

SECONCH

Second Congregational Church UCC, P.O. Box 164, 205 Main Street, Norway, ME 04268

(207) 743-2290 ~ e-mail: seconch@megalink.net ~ website: seconch.com

FEBRUARY 2022 ~ WORSHIP ~ SUNDAY SCHOOL ~ CHILDCARE **SUNDAYS AT 10 AM**

MESSAGE FROM PASTOR SARA

John 20:16-18

"Jesus said to her, "Mary." She turned toward him and cried out in Aramaic, "Rabboni!" (which means "Teacher"). Jesus said, "Do not hold on to me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father. Go instead to my brothers and tell them, 'I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.'" Mary Magdalene went to the disciples with the news: "I have seen the Lord!" And she told them that he had said these things to her." (NIV)

When we as Christian explore the history of the people in our scriptures, we so often think we have been taught the full story. For example, many today believe that Mary Magdalene was a prostitute who had been "saved" by Jesus. However, this understanding was handed down to us from Pope Gregory the Great, whose 1591 sermon blended several women in the gospels, (none of whom were considered prostitutes) into one; Mary Magdalene. We aren't quite sure why Pope Gregory thought this was a good idea, but Mary was a powerful person in the life and death of Jesus. She financially supported Jesus during his

ministry, remained with him as he suffered and died on the cross, and in the

Gospel of John, was the one who discovered the empty tomb, then followed Jesus' call to share the news with the other, male disciples. But how often over the years have we studied *this* Mary and extrapolated lessons from her life as a disciple?

From Cain to Paul, I encourage us to explore for ourselves those sacred stories which help us understand our relationship to God. In fact, as Lent beckons us from around the corner, I encourage all of us to take some time, and be ok with owning our individual faith journeys. That is, we should always give ourselves permission to question and ponder our faith, and never allow anyone to tell us what we are supposed to believe, or where the truth lies.

I lift up when we explore our faith, and what it means for us, then we *lean into our relationship with God, not someone else's*. Imagine what we can learn about ourselves and God! So, take this month of

February and explore one new topic or idea for yourselves. Know you are loved!

Blessings of love,
Sara

MESSAGE FROM THE MODERATOR

After a very cold month, January is over and February is just hours away! It seemed like January was going to last forever and then Deb Ladner contacted me about articles for the February Seconch – and I wasn't ready! So here it is the last day of January and I am spending the morning gathering my thoughts on what needs to be shared with all of you.

It has been a busy month of gathering estimates and planning a move of all the items in the basement that needs to be done in preparation of starting and completing the flooring project. We are utilizing the nursery and part of the Sunday School classroom at the foot of the ramp to store many of those items that need to be moved. The Trustees have been dealing with the insurance company and vendors for removal of old flooring and installing of new flooring. They are also gathering estimates to upgrade the lighting as well.

We were contacted by members of the U.U. church, who are working with a group who are helping refugees from Afghanistan get settled in Maine. We were able to provide some furniture and household items for two couples. One

couple is expecting their first child in March, spoke English very well and the other couple are older and needed help in understanding English. Both couples were very appreciative of all that we were able to give them. They will be moving into new housing over the next few days. In the meantime, while the basement is being prepared for the flooring project, AA will be meeting upstairs in the Cummings Room on Monday nights. Currently there is no in-person Sunday School happening at church but once the decision is made to return to in-person worship, the kids will be using the Lello Room for classes and activities until we can reopen the basement spaces.

Rev. Sara has gathered some members for a focused group on discussing options for using the parsonage. They will share ideas/recommendations with the Trustees and Church Council for consideration. You can expect to hear more about this in the weeks ahead.

Over the next year, Rev. Sara and I would like to create some other focus groups to look at all aspects of our church. As I mentioned at our annual meeting, we are not following our by-laws in regards to staffing our teams/committees and as a church we should look at what we could do differently. We do great mission work, however is there ways that we could meet the needs of our community if we worked with others doing similar things? What do we see in the future for reaching families, children and youth? What about technology – is there more we should be doing? We have spent the last few years working on ways to bring people into our church – is it time to look at things in a different way? What if we

looked at it instead as “how do we take our church to where people are”? I hope that some of these focus groups will interest some of you and perhaps have people that would like to be part of a time limited discussion on these topics. How do we see our future church? Please consider sharing your voice!
Blessings to you all!
Pam Davison, Moderator

FREE SUPPER

Our January drive-thru free supper was held on one of those very cold days. A perfect time to offer a meal consisting of chili, bread and homemade oatmeal raisin cookies. Many of the people were collecting meals to deliver to others who couldn't come out that night. We handed out numerous requests for 6-8 meals at a time. The chili was made with leftover pork from the spare ribs that Smokin' Dave's had cooked for us. It smelled wonderful! We also had a vegetarian chili available. We found homes for every meal!

Our next free drive-thru meal will be on Friday, February 18 starting at 5:00 p.m. until the food is gone. Our menu will be American Chop Suey, garlic bread and homemade cheerio bars. A vegetarian option will also be available.

