



The North Church

BEACON

The deadline for the next BEACON is at **9 a.m. Monday February 6, 2012**. Send entries to beacon@fccucc.org.

First Congregational Church
 United Church of Christ
 South Portland, Maine 04106
 Phone (207) 799-3361
 Fax (207) 799-4095
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January 23, 2012

Worship

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Pastor and Pew

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S L & W / Youth

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Seniors

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E G & F

4-6

Mission & Outreach

6-7

Administration

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Looking Ahead in Worship

January 29

- 8:30 a.m.** - Chapel worship
- 10:00 a.m.** - Sanctuary worship with the Meetinghouse Choir. Sunday school classes through the sixth grade and Worship Discovery for grades 7 & 8. John McCall will give the message.
- 11:15 a.m.** - Congregational meeting to approve a 2012 operating budget. Followed by fellowship in Wright Pavilion.

February 5

- 8:30 a.m.** - Chapel worship with communion
- 10:00 a.m.** - Sanctuary worship with communion and the Meetinghouse Choir. Sunday school classes through the sixth grade and Worship Discovery for grades 7 & 8. Elsa Peters will give the message, followed by fellowship in Wright Pavilion.
- 11:15 a.m.** - Final Communion Conversation in Davidson Lounge, hosted by our Education Growth and Fellowship Team, with *emphasis on children and communion. Parents are especially encouraged to join us.*

February 12

- 8:30 a.m.** - Chapel worship
- 10:00 a.m.** - Sanctuary worship with the Meetinghouse Choir. Reception of new members. Sunday school classes through the sixth grade and Worship Discovery for grades 7 & 8. John McCall will give the message.

February 19 - Diversity Sunday

February 22 - Ash Wednesday with 7 a.m. Communion breakfast and 8 p.m. worship

February 26 - First Sunday in Lent

Remember to bring non-perishable items for our food pantry. The need is greater than ever.



PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

For peace and peacemakers; for the end of US military involvement in Iraq; those in the military and their loved ones; for all who live without sufficient food, water, shelter, safety, love; for all who advocate courageously for justice in our economy that should serve all of God's people; for our elected leaders; for those affected by proposed cuts in Health and Human Services funding.

Concerns:

Ruth Upshall expecting to be home this week from rehab following surgery; **Jane Howard**, having treatments for early stage cancer.

In our extended family:

Liza Little and her family on the January 18 death of her mother, **Juliana Little**, on her mother's birthday; **Kathy Cotter's** mother, dealing with ongoing illness in Connecticut.

Looking Toward Lent

Lent? It's all about the cross and the Son of God who suffered and died for our salvation. *Right?*

It's all about Jesus "the lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world," who atoned for our sins. *Right?*

It's just the way Mel Gibson presented it in that gory movie *The Passion of the Christ*. *Right?*

That's what many Christians believe. Maybe you do too. Or, maybe you don't. Even those of us who were taught about atonement, suffering, blood, the cross, the crown of thorns and agonizing death may find ourselves questioning. Do we have to focus on these things in order to be Christian? Do we have to believe that God sent Jesus to the cross to die for our sins? Am I an embarrassment to God if I have questions?

This Lent, Elsa and I have chosen the theme: God So Loved the World? We are pulling upon that often quoted passage in John 3:16. We invite you to wrestle with the heart of Christianity. What might we discover if we begin with God's love for the world rather than the cross, the blood, the suffering and the sin? Where might this amazing story take us? What, really, is on the other side of the cross, at the heart of the Good News?

John

God So Loved the World?

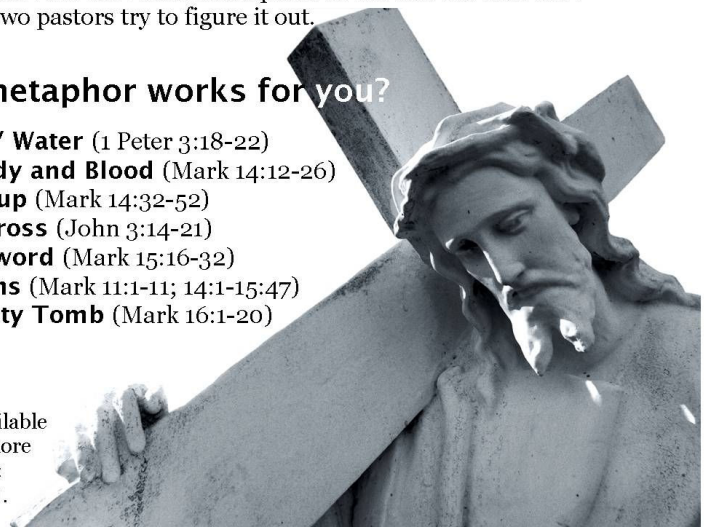
Lent is the season where Christians think about suffering. But maybe you suffer enough. Maybe you need more love. So what do you do with the violent metaphors in the end of Jesus' life? Come listen to two pastors try to figure it out.

