

THE TIMES NEWSLETTER

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

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MINISTER'S CORNER

Dear Friends:

As I write this, it has been a month since a shocking, horrific event in Washington D.C. occurred. Like all of you, I was appalled and angered that our Nation's Capital, and the members of Congress who were assembled to ratify the Electoral College votes from the 2020 Presidential election, came under attack by domestic terrorists posing as patriots. Lives were lost, a hallowed building where the work of the American people is accomplished was desecrated, and our democracy itself was threatened.

After the attack, I wrote a prayer that I shared during the January 10th Zoom worship service. I was asked to publish it in our church newsletter. You can read that prayer below.

Almighty God, our nation is in a dark place right now, and we desperately need your light to shine down on us. We pray that it isn't too late for this country we love to be saved.

Lord, America is in trouble. We have been saturated with lies and deception from the mouths of our leaders. Anger is being intentionally stoked by politicians who crave power, want to divide us, and are disregarding the principles of justice and freedom that have made us a beacon of hope for the rest of the world.

We love our country, dear God, but we fear for it. Until recently we couldn't have imagined that some of our fellow citizens would be manipulated into storming the halls of Congress and desecrating the very building where our democracy, and the rule of law that governs us, stems from.

And never could we have believed that the torch of liberty, which has burned brightly for the past 244 years and which the Statue of Liberty symbolizes, could come as close as it now is to being snuffed out. Not from without, by our foes, but from within, by those we entrusted to represent and serve us.

Gracious Lord, we say that we are "one nation under God." But, as is true in many instances, it is one thing to claim to be something, and it is another thing entirely to live out that which we claim to be. We are at a crossroads in this country, and now we must decide which path we will walk down as citizens of the United States and as citizens of your blessed kingdom. So we ask you to guide us in choosing the right path,

and to give us the strength and courage to walk down it with determination, that we might help fashion our great but imperfect nation into a more perfect union.

We pray now, dear God, that you will make us instruments of transformation for these United States. Where there is tyranny, help us to overcome it with the light of your love.

Where there is anarchy and authoritarianism, help us bring justice and democracy.

Where there are lies and deception, grant us the wisdom to discern the truth, and the resolve to speak truth to power.

Where there is social and economic injustice, use us to plant seeds that will bear the fruits of equality for all.

Where there is division, make us instruments of unity and healing.

Where there is anxiety and loss of hope, fill our hearts with calm and a deeper faith so that, no matter how bad things are, we will trust that you are still in control.

And where there is violence and hatred, make us agents of mercy and peace so we can be shining examples for others to follow.

We ask these things, Almighty God, believing that you who, in the beginning, spoke a word and created light and life and all things and called them good can even now speak a word to recreate all things and call them good, as well. In Christ's name we pray. Amen.



TIME OUT FOR PRAYER

Heavenly Father, we have decided for your kingdom and dared to take your cup. But we confess that we do not understand the fearsome consequences of obedience. When we are brought to the test as Jesus was during his 40-day wilderness journey, steady our nerves and hold us in our faith. And enable us to resist any temptation that can cause us to stray from you. Through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

Caryl Micklem

STEWARDSHIP CAMPAIGN PLANNING UNDERWAY

The Ministry of Outreach and Stewardship is moving ahead with plans for the 2021-22 Stewardship Campaign. And as is true with most everything in this time of COVID-19, it is going to be done a little differently this year.

Stewardship Sunday will be on March 21st. That is the date by which we hope to receive your pledges of support for the new fiscal year. Traditionally we have had a Stewardship Brunch after worship a couple of weeks before Stewardship Sunday to kick off the campaign, but unfortunately, and for obvious reasons, we will not be doing that this year.

In the past we have utilized the brunch to hand out packets with pledge cards, direct deposit forms and other stewardship materials, but this year all stewardship packets will be distributed via the USPS. They will be mailed out the week of March 8th, so please watch for them to arrive in your mailboxes. Also, instead of requesting that you bring your pledges to the worship service on Stewardship Sunday so they can be blessed and dedicated, we ask you to mail them back or drop them off at the church office by March 21st.

