

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

February, 2023 newsletter
Steeple View
West Parish Congregational Church
United Church of Christ



Pastor's Perspective

Now that it's really starting to look and feel like winter, I am glad for the warmth and fellowship that the church provides. In this season of Epiphany, when we celebrate the light of Christ, there are many ways that we, as a church, are sharing that light.

The service of thanksgiving and celebration of Peggy Wight's life reflected Peggy's spirit and the light that she was to so many. Peggy's love of family, camp/lake, and church shone through everything as did her abundant faith.

This past Friday, we hosted a book reading event and potluck with Heidi Bullen and Lisa Wentzell who read from their book *A Dog and his Boy: The Adventures of Spillway and Scotty*. The book is about a real-life young adult, Scotty, and the physical and developmental challenges he has faced and how his stuffed dog, Spillway, has been his companion through it all. Scotty and Spillway were with us for the event and we could see the light and love of life and people that Scotty has and demonstrates with his hugs and fist-bumps. There were many people of all ages from the wider community at the event and it was great to put our church's welcome and inclusivity front and center.

Through our retreats and small group coaching and consulting this past Fall, we learned about the importance of partnering with community groups and ministering to people where they are. We are hoping to do this in a couple of ways this winter. First, we are asking people to help with food for the Bethel Outing Club and Gould's Wednesday Night Lights Skiing at Pine Hill for children and their families. There are sign-up sheets for each Wednesday that you can access [here](#).

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1Dcl4cJK9HfAhwWlyiBOqhj3cjAltP-h7ttQJnOiVNtY/edit>

We can also go skating at the Bethel town rink and have a group outing there.

We are also hoping to begin partnering with the NorthStar/Interact group at Telstar on a weekly drop-in teen center here at the church (see Henrie's report on this elsewhere in this newsletter). Plans are in the works for this to begin in March.

All of these are ways for our church to extend welcome, care, and compassion to the wider community. There are also opportunities to volunteer at the Bethel Food Pantry. They are now open three days a week and have begun a client-choice distribution model. Here is the link if you would like to sign up to volunteer:

<https://bethelareafoodpantry.org/join-us/>

Blessings and peace to you and your family! Tim

CHRISTIAN EDUCATION NEWS

The new year is off to a good start for our Christian Education program. Our biggest focus right now is on gathering families and youth together for shared activities, meals, and spiritual content. We are also strongly encouraging intergenerational connections between the children and youth of the church and the congregation as a whole.

We had several youth group events and church potlucks over the last few months, and now that the new year has begun **we are going to be gathering every Friday evening, from 5 to 7 pm.**

Our Youth Group gatherings will all involve a shared supper, and time for engagement with our faith, as well as an activity - often the arts, and sometimes science or a service project.

In January, we had a wonderful gathering to hear a presentation by local elementary school teacher Heidi Bullen, co-author of [A Dog and His Boy](#), which was followed by a church potluck.



This month, our Youth Group schedule of activities is as follows: Feb 3 and 10, art with Deb Lewis; Feb 17, all-church potluck; and Feb 24, service learning project.

Myself or one of our committee members will be available each Sunday to spend time with any children under the age of five, during worship.

Please feel free to contact me with any ideas, questions, or concerns.

Christ's peace to you all,
Patricia and the CE Committee

Maine Conference News

New England Women's Conference is back.

The New England Women's Conference is back after the pandemic hiatus. It is an opportunity to share with others in New England and celebrate our Christian life together.

The conference is March 17 - 19 in Manchester, NH. Deb Lewis has worked for several years to make this one even better than previous retreats. Go to the website and look at the amazing list of workshops. All the details and registration for Celebration XI are on the website - www.uccwc.org

If we can have a group of women from our church attend, we can make sleeping accommodations together.

Please get in touch with Deb Lewis if you are interested.

World Service

Love Bowl supports Telstar Northstar students with Driver's Ed

The February Love Bowl pays for high school students in the Northstar program who have no other way to pay for Driver's Education. This fund really helps young people gain a vital skill which opens many doors to work, schooling. Lyndsay Smith approached our church with this specific need. Driver's Ed costs \$625 for each student. And each student with need must come up with \$50.00 toward the course. Last year we funded four students who were very thankful.

