

## Union Church Newsletter-February 2019



From the Pastor...

My friends, as I sit here today, the weather is unusually mild and the sun is shining. It feels like spring, but we all know well, that this is just a taste of winter thaw and that snow is forecast for later in the week. For some, the mild temperatures bring a sense of hope that spring will arrive early, as our friend the groundhog recently predicted. For those who love winter sports, the hope lies in some cold, snowy weather ahead. We held our semi-annual meeting on the last Sunday in January and all went very well. I will include some highlights from the reports shared at that meeting within this report.

We are still in the midst of winter and so I invite you to make the most of these days, to be present to the gifts as well as the challenges of winter in Maine. Valentine's Day is just a few days away and so I send you all warm greetings of love and fellowship and a reminder that you are loved. Happy Valentine's Day!

Blessings,

Pastor Paula

### Looking Ahead to Lent...

We are already hard at work with planning for the Lenten Season and for Easter. It seems like only yesterday that we were in the midst of Advent and Christmas, but the days are longer now and the sun sets later. Ash Wednesday is on March 6<sup>th</sup>, with Mardi Gras the day before. We will hold a Service here at the church on Ash Wednesday as we begin the six weeks of Lent, culminating in Holy Week and our Easter celebrations on Sunday, April 21<sup>st</sup>.

Easter this year is just one day before Earth Day and so we are inspired to weave into our Lenten Observances a care for our earth and ways that we might 'fast' from carbon and implement some simple ways of caring for our planet, God's amazing creation, that has been entrusted to us to pass along to future generations. We are looking forward to including our young people in helping us develop ideas for Lent and our care for the earth. Our theme during Lent will be Come Away and Rest Awhile. We will be using some meaningful worship materials that were developed by the same team that created our materials during Advent that were very well received in that season.

We will also be offering a 'walk in nature' in silence once a week with different folks from church. We will publish all of this in a Bulletin

Insert as we begin Lent. We hope to collaborate with the Environmental Action Club at UNE to offer a film and discussion for Earth Month.

Local Clergy are also organizing a community-wide Service to celebrate spring and new life. This is being planned for Wednesday evening, May 1<sup>st</sup> at the Unitarian Universalist Church in Saco at 7pm. Please plan to join us, if you can.



Photo by Averyl Hill, Natural Resources Council of Maine

**Important Dates:**

Tuesday, March 5<sup>th</sup>-Mardi Gras

Wednesday, March 6<sup>th</sup>-Ash Wednesday, Service at 6pm

Tuesday, April 9<sup>th</sup>-Lenten Gathering "Come Linger in the Light"- 9:30am, BPCC

Sunday, April 14<sup>th</sup>-Palm Sunday

Thursday, April 18<sup>th</sup>-Maundy/Holy Thursday

Sunday, April 21<sup>st</sup>-Easter Sunday, Services at Sunrise and 10am

Monday, April 22<sup>nd</sup>-Earth Day

Wednesday, May 1<sup>st</sup>-Community Wide Celebration of Spring-UU Church, Saco,  
7pm

**Below are copies of the reports submitted for the Semi-Annual Meeting which was held on January 27, 2019:**

**From our Moderator, Paul Schlaver**

Since the winter storm cancelled church service on Sunday the 20<sup>th</sup>, members of the church leadership spent the day writing their reports for the Semi-Annual Meeting next Sunday, the 27<sup>th</sup>.... and certainly also spent time clearing away the snowfall. As I reflect on the past six months for Union Church I want to offer my very positive report on the "State of the Union" (Church).

Pastor Paula and my colleagues speak to some of the details of what has been the focus in 2018 and the current state of affairs. I want to add to the positive theme with just a few items of note. Our attendance remains strong every Sunday and there has been a pretty steady presence of children and all the creative fun and joy they add on Sunday morning. It is a rare Sunday, even in the winter, when the attendance dips below 50 people and often has topped 70. The attendance for the Christmas Eve service was a completely pack house at 120! Clearly, our attendees are pleased with the creative and meaningful services Paula and her team has prepared. I should add that the spirit and friendliness that lingers long after the service in fellowship is a testimony to the importance of the friendship we feel toward each other in this church family.

As Moderator I am fortunate to have the pleasant task as the purveyor of communications to the 120 people on my email distribution list. I do receive many grateful messages of the value of this method to keep us all connected to the doings of Union Church even when miles and other forces prevents the face to face connection on Sunday. I have the challenge of diplomatically prodding us all for pledges and support for various mission projects that needs donations, healthy snack for kids, gloves and hats, homemade cookies and volunteer hands of support as well. Thank you all so much for your responsiveness.

