

Union Church Winter 2018



From the Pastor...

Dear Friends,

Hoping you enjoyed a lovely Thanksgiving. Next Sunday, we begin the Advent Season once again. We will be putting up the tree and decorating the church in anticipation of our time of hopeful waiting for the celebration of the birth of Christ again on Christmas. Each year, as these special weeks pass quickly, I want to be more intentional, more mindful to the moments of these days so that I might be more present to this precious time of year. Perhaps you feel much the same, and so I invite us this year to slow down and enjoy the moments of each day, to take time for prayer and quiet, to be intentional about making time to observe these wondrous days and be present to this opportunity to open our hearts to the Season of Advent.

The theme of our Advent Worship in the coming weeks will be Calm and Bright as we remember the 200th Anniversary of the beautiful hymn, Silent Night. We will light the Advent wreath each week as we enter into the moments of peace, hope, joy and love and reflect on how we encounter each of these in our daily lives. We know that they are central to the Christmas message and we know that our nation and our world are in such need of these gifts.

Just a few weeks ago, one of our oldest members, Laura McKenney, passed away surrounded by her family. Many of you know that Laura grew up in Biddeford Pool, just down the street from Union Church and that this church was so important to her life over many, many years. We gathered on November 10th to celebrate her life and to commend her lovely, gentle spirit to God. We continue to thank God for the gift of her life in each of our lives and for the ways she shared her time and gifts with this church community.

In addition to our weekly worship to observe the Season of Advent, we will gather for the annual Fireside Chat on Wednesday evening, December 12th at 6pm at the Biddeford Pool Community Center. This will be a simple evening of fun, food, and a conversation about the meaning of Advent and Christmas. Please join us.

In January, we invite you to a retreat at the Marie Joseph Retreat Center at the Pool. The title of the Retreat is the Long and Winding Road: A Spirituality for Our Life Journey. A group of us have been meeting in recent months to organize this offering, including Rev. Ned Dougherty, Rev. Jan Hryniewicz, Anne Murray, and Lisa Barstow. Please join us for a special day. A lovely poster with more information is found later in this Newsletter.

Wishing you all the blessings of this Advent Season as we make our way to the wonder of Christmas.

In Peace,

Paula

Your faithful Pastor

Important Dates:

December Advent Collections-We will be collecting items as part of our Advent observation to support those served by local organizations. Please read more in the Mission article below. Gift cards and mittens, gloves and hats will be collected each week at Church.

Wednesday, December 12th, 6pm: Fireside Chat: BPCC. All are welcome.

Sunday, December 23rd, 10am-Sunday Worship with special Focus on our younger members.

Monday, December 24th, 5pm-Christmas Eve Service, Join us at 4:30 for a Carol Sing before the Service.

Tuesday, January 15th-Retreat, Marie Joseph Retreat Center, The Long and Winding Road: A Spirituality for Our Life Journey

From our Moderator...

As the holiday season comes into full swing I work away on my "TO DO" list before the end of the year as Moderator. I have tried to keep you all informed with periodic emails and updates in our Newsletter so this report might be a little repetitious. I will soon be sending you all a letter and envelope seeking a pledge for the year 2019 as the leadership of the church prepares for a new fiscal year. So please, as you review your personal

financial picture as the year ends, keep our church in mind both as to completing any pledge you made for this year and what you might be able to commit to for 2019.

I want to repeat what I sent a few weeks ago in an email because it is so important that we find someone in the church family willing to make a very special commitment as a Treasurer and officer starting next June.

"I wish to announce a change in a vital leadership position in our church family. Ada Goff has decided to step down from the position as our Treasurer. She has faithfully served in that important role for eight years. Prior to the role she had served a stint as Moderator for four years and behind the scenes has performed countless other duties for this church. Thankfully, in true Ada fashion, she is offering us a long lead time to find a new Treasurer and certainly offering to help in the training and work with the new Treasurer during the needed transition process as she passes this important torch. She will continue to serve as our Treasurer until next June when we would elect any new officers and make other appointments at that June 2019 Semi-Annual meeting.

The Treasurer serves in one-year terms but often for a number of years as have Ada and Brad Coupe before her. The Treasurer is an officer of the church and must also be a member of the church. The Treasurer is therefore on the

Executive Committee and on the Finance Committee, obviously. It would certainly be helpful if the person that would step forward has some accounting and other fiscal skills and can easily work with Excel Spreadsheets, Quick Books and other computer tools. The church will send you for training on Quick Books if need be.

