

THE TIMES NEWSLETTER

*A publication of the First Congregational Church
of Scarborough, Maine 04074*

MARCH 2020



MINISTER'S CORNER

Dear Friends:

The great Protestant reformer Martin Luther once said of the law, *lex semper accusat*: the law always accuses.

In the classic Charlie Chaplin film *The Immigrant*, Chaplin played the immigrant character, newly arrived in this country without a penny in his pocket. One scene shows him eating a huge meal in a restaurant, knowing all the time that he doesn't have any money.

Between mouthfuls of his food he notices a huge, burly waiter and three large bouncers pounce on a customer, beat him to a pulp, kick him, and then toss him out into the street. Charlie asks another waiter what the man had done.

The waiter responded, "He was ten cents short."

That's the way the law works. If you play by its rules and come up short of what the law demands, even a dime short, you are out on your ear. Many of us believe that in this life we sit at the table of the Lord and feast on the blessings God serves us, but in the end God is going to hand us a check and demand some kind of payment.

In the Gospels, there are numerous stories of people who know they are religiously bankrupt, holding empty wallets and purses, and are in need of a benefactor to stand before God and pay their bill. These people can only throw themselves on the mercy of God and trust that they will not be pounced on, beaten up, kicked, and thrown out into the street. Jesus affirms them by saying, "Your faith has made you well." In other words, says Jesus tells them that the law they had been living by, which never stops accusing, has been overruled by the grace of God.

This Lenten season, may you discover that no burly waiter or muscle-bound bouncers are going to pounce on you and throw you out of God's kingdom on your ear. Because you see, the check for the meal you have been enjoying your whole life has already been paid for in advance by Christ. But you can leave the Lord a tip by living your life with joyous gratitude and love, and praising God for the grace He has shown you.



MINISTER'S CORNER (Cont.)THE LENTEN LUNCHESES CONTINUE!

The Lenten Lunches have begun, but there are more to come on Wednesdays from noon to 1 p.m. at St. Maximillian's Catholic Church. The devotions are always inspiring, the various soups and chowders are delicious, and the fellowship among people from our area churches is delightful. Please plan on attending one or more of the remaining Lenten Lunch events. The dates and church sponsors are:

March 11th – Blue Point Congregational Church, UCC
 March 18th – Scarborough Baptist Church
 March 25th – St. Maximillian Catholic Church
 April 1st – West Scarborough United Methodist Church

STEWARDSHIP SUNDAY IS MARCH 15TH

Stewardship Sunday, March 15th, is right around the corner. Pledge cards were handed out at the Stewardship Brunch on March 1st. Those who did not attend the brunch will receive their stewardship packets by mail. If you do not already have your packet, it should be arriving soon, so please watch your mailbox or contact the church office if you have any questions. On Stewardship Sunday you are encouraged to come to the worship service and personally offer your filled out 2020-21 pledges of support so they can be dedicated to God. Thank you for your generous past giving; and thank you in advance for your continued support of the ministry and mission work of our church.

STEWARDSHIP MOMENT

God measures our gifts not by the greatness of them, but by the self-denial they express in giving them.

Unknown author

TIME OUT FOR PRAYER

O Lord, during this Lenten season transform my soul so that I may attain a genial spirit and unwearied forbearance; a mild, loving, patient heart; kindly looks, cordial speech and pleasant manners in the interactions of daily life; that I may give offence to none, and as much as possible live in charity with all people.

John Arndt (adapted)

* * * **Prayer is the world's greatest wireless communication** * * *

A NEW BIBLE STUDY BEGINNING APRIL 1st through May 6th, will meet on Wednesdays from 3:00—4:30 pm in the Ladies Parlor. This DVD study, “Evidence That Demands a Verdict” is taught by Josh McDowell and his son, Sean McDowell, PhD. It explores the historical reliability of the Bible, the claim of Jesus to be God, and evidences for the Resurrection. It includes a study guide (cost approximately \$8.00) with questions for discussion and for personal study through each week. For more information contact Elizabeth Deal, who will be leading the group. (Phone: 799-4599) Please sign up before or by March 15 for study guides to be ordered.

