



STEEPLENOTES

A Newsletter of

The Foreside Community Church



February 2025

Connecting to God ~ Nurturing Community ~ Discovering how our Lives Make a Difference



Susan Gilpin (second from left) and Clifford Gilpin (second from right) facilitated a walk of the Freedom Trail in Portland in recognition of the 38th annual observance of Martin Luther King, Jr. Day federal holiday. (See page 4 for more.)

THE FORESIDE COMMUNITY CHURCH, UCC
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Pastoral Notes

The Ground We Stand On: Faith, Hope, and Love

“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set free those who are oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor... Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.” - Luke 4:18–19, 21

Dear Foreside Friends,

There are many for whom the last weeks of our national life have been painful: those who are anxious about many things, not limited to:

our trans siblings and their families who have had protections and rights removed through regulations.

agencies, researchers, workers, and—above all—program recipients who have seen essential public funding disrupted.

the fragile web of our world as environmental regulations were halted or repealed.

those who have been in the past, or are now, threatened by political violence.

Like many of you, I’ve been praying and thinking about how the Church universal, Foreside Community Church, and indeed all of us as ministers in Christ’s church might be called to respond in the days—and years ahead. I’m not sure I always clearly see the path yet... so I have been focused on where we start.

I hear in Luke’s telling Jesus’s proclamation that message of the prophets be embodied and made real in human life. I know that to embody that good news in the body of Christ in these days will involve the diversity of gifts, of conscience, of perspectives that all our ministry contains. I also hope for a common grounding that can sustain in the work of compassion and justice in trying times—yes, for holy truth telling—but also including the right practice of sabbath, renewal, and joy.

“Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you; I appointed you a prophet to the nations.” - Jeremiah 1:5

First, I pray we prioritize the understanding, naming, and claiming of each of us and every other as created in the divine image. Partly, because this understanding must ground our ethic for the treatment of others: those we would stand with, and those we would dispute with. Partly, this is simply because if we are to stand, we must find that solid ground beneath our feet which can anchor and support us. The prophets, and certainly Jesus, *started* from a clear place of being created and loved by God. That is an essential in a world in which we will sometimes hold unpopular opinions! I also want to say that the regular return to community, friends, partners, or others who can remind us of our own worth and belovedness is not optional, but essential.

Create in me a clean heart, O God, and put a new and right spirit within me. - Psalm 51:10

Second, I think those who would follow Jesus are being invited into a great clarification of our faith’s deepest values. We face a time which has compromised and conflicted much of American Christian life: a harmful reframing of Christianity which seeks and revels in power over others, in cruelty, and in force and

Pastoral Notes (cont.)

violence. It is a distortion of our faith both deeply alien to my understanding of the Gospel, yet also one where elements of our own traditions and common life have been fertile soil for these “thorns.”

In the civil rights era, Thomas Merton reflected on the ways in which his own faith had held sway over and done violence to the lives of others, and sought a new way:

Growth, survival and even salvation may depend on the ability to sacrifice what is fictitious and unauthentic in the construction of one's moral, religious or national identity. One must then enter upon a different creative task of reconstruction and renewal. This task can be carried out only in the climate of faith, hope and of love: these three must be present in some form, even if they amount only to a natural belief in the validity and significance of human choice, a decision to invest human life with some shadow of meaning, a willingness to treat other people as other selves. ¹

Merton's insistence on a “climate of faith, hope, and love” to do the work of reconstructing and renewing a faith built on the self-giving, poured out compassion of the living Christ makes me thankful for this church. For we will need each other as we seek to understand some of the painful parts of our own tradition and beliefs that may be entangled in violence or injustice as we seek to grow in a faith more fully rooted in Christ's love and ministry.

If I speak in the tongues of humans and of angels but do not have love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. - 1 Corinthians 13:1

During trying times, then, we will speak. As we do, we should not fall away from telling stories of great love and service which can inspire us and others, just as much as we might feel called speak out in outrage. So, read on in this *Steeplenotes*... here are prophets who speak truths, angels who say “be not afraid,” saints who welcome the stranger in... who dance with the refugee, who warm their hands in the cold, those who gather to learn and discuss the deep power and meaning of the cross as we move towards Lent, that we might proclaim that truth, those who build beloved community in joy and love...

Thanks be to God, friends, that we find ourselves in this community of faith, where faith, hope, and love abide... for we trust that these three will last... and they will root us to the firm ground of Christ's resurrection life and hope as we stand for God's dream for the world.



