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Claire's Corner

The Rev. Dr. Claire Bamberg

Change: The Way of it right now

There are times when I have said, out loud, "Stop the world! I want to get off." Usually the occasion for this outburst has to do with the rapidity of change around, in and through my life's sphere. Children can occasion this; churches, a pace at work, etc....

Change, like many things in life, is the (sometimes) unwelcome by-product of a life well-lived. I define a life well-lived as one that is involved in participating fully in life, with curiosity and compassion. If you have both curiosity and compassion towards other sojourners on life's trajectory, you cannot *not* change. You cannot.

So, in my life as a church pastor, and then a pastoral counselor, then national consultant to churches, then clergy and congregational coach..... I have come to learn that change is as predictable as the weather — which changes!

In this time of deep and rippling change, local, state, national and global, wanted and unwanted, the church struggles. Gone are the patterns where church was the first thing you looked for, upon entering a new town.

Now, the generations to come want to know that their involvement in *anything* will have a lasting, positive impact in the world; that their children will learn about world religions, in addition to our faith; that worship will be vibrant and engaging, stretching them, and that the church is committed to generosity and outreach. THEN, they may come, to engage in an initiative, and, if they do and the experience meets these criteria, you will get 150% of them.

Research shows that the churches that are growing are those that are getting out of their four (or more) walls, engaging and encountering the neighbors and the

world around them. It also shows that the churches that are "dying" (closing their doors) tend to be those where some version of "this is how we do things" or "we tried that once" or "we don't do things that way here" are used in conversation with the newcomer, who comes, by the way, with ideas of their own that are, to them, fresh and bright.

The punch line? If we are to survive we need to be open to doing things differently, embracing the stranger and the ideas they bring with them, embracing new ideas and ways of doing things. Period.

So, change; change is the name of the game. Over the next "several many" (as my niece would say) weeks, we will be experiencing some new and different things in worship. There may be some different initiatives and suggestions coming from leadership. Please watch for, embrace and be ready to support the changes that are coming to "a church near you" in the near future.

Please watch for the newcomer to bring a fresh vision, perspectives *and* initiatives when they enter our doors, and be curious and compassionate. So may we grow. Every year Christian churches throughout the world decorate for Christmas in geographically appropriate way. Some decorations are ornate; others simple.

There are two elements that are present almost everywhere in our decorating for the Advent and Christmas seasons. I say almost. I have never known a church *not* to incorporate these elements.

In the special, intergenerational service on Dec. 2, we will begin Advent with a sense of the meaning embedded in the elements we use to decorate. We will sing hymns and we will begin the Advent journey together. Please join us.

Grace and Peace, Claire

Parish Council

Kay Jorgensen

This Advent and Christmas season will see some changes from past years that we hope will give pleasure, comfort and more opportunities for people to participate. See the write-ups with information about decorating the church during the Dec. 2 worship service (Claire's Corner); caroling after church on Dec. 16; and the Dec. 19 Service of Light to give solace to those for whom Christmas is a sad season.

And read about the Thanksgiving bags, Christmas meal boxes for needy families and the Dec. 23 and 24 worship services in this issue.

Everyone is invited to share our old and new traditions of the season. Join us in worship and as we reach out to our neighbors with song, food and friendship.

For three Sundays starting Nov. 18 specially marked offering envelopes for the Pastor's Fund will be in the pews. This fund is separate from church revenue and is used to give assistance, confidentially, at the pastor's discretion.

Worship service bulletin covers during the summer featured photos of the South Tunbridge Methodist Church and the North Tunbridge Baptist Church. We will end the year with the Tunbridge Village Congregational Church on the December cover.

The Congregational Church was built in 1839 — replacing the first Congregational Church built just two years earlier that burned. We'll plan something to celebrate the building's 180th year.

Pastor Search Committee

This committee report was prepared at the Parish Council's request and shared at its last meeting.

The Pastor Search Committee organized on June 15, 2016. Euclid Farnham was elected chair, Connie Button as recording secretary and Nan Frost as corresponding secretary. Lisa Amodeo, Amy Frost, Kay Jorgensen and Ben Wolfe are the other members. Members agreed their

discussions about candidates would be confidential and that they would unanimously choose a candidate to propose to the congregation.

The current bylaws state that the mission of the Search Committee to recommend a candidate for pastor of the church, and present that person to the membership of the Church at a warned meeting.

