

*First Congregational Church of
Wiscasset, UCC*



**The
MEETING HOUSE CHIMES
February 2024**

*First Congregational Church of Wiscasset, UCC
28 High Street, Wiscasset, ME 04578
(207) 882-7544*

Welcome to the February edition of the monthly Chimes!

"For surely I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord, plans for your welfare and not for harm, to give you a future with hope." ...*Jeremiah 29:11*

Myers' Musings

***February 2024
Lent and Easter***

Dear church families,

Several years ago, a schoolteacher was assigned to visit children in a large city hospital. She received phone call – seemingly a routine request to go visit a child. The teacher said, “we’re studying nouns and adverbs in his class now. I’d be grateful if you could help him with his homework, so he doesn’t fall too far behind the others.

It wasn’t until the visiting teacher got outside the boy’s room that she realized she was in the hospital’s burn unit. No one had prepared her to find a young boy horribly burned and in great pain. She felt that she couldn’t just turn around and walk out, so she awkwardly stammered, “I’m the hospital teacher, and your schoolteacher sent me to help you with nouns and adverbs.”

The boy was in such pain he barely responded. She stumbled through his English lesson, ashamed of putting him through such a senseless exercise while he was in such great pain and suffering.

The next morning the nurse on the burn unit asked her, “What did you do to that boy?”

Before she could finish a profusion of apologies, the nurse interrupted her: “You don’t understand. We’ve been very worried about him. But ever since you were here yesterday, his whole attitude has changed. He’s fighting back, responding to treatment – it’s as though he’s decided to live!”

The boy later explained that he had completely given up hope until he saw that teacher come into his room. It all changed when he came to a simple realization. With joyful tears, he expressed it this way: “They wouldn’t send a teacher to work on nouns and adverbs with a dying boy, would they?”

I think of this story every Lent. It’s harder for me to muster hope during Lent than at any other time of the year. The very nature of the season of Lent calls us to look closely at our own weaknesses and sins. It’s a time when I look back over the past year and count my losses.

When I seem to see around me is woundedness and pain, this story invites me to celebrate the gift of life! It shows me again that on the other side of pain is resurrection. It reminds me of what is possible when there is hope.

May you know the grace and the peace of God’s
Spirit,

Dave Myers

*Ash Wednesday Worship Service
A Combined Service with St. Philips Episcopal Church
Wednesday, February 14, 7:00pm
First Congregational Church of Wiscasset*

As is our tradition we will observe a combined Ash Wednesday service with the members of St. Philip's Episcopal Church on Wednesday Evening at 7:00 pm. The service has been developed by the Rev. Thomas Junkert and Rev. Myers will be preaching. Also included for those who desire will be the imposition of ashes.

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**Rev. Myers (and Deb) will be away
February 22 – 28.
Sarah Whitfield will be preaching.**

Rev. Myers and Deb will be vacationing in Naples Florida and attending a Red Sox Spring Training Exhibition game against Debb's alma mater, Northeastern University from February 22 – 28.

Sarah Whitfield, one of our own members, will be the preacher. Sarah is enrolled in the Maine School of Ministry and currently serves as a Supply Lat Preacher for churches in the greater Mid-Coast Area.

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**Church will be taking a Special Offering for
The School of Ministry,
Maine Conference U.C.C.**

The **School of Ministry** focuses *theological education for the life of the church*. When God call, and people respond to that call, we want leaders who are equipped with learning, curiosity, and habits of both practice and reflection. Each person who takes part in our program of theological education is part of a learning community. Maine School of Ministry includes pastors and church members, lay and ordained, and those exploring or committed to a Member in Discernment journey.

Your financial support benefits the church by boosting regional theological education during an important transition into the School of Ministry's second decade. The School of Ministry is not funded by the Maine Conference budget, but relies on tuition/scholarships, grants, and contributions. Your support is appreciated.

(See the "Sermons and Scriptures" section below for the February Sermons)

Pre-Lenten Bible Study with Rev. Myers

Thursdays, 12:30 – 2:00pm continuing through February 15th.

What is required? A Bible and your openness to it. Rev. Myers prefers the NRSV for its accuracy to the original text; but it is helpful to have different translations or even paraphrases (i.e.. The Message by Eugene Petersen) to understand how others interpret the Scripture. One book I have found especially helpful is called ***Gospel Parallels***.

What will we be studying? In addition to specific passages (listed below) we will learn about Biblical resources that can help us learn more about the New Testament and also about the customs and living conditions during the times of Jesus that will help us better understand Jesus' teachings and stories. In particular we will focus on three aspects of Jesus teachings:

Healings:

Luke 7:36 – 50 (the woman with the ointment);
Mark 10:46 – 52 (the story of blind Baritmaeus); and
Luke 13:10 – 17 (the story of the bent over woman)

Prayer:

Luke 11:1 - 4 (Luke's version of the Lord's prayer)
Luke 11:5 – 8 (the friend at midnight)
Luke 18:1 – 8 (the parable of the unjust judge)

Faith:

Mark 14:36 – 42 (Jesus prayer in Gethsemane)
Luke 17:5 – 6 (“Increase our faith”)
Mark 5:24 – 34 (woman with a hemorrhage for 12 years)
Luke 10:25 – 37 (the good Samaritan)

I look forward to all who come!