What metaphor works for you?

Sunday February 26 // Water (1 Peter 3:18-22)
Sunday March 4 // Body and Blood (Mark 14:12-26)
Sunday March 11 // Cup (Mark 14:32-52)
Sunday March 18 // Cross (John 3:14-21)
Sunday March 25 // Sword (Mark 15:16-32)
Sunday April 1 // Palms (Mark 11:1-11; 14:1-15:47)
Sunday April 8 // Empty Tomb (Mark 16:1-20)



Faith formation opportunities available for all ages. For more information, visit: www.fccucc.org.





STEEPLE LIGHTING

The steeple is lighted the week of **February 5** in loving memory of our son, **Stephen Woodbury** by mother Evelyn, father John, sister Beth and niece Keri.

The steeple is lighted the week of **February 26** in memory of **Gordon Mitchell** by Marilyn Mitchell and family, and in loving memory of **Elizabeth Liston** by her mother Virginia Baker and sister Sue Lang.

SL & W TEAM

The Spiritual Life and Worship Team welcomes **new member Margaret O'Connor**.

The SL&W Team meets every first Thursday of the month at 7 p.m. in Davidson Lounge. They welcome visitors.

Responsibilities of this Team include overseeing acolytes, communion and baptism, chancel arrangements, altar flowers, greeters, ushers, worship leaders and music.

Questions or suggestions? Contact Dana Wiggins at [dwiggins@llbean.com](mailto:dwigins@llbean.com).

Confirmation Begins

On the evening of January 22, there were 13 mentors leading 13 blindfolded youth through the church on a trust walk.

This begins the journey toward Confirmation where the youth are challenged to ask questions about their lives -- who they want to be, what it means to be good and what it means to be faithful. We invite these youth to

experience service and other forms of worship in this six month journey that concludes on June 10, 2012.

We hope you'll keep these teenagers, their mentors and their parents in your prayers as they embark on this journey together.

*Elsa Peters
elsa@fccucc.org*

Children and Communion

Recently some of our Sunday School students asked why they were not receiving Communion at their worship services in the Chapel.

How would you answer that question?
What is our church's policy on children receiving Communion?
Who makes the decision who? or when? someone can receive Communion?

Good questions. If you would like to know the answers, or especially if you have some ideas to share, we need your help. On Sunday February 5, the Spiritual Life and Worship Team and the Education, Growth and Fellowship Team will hold a conversa-

tion following the 10 a.m. worship service to discuss these issues.

PLEASE COME!

It is your children asking these questions, or maybe they are your questions.

We want your input on children and Communion.

Please join us **Sunday, February 5** in Davidson Lounge at **11:30 a.m.**, following the worship service to discuss this important topic. Childcare will be available. If you will be unable to attend, please send your comments to Sue Stevens at sues618@aol.com.

Youth Ministry Calendar

Save the date for these upcoming events for our youth:

Sunday January 29
@9:15 a.m./11:30 a.m.
Super Bowl Sub Sale

Saturday February 4
@4:30 p.m.
Lock in at the church

Please contact Jerry Reynolds with any questions at youth@fccucc.org.

Youth Ministry Super Bowl Sub Sandwich Sale

Sunday, February 5 is the day... now is the time to order your custom sub sandwich for your enjoyment on Super Bowl Sunday. You'll find forms to order on **Sunday morning, January 29** and can prepay or pay when you

pick up. This is the YM's one major fundraiser to support programs and outreach. Sandwiches are \$7 each, 3 for \$20 or 4 for \$24. Contact youth@fccucc.org with any questions.