We still need to find a church member that is willing to take on the task of replacing Ada Goff our long serving Treasurer. We are also always looking of

individuals willing to serve as Deacons, Trustees as well as volunteers that make our mission and social projects so successful. To all those that faithfully serve...THANK YOU...and to others...join us!

**Union Church Trustee's Report by Bob Sherman, Chair**

Activities in calendar year 2018:

Back entry/exit repaired from last Winter's snow and freeze damage

Front steps and walkway repaired in Spring by landscape contractor

Sprinkler system installed in Summer by contractor

Helped with set up and take down for Speaker Series

Clean up of leaves in back gutters

Adjusted screens and storm windows for seasonality

Participated in set up and take down of Christmas decorations

Basement filters changed monthly (previously quarterly)

Installation of new cabinet in bathroom to facilitate storage of paper products used at church, freeing up space in the kitchen, back storeroom and people's homes / garages.

Met with Cunningham Security on Dec 18 to explore options for improving security. Awaiting Report

Thanks to the Trustee Team: Tom Craven, Bill Stepchew, Chris Hudson, Denny Tallagnon, Rob Harriman

Focus efforts for 2019:

Improve access to electricity in front of church, in order to better light entry steps and holiday decorations

Clean out, sort and organize items in back storeroom.

### **From the Deacons... by Katie Koles, Chair**

Since our last church meeting, the Deacons met in Nov '18 and in Jan'19.

Weekly Prayers: We have started to use a book in the foyer to write our prayer intentions. As Pastor Paula noted, many people will ask, "Can you put me on your prayer list?" We'd like to honor that and keep those people and prayers in a more permanent way. While we can still use the prayer slips (and the Welcoming Deacon will collect them), we'd like to start utilizing the book as much as possible. So, if you'd like, please just write your prayer intentions in the book when you enter.

Remembrance Garden: Our Moderator, Paul Schlaver, asked the Deacons to take care of some guidelines and planning for the Remembrance Garden. Because this should involve interests outside of the Deacons, we formed an *ad hoc* committee with Beth Baskin and Eve McPheeters representing the Deacons. Cris Hudson represented the Trustees. Nancy Bancroft agreed to spearhead the committee. Their input will be addressed separately.

Advent and Christmas Season: Pastor Paula addressed the Advent Worship and Christmas Worship in her report. But I just have to say that I personally found the services to be so moving. And it's times like this that I wish our summer folks could be with us share our experience. The musicians outdid themselves through the whole season. Many hands made the church look exquisite—"Calm and Bright". I'd also like to thank my brother and sister Deacons. Eve McPheeters, Beth Baskin, Lamar Robinson, Stephen Fox, and Chris Sorrentino serve with such quiet grace and heartfelt love for our church community. It is such an honor and privilege to work together.

Pew Bibles—We will be purchasing new Bibles to replace the ones in our Pews. We will organize a plan to list the names of the donors from our present Bibles in

a place of honor and we will invite church members to consider sponsoring a Bible in memory of or in honor of a loved one.

### **Treasurer's Report and Thank you**

Ada Goff, our hard-working Treasurer, also submitted a report with supporting financial documents for the Semi-Annual Meeting which were shared in an earlier email prior to the meeting. If you would have not seen a copy of that report, please contact Paula or Paul and we will gladly send you one.

We would like to thank Ada for all of her hard work in recent years as she ably served us in the position of Treasurer. Ada will be finishing her term this spring and we are actively seeking a replacement. Ada, thank you very much for helping keep our finances in order and for all the detail work you have done to keep us on top of our finances!

### **From Mission....Mission Committee News**

**By Ken Murray, Chair**



#### Healthy Snacks for Children

During the last school year and this one, we have been collecting healthy snacks for the children in the ELL classroom at Biddeford Primary, most of whom are new residents of Maine and don't always have access to these items. Paul Schlaver and his grandson Cotton deliver these snacks once a month. But you can bring these non-

perishable items to the church anytime and put them in the plastic bin at the front of the church. So, whenever you think of it, buy some healthy snacks and put them in the bin. The children will thank you for it, and so will their teachers. Thanks.



## Responding to Disasters

During Advent, Union Church collected funds to support recovery efforts following the devastating Camp Fire in California. The funds were distributed to two local charities that were known to Jen Comeau. However, it brought up the question about how best to handle such events in the future. The Mission Committee discussed the issue and decided to return to a policy that had been adopted “five or six years ago.” When the church family brings forth concerns about disasters happening in the world, these concerns should be brought to the Pastor or the Mission Committee. At that point...