I am fully vaccinated and am available for times to visit, sit, or pray together as you would like. If you would like to schedule a meeting, [you can do so](#) here, or by contacting me [by email](#).

Blessings of the Spirit to you ~

Pastor Geoff

Worship in the sanctuary...

...and attendance on Sundays is open to all with the following protocols in place:

- Mask wearing is voluntary (a supply can be located in the narthex).
- We ask households to give each other good social distance.
- Windows will be opened enough to increase ventilation.
- Worship continues to also be live-streamed for attending convenience by going to:

<https://www.youtube.com/ForesideCommunityChurch>

Bulletins for each service, including words to that day's hymns are also posted at the above website address.



On the road and missing a sermon? Want to go back and revisit any one sermon? Want to share a sermon with a friend or family member? Pastor Geoff's sermons in both written and audio form from May 2019 and including Easter services (minus "Prayers on the Patio") can be viewed and/or heard on FCC's website at:

<http://www.foresidechurch.org/index.php/category/sermons/>



Do you know someone who likes asking questions with children?

They might be a:

Retired Teacher
Ed Tech at a local school
Education student

Camp Counselor/Director
Nanny looking for more hours
Friend of your adult child

FCC is seeking a Youth & Families Ministry Coordinator. We are looking for a good fit for our community and the candidate, thus are willing to adjust the position (hours etc.) if needed.

FCC needs YOUR help!
Please take a moment and consider who might be a good fit and email Geoff or Wendy at wendyrtracy@gmail.com.



FORESIDE COMMUNITY CHURCH



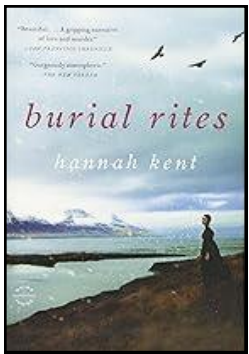
Learn More

UPDATES, REPORT OUTS, AND UPCOMING EVENTS

FCC Book Club Updates

After a very thought-provoking discussion in January on A Prayer for Owen Meany, The Foreside Book Club will be meeting again on **Wednesday, February 19 at 4:00 p.m.** to talk about Burial Rites by Hannah Kent.

"Set against Iceland's stark landscape, Hannah Kent brings to vivid life the story of Agnes, who, charged with the brutal murder of her former master, is sent to an isolated farm to await execution. Horrified at the prospect of housing a convicted murderer, the family at first avoids Agnes. Only Toti, a priest Agnes has mysteriously chosen to be her spiritual guardian, seeks to understand her. But as Agnes's death looms, the farmer's wife and their daughters learn there is another side to the sensational story they've heard. Riveting and rich with lyricism, Burial Rites evokes a dramatic existence in a distant time and place, and asks the question, how can one woman hope to endure when her life depends upon the stories told by others?" quoted from Goodreads.

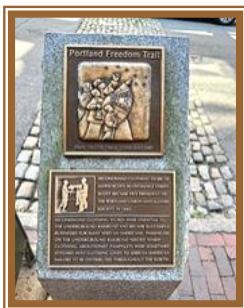


Please consider joining us for an hour of friendly discussion. As always, anyone (of any sex) is encouraged to share their thoughts with us. I have extra copies of this book if anyone wishes to borrow one. Just let me know, and I will see that you get one. FMI: mimihinkel@gmail.com. Happy reading and stay warm!

Portland Trail Walk Well Attended

Clifford and Susan Gilpin led a group of 13 attendees through a large portion of the Freedom Trail in Portland, on Sunday, January 19. The group met and began their walk at the Abyssinian Meeting House on Newbury Street and stopped to read several markers, working their way to the Maine Street Pier. FCC member Sally Somes, walking with her husband shared: "*Barry and I have wanted to walk the Freedom Trail for some time and we thank the Gilpin's for offering this opportunity! I was hoping to find some way to mark the Martin Luther King, Jr. holiday and this was the perfect reflection to do so.*"

For more details on the entire trail, plus the meeting house, [please click on this link.](#)



A HUGE THANK YOU to Justice & Outreach!

Dear Foreside Community Church friends,

Many of you know that our church has become involved with volunteering at the State Street Shelter in Portland. It is a shelter that houses four families who are seeking asylum from December through the spring (six months). Along with other faith communities, we strive to spend time there so that the residents can sleep in safety. Most days they have to leave the shelter from morning till supper time, when the children go to school, and the adults find places to keep them warm.

