

# THE TIMES NEWSLETTER

*A publication of the First Congregational Church*

*of Scarborough, Maine 04074*

**SEPTEMBER 2024**



## PASTOR'S MESSAGE

### A Willing Spirit

September always comes with a sad goodbye to warm summer days as well as a joyous anticipation of what may lie ahead as we return to our regular schedules. This is going to be an important year of church transformation for us, and it holds much promise. Yes, it is time to adjust our outlook towards “imagining what is possible” and risk looking forward in hope for the future. We can do it. While we definitely cherish all that we have been in the past which has made us who we are today, the turning of the calendar to this September has us looking towards whatever it is God has in mind for us. When we do this, trusting in one another and in God, there will undoubtedly be many blessings and gifts of grace ahead.

Why are you a part of this church of Jesus Christ? Maybe you are searching for something more in your spiritual lives – or wondering about what God has to do with you and your living. Maybe there are times when you feel you are just going through the motions and worship and prayer are a low priority for you. Whichever it is...it's all good, for we all experience peaks and valleys in our walk of faith. The good news is that God remains our steadfast companion, no matter what.



Eugene Peterson wrote a translation of the Bible which he entitled The Message. It is a paraphrased translation, which is quite different from translations you are probably more familiar with. What makes it different is that Peterson restates scripture's ideas in his own words. As such, it takes us a step further away from scripture's original wording, which is important to remember when using it. Even so, it can sometimes enlighten us with a new perspective.

As I was thinking about the peaks and valleys of our faith journeys I thought about how Paul once gave advice about offering ourselves as holy, pleasing sacrifices to God, which is found in Romans 12:1-3. Here is Peterson's version of this scripture: *“So here's what I want you to do, God helping you: Take your everyday, ordinary life – your sleeping, eating, going-to-work, and walking-around life – and place it before God as an offering. Embracing what God does for you is the best thing you can do for God. Don't become so well adjusted to your culture that you fit into it without even thinking. Instead, fix your attention on God. You'll be changed from the inside out. Readily recognize what God wants from you, and quickly respond to it. Unlike the culture around you, always dragging you down to its level of immaturity, God brings the best out of you, develops well-formed maturity in you.”*

We are usually comfortable coming to God in search of something like healing, or strength, or comfort, but isn't it true that we are usually less comfortable with the idea of presenting ourselves to God as an offering? This requires a completely different orientation towards God, doesn't it?

How can you and I ever be a worthy offering to God? How can you and I ever be an offering that is "*the best thing we can do for God?*" We are not perfect, yet the love of Jesus' sacrifice for us reminds us that we are loved just as we are - flaws and all - maybe a little out of shape - sometimes even distracted from listening to the sermon or prayers in worship.

Paul tells us that we can get the help we need for the peaks and valleys of our faith lives by assuming a new posture before God – that of an offering of a willing spirit. Instead of always asking God to fulfill our wish lists, we give to God our open heart – eager to discern and do God's will instead of ours. We live with a spirit of generosity and focus on God first. We respond to God's call to us in this way: "here I am Lord," instead of "what can you do for me Lord?"

When we bring to God the offering of ourselves, only then do we begin the process of authentic spiritual renewal. As Peterson says, "*you'll be changed from the inside out.*" And did you know that spiritual renewal is actually the very foundation needed for church renewal? It is true. It is just an attitude adjustment away.

As we return from our summer vacations and set our feet firmly on the path of this important year of church transformation, why don't we first lay this good foundation of spiritual renewal to build upon. Won't you join me in offering our willing spirits?

Your Servant in Christ,

Reverend Linda C. Hey





## **NEW MEMBER ORIENTATION**

Rev. Linda will be holding a New Member Orientation class after church on September 29th. If you are interested in becoming a member of the church please let Rev. Linda know. If this date doesn't work for our group, we can definitely be flexible.

## **CHURCH COUNCIL MEETINGS RESUME IN SEPTEMBER**

The Church Council gets back to business with its first meeting of the Fall on Tuesday evening, September 3, starting at 6:30 pm in the Parlor.

If you have questions or concerns for the Council, please bring them to a Ministry Chairperson or to Member-at-Large Brenda Harrison to be brought up at the meeting.

