



Union Church of Belgrade Lakes

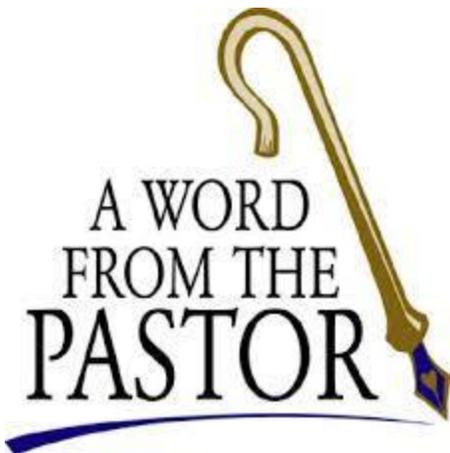
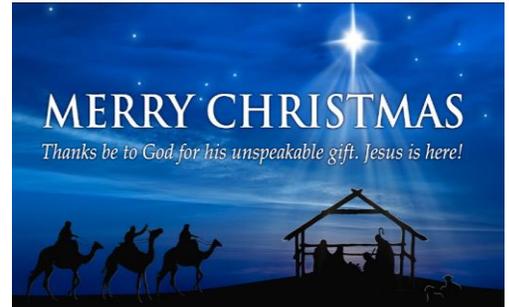
United Methodist Church

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
Pastor's Email: unionchurchumbelgrade@gmail.com
Website: unionchurchmaine.org

Union Rider

December 2020 Newsletter



Dear Members
and Friends,
Greetings
in the name of
the One who is
the "reason for
the season!"

How do we "celebrate" Advent in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic?? Not "if" we celebrate it, for celebrate we will! But... "how??" These words were scrawled on a wall at some point during the Holocaust: "I believe in the sun, even when the sun is not shining." These words and others were set to music by Mark A. Miller, and his song "***I Believe...***" is the theme song for our Advent season. The power of music will call us to an Advent response of transformation, in the midst of great uncertainty, through hope, love, joy, and peace. This Advent and Christmas, we will affirm and act on the reasons why we can still "believe, even when" we might be discouraged.

Here's what we know we will do:

- Each and every worship service will be livestreamed, both on the church's Facebook page and website.

- We will continue to adhere to Maine state guidelines for gatherings, and when we gather in-person, we will have the benefits of fresh air (doors cracked open, and windows cracked open from the top), filtered air (from three air purifiers sized to accommodate a space larger than our sanctuary), and a well-heated sanctuary.
- We will light the Advent candles each week, and we invite those worshipping at home to also light Advent candles each week (please contact the Church Office if you do not have access to Advent candles and we will find some for you).
- A newly formed Chimes Choir will be providing special music, either live or, if that's not safe, previously recorded.

I realize that the only constant, in the seasons just past and in this new season, is change. We will "pivot" and provide other meaningful ways for you to celebrate the Advent season and its culmination on Christmas Eve as we learn what might be possible. Right now, here's what we are planning, without having all the details worked out just yet:

- Gathering pictures of your Nativity sets, and the stories behind them, for a virtual display of them that we can share on our Facebook

page and website (please send your pictures and stories to the church email – unionchurchmaine@gmail.com).

- Gathering home-made luminaries to be displayed on our church porch, steps, and walkways on Christmas Eve.
- Offering a Christmas Eve “stroll” through the decorated sanctuary as another, safer alternative to being in-person for Christmas Eve.

You’ll want to pay close attention to the daily e-mails from Kathy (and from me through Kathy) to learn more about these opportunities to celebrate this season.

The good news covering us all is that our God is faithful, and the season of Advent now upon us encourages us, in the darkest time of the year, and in this dark time in our collective lives, to lift up God’s peace, God’s love, God’s joy, God’s hope.

In this season of thanks-giving in a time when we might feel deprived, and in this season of gift-giving when we might feel destitute, Mark and I are abundantly blessed, and thankful, to be walking beside you all in ministry here at Union Church of Belgrade Lakes UMC. We 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!

*Together 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, either in-person or by livestreaming, in meaningful worship experiences, and to invite neighbors, friends, and family members, near and far, to share them with you!

Nov. 29 – 1st Sunday of Advent: “I Believe in the Sun: Hope for Tomorrow”

Dec. 6 – 2nd Sunday of Advent w/ Holy Communion: “I Believe in Love: Daring Right

Relationship”

Dec. 13 – 3rd Sunday of Advent: “I Believe in God: Ode to Joy”

Dec. 20 – 4th Sunday of Advent w/ Holy Communion: “I Believe in the Light: Illuminating

Peace”

Monday, Dec. 21, 5 p.m. – “Longest Night Worship Service”:

A special service will be offered on Monday, Dec. 21, at 5 p.m. The service will be livestreamed on Facebook and on our website. The name of this service, “Longest Night”, describes the feeling that some have during this season – and perhaps many of us, in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic. In this service, all who participate will be invited to lift up to God the sadness or struggles they may be facing – and we will worship in special ways, trusting that we will find hope and strength in knowing that we are not alone.

