

# THE ECHO

First Congregational Church of Eliot  
United Church of Christ



**The members of the congregation will vote on whether or not to sell the parsonage. The Property Board is recommending the sale and invites everyone to review the information at [eliotucc.org](http://eliotucc.org) and all members to come and cast a ballot.**

**Prayers are invited and encouraged during this important and sensitive time of consideration.**

## Pastor's Page

*The Pastor's Annual Report 2018: an imaginary letter to a colleague about a very real church*

Dear Rev. Brian Gruhn,

What a joy it is to be able to write to you about the congregation I serve. As you prepare to visit and bring The Word as a guest preacher, I thought you might benefit from learning about the people of FCCE and our journey together, especially this past year.

They are an alive, vibrant and vision forward community. While the majority of our worshippers tend to be over the age of 50, we are also filled with a strong collection of children and many who are under the age of 50. We blend together, believe uniquely and bless each other each week. If you walk through the doors - you belong and with the gift and grace of the gospel, we become disciples together. The people of this church are daring and bold in their faith and in their willingness to always trust their pastor in creative worship ideas, moments of spiritual challenge and invitational practices. No matter how I ask them to stretch, reach or dance in their pews, they rise and take it even further. They gift me each and every day with honest faith and radical love. We are an extravagantly hospitable community and welcome everyone regardless of politics, identity, orientation, ability, age, place of origin or how anyone loves or learns! If you are looking for a home, we have the heart for you!

Our CE program continues to flourish as we adjust to the culture and changing times of Sunday morning needs and demands and we

have a brave crew of Property Guys who are helping us navigate into a solid future while also struggling with the stewardship of our aging buildings suffering from much deferred maintenance. We are determined to be a church of tomorrow while also giving heartbeat to the church of today. These people are brilliant in the way they honor the past and embrace the future.

Brian, you will be blessed, as I am, to work with our fantastic Music Director. While I know many churches are wrestling to bring their music offerings into the present, Lisa Marshall has gifted us with an incredible balance of joy and challenge and many of the people who worship at FCCE do so because of the music. The Senior Choir, the music support team and the welcoming nature of the congregation helps us to rock the roof and praise God each week! You will also work with our Sanctuary Steward, Linda Gove, she will make your job a lot easier and her efforts will make it possible for you to actually worship. She covers the liturgical details and the support needs of the pastor. Every church needs her!

The Deacons are a hearty bunch and quite skilled in laity preaching. If you need something by way of support for the health and care of the congregation, these deacons will never let you down. Shelby Grondin- Bushe is the Senior Deacon and is quietly powerful. Behind the scenes you might encounter our fantastic finance team or our Ladies Circle. The leadership there is also great as is the Craft Fair and the End 68 Hours of Hunger people. We also have a ministry called Out of the Shadows, but it has been on unintentional hiatus due to

unforeseen personal concerns of the OOTS board. We hope that this effort that helps families and individuals in recovery will reenergize in the spring of this year. I am also prayerful that a Mission Board will find new life, as I believe that is the call of a Christian.

Brian, we currently do not have book or Bible study at FCCE as their does not seem to be sustained interest, but I would like to explore some possibilities in Lent and Eastertide. We have however, begun “Women at the Well” and this is a creative, informal gathering of women supporting women and it has been radically successful. And in an attempt to change how information is shared and how disciples can serve, we have begun quarterly gatherings called “Leadership Breakfast.” Hopefully we can have our next one in February. Everyone who wants to attend is invited! I am also dreaming still about a Dinner Church that would be called “Table Grace” but for now that is just in my imagination. I also have hopes for a training workshop for our ushers.

