WEEKLY NEWS - November 25, 2026

Office Hours Monday - Thursday
8:00-12:00 pm

Fellowship Hall

The church will be closed on Thursday, November 26 in observance of Thanksgiving Day



Gray UCC Caroling - Please join Us!

We would like to invite your congregation to join us Sunday, December 13th for some Christmas Caroling from 3pm to 4:30pm. We will be meeting at our Parish House located at 5 Brown Street here in Gray.

Hope to see you there!

November/Decemer Meetings and Activities

Congregational Meeting - Sunday, December 6 following worship

Faith Formation - Sunday, December 13 following worship

Trustees - Tuesday, December 8 at 6pm.

Missions - Monday, December 7th 6:30pm via Zoom

Council -17th at 6pm

Activities:

Hanging of the Greens and Potluck on November 29 at 11 am.

Choir Rehearsal Wednesdays at 6:30pm and Sundays from 8-8:30 am.

Epiphany Concert Rehearsal - Tuesday, December 15th from 6:00-8:00 pm.

Pet Pantry is open on the second Saturday of each month from 9:00-10:00 am.

Men's Club meets on the third Saturday of the month at 7:30 am. at Toddy Brook.

Tuesday Gals meet at 10 am in the Fellowship Hall.

Faith Formation News

Faith Formation will be celebrating on Sunday, December 13th with a "Little Christmas" after the morning service. This is a start of the 12 days of Christmas by sharing with each other a “little” gift. Everyone is welcome to participate by bring a small gift (or two) to share with another. This can be a cookie, muffin, ornament of whatever you would like to share. If you have any questions, contact Lois Knight.

In Our Prayers

We pray for those in our congregation and community who are
• mourning the loss of loved ones;
• serving our counWe pray for those in our congregation and community who are
• mourning the loss of loved ones;
• serving our country in the military,
including James Black, E-6, US Navy;
• experiencing health issues or personal concerns,
including Candy B., Jenn (Charlene B's daughter), George D. (Leah D.'s brother), Sandra and Vince G., Samuel N., Jasmine L. (Trudy P.'s granddaughter), Steve Q., Lori M. and Kaitlin Q., Susanellen S., and James S.

We pray for those in the wider world, nationally and globally who are
• hungry or unhoused,
• experiencing violence and destruction from wars and conflicts,
• rebuilding their lives following natural disasters,
• recovering from trauma.

We pray for neighbors, friends, colleagues, and fellow Christians who are "New Mainers" or "sojourners," seeking to live, study, work, and raise their families peaceably among us (See Leviticus 19:33-34).

We pray for those who are struggling with, or in recovery from addictions including alcoholism, and their families and friends.

We Pray for Peace within ourselves, our families, our communities, and our world.

A Celebration of Life will be held in the Fellowship Hall on Saturday, November 28th at 11 am.

*Please submit items for the Church Calendar to Lyn by Tuesday in order to be included in the bulletin. For the prayer list, please speak with a deacon or the pastor. Thank You.

From the desk of Rev. Cynthia Biggar, November 25, 2026

Tomorrow is Thanksgiving Day. We have much to be thankful for, individually and collectively as a Congregation. Last Saturday, NYCC offered a magnificent "Santa's Workshop Christmas Fair" to the community. As Interim Pastor I was privileged to take part by standing at the door and welcoming "customers" for a while, and, like everyone else, to look at interesting and beautiful items for sale and to make several unique purchases. One of my "finds" was the wreath that will hang beside my front door in Saco starting this Friday (the day after Thanksgiving). It was designed by a young man named Kai from Westbrook who helped at the Fair in multiple ways, especially manning the wreath table. (Most of these beautiful wreaths were designed by Gail Strattard and her associates).

Another special, and recent, happening in the life of this church was the weekly Book Discussion (and Bible Study) that met on Thursday afternoons from Sept. 24-Nov. 19. We read and discussed Rachel Held Evans' memoir, Inspired: Slaying Giants, Walking on Water, and Loving the Bible Again, along with Bible passages that the book referred to. The book gave us all permission to ask questions about the Bible and encouraged us to actually read (or reread) the Bible with greater understanding and appreciation.

As the facilitator, I thoroughly enjoyed our discussions. It was a great group of participants! Mark Heath photographed the our group as we gathered for one of our later sessions. Participants included Priscilla Brobst, Kathy Whittier, Gail Strattard, Lois Knight, Leah Davis, Marsha Heath, Jeanne Chadbourne, Ellen Medrano and her friend Bess, Leslie Eastman, and your Interim Pastor.

