

THE TIMES NEWSLETTER

A publication of the First Congregational Church

of Scarborough, Maine 04074

FEBRUARY 2025



PASTOR'S MESSAGE

What is Covenant?

You may have noticed how people in the church have been saying the word “covenant” a lot lately. Some of us are scratching our heads wondering what it really means. While it is not incorrect to say the word “covenant” simply means an agreement or mutual understanding, this definition alone doesn’t quite cover it. When we say the word “covenant” as it relates to the church, it calls to mind the relationship of commitment between God and God’s people. It is biblical! We recall from scripture how such covenants with God were made with Abraham and Moses and David.

When Jesus came into the picture, he referred to himself as the new covenant. We say this every time we celebrate the sacrament of Holy Communion, remembering how Jesus raised the symbolic chalice of wine at his last Passover supper and told his disciples, “this is the new covenant in my blood.” It was a covenant that represented a new understanding between God and God’s people, one of forgiveness and restored relationship.



Another place where “covenant” is found in scripture, is in the book of Acts. When the new Christians came together they devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching, prayers, worship, and fellowship. For them, covenant meant mutual responsibility to share their common faith and to share what they had to build one another up, and there were no social distinctions between them. “And they had the goodwill of all the people.” (*Acts 2:47*)



So we see the richness of this word “covenant” in the very foundation of our faith’s testimony. In the church we live into the covenant of Jesus Christ and the early Christians every day, by the way we practice faith in our community. We are bound together by our common faith in Jesus Christ as God’s Son, our Savior, and the sole head of the church; and our mutual concern, dedication, and responsibility for one another is the glue that holds us together. This bond is not just glue, it is super-glue! It is not based on simple rules or regulations, but it is based on responsible relationship with one another. It is a relationship that is rooted in our commitment to God and it is characterized by trust, mutual commitment, and promises.

And there you have it – a new word that is an important guiding principle for our relationships in, and also outside, the church. Sure, it sets a high bar. But it is worth thinking about. Might we be the kind of people who live with honor and mutual respect in all our relationships? Could we become God’s covenant people?

Winter Blessings.

Yours in Christ’s Service,

Reverend Linda C. Hey



Pastoral Search Committee

The Pastoral Search Committee has begun their work of writing our local church profile with the aid of the Transitional Steering Team's report, and with the support of the UCC Maine Conference Associate Conference Minister, Rev. John Fiscus. Rev. Fiscus came to Scarborough on January 14th to give our committee an orientation to the process of Search and Call in the UCC.

Our committee is organized and trained, and ready to devote their hearts and souls to the important work of calling of our next settled pastor. We will update you on the committee's progress. The congregation will commission our Pastoral Search Committee for their work during our Sunday worship service on January 26th. Please join us. And please pray for our committee members: Terri Brown, Ruth Bruns, Liane Giambalvo, Wendy Northrup, Bryce Roberts, and Kathy Ross.

News from the Covenant Development Team

The Covenant Development Team held two meetings in early January of 2025. The first meeting was held on Monday, January 6, 2025 at 2:00 PM in the Church Annex where our team met with our United Church of Christ (UCC) Mentors, Rev. Stephen Carnahan and Christine Shesler. The second meeting was held on Monday, January 13, 2025 at noon at the home of Liane Giambalvo where our team worked together to draft a letter of Covenantal Agreement given the guidelines of the Cumberland Association, the Maine Conference, and the National Office of the UCC. Each meeting has helped our Team further develop our vision of our church's relationship to the UCC and the expectations we have for the UCC towards our church

Our meeting with Rev. Carnahan and Christine Shesler provided us with a great deal of information and guidance. As we are a Schedule 2 Church of the UCC, our work as a Covenant Development Team is well underway. Our working knowledge of the UCC, as well as many of our worship and mission practices, is well aligned with the denomination. We were also provided with the working timeline of the Association in the event we would be seeking full membership in the UCC. In our case, the submission of a Letter of Covenantal Agreement would need to be submitted by mid to late March of this year in order to be considered at the Association's May Meeting.

The Covenant Development Team developed a letter of Covenantal Agreement, which was revised and edited by the Rev. Linda Hey, Allison Curry, Gail Dobriko, Liane Giambalvo, Lorraine Taylor, and Susan Whitten. A final meeting of the team, in preparing our document, will be held in the Church Annex on Tuesday, January 28, 2025 at 9:30 AM. All members of the congregation are welcome to attend and add to our conversation.

Transitional Steering Team

The Transitional Steering Team, which has been leading our church's work of discovering more about our identity, ministries, core values and how God is calling us into the future -has completed their work. Reports are available in the church office to any interested church members.



Bible Study for the Season of Epiphany (January 6 through March 2)

The Lectionary is a three year cycle of scripture readings, designated A, B, or C. Each yearly cycle begins on the first Sunday of Advent. We are currently in year C.