Funerals and pastoral care tend to be a large part of my work but as you know, Brian, it is one place the church reaches the unchurched these days, so I feel blessed. I do hope that more people will join the church in covenant membership this year but I wrestle with that as I know most people do not join things these days. It is a sign of the times, I think. Also, a sign of the times, is that in general, people aren’t going to church as a society anymore. Fewer people are attending weekly now than they were even 10 years ago, while the number of people “seldom” or “never” going to church is rising. The structure of society is changing. Where once churches were the center of communities, nowadays, people form their communities through other means. People

develop their values more privately. People no longer go to church out of a social commitment, but out of a personal one. People go to churches where they feel like they’re being “fed and welcomed.” I hope and pray that we take courage in our small BIG church and find that the heart of our gathering is not measured by our numbers but in our faith and work together as believers and doubters. But we are indeed a presence in the town and in social media. We are present to one another! We try to remember that Jesus said, “Feed my sheep.” Not count them.

And finally Brian, I would not be telling you about the stability and strength of my congregation if I did not tell you about the hard and horrible year I have had personally, as my mother and father had significant health challenges that continue to this day. While Boston hospitals became a part of my routine as I cared for them, the church has cared for me. And on the day after my own unexpected serious surgery, one of the church grandmothers said to me as I prepared to preach, “My goodness, what are you doing here? We could have managed without you!” And I know with full confidence that is true. The bigger truth is I could not have managed without them.

They are my people and I am so blessed to be their pastor!

**Beth**

# SUNDAY SERVANTS

## February

### Fellowship Hosts

*Fellowship Coordinator -Jane Spinney*

- 3 Joann Cultrera and Nancy Cultrea
- 10 Linda Gove and Rachel Fontiane
- 17 Robin Wheeler and Peggy Gray
- 24 Laura Shontag and Bobbie Jean Gosselin

### Ushers

- 3 Peggy Gray and Robin Wheeler
- 10 Rob Quinn and Sonya Quinn
- 17 Linda Gove and Dick McKenney
- 24 Lauren Cultrera Small and Hailey Lonergan

### Liturgists

- 3 Pastor Beth
- 10 Sandy Norris, Member In Discernment
- 17 George Salzer
- 24 Sonya Quinn

### Sunday School Leaders

**Theme:** *The Good Samaritan: Learning and Giving First Aid to Our Neighbor*

- 3 Superbowl Sub making with Lydia and Simon
- 10 Jeff, Julie and Justin Pelkey
- 17 Jeff, Julie and Justin Pelkey
- 24 Jeff, Julie and Justin Pelkey

### Deacon of the Month

Lauren Cultrera Small

### Lead Greeter

Doris Grover

### Sanctuary Steward

Linda Gove



### Birthdays

- 02/02 Ann Bailey
- 02/13 Donna Collins
- 02/13 Faith Follum
- 02/13 Sylvia Walcott
- 02/17 Ellie Sanborn
- 02/18 Nancy Hundley
- 02/19 Andy Wormwood
- 02/21 Heidi Roberge
- 02/25 Lois Widi

## SUNDAY SERVANTS

### March

#### Fellowship Hosts

*Fellowship Coordinator -Jane Spinney*

- 3 Laurie Troy and Linda Downey
- 10 Jan McMullen and Joan Donhauser
- 17 Shelby Grondin Bushe
- 24 Audrey and Rod Bryce
- 31 Host Needed

#### Ushers

- 3 Brad and Jen Swanson
- 10 Richard and Joan Donhauser
- 17 Dave Caswell and George Salzer
- 24 Peggy gray and Robin Wheeler
- 31 Linda Downey and Laurie Troy

#### Liturgists

- 3 Pastor Beth
- 10 Sandy Norris, Member In Discernment
- 17 Laura Shontag
- 24 Betty Grogan
- 31 Justin Pelkey

