

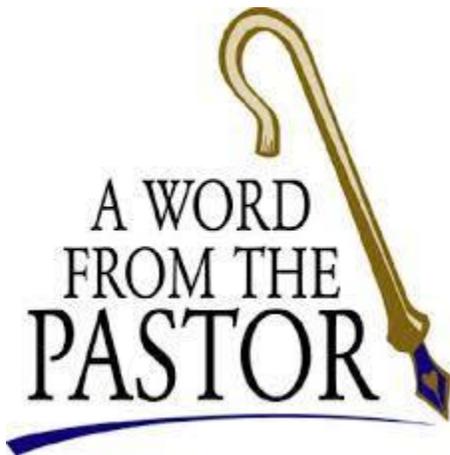


Union Church of Belgrade Lakes  
United Methodist Church

Location: 67 Main Street, Belgrade Lakes, Maine  
Mailing Address: P. O. Box 133, Belgrade Lakes, Maine 04918  
Phone: 207-495-3599  
Church Email: [unionchurchmaine@gmail.com](mailto:unionchurchmaine@gmail.com)  
Pastor's Email: [unionchurchumcbelgrade@gmail.com](mailto:unionchurchumcbelgrade@gmail.com)  
Website: [unionchurchmaine.org](http://unionchurchmaine.org)

## Union Rider

# December 2022 Newsletter



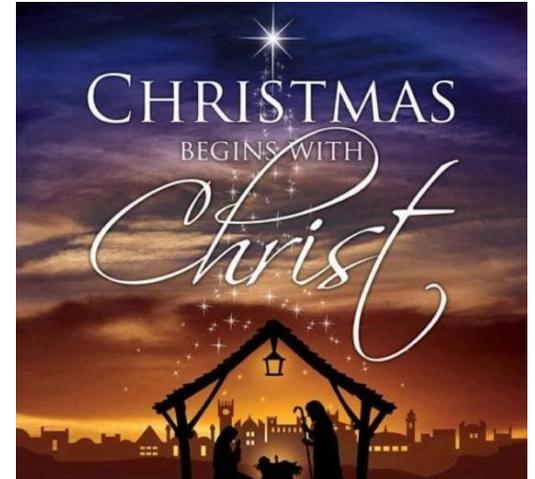
Dear Members  
and Friends of  
Union Church,

Greetings in the  
name of the One  
who is the "reason  
for the season!"

I am writing to you  
as we are about to

begin the Holy Season of Advent. It is a season in which we prepare for the celebration that "Love came down at Christmas, Love all lovely, Love divine; Love was born at Christmas; star and angels gave the sign" (UMH #242). Earlier in November, just days after we had a conversation in our weekly Bible Study group about Divine Love, and about how difficult it is for us mere humans to comprehend, the title of the daily devotional I receive by email, "Richard Rohr Daily Meditation," was "A Movement of Divine Love." In it, Father Richard proclaims that God's unconditional, truly divine love is itself a movement that transforms us.

In his words, "This whole human project pivots around Divine Love. Because our available understanding of love is almost always conditioned on "I love you if" or "I love you when," most people find it almost impossible—apart from real transformation—to comprehend or receive Divine Love. In fact, we cannot understand it in the least, unless we "stand



under" it, like a cup beneath a waterfall. When we truly understand Divine Love, our politics, our anthropology, our economics, and our movements for justice will all change. If we are to believe the biblical revelation, it seems that God does not love the people Israel *if* they change (as they first imagine), but *so that they can change*. Divine Love is not a reward for good behavior, as we first presume it to be; it is a *larger Life, an energy and movement that we can participate in*—and then, almost in spite of ourselves—we behave differently. It seems few of us go there willingly. For some reason, we're afraid of what we most want... For some reason, we think that *if* we love God, God will love us. When, in reality, it is *because* God loves us that we can return the compliment. God does not love us because we are good; God loves us because God is good."

