



The Beacon

May 2024

Vol. 40, No. 5

A Visioning Update from your Moderator

I'm thrilled to report that your Cabinet had an incredibly productive meeting on April 23rd that marks an important milestone in our Visioning process. As you know, many of our members have put in countless hours on the 4 Action Teams focused on our Congregational Vitality, Community Ministry, Operational Effectiveness & Financial Sustainability. We mindfully reviewed all the proposed action items, then assigned them to "owners" (committees, individuals, etc.) so that each one has a responsible party to ensure none of them fall in a crack, or just end up in a binder on a shelf. Several of the new ideas landed in an "To Be Determined/Multiple Committees" bucket, and several creative suggestions were raised to reconfigure where something best resides. Both of those dynamics confirm that we were due to engage in this process.

The Visioning Core Team will review the night's output, make additional recommendations, then brief the Governance Team, which launches next week. That team will dig into the best possible organization structure to do the work of the church that has been identified by our congregation as our top priorities as a faith community. Bylaw changes, as required, will be the final work of the Governance team. Those go to Cabinet then a vote by you, the Congregation.

It was exciting, positive, and hopeful. Lisanne, Ute and Patty all noted that there are already positive changes that have come from visioning. The Core Values Statement, Covenant of Right Relations, and the Stewardship initiative to challenge us for a 10% lift on pledges are 3 strong examples - and we're not even close to complete!

I hope by now you've all had a chance to read the letter sent last week by email about the draft plans for our 3-part ministry comprised of Heavenly Threads, SOS, & Shields. With potential change comes differing ideas and opinions. Unfortunately, our process efforts have resulted in the Heavenly Threads staff resigning. Personnel matters are always both sensitive and confidential, and the church trusts the Personnel Committee with responding to such matters. Details are not available beyond the Personnel Committee.

We will be offering mediated sessions for volunteers and members who would like to process their feelings about these developments. Please be on the lookout for our new Mid-month Newsletter issue. We will announce the date of the mediation opportunities as soon as it's finalized.

I am grateful to you all for lending your voice, your talents, and your passion to the work of this amazing church!

Thank you,
Tim Sheehy
Moderator



***From Rev. Ute Molitor
Senior Minister***

I don't know about you, but I feel in my bones that the energy of Easter, an energy of arising again, has been powerfully at work within and around us. So much is happening, individually and collectively. I am grateful for the forward momentum with our visioning process which Tim already identified in his letter.

Right now, we are also called upon to hold divergent experiences and developments in our hearts and minds at the same time. You may recall that we have been engaged in a necessary process of addressing issues inherent in our current structural and supervisory models for HT, SOS & Shields. The HT/SOS/Shields Ad Hoc Team are still working on the developing proposal for how we carry these important ministries into the future in an integrated and sustainable way.

As Tim noted, we are saddened by the resignation of Heavenly Threads staff. We are grateful for their service and accomplishments in growing its community-facing presence as a nexus of connection as well as a source of funds for Outreach (and soon Shields) to do the church's essential works of Christian service in our community. We wish our former staff members well.

Of course, questions, concerns and emotions arise in times like these. We are planning to provide mediation sessions for our members and volunteers run by an outside facilitator who is familiar with our church and ministries. In the meantime, Patty, Tim and I are also available for conversation. Please rest assured that our church remains committed to serving our community, especially those in greatest need. Heavenly Threads will continue to play a vital role in this effort.

God is not done with us yet,
Ute

Thank you for a Great Inaugural Season of Cake & Community!
I (Ute) would like to thank our coordinators Mary Brett and Natalie Ward and all the people who worked so hard to make the vision of *Cake & Community* gatherings a reality. *Cake & Community* has

become a delicious and vital opportunity for fellowship for the wider community in its own right, following in the wonderful footsteps of Soup Lunch. We look forward to another successful season beginning late in the fall.

**We have been selected to send a team to
“Claiming Your Call” Training!**

Our church is one of nine congregations in New England selected to send a team of four to a free three-day seminar called “Claiming Your Call for a Climate Changed World” at the Schoodic Institute in Winter Harbor from June 20-22! Susan Yoder spearheaded the application process. Susan, Doug Webb, Tim Sheehy, and Ute will participate on behalf of the congregation. This is truly an honor and a great opportunity. We will send out more information in the future.

