



Dear members and friends of Union Church

It's hard to believe that we have experienced almost a full year in transition together. Hopefully, despite the pervasive cold germ that attacked many of us this holiday season, you were able to enjoy a wonderful Christmas with your loved ones. Prior to Christmas many in our congregation worked to ensure that people who have less in our community would enjoy a great holiday. Our music ministers outdid themselves in providing magnificent sounds to raise our spirits in festive celebration. Busy individuals gave their time to decorate our church, bring plants in memory of loved ones, serve as readers and greeters and attend to the many details that made our services the uplifting experiences that they were.

Now we begin a new year - a year still in transition. This month our country will inaugurate a new president whose agenda and style of leadership is significantly different from what we've experienced. With Brexit, the plight of refugees, and the escalation of cold war rhetoric, the world seems more on edge, insular and divided. Closer to home, a settled pastor has not yet surfaced for us. The future can feel ominous, and be anxiety provoking. It seems like the perfect time to declare 2017 a year of HOPE.

One of my mentors, Joan Chittister, says, "Everyone goes through times of pain and sorrow, depression and darkness, stress and suffering. It is in the necessary struggles of life, however, that we stretch our souls and gain new insights enabling us to go on. We struggle," she says, "against change, isolation, darkness, fear, powerlessness, vulnerability, exhaustion, and scarring; and while these struggles sometimes seem insurmountable, we can emerge from them with the gifts of conversion, detachment, faith, courage, surrender, limitations, endurance, transformation, and (perhaps most important) hope. . hope grows in us, despite our moments of darkness, regardless of our regular bouts of depression. It is an invitation to look again at the struggles of life in order that we might remember how to recognize new life in our souls the next time our hearts turn again to clay. . It is not a matter of waiting for the

outside of us to get better. It is about getting better inside about what is going on outside.”

Chittister tells a tale told by the ancients in which an elder stated, “I feel like I have two wolves fighting in my heart. One is the vengeful angry violent the other is the loving compassionate one.” Someone asked him, “Which wolf will win?” He answered, “It depends on which one I feed.”

“The spiritual task of life is to feed hope. Hope is not something to be found outside of us. It lies in the spiritual life we cultivate within.”

Let's feed each other hope this year. I'll start us off. This December, inspired by Pope Francis' plea “to lift up the poor”, Time Inc. gathered a group of Fortune 500 executives, philanthropists and policy experts at a Global Forum in Rome to brainstorm ways to address the world's biggest challenges. Working together they identified ways that the private sector can help end poverty, reduce environmental damage and improve access to education and health. It's a start. I invite you to be particularly attentive throughout the year to the signs of love being stronger than hate, willingness to forgive being stronger than the desire for revenge, generosity outdoing greed; and to share what you discover with the rest of us - in the monthly updates, bulletin inserts, through songs, poems, photos, etc. Let's work together this year to suspend each other in hope above the rough and rocky road of 2017. This effort will help us feel more secure individually and grow stronger as a community. Happy 2017! The Year of Hope!

Love, Nancy



January 1: Communion Sunday

January 6: Speaker Series Meeting. 2:00 p. m. Church Office, North Dam Mill

January 9: Mission Meeting 11:00 a.m. Church Office, North Dam Mill

January 16: Martin Luther King Jr. Day –Let us pray for greater respect for and acceptance of all.

January 17: Union Church Service 11:00 a.m. St. Andre’s Health Center

January 17: Executive Committee Meeting. 3:00 p.m. Church Offices, North Dam Mill

January 20: Maine Council of Churches. Brunswick

January 20: Inauguration Day – Let us pray for our new president and for our country

January 29: Life Lesson Sunday – Please consider taking part

January 29: Union Church Semi-Annual Meeting – Following the 10:00 a.m. service

New Deacon: On Sunday December 18, Chris Sorrentino, was welcomed as Union Church’s new deacon.
Thank you, Chris for your willingness to serve us.

Music Ministry: On January 10th our music director, Michelle Currie will have her first of two carpal tunnel surgeries. She has been working hard to plan for our music during her recovery. If you have any music talent or can sing please consider offering yourself to Michelle or Patricia Mulholland our choir director.