Dave Myers

Stewardship is not just something we do in the fall...

I have been honored to serve as chair of the stewardship committee for this past year. As an economist, I instinctively think about optimizing resource allocation between competing wants and needs; it's just the way my brain works. Adding faith to the equation means that stewardship is something we should talk about not just when we want to forecast income for the coming year but every month. Or at least every other month!

To help me think about stewardship, I subscribe to an email newsletter from the UCC called “Generosity Updates”. The most recent edition contained an article by Rev. Andrew Warner entitled “**A Nudge Instead of a Resolution**”. Whereas January is the month we often make resolutions, February is the month when we find out if we can be successful or have been too optimistic in setting goals. Rev. Warner suggests that instead of making specific resolutions, we focus on something a little simpler. He is following advice given by behavioral science, advice to pick a word that reminds us what we think is truly important, a word that will “nudge” or make a gentle push toward a desired change, a word that we can easily remember.

He has chosen the word "legacy" as his nudge word. For starters, that word reminds one to look at estate plans. But more importantly, it reminds us to think about the world we’re helping to build, focusing on the future we will shape for others. Rev. Warner asks “**What word expresses the values and attitude you want to embody this coming year? What one word can remind you of who you most want to be?**” I can easily see myself taping one word to the bathroom mirror and the refrigerator door, so that I am visually reminded more than once a day of what action or attitude I want to accomplish.

For some people, one word seems inadequate. Perhaps we need more words to embody what we want to be in the future....and that leads us to consider the vision and mission statements proposed at the annual meeting in January. Whether you choose to pick one word for what you feel God is calling you to prioritize or you share in the vision and mission statements, I hope you will think about how you spend your time, talent, and treasure this year. God blesses us whether we give back or not...but I think we feel better when we answer his call to spread his blessings to others.

Submitted by Cindy Clement



**Would you like to bring in flowers
to grace our sanctuary?**

Bringing in your favorite houseplant to share would be wonderful! Would you be willing to leave your beautiful offering for more than one week?

Please sign up for two weeks in a row if you'd like. Cut flowers are always welcome too!

= SOS = SHOP ORGAN SOCIETY

The first Sunday of each month, the Organ Society will set up shop in Fellowship Hall, offering seasonal handmade items for sale.



Proceeds will support the church and Organ Society programs, including *For Her*.

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Feed Our Scholars

Feed Our Scholars is a community project that supports Wiscasset Elementary School children who are living with food insecurities. Many children rely on school

lunches for their most nutritious meal of the day. In some cases, this may be the only meal a child receives. That makes it important to supply these children with weekend food.

Volunteers are needed to pack weekend bags weekly here at FCCW. This takes about an hour per session. There is some lifting of weights up to 24 pounds but not everyone is expected to be able to do this lifting. You can volunteer to pack one week a month or several weeks a month depending on your own schedule.

The food that we distribute comes from Good Shepherd Food Bank and is delivered on the third Tuesday of each month at 7AM. We need volunteers for this as well as the weekly packing of bags. This does require lifting of 24 pound boxes by most volunteers. The boxes also need to be marked with receipt month and year and you can volunteer to do that if you are unable to do the lifting.

If you are able to help with either packing of bags (packing day yet to be determined) or Good Shepherd deliveries, please contact Beth Maxwell at 882-6180 or emaxwell@myfairpoint.net.

For Her – A small start

For Her is a new program in Wiscasset which provides pads and tampons free of charge in the public bathrooms of the Wiscasset Community Center and First Congregational Church as well as providing them to the Wiscasset Food Pantry at St. Philip's.

In initiating ***For Her***, The Ladies Organ Society of First Congo joined organizations in Maine and throughout the country which provide free menstrual products in schools and other public places, a need which has been widely recognized and even legislated in some states.

Funded initially by the Ladies Organ Society, ***For Her*** will need contributions to continue and expand its program.

Contributions may be sent to the Organ Society c/o First Congregational Church, Box 350, Wiscasset, ME 04578. Please indicate ***For Her*** in the memo line.

News from the Hospitality Committee



Thank you, members of the Church in Society Committee, for hosting Coffee Hour in January.

In February, Pastoral Relations Committee will be our hosts.

Please ask Jan Whitfield if you wish to be reimbursed for half-and-half.

We always need volunteers to help with setup, bringing goodies, and clean up for Coffee Hour.

If you would be willing to assist, there is a sign-up sheet in Fellowship Hall.



Nominating Committee

As of right now, we have several openings on committees, and we would appreciate your input and volunteering to fill those spots. They include:

- * Treasurer
- * Secretary of Council
- * 4 openings on Diaconate
- * 1 on Nominating Committee
- * 1 on Hospitality

Please contact Janet Whitfield, Margot Stiassni-Sieracki, or Nancy Roby if you can help us.

Thank you.

