

Mountain Reflections

Rangeley Congregational Church, United Church of Christ

P.O. Box 218 Rangeley, Maine
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Rev. Leslie Chatfield

Greetings, dear Church Family,

Lordy, Lordy, we head into October of 2021, with beautiful Fall colors and mornings with clear blue skies and brisk temperatures. More of us are out and about, still masked but many vaccinated, compared to this same time last year. Small and glorious blessings! Still, we are watching numbers to see just how far out we might venture while determining need and urgency. Still seeking the best ways to keep one another safe and healthy; still wishing one another greetings yet expressing our care in that regard. Thank you all for your continued care and wisdom for everyone's continued safety. It is a profound statement of faith: we care for one another in the best ways we know. Simple.

Still, there is so much that is uncertain, sometimes month-to-month, week-to-week, day-to-day; sometimes even hour-to-hour. We think we have one understanding, and then a new report comes in, or new numbers are released and, lo, we are scuttling about to consider the new information for what we had considered, only moments before, to be our best laid plans. What a time this has been; never ending. How long, O Lord!

From the perspective of Christian faith communities, across the history of The Church, we faithful folks are often known for talking about The Seven Last Words of Christ. Often "The Seven Last Words" are not always exactly 'seven last words' but seven sentiments that include the 'Seven Sayings': 'for they know not what they do'; 'you will be with me in paradise'; 'Woman! Behold, your son!'; 'My God, why have you forsaken me?'; 'I thirst...'; 'It is finished...'; and, finally, 'into thy hands I commend my spirit.' We recognize the consistent theme of 'surrender' in each of the sayings. We are called 'to surrender' to what God puts before us, to surrender to God's will; remember? 'Thy will be done.' Not always easy; not always pleasant and almost never welcome. Embedded in all the dimensions of 'surrender' is the bright beacon of hope that God offers those of us who hold on to our faith, embracing the trust in God's will. But, alas, The Bible is replete with stories of 'willful', well-meaning people, who object to 'surrender' and want their own way. We, too, are among them; bless us all, dear God!

Over time, many folks 'in the church' have become familiar with the affectionate, humorous statement referring to 'The Seven Last Words of the Church.' Almost all of us folks of faith are encountering these 'seven last words of the church', these days, in the forefront of our general, regular operational conversations. The Church's Seven Last Words are: "We've Never Done It That Way Before!" Historically, these words have been a cheeky way of defending and lifting up our love for the 'good ole tried and true' and 'successful' choices, our lofty regard for the familiar



and for our own beloved precious traditions and life ways. Our life ways are our own personal scientific experiment: under these conditions, if I do this, then this will be the outcome. Predictable behavior, without variables, equals predictable outcome. But, lest we forget: God is our God of surprises. And of course, we know adhering to our own beloved life ways, that includes resisting change, can be antithetical to how God asks us to be faithful, and how God asks us often to 'surrender' to what is unknown, uncomfortable, and unpredictable.

Enter Covid times. Unknown, uncomfortable, unpredictable; upsetting our 'normal ways' of operation and being. Challenging, to put it kindly. Irritating and deeply aggravating, to put it honestly.

We have never before walked these paths. There is so much that is new and beyond our understanding and experience! We attempt to assign our own hard-earned wisdom and experience to interpret the challenge of what we have never seen before: a pandemic we are experiencing in small order in our little corner of the earth. We have found ways to celebrate safely our life passages, e.g. weddings and end of life gatherings, as well as more familiar regular activities of worship, and fellowship – as we adjust our ways, tried and true, appreciated, and expected. But what about the ways we've come to know and love that are no longer safe or appropriate? We long for those ways to resurface! For many, all this 'adjusting' seems cumbersome and contrived. Frustrating, Irritating, a nuisance. When will this be over? It's easy to wonder: why aren't these words included in the last sayings of Christ?

Churches in our lifetime, have never welcomed a new pastor in the heat of a global epidemic; pastors have never arrived at a new pastorate at such a time. We are all learning how to get to know one another in ways we have never experienced. We know, also, that we are a people of generosity and forgiveness. Our better angels can lead us through these troubling times. We can be assured we will be clumsy and awkward as we go; but, also, we are a people of God's love, patience and kindness. We are all finding new ways to carry out tried and true duties for the ardently faithful, the committed skeptics, and the questioning cynics; God be with us in days ahead, if we but turn to acknowledge God's presence, surrendering to 'thy will be done.'. Remind us to surrender to your holy work, O God, your guidance to love and care for one another. Every minute, every hour, every day, - all the time; nudge us all in your way, O God.