Our very human belief in retributive justice, that is, "tit for tat," goes like this: a mistake is made; punishment follows; conversion/reform occurs; forgiveness/consolation is received. A belief in Divine Love drives this understanding of divine justice: a mistake is made; forgiveness/consolation is received; conversion/reform occurs. It sounds too good to work, right?? Too good to be true... Father Richard sums it up this way: "Divine Love is the interpretive key to everything. Unloved

people do bad things. Loved people do good things. It is that simple.”

May we dream bigger dreams of Divine Love in this Advent Season. And then, may we know the reality of Divine Love – “Love Came Down at Christmas”... “Love shall be our token; love be yours and love be mine; love to God and all, love for plea and gift and sign” (UMH #242).

Mark and I are so, so grateful for your loving care, concern, and support! We wish you a Blessed Advent Season, a Merry Christmas, and a Happy New Year!

In Christ’s Love and Service,  
*Pastor Eleanor Collinsworth*

---



### [Worship Opportunities in Advent and Christmas Seasons](#)

The Advent and Christmas seasons provide opportunities to worship in special ways and with special messages that help us remember the true “reason for the season.” What a great time to share in meaningful worship experiences, and to invite neighbors, friends, and family members, near and far, to share them with you as we live into our Advent theme, “**Songs for the Waiting.**”

**Nov. 27 – 1<sup>st</sup> Sunday of Advent: “I Want to Walk as a Child of the Light”**

**Dec. 4 – 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of Advent w/ Holy Communion: “O Come, O Come, Emmanuel”**

**Dec. 11 – 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of Advent: “Come, Thou Long-Expected Jesus”**

**Dec. 18 – 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Advent w/ Holy Communion: “Lo, How a Rose E’er Blooming”**

**Friday, Dec. 24 – Christmas Eve:**

**5:00 p.m. Candlelight Service of Lessons & Carols (in-person and livestreamed)**

**11:00 p.m. Candlelight Service of Lessons & Carols**

**Sunday, Jan. 1 – First Sunday After Christmas w/ Holy Communion:**

**8 & 9:30 a.m. “Lessons & Carols for a New Year”**

---

### **CELEBRATE CHRISTMAS**



**‘I am like an evergreen tree, yielding My fruit to you throughout the year.’ Hosea 14:8**

The word ‘celebrate’ means to *rejoice, delight in, revel, and appreciate.*

Jack Hayford writes: ‘There is so much done in the name of Christmas that is neither pleasing nor honouring to Christ. Even so, I find myself doing battle... with... religious superstitions

which argue against almost every observation of Christmas... against giving... against decorations, trees, or just plain fun, as though such participation defiled something holy. Such harsh debunking is nothing more than “holy humbug”. A Christmas tree... is a specific statement... By means of this tree we are saying: *We believe in celebration.* We serve the God who “*gives us richly all things to enjoy*” (1 Timothy 6:17 <sup>NKJV</sup>) and who through history assigned... sacred appointments of feasting and rejoicing... “*great gladness*” (1 Chronicles 29:22 <sup>KJV</sup>)... Although no one can make a “Biblical case” for Christmas trees, we gather around ours with joy. We see in its living branches a symbol of everlasting life given us because of Jesus’ death on the tree—whose naked crossbars Xed out death and ushered in forgiveness... and eternal hope. The lights... gleam a testimony of His Light-of-the-world glory. The ornaments reflect the decorative splendour with which His kindnesses adorn our lives. The star beams hope, with a heavenward ray, reminding us that from there He shall come again to receive us.’

As you gather together this Christmas, don’t forget to celebrate the One who said, *‘I am the Light of the World. Whoever follows Me... will have the light of life.’* (John 8:12 <sup>NIV</sup>)

### Celebrate Christmas!

December 26

### ‘This day is holy.’ Nehemiah 8:9

The word *holiday* comes from the Old English word *haligdæg*, which means ‘holy day’. So, when Nehemiah announced, *‘This day is holy,’* he was declaring a celebration; a time to *‘eat and drink before the Lord.’* (1 Chronicles 29:22 <sup>KJV</sup>)

