



Union Church of Belgrade Lakes

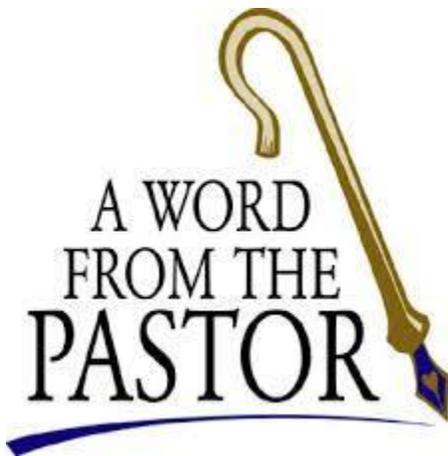
United Methodist Church

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Union Rider

January 2022 Newsletter



Dear Members
and Friends,

Greetings in the
name of the One
who is, and so
calls us to be, "A
Light to the
Nations!"

Again in this year
just now ending, and in the face of immensely
daunting challenges, the Church – this church
– has risen to every challenge encountered in
the roller-coaster ride we have come to know
as life in global pandemic times. Praise and
thanks be to God!

Each year about this time, I try really hard to be
attentive to God's "word" for me – a word or
phrase that will help me to focus on God's will
as we move forward into a new calendar year.
Two years ago, I believed God's word for me
was "joy"...but it turned out to be "pivot" as
COVID-19 descended upon us! Hmmm.
Maybe it was "pivot with joy?!?" Last year,
God placed the phrase "Carpe diem" before
me – which is a Latin phrase translated as
"Seize the Day." As God would have it, that's
what was required on the path of responding
to, and in spite of, at times, COVID-19. This
year, God has placed the word "compassion"
before me, for a variety of reasons, I am
discovering. It's a concept familiar to the

members of this faith community. Indeed, the
biggest testimony I can give to the greatness of
God's love and God's presence in the midst of
a global pandemic is this... As each of us
have been navigating our own ways through
the fear, frustration, confusion, despair, and
grief wrought by COVID-19, together, we have
able to come "together" to do good and
wonderful works of compassion!

Spiritual writer and priest Henri Nouwen
describes "the call to compassion" like this:
"As disciples of Jesus, we are sent to wherever
there is poverty, loneliness, suffering of any
kind. We are given the courage to be with
suffering people. We can trust that by entering
into spaces of pain, we will find the joy of
Jesus. A new world grows out of compassion.
The call to compassionate ministry is a great
call. But we must not be fearful. We must not
say, 'I can't do that.' When we are aware that
we are the beloved, and when we have friends
around us with whom we live in community, we
can do anything. We're not afraid anymore.
We're not afraid to knock on the door while
somebody is dying. We're not afraid to open a
discussion with a person who, underneath all
the apparent glitter, is much in need of
ministry. We're free. I have experienced that
constantly. When I was depressed or when I
felt anxious, I knew my friends couldn't solve it.
Those who ministered to me were those who
were not afraid to [just] be with me. Precisely

where I felt my poverty, I discovered God's blessing."

Friends, these words of Henri Nouwen resonate with me on many levels. I expect I will be finding more ways to share them and their meaning for us in our daily lives, and in our daily ministry efforts as the new year unfolds. We have received the Light, and we are called to be "A Light to the Nations" – the theme for our worship experiences between now and the beginning of Lent. Above all, let us enter 2022 as a hopeful people – hopeful that we will hear and answer "the call to compassion" and hopeful that we will continue to be fruitful in our ministries and missions, all while giving the thanks, praise, and glory to God! And the sentiment behind these words remains the same: "I can't think of a better way to welcome a new year than to be walking in God's Way alongside all of you!"

Together in Christ's Love and Service,
Pastor Eleanor Collinsworth



Mark and I thank you for your Christmas wishes, cards, and gifts. How blessed I am to have

been called (first by God and secondly by Bishop Devadhar!), and how blessed we both are to walk and serve and live among you. How blessed we are to be part of such a beautiful, loving, faith-filled community! Many, many thanks!

Pastor Eleanor and Mark

In Case You Receive a "Thank You..."

