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# The Landmark

Volume 21, Issue 12 | December 2022

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## A Letter From The Pastor

Dear Congregation,

On this dark evening while the wind howls outside the windows of my little upstairs office in our home, I open a book that is often on my desk. It is Thomas Merton's *New Seeds of Contemplations*, a collection of Merton's thoughts and reflections on the interior life. I know I have mentioned this book to you several times before. I often return to Merton because there is so much depth in his writing that I find in each sentence something to be savored. This evening I read a few paragraphs about "God's will" and there found fuel to stoke the fire.

I often wonder about this idea of "God's will." What could this possibly mean? And how could I ever know the will of God? How might I be able to discern, when seeking to understand God's will-- in other words, in seeking to understand the direction for my life that God would have me follow—the difference between what is actually God's will and what is my own will? How might I be able to understand this difference, and recognize the sometimes subtle distinction between what is truly God's will and what are my own confused ideas which, in my selfishness and self-centeredness, disguise themselves as God's will?

While this may seem to some people as merely an agonizing exercise in splitting hairs or a meaningless waste of time, for people who consider God and wonder about the possible direction God might intend for one's life, it is an important question. What is God's will for my life? And here, Merton has a great deal to offer. Merton's approach to discerning God's will is through dialogue--an ongoing dialogue with God. But this dialogue is not frivolous conversation, nor is it necessarily a dialogue of words. Rather, for Merton, it is "a dialogue of love and choice. A dialogue of deep wills."

Merton wants to reframe the idea of God's will, moving away from the notion of heavy-handed edicts and toward the idea that God's will is an invitation to love. He writes, "In all the situations of life the 'will of God' comes to us not merely as an external dictate of impersonal law but above all as an interior invitation of personal love. Too often the conventional conception of "God's will" as a sphinx-like and arbitrary force bearing down upon us with implacable hostility, leads people to lose faith in a God they cannot find it possible to love."

For Merton, our dialogue with God in which we seek the will of God, the dialogue he describes as one of love and choice and deep wills, is an ongoing communication in the depth of the human heart which opens to God. When we seek to know God's will, we may do so through seeking "the obscure and intimate mystery of the encounter that takes place in contemplation." And key to this encounter is our concept of God. We remember that God is seeking us to love us. Merton puts it this way: "We must learn to realize that the love of God seeks us in every situation, and seeks our good. His inscrutable love seeks our awakening."

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## DECEMBER BIRTHDAYS

5-Dec	Marie Underwood
6-Dec	Kyle Rose
7-Dec	Tom McKeon
11-Dec	Karen Kelley
14-Dec	Clayton Blood
23-Dec	Mike Nahme
26-Dec	Gage Rose
27-Dec	Tynlee Rose
30-Dec	Jay Holweger

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## DIRECT FROM THE DEACONS

By Priscilla King, Deacon of the Month

When assembling ideas for the Diaconate's monthly report for the Landmark, I perused a book of prayers and found this one, attributed to the prophet Muhammed:

What actions are most excellent?

To gladden the heart of a human being.  
To feed the hungry.  
To help the afflicted.  
To lighten the sorrow of the sorrowful.  
To remove the wrongs of the injured.  
That person is the one who does most good to God's creatures.

This reminds me what our Church tries to do and what we can aspire to be year-round. Many blessings are prayed for our generous congregation and those we touch, as we continue this path.

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*"To prepare our hearts for Christmas, we must cultivate the spirit of expectancy."*

*Handel H. Brown*

## WOMEN'S FELLOWSHIP NEWS

By Phyllis Gaul, President

November has been a very busy and productive month for your Women's Fellowship.

We elected new officers for the 2023 season at our November meeting. They are President, Karen Kelley; Vice President, Jill Perkins; Secretary/Treasurer, Sue Nichols. Thank you, ladies, for stepping up to fill these positions. Our organization will thrive under your leadership.

Our fall fair returned to Curtis Hall on November 5th. It was a smashing success. What a joy it was to be back working together with so many of our Church members. We earned approximately \$3,000.00 to use for the benefit of our Church projects. We could not have done this without the support of all of you.

