

Our Mission

By God's Grace, West Parish Congregational Church, United Church of Christ, is committed to Nurturing and Celebrating God's Love in our lives, in the Church Family, in the Community and in the world

May 2021 newsletter

Steeple View

West Parish Congregational Church United Church of Christ



Pastor's Perspective

May 2021

Greetings and Happy Eastertide!

I hope you are having a good Spring and able to enjoy being outside a little more as the weather warms up. We are in something of a “holding pattern” with COVID, as more people get vaccinated (including me), though the case numbers in our area are still high.

Here at the church, the Church Council (based on recommendations from the Coming Home Committee), has discussed the possibility of having in person “hybrid” (both in person and streamed live for people at home) Sunday worship beginning on May 16th. That’s contingent on where we are with local COVID case counts at that time.



This past Saturday, I attended a virtual workshop about hybrid worship that was led by Rev. Paul Nickerson, a UCC pastor and church consultant. His main point was that we shouldn’t think about church returning to “normal” but that we should understand it as being a new thing, almost like a new church start. He talked about different approaches to holding hybrid worship including having a separate recorded service recorded ahead of time and an in-person service on Sunday morning, an in person and live streamed service at the same time, or to record an entire in person service and then send out an edited version to people at home. There are pros and cons to all of these, and I will be discussing each approach with the Deacons and other church leaders.



Nickerson talked about how churches should be asking the questions “who is our church?” and “who should we be reaching out to in this new time?” There are people in the community who may be looking for something more spiritually fulfilling in their lives and deeper connection with a spiritual community may be more important to them now.

Finally, Nickerson talked about how churches should celebrate being back together in person, have a “grand re-opening,” and consider having a whole month of special celebrations during worship. He suggested several ways to do this that would involve the wider community beyond the people of the church-

All in all, it was a very useful workshop, and I will be talking about it with church leaders as we plan and prepare for our returning to in person worship and gatherings.

Here at the church, we will be starting a new Spring adult study reading the book *Lies My Preacher Told Me: An Honest Look at the Old Testament* by Brent A. Strawn. Here is the description of the book from Amazon: “In this concise volume, Brent Strawn addresses ten common “lies” or mistruths about the Old Testament, from perceptions of God's personality (the “angry Old Testament God”) to the relevance of the Old Testament for Christians. Discover why stories and laws written thousands of years ago, centuries before Christ, are enriching and indispensable for modern Christians. Written by a leading scholar in Old Testament and designed for easy reading and group discussion, this book will expand your thinking about the Bible's First (and largest) Testament.” The study will again be on ZOOM and will be on Thursday evenings at 6:45 during May and June, beginning on May 13th. Everyone will need to purchase the book or get it from the library. Please let me know if you’d like to take part so I can send you the ZOOM link.

Also, beginning in May, I will be starting a new ZOOM Bible study on the lectionary passages for the coming Sunday. Each week we will look at two of the readings and discuss their historical context and meaning for our current time. The study will be on Tuesday afternoons at 4 PM beginning on May 18th. Again, please let me know if you’d like to take part.

Finally, we will continue to hold outdoor services in the Memorial Garden (bringing them indoors if needed because of inclement weather), and these are held on Thursday afternoons at 4 PM. Masks are required and you must RSVP me by text, email, or phone call as we call as we have a maximum of 16 people for these services.

God’s grace and peace to you and your family, be safe and well, and see you soon.

Tim

Christian Education

Time is flying – I can hardly believe that May is upon us! I hope that your Spring has been a beautiful one so far.

We had a wonderful a socially distant Easter Egg hunt with many of the young families outside the back of the church on the day before Easter. Thank you to Jane Chandler for being there to take photos! And a thank you to Jim Chandler and Lisa Maliska for their help in hiding eggs, etc! The children had a terrific time.

The families with young children and youth have been studying The Lord's Prayer. The curriculum we are using looks at this very important prayer, used for so long by Christians all over the world, through the lens of these questions:

- What is Prayer?
- Praying to whom?
- Praying for what?
- Praying for today?
- Praying for you, me, us, we
- Praying when it's difficult

We did take a three-week break from this curriculum to focus on Palm Sunday, Holy Week, and Easter. We learned about the Palm Sunday story, and made crosses out palms (thanks to a how-to video from my daughter Carla), and then we focused on the Easter morning story. The children had materials to make felt bunnies or eggs (or both!) thanks to parent and committee member Jenn Doyle once again!

