

THE TIMES NEWSLETTER

*A publication of the First Congregational Church
of Scarborough, Maine 04074*

NOVEMBER 2021



MINISTER'S CORNER

Many moons ago, when I was a student at the Bangor Theological Seminary, I took a New Testament Greek class. I was terrified of foreign languages because my two previous attempts to learn them (French and Spanish) didn't go very well; but I was required to take either Greek or Hebrew if I wanted to graduate, so I decided on Greek because I thought it would be helpful to be able to read the New Testament in its original language. Fortunately—praise God—I took a liking to it and did pretty well.

It was in Greek class that I first heard a word that I sometimes use today: “penultimate.” *Penultimate* is a fancy, and I think kind of cool way of saying “second last” or “next to last.”

This is my penultimate Minister's Corner message. That seems pretty surreal to me because I have been writing these messages for the monthly newsletter since December of 2008. And as the next several weeks go by there will be various other penultimate and ultimate, or final, things I will be doing as the pastor of the First Congregational Church of Scarborough. For example, as I write this I will be leading Sunday worship here just five more times, and I will officiate at a Christmas Eve service with you only once more.

As the time of my exit draws near, I'm experiencing various emotions. Among them are: gratitude that I was given the opportunity to be your pastor for thirteen years; some anxiety about the unknowns that Penny and I will experience in the weeks and months ahead; excitement that a new chapter in my life remains to be written; sadness that I will be leaving some wonderful people; and regret that my ministry here ended on a somewhat sour note.

But the love and support many of you have shown me in the past several weeks has lifted my spirits and strengthened me during this rather overwhelming transition from parish ministry, which I have been doing for over half my life, (Yikes!) to whatever God has in mind next. And for that I sincerely thank you.

The old saying, “God works in mysterious ways” is an apt one for this time in my life, because although the path to retirement I'm now on isn't what I had envisioned or how I planned on doing it, I have come to see God's wisdom and grace in it for myself, my family, and for this church. I look forward to our final weeks together as we say goodbye and wish one another well. May God's love and peace be with you all.

Fred

MINISTER'S CORNER (cont.)

HAPPY THANKSGIVING

As Thanksgiving Day draws closer, it's appropriate to reflect on the things we're grateful for, and the many blessings God has poured out on us. But did you know there are two kinds of gratitude: the sudden kind we feel when we receive, and the larger kind we feel when we give.

It's fairly easy to offer a prayer of thanks to the Lord for what we receive, but it's not as easy to offer a prayer of thanks for what we give—perhaps because we have received much more than we have given. But if it's true that gratitude for giving is “larger” than gratitude for receiving, it might be interesting to change the focus of our Thanksgiving Day grace before feasting. Rather than thanking God for all the things we have received, maybe we could thank God for the opportunities we have had to bless others with our giving.

And if our prayer of thanksgiving for giving to others is a little skimpy and brief, we can always give a little more so we will have more gratitude to express to God in the future.

STEWARDSHIP MOMENT

Our money is ourselves. It is our very life, our daily work, our strength and skill, our very lifeblood minted into coin.

When we hold our money in our hands we are holding the many minutes and hours and days of our life, because so much of our vital force has been expended in its acquisition, so much of our toil and time.

When we give, we are literally giving our life to others, to help, to heal, and to save them. Giving is in reality the laying down of our lives for our brothers and sisters—losing our lives for Christ's sake so that we may find our true selves in a larger fellowship with Christ in the world's redemption.

As we begin to realize that our money-giving is self-giving, then our stewardship merges into a glorious partnership, not only with Christ but with all those who in any way are at working to usher in God's kingdom.

Guy Morrill (adapted)

TIME OUT FOR PRAYER

"Lord God, I give thanks for all that you do for me on a daily basis, and I never want to forget that. Sustain me with the hope of salvation, your immeasurable gift of grace, and your constant presence in my life. Lead me to live in testimony to your incredible blessings, so your love may be known and experienced through me by those I encounter. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen."



NATIVITY PLAY

Amid humble shepherds,
Majestic kings, awkward angels
With their bent-coat-hanger halos,
My most unforgettable character
Is the tender-hearted lad
Assigned to play inn keeper
Who undid the whole production
When he assured the wandering couple,
"You folks are so, so lucky.
We just had a cancellation."

