

THE MESSENGER

The First Congregational Church of Pembroke, UCC; 301 Pembroke Street, Pembroke, NH 03275-3234

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You are the light of the world!

I can recall back to when my daughter was in the fourth grade and was studying *reflection* in school. It happened to be during this same period of Lent, and I remember that helping her study for her tests brought the subject to mind and caused me to *reflect* upon the mission and ministry of the church. So, with that as the background, what I hope to do in this column is *mirror* back to you what I have observed about our church, in hopes of you getting a new *angle* on the great strengths we have and the awesome opportunity we are being led to fulfill, by the grace of God.

First off, *we are a great light*. Just ask anyone who has ever been in any need and you will learn of the tremendous outpouring of kindness, help, calls and cards that come from so many in this church community. Did you see what excitement and appreciation was visible on the faces of boys and parents on Scout Sunday this year? What a wondrous privilege it is for me to pastor with such a community that not only demonstrates faith in attendance, activity and giving, but reveals compassion and hospitality throughout its relationships in the church and in the community.

So, what have I learned about you as a result of your generous and willing service, this thoughtful caring, hospitality, and compassion? What can I *mirror back* to you so you can see who you truly are as the congregation of the First Congregational Church of Pembroke?

Several things:

- **Christ is the head of this church.** *God's only son who came to us to reconcile us to one another, show us the way to live, and gave his life that we might truly know the full extent of his love for us—this Christ reigns in*

our hearts and through our loving service here.

- **Regardless of age, we have a mission to fulfill and we're going to do it.** *There is a pervasive attitude among us which can be summed up: if God is giving me another day of life, then I am going to make the most of it! For some of us the arena of our action is not within the church, but rather out in the wider community. For others it is both places, and for still others it is primarily within the church. Yet the attitude pervades: God gave me this day, I am going to make the most of it! And this is true regardless of one's age!*
- **You rally together and make the effort if the enterprise is worthwhile.** *Whether for the Holiday Fair, Work Project, Dinners, Church School, Cookie Walk, Circleslide Concert or hosting a Community Worship, you rise to the challenge and not only meet it, you exceed it and discover your united strengths in the process!*
- **Changes are embraced and undertaken without a second thought or complaint.** *Guest musicians, dancers, speakers, bands, are welcomed. New elements of worship are engaged with enthusiasm: songs, crafts, drama, movement, silence, meditation, multi-media, and sharing moments. We are revealing that "more light and truth" are breaking through us in Christ's name!*
- **This church assumes responsibility for getting the job done. Co-workers with God and Christ.** *You know that life is a gift to be returned to God better than you received it, so you assume responsibility with God and one another and get it done! Yes, indeed, we "are companions in Christ!"*

No doubt, some of you will protest and say, surely what I reflect back to you is not what you are really about, you're human, can't I see there is chaff in with your wheat? O sure, the chaff is there, and you are human (thank God for that), it's just that **you**

have chosen the good portion! Your focus, purpose, goal, and spirit are invested in growing the wheat, so the chaff merely falls by the wayside.

Now we come to one more quote from the *Sermon on the Mount*: “a city set on a hill cannot be hid.” That is, whether we’ve been that aware of it before or not, our light is shining brightly as a beacon for all others around us to see. We are not merely a small, isolated, simple church community. ***We are the light of the world. We are the people of God!*** We are already boldly manifest, not hidden. Our light is currently being seen by untold numbers of friends and community neighbors. (Recall again, Scout Sunday) It beckons to them. All we need to do is realize that we are this great beacon of hope in a world full of fear and despair. We actually do shine out into the world. So we need to own and accept that our light is shining so brightly that others are being drawn to us (just as was promised in scripture). **Our job is to ask them to accompany us, be our guests:** At worship, at special events (think Cookie Walk), at summer outdoor worship, in Sunday School, with our youth, helping for the fair, singing in the choir, playing with our praise band.

