



The Landmark

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A Letter From The Pastor

Dear Congregation,

As January begins, we say goodbye to the old, familiar year and greet the new, unknown one. We celebrated a beautiful Advent and Christmas together, growing together as a loving and supportive community. And now it is fitting to begin the new year with Epiphany because this is the season of unexpected discovery and insight. What will this new year bring to us? In what new ways will we learn and grow? At this point, we cannot really answer this question because we are moving forward into unknown territory. But no matter how old we are, there continue to be new possibilities. And most of the time, at least, it seems to me, learning and growing happen during difficult times, that is, during times of transition. Transitions in our lives are challenging, and we usually do not want them to occur. But life keeps changing, and we must keep adapting to change.

It's not easy, but I have found that the most difficult transitions are the ones that require of me the most growth. Difficult transitions offer challenges in which we are forced to grow, forced to ask new questions, and in so doing, to create the conditions in which unexpected discoveries, new insights, and new adventures occur. And when a transition resolves, we may find ourselves in a completely new life. For example, when I entered seminary six years ago, I had no idea how difficult it was going to be, how much I would struggle, or where it would lead. But through it all, God was calling me to a new life, and now here I am in Searsport with you! One step leads to another, and even though we don't always know where the road will lead, we step out in faith.

We cannot truly recognize a transition for what it is until after we have gone through it. In other words, when we are in the middle of a transition, we cannot recognize it because it is a threshold experience. Standing on a threshold, we stand between two rooms. We are leaving one behind but have not yet entered the other. We are neither here nor there, but rather, we are in-between. This "in-between" experience can be frightening because there is so much uncertainty. We no longer know who we are or where we are going. People in the middle of a transition are no longer the persons they used to be, nor are they yet the persons they will become. Until we completely arrive at our new destination, we will not have a complete perspective on the transition we have just come through. Standing on a threshold, we know where we have been, but we do not know how our transition will resolve. It is this sense of uncertainty, of not knowing where the road leads, that makes transitions so difficult.

I'm sure you can relate to this experience. As you look back across the trajectory of your life, can you now recognize, from your present vantage point, the times that were transitional? When you were going from a familiar Point A to an unknown Point B, perhaps you experienced confusion and uncertainty, not knowing exactly what the outcome would be. But there was no way of knowing how things would turn out. And this uncertainty is precisely what makes transitions frightening and uncomfortable.

I believe this is where faith can be so helpful. As we step into the unknown new year, we can be encouraged, through our faith, that transitions eventually resolve. They deepen us and produce endurance. Whatever the challenges we may face during the coming year, our faith in God's goodness and love will give us tremendous courage to navigate our journey.

Grace and peace to you for the New Year,

--*Pastor Ed*

JANUARY BIRTHDAYS

4-Jan	Tiffany Butler
11-Jan	Audrey Deveney
14-Jan	Rexford (Rex) Kelley
16-Jan	Brenda Holweger
18-Jan	Carter Middleswart
22-Jan	Ezra Middleswart
23-Jan	Nicole Middleswart
23-Jan	Wesley Butler

DIRECT FROM THE DEACONS

By Karen Kelley, Deacon of the Month

The Board of Deacons have been working with half of the Board this very busy Advent. We are praying for Priscilla's recovery from hip surgery, Dorothy's recent diagnosis and her care of David, and Barbara's relocation for the winter in Florida. Thank you to Mary, Jill, myself and Pastor Ed for ably getting things done. A special thank-you to all who worked so diligently in getting our Sanctuary beautifully decorated for the holidays, and to Carolyn & Dionne for all the time they have put in to bringing us the special music, and guest musicians.

With a request of many in the congregation Pastor Ed has brought back a time for silent prayer. He will be taking some time to visit his mother the week after Christmas and has found a supply minister to lead us in worship on January 1st. The Board decided to wait to have communion on January 8th when he has returned.