#### Sunday School Leaders

**Theme:** *Wizards, Wonders and The Force*

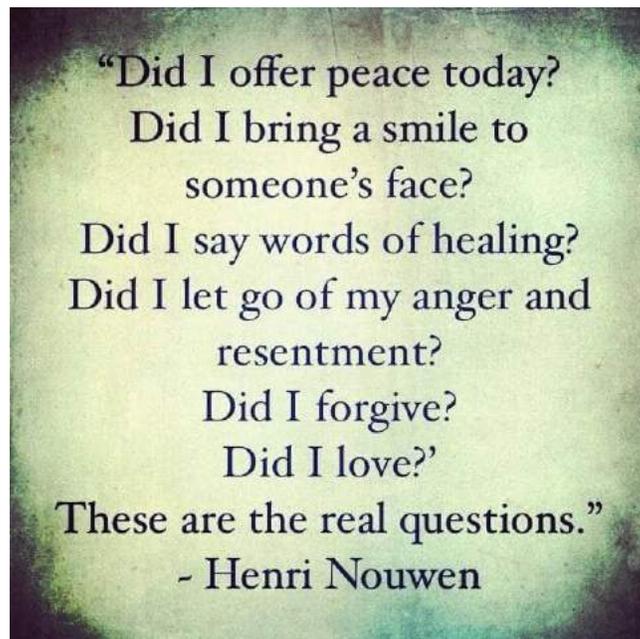
- 3 Adventure with Lydia and Simon
- 10 Laurie Troy and Diane Hair-
- 17 Rachel Roberge-
- 24 Mark and Gabe Hoffman
- 31 FAMILY WORSHIP SUNDAY

#### Sanctuary Steward/ Deacon of Month

Linda Gove

#### Lead Greeter

Doris Grover



#### Birthdays

- 6 - Jennifer Pelkey
- 7 - Rob Quinn
- 8 - Brian Sanborn
- 10 - Lisa Marshall
- 10 - David Wheeler
- 18 - Lydia Hoffman
- 23 - Allana Sanborn
- 25 - Richard Donhauser
- 27 - Susan Downey
- 28 - Kyle Cultrera
- 28 - Rachel Roberge
- 30 - Diane Hair
- 30 - Shawn Troy

# Were you there?

## LENT 2019

REFLECTIONS THROUGH THE SPIRITUALS

The CLERGY ASSOCIATION of  
KITTERY, ELIOT and SOUTH BERWICK

INVITE YOU TO  
ECCUMENICAL MIDWEEK  
LENTEN COMMUNITY WORSHIP

March 6	First Congregational Church in Eliot
March 13	St. Mark's United Methodist in Kittery
March 20	First Congregational in Kittery Point
March 27	St. Raphael's Church in Kittery
April 3	Second Christian Church in Kittery
April 10	Eliot United Methodist in Eliot
April 19	First Parish Federated in South Berwick

## Ladies Circle

On Wednesday January 2 eleven ladies met at 11:30 a.m. for lunch of hot home made soup. Dessert was by Jane Spinney and Nancy Hoyt. Our regular meeting was at 12:30.

The Monday Night Craft Group's next meeting has been changed to **March 11<sup>th</sup>** at 6 p.m. for a Pot Luck Supper and discussion about the fair both past and future. We are now looking for items for the Health kits. Items needed include nail clippers, large tooth combs, toothbrushes and Aloe Ivory soap. Cloth school bags will be needed for the School Kits. The ladies voted to continue to pay \$100 a month for the copier. Again this year we will give the Religious Ed Group money to help with the Subs. Our next meeting will be on February 6 at 11:30. Each one is to bring a sandwich for their lunch and dessert will be provided by Nancy Hundley. Devotions will be by Jane Spinney. If we have to cancel—we will meet on Monday Feb. 11 at 11:30. Ladies are asked to bring small items for the Valentine's Day gift bags that will be put together for ladies at Footprints.

For our meeting on March 6<sup>th</sup> we will go out to lunch at 11:30 at Norma's in York. We will carpool to leave from the church at 11:00 a.m. March 6<sup>th</sup> is Ash Wednesday and services will be at our church. The ladies of the church are asked to provide goodies for the refreshments.

## Thrift Shop

It will soon be time to start thinking about the Thrift Shop opening (April 20). We will be starting to take in items during the month of March. There will be a day of cleaning and arranging racks and tables sometime in March. The date will be announced.

