

THE TIMES NEWSLETTER

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

NOVEMBER 2023



PASTOR'S MESSAGE:



It was on the eve of All Saints Day, October 31, 1517 when Martin Luther nailed his 95 theses to the door of the church in Wittenberg Germany, marking the beginning of the Protestant Reformation. His 95 theses was essentially a “protest” document, outlining his charge of offenses made by the papacy - one of the most serious being the sale of indulgences for the forgiveness of sins for admission into heaven. Luther’s conscience would not let him continue to accept what he knew was an offense against God and a misuse of religious power and authority for material, worldly gain.

It was dangerous to oppose the papacy in the 16th century. It surely meant you would be branded a heretic and excommunicated. And it also could mean death if the soldiers were able to get their hands on you. The papacy ordered Luther to retract his accusations, but to this he said *“Unless I am convinced by proofs from Scripture or by plain and clear reasons and argument, I can not and will not retract, for it is neither safe nor wise to do anything against conscience. Here I stand. I can do no other. God help me. Amen!”*

Today I listened to Martin Luther’s hymn (c. 1529) “A Mighty Fortress Is Our God.” It reminded me of the deep admiration I feel for Luther’s courageous spirit. Luther quite unintentionally began the Protestant Reformation because of his moral convictions as he understood them as a disciple of Jesus Christ. When he heard the call of God to challenge the corrupt practices of the church, he set out to do just that, putting his personal career and safety second. And it is because of what he started that we are here as the church today.

It is wise for us to take a lesson from history every once in a while, and even more often than that. We sometimes fall into the trap of believing that we are the first ones to ever experience something such as struggle with difficult choices or even a prodding from God to protest against corrupt powers that tear down God’s values and harm God’s children. But someone has likely already “been there and done that,” in another context. We just need to look for it and then learn from it.

I think one of the lessons we learn from Martin Luther, is to never underestimate the power of faith. Some of us might say, “*what can I do, I am only one person?*” Yet Luther was only one person. He was a monk in the Catholic church who acted on his Christian conscience, and he unexpectedly changed the world. Most of us have certainly had those times when we tried quieting that still small voice inside us, urging us onto something we’d rather not do. Non-action can be the easier path, but it can also make us complicit in the work of sin. God has been calling faithful souls out of such work and giving God’s people courageous spirits for a very, very long time. We have met some of them on the pages of history, in the communities where we live, and in the pews of our churches. Thanks be to God!

In this season of Thanksgiving, I think we need moral clarity and courageous spirits more than ever. Given recent national and world events, it seems that our human moral compass is cracked. Is there anything at all we can be thankful for? Well, yes. The list is longer than we might first imagine, and it includes being thankful for the hope we find in the church – in this church which belongs to the tradition of the Reformers. Following in their footsteps, we too can be courageous. We too can stand up for the things that matter to God- even if they are unpopular. Things like love, justice, truth, human dignity, and genuine encounter are the true agents of God’s transformation. So let us be courageous in these and give thanks to God in all circumstances this Thanksgiving season. For this is truly God’s will for us! (*from 1 Thess 5:18*)

I am so thankful for you, and I wish you and your loved ones a Blessed and Holy Thanksgiving Holiday!

Yours in Christ’s Service,

Reverend Linda C. Hey

Thank you!

Dear Members and Friends of First Congregational Church,

I want to express my deep appreciation for the many cards, gift, kind words, good wishes, and the wonderful reception after church on Pastor Appreciation Sunday (October 8th). You really surprised me! It is hard to believe it has already been a year since I joined you. How time flies! As I said on Sunday, I feel very blessed to be serving as your Interim Pastor, and I look forward to our continuing work together as Jesus’ church. Thank you so much.

I am yours most faithfully,

Rev. Linda



HELP WANTED: BUILDING ADVISORY COMMITTEE

The FCC Church Council is seeking five individuals to serve on a Building Advisory Committee.

WHY DO WE NEED THIS COMMITTEE?: The Ministry of Governing & Finance presented a Long Range Plan – Property Update to the Congregation on September 17, 2023. (Copies available at the church office) The Church Council is seeking individuals with particular interest and expertise to investigate, evaluate and report back to the Council on the feasibility of the 3 major property initiatives options that were identified.

QUALIFICATIONS OF MEMBERS: We seek individuals who care deeply about the future of the church and accessibility of the buildings. A background or expertise in one or more of the following is desired: building construction, accessibility issues, fundraising and financing.

This Committee will determine its meeting schedule. It is expected that much of the work will be individual research: identifying resources and gathering information to compile and share with the church members.

