



The Beacon

January 2026

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*Our Newest Banner From Kathryn Oliver
For Epiphany*



Read more on page 3.



*From the Interim
Senior Minister's Desk*

Rev. David J. Wood

Dear Friends,

As the light dawns on a New Year, I look forward to breaking new ground together here at First Congregational Church, Camden! We live in interesting times and I count it a privilege to walk these days with you.

A few things that I am looking forward to taking up in this New Year:

- Welcoming new members into our congregation
- Entering into a series of conversations (focused by common readings) exploring what it means to live the life of faith in a technological age
- Leading a Bible study
- Undertaking an effort to refurbish the basement area of our facility to become more hospitable to children and young families

More details (re: books and schedule) on all these undertakings will become available in the coming weeks.

I am confident that 2026 will be an eventful year for us as a congregation as we lean into the future with open hearts and minds.

Peace,
David

Notes from Kathryn Oliver on the new Epiphany banner

The Magi offer their gifts—frankincense, gold, and myrrh—while an angel guides them. Golden light pours into the waters, and the Holy Spirit descends like a dove.

Painting this in the dark winter season reminded me of Gerard Manley Hopkins' poem *God's Grandeur*, with its vision of inexhaustible light:

*The world is charged with the grandeur of God.
It will flame out, like shining from shook foil.*

This banner draws on the liturgical celebrations of Epiphany in the West, which highlights the Magi and the guiding star, and Theophany in the East, which emphasizes Christ's baptism. Both proclaim God revealed in the world, shining unexpectedly in the ordinary, and inviting us to see the divine radiance all around us.

- Kathryn Oliver

JUSTICE & WITNESS

LGBTQ+ Action Group Update

Big thanks to the Warm Supper Cooking Group!

Six congenial and capable volunteers- Kris Edmonds (grocery-shopper-extraordinaire), Nancy Laite, Ben Perry, Sarah Reynolds, Zella Walker and Jennifer Woods—along with the indispensable Ryan Berry—gathered in the church kitchen on the morning of Monday, December 8. To the strains of French Cooking Music, they made short work preparing a menu for 50 of Baked Ziti, mixed green salad, garlic bread, and an assortment of cookies and brownies to be delivered the following afternoon to The Landing Place (TLP) in Rockland for their Tuesday evening Warm Supper. On Tuesday, Nancy and Zella met to bake the huge pans of Ziti and assemble the food for transport just in time for hot-out-of-the-oven pick up and delivery by Aurelia (expert driver in heavy afternoon traffic) and Ursula Crosslin to the awaiting hungry and appreciative youth and staff at TLP. Mission Accomplished!

How can FCC members and friends help The Landing Place?

- **Volunteer for TLP Cooking Group: If you would like to help with future cooking projects, please contact Zella Walker.**
- **Contribute to the Donations Wish List for TLP.** Thanks to those of you who made contributions to the December/January Donations Wish List!

Requests for January are hygiene supplies; flashlights and extra batteries; hand warmers and bike locks.

Recognizing that many of the youth attending TLP have transportation difficulties, The Landing Place has an ongoing, very successful Bike Program which teaches the repair, care, and responsibility of having a bike. Bike locks, essential to good bike care, are given to each youth to whom a bike is provided.)

Art and school supplies are an on-going request. These supplies, new or used, are available for use at the **TLP After School Club** and offered five afternoons a week where youth ages 11-21 stop by, grab a snack, get a drink, take home some food, use WiFi, take a shower, do laundry, get clothes, hygiene products, and art supplies as well as participate in a variety of planned activities.

DONATIONS MAY BE PLACED IN A BIN LOCATED IN THE CHURCH OFFICE.



Vespers Schedule for Winter

Please join us for 30 minutes of candlelight, peaceful music, prayers, readings, and meditation in the Sanctuary.

**Vespers are on the 1st and 3rd Wednesday
of the month, 5-5:30pm.**

Here are upcoming dates for your calendars.

January 7 **Next one**

January 21

February 4

February 18

**All Committee & Other Reports
for the Annual Meeting
are due to the office
by Monday, January 12.**

**The 221st Annual Meeting of First Congregational
Church, Camden, will take place following
worship on Sunday, February 8.**



Shields Fund Administrator
Jeanne Denny

The Gift of Receiving

In the Christian tradition, there is significant emphasis on the value of giving...”It is better to give than to receive, etc.” However, in one of his Christmas sermons, our pastor, David, shared how important it is to be able to receive. Recently, I attended a workshop where we were instructed to appreciate receiving, that when one receives, one gives the gift of giving! This is an important consideration, because the traditional concept that, ”it is better to give than to receive” implies that one is better than the other. Often I hear from applicants that asking for help is humiliating; they are treated as “less than.” When we take the concept of “better than” out of the equation, we find neighbor helping neighbor and we have re-established an atmosphere of equality, reducing the need to “shame” the recipient! Applications for assistance at the various town offices can be singularly challenging (I do not wish to generalize), but they often lack any training on interview techniques and can be offensive just by the words they use, even when they do not intend to be demeaning. When requesting rent assistance, it can be humiliating to be grilled about whether one uses deodorant, etc.