When they come among us, we all collectively reflect their light back to them for them to see that they too are the light of the world. And the community will grow in love, service, and involvement to the glory of God. We are already doing 99% of what it takes for a church community to grow and thrive. God beckons to us to finish the task, do that 1% more that will make all the difference. **Share the light, offer an invitation to life, ask a friend or neighbor to be your guest.** Chances are they will discover the seat of honor at the banquet of the Lord with their name on it, all thanks to you! **Seize the moment: extend that invitation for Palm Sunday (and the Easter Egg Hunt), Maundy Thursday, Easter Sunday.** Or truly, anytime! (Just let the Spirit bring to your mind someone around you to whom you might be being led to genuinely extend an invitation to simply “try us out” or join the fun of the Easter Egg Hunt, or try out the youth program or Sunday school). It could transform someone’s life, a whole family, even a neighborhood!

Yes, I hope you have seen mirrored back to you just who you are as a participant in this church community, but even more importantly, I hope you see who we are called to become. There are so many

people so much in need of the loving, caring, light-giving community we are by the grace of God.

Let your light so shine!
Your pastor and teacher,
Jim Howard

Remember to bring a friend on Sunday, March 28th!

CHRISTIAN EDUCATION ...

Thanks to all the teachers who helped during February's Making Choices Sunday school rotation. Another successful PowerXpress month. Our generous and energetic volunteers are one of the reasons why our students come back week after week. A big thanks also goes to the volunteers helping out in the nursery. It's a great thing that our nursery is getting so busy that we need extra help!

The high school class has finished its February study of the film *Groundhog Day* as the central illustration of God's mysterious call to us. We aren't sure if anyone has ever used a Bill Murray movie in a Sunday school class before now, but we think it was great fun. The next class is scheduled to run from April 11th (the week after Easter) through May 2nd. All 8th graders and high school students are welcome and encouraged!

In March we will begin our Easter unit: Go and Tell. On Palm Sunday, March 28th, all Sunday school students from pre-K through 7th grade will have an Easter scavenger hunt with prizes at the end. March 28th is also *Bring A Friend* Sunday. Kids, bring a friend (or two or three...). Special prizes for anyone who brings a new friend to Sunday school (and a prize for the friend, too)!

THE ANNUAL CONGREGATIONAL MEETING ...

The 276th meeting will be held on **Sunday, March 14, 2010** directly after worship. Copies of the Annual Report will be in the Parish Hall on March 7th. All members are requested to pick up a copy to review prior to the meeting.

HOLY WEEK

**March 28 — Palm
Sunday**

*Children gather in the
Parish House at 9:45
sharp to prepare for
the Palm Procession to
open worship*

Easter Egg Hunt
following worship

**March 31 —
Companions in
Christ**

*Concluding Lenten
Study Class at 7 p.m.*

**April 1 — Maundy
Thursday**

*6:00 p.m. Soup
Supper, Communion,
Tenebrae
(nursery care
provided)*

**April 2 — Good
Friday**

*Church open for
prayer and reflection
Noon to 6 p.m.*

April 4 — Easter
*10 a.m. Worship with
Choir and Brass
(nursery care
provided)*

Companions in Christ

**(Wednesday Night
Lenten Study)
7 to 8:15 p.m.**

**Topics for remaining
classes**

**Mar. 3 - Part 3 Deepening
Our Prayer: The Heart of
Christ**

**Mar. 10 - Part 4A
Responding to Our Call:
The Work of Christ**
Radical Availability;
Living Reliance

**Mar. 17 - Part 4B
Responding to Our Call:
The Work of Christ**
Bearing the Fruit of the
Vine; Gifts of the Spirit;
The Body of Christ Given
for the World

**Mar. 24 - Part 5A Exploring
Spiritual Guidance: The
Spirit of Christ**
How Do I Know God's
Will for My Life?
Spiritual Companions

**Mar. 31 - Part 5B Exploring
Spiritual Guidance: The
Spirit of Christ**
Small Groups for Spiritual
Guidance;
Re-Visioning Our Life as
Companions in Christ
Discerning Our Need for
Guidance; Next steps for
the Journey

THE YOUTH GROUP SCHEDULE ...

On Saturday, March 13, from 10-11am the "No Hassle Dinner" orders will be packaged. This is a **fundraiser** for Work Camp! (See order from in this *Messenger*). Eileen Herring will cook the dinners, Jodi Ehler will make the desserts and youth group members will package up the orders for distribution. On Sunday, March 14, the "No Hassle Dinners" will be distributed to those who have ordered them.