BIBLE STUDY BASED ON THE GOSPEL OF JOHN ENDS FOR NOW

The Bible study of the Gospel of John, led by Sheryl Rhodes, will cease during the Month of March. Facilitator Sheryl Rhodes is traveling this month and there are also concerns about the coronavirus. For more information, please contact Sheryl Rhodes at 636-399-7239 or sheryl@slrhodes.com

CROCK POT SUPPER CANCELLED: The Crock Pot Supper, originally scheduled for March 14, has been cancelled due to community health concerns.

WOMEN’S FELLOWSHIP MONTHLY MEETING

March 24th, 2020 at 7:00 in the Ladies Parlor

The topic is “Travel Do’s and Don’ts, featuring Sandy Elder and Merry Robert.

NEWS FROM THE MEN’S FELLOWSHIP

NEXT MEETING: March 14, Saturdays at 8:30 am in the Ladies Lounge.

All men of the church are welcome to join for this monthly get-together.

Contact Dan Davidson with any questions at danprpro@gwi.net or 767-4682

MEN’S FELLOWSHIP ONGOING ACTIVITIES:

The 4th Annual Moe’s BBQ fundraiser will be held on September 23. Please put this on your Calendar and plan to attend.

The Church’s Sales Tax Exemption at Lowe’s and Home Depot has been updated.

FUNERAL PRE-ARRANGMENTS SEMINAR

A free seminar on funeral pre-arrangements, open to church members and the community, will be sponsored by Men’s Fellowship on Saturday, April 18, at 2:00 p.m., in the church vestry. Pre-arrangements can significantly reduce the stress and complexity of losing a family member. The seminar will be conducted by Jeffrey Inman, licensed funeral director at Hobbs Funeral Homes. Come with a notepad ... and your questions.

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED FOR USHERING AND FLOWERS. We are trying to have 4 ushers at each service. Please sign up to usher and/or let an usher know when you arrive at church on Sunday if you would be willing to help during Offertory-Collection.

MINISTRY MEETINGS

Governing & Finance: **March 16th, Monday 7:00 pm** meet in the Annex.

Worship & Spiritual Care: **March 22, Sunday, 11:00 am** meet in the Ladies Parlor

Members, Friends & Church Life: **April 19, Sunday, 11:00 am** meet in the Ladies' Parlor.

OTHER MEETINGS

Long Range Planning Committee, March 7, Saturday, and
March 28, Saturday
9:00 AM - Noon, meet in the Annex

Men's Fellowship, Saturday, March 14th, 8:30 am, meet in the Ladies Parlor

Womens' Fellowship Monthly Meeting, Tuesday, March 24th , 7:00 pm
meet in the Ladies Parlor

EASTER CANTATA REHEARSALS HAVE BEGUN. Please join us in the Sanctuary each Sunday after Neighboring to practice the Cantata that will be featured in our Easter service. This is a great way to experience the joys and benefits of choral singing this Spring.

STITCHERS & CRAFTERS UNITE!

Stitching Together (formerly "Pitch The Stitch") resumes on Wednesday, March 18, meeting at 1:00 pm in the Annex Parlor. All are welcome. Bring a project to work or just come to chat.

Crafters and Knitter are always welcome to make items for sale at the Christmas Fair. Please let us know if you have a "pet" project you would suggest for the Fair.

PREBLE STREET DONATIONS: A reminder that the third Sunday of the month is designated as "Undies Sunday". The Sock Ministry has been changed to Underwear Ministry at the request of the Center. In addition, all items of clothin (new and slightly used) are gratefully accepted. A basket is located in the Narthex for donations.

SINGERS AND STRINGERS resume practice on Wednesday April 15th at 6:30 pm in the Church Sanctuary and will provide the musical program at the service of April 19th. See Brenda or Ray Birkner for more information.