Thank you: A huge thank you to the many who contributed to making both Christmas eve services very special celebrations. Despite many having miserable colds the music was beautiful, and the liturgy meaningful. Very special thanks to Marty Grohman for helping to have the street light across from the church replaced, providing more safety to all who attended the Christmas Services. Nancy Bernier tried heroically to capture the 4:00 p.m. Christmas Eve Service digitally. You’ll be able to see the edited version on our website soon.

Un-decorating: The Christmas season officially ends on the feast of Epiphany (Three Kings), January, 6th, which we will celebrate on Sunday January 8th. If our tree isn’t too dry, we will leave it up until then. So after the service on January 8th, we’d appreciate everyone’s help taking down and storing the decorations. If we all work together we can get it done quickly.

If the tree looks very dry, our head trustee Bob Sherman will ask that we take things down this coming Sunday, January 1st.

Soup Friends: Here’s sending a huge “Get Well” to all of those under the weather. If you are not feeling well and would like to receive soup from Union Church, please contact Laura Cobb (286-3426) or lcobb82@gmail.com . You can also let her know if you’d like to be on the soup-making team. Let’s watch out for each other this winter.

The Saco Meals Christmas Dinner: was most impressive and appreciated. The dining tables were covered with colorful red tablecloths with a stripe of green down the center and fresh Christmas colored flowers for centerpieces. Added to this holiday setting as the guests arrived were over 100 gift packages assembled on the stage area stirring the “wonder” of Christmas in all. A true Christmas sight to see! The meal began with a cup of apple cider and sliced cheese and crackers as the guests settled into their seats. A fresh fruit cup began the meal, followed by the usual meat loaf with mushroom gravy, mashed potatoes, and sliced carrots with a few peas for color. Dessert is always a Hoodsie Ice Cream Cup with 2 Pepperidge Farms Christmas Cookies. Feeding 104 people in 2015 we planned on high attendance again this year. However, due to the cold or what we’re not sure, only 70 guests came. As a result, everyone got a meal to take home along with their gift bags. Hugs and Thanks to all who helped to make this possible.



Maine Council of Churches: Union Church is now an associate member of the Maine Council of Churches. The Council, whose motto is *Seeking Common Ground, Working for the Common Good*, approved our application at their December 9th meeting. This affiliation will give us a forum to influence public policy as well as an opportunity to learn more about programs for churches on such issues such as hunger, conservation, and more. Moderator, Paul Schlaver appointed Tom Bancroft as Union Church’s representative to the Council. You can learn more about the council on their website: mainecouncilofchurches.com

Fellowship Committee: The Fellowship Committee will be meeting soon to plan an event. Stay tuned!

Mission Committee: The Mission Committee helped with two special events during December. One was decorating for the Saco Meals Program dinner on December 19 and providing gift bags to all the guests for that evening (see Eve McPheeters’ article about the meal in this Monthly Update). The other was providing a special lunch and gift bags for the 40 students at the Alternative Pathways alternative high school program in Biddeford. Thanks to the Committee members and other helpers who made Christmas brighter for our neighbors. And thanks to the church family for your generous contributions toward these events. Ken Murray, Chairperson



Do you know residents of York County who might need help with their energy bills? It is now possible to apply for LIHEAP (fuel assistance) benefits over the phone. These benefits are available to homeowners and renters who are income-qualified. To learn more, call York County Community Action at 324-5762, Option 1 (for Energy Services). the Mission Committee



Susan Maccalous - January 17

Sharon Gaudin – January 26

Life Lesson Sunday: The theme of our service on January 29th will be *Lessons from Winter*. Please consider taking part by writing something for the service, contributing a song, making artwork, etc. The Spirit works is active in all of us and our worship time is special because so many gifted people give of themselves. Please let Nancy know if you want to share.

Retreats at Marie Joseph Spiritual Center:

Contact Us:

Marie Joseph Spiritual Center

10 Evans Road

Biddeford, ME 04005

Tel: 207-284-5671

mariejosephcenter@yahoo.com

JANUARY 20 – 22, 2017:

Transition and Grace: Responding to God's Self-gift of Love

with Beverley Fournier, MA. MTS, M.Div

We all face transition times in our lives and for countless reasons. Some are self-motivated, while others are thrust upon us in ways we can't imagine. Whatever the reason, we all know that change is never easy. Join us for a weekend of reflection where participants will see that times of transition are very powerful opportunities to draw closer to God. Through Scripture, prayer and song, we will see change as an invitation from God to be open to God's self-gift of love, which we know as grace. This very special grace empowers us to transform our resistances and fears into resilience and courage.

