

THE TIMES NEWSLETTER

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



MAY 2020

PARKING LOT WORSHIP SERVICE ON MAY 31ST

Miss coming to church on Sundays? So do we. And after more than a two month hiatus there will be an opportunity to gather together for worship in as safe a manner as possible. On May 31st, which is Pentecost Sunday, at our usual 9:30 a.m. worship time, we are going to have a “parking lot” service.

What is a parking lot worship service? Quite simply, it’s a service that takes place outside in our church parking lot. Those who attend will stay in their vehicles and worship God “drive-in” style! Pastor Gagnon will speak using a microphone, and organ music will be pumped through the open windows of the church sanctuary for you to listen to., Keeping in mind that we are still in the midst of a pandemic and want to avoid getting or giving others the coronavirus, there are certain guidelines that need to be followed to help insure everyone’s safety. They are:

If you are feeling sick—even if you don’t know for sure that it is COVID 19—we ask you to not attend this stay-in-car service. You should remain home.

Only individuals from a single household should be in each vehicle, so please do not carpool. All vehicles will be directed to enter the parking lot via Black Point Road and leave via Woodside Drive.

As drivers pull into the church parking lot, they will be directed by an usher to park their vehicles six feet apart. Attendees must remain in their vehicles at all times. The rest rooms inside the church will not be available to use.

The worship leader and ushers will practice social distancing and maintain a minimum of six feet apart from one another and from worshippers’ vehicles.

Nothing can be passed to or from any vehicles. This means there will be no paper bulletins, and no offering will be taken (if you would like to get your offering to the church, you are encouraged to mail it to the church office at 161 Black Point Road in Scarborough).

Vehicle windows should not be rolled down more than two inches (it sounds a little drastic, but it is highly recommended!), to help prevent getting or giving others the coronavirus.

You are encouraged to wear a mask during the worship service to increase your safety and your sense of security.

It would be very helpful if you would contact the church office, either by phone at 883-2342 or by email at fcchurch@fccscarborough.com, and let us know you are coming so we can have an idea of how many vehicles to expect..Because we are holding this service on Pentecost Sunday, we encourage you to wear something red to celebrate the coming of the Holy Spirit!

This will be a different way to worship, but hopefully it will help our church feel more connected during this period of isolation. It has been a long time since we have gathered at the church to worship God. Pastor Gagnon and members of the Ministry of Worship and Spiritual Care are very much looking forward to having this worship service in our parking lot, and we invite you to join us on May 31st at 9:30 a.m.

YOUR CHURCH IS HERE FOR YOU

With people being told by the CDC to practice self-isolation and social distancing, there is an increased risk of individuals experiencing loneliness and depression, or running out of food, medicine and other essentials. But even when we aren't able to gather together and worship as a faith community, we can still be the church by loving, supporting and assisting one another during this difficult time.

If you are in need of prayer or someone to talk to, please don't hesitate to contact Pastor Gagnon by phone at 883-2342. He would be glad to listen to you, talk with you, and pray for you. Also, we have a list of volunteers in our church who want to help members of our congregation who are in need of assistance. If you have a prescription to pick up, need a few groceries from the store or have some other simple chore that you aren't able to do, these individuals are willing to assist you. Call the church office at 883-2342 and Elaine will put you in touch with someone who can help you out.

HOW TO CONTINUE YOUR FINANCIAL SUPPORT OF OUR CHURCH

The COVID 19 health emergency has made it necessary to cancel worship services until further notice, but this interruption will not last forever. It will be wonderful to resume gathering on Sunday mornings to praise God and fellowship with one another. Until we are able to do that, however, you can still continue your financial support and insure that our church's ministry will go on without interruption. If you are wondering how to get your offerings or your 2020-21 stewardship pledges to us, we suggest two possible ways. You can do so by mailing your offerings to the church office at 161 Black Point Road, Scarborough, Maine 04074. Or, you can stop by the church office and drop off your pledge envelope there. If you choose to drop them off in person, we encourage you to call first and make sure someone will be in the office to greet you. Also, we are looking into the possibility of making it possible for people to give their offerings on our website using PayPal or a credit card. Thank you for your understanding and your continued generosity.

FROM THE STEWARDSHIP COMMITTEE:

The Stewardship Committee asks that people who haven't yet made their pledge for 2020-2021, to please do so as soon as possible. We need to pass the pledge numbers on to the Ministry of Governing and Finance for them to do their budget.

As of May 12, we have 68 pledgers for a pledged total of \$120,502. A year ago at this time we had 87 pledges for a total of \$157,292.