We are always in need of ushers and greeters for our Sunday morning services. Please take a moment to sign the sign-up sheet in the narthex. The Deacons are making good use of the Deacons Fund as we continue to help those in our church and community with their needs. We can always use your donation to this very worthy fund.

WOMEN'S FELLOWSHIP NEWS

By Karen Kelley, President

The Women's Fellowship met on December 6th with a new President at the helm. We thank Phyllis Gaul for her leadership and service for the past 6 years and her assurance that she will be continue to be an active member of the Fellowship.

The ditty bags are being filled and will be delivered on time for Christmas. We set a tentative date for our Valentine Chocolate Fest for February 11th. It will probably be a virtual event as we did last year. The money from the fest goes to the Inter-Faith Fuel Fund to help keep families warm.

We are considering having an auction instead of a yard sale next spring, so please consider this when you are doing your spring housecleaning!

Our next meeting will be Tuesday, January 4th in the Murphy Room. Please consider joining us and helping with the work we do to support our church and community needs.

JANUARY CALENDAR

January 3, 10:00 a.m., Womens' Fellowship, Curtis Hall

January 4, 10:00 a.m., Missions Committee, Murphy Room

January 4 and 18, 8:00 a.m., Men's Breakfast, Methodist Church

January 11, 7:00 p.m., Trustees Meeting

January 15, Deadline for Landmark articles

January 15, 11:30 a.m., Church Council Meeting, Murphy Room

January 31, 3:30 p.m., Deacons' Meeting



MUSIC NOTES

By Carolyn Maunz and Dionne Haase

From the Minister of Music

"And now we welcome the new year. Full of things that have never been."

—*Rainer Maria Rilke, poet*

As the poet says, the New Year will be “full of things that have never been”. New experiences, new songs to sing, new people in our lives. We look forward to what the new year will bring in our church. New Anthems and Introits, new instrumentals and instrumentalists, new bell ringers, solos and ensembles, as well as many opportunities in our local school and community.

Dionne and I worked to add some extra music to pre-Christmas events, and some community experiences that were very well received. We will build on those in the coming year. We are grateful to each member of our church who participated in making these events a success. If you want the BEST Hot Chocolate, come to the Community Carol Sing next year! We thank Mary Alden for her work on that, as well as all who made cookies and attended and sang.

Our Concert Series is well under way, with some new performers awaiting confirmation, and others have already agreed to perform. We have the Katahdin Valley Boys in July, Dixieland in September, and an Organ Concert in October. In November we will have our Second Festival of Gratitude, a choir festival featuring choirs from several local churches, as well as a combined choir under the direction of Nancy Cole and accompanied by our own Dionne Haase. 2023 will undoubtedly hold many opportunities for music! Be sure to join those whenever you are able.

We would like to thank the Trustees for agreeing to keep the church temperature at 55 degrees, instead of 50 degrees. That small change has kept the organ in better tune, and the stops easier to pull out in the colder weather. Andover Organ said that was the lowest temperature at which the organ should be kept on a regular basis, to hold its tune. It is always colder in behind the organ, than it is out on the floor, and this has helped so much.

I contacted Carlton Russell, always a friend of our church, after I felt Dionne and others could benefit from his skilled teaching, and broad organ experience. He said he would be “delighted to come out of mothballs” to teach again, so long as the students could read music and had keyboard skills and music experience. In addition to Dionne, Pastor Ed is taking lessons, and Jay Holweger has returned to study organ with Carlton, after some years away. Carlton is a wealth of knowledge and personable and is enjoying his time with the students. And the students are finding him a person of fascinating stories and great teaching abilities.

From the Associate Minister of Music

Happy 2023 from the choir room. As I reflect back on my first 2 months in my new position as the Associate Minister of Music the first word that comes to mind is grateful. I am grateful that you, as a congregation, have welcomed me with such warmth and continued dedication to Carolyn and my ministry.

