

Mountain Reflections

Rangely Congregational Church, United Church of Christ

P.O. Box 218 Rangely, Maine
04970

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Rev. Leslie Chatfield

Dear Blessed Church Family~

With Advent and Christmas now behind us, we have most likely re-centered and re-oriented our spiritual compasses. We rise to be God's people following the arrival of God's holy light; we - the people of God, blessed be, renew our commitment to bring God's holy work to our own hands, and bring to birth the Christ, anew, each day from the crèche in our own heart.



During these times, we are often inadvertently tripped up by life's challenges, swept into our own earthly concerns and worries. We forget that our promised destination of daily spiritual pilgrimage to the stable's safety where the light of God's love, so tender and fragile, awaits to nourish and reassure us. Hopefully, we have been renewed and refreshed by the Christmas spirit.

Please take a peek at a few photos from our Christmas Eve service under God's heavenly sky- on a very chilly night!

The stunning blue-twilight color of the sky on the horizon is why many churches choose blue paraments for Advent; under the shimmering blue sky - we stood waiting- carrying our own heart's light, merging our individual light's into one shining brilliance - God's light!

Our own pilgrim magi arrived- on the move - bringing gifts to God's service; traveling together, yet ever separately, seeking God's path, striving to live God's way, renewing commitment.

The Moon shone its light in the shimmery twilight sky- with the star speckled firmament gracing our gathering. Our Deacons brought in God's light; our Carolers, on the steps, rang in the Christmas tidings with haunting song and uplifting cheer in the chilly night air.



The glowing Lights twinkling in our Tree reminded us of ALL in our worshipping community who bring God's light into our world, no matter where they reside. With the Liturgy and the Story read, we all trundled on home to the warmth of wood stoves, Christmas Eve cheer and traditions. Merry Christmas, indeed.

We lifted up that one night in Time's fabric for Christmas Joy - celebrating in between life's challenges and God's promise. We gathered to resolve to spread hope, peace, joy and love as these gifts of wisdom need to be valued, mined, and shared.

Remember why you seek the manger.
May God's light shine through you every day to brighten the world's darkness.
We need you to shine with us.
Epiphany blessings to you on your travels!

Travel well. Travel safely.
Go with God's love.
Blessings on your Holy Way,
And...God's Peace to you.

+Leslie





Rick Baker

We've entered the time of year where we commonly greet someone with the salutation: "So how cold was it at your place last night?" Do you reply with the wind chill figured in or just as the thermometer reads? I know others have had colder this season but we've hit -28F with out the wind chill. The dog doesn't even want to go out!

At the entrance to our Sanctuary we've had a sandwich board, that up to recently said "closed". I have to admit that really bothered me. Not just because we weren't meeting in person but I knew that there was still much going on in the quiet behind the scenes. As you'll read in the reports, folks have been busy. Rev Leslie, Sue, the Zoomigos and Deacons have been hard at work providing a Service for us on Sundays via Zoom. We had in person meditative evening worship in the Sanctuary during Advent. Women's Fellowship has been active and successfully raised an impressive amount of funds that were donated to the community. Prayer Shawl women have kept our supply updated and sending them out as needed. Christian Ed has had book study for us. Mission has held successful fundraisers. Our Financial Committee has been active and on top of our cash flow and investments. And, (near and dear to my heart) Building and Grounds have ensured the clearing of snow, sanding, thawing of occasional frozen pipes and getting quotes for summer projects. So the word "closed" just didn't "cut it". Despite not being physically present in the Sanctuary, the church is still active and finding ways to continue to serve our community and us. So please join us on Zoom for fellowship and services.

As you know, the Covid numbers are still not good at all. The Maine and Federal CDC's have said we should also watch the numbers around hospitalizations as there are so many at home tests now that we really don't know what the real total number of cases are. I know everyone has their own personal risk thresholds that govern their behavior. As an individual we assume the risk and consequences of our actions. But making decisions for an organization are different. With respect to Covid we have to weigh the risks to public health and our members. We have to take into account the risk factors of our congregants and also the organization's consequences if we were responsible for an outbreak of Covid-19. All of this is why as a Council we have tried to do the "right thing" for our Church.

Please be patient, be good to each other, and stay warm.

Peace

Rick Baker



Music Notes

Sue Downes-Borko

Despite the ongoing pandemic, we are so fortunate to have a great team at the sanctuary each week giving their time and talents to bring us a good quality virtual worship! Our singers/musicians are Kit Caspar, Anne Crump, Les Hoekstra, Kelsey and Sam Meehan, Dan Simonds, Erin Smith, and Dave Walker. Thank you to these folks, and also to our hardworking Zoomigo team. New singers are welcome! If you'd like to give it a try, please let me know.

The bell choir will begin a new round of rehearsals in mid-February. We will rehearse in The Barn, masked and distanced, hoping to ring at the Maine Spring Ring in late March and for Easter season church services. We have room for at least one new ringer, so if you would enjoy ringing, email or call.