God So Loved the World? A Faith Formation Question

For many Christians, this is an exclamation or even a statement of conviction. For other Christians, this phrase leads to more questions than answers. For those Christians, it is difficult to reconcile violence, suffering and even sacrifice with the love that God might have for us. For surely, it can be difficult to understand why a loving God would require such hardship and brutality of God's people. It's hard enough to hear the stories of Jesus being whipped, dragged, pierced and crucified. Even if there is good news on the other side of this violent death, is this what God's love requires of us?

This Lent, we will explore this question through a preaching series led by your pastors -- but the question will not be answered only by your pastors' words. Your pastors seek to offer a variety of experiences for you to ask these questions together.

John McCall will continue to explore the themes suggested in worship in **two Davidson Conversations**. In these post-worship discussions, John will provide a brief overview of atonement theory as he explores the metaphors explored in worship. Mark your calendars for the **Sundays of February 26 and March 25 at 11:30 a.m.** to share in these conversations.

Parents, mentors and Sunday School teachers will find a handout tucked into the "Please take one" folder on the Children's Faith Formation bulletin board outside of Wright Pavilion. This handout provides an overview of how to talk about this difficult part of our faith with your children. Though the children will not explore the same texts as those in worship, this conversation will continue in Sunday School as the

children explore the significance of the cross.

RITA NAKASHIMA BROCK
and REBECCA ANN PARKER

PROVERBS OF ASHES

VIOLENCE, REDEMPTIVE SUFFERING,
and THE SEARCH FOR WHAT SAVES US



"A searing indictment, personal and experiential, pastoral and theological, of the most unfortunately successful idea in the history of Christian thought."

JOHN DOMINIC CROSSAN
author of *Jesus: A Revolutionary Biography*

Elsa Peters will lead a **book study of *Proverbs of Ashes: Violence, Redemptive Suffering and the Search for What Saves Us* by Rita Nakashima Brock and Rebecca Ann Parker**. This was one of the most engaging and most challenging books Elsa read in seminary. In this book, two pastors reflect on the particular stories of church members that believe God wants them to suffer. The conversation between these two pastors is heartfelt and eye-opening to those of us who have ever said Christ died for our sins. A limited number of books have been ordered at Nonesuch Books in Mill Creek and will be available on February 18 at 10% off the cover price. We will read the whole book together and gather three times over the season to share in conversation. If you are interested in joining these conversations, please mark your calendars for the **Mondays of February 27, March 12 and March 26 at 7:00 p.m.** in Davidson Lounge.

Elsa & John



SENIOR ACTIVITIES

Thursday, February 2 -
SAGE meeting at 1:00.

Wednesday, February 8
- Lunch at **SMCC** at
noon. The price of \$14
includes tax and gratuity.
Please RSVP by February 1.

Thursday, February 16 -
Lunch and Fun at noon
in Wright Pavilion. Bring
your own food and come
for good conversation
during lunch. You might
want to stay afterwards for
a lively Domino game with
lots of laughter.

Thursday, February 23 -
breakfast at I-Hop. Join
us at 9:00!

Thursday, March 1 -
SAGE meeting at 1:00 .

COMMUNION SERVERS WANTED!

Do you have a desire to get involved in our church, but not sure where to start or how much time you want to commit to? Then consider becoming a Communion Server! Serving communion is a deeply meaningful way to serve your church family and would only require a commitment of approximately 4 Sunday mornings a year. Please contact the church office (office@fccucc.org) or Betsy Keiter at 767-6182 to express your interest today!

Eskimo's

Our next meeting is **February 1** at **6:30 p.m.** in the Igloo. **Our speaker will be Rodney Laughton** whose subject will be "Scarborough, a Historical Perspective". Rodney is the owner of The Breakers Inn at Higgins Beach and a lifelong resident of Scarborough. He is a member of the Maine and Scarborough Historical Societies and the author of two books on Scarborough history. Non-Eskimos are welcome to join the regular blubber eaters for an otherwise fine meal and a good time. Questions? Please contact eskimos@fccucc.org.

IN SEARCH OF SACRED SPACE: A SABBATICAL ADVENTURE

The Hilltop Guild will meet on **February 9th** at **2:00 p.m.** in Wright Pavilion. **Nancy Foran will speak** about her four month sabbatical experience when she traveled to Peru, Scotland, and Canada and about building a labyrinth on the family farm in Naples.