Today, overindulgence and overspending have become synonymous with Christmas, making Christians hesitant to celebrate. Jack Hayford writes: ‘Often it is from those newly associated with our fellowship who have allowed themselves—perhaps for the first time—to enter into the wonder and fullness of Christmas joy

and celebration... Christmas is more than merely “merry”. Christmas is *mighty*. Celebration—unfettered enjoyment, love... laughter... gifts and giving, trees and tinsel... carols and bells... all of it—has an inherent potential for mightiness. The qualifying factor is *the presence of the Holy Spirit*. When He is present, the accoutrements of Christmas... can bless, strengthen, heal, [and] restore... When He is absent, carols ring hollow. Greetings, wishes and smiles lie on the surface, like glitter glued on a flat card. Lights and decorations... can leave the heart more desolate than ever. But where the Holy Spirit is there is power... to change entrenched habits... transform cold hearts... grudges and expectations... lift lives out of the shadow... This Christmas, let Him come upon you. Welcome the... Holy Spirit... to move upon your life, and then make your *own* move... into the season’s best opportunities to bask in the wonder of it all... Reach out to those around: encourage, bless, bake, give, visit, invite, share, and lift hearts wherever you can. By... New Year... you’ll find Christmas to... have been marvelously, and even miraculously, mighty.’



### FRIENDS AND NEIGHBOR LUNCHEON

Thursday,  
December 8, 2022  
from 11:30 to 1 p.m.

**While we are unable to share this time together; while you are eating your lunch, pray for those who usually join us for lunch on this day for fellowship!**



## Our 2022 Global Mission Initiative Is Going to The Sheble Campership Fund

**Joys & Celebrations**  
**Total as of 11/27/2022:**  
**\$2,933.00**

**Our yearly goal is**  
**\$2,500**



**SHEBLE**  
**CAMPERSHIP FUND**



**Meetings at a**  
**Glance:**  
**December 2022**

**Worship Committee:** 12/13 @ 4 p.m.

**NOTE:** Change in Time

**Missions & Outreach:** 12/14 @ 11:15

**Prayer Shawl:** 12/12 and 12/26 @ 1 p.m.

**Belgrade Senior Resource Meeting:** 12/26 @ 6 p.m. at the Town Office



## Our Mission Ministries

Through the year in this Newsletter we highlight our mission projects and programs where we serve God through Christlike compassion, mercy and transformation; reaching out, lifting up, building up.

*We will list some of the ways during 2022 contributions from Missions and Outreach through your support received in our weekly worship offerings, pledges and special giving.*

**Center for All Seasons Summer Camp –**  
As the school year has begun, we will once again support by providing and/or after school activity supplies. On 10/12; we donated \$250 for them to purchase pumpkins for jack o lantern carving and for activity supplies.

**The Belgrade Rome Food Pantry** with special monthly “Wish List” donations; January through December we will be fillin’ our shopping cart. - Many thanks. Look for Wish List later in the NL.

**Kenneth Workman Youth Sports Program -**  
Ever notice the sign at the **Belgrade Ball Park**? Our donation each year supports this local youth program and shares our active presence in the community in Christ’s service. \$200 was donated on May 17th.

**Maine Justice Foundation, Augusta, Maine.** We supported this work that serves the LGBT, gay community those of whom are among the poor and vulnerable among us, facing issues of employment and housing discrimination, domestic violence, homelessness. In this manner we extend our church Welcoming Statement into the community beyond our own worship doors. Our \$500 donation was sent on **February 10, 2022.**

**Messalonskee High School – In April we sent \$500 to support the High School’s Food Pantry.** A food pantry is located at MHS to serve their students and families. They also hold an event each year called Empty Bowls project which supports our local Food cupboards and the Food Cupboard at the High School. In April we sent a donation of \$500 for their Food Pantry .

**Bread of Life Ministries.** Through the year, each month we provide a Tuesday evening meal for the residents of the temporary Shelter Program. It’s been a blessing to meet folks there and see how this ministry gives them both shelter and a boost to what is next as they move forwards in life by God’s grace. We will again contribute to this program in 2022. In December we will be sending a donation of \$500 to support their Christmas Wish List for their residents. Our Christmas Eve Offering this year again will also be sent to the Bread of Life Homeless Shelter.