I am grateful for the commitment the adult and children's choirs had exhibited and appreciate each singer. December was a whirlwind of introits, anthems, duets, solos, community sing-alongs, an open house, fabulous Christmas cookies and wonderful hot chocolate (thank you Mary).

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A special event for me was the recording of the organ, bells, and choir for the Penobscot Museum project. Thank you to all who participated. As I look forward to the upcoming Winter season, my hope is for health and happiness for the choir and the larger congregation.

If you have ever wondered what singing in a choir is like, please check us out. A choir robe and music are waiting for you. The adult choir is made up of a wonderful, eclectic group, each with their own talents and abilities. No prior experience is necessary. The choir meets downstairs on Thursdays at 3 pm.

MISSION NEWS

By Nancy Hamilton, Chair

December was a busy month for the Missions Committee. At our meeting, we voted to again provide Christmas gift bags to the staff at Bayview Manor, with Dunkin Donut gift cards, hand cream, and lip balm—all useful in winter! We also decided to donate \$200 to the Bayview Manor Activities Fund, to help provide outings for the residents. The gift bags and the check were delivered when the choir went caroling at Bayview on December 14.

On December 18, the “Angels” in our congregation outdid themselves in providing gifts for 36 children of Waldo County inmates. Thank you all, for your support of this effort, and thank you to Jill Perkins, who helped organize all the gifts into family groups for delivery to the Belfast Re-Entry Center.



Missions also provided an opportunity for our congregation to write Christmas cards to the women served by CourageLIVES. The plan was to put all the cards into an envelope and send it to the organization’s office, but an amazing thing happened. Phyllis Gaul was given 5 full-sized and 5 child-sized quilts, all hand-quilted by a friend who knew Phyllis could find a good home for them. The quilts, as well as the cards were picked up on December 19 by Carey Nason, CourageLIVES director.

We haven’t just been thinking about Christmas. At the December meeting we decided to again offer the Ukrainian pysanky eggs during Lent. The colorful Easter eggs were very popular last year, and the proceeds from their sale allowed us to help several relief efforts serving that war-torn country.

Our next meeting will be January 4, at 10:00 in the Murphy Room. All who are interested in our mission and outreach efforts are welcome!

NEWS FROM THE TRUSTEES

By Dan Nichols, Co- Chair

Norm Otis has completed painting the hallways and large storeroom on the lower level of Curtis Hall. The storeroom floor will be cleaned and waxed in the next couple of weeks. This room will be set up as a storage room with shelving etc. to be shared by our various church groups. We also hope that it will be the home for the Christmas tree and decorations which now have to be wrestled up and down to the church balcony.

We envision the smaller room at the south end of that hall will be configured as a small meeting room with desk space for temporary use that would be handy for those working on special projects. The room will first need painting and the rug replaced.

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If you didn't see the videos Jeana Ganskop, the museum's education director, made of the church's history and of some music from the organ, choir, and bells here are the links to the museum's YouTube website:

<https://youtu.be/woCXDiEoMB8> and https://youtu.be/L_1igBk_LGk.

If we have to cancel church services due to bad weather, we'll put the notice on WLBZ2 TV and website by 6:30.

From the treasurer - Sandra will be mailing out the individual contribution records for 2022 in mid-January. Call her if you have any questions. The 2023 offering envelopes are in the back of the sanctuary. Please sign the receipt sheet and use them for your offerings. Their use really helps with our record keeping.

A security note — A reminder that we have instituted some of the security measures that we used way back before Covid closed us down. At the beginning of the church service around 10:00, the trustees will lock the lower level doors and the main Curtis Hall door. These doors will be available anytime for those of you with keys and always can be opened from the inside. The main entrance door to the church will be open and someone will be there to greet any late arrivals. As always, we welcome all for worship and our activities. Please alert the trustees or any church officer if you note any activity that gives you pause. Do not leave purses unattended.

