

**Union Church of Biddeford Pool
Biddeford Pool, Maine**

From the Pastor-December 2019



Dear Friends,

As I write this, many are making their preparations for Thanksgiving gatherings with family, friends, and neighbors. At church this past week, we took a moment to reflect on the many things for which we are grateful. Certainly, for me, that includes the gratitude I feel in serving as your Pastor at Union Church. I continue to be inspired by the amazing generosity of all of you in sharing your time, talents and treasure with this wonderful church and with our local and international Mission outreach. We are truly blessed to be surrounded by the gifts of one another and by the companionship and inspiration that we may draw from one another and our neighbors near and far.

With the first of December, we begin a new liturgical year in the Christian tradition as we commence our observation of Advent and our preparations for Christmas. Our Theme for Advent is Heaven and Nature sing as we celebrate the 300th anniversary of “Joy to the World.” Our Worship materials will come

again from the creative work of Dr. Marcia McPhee and here is her intro to the themes for Advent...

“Joy to the World,” a beloved Christmas classic, turns 300 this year. Composer Isaac Watt’s interpretation of Psalm 98 invites us to sing a “new song” — and it is a powerful cosmic performance of all creation being renewed and freed. Rather than “joy” being yet another word for “happiness,” we will discover that the depths of joy can be found especially in the midst of suffering, the work of justice, and the presence of compassion — all part of the coming of Jesus to this world and a message the world still so desperately needs. “

We may come to understand that joy is not the same as happiness. Joy goes much deeper. Happiness is when your face is smiling. JOY is when your heart is smiling. When your heart is smiling, it’s a real smile and you know it. One way to connect with the joy in our hearts is to have hope. Hope means believing in something happening and having the confident expectation that it will. So many people throughout history — from poets and painters to inventors and scientists, and even the wise men — have looked to something to help remind them of hope. We are invited then to look for the signs of hope over the coming days and to make room for the joy that comes when we discover that, despite the struggles and suffering of our world, there is still much to be hopeful about.

Perhaps we might encourage one another to take time, in the midst of the shopping and decorating and the writing of cards, to look for hope and to be hope to our neighbors and to our world. This past year, a number of you have reached out in welcome to visitors and new members at our church, including our new friends Gladdess, York and Houston. It has meant a great deal to them. We are a church of welcome and inclusion.

During the Service at Christmas Eve, our collection is always directed to what we call the Pastor’s Discretionary Account. All of the funds from this account are directed to help provide various types of support to folks within the church or connected in some way to our faith community or to the local community. I wanted you to know that some of the ways in which the funds have been helpful this past year include paying for a week’s stay at a local campground for a homeless family, purchasing a tank of fuel oil for a family with

a member who is seriously ill, buying Hannaford gift cards for those who need food, paying for someone's electric bill, helping supplement rental payments when there is a need to make up the difference, buying clothes for back-to-school and more. I was invited to share this because I understand that some don't know of the existence of the Pastor's Account and others have donated during the course of the year to the account and it is helpful to know how the funds are being used. Thank you for your generosity.

Thank you also to all those who volunteer time and support to many of the local organizations in Biddeford and Saco, including Seeds of Hope, Saco Meals, Mustang Rescue, Alternative Pathways, the Cohen Center, In a Pinch Pantry and more. You give so generously of your time and it makes a real difference in the lives of those who are served.

I wish you a blessed Advent. I am including a reflection below from Sister Joan Chittister with some thoughtful reflections on this special season. May you know peace; may you know hope; may you know joy.

Paula

Rev. Paula Norbert

Pastor, Union Church

Important Dates:

Wednesday evening, December 11th-Advent Fireside Chat

Sunday, December 22nd-Worship will include our younger members

Tuesday, December 24th-4:15-4:45-Carol Sing

5pm- Christmas Eve Service



ADVENT MEDITATION

The Human Experience of Waiting by Joan Chittister

When all the feasts have been celebrated and all the prayers are said and done, the strength and power of the liturgical year does not lie in its cataloging of feast days and seasons, as important as these are. Nor does it lie in its rubrics and rituals. The real power of the liturgical year is its spiritual capacity to touch and plumb the depths of the human experience, to stir the human heart. By walking the way of the life of Jesus, by moving into the experience of Jesus, we discover the meaning of our own experiences, the undercurrent of our own emotions, the struggle it takes to go on walking the way.