NEWSLETTER AVAILABLE ON THE CHURCH WEBSITE: www.fccscarborough.com

The monthly church Newsletter is posted on the Church website, which is **www.fccscarborough.com**. Try the website if you cannot open the Newsletter in your e-mail or on your phone.

IMPORTANT ANNOUNCEMENT REGARDING FLU AND CORONAVIRUS PREVENTION

As you know, a newly emerging virus called the coronavirus is much in the news. So much so, in fact, that we have almost forgotten that it is still flu season, and the flu can be a serious, and even deadly illness for the elderly and those with compromised immune systems.

At the last Council meeting we discussed possible options to help prevent the spread of both the flu and coronavirus in our church. Some of the actions we are taking may seem extreme, but our goal is the health and safety of our parishioners and visitors. So, we will be taking these steps for the time being.

When you come to church, the ushers will approach you to squirt some hand sanitizer gel on your hands. We ask you to be receptive to this and rub the gel on your hands until it has been completely absorbed. The Sacrament of Holy Communion will be done by Intinction (people come forward to receive the bread and take an individual cup) to prevent numerous hands from touching the bread.

We will not be shaking hands and hugging after worship. We will find other ways to greet you and convey warmth and welcome.

At Neighboring, snacks will be served to you by one of the neighboring hosts (sort of like a bakery or deli, where you point out what you would like and it is given to you). As with Holy Communion, this is to prevent numerous hands from touching the food. Coffee and other drinks will be served the way they always have.

We hope you will understand that we are taking these actions, not out of a sense of alarm but out of precaution, and they are intended to safeguard the health of the congregation and all who come among us. If you have thoughts or questions, Pastor Gagnon will be glad to discuss them with you. Thank you.



TECHNOLOGY TIP:

The church recently upgraded our phone system to Spectrum's (formerly Time Warner Cable/TWC) phone service. As a result of this change our former email addresses that used the legacy TWC 'road runner' system (those ending in '@maine.rr.com') were unexpectedly discontinued by Spectrum. We were informed that Spectrum is retiring these legacy email addresses and they could not be restored.

The church opted to transition our mail accounts to the same website that hosts our church website so that our e-mail addresses will have the same domain as our web site address: fccurch@fccscarboroug.com, revfredgagnon@fccScarborough.com, etc)

Since the transition we've discovered that some members and friends of the church using these legacy TWC email addresses are experiencing inconsistent email delivery to our new church email 'domain' (@fccscarborough.com). Spectrum's technical support confirmed this issue and informed us that the legacy email system is no longer being updated and recommended that our members and friends should migrate to supported email addresses (those not ending in @maine.rr.com). Spectrum does not seem to be broadly communicating this to their customers to our knowledge.

We are sharing these learnings from our email transition to alert you to the potential issue of using legacy Time Warner email address. If you have further concerns you may want to contact Spectrum support directly for recommendations for your specific situation.

Return Mailing Address:

First Congregational Church
of Scarborough
161 Black Point Road
Scarborough, ME 04074

2020 EASTER FLOWERS ORDER FORM

Please help us prepare our sanctuary for the glorious celebration of Easter on April 12th. Flowers may be dedicated “in memory of” or “in honor of” loved ones. The dedications will be listed in the bulletin on Easter Sunday.

Please fill out the order form, then mail it or bring it to the church office with your check: 161 Black Point Road. Any questions, please call Elaine at the church office@883-2342. You may also bring in your own Spring plant of any variety to the church office by Friday, April 10th.

The deadline for ordering plants is Wednesday, April 1st:

Please indicate quantity of the item you wish to order.

___ **Double Lily (8” pot) ...\$30.00**

___ **Tulips (6” pot) \$20.00**

___ **Hyacinths (6” pot) \$20.00**

___ **Spring Mix (6” pot)... \$20.00 (New this year – Assorted flowers)**

Dedication - *Please circle one* (in memory of / in honor of)

Given by _____

Phone number _____ **E-mail** _____

Bringing my own plant _____

PLEASE take your plants home after the Easter Sunday Service. Thank you.

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