1. We will ask those bringing forth the concern to provide as detailed information as possible about the need and organizations or projects working to meet the need.
2. We will publicize that information among the congregation.

3. We will invite individuals who feel so moved to make donations directly to the organizations or projects working to meet the need.



From Sharon Gaudin

I wanted to give an update to this year's Warm Hands, Warm Hearts project. We collected 824 items!!! That means hundreds of people in our community will be a bit warmer this winter.

[Alleen Eastwood](#) and I brought the last three bins of scarves, hats, mittens and gloves to three elementary schools recently. At one of the schools, an administrator told us they had just run out of warm items to give to kids in need. At another school, they were bringing our donations in to the nurse's office, where kids, coughing and sneezing, were waiting to be seen. Many had gone to school with nothing on their hands and heads on a bitterly cold day.

This is a huge thank you to everyone who helped distribute collection boxes, who took collection boxes into your business, who donated, sorted and counted with me. You are wonderful!

Our collection sites included [CIA Cafe](#), [Saco Bay Variety](#), [Biscuits & Company](#), [Fernleaf Bakery](#), [Saco](#), [Shaw's Supermarket](#), [Hannaford Supermarkets](#), [The Saco Scoop](#), [Union Church Biddeford Pool, Maine](#), [Trinity Episcopal Church](#), [Skippers Seafood & Rotisserie](#)

Items collected went to three elementary schools, three nursing homes, the Sam L. Cohen Center, an organization that helps homeless veterans and three cancer centers. Items collected at Union Church went to our Union Church Mission partners, Seeds of Hope Neighborhood Center, Stone Soup Food Pantry, the Saco Meals Program and the ELL Classroom at Biddeford Primary School.



## Thank You

The Mission Committee thanks our many helpers who made it possible for us to provide special holiday cheer for the students of the Alternative Pathways Center of Biddeford High School and the guests of the Saco Meals Program. Through the generosity of our congregation and others, we provided a festive meal and thoughtful gifts to both groups of people. Bless you all.

## Upcoming Projects

On February 12, members of the Mission Committee will be preparing a chili and cornbread supper for those who are visiting the In-a-Pinch Non-Food Pantry at the Seeds of Hope Neighborhood Center in Biddeford.

This Spring we will also be working with the congregation on some kind of special Lenten Project focused on the environment. Watch for further information.

## Program Committee News

### Ken Murray

#### 2019 Summer Speaker Series

After a successful 2018 Summer Speaker Series, the Author Selection Sub-Committee, under the leadership of Deb Burke, got right to work in the Fall of 2018 to plan for the coming year. After several meetings and lots of work behind the scenes, by December 11 Jen Comeau was able to announce that the 2019 Speaker Series would include the following four authors:

July 11, 2018 - Andre Dubus III

July 25, 2018 - Jessica Shattuck

August 8, 2018 - Wesley McNair

August 22, 2018 - Kevin Gardner

Now that the holidays are over, the Program Committee will begin working on the details of the 2019 Summer Speaker Series, including marketing of the program, ticket sales, ad sales for our program book and arrangements for each of the four summer events.

Just a reminder that **ALL** the net proceeds of the Summer Speaker Series go to fund the mission outreach of Union Church.

#### Other Events

We look forward to a variety of activities for 2019, including some traditional items, as well as some new ones.

Our projected calendar is as follows:

- |                 |   |
|-----------------|---|
| March 5, 2019   | Our annual Mardi Gras celebration   |
| May 4, 2019     | Our annual Cinco de Mayo celebration  |
| May TBD         | A Special Speakers event coinciding with a book tour for <i>Sacred Stones, Sacred Water</i> , a book that contains poetry by our own Jen Comeau and others. Watch for news of the specific plans. |
| July 4, 2019    | The annual July 4 <sup>th</sup> Bake Sale   |
| July 11, 2018   | Summer Speaker Series, Event 1, featuring Andre Dubus III   |
| July 25, 2018   | Summer Speaker Series, Event 2, featuring Jessica Shattuck  |
| August 8, 2018  | Summer Speaker Series, Event 3, featuring Wesley McNair   |
| August 22, 2018 | Summer Speaker Series, Event 4, featuring Kevin Gardner   |
| October TBD     | An Autumn Cabaret, if we can recruit performers and find a venue  |
| December TBD    | The annual Christmas Cookie Walk  |

## Day Long Retreat....Winter 2019

### The Long and Winding Road: A Spirituality For Our Life's Journey

By Beth Baskin

On January 15 spiritual leaders and lay people from Union Church hosted a day-long retreat at Marie Joseph's Spiritual Center in Biddeford Pool. The retreat presenters were Pastor Paula Norbert, retired pastors Jan Hyrniewicz and Ned Dougherty, and Lisa Barstow and Anne Murray.