## **ESTATE PLANNING - LEARNING WHAT'S INVOLVED SAVE THE DATE: OCTOBER 9**

The Ministry of Outreach and Stewardship has been asked if we could find a way to educate our members about Estate Planning. Some people wanted to know how to go about including our church in their planning.

We are pleased to have found a group that offers a panel that will help us all understand what does go into planning for and protecting our future needs and wishes. On Wednesday, October 9 at 1:30 PM in the Parish House this group will offer information about a variety of planning areas that are included in estate planning. It will be upstairs. There is a chair lift that can help get you there. This will be open to the public. Please consider putting this on your calendar.

You are all invited to attend or send someone from your family who may need a jump start to begin to think about all the matters that can come up for themselves or for you in planning for the future. It may be a good way to start a conversation.

If you've already done some of this work, you might like to hear what changes may have occurred over the past few years.

Save October 9, a Wednesday, at 1:30 PM in the Parish House for this information event!!!

From your Ministry of Outreach and Stewardship

## **GREETINGS FROM THE TRANSITIONAL STEERING TEAM!**

Our thanks to all who have been taking part in our Congregational Conversations over these last few months. The information we received from our first meeting on Sunday April 28<sup>th</sup> was shared with you in our July Newsletter.

Our 2<sup>nd</sup> Congregational Conversation was held on Sunday May 19<sup>th</sup>. Thirty-four members and friends joined the task of exploring our “church identity.” Together we brainstormed facts about our ministries, and asked hard questions about what is working, and what is not working. We will be using the information we compiled to help guide us in planning for our September Congregational gathering, to be held after church on September 15<sup>th</sup>.

The Transitional Steering Team identified the need for our church community to learn more about the UCC denomination which we are members of as a Schedule 2 church. It was our hope to dispel misconceptions and to give our members true and accurate information about the UCC. Consequently, we distributed a booklet “about the UCC” to interested members, and invited Rev. Marisa Laviola, UCC Maine Conference minister to preach and lead a Question and Answer time on Sunday July 14<sup>th</sup>.

Rev. Laviola preached a sermon on “Who and whose we are” inviting us to consider that our identity as people of faith included our belonging to God. To walk with Jesus means we love and welcome all of God’s children. This is at the heart of the UCC identity, and it is a value that resonated with many who attended church that day.

The Q and A that followed in the Vestry was well attended by thirty-four members. Those who were there participated fully with many questions. Rev. Laviola graciously met people where they were and answered their questions in an honest and forthright manner. Attendees liked her very much and said they thought she did an excellent job. A report of highlights from the event follows.

We hope to see everyone at our next Congregational Conversation on September 22<sup>nd</sup> after church in the Vestry. Our forward-looking topic for that meeting will be “Who is God calling us to be?”

We are Your Servants in Christ,

### **The Transitional Steering Team Members**

Sue Whitten

Sue Hilton

Elaine Sederlund

Terri Brown

Rev. Linda Hey

**Highlights from our Conversation on July 14, 2024 with  
Rev. Marisa Laviola, UCC Maine Conference Minister**

*Here is some of what we learned that we didn't know before –*

1. The First Congregational Church of Scarborough has been a Schedule 2 member of the UCC for 67 years (when the UCC was formed and we voted not to be a covenanted church of the denomination.)
2. We are 1 of only 2 Congregational churches in the State of Maine who have the membership status of Schedule 2 in the UCC Maine Conference (out of over 150 churches).
3. We have a relationship with the Cumberland Association of the UCC, attend their meetings, and have voting Delegates from our church represent us as part of the ministry of the Association.
4. As members who are not fully covenanted with the denomination, we are not listed as a UCC church on the Maine Conference or UCC National Conference websites, and as such, we would not come up if someone was looking for a UCC church.
5. We have received support from the UCC Conference staff in the past as a gift of generosity. This support has been primarily in the area of Search and Call (when we are looking for a settled pastor).
6. We have had UCC ordained pastors leading our church for many years.
7. As a Schedule 2 church, we are not eligible to receive the conference offerings of “resourcing the local church.”

