

Monthly Update for Union Church

January 2018



From Your Pastor...

As I write, there is a blizzard outside but it is a beautiful, snowy day which will be followed by more cold temperatures in the days ahead. It's a wonderful time to stay home, take a break from our often busy lives and enjoy the peace that comes from spending time with a book or a puzzle or a knitting project in the warmth of our homes. I hope that everyone enjoyed a lovely and meaningful Christmas. At our church, we gathered for a lovely Service in the morning which

included the help of several of the younger ones at our church. On Christmas Eve, our choir director, Patricia Mulholland, along with our brilliant musician, Michelle Currie, helped lead the singing of carols beginning at 4:30 before the 5pm Service. The church was quite full for the 5pm Christmas Eve Service; the music was so beautiful and we offered Lessons and Carols during our Reading of the birth of Jesus from Luke's Gospel. In the tradition of Union Church, we finished our Service with the singing of Silent Night as people lit their individual candles and the church was dimmed. We all felt the joy of that blessed night.

On the third Sunday in Advent, we celebrated the theme of Joy with the inclusion of many of our families and children who welcomed people and took up the collection, shared their musical gifts, read the Gospel, and offered wonderful reflections during our Children's time as we read The Grinch who Stole Christmas. At the conclusion of the Service, we formed a circle around the sanctuary and sang Joy to the World. Our hope is to offer a Multigenerational Service again in the spring, including members of all ages from our community.

I hope and pray that the New Year brings you deep peace, good health and continued growth in your spiritual journeys. Whatever the year may bring, we are a community of faith, support and hope for one another as we move forward together. Later in the update, I share a wonderful piece taken from the writings of Parker Palmer, entitled "Five Habits of the Heart" that may provide inspiration for us as we look forward to the year ahead. Below, you will also find a link to a listing of the most spiritually literate films of 2017, should you be looking for some ideas for films you might enjoy.

One of the great joys for me in 2017 was being called to serve as your Pastor. I look forward with expectation to what this new year brings for us as a community together. Happy New Year!

With blessings and peace,
Pastor Paula



The beautiful tree during the Advent Season...



Martin, Amy, Hannah and Henry Grohman light the Advent wreath for the third Sunday in Advent.



Stella Duquette on violin with her mother, Andrea Wollstadt, Henry Grohman on drums with Andrea and Michelle Currie, our amazing Music Director

Christmas Eve Morning

Some news notes from the Moderator, Paul Schlaver...

Even though January is a good time to hunker down and slow down out of necessity, thanks to Mother Nature, stuff still happens at Union Church. The Finance Team and Executive Committee are working on finalizing a budget to present to the whole church for its approval at the Semi-Annual Meeting on Sunday, January 28th. This meeting will follow the church service that Sunday. The proposed budget will be explained, discussed and then voted on at this meeting. The various church committees will be submitting their semi-annual reports as well. Written reports will be sent out to you in advance and any questions or concerns can then also be discussed at this meeting.

Some of you have now received a new Church Directory for 2018. Many enjoyed seeing the colored pictures of 59 of our households last Sunday when the Directories were made available. But 57 other households were also listed in the directory so we all have the means to call, email or even visit each other! If you are not in town during the winter months I am willing to mail you a copy upon your request. Otherwise copies will always be available in the church for each household.

I am pleased to announce that a sixth Fellowship Team has now been formed to help with Sunday duties such as greeters, collectors, coffee makers, bakers etc., for our traditional mini-feast and fellowship following the service. This now means that 53 households are part of the six teams and the rotation now means that each team has to help only every sixth Sunday. Thanks to those faithful folks that have done this for years, you now have an extra week between scheduled Sundays!

I guess I should also take one more opportunity to encourage those of you that have not submitted a pledge for 2018 to please return your pledge forms. Even if you cannot make a financial

commitment right now, we want to know that you do want to volunteer in other ways or will help financially when you might be able to. There are a few extra forms in the vestibule of the church. Our goal is to have a 100% return or as close to that as possible. Your support means a great deal to us and it is an immense help to the Finance Committee as they plan for the coming year.

Happy New Year and thanks for your love of and involvement in the life of Union Church.