**Vernon Valley Lodge 99 A.F. & A.M. –** We again are sponsoring the Bikes for Reading Program for local school children by sharing with them \$200; and will be sending this donation in early December. Jim Webster is a key member of this group

**Adaptive Outdoor Education Center – We again supported this program in 2022** as an affirmation of their annual Ski-A-Thon that supports programs that empower adaptive athletes towards a healthy, active and rewarding life. A \$100 donation was sent on **February 10, 2022.**

**Neighbors Driving Neighbors,** this local ministry program serving to help folks who would be otherwise home bound was supported with our **\$500 gift on February 10, 2021** and through the engagement of those offering to serve as drivers, and part of the programs leadership

**Winthrop, Maine: United Methodist Camp Mechuwana.** They are back to holding in person camp outings! If you have children/grandchildren who would like to attend, please sign them up soon; their camping sessions are filling up fast. On April 13th we sent a \$500 donation towards this much needed program. The year-round camp and youth programs happening there transforms lives of children and youth.

**Pastor’s Discretionary Fund –** With generous donations we are able to assist families with urgent housing needs; **and will continue helping through 2022.** Each specific in their own way are able to be a means of God’s Grace in troubling times. To date \$1,968.21 has been expended.

**Prayer Shawl Ministry.** This group meets twice a month (2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Monday @ 1 p.m.) and distributes prayers shawls to both women and men who are dealing with health issues and or hospital stays.

**Belgrade Central School –** The Mission and Outreach Committee at their August meeting found that the school could use donations of snacks and school supplies and will be working closely with the School Administrators as to their **needs in 2022. We dropped off several cases of soda (\$200 worth) for the Basket Bingo Event held on 11/18 which proceeds go towards the kids being able to go on class trips**

**Belgrade Public Library –** On May 17<sup>th</sup> we sent a donation of \$100 to the Sandra Fuller Fund (Collection of Children’s Classical Book)

**Belgrade Fire & Rescue –** A donation in the amount of \$500 was sent to support the First Responders Bench that will be placed at the Town Office.

**Furnace Cleanings –** We donated \$990 to Bruce Galouch who generously volunteered to

clean furnaces for those who were unable to afford to have this done themselves.

**Preacher's Aid Society** – At our September 21<sup>st</sup> meeting it was approved to send a donation in the amount of \$500.

**UMEM** – In early December will be sending a donation in the amount of \$1,500 to support their ministry of helping folks who need assistance with heating and/or electrical expenses



## Bread Of Life Ministries

**Our Next Bread of Life Homeless Shelter Dinner will be DECEMBER 13th**

**NOTE:** We are changing to this month's dinner to the 13<sup>th</sup> so that folks will have the week before Christmas to make preparations for their Christmas gatherings.

Please email us at [unionchurchmaine@gmail.com](mailto:unionchurchmaine@gmail.com) for those of you wanting to designate your participation in this ministry; we are looking for many volunteers. Signing up is important so that we are aware of what you will bring so that we can complete planning for whatever else needs to be prepared and donated. Thank you!

**We would like to encourage as many volunteers as possible to help donate items for this dinner.**

At this time they are housing around 50 residents.

Thank you to Carol, Cheryl, Louise, Tony, Hilary, Lynn McClure, JoAnn, Betty, Sharron, and Kathy for sharing in this ministry on November 15th.

**We share a hot meal on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Tuesday of each month.**

In addition to providing the Bread of Life Homeless Shelter with a hot meal every month; we have learned that they are in need of Warm Clothing including the following items: Wool Hats, Gloves, Hand and Feet Warmers. If you are interested in donating, please drop off and we will deliver at our next meal delivery.