*Here are some of the major topics that came up –*

1. UCC as a progressive denomination. Some members had bad past experiences in other UCC churches with the pastor being “liberal.” Others spoke of positive experiences as members of UCC churches. Some also expressed concern that the UCC would try to control the church’s beliefs and decision-making process. Rev. Laviola spoke of congregations’ identities coming from the heart of the people in them. You are who you are. Finding a settled pastor who connects with a church’s identity is important. Churches in the UCC are also completely autonomous in relation to the denomination. While the denomination shares beliefs and takes stands on behalf of love and justice in the public forum, the local churches do not have to agree or adopt them. The church remains self-governing and self-determinative.

2. The Maine Conference of the UCC is Open and Affirming. The question was “What is “Open and Affirming?”” Some members shared that they did not agree with the UCC’s definition/process of Open and Affirming, saying that a gentler, quieter acceptance of all people is a better choice than making a statement about it. Others said that their relationships with LGBTQ family members has helped them understand that a church that is not “Open and Affirming” is not one that people who identify as LGBTQ would feel safe attending. Churches in the UCC do not have to be Open and Affirming. In the UCC, the decision about whether or not a church will become Open and Affirming is a process that takes time and needs careful guidance. The Conference provides such professional guidance, if requested, to fully covenanted churches of the denomination. There was a sense that more discussion about the Open and Affirming process in the future would be very helpful.
  
3. There were several questions about the financial cost of joining the UCC. There was some confusion between the terms “donation” and “dues.” Who do we pay money to? Where does the money go? Rev. Laviola explained that churches pay “dues” to the Association. That rate is calculated on the number of active members a church has. FCC Scarborough has been paying such dues to the Cumberland Association right along. This stays with the Cumberland Association and does not go to the Maine Conference. The funds needed to support the Conference and National office come from an offering called OCWM (Our Church’s Wider Mission). This is a donation churches make to support the ministries that support them. It is not mandated, and the amount is determined by the local church.
  
4. Additional helpful information: The UCC organizational structure is not hierarchical, but covenantal. Covenant is the principle that defines UCC relationships. Jesus Christ is the ultimate head of the church. The local church is the basic unit of the UCC. Individual congregations work together through Associations and Conferences. All of this makes up the UCC in the National setting. The governing body of the UCC is its members, just as it is on the local church level.
  
5. There was more conversation that may not have been represented here, but we hope we have hit on the biggest topics. The discussion is ongoing.



This summer we have lost two of our dear members.

**Herbert Hughes** passed away on the morning of June 16th at the Gosnell Memorial Hospice House. As many of you know Herb was a long time member of our church. He served on several different church boards and committees through the years. Many have described him as a grace-filled and welcoming member; a person of integrity. He cared deeply about the church and its future. He served most recently as a member of the Transitional Steering Team, and his input was greatly valued by the whole team. We sure do miss him! His final wishes were to have no funeral but only "calling hours" at the funeral home, and I know many of us showed up to honor him and say goodbye.

Here is the link to his obituary: <https://www.hobbsfuneralhome.com/obituary/herbert-herb-hughes>

**Edward Kriege** passed away suddenly and peacefully on July 17th at the Enclave Assisted Living residence. After he moved to Scarborough several years ago to be closer to his daughter and her family, Ed began attending our church. He was a person of deep faith with a kind heart. Ed was a cherished member of the Senior Choir. His shining smile and gentle soul will be missed by many of us. His daughter Janet has said that she is glad her dad is now reunited with her mom, Karen who passed away in 2016. She thanks the church for their support of Ed through the years, and is planning a memorial service for him at a later time, in Ed's hometown in Maryland.

**Prayer:** O Lord, we thank you for blessing us with Herb and Ed as part of our church community. We pray for them and their families, and we thank you for receiving them into their eternal home with you. In Jesus' name. Amen.

## MUSICAL NOTES:

Happy September! What a beautiful summer. Here we are ready for traditions of the fall, including in the choir loft, when members will return to lead you in song and musical fellowship. Looking back for a minute, I want to give Mary Ellen Bossom and Brenda Birkner another shout out for the donation of the keyboard from Mary Ellen, and then Brenda's leadership to follow up with researching and providing funds (along with Mary Ellen), to purchase the speaker and cords and stand to get everything up and running for use in the balcony, or wherever we might need it. Bravo!

