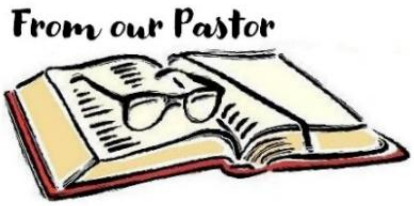
THE FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
OF ELLSWORTH, MAINE
FOUNDED 1812

December 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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The Stable—Where It All Began

Before the miracles, before the crowds gathered to hear Jesus teach, before the healing of the sick, the feeding of thousands, and the invitation to love one another, there was a stable.

This Advent season, you will notice something a little different in our sanctuary. A simple stable will stand before us, and throughout the four Sundays of Advent, it will remain empty, with the exception of a manger that will serve as our Communion table.

So often, we think of the stable as simply the setting for the Christmas story. But what if the stable tells us something much deeper about who Jesus was and the ministry he would live? What if this humble beginning was the first glimpse of the extraordinary love, compassion, humility, and welcome that would define his life?

Throughout Advent, we will explore the significance of the stable through the gifts of **Hope, Peace, Joy**, and **Love**:

November 29 – Hope: God Doesn't Always Show Up Where We Expect
December 6 – Peace: There's Room for You Here
December 13 – Joy: The Holy Is Found Among the Ordinary
December 20 – Love: Love Makes Room

There is something particularly meaningful about gathering around a manger as our Communion table. The child who was laid in a feeding trough would grow to feed the hungry, welcome the overlooked, and invite people from all walks of life to share at his table. What a beautiful reminder that God's table is a place where everyone belongs.

As we journey through Advent, I invite you to spend some time reflecting on the empty stable. Consider what it represents, what it teaches us, and how its story continues to unfold in our lives today.

Then, on Christmas Eve, our Advent journey will culminate in a special worship experience as the Christmas story comes to life in our sanctuary. I encourage you to invite your family, friends, and neighbors to join us as we celebrate the birth of Christ together.

This Advent, may we discover that the stable is more than a place in the Christmas story. It is the beginning of a ministry that continues to transform lives, challenge expectations, break down barriers, and remind us that there is room in God's love for everyone.

The stable is waiting. The promise is coming. Let us prepare the way of the Lord!

Peace & Love,
Pastor Andy Elliott

December Church Meetings

Adult Forum – Sundays, 8:15 a.m.
Choir – Thursdays, 6 p.m.
Music – TBA
Busy Bodies – Monday, Dec 7, 10:30 a.m.
Deacons – Sunday, Dec 13, 11:30 a.m.
Trustees – Thursday, Dec 17, 7 p.m.
Missions – Sunday, Dec 27, 11:30 a.m.
Council – no meeting in December

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.

Christmas Eve Service
Thursday, December 24
at 7 p.m.

Everyone is invited to attend the traditional Service of Lessons & Carols, where we hear familiar passages from Scripture and beloved carols. We will conclude with candle-lighting throughout the congregation as we sing "Silent night".

The service will broadcast live through WDEA AM 1370, Facebook, and Zoom to worship at home.





December Lectionary Readings

Dec 6 - 2nd Sunday of Advent — Peace
Isaiah 40:1-11
Psalm 85:1-2, 8-13
2 Peter 3:8-15a
Mark 1:1-8

Dec 13 – 3rd Sunday of Advent — Joy
Isaiah 61:1-4, 8-11
Psalm 126 OR Luke 1:46b-55
1 Thessalonians 5:16-24
John 1:6-8, 19-28

Dec 20 – 4th Sunday of Advent — Love
2 Samuel 7:1-11, 16
Luke 1:46b-55 OR Psalm 89:1-4, 19-26
Romans 16:25-27
Luke 1:26-38

Dec 24 – Christmas Eve
Isaiah 62:6-12
Psalm 97
Titus 3:4-7
Luke 2:(1-7), 8-20

Dec 25 – Christmas
Isaiah 52:7-10
Psalm 98
Hebrews 1:1:4, (5-12)
John 1:1-4

Dec 27 – 1st Sunday after Christmas
Isaiah 61:10-62:3
Psalm 148
Galatians 4:4-7
Luke 2:22-40

Dec 31 – New Year's Eve
Ecclesiastes 3:1-3
Psalm 8
Revelation 21:1-6a
Matthew 25:31-46

DEACONS

Dec 6 – ***Advent II,*** Rev. John Fiscus, Service of Installation, Communion, luncheon
Dec 13 – ***Advent III,*** Pastor Andy Elliott
Dec 20 – ***Advent IV,*** Pastor Andy Elliott
Dec 24 – ***C. Eve,*** Pastor Andy Elliott
Dec 27 – Hymn sing, The McIntyres

December Deacon: Katharine Schrader

On any given Sunday, our pastor Andy Elliott says, "Go and be the Church, Spread the News!" I think Paul Nickerson must be listening to the same people because he is saying the same thing in this article. Please read, reflect, and imagine how you might change your ministry:

How we connect with new people has changed radically as the culture has changed around us.