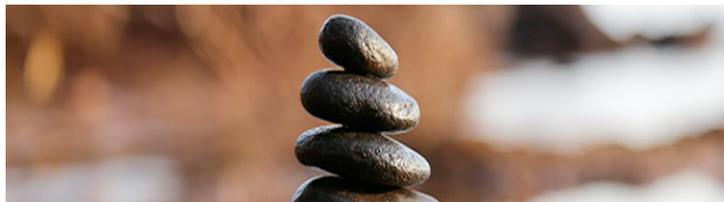
Thursday, Dec. 24 – Christmas Eve: “We Believe, Even Now...”

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

6:30 p.m. Possible Second In-Person Candlelight Service...

Sunday, Dec. 27 – First Sunday After Christmas: “Believe This: The Time Has Come”

Service at 9:30 a.m. (In-Person and Livestreamed)



Instruments of Peace

Bible in a Year: **Ezekiel 16–17**
James 3

Peacemakers who sow in peace reap a harvest of righteousness.

James 3:18

Today's Scripture & Insight: **James 3:13–18**

When World War I erupted in 1914, British statesman Sir Edward Grey declared, “The lamps are going out all over Europe; we shall not see them lit again in our lifetime.” Grey was right. When the “war to end all wars” finally ended, some 20 million had been killed (10 million of them civilians) and another 21 million injured.

While not on the same scale or magnitude, devastation can also occur in our personal lives. Our home, workplace, church, or neighborhood can also be shrouded by the dark specter of conflict. This is one of the reasons God calls us to be difference-makers in the world. But to do so we must rely on His wisdom. The apostle James wrote, “The wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure; then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere. Peacemakers who sow in peace reap a harvest of righteousness” (James 3:17–18).

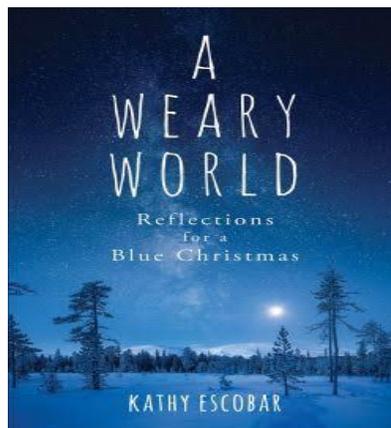
The role of peacemaker is significant because of its harvest. The word *righteousness* means “right standing” or “right relationship.” Peacemakers can help restore *relationships*. No wonder Jesus said, “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God” (Matthew 5:9). His children, relying on His wisdom, become instruments of His peace where it’s needed most.

By: **Bill Crowder**

Reflect & Pray

In what personal conflicts do you need the light of God’s wisdom? How can His peace enable you to be a peacemaker when people around you choose to fight?

Father, Your light penetrates the deepest darkness and Your peace calms the most troubled heart. Help me know Your wisdom and peace and carry it to others in their struggles as well. Amen



NEW ADVENT BIBLE STUDY

**Wednesday
Mornings: 12/2,
12/9, 12/16 and
*12/23 (this date
subject to
change since it
is so close to
Christmas)**

Time: 10 a.m.

IF YOU ARE Interested in an Evening Bible Study Session Via Zoom @ 6:30 p.m.

PLEASE EMAIL US AT

unionchurchmaine@gmail.com to let us know you would like to attend, so we can plan accordingly and can order enough books for everyone.

Thank you!



FRIENDS AND NEIGHBOR LUNCHEON

**Thursday,
December 12,
2020 from 11:30
to 1pm.**

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



UNITED METHODIST WOMEN'S CHRISTMAS GIVING TREE

Beginning Sunday November 29th 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 with their tags attached back to the Church by Sunday December 13th, preferably wrapped, but if you do not have the time to wrap Bobbi will wrap them for you.

THANK YOU!