Laura Lepine and I talked about ways we could help keep them warm as they walk around the city in the cold. Laura had already bought them hand warmers, which were greatly appreciated. Then we talked about applying to the Good Samaritan Fund (J & O Ministry) for funds to further this work. We applied and were granted \$400 to spend.

With this money, we were able to purchase 14 sets of thermal underwear (adults and teens), 36 tubes of chapstick, four bottles of body lotion, forty pairs of toe warmers, and ninety hand warmers!

If you are interested in learning more about this shelter and ways you can help, visit sswfs.galaxydigital.com or contact [Pastor Geoff](#) or [myself](#). **Our church, along with Falmouth Congregation Church will be responsible for staffing all of the shifts during the week of March 23-29.** Please consider being a part of this endeavor.

Sincerely,
Carrie Penrose

UPDATES, REPORT OUTS, AND UPCOMING EVENTS (cont.)

Join us in Miami for our next Travelogue!

This year we have been to the Land of a Thousand Hills enjoying Autumn's trip to Rwanda. **On February 6th at 6:30 p.m.**, we are traveling a bit closer to home – Miami Florida. Wander the street of art deco buildings, muraled lined walls and Cuban cigar shops along with some time at the beach and the Holocaust Memorial. Lots to do to keep anyone busy for a week or more!

Hope you will join us. **Watch for the zoom link in weekly update as we get closer.**



Where's Waldo? Pete? Join us on February 6th and find out!

Valentine's Day Card Making Tradition Continues

It's time to share our **LOVE** with others by making Valentine's Day Cards. **Plan to join us after church on February 9th** to let your creative juices flow and create **Valentine's cards** for members in our church to let them know they are loved and thought of in this season as well as the whole year through. We will be pulling together a bunch of art supplies to do this but feel free to donate any you have to the cause. Last year we made around 50 card and every one of them was sent out. I received numerous calls and note thanking me (really all of you) for them.

So let's have fun again and let's make others smile and **send our Love** out into the wider world.



It's a Welcome Tea Party

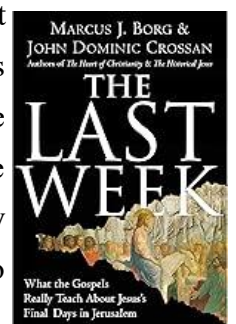
Please join us after church on March 2nd to gather to welcome our newest members. March 2nd is a New Member Sunday. After church, rather than the traditional coffee hour, we will be having a tea party (we will serve coffee for those who cannot start their day without) with lots of finger food. We will set up the round tables so that people can sit with their food and chat with people at their table so our new members get to know more people. Please feel free to move from table to table as you get additional goodies or a refreshed cup of tea. The idea is to get to know each other just a little better and jump start the welcoming of our new members. If you are willing to make some nice tea sized finger food, please reach out to Liz Ventre eventrel@maine.rr.com so she can make sure we have a great variety of offerings both sweet and savory. We welcome anyone who wishes to help with setting up as well.



Tuesday Morning Reading Group Continues

Beginning February 18th for the following 8 weeks of Lent, we will be reading The Last Week: What the Gospels Really Teach About Jesus's Final Days in Jerusalem by Marcus Borg and John Crossan. This book is a day-by-day account of the final week of Jesus's life starting at Palm Sunday as told by two Jesus scholars.

If this is anything like the First Christmas, which we read early and is by the same authors, there should be plenty to discuss. Join us at 9 am in the downstairs parlor beginning February 18th. Any questions, please reach out to Liz Ventre eventrel@maine.rr.com.



UPDATES, REPORT OUTS, AND UPCOMING EVENTS (cont.)

Lewis Family Support Continues

A contractor has been found to construct a much-needed accessible bathroom for Michelle Lewis but before the work can start a small team of women is needed to clear out accumulated items from the area. A friend and I will be working on this on either **Wednesday, February 12 or Friday February 14.** The work should take about 2-2.5 hours. I need 1 more woman who is able to help sort, bag, and organize all the items in the area of the current bathroom and attached hall. We will work at the Lewis home on Blackstrap Road during the day when the children are in school. Please contact Dotty Blanchette if you would like more information or can assist with this crucial work.

Thank you, dorothyb@maine.rr.com

Dear "Fair" Folks...



