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A Message from the Moderator

Good morning! As I write these words, the start of the “holiday season” is about to be upon us – beginning with Thanksgiving.... then, you know the drill.... Each year I tell myself I will not let this season become a “drill,” but a time of deep reflection, waiting, darkness outside, so the light inside (of me) needs to shine a little brighter for those around me. One of my favorite verses of Scripture is John 1:5 – “The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.” (NRSV) In the New Jerusalem Bible the Greek is translated, “and light shines in darkness, and darkness could not overpower it.” “Did not, could not.... overpower, overcome....” We are the carriers of that light, my friends, that emanates from the spark of God that is within each one of us.

As your new Moderator, I call upon each of you in the churches in the Hancock-Waldo Association to work with me in the coming year to spread that spark of God to all whom we meet and welcome into our church fellowships and beyond our church doors. Let me know your thoughts about how we might best do this as an association of churches all committed to serving God’s people, no matter who they are, or where they are on life’s journey. I have a vision of some sort of project we all might share in fostering in one way or another in our Association. Any ideas? Be in touch with me – either via e-mail at susanstst@aol.com or via regular mail at PO Box 288, Lincolnville Center, ME 04850 or via phone at 207-763-4526.

I look forward to hearing from you, and seeing you at our Spring Meeting, which may actually take place in April. Stay tuned for more details. Your Executive Committee will be meeting in January to make some decision about date, place and theme for that meeting.

I also look forward to serving as your Moderator and working with you to spread the light that shines in the darkness of our fractured and chaotic world.

Blessings to all as we begin this holiday season, 2010.....

Rev. Dr. Susan Stonestreet (call me Susan!)

New Interim Pastors

The Rev. Diane Harvey became the interim pastor of the Trinitarian Congregational Church in Castine in July. She holds standing in the York Association where she has served on the Committee on Church and Ministry.

The Rev. Linda Hatch recently has been called as interim pastor of the United Church of Christ of Northeast Harbor and Seal Harbor.

Missions and Meditation at the Bar Harbor Congregational Church

At press time, the Bar Harbor Congregational Church expected to provide more than 200 food baskets to area people in its Annual Thanksgiving Drive. Pastor Sandra Reed reports that donations came from throughout Mt. Desert Island including 250 pumpkin pies, “made with fresh pumpkin,” provided by Morning Glory Bakery. The Bar Harbor congregation will also join in the Christmas Drive of the Maine Seacoast Mission, supplying gifts for children on this and surrounding islands.

Sandra also reports the Bar Harbor Church has begun two new Guided Meditation Groups that meet weekly. “We are enjoying getting into the Scriptures in a new way that involves body awareness, relaxation, and opening ourselves to the ways in which Scriptures inform and affect our lives,” she said.

Bucksport Church Welcomes Student Pastor, Completes Renovations

The Elm Street Congregational Church in Bucksport is pleased to have Izzie Radford-Nash, a senior at Bangor Theological Seminary, as student pastor, completing her mentored practice requirement with our pastor, the Rev Linda Smith. Ms. Radford-Nash will lead our local ecumenical Thanksgiving service.

A rededication service was held on Sunday, November 14 to celebrate completion of extensive renovations to our church. The last project was the installation of the granite steps and walkway that leads into the church. Now the church building has been fully restored back to its original state. This huge project wouldn't have been possible without the help from the church members, friends, and citizens of Bucksport and surrounding areas.

The women's group, along with a few men, has been busy restoring the Guild “parlor” room back to its original state. During the renovation process, the original wallpaper that is on the walls was found in small strips. The wallpaper strips reveal the now faded but beautiful and grand wallpaper that was meticulously installed on the walls.

We provided an ecumenical meal for local shut-in's and seniors October 11. Church members from Elm Street, along with church members from area churches, provided and delivered a hot meal of homemade soup, rolls, carrot and celery sticks, and dessert 85 shut-ins and seniors.

Our older youth have expressed an interest in doing service projects for the congregation members. During the month of October and November the youth have gone to three church members' homes to help with yard work that included raking leaves, putting away lawn furniture, and helping to organize items in a garage. Each month the youth will help another church member for their service project.

Bucksport Advent activities include:

A potluck supper on Wednesday, December 1 at 6 p.m. in Brown Hall. After the supper everyone can help decorate the church for Advent. Everyone is encouraged to bring a dish to share along with their place setting.