So this is a call for someone within the membership of Union Church to step forward to make this significant commitment to the leadership team. You are welcome to speak directly to Ada Goff, Peter McPheeters or me to begin a discussion of this possibility for you to serve your church in this important role.”

Lastly, I just want to commend so many of you for the endless generosity of your time volunteering with so many church tasks as the Fellowship Teams, choir and various committees; partaking of the volunteer opportunities in mission projects and also with baking and cooking for the many efforts the church is a part of. I truly believe this is not just a caring community but operates like a family and brings such an extra dimension to our lives.

My best wishes to you all in the Christmas season.

Paul Schlaver, Moderator

Special Support for those in California
affected by the tragic fires...

Union Church Accepting Donations for Victims of the
"Camp Fire" in Paradise CA and Surrounds

With a good friend "on the ground" in Chico, CA, near Paradise, Jen Comeau has identified and vetted two local charitable organizations -- one for the thousands of homeless families and one for the hundreds of homeless pets that are the victims of the most disastrous fire in California's history. Thus, Union Church will take monetary donations for both. Please make your checks out to: Union Church, and put, "CA Fire Relief" or something similar in your subject line. **We will collect donations until December 2nd.**

The two places that have the best access and support systems to accept donations are North Valley Community Foundation and North Valley Animal Disaster Group.

<https://www.nvcf.org/fund/camp-fire-evacuation-relief-fund/>

<https://www.nvadg.org/donate>

Thank you for your generosity

Missions Committee News

Ken Murray

Union Church is providing various opportunities for each of us to be involved in outreach to our community during the Advent season.

1. As you may remember, we have developed a close relationship between our church and the Alternative Pathways Center (APC) of Biddeford High School. The Alternative Pathways Center's mission is to give alternative learners an opportunity to obtain a Biddeford High School diploma through coursework that is individualized, project-based and combined with pre-vocational training, work experience and social and emotional learning. Our Union Church Knit Wits group has been going to APC a couple of times a month to interact with students through shared cooking and crafts projects.

As we have done in previous years, we will be hosting a holiday party for APC on December 12, which is a day that the Knit Wits will be there. As part of that, we would like to provide each student with a \$10 gift card to one of the following four businesses that are within walking distance of downtown Biddeford: Subway, Dunkin Donuts,

Domino's Pizza or 7 Eleven. We are asking the church family to purchase and contribute one or two gift cards from one of these four businesses and drop them in the box that we will place at the back of the church. Your kindness will be greatly appreciated by the APC students and staff.

2. Another Union Church Advent project this year will be "Warm Hands, Warm Hearts." Donations of new winter hats, gloves, mittens, scarves and socks will offer much-needed warmth and kindness to both kids and adults this winter. This project, coordinated by Sharon Gaudin, is working with a number of community organizations which will give what is collected to people they know are in need. Items donated at Union Church also will go to our mission projects, like Seeds of Hope and the Saco Meals Program, with a special focus on children and teens. We are trying to find as many avenues as possible to reach people in need of warmth this winter. Thank you for your help

3. Union Church is also putting on a holiday party at the Saco Meals Program dinner on Monday, December 17. Our church cooking team will be adding special holiday touches to the meal that we prepare. We will also provide special decorations for the Most Holy Trinity Parish Hall where the meal is served. And, using funds donated by Landry French Construction Company, a

holiday gift bag will be prepared to give to each guest at that night's meal. Lots of Union Church elves will be working on this event. Call or email Ken Murray if you would like to get involved. He may be reached at 494-9376 or ktmurray1727@hotmail.com

4. Finally, the two students who are supported by Union Church are doing fine. Diana Jepchirchir, in Kenya, sent us a letter this summer thanking us for supporting her in her studies. The Education for All Children program, through which we sponsor her, sent her grade report. She is one of the top students in her class. Luis Choc, in Belize, also has been in touch with us through email. He has just moved up from the middle grades to high school at Holy Cross Anglican School. He is enthusiastic about the change and eager to do well. The Mission Committee is proud of them both and continue to monitor their progress.

From the Deacons...

"Let Us Accept Acts of Kindness"

by Katie Koles, Chair of Deacons

We are a such generous church community. We raise funds through our Speaker Series to support local and global causes and we are known as "the little church with the big heart."

