

# Monthly Update for Union Church

December 2017



## From Your Pastor...

As we approach the start of Advent, we are reminded to stay awake and be intentionally mindful of the precious moments this season provides for us to prepare our minds and hearts for the coming once again of the Christ child in our midst. As we approach the winter solstice, we are provided us with the visual reminder of the darkness that engulfs so many lives in our world. And yet, the Prince of Peace,

**the Light of the World, is here with us, now and in the beauty of the darkness as well as the lovely days of sun and cold.**

**It is a busy time of year with many preparations to be made, but I encourage each of us to take time out of our days to listen quietly to the voice of God calling us to peace, to justice, to right relationship and to hope. I look forward to worshipping with you in the coming weeks as we remind one another of the true meaning of this season. Our world desperately needs peace and hope, and we may be the bearers of those gifts to those whose lives we touch each day. May we be renewed in spirit in these blessed days of waiting.**

**I'd like to share a wonderful reflection on Advent.**

**"Life is a constant Advent season: we are continually waiting to become, to discover, to complete, to fulfill. Hope, struggle, fear, expectation and fulfillment are all part of our Advent experience.**

**"The world is not as just, not as loving, not as whole as we know it can and should be. But the coming of Christ and his presence among us—as one of us—give us reason to live in hope: that light will shatter the darkness, that we can be liberated from our fears and prejudices, that we are never alone or abandoned.**

**"May this Advent season be a time for bringing hope, transformation and fulfillment into the Advent of our lives."**

**Connections**

**Wishing you a peaceful, meaningful Season of Advent. Pastor Paula**

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**Important Dates in December:**

**Thursday, December 7<sup>th</sup>-Deacon's Meeting at Church Office, 4:30pm**

**Sunday, December 10<sup>th</sup>- Fireside Chat at BPCC 6-8pm,**

**Sunday, December 24- Worship at 10am**

**Sunday, December 24- Christmas Eve Service at 5pm**

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**From Our Moderator, Paul Schlaver...**



**All Members or friends of Union Church who receive emails, mailings and have shared their contact information with us should be receiving a letter from me these early December days. It is a request to make a financial pledge for 2018. The leadership of the church is in the process of making a budget plan to submit to the church members for approval in late January. This budget is based to a large extent on the pledged amounts that are dutifully returned promptly in the month December. Some people do not return a pledge but often those same people are dutifully generous on the Sundays they attend our worship services. Hence we have the faith and confidence our budget needs will be met.**

**We are trying something different this year. On the pledge form that accompanies my letter, there is the opportunity to simply check the box that says, “While I cannot make a financial commitment at this time, I will contribute to Union Church as I can throughout the year and volunteer to help as I am able.” Thus we hope to hear back from everyone who receives my letter. We certainly honor and welcome people’s contribution of their time and talents to our church**

**in addition to any financial support they can offer. Our church, unlike many others, only makes this one, annual push for commitment. No one knocks on your door. We don't suggest a percentage of your income or try at all to make you feel obligated beyond this pledge letter push. In that spirit please respond to the letter you may already have as you read this so we know you treasure Union Church and will do your best to be supportive.**

**Thank you,**

**Paul Schlaver, Moderator**

**P.S. If for some reason you are reading this December Updates e-newsletter but do not receive a pledge letter in the mail...a few copies with the pledge form will be in the vestibule of the church. You may also send me an email and include your snail mailing address please. [Schlaver@maine.rr.com](mailto:Schlaver@maine.rr.com)**

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**From Mission:**

**Volunteers Needed**

**Alternative Pathways Center Holiday Lunch**

The Alternative Pathways Center's (APC) mission is to give alternative learners an opportunity to obtain a Biddeford High School diploma through coursework that is individualized, project-based and combined with pre-vocational training, work experience and social and emotional learning.

Union Church will be bringing a holiday party, complete with lunch and gifts, to APC on Thursday, December 14, 2017 @ Noon. Volunteers are needed to...

- Order and pick up lunch at the Biddeford Subway
- Shop for \$5 gift cards for gifts (using Mission funds)
- Shop for warm winter items, if needed (using Mission funds)
- Shop for gift bags (using Mission funds)
- Bake cookies ahead of time for dessert
- Bring lunch and gifts to APC on December 14

- Serve lunch and visit with students

If you would like to help, please contact Ken Murray at 985-6577 or [ktmurray1727@hotmail.com](mailto:ktmurray1727@hotmail.com).

### **Saco Meals Program Holiday Party**

As I am sure you know, Union Church prepares the Saco Meals Program dinner the third Monday of most months. In December we make that special with festive decorations, a gift bag for each guest and special items on the menu. This event falls on December 18, this year. In addition to the volunteers who prepare the meal, volunteers are needed to...

- Decide on gifts to buy
- Shop ahead of time for gifts in bulk (using donated and Mission funds)
- Decorate the tables in the morning of December 18th
- Prepare the gift bags in the morning of December 18<sup>th</sup>

If you would like to help, please contact Ken Murray at 985-6577 or [ktmurray1727@hotmail.com](mailto:ktmurray1727@hotmail.com).

