

Sunday Services on GCTV

Sunday: 10:00 a.m., 3:00 p.m.
Monday-Friday: 2:30 p.m.
Saturday: 9:30 a.m., 2:30 p.m.

February 2016

First Congregational Church,
United Church of Christ
P.O. Box 155
Gray, ME 04039

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Church office: 657-4279
Church/Supper room: 657-3279
Email: grayfirst@securespeed.us
Website: www.grayfirst.org

Office Hours:

**Rev. Annette: Tuesday &
Thursday with open office
hours 2:00-4:00 on Thursday.**

Rose's Office Hours:

Tuesday & Friday 9:00 – 3:00

*Office hours subject to change.
Please call ahead to be sure.*

First Church Notes

From Pastor Annette:

“Ring out the old, ring in the new” are words from the poem *Ring Out Wild Bells* by Alfred Lord Tennyson. I came across this fine poem again just recently. It was clearly written for the New Year, and yet I think it works equally well as a Lenten prayer and meditation for us. Lent is also a time for turning away from habits, pursuits, attitudes, and behaviors that hinder our relationship with God, and towards those ways of being and doing that nourish “that life which really is life,” as the Bible puts it. Traditional Lenten practices to help us to re-orient ourselves to God and God’s will for the earth have included prayer, fasting (or giving something up), and almsgiving (helping the poor and other deeds of kindness). I think one of the most important ingredients for making the most of the Lenten season is **intentionality**: actually thinking about and deciding upon one or more particular actions one will undertake during Lent in order to draw closer to God and/or to better serve one’s neighbor. Lent begins on Ash Wednesday, February 10. How will you observe it this year?

You will find the complete poem “*Ring Out Wild Bells*” in this newsletter. I hope you will take time to read it and pray along with it. Its words speak to both the personal and the civic, with a clear call to inner renewal. May you be blessed in your reading of it. Amen.

Lectionary Readings for February 2016

February 7, 2016

- Exodus 34:29-35
- Psalm 99
- 2 Corinthians 3:12-4:2
- Luke 9:28-36

February 14, 2016

- Deuteronomy 26:1-11
- Psalm 91:1-2, 9-16
- Romans 10:8-13
- Luke 4:1-13

February 21, 2016

- Genesis 15:1-12,17-18
- Psalm 27
- Philippians 3:17-4:1
- Luke 13:31-35

February 28, 2016

- Isaiah 55:1-9
- Psalm 63:1-8
- 1 Corinthians 10:1-13
- Luke 13:1-9

Monthly Financial Report

December Income and Expenses

Pledges	\$7,868.10
Loose Offering	1,151.00
UCC Dues	51.00
Initial Envelopes	4.00
Orphan Bills	199.12
Parsonage Rent	1,450.00
Donations (Pantry, Extension Group & Sue Given)	750.00
Total	\$11,473.22

Expenses for the month of December totaled \$7,555.36. To meet the budget for 2015, our monthly income should be \$9,008.24. It is nice to see the income total more than the expenses and be higher than the amount needed to meet the budget!

Respectfully submitted,
Fran Hutchings

SHROVE TUESDAY

The BCE will be hosting the annual Shrove Tuesday pancake supper on February 9th at 5:30 PM. The menu will include pancakes, (blueberry, chocolate chip or plain), sausage links, juice and a variety of pancake toppings.

After the meal there will be a pancake flipping competition for children of all ages. The winners will receive a crown and bragging rights for a whole year.

Everyone is welcome. It's BYOP, (bring your own pan) for flipping. There will be plastic plates available for flipping if you prefer that.

Please join us! There will be the lot of smiles, laughter and fun for everyone.