Important Dates in January:

Wednesday, January 24th, 9:30- Social Justice Committee meets at Church Office

Thursday, January 25th, 6pm-Social Justice Evening Group meets at the Tallagnon's in Fortune's Rocks

Sunday, January 28th-Semi-Annual Meeting of Union Church following the Sunday Service

New Members:

**In November and December, we welcomed two new members to the Union Church community,
Denise Kinney and Virginia Healey.**

Denise Kinney:

Denise is from Biddeford and has worked for many years as a Registered Nurse, sharing that her most rewarding work was as a Hospice Nurse. She met Katie Koles at the Sam L Cohen Center where Katie shared such wonderful things about Union Church. Denise adds that she is on a rather unexpected journey at this time in her life and therefore, she wants to surround herself with as much love and warmth as possible. She has always been a mindful and spiritual person, practicing loving kindness, and so she came to Union Church looking to be surrounded by a community that shares the same values that she has always held close to her heart. Denise said, "I can say that I am truly blessed to be welcomed and feel the warmth and love here. I am blessed to say that Union Church is part of my life."



Denise Kinney along with Pastor Paula Norbert.

Virginia Healey- Virginia was born and brought up in Cambridge Massachusetts and now lives in Ocean Park. She is a retired RN, a widow with four grown children and five grandchildren. She was

raised Catholic, had joined the UU church in Saco, but had allergies at that church. She met Anne Murray who told her about this church, and she prayed that it would be mold free as Anne had shared that it was a wonderful church. Thankfully, she has had no symptoms here. Additionally, our Virginia has known our pastor for several years so it was wonderful to reconnect here. Virginia said that she feels she has found her new sacred space and it already feels like family.



Virginia Healey

Baptism:

And a beautiful baptism for Hannah Alec Smith, daughter of Charlotte Cyr and Jeremy Smith was held on Sunday, December 31st during the Service. The godparents are Sarah Shubert and Randy Pittman. Charlotte and Jeremy were surrounded by their family and the support of those present at church that day to celebrate this blessed occasion.





The baptism of
precious Hannah



From the Mission Committee

Alternative Pathways Center Holiday Lunch:

Thanks to a lot of help from Mission Committee members and others from Union Church, we were able to provide a nice holiday party for the students and staff of the Alternative Pathways Center, which is part of the Biddeford School System. We purchased two six-foot subs as well as chips and drinks for their lunch. Volunteers baked cookies. Anne Murray went shopping and found great deals on hats and mittens and socks. We purchased Dunkin Donuts gift cards and Anne put together 35 lovely gift baskets, one for each student. Everybody was most appreciative and thanked us for our generosity and kindness. Since then, Carol Sherman has made contact with the new APC director to re-establish the relationship between our Knit

Wits and students interested in learning those skills. A great day overall!



The Alternative Pathways Center's new home on Bacon Street

Saco Meals Program Holiday Party:

Four days later, other volunteers came together to make the regular Saco Meals Program dinner special for the holiday. Before the event, shoppers used funds, most of which came from Landry French Construction Company, and bought items to give as gifts to the guests. On the morning of the meal, a group of volunteers went to the meal site, the Most Holy Trinity Church Parish Hall, in Saco, and decorated the tables and put together 100 gift bags. In the afternoon, other volunteers worked in the kitchen to prepare a special supper. Inclement weather kept the number of guests down a bit, but those who came were delighted with what they found.

A Letter from the Student We Support in Kenya, Diana Jepchirchir

20/10/2017

Dear members of union church,

How are you all? It is my hope that you are progressing well both physically and spiritually. I started this term with a good note and the term is going to an end. It has been the shortest term since there is re-election in Kenya for presidency. I did my opener exams and managed to score a B plus. I did not expect this because I had revised well, but the results were affected by eye problems. I had been having eye problems since primary school but my mother could not afford to take me to the optician. But I thank God for giving me such marks, I was number one in our class and seven overall of one hundred and six students.

On 29th September, all Form ones had a trip to Thompson falls in Nyahururu in Kenya which is two hundred and fifty-two kilometers. It was named after a certain European who was called Thompson. I enjoyed riding on a camel and a horse. I took photos with my best friend Faith. She is hardworking and we usually help each other in our studies. She would one day like to come with me to Biddeford Pool, Maine. She is also sponsored by another board.

On 30th September, we EFAC scholars were visited by some EFAC sponsors and I received the letters, and the card from the Sunday school and the compact disk. I also received a very beautiful book

from Sandy next year during the workshop. I will do as she has requested me honestly. I also received a letter from Debbie.



Diana Jepchirchir, our student in Kenya

A Letter from the Student We Support in Belize, Luis Choc

Dear Sir/Madam,

Thank you for sponsoring me and helping me with all I need. I'm very thankful for what you are doing. This help that you are providing is lifting an enormous burden from my parents' shoulders since I have more siblings that are depending on them.

School is going great. Mathematics is my only struggle. I feel that with more dedication and effort I will be able to succeed. Moreover, I

want to express my gratitude for all the effort that you are providing me. I am grateful for everything and I know how hard you have worked in order to sponsor me. From the bottom of my heart, a million thanks.