TERM: The initial Committee will meet for up to six months, reporting back to the Church Council.

TO APPLY: E-mail or contact the church office, or speak to a member of the Council. If you care to “nominate” someone you know, please ask them first and then pass their name and contact information on to us.

If you have any questions, please contact Kathy Ross: kross29@icloud.com (207-245-4173)

Notes from the Women's Retreat October 7, 2023

There were 16 participants at "Pray All Ways" led by skillful and trained retreat leader, Reverend Cheryl Anderson. We began the morning with coffee and muffins, a brief time to reconnect as we organized ourselves for the day. We were joined by some friends of FCC, Mary Lou Smith, who makes calls to shut-ins for the food pantry home delivery service, and Christina Young, a food pantry volunteer, and Jackie Manasso, a frequent visitor to our Christian Ed offerings.

Pastor Cheryl led us through a few morning hymns to awaken our spirits - she plays guitar- and the Lords Prayer as revised by Parker Palmer. We learned how to welcome the days blessings by standing and opening ourselves to God, receiving and releasing those blessings back to the world.

We had been asked to bring a small object from nature that had meaning to us. These items were then used as a form of meditation What is it? What does it mean to me? What might God be saying to me through it? And how will I use that awareness to give back to the world? We were in small groups to discover these meanings and learned so much about ourselves and each other as we talked.

Before lunch, we were given the task of writing a short grace prayer, called a "collect".

The collect is divided into five parts : invocation, basis for petition, petition, purpose and ending - an example:

Holy One

Giver of all life and knower of all things

Bless us all with wisdom and love, teach us to know your ways

That we may love one another into deeper love for you and the world

In Jesus name, Amen

Lunch was a simple affair, sandwiches and chips and fruit and cookies, lots of time to visit and reflect on the morning! We returned to our prayers after our meal, singing a few hymns, again using our bodies and voices to invite the blessings of the afternoon. We then settled down to write poetry, haiku specifically. This was a challenge to us all but we did it, and so learned that the intentionality of poetry writing is a form of prayer. We must focus on the moment. Here are a few examples of our efforts:

Soft rain

Gently

Earth awakens

Body changes
Wrinkles appear
Wisdom thrives

In the church
The haiku speaks
And we all wonder

God speaks
Haiku or not
Hallelujah!

Standing tall
The Black-eyed Susan
Butterfly lands

Fenced in Green
Movement falling sounds
Color is Fading.



The winds;
Blowing the trees;
Birds sing.

We closed the day with a variety of prayer forms, ending with a few hymns and the prayer of Saint Francis - Lord, make me an instrument of your Peace. Thank you so much to the Women's Fellowship for sponsoring this wonderful retreat, and thank you to all those who supported this effort, through words and actions, and attendance!

Liane Giambalvo, Christian education and Christian nurture

A Collect prayer:
Dear Goddess - Mother Earth
Your beauty is everywhere, in everyone.
Shine your light in love and acceptance to all, because you are the strength in us all.
I am grateful for all the gifts of nature you share with me, Amen

Music Notes

Happy fall! Here we are letting go of summer already. Thankfully, God graces us with warm late summer and early fall days of beautiful and stunning foliage. Such blessings!

Like other committee members, we in the choir are already thinking ahead to the Christmas Season and our anticipated collaboration with the Brunswick United Methodist Church for a Christmas Cantata. I hope some of you are considering joining us to celebrate, whether by performing in the choir or by being a supportive and actively singing audience member.

We will rehearse Sundays after church, beginning October 29th, from approximately 11:00-11:45 (maybe as late as 12:00 a couple of Sundays), and there will be one dress rehearsal and two performances. If we want to get going sooner after church, that's fine, too. The group can decide what they prefer.



The dress rehearsal will take place Thursday, December 7th, at the Brunswick site, Brunswick United Methodist Church on Church Road in Brunswick - we will carpool - and we will perform for the first time, Saturday, October 9th, also at their church, at 5pm. Our second and last performance, here in Scarborough, will take place the next day, Sunday, October 10th, at 5pm.

If you are not planning to perform with us, we invite you to come out and "hear" the Cantata. Well, actually, to help us perform it, even from the pews, because as it turns out, all of the carols are familiar, and we will need you, the members of the congregation, to sing the familiar tunes while we add the special harmonies. There will be multiple instrumentalists, 10+ singing members of our church choir, along with 7-10 singing members from their church choir, and readers from each of the churches.

