

# THE TIMES NEWSLETTER

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

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## MINISTER'S CORNER

Dear Friends:

At the time of this writing, people are beginning to receive COVID-19 vaccines and the number of infections and deaths from the virus seem to be dropping. Which is wonderful news because it has been about a year since this pandemic began and everyone is extremely anxious to get back to some semblance of a normal life. We are not out of the woods yet, of course but hopefully, as more and more people get vaccinated, we can begin worshipping in the sanctuary again in the not-too-distant future, even if we have to continue to wear masks and practice social distancing.

In the meantime. I'm very excited to tell you about the Holy Week and Easter events that are planned for our church

### ***Palm Sunday, March 28th***

Holy Week begins on Palm Sunday, the day we commemorate Jesus' entry into Jerusalem while people waved palm branches in celebration. The Ministry of Worship and Spiritual Care decided to attach palm crosses to the March newsletter, both as a way to celebrate Palm Sunday, and as an outreach to everyone in the congregation to let them know they have not been forgotten.

### ***Maundy Thursday, April 1st***

The Rev. Allison Curry and I will be leading a Tenebrae service with Communion on Zoom at 7 p.m. In a Tenebrae service the story of the Last Supper, and Jesus' arrest, trial and crucifixion, are read from the Gospels, and candles are extinguished after each reading to symbolize the darkness that tried (but failed) to extinguish Christ, the Light of the world. It is a beautiful service, and I hope many of you will attend.

### ***Easter Sunday, April 4th***

I will be leading an Easter Sunrise service at 6:20 a.m. at Higgins Beach. Past Sunrise services have attracted 100 or more people, so everyone will be encouraged to wear a mask and practice social distancing. And the Ministry of Worship and Spiritual Care and I are planning to have an Easter worship service outdoors in the church parking lot at 9:30 a.m.

The details about these Easter services are still being worked out. We will make more information available to you as we get closer to the date.

## WHY DO YOU COME TO CHURCH?

Writer and Methodist minister William Willimon shared the following experience when he was leading a parish.

We were discussing the need for more evangelism in our congregation, the need to attract new members to our church. “Why do you come to church?” I asked.

Some said they enjoyed the fellowship. One said she loved the music. Thank goodness someone mentioned the good preaching!

Then Mary said, “I keep coming back, as I have done for twenty years, because, of all the places in my life, this is where I experience most vividly the presence of Christ. I have hardly ever come here without feeling, at some point during the service, or in conversations before or after, that Jesus is here. I can feel the reality of Easter in this place. That’s why I want to be here in church.”

## IMAGINE WHAT EASTER WAS LIKE

A number of years ago, two men in uniform arrived at the garment factory where Ruth Dillow worked to tell her some very tragic and sad news. With somber expressions and soft voices they notified Ruth that her son, Clayton Carpenter, had been killed by an IED bomb the previous Wednesday night. Imagine Ruth Dillow’s shock. Imagine her grief, losing a precious loved one so suddenly, violently, and without any warning.

Ruth Dillow’s experience helps us imagine what it must have been like for Jesus’ family and friends when they learned (or witnessed) that he was arrested, put on trial, imprisoned, physically and mentally abused by his captors, and then executed by crucifixion on a hill in Jerusalem called Golgotha. Certainly those who loved Jesus also experienced shock, grief, and broke down weeping over their great loss.

Of course, that wasn’t the end of the story for Jesus. And it wasn’t for Ruth Dillow, either.

On the following Friday night, Ruth received an astounding phone call. It was her son, Clayton, and he was very much alive. There had been a mix-up, and the Army erroneously declared that Clayton had been killed in action. But he was very much alive, calling his mom from a hospital bed in Saudi Arabia where he was being treated for non-life threatening shrapnel wounds. When asked by a reporter how she felt, Ruth Dillow said simply, “My son is coming home soon, and when he gets here I’m going to hug him to death!”

Imagine Ruth Dillow’s disbelief, her astonishment, her excitement and delight when she realized her son was alive! Imagine her weeping over the phone as she talked to her son; but this time it wasn’t tears of grief, but tears of joy.

A story like Ruth Dillow's allows us to know in a more tangible way what it must have been like for Jesus' family and friends when they were told (or saw) how the large stone sealing Jesus' tomb had been rolled aside, the tomb was empty, and people were claiming that Jesus had appeared to them. At first they couldn't believe it, but eventually they realized it was true. Jesus really was alive! And the message of Easter for us today is that he still is. Our Savior lives! It really is true. Imagine what that means for us, and for the world.

