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A MESSAGE FROM OUR MODERATOR

Advent greetings to all in the Hancock-Waldo Association! When the seasons change, I am always drawn to the writing of Sister Joan Chittister. In her wonderful book, *The Liturgical Year, the Spiraling Adventure of the Spiritual Life*, she writes of Advent: “Advent is about learning to wait. It is about not having to know exactly what is coming tomorrow, only that whatever it is, it is of the essence of sanctification for us. Every piece of it, some hard, some uplifting, is a sign of the work of God alive in us. We are becoming as we go. We learn in Advent to stay in the present, knowing that only the present well lived can possibly lead us to the fullness of life. Life is not meant to be escaped, we, learn, as the liturgical year moves from season to season, from feast to feast. It is meant to be penetrated, to be plumbed to its depths, to be tasted and savored and bring us to realize that the God who created us is with us yet. Life, we come eventually to know, is an exercise in transformation, the mechanics of which take a lifetime of practice, of patience, of slow, slow growth.”

I need to remember those words in Advent – particularly this Advent – with so much economic and relational adversity facing so many in our churches, with deaths coming too soon – surrounded with anguish and grief, with too much to do, and too much tiredness all around. I need to be reminded that each year, each day, we are given the opportunity to “start over”... to do life differently if we feel we’ve not been the people we’d like to be, to try to be more forgiving and more forgivable, to be more generous and less anxious about “having enough” for ourselves, to take another look at what it means to follow Jesus’ ways of life rather than the ways we too often fashion for ourselves.

Join me, won’t you, in this waiting journey through Advent! As always, don’t hesitate to be in touch with me if there is any way the Association, or I personally as your Moderator, can be of assistance. You may reach me at susanstst@aol.com or by phone to 207-763-4526.

SPRING MEETING

Make a note, too, of the Spring Meeting of our Association. We will gather at First Congregational Church UCC of Blue Hill on Saturday, April 21st at 9:30 a.m. (registration and coffee between 9 and 9:30). Rev. Rob McCall and congregation will be our hosts this time around. Joe Cistone, Executive Director & CEO of IPM (International Partners in Mission) will be our guest speaker. Joe is a member of the United Church of Northeast Harbor and Seal Harbor UCC in Northeast Harbor. He will share with us the work of IPM around the world and let us know how we might participate in this important ministry. We may learn about how we can become involved in an immersion trip to the Holy Lands! We may also have a short presentation about treasurers and financial matters in our churches by someone “in the know” from the Maine Conference Office. Money matters are always a challenge, aren’t they? We can never learn enough about this aspect of church life.

So, blessings to all in our Association as we begin anew this Advent Season!

The Rev. Dr. Susan Stonestreet,
Pastor, United Christian Church, Lincolnville, Maine

PASTORAL CHANGES

FRANKFORT

The Frankfort Congregational Church UCC has seen its unique calling over the years as supporting and nurturing student pastors on their journey toward ordination. Most recently, the congregation has called Judith Ahles as pastor. A Bangor Theological Seminary student under the Bangor Plan, Ms Ahles received her Master of Divinity degree from BTS last May and hopes to continue course work toward a Bachelor's degree. A member in discernment with the Penobscot-Piscataquis Association, she has served as pastor of the Kenduskeag Union and Carmel Congregational Churches as well as a coordinator with Literacy Volunteers and Families and Children Together.

CASTINE

It has been a busy fall for Tim Hall with an ecclesiastical council, ordination and then a call to serve as settled pastor of the Trinitarian Parish Church UCC in Castine beginning November 1. An Augusta native, Tim began his seminary studies after a long career with the Maine State Park Service. He most recently served as pastor of the Frankfort Church for the past three years. A graduate of Bangor Theological Seminary, Tim was ordained October 30.

BROOKS

Joan Smith has been called as part-time interim pastor of the Brooks Congregational Church UCC, An ordained UCC minister, she was a counselor-administrator-cook for Greenfire Retreat in Tenants's Harbor.. Upon it's closing, she opened Healing Soup for a ministry of hospitality and spiritual counsel in Rockland. Joan recently completed three years as part-time Interim Minister for an island community church in partnership with the Maine Seacoast Mission.

DEDHAM

Leslie Anne Chatfield, a member in discernment with the Midcoast Association, has been called as interim pastor of the Deadham and Holden churches. She received her Master of Divinity degree from BTS in 1993 and has focused on training for intentional interim ministry. She has served as licensed interim pastor of yoked parishes in the York Association and looks forward to an ecclesiastical council with her home association in the near future.

LET US ENTERTAIN YOU

Over the last two years, the First Church in Belfast entered the Saturday night public supper arena with a twist – live entertainment. We found the previous year that people seemed to really enjoy our Valentine's Dinner, which included musical performances by some of our own members as well as some from outside the church. So, we began to include both a theme and some kind of entertainment to our suppers this year.

- The "Valentine's Dinner" (lasagna) with a number of soloists, a mixed trio, and a quartet of local guys called "The Four Valentines", all who sang various love songs, some accompanied and some a cappella. We also had a special appearance by Elvis!
- A "St. Patrick's Day Dinner" (traditional corned beef dinner) where we led folks in singing some old Irish favorites and also had a few solo numbers.
- In May, we had "Cowboy Ken's Round Up" (pulled pork, potato salad, beans, etc.) which included cow-pokes in western wear, singing cowboy songs with guitar accompaniment.
- July 2 was the "USO Tour" public supper with a patriotic theme.
- And our September public supper featured a "Hootenanny" with a number of groups singing folk songs of the '50s and '60s.