A reminder that even though our virtual services continue, I'm always open to music requests. Whether it is a favorite hymn or a special piece of music, please don't hesitate to pass on your ideas. Your favorite might bring comfort or joy to others.

Keep a song in your heart,
Sue



Finance Committee

Paula Hatfield

The Finance Committee has met monthly via Zoom to review and discuss financial activity and reports. This year in-depth analysis is being done on a quarterly basis in light of the projected budget deficit. The mid-year analysis of activity through December 31, 2021 was shared with the Council at the January meeting.

Our YTD Pledged Contributions include multiple prepaid pledges, both 100% paid and partial prepaids. This requires that we subtract the amount of prepaid pledged contributions that are intended to be applied towards our remaining annual expenses to get an accurate picture of our income YTD. The adjusted balance equals YTD Pledged Contributions of \$54,835 less annualized prepaid pledge amount of \$17,261 resulting in an adjusted YTD Pledged Contributions of \$37,574.

Summary of as of December 31, 2021

| | |
|---------------------------|--------------|
| YTD Total Income | \$64,833.76 |
| Less prepaid pledges | \$17,261.00 |
| Adjusted YTD Total Income | \$47,572.76 |
| Less YTD Total Expenses | \$55,710.00 |
| Difference as of 9/30/21 | \$ -8,137.24 |



Note that this is less than our budgeted YTD deficit of \$12,456. This is due in large part to heating, plowing and sanding expenses that occur between October to May but are budgeted equally over 12 months. It is also due to substantial savings we experience during remote worship including utilities, heating and cleaning expenses. Another quarterly analysis will be done at the end of March which will be used for budgeting purposes.

During our continued time of remote worship, we greatly appreciate your continued financial support. Please mail all contributions to Rangeley Congregational Church, PO Box 218, Rangeley, ME 04970. If you would like to know where your fiscal YTD giving stands in relation to your annual pledge, please email Kathy Brittain, our financial secretary, at rangeleyuccfinance@gmail.com. If you'd prefer that she call you instead of emailing the information, please include that in your request.

As a courtesy, contribution statements were mailed out in mid January to all who made contributions for the calendar year ending December 31, 2021 totaling \$200 or greater. Please contact Kathy Brittain at rangeleyuccfinance@gmail.com if you have any questions.

As always, your input and participation are welcomed at our monthly meetings on the second Monday of each month at 3:45pm. We continue to meet via Zoom so if you'd like to participate, please email Paula Hatfield at rangeleyuccfinance@gmail.com to request a Zoom invite.

The Finance Committee

Submitted by Paula Hatfield, Treasurer



Deacon News

Claire Chase

December was a busy month of Advent through Christmas. Although our Sunday services were via Zoom, there were a few amazing exceptions...4 beautiful, candlelight Taizé services in the sanctuary with windows wide open and scarfs wrapped tightly and a Christmas Eve service outside in the parking lot with candlelight, prayers and music. Because of Covid concerns and extremely cold temps, these events were lightly attended, but greatly appreciated by those who ventured out. The final Sunday in December was an opportunity to stream from any of 5 choices that Rev Leslie sent to us.

We find ourselves still in Zoom mode for the month of February. You will notice a change in the bulletin. The prayer list will appear at the end of the bulletin where it can be available for people to consider privately in their own spiritual time. The list will appear on the screen during the postlude.

The Deacons' Relief Fund has had no takers thus far. If you are aware of someone in need, please have them contact a deacon or the church office.

We are moving toward Lent and Easter, which falls on April 17 this year. This Lenten season, Rev Leslie will send a daily email that could be a writing prompt, scripture or daily meditation for each of us to consider as we choose.

What will Easter look like for us this year? Inside, outside, Zoom, sunrise or 10 o'clock? We will be sending out a Survey Monkey to ask what the congregation might want for Easter. Stay tuned!



Mission Board

Sue Downes-Borko

Don Miller

Thank you, church family and friends, for making 2021 a RECORD year for mission donations! We made it clear that no pandemic was going to stop our outreach to help those in need. Over the last year, you helped us retain our 5 for 5 standing by giving to the following UCC offerings:

- 1) **Our Church's Wider Mission**-supporting the UCC State and National Ministries



- 2) **One Great Hour of Sharing**-supporting international health, education and agriculture, and domestic and foreign disasters
- 3) **Strengthen the Church**-supporting youth ministry and building the future of the church
- 4) **Neighbors in Need**-supporting American Indian Ministries and other justice and compassion projects
- 5) **The Christmas Fund**-providing emergency assistance, health care supplementation and pension assistance to clergy and low income retired church workers

A hearty thank you to all who supported these offerings!

The Mission Board

Don Miller, Sue Downes-Borko, Marcia Baker, Marge Miller, Dave Walker, Claire Chase



Nancy Zambraski

Happy New Year to all! We are hoping and praying that this coming year we can, once again, join together to continue our mission of fellowship and crafting. We have truly missed our bi-monthly meetings. We are thankful that we were able to participate in 2 summer festivals with great success and had a good response to our “zoom” meeting where we distributed \$7,000 to 19 charities. The newspaper article regarding “Rangeley Congregational Church Women’s Fellowship Donates \$7,000 to Charity” was submitted to the Sun Journal, Rangeley Highlander, Mountain Messenger, Daily Bulldog, & the Irregular. For those who haven’t seen it, a copy of the article is below.