All are welcome. If you are not a Guild member and would like to attend, please call Joan Dennison at 799-3193.

We look forward to seeing you.

Kathy Cotter
Program Chair

Thinking of Church Membership?

Join us for the next Inquirer's meeting on **Tuesday January 31 at 7 p.m.**

Are you new to the church? Have you been worshipping for a few weeks or few months? Have you been around for a long time and never (quite) gotten around to becoming a member?

You're warmly invited to join us **Tuesday, January 31, 7 - 9 p.m.** in

Wright Pavilion for an informal Inquirers' meeting where we'll get to know each other, talk about the church, and answer questions so you can decide whether you're ready to become a member at the 10 a.m. worship service on February 12. Please call the church office (799-3361) or email (office@fccucc.org) to say you'll be there.



SCHOLARSHIP OPPORTUNITIES AT FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH

ATTENTION: ALL GRADUATING SENIORS AND STUDENTS CURRENTLY ENROLLED IN POST-HIGH SCHOOL EDUCATION

YOUR CHURCH CAN HELP YOU WITH SCHOOL COSTS. SCHOLARSHIP APPLICATIONS ARE AVAILABLE **MONDAY, JANUARY 30** FROM THE CHURCH OFFICE AND THE DEADLINE IS **MONDAY, MARCH 12, 2012**.

The **Loretta Thompson Pond Scholarship**, established in 1995, is for graduating high school seniors who are members of this church. Criteria for the Pond Scholarship include service to the church and the community; involvement in church activities, academic achievement, and financial need. Letters of reference and written essays are required in the application process for the Pond Scholarship.

✓ Applicants for the Pond Scholarship will complete the General Scholarship Fund Application, the Loretta Thompson Pond Scholarship Application, and the Church Financial Aid Form.

The **General Scholarship Fund** is available to church members who are studying at the college, university or graduate level.

Award considerations include church involvement during and after high school.

✓ Applicants for the First Congregational Church Scholarship will complete the General Scholarship Fund Application.

We're going electronic and encourage you to email your request for an application to scholarship@fccucc.org and then to complete the Word document and return it to the same address. We will accept hard-copy applications which are available from the church office. Questions? Please call the office at 799-3361.

Scholarship Committee:

*Jeri Sides, Sally Sutton, Lee Taylor,
Jane Taylor, Margaret Thibodeau,
& John McCall*

Mission Giving

<u>Mission Giving</u>	<u>2011</u>
Camperships	1,600
Christmas Offering	3,433
Crisis Ministries	80,393
CWS Blankets	775
Easter Offering	2,661
Food Pantry	5,201
Heifer International	0
Holly Daze Bazaar	3,600
Mission Fund (# 3020)	520
UCC Basic Support (Budget)	36,494
Other Mission giving (Budget)	17,000
Neighbors in Need	1,111
One Great Hour of Sharing	1,218
Mission Mall	1,130
Scholarships	12,900
Veterans of the Cross	2,017
Children's Sunday School	788

Total Mission Giving: \$170,841

You will find a 10 -year summary of our church's mission giving and more in the 2012 Budget Packet now available at selected areas in the church.

Our Mission Giving as a percentage of our operating budget for 2011 was 34%!

Cyndi Alden
cda@fccucc.org

Holiday Bazaar Disbursements for 2012

As you all know, we had a very profitable Bazaar this year. Thank you all who worked so hard. Our parishioners really pulled through for us this year . We had a meeting on Jan. 15th of all the room chairs & this is how we voted to donate our money.

Church Budget	\$5,000.00
Food Pantry	1,000.00
Crisis Ministries	2,500.00
Pilgrim Lodge Campership	350.00
Discovery Center	500.00
Photo Sleeves for Archives	76.00
Picnic Comm. for water cooler	50.00
Prayer Shawl Ministry	200.00
Jack Ricketts for work on our sign	100.00
Preble St. Soup Kitchen	500.00
Sweetser Home	500.00

Spurwink School	500.00
Cancer Community Ctr.	250.00

Total Donations: \$ 11,526.00

Thank you all.

