

# The Church Chat Room

## Newsletter of the Westmoreland United Church

### Governing Board Decides on No In-Person Worship Until at Least October 7

by Carol Austin, Moderator

On March 4<sup>th</sup>, the Governing Board held its customary monthly meeting. The April Easter services and activities were being planned. A Special Church Meeting and potluck luncheon was scheduled for March 29. At that meeting, a Pastoral Relations Committee and a 2020 Nominating Committee were to be elected, and the church bylaws were to be revised. The annual church yard sale, an important church fundraiser, had been scheduled for May 14. However, that all changed! We learned of the COVID-19 pandemic and the necessary cancelling of group events. A stay-at-home advisory, and cautionary hygiene and distancing guidelines began. The March 15<sup>th</sup> Sunday morning worship service was cancelled. All Easter events at the WUC were cancelled. The Lenten message of self-examination, self-sacrifice, evaluation of what is necessary in life, love for neighbors, and prayer took on new meaning.

As the cautionary quarantine time was extended, and then further extended, in-school classes were cancelled through the end of the school year in favor of something called "remote or virtual learning". Any church and social events were cancelled, restaurants and businesses closed or altered their venue to accommodate fewer or any patrons, employees began working at-home, and our daily routine was dramatically altered. A new normal was emerging.

What we might have envisioned as a month, or maybe two months, of the self-isolating and distancing time has been extended into the sixth month of diligent hand-washing, social distancing, mask-wearing, rescheduled medical appointments with extra testing prior to the appointment, deaths of those we love, altered or lost employment status, a plan to continue "remote learning" as the new school year begins, and a new vocabulary. March now seems so long ago! It was.

During this unusual time, the leadership at the WUC is accepting the challenge to decide what we at the Brick Church should do to keep our members and friends safe and without additional risk - but at the same time to stay connected with its members, to assess and meet the needs of those unable to meet basic shopping and transportation needs, and to continue the mission and outreach and upkeep and funding of the church.

Although not all members have the capacity to participate in something called *Zoom*, Sunday morning worship on Zoom began on Easter Sunday and is continuing to be the option deemed most safe at this time. Pastor Lynn prepares the worship service each week and sends the worship bulletin to members and friends by email or snail mail. Ashley records the chosen hymns which she plays for the Zoom worship service. However, the absence of congregational hymn-singing and choir music is a big miss. One of those "attending" the Zoom service reads scripture. It is working for now but is not the traditional way of in-person worshiping, sharing, hugging, and conversing over coffee and snack to which we are accustomed. We are social beings! For now, however, it seems the safe option.

The Governing Board has, and will continue to have, their meetings on Zoom and will continue to assess whether resuming in-person worship seems to be appropriate once again. In its attempt to stay connected, Board members have each agreed to contact those on their personal contact list and are telephoning or emailing those people each week. Missions work continues. Members are making or providing masks to share with others. A local family who suffered a house fire, and gentleman in Stoddard who also suffered a house fire, have been helped by congregational donations. Cards continue to be mailed to many in the community. Joan's Pantry still receives food donations from members, and food donations can be left just inside the church and will be delivered regularly. The properties are being maintained, and even improved, with volunteers who are so appreciated. An additional sign has been added to the church signboard. Fellowship Hall will be painted soon. The fundraisers have been cancelled, but pledges and cash donations continue to be mailed to the church address of PO Box 214. Your support during this time is appreciated!

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(Continued from Page 1 Governing Board Decides)

The Board has extended the time for resuming in-person worship in an effort to keep the membership safe, first from the end of May to the end of June, then to the end of July, then into August and September. **Currently, no in-person worship will occur until at least October 7<sup>th</sup> when the Board next meets and determines the best plan forward.**

The NH Conference, UCC has issued guidelines for resuming in-person worship but each church makes its own decision. The guidelines are important. They include: good ventilation during the worship service, entering and exiting the church by different doors, use of hand sanitizer, wearing of masks, no congregational or choir vocal singing, use of sign-in sheets for attendance for "tracking" should an attendee develop a positive COVID-19 test, 6-foot distancing in pews, no coffee hours or Sunday School, no communion elements passed or picked up, extra deep cleaning between services. The Board is assessing other worship options such as outdoor services but that option is so weather-dependent that it may not be a viable option.

**You** are part of the decision-making. Please share your ideas or your concerns about members or friends who might need a phone call or some assistance. Please share any concerns you may have about the Brick Church that would guide your leadership's decisions. Please call me at 399-4975 or email me at chaustin@myfairpoint.net and I will share that information as appropriate.

The Board next meets via Zoom on September 2<sup>nd</sup> at 6 PM to continue making decisions on behalf of the church. The safety and well-being of the members and friends is our first priority in any decision. Our faith, our prayers, our compassion and generosity to others, and God's love for us are not dependent on worship within the Brick Church. That is possible in any venue. It is not necessary to live out God's message only by attending in-person worship. It is possible in any venue. May you stay well as we adjust and try to be patient with life's many changes over which we feel no control. But, we are not in control.