Arrival: Friday / 6:30 PM: \$200.00 ~ Program begins 7:15 PM

Arrival: Friday / 4:00 PM includes 5:30 evening meal: \$210.00

Departure: Sunday / 1:00 PM

FEBRUARY 10 – 12, 2017:

The Spirituality of Aging

with Marguerite Stapleton

Every life stage has its own age-appropriate learnings, challenges and questions. This, of course, is true for seniors. In the last few decades, gerontologists have become increasingly aware of the importance of spirituality to the well-being of seniors. Seniors themselves reveal that when more focus is given to *being* rather than *doing*, the issues of spirituality take center stage. Anyone who is over fifty, dealing with aging parents or friends, or who works with elders will benefit from this retreat. You will be invited to create a safe and gracious space to reflect together on the spiritual tasks of the elder and the winter gifts of wisdom, courage and surrender. There will be time for conversation, silence, prayer, creative expression, laughter and rest.

Arrival: Friday / 6:30 PM: \$200.00 ~ Program begins 7:15 PM

Arrival: Friday / 4:00 PM includes 5:30 evening meal: \$210.00

Departure: Sunday / 1:00 PM

A Contemplative Weekend:

A Winter Special

This silent weekend will allow personal time to journey with self and with God. Adoration will be available; also Spiritual Direction for those who wish.

Arrival: Friday / 6:30 PM: \$150.00 ~ Weekend begins 7:15 PM

Arrival: Friday / 4:00 PM includes 5:30 evening meal: \$160.00

Departure: Sunday / 1:00 PM

FEBRUARY 17-20, 2017:

An Introduction to the Spiritual Exercises and Ignatian Prayer

with

Ken Hughes, SJ and Nancy Sheridan, SASV

This extended prayer weekend will introduce retreatants to important principles of Ignatian prayer and engage them in key meditation /contem- plation from the Spiritual Exercises. The retreat combines elements from both guided and directed retreats, with reflections for the group as well as one-on-one meetings with the directors. The retreat begins at 7:15 PM on Friday and ends with the noon meal on Monday. *Please reserve early as space is limited.*

Arrival: Friday 6:30 PM: \$ 275.00

Arrival: Friday 4:00 PM \$ 285.00 ~ includes evening meal

Deposit required for either arrival times \$ 85.00

FMI: and to make reservations, call or write:

Marie Joseph Spiritual Center

10 Evans Road

Biddeford, Maine 04005

207-284-5671

MARCH 10 – 12, 2017:

An Introductory Workshop / Retreat on Centering Prayer

with Fr. Joseph Manship

Do you feel pulled in all directions? Do you want more from your prayer life? Do you hunger for a deeper, personal relationship with God? Do you simply want to review your existing practice of Centering Prayer?

Centering Prayer is a simple method of Christ-centered, silent prayer; a renewal of an ancient Christian contemplative practice, updated for our time. It can lead to a deeper prayer life, personal healing, spiritual transformation and closer union with God.

Arrival: Friday / 6:30 PM: \$200.00 ~ Program begins 7:15 PM

Arrival: Friday / 4:00 PM includes 5:30 evening meal: \$210.00

Departure: Sunday / 1:00 PM

MARCH 24 – 26, 2017:

Watercolor with Mandalas

with Mary Rich

This weekend will be about the use of watercolors and mandalas as a means to help identify our woundedness and to create a path to healing – a health plan. In the process, we will learn many watercolor techniques. You do not have to be an artist to benefit from this retreat. Please bring Prang Watercolor Paints and 140# cold press watercolor paper (Strathmore, 12 sheets).

Arrival: Friday / 6:30 PM: \$200.00 ~ Program begins 7:15 PM

Arrival: Friday / 4:00 PM includes 5:30 evening meal: \$210.00

Departure: Sunday / 1:00 PM

MARCH 31 – APRIL 2, 2017:

Praying with Icons: Behold the Beauty of the Lord

with Steve Bonian, S.J.