We are hoping to raise \$145,000 in pledges this year (about 10% more than last year) so our church's ministry can remain vibrant. It is a lofty goal to be sure, but your past generosity gives us hope that it can be reached. The Stewardship Campaign is more than just the church asking for money. Pledging how much financial support you plan to give aids the Ministry of Governing and Finance as they create a budget. So we hope you will make a pledge of financial support this year. It would be very helpful and greatly appreciated. Thank you.

STEWARDSHIP MOMENT

Do you remember the old, long-running comic strip *Nancy*?

One day, Nancy and her friend Sluggo were talking, and Sluggo asked, "How much money do you think is in your piggy bank?" Nancy replied, "Let's check."

In the piggy bank was her weekly allowance. "Oh boy! My allowance!" Nancy said. Then she ruminated, "If I had an extra dollar a week, I'd be all set. I expect an extra dollar a week! I demand an extra dollar a week!"

Nancy's Aunt Fritzi said, "Okay," and gave Nancy an extra dollar.

“Wow!” Nancy said, very excited. Then she looked at the extra dollar she received, thought a moment and said, “Of course, if I had an extra two dollars a week, I’d really be all set.”

Isn’t that often the case? We want more and ask for more and even demand more from life, from others, and from God. And if we’re blessed with the good fortune of receiving more, we’re happy and think we’re all set; but after a time many of us come to think, “If I only had more than this, I’d really be all set.”

Lent is, among other things, a time of striving to overcome the attitudes of covetousness and greed, and replace them with attitudes of gratitude and generosity. And our stewardship giving is a tangible action we can take to overrule the self-serving nature of getting and put into practice the selfless nature of giving.

FCC MIDYEAR FINANCIAL REPORT

Following the January 24th worship service, the Ministry of Governing and Finance provided a quarterly financial update. Below is the chart shared with the congregation. We are grateful and fortunate for the continued financial support from the members and friends of FCC. If you have any questions please contact the church office and a member of Governing and finance will be in touch with you.

Fiscal year 2020–2021 (Current year) YTD Status

Period	Income	Expenses	Net Difference
Mid-Year	\$104,846.78	\$94,917.24	\$9,929.54

Favorable Items	Unfavorable Items
<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ No withdrawals needed from Investments yet➤ Fuel and utility costs tracking under budget➤ Building rental income has been steady despite the pandemic➤ Payroll costs slightly reduced due to few hours worked due to the pandemic	<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Income is lower (12.4%) due primarily to the stoppage of church services with the pandemic➤ New local Real Estate taxes for the Parsonage (\$2,382.06 for first year)

NOTES FROM THE FOOD PANTRY:

Thanks to all those who continue to support our food pantry. Today we were visited by Christopher Bushey of the Navy Recruiting Station located on Expedition Drive in Scarborough. He delivered 50 canned and dried food items that were donated by future sailors and recruiters at their station.

Word is spreading through the community of our Food Pantry Ministry. Remember that donations can always be left in the breezeway of the Annex after hours. We check that space daily so items don't freeze.

CANDY.....for Christ?

JELLYBEANS.....for Jesus?

The Ministry of Worship and Spiritual Care is planning an outreach effort for the Lenten Season, that combines religious devotion, fellowship....and sugar! We will be assembling bags of jelly beans, with a color chart provided by Rev. Allison Curry, that links each candy color with an aspect of the Lenten season and Passion of Christ.

Individual members of the Committee will deliver these to the homes of Church members and friends who request them, during the 4th week of March preceding Palm Sunday. This gives us a brief opportunity to see and greet you, as we await the promise of the Resurrection and the arrival of Spring. If there are any youngsters in your life, we can supply you with several to share with them.

Please call the church office or speak to a member of Worship and Spiritual Care if you would like a visit and delivery from one of us. Thank you.

NEED A LIFT?

Our church still has a "ride ministry" to connect drivers to members and friends who are unable to get out to the grocery store or to medical / vaccine appointments. If you need a ride, please contact Elaine Sederlund, our Administrative Assistant, at the Church Office: 883-2342 for more information or scheduling.

CHURCH CONTACTS:

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