Sermons and Scriptures Sunday Worship for February, 2024:

February 4:

Sermon: "Healing Lepers" based on II Kings 5:1 - 15b and Mark 1:40 - 45. People with leprosy, even to this day, face ostracism. Their skin is terribly disfigured. Elisha had a great gift of healing, but the one he

healed was Naaman, the Commander of the Syrian army. Why not one of the Jewish faith? Sometimes, even our faith stories and Jesus makes very important choices that can jar us out of our complacency.

February 11:

Transfiguration Sunday: Sermon: “Just Trying to Get Away From it All” based on Exodus 34:29 – 36 the” mountain with him. There Jesus met Moses and Elijah. We are told there was a great light as this happen, and God spoke (well, a voice from out of the cloud) saying, “This is my Son. My Chosen; listen to him.” It was at this point, to the three disciples, and to us as we read this, that Jesus was transfigured from a rabbi to the Chosen One of God.

February 14:

7:00 pm: Ash Wednesday combined service with St. Philips Episcopal Church. The Service will be at The First Congregational Church at Wiscasset. Rev. Tom Junkert has prepared the liturgy, Rev. Myers will be preaching, and, for those who wish ashes, will be administered.

February 18:

First Sunday in Lent. Sermon: “Led by the Spirit to be Tempted By the Devil” based on Mark:1:9 – 15 and Matthew 4:1 – 11. To our modern minds it may seem strange that God’s Spirit would lead Jesus out into the wilderness to be tempted by the Devil – especially because it was immediately after Jesus was baptized by John the Baptist. There Jesus faced the same temptations that we face on a daily basis.

February 25:

Second Sunday in Lent. Sarah Whitfield will be the preacher for the day. Rev. Myers and Deb will be in Naples, Florida for a vacation with friends, from Feb. 24 – 31.

March 3:

Sermon: “The Last Laugh: Setting Your Mind on Divine Things” based on Genesis 17:1 – 7 and 15 – 19; II Samuel 24:24 – 25; and Mark 8:31 – 35. Peter, James, and John got harshly rebuked by Jesus as they came down the mountain after the Transfiguration. They were frightened when Jesus revealed to them where his journey was going to take Him. As Dietrich Bonhoeffer said, “there is a cost of discipleship.”

A Message from the Trustees:

During the pandemic we all got a little bit lax when it came to closing doors in the church building, particularly the one by the choir robes which had to stay open, or it would have pinched the wire we were using to connect to Zoom for church services.

Well, the pandemic is over, the wire has been relocated and we need to start making sure that we resume the practice of closing **all** doors when we're not in the building. That includes the kitchen, parlor, bathrooms, offices, classrooms, hallways, stairwells, basement, furnace room, Fellowship Hall and, especially, our lovely Sanctuary. It includes both fire doors and regular old doors. No one is going to fault you if you prop open a door when you are moving items through it and your hands are too full to keep opening it. Please, just remember to close it right away when you're finished.

Closed doors make a huge difference in the event of a fire.
Thank you,
Your Trustees

CLYNK Reminder

CLYNK bags, in which you put your returnable bottles and cans, are available in the church office. The tags that must be put on these bags are in Fellowship Hall tacked on the CIS bulletin board near the kitchen; there are also pre-tagged bags there.



Take the tagged filled bags (no more than 20 pounds) to any local Hannaford CLYNK station or bring it to church and notify Beth Maxwell who will take the bag to Hannaford. There is a bag in the kitchen if you want to bring in bottles and cans and deposit them there instead of collecting them at home.

The money collected by using these bags is used to support the Feed Our Scholars program.

Many thanks for participating in this effort.

Pastoral Care

In case of a pastoral emergency please use Rev. Dave's cell phone 202-302-6903. Office hours are T, W, Th 9:00am - 12:00pm. Please continue to use the church number (297-882-7544) for all other church business.

Becky Lenz
Church Council President

Directories!

If you have moved, new phone number, new email address, please let the office know so we can update the directory with any changes.

The 2024 directory will soon be available. When they are, please pick one up in Fellowship Hall or in the Narthex. If you are away, Ted is happy to put one in the mail to you, or Email to it to you.

Please keep the office posted when phone numbers or addresses change. It is easy to update the database so the next time the directory is printed, your change will be included.



Thank you for reading the February issue of The Chimes!

If you have news, you'd like to share for the March issue, please send in your article by February 20th to fccw@myfairpoint.com.

[>> Click here for the January Chimes](#)

*First Congregational Church of Wiscasset, UCC
Mailing address: P.O. Box 350
www.uccwiscasset.org ~ fccw@myfairpoint.net
Office Hours: Tuesday through Thursday, 9am-12pm
Worship: Sunday 10 a.m.
Office Administrator: Ted Gilbert
Organist: Joel Pierce
Sexton: Mary McKinney*

*Shining the Light of Christ
FIRST
CONGREGATIONAL
CHURCH
in the Heart of Wiscasset*

First Congregational Church, Wiscasset | 28 High Street, P.O. Box 350, Wiscasset, ME 04578

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