Interim pastor Jo Shelnutt helped guide the committee as it launched its search preparation. This work involved sharing the church's history, seeking input about the church and its future, and writing a profile that described the church to potential pastors.

The Rev. Pam Lucas of the UCC Conference office met with the committee during the summer to answer questions about her office's services and to describe methods that members might use to evaluate candidates. She attended another meeting in April 2017.

The committee's early work was on timeline boards tracing The Tunbridge Church's history since 1792. The boards were first displayed at a well-attended July 2016 pizza event to kick off the pastor search effort. Attendees were invited to add their personal bits of history with the church.

During the summer and fall of 2016 members conducted one-on-one meetings with church members and friends to talk about the church. Connie held a separate event for youths that included a movie and refreshments.

The committee mailed letters with surveys asking people to rank various ministerial qualities and to share comments. Responses representing 92 people cited the most important qualities and duties for a new Tunbridge pastor as:

- Being an effective preacher and speaker
- Being a compassionate and caring person
- Making pastoral calls to shut-ins and patients
- Working effectively with children, youths and teens
- Being a helpful counselor
- Being accepting of people with divergent views.

Survey respondents had much less interest in a pastor who organizes people for community action, encourages others to assume leadership, works on stewardship growth, helps people develop their leadership abilities and is an effective planner.

During fall/winter 2016 the committee worked on the profile which was completed in February 2017. Pam Lucas wrote: "I have to tell you that your profile is the most amazing profile I've seen. It is so professional - and so attractive - and reads like it comes from the heart of your congregation - which is exactly what it's supposed to do! Great job by everyone..."

At that time the committee placed ads in The Herald and Valley News and publicized the profile and its availability. The committee thereafter communicated with the wider community through worship services, newsletter columns, handouts, congregational meetings and press releases. The timeline boards and other display materials were shown in church and Jo Shelnett frequently mentioned the search from the pulpit.

Profiles and queries were received from eight candidates between April 2017 and August 2018. All but one pastor who submitted profiles did so through the national UCC employment site. The Vermont UCC vetted candidates who applied for legal or ethical issues then sent our profile to the candidate and forwarded the candidate's information to us.

The committee created a "candidate rating worksheet" which included what members felt were the most important qualifications:

- Experience working with youths, young adults
- Experience with pastoral care
- Demonstrated fresh ideas, creativity
- Ability to collaborate
- Nurturing of spiritual education
- Biblical and theological background
- Sense of strong personal faith
- Capability to build bridges within the congregation
- Commitment to the larger community
- Public speaking ability
- Varied musical experience

Committee members reviewed how they ranked candidates in each of the categories and followed up with invitations for interviews or a letter saying the applicant was no longer under consideration.

In addition to in-person and electronic interviews, visits to observe candidates in worship services (in-person or online) and watching worship services online, the committee followed up on some leads about potential candidates.

The committee spent many weeks each for the six most viable candidates, in addition to dedicating time to correspondence, interviews, committee meetings and discussion.

An offer was made to one candidate who ultimately accepted the call to another position closer to family and friends.

The committee is learning of other networks that connect pastoral candidates with churches. The committee is discussing new ideas for how to find candidates. This week it met with the head of the New Hampshire / Vermont American Baptist Church to hear how he has been able to help small rural churches find pastors who are appropriate fits for their congregations.

November/December Events

Special Events:

- Nov. 17: Thanksgiving bags packing
- Dec. 2: Worship, church decorating
- Dec. 16: Christmas caroling
- Dec. 19: Service of Light
- Dec. 23: Service of music
- Dec. 24: Christmas Eve Service, 7 p.m.

Regular Events:

- Sunday Worship: 10 a.m.
- Community Food Shelf: Fridays, Parish House, 4-6 p.m.

Seasonal Music News

Judie Lewis

We are trying something different for this year's Advent/Christmas season. There is an amazing number of beautiful

songs of Christmas that we want to hear. At the same time, there have been requests for a simple Christmas Eve service of lessons, carols and candles.

In past years we have packed a lot of music into the Christmas Eve service. This year we are instead preparing a service of music for the fourth Sunday of Advent, Dec. 23,

This Fourth Sunday service will include carols from various countries dating back to the 1400s and contemporary Christian carols. The aim is to offer a festive and reverent service emphasizing the joy and meaning of Christmas.