Since we were unable to hold the Holly Fair this year due to COVID 19, we decided to put our little “*Need One, Take One*” tree on the front porch of the Barn. It was stocked with hats, mittens, and scarves. And it was a success again this year with 30 items taken from the tree. Thanks to all our volunteer “elves” who looked after the tree and kept it stocked.

As a reminder to all, the prayer shawl cabinet has lots of prayer shawls for anyone who might have a need. Please contact me, Paula or Linda C. and we can arrange a shawl to be sent or picked up.

Restarting “in person” Women’s Fellowship gatherings is dependent on COVID numbers in the community. We will continue to update the group with Email Blasts. There is interest in Women’s Fellowship Zoom meetings which will potentially start in February. If anyone is interested in the zoom meetings, please contact me (nzambraski@gmail.com).



Rangeley Congregational Church Women's Fellowship Donates \$7,000 to Charity

This past year Rangeley Congregational Church Women's Fellowship group was able to participate in two summer festivals in Rangeley, where handmade crafts, jams, and baked goods were sold. All the proceeds of these fairs are donated to charity. Due to the increasing Covid-19 numbers in Maine, the annual Holly Fair was postponed. Despite it all, we were still fortunate to be able to distribute donations to 19 wonderful organizations, with a large percentage of these donations benefitting people in the Rangeley community and region. On Sunday, Dec. 19th the women of the Rangeley Congregational church and our Women's Fellowship community met via Zoom to distribute \$7,000 to charity.

Following is a partial list of organizations which will receive funds from our proceeds: Rangeley Health Ride, Rangeley Meal Site, WRGY, The Giving Tree, Rangeley Library, Grandmother's Purse, Little Mountain School, Rangeley Health & Wellness HELP/HARC & RSSF programs, RLRS Mentoring program, Rangeley Fire Department Children's Christmas Party, Arbor House, Safe Voices of Farmington, The Center for Grieving Children, Androscoggin Home + Healthcare, Farmington Animal Rescue, and other national & international charities.

The Rangeley Congregational Church Women's Fellowship's participation in summer festivals and Holly Fair have generated proceeds which have benefitted many organizations for the past 27 years. 2022 marks our 27th Annual Holly Fair which will be held on November 19th at the Rangeley Congregational Church Barn from 10 am to 2 pm. Your purchases at the 2022 Strawberry & Blueberry Festivals, and Holly Fair will help us continue to help others.

With heartfelt gratitude, the Women's Fellowship organization would like to thank the Rangeley community and the summer visitors who supported our efforts this past year. We are looking forward to 2022 and being able to continue this very important mission.



February Calendar

| DATE | TIME | ACTIVITY |
|--------------------|------------------------------|--|
| Tues. Feb 1 | 4:00pm | Epiphany Book Study - Zoom |
| Sun. Feb 6 | 10:00am - 11:00am | Worship Service – Zoom |
| Sun. Feb 6 | 11:00am - 12:00pm | Coffee Hour – Zoom |
| M-F. Feb 7-11 | 3:00pm - 5:00pm | Piano Lessons w/ Erin – East Room |
| Tues. Feb 8 | 4:00pm | Epiphany Book Study - Zoom |
| Sun. Feb 13 | 10:00am - 11:00am | Worship Service – Zoom |
| Sun. Feb 13 | 11:00am - 12:00pm | Coffee Hour – Zoom |
| M-F. Feb 14-18 | 3:00pm - 5:00pm | Piano Lessons w/ Erin – East Room |
| Mon. Feb 14 | 3:45pm | Finance Meeting - Zoom |
| Mon. Feb 14 | 6:30pm | Church Council Meeting - Zoom |
| Mon. Feb 14 | HAPPY VALENTINE'S DAY | |
| Tues. Feb 15 | 4:00pm | Epiphany Book Study - Zoom |
| Sun. Feb 20 | 10:00am - 11:00am | Worship Service – Zoom |
| Sun. Feb 20 | 11:00am - 12:00pm | Coffee Hour – Zoom |
| M-F. Feb 21-25 | 3:00pm - 5:00pm | Piano Lessons w/ Erin – East Room |
| Tues. Feb 22 | 4:00pm | Epiphany Book Study - Zoom |
| Thur. Feb 24 | 7:00pm | Spiritual Direction Group Meeting - Zoom |
| Sun. Feb 27 | 10:00am - 11:00am | Worship Service – Zoom |
| Sun. Feb 27 | 11:00am - 12:00pm | Coffee Hour – Zoom |
| Mon. Feb 28 | 3:00pm – 5:00pm | Piano Lessons w/ Erin – East Room |
| Mon. Feb 28 | 6:30pm | Deacon Meeting - Zoom |