Good Shepherd Food-Bank

Feeding Maine's Hungry

Our 2020 Global Mission Initiative will be donated to the **Good Shepherd Food Bank** (donations will be sent to them quarterly)

**Joys & Celebrations Total
As of 11/22/2020:
\$2,012.02**



**Our yearly goal is \$2,500;
We are in hopes to receive
the remaining \$488 we need to reach this
goal by the end of December.**



**Meetings at a
Glance:
October 2020**

Mission & Outreach: 12/16 @ 11:15 in person and online via Zoom

Worship Committee: 12/8 @ 6:30 p.m. in online with Zoom

Prayer Shawl: 12/14 and 12/29 @ 1 p.m.

Church Council: 12/15 @ 6:30 via Zoom



CHURCH COUNCIL

**Tuesday
December 15th
VIA Zoom
@6:30 p.m.**

We will hold our final Church Council Meeting Sometime at this time as we need to approve the 2021 Budget Tony has pulled together and we may have two other action items to discuss and approve as well.

ALL ENCOURAGED TO ATTEND!



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 2020 contributions from Missions and Outreach through your support received in our weekly worship offerings, pledges and special giving.***

The Good Shepherd Food Bank

We will support this work that provides food to local food banks throughout Maine. "Feeding families living with food insecurity makes an impact that goes beyond a nutritious meal." (At our February 23rd Church Council Meeting it

was approved our Joys and Celebrations monies will be sent to this organization)

The Belgrade Rome Food Pantry with special monthly "Wish List" donations; January through December we will be fillin' our shopping cart. - Many thanks. December continues to be Stuffing, Cranberry Sauce and Packets of Gravy.

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. \$150 was donated on September 9th.

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 March 3rd.

Messalonskee High School – In December we sent \$500 to support the High School's Food Pantry. Each year their empty Bowls project supports our local Food cupboards and the Food Cupboard at the High School we will continue to contribute and will share information of this year's project in March as it becomes available . In June we look to provide leadership and participation in their Baccalaureate program for new graduates.

We have Pints of Maple Syrup still available - *again* this year for your Summer enjoyment and purchasing. With Fair Trade pricing 100% of the purchase price goes to assist their ministry programs that transform lives in here in Maine; \$600.

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 2020.

Our Christmas Eve Offering of this year will go to the Bread of Life Homeless Shelter. If you are not attending in person, we welcome you to send your contribution in either by mail, through your bank and/or our Website through PayPal – Be sure to put comments that it is specifically for our Christmas Eve Offering. Thank you.

Maine Adaptive Sports – We again support this program in 2020 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 in February.

Neighbors Driving Neighbors, this local ministry program serving to help folks who would be otherwise home bound was supported with our **\$500 gift in February 2020** and through the engagement of those offering to serve as drivers, and part of the programs leadership

Winthrop, Maine: United Methodist Camp Mechuwana. Due to Covid they were unable to hold camp weeks; however the Camp put together a Food Program to share meals with those in need. Many folks/students stepped to help with this. On September 9th 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 2020** Each specific in their own way where we were able to be a means of God's Grace in troubling times.

Prayer Shawl Ministry. This group meets twice a month 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 2020.** A carload of snacks, bottles of water, reusable water bottles and sanitizing wipes was delivered the week of September 14th. On Tuesday October 20th 10 sets of school supplies was delivered. **On Wednesday we delivered 66 Thank You Cards (handwritten by a few of the committee members) which included \$10 gift cards to Hannaford!**

Messalonskee Middle School – **on Thursday October 22nd they delivered 39 cases of bottled water**

The Committee will continue to schedule monthly mission giving in 2020. We will update the above listing monthly as these occur.



Bread Of Life Ministries

Our Next Bread of Life Homeless Shelter Dinner will be December 15th

Please email us at unionchurchmaine@gmail.com for those of you wanting to designate your participation in this ministry. 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 30 residents.

Thank you to JoAnn, Rhonda, Tony, Pastor Eleanor and Kathy for sharing in this ministry on November 17th.

We share a hot meal on the 3rd 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 the following items. 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.

Also now that winter months are coming, they are looking for donations of:



Gloves

Scarves



Hats



Thank you!

Maple Syrup

\$12 per pint



We support the ministry at the **United Methodist**

Economic Ministry in

Salem Township, as we extend the grace of God outward regionally. 100%, all of the funds raised from sales go directly to the Economic Ministries that help folks, that equip them for work readiness and life; Home Repairs, Thrift Shop, Food Cupboard, Christmas Gifts, Winter Clothing (New Coats and Boots), Backpacks (school supplies, essential clothing) Program, Life Skills, work.

Pick Some up for Christmas Gifts!



