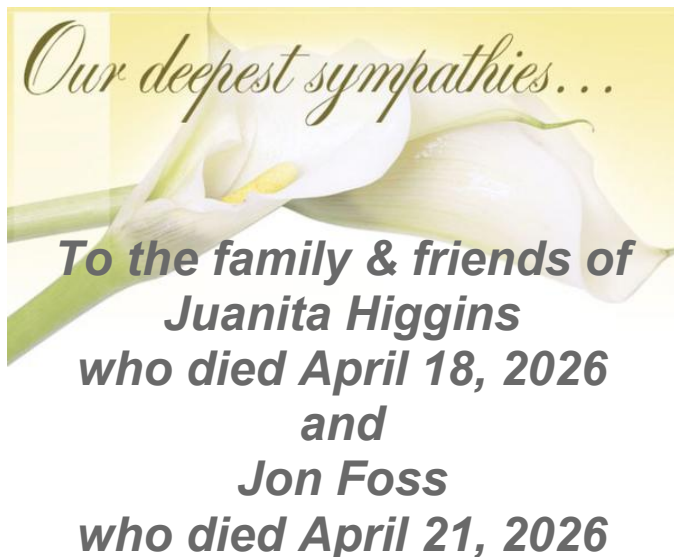
MAY CHURCH MEETINGS

- Adult Forum** – Sundays, 8:15 a.m.
Choir – Thursdays, 6 p.m.
Music – TBA
★ **QUARTERLY CONGREGATIONAL MEETING** ★
– Sunday, May 3 after worship
Deacons – Sunday, May 10, 11:30 a.m.
Christian Ed – Sunday, May 10, 11:30 a.m.
Trustees – Thursday, May 21, 7 p.m.
Missions – Sunday, May 24, 11:30 a.m.
Council – Monday, May 25, 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.

QUARTERLY CONGREGATIONAL MEETING ★ May 3, 2026 ★

After worship at 11 a.m.
Luncheon included.



MAY LECTIONARY READINGS

May 3 – 5th Sunday of Easter

Acts 7:55-60
Psalm 31:1-5, 15-16
1 Peter 2:2-10
John 14:1-14

May 10 – 6th Sunday of Easter

Acts 17:22-31
Psalm 66:8-20
1 Peter 3:13-22
John 14:15-21

May 14 – Ascension Day

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

May 17 – 7th Sunday of Easter

Acts 1:6-14
Psalm 68:1-10, 32-35
1 Peter 4:12-14; 5:6-11
John 17:1-11

May 24 - PENTECOST

Acts 2:1-21 or Numbers 11:24-30
Psalm 104:24-34, 35b
1 Corinthians 12:3b-13 or Acts 2:1-21
John 20:19-23 or John 7:37-39



May 31 – Trinity Sunday

Genesis 1:1-2:4a and Psalm 8
2 Corinthians 13:11-13
Matthew 28:16-20

GRADUATES?



Please notify the church office as soon as possible of any 2026 graduates in our church family.

DEACONS

- May 3 – Rev. Linette George
- May 10 – Pastor Andy Elliott
- May 17 – Pastor Andy Elliott
- May 24 – **Pentecost**, Rev. Dr. David Henry
- May 31 – Pastor Andy Elliott

May Deacon: Katharine Schrader

From the weekly newsletters of Paul Nickerson:

Your Church Can Grow in Worship Attendance & Giving

Horizons Stewardship (a great resource for any church) has published their 2025 report on worship and giving trends. Here are a few highlights that should be encouraging to any church.

First, any church can grow. It is not about size or location, but about mindset. Three key factors:

1) **A Vision and a Plan:** churches need a clear vision of where they want to go in the next few years and an action plan with goals and objectives. Scripture says that *"without a vision the people perish"*. It is also true that without people the vision perishes! If your church hasn't invested the time and energy to discern God's future, now is the time.

2) **Engagement & Discipleship:** Horizons reports that church members who are involved in a small group and/or a ministry give 3.5 x as much of their income as those who attend 1-2 times per month but are not involved otherwise. My experience is that many churches have only a sporadic discipleship strategy that doesn't really help people grow in their faith, identify their spiritual gifts, and use those gifts for the Kingdom. The more we help people go deeper in faith, generous giving follows.

3) **Change & Adaptation:** When fear and *"we never did it that way before"* abound, churches decline. Tony Morgan, in his book, **The Unstuck Church**, said it well:

"Churches can't have new influence without giving up their old ways. They recognize their message will stay the same, but their methods must change. Healthy churches today are not the same churches they were ten, five or even two years ago".

With a rapidly changing culture around us, adaptability is key. Church leaders need to help congregations understand the need for change, have a plan for the change, and overcome the resistance to change.

I hope you will read the entire report from Horizons Stewardship (Horizons.net). Yes, there are many churches in decline and yes giving has been affected. But with faithful leadership, you can make a difference and help fund the vision God is giving your church. ♦

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 May:

- Barb Ameen
- Ginny Davis
- Joyce Johnston
- Katharine & Robert Schrader
- Betty Tassara
- June Skinner
- Deborah Hodgkin
- Tiffany Raiche (Waugh)
- Daryl & Jean Whitaker
- Abigail Kimball
- Vivian Wass

Pastor Andy is looking for folks willing to speak during **SPECIAL MOMENTS** in worship. He would like you to share something that has been meaningful to you in your spiritual journey. Questions? Speak with Andy.