Bazaar Chairs:
Lynn, Karen & Jan
hollydaze@fccucc.org

MEN'S RETREAT MARCH 10-11, 2012

The 2012 annual Men's Retreat will be at the Beachmere Inn, Ogunquit, on **Saturday and Sunday, March 10-11**. Hold the dates and watch for more information. Estimated cost is about \$100 including three meals and over night lodging. There will be plenty of time for conversation, fellowship, and free time. If you are interested or hav questions contact mensretreat@fccucc.org.

FOOD PANTRY VOLUNTEER NEEDED

Food Pantry is looking for a volunteer to be on call for **six Wednesdays from February 22 through March 28th**.

This would be to fill any food request orders that come in that day. Please contact Cyndi Alden @ cda@fccuc.org or 799-3361 if you are interested.

MISSION TRIP 2012
-
INFORMATION MEETING

Our dates are set! We're headed back to Cherryfield, Maine to volunteer with the Seacoast Mission **Sunday, July 22nd – Saturday, July 28th.** If your interest was peaked after our Mission Trip worship service in the fall, please plan to come to an informational meeting on **Monday, February 13th at 7:00 p.m. in Davidson Lounge** to learn more about the Seacoast Mission and to ask questions about this wonderful mission opportunity.

Make a commitment to be a part of this mission adventure by signing up in the church office by **Sunday, February 26th.**

Please call Scott Berry (767-0236) or Betsy Keiter (767-6182) if you're unable to attend the informational meeting, but are curious and have questions!

**OFFICIAL CALL TO BUDGET MEETING
OF THE
FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH, U.C.C.
SOUTH PORTLAND, MAINE**

JANUARY 29, 2012

The members of the First Congregational Church, United Church of Christ, are hereby called to meet on Sunday, January 29, 2012 following the regular 10:00 a.m. Service of Worship, for the following purposes:

- I. To hear and vote on the Annual Budget Report; and
- II. To hear and act upon any other business which may properly come before the Church.

Janet B. Butler, Clerk

Annual Budget Meeting is January 29

Good News! Thanks to you we finished our 2011 budget year in a strong position - expenditures a little lower and income a little higher than the budget we approved last January. We only needed to draw \$3000 from our (shrinking) cash reserve.

The Challenge! On Sunday, January 29, right after the 10 a.m. service, we'll hold our annual congregational budget meeting to look at the Council's 2012 budget proposal(s). Please mark your calendar for this important conversation. The Church Council's proposal *includes a \$27,000 deficit for the year which will be covered by the cash reserve that has come from surpluses in years past. In covering this deficit for 2012 we will exhaust the cash account.* So we can maintain status quo for 2012. Our challenge is to maintain ministries, staff, and outreach, while reducing the projected deficit. The Council believes we can do better.

Please consider this: if you haven't yet made a pledge or giving estimate for 2012, do so today. Every household can do something. If you're able to increase your 2012 commitment, do so today. A small increase from each of us will have a big impact. You can:

- pledge online at www.fccucc.org/about/2012-pledge-form/
- email pledge@fccucc.org
- use a pledge card from the pew rack, or
- phone Cyndi Alden at 799-3361, ext. 103.

We can do this together.
There's Good News all around us.
Thank you. And thanks be to God!

THE NORTH CHURCH BEACON
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THE FUTURE OF RELIGIOUS COMMUNITIES: WILL THEY BE HERE FOR US?

Saturday, February 4, at 6:00 p.m., Saint Ansgar Lutheran Church, 515 Woodford Street Portland. Join us for conversation over a light meal at an Interfaith Conference with speakers: Rabbi Hillel Katzir of Temple Synagogue in Auburn, Father Michael Seavey of the Portland Diocese, Reverend Mair Honan of Grace Street Ministry, Reverend Allen Ewing-Merrill of Hope.Gate.Way., Reza Jalali from the University of Southern Maine, and other leaders from Maine faith communities.

What are the challenges and signs of hope springing within each of our religious circles? Share our stories, build community, and grow in wisdom and in joy.

Sponsored by the Portland Discernment Group; a gathering of faith leaders seeking to find and promote spiritual growth and renewal in our faith communities, and to foster interfaith dialogue and fellowship. Coordinator, the Rev. Mia Dyson, Presbyterian Church (USA). Please register your intention to attend at: conference2012@saintansgar.org .