Pillows



Bath Towels

Face Cloths



Twin size bed in bags



Bedding is so important to us because the shelter clients take this with them when they move into their own apartments

## Soup Kitchen Wish List



**Bottled Water**



**Sandwich Ziplock Baggies**

**Coffee Creamer**



**MONTH OF  
DECEMBER**

**Food Pantry  
Donations Needed**



**“TIME TO CELEBRATE”**

**ROME/BELGRADE  
FOOD PANTRY**

**Turkey/Chicken Gravy Instant  
Packets (Please NO cans or jars)**

**Bags Potatoes**

**Canned Vegetables**

**PERSONAL CARE ITEMS NEEDED:  
TOOTHBRUSHES (INDIVIDUAL)  
TOOTHPASTE (REG SIZE)  
DEODORANT (GENERIC)  
SHAMPOO (GENERIC)**



**Food Pantry  
Donations Needed**

The Belgrade/Rome Food Pantry will be shopping for and packing Holiday Baskets for Residents of Belgrade and Rome who take

the opportunity to sign up to receive a full Turkey/Chicken Dinner with all the fixings. Stay tuned to find out if they need shoppers and/or volunteers to put the baskets together.

Baskets will be put together on Friday, December 17<sup>th</sup> and the Baskets will be given out on Tuesday, December 20<sup>th</sup>

If you are interested, please email us at [unionchurchmaine@gmail.com](mailto:unionchurchmaine@gmail.com) letting us know. She will create a call back list and get in touch with you if help is needed.



**Thank you!**



**Finance  
Committee  
Update**

As we come off a major holiday, Thanksgiving Day, and are preparing for another celebration later this month, Christmas Day, we will soon be closing out our year-end financial statements. In preparation for a new fiscal year, the Finance Committee finalized a church budget for 2023 at its October meeting. That budget was approved at the Church Conference held on November 14, 2022.

The church's annual stewardship campaign kicked off in August and to date, Union Church as received 47 pledges, two of which are new, totaling \$111,930, a 2.7% increase compared to this year.

I know you are all very anxious to learn how Union Church stands financially. Through October 31, 2022, Union Church received income totaling \$114,653 (excluding \$7,332 received from a federally funded, CARES Act -related program). The total was 92.4% of the amount projected. Although that is reasonably close to our target, there is an imbalance year-to-date (YTD) since our expenses through October 31 totaled \$140,775 which is 99.3% of projections. That means that our net operating income YTD through October 31 is a negative **\$26,122** (in reality, a negative **\$18,790** after taking the federal funds into account). Increased cost of utilities in particular (including fuel oil, internet services, and electricity costs), property and liability insurance premiums, real estate tax, association fees, as well as general supplies contributed to higher overall expenses. On the bright side, while our YTD income vs expenses do not align well, the Church's unrestricted checkbook balance is very healthy, in excess of \$20,000, and the escrow accounts, including an undesignated gift account, are all strong. Although our YTD financials are negative for 2022, our overall balance is in the black.

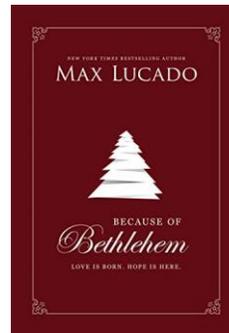
Looking forward to 2023, the approved budget projects income of \$153,930, an increase of \$1,630 or 1.1%. Expenses, however, are projected to rise 6.3% from \$169,052 this year, to \$179,753 in 2023, an increase of \$10,701. Our Faith Line in 2023 will be approximately \$25,000. Efforts will continue to attempt to rein in expenses where possible and prayer and thought will be given to how to enhance our income. Any suggestions you might have will be greatly appreciated.

Union Church is blessed by your regular and consistent generosity and support. Our Mission Shares to the New England Conference continue to be paid in full and those funds support numerous missions locally, regionally, and globally. Through an active and committed Mission & Outreach committee, Union Church is making a difference in our community and beyond. We continue to be a community of faith and our continued commitment

of time, talent, and treasure **will be ENOUGH** to get us through the coming year.

May the blessings of this Christmas season fill each of you and yours with joy, peace, and love. Let us celebrate the birth of Christ into this world by shining the light of Christ in the world through our actions. Happy Holidays!

Respectfully,  
Tony Mastromarino



## **ADVENT BIBLE STUDY BECAUSE OF BETHLEHEM**

**Wednesdays 9:45 to 11 a.m.  
November 30th to  
December 21st**

For some, Christmas is a time of excitement, celebration, and quality time with loved ones.