SENT FORTH IN **LOVE**

The **Strengthen the Church (STC) Offering** reflects the shared commitment of people across the United Church of Christ to cooperatively build up the UCC. Conferences and the national setting equally share the gifts given by members and friends through their local congregations. The funds raised support leadership development, new churches, youth ministry, and innovation in existing congregations. **By your generosity to this offering, you build up the Body of Christ.**

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.

FCC will accept gifts to this mission offering through the month of May. Please use an envelope in the pew rack and write **STC** in the memo.



SEATS OPEN: MEET & EAT MAY 15 AT MARLINTINI'S

We *LOVE* our new monthly gathering at a local restaurant, *Seats Open: Meet & Eat*. **This month it takes place at Marlintini's in Blue Hill, on Friday evening, May 15, 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.




GORDON THOMAS WARD IN CONCERT AT FCC SATURDAY, JUNE 20, 2026 7 P.M.









Singer-songwriter Gordon Thomas Ward will appear in concert on Saturday, June 20, at 7 p.m. He is an author and a GRAMMY-balloted, award-winning singer-songwriter with four #1 charted songs and others that have charted in the US and abroad. He has worked with notable musicians such as Noel Paul Stookey (Peter, Paul, and Mary), Eric Troyer and Mik Kaminski (Electric Light Orchestra, The Orchestra), Kevin Barry (Jackson Browne, James Taylor), Abbie Gardner, and Jud Caswell, and he's shared the stage and billing with Natalie Merchant, Christine Lavin, The Boxcar Lilies, Bill Staines, and Garnet Rogers. Gordon is a storyteller whose songs occupy a space filled with honesty, imagery, and emotion.

Admission is \$15 at the door. Doors open at 6:30 p.m. Invite your friends!



PILGRIM LODGE Summer 2026

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

VISIT PILGRIMLODGE.ORG AND REGISTER FOR CAMP TODAY!

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

Roast Turkey Supper

Saturday, May 23, 2026
Serving 5:00 to 6:30 pm




Roast turkey, stuffing, gravy, green beans, glazed carrots, mashed potatoes, cranberry sauce, Caesar 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 Lois Stevens immediately about the ways you can help.

May 2026

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
					1 OFFICE CLOSED	2 9 am Assoc mtg
3 8:15 am Adult Forum 10 am Worship Service & Communion 11 am Qtrly Cong Mtg	4 OFFICE CLOSED 10:30 am Busy Bodies activities	5 6 pm Boy Scouts	6 2-3:30 pm Welcome Table take-out	7 9 am Bulletin deadline 4 pm Chess Club 6 pm Choir	8 OFFICE CLOSED	9
10 8:15 am Adult Forum 10 am Worship Service 11:30 am Christian Ed & Deacons	11 OFFICE CLOSED 10:30 am Busy Bodies activities	12 6 pm Boy Scouts	13 2-3:30 pm Welcome Table take-out	14 9 am Bulletin deadline 4 pm Chess Club 6 pm Choir	15 OFFICE CLOSED 6 pm Seats Open at Marlintoni's	16
17 8:15 am Adult Forum 10 am Worship Service	18 OFFICE CLOSED 10:30 am Busy Bodies activities	18 6 pm Boy Scouts	20 2-3:30 pm Welcome Table take-out	21 9 am Bulletin deadline 4 pm Chess Club 6 pm Choir 7 pm Trustees	22 OFFICE CLOSED	23 5 pm Turkey supper
24 PENTECOST 8:15 am Adult Forum 10 am Worship Service	25 OFFICE CLOSED 10:30 am Busy Bodies activities 6:30 pm Council	26 6 pm Boy Scouts	27 2-3:30 pm Welcome Table take-out	28 9 am Bulletin deadline 4 pm Chess Club 6 pm Choir	29 OFFICE CLOSED	30
31 8:15 am Adult Forum 10 am Worship Service	<p><i>Come Holy Spirit, we need you. Just as you fell on the early church with wind and fire, fall afresh on us today—not a flicker, not a breeze, but a blaze. Burn away what is not of you.</i></p>					



The Sunrise Association UCC holds its Spring Meeting on Saturday, May 2, at 9 a.m. at the Somesville Union Meeting House on Mount Desert Island. There will be brief committee reports and two speakers: Rev. Jane Field, Executive Director of the Maine Council of Churches and Rev. Jodi Hayasheda with the Multi-faith Justice Maine at Maine People's Alliance. Lunch will be provided by the Somesville church.

In the afternoon, we will gather at the Bar Harbor Congregational Church UCC at 2 p.m. for the Ordination of Carter Baxter. This is an important event in Carter's life and the Sunrise Association. All are welcome to attend! Clergy are asked to wear **RED** or **RAINBOW** stoles.

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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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.