Among the topics examined and discussed were *Spirituality Across the Stages of Our Lives; Spirituality for the Second Half of Life; Entering the Mystery of Prayer; Our Passion and Purpose in the Second Half of Life; and The Gift of Self Compassion: Meditation, Writing and Sharing.*

There were 15 attendees, some from Union Church, some from the community at large. The workshop allowed space for group discussions of presented topics, time for one-on-one sharing between attendees, and quiet and written meditations in response to and as reflection on various elements in the different segments. Those who have shared their response to the day said they found the workshop spiritually thoughtful and emotionally provocative, indicating gratitude for the opportunity to come together as a group and explore more deeply some of the issues challenging us as Christians in these challenging times.



Retreat Images by Nancy Bernier

## Lenten Prayer Morning

Come! Gather together...

Tuesday, April 9th, 9:30 to noon @ Biddeford Pool Community Club



### ***Linger in the Light***

Lenten reflections with  
Mary Oliver, John Denver and more.

Guided by Rev. Jan Hryniewicz

*“ Sometimes I need only to stand wherever I am to be blessed”*

( Mary Oliver)

9:30 – 10:00; Coffee, tea and chitchat

10 :00 – 12:00: ***Come, fill up your senses:*** Inspiration for the Soul

***Come, awaken the Easter that waits within***

All welcome...



## **In The Midst of Winter...**

By Katie Koles, Chair of Deacons

How quickly the Christmas season came and went! A brand spanking new year begin with so much hope: a fresh start, a clean slate and resolutions for self-improvement.

Now we are nearing the end of January. The once pristine snow is dirty. Instead of being excited at a “day off”, families groan when “snow days” are announced because schools will need to make up the time when the weather is beautiful. Perhaps we’ve “modified” our resolutions or even abandoned them.

Enter “The Febs”. “The Febs” is a term coined by one of my college chaplains, Father Joe Zuschmidt; better known by his nickname “Zooey”. He described “The Febs” as the state of let-down after the busy-ness and often frenetic pace of the holidays,

Yet, even with “The Febs” upon us, we do not have to succumb to the “bleak midwinter”. God does not require us to wait for the start of a new year or a new season to reinvent or initiate even a small change in our lives.

Some of us were able to attend our church day retreat a few weeks ago. How wonderful to be able to “borrow time” from our lives and invest in our spiritual and religious well-being. We cannot always take a

whole day for reflection. Yet we learned we can for a few minutes, steal a few moments each day to pray, listen to God's message for us and refuel our spirit. We can take the time to start anew. And THAT can help us stave off "The Febs".

Albert Camus wrote, "In the midst of winter, I finally learned there was in me, an invincible summer." I pray we all take time to live and grow in God's invincible summer.

### **Sisters Sing**

A few members and friends of Union Church gathered in a spontaneous "sing" as a part of a worldwide Women's Virtual Choir, (<https://www.womensvirtualchoir.com/>) led from afar by Swedish choir conductor, multi-instrumentalist, singer-songwriter Åsa (pronounced OhAhsa) Larsson. Her goal is to blend her musical skills with her love for trees and her engagement in empowering women. Jen Comeau tells us there may be other, less spontaneous, opportunities to sing as a part of this creative effort. If you are interested, please let her know. Meanwhile, stay tuned for the final product, a video of women singing around the world, scheduled to be on You Tube in a few months. (We hope it goes viral!)



Photo Left to Right: Carol Schoneberg, Anne Murray, Jen Comeau, Nancy Bernier, Denise Kinney.

**Storm ~ Jennifer Comeau**

Dark clouds kiss  
the sky,  
lay themselves down like a vixen waiting  
to be ravaged.

Winds aloft are warm  
like breath, but here  
where I stand, it's frozen.

Tiny, iced ball-bearings pelt  
the earth and leave  
striations of white  
against my window.

Who gives a storm  
a name as if it's been invited  
to tea?

For this unwelcome  
guest I have infantries

of resistance and snipers  
in the trees.  
Behind the wild sky our cheeky  
planet eclipses a full wolf  
moon, and in the blackness  
cosmic forces howl.  
I feel, rather than hear,  
their impact. I know  
their intent.  
My soldiers  
are weary; urge me to stop  
the war. I lay down  
my arms.  
N'oreaster winds blow  
like a bellows on  
the embers of  
my heart.



Full Lunar Eclipse by Gordon Elwell, Jen's brother at <https://gordon-images.com>