**Union Church Trustees Report
Semi-Annual Meeting
December 31, 2017**

During the first half of 2017, Trustee activities included a Spring Cleaning of the church's interior, clearing the grounds of winter debris and the installation of a surface drain in the handicapped spaces in front of the church.

In the second six months of the year, the handicapped parking spaces were paved, permanent handicapped signs were installed, the interior of the church was painted as part of a "once every 15-year" cycle program, the heating system was cleaned prior to winter use, and coordination was provided for both the setting up and taking down of the Christmas decorations. Finally, the "hide-a-key" lock was replaced with a coded lock box.

The Trustees want to express their appreciation to all those who participated in the above activities, especially for the Spring Cleaning and the Christmas Decorations. Special kudos are noted for Old Pool Painting, as several days of painting were disrupted by a loss of electric power.

Looking ahead in 2018, the normal annual cycle of building maintenance activities will be augmented with the installation of an irrigation system to serve the Remembrance Garden and the garden area at the right-side entry to the Church.

The Trustee team of Tom Craven, Denny Tallagnon, Chris Hudson and Bill Stephchew continue to work on keeping our church home looking terrific and being in good condition.

Bob Sherman, Trustee Chair

Warm Hands, Warm Hearts

Many thanks to church member, Sharon Gaudin for her wonderful leadership on the Warm Hands, Warm Hearts program. During the Advent Season, our church helped collect items to be distributed to many local agencies, including those with whom we have a special relationship through our Mission Committee. Sharon shares a report below on this important project...



Thank you so much to the Union Church community for being one of the largest contributors to the Warm Hands, Warm Hearts project during the Advent Season! While this was the first year of the project, it was a huge success, far exceeding my expectations. Thank you to everyone for your generosity and warm hearts. Because of your help, we were able to help keep more children and adults warm this winter, and let them know that their neighbors care about them. The Saco Police Department was a huge help and I paired my collection with their Socks for Seniors program so we could reach even more people in need this winter.

I'm in the midst of doing a second collection but here are the numbers from our first collection:

Socks – 1,011 pairs

Hats – 204

Gloves – 103 pairs

Mittens – 26 pairs

Scarves – 58

Two veterans' organizations received more than 300 pairs of socks, 25 hats, 15 scarves and 13 pairs of gloves. Seniors at nursing homes in Biddeford, Saco and Scarborough received more than 200 pairs of socks, 10 scarves and 17 pairs of slippers. Two elementary schools in Saco received almost 50 pairs of gloves, 16 scarves, nearly 50 hats, and 14 pairs of mittens. The third Saco elementary school will receive its donation in about a week.

The cancer center in Scarborough received 63 hats (many of them handmade) and 31 pairs of socks.

Caring Unlimited received 29 hats, 13 scarves, 34 pairs of socks, 18 pairs of gloves, 8 slippers and 5 pairs of mittens.

While donations from around Saco and Biddeford, including UC, collected these items, Union Church alone sent 19 hats, 8 pairs of gloves and 10 pairs of socks to Seeds of Hope.

Thanks again,

Sharon Gaudin

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. 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 or 985-6577. Thanks - Ken Murray

Social Justice Group:

Two groups will gather in January for the first meeting for prayer, reflection and action on behalf of a faith-based approach to working for social justice in whatever form that may take. The dates for our meetings are Wed, January 24th from 9:30-11 at the church office and Thursday, Jan 25th from 6-7:30pm at the home of Dennis and Bonnie Tallagnon. Their address is in our new church directory.

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. For more information, please contact Rev. Paula Norbert.

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.

We will be trying a new way to share Communion as we begin the New Year. We will be inviting folks to come forward, if they wish, to receive from the plate and cup and then return to their seats. As they take a piece of the bread, they may dip it into the cup, and then return to their seats for some time for quiet prayer. Pastor Paula will also make her way around the church to offer communion to those who wish to receive at their seats. We will try this in the coming months and then welcome feedback from the community.

Resources for Spiritual Growth, Inspiration and Renewal:



And now here is my secret, a very simple secret: It is only with the heart that one can see rightly; what is essential is invisible to the eye.
--Antoine de Saint-Exupery

Five Habits of the Heart

--by [Parker Palmer](#), syndicated from couragerenewal.org, Jan 02, 2018

“Habits of the heart” (a phrase coined by Alexis de Tocqueville) are deeply ingrained ways of seeing, being, and responding to life that involve our minds, our emotions, our self-images, our concepts of meaning and purpose. I believe that these five interlocked habits are critical to sustaining a society.