The plan is to include short dramatizations pertaining to the Christmas story. The Rev. Claire Bamberg will lead the service. Instrumental musicians will provide accompaniment to enrich the experience. Singers from around the area will join with the church choir for this service.

For those interested in participating, there will be three rehearsals exclusively to prepare for this service. Rehearsals are at 7 p.m. Thursdays, Dec. 6, 13 and 20. Please pass the word.

The choir is presently preparing anthems appropriate to the season for the three other Advent Sundays.

News and Notes

Thanksgiving Bags

The Outreach Committee is requesting your help in providing baked items or money donations toward food supplies for its Thanksgiving bags. This annual project provides treats for seniors and others in our community who often have limited mobility. In the past, some 40 bags were packed and delivered the weekend before Thanksgiving.

This year bags will be assembled at the Parish House on Nov. 17 at 1 p.m. Baked food items such as cookies, small quick breads and other snacks can be left at the Parish House or Elaine Howe's porch.

Money donations help supply fruits, cheese and items especially for those with diabetes. For more specific information or donations please contact Sue Barnaby.

Outreach Committee members are Lisa Amodeo, Sue Barnaby, Nancy Chapman, Elaine Howe, Nancy Howe, Kay Jorgensen, Dawna Neron, Jacque Norris, Margaret Rogers and Judy Tucker.

Habitat for Humanity Lunches

After Thanksgiving volunteers building the Habitat for Humanity house in Sharon will work only on Fridays and Saturdays. We will provide lunch on Nov. 19, their last work Monday. If you would like to give chips, cookies, fruit or drinks or help make sandwiches that day at the Parish House at 10:30, please let Kay Jorgensen know.

Gifts for Needy Families

A box will be in the church vestibule the first two Sundays in December to receive small gifts for families who come to the Community Food Shelf. Suggested donations include ornaments, family games, specialty foods like jams, jellies and candies, and books, pencils, pens and small notebooks. For more information please contact Sue Barnaby 889-3736 or sue_barnaby@ymail.com.

Christmas Caroling

All are invited to take part in the annual caroling to local homes on Sunday, Dec. 16. Everyone who is interested should come to the Parish House at 11, after the worship service, for soup before heading out with song sheets and poinsettia plants to visit community members. The caroling will conclude with refreshments at the Parish House.

Holiday Family Food Boxes

Food boxes will be given out to families on Saturday, Dec. 17. Supporters of this annual program include the Tunbridge Central School Student Council, which conducts a food drive for pantry and holiday items, and Clever Clovers 4-H Club members who will make decorated cookies. The church's Outreach Committee purchases hams and food items to provide a full dinner in each box.

Gift items will be set out on Parish House tables for families to choose from to add to their Christmas box. Needed are small gifts items such as toys, books,

games, decorations, holiday foods like jams, jellies, fruits, baked items and candies.

Donations for purchase of food for the boxes can be made out to the Community Food Shelf and mailed to Euclid Farnham at 24 The Crossroad or put in the offering plate. For more information contact Sue Barnaby, 889-3736, sue_barnaby@ymail.com.

Service of Light

Christmas is a time for laughter and light, surprise and joy — but not for all and not in every circumstance.

The Service of Light “sets aside” time, sacred time, set in the context of worship, to observe and honor loss — loss of a loved one, a hope, a job, a promise.....

Loss. The Service of Light observes the nuances of loss and transformation; its intention is to release the person who attends, by allowing them to grieve — and move on into the season.

Please, come and join us at 7 p.m. on Dec. 19 at The Tunbridge Church.

‘Matilda’ Is Coming

Roald Dahl’s “Matilda the Musical,” a Tony Award winning play, will be performed by Northern Stage in White River Junction from Nov. 14-Jan. 1. Olivia Swayze plays Hortensia in one child-actor cast. Alex Hoyt of Tunbridge plays Bruce is in the other cast. The casts alternate between shows. Olivia’s mother, Dawna Neron, has the schedule if anyone is interested in seeing one cast or the other.

Food Shelf Benefit Supper

Come one and all to the "Potluck (Italian) Pasta," a Community Food Shelf fundraiser on Saturday, Jan. 5, at the Town Hall. Bring something to share at the supper which will be served from 5-7 p.m. Lois Gross, who hosted the popular Chinese Buffet to benefit the Food Shelf last April, will provide the main dishes.

