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Pastor's Message

Rev. Deadra Ashton

As I write the snow-covered ground is frozen solid. It's hard to believe that when I write my next newsletter column for May we'll be preparing for Green-Up Day. We're about to go through our annual dramatic winter-into-spring season.

As inviting as the prospect of warmer weather and flowers in bloom is, I always find the transition from dark, dead and frozen to light, living and warm to be the most difficult of the year. I suspect it's because it's like waking up from a deep sleep. It can take some time to become fully acclimated.

It's no accident that Lent and Easter fall at this time of year. And while we might be happier just to be able to fast-forward ahead to Easter and warmer weather, the season of Lent is an important time of preparation for what is to come. It has traditionally been a time when Christians intentionally gave up something like sweets or meat on Fridays, and churches have refrained from singing "alleluia" until Easter morning. While this can appear to be a six-week long endurance test, the practice of giving up something is meant to be a spiritual cleanse in order to fully receive the rich new life that comes to us in Easter.

The season of Lent includes not only fasting, but also engaging in prayer and almsgiving – reaching out to God and to our community. This reorientation from looking inward to focusing outward

mirrors what's happening in creation. Hibernating animals begin to wake up and become active, plants bloom and grow. If we allow it to, Lent will become a season of awakening.

Parish Council

Rob Howe

As I leave the executive board of the Parish Council, I'd like to take this opportunity to express my appreciation for being a part of this church community. Having been president of the Council over the last two years, it was challenging in many ways, yet quite rewarding. When asked how I felt about stepping down, it didn't occur to me that I was no longer a member of the executive board, even though I'll still be a member of the Parish Council, and likely an active member of the trustees. Prior to this latest stint as president, I was secretary, and prior to that President and Vice President for a few years. No longer an executive board member is more of a change than holding the gavel as President.

The executive board of the Parish Council has the responsibility of finance and personnel to deal with. We have certainly had our share of financial woes over the past few years, from weak investments and the stock market uncertainty, as well as some major expenses to maintain the many buildings the church is responsible for. With the retirement of David Wolfe and hiring of Deadra Ashton as our minister, we have undergone many changes. Deadra referred to this as the pastoral transition, to which the executive board has worked very hard in dealing with

personnel relations. We have developed job descriptions and now have contracts that clearly identify and state roles and responsibilities between our staff and the governing body (Parish Council). It is hard to believe that five years have past since Deadra took over the reins as our minister, and I feel that our services are fresh and the congregation continues to grow in numbers and in spirit.

The Parish Council has begun a new year with the election of Kay Jorgensen as President and Dawna Neron as Vice President. Sue Barnaby will continue on as Secretary, and Townsend Swayze as Treasurer. They will be our executive board.

Stepping down from the Parish Council board this year were Elsie Farnham, Ben Wolfe, and Lisa Kippen. They each have made a very special contribution in their own way to make the work of the Parish Council successful. We appreciate their talents and time given to the work of the church. It is hoped that they will want to again contribute to the governing body in the future.

At the annual meeting I noted a desire to see some improvements to the interior of what I call the "Main" church facility. The Congregational Church building is in dire need of an interior face lift. We need plaster repairs, paint from ceiling to baseboard, and perhaps even a character change. I threw out some radical ideas as to how this might be done, which generated discussion. I hope this exchange of ideas will continue and that together we can come up with a plan.

I'd like to see additional lighting to brighten our place of worship. Whether this is done with electricity or with natural lighting, time will tell. If I am still chair of the trustees, I hope to see this through during the next year. It will require some additional fund raising, creative thinking, and hard

work. In the end the goal will be to have a place of worship we can all be comfortable in and very proud of.