Some of you have already received a "thank you" to Union Church, from a Town of Belgrade Fire and Rescue Worker! If you have, you might be wondering "why??" Here's why! In

early December, the Missions and Outreach Committee decided to use proceeds from our "Returnables Box" at the Belgrade Transfer Station to show our appreciation to the forty-four Town of Belgrade Fire and Rescue Workers. Each was given a \$20 gift card to the Sunset Grille. One Rescue Worker expressed thanks in these words: "I was at training tonight and our rescue chief handed me an envelope. I was delighted to find the thank-you note from the Union Church. How thoughtful and to include a gift certificate for each member of the team was very generous... this is a nice way to feel there are more people out there searching for ways to improve the lives of our community members! My humble thank you to each and every parishioner."

That's practicing "the call to compassion," dear ones!



Virtual Presence

Bible in a Year:

- [Micah 6-7](#)
- [Revelation 13](#)

Though I am absent from you in body, I am present with you in spirit.

[Colossians 2:5](#)

Today's Scripture & Insight: [Colossians 2:1-5](#)

As the novel coronavirus marched across the globe, health experts advised increased physical distance between people as a means to slow the spread. Many countries asked their

citizens to self-quarantine or shelter in place. Organizations sent employees home to work remotely if they could, while others suffered a financially debilitating loss of employment. Like others, I participated in church and small-group meetings through digital platforms. As a world, we practiced new forms of togetherness despite being physically disconnected.

It isn't just the internet that lets us maintain a sense of connection. We connect to one another as members of the body of Christ through the Spirit. Paul expressed this notion centuries ago in his letter to the Colossians. Though he hadn't personally founded their church, he cared deeply for them and their faith. And even though Paul couldn't be with them in person, he reminded them that he was "present with [them] in spirit" (Colossians 2:5).

We can't always be with those we love for financial, health, or other practical reasons, and technology can help fill that gap. Yet any form of virtual connection pales in comparison to the "togetherness" we can experience as fellow members of the body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:27). In such moments, we can, like Paul, rejoice in one another's firmness of faith and, through prayer, encourage each other to fully "know the mystery of God, namely, Christ" (Colossians 2:2).

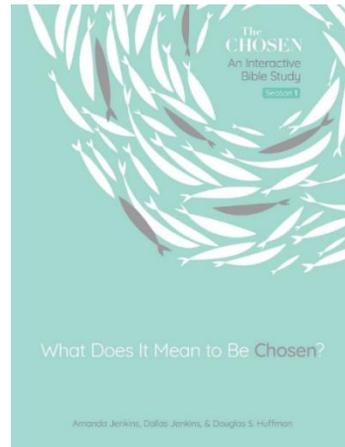
By: [Kirsten Holmberg](#)

Reflect & Pray

How have you experienced a sense of connection with other members of the body of Christ? Who needs your prayers of encouragement today?

Jesus, thank You for being with me even when no other person can be physically present.

*Thank You for the connection
You give me to others through the Holy Spirit.*



NEW BIBLE STUDY

What Does It Mean to Be Chosen?

**Begins, January 2nd
Wednesdays
@ 10 a.m.**

A deeper look at Isaiah 43 and its fulfillment in Jesus and the lives of His followers (including us!)

Being chosen by Jesus has beautiful and far-reaching implications—although it says even more about the Chooser than the choosees. We are loved because He is love. We are saved because He is merciful. We belong to the family of God because Jesus invites us, making the Bible and all its promises as true for us today as it was for God's chosen people.

What does it *actually* mean to be Chosen? To answer that question, we're going Old school—Testament that is—which leads us back to the New. Which always leads us directly to Jesus.

Please Join Us



FRIENDS AND NEIGHBOR LUNCHEON

Thursday,
January 13, 2021
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!



Good Shepherd Food-Bank

Feeding Maine's Hungry

Our 2021 Global Mission Initiative will continue to be donated to the **Good Shepherd Food Bank** (donations will be sent to them quarterly)

Joys & Celebrations Total
As of 12/26/2021: \$2,990.50

Our yearly goal is \$2,500; which went to the Good Shepherd Food Bank.