Icons have been objects of faith, controversy and fascination for centuries. The popularity of icons, which are a rich resource for prayer, continues to this day. Praying with icons is an intuitive art gained with practice and experience. This retreat will consist of meditations on specific icons, each of which will be paired with scriptural passages. Icons used for this retreat will be:

* Our Lady of Perpetual Help

* Christ the Savior

* Transfiguration

* Trinity

Fr. Bonian invites you to read his article on *Praying with Icons* in America, December 2008, available on Google search.

Arrival: Friday / 6:30 PM: \$200.00 ~ Program begins 7:15 PM

Arrival: Friday / 4:00 PM includes 5:30 evening meal: \$210.00

Departure: Sunday / 1:00 PM

APRIL 21 – 23, 2017:

Women in Scripture ~ Touched by Christ

with Aline Plante, p.m. and Ann Boyle, RSR

Our focus will be on the stories of four biblical women: Mary Magdalene, the Samaritan woman at the well, the woman who touched Jesus' garment, and the woman caught in adultery. We shall see how their lives were radically transformed when Jesus healed them and gave them a new purpose in life.

Women in biblical times were no different from women today.

Stress is stress, no matter what century you live in. Illness is illness, no matter the name of the disease. Loneliness is still loneliness, no matter the reason. Jesus ministered to women of His time in the midst of their struggles and continues to do so today. Here, we will ponder His question, "What do you want Me to do for you?"

Arrival: Friday / 6:30 PM: \$200.00 ~ Program begins 7:15 PM

Arrival: Friday / 4:00 PM includes 5:30 evening meal: \$210.00

Departure: Sunday / 1:00 PM

APRIL 28 – 30, 2017:

Praying with Hearts and Hands

*While the mind and body are toiling,
the heart can also be at its own work. – (Blessed Marie Rivier)*

with Connie Bartelson and Marsha Hafferty

Join the Holy Knitters Prayer-Shawl Ministry as we joyfully share in the care of God's people by using the gifts of our hands to knit or crochet sacred prayer shawls. Our prayers and blessings are woven into the shawls as our hands work to fashion them. Shawls are then given to people for comfort, healing or in celebration.

*Basic knitting or crocheting skills are a prerequisite for this retreat.

A list of required materials will be sent upon registration.

Arrival: Friday / 6:30 PM: \$200.00 ~ Program begins 7:15 PM

Departure: Sunday / 1:00 PM

New Year's Resolutions: For those of you who make New Year's resolutions, here's a handbook from my friend,
Marguerite Stapleton:

HANDBOOK 2017 Health:

Drink plenty of water.

Eat breakfast like a king, lunch like a prince and dinner like a beggar.

Eat more foods that grow on trees and plants and eat less food that is manufactured in plants.

Live with the 3 E's--Energy, Enthusiasm and Empathy

Make time to pray.

Play more games.

Read more books than you did in 2016.

Sit in silence for at least 10 minutes each day.

Society:

Call your family often.

Each day give something good to others.

Forgive everyone for everything.

Spend time with people over the age of 75 & under the age of 6.

Try to make at least three people smile each day.

What other people think of you is none of your business.

Your job won't take care of you when you are sick. Your friends will. Stay in touch.

Life:

Do the right thing!

Get rid of anything that isn't useful, beautiful or joyful.

GOD heals everything.

However good or bad a situation is, it will change.

No matter how you feel, get up, dress up and show up.

The best is yet to come.

When you wake up alive in the morning, thank GOD for it.

Your innermost soul is always happy. So, be happy.

Personality:

Don't compare your life to others. You have no idea what their journey is all about.

Don't have negative thoughts or things you cannot control. Instead invest your energy in the positive present moment.

Don't overdo. Keep your limits.

Don't take yourself so seriously. No one else does.

Don't waste your precious energy on gossip.

Dream more while you are awake.

Envy is a waste of time. You already have all you need.

Forget issues of the past. Don't remind your partner about his/her mistakes of the past. That will ruin your present happiness.

Life is too short to waste time hating anyone. Don't hate others.

Make peace with your past so it won't spoil the present.

No one is in charge of your happiness except you.

Realize that life is a school and you are here to learn.

Problems are simply part of the curriculum that appear and fade away like algebra class but the lessons you learn will last a lifetime.

Smile and laugh more.

You don't have to win every argument. Agree to disagree.