Dear Holy God, you have given us the Holy Work to learn how to surrender our strong wills to you as we gather together to do your work and offer your love, care, and kindness through a new lens, with new perspectives. May our faith provide the strength to welcome your nudgings. Be with us as we surrender to your tried and true ways of patience and understanding. It leads us all to your blessing. We ask this remembering the steps of your son when he was wondering, 'when will all of this be over?' Amen.





Rick Baker

Fall is here and not disappointing. The colors in the area are starting to “pop” out reminding us that it is one more reason why we love it here.

I wish I could be as “cheery” about the Covid-19 numbers in our state and Franklin County. RCC’s Executive Committee (Minister, Head Deacons, Moderator) met and reviewed the data again. I actually follow it almost daily and do my own calculations using the formulas used by the referenced sites, just so I am current with the information. Most sites have a one to two day lag in the data assessment. We follow a number of data reporting sites: The Maine CDC, Fed CDC, NY Times and CovidActNow. The later site, CovidAct Now for Franklin County is the easiest to read and you don’t have to do your own calculations plus their data for daily cases, Infection Rate and Positivity percentage is easily found.

All four sites regularly report and their numbers are usually very close to each other. When we returned in person on June 13 Franklin County was averaging 2 cases/day (6.7 average cases per day for seven days per 100K population) (which put the Community Infection Risk Level at “Mid-Moderate”. For the last 7 day average (9/22-9/28 MeCDC data) it has been 15.1 cases (50.4 average cases per day for seven days per 100K population / day) which is in the “High” risk level. We are still at high levels for daily cases, infection rate and positivity. It had been improving but the numbers significantly bumped up early this week. We are still over the 10 average cases per day per 100K population needed to put us in the Level 2 or Moderate risk levels.

The plan is that when we reach a Level 2 or Moderate 7 day average for 100K population and the Infection rate is close to 0.8 and Positivity Rate is close to 3% those will be indicators suggesting we can be back in person.

It’s not easy or fun making these decisions but rather than making the decision based upon “gut feeling” we want to fall back on the science and the data.

It is important that we not go from week to week in deciding about in person or zoom only. Those involved with the services need lead time to plan. So for the month of October the plan is that we will be Zooming our Services for October 3,10,17. In person services will be assessed as time moves on.

The credit for our continued Zoom Services goes to the talent and flexibility of Rev Leslie, Sue, Sam and his crew and the Deacons. Thank you so much.

So please hang in there. Be safe.

Peace

Rick Baker



Production Committee

Sam Meehan

Hello all!

What a time to be alive! The fall is perhaps the best time of year—every year. This will not be too long winded.

In August we went back to in person services with a hybrid approach, continuing to also have zoom as an option. Truly, that transition was smoother than any of us could have imagined. We got the sanctuary set up so that people from home could join in with the beautiful music we were all making in the church! Unfortunately, we did have to go back to strictly zoom services again due to COVID-19 numbers being on the rise. That turned out to be tricky for some reason and we had some bugs to work out the first few weeks. Not to worry though—we have them all figured out now... We hope.

From Dan, Dave and Sam, the Zoomigos wish you well and we will see you in the ether!



Mission Board

Sue Downes-Borko

Our October five-for-five offering is Strengthen the Church! STC is all about new life: Supporting new churches in their beginning, supporting young people in their journeys, and helping established churches breathe new life into their midst with programs. Please enjoy the following story about our support of youth and young adult ministers. If you would like to support this offering, please note on your check or envelope that it is for STC. Thank you so much for your generosity.



Reset for Renewal

Part of the Strengthen the Church Offering supports youth and young adult ministry. 2020 scabbled many plans for such ministries, including the delay of the much-appreciated National Youth Event. Youth and Young Adult Ministers wondered how to effectively reach out during the pandemic and sought peers' support.