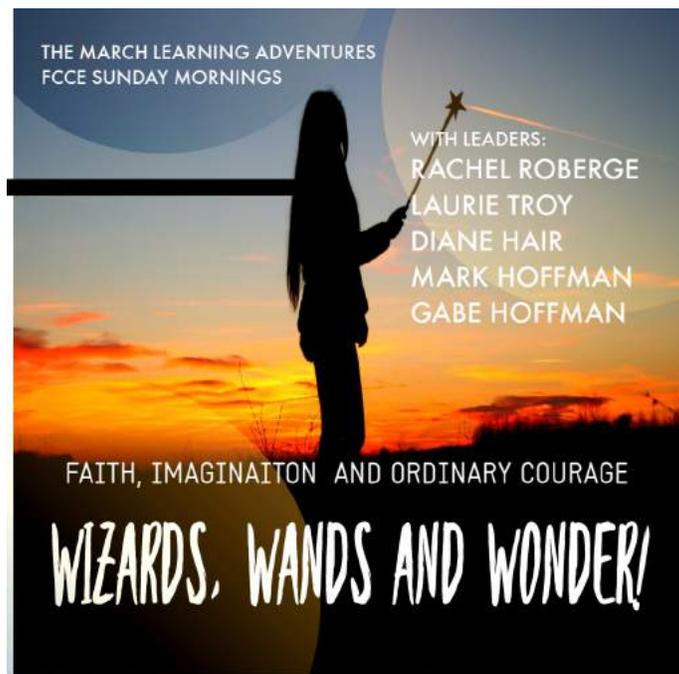
## Christian Education

Our leaders and learners are still taking orders for Super Bowl Subs and invite you to reach out to the Director of Education (Lydia Hoffman 603-913-4824) to text or call in a request. Sunday February 3 will be the day they will be made and can be picked up

**Starting February 10<sup>th</sup>** we will offer an exciting learning adventure about the Good Samaritan and First Aid Response. All children and youth are invited. .



**Starting March 10<sup>th</sup>** our Learning Adventures theme will be all about Imagination and courage.



# A Pastoral Letter: That They May All Be One

Written by John Dorhauer, General Minister and President of the United Church of Christ.

January 23, 2019

Dear Partners in Christ:

The vision of a body united –in purpose, in mission, in vision – is one that inspired the birth of our denomination. All of our spiritual impulses reverberate in an effort to call us into a more perfect union. Throughout our shared history as a people of faith and as a part of the Body of Christ, we have challenged ourselves to widen the circle of inclusion. Widening the circle has always come with growth pains as we shed old skins and welcome those whom we had previously thought unwelcome. And, with each new articulation of a more fully expressed Body of Christ we have realized new joy. Through it all we remain focused on the call to be one and committed to meeting the challenges inherent in that call.

We are now living in and through a season when the threats to unity are legion. Talk of walls that mark refugees as threats, labels like ‘terrorist’ that attach too easily to Muslims, overt racial bias that normalizes fear and hatred, a pandemic of abuse to women with the trigger reflex to forgive the men who author that abuse have turned America into a land many of us no longer recognize and that too many of us are finding harder and harder to reconcile with our faith.

Now more than ever, the Holy Spirit of the Living God and the Risen Christ is seeking to partner with anyone committed to unifying the

human community. The gospel mandate to love our neighbor as we love ourselves resonates deep within us. It calls for the better angels among and within us to always resist impulses to hate, to condemn, to vilify, or to castigate. In such a time as this, the United Church of Christ’s call to fulfill the prayer of Jesus, that they may all be one, stands as an urgent mandate to disciples who envision a just world for all.

United with you in God’s service,



John Dorhauer

General  
Minister  
and  
President of  
The United  
Church of  
Christ





## Leadership Breakfast

**WHO:** Anyone who identifies themselves as a leader in our congregation or wants to take a role in leadership going forward. Includes board and committee and team leaders but is not exclusive. Please come if you feel called.

**WHY:** A chance to come together and share information and ideas that move the church always forward in discipleship and devotion to God. We all work in our own circles here at FCCE.



This is a chance to make a big circle, together. Communication is critical.

