

# Union Church Newsletter-May 2018



## **From Your Pastor...**

It is a lovely morning in May as I wake this morning. We have waited a very long time to welcome the beauty of spring, but today the grass is greening, the trees and bushes are budding, and the early spring flowers are sharing their lovely colors of yellows and pinks. The beauty of spring with the rains helping all of the new plantings to burst forth reminds us each day of the promise of Easter, of new life, new creation, constantly emerging each day.

I continue to be very impressed by the amazing energy and dedication of the members of Union Church. I have the privilege of working with the various committees that provide the important leadership to our church. Over recent months, the Speaker Series Committee has worked very hard to select and invite the speakers for the summer series. They are now working on the program book and selling ads and tickets for the event.

Delicious food and fellowship is always a big draw for folks in our community. On Easter morning, many were up before dawn putting the coffee on, decorating and preparing the delicious food to be shared at the breakfast following the Sunrise

Service. Many joined us for that lovely gathering and again, we give thanks for all who worked behind the scenes to make that possible.

On Earth Day, Joyce Morrisette invited the youth of our church, along with others to join in helping clean up some of the parks in downtown Biddeford as a way to share our respect for our earth. Several families joined us for that clean up. Many others in the local community were involved and progress was made in preparing the parks to be enjoyed in the months ahead.

Peter and Eve McPheeters, along with a team of cooks and sous chefs, graciously hosted the annual Cinco de Mayo gathering on Saturday evening, May 5<sup>th</sup>. It was a huge success and the food was delicious. Everyone enjoyed the spirit of the evening! Big thanks to all who helped with that.

Over the last several months, we have established two important outreach groups at the church. The Pastoral Assistants, coordinated by Nancy Bancroft, are available to assist our pastor with visits to members at home, in the hospital or at rehab facilities. They are available when the need arises. Elaine Robinson is leading our Helping Hands group. We have a number of people who have offered to provide meals, rides, run errands, and offer general support in a concrete way when folks may be able to use their help.

As we look ahead to these precious months of spring into summer, we are always invited to find balance in our days. A recent Sermon reminded all of us to “Be Here Now,” to try to pause each day to enjoy the small moments, to allow all of our senses to enjoy the scents, the sounds, the colors and the fullness of the experiences all around us. God has blessed us with these new moments constantly unfolding and we are invited to respond by being fully present as best we can. We enjoy the creativity and ways in which we may offer our gifts with others and we may be grateful that we can indeed pause and be at rest. Be Here Now, for the present is what we have. These days are truly precious; they are a gift to us.

**Wishing you all the blessings of these days,**

**Paula**

### Important Dates:

**May 13 - One To One Program at Union Church**

**May 16<sup>th</sup>- 6pm-Women's Gathering of Union Church at BPCC**

**June 3<sup>rd</sup>- Services begin at 9:30 and continue through the summer months**

**June 10<sup>th</sup>- One to One's after Service, 7pm-Hunger Panel at Union Church**

**July 8<sup>th</sup>- One to One's after Service**

**June 25<sup>th</sup>- Michelle Currie at Vinegar Hill Music Theater**

**July 26<sup>th</sup>- Speaker Series Begins in the evening**

### **From Our Moderator...**

#### **An Important Reminder**

**Our Sunday Service will return to the earlier summer schedule time of 9:30AM, beginning on Sunday, June 3<sup>rd</sup>. Please mark your calendars.**

### **A fun, new program at Union Church**

*by Paul Schlaver, Moderator*

I want to offer a few more details to a new program Pastor Paula announced in the Sunday Bulletin recently called **ONE TO ONE'S**. I joined Union Church ten years ago and certainly have established many friendships within the church and often this spills over into other parts of my own personal/social life, and community activities. But the church continues to grow with new people joining in our midst regularly. Even as Moderator I struggle to put a name with a face let alone even begin to learn about interesting life stories of new people (or even many long-time members). Many years ago, Pastor Jan promoted a "Guess Who is Coming to Dinner" evening. As I recall six of us agreed to host a pot luck dinner party at our homes and until the seven guests arrived we did not know who Jan had assigned to join us. All together over 40 of the church family at that time participated and got to know some people much better than before that evening.