1. An understanding that we are all in this together. Biologists, ecologists, economists, ethicists and leaders of the great wisdom traditions have all given voice to

this theme. Despite our illusions of individualism and national superiority, we humans are a profoundly interconnected species—entwined with one another and with all forms of life, as the global economic and ecological crises reveal in vivid and frightening detail. We must embrace the simple fact that we are dependent upon and accountable to one another, and that includes the stranger, the “alien other.” At the same time, we must save the notion of interdependence from the idealistic excesses that make it an impossible dream. Exhorting people to hold a continual awareness of global, national, or even local interconnectedness is a counsel of perfection that is achievable (if at all) only by the rare saint, one that can only result in self-delusion or defeat. Which leads to a second key habit of the heart...

2. An appreciation of the value of “otherness.” It is true that we are all in this together. It is equally true that we spend most of our lives in “tribes” or lifestyle enclaves—and that thinking of the world in terms of “us” and “them” is one of the many limitations of the human mind. The good news is that “us and them” does not have to mean “us versus them.” Instead, it can remind us of the ancient tradition of hospitality to the stranger and give us a chance to translate it into twenty-first century terms. Hospitality rightly understood is premised on the notion that the stranger has much to teach us. It actively invites “otherness” into our lives to make them more expansive, including forms of otherness that seem utterly alien to us. Of course, we will not practice deep hospitality if we do not embrace the creative possibilities inherent in our differences. Which leads to a third key habit of the heart...

3. An ability to hold tension in life-giving ways. Our lives are filled with contradictions—from the gap between our aspirations and our behavior, to observations and insights we cannot abide because they run counter to our convictions. If we fail to hold them creatively, these contradictions will shut us down and take us out of the action. But when we allow their tensions to expand our hearts, they can open us to new understandings of ourselves and our world, enhancing our lives and allowing us to enhance the lives of others. We are imperfect and broken beings who inhabit an imperfect and broken world. The genius of the human heart lies in its capacity to use these tensions to generate insight, energy, and new life. Making the most of those gifts requires a fourth key habit of the heart...

4. A sense of personal voice and agency. Insight and energy give rise to new life as we speak out and act out our own version of truth, while checking and correcting it against the truths of others. But many of us lack confidence in our own voices and in our power to make a difference. We grow up in educational and religious institutions that treat us as members of an audience instead of actors in a drama, and as a result we become adults who treat politics as a spectator sport. And yet it remains possible for us,

young and old alike, to find our voices, learn how to speak them, and know the satisfaction that comes from contributing to positive change—if we have the support of a community. Which leads to a fifth and final habit of the heart...

5. A capacity to create community. Without a community, it is nearly impossible to achieve voice: it takes a village to raise a Rosa Parks. Without a community, it is nearly impossible to exercise the “power of one” in a way that allows power to multiply: it took a village to translate Parks’s act of personal integrity into social change. In a mass society like ours, community rarely comes ready-made. But creating community in the places where we live and work does not mean abandoning other parts of our lives to become full-time organizers. The steady companionship of two or three kindred spirits can help us find the courage we need to speak and act as citizens. There are many ways to plant and cultivate the seeds of community in our personal and local lives. We must all become gardeners of community if we want society to flourish.

*Syndicated from [Parker Palmer's Five Habits of the Heart](#). [Parker J. Palmer](#), Founder and Senior Partner of the [Center for Courage & Renewal](#), is a world-renowned writer, speaker and activist who focuses on issues in education, community, leadership, spirituality and social change. He has reached millions worldwide through his nine books, including *Let Your Life Speak*, *The Courage to Teach*, *A Hidden Wholeness*, and *Healing the Heart of Democracy*. Shared on the website www.dailygood.org.*

(Shared by Anne Murray)

Other Resources:

There are a number of other wonderful websites that provide reflections, resources, and inspiration for spiritual growth which we have now shared on our website. They list opportunities for online courses, daily reflection, and other wonderful and inspiring writings.

Recommended Films from 2017- The Ten Most Spiritually Literate films of 2017
www.spiritualityandpractice.com/films/features/view/28522/the-most-spiritually-literate-films-of-2017

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

Nearby Retreat Opportunity for the spring:

“Exploring Times and Places of Sanctuary”

Marie Joseph Retreat Center, Biddeford Pool, March 23-25th, 2018.

With Marguerite Stapleton

For more information, please contact the retreat center or check it out online.

To the New Year

By W. S. Merwin

With what stillness at last
you appear in the valley
your first sunlight reaching down
to touch the tips of a few
high leaves that do not stir
as though they had not noticed
and did not know you at all
then the voice of a dove calls
from far away in itself
to the hush of the morning

so this is the sound of you
here and now whether or not
anyone hears it this is
where we have come with our age
our knowledge such as it is
and our hopes such as they are
invisible before us
untouched and still possible