

THE TIMES NEWSLETTER

A publication of the First Congregational Church

of Scarborough, Maine 04074

MARCH 2025



PASTOR'S MESSAGE



For the Birds!

I have had a bird feeder in my backyard for many years. I've tried different feeders, some rather fancy, others quite plain. It seems that the best one I've had is also the cheapest – with clear plastic sides and a light green roof. The birds flock to it. It is a joy to watch them – Tufted Titmouse, Yellow Finch, Cardinals, Robins, and Blue Jays. The Blue Jays are my least polite dinner guests with their aggressive attitude. They are birdfeeder bullies. As I watch them I understand how they have earned their reputation as villains of the songbird avian world!

My enjoyment in watching the birds is not without its problems. Yes, you guessed it – squirrels! While the Blue Jays are impolite, the squirrels are downright rude. They are greedy, unwelcome guests as far as I am concerned. No matter how hard I try to outsmart them, positioning the bird feeder “just so” and even spraying WD-40 on the pole so they can't get a grip, they always seem to manage. First, they scare the birds away. Then they gorge themselves using those dastardly little front paws. If they can dump the seeds on the ground, they do.



Even though I try to scare them away, they always come back. They stand at the edge of the grass and wait until I'm not looking. The worst part of it, is that I have put the seeds out for the birds, not the squirrels. It doesn't matter. After I refill the feeder yet again, I watch the birds and squirrels vie for a seat at the table. While I still "shoo" them away when I can, I guess I have accepted the squirrels' visit as a price I must pay to see the birds. Although, I do not forgive them for their inconsiderate behavior...

Have you ever had unwelcome "squirrels" in your life - those who have just messed up your plans and good intentions? Those who have been inconsiderate, and uncaringly dumped your seeds and taken the best for themselves? I think we all have experienced this at one time or another. They can make us angry and hurt us by their actions, and then we are left holding onto that hurt and disappointment, for who knows how long!

Lent is a good time to reflect on how we hold onto such things. We may want our past offenders to repent and ask for forgiveness, but that doesn't always happen, does it? How then are we to move on - to be free - from the bitterness that may be consuming us?

The Apostle Paul would tell us to forgive anyway. When he was faced with hurtful opposition, he found something to rejoice in. He trusted in the power of the cross of Jesus Christ. He surrendered his hurt to the wisdom and power of the Divine. In other words, he gave it to God. And with God's help, he was able to forgive.

The gift of God's ultimate forgiveness for us through Jesus is the gem we reach for in the season of Lent. This is what it is all about. Finding a way to let go of those things which burden our hearts and keep us from life's joy is part of the good work of the season. Walking on paths towards reconciliation, wherever that leads, will lead us towards peace. So then let us begin. As for me, I will start by trying to forgive the squirrels in my life. After all, they get hungry too.

Lenten Blessings!

Yours in Christ's service,

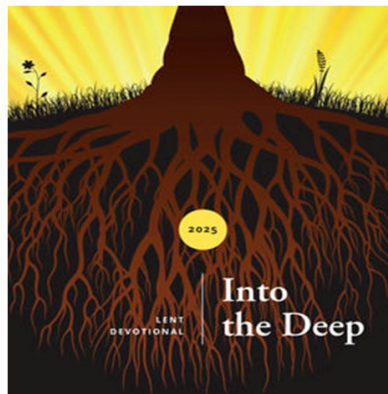
Reverend Linda C. Hey



Ash Wednesday

Ash Wednesday is the first day of Lent. Many Christians observe Ash Wednesday with prayers of repentance and fasting. The rubbing of a cross with ashes on a person's forehead or back of the hand, connects with our origin and symbolizes our desire to be penitential and reflective about our actions during the Lenten time of waiting for Christ's resurrection.

Rev. Linda will once again be in the church sanctuary on Ash Wednesday for anyone who wishes to drop-in and receive ashes and a prayer. You can come any time between 12:00 and 1:00 on March 5th. All are welcome.