Paula's **ONE TO ONE'S** also has a fun, random aspect to it that may also foster some new friendship or at least awareness of others joining us regularly at Union Church. Here is the plan:

On the second Sunday of each month we can voluntarily put our name, phone number and email address in a basket or hat. At the end of the service those that put a name in the pot will draw one out and then will connect with that person either immediately or soon thereafter. The expectation is that over the next few weeks, and before the next 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of the month, you will spend some time together with the chosen person...over coffee, lunch, on the phone, whatever you work out for a meeting of minds to get to know each other better. Presuming that your name wasn't also drawn by the same person you picked, you will end up having a friendly encounter with two people each month who chose to participate in the program.

I think this will be fun and really a modest commitment of your time. So I hope you agree to participate!

And, you can participate some months and not others, depending on your own schedules. If you realize that you won't be at church on a given Sunday, but would like to participate, just ask a friend to submit your name and select a person for you to contact. If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to speak with me or Pastor Paula.

## **From our Church Deacons by Katie Koles**

### **Looking back at Lent and Easter...**

Lent began at Union Church as Pastor Paula led us in worship on Ash Wednesday. The service was well attended and included prayerful reflection and the distribution of ashes marking the start of this holy season.

On the first Sunday of Lent, we heard the story of the Prodigal Son. We were reminded that God gently calls us back with infinite mercy when we distance ourselves and welcomes us with open arms when we return. Sermon lessons invited us to look into ourselves and respond to God's ever present and unconditional love.

During the latter weeks of Lent, we turned to the love of our neighbors as we heard the story of the Good Samaritan. Pastor Paula shared her experiences when she visited third world Latin American countries. Even in the midst of unimaginable poverty, the love of God thrived. Jesus teaches us and lives with us through suffering. He also calls us to challenge both ourselves and our communities to end injustice.

We began Holy Week on Palm Sunday as we remembered Jesus' last night in the Garden of Gethsemane. He asked his closest friends to remain with him in prayer. While his friends loved him, they failed him and fell asleep three times. Yet God did not fail Jesus and God does not fail us in our darkest times. On Maundy Thursday, we shared Communion and the Tenebrae (Latin

for “darkness”) Service as we entered the darkness of Jesus’ pending crucifixion. On Good Friday, the church was open for quiet reflection on this solemn occasion for people to sit quietly and reflect.

Easter Sunday found the largest gathering of people we have had in years at the Coupe’s. While the weather and cloudy sky did not let us see the sun actually rise, our world still became full of light as the new day dawned. It was representative of what faith is, really—while we cannot see God or Jesus or the Holy Spirit, we are a Godly people believing in their existence. We shared fellowship at the Community Breakfast and then rejoiced in the Easter promise at our church service. Some of our younger members rose early to attend the sunrise Service and others joined us for the 10am Service. Each of the children were presented with a special gift of a decorative Easter egg and their own daffodil plant to take home and watch bloom to remind them of the hope of the season. The music was joyful at both Services.

The following excerpt from Pastor Paula’s Easter morning sermon captures our Lenten journey best: “The story of Easter is the story of life triumphing over death, of love being stronger than hate. We are encouraged to celebrate new life and to open our very selves to the new life that God invites us to. And the secret of course, is that in sharing our very own lives, in being Christ to one another, we too will find new life once again.”

## **Mission Update by Ken Murray**

*Volunteer Opportunity at Engine:* The community program called Engine, which is in downtown Biddeford, has asked us to let Union Church members and friends know that they are looking for volunteers to work with the growing number of immigrant children who are coming to them seeking support with homework, reading, using their mobile devices, art projects and other activities. This volunteer opportunity would take place during after-school hours and on Saturdays. To learn more, contact Tammy Ackerman, Engine Executive Director, at 370-9130 (office) or 229-3560 (mobile).