I also want to thank those who provided "Special Music" this summer. It's nice for the choir to have a break, although there were many members who sang in August under Brenda's direction, as well as Brenda joining me for a duet, and Sue and Dennis singing in August, too. We are so fortunate to have motivated musicians who are willing to share their gifts, whether in a large or small group, and with such passion for providing musical spirit in our church.

Looking ahead, please consider joining us in the choir for a rehearsal, or a rehearsal and a Sunday, or a few rehearsals and Sundays, or even a season, such as the Christmas or Easter Seasons. I bet you will find it fun, and maybe just maybe you are someone who has had singing in a group on their wish list for life. Come fulfill it with us! This year we expect to hold rehearsals on Monday evenings. The first rehearsal will be Sept. 9, starting at 7:00 pm in the Vestry. The choir will sing during worship starting on September 15.

And, finally, just know that we love to hear your beautiful voices in the pews. You are most definitely a singing congregation and a strong one at that...we appreciate that spirit coming right back at us in the choir loft.

Be well, and let's have the best year yet!

Yours in music,

Wendy



<b>OFFICE E-MAIL ADDRESS:</b>	<b><a href="mailto:fcchurch@fccscarborough.com">fcchurch@fccscarborough.com</a></b>
Church mailing address	161 Black Point Rd, Scarborough ME 04074
Church Website	<a href="http://www.fccscarborough.com">www.fccscarborough.com</a>
Church Telephone #	(207) 883-2342
Pastor: Rev. Linda Hey	<a href="mailto:rlindahey2@gmail.com">rlindahey2@gmail.com</a>
Office Hours:	9:00 am - 1:00 pm. Monday through Friday



## WOMEN'S FELLOWSHIP RESUMES IN SEPTEMBER

Summer is here and the gardens are growing. This is the time of year that people start making pickles, relishes, jams and jellies. If you are one of these people, please consider setting a few jars aside to donate to the Yuletide Fair food tables. Those that come to the fair truly appreciate the wonderful homemade items!



It's hard to believe that fall is coming and the Women's Fellowship will be starting their meetings again. Our first meeting will be Tuesday, September 24, 2024 at 5:00 p.m. in the Vestry. We will be having a potluck supper, so bring your favorite entree, side dish, salad or dessert for all to share. It's always a time of good food and great fellowship. We hope to see you there!

If you attend church but are currently not a member of the Women's Fellowship, please consider joining us. We meet the fourth Tuesday of each month (with a few exceptions due to holidays) at 2:00 p.m. in the Ladies Parlor or Vestry (according to the program). We have a program each month on various subjects, our business meeting and refreshments. It's a great way to meet with the ladies of the church and enjoy their fellowship. We hope you can join us!

## PICNIC AFTER CHURCH ON SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 8th

The Ministries of Members, Friends and Church Life and Worship and Spiritual Care are joining to offer a special neighboring on September 8th after worship services. To celebrate the end of Summer.

There will be sandwiches, chips, ice cream and beverages. Weather permitting, we will be outside. Inside if rainy.

Going forward, we are needing hosts for neighboring beginning September 15th. Please sign up in the Vestry if you can help out. We can pair you with a helper to make it easy.



## TRUNK OR TREAT

Please save the date!! On **Saturday, October 26th**, we will be holding our 3rd Annual Trunk or Treat in the church parking lot. We are hoping to have at least 20 cars participate in this very fun event. There will be food, a fire pit and photo op. We always have a great time and enjoy some wonderful Fellowship with the rest of the participants. We will share more details as we get closer to September. In the meantime, if you have any questions please contact Terri Brown at [terribrown1959@yahoo.com](mailto:terribrown1959@yahoo.com) or 883-6093.

## SUMMER FUN AND FUNDRAISING

On June 29th, three of our church groups joined forces to host a day of food, fun and bargain hunting.



Our Yard Sale, sponsored by the Ministry of Members, Friends & Church Life, raised over \$1800.00, thanks to the generosity of our friends and community who donated saleable items, and help from a slew of dedicated volunteers.

That same morning the Women's Fellowship hosted a Snack Shack in the Library of the Parish Hall and raised over \$200.00.

Not to be outdone, the Men's Fellowship sold raffle tickets for a "Calendar Raffle", where winners are chosen two days weekly for a month. The men solicited in-kind and cash donations from local businesses and raised nearly \$1,000 from the sale of \$20 raffle tickets..



























