

THE TIMES NEWSLETTER

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



APRIL 2020

MINISTER'S CORNER

Dear Friends:

It's been a very tumultuous several weeks, hasn't it?

The whole world, and, of course, our own country, has been gripped by the coronavirus, and life as we know it has been turned upside down. Routines have been disrupted. Feelings of safety and security have been shaken. Panic and fear threaten to overcome us.

When crises like the coronavirus pandemic occur, they can bring out the worst or the best in human beings. I was in the grocery store last week, and there wasn't a roll of toilet paper to be found. People were hoarding them, along with a lot of non-perishable food items, hand sanitizer, and other things that they believed would help see them through this crisis. I even heard that some individuals in the super-market had actually taken items they wanted (felt entitled to?) out of other people's shopping carts!

Like I said, crises can bring out the worst in human beings.

On the other hand, just before I sat down to write this, I checked my emails and an individual in our church told Elaine and I that if we knew of anyone who needed a prescription picked up and they couldn't get out, this person would be willing to go pick it up. That email was responded to by two others in our church who also said they would be willing to assist others who needed help. And those emails were followed by one from a "snowbird," member of our church, who wrote that he wished he was around because he would like to help out, too.

Like I said, crises can bring out the best in human beings.

These are strange and uncertain times, my dear friends. Most, if not all of us, have never lived through an experience like this. As we make our way through this coronavirus emergency, one day at a time, I would remind you of two things.

First, remember that we are all in this together. God put us on this earth to love, support and care for one another. That was the very heart of all of Jesus' teachings. So, as Christ's followers, may we do what our Lord wants and look after one another and our neighbors in need. That is essential if we are to make it through this challenging time with our health, safety and sanity intact.

And second, remember that God is our shepherd and continues to watch over us. Although it might not seem like it, God is still in control. Does that mean the Lord will prevent us or our loved ones from getting sick from the coronavirus? Maybe. Hopefully. Or maybe not, because in this mortal life sickness and death are a reality and aren't always possible to avoid.

But as the 23rd Psalm assures us, when we walk through the valley of the shadow of death we need not fear any evil. For God is with us. God's rod and staff will comfort us. And surely goodness and mercy will follow us all the days of our lives, coronavirus or no coronavirus, and we will dwell in the house of the Lord forever. May God bless you and keep you safe and healthy.

LENTEN LUNCHES CANCELLED

The Lenten Lunches got off to a great start, with 85 people coming to the first one and 81 attending the second one. But unfortunately, due to the coronavirus emergency, the remaining three were cancelled. I want to thank everyone from this church who helped out when it was our turn to provide food for the lunch. I'm glad we had the opportunity to participate in this wonderful, ecumenical community event. God willing, we will do it again next year!

WORSHIP SERVICE CANCELLATIONS

As you may know, for health and safety reasons the March 15th, 22nd and 29th worship services were cancelled. Pastor Gagnon and the Ministry of Worship and Spiritual Care are currently discussing what should be done regarding upcoming worship services and activities, especially during Holy Week and Easter. With so much uncertainty about what the situation will be like a few weeks from now, it's hard to know exactly what to do. Some difficult decisions will surely have to be made. Please know that they will not be made lightly. Our highest priority is the health and safety of our parishioners. We appreciate your patience and understanding as we determine what the best course of action to take might be.

HOLY WEEK AND EASTER UPDATE

At the time this is being written, my prayer is that some good news will soon come out regarding the coronavirus emergency and we will be able resume worship services in April. After anguishing over it for a couple of weeks, it has been decided that there will be no events on Maundy Thursday, April 9th, when we usually have a brief Communion service followed by a religious-themed movie.

On Good Friday, April 10th, the sanctuary will be open from noon to 3 p.m. (the hours that Jesus hung on the cross) for quiet meditation, as we have done in the past. That should be okay because there are usually no more than two or three people in the sanctuary at the same time, and those who come can keep a safe space between one another.

What to do about Easter Sunday is the most difficult decision of all, because it is the highest and holiest day in the Christian church calendar. Although the Easter Sunrise service at Higgins Beach is very special, we have decided to err on the side of caution and cancel it this year because of the challenge of maintaining safety.

Easter Sunday services in our sanctuary have drawn well over 100 people, which makes for a crowded sanctuary and a greatly increases the risk of contracting or spreading the coronavirus. The Ministry of Worship and Spiritual Care are considering the possibility of having a short, informal outdoor Easter service in our church parking lot (weather permitting, of course) at our usual worship time of 9:30 a.m. It would be along the lines of the sunrise services at Higgins Beach. Ushers could regulate things to make sure people kept a safe distance apart, and chairs would be set up for those who would find it difficult to stand. The final decision probably won't be made until the week before Easter, but if we decide to hold such an outdoor service we will try to get the word out as much as possible.