There was a time, decades ago...a new person would come to church, would learn about the Gospel, and then build relationships within the church.

In today's culture, the journey is just the opposite...we build relationships with people, outside of the church, we listen to their stories and in time, share our story of the Gospel and then invite people to church.

The starting point is not the front door of our church on Sunday morning, the starting point is now the coffee shop, the soccer field, the exercise class, etc.

This means for us...we can't just put a greeter at the door and wait for people to come to us. We must meet people right where they are and often walk with them for longer periods of time due to the poor image church has in the culture and the lack of faith background of many people.

We become ambassadors out in the mission field, rather than gatekeepers of institutions.

It's a totally different starting point. This is a challenge but if we get out in the community we will find fertile ground. People are recognizing the current culture is very corrupted and lonely. Meaningful relationships and difference-making service is hard to find. And we have Good News, wonderful community and many opportunities to serve others.

The script has flipped. The "*old days"* are not coming back. But we can make a huge difference in this new culture. People are waiting for you in the mission field.

Go meet them! ♦

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 December:

Gale & Bill Caddoo
Lynn & Michael Hall
Betty & Jim Kimbrell
Elizabeth Palmer
Marshall Smith
Leita Zeugner & Bill Hodges
Jennifer Allen
Olivia Robidoux
Dylan Lacey
Dan & Shirley Rhodes

SMILE
LAUGH
LOVE

Thank you all for the gifts, love, joy, and whatever is in our future. Remember how good God is.

God bless,
Julianna Wood

BUSY BODIES

CHURCH FAIR

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 5 8:30 AM – 1 PM



The Busy Bodies invite everyone to their Christmas Fair. They will offer our usual knitted and crocheted items, other crafts, books, delicious food, antiques and attic treasures. *And our popular berry bowls!*

Please bring donated baked goods to the church on Friday afternoon, December 4, from 12-2 p.m. Or bring them in Saturday morning as soon as you can.

Questions? Contact Sue Fuller or Louise Emerson.

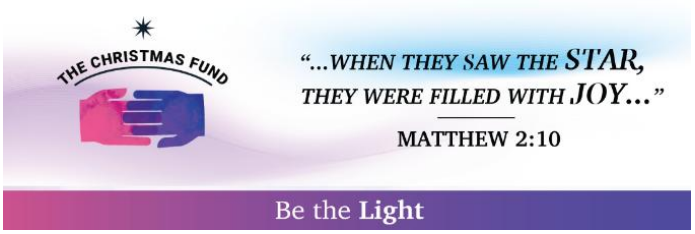
We can't wait to see you at the fair and our Silent Auction!

Installation

There will be a Service of Installation during morning worship on Sunday, December 6. Pastor Andy Elliott and the congregation will formally make promises to one another as we minister together in this community. Associate Conference Minister Rev. John Fiscus will join us. A luncheon will take place after the service.

The Pastor invites you to bring a nativity from your home to display on the front tables in the sanctuary.





The Christmas Fund has been caring for active and retired clergy and lay employees of the United Church of Christ for over 100 years, providing emergency grants, supplementation of small annuities and health premiums, and Christmas "Thank You" gift checks each December to our lower-income retirees.



UCC congregations and members have contributed generously for many years. FCC will collect gifts for the Christmas Fund through the month of December. There are envelopes in the pew racks.

Emmaus Homeless Shelter

Serving First Those Who Suffer Most

GRANTING HOLIDAY WISHES

We will again participate in the Emmaus Homeless Shelter's project to purchase Christmas gifts for local children. There will be a small tree with "ornaments" that name a child and include his/her Wish List. You take an ornament, write down on the clipboard whose name you selected, buy the gifts and wrapping paper, and bring them to the church. **This will take place in the first two weeks of December.** There will be 25 names.



Speak with Kara Ibarguen, of the Missions Committee about supporting this community ministry.



Community

Christmas Concert

December 6, 2026
3 p.m.

First Congregational Church

2 Church Street

Ellsworth

We invite all to attend.

If you would like to join the Community Choir, your congregation would like to provide a musical number, or have questions, please contact Katharine Schrader, 207-266-2541.

Please join us for this unique, holiday presentation!

Rings and Strings Christmas Concert



FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH OF ELLSWORTH
2 CHURCH STREET, ELLSWORTH, ME

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 18, 7:00 P.M.
SUGGESTED DONATION: $15

Rings and Strings, a dynamic, acoustic music duo of award-winning, singer-songwriter Gordon Thomas Ward and celebrated handbell ringer Veronica Ward, will usher in the holidays with their mezmerizing and dramatic blend of classic and original seasonal music!

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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207-667-8321 office@ellsworthucc.org ellsworthucc.org
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.