Pat Wood

Sunday School Superintendent

PANTRY NEWS

The Community Pantry started in our Parish House about 7 years ago, occupying one room on the basement level. The first time we opened, we served about 9 households. Our numbers have now grown to 70 +, which includes several home deliveries to housebound folks in Gray. Our volunteers have also grown from a handful to over 20 great, generous people, who are glad to be able to serve those less fortunate. We also outgrew our one room, and now use all but one room in the basement. We are so thankful to Hannaford, Shop-n-Save, Panara Bread in Auburn, Cheetah's Bakery in Gray, and many donations from citizens of Gray, Churches, and many other places of business here in Gray and New Gloucester. During recent bad weather, our numbers are down a little – but we feel sure the folks will be back again when the weather cooperates. Continue to keep the workers and the clients in your prayers.

About the UCC...

By Carol West

It is well known that some in our congregation are not happy with some things the UCC endorses. I also, do not agree with all aspects. Before any types of discussions or rash actions are taken, I believe we need to know the facts. I am educating myself and plan some ongoing articles on what I learn. Should you wish, go online to Maine conference UCC.

Following is an excerpt from the UCC Constitution:

18 The autonomy of the Local Church is inherent and modifiable only by its own action. Nothing in this Constitution and the Bylaws of the United Church of Christ shall destroy or limit the right of each Local Church to continue to operate in the way customary to it; nor shall be construed as giving to the General Synod, or to any Conference or Association now, or at any future time, the power to abridge or impair the autonomy of any Local Church in the management of its own affairs, which affairs include, but are not limited to, the right to retain or adopt its own methods of organization, worship and education; to retain or secure its own charter and name; to adopt its own constitution and bylaws; to formulate its own covenants and confessions of faith; to admit members in its own way and to provide for their discipline or dismissal; to call or dismiss its pastor or pastors by such procedure as it shall determine; to acquire, own, manage and dispose of property and funds; to control its own benevolences; and to withdraw by its own decision from the United Church of Christ at any time without forfeiture of ownership or control of any real or personal property owned by it.

Peanut Butter Ice Cream Sauce

If you can read, you can make this!

If you like Peanut Butter, I think you will Like this!

1 Cup Brown Sugar either light or dark (I used light)
 1/2 Cup Light Corn syrup
 3 Tablespoons Butter
 Pinch of salt
 1 Cup of Creamy Peanut Butter
 1/2 cup of Evaporated Can Milk

In a microwave-safe dish, combine the brown sugar, corn syrup, butter and salt. Cover with plastic wrap and microwave on high for 2½ minutes or until mixture boils, stirring twice during this time. Add Peanut Butter, stir until smooth. Stir in evaporated milk. Serve warm over vanilla ice cream. Cover and store in the refrigerator. To reheat, put in microwave for 30 to 40 seconds. Makes 2 ¾ cups. Times may take a little longer depending on your microwave. Enjoy!

Lenten Soup N Study begins February 10th

“*Making Sense of the Cross*” will be the topic of a six-week Soup N Study during Lent, beginning on Ash Wednesday, February 10th. This book study includes DVD presentations as part of each session. The Rev. David Lose is the author of the study, in which participants are invited to “listen in” on an open conversation about the cross and to explore its meaning for their own lives.

The first session will meet in the supper room in the church; all other sessions will take place in the fellowship room of the Parish House. We will begin with a simple meal of soup and bread at 5:30 p.m. and end the study just before 7:00 p.m.

You can get a copy of the study book from Pastor Annette on Sunday mornings. If you would like to pay for your book, a donation of ten dollars would be appreciated.

Looking Backward: By Miriam Bisbee

Once the beast (the old black iron cook stove) was tamed it was time to start putting things together. Our cuisine was far from "haute" but it was wholesome and filling -- no costly and exotic ingredients -- but eggs from the hens, milk, cream and butter from the cow, vegetables from the garden and fruit from our trees. Add sugar, flour, salt, soda and cream of tartar from the brick store and you had the means to stave off starvation for a lifetime. (A bit of spice and vanilla were our major indulgences.) I suppose cake was my earliest interest. My mother swore by her basic recipe, the 1,2,3,4 cake -- that's one cup of butter, two cups of sugar, three cups of flour and four eggs. Add to that one teaspoon of soda and two of cream of tartar, one of salt and two of vanilla and a cup of milk and you had the makings of a great tasting cake which could be varied with the addition of cocoa powder, spice, raisins or what-have-you. As I mentioned before, it was also subject to my mother's substitutions, sour milk instead of cream of tartar, brown sugar instead of white, sour cream for butter, etc., etc. Over a lifetime you learn from experience what you can get away with.

