

# THE TIMES NEWSLETTER

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



**JUNE 2020**

## MINISTER'S CORNER

Dear Friends:

Recently, President Trump called for Houses of Worship to reopen, saying they provided an essential service to our nation. Soon after that announcement, I was contacted by several parishioners who wanted to know if and when we were going to start having worship services in the sanctuary again.

That is a difficult question to answer. We all want our lives to return to normal as soon as possible, and that includes our life as a congregation. After a few months of isolation, most of us are chomping at the bit to come together again as a church family. I include myself among those who feel that way. I have been trying to find ways to offer worship experiences that help fill the void of not having services in our sanctuary. I know it's not the same. Nothing can totally replace gathering in person to worship together, pray together, and praise God together.

The Ministry of Worship and Spiritual Care and I met recently to discuss this matter. One thing we all agreed on was that it is too soon to have worship services in our sanctuary at this time. Having worship during this pandemic isn't simply a matter of unlocking the church's doors and inviting people in. That would be much too risky. It's a complicated matter that will require a great deal of work so we can maintain the necessary safety standards for those who attend.

The good news is, there are other options we can use to maintain our connectedness and worship together, even though we are physically apart. One example is the devotion services that I have been mailing out and recording in the sanctuary and posting on our church website. I will continue to offer them to you. Another example is the Parking Lot, Stay-in-Your-Car worship service we recently had. Our hope is to have more of them throughout the summer.

Another idea we are looking into, which I have put on the front burner to explore, is having worship services via *Zoom*. *Zoom* is a communication tool that allows people to come together using their computer, tablet, and smartphone. Up to 100 people can log in and be able to see, hear and interact with each other. And with a subscription to *Zoom*, it allows the option for people who don't have a computer to call in and participate audibly by telephone.

When these options for community worship become available, we will get the word out to you right away. In the meantime, please know that the Ministry of Worship and Spiritual Care and I are working to find ways to keep us united until we are able to come together to worship and fellowship in person again. I ask for your prayers and your patience as we do this. And if you have any questions or suggestions, please feel free to get in touch with me.

## WORRYING

These days it's hard not to worry. As Jesus once said to his friend Martha, "You are worried and upset about many things." But another thing Jesus said about worrying is that it doesn't add one day to our life (or one bit of life to our day). Our anxiety earns us heartburn, and nothing more.

Regarding the things about which we fret, author and pastor Max Lucado wrote that:

40 percent of our worries never happen.

30 percent are about unchangeable deeds in our past.

12 percent focus on the opinions of others that can't be controlled.

10 percent center on personal health, which only worsens as we worry about it.

8 percent concern real problems that we can influence.

In other words, 92 percent of our worries are either needless or useless.

But 100 percent of our worries and fretting can be handed over to God so we can keep them from robbing us of the peace and joy God desires us to have.

## STEWARDSHIP THOUGHT

A report from the Maryland Forest Service gives us these important facts. "One tree has the cooling effect of five air conditioners. Noise levels are reduced by six to eight decibels by greenbelts (land that surrounds or is next to an urban area and is designated to be kept largely undeveloped, wild, or agricultural) 100 feet in width. One acre of growing trees will scrub clean the air polluted by eight automobiles operated for twelve hours. The same acre of trees will absorb the carbon dioxide produced by fifty cars in the same twelve hour period. A 129-acre woodland will absorb one million gallons of sewage runoff per day, with no harm to the trees, soil or water." So, when you look at beautiful trees this summer, thank God for them!

## TIME OUT FOR PRAYER

Dear God, make me think about what I am doing  
with my mind  
with my body  
with my habits  
with my study  
with my friends  
with my hopes  
with my family  
with my faith  
with my life.

--Carl Burke

## **NOTICES AND UPDATES:**

### **PARKING LOT PROJECT COMPLETED:**

This week Thyng Paving of Lyman completed the restoration of the lower parking lot. The Company dug out the crumbled asphalt and improved the drainage system, prior to paving and relining the entire church lot. Thanks again you to all who have contributed to this project which improves the safety and appearance of the church grounds.

**HAVE YOU NOTICED OUR GARDENS?:** Liane Giambalvo has devoted considerable time to planting and tending the church gardens. Next time you come to the church, take notice of the retaining wall and stops that she installed between the parking lot and the front door to the church and the lovely flowers.

**GOVERNING AND FINANCE CLIPS AND PRUNES:** On June 13th, several members of the Committee of Governing and Finance, with assistance from Barbara Bathe, spent the morning trimming and pruning shrubs, raking and hauling to maintain the appearance of the exterior of the Church.

**PASTOR GAGNON IS ON VACATION:** Pastor Fred Gagnon is on vacation until July 6th. He can always be reached by phone or e-mail in an emergency. Terri Brown and Rev. Allison Curry will be leading online services for June 28th and July 5th.

**CHURCH OFFICE HOURS:** Elaine has reduced her office hours to 9:00 AM—Noon until further notice. She is available outside of those hours if needed...just give a call or e-mail to set up or get what you need. There is now a mail slot in the entrance to the Annex/Office where you can drop mail, pledges and the like.

The breezeway of the Annex, next to the garage, is also a convenient place to leave items for the food pantry or to exchange other items after hours without needing to enter the office.

**CHRISTMAS FAIR CANCELLED:** The annual Christmas Fair will NOT take place this December.

**IN MEMORIAM:** Our thoughts and prayers are with the family of Alice Fielding, who passed away this week at her home. There will be a small family service in the church officiated by Pastor Gagnon, on June 24.

### **ANNUAL MEETING OF THE CHURCH MEMBERSHIP ON JULY 12**

**The Annual Meeting, which was postponed from May 3rd, will take place on Sunday morning July 12th at 10:30 AM. Next week each member will receive in the mail an Official Meeting Notice, along with an Annual Report, Proxy form(s), and instructions on how to participate by ZOOM or by phoning in to the Meeting.**

**Please plan on joining with us at this time.**



