By taking us into the depth of what it means to be a human on the way to God — to suffer and to wonder, to know abandonment and false support, to believe and to doubt — the liturgical year breaks us open to the divine. It gives us the energy to become the fullness of ourselves. It makes the next step

possible. It calms us as we stumble from one to the other. It leads us beyond our present selves to the self that lies in wait for God.

The liturgical year does not begin at the heart of the Christian enterprise. It does not immediately plunge us into the chaos of the Crucifixion or the giddy confusion of the Resurrection. Instead, the year opens with Advent, the season that teaches us to wait for what is beyond the obvious. It trains us to see what is behind the apparent. Advent makes us look for God in all those places we have, until now, ignored.

A friend recently gave me a textile wall-hanging from Peru that makes clear that the process of finding God in the small things of life is as profound as it is simple. A pastoral scene of palm trees and rural lean-tos has been hand-stitched by peasant women, quilt-style, across the top of a felt banner. Under it is a calendar of thirty small pockets, each of them filled with something we can't see. Every day until Christmas, we are invited to find the part of the scene that has been pocketed for that day and attach it to the scene above, one piece of handwoven cloth adhering to the other as we go.

Some of the pieces are of benign and beautiful things; some are not. There are bumble bees and angels, wild animals and dry straw, a branch-laden peasant man and a weary-looking woman. But there at the end of the days, as common as all the rest of the items in the scene, is the manger; the sign of the One who knows what life is like for us, who has mixed His own with ours. Now, we can see, all our expectations have been worth it.

Advent is about learning to wait. It is about not having to know exactly what is coming tomorrow, only that whatever it is, some hard, some uplifting, is sign of the work of God alive in us. We are becoming as we go. We learn in Advent to stay in the present, knowing that only the present well lived can possibly lead us to the fullness of life.

Life is not meant to be escaped, we learn, as the liturgical year moves from season to season, from feast to feast. It is meant to be penetrated, to be plumbed to its depths, to be tasted and savored and bring us to realize that the God who created us is with us yet. Life, we come eventually to know, is an exercise in transformation, the mechanics of which take a lifetime of practice, of patience, of slow, slow growth.

Clearly, then, learning to wait is an essential dimension of spiritual development. It has its own values, bringing its own character to the process of becoming spiritually mature.

Waiting hones our insights. It gives us the time and space, the perspective and patience that enable us to discriminate between the good, the better, and the best. It is so simple to go through life blind to the wealth of its parts, swallowing life whole, oblivious to its punctuation points. Then we fail to call ourselves to the small, daily demands of compassion or choice, trust or effort. If we do not learn to wait, we can allow ourselves to assume that one thing really is as good for us as another. Then we forget that life is about more than this life. We race over the top of it, satiating ourselves with the obvious, unmindful of its depths. We become stale of soul. We fail to grow spiritually.

It is waiting that attunes us to the invisible in a highly material world. In contemporary society, what counts is what we can get and what we have. Instead of listening for the voice of God in the winds of change around us, we can come to hear only our own.

The function of Advent is to remind us what we're waiting for as we go through life too busy with things that do not matter to remember the things that do. When year after year we hear the same scriptures and the same hymns of longing for the life to come, of which this one is only its shadow, it becomes impossible to forget the refrains of the soul.

Advent relieves us of our commitment to the frenetic in a fast-paced world. It slows us down. It makes us think. It makes us look beyond today to the "great tomorrow" of life. Without Advent, moved only by the race to nowhere that exhausts the world around us, we could be so frantic with trying to consume and control this life that we fail to develop within ourselves a taste for the spirit that does not develop within ourselves a taste for the spirit that does not die and will not slip through our fingers like melted snow.

It is while waiting for the coming of the reign of God, Advent after Advent, that we come to realize that its coming depends on us. What we do will either hasten or slow, sharpen or dim our own commitment to do our part to bring it.

Waiting — that cold, dry period of life when nothing seems to be enough and something else beckons within us — is the grace that Advent comes to bring. It stands before us, within us, pointing to the star for which the wise ones from the East are only icons of ourselves.

We all want something more. Advent asks the question, what is it for which you are spending your life? What is the star you are following now? And where is that star in its present radiance in your life leading you? Is it a place that is really comprehensive enough to equal the breadth of the human soul?

From The Liturgical Year

A message from Moderator Paul Schlaver

Please watch your mailbox in early December for my annual early winter task is to send the members and friends of Union Church a letter seeking a financial pledge commitment for the approaching new year. Our budget planning for 2020 relies on the prompt return of the pledges so please consider a timely response to this once a year effort to solicit your financial support. If you do not receive this letter and pledge form by December 6th, please email me and I can forward it that way. Thanks! Schlaver@maine.rr.com

Mission Committee News Ken Murray



Healthy Snacks for Children

Now that school is back in session, we have begun collecting non-perishable healthy snacks for the children in the ELL classroom at the Biddeford Primary School, most of whom are new Mainers. Snacks may be left in the bins that are on the side pews at the front of the church. They may be dropped off anytime.