For others, it's full of loneliness, grief, and loss. Join New York Times bestselling author Max Lucado as he unwraps the enduring promises of Christmas and discovers a lifetime of hope, all because of one baby born in Bethlehem. It's easy to lose sight of the remarkable story of Christmas. We forget that a king ordered a census, Joseph was forced to travel, Mary bounced on a donkey's back, the hotel was full, the hour was late, and the event was one big hassle. Yet, out of that hassle, hope was born.

In *Because of Bethlehem*, Max invites us to look at the Christmas story from a different perspective. He reminds us that Christmas is about more than a pretty tree with presents piled up underneath it. Christmas begins what Easter celebrates: the child in the cradle who goes on to become the King on the cross. Because of Bethlehem, we have a place on earth and a Savior in heaven.

In the midst of your hectic Christmas season, Max will give you the encouragement, advice, and tools you need to:

- Rekindle your connection to the Christ of Christmas
- Receive the promises of the Christmas season
- Lay down your endless Christmas to-do list and trust what Jesus has already done

- Heal your heartache by embracing the God who is always near you, always for you, and always with you

**Everyone Welcome!**

---



### Coffee Hour Social in December

Hey everybody, we're planning to have an old-fashioned coffee hour on December 11th after the 9:30 service. Nothing fancy, just some cake, and coffee or tea to enjoy while we talk with each other. It's been far too long since we've shared fellowship after worship, so I hope you will plan to spend a few minutes catching up with your church friends.

See you on the 11th; Hopefully, it will be hosted by the Endowment Committee.

Mark your calendars for the Second Sunday of Every month; these Coffees will be regularly scheduled for this Sunday.

Don Petersen  
Worship and Music Committee

---



### UNITED METHODIST WOMEN'S CHRISTMAS GIVING TREE

Beginning Sunday  
November 27th there  
will be a tree in the  
Sanctuary full of tags  
with items listed on  
them that the children  
of the Belgrade

Central School are asking for Christmas gifts this year. On your way out from our Worship Service (in you attend in person),

**please stop by and pick up 1, 2 or as many as you would like. If you don't attend in person, please feel free to stop by on Tuesday or Wednesdays of each week to pick up some tags. Please have the gifts back to the Church by Sunday December 11th, preferably wrapped, but if you do not have the time to wrap Bobbi will wrap them for you.**

**Thank You!**

---



**Saturday,  
December  
3rd  
4 p.m. to 7  
p.m.**

Chowder/Soup  
Crafts  
Bake Shoppe

We will be looking for donations of chowders/soups, baked goods, and crafts

We also need Folks to volunteer as Servers and to help out at the different tables to oversee sales, etc.

Set Up Date and Time to Be Determined

**Please let Bobbi our Chair know if you are willing to volunteer for this wonderful event. Or sign up on the Sign-Up Sheet in Friendship Hall**

**THANK YOU!!!**

---



**Advent Wreath Making Event Coordinated by Betty on Sunday 11/27**

Sharing some pictures taken from this event on Sunday; There were 14

in attendance, and everyone had a blast preparing these wreaths to enjoy in their homes. Thank you Betty for all your preparations, instructing and sharing the Advent Readings with all to take home with them.



A couple of the finished wreaths



**Christmas Eve Offering Designated to the Bread of Life Ministry, Augusta**

Given that the Christmas Story is all about a displaced/homeless family, our Christmas Eve Offering will again go to the Bread of Life Homeless Shelter!

They provide shelter, long term housing, food, and case management/life skills coaching. Between the Family Residential Building and the Veterans Building; they have 50+ folks they are assisting.



**Services Will be Held on Christmas Eve**

This year since Christmas is on Sunday we thought we would hold two Services on Christmas Eve and not hold our morning service on Christmas Day. That way everyone can go about their Christmas gatherings as you would each Christmas.

**We will hold our traditional Candlelight Service at 5 p.m. and adding another Candlelight Service at 11 p.m.**

Union Church of Belgrade Lakes  
United Methodist Church  
67 Main Street  
P.O. Box 133  
Belgrade Lakes, Maine 04918

**Our Mission** is to live our experience of God's love  
in all that we say and do...

**Our Vision** is to be a growing spiritual faith community in the  
manner of Christ, where all are welcome and cared for...