Super Senior Luncheons

The Outreach Committee is pleased to report four successful Super Senior luncheons again this year, with an average attendance of 36 seniors.

Attendees enjoyed various meals starting in April, throughout the summer and finishing with a pre-Halloween luncheon, complete with fall decorations and candy treats.

The concept behind the luncheons is to give people in our community an opportunity to have an outing and to reconnect with others in their age range, while enjoying a meal. If you know of anyone who would enjoy the luncheons please let one of the committee members know. The events have been such a success that they will no doubt continue next spring.

Funeral Fellowship

The Funeral Fellowship Committee provided refreshments after the Oct. 27 funeral service for Lorraine Palmer, which was held in the church.

Red Sox Tradition

The tradition of ringing the church bell to celebrate the Red Sox winning the World Series was continued this year — their fourth win since 1918. With the Oct. 28 final game being played on the West Coast this year’s bell ringing was well before most bedtimes.

Thank Yous

Thanks to Elaine Howe whose bountiful gardens supplied beautiful flowers for worship services from July through early fall.

One hundred twelve people attended the 50th anniversary Festival of Worship. The Fair Service theme was “Singing for the Love of God.” Thanks to all who shared their musical talents. Eighteen singers were in the chorus. Featured soloists were Janet Zug, Scott and Rose Terami, Bob Crino, Olivia Swayze, Dawna Neron, Connie Button, Isabella Amodeo, Bruce Post and Eve-Lynne Ermer. Debbie Thomas and Nan Frost provided accordion and flute music. Dale Post was the accompanist, with Norm Lebrecque, Cory Unger, David Indenbaum and Scott Paulson in the band.

The Anything Apple Harvest Fest on Oct. 6 added more than \$1,700 to the capital fund for Parish House improvements. Many community members supported the lunch and apple foods sale with donated baked goods and soups. Others gave silent auction items and made auction bids. The volunteers who worked that day were Nancy Chapman, Pam Dietz, Mary Fisk, Elaine Howe, Nancy Howe, Rob Howe, Kay Jorgensen, Joyce Miller, Dawna Neron and Jacque Norris.

We appreciate the generosity of these auction donors: Warren Baldwin, Boardway & Cilley, Brocklebank Craft Brewing, Rob Howe, Anne Peters, Fred Pond, Saturday Sewing Circle, Tunbridge Recreation, Tunbridge Store, Union Agricultural Society and Vermont Technical College.

Fifty Years Ago

Tunbridge pastor Jean Louise Smith delivered this sermon on Dec. 29, 1968. She served as a United Church of Christ lay pastor in Vermont. Thanks to Nancy Howe who shared the sermon.

1968 has been a difficult year – both for our nation and for our own community of Tunbridge. We have been shocked by assassinations of two of our national leaders. We have suffered the depths of sorrow with their families and we have tried to think that this senseless violence might have meaning.

We have had violent deaths here, among our neighbors, and we have suffered with those who survived. Sickness and the uncertainty of life has stalked among us to take its toll in families we all know. Personal goals of jobs and life plans have, for some, seemed not to materialize, and when this happens failure looms large and hope runs low.

But we go on, and in the midst of our troubles we see cause for hope: the Paris peace talks are going on; Christmas Eve, on TV, we visited the homes of Mrs. Coretta King and Mrs. Robert Kennedy and saw that they and their children are bearing up.

Possibly part of the decision to launch Apollo 8 [Dec. 21] during this tragic years of 1968 was based on recognition of a need to end the year on a note of hope and accomplishment. I am only guessing at this, but of this there is no doubt: the astonishing flight has helped us all to be hopeful rather than despairing.

Who will ever forget the voices of the three astronauts, William Anders, Frank Borman and James Lovell, reading the majestic words from the book of Genesis, of that story of creation? What an affirmation of faith as man realizes that a Creator-mind greater than human understanding rules over the Universe He made.

Why do we go on in the midst of sorrow, sickness, hard times, and frightening responsibilities — even failure? Think now of yourself and of those you know to see if you can find some reasons for going on, in hope, during 1969 and the years of life that may be ahead.