First “Church of the Wild” Pilot Gathering

“Church of the Wild” is a growing movement around the country. People gather to reconnect and remember how we belong to the natural world. We are of the wild. Such gatherings are highly experiential and non-dogmatic. We can include poetry and other readings, rituals, and offer promptings of the spirit as we also each spend some time individually engaging with the natural world before gathering again to share our experiences. My intention is to alternate between events that will involve a more strenuous hike and gathering on more accessible land. It will take some time to find a more regular rhythm, but I intend to offer some pilot gatherings starting this spring. Please contact me directly if such offerings interest you. For starters, **join me for a walk and gathering at Fernald’s Neck in Camden on Saturday, May 25 at 4:00 pm.** It would help if you could let me know (ute@camdenucc.org) if you are planning to come as we may try to arrange carpooling but please feel free to decide spontaneously as well.

Interested in Meditating in Nature?

We’ll continue what we enjoyed last summer.

Join me at Laite Beach in Camden on **May 8 and May 22** for Mindfulness Meditation at 8:00 am for 30-45 minutes.

Please contact me directly if you are interested, or have questions. (ute@camdenucc.org).



Discover the Power of Storytelling at Faith Connections Story Hour

Have you been captivated by the heartfelt tales on the Moth Radio Hour or touched by the intimate interviews on StoryCorps? These platforms remind us of the beauty and depth of human experiences shared through stories.

We invite you to join us on **Sunday, May 26th, right after Worship** for our very own Faith Connections Story Hour. Inspired by the spirit of Moth and StoryCorps, this event aims to foster connection and community through our faith stories.

Whether you have a personal story of faith to share or simply want to engage in meaningful conversations with others about important events or life lessons, this is the perfect opportunity to connect and inspire one another.

Don't miss out on this special gathering where our stories become the threads that weave us together as a community. See you there!"

Take Them A Meal Program

One of the wonderful gifts our church offers to our congregants is the "Take Them A Meal " program. This is an online program the Care Team utilizes to organize meals to those in our congregation who may need a helping hand after surgery, an illness, or a life crisis.

We always need more chefs to add to our meal list - would you like to join in the fun? Simply send me your email and I will add you to the distribution list for Take Them a Meal chefs, and will notify the group when we have a need in our congregation. We also are eager to hear from you if you, or someone you know, needs to have meals delivered.

Warm regards, Jean Sheehy, Care Team
tjsheehy23@yahoo.com



From Elizabeth Lally
**Faith Connections
Program Leader**

On May 2nd, 3rd, and 4th I will attend the NEAUCE Conference in New Hampshire. NEAUCE stands for the New England Association of United Church Educators. The focus is SABBATH with workshops about how to connect members of the congregation across all age groups.



**Bal-A-Vis-X to be
demonstrated on May 5th**

Coming up on May 5th we have a Faith Connections Activity that will demonstrate Bal-A-Vis-X.

Bal-A-Vis-X stands for -Balance-Auditory-Visual Exercises. These are a set of 200+ exercises, each rooted deeply in rhythm, using racquetballs and beanbags. They are practiced individually and with partners. Bal-A-Vis-X can be used with someone of any age who needs better balance, focus, and rhythm. These exercises improve math, spelling, reading fluency and comprehension. Bal-A-Vis-X also helps those with balance disorders and diagnoses such as Stroke, Traumatic Brain Injury, Parkinson's, Alzheimer's and Dementia. We are listing this as a service activity because we all know someone who would benefit from this work.

We hope you can join us!

JUSTICE AND WITNESS MINISTRIES

Anti-Poverty Work Group

SAVE THE DATES!

On May 6th and May 14th, the Anti-Poverty Work Group of FCC will host guest speaker the Rev. Jodi Hayashida, a UU minister who is both a founding organizer of the Maine affiliate of the Poor People's Campaign, and the person within the Maine People's Alliance responsible for helping faith communities work together on social justice efforts. Jodi will be facilitating a discussion of how to apply theory to action.

This will be especially helpful to those who spent six weeks together reading the book Poverty, by America by Matthew Desmond, however *everyone is welcome* to attend and learn more about what it means to be an advocate with and for those living in or near the poverty line.

Jodi will talk about how we build power as a community and how we then use it for the greater good. At the heart of her talk will be a consideration of what political advocacy education looks like.