...The loose ends are just about tied up after another fair season - We can congratulate ourselves for once again making a significant contribution to the budget AND having a fine time doing it! So let's have a little potluck at my house and celebrate! **The date to gather at 35 Old Powerhouse Road in Falmouth is Monday February 3 @ 5:00 p.m.** (departure whenever). Parking is available in the two lots of my next-door neighbor, the Portland Yacht Club. I will provide a pan of chicken, a vegetable and dessert, so that even if you can't bring anything (all contributions are welcomed!) dinner is covered. This invitation goes out to anyone and everyone who assisted with the fair in any manner whatsoever, so I hope to see many. In the meantime, please contact me with any questions at either cwardmd2@gmail.com or **838-8235**.

"This has been a sign for us that we are not alone in such a tough time, and we have neighbors and community who show up for us and care for us." – Michelle Lewis



Above, from L-R: Wes, Kurt Eckhardt, Nathan and Michelle Lewis, Juniper, Dotty Blanchette, Jill Fox, Cynthia Beggs, and Dorothy Eckhardt on delivery day!

The family of The Rev. Dr. Rebecca Erb, FCC member who passed in October 2024, has set up a memorial fund at the Topsham Public Library, 25 Foreside Rd., Topsham, ME 04086 and invites your support.

Rebecca's memorial service is scheduled at FCC on Saturday, May 31, 2025 @ 10:30 a.m. Details to follow in the coming months.

Sincerely,
Chuck

~ ATTENTION ATTENDING CHURCH FAMILIES ~

Please note that during the February school break there will be no Sunday School classes held on February 16 or 23. Nursery care will still be available both Sundays. We apologize for any inconvenience and always welcome our younger attendees in the pews!

Please help us acknowledge the following February Birthdays!

Theo Demetriou ~ 3

Christian Rodas ~ 7

Valerie Roberts ~ 7

Sandy Cushman ~ 10

Wendy Tracy ~ 13

Julia Tracy ~ 18

Liz Ventre ~ 26

**Let's do (a continental)
Breakfast Ladies!**

Women of the church, members and friends
are invited to breakfast on

Wednesday, February 19 @ 8:30 a.m.

in the FCC coffee area,

we'll provide the food,

you bring your appetite.

~ good food, good conversation ~

it's a great way to start your day!

Please RSVP to Deb Gray

by Friday February 14

(deborah.gray48@gmail.com / 952-4041)

so we can plan accordingly.

See you there!

The Men's Breakfast...

will be held

Saturday, February 8 @ 8:30 a.m.

downstairs at the church.

An enjoyable repast and

lively discussions are always on the menu!

FMI John Bischof

jegbischof@gmail.com or 781-2391

Your church family would love to help you celebrate your special day! If you haven't seen your birthday listed in the monthly newsletter, that means the office does not have it. How about special anniversaries? We will gladly print those as well.

Please consider sharing your days

and months by emailing

info@foresidechurch.com.

Who knows,

maybe you might even be "gifted!?"



You can also call 781-5880.

**The March edition of *Steeplenotes*
material submittal deadline is
February 21, 2025**

**Submitted articles should be final and
print ready, pictures complete with cap-
tions in jpeg format can be included.**

February 2025

Be sure to check the calendar at The Foreside Community Church's website
www.foresidechurch.org for any updates or changes.

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
2 9:30am hybrid service & Communion (see pg. 4 for link)	3 5pm Potluck @ Carol's! (see pg. 7 for details)	4 9am Tues book grp. parlor 12pm Knitters 6:15pm Choir Rehearsal 6:45pm AA 7:15pm Bell Rehearsal	5 10am Centering on Prayer 6pm Evening Prayer 6:30pm Green Team (Classroom)	6 9am Bells 6pm AA-Fellowship 6:30pm Travelogue (see pg. 6 for details)	7	8 8:30am Men's Monthly Breakfast See Pg 8 for details.
9 9:30am hybrid service (see pg. 4 for link) following worship <i>Valentine's Card</i> <i>Making Event</i> (see pg. 5 for details)	10 3pm J&O Mnthly Mtg. (Classroom & Zoom)	11 12pm Knitters 6:15pm Choir Rehearsal 6:45pm AA 7:15pm Bell Rehearsal	12 10am Centering on Prayer 6pm Evening Prayer 7pm Finance Ministry Mtg. (Google)	13 9am Bells 6pm AA-Fellowship	15 RSVP Women's 2/19 Brkfst attendance to D Gray 	
16 9:30am hybrid service (see pg. 4 for link) No Sunday School class today.		18 12pm Knitters 6:15pm Choir Rehearsal 6:45pm AA 7:15pm Bell Rehearsal	19 8:30am Women's Brkfst See pg. 8 for details. 10am Centering on Pryr 4pm Book Club See pg. 5 for details. 6pm Evening Prayer	20 9am Bells 6pm AA-Fellowship 7:30pm Bldg & Grnds Mtg. (Zoom)	21 March Steeplenotes deadline	22
23 9:30am hybrid service (see pg. 4 for link) No Sunday School class today.	24 7pm Governing Board Mtg. (Google)	25 9am Tues book grp recon- venes-See pg. 6 for details. 12pm Knitters 6:15pm Choir Rehearsal 6:45pm AA	26 10am Centering on Prayer 6pm Evening Prayer	27 9am Bells 6pm AA-Fellowship	28	