In part supported by Strengthen the Church funds, the Rev. Trayce Potter organized a "Reset for Renewal" event for people working with youth and young adults. "Reset for Renewal" was a virtual gathering to foster relationships that provided space for leaders to reclaim their resilience and ministerial gifts and reconnect with young people's pulse amid today's world. Throughout three days, participants had the opportunity to meet and gather with like-minded individuals who are doing youth ministry in various contexts within the United Church of Christ and beyond. A diverse group of keynote speakers brought thoughtful and timely messages to help participants as leaders called to disciple young people in difficult times.

"Reset for Renewal" occurred during this unique time of a global pandemic, the uprising of white supremacy, a chaotic election season, and a general dis-ease across the country. Participants openly wept as they processed the weight of their calls and position, shared the challenges in their personal lives, and looked forward to a time when life returned to a routine that allowed face-to-face interaction with the youth in their lives.

A few quotes highlight the joy and experiences shared.

"Best conference EVER! Genuine and so full of the Holy Spirit Thank you all!" - Dorine DeCarli

"It's been such a blessing to be with everyone. Just what I needed, right when I needed it." - Kim Looney

"This was what so many in our churches and other ministry settings were desperately in need of during this extraordinary time." - Lisa Hart

Gifts to the Strengthen the Church Offering make meaningful events like **Reset for Renewal possible.**

Gifts to the Strengthen the Church Offering Renew the United Church of Christ.





Deacon News

Kelsey Meehan

What a beautiful fall it is turning into! Seeing all the leaves start to change really helps bring the fall season into perspective. Your Deacons have been busy – in August we were busy enjoying being back in person for our services. We nominated our committee leaders: Claire Chase and Kelsey Meehan will co-chair the Deacons and Lucy Simonds will serve as our secretary. We had the wonderful Becky Walker lead us in worship as pulpit supply two weekends in a row in August while Reverend Leslie enjoyed a well-deserved vacation! In September your Deacons leaned back into the flexibility we had in 2020 and jumped right back into Zoom services as needed. While we were all sad to have to make the switch so suddenly, we wanted to say thank you to the congregation, Leslie, Zoomigos, Sue & musicians and liturgists alike who worked so hard in such a short amount of time to make that transition happen. All of September we spent on Zoom again as the Covid numbers continue to rise for our area in an effort to keep all involved safe.

Our Deacon of the Month for October is Zenna Inness and our Deacon of the Month for November is Lucy Simonds. Please reach out to any Deacon with any needs or suggestions.



Music Notes

Sue Downes-Borko

The handbell choir met for rehearsals in August and mastered five pieces of music. Churches began asking for the group to play at services, so we were able to ring at all five churches between August 29 and September 12! The ringers will take a break until November, at which time we hope to return to rehearsals and getting prepared for the Advent/Christmas Seasons.

Thank you to the Zoomigos and Musicians who stepped in as we transitioned back to Zoom-Land recently. They made our virtual services much more enjoyable.



Sue Downes-Borko

Rangeley Food Pantry

The Ecumenical Food Pantry now has a dedicated phone number and email address. Anyone calling the phone number will hear a message with basic information, and may leave a message if they wish to speak with someone. Phone: 207-520-2470 Email: rangeleyfood@gmail.com

The food pantry continues to be open on Tuesdays from 10 am-12 pm.

Please help us get the word out so that we can better serve our community. Thank you!

Thanksgiving Baskets



The Rangeley Food Pantry is providing Thanksgiving baskets for those in need. Pick up on Monday, November 22nd 12:00PM - 4:00PM Church of the Good Shepard Reserve by October 15th. Call (207) 520 - 2470



Nancy Zambraski

And just like that.....summer is over and the crispness of fall is in the air. The leaves are changing quickly and the explosion of color is spreading across the mountains. No prettier place on earth than Rangeley in the fall. We are blessed.

We started the summer with a bang! Back to in-person meetings and crafting was such a joy. As our Covid numbers climbed, we tried to adapt to outside meetings. However, it wasn't meant to be. We finally decided with our local cases on the rise and the temperatures on the decline, we



would suspend Women's Fellowship meetings until further notice. We will be following recommendations from the Maine CDC and our Church Council on when/if we should resume.

But that doesn't mean we haven't been busy. Just to catch up on the summer happenings. We had very successful Strawberry and Blueberry Festivals. Our homemade jam, breads and crafts "flew" off the shelves and kept us busy for the summer months even when we couldn't meet on a regular basis.