November and December Joys & Celebrations are going to the Starfish Village Program in Waterville that provides support for the homeless in that area.
Total \$490.50



Meetings at a Glance: January 2022

Worship Committee: 1/11 @ 5:30 p.m.

Belgrade Senior Resource Meeting: 1/24 @ 6 p.m.

Missions & Outreach: 1/12 @ 11:15

Prayer Shawl: 1/10 and 1/24 @ 1 p.m.



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 2021 contributions from Missions and Outreach through your support received in our weekly worship offerings, pledges and special giving.

Center for All Seasons Summer Camp –
In June We donated \$200 worth of snacks for the kiddoes. Summer Camp End of year BBQ was held on August 15th with this committee providing/grilling hamburgers and hot dogs as well as fruit and ice cream for as many as 75!

The Good Shepherd Food Bank
We will continue to 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 through 2021)

The Belgrade Rome Food Pantry with special monthly “Wish List” donations; January through December we will be fillin’ our shopping cart. - Many thanks. December we may be asked to do some shopping for their Christmas Baskets.

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 June 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 **February 17, 2021.**

Messalonskee High School – In November 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 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 2021. In November we sent a donation of \$500 to support their Christmas Wish List for their residents. Our Christmas Eve Offering this year again was sent to the Bread of Life Homeless Shelter. We sent a donation of \$500 for this year’s Christmas Wish List

Waterville Homeless Shelter – In late December we shared with them a donation of \$500

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; sent in November. Jim Webster is a key member of this group

Belgrade Historical Society – We shared \$200 for their Townhouse restoration project in which they will be opening up to the public in the future. Preserving Belgrade History for Future Generations

Maine Adaptive Sports – We will again support this program in 2021 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 17, 2021.**

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 17, 2021** 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 June 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 2021.** Each specific in their own way are able to be a means of God's Grace in troubling times. To date \$**3,659** has been expended.

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. Prayer Shawls were sent to both Elisha McKenney and David Stevens in April

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 2021. To date we have dropped off five carloads of snacks during their school year. And donated lots of snack for their Basket Bingo Event that helps pay for class trips and school supplies.**

Maine Home for Little Wanderers, Waterville, ME – On February 17, 2021 we sent \$1,000 in memory of Joan & Dick Tripp. All three of their children were adopted from this wonderful organization.

Pine Tree Camp for Special Needs Adults and Children – As part of Barbara & John Sheble's general donation a \$5,000 gift was given to this camp so they could build a greenhouse and have a garden this summer

Belgrade Fire and Rescue – In November we sent a donation in the amount of \$1,000 as they have not been able to hold any of their annual fundraisers.

In December we gifted the 44 employees and volunteers with a \$20 gift certificate to the Sunset Grill for their dedicated service to our community.



Bread Of Life Ministries

Our Next Bread of Life Homeless Shelter Dinner will be January 18th

Please email us at 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 JoAnn McElvaine, Michelle Cullins, Meg Lane, Louise, Carol, Hilary, Tony, Sharron, Julie, Pastor Eleanor and Kathy for sharing in this ministry on November 16th.

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 which includes sweatshirts, hoodies (Lg/XL), gloves and scarves. 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



FRESH START

Food Pantry
Donations Needed

**MONTH OF
JANUARY**

FOR THE ROME/BELGRADE

FOOD PANTRY

**TOOTHPASTE, SHAMPOO
TOILET PAPER**

**PERSONAL CARE ITEMS ARE
ALWAYS NEEDED**



**Finance
Committee
Update**

Through the first 11 months of 2021, I am

happy to report that your continued generosity and commitment of giving have put us in an enviable position! Although I cannot say precisely how strongly we will end the year at this time, we will most certainly end in BLACK ink and we will have met or exceeded our anticipated commitments. Not only have we had sufficient funds to maintain our facilities and the cost of operations, including salary and wages for the pastor and our staff, but Union Church has continued to pay 100% of our Mission Shares to the New England Conference (a significant portion of those funds, totaling \$21,076 this year, support global missionary projects/programs), and it has provided funds in support of our local/regional Mission & Outreach efforts. The infrastructure your continued support provides allows Union Church to reach out into the

community in many ways, for example, providing monthly meals to the residents at the Bread of Life Shelter, supporting the local Belgrade-Rome food pantry, supporting the Good Shepherd Food Bank, providing support to the Starfish Village Ministry in Waterville, comforting those in need through the Church's Shawl Ministry, and providing general assistance to community members who may be struggling financially. Union Church continues to play an active role in the life and ministry of our community. But that is only possible because of YOUR generosity and support of your time, your talent, and your treasures. **THANK YOU for your FAITHFULNESS!**