We made a video of the Psalm for Easter, with many of the families reading a section of the psalm, and Tom Davis accompanying it quietly on keyboard. It was part of our recorded Easter worship service, and we plan to do another one this coming month. Many people found it to be very meaningful.

The children will be painting rocks to foster building bridges of peace in God's Kingdom (Your Kingdom come), making homemade bread (Give us this day), and other activities as we continue to study the Lord's Prayer.

We will be gathering at the church garden on May 16th, at 3 PM, to share our painted rocks and place them around the garden. We will also share a time of outdoor fellowship and a snack with each other, and anyone is welcome!

The pen pal program is going very well, with positive feedback from children, youth and adults. If you'd like to take part, let me know and I'll put you on the waiting list!

As always, if there is any way that you'd like to help with Christian Education, an email to either myself at PboyleWight@gmail.com or Jim Chandler or Deb Lewis (co-chairs of the CE Committee) at Chandler@megalink.net and FineArts.DeborahLewis@gmail.com with your thoughts or ideas.

May the Spirit of the Risen Christ, and of new life and opportunities, be each and every one of you!

~ Patricia



Sabbatical Plans

Tim will be on sabbatical from September 1 – December 1, 2021. The Sabbatical Committee (Diane York, Patricia Boyle-Wight, Ted Davis, and Seabury Lyon) are pleased that coverage for the 13 Sundays has been confirmed.

Linda Couture will lead worship for 10 Sundays and Patricia for three. Linda lives in Rumford Point. She is a Member in Discernment under the auspices of the Oxford Union Association and a licensed lay pastor. This means that she is taking courses to become an ordained pastor. She

serves as the part time pastor at the West Paris Church and is looking forward to being with us in the fall. As she will be serving both churches this fall, we will make a slight change in our time of worship to allow her travel time. We will meet at 10:30 AM for the sabbatical period.

Diane York and Patricia Boyle-Wight will share pastoral care this fall in Tim's absence

"We pray for this sabbatical time be a meaningful time and one of growth in the Spirit for both Tim and our congregation," said the deacons.

May Calendar of church events

Sunday, May 2nd - Online Recorded Service on You Tube (available via emailed link or church Facebook page), Communion/Prayers/Fellowship beginning at 10:45 AM on ZOOM;
Oxford-Union Association Spring Meeting on ZOOM at 3 PM

Tuesday, May 4th - Prayer Group at 8:45 AM on ZOOM; American Red Cross Blood Drive at Church, 9 AM-1 PM; Coming Home Committee and Deacons (joint meeting) at 1 PM at Church; Book Group at 7 PM on ZOOM

Wednesday, May 5th - Men's Breakfast at 8 AM at Church and on ZOOM; Bethel Food Pantry open at Nazarene Church; Christian Education Committee at 6:30 PM on ZOOM

Thursday, May 6th - Outdoor Service at Church, 4 PM

Sunday, May 9th - Mother's Day, Online Recorded Service on YouTube (available via emailed link or church Facebook page), Prayers/Fellowship beginning at 10:45 AM on ZOOM

Tuesday, May 11th - Prayer Group at 8:45 AM on ZOOM; World Service Committee special meeting at 3 PM on ZOOM; Trustees at 6:30 PM on ZOOM

Wednesday, May 12th - Stewardship Committee at 11 AM at Church

Thursday, May 13th - Outdoor Service at 4 PM at Church; Adult Study on *Lies My Preacher Told Me* at 6:45 PM on ZOOM

Sunday, May 16th – 10:00 AM *Tentative date of "hybrid" (both in person and live-streamed) services to begin, more info will be emailed closer to the date*;
Family Gathering 3 PM at Church outside., building peace bridges.