Happy Thanksgiving!

Rev. Cynthia

Pastorbiggar@gmail.com



Report from the Novemer Council Meeting

1. The pastor provided an overview of the Advent and Christmas services. She also provided a report of the Rachel Held Evans' Inspired book study, as well as notes on stewardship, Conference and Association meeting attendance.
2. Finances: Year to date we are about $15000 in the red. Lois is still waiting for about $27000 in pledges to the end of the year. Rental income is down, and there has not been a Chicken Pie Sale (note: this occurred at the Christmas Fair and income will be reported later). Fuel costs are up. We have entered into a service contract for heating maintenance. Snow removal and sand are unknown at this time. We have carried over a $15000 surplus from last year, which covers this year's deficit. However, this may not occur for next year. Folks are looking into returns on our Conference investments, which seem to be below market levels.
3. Trustees: Internet and phone change is nearly complete. Concerns have been expressed about the organ needing to be cleaned as well as possible leaks from the gable end that could affect the organ. Work is progressing in the back stairwell. Salaried employees are being notified that annual employee reviews will be conducted next year.
4. Diaconate/Faith Formation: Diaconate is working with Cynthia on Advent and Christmas activities, including an interactive Christmas pageant on 12/20. Hanging of the Greens and the children creating the Advent candle wreath will take place 11/29. 12/13 will be Little Christmas. The deacons will be sending out Christmas gift cards; Missions will send cards for Thanksgiving.
5. Missions: Proceeding with collections for food pantries and also focusing on heating assistance. A collection box was put out at the Christmas fair for this purpose.

NEW BUSINESS

1. The Council approved grinch and snowman blowups for the day of the Christmas fair.
2. Mark would like to start First Friday lunches in January for three months and would like to form a committee to help him.
3. 2027 budget: This was tabled until the December meeting, when more financial information would be available.
4. Christmas Eve offering: This will be earmarked for local heating assistance. MOTION VOTED. The Men's Club has also designated $5000 for heating assistance. Norm Smith is the contact person.
5. Search Committee: The committee requested that a congregational meeting be called for the purpose of discussing two topics: sharing a pastor and changing our service time. These issues have come up in our search for a new pastor. The congregational meeting will be held on 12/6 with hopes that we have a good attendance and an open and healthy discussion. There will be no vote taken — this is to explore the wishes of the congregation to assist in our search process. Watch for a longer explanation.
6. Meeting adjourned. Next meeting 12/17.

CONGREGATIONAL MEETING DECEMBER 6: SOME CONSIDERATIONS

The Search Committee has a viable candidate for called pastor and is proceeding with the process. Because calling this person would involve the church making some changes and experiencing situations not encountered before, we would like to know how the congregation feels about making some important changes.

1. Sharing a minister with another church. Because we have only a half-time position and candidates applying for positions can't live on this salary, concessions have to be made. Our profile has been posted for over a year, and we have had no one interested in our job, most likely because of the half-time income and costs of living in this area. For that reason, considering a shared minister is a sound financial decision. Advantages to this include: (a) the opportunities for shared services, events, fundraisers, Bible study, etc. (b) The ability for each church to preserve its own identity. (C) The ability for each church to use its stronger lay leadership. (D) Broader perspective and support between the churches. (E) The pastor can prepare one sermon weekly, allowing more time for other functions. (F) The pastor can experience the benefits of full-time ministry without having to rely on another job or method of securing adequate income.

Disadvantages or potential issues include: (a) Churches having to change their Sunday morning service times. (B) Pastoral availability for unexpected occurrences. (C) Possible pastoral overwork and potential burnout. (D) Perceived unfairness between time spent with each congregation. (E) Scheduling constraints. (F) Compromised local presence. (G) Extra meetings for the pastor.

There are also some areas where the churches involved would have shared concerns: (a) the distance between the two churches. (B) Current budgets and membership size. (C) Denominational rules. (D) One church would have extra time with the pastor before services, the other after. (E) Pastoral care would be done by triage. (F) Work hours would be flexible. (G) There would need to be discussion between the churches to settle issues and decide on logistics. (H) A broad consensus would be mandatory to continue. (I) COMMUNICATION BETWEEN CHURCHES IS PARAMOUNT!