Trustee of the Month for December: Wayne Hamilton

Trustee of the Month for January: Jennifer McKeon

Next Trustees meeting: Wednesday January 11 @ 7:00

A FLAGPOLE

By Karen Kelley

Being the granddaughter of a WWI veteran, the daughter of a WWII veteran, and the wife of a Vietnam veteran I went to the Trustees meeting on December 14th and presented a plan to put a flagpole on our church property in memory of past, present and future veterans who have attended our church.



My plan is to raise the money needed to complete the project. In fact, I've spoken to some of you and without asking, have raised about \$1500 of the estimated \$5000 to \$6000 that may be needed (I tend to overestimate). This tells me that putting a flagpole on church property is something that others would like to see happen as well.

While I'm still researching in order to make the best choices, what I've found so far is estimated costs which include purchasing a good quality commercial 20' to 25' pole; a 3x5' flag; preparing a suitable spot of land in the front of the church near the lamppost beside the ramp to install the pole that will not impinge on museum property; a solar powered light that attaches to the pole to insure the 24 hour required lighting on the flag; crushed rock placed over fabric paper to lessen needed maintenance; purchasing a four foot granite bench; and the costs to get the site ready and the installation completed.

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I've gone to the town office and spoken with Randy Hall, Code Enforcement Officer, who tells me this plan does not need town approval. He gave me a copy of Searsport's Lighting Ordinance and suggested I speak to George Kerper, the Chair of the Planning Board, who said that the solar lighting will not be a hazard to the surrounding area, so does not need approval from the Planning Board.

I received a motion and unanimous approval from the Board of Trustees to move ahead with the project. I invite and very much appreciate ideas, kind criticisms, and opinions. My hope is to complete this project in a timely manner.

SEAFARERS' FRIEND

By Sue Nichols

25 ditty bags were stuffed and ready for delivery earlier this month. (Photo below)



Last week, on December 15th, the bags were picked up by George Rogers, a resident of Lincolnville, shown in the photo with me.

George is an interesting fellow who is a retired ship's engineer with thirty years' experience on all sorts of vessels. Like Sue Nichols' father, George's father also served in the Merchant Marines during WWII.



During his years at sea, George had been the recipient of at least one ditty bag, and often visited the seamen's gathering places associated with the Seafarer's Friend Mission. After he retired, he wanted to give back to the organization that had been so helpful to him over the years. He is now a certified ship's visitor for Seafarer's Friend and regularly visits ships that come into Searsport and Bucksport Harbors. He goes on board and talks with crew, and often takes them ashore. Their favorite store is Walmart!

When asked which ship will receive our ditty bags, he said that he'll wait for a call from Ida MacRae, who visited FCC in September. George promised to send pictures of the crew when they receive their ditty bags.

SUNDAY SCHOOL NEWS

By Sue Nichols

We have had a wonderful Advent Season, beginning with the decorating of the Sunday School tree in Curtis Hall by Shayla and Annie, who did a great job.

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On the first Sunday in Advent, pictured below, the children were fully involved in making their own Advent wreaths to take home, complete with tiny blue, white and pink candles and fresh greens.



On Advent II and III, we discussed the Christmas story, read through the Pageant script, and tried on angel and shepherd costumes.

On Advent IV, the children presented a wonderful Pageant that was tailored to our smaller group of seven children. It had everything: a trumpet announcement, the Christmas story read with feeling, clever costumes, lots of familiar carols, a trumpet solo, and a heartfelt anthem by the young people who asked “What should they bring Him?”



The Pageant, from left to right: Annie, Ezra, Beckham, Shayla, Katie and Harmony. Carter, not pictured, was the trumpeter and Stage Manager. Pastor Ed was the Narrator.

As if that wasn't excitement enough, there was a special visit by Santa himself in Curtis Hall. Parents and grandparents were delighted to have photo opportunities for each child with Santa.



CONTACT INFORMATION

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“Although our New Year’s resolutions may quickly crumble, God’s plans never fail.”

--Charles Stanley