Please give generously to these local students with your donation.

Jane Chandler for the World Service Committee

Book Group to meet in February

Book group will meet Tuesday, Feb. 7 at 7 PM at Bob and Lida Iles' home on Paradise Street, Bethel.

We will discuss the book Lessons in Chemistry by Bonnie Garmus. It is a book about a female scientist in the 1960's who overcomes many obstacles while

pursuing her chemistry research. She uses cooking classes to teach the "average homemaker" chemistry.

Anyone is welcome to attend.

What If?

Last fall, the congregation tried to imagine a number of scenarios that could happen in the future of West Parish Congregational Church. Some – like the breakfast communion service – have actually taken place as a result of these imaginings. Others are percolating up through the energies and actions of folks that were part of the Small Church Leadership group sponsored by the BTS Center, and some that have worked with Paul Nickerson on community outreach. One idea that has been slowly incubating is the establishment of a Teen Drop-In Center – The Green Café – to be run in the basement of the church. Henrietta List and Rev. Dr. Tim LeConey have met with the Interact group at Telstar High School. They are very interested in working with the church to establish this Center. So far only very small steps are being taken. It is being proposed that the Café be open only one afternoon a week. The Interact students are expressed interest in using the space to relax and chat, to learn crafts – knitting and sewing in particular -- to do art, to sell their artwork, to listen to music and perhaps to do some theater. We are hoping to have our first gathering in March. We will keep you posted on the progress of this idea. Please keep this work and its growth in your prayers. If you have questions or are interested in participating in any way, please get in touch with Henrie – hlist@roadrunner.com. Stay tuned ... What if?

February Blood Drive

American Red Cross Blood Drive Feb. 10

Have you considered donating blood? Have you given in the past and didn't want to travel far to donate a pint again?

Our church sponsors an American Red Cross blood drive in the dining room every other month. This month sign up to donate Feb. 10, noon to 4 PM. Go to the American Red Cross site and click on Find a Drive. [Red Cross donation](#)

Just think, the hour or so you give can really help save a life.

February Calendar of Events

Wed., February 1 Men's Breakfast, 8 AM at church/on ZOOM; Music Committee, 7 PM on ZOOM

Thursday, February 2 "To Your Health" class on Afib, 4:30 PM

Friday, Feb. 3 Middle School Youth Group, 5-7 PM

Sunday, Feb. 5 Worship with Communion at 10 AM at church and live streaming on YouTube Live

Tues., Feb. 7 Prayer Group at 8:45 AM at church/on ZOOM

Wed., Feb. 8 Christian Education Committee, 12 PM at church/on ZOOM

Friday Feb. 10 Middle School Youth Group, 5-7 PM

Sunday, Feb. 12 Worship at 10 AM at church and live streaming on YouTube Live

Tues., Feb. 14 Prayer Group at 8:45 AM at church/on ZOOM; Trustees at 6:30 PM on ZOOM

Wed., Feb. 15 World Service Committee at 3 PM at church/on ZOOM

Thurs., Feb. 16 Pastoral Relations, 1 PM at church

Friday, Feb. 17 Potluck Supper, 5-7 PM

Sunday, Feb. 19 Worship at 10 AM at church and live streaming on YouTube Live

Tuesday, Feb. 21 Prayer Group at 8:45 AM at church/on ZOOM; Deacons at 10 AM at church/on ZOOM

Wed., Feb. 22 Ash Wednesday Service, time tbd

Friday, Feb. 24 Youth Group Service Learning trip, time/place tbd

Sunday, Feb. 26 Worship at 10 AM at church and live streaming on YouTube Live

Tues., Feb. 28 Prayer Group at 8:45 AM at church/on ZOOM

February Birthdays & Anniversaries

February 3 – Cassidy Scanlon
February 6 – Adeley Strugatskiv
February 11 – Sandra Francis
February 16 – Magnolia Firmin (Donna Coe's grandchild)
February 18 – Jim List
February 21 Allidah (Lida) Iles
February 22 – Melody Bonnema
February 24 – Susan Cooper
February 26 – Haiven Mason (Jan Whitworth's granddaughter)
February 28 – Jonathan Smith



We miss you every day Peggy!