You could help out by ushering, too, and/or helping pick up after the event. We are excited to share this experience with our church congregation and members of the Scarborough Community. It's fulfilling to perform for you, and to hear you sing -- our devoted church members, always appreciative of music offerings -- so this unique music event could be very special for all of us!

A suggested donation of \$10 will be used in part to cover any last minute non-volunteer performers, but, most, if not all of the funds, will be split between the two churches to support whatever good cause is decided by the pastor and the appropriate committee members.

Thanks in advance for your support of this significant music endeavor. I am grateful for the choir members' willingness to go on a musical journey of faith, to sing Christ into this, his season!

Hallelujah!

Yours in music,

Wendy

MINISTRY OF CHRISTIAN OUTREACH & STEWARDSHIP

Helping to End Food Security in Maine



Did you know that Maine ranks 9th in the nation and 1st in New England for low food security (hunger) or that one in every five children is food insecure? About 14% of the Maine population lacks access, at times, to enough food for an active healthy life.

As we approach our Thanksgiving Holiday, the Outreach and Stewardship Ministry has chosen the Wayside Food Programs as the recipient of our Thanksgiving Offering. Wayside has been increasing access to nutritious food to our neighbors in Southern Maine since 1986. Wayside's hunger relief efforts include: Community Meals, Mobile Food Pantries and Kids' Healthy Snacks Program. Our Scarborough Food Pantry is one of the recipients of their programs.

Through its food rescue efforts, Wayside diverted 1,000,000 pounds of edible food from the waste stream in 2022. Rescued food was distributed, free of charge, to 70 + partners throughout Southern Maine including food pantries, soup kitchens, shelters, and other social service agencies.

In addition, the Outreach and Stewardship Ministry is donating from its mission fund in November to the Preble Street Organization, also a leader in addressing hunger in Maine. Preble Street's Food Security Hub currently serves 26 towns in Southern Maine and prepares hot, nourishing meals each day.

Thank you for giving consideration to assisting in this very important cause.

MISSING FROM THE PARISH HALL:

A DVD player and Soundboard are missing from the Christian Education office at the Parish Hall. If you have used this equipment and did not return it or know its whereabouts, please notify the office and/or return it. Thank you.



2nd ANNUAL TRUNK OR TREAT

Please join us for FCC's 2nd Annual Trunk or Treat. It is going to take place on Saturday, October 28th from 3:30-5:00 pm. We hope to have a minimum of 15 individuals and their car trunks participate.

The event is very easy to take part in and the children (as well as the Trunkers) had a great time last year. All you need is a trunk and some candy. You can decorate your trunk with as little as a pumpkin or you can get really extravagant, your choice.

In addition, we will be having hot dogs and a fire pit (for s'mores) for both the children, their family and the Trunkers.

I hope you will be able to join us. Please contact Terri Brown (terribrown1959@yahoo.com or 883-6093) if you have any questions or can join us on the 28th.

WOMEN'S FELLOWSHIP

Our next meeting will be October 24, 2023 at 2:00 in the Ladies Parlor. Kimberly Mann from Hospice of Southern Maine will be our guest speaker. Hostesses for the meeting are Liz Barton and Barbara Grotton. Come and enjoy the afternoon!

The Yuletide Fair is fast approaching. We are always looking for folks to bake cookies, make candies and lots of other sweet treats as well as baked beans and soup to sell. So get your favorite recipes ready for December 2 and the Yuletide Fair!



The Craft & Fellowship Group meets every Tuesday (except for Women's Fellowship Tuesday) at 1:30 in the Annex. Bring a craft to work on, or maybe a game to play. All are welcome.

MEMBERS, FRIENDS & CHURCH LIFE

The Members , Friends , and Church Life Neighboring is headed up by Brenda Harrison in November ! Fill her slots for her ! Sign up on bulletin board in Vestry! November 19 , Sunday will be a homemade pie at coffee time ! If you would like to donate a pie let Brenda or Joanne know! Call Brenda : 939-5890 or Joanne: 883-2057

Women's Coffee Time is held the second Wednesday of every month. We meet at IHOP in South Portland at 9:30. Please join us!



SPAGHETTI DINNER SEPTEMBER 23, 2023



Pictured above (L-R):

Ray Birkner, Dennis Bailey, Betty Holmes, Vickie Flynn



Pictured above (L-R):

Jay Zerner, Liz Barton, Bob Barton,

Meriden Zerner, Rev. Linda Hey, Terri Brown



Pictured above: Members of Boy Scout Troop #47

PASTOR APPRECIATION DAY OCTOBER 8, 2023

Thank You, Rev. Linda Hey



Pictured above:

Dick Grotton (Master of Ceremonies)