STEWARDSHIP MOMENT

REMEMBER TO SAY "THANK YOU" TO GOD

We call God "Father," and like children we want God to provide for us. Of course, God does. God's generosity is greater than our ability to appreciate it. Maybe that's part of the reason why we often don't thank God as much as we should.

We expect the sun will rise every morning, and we pray for cloudless skies (if we have a picnic planned) or for rain (if our crops need it). Yet even when we get what we asked for, how often do we really say a heartfelt "Thank you" to God for it or do something in return as an expression of our gratitude?

Again, like children, we want good things from God. We believe that's how our relationship with our Heavenly Father is supposed to be. But when God meets our expectations, are we genuinely appreciative?

We know how special it is as parents to receive a hug and a whispered, "you're the best, Dad" from a daughter, or an "I cleaned up my room without being asked, Mom." So why not thank the Lord in a tangible way for our blessings, with something like, "I made a donation of food to the food pantry today, Lord," or "I joined the choir"? How pleased God would be!

MINISTER'S CORNER

Dear Friends:

It has certainly been different for me, trying to minister to you from afar in the midst of a pandemic. But I have tried to be creative doing it and learn new skills to try to maintain a connection with you.

For example, as I write this I have:

Recorded several *A Visit from the Pastor* videos and sent out links via email to make it easy for you to simply click and watch.

Sent out weekly devotion services via email and snail mail so that you would have something to help guide you in drawing closer God at home.

Recorded an Easter Sunday service and posted it on our church's website so you would have the opportunity to worship and to celebrate Christ's resurrection in the absence of a worship service in the sanctuary on Easter Sunday.

Made phone calls to congregation members to touch base with them, see how they're doing, and let them know I'm thinking of them.

And I'm intending to learn more about *Zoom*, and the possibility of our church using that communication tool in various ways—perhaps to hold a meeting, come together in real time via computer, tablet or smartphone to hold a meeting, worship together, pray together, and anything else we can come up with.

I can't say I prefer ministering to you "from afar" as opposed to the old fashioned, in person way, but I will say I have learned a lot about the benefits and pitfalls of technology. And I'm certainly very pleased and grateful that I am able to stay in touch with you during this time of social distancing. I will continue reaching out to you and being your pastor as much as possible and as best I can. Please know that I hold you in my heart and I'm keeping you in my prayers.

A PRAYER FOR PENTECOST (The Pentecost season begins Sunday, May 31st)

In the hour of my distress,
When temptations me oppress,
And when I my sins confess,
Sweet Spirit, comfort me.

When I lie within my bed,
Sick in heart and aching head,
And with doubts discomforted,
Sweet Spirit, comfort me.

When God knows I'm tossed about,
Either with despair or doubt,
Yet before the day runs out;
Sweet Spirit, comfort me.

WHAT I CAN LEARN FROM MY MOM (In honor of Mother's Day)

Mothers teach us about foresight: "Make sure you wear clean underwear in case you're in an accident and have to go to the hospital."

Mothers teach us about logic: "If you fall out of that tree and break your leg, don't come running to me."

Mothers teach us about religion: "You'd better pray that stain comes out of the carpet."

Mothers teach us about contradictions: "Close your mouth and eat your dinner!"

Mothers teach us about contortionism: "Will you look at the dirt on the back of your neck?"

Mothers teach us about perseverance: "You're going to sit there until you eat every bit of that broccoli."

Mothers teach us about the weather: "It looks like a hurricane blew through your room."

And Mothers teach us about genetics: "You're just like your father."

Happy Mother's Day and God bless all the moms out there!

NOTICES AND UPDATES:

OUTDOORS WORK DAY on SATURDAY, JUNE 13, 8:30 AM til Noon: Please come out and join the Ministry of Governing and Finance as they sweep, prune, rake and perform other outdoor tasks to spruce up the exterior of the Church grounds. Many hands lighten the load!

PARKING LOT PROJECT SCHEDULED FOR BEGINNING OF JUNE:

After careful review and consideration, the Ministry of Governing and Finance decided to go forward with repairing the disintegrating part of the parking lot to improve drainage and safety. The Church has contracted with THYING Paving to repair the lower parking lot between Woodside Drive and the Parish Hall. The project is scheduled to happen during the 1st half of June. The old pavement will be dug out, and the drainage system improved before paving and relining of parking spots.

Thank you to all who have contributed to this project. We think the repair along with cleaning and striping the whole parking lot will improve safety as well as give our church a much-needed facelift. Our Parking Lot Fund raising will cover all but a few hundred dollars of the cost for this repair. We would gladly accept contributions to close the gap.

YARD SALE POSTPONED: The annual Yard Sale, which had been scheduled for the end of June, will be postponed until the Fall.

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

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