Church Positions

Elsie Farnham, Recording Treasurer

Parish Council Members

Kay Jorgensen, President

Dawna Neron, Vice President

Sue Barnaby, Secretary

Townsend Swayze, Treasurer

Lisa Amodeo

Rob Howe

Robert Brinkley

Nancy Chapman

Pam Dietz

Jim Sweeney

Staff

Deadra Bachorik Ashton, Pastor

Judie Lewis, Director of Music

Janet Zug and Liz Mulvey, Youth Choir Directors

Amy Frost, Administrative Assistant

Euclid Farnham, Sexton

David Wolfe, Pastor Emeritus

Gordon Mitchinson, Parish Associate

Treasurer's Note

T Swayze

Canvass donations at the end of last year totaled \$5,220, and donations for the first two months of this year were \$1425. In total, this represents a sharp drop from the previous year's totals.

Offerings for the first two months of this year were also significantly down from last year. If it were not for a very generous and unexpected donation of \$6,000, we would have had to draw down from our investments in order to meet our operational expenses. This gift is not only helping us with our ongoing expenses, but it will contribute to long delayed planned improvements for the Parish House. As we look ahead, if the funds become available we very much want to paint and freshen up the interior of the church. Our great thanks to the community's continuing support of the church.

March/April Events

Every Sunday our Worship Service is held at 10 a.m. and Sunday School for children is held during worship. Adult Bible Study, led by the Rev. David Wolfe, is held at 8:45 a.m. in the Parish House. The Weekday Bible Study group meets every Tuesday at 5 p.m. at the Parish House.

Rev. Ashton's Parish House Office hours: Tuesdays and Thursdays, 1- 3 p.m.

Regular Meetings

- Parish Council: First Sunday of the month after the worship service.
- Great Choir: Wednesdays 7 pm;
Junior Choir: Wednesdays 6 pm
- Community Food Shelf: open every Friday between 4-6 p.m.
- Youth Group: Third Sunday of the month.

Soup and Stories

On Wednesday, February 19, Soup and Stories met for the first time in the Parish House from 12.30 to 2.30. Bunchie Angell, Felicity Swayze, and Ruth Mengedoht each brought a Soup and group members brought the Stories.

There were sixteen in all, men and women. People brought bowls and served themselves from the crockpots and from a pot on the stove. Chuck Ashton brought a loaf of his homemade bread and others contributed a variety of crackers, some butter, apple cider, and delicious cookies. We chatted while we ate. We then settled down to hear some Stories. We went around the table with each person telling us how they had come to be in Tunbridge. This was our theme for the day.

Some had generations of family history here, others had arrived from elsewhere,

from as close as Strafford and Chelsea and as far away as Kazakhstan. As we talked, we learned the ways in which we are bound together by our love for the Tunbridge community.

The next meeting will be Wednesday, March 19, from 12:30 to 2:30 at the Parish House. Please join us if you are free during the day. Bring a bowl and a spoon. And bring your Stories.

News and Notes

The Outreach Committee is sponsoring a food drive for the Tunbridge Food Shelf, to run during the entire Lenten period, beginning on the first Sunday in March. Church members may leave food items all during this period in the basket/box in the church entryway.

Thanks to Elsie Farnham and Peg Sherlock for setting up the dining area and warming and putting out dishes for the Feb. 2 potluck that preceded the annual meeting. Additional helpers for clean-up and dish washing and drying were Nancy Chapman, Lee Gold, Kay Jorgensen, Marybeth Lang, Kathi Terami and Ben Wolfe.

A furnace problem in the church that morning prompted an exodus to the Town Hall. Thanks to everyone who moved hymnals, collection plates and other necessities between buildings and to those who set up and took down chairs.

And finally, *HAPPY BIRTHDAY!!*

Sharon Mee – March 4

David Wolfe and Eve Ermer – March 7

Arlene Stockwell – March 24

Elaine Howe – April 7

Nan Frost – April 8

Edward Howe and Judy Hilts – April 9

Alec Frost and Don Hilts – April 13

Kay Jorgensen and Rob Howe – April 20

Shirley Boles – April 26