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 your Pastoral Search Committee:

The Pastoral Search Committee meets weekly on Monday or Tuesday. A couple of people have dropped off the committee due to personal reasons. We agreed to Kathy Ross as our chair, Ruth Bruns as our secretary and Liane Giambalvo as our Chaplain and additionally have Bryce Roberts and Terri Brown as members.

We met with Rev. John Fiscus, UCC Maine Associate Conference Minister for our Search Committee Orientation and Instruction. We have begun the work of putting together our church profile by using the "Maine Conference, Local Church Profile Guide". By answering the questions of "Who is God Calling to Minister with Us" and "Who is God Calling Us to Become" we are identifying what characteristics and background we are looking for in a pastor and what our church characteristics and challenges are. More to come as we progress through the tasks of preparing for our Pastoral Search.

Please keep our work in your continued prayers. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact Kathy Ross at 207-245-4173 or Kross29@me.com

Bible Study for the Season of Epiphany



Our final meeting will be on **Wednesday, Feb. 26 at 3:00 PM** in the **Annex parlor** (church office 161 Black Point Rd) Everyone is welcome! You do not have to have attended the prior sessions to participate. There is no reading in advance and no homework!

Your faithful leader, Liane Giambalvo

From the Women's Fellowship

The Women's Fellowship meeting for March will be March 25, 2025 at 2:00 in the Ladies Parlor. Our program will be "Like Father, Like Sons - A Scarborough Family in the Revolutionary War. Our hostesses will be Susan Fielding and Deb Gerry. If you are able, the items for the food pantry donation a canned fruit and vegetables. We hope to see you there!

Our Women's Coffee Hour is starting again in March. It will be the 3rd Thursday of the month. So, we will be meeting on March 20th at 9:30 a.m. - we are going to see if Stacks Pancake Co. on Route 1 in Scarborough is available. More to come on the location.



FROM THE COVENANT DEVELOPMENT TEAM

The Q and A by the Covenant Development Team has been rescheduled from February 16th to February 23rd after church in the vestry. By now everyone should have received a copy of the letter written by this team to the UCC Maine Conference Cumberland Association Committee on Church and Ministry, requesting fully covenanted standing in the UCC denomination. If you have any questions about this letter, please plan on attending the Q and A after church this Sunday Feb. 23rd. If you need a copy of the letter, please contact Elaine in the church office.

NOTICE OF SPECIAL MEETING

A Special Meeting of the First Congregational Church of Scarborough, Maine will be held at 11:00 AM on Sunday, March 9, 2025 in the Church Sanctuary. The gathering is to act on the recommendation of the Covenant Development Team as affirmed by the Church Council:

WHEREAS:

The First Congregational Church of Scarborough (“FCC”) has been a Schedule 2 Church of the United Church of Christ (“UCC”) since the formation of the denomination in 1957; and

After a discernment process undertaken by the Transitional Steering and Covenant Development Teams with participation by the congregation, we believe that being a fully covenanted church in the UCC would be mutually beneficial to our church and to the denomination;

NOW, THEREFORE, be it resolved that the congregation hereby authorizes the Covenant Development Team of the FCC:

To send a letter of request for full standing in the United Church of Christ, to the Church and Ministry Committee of the Maine Conference Cumberland Association of the United Church of Christ; and we agree to accept fully covenanted status as a church in the United Church of Christ, should it be accepted by them

Dated at said Scarborough, Maine on February 23, 2025

Elaine H. Sederlund

Church Clerk



Imagine Together **Stewardship Campaign 2025-2026**

Our stewardship theme this year is Imagine Together. What is imagining? To me it is about dreaming, being creative, making pictures in my head of what I want to do, considering what might be possible. It is the kicking off of changes in my life, in how I might go about making life better for my family and me. What is it for you? What does this mean for this church? What are some of your dreams for this church?

You'll hear from members of our Ministry of Stewardship over the next few weeks about their visions for the church and our community. As we talk about what we imagine, please think about your hopes and dreams for this faith community.