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Daily Lectionary Readings for February 2025

Sat., Feb. 1

Psalm 71:1-6
2 Chronicles 36:11-21
John 1:43-51

Sun., Feb. 2

Jeremiah 1:4-10
Psalm 71:1-6
1 Corinthians 13:1-13
Luke 4:21-30

Mon., Feb. 3

Psalm 56
1 Kings 17:8-16
1 Corinthians 2:6-16

Tues., Feb. 4

Psalm 56
2 Kings 5:1-14
1 Corinthians 14:13-25

Wed., Feb. 5

Psalm 56
Jeremiah 1:11-19
Luke 19:41-44

Thurs., Feb. 6

Psalm 138
Numbers 20:22-29
Acts 9:19b-25

Fri., Feb. 7

Psalm 138
Numbers 27:12-23
Acts 9:26-31

Sat., Feb. 8

Psalm 138
Judges 3:7-11
Luke 4:42-44

Sun., Feb. 9

Isaiah 6:1-8 [9-13]
Psalm 138
1 Corinthians 15:1-11
Luke 5:1-11

Mon., Feb. 10

Psalm 115
Judges 5:1-11
1 Corinthians 14:26-40

Tues., Feb. 11

Psalm 115
1 Samuel 9:15—10:1b
1 Timothy 3:1-9

Wed., Feb. 12

Psalm 115 I
Isaiah 8:1-15
Luke 5:27-32

Thurs., Feb. 13

Psalm 1
Jeremiah 13:12-19
Acts 13:26-34

Fri., Feb. 14

Psalm 1
Jeremiah 13:20-27
1 Peter 1:17—2:1

Sat., Feb. 15

Psalm 1
Jeremiah 17:1-4
Luke 11:24-28

Sun., Feb. 16

Jeremiah 17:5-10
Psalm 1 1
Corinthians 15:12-20
Luke 6:17-26

Mon., Feb. 17

Psalm 120
2 Kings 24:18—25:21
1 Corinthians 15:20-34

Tues., Feb. 18

Psalm 120
Ezra 1:1-11
2 Corinthians 1:12-19

Wed., Feb. 19

Psalm 120
Jeremiah 22:11-17
Luke 11:37-52

Thurs., Feb. 20

Psalm 37:1-11, 39-40
Genesis 43:16-34
Romans 8:1-11

Fri., Feb. 21

Psalm 37:1-11, 39-40
Genesis 44:1-17
1 John 2:12-17

Sat., Feb. 22

Psalm 37:1-11, 39-40
Genesis 44:18-34
Luke 12:57-59

Sun., Feb. 23

Genesis 45:3-11, 15
Psalm 37:1-11, 39-40
1 Corinthians 15:35-38, 42-50
Luke 6:27-38

Mon., Feb. 24

Psalm 38
Genesis 33:1-17
1 Corinthians 11:2-16

Tues., Feb. 25

Psalm 38
1 Samuel 24:1-22
1 Corinthians 11:17-22, 27- 33

Wed., Feb. 26

Psalm 38
Leviticus 5:1-13
Luke 17:1-4

Thurs., Feb. 27

Psalm 92:1-4, 12-15
Proverbs 13:1-12
Romans 5:12—6:2

Fri., Feb. 28

Psalm 92:1-4, 12-15
Proverbs 15:1-9
1 Thessalonians 4:13-18



STEEPLENOTES

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General Office Hours:

Monday through Friday

9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

or unless otherwise posted

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