

THE TIMES NEWSLETTER

A publication of the First Congregational Church

of Scarborough, Maine 04074

JANUARY 2023

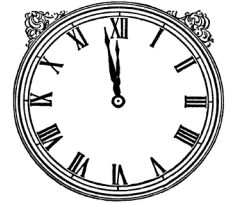


PASTOR'S MESSAGE:

We think a lot about “time” in the month of January. Another year has gone by and a new one lay ahead. Perhaps you are like me in stumbling a bit the first weeks in January when writing the date. It’s okay. After all, the last year has had twelve whole months to imprint itself on our minds!

Time inevitably keeps moving us forward. The year that has passed had its ups and its downs; its great celebrations and deep sorrows. And now we can decide how we want to “live-into” whatever comes our way in 2023. Maybe we have wounds that will need healing. Maybe we look with excitement towards promises and dreams that will be fulfilled. Only time will tell.

Have you ever said this, “time is too short!” I know I have, especially when my beloved children come to the end of a visit with me. It is always a tearful goodbye. Time is a precious gift from God and so are the people God gives us to journey with. The steady passing of time does not care about our desire to slow it down or speed it up. It moves on as the Creator designed it to do. One second, one minute...at a time. And in its moments we live our lives, as the Creator designed us to do.



The writer of the book of Ecclesiastes talks about time - *“For everything there is a season. And a time for every purpose under heaven... There is a time to be born, and a time to die, a time to weep and a time to laugh, a time to mourn and a time to dance.”* (Ecc. 3:1,2,4)

It is interesting to note how the very first chapter of this book begins. It says, *“all is vanity.”* Now, some of us who read this are tempted to hear these words as an expression of the futility of life. Yet, because we are people of faith, we hear in its message a truth about our proper place before God. It is a message about how the human heart and mind cannot possibly understand what God is doing. God gives us life and we live it...and in the end, we all stand in awe and wonder before God’s mystery.

God’s greatest gifts to us are the blessings of time and life. We can appreciate and celebrate them, or we can squander them away by losing sight of God’s loving intentions for us. Ecclesiastes advises us to not waste energy railing against life, but

instead, to be happy and enjoy God's good gifts in the moment. I think this is good advice.

In these days when we remember about the past and look forward to the year ahead, I pray we will remember to stop and give thanks to God for our daily blessings. We always have the chance to begin anew. This year let us do so as God's faithful people. In God's time, may it be so...

Yours in Christ's service,

Rev. Linda

Thank You for Your Generosity

Thank you to the members and friends of the congregation for your generosity during this past Thanksgiving and Christmas seasons. Your gifts to the special offering are very much appreciated by the organization that the Ministry of Outreach and Stewardship selected. Each year we choose different groups to receive the special Thanksgiving and Christmas offerings. And Our Giving Tree has gone to the Long Creek Youth Development Center for more years than I can count.

This year's Thanksgiving Offering went to Elena's Way, the brand new shelter established at Preble Street Resource Center in Portland. It houses persons who for whatever reasons don't qualify for other emergency housing. The facility is new, fresh, and offers a variety of services, including meals, medical and social services, for about 40 individuals who had been unhoused, living on the streets. Our gift to them this year was \$600.

This year's Christmas Offering has gone to Project Grace's Fuel Fund. Project Grace works with people in Scarborough who are in need. Our gift of \$1288 will go toward keeping families warm in this year of high heating oil and gas prices.

And finally, the gifts to the Long Creek Youth Development Center were gifts cards to a variety of businesses ranging from McDonald's, Subway to Target and TJ Maxx and several in between. The cards are used to allow some of the youth to learn how to navigate the everyday world, to reward them for maintaining good behavior, to helping to supply clothing and personal care items. The value of the cards you all gave was \$635.

So many thanks for your thoughtful and generous gifts to all of these groups.

From the Ministry of Outreach and Stewardship,
Ruth, Gail, Lynn, Bryce, Vicki and Pam

STEWARDSHIP AND OUTREACH MINISTRY WE STRIVE TO BE A LOVING COMMUNITY

We believe that “Jesus calls His followers to love one another and to be devoted to each other. This call encourages us to care for one another, invite new friends to join us, and open our lives to those outside the church. We love, because God loved us first”.

Our primary stewardship mission is to serve our immediate community through food donations, monetary support and prayer.

Your financial support to our church has helped deliver donations to the following organizations over the past 90 days:

Maine Veteran’s Home, an organization dedicated to providing residential care for Maine’s Veterans.

Preble Street Resource Center providing numerous services for the homeless and underserved including meals, shelter and many social work programs.

Hospice of Southern Maine offers end of life support for patients and their families.

Their comprehensive options for supportive care include services at the Gosnell Memorial Hospice House, in home support, or long-term care and assisted living facilities.

Simple Gifts purpose is to provide limited financial support and encouragement to patients and their loved ones who are experiencing a medical crisis. Assistance can come in the form of gas and food credit cards, gift certificates, as well as other forms of limited financial support.

The Salvation Army will use the donation to fund a take-out window for cups of coffee.

This coffee window brings opportunities to access other needs that the Salvation Army can provide through programs including assistance with warm winter clothing, heating and food.