2. Changing the time of our morning service. This is a discussion that we haven't had as a church. It is imperative that the search committee know exactly how people feel on this issue. There will be some who don't want to change; some who like an early or earlier service; and some who would welcome a later service. It is also of note that with any change in meeting time, there will always be some who stay home and others who attend where they haven't previously. It is noteworthy that the church with the later service could also hold meetings before the service, especially if the pastor's presence wasn't necessary.

The search committee hopes that we will have good attendance at this meeting: The results are very important in how we proceed as a search committee. It is of note historically that churches often shared a minister and with cooperation and communication, this can be a positive experience.

Please plan to attend this meeting and give us the opportunity to hear everyone's opinion on these important issues.



During Advent this year we will be following a series created by Worship Design Studio (adapted a bit by Rev. Cynthia). The series is "Carols for the Coming Christ." For anyone who may be interested, the inspiration for the series was a newly published devotional guide, "Carols for the Coming Christ," by Adam L. Tice, who is a hymn writer and a Mennonite minister. Sundays in Advent will, as usual, be named "Hope, Peace, Joy, and Love." This coming Sunday, Nov. 29, is the First Sunday in Advent: Hope. A special feature of the service will be Amanda Skupin's making and explaining the Advent wreath to the children (and us all).

~ November 2026 ~

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
1 Daylight Saving Time Ends 8:30a Choir Rehearsal 9:30a Worship	2	3 Election Day 10a Tuesday Gals (FH)	4 6:30p Choir Rehearsal 7p AA	5 1p Book Discussion 6p Greely Volleyball Banquet	6	7 9a Church Clean-Up Day
8 8:30a Choir Rehearsal 9:30a Worship 11a Diaconate Meeting 11a Faith Formation	9	10 10a Tuesday Gals (FH) 5p Field Hockey Banquet 6p Trustees	11 Veterans' Day **Office Closed** 6:30p Choir Rehearsal 7p AA	12 1p Book Discussion	13	14 9a Pet Place Pantry 9a Church Clean-up Rain Date 4p Girl Scout Event (FH)
15 8:30a Choir Rehearsal 9:30a Worship	16	17 10a Tuesday Gals (FH) 5:30p Girl Scouts (CR)	18 6:30p Choir Rehearsal 7p AA	19 Christmas Fair Set-up 1p Book Discussion 6p Council	20 Christmas Fair Set-up	21 7:30a Men's Club Breakfast (Toddy Brook) 9-2pm Christmas Fair
22 8:30a Choir Rehearsal 9:30a Worship	23	24 10a Tuesday Gals (FH)	25 No Choir Rehearsal 7p AA	26 Thanksgiving Day Office Closed	27	28
29 8:00a Choir Rehearsal 9:30a Worship 11a Hanging the Greens and Potluck	30					

~ December 2026 ~

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
		1 10a Tuesday Gals (FH) 5p Cumberland County 4-H Swiners	**2** 6:30p Choir Rehearsal 7p AA	**3**	**4**	**5**
6 PEACE 8:30a Choir Rehearsal 9:30a Worship Congregational Meeting following worship 6p GFCC Dress Rehearsal	**7** 6:30p Missions Meeting	**8** 10a Tuesday Gals (FH) 6p Trustees	**9** 6:30p Choir Rehearsal 7p AA	**10**	**11**	**12** 9a Pet Place Pantry 5:30p GFCC Rehearsal and Concert
13 JOY 8:30a Choir Rehearsal 9:30a Worship Little Christmas 11a Faith Formation 2pm GFCC Concert	**14**	**15** 10a Tuesday Gals (FH) 5:30p Girl Scouts 6-8p Epiphany Concert Rehearsal	**16** 6:30p Choir Rehearsal 7p AA	**17** 6p Council	**18**	**19** 7:30a Men's Club Breakfast (Toddy Brook)
20 LOVE 8:30a Choir Rehearsal 9:30a Worship Interactive Christmas Story 1p Brown Gathering in Fellowship Hall	**21**	**22** 10a Tuesday Gals (FH)	**23** 6:30p Choir Rehearsal 7p AA	**24** Christmas Eve 5:30p Family Christmas Eve Service 11p Christmas Eve Candlelight Service	**25** Christmas	**26**
27 No Choir No Deacons Mtg 9:30a Worship	**28**	**29** 10a Tuesday Gals (FH)	**30** 6:30p Choir Rehearsal 7p AA	**31**		