*Social Justice Group:* Union Church people who are interested in social justice issues have been meeting during the winter and spring in two groups: one group who could meet in the morning and another that could meet in the evening. On April 24, the two groups met together at 5:00 p.m. and decided to join forces on a church social justice initiative on the issue of ending hunger. Our first activity will be a worship service on Sunday, May 20, that will focus on the issue of hunger in our world. Our second activity will be a panel discussion on the topic to be held at the church at 7:00 p.m. on Sunday, June 10. Our panelists will be former Maine Senate President Justin Alford, University of Maine Cooperative Extension staff member Fred Wertheim, and local community activist Holly Culloton. The panel discussion will include presentations and time for questions and answers, as well as exhibits from local groups addressing this issue, which will allow attendees to get connected right away. Both activities are geared to both the church community and wider community, so you may invite others to come.

## **From Our Trustees by Tom Craven**

Our hard-working Trustees continue to ensure that our beautiful church and surrounding property are maintained and up-to-date as the seasons change. As they look ahead to the coming months, they are planning to conduct a cleanup of both inside the church and the outside areas. They will undertake some needed window maintenance, inspect the crawl space of the church and look ahead to scheduling the annual inspection and servicing of our furnace. We are grateful for their ongoing care of our property and church building.

## **Summer Speaker Series**

A committee from our church has been hard at work organizing the Summer Speaker Series for 2018. In addition to scheduling the following authors and speakers, they are working tirelessly to coordinate the details and advertisements for the Program Book which, along with the ticket sales, generates the income that supports the church Mission Outreach throughout the year. We are deeply grateful for their wonderful efforts.

The 2018 Union Church Summer Speaker Series has a schedule of four presentations lined up for the season: July 26 – J. Courtney Sullivan; August 2 – Bill Roorbach; August 9 – Wesley McNair; and August 23 – Noah Isenberg. Additional help may be needed with selling advertising space in our program book. If you can help, contact Ken Murray at [ktmurray1717@hotmail.com](mailto:ktmurray1717@hotmail.com) or 985-6577. Revenue from advertising and ticket sales funds our church's mission outreach program. The beautiful Ad Poster with details about each of the speakers will follow at the end of our newsletter.

**One morning in May...**  
**A view of Union Church with deer in the foreground.**



(Photograph by Peter McPheeters)

**Mission Outreach:**

Thanks to the hard work and dedication of all who worked on the 2017 Summer Speaker Series, the Mission Committee has been empowered to do even more good in the community. In addition to supporting our regular mission partners, we have been able to support the following:

- Sponsor three raised beds and provide other financial support to the new Mission Hill Community Garden in Biddeford.
- Provide funds to the Alternative Pathways Program of Biddeford High School to provide enrichment activities for the students, purchase healthy food to send home with

students for the weekends and support the creation of a clothing closet for the students' needs.

- Provide funding to support a hunger-relief program operated in Honduras by the York Association of the United Church of Christ. Each spring, funds are collected by churches in York county to support a program which helps provide much needed meals to children in a community in Honduras. This was established with the help of local leaders there, along with church members from Maine. Pastor Paula is familiar with this program.
- Provide funding to support children displaced by the fighting in Syria through an intermediary yet to be identified.
- Provide support, if needed, to the Seeds of Hope fundraising walk taking place in June. Four members of the Union Church family will be walking in this event. Candy Blaxter will be coordinating a luncheon for the walkers on the first day.

Union Church's good energy is being put to good use far and wide, thanks be to God.

### **From our Music Director, Michelle Currie**

I will be performing this year again at the Vinegar Hill Music Theatre on Monday, June 25th @ 8pm. There are still tickets available, but they are going fast and it will definitely sell out!!