Camp Susan Curtis a summer camp that has supported over 18,000 Maine children who have faced economic hardships. The facility is more than a camp but a place where children obtain a sense of belonging and self-confidence. Many of the campers face a range of adverse childhood experiences that can be barriers to development and well-being. Camp Susan Curtis is focused and skilled in using the outdoor environment to build positive attributes that are durable when the campers return to school and community.

If you know of any local non-profit agencies in need of financial support, they can send their request in writing to FCC Congregational Church.

FROM THE SCARBOROUGH FOOD PANTRY

The Scarborough Food Pantry in the parish hall of the First Congregational Church is open Tuesday and Thursday from 1:30 to 4:00. About 130 families, comprising 330 individuals, from towns all over the region



receive monthly curbside distributions of food. The pantry depends principally upon cash donations and government food. Individuals, businesses and civic groups regularly contribute food or cash, or hold food drives, especially around the holidays.

Four principal volunteers spend a combined total of 32 hours each week sorting donations, shelving groceries, filling bags, and serving customers. Two more volunteers help serve customers for another five hours. Two or three of the principal volunteers together spend another 14 hours planning, shopping, stocking, and writing thank you notes. It adds up to more than six full workdays each week.

Two of the principal volunteers make two monthly trips to the Wayside agency in Portland to bring back a pickup truck full of government food for another eight or nine hours of work getting and stowing the food. A seventh volunteer contributes four hours more each month to bring another pickup full of food or other merchandise from the Hannaford warehouse. Almost another two workday equivalents monthly.

Food pantry customers receive mostly nonperishable items; each customer receives dry beans, canned salmon, raisins, peanut butter, mac and cheese, canned pasta, canned fruit, canned vegetable, baked beans, and shelled walnuts, all from Wayside. Each also receives cereal, canned meat, beverage, baked beans, tuna, fruit, cake mix, three vegetables, two soups, rice, hamburger helper, macaroni, pasta sauce and a choice of condiment, plus frozen meat or fish, and fresh eggs, bread and an assortment of fruits and vegetables, all purchased or donated. In summer, there are vegetables from local gardeners. Other donated foods are spread on a self-service table.

In November, gift cards from Kiwanis were distributed for folks to buy turkeys. The food pantry added a bag of six more Thanksgiving meal items. In December, each customer received a gift bag with small kitchen items. On request and as available, there are laundry and dish soap, personal toiletries, diapers, and paper goods.

FROM THE WOMENS FELLOWSHIP

Women's Fellowship will be meeting on Tuesday, January 24th at 2:00 PM in the Vestry under the church. Bring with you a game to share, a board or card game. We'll spread out and play. Our contribution to the Food Pantry this month is canned fruit. Looking forward to welcoming any and all women of the church.

The Womens Fellowship would like to thank everyone who helped make our Yuletide Fair a success this year. So many people helped before and after the fair - setting up tables and decorations, taking them down after the fair. All those who baked, made candy, jams/jellies, pickles, soups and baked beans. All the crafters and knitters. Everyone making purchases appreciated all your hard work. We could not have done it without you!!!!

Roberta Brown and Terri Brown

Co-chairs of the Yuletide Fair

As you I start taking down your holiday decorations in the next few weeks, do you have some stored away that you no longer use and would like to get rid of? The Womens Fellowship is always looking for items to sell on our Christmas table. And artificial trees that we can use for product display. If you have these type of items, put them to one side and in November of 2023 we will be asking that they be brought to the parish house for the fair. Please be sure the items are in working order, clean and not broken. Thank you!

COME TO WORSHIP AND PRAY TOGETHER, THEN

STAY FOR THE NEIGHBORING

- Feb. 5 Boy Scout Sunday and Pancake Breakfast
- Feb 12 Valentine's Day Neighboring
- Feb 19 (Tentative) Information & Financial Update (Governing & Finance)
- Feb 26 A special neighboring to recognize Bethany Kirkpatrick's 18 year of dedicated service as our Music Director

SAVE THE DATE: SPRING POTLUCK ON MARCH 25

The Ministry of Members, Friends and Church Life is planning to hold a Church Potluck on March 25, 2023 to celebrate the arrival of Spring. The event is planned from 3:00—6:00 pm in the Vestry. Details to follow.

We hope for a good turnout from the Congregation...and bring a friend, please.

OUR CHURCH'S INCLEMENT WEATHER POLICY

If there was a significant storm on Saturday night or it is storming on Sunday morning, make sure you check to see if the service has been cancelled. The First Congregational Church of Scarborough is now registered with WCSH and WGME TV, and a cancellation notice will run on both of those stations by 7 a.m. You can also call the office at 883-2342 to find out if the parking lot has been plowed and safe to walk on and the church building is accessible. The Admin Assistant will either be in the office or leave a message on the answering machine by 7:30 a.m. if the service has been cancelled. If the answering machine message hasn't been changed, it means there will be a service of some kind (although it may be an abbreviated one). Please use discretion in deciding whether to come to church in bad weather.

SAFETY ON EXITING OUR PARKING LOT

We recommend using Woodside Drive (the side street east of the church) to exit our Parking lot. There is less traffic and better visibility to enter Black Point Road.

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