Taize: An ecumenical Advent service of readings, reflection, silence and song will be offered on the four Wednesdays in Advent beginning on Wednesday, December 1 at 5:30 p.m. at St. Vincent de Paul Catholic Church. Taize is a beautiful and contemplative form of worship which incorporates song, scripture, and silence in a wonderfully meaningful way. Taize comes to us from a community in France, and is practiced worldwide as a beautiful way to meditate on God's word. The service will last one hour with a soup and bread supper offered in the church basement after the service.

Week 1: December 1, 5:30 p.m.-Taize Service-Reflection by Father Bruce Siket

Week 2: December 8, 5:30 p.m.-Labyrinth Walk Prayer Experience in the church basement

Week 3: December 15, 5:30 p.m.-Taize Service-Reflection by Rev. Linda Smith

Week 4: December 22, 5:30 p.m.-Taize Service-Reflection by Pastor Peter Remick

Christmas Eve: A service of carols and scripture Friday, December 24 at 5 p.m.

Deer Isle Church Hosts Harvest Supper

The Deer Isle Congregational Church hosted a Community Potluck Harvest Supper to benefit the Island Food Pantry November 17. Members of the Community of Christ Church and the Deer Isle Church prepared turkeys and stuffing to accompany the variety of dishes people brought. Although free to all, the meal is also the occasion for collecting food and donations for the Island Food Pantry. After the supper, the Deer Isle/Sunset choir performed in the church and the audience later joined in, singing favorite Thanksgiving hymns and songs.

The Island Food Pantry is a lifeline for many. It depends on the generosity and effort of all our citizens. This Harvest Supper brings everyone together in friendship and thanksgiving.

Advent Secret Pals at the Monroe Community Church

In mid-November, Members and friends of the Monroe church drew names from a Christmas tree. Each week during Advent they then receive small gifts from anonymous givers. On the Third Thursday, at our regular Friendship Pot Luck supper we exchange our 4th gift and try to guess who our Advent friend was. We have a lot of fun doing this. (Gifts are inexpensive.) Also right after Christmas we draw items from the tree to give to our church. Items are coffee, paper towels, soap, etc. and in January on the 3rd Thursday at our Friendship supper we open the gifts for our church. Nice way to cut some of the expenses.

Wreaths, Brother Advent, Live Nativity

Mark Christmas Preparations at Belfast's First Church

The First Church in Belfast launched its biggest annual fund-raising event November 21, decorating some 700 wreaths for shipping across the country as well as local delivery and pick-up. Work actually begins in the summer as parishioners gather pine cones of varying dimensions and styles, acorns, horse chestnuts and peach pits – all components of our natural materials decorations -- while a few begin to fashion the distinctive velvet bows. The week before Thanksgiving work begins in earnest with members individually decorating each wreath according to their artist bent – no two are exactly alike – while our upstairs parish hall becomes a huge quality control/shipping center. Although the deadline for shipped wreaths has passed, if you plan to be in the Belfast area December 3, you still have time to order a wreath. As the ad below states, the deadline for orders is Monday, Nov. 29 and they must be picked up at the church on or before December 3. Anyone who would like to be placed on the mailing list for shipped wreaths for 2011 may also call the church.

Christmas Wreaths!



You can still order your wreath from First Church!

Call 338-2282 or 338-1329

Deadline is Monday, Nov. 29

(Wreaths to be picked up by Dec. 3)

Throughout Advent, Brother Advent (portrayed by pastor Joel Krueger) and other characters appear during Sunday worship at First Church to help the children (and adults too) learn about the season. The church front yard is also the setting for the Live Nativity December 3 at 5 p.m. Sponsored by the Greater Bay Ministerium, the event includes participants from churches in Belfast, Searsport and Frankfort.

Other First Church Advent activities include:

- An annual Christmas Party for residents of our local Group Homes including a dinner provided by church members and a visit from Santa. Each year we obtain a wish list for each resident and Santa delivers individual gifts after dinner.
- This year, we will hold an intergenerational Advent event the evening of Saturday, Dec. 11, which will include a sharing of traditions. Folks will have a chance to learn how to bake Christmas cookies or pumpkin pie tarts, to learn how to sing a German Christmas carol, or a number of other seasonal traditions that members wish to share. This is a new venture for us and we are excited about the possibilities it may bring.