In my personal life, my family and I have been the recipients of the generosity of spirit that our church members offer. When my dog Gracie passed away, I received a prayer shawl from the Knit Wits. When I was recovering from surgery and could not drive, my church friends drove me to appointments and meetings. Last year, when my mother was in the hospital, our Pastor visited her in the hospital and people brought meals to us. My mother received countless cards from people during her recovery and I cannot express the way this lifted her spirits and motivated her to heal.

Most recently, my college roommate, Trudy, was battling cancer. We prayed for her healing and comfort for almost six months. When she lost her battle, we prayed for her family and friends. My church friends offered so much support and compassion to me during this dark time in my life-a lifeline in a way.

Would I have “made it” through these rough patches without this help? Yes, I suppose so. But I would not have come through to the other side with the richness sharing sorrow brings and the deepening appreciation for my community.

Generally, though, some people are reluctant to accept help. Do we see it as a sign of weakness? An invasion of privacy? Fear that others may think our lives are unraveling and we cannot manage? Or do we think

we're doing "okay" now but might need help in the future so we do not want to wear out our welcome?

I think kindness and compassion are like shock absorbers on a car. The journey—the road—the path—none of that changes. Yet accepting the companionship and good will of others eases the difficulty, brings grace to our burdens, and helps our community grow closer.

We are not a church community who "rations" our kindness. Taking a meal from "Helping Hands" or a visit from one of the Pastoral Assistants are not acts of weakness. It is simply allowing others the gift of giving.

Pastor Paula spoke about Jesus' new kingdom—of truth and of the Godliness in each one of us. Would any of us really refuse a gift from God? Then, let us be willing to accept God's kindness working through others.

LET'S HELP OUR NEIGHBORS

Collecting NEW winter hats, mittens, gloves, scarves and socks. Please leave them inside here in the box and we'll distribute them to local school children, senior citizen homes, veterans' groups and the Scarborough cancer center. People at these organizations will get them to people in need.



Knit Wits

Want to be a Knit Wit? It is easy. This winter the Knit Wits are going to knitting prayer shawls. The Mission Committee provides the yarn for us. We have several different patterns that you can choose. You do need your own needles. We meet once a month at the church

office. Seeeee-it is easy. You can knit at your own speed and help others. Please speak with Carol Sherman about scheduled meeting dates or if you have any questions.

From Nancy Bernier...

Nancy Bernier has shared three links to videos she filmed that may be of interest to those in our church community. Below, Wood Island shares the link to the video on their website which was completed this past June. Perhaps others in our congregation might enjoy viewing it so I am sending along the link:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vRXHCjvbzr0&t=5s>

Also others in the congregation have asked about Nancy and Tom Bancroft's Garden Tour July 2017 –

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BS14B54_jYM&t=20s (about 27 minutes long)

And my trip to Tanzania/Sept 2018 –

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IhE-bR1EbbA&t=976s> (also about 25 minutes)

**Come, meander with us
*down the long and winding road***



toward spiritual awakening

Tuesday, January 15, 2019

9:00 am – 4:00 pm

Marie Joseph Retreat Center, Biddeford Pool

SPIRITUALITY FOR OUR LIFE JOURNEY

Tour Guides: Rev. Paula Norbert, Lisa Barstow,
Rev. Ned Dougherty, Anne Murray,
Rev. Jan Hryniewicz

Cost: \$35.00

Please sign up now to reserve your place.
Lunch included. Snow Date: January 30th



Photo Album



Photo by Nancy Bernier

Members and Friends at the Holiday Tea in November



Photo by Nancy Bernier

The Annual Bake Sale dedicated in loving memory of Laura McKenney and Judy MacGillivray



Photo by Nancy Bernier

Children's Sharing Time with Emily Couture and Calvin Johnson-McPheeters

World War I Novels (and a Few Histories)

By Tom Bancroft

Europe should have had some inkling of the carnage that lay ahead when W.W. I. was declared in August 1914. They could have looked back to the American Civil War, where improved fire power and the perceived need for unconditional surrender led to unprecedented slaughter. Indeed, there was much foreboding in many areas of what it could mean when the greatest industrial nations on earth clashed (sans the U.S.). The British Foreign Secretary, Sir Edward Grey said just weeks before Britain's declaration of war, "The lamps are

going out all over Europe. We shall not see them lit again in our lifetime". He was prescient to the degree that if one accepts that World War I led to World War II, and World War II led directly to the Cold War, then seventy years of conflict emerged after "The War to End All Wars".

Why does it resonate today one hundred years hence?