We will meet on **Wednesdays at 3:00 PM** in the **Annex parlor** (church office 161 Black Point Rd)

Dates are: **January 22, and 29; February 5, 12, 19 and 26.**

Everyone is welcome!

There are usually three or four lectionary readings for each Sunday. For example, January 12: Isaiah 43: 1-7

Psalm 29

Acts 8: 14-17

Luke3: 15-17, 21-22

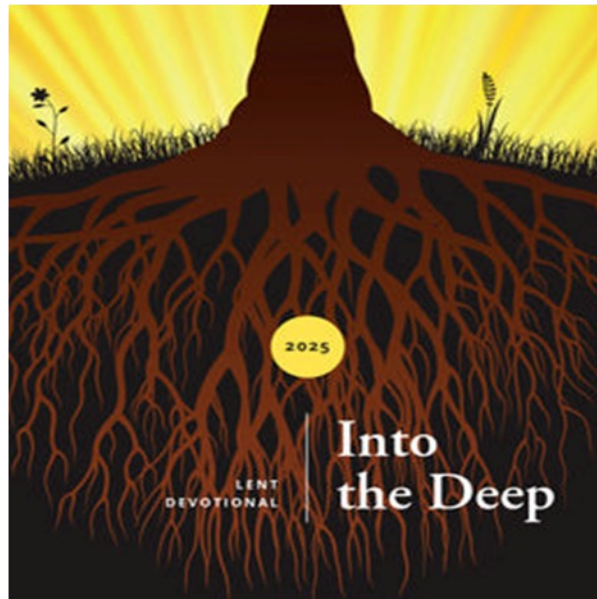
The pastor, if following the lectionary on any particular Sunday, decides which reading to offer to the congregation.

In our Bible study group, we will use the reading that Reverend Linda has chosen for the following Sunday. Liane does some research to find commentary relating to the reading. The group then has opportunity to review the materials and discuss.

There is no homework, no tests, no requirement to share your thoughts, so no obligation to make a commitment to the group! Please do come if you are able.

There will be cookies!

Your faithful leader, Liane Giambalvo



Lenten Devotionals

In her introduction to this year's Lent Devotionals booklet, "Into the Deep" by the Stillspeaking Writer's Group, Mary Luti writes "God inhabits the depths of life, love, loss, ecstasy, and pain; God dwells in the profundities of prayer, in sighs too deep for words. God loves the deep."

Utilizing humor, biblical insight, personal stories and challenging faith questions, the writers of these devotionals explore the theme of "going deeper with God." Our study invites us to consider this question for Lent: "What courage, what faith, what reckoning, what wonder might find us as we go deep into God's depths?"

Rev. Linda will be holding a series of 1 hour Lenten Devotional sessions which will utilize this collection of brief daily devotionals for Lent. If you participated in the past, you know about the lively and thought-provoking conversations that inevitably happen. If you did not participate, please consider joining us this year for a solid Lenten practice of reflection and prayer.

Meetings will be held in the Parlor of Parish Hall on the following days: Ash Wednesday, March 5, 2:00 PM; Wednesday, March 12, 11:00 AM; Wednesday, March 19, 2:00 PM; Wednesday, March 26, 2:00 PM; Wednesday, April 2, 2:00 PM; Wednesday, April 9, 11:00 AM. There is a sign-up sheet in the Vestry. You can also call Rev. Linda or Elaine at the church office to sign-up and have a booklet set aside for you. Donations to cover the cost of the booklets are welcome but not required.

FROM THE MINISTRY OF CHRISTIAN OUTREACH & STEWARDSHIP:



IMAGINE TOGETHER

is the Pledge Campaign Theme for 2025

Our annual pledge campaign this year will begin on February 2 and conclude on March 16, with our annual brunch. Please put this date on your calendar to enjoy delicious food and our wonderful community.

Our goal this year with all of your help is to increase the \$160,000 raised last year by 6% to \$170,000.

The theme this year will be IMAGINE TOGETHER. Just what does imagining mean to you? The dictionary says it is dreaming, conceiving, or envisioning a thought that is not yet true. We would like to bring that imagining to our church this year.

THANK YOU!!

When we send off donations to various organizations that the Ministry of Outreach and Stewardship chooses we do receive thank you notes. Here are some of them:

From the American Red Cross for our gift of \$2299 to the Relief Programs for Hurricanes Milton and Helene; this came from your response to the Special Offering.

Thank you for your many gifts to the Thanksgiving Special offering earmarked for the Scarborough Food Pantry totaling \$3018. It is a wonderful gift.

We are awaiting totals of the Christmas Special Offering for the Maine Veteran's Home. It will be shared in the next newsletter.

From the following organizations helping people deal with domestic violence: Caring Unlimited: York County's Domestic Violence Program for a donation of \$500; from Through These Doors serving Cumberland County for a donation of \$1200; from The Maine Coalition to End Domestic Violence for a donation of \$1200 from the Ministry of Outreach and Stewardship on behalf of this church.