I think I must have been in school before I ever tasted baker's bread and it was a long time after that before I learned to tolerate it. My mother made yeast bread and also "lazy bread". I guess I learned lazy bread first. This dough was like biscuits but with only a little shortening and you could drop it by spoonfuls in a greased bake sheet for lazy biscuits or bake it in a loaf pan. It was more than likely made with soda and sour milk or buttermilk. It made excellent toast as I recall. In fact, I'm tempted to end this screed and go make some now.

Miriam Bisbee

Ring Out, Wild Bells

From *In Memoriam* by Alfred Lord Tennyson

Ring out, wild bells, to the wild sky,
The flying cloud, the frosty light:
The year is dying in the night;
Ring out, wild bells, and let him die.

Ring out the old, ring in the new,
Ring, happy bells, across the snow:
The year is going, let him go;
Ring out the false, ring in the true.

Ring out the grief that saps the mind
For those that here we see no more;
Ring out the feud of rich and poor,
Ring in redress to all mankind.

Ring out a slowly dying cause,
And ancient forms of party strife;
Ring in the nobler modes of life,
With sweeter manners, purer laws.

Ring out the want, the care, the sin,
The faithless coldness of the times;
Ring out, ring out my mournful rhymes
But ring the fuller minstrel in.

Ring out false pride in place and blood,
The civic slander and the spite;
Ring in the love of truth and right,
Ring in the common love of good.

Ring out old shapes of foul disease;
Ring out the narrowing lust of gold;
Ring out the thousand wars of old,
Ring in the thousand years of peace.

Ring in the valiant man and free,
The larger heart, the kindlier hand;
Ring out the darkness of the land,
Ring in the Christ that is to be.

Organ News

Organ News from RoJean Tulk: The church has received an anonymous gift of \$1500 to be used for maintenance and repair of our Allen Organ. This gift was given in memory of Agnes Stansfield. I would note that Agnes left a strong and positive mark on the music ministry of our church, particularly as it pertains to the organist’s duties and the church’s instruments. She was a guiding influence when we purchased the Allen Organ, and she advocated for the establishment of an organized process for the use of the organ and for expectations of the organist’s duties, responsibilities, and perks. In developing these procedures and guidelines, Agnes, along with others, ensured a consistent and smooth transition among the various volunteer music committees throughout the years. We owe much of the strength of our music program, at least in part, to Agnes.

On another note: Over the years, the organ has been losing some of its “oomph” in terms of the volume the instrument could produce. Therefore, I would “crank it wide open” on the hymns in order to lead the congregational singing. Recently, however, our organ repairman, Nick Orso, gave the organ a thorough refurbishing, including the replacement of certain parts. As a result, the organ has its “oomph” back. Now when I open it up, the volume is apparently way too loud for the enjoyment of the congregation. For this, I sincerely apologize. I will do my best to back off the volume so we can all enjoy the instrument and retain our hearing.

NEW DIRECTORY COMING SOON!

I will be updating our church phone directory within the next month. Please help me by making sure that your information is current. You can print this and mail it to the office (P.O. Box 155 Gray ME) or email it to grayfirst@securespeed.us .

Name(s): _____

Address: _____

Phone: (indicate if this is landline or cell. Provide cell# for each person listed.)

Email address: _____

Do you currently receive weekly email from the church? _____ Would you like to? _____

Do you prefer your monthly newsletter to be mailed or e-mailed?