J. Barrie Shepherd

THE ANNUAL GIVING TREE

We are going to continue the tradition of using our Giving Tree to support the youth who are clients of the Long Creek Youth Center. There are still young people in need of help who are in Long Creek, and there are many who are in community based group homes. The Center is committed to providing all of them with holiday gift bags. This is a really big job, and the Center needs all of our support. While we received a long list of needs we decided to again concentrate on providing gift cards that can be used by these young people for whatever they may need. The tree will be up and decorated with small gift card size gift bags labelled with the gift card amount you can purchase either at the store listed or at Hannaford or Shaw's Supermarkets where there is a selection of cards. If you wish to make a monetary gift for off ground activities, or for items for which there is an ongoing need please make the check to First Congregational Church, place in an envelope, seal, send or drop it off at the church office. Just label the check Long Creek on the notation line.

The Giving Tree will be up downstairs in the vestry on Sunday, November 28th. The options for the gift cards range from food franchises (McDonald, Burger King, Subway, Amato's) for \$10-\$15, department stores (Target, Wal-Mart, TJ Maxx) for \$15-\$30.

The gift cards MUST be returned to church office, or to Gail Dobriko by the Giving Tree at church on a Sunday no later than December 14th.

This is our way of letting these young people know that someone is thinking of them, caring about them during this holiday season. Thank you for your help in making this possible. Come pick a gift bag off the Giving Tree!!!

Our thanks from the Ministry of Outreach and Stewardship

YULETIDE FAIR

The Yuletide Fair will be held on Saturday, December 4, from 8:30 am until 12:00 Noon. Please help spread the word to all who would like to shop and see familiar faces this season.

The Fair will feature: hand knits, crafts, kitchenware, holiday greens and arrangements, jewelry, quilts, vintage items, baked goods and the Cookie Walk

The Men's group will be offering coffee and breakfast pastries in the Vestry.

THIS YEAR'S CHRISTMAS OFFERING

This year's Christmas offering is dedicated to Make-a-Wish Foundation Maine.

Founded in 1992. the Maine Make-a-Wish Chapter is one of 59 chapters across the U.S. and serves Maine children in all 16 counties. Their mission: "Together, we create life changing wishes for children with critical illnesses."

In their 29 year history, Make-a-Wish Maine has granted more than 1.65 – wishes for children in Maine. On average, they grant 1 wish every 5 days and currently have over 100 kids waiting for a wish. His average cost is \$7,000 with all funds staying in Maine to grant wishes to local children. Their goal for the coming year is to grant 75 wishes.

To learn more about them, you may go to maine.wish.org.

If you would like to support this wonderful organization, please make checks payable to: FCC-Scarborough and reference "Christmas Offering" in the memo line. Thank you very much.

Ministry of Christian Outreach & Stewardship

A WAY WITH WORDS - A collection of Advent/Christmas verse now available J.Barrie Shepherd has released a collection of recent verse, beginning with Advent—Epiphany themes and continuing through the year. The book sells at \$10 per copy (plus \$2 for shipping) and all proceeds, beyond cost, will be donated to the Scarborough Food Pantry. Look for Rev. Shepherd after church services or contact him at barrieshep@aol.com, 207-510-1637 to place an order.

SPECIAL MEETING OF THE FCC MEMBERS ON DECEMBER 5, 2021

Please stay after church on December 5th to participate in the Special Meeting called to adopt conceptually the proposed Long Range Plan. Meeting Notices and Proxies if you cannot attend have been e-mailed or mailed to each member. Please contact the church office if the need arises.

**ORDER A POINSETTIA PLANT FOR CHRISTMAS
TO HELP US TO ADORN OUR CHURCH**

This is a long-standing tradition here as a way to remember and honor our loved ones as well as celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ. We are offering, from Fleur de Lis in South Portland, a medium size red plant in a 7 ½ inch pot for \$30.00. To order a plant, please fill out the form below and **bring it or mail it to the Church Office** (161 Black Point Rd.) with your payment enclosed.

Checks payable to: **First Congregational. Church of Scarborough**
Please do not place it in the offering plate.

Orders will be taken until **Friday, December 10th**.

If you prefer, you may purchase your own plant. Please be sure to put your name on it and fill out the form below as well, indicating that you will be providing your own plant. Please leave your plant in the Church Office or the Vestry, with your name on it by Thursday, Dec. 16th.

A list of dedications will be in the bulletins on Sunday, Dec. 19th , and Christmas Eve.

of plants _____

Dedication: Circle one - in memory of / in honor of

Given by: _____

Phone No. _____ Amount Enclosed: _____

Providing your own plant: _____ **Deadline: Friday, December 10, 2021**

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