Tuesday, May 18th – Prayer Group at 8:45 AM on ZOOM; Deacons at 10 AM on ZOOM;
Lectionary Bible Study at 4 PM On ZOOM

Wednesday, May 19th - World Service Committee at 3 PM on ZOOM

Thursday, May 20th - Outdoor Service at 4 PM at Church, Adult Study on *Lies My Preacher Told Me* at 6:45 PM on ZOOM

Sunday, May 23rd - Pentecost Sunday, Hybrid Worship (both in person and live-streamed) at 10 AM (tentative, otherwise service will be pre-recorded and available on YouTube with live ZOOM at 10:45 for Prayers/Fellowship)

Monday, May 24th--Friday, May 28th - Rev. Tim on Vacation

Sunday, May 30th - Hybrid Worship at 10 AM (tentative, otherwise service will be pre-recorded and available with live ZOOM at 10:45 for prayer/ fellowship)

SAVE THE DATE – Smile Fund Yard Sale is planned for Saturday, June 19.



From the Deacons

First on our April agenda was expressing our appreciation for all those who made the Holy Week and Easter services so full of the Spirit reaching deep into our souls. Musicians, readers, computer whizzes, and of course Tim who weekly preaches into a camera. We are blessed.

Two representatives of the Deacons will meet with the Coming Home Committee on May 4th to discuss protocols for opening the sanctuary. Duties will be outlined and coverage discussed. It is hoped that we can begin a hybrid worship in mid to late May.

Rev. Alexis Fuller-Wright has been called by the Maine Conference as the Associate Conference Minister. She will be working with churches with full time pastors. The conference minister will be responsible for part-time churches, the majority of our churches in the Maine Conference.

Bridgett, Melinda and Melody participated in a church retreat at Pilgrim Lodge





May Love Bowl – Pilgrim Lodge

Pilgrim Lodge, our Maine Conference, UCC summer camp, will not be open for campers again this summer. Without the camper tuitions, there is a large decrease in available funds to cover ongoing expenses. Our donations will help carry over the camp until the time it reopens and the boardwalk is full of happy kids and adults.

Pilgrim Lodge is available this summer for church retreats, family day use, and all ages can enjoy the activities at Pilgrim Lodge. Shown above Bridget, Melinda and Melody enjoy a church retreat. Mary tosses a bean bag, and Carla is working at the waterfront.

Book Group

Book Group meets the first Tuesday of each month. This month the group gathers May 4 at 7 p.m. to discuss *Dearly Beloved* by Cara Wall. This follows two couples, and the men share the ministry of a church in New York City. We will have lots to discuss about roles of ministers' spouses in a church and different ways that people come to their faith.

June 1 - *The Book of Lost Friends: A Novel* by Lisa Wingate ;

July 6 – any book by Ernest Hemmingway;

August 2 - *Burglars Can't be Choosers* by Lawrence Block

Birthdays and Anniversaries in May

May 2 – Patricia Boyle-Wight

May 5 – Jennifer Doyle

May 4 – Amy Wight

May 7 – Bill Marshall

May 23 – Jennifer and Jamie Doyle

May 19, 1945 – Dick Bennett

May 13 – Priscella and Dean Walker

May 18 – Debra and Dean Richmond

May 20 – Carol Nielson

May 22 – Mary and Tim LeConey

May 24 – Molly Keane

May 28 – Tim LeConey

Flowers for May - For the virtual recording please have two arrangements. When the church resumes in-person church services, one arrangement will be appropriate.

May 2 – Amy Davis

May 9 – Susan Herlihy

May 16 – Marilyn Sahlberg

May 23 - Beth Brough in memory of Walter

May 30 - Mary Scanlon in honor of her mother

Coffee Order due May 9

Every cup of coffee is a cup of justice, eliminating the middle man and large markups by large coffee distributors. The next order of Fair Trade is due Sunday, May 9.

Please let Jane Chandler know of your coffee wishes. Go to the site <https://equalexchange.coop/> for a full list of items. She will get back to you with the cost. Orders are due Sunday, May 9.



Jane received this communication from Equal Exchange thanking West Parish Congregational Church for ongoing purchases. Bethany McInnis, Community Sales Representative, said, “*I wanted to let you folks know that you were among the top faith-based groups who ran an Equal Exchange program with our products last year. I've attached your certificate acknowledging our appreciation. For reference, you made **\$4,288 worth of fair trade purchases in 2020**. Your purchases significantly helped out Equal Exchange and small scale farmers during an extremely difficult year when our volume was down by over 118,000 pounds of coffee due to churches being closed, so thank you all so very much!*”

Steeple View is the monthly newsletter of West Parish Congregational Church.

Jane Chandler is the editor. Please send contributions for the newsletter to jane.h.chandler@gmail.com.