The Bible speaks of dreams, imaginings, in many places. God wants us to become all that we can be. That includes all those dreams stored in our heads. What vision inspires you to make a difference in our congregation, community, or even the world? Do you imagine a church that cares about the rights and dignity of everyone? That is a present for the next generation? That is strong, and active now? God sends the Holy Spirit in the form of inspiration, or vision to urge us to speak those dreams aloud, and to bring some of them into being. After hearing our dreams and dreaming yours, you can then decide on how you would like to pledge for the coming year so we can begin to work on some of those visions.

Pursuit of our visions, however, requires money. One of our biggest dreams is to increase support for our church through stewardship and pledging. Last year we dreamt big, and thanks to all of you, we exceeded our goal. Our goal in 2024 was \$140,000. We actually received pledges for \$160,506, a substantial increase. Our goal this year is \$170,000, which is an increase of 6% with 6 new pledges. Our donations make it possible to turn what we imagine into reality. Through our annual commitments we imagine together all that we can do.

Our Stewardship campaign will run from February 2 to March 16th. On the 16th we will collect our pledge cards bless them, and pray that with God's help we can begin to bring our dreams into reality. We ask for your enthusiastic support of our Stewardship Campaign. Following the service that day, please plan to join us as we gather for a brunch in celebration of your generosity.

For the Ministry of Outreach and Stewardship
Gail Dobriko



Ministry of Outreach and Stewardship - Notes

The Ministry group met on February 9th. We want to share the accounting of funds spent during January and February. We have mailed checks to the following organizations: The Maine Veteran's Home, the amount of \$1827 from our Special Christmas Offering; The American Red Cross, LA Fire Relief: \$105 collected from the special offerings along with \$1,000 from the MCO&S disbursement for a total of \$1,105; The Maine Conference of the United Church of Christ, \$1000 donation; and to Project Grace for the Fuel Fund, a check for \$1000. Thank you for your donations that we share with the community of Scarborough as well as those nearby and far away.

We have received thank you notes from Friendship House, serving men in recovery and from Long Creek Youth Development Center for gift cards received at Christmas time. They thanked us most sincerely for our continued support.

Since our meeting we've had another snow storm causing our Stewardship Campaign to miss out on sharing our dreams. If you go to the church's website, www.fccscarborough.com, you will see a piece from Liane G. about her dreams for the church. Stewardship packets with a paper pledge card, information about automatic withdrawal, and a return envelop will be distributed on February 23rd. We look forward to blessing our pledges on March 16th. Please join us that day, too, as we celebrate your gifts to the church with a brunch following worship.

- from your Ministry of Outreach and Stewardship

FROM MEMBERS, FRIENDS & CHURCH LIFE

The Month of March will feature two special neighborings after our worship service.



On March 2 the Boy Scouts host their yearly Pancake Breakfast. On March 16, the Stewardship Team hosts their Breakfast Brunch.

Ruth Bruns is in charge of neighboring for the rest of March, so if you care to bring some food and help out on March 9 and/or March 23, please sign up in the Vestry and/or let her know.

WE ARE TAKING NOMINATIONS TO THE MINISTRIES OF THE CHURCH

Every year at our Annual Meeting (May 4, 2025) we elect Officers and Members to the five Ministries of the Church:

- Governing & Finance;
- Worship & Spiritual Care;
- Christian Education;
- Christian Outreach & Stewardship; and
- Members Friends and Church Life.



If you are a church member seeking to get more involved in the life of our church, please consider serving on one of these Ministries. Contact Joanne Brown or Elaine in the office with questions or for more information.

OUR CHURCH'S INCLEMENT WEATHER POLICY

Well it is now two Sundays in a row that we have had to cancel our Sunday worship service on account of the snow. The First Congregational Church of Scarborough is registered with Channels 6, 8 and 13 (WCSH, WMTW and WGME TV,) and a cancellation notice will run on all 3 stations. You can also call the office at 883-2342 to find out if the parking lot has been plowed and is 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 7:00 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.

**REMEMBER: DAYLIGHT SAVING TIME
BEGINS MARCH 9TH!**

**DAYLIGHT SAVING
TIME**