**WHEN:** 9-10:30AM SATURDAY MARCH 9th in the fellowship hall. YOU MUST RSVP with Pastor Beth if you plan to attend. This is so there is a plate and a place for you.

**WHAT:** Breakfast will be an assigned potluck and conversation will be facilitated by our pastor. We will end promptly at 10:30AM , even if we are in mid sentence.

**HOW:** With God's grace and with your commitment!

RSVP to [bhoffman@metrocast.net](mailto:bhoffman@metrocast.net) and make a suggestion as to what you might bring to the table.



First Congregational Church of Eliot, UCC

# February 2019

Worship 10:00 AM

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
					1	2
<a href="http://www.eliotucc.org">www.eliotucc.org</a> 207-439-1105 firstcongchurch@aol.com						
3 <i>Choir 8:30</i> <b>Worship 10am</b> <i>Holy Communion</i>	4 Sanctuary Reserved 5-9pm	5	6 Ladies Circle 11:30am  Weekly ~ Banjo Lessons 1-7 ***	7 Exercise 8am Choir 6:30pm Bluegrass Weekly 4-7 ***	8 Exercise 8am	9
10 <i>Choir 8:30</i> <b>Worship 10am</b> CE Penny Collection	11	12	13 Sr. Citizens 11:30am Property Board 5:30pm Women/Well 6pm ***	14 Exercise 8am Garden Club 11-3:30pm Choir 6:30pm ***	15 Exercise 8am  <b>ECHO ITEMS DUE</b>	16
17 <i>Choir 8:30</i> <b>Worship 10am</b>  Finance 11:30	18	19 Council 6pm	20 ***	21 Exercise 8am ***	22 Exercise 8am	23
24 <b>Worship 10am</b>  C.E. 11:30	25	26	27 ***	28 Exercise 8am ***		

Special Welcome to Linda Downey,  
Linda Joyal and Joan Pelkey who  
recently joined the church in covenant.

# March 2019

First Congregational Church of Eliot, UCC

www.eliotucc.org 207-439-1105

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
Worship weekly 10am ***					1 8am Exercise	2
3 Choir 8:30 *** Holy Communion	4  Hall Reserved 6-10pm	5  FAT TUESDAY PANCAKE SUPPER 5-6:30pm	6 Ladies Circle 11:00am 1-7pm Banjo Lessons <i>ASH WEDNES- DAY SERVICE at ELIOT UCC 7pm</i>	7 8am Exercise 4-7 Bluegrass 6:30 Choir	8 8am Exercise	9  <i>Time to set your clocks ahead one hour</i>
10 Lent I  Choir 8:30 ***	11  6pm Craft Group Potluck Supper	12	13 11:30am  Sr. Citizens 7pm Banjo Lessons <i>7pm Lenten Service at St. Mark's in Kittery</i>	14 8am Exercise Garden Club 11:45 -3:30 4-7 Bluegrass	15 8am Exercise	16  <b>ECHO ITEMS DUE</b>
17 Lent II  Choir 8:30 *** 11:30 Finance	18  7pm Craft Group	19  Council 6pm	20  1-7pm Banjo Lessons <i>7pm Lenten Service at Kittery Point UCC</i>	21 8am Exercise 4-7 Bluegrass 6:30 Choir	22 8am Exercise	23
24 Lent III  Choir 8:30 ***	25  7pm Craft Group	26	27  1-7pm Banjo Lessons <i>7pm Lenten Service at St. Raphael's</i>	28 8am Exercise <i>Bread &amp; Bowl 11-1pm</i> 4-7 Bluegrass 6:30 Choir	29 8am Exercise	30
31 Lent IV  Choir 8:30						

# Coming Soon!

THURSDAY

MARCH 28

11-1PM

## BREAD & BOWL

1361 State Road, Eliot  
Church Fellowship Hall

Enjoy a luncheon of homemade soup,  
sandwich and dessert.  
Suggested donation of \$6  
and all proceeds strengthen  
the mission and ministry of  
The First Congregational Church of Eliot