And I will also be part of the Ocean Park Music Festival, Summer 2018. Here is the information on that concert:

Michelle Currie & The Jim Rice Band

The Temple - Ocean Park (ME) on Sunday July 29th @ 7:30pm

General Admission \$15.00; Under 18 \$5.00; and \$10.00 for Seniors (60 and over)

(Seating unreserved: tickets can be purchased at the door or in advance at the OPA Office.)



## **Knit Wits Outreach to Alternative Pathways in Biddeford**

**by Polly Nodden**

Several Knit Wits and other friends have, for varied and unknown reasons, chosen to “lean in” at the Alternative Pathways Center in Biddeford. That term just mysteriously showed up, but I think it’s apropos. According to the dictionary, to “lean in” means “to incline the body against something for support; to trust for support; to favor.” There seems to be a mutual and natural sense of support at work at APC. We trust and support the students and they appear to trust us back.

We go every other week on Wednesday morning and stay for a few hours. As a few of us were walking out after this morning’s visit, I queried, “Wouldn’t it be wonderful if we could come for a little time *every day*?” (The response was a unanimous heartfelt, “YES!”)

When we arrive, students are generally milling about, some with sleepy eyes, squeaky sneakers, and arms outstretched for a breakfast bagel and a simple cup of apple juice. Others are wide awake, already fed, and ready to roll on with the day. Staff is there. They obviously care. They are the trained ones who dare to help kids establish realistic goals, there to listen as the teenagers bare their souls.

I don’t detect a rigid plan or magic formula for our being there. And it is a relief, at least for me. There’s no seething pressure or confines but, instead, an atmosphere of acceptance where youth are given a little more time, a little more space, a little more encouragement to grow.

We Knit Wits just show up and trust the process, grateful that we’re welcomed in. We really are just a presence to the kids. We greet them and meet them where they are and we sit patiently amongst their familiar faces. We keep showing up. Barriers soften and relationships evolve naturally.

Each youth has his or her uniqueness. For example, J. seems to energize the group with outspoken humor, a wide grin and eyes that take everyone in. G. writes poetry and isn’t afraid to share his despair. He’s reaching out in his own way, and I think he knows we’re there for him. A.

prefers silence but she does show up. She's now offering eye contact and an occasional wry smile and, all the while, she's coloring valentines for friends. H. is our 'Glitter Queen.' She's a card shark, too, and a master make-up artist with perfectly sculpted acrylic nails. C. is always there. He's reliant, observant of others, an avid after-school and weekend fire fighter who's just turned sweet sixteen. S., he's the one with blue, blue eyes and a passion for pastels. And G. who treasures his grandmother and gives us a nudge suggesting that "ALL grandmas count." There are many others, each with their own gifts and challenges.

I think APC is really about one of our greatest human needs: creating pathways for *connection*, ever more urgent for youth who have known suffering at a tender age.

### **APC Open House**

**By Polly Nodden**

The Knit Wits recently attended the Alternative Pathways Center's Open House in their lovely location on Bacon Street in downtown Biddeford. Student artwork and some poetry were on display and a generous array of brochures and refreshments were put out for visitors to enjoy. Staff and several students were on hand to enthusiastically welcome guests and talk about their experience. They visibly conveyed their comfort level and pride in being part of the Center's alternative learning program. Some of the students will be graduating soon and we are looking forward to attending their June 2 graduation.

### **Special Recognition for our church member, Ron Ramsey...**

The Saco and Biddeford Savings Institution featured Ron as an outstanding member of our community. This was published on their Facebook page recently...

Ron Ramsey goes by many names, including Dad, Pèpère, Officer Ron, and during Christmas time, The Big Guy (a.k.a. Santa Claus.) In 2003, Ron's grandson JT was diagnosed with a terminal illness at the age of three months. Over the next several months, the family spent a lot of time at the children's hospital, and when JT passed away at 10 months old, Ron decided he wanted to do something to help all the children and families he met in the hospital.

Shortly after, a connection Ron had with a local news station asked him if he would play Santa at Barbara Bush Children's Hospital. Ron did not hesitate to say yes. "It has been the best thing I've ever done," he says. "No matter how sick a child is they light up when they see Santa, and those are very special moments."