Music programs are returning to our sanctuary. Sean Fleming entertained us with a beautiful patriotic organ concert on November 12th. It was our pleasure to serve refreshments in Curtis Hall following the concert.

Our next meeting will be held on Tuesday, December 6 at 10:00. Come join us as we plan our 2023 calendar of events.



*Sue Nichols and Dick Burns with the new coat racks he made for the Sunday School room.*

## MUSIC NOTES

By Carolyn Maunz and Dionne Haase

A lot has happened since our last Landmark! Dionne Haase is officially on board as Associate Minister of Music. We welcome her with open arms and gratitude for all she brings. See her report below.

Some highlights of what's happening musically at FCC Searsport.

- Each Sunday in December will feature special music including Solos, Piano/Organ Duet, Children's Choir and Adult Choir.
- Thursday December 8th – 5:00 PM Community Carol Sing – Curtis Hall for all ages. Cookies and Hot Chocolate, too!
- Saturday December 10th – 12:00-4:30 Historical Society Open House Tour includes our church this year. A variety of musical offerings, including our bells, solos, duets, and organ/piano music will welcome the guests as they tour our church.
- Saturday December 10th – 7:00 PM Pen Bay Singers Concert in the Sanctuary.
- Wednesday December 14th – Our choir will visit Bayview Manor and sing Christmas Songs with the Residents.
- Saturday December 24th - Christmas Eve Service with the Bell Choir, Adult Choir and O Holy Night sung by Jiffy Kelley Young.

In January, we begin our Community Outreach, as outlined in the Music Proposal from earlier this year. Dionne is already busy planning offerings for local children, and I have secured spots each month to take music to Nursing Facilities and Assisted Living homes in our area.



If you ever doubted the power of singing, take a look at what choir rehearsals have done for our Music Room Cactus!

## Greetings From the Associate Minister of Music

The adult choir has been hard at work in the choir room on Thursday afternoons. We are busy preparing anthems and musical selections for the upcoming holiday season. I encourage new folks to try out the choir and see if it is a good fit for you. We are always accepting new singers, regardless of experience and musical talent. The choir is a fun, welcoming, eclectic group of caring, funny and dedicated singers. If you have always wondered what it is like to sing in a choir, please check us out on Thursdays. Tenors and basses rehearse from 2:30-3:00, and the entire choir meets from 3:00-4:15.

The children's choir is also accepting new singers. The children sing in service the 3rd Sunday of the month and are currently preparing for the December 18th Christmas Pageant, to be held during the worship service. The kids rehearse after Sunday service in the sanctuary until 11:30. All are welcome!

Part of my duties as a new staff member is to help engage the outside community in music participation. I will be meeting with the music teacher from the Searsport Junior and Senior High School after Thanksgiving to gauge the interest in an afterschool music program. Details will be forthcoming. I am helping Carolyn secure musicians for our 2023 concert series to begin in May, and have contacted some new groups that should appeal to a wide audience.

Thank you so much for putting your faith and trust in me, and approving a new staff position. I promise I will try my best to live up to your expectations and am excited for the new possibilities.

*Make a joyful noise,  
Dionne Haase*

## NEWS FROM THE TRUSTEES

By Dan Nichols, Co- Chair

At their November meeting the trustees elected their officers for the current church year: Dan Nichols, Chair; Bill Vail, Vice Chair; and Jennifer McKeon, Secretary. Elected at the annual meeting were Sandra Otis-Anderson, Treasurer, and Art Curtis, Asst. Treasurer.

The few snowflakes we saw this past week reminds us that we should explain again the procedure should we have to cancel services because of bad weather. The chairs of the trustees (Dan Nichols) and Deacons (Priscilla King) will consult with Moderator (Phyllis Gaul) who will be consulting with Pastor Ed. Any cancellation will be made by 6:30 AM and posted on WLBZ2 TV and their web site. We'll try (if the lines are clear) to get an email out to those on our email list as well as phone calls to those who don't have email. Please let us know now if you definitely will need a phone call. Even though the church may be "open", please use your judgement when venturing out. The roads, parking lot, and walkways will not be summertime clear.