May the blessings of the Christmas season we have just celebrated enrich your lives throughout the coming year. There is no question in my mind that we are "**Better Together**", and that we will continue to do great things in our community through Union Church in this new year.

Through November 30, 2021, our total expenses were \$144,438 which is 94% of what was projected, and our total income was \$137,540 which was 102% of what was projected. Despite a negative net operating income of (\$6,898) through November, the unrestricted checkbook balance was \$20,128.

I can hear Jesus' words echoing in my head, "Well done, my good and faithful servants"! Let us regroup and start anew in 2022!

Respectfully and Gratefully Submitted,
Tony Mastromarino



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. \$315 was donated and was mailed to them December 28th.

CHRISTMAS STROLL 2021

Again we thank Bobbi for Chairing this event; especially with the challenges COVID presented. It was a huge success! We are grateful for all who provided soups/chowders and items for the Craft/Second Time Around Christmas Decorations and the Baked Goods Table.

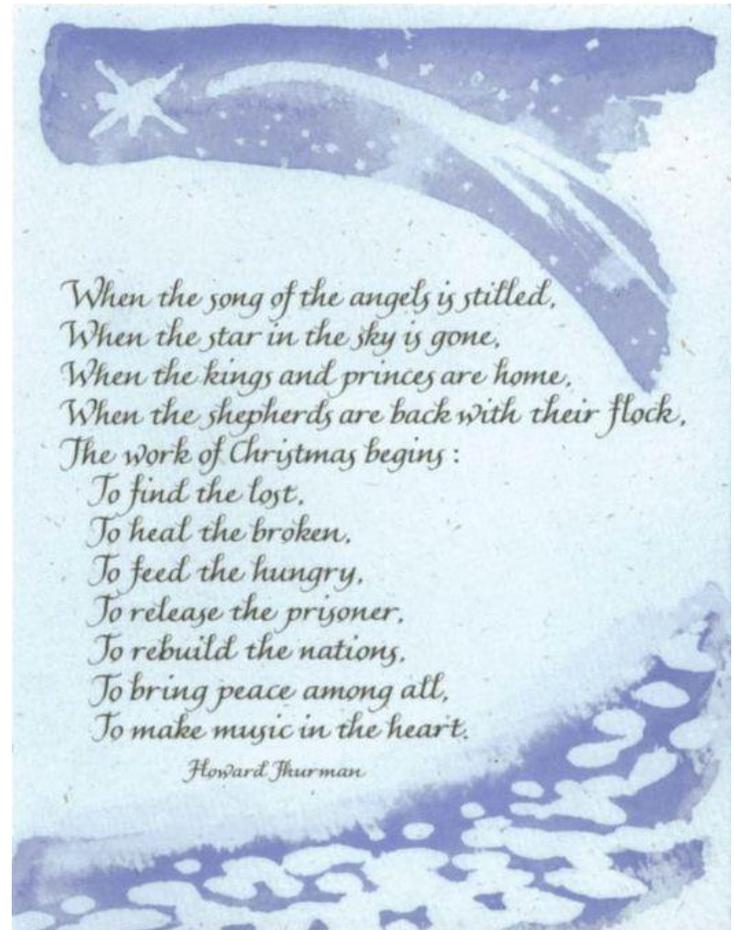


CHRISTMAS COOKIE DECORATING SUNDAY, DECEMBER 19TH

Thank you to Pastor Eleanor who made Cookie Dough/Cookies for all those who came to help Decorate Christmas Cookies for the Bread of Life Homeless Shelter Dinner on December 21st. Fun was had by all. And the folks at the Shelter were thrilled to receive them!



Sharing Corner...



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...