One of the prime reasons each of us keep his head high in hope is *because of others*. When you hit “rock bottom” there is nearly always someone close by your side who is hoping, praying and encouraging you to keep going, to keep alive and not give up. For Mrs. King and for Mrs. Kennedy, there are children and others, but especially the children with faith which no parent would want to let down.

As responsible, loving persons we try to be strong in the midst of trouble because others look to us in love and confidence, and this encourages us to refuse to give into self-pity of despondency. The truly pathetic people are those who feel that no one cares whether they live or not.

If they are emotionally sick people or ridden by disease to the extent that their thinking is confused, the situation for them becomes difficult. The fact is that most of us *do* live for others both personally in families, among friends, and in society. Thank God for those who need us. Thank God for people to depend on.

I think that there is another reason why most of us pick ourselves up with God’s help after failure, trouble and hard times and move forward in hope. This is because each of us is aware of the need to

live in a manner that will let us *fulfill our own destiny*.

I am not speaking here about predestination, although you may believe that God has for each person a predetermined goal of what he is to become. I am not sure about this idea. It is one of the things I have to say, "I do not know" to, in all honesty. I think that I would rather put it this way: we have, as Christians, an example in Jesus of a person who lived for others and for God.; One who gave his life to healing and loving the persons who surrounded him; One who was not afraid to suffer, even unto death.

No one of us is going to be without sin — a perfect living example like Jesus was. To think this would be blasphemous. Yet He asked us to be perfect "as your Father in heaven is perfect." This represents a destiny for each one of us — an impossible one, but nonetheless it is a kind of "built-in hope" that each one of us is responsible and capable of living up to his highest capacity. It takes a lifetime for many of us to grow in ways that move us closer to realizing our destiny.

What we each need to come to realize is that there is within us a greater capacity for growth than most of us let develop and that we must always give this best self a chance to grow, rather than give way to weakness of the dark side of our nature.

Jesus saw beyond the limited person into his greater, unfulfilled capacity. He saw what the rich young man, who seemed to be letting his material riches stand in the way of possessing the Kingdom of God, might become. He saw how a woman who was trying to cover up her immorality might be if she confessed her sin and gave way to realizing a decent life.

In the story of the unfaithful steward, Jesus envisioned a transformed, faithful man. These were but a few of the personages in the Bible who were not fulfilling their destinies — people whose personal and spiritual growth was stunted or stopped because they were unable to move beyond the obstacles that stood in the way of their becoming the best persons they were capable of being.

Let us look beyond ourselves to yet a third reason why most of us go on in the face of trouble: because *we sense that we belong to something greater than we are, but which is nonetheless part of us*. Call this any name you wish: being a "child of God" or "heart of creation." Various names have been given to this undefinable realization that each of us is part of something too great to understand in our limited, human capacity.

The astronauts spoke of "the good earth" and they said it with such feeling that you knew they meant the goodness and greatness of the world which far outshines weakness and evil. Each one of us is part of this goodness — of the creative, spiritual world and universe, with all its power and wonder. We are part of creation and of the Creator who made us. How then shall we respond, except in dignity as having a place in this?

When life's energy runs low in us, it is strengthening to remember that being part of the goodness and greatness of the Creator's creation also means that we can tap it — can draw on its power. This can help us to stand firm and in hope, both in life and in death — for death is part of all this and we all move toward it soon, or late.

As we face 1969 and whatever years may lie ahead for each of us and for society, let us keep hope and courage high, facing our failures and moving toward such new beginnings as God gives us.

Let us do this because of the need to do it for each other; because each day should see us closer to fulfilling our destinies as persons and as a human society; and because we are part of something so much greater than ourselves that we dare to speak of ourselves as creatures of our Creator – God.

(over)

Birthdays

November

05 – Nancy Howe

06 - Gordon Mitchinson

21 – Eleanor Frost

22 – Sebastian Fraser

24 - Nancy Howe Rogers

December

Ben Wolfe

03 - Pam Dietz
12 - Felicity Swayze
21 - Addison Danforth
23 - Bob Rogers
26 - Patty Swahn
27 - Mary Fisk

Anniversaries

December

16 - Ken & Kim Danforth
26 - Nancy & Dennis Rogers

Parish Council

Kay Jorgensen, President
Dawna Neron, Vice President
Sue Barnaby, Secretary
Townsend Swayze, Treasurer
Nancy Chapman
Rob Howe
Maureen Moriarty
Judy Tucker