“Pathway to Tomorrow” – Union Church Capital Campaign

Last Summer I announced that the church was embarking on a year-long Capital Campaign to raise \$45,000. The funds are to be used to make several improvements to our church facility including the brick walkway, new signage and new lighting in front of the church; new decking on the ramps and stair landings and an enlarged and paved parking lot in the rear of the church. I am pleased to announce that to date we have received gifts and pledges totaling \$37,650

That means we need to raise \$7,350 to reach our goal. I want to extend a heartfelt THANK YOU to those who have already contributed and invite everyone else to make

If you would like to contribute, please make out a check to Union Church and write “Capital Campaign” on the memo line. Put it in the offering on Sunday morning or send it to the church office. Union Church of Belgrade Lakes, UMC, P. O. Box 133, Belgrade Lakes, ME 04918.

Thank you,
Lynn Matson
Chair, Staff Parish Relations Committee

The parking lot light is in place now and we look forward to the lot being paved next Spring.



United Methodist Economic Ministry

Is in need of items to stock their food pantry - Personal Care Items - Adult Toothbrushes, Deodorant, Shampoo Laundry Detergent and Dish Soap

We have identified two drop off sites for non-perishable food and paper products:

Union Church of Belgrade Lakes, UMC,
Contact the church office to arrange a time
207-495-2677 or
unionchurchmaine@gmail.com

Bath UMC, Contact the church office to
arrange a time 207-443-4707 or
bathumc@me.com



Finance and Stewardship Campaign Report

As this most unusual year draws to a close, we give thanks for the generous, faithful, and steadfast commitment of our members throughout the year. Overall, however, it should be noted that a positive balance sheet has only been made possible by the funds, totaling \$14,700, received in April from the PPP (Payroll Protection Plan) loan made available to small businesses and non-profit

organizations, including churches. Through October 31, 2020, our income from all sources (pledges and loose offerings comprise the bulk of the income) totaled \$114,068, while expenses through October 31, 2020, totaled \$127,941, leaving a net operating income of a negative **\$13,873**. Add in the PPP loan and our balance (with just 2 months left in 2020) was \$827. We recently received word that our PPP Loan application was favorably reviewed by the SBA (Small Business Administration) and that the entire loan amount was forgiven... a Thanksgiving blessing!

Our 51 pledges for 2020 total \$103,072. Of the 44 pledges received for the coming year, 2021, 41 are from families who pledged in 2020 and 3 are new. Together the pledges total \$101,860. If you have not yet returned your pledge card, it is not too late to do so and we would encourage you to do so as soon as possible before December 31, 2020.

Although our draft budget for 2021 is essentially unchanged (\$168,929 in 2020 vs \$168,040 in 2021, a decrease of just \$889 or 0.5%), our projected income, including \$10,000 from the 3 major fundraisers in 2021, is \$141,310. That leaves a deficit budget of **\$26,730**. We will need to be creative in 2021 and to monitor expenses carefully.

The year's end, however, offers an opportunity to contribute something extra to Union Church, especially if you itemize your tax returns. Consider that option.

It should be noted that all unrestricted contributions received at the Christmas eve worship service will be donated to the Bread of Life Ministry in Augusta, so please consider this worthwhile community organization and give generously in the spirit of Christmas! It should also be noted that Union Church has continued to generously support its Mission

and Outreach projects within our community and in addition, Union Church has once again fulfilled its commitment to the New England Conference by contributing 100% of its annual Mission Shares which this year totaled \$22,093.

In summary, Union Church is grateful for your continued support of the ministries your funds make possible. Let us all ring out the current year by generously supporting the Bread of Life Ministry on Christmas Eve and perhaps a special gift to the church, and let us bring in the new year with commitment to carry on Christ's work in this, His, community with enthusiasm, joy, and love. **I wish each of you the blessings of the Christmas season!**

Respectfully Submitted,
Tony Mastromarino
Chair, Finance Committee

May God richly bless our efforts to be good stewards of ALL God has entrusted to us!



**For the
Seventh Day
of Christmas**

The Christmas spirit is that hope which tenaciously clings to the hearts of the faithful and announces in the face of any Herod the world can produce and all the inn doors slammed in our faces and all the dark nights of our souls that with God all things still are possible, that even now unto us a Child is born!

Ann Weems



Reminder to SAVE THE DATE...

**WHAT WILL I LEAVE TO THOSE I LOVE
THE MOST?**

**Planned Giving for
the Living**

Wills, Trusts & other Love Letters

Join us on ZOOM
Thursday, December 3, 2020 / 7:00 pm

PRESENTER:

Gary Melville / Foundation Director of
Development

TOPICS:

- *How to Begin the Planning Process*
- *Maximizing Income for Retirement,
Family & Charity*
- *How the Charitable IRA Works*
- *Giving Through Wills & Trusts*
- *The Foundation's Role in the Process*

**SAVE THIS EMAIL AND
[CLICK HERE](#) to Join the Meeting on 12/3**



**Service for the Longest Night;
During a Season of Remembrance
and Hope**

**Monday, December 21st @5 P.M.
Union Church of Belgrade Lakes**

This evening service acknowledges that for some, and even many, the Christmas Season brings with it mixed and conflicting feelings. Some of loneliness; some of pain and hurt; some of a quiet fondness. Together we come for an evening of prayer. Together if even for this moment, isolation is broken, community is gained. God is here.