Advent Giving Program

As noted elsewhere in this newsletter, The Mission Committee has adopted "Warm Hands, Warm Hearts" as our special Advent Giving Opportunity for this year. Donation boxes to receive gifts of new mittens, gloves, hats and scarves will be placed at Union Church and in other locations around Biddeford and Saco. This is our only special collection for Advent this year, so please give it your consideration and give generously if you can.

In-a-Pinch

As reported in a recent story on WGME-TV, Channel 13, In-a-Pinch is in a pinch. The current home of In-a-Pinch needs the space currently occupied by In-a-Pinch. Although In-a-Pinch has been looking for new site in downtown Biddeford to host them, they have been unsuccessful so far. If you have information or ideas to help them, please contact Ken Murray or Paul Schlaver. Thanks.

Saco Meals Program

As you likely already know, a team from Union Church prepared the dinner for the Saco Meals Program on the third Monday of most months. In December, we make it a special holiday event by adding special decorations for the hall, special touches to the meal, and a gift bag for each guest. We are looking for volunteers to help decorate the tables and prepare the gift bags on Monday, December 16, from 10:00 a.m. to Noon at the Most Holy Trinity Parish Hall in Saco. A sign-up sheet will be placed at the back of Union Church, or you may volunteer by contacting Ken Murray at 207-494-9376 or ktmurray1727@hotmail.com.



In addition, the Saco Meals Program is needs volunteers on Mondays and Thursdays to do things like hall set-up, kitchen prep, serve meals and clean-up. To learn more you can email Jacqueline Newport, the Program Manager at sacomeals@sacomeals.org.

2020 Mission Budget

The Committee discussed and adopted a Union Church Mission Budget for 2020 which is based on current funding available, \$10,000 from the Summer Speaker Series and \$2,000 from the general church budget.

However, we did so with a strong commitment that we and the church at large should work together to raise additional resources to meet the ongoing needs in our community and to support the good work that is already being done.

The 2020 proposed Union Church Mission Budget categories and amounts are as follows:

Local Mission – Individual Assistance	\$ 1,000
In-a-Pinch Non-Food Pantry	\$ 1,200
Saco Meals Program	\$ 1,800
Stone Soup Food Pantry	\$ 1,500
Seeds of Hope Neighborhood Center	\$ 2,500
Ever After Mustang Rescue	\$ 300
The Knit Wits & The Alternative Pathways Center	\$ 700
Miscellaneous Community Missions	\$ 1,000
Holy Cross Anglian School of Belize to support student	\$ 1,000
Education for All Children-Kenya to support student	<u>\$ 1,000</u>
	\$12,000

Alternative Pathways Center



Alternative Pathways Center is one of the organizations that Union Church supports. 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. The Center stands alone, about a mile away from Biddeford High School in the first few floors of a renovated old house. There are only 44 students, as compared to more than 700 at Biddeford High. There are a few teachers and support staff, all split amongst assorted classrooms and offices. The director is Martha Jacques, who is also a licensed social worker. She meets with each student regularly and helps to connect them with the social service agencies that many need. The school offers a small food pantry and washer and dryer on campus. The school works to help their students have tools that they can carry with them throughout the rest of their lives. The Knit Wits from Union Church have volunteered at APC for 4 years. Their role has changed over the years from teaching knitting to lifestyle support and encouragement. The Knit Wits cook, play games, give parties, carve pumpkins, among other things with both the students and staff. Each year APC has a motto. Last year it was, "An Attitude of Gratitude". This year it is "Positive Mental Attitude." So far this year the students have baked pies for the Biddeford Festival, made blankets for the dogs at the Animal Welfare Society, and as a "thank you" to all the people that have helped APC, the students and staff will be serving a Thanksgiving Luncheon for them all to enjoy.



Warm Hand, Warm Hearts



The Warm Hands, Warm Hearts project, now in its third year, has helped hundreds, if not a few thousand, people in our community who need not only warm winter clothing but neighborly kindness. As we are gearing up to launch the project again, we are looking to place our collection boxes in locations throughout our community.