A good rule of thumb is to talk with others as one would like to be addressed. The words from the 1964 hit recording by Joan Baez, remind us that hard times can fall on any one of us at any time, “There but for fortune [or Gods’ grace], go you or I, You or I.” For those who attended the book discussion on “*Poverty by America*”,

you have learned how the social structure can be set against individuals and families to determine one's success in life; even such subtleties as birth rank, date of birth, can contribute to one's success in life.

(If this is of interest to you, you might want to review *Outliers: The Story of Success*. Chadwell, M. (2008).

Shields has experienced a very successful year and has been afforded the opportunity to be generous for yet another year. We served over 165 individuals and families in 2025. We plan to continue this generosity as long as possible. You can learn more about the details of the Shields Fund by reviewing the details of the Shields Fund Annual Report which will be available later this month! Thank you all for your support!

Happy New Year!

Warm regards,

Jeanne

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



*from Heavenly Threads
James Cook, Manager*



Spruce-Up Week and a Progressive Sale in January

January is usually a slow month for us here at the Heavenly Threads shop, but we're going to keep busy in two ways.

First, to welcome in the new year we're going to be holding a progressive sale, with 40% off the price of everything in the shop on Tuesday, January 6 (1-6 pm), 50% off on Wednesday, January 7 (10 am – 4 pm), and 60% off on Thursday, January 8 (10 am – 4 pm). We know that folks' budgets tend to be a bit tight this time of year, and we also would like to clear the shop of as many items as possible to prepare us for...



... our second activity, **Spruce-Up Week!** From Monday, January 12 through Friday, January 16, Heavenly Threads will be closed to shopping and donations. After a busy summer and bustling Christmas season the shop needs some tender loving care to recover and freshen up. So instead of focusing on sales, we'll this time to clean, paint, and restock the shop to prepare for a wonderful new year.

In order to accomplish this feat of re-creation, we'll need volunteers! **Would you like to lend a hand?** If you're interested in helping to refurbish Heavenly Threads during that week, send us an e-mail to

heavenlythreads@camdenucc.org.

In addition to your name and phone number, please let us know what days of the week and at what times between 9 am and 5 pm you're available to come in. We'll be sure to get in touch with you with details before the week begins.

James Cook, Manager, Heavenly Threads



**We Are Excited to be
Offering Season 3 of
Cake & Community!**

**STARTING
THIS FRIDAY, JANUARY 6!**

**When: Fridays in the Pilgrim Room
from 12-1pm ~ January 9- March 27.**

We invite you to join us for conversation, companionship, and help in chasing away the winter blues. Teams of volunteers will provide sweet and savory treats and hot beverages. You are welcome to bring a brown bag lunch if desired. Spread the word to friends and neighbors, as all are welcome!

Reiki will be offered on January 30th, February 27th, and March 27th. Special thanks to Lisa Allen for coordinating these sessions.

Please note: Cake and Community will not occur on days when Camden Rockport Elementary School is closed for inclement weather.

Any questions contact Cake and Community coordinator Natalie Ward at wards05@verizon.net.

Thanks, and we look forward to seeing you on Fridays at Cake and Community! Come join the fun!



Requesting donations

for January

Crackers in Sleeves and Pasta or Rice Sides

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

JANUARY BIRTHDAYS

- 1/2 Roger Wickenden
- 1/3 Joseph Dowd
- 1/4 Mary Kay Felton
- 1/5 Christine Webb
- 1/6 Annie Woodruff
- 1/11 Larry Ward
- 1/13 Marty Hamalainen
- 1/20 Nan Smith
- 1/24 Owen Thomas
- 1/30 Pat Root

If your birthday isn't listed
please call the office and we'll
add it!





JAN KELSEY

Thanks to you, Jan, for the lovely quilts and hangings you have made over the years for our church. We'll soon find a spot for the Ukraine quilt, and we always look forward to using your fine handwork in the sanctuary during Advent.

ADVENT SANCTUARY DECORATORS

Thanks to all those who added greens, décor & lights to the windowsills and elsewhere in the sanctuary during our Christmas season.

ANN RAFFERTY

Thanks for faithfully sending birthday and get-well cards to our members and friends.

Request to all: If you have extra cards (birthday, sympathy and blank), please bring them to the office so we can get them to Ann to use.

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

Inclusive. Inspired. Involved.

**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