We have "whittled" down our Rada Cutlery inventory. Due to ever-increasing shipping costs and our inability to find a volunteer to organize and account for it, we are seriously contemplating discontinuing our sales of Rada Cutlery. If anyone is interested in being the Rada Coordinator, please contact me.

It was finally decided that we will not be able to hold the Holly Fair this year due to Covid and our inability to meet and craft on a regular basis. Thankfully, we did very well with our Summer Festivals and will still have a significant amount to donate to the charities of our choices. A meeting will be held (via in-person or zoom) in early December to decide the recipients.

During the holiday season, we will be putting up a small Christmas tree at the front entry of the Barn with hats, mittens, and scarves with our "NEED ONE? TAKE ONE!" sign. Last year it was a great success with approximately 50 items taken. Any contributions to the tree are welcome. We will need to keep the tree supplied!

We continue to take orders for some of our craft items we know we can finish and sell, so if there's something you would like, please let me know and we will do the best we can to make it happen.

On the prayer shawl front. A number of prayer shawls have been distributed this summer, 22 shawls since June! If you know someone who might need one, let me know and I can arrange to meet you at the barn. If you need yarn for home knitting, we have a supply at the church barn.

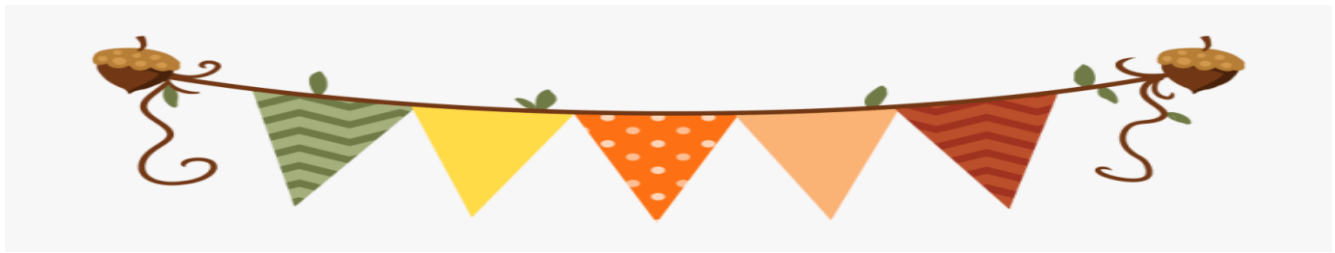
As always, many thanks to all the women who continue to knit, craft and bake at home. Hopefully we can meet again soon. In the next month, our summer church family members will be heading out of town, so safe travels to all.

Blessings,

Nancy Zambraski

Women's Fellowship Co-chair





October Calendar

DATE	TIME	ACTIVITY
Sun. Oct 3	10:00am - 11:00am	Worship Service – Zoom
Mon. Oct 4-8	3:30pm -5:30pm	Piano Lessons – East Room
Tues. Oct 5	7:00pm	Book Study “Dear Church” Zoom
Sun. Oct 10	10:00am - 11:00am	Worship Service – Sanctuary
Mon. Oct 11	3:45pm - 5:00pm	Finance Meeting, Zoom
Mon. Oct 11-15	3:30pm -5:30pm	Piano Lessons – East Room
Mon. Oct 11	6:30pm – 8:00pm	Council Meeting, Zoom
Tues. Oct 12	7:00pm	Book Study “Dear Church” Zoom
Sun. Oct 17	10:00am - 11:00am	Worship Service – Zoom
Mon. Oct 18-22	3:30pm -5:30pm	Piano Lessons – East Room
Tues. Oct 19	7:00pm	Book Study “Dear Church” Zoom
Sun. Oct 24	10:00am - 11:00am	Worship Service – Sanctuary/ Zoom?
Mon. Oct 25-29	3:30pm -5:30pm	Piano Lessons – East Room
Mon. Oct 25	6:30pm - 8:30pm	Deacons’ Meeting - Zoom
Tues. Oct 26	7:00pm	Book Study “Dear Church” Zoom
Thur. Oct 28	7:00pm	Spiritual Direction Group - Zoom
Sun. Oct 31	10:00am - 11:00am	Worship Service – Sanctuary/ Zoom?