So, save the dates of May 6th and May 14th from 6pm to 7:30pm. We will meet in person in the Pilgrim Room.



Rev. Jodi Hayashida

JUSTICE AND WITNESS MINISTRIES

Wabanaki Rights Group

Maine tribes and state have opportunity
for a more equitable relationship

4/4/24 by Opinion Contributor *The Rev. Marvin M. Ellison*
Willard S. Bass Professor Emeritus of Christian Ethics at Bangor
Theological Seminary.

As an ordained Presbyterian minister and educator, I'm grateful that people of faith across the ecumenical and interfaith spectrum are encouraging the Maine legislature to pass LD 2007, An Act Regarding the Criminal Jurisdiction of Tribal Courts and to Extend the Time for the Penobscot Nation to Certify Its Agreement to Public Law 2023, Chapter 369. This bill will help correct serious harm that Native peoples have long endured. [to

read this article in its entirety go to: <https://www.bangordailynews.com/2024/04/04/opinion/opinion-contributor/maine-tribes-state-opportunity-equitable-relationship-joam40zk0w/>]

See the Opinion page of the Bangor Daily News for contributions by Wabanaki Alliance on tribal perspectives. These columns appear monthly.

<https://www.bangordailynews.com/2024/03/28/opinion/opinion-contributor/wabanaki-nations->

Legislative News Related to Wabanaki Rights:

LD 2007 — Tribal sovereignty bill: This bill was pared down to mostly cover criminal jurisdictions and recognize the Penobscot Nation's authority to regulate their drinking water. It was passed to be enacted in the House and Senate and now heads to the Governor's desk! The Governor has 10 days from when bills are enacted to sign or veto them, or they become law without her signature.



Shields Mission Project Administrator
Jeanne Denny

Stepping into New Areas of Service: A Single Ministry

How adventuresome are you? As we work our way through the visioning process, we are identifying ways to share our community ministries, working as a team, rather than working from "separate silos." Words like "collaboration," "cooperation," and "consolidation," take on new meaning. What is the feasibility of using our 3 separate ministries to provide one Ministry that has multiple facets to serve the larger community together? Already we are starting to identify ways that SOS and Shields can work together to create a continuum of service, while using the profits from Heavenly Threads to sustain Shields. It is indeed an exciting time that will foster creativity, more opportunities for church members to volunteer and get involved, and more funding to sustain the Shields Fund. It is a logical "next step" for our congregation!

However, with change comes discomfort, tension and fear. Stepping into the "void" can be intimidating as none of us like to leave our comfort zone! Change, while exciting, can also cause tensions that impact communication and understanding. Nothing is definitive yet, but brainstorming is taking place through an intentional process that provides opportunities to collaborate. Shields has even started sending out some trial balloons to test the new model. Let me elaborate with a recent example.

While I was in PA again, to attend to my sister, I received a call from Becky from the church office. She had received a call from a concerned mother asking for assistance for her adult son who resides in our catchment area. Mom was unable to come to town to assist as there are other family needs that warranted her attention, so she called me to discuss the situation. I requested that she call Jessica Bergelin, one of the dynamic SOS volunteers, to determine whether Jessica was available to purchase the needed car materials requested by the young man needing assistance; such simple assistance would aid this individual in his search for employment and housing.

In addition, I called the young man requesting that he apply to Knox County Homeless Coalition (KCHC) to get on the waiting list for a case manager. When I was unable to reach him (his voicemail was full), I reached out to mom and advised that she ask him to contact KCHC. (Shields has a solid working relationship with KCHC.) Jessica

was able to deliver the car supplies to the young man; she was advised to submit a receipt to Shields for the materials she purchased. I also called the emergency worker at KCHC to alert her to be on the watch for a call from this fellow.

Cooperation and flexibility made it possible to respond quickly to this request. We functioned as a team to quickly move through the Shields service protocols. As we walk into these unknown waters, we will be able to identify additional ways that we can work together; creative opportunities will be identified to extend FCC into the community. But it is only natural that we will encounter tensions and miscommunication, as we collectively move into this unified ministry to build community. In order to prevent regression to the traditional competitive model so prevalent in our society, one will need to stay focused, choose language that is not loaded with aggression, blame, and assumptions. It is important that we don't become accusatory. If we don't know what is actual fact, don't send the message; gossip serves no one as we move through this process. Many opportunities to engage in civil discourse will emerge to guide us through this process.