It was a 20th century war of weaponry fought with 19th century tactics. In order to "engage the enemy", soldiers had to, as in centuries past, move forward over open ground. With the advent of the machine gun, poison gas and long-range artillery, this became tantamount to suicide. The unimaginable statistics still shock: On the first day of the Battle of the Somme, July 1, 1916, the British Army lost 60,000 men, dead or wounded, the worst single-day loss in battle in recorded history. In three days of fighting on the Western Front, the French lost 200,000 men.

The War of Downton Abbey had casualties we wouldn't accept today.

Nobody living remembers the individuals who died then. But the First World War, more than the Second, continues to reverberate and affect us today. The United States entered the War in 1917, and powered the exhausted allies to victory. We lost 116,000 soldiers. Compare that to two million Germans, over one million

Austro-Hungarians, about two million Russians, and 1,400,000 French. The British and their Empire lost 1,115,000. The war made the United States the world's leading creditor, replacing London as the financial capital of the world with New York. An ocean away from the devastation in Europe, America's economy boomed, surpassing the British Empire's, to become the largest in the world.

Many of the conflicts of today stem directly from the Great War. France claimed Lebanon and Syria, while Britain took Iraq and Jordan and the Gulf States. The new borders were arbitrarily drawn. Iraq was created by lumping three former Ottoman provinces together, dominated respectively by Shias, Sunnis and Kurds. It wasn't until seventy-five years later, when the U.S entered the Iraq fiasco, that we discovered that they were still fighting over the results of the First World War.

It is no wonder then, that the Great War captures the imagination of many more artists, poets, and novelists than the even greater cataclysm of the Second World War. One felicitous result of the Great War is the great literature it engendered.

WWI is the first conflict in which there were tens of thousands of well-documented cases of debilitating neurological disorders, or shell-shock, today known as PTSD. In the mid 90's Pat Barker wrote a trilogy, *The*

Regeneration Trilogy, consisting of *Regeneration*, 1991, *The Eye in the Door*, 1993, and *The Ghost Road*, 1995, which won the Booker Prize. The central characters in all three books are Lieutenant Billy Prior, who has been cured of shell shock in time to return to France for the “one big push” that will presumably end the horror. The other is Dr. William Rivers, a real-life character who was instrumental in developing the treatment of shell shock. In the first book, *Regeneration*, he treats the real-life antiwar hero Siegfried Sassoon, a famous poet, who goes on to become one of the most important memoirists of the conflict. All three of these books are among the best novels ever written about the war and are available on-line in one volume as the *Regeneration Trilogy*. If I had to recommend one book of the three, it would be *The Ghost Road*.

WWI literature can't be approached without reading *Birdsong* by Sebastian Faulks. Readers will find in intricate, terrifying detail just what it was like in the trenches, and below, where our hero is part of the Tunneling Companies. They build primitive tunnels to reach below enemy lines and to plant devastating mines. They could just as easily bury their diggers – and do. Juxtaposed, in this nearly perfect novel, is a sweet love story begun before the war, and improbably, resumed near the end. To say this is all bitter sweet is perhaps understating it. This is essential war-time reading.

Irish writer Sebastian Barry is not well known in the U.S., but should be. A contemporary author, he wrote *A Long, Long Way* in 2005. Eighteen-year-old Willie Dunne enlists and leaves Dublin to join the Allied Forces on the Western Front. This means that he has to join the British Expeditionary Force. He keeps up his spirits by the camaraderie of the boys he fights with. But when he returns home on leave, he runs into the growing tensions of Irish independence in his country and at home. He soon faces unbearable choices regarding his family, patriotism and duty.

A more recent book of the first major conflict of the 20th century is one I just finished reading last week, *The Winter Soldier*, by Daniel Mason, 2018. Written by an American physician, it is unique in this series of reviews in that it is told from the point of view of an Austrian (thus on the German side) medical student who upon enlisting, and never having operated on a patient, becomes, at the Front, a battlefield surgeon. He falls in love with a religious order sister/nurse. They're separated by war, a quest ensues, and a resolution of sorts occurs. Despite this terse summary, this is first-rate literature. The surgeries and battlefield injuries are graphically written as you might imagine from a physician. Like in horror movies, there are some scenes where you may want to close your eyes.

As a general rule, from the verminous mud of the trenches, this conflict produced the war literature to end all war literature: bitter and hopeless. But, as in the conflict itself, also warmth, sensuousness, and beauty.

