

Monthly Letter for February 2018



Dear Friends of Union Church,

I hope this finds you healthy and warm as we welcome light snow this morning. I know some of you will be reading this from your homes in warmer parts of our country, so we ask that you please send a little warmth and light this way! The daylight hours are slowly lengthening as we begin the month of February. For many, that is a sign of hope as we move towards springtime. I understand that the Groundhog did predict more weeks of winter, so we shall see. As the French Philosopher Albert Camus once wrote, “In the midst of winter, I found there was, within me, an invincible summer. And that makes me happy. For it says that no matter how hard the world pushes against me, within me, there’s something stronger – something better, pushing right back.”

This month, we will not publish a traditional monthly newsletter, but instead, I will provide a brief overview of some of the

accomplishments of the last month. We hope to publish a newsletter on a quarterly or seasonal basis as we look ahead to the coming year.

News from Union Church in January:

Semi-Annual Meeting- We met on the last Sunday in January where the various committees shared their reports from all of the great work of the last year. Much good news was shared, including the passing of a balanced budget for the fiscal year 2018. Many thanks to our wonderful Finance Committee and to our Treasurer, Ada Goff, who works throughout the year to pay our bills and keep our finances in order. Peter McPheeters shared the good news, along with the fact that our other investment accounts for the church have continued to grow in the past year.

Social Justice Committees-

Two groups have begun to meet to spend time in prayer and reflection about what issues they might pursue that would help, in some measure, to address some of the root causes of injustice. As we know, there are many areas of concern, but the hope is to share information with the wider church about speakers, workshops, bills in front of the Maine Legislature, that might help better inform us as we seek to live out faith-based justice. They will meet once a month to discern how and where they might make a difference. I will share an important article on this topic at the close of this letter.

Helping Hands and Pastoral Assistants Programs:

As the membership and needs of Union Church continue to grow and expand, these two groups are in the process of being established for outreach in the church. These efforts are not meant to replace the wonderful outreach members already share with neighbors and friends;

however, we want to coordinate our efforts to ensure no is forgotten when they have a need.

Pastoral Assistants-

I have invited four people to help develop and pilot a visitation program to support me, as your Pastor, in making sure that those who would like a visit may be responded to...whether at home, or if they are at the hospital or in rehab. Former interim pastor, Nancy Bancroft, and member, Heather Davis had spent a great deal of time working on this before I arrived at the church, and they will continue to serve in the development of this program. Tom Bancroft and Don Chretien have also graciously agreed to serve over the coming year. If you are aware of someone who would like a visit, please contact Nancy Bancroft, who will help me with the coordination.

Helping Hands-

We invite interested folks in the church to help in providing support to folks when they may need meals, rides to appointments or other concrete help. A sign-up sheet will be available at the church for those interested. The training will be held on Tuesday morning, February 13 from 9:30-11 at the Church Office. Again, this in no way will replace the wonderful outreach so many folks in the church already offer to friends and neighbors.

Knit Wits Donation-

As many of you know, several members of our church meet twice a month to create knitted goods and other wonderful hand-made gifts that they generously share with those in need. In late January, they delivered seven large canvas tote bags, Blessing Bags, filled with essentials to Caring Unlimited which will be provided to women and

children in need. We are grateful to those who worked hard on these bags! The Mission Committee also supported this project financially.

Looking Ahead to February:

Tuesday, February 13_ The Annual Mardi Gras Potluck

The traditional pre-Lenten festivity will take place at the BPCC, starting at 5:30 with the social and 6:00 potluck buffet. Everyone is welcomed, as are hats, masks, beads and Cajun cuisine. Folks are invited to sign-up in church foyer or look for the on-line sign-up. If you need more information, please contact Eileen Foley at Foley55@maine.rr.com or 978-376-1850. We are grateful to the Social Committee for their wonderful work on this celebration and other events throughout the year.

Wednesday, February 14th- Ash Wednesday Service, 6:00pm at Union Church. Please join us as we gather to prayerfully begin the sacred journey of Lent. And, Happy Valentine's Day...may you feel loved this day and always!

I wish you every blessing for the days ahead. If I may be of assistance to you or your family in any way, please do not hesitate to contact me. Below I will share a reflection published by Father Richard Rohr, who shares a daily meditation from his Center for Action and Contemplation, New Mexico. In the meditation, he mentions Rev. John Dear, who will be speaking in Maine on March 17th. More information on that conference will be found below as well. This reading may provide further context for our commitment to social justice at the church.

Wishing you peace and joy,

Paula

Your faithful Pastor

**From Richard Rohr's daily meditation, Center for Action and
Contemplation Sermon on the Mount**

Blessed Are Those Who Hunger for Justice

Friday, February 2, 2018

*Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for justice: they shall have their
fill. —Matthew 5:6*

This Beatitude is surely both spiritual *and* social. Most Bibles to this day soften this Beatitude: “hunger and thirst for what is right” or “for righteousness” are the more common faulty translations. But the word in Greek clearly means “justice.” Notice that the concept of justice is used halfway through the Beatitudes and again at the very end. The couplet emphasizes an important point: To live a just life in this world is to identify with the longings and hungers of the poor, the meek, and those who weep. This identification and solidarity is in itself a profound form of social justice.

My friend John Dear, who has spent his life in the struggle against the injustice of violence, writes about this Beatitude:

Righteousness is not just the private practice of doing good; it sums up the global responsibility of the human community to make sure every human being has what they need, that everyone pursues a fair sense of justice for every other human being, and that everyone lives in right relationship with one another, creation, and God.

. . . Jesus instructs us to be passionate for social, economic, and racial justice. That's the real meaning of the Hebrew word for justice and the Jewish insistence on it. Resist systemic, structured, institutionalized injustice with every bone in your body, with all your might, with your very soul, he teaches. Seek justice as if it were your food and drink, your bread and water, as if it were a matter of life and death, which it is. . . . Within our relationship to the God of justice and peace, those who give their lives to that struggle, Jesus promises, will be satisfied. . .

How do we hunger and thirst for justice? By making global justice a priority in our lives. This Beatitude requires us to join a grassroots movement that fights one or two issues of injustice and to get deeply involved in the struggle. Since all issues of injustice are connected, fighting one injustice puts us squarely in the struggle against every injustice. As Martin Luther King Jr. said over and over again, "Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere." Befriend the victims of systemic injustice, side with them, listen to their stories, let their pain break your heart, join the movements to end injustice, tithe your money to the cause, and commit yourself to the struggle. . . .

While [it] may take a long time, our nonviolent persistence and truth-telling will eventually win out and bear the good fruit of justice. Truth is on our side; God is on the side of justice. "The arc of the moral universe is long," Martin Luther King Jr. said famously, "but it bends toward justice." [1]

Gateway to Presence:

If you want to go deeper with today's meditation, take note of what word or phrase stands out to you. Come back to that word or phrase throughout the day, being present to its impact and invitation.

Center for Action and Contemplation: If you wish to find out more or to subscribe to Richard Rohr's daily meditations, you may find him at <https://cac.org/>.

Fr. John Dear will speak at the Center for Faith and Spirituality, Saint Joseph's College, Standish, Maine on March 17th. His topic will be Living a Nonviolent Life. For more info: <https://www.sjcme.edu/about-us/center-for-faith-and-spirituality>