15 years later, Ron's holiday seasons are packed with gigs. "Once you do it once for someone, word gets around," he laughs. It's no surprise that he is in high demand, as many adults who witness him perform say he makes them believe in the magic of Santa Claus. "I have some people who will tell me things about their child in advance and I will make a point to remember those details and make the experience extra special," he says. "I just have so much fun doing it."

Ron never says no to an opportunity and will make time for any child who needs a visit no matter the circumstance or time of year. He does trips to BBCH at least twice a year (in both December and July) and even flies in on a helicopter to Hadlock Field for the annual Holiday at Hadlock. "People ask if I will ever stop, and I say no, I never will," says Ron, who still works full-time as a Security Officer at the University of New England. "The opportunity to make a child or their family smile, no matter what they are going through is something I cherish. To be able to ease a little pain for them, I love it," says Ron.

After so many years, it's no surprise that Ron has a never-ending collection of stories that will bring tears to anyone's eyes. In fact, he has so many, that he would like to one day write a book, to demonstrate to others that there are many good things that happen each year during the holidays that you don't hear about. We are proud to call Ron an SBSI customer, and always look forward to witnessing the magic he brings to our communities through his caring nature and kind heart, not only during the holidays, but all year long!



**2018 Good Energy Café**  
**Mondays in Jordan Hall; 4:30 – 6:00**  
**50 Temple Ave in Ocean Park**



**Arts and Appetizers by the Sea**

Cost \$5.00

*Gather together to enjoy musical performances, appetizers and fellowship... coffeehouse style, led by different performers each week. Enjoy the beautiful, peaceful energy of Ocean Park.*

Contact Jan Hryniewicz, Program Coordinator for more information. [jhryniew@maine.rr.com](mailto:jhryniew@maine.rr.com).

207- 934-2395.

**July 9: Jennifer Comeau**, singer/songwriter and inspiring storyteller. Her creativity, passion and energy are gifts to the local community and to the planet. Experience her positive energy, inspiring music and the stirring message she always delivers!

**July 16:** Singer/songwriter/musician **Cheryl Sager** and her husband **Neal Zweig**, gifted, innovative guitar artist will offer a beautiful musical program of spirit, passion and joy! Their music is soothing and healing to body, mind and spirit. Their love is contagious!

**July 23:** Singer/songwriter **Delilah Poupore** integrates creativity, self awareness, intercultural

communication and personal development through her captivating music and community development as the Executive Director of The Heart of Biddeford. Before coming to Biddeford in 2006, she toured with the acoustic duo, Antara & Delilah and recorded 4 CDs. Inspiring!!

**July 30: Rob Duquette & Friends:** Rob, a multi-instrumentalist musician with an emphasis on drums and percussion, teams up with some of his musically gifted drum students. Drop by and feel the energy of percussion and voice, reflecting Rob's passion for music, creativity and Earth.

**August 6: Mairzy Doats Duo, Ellen Nordstrom and Abigail Charbeneau** will amaze and delight audiences as they sing and portray morale-boosting songs that were popular during the two World Wars, from "Over There" to "Cock-eyed Optimist". Extraordinary talent, an unforgettable performance.... a touch of Broadway in Ocean Park.

**August 13: Patrick Doane, Violinist,** will offer a classical music program that is breathtaking, rich and varied. Patrick is a resident musician at Music Haven, in New Haven CT. He performs with ensembles including the Hartford Symphony, the Harrisburg Symphony and the New Haven Symphony, as well as the Orchestra of St. Luke's. Patrick has appeared as soloist with orchestras in New York City as well as Concertmaster for international tours. Quite simply, he is superb.

**August 20:** Percussionist/West African Drummer, **Annegret Baier** captures and captivates audiences with her fascinating rhythms and her skill playing a variety of indigenous instruments.

She also performs with her groups, The Inanna Sisters of Rhythm and the Zulu Leprechauns. Captivating!