From Wesley Jardim, age 14, of Brazil, a child we have sponsored through Child Fund International for a Christmas gift of \$25.00 with which he purchased clothing for himself.

From Noreen Namaiso, age 11, of Uganda, also sponsored through Child Fund International for a Christmas gift of \$25.00 with which she purchased a goat.

The Ministry gave the Scarborough Police Department's Social Services Division a donation of \$700. Lauren Dembski-Martin, the Social Services Manager, was very thoughtful in letting us know how it was put to use to help people in our community.

I wanted to share with you a couple of the amazing experiences we have been able to witness and be a part of with your donation:

- Gas Card for an unhoused individual who is currently living out of his car- this card helped to keep him warm and safe.

-Gift card to Pat Pizza so that an individual I have been working with for about an year could celebrate her completion of an intensive outpatient program.

-Purchase of a landline phone for an elderly female who has been repeatedly calling 911 but was unable to be heard due to her phone not working properly.

-Bottled Water and food box for an unhoused individual who is very close to finding safe and stable housing.

Thank you!!!!!!

Lauren Dembski-Martin, LCSW

Social Services Manager

Scarborough Police Department

(207) 730-4397

These notes and other information can be found on the bulletin board for the Ministry of Outreach and Stewardship in the Vestry on the parking lot facing wall.

Getting the Town E-Newsletter

As I looked through the many emails that appear in my inbox every day, there is one that I thought perhaps you might like to know about. I'm speaking of the Town E-Newsletter that can come to your personal E-Mail. If you already get this by email, then go on to the next article.

To start, you will need to access the town website. The link to that is here: www.scarboroughmaine.org. On the website you can access many of the departments of the town and find answers to questions as well as current information about the town. Check it out. The description you find below is from my computer, it may look a little different on yours, be patient and look for the wording I'm giving you.

Now about the Town E-Newsletter: It is sent twice a month for free to your inbox and can provide lots of answers to many common questions, as well as up to date information and notes from our Town Councilors, various town Departments, the School Board, and the Scarborough Public Library. You can find it by clicking on the link above to the Town website or pasting the link into your search bar. When you get to the home page, you can search for the E-Newsletter in the search bar or scroll down just a bit to the box that says News and Notices, and click there. On the new page, titled Town News scroll down to the line that says January 1, 2025 Town Newsletter, click on that. If you want to receive it in your email look for a blue bar at the top of the page. There is a box that says "Join our Email List". Click on that and follow the directions.

On the page entitled Town News there is a tab to the left of the column of pictures and titles that says Town E-Newsletter. You can click on that and you will find an archive of previous newsletters from the town.
I hope you find this helpful.

Gail Dobriko

Our Church's Inclement Weather Policy

If there was a significant storm on Saturday night or it is storming on Sunday morning, make sure you check to see if the service has been cancelled. The First Congregational Church of Scarborough is now registered with WCSH and WGME TV, and a cancellation notice will run on both of those stations by 7 a.m. You can also call the office at 883-2342 to find out if the parking lot has been plowed and safe to walk on and the church building is accessible. The Admin Assistant will either be in the office or leave a message on the answering machine by 7:30 a.m. if the service has been cancelled. If the answering machine message hasn't been changed, it means there will be a service of some kind (although it may be an abbreviated one). Please use discretion in deciding whether to come to church in bad weather.

WOMEN'S FELLOWSHIP NEWS

The next Women's Fellowship meeting is February 25, 2025 at 2:00 p.m. in the Ladies Parlor. Our program will be Amsterdam Travel Log by Sue Whitten. Our hostesses will be Barbara Grotton and Ruth Bruns. For those who are able to donate, the items for the food pantry this month are canned meats (tuna, chicken, ham, etc). We hope to see you there!

For those who like to do crafts, have good conversation and/or play games, Crafts & Fellowship is held every Tuesday (except Women's Fellowship Tuesdays) at 1:30 p.m. in the Annex. This is open to women AND men.

We know Christmas has just passed, but are you ready to clean out some decorations? If they are not broken and still work, please consider giving them to the Women's Fellowship to sell at the "gently used" Christmas Table. This table is extremely popular and sells out almost every year! Items can either be left in the Annex breezeway, or you can contact the church office or Terri Brown to set up a delivery date/time. Thank you!

MEN'S FELLOWSHIP NEWS

Men's Fellowship, working with the Ministry of Worship & Spiritual Care, has completed the installation of ten new window shades for the Sanctuary. Our group has numerous other projects pending, some of which require more research/information or are on hold until springtime.

FCC SUGGESTION CORNER

My name is Brenda Harrison - one of my positions at the church is Member-At-Large on the Church Council.

The Church Council meets once a month, the first Tuesday of the month. If anyone has a question or a concern concerning anything at the church and you would like it brought to the Church Council, please email me.

If you would like to talk to me in person, please email your phone number and the best time to get in touch with you.

Thank you. Brenda Harrison

Email address: FCCSuggestions@gmail.com