On Friday, Saturday, March 20 a Lock-In has been tentatively scheduled. Arrive Friday at 7pm and leave Saturday at 7am. Special guests "In The Summer" and others throughout the night. Bring friends!!

On Wednesday, March 30 **WORSHIP ONE!** at Centerpoint Church in Concord. Meet at church at 6pm and arrive at Centerpoint at 6:30pm. Again, plan to bring friends!

USHER SCHEDULE FOR MARCH ...

7 - Don & Laurie Hill, Ken Williams & Dean Hopps

14 - Luke & Cindy Bonenfant and Tom & Allison Hardy

21 - Harold Matava, Lynn Matava, Helen Chapman and Randy Shuey

28 - Peter, Sharon & Eric Chase and Dean Hopps

If you are unable to usher on your given day, please contact Dean Hopps at 485-5509.

SUNDAY FLOWERS ...

As always, donations of flowers are welcomed for our altar each Sunday morning. To contribute all you have to do is sign up on the Flower



Sheet in the Parish Hall or let the flower committee member know.

If you would like to donate a lily in memory of a loved one, please see a member of the Flower Committee and let us know your wishes. We would need the lilies for Saturday, April 3, or we will pick up the lilies for you. Please give us the name[s] as you would like it listed in the Sunday bulletin.

Please contact Doris Rowden 485-3664 (March) and Robbe MacKenzie 485-7295 (April).

DAYLIGHT SAVINGS TIME begins on Sunday, **March 14th**. Don't forget to set your clocks **AHEAD** one hour on Saturday night!

STEWARDSHIP NEWS ...

Our Stewardship Campaign for this year is nearly complete. If there is anyone who has not turned in a pledge card, please do so as soon as possible. The Stewardship committee would like to thank all of the stewards who took the time to write the letters to other members. Thank you Kurt and Jodi Ehler, Marc and Amanda Hall, Tad and Stef Curry, Tim and Abby Morrison, Rick and Jayne Hochsprung and Dave and Nancy Bibbins. Your efforts have made this campaign a success.

JUST FOR LAUGHS ...

Open Mouth, Insert Foot

At the outpatient surgery center where I work, the anesthesiologist often chatted with patients before their operations to help them relax.

One day he thought he recognized a woman as a co-worker at the VA hospital where he had trained. when the patient confirmed that his hunch was correct, he said, "So, tell me, is the food still as bad there as it used to be?"

"Well, I suppose," she replied, "I'm still cooking it."





WORLD SERVICE ...

Our Family's Table serves a free meal on Wednesdays at 5:30pm. See Pat Hill if you have questions or would like to volunteer to help.

Every **2nd Sunday** of the month is **Brown Bag Sunday**. Especially needed are **rice and canned items – baked beans, green peas, carrots and mixed vegetables** and non-food items such as **toilet paper and hygiene items**. All donated items can be left in the Parish Hall.

The **Interfaith Food Pantry** is open on Wednesdays from **1-3pm and 5:30-6:30pm**.

ONE GREAT HOUR OF SHARING, part of Our Church's Wider Mission is the special Lenten mission offering of UCC that carries God's message of love and hope to people in more than 80 countries through working with international partners. The offerings provide sources of clean water and food, education and healthcare, small business, microcredit, emergency relief and advocacy and resettlement for refugees. OGHS also supports domestic and international ministries for disaster preparedness and response. The suggested 2010 date for this offering is March 14th. Thank you for caring!

2010 WORK CAMP ...

Date: July 11-17, 2010

Where: Windsor, Maine

Who: Senior High or older. Adult chaperones needed, age 21 or older.

Cost: \$50.00 deposit with registration.

Registration Deadline: March 15, 2010. Forms are available in the Church office if you didn't receive one.



COOKIE WALK UPDATE ...

Many thanks to those who donated cookies, and volunteered their time to make it all happen. Also, many thanks to those that purchased cookies!! Once again this fundraiser was a success, raising **\$738.00** to go towards work camp this summer in Windsor, Maine. That's a lot of cookies!!



FREE
Invite
Your
Friends
Popcorn
Provided