You have undoubtedly noticed some changes around our campus this past month. Kindness has consolidated their operation at the Belfast Soup Kitchen thereby opening space in the lower level of Curtis Hall. The trustees are working with Council and church committees to assess how best to use this space at the same time looking at other stowage spaces in the church. By the time you read this, Norm Otis probably will have completed the painting of the old Kindness storeroom and hallways.

The tree that previously dominated the area in front of the church by the deck and ramp is gone. Thank you to Marie Underwood's gardener, Richard, for taking the tree away and also cleaning out the gardens and gutters for the

winter. The replacement tree will be planted in the spring.

Several weeks ago, we relearned the hard lesson that we need to shut off the water valve leading to the dish washer when it's not in use. The valve is difficult to reach in the back of the cabinet next to the dish washer. Although the defective dish washer part is on order, the prudent thing to do to prevent another flood on the kitchen floor and the hallway below is to shut the water off when finished with the dish washer.

Next Trustees meeting: Wednesday December 14 @ 7:00 PM

November Trustee of the Month: Jennifer McKeon

December Trustee of the Month: Wayne Hamilton

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## SUNDAY SCHOOL NEWS

By Sue Nichols, Christian Education Chair

Plans are underway for an exciting Advent season this year. On November 27th, Advent I, the lesson will focus on the meaning of the Advent Wreath and other popular Christmas symbols. A take home mini wreath is the planned activity.

Christmas cookie baking is featured on another Sunday, and on December 18th, Advent IV, a modified Christmas Pageant is planned. Look forward to a visit by some angels and shepherds, familiar Christmas stories read by our Sunday School students, and quite a few familiar Christmas carols.

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*"For it is good to be children  
sometimes, and never better than at  
Christmas, when its mighty Founder  
was a child himself."*

*Charles Dickens*

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The winter months offer conditions suitable for contemplative prayer. Let us go forward in love, remembering that God is seeking us in love, and let love be the basis for discovering God's will in each of our lives. May you have a blessed Christmas.

*With grace and peace,*

*--Pastor Ed*

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## **SEAFARER'S FRIENDS NEWS**

By Sue Nichols

Twenty-five Ditty Bags are almost completed. For the first time, they will be presented to the seamen on one of the ships that regularly unloads cargo at Mack Point in Searsport Harbor. In my mind, I think of the giving of these bags as a gesture of hospitality and warm wishes for the Christmas season from all of us from the First Congregational Church of Searsport.

Many thanks go to our hat knitters (Lee Nahme and Priscilla King) and Ditty Bag sewer (Priscilla), along with generous donations from Dorothy Alling (tee shirts), Wayne Hamilton (Hamilton Marine first aid kits, pads of paper and pens), Sandra Otis-Anderson (shampoo), and Women's Fellowship, who is covering the cost of the other sixteen items.

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## **MISSION NEWS**

By Nancy Hamilton, Chair

### **Hurricane Relief**

The Mission Committee, the rest of our congregation, and all those who purchased beans and/or bread at the Fall Fair have made it possible for us to send a check for \$1,275 to the Southern Baptist Disaster Relief organization's relief and recovery efforts in Florida and the

other states hit by Hurricane Ian this fall. Thank you, everyone!

### **Angels in Action**

We will have the names of children of Waldo County prisoners for our Angels in Action Christmas gift program available on Sunday, December 4. Gifts (wrapped and labeled) should be returned the next Sunday, December 11, to ensure delivery by Christmas.

Giving these gifts in the name of the incarcerated parent can help maintain the parent/child bond through a very difficult time, and providing gifts is a real help to the parents and grandparents who are often struggling to raise these children while a parent is locked away. Thank you in advance for supporting this effort!

### **Bayview Manor**

The Missions Committee will again be delivering gift bags for the staff at Bayview Manor, as we did last year. Caring for our fragile elderly is a difficult, sometimes heartbreaking, and often unappreciated job, so this is one way we can show our appreciation and share the joy of Christmas.

Our next meeting is December 7 at 10:00 AM in the Murphy Room. All are welcome!!