Happy First Birthday to Hannah, daughter of
Charlotte Cyr and Jeremy Smith

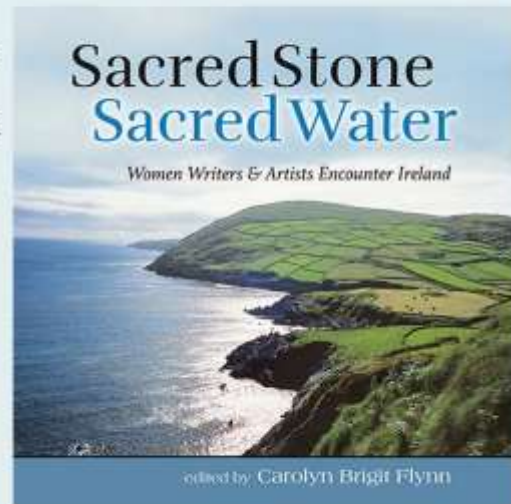


EXCITING NEWS!

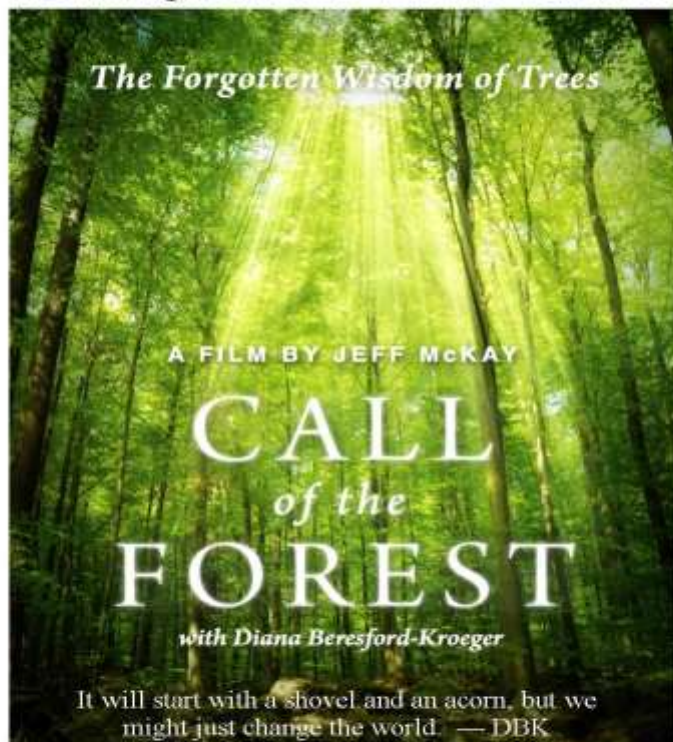
Jenny Comeau's prose poems will be published in an anthology *Sacred Stone Sacred Water ~ Women Writers & Artists Encounter Ireland*

This full-color book of poetry, photography, and art is due out in spring 2019. Stay tuned as a book tour wends its way through Biddeford Pool in May 2019!

To pre-order your copy (only \$25) and support its publication, click [here](#), or type in your browser: <https://www.gofundme.com/sacred-ireland>.



A Stunning Movie Love-Letter to Our Forests



Thursday November 29th 6:30 PM ~ Graves Library
Kennebunkport ~ Popcorn & Refreshments
\$15 donation benefits Treesisters.org & Kport Trust
To reserve seats, call or text Jen: (207) 229-4136

Five years in the making, filmed around the world, *Call of The Forest* is a stunningly photographed movie love-letter to the forest. The film played to record breaking crowds in October. At a recent screening in California the audience was moved to tears by how our forests are disappearing around the world. Acclaimed author and writer Diana Beresford Kroeger tours some of the last great forests in the world in Japan, Ireland and Germany and speaks out about their endangerment and what we can do about it. Diana was orphaned in Ireland in her youth, and educated by elders who instructed her in the Brehon knowledge of plants and nature. Told she was the last child of ancient Ireland and to one

day bring the Brehon knowledge of plants and nature to a troubled future, Beresford-Kroeger has done exactly that.

Reviews

I was not prepared for the standing ovation we received at the end of the film. I was not prepared for the huge audience who were crying. And, I was definitely, not, in any way prepared for the warm and heartfelt hugs I received afterwards. ---**DIANA BERESFORD KROEGER**
(Writer & activist)

END

***With Thanks to all who contributed to this Winter Newsletter**