However, it is important to recognize that civil discourse does not mean one always speaks in complimentary ways, but rather one shares one's truth with kindness, avoiding deliberate attempts to offend or belittle others. One needs to send "I" messages which allow one to take responsibility for one's own feelings and behaviors; "you" messages try to affix blame and/or prevent one from taking responsibility for one's own behavior wanting the other person to concede.

These are exciting new times for the church that offer many creative opportunities to express our faith. An opportunity to work together, removing the us vs. them attitude, working together to serve one another to enhance "we." We have much to learn from each other.

With warm regards,

Jeanne

SAVE THE DATE! The second annual **Summer Solstice Concert**, featuring the Brass Quintet will take place on **June 21, 2024 at 7:00 pm**. Come enjoy some toe-tapping music and comradery with friends and neighbors. The concert is free with all donations supporting the Shields Fund! Please give generously. See you June 21!

Shields Committee: Deb Endl (Chair), Betty Bates, Jean Forest, David Giansiracusa, Rich Stuart, David Jones, Zella Walker, Natalie Ward, Jeanne Denny (Administrator)



ONE GREAT HOUR OF SHARING WILL BE CELEBRATED ON SUNDAY, MAY 12

In May, envelopes will be in the pews and elsewhere in church. Your donations are most welcome; put OGHS on your checks, and you can donate directly on our website by choosing One Great Hour of Sharing. Thanks to you, our church gives generous support to the One Great Hour of Sharing offering each year. This UCC ministry sends resources worldwide to fund health, education and agricultural development, give emergency relief, support refugee ministries and bring aid and relief to communities torn by war or ravaged by national disaster.

Although Heavenly Threads is temporarily closed, we are still actively receiving donations as follows:

Mondays and Wednesdays 9 am -11 am

Tuesdays 6 am -11 am

Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday 5 -7 pm

Please take items to the **BLUE DOOR** on the parking lot side of the building.

Sunday, May 19 at 4
Don't miss the next 2024 Friends of Music
Jessica Deskin, Singer/Songwriter
"Choices in Harmony"

OUR NEWEST MEMBERS JOINED IN APRIL ~ WELCOME TO ALL !



Christine
& Doug
Webb



< Marion
Rector



Pat Root >



< Mark Bergelin

You can read more about our newest members on the Membership Board in the Pilgrim Room. Each one answered a question; you'll learn why they decided to join and what they are interested in doing as members of our faith community.



CAMDEN
FESTIVAL
OF
POETRY

THE CAMDEN FESTIVAL OF POETRY IS COMING IN MAY!

Are you a lover of poetry? Baffled or intimidated by poems? A writer yourself? Then you won't want to miss this year's second annual festival.

Once again, our church is hosting the main event of the Festival, which takes place on **Saturday, May 18, 2024, from 1 – 5:15 pm**. And: there will be an **Open Mic Event on Friday, May 17, from 7 – 9 pm** in our sanctuary; both of these events are free and open to the public. Come Friday night to hear 30 local poets share their work, among them our own Tim Sheehy.

Do mark your calendars to join us for this special event. This is a free event, thanks to the generosity of many individual donors and sponsoring businesses, but preregistration is encouraged. To do so, or find out more about the program and offerings, check our website: www.thepoetscorner.org/festival. The afternoon will offer readings by five distinguished Maine poets as well as performances by two Maine singer-songwriters, Chris Ross and Mehuman. There will be “sampler” workshops on poetry (exploring various kinds of poems and on dimensions of writing poetry), a Book Fair where you'll be able to meet poets and peruse their books, as well as a closing keynote address by the immensely popular **Irish poet Pádraig Ó Tuama**, whose podcast “Poetry Unbound” has been downloaded more than 10 million times. Perhaps you've heard it. To check out his website:

<https://www.padraigotuama.com/>

Mary Brett is organizing volunteers for this event; if you would like to help, she would be glad to hear from you. Mark Burrows is the co-founder and co-director of the festival; he'll be glad to answer your questions about it.