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## **WATCH FOR THE WREATHS!!**

The Wreaths Across America convoy will be coming through Searsport on Sunday, December 11. It is scheduled to leave Ellsworth about 10:45 AM, and be at Hannaford in China at 12:45 PM, so sometime between those times it will be coming through Searsport.

It's a very heartwarming sight to see all the decorated trucks and all the law enforcement vehicles accompanying the wreaths on their way to Arlington Cemetery and others across the country.

## COMMUNITY NEWS

From Karen Kelley

### Searsport Tree Lighting

The Town Tree lighting will be Saturday, December 3rd, at 6 pm at the Penobscot Marine Museum's Crescent Park on Main Street. There will be carol singing on the Methodist Church lawn with Hot cocoa and homemade cookies. Please join the Events Committee for this very special event.



### Holiday House Tour

The Searsport Historical Society is excited to once again hold our Annual Holiday House Tour on Saturday, December 10th from noon to 4:30 pm. There will be eight stops on the tour starting with the Crary/Carlin/Colman House on Sears Island Road where you can purchase your tickets that day for \$15, have a tour of the historic house and see the lovely decorations and enjoy a beverage and homemade treats. The Keith & Dawn Ritchie home will feature an exhibit of Christmas villages which includes a train display. The newly renovated Capt. Nickles Inn and the Homeport Inn & Tavern, The Penobscot Marine Museum's "Old Vestry" on Church Street with an exhibit of old pictures of Searsport. The First Congregational Church will be beautifully decorated and offering performances by the Bell Choir, members of the Choral Choir, and other instrumental presentations throughout the afternoon. The United Methodist Church will once again have a Creche display. And finally, the Phyllis Gaul Home also beautifully decorated for the holidays. All of these stops offer a taste of Searsport's history.

Tickets will be available the day of the tour at the Crary/Carlin/Colman House for \$15 or if you wish to purchase early you may call Karen Kelley at 548-2947.

### Historical Society Meeting

The final meeting of the Searsport Historical Society for 2022 will be our annual Christmas Party which will be held at the Crary/Carlin/Colman House on the Sears Island Road, Tuesday evening at 6 pm, on December 13th. The Board of Directors will be providing a "Sweet & Savory" buffet and the party is open to the public. We ask that you bring an unwrapped toy that will be donated to the "Christmas for Searsport children" program. Please come and join us, we look forward to seeing you there.

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## DECEMBER CALENDAR

- December 4**, After church, Angels in Action names available in Curtis Hall
- December 6**, 10:00 AM, Women's' Fellowship, Curtis Hall
- December 7 and 21**, 8:00 AM, Men's Breakfast, Methodist Church
- December 7**, 10:00 AM, Missions Committee, Murphy Room
- December 8**, 5:00 PM, Community Carol Sing, Curtis Hall
- December 10**, 12:00-4:30 PM, Historical Society Open House Tour, Sanctuary
- December 10**, 7:00 PM, Pen Bay Singers Concert, Sanctuary.
- December 11**, Bring Angels in Action gifts to Curtis Hall
- December 14**, Choir carols at Bayview Manor
- December 14**, 7:00 PM, Trustees Meeting
- December 18**, Lessons and Carols, Children's Christmas Pageant
- December 18**, Deadline for Landmark articles
- December 24**, 7:00, Christmas Eve Candlelight Service
- December 25**, 10:00 Sunday worship service
- December 27**, 3:30 PM, Deacons' Meeting

## CONTACT INFORMATION

### Church

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/fccsearsport/>

Email: [fccsearsport@gmail.com](mailto:fccsearsport@gmail.com)

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### Pastor Ed Gabrielsen

Office hours: Tues., Wed. 8AM-4PM (or by appt.)

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### Bill Zito, Administrative Assistant

Office (and home) hours: Tues., Thurs. 11AM-3PM

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### Carolyn Maunz, Minister of Music

Office/prep hours: Tues. 8:30-10:30AM, Thurs. 1:00-2:00PM

Email: [clmaunz@icloud.com](mailto:clmaunz@icloud.com)

Home phone: 207-567-8039



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For unto us a child is born,  
unto us a son is given...

Isaiah 9:6