### TIME OUT FOR PRAYER

Halleluiah! Jesus is risen! He is risen indeed!

May this declaration resound not just during the Easter season, dear Lord, but be heard by everyone we encounter, everywhere we go. Let it always be the joyous message we witness to. Your love, proclaimed by priests and prophets through the years and intended for your own people, has often been ignored and rejected, but by Christ's resurrection may its sweetness be magnified to redeem and transform the world.

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### STEWARDSHIP CAMPAIGN UNDERWAY

By this time you should have received in the mail a Stewardship packet. WE ask that you please fill out your pledge card and mail it or drop it off at the Church Office by Stewardship Sunday, March 21st.

There are two important reasons why church members and friends are asked to fill out a pledge card. First, the Ministry of Governing and Finance is tasked with coming up with a budget every year, and trying to figure out a budget for our church without having any idea of what our income will be is very difficult!

And second, a pledge card is a way of raising your awareness of the church's financial needs and committing yourself to help meet those needs in the year ahead. By the way, if your financial situation changes and your giving to the church becomes a burden, you can certainly reduce your pledge—or increase it if you are blessed with good fortune!

## Our Easter Offering - Sharing What We Have with Those in Need

This year the Ministry of Outreach and Stewardship is asking for your support for the Michael Klahr Jewish Family Service Diaper Bank for our special Easter Offering. This Diaper Bank helps provide diapers for many families in need here in Maine. It is one of only two diaper banks in Maine, the other is in Machias. While donation of goods is welcomed, dollar donations go a very long way in helping the organization purchase diapers at discount. As a comment from the link below says: your dollar donation goes twice as far, twice as quickly, and more importantly provides consistency in the services provided.

Diapers, you say! Well, we were surprised to learn some interesting facts about disposable diapers as we investigated this organization. There is a website that you can use to see some of these facts, and a short promotional video by WCSH6. I would encourage you to read it here: <https://www.mainejewish.org/michaelklahrjewishfamilyservices/diaperbank/>. But I want to fill in some thoughts on why this is important.

When a family receives local or federal assistance, that does not include diapers. A year's worth of diapers costs about \$900 per child. That's about 235 lattes or 9 day passes at Disneyland, quoting from the News Center Maine video. Young families sometimes have 2 or more children in diapers at the same time. There is a luxury tax on disposable diapers. If a child's diapers are not changed regularly, skin and other problems can develop. For parents already stressed by financial worries, having children with health problems impacts their mental health. Most families on assistance do not have access to their own washers and dryers so having cloth diapers is not an option. Small apartments are not even built with that in mind, let alone having the cost of washers and dryers, or space for hanging them out to dry. And that is supposing that the family in need lives in an apartment, and not in their car or a tent. So disposables are the way to go. Diapers have to be provided by the family if their children go to day care. If they can't provide diapers, they can't access day care, and then they can't go to work, or have to take time off. Again stressing the parents. It's a domino effect that is felt by both child and parent.

Please give some thought to this year's Easter offering and the chance to show some "loving kindness" to people in need of that. Enclosed with this Newsletter is an envelope for your Easter offering. If you do not use that envelope, please write "Easter Offering" on the Memo line of your check.

Thank you in advance for your consideration from the members of our Ministry, Gail, Ruth, Bryce, Mary Ellen, Meghan, Susan, Lynn, and Vicki.

## **SCOUTS' PINWOOD DERBY RACE TOOK PLACE AT CHURCH PARISH HALL**

On Saturday, March 13, our local Cub Scouts used the Parish Hall for their annual Pinewood Derby Race. The Pinewood Derby Race is open to all cub scouts (1st through 5th grade). Scouts are given a block of pine wood, wheels and axles and told to use their imaginations to create a car. The scouts must then register their car and pass several inspection points.

This year because of COVID, a handful of adult ran the cars on the track. Normally the scouts run their car 4 times (once in every lane). A software program keeps track of the finishing times and determines the winners within the pack. Trophies go to the top 8 winners with several others handed out for winners of various categories such as Best Use of Materials, Fastest Looking, Scout Choice, etc. The top 5 winners then are invited to participate in the District derby race held in April, where other top 5 winners from different packs compete against each other.

### **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.

### **CANDY.....for Christ?**

### **JELLYBEANS.....for Jesus?**

The Ministry of Worship and Spiritual Care is meeting after the March 21st worship service to assemble bags of jelly beans accompanied by a Prayer that associates 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 some Church members and friends 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 multiple packets and prayers 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.