Note: May have to be presented over Zoom



**Send Us
Pictures
of Your
Nativity
Scenes**

**We would
love to
put
together a**

**slideshow of everyone's Nativity Sets you
decorate your house for Christmas with.
Please share by sending in no later than
December 15th.**



Time to Celebrate

MONTH OF DECEMBER

Food Pantry Donations Needed

FOR THE ROME/BELGRADE

FOOD PANTRY

Turkey/Chicken Gravy

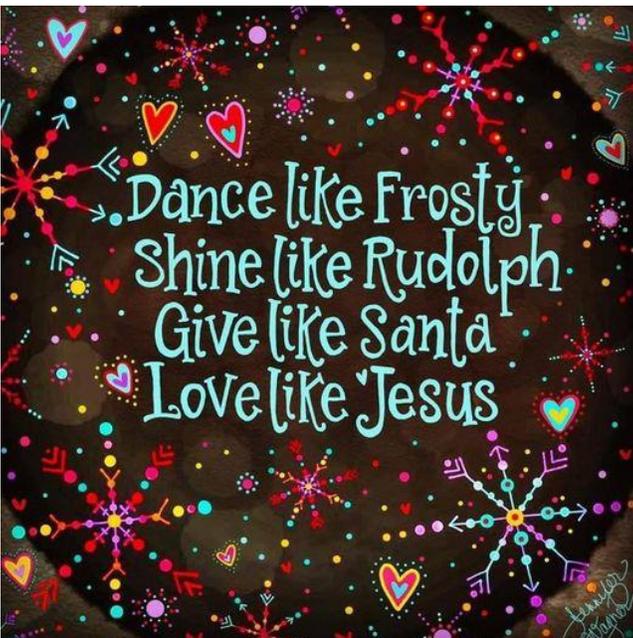
Instant Packets (Please NO cans or jars)

Bags/Boxes of Stuffing

Cans Cranberry Sauce



PERSONAL CARE ITEMS ARE ALWAYS NEEDED



Shared by Carol Johnson

A Prayer for Putting on a Face Mask

Creator God, as I prepare to go into the world, help me to see the sacramental nature of wearing of this cloth. Let it be a tangible and visible way of living love for my neighbors, as I love myself.

Christ Jesus, since my lips will be covered, uncover my heart, that people would see my smile in the crinkles around my eyes. Since my voice may be muffled, help me to speak clearly, not only with my words, but with my actions.

Holy Spirit, as the elastic touches my ears, remind me to listen carefully and caringly to all those I meet. May this simple piece of cloth be shield and banner, and may each breath that it holds, be filled with Your love. In Your name and in that love, I pray. Amen.

Rev. Richard Bott, Moderator
Presbyterian Church of Canada

Shared by Julie Michelitch

Children's Corner



Donations from Danielle and Joe Hallett

to the Rome/Belgrade Food Pantry with Special Homemade Thanksgiving Cards.

Thank you so much Danielle and Joe!





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 Office will again go to the Bread of Life Homeless Shelter!

They provide shelter, long term housing, food, and case management/life skills coaching. They are currently in a shelter expansion project where their goal is to Never Say No Again to those seeking shelter.



Christmas Eve Planning

As of December 1, we expect that we will be practicing safe, social distancing in-person worship (as we have been since mid-June) for our Christmas Eve worship experience. And

we will be planning to livestream (on Facebook Live and our website) our traditional 5 p.m. Christmas Eve Service. What we don't yet know, and what we need your assistance with, is determining how many people will wish to worship in-person so that we can schedule additional Christmas Eve service(s) if needed. As strange as it sounds, we will need to receive reservations from individuals/couples/families so that we can accommodate all who wish to attend in-person. Current plans are to hold the traditional, one-hour 5 p.m. service; if we exceed the maximum number allowed we will hold another, very similar service at 6:30 p.m. You are invited/encouraged, as soon as you have made your own plans, to make a reservation (by emailing or calling the Church Office) for either of these two services. If you have questions or concerns about these current plans, please contact Pastor Eleanor or Kathy Gerard. Thank you in advance for your kind consideration of this request!



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...