*From Matt Mainster
Minister of Music*

This year's Easter may have been my favorite yet. The energy from every part of the service was palpable! In particular, with the aid of the wonderful Midcoast Brass Quintet and such talented vocalists as Kim Murphy, Susan Weber, Hayden Sears, and James Cook, our Sanctuary Choir shared a joyous and triumphant performance of Beethoven's beloved "Hallelujah" from *The Mount of Olives*. I couldn't have been more pleased with the whole experience, AND, if you can believe, the choir accomplished all this in just *one* rehearsal. So that's your little reminder to give us a try sometime—we're back to singing truly fulfilling sacred choral music (and all while still leaving you time for television!) The bells have been knocking it out of the park as well, and there's always room for more ringers. Both choirs now rehearse one Monday a month at 5 p.m., and remember, you can sing/ring as many or as few months as you like. There is no full-time commitment required.

When our choirs weren't busy, we've been treated to a variety of musically and spiritually moving soloists, including singers Elizabeth Lally and Alice Lemoges, guitarist Jim Gibson, pianist Ina Wolovitz, soprano Kathryn DerMarderosian, cellist Allison Angell, and singer/guitarist Ben Perry. What a thrill to live and work in a community with so much talent!

In other news, please keep an eye on our Friends of Music concert calendar (posted around the church and on our website). We've had two concerts already this year, and audience numbers are perking back up now that the pandemic is firmly in our wake. Next up, we will feature singer-songwriter, Jessica Deskin, in a collection of her own compositions titled "Choices in Harmony". I first heard Jessica over ten years ago in Maryland, and she remains one of the most pleasing singers to listen to in my estimation. Think the easy-listening of Karen Carpenter, paired with the color and depth of a first rate poet. Then in June, we will welcome another singer-songwriter, Bobby Jo Valentine, whose folksy charm will feel like a warm conversation with a good friend. His songs and storytelling also hint at reconciling the hurt that was once so prevalently inflicted upon LGBTQ+ people by spiritual communities.

Remember, many of these artists perform all over the world for sold-out houses and very large ticket prices, and yet are being presented here to the Midcoast community free of charge. Please help us spread the word, and be sure not to miss out yourself!!! Hope to see you there! 🎵

Happy Spring!

Matt



Requesting **MAY** donations of :

PEANUT BUTTER & JELLY

Please leave in the box across from the office,
and thank you for helping.

MAY BIRTHDAYS

- 5/1 Marian White
- 5/5 Ann Bresnahan
- 5/6 Susan Weber
- Ed Weber
- Wendy Wickenden
- 5/9 Peter Palermo
- 5/10 Jenna VanRyn
- 5/11 Marian Rector
- 5/12 Loie Hanscom
- 5/13 Craig Wells
- Mark Bergelin
- 5/14 Judy Waterman
- 5/17 Tillman Crane
- 5/19 Sally Fernald
- Tracy Wickwire
- 5/21 Roberta Walker
- 5/23 Dyane Mohr
- 5/26 Rick Bresnahan
- 5/30 Mike Fletcher



If we have omitted your birthday here please let the office know!



Looking for the calendar?

A short version is in every Sunday's worship bulletin.

Look on our website for an up-to-date calendar. Use the drop-down tab "Connect & Support," select Calendar and a month.



Join Midcoast Habitat for Humanity on Mother's Day weekend May 11 and 12 for an inspiring Women Build.

We're harnessing the collective power of women to tackle the housing crisis in our community. Volunteer to take part; 3 volunteer times available: May 11 9:30-11:30 am and 1:30-4:30 pm; May 12 1:30-4:30 pm. For more information email kate@midcoasthabitat.org.

News flash: You can also join First Congregational folks for a Midcoast Habitat build on Sunday, June 9. Look for more information soon.

GIVE BLOOD



American Red Cross

You can make a difference.

**Wednesday May 8
Pilgrim Room, First Congregational Church
10 am-3 pm**

Sign up online with American Red Cross or come without an appointment, all are most welcome to donate blood.

FIRST
CONGREGATIONAL
CHURCH
CAMDEN, MAINE
UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

First Congregational Church
55 Elm Street
Camden, ME 04843



ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH OF CAMDEN
An Open & Affirming Congregation of the United Church of Christ

Growing in Faith, Centered in Christ, Committed to Community

We are an Open and Affirming Congregation embracing diversity
and affirming the worth and dignity of every person.

We welcome everyone to share in all aspects of our church life.

TO CONTACT US:

Call the Church Office at 207.236.4821, Monday through Friday, 8:30-3:30 pm

E-mail the Church Office at churchoffice@camdenucc.org

Check out our website: www.camdenucc.org