

THE TIMES NEWSLETTER

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

FEBRUARY 2020



MINISTER'S CORNER

Dear Friends:

A man named Vincent shared the following story.

“A jumbled roll of barbed wire that I saw while hiking last summer reminded me of something that happened to my brother-in-law. Several years ago, Jerry was leading his horse through a pasture. The horse stepped into some unseen barbed wire and got tangled in it. The more it struggled to get free, the more ensnared it became. Jerry tried to calm the horse and unravel the wirey mess, but the animal resisted his every attempt. The horse reared and struggled, the flesh was cut deeply, and the blood streamed down its legs. It wasn't until the horse collapsed in exhaustion that Jerry could free it and tend its many wounds.

“This story reminds me of how I get myself tangled up in bad situations. Resisting God's help, I struggle and struggle on my own to get free, but most times it only makes my problem worse. I often get hurt and collapse from emotional exhaustion before I remember that God is there, trying to get me out of the tangle. Once I calm down and turn to God, I realize that I don't have to do it alone. So often I ignore the Lord as a powerful advocate who is always available to me. When will I learn?”

This year the Lenten season begins on February 26th (Ash Wednesday). Some individuals don't really care for Lent. I have heard people say that it's too somber for them and brings them down. They wonder, “Why do we need to think about the cross? Why can't we just skip over that gloomy part and get right to Easter?”

My response is that Lent is an important reminder to us. It reminds us that, figuratively speaking, we all step into a roll of barbed wire at times and get ourselves tangled up; and when we struggle to get out of that wirey mess on our own, we only end up becoming more and more ensnared. The Lenten season also reminds us that God sent Christ to help us escape from the spiritual entanglements we find ourselves in and tend to our many wounds.

As somber as Lent might be, it also assures us that we are never alone in our toils and troubles. Jesus came into the world to reveal God's love—a love that was expressed most powerfully when he was crucified and died on Golgotha. And the gates of eternal life were opened to us through Jesus' resurrection. But you can't have the empty tomb without Golgotha. We have to go through Lent and the cross before we can get to Easter and the resurrection.

ASH WEDNESDAY

Ash Wednesday, the start of Lent, is on February 26th. If you would like to receive ashes there will be two opportunities to do so. Pastor Gagnon will be in the sanctuary from 1 to 2:30 p.m. and 6 to 7 p.m. A self-guided devotion booklet will be available for any who wish to use it to help focus on the meaning of the Lenten season. Those who wish to simply stop by the sanctuary, receive ashes and leave are welcome to do so. Pastor Gagnon will also be available to offer individual prayers or just to talk.

MINISTER'S CORNER (Cont.)

LENTEN LUNCHESES ARE BACK!

This year we will once again have Lenten Lunches on five Wednesdays from noon to 1 p.m. St. Maximilian's Catholic Church will host them as they have done for the past several years. For those who might not know what the Lenten Lunches are, various Scarborough-area churches sign up for a Wednesday afternoon during Lent to take charge of one. The pastor of that church leads a brief devotion service, and the church provides a simple lunch of soups, chowders, bread and crackers. It's a wonderful time of ecumenical fellowship and spiritual nurturing. We hope you can join us for one or more of them! The dates are:

March 4th – First Congregational Church of Scarborough
March 11th –
March 18th –
March 25th –
April 1st –

As you can see, our church will kick off the first Lenten Lunch on March 4th. I will lead the devotion service and members of our congregation will provide the food. I will be hanging a sign-up sheet on the vestry bulletin board very soon so we can plan who will be bringing what for the March 4th lunch. Please look for it. Thank you!

STEWARDSHIP SUNDAY IS COMING

FYI: Stewardship Sunday is a little over a month away, on Sunday, March 15th. The Ministry of Outreach and Stewardship is planning for what we hope will be another successful stewardship campaign. One of the scheduled events is our annual, and very popular, Stewardship Brunch on March 1st after worship. (See below for more details.) Please keep an eye out for your 2020 stewardship packet, which is coming soon to a mail box near you!

YOU ARE INVITED TO BRUNCH ON MARCH 1ST

As part of its 2020 Stewardship campaign, the Ministry of Christian Outreach and Stewardship is inviting everyone in our church to attend a special Stewardship Brunch during the Neighboring time on Sunday, March 1st. There will be a variety of delicious foods to enjoy, and Stewardship campaign packets will be given out as well. You don't have to bring anything but yourselves. We hope to see you there!

