

April 2016 Monthly Update



The Lord is Risen!

Alleluia! Alleluia!

Happy Easter to all of you! Eastertide is the period of **fifty days** from Easter Sunday to Pentecost Sunday. It is celebrated as a single joyful feast, indeed as the "great Lord's Day". We are invited to recognize signs of the Risen Christ in and among and to rejoice in new life in ourselves and all around us.

Many have commented on the meaningful services that we have enjoyed together this season, from our lively procession on Palm Sunday, the ritual of feet washing, communion and Tenebrae on Maundy Thursday, prayerful visits to the church on Good Friday, a joyful Sunrise service on Easter and our grand celebration at the 10:00 Sunday service. In addition to the religious services, the Holy Days were made special by members of Union Church celebrating Maundy Thursday at Seeds of Hope; sharing fresh hot cross buns from Riley's bakery and donating socks to the guests and by the wonderful community Easter breakfast with its beautiful decorations and delicious food.

As we look back in appreciation for all of these experiences, we can recognize that they were made special by the many, many people who participated in them. In addition to the people who have been recognized for their important contributions, let's take a minute to say a prayer of thanks to those who contributed behind the scenes. They include those who brought instruments on Palm Sunday, washed the altar cloths, ordered and picked up the hot cross buns, cleaned the candle holders, removed the flowers from the Easter cross, and on and on. It was a special season made holy through the ministry of many. Thank you all

for your part. We have all been enriched by your contributions.



April Events

April 2 – Open House at Cohen Center. Union Church members meet at 9:30 a.m.

April 6-7 and April 12-13 - Women in Ministry over-night retreat at Marie Joseph Spiritual Center. Check-in 3:00 p.m. on day one. Check-out after lunch second day. The cost is \$80. That includes dinner the first night, a simple private room, and breakfast and lunch the next day. Those not able to take part in the full overnight experience can join us for a meal and part of the day or evening. (Dinner and evening April 6th and/or April 12th, or morning and lunch April 7th and/or April 13th. The cost for each meal is \$10. There is no set agenda. We'll create it together. We'll have time to pray together, share, maybe music, games and alone time. If you have a reading or something else that you'd like to share, such as maybe wine, cheese or other snack, do bring it along. **If you are taking part in the over-night, please contact Marie Joseph Spiritual Center -284-5671 NO LATER THAN MONDAY, APRIL 4th**, and send them a check and let Nancy know. **I need a count for those coming for meals only BY MONDAY APRIL 4th**.

April 13 – Executive Committee meeting 3:00 p.m. Union Church Office.

April 17 – Nancy’s ordination to ministry during 10:00 a.m. Sunday service

April 20 – knit wits 10:00 a.m.-12:00 p.m. Union Church Office. **One suggestion: baby blankets.** There’s **PLENTY** of yarn in the knit wit bin at the office for everyone.

April 24 – Celebration of Earth Day

ANNOUNCING UNION CHURCH'S
2016 SUMMER SPEAKER SERIES
FOUR FASCINATING SPEAKERS IN BIDDEFORD!

			
July 14, Hank Phillippi Ryan, Award-Winning Mystery/Crime Novelist	July 28, Anita Diamant, NYT Best- Selling Author	Aug 11, Emerson Baker, Historian and 17th Century NE Expert	Aug 28, Sy Montgomery, Award-Winning NF Adventure Writer

**Events 7PM at Union Church FMI: Contact Elaine—
erobinson4@maine.rr.com or (207) 283-1398**

Rain, Cherished Rain

Rain falls. Spring rains, beneficent rains. And I intend to be grateful and thankful, even with their raw, 30 degree backdrop.

I recall my friend Anne's meditative journey/dream to Rain. In it, Rain – a being; Rain like a character in Earth's novel. And she – and surely Rain must be a 'she' – was distraught at the many denigrating metaphors that accompanied her. You know them: *Rainy days and Mondays always get me down; Grey skies are gonna' clear up! (Put on a happy face!); Into each life a little rain must fall.*

And she grieved over how she is treated as an object that we command – *Come now, water my garden; Stay away on my wedding day* – as all the while we despoil the clouds from where her quickening drops fall with noxious gases from our factories and our tailpipes.

Surely, if as Quantum Physics has proven, all of creation is energy, then it's not too far a leap to imagine Rain as a being – an animate life force. And then, how insensitive and cruel will we have been with our vilifying sentiments about her. And if we carry this logic –or paradoxical thinking – just a bit farther, we will realize the tragedy of our thinking. Because Rain – water – is THE life force of the planet. Some would say it is all that matters.

I am reminded of a walk I took in the woods last July. As with many occasions in nature, I found myself writing prose to the cadence of my steps:

Rain decided to accompany me on my walk in the woods today. And I noticed all of nature continues to go about its business in the steady supply of her raindrop kisses. Birds sing jubilantly and fly from limb to limb undaunted; leaves spring up and down as if being tickled. I'd swear in the wildwood, everything seems a bit bolstered, grateful even, for this life-giving essence.



Miles from home and surrendered to the idea of becoming soaked on the trail, I decided too to sing my gratitude to Rain, thinking of Topanga and her parched landscape, thinking of Ireland whose wet abundance yields green hued-hills nowhere else seen.



Rain must have heard our praises, for her joyful purge gained strength. Invigorated, I sang louder – words of apology for the many times I used dark skies and rainy days as metaphors for something unpleasant and calamitous. And our rising dance of relationship lingered for many minutes. It was a cleansing. I felt forgiven, my thoughtless transgressions washed clean.

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Retreats at Marie Joseph Spiritual Center, 10 Evans Road, Biddeford Pool.

April 29 – May 1, 2016 Compassion ~ The Gift of God’s Healing Presence with Michele DeSimone

Come away for a weekend to be quiet, to be loved, to be healed. Come for a time to bask in the intimate presence of a gentle, understanding, non-judgmental, nourishing and life-giving God!

Cost: \$190.00

May 13 – 15, 2016 Mindfulness ~ Finding God Throughout the Day with Sr. Aline Plante, p.m. Mindfulness seems to be the new buzz word today, for we live in such a busy and

noisy world. Our conversations often center round how busy we are and our mantra is, “I don’t have time!”

In this retreat, we will see how the practice of mindfulness can help us to live in the present moment with focused attention and also help to enhance our quality of life. Cost: 190.00

FMI and to register, please call 207-284-5671 or visit www.mariejosephspiritual.org

Personal note – I ask for your prayers this month as I prepare for my ordination to ministry. It will be a beautiful service as we all celebrate our ministerial calls. Rev. Jan Hryniewicz will give the sermon and of course, we’ll have spectacular music. Hope you can attend.

For a New Beginning

In out-of-the-way places of the heart,
Where your thoughts never think to wander,
This beginning has been quietly forming,
Waiting until you were ready to emerge.

For a long time it has watched your desire,
Feeling the emptiness growing inside you,
Noticing how you willed yourself on,
Still unable to leave what you had outgrown.

It watched you play with the seduction of safety
And the gray promises that sameness whispered,
Heard the waves of turmoil rise and relent,
Wondered would you always live like this.

Then the delight, when your courage kindled,
And out you stepped onto new ground,
Your eyes young again with energy and dream,
A path of plenitude opening before you.

Though your destination is not yet clear
You can trust the promise of this opening;
Unfurl yourself into the grace of beginning
That is at one with your life’s desire.

Awaken your spirit to adventure;
Hold nothing back, learn to find ease in risk;
Soon you will be home in a new rhythm,
For your soul senses the world that awaits you.

John O’Donohue