Including entertainment sets us apart from the multitude of other area suppers and we're fortunate to have a wide variety of gifted vocalists and instrumentalists among our parishioners as well as folks from the wider community who have pitched in. It requires more planning to pull off well this live entertainment. But we've found that people are attracted to this feature and generally leave with more than just a full and satisfied stomach. They also leave with a full and satisfied spirit.

ELM STREET CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH , BUCKSPORT

BLUE CHRISTMAS SERVICE

A Blue Christmas service will be held on Wednesday, December 14 at 7 p.m. The holidays bring smiles, caroling, decorating, and celebrations, but it is not always a time of happiness. Amid the happiness are people who are experiencing the death of a loved one, job loss, serious illness or who are just “blue.” This worship service will bring an awareness to those who are “blue.” People that have died as well as other losses in people’s lives will be held in remembrance during the service. If you are dreading the festivities that surround Christmas or if you know of someone who would benefit from this service of healing and caring, please come to the service.

TOY AND FOOD DRIVE

The Bucksport Community Concerns Food Pantry will be having a toy and food drive in our dining hall on Saturday, December 17 from 8:30 a.m.-12 noon. The food pantry helps area families and children with Christmas dinners and by providing toys for children. This wonderful outreach is held each year. Parishioners from Elm Street Church help to collect non-perishable food items on a weekly basis for the food pantry, and also during the month of December parishioners collect hats and mittens to be distributed by the food pantry.

Parishioners are going to be invited to participate in Christmas caroling on Sunday, December 18 at 3-5 p.m. Everyone will gather at the church and go and visit several locations to ring in the Christmas cheer for others. After the caroling is done everyone will return to the church for hot chocolate and cookies.

A Christmas Eve worship service will be held on Saturday, December 24 at 5 p.m. This beautiful candlelight service will include many familiar Christmas carols, scripture readings, and praises for the birth of our Lord, Jesus Christ. All are welcome to come and worship with us!

BAR HARBOR CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH-UCC

ANNUAL CHRISTMAS FAIR WEDNESDAY DECEMBER 7, 10 AM – 2 PM

Have you started your Christmas shopping yet? If not here is the perfect opportunity to purchase that perfect present for a special friend or family member. The Bar Harbor Congregational Church’s Annual Christmas Fair has something for everyone...lovely crafts, yummy baked goods, fascinating attic treasures, and gorgeous gift items! In addition there will be a raffle table featuring the art of several area artists, cash gifts, specialty baskets, and many other gift items. Let’s not forget the luncheon which begins at 11:00 a.m. The menu will include savory soups, scrumptious sandwiches, and delicious pies. All are welcome!!

GINGER BREAD SATURDAY!! DECEMBER 3RD

This is an annual event at the Bar Harbor Congregational Church-UCC where the younger children of the church are gathered together to make Gingerbread Houses. The families are sent templates for the gingerbread so they can make the parts for the houses ahead of time. On Gingerbread Saturday the decorating begins. It’s a great way to kick off the holidays with our younger members!

HAPPY BIRTHDAY SUNDAYS

The Bar Harbor Congregational Church UCC celebrates everyone’s birthday on the first Sunday of the New Year. Folks are solicited to make a birthday cake for each month. Then on Sunday everyone gets to enjoy their birthday month cake. However some are known to sample several months’ cakes because they are just too hard to resist.

GAME DAY POTLUCK!! FRIDAY JANUARY 27TH

The Christian Education Board hosts an Game Night Potluck for everyone in the church. Lots of great food and lots of fun! Board Games, card games, more active games like Twister are played by both our older and younger members. A great way to break out of those cabin fever blues!!

SOUPER BOWL SUNDAY FEBRUARY 5TH

The youth of the Bar Harbor Congregational Church-UCC collect a special offering of food and funds for the Bar Harbor Food Pantry on this day. A great way to remind both young and old of the ongoing needs so many in our community.

FIRST CHURCH IN BELFAST UCC

During the final two weeks in November, the upper parish hall takes on an assembly line atmosphere as members and friends decorate some 700 Christmas wreaths, nearly 200 for shipping across the U.S. and the remainder to adorn local stores and homes. The project has a long tradition at First Church, launched some 80 years ago in a member's kitchen

Another tradition is the annual Christmas supper and party, hosted by the Eight O'Clock Club for residents of Group Homes in Belfast. Santa makes an appearance with a gift for each guest. The Penobscot Bay Singers will present their annual Holiday Concert at First Church Saturday, December 10, at 7 pm.

The Greater Bay Area Ministerium will sponsor a **Live Nativity** Friday, December 16, at 5 p.m. on the First Church lawn. A stable already has been erected and we're hoping some live animals will join the scene. One year we even had angels proclaiming the good news from our bell tower.

SOMESVILLE UNION MEETING HOUSE UCC

We will be having a Pot Luck Supper and presenting *The Gift of a Son* on Saturday December 3 at 5:00pm. Those present for the supper are the cast for the telling of the Christmas story, only Mary, Joseph and baby Jesus are previously chosen.

Somesville will also be reading *The First Christmas* by Marcus Borg and John Dominic Crossan during Advent and will have a discussion of the book early in January, possibly after the service on Epiphany..