I HEARD GOD LAUGH

I heard God laugh today. It wasn't loud or uproarious or sarcastic. It was more like the understanding chuckle of a parent listening to a child. At the time I was busy working around the house and complaining to God about a friend. Yesterday she called asking for advice in my area of expertise. She seemed satisfied with my answers, but when she left she said, "Please pray for me. I need wisdom." Today my friend called back. She had made her decision. Ignoring my advice, she had done the opposite of what I had recommended.

Feeling insulted, I complained as I vacuumed the floor. "Lord, I don't understand. Why does she bother? Why ask for help and then ignore it?" I sensed a gentle nudge and was reminded of times I had asked God for wisdom. Had God given it? Did I always listen?

Silence.

It was then I heard God laugh.

A WRONG SENSE OF VALUE

We have all engaged in comparison shopping, haven't we? We "shop around," as the saying goes. And that's smart. It's how we find the best values, the bargains.

Archbishop William Temple said that life is like a huge store window, and whether we like to shop or not, we must do some comparative shopping. The catch is, pranksters have switched the price tags, so that things of great value are priced as worthless baubles, while cheap, gaudy trash is priced extremely high.

Temple went on to say that the tragedy of it is, we go along with the joke. We believe the switched price tags to be true, and let ourselves be taken in. Jesus came to switch the price tags back around so we would come to know what is truly valuable and what is not.



STEWARDSHIP MOMENT

Stewardship is what we do after we have said, "I believe."

Do you believe? Then what will you do?

Clarence Stoughton
United Lutheran Church Stewardship Director

TIME OUT FOR PRAYER

Heavenly Father,
We have decided for your kingdom
and dared to take your cup.

But we confess that we do not understand
the fearsome consequences of obedience.

When we are brought to the test as Jesus was
during his 40 day wilderness journey,
steady our nerves and hold us in our faith.

Enable us to resist any temptation that
can cause us to stray from you.
Through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.



FCC SCARBOROUGH'S CHURCH'S INCLEMENT WEATHER POLICY

We all know that Maine winters are unpredictable and can be treacherous. So, if there is a significant storm on Saturday night or it is storming on Sunday morning, make sure you check to make sure the service hasn't been cancelled before venturing out. Cancellation notices will be posted on our church's website, at **fccscarborough.com**. Also, the First Congregational Church of Scarborough is now registered with **WCSH and WGME TV**, and a cancellation announcement will run on both of those stations as early in the morning as possible. Finally, you can call the office at **883-2342**. Pastor Gagnon will leave a message on the answering machine by 7:30 a.m. if the service has been cancelled. If the answering machine message hasn't been changed, it means there will be a service of some kind (although it may be an abbreviated one). Please use discretion in deciding whether to come to church in bad weather. You can contact Pastor Gagnon if you have any questions about this policy.

FROM OUR DIRECTOR OF MUSIC

I Planned; God Laughed

As the saying begins; the best laid plans of mice and men.....

For quite some time now, the Memorial Handbell Choir has been struggling to find enough ringers to continue playing. This fall especially difficult and became very worrisome to both the handbell choir members and to me. So after much prayer and discussion, it was decided the Handbell Choir would go on permanent hiatus until more members could be recruited. This was a very difficult and sad decision. I Planned.

Thursday evening arrived and I was ready to tell the handbell choir of our decision. I sent out an email earlier in the day to prepare them for the change. We arrived and I started the conversation. At that time, a new handbell ringer walked into rehearsal ready to join the group. As we continued the conversation and I soon learned another member was retiring and thus able to be a permanent member of the ensemble. Within five minutes of starting the conversation, we had a FULL handbell choir. Of course I told them about the miracle we just experienced when one of our new members said, "You planned, God laughed."

What a wonderful, wonderful, blessing we received. I pray that we all Plan but allow God to Laugh.

Sincerely,
Bethany Kirkpatrick
Director of Music



been
was

From Your Ministry of Outreach and Stewardship

The Christmas Offering:

The Committee is happy to report that, thanks to your generosity, Simple Gifts is the recipient of \$1,860.58 through the Christmas Offering. Simple Gifts is an all volunteer local non-profit whose purpose is to provide limited financials support and encouragement to patients and loved ones who are experiencing a medical crisis. Many times families struggle to drive long distances to visit loved ones in the hospital or even get to their owner cancer treatments. They may not be able to afford food for themselves while staying by the side of their family member in the hospital. Simple Gifts can help with gas cards, cafeteria vouchers and grocery cards. To learn more, please visit: simplegiftsmaine.org.