In looking ahead to March, we expect to be in the midst of the flooring project for the basement. This will mean that we will not have access to the downstairs kitchen. We are thankful that we have access to the upstairs kitchen and some roasters that will help us. We are also wondering if any of you would like to help us with the

preparation for that meal. We have decided on a menu that will be a bit easier to prepare and package. Our menu will be Corn Chowder and a sandwich. We are looking for people that would be willing to make us a dozen finger rolls filled with a sandwich filling (your choice). We usually prepare between 100-125 meals. If you would like to help us, please contact Pam Davison or Deb Ladner.

Annual Meeting:

Our annual meeting went well this year with our hybrid process of in-person or Zoom attendance. With the help of Melissa Wood, we were able to function as a group in this mixture of technology and being in-person. Having the ability to use technology allowed our Clerk, Susan Prindall, to be able to be in Florida and gather all the information we were discussing. It is amazing how far we have come with technology over the past two years! We learn from each experience and work to improve as we move forward. Thank you all for your participation in this process, whether in person or online!

Worship Service:

At our Annual Meeting, we discussed whether or not to come back to worshipping in person in our sanctuary. While we all miss being together to worship, consensus seemed to clearly recognize that the infection rate for Covid was still quite high in our area. After a discussion we determined that we would

continue to have our service on Face Book through February. Those who don't have access to the internet are welcome to attend in person following our safety protocols.

We are hopeful that infections are starting to decrease and that we will be able to announce in March that we will be able to encourage everyone to return to in-person service. Church Council will continue to discuss this at every meeting and will announce our plans as they change. With the recent northeaster, we had the opportunity to provide a shorter service totally over Zoom and Face Book. Rev. Sara and Shirli Allen Heald worked together, each from their own home, to provide a service with the help of Melissa Wood's technology knowledge. Isn't it great to have the flexibility to do something different when challenges present themselves!

MISSION COMMITTEE

Mitten Tree

This year, over 150 pairs of mittens and gloves, hats and scarves decorated our Mitten Tree during Advent. These were distributed to Rowe School, Norway, Paris Elementary School, and Agnes Gray School, West Paris. The adults were very appreciative of the donations and said that they would be put to good use. Three large bags of hats and gloves that were donated to us in the fall were given to the Table in Norway and the Harrison Food Bank.

Souper Sunday

We continue to collect cans of soup for Souper Sunday, Feb. 13. Donations can be dropped off at the church on Tuesday and Thursday and during the Valentine's Day for the Birds event on Sunday, Feb. 6 at 1 pm. Checks can also be sent directly to SCC with "Souper Sunday" in the memo line.

Heart Prayer Squares

Prayer squares for the hard-working staff at Stephens Memorial are due on February 6. There is a basket at the top of the ramp for finished squares or they can be put in the blue collection bin outside the entrance doors.

As always, thank you so much for supporting our mission projects, both local and far away. With your help, we can touch the lives of so many people. A big THANK YOU to Mickie Shibles for all her dedication and efforts to the SCC missions for many years. She is stepping down from the committee after serving as chair and leaves very big shoes to fill. Congratulations Mickie on your "retirement"!

Youth and Family

We have several opportunities for our families coming up for fellowship time together. This Sunday Rev. Sara is hosting a get together for all families in the parking lot at 1 pm. We will be making bird feeders and having a cookie swap. It should be a fun time to get together while we are apart. And as promised, Lindy Howe (minister at the

Oxford Church) has invited several area churches to come together for dog sled rides in Buckfield on February 26. There are limited spots available so if your children are interested please let Melissa know ASAP so we can get them on the list. If anyone pops into church, you will see our Sunday School space is currently being used for storage while the work is being done in the basement-but never fear, we will be setting up in the Lello Room once we are back to in-person Sunday School again.

PLEASE KEEP IN YOUR PRAYERS



Martha Farrington, Helen Heath, David Porter, John Higgins, Jane Munn, P.J. Allen and Katarina Sherbinski.

FEBRUARY BIRTHDAYS



- 1st Deb Ladner
- 5th Carol Bailey Leigh
- 13th Foster Shibles
- 14th Deb Fickett
- 21st Kieran Luff

Happy Valentine's Day!

Church Council

Moderator, Pam Davison
 Collector, Carolyn Baker
 Treasurer, Jane Munn
 Clerk, Susan Prindall

Shirli Allen Heald, Deb Ladner, Mary-Jane Robichaud, Foster Shibles, Deb Fickett, Linda Porter (member at large)

Trustees

Deb Ladner, Keith Ladner, Foster Shibles, Buck Gouin, Melissa Wood, John Ellis, Randy Butters.

Spiritual Life & Leadership

Shirli-Allen Heald, Mary-Jane Robichaud, and Melissa Wood

Deacons

Jody Deegan, Robert & Debbie Fickett, Laura Gouin, Chad Pendexter, Mary-Jane Robichaud, Mary Gatchell, Christina Bigelow, Michelle Johnson, John Ladd.

Mission Committee

Linda Porter, Jane Munn, Bruce Davison, Trudy Brown.

Youth and Family Team

Melissa Wood, Annie Tilsley

Stewardship

Deb Ladner, Jean Saunders, Dave Porter, John Ellis

Church Staff

Designated Term Minister: Sara Bartlett
 Director of Music: Shirli Allen Heald
 Organist/Pianist: Elaine Emery, Ed Baldrige

Office Hours

Thursday 9 a.m. to noon
 or by appointment.