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## **Other Important Updates...**

### **2018 Union Church Summer Speaker Series:**

While the summer of 2018 seems like a long way off, if you are planning a Summer Speaker Series it is not. The timeline for that event has already started. A Speaker Selection Committee has begun work under the leadership of Deborah Burke. If you have suggestions for potential speakers to invite, you may contact her. In the meantime, I am in the process of contacting the people who have handled other tasks in the past to check if they are willing to be involved again this time. If you would like to know how you might be involved, please contact me at [ktmurray1727@hotmail.com](mailto:ktmurray1727@hotmail.com) or 985-6577. Thanks - Ken Murray

### **Social Justice Group:**

We held two meetings the week after Thanksgiving, one on Wednesday morning from 9:30-11 and the second one on Thursday evening, from 6-7:30. Both meetings followed

a similar format. We began with a prayer, then spent some time sharing what drew each of us to the group. We spoke about a number of justice issues that are of concern for us and decided we would try to choose one at our meetings in January. Our hope for each meeting is to spend some time in prayer and reflection, and then decide what actions we might take beyond the meeting to address the issue. Then, we would gather again and reflect back on the action we have taken. Essentially, it will be a mix of prayer, action and reflection so that we may remain grounded in faith and work on these issues from a place of peace and love. Our plan is to meet once a month for six months.

We will gather again in January with the option for folks to be part of the morning group or an evening or weekend time outside of work hours to allow for those who work to participate. The dates for our next meetings are Wed, January 24th at 9:30 at the church office and Thursday, Jan 25th at 6pm, location to be determined.

**Deacons:** Our Deacons are now wearing nametags on Sunday mornings so new visitors and guests will know whom they might speak to if they have questions or are interested in learning more about Union Church. If you have questions about our church, are interested in becoming a member, or need any information, the Deacons are a wonderful place to begin that conversation.

**Fireside Chats:** In the tradition of Union Church, all are invited to join us for a Fireside Chat during the Advent Season. We will gather on Sunday evening, December 10<sup>th</sup> from 6-8pm at the Biddeford Pool Community Center. We could use your help with setting up or cleaning up and all are welcome to bring a light refreshment to share. We will take some time during the gathering to speak about a special moment from our past connected to the season. A sign-up sheet will be available in the vestibule of the church for all who will attend so that we know how many may join us.

**Gratitude for our Trustees:** Special thanks to our wonderful trustees who have worked hard in recent weeks to facilitate the transition during the painting of our church sanctuary from the church to the Biddeford Pool Community Center and back again. They also helped coordinate the paving of the two Handicap Parking spaces at the front of the church and communicate with the town when our main power line was cut. They are also helping ready the church for the Advent and Christmas Season. They have put in many hours and we appreciate it.

## **Resources for Spiritual Growth, Inspiration and Renewal:**

There are a number of wonderful websites that provide reflections, resources, and inspiration for spiritual growth. Church member Anne Murray has compiled a short list of some of her favorites which are shared below. We hope to also make this available on our website. In visiting the sites, you will find opportunities for online courses, daily or weekly reflections sent to your email and other resources that you may find helpful.

**Sabbath Moments** <https://www.terryhershey.com/sabbath-moment/>

**Center for Action and Contemplation-Richard Rohr** <https://cac.org/>

**Sojourners** <https://sojo.net/>

**Spirituality and Practice** <http://www.spiritualityandpractice.com/>

**Daily Good** <http://www.dailygood.org/>

**Gratefulness.org** <http://gratefulness.org/>

**Action for Happiness** [www.actionforhappiness.org](http://www.actionforhappiness.org)

### **Advent Kindness Calendar-**

**On the website [www.actionforhappiness.org](http://www.actionforhappiness.org), they have a wonderful Kindness Calendar available to print out as a simple, yet meaningful way to be mindful this Advent Season. Copies will also be available on Sunday at church.**

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# Warm Hands, Warm Hearts



**Help us share with those in need in our community.**



## **WARMTH & KINDNESS**

Please help us bring some much-needed warmth to people in our community who are in need this winter. A donation of a new winter hat, mittens, gloves or scarf could make a huge difference to someone -- adults and children.

### **Let's spread warmth and caring!**

**What we need this winter:** new winter hats, mittens, gloves, socks and scarves

**Please bring donated items to church to be shared with those in need.** I Warm Hands, Warm Hearts is a volunteer-based community initiative to aid those in need within our community. We collect donated items and distribute them to some of our partner organizations and to local schools, the Saco Police Department, a domestic abuse support group and nursing homes



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**CATHERINE PIERCE**

***ANTHROPOCENE PASTORAL***

In the beginning, the ending was beautiful.  
Early spring everywhere, the trees furred  
pink and white, lawns the sharp green  
that meant *new*. The sky so blue it looked  
manufactured. Robins. We'd heard  
the cherry blossoms wouldn't blossom  
this year, but what was one epic blooming  
when even the desert was an explosion  
of verbena? When bobcats slinked through  
primroses. When coyotes slept deep in orange  
poppies. One New Year's Day we woke  
to daffodils, wisteria, onion grass wafting  
through the open windows. Near the end,  
we were eyeletted. We were cottoned.  
We were sundressed and barefoot. *At least  
it's starting gentle*, we said. An absurd comfort,  
we knew, a placebo. But we were built like that.  
Built to say *at least*. Built to reach for the heat  
of skin on skin even when we were already hot,  
built to love the purpling desert in the twilight,  
built to marvel over the pink bursting dogwoods,  
to hold tight to every pleasure even as we  
rocked together toward the graying, even as  
we held each other, warmth to warmth,  
and said *sorry, I'm sorry, I'm so sorry* while petals  
sifted softly to the ground all around us.

Shared by Tom Bancroft