Union Church has been the largest donor to this charity each year I have run it. **In addition, the church Mission Committee has selected Warm Hands, Warm Hearts as the 2019 Union Church Advent Giving Project.** The church family's generosity has always overwhelmed me as it has enabled us to help so many people. Thanks in part to UC, we have been able to bring large tubs of hats, mittens, scarves, gloves and socks to elementary schools, nursing homes, a homeless veteran's organization, two adult cancer centers and one cancer center focused on helping children, as well as Union Church connected missions such as Seeds of Hope Neighborhood Center, the Stone Soup Food Pantry, the Saco Meals Program and the ELL classroom at the Biddeford Primary School.

Both years we have delivered these winter items to the schools, administrators have cried, telling us how many children come to school cold, and sometimes sick, because they simply don't have things like hats and mittens to keep them warm.

At one of the nursing homes we delivered to last year, the social director gave a group of seniors new scarves and then took them out on a jaunt to see the holiday lights.

The donation of a simple hat, a scarf or a pair of socks can mean more than many of us realize.

Items for the schools need to be new with the tags still on and/or in their original packaging. Hand-made items can go to the nursing homes, Seeds of Hope, veterans and cancer centers. Everything needs to be new. I'm sorry but second-hand items, only if in great condition, can only be donated to Seeds of Hope.

Thank you for your help. What a wonderful community!!

- Sharon Gaudin



UNION CHURCH COOKIE STROLL

Hear ye ... Hear ye! Calling all our valued and highly esteemed Union Church bakers!

Christmas is coming soon and so also the Union Church "Cookie Stroll. "

When: Sunday, December 15th, 2019. Time: 2:00 to 4:00 P.M.

Where: In conjunction with the Biddeford Pool Community Center Magical Christmas Tea.

What: COOKIE STROLL! Festooned and merrily resplendent tables are laden with tempting homemade

Christmas and international baked treats of all kinds ... cookies, cookie bars, Scottish Shortbread, fruitcake slices,

scones, truffles, tarts, bon-bons. Bakers ... let your imaginations soar!

Holiday gift boxes are provided for customers to fill with their 13 selections.

Proceeds of the sale will support the Union Church Mission Fund.

The requested donation for this baker's dozen delight is 8.00

Drop - off information may be found on the sign - up sheet in the foyer.

Thank you.





November 16, 2019

To the members and friends of Union Church,

I want to take a moment to thank you for your monthly support of this rescue through your Local Mission. It is greatly appreciated and has helped us to continue to save America's wild horses from abandonment, neglect and abuses. Many were slaughter-bound when found. We were their last hope. In time, all can be gentled and handled. Our goal is to rehome as many as possible to qualified approved homes. Some need permanent care, due to health, soundness or behavioral issues.

Our belief, is whether you walk on 2 legs or 4, fur coat or none, we are all God's creatures and deserve love and kindness one to another.

We appreciate your help in fulfilling our mission and invite you to schedule a visit to learn more.

Gratefully,
Mona Jerome, Director

NEWS FROM THE KENNEBUNKPORT
CONSERVATION TRUST



JOIN US FOR AN EVENING OF

*Tails, Trails,
and Ales*

Learn more about the Kennebunkport Conservation Trust's newest preserve:

The Meadow Woods Preserve

Consisting of over 300 acres of land situated between Mills Road and Oak Ridge Road on the Kennebunkport & Biddeford town border. The vast majority of the preserve will remain in its natural state, but the part of the Preserve that was once used for excavation work will be re-purposed and restored.

Meadow Wood Preserve will contain a multi-acre, off-leash dog enclosure, network of all inclusive trails, restored pond, native pollinator meadow, and welcome center.

We're well on our way, but can't do it without your help. Please come learn more about this wonderful new Preserve and how you can help to make it a reality.

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 14, 2019, 2-5PM
57 GRAVELLY BROOK ROAD
KENNEBUNKPORT, ME 04046