Preble Street Donations: As you know from previous announcements, the folks at Preble Street have requested that we change our "Sock Ministry" to "Undies Ministry". They express gratitude for our generous sock donations over the years and report that a local retailer will now be donating the equivalent of a year's supply. There is, however, a great need for underwear (75% for men and the remainder for women & children). Therefore, the third Sunday will be designated as "Undies Sunday".

Throughout the year the following organizations have also received support through the Christian Outreach & Stewardship Ministry:

- The Scarborough Food Pantry
- Curamericas
- Child Fund International
- Minister's Discretionary Fund
- Red Cross Relief Fund (for the Farmington Explosion)
- Smile Train
- Operation Hope
- Hospice of Southern Maine
- Honor Flight Maine
- Alisha Gagnon Missionary Trip
- Gosnell House

Save the Dates for the 2020 Stewardship Campaign Kickoff!!!

March 1, 2020: Immediately following worship, the Ministry of Outreach and Stewardship will be hosting a Brunch - a feast of delicious Egg Casseroles, Bacon & Sausage, Fruit Salads, Assorted Coffee Cakes, Cinnamon buns, Juice and Coffee. Pledge envelopes will be distributed at this time; however, those unable to attend will receive the pledge material in the mail.

March 15, 2020 is Stewardship Sunday when we will have an opportunity to hear about the Campaign and offer our pledge envelopes during the worship service.

So watch for more news as it comes out in the Sunday Bulletins, announcements in church and perhaps on our web site.

Ruth Bruns
Mary Ellen Bossom
Gail Dobriko
Vickie Flynn
Sue Hilton

Lynn Roberge
Bryce Roberts
Meghan Wakefield

MINISTRY MEETINGS

Church Council

February 4th, Tuesday, 6:30 pm meet in the Ladies Parlor

Ministry of Christian Outreach & Stewardship:

February 9th, Sun., 11:00 meet in the Annex, Upstairs

Min. of Governing & Finance:

February 17th, Mon., 7:00 pm meet in the Annex.

Ministry of Worship & Spiritual Care:

February 23, Sun., 11:00 am meet in the Ladies Parlor

Ministry of Members, Friends & Church Life:

April 19, Sun., 11:00 am meet in the Ladies' Parlor.



**Church
Committees** ary 1,

OTHER MEETINGS

Long Range Planning Committee, Saturday, Febru-
9:00 - Noon,
meet in the Annex

Bible Study, Sunday, February 2,9,16,23 & March 1 and 8, 11:00 am
til 12:15 pm, meet in the Annex, downstairs

Womens' Fellowship Coffee Time, Wednesday, February 5th, 9:00 AM
meet at First Light Coffeeshop

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

Long Range Planning Committee, Saturday, February 15, 9:00 - Noon,
meet in the Annex

Womens' Fellowship Monthly Meeting, Tuesday, February 25th, 7:00 pm
meet in the Ladies Parlor

BIBLE STUDY BASED ON THE GOSPEL OF JOHN CONTINUES THIS MONTH

The Bible study of the Gospel of John, led by Sheryl Rhodes, will continue each Sunday until March 8, 2020. The study group will meet in the lower level of the Annex every Sunday after the worship service and neighboring, from 11:00 AM til 12:15 pm. It is not too late to join; the 4th session is on February 9. FMI, contact Sheryl Rhodes at 636-399-7239 or sheryl@slrhodes.com

SAVE THE DATE: CROCK POT SUPPER on March 14, 2020 from 5:00 - 6:30 pm. Cost: \$8 for adults; \$4 for children under 10. If you are able to bring a crock pot, please contact Sheryl Rhoades to sign up. See contact info, above. Dessert will be provided.

NEWS FROM THE MEN'S FELLOWSHIP

NEXT MEETINGS: February 8 and 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:

Thanks to Dick Grotton, research is being done to investigate an alarm and emergency alert system for the church and Parish Hall to protect both life and structures. Currently there is no complete system that would alert local authorities such as fire and police. One option is a wireless, monitored system.

Many Thanks to Donny Mitchell and Herb Hughes for installing a vestry emergency lighting system. Donny (Donald) did not charge for his services.

This Spring we will coordinate a free seminar open to the congregation and the community on funeral pre-arrangements presented by a professional local funeral director. Stay tuned for details.

The next Moe's BBQ fundraiser will be held on September 23. Please put this on your Calendar and plan to attend!

WOMEN'S FELLOWSHIP MONTHLY MEETING

February 25th, 2020 at 7:00 in the Ladies Parlor

This will be a Show and Tell meeting. Please bring a treasure to talk about.