FCC SCARBOROUGH'S CORONAVIRUS CANCELLATION POLICY

The coronavirus emergency may make it necessary to cancel worship services at times, but you can check and see about cancellations before venturing out. A notice will be posted on our church's website, at **fccscarborough.com**. Also, a notice will run on **WCSH and WGME TV**, as early in the morning as possible. Finally, you can call the office at **883-2342**. Pastor Gagnon will leave a message on the answering machine by 7:30 a.m. if worship has been called off. If the answering machine message hasn't been changed, it means there will be a service of some kind. You can contact Pastor Gagnon if you have any questions about this policy.

HOW TO CONTINUE YOUR FINANCIAL SUPPORT OF OUR CHURCH

Even though worship services may be suspended for a time due to the coronavirus emergency, you can still continue your financial support of our church and insure that our ministry can go on without interruption. To reduce the risk that comes with person-to-person contact, we encourage you to mail your offerings to the office at 161 Black Point Road, Scarborough, Maine 04074. And if you are feeling well, you can stop by the church office and drop off your pledge envelope. Thank you for your understanding and your continued generosity.

YOUR CHURCH IS HERE FOR YOU

With people being strongly urged by the CDC to practice self-isolation, there is an increased risk of individuals experiencing loneliness and depression, or running out of food, medicine and other essentials. 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.

EASTER POEM

Tomb, thou shalt not hold Him longer;
Death is strong, but Life is stronger;
Stronger than the dark, the light;
Stronger than the wrong, the right;
Faith and Hope triumphant say,
Christ will rise on Easter Day.

Phillips Brooks.



BENJAMIN FRANKLIN'S EPITAPH

When Benjamin Franklin was about to die, he asked that a picture of Christ on the cross should be placed in his bedroom so he could look, as he said, “upon the form of the silent sufferer.”

Franklin himself wrote the epitaph that he wanted on his gravestone: “The body of Benjamin Franklin, Printer, like the cover of an old book, its contents torn out and stripped of its lettering and gilding, lies here . . . Yet the Work itself shall not be lost; for it will, as he believed, appear once more in a new and more beautiful edition, corrected and amended by the Author.

QUOTES WORTH NOTING

YESTERDAY is a cancelled check.

TOMORROW is a promissory note.

TODAY is the only cash you have. Spend it wisely.

Never throw mud. You may not hit your mark, but you will have dirty hands.

I shall pass this way but once; any good that I can do, any kindness that I can show, let me do it now, for I shall not pass this way again.

We cannot cause the wind to blow the way we want it to, but we can adjust our sails so it will take us where we want to go.

A temper is a valuable possession. Don't lose it.

STEWARDSHIP MOMENT

Anyone who has ever been able to sustain good work has had at least one person—and often many—who have believed in him or her. We don't get to be competent human beings without a lot of different investments from others.

—*Fred Rogers*

TIME OUT FOR PRAYER

Lord, death could not hold you.

And because of you and your resurrection, we, too, can live.

Thank You that the grave is only a journey into the presence of God.

You have removed the sting of death and empowered this thing called life.

Now I will live in your presence forever. Amen.

Rebecca Barlow Jordan

EASTER FLOWERS CANCELLED

We received notification from our Florist that they will be unable to provide Easter Flowers since their wholesale supplier has closed. If you already submitted a check for flowers, you will get a refund. In the event there is any type of Easter Service, we will improvise.

FOOD PANTRY REMAINS IN OPERATION

Let's applaud Ellen Parenteau and her volunteers who have kept the food pantry open. Service is by "drive through" so you may note the orange cones and extra signage in the Church parking lot.. Food pantry clients are served pre-bagged food at the main entrance to the Parish Hall without entering the building itself.

The Food Pantry is open from 9:00 am - Noon on Tuesdays and Thursdays, and from 4:00—6:00 pm on the 1st and 3rd Wednesday of each month.

If you want to donate food items, please bring them to the Parish Hall (parking lot) during hours of operation, or to the church office, or leave them in the breezeway of the Annex (161 Black Point Rd) next to the garage.

CHURCH OFFICE REMAINS OPEN

The Church Office remains open, although hours may be reduced somewhat. Fred and Elaine are here to support you, so please call, e-mail or stop in as your schedule and needs dictate.

SAVE THE DATES (Subject to Change!):

Community E-Waste Collection Event

April 25, Saturday, from 9:00 am to 1:00 pm is the date scheduled for our annual E-Waste event in the Church Parking Lot. We will accept: Cellphones, Laptops, Computer Towers (CPUs) and Printers, TVs and Monitors (both flat screen and old tube style for both)

May 3rd Annual Meeting

The Annual Meeting of the First Congregational Church is scheduled for Sunday, May 3rd. We will notify you in advance of that date as to how we will conduct the Annual Meeting, depending on the circumstances. If you are the head of a Ministry or Committee, it is never too soon to start drafting your portion of the Annual Report. WE would like them in the office by April 17th

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