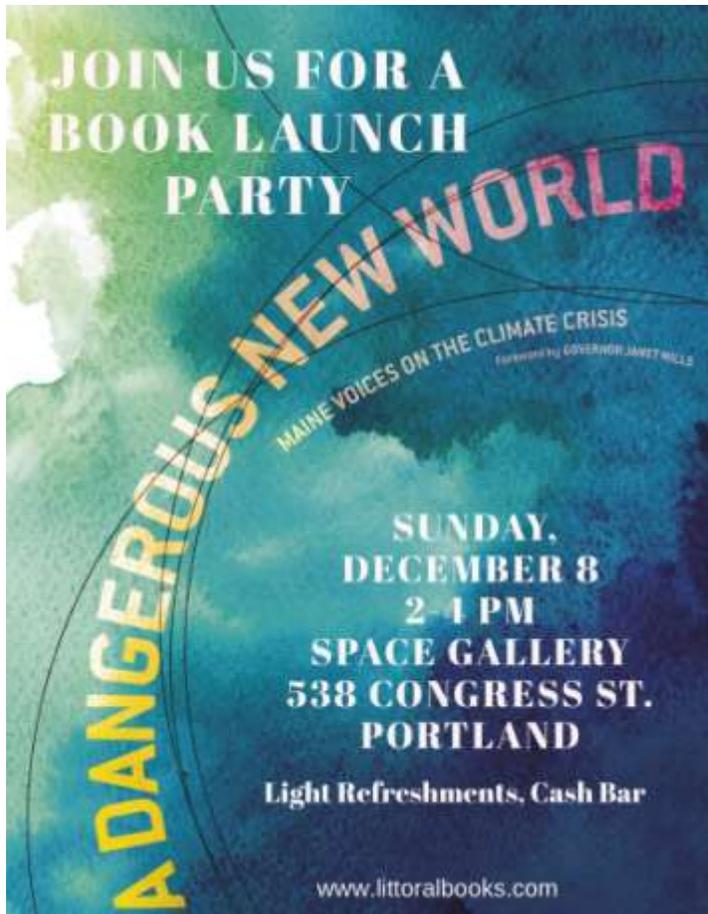
One for the Clock: Special Fundraiser for the Biddeford Mills Clock Tower



Many of you have seen the clock tower sitting near the Mulligan's parking lot. Built in 1853, it served as the Communications Center for all of Biddeford until it was chain sawed down from its belfry on top of the Lincoln Mill in 2007. The Biddeford Mills Clock Tower Committee is trying to right this terrible wrong by preserving it and placing it on the River walk in 2020. We are hosting a presentation about the history of the clock tower on Friday, November 29 from 6:30 to 7:30 at Flourish, 140 Main Street, in downtown Biddeford. We are also planning fundraisers, the first of which is on December 4th from 5-10 p.m. when the 99 Restaurant will donate 15% of the evening's profits to the clock tower efforts. Voucher coupons will be available at the event.

Here is a page with more information on the clock tower -

<https://www.facebook.com/Friends-of-the-Historic-Biddeford-Mill-Clock-Tower-473313606771613/>



Jen Comeau's Essay Published in Climate Anthology to Benefit 350ME.ORG

Jen Comeau's essay joins creative offerings by 65 writers and 20 artists, who responded to a call for essays, poetry and art work on the effects of climate change. *A Dangerous New World: Maine Voices on the Climate Crisis*, edited by Meghan Sterling and Kathleen Sullivan, is a many-layered and complex mosaic of voices and visions, of thoughtful appraisals, of careful observations, of emotional responses, and of scientific analyses. We see changes along the coast through the eyes of lobstermen and clambers, changes in the woods through the eyes of forest walkers and birders. We hear stories of changes in the landscape, feelings of foreboding and loss.

Published by Littoral Books with a foreword by Governor Janet Mills, all profits to be donated to 350 Maine. Join Jen and distinguished poets and writers,

Wes McNair, Biddeford Pool's Margo Taft Stever, Richard Blanco, Richard Foerster, Martin Steingesser, Sherry Abaldo, Cathleen Miller, Caitlin Shetterley, and more on December 8th from 2 – 4 PM at Space Gallery, 538 Congress St. Portland.

Kennebunkport Trust Labyrinth Begun

The Labyrinth at Emmons Preserve has begun and there is still need for more stones to complete the shape. To donate a stone in honor of a loved one, please follow this link:

<http://www.kporttrust.org/labyrinth>

The Labyrinth of Lights will be held again this year as part of Kennebunkport's Prelude festivities.

Friday December 6th and Friday December 13th 4 – 7:30PM at The Village Green, Ocean Avenue. Refreshments too!



The Under-Tree

**The UnderTree is bare now ...
Piled pile space once in complete replete,
Now airy and light ... The space is mostly nearly silent.
No rustling paper ... No whoops n cries n shouts
In delight surprise. Yet ...
Eminences of Laughter linger, lean,
Reverberate, rusticate, elevate memory.
Listening hard ...**

**There it is again ...
A rustling of angel wings weaving forth
The essence of another grace-filled day.
The UnderTree is bare now ...
Still much alive with Presence ...**

~ Dick Bennett