### **Mission Ministry**

*by Judy Rancourt*

The summer mission has been for a deacon of the Stoddard Congregational Church Jonathan Hicks who lost everything in a fire. The congregation was asked to send their donations directly to the Stoddard Congregational Church, PO Box 334, Stoddard, NH 03464 to the attention of the Treasurer/Jonathan Hicks Fund.

Each week I check the Church and Fellowship Hall and collect any food that has been donated for Joan's Pantry and transport it to Chesterfield.

### **Upreach Ministry**

*by Flossie Gray*

As we all are aware, we are not physically meeting at the Church, but fortunately are able to meet via zoom due to Pastor Lynn and Ashley's work. I want to acknowledge everyone's efforts in making our Sunday services meaningful and practicing our traditions. Additionally, I have gratitude for all that participate in all the ways needed to fulfill our Sunday morning services.

### **Property Ministry**

*by Jeanie Sy*

Fellowship Hall will get a new coat of paint this summer/fall. The siding on the back will be repaired, as will a window or two. The color will remain the same.

We are having the stairs to the basement of the church rebuilt, as they are dangerous to navigate when we go to the basement or turn the furnace off and on.

There is a new sign out front which we hope you have noticed. It lets people know that Pastor Lynn Wickberg is our minister and gives the number where she can be reached.

The "virtual spring cleanup was done. Many thanks to Leslie Luebke who added many of these chores to her weekly cleaning.

Sean Laine continues to take care of the lawn for us. We are grateful for this donation.

### **Outreach Ministry**

*by Carrie Staples*

We continue to reach out by phone to members of the church to make sure they are able to obtain items they might need in the way of food or medications and to give them calls to be sure they, like the rest of us, are coping with our new lives.

Although we here in Westmoreland have been spoiled by the low numbers of cases here, we need to remain vigilant and use masks and social distancing to help keep the numbers down

Revised Common Lectionary  
Readings, Season of Ordinary  
Time after Pentecost, 2020.

**August 16:** Isaiah 56: 1, 6-8.  
Psalm 67. Romans 11: 1-2a, 29-32. Matthew 15: (10-20), 21-28.  
**August 23:** Isaiah 51: 1-6.  
Psalm 138. Romans 12: 1-8.  
Matthew 16: 13-20.  
**August 30:** Jeremiah 15: 15-21.  
Psalm 26: 1-8. Romans 12: 9-21.  
Matthew 16: 21-28.  
**September 6:** Ezekiel 33: 7-11.  
Psalm 119: 33-40. Romans 13: 8-14. Matthew 18: 15-20.  
**September 13:** Genesis 50: 15-21. Psalm 103: (1-7), 8-13.  
Romans 14: 1-12. Matthew 18: 21-35.  
**September 20:** Jonah 3: 10 – 4: 11. Psalm 145: 1-8. Philippians 1: 21-30. Matthew 20: 1-16.  
**September 27:** Ezekiel 18: 1-4, 25-32. Psalm 25: 1-9.  
Philippians 2: 1-13. Matthew 21: 23-32.

## Waking Up White

Though the town-wide read and discussion of *Waking Up White* by Debby Irving was postponed due to the pandemic, we are strongly encouraged to proceed with reading and reflecting on it on our own at this time. The author provides reflection questions at the end of each chapter. If access to or cost of the book is of concern, please contact Pastor Lynn.

## Pastoral Ponderings

I have shared at other times and in different ways how we can “be the church” in our community and in this time of our lives. This has been our stewardship theme for the past two years with wonderful “visual aids” made by the Stewardship Committee. And the United Church of Christ (UCC) has put wording on posters and bumper stickers of some ways to live this as individuals and as church communities that include:

“Protect the environment. Care for the poor. Forgive often. Reject racism. Fight for the powerless. Share earthly and spiritual resources. Embrace diversity. Love God. Enjoy this life.”

And in response to this coronavirus pandemic of 2020, the UCC added another version of ways that we can “be the church”:

“Stay home. Social distance. Wash your hands. Check on the elderly. Live stream worship. Give electronically. Support each other. Love God. Flatten the curve. Pray daily. So we can all enjoy this life.”

So I wonder, do you have favorite ways of being the church? As an individual? As part of the Westmoreland United church (WUC)? As part of the church universal?

I also wonder, have your ways of being the church changed since early March? What do you see our community “hungering” for this summer? How does or how might our church respond? And if WUC were to make up its own banner and bumper stickers reflecting the ways we most “be the church”, what would you include?

I look forward to hearing your thoughts and experiences. Maybe we can come up with a new “visual aid” that communicates to our world how we are still the church, whether we gather in person or remain apart in our homes. And I hope and pray for you and yours that:

“the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.”  
(Romans 15: 13, NRSV)

Shalom, Pastor Lynn

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## Hymns by Request

*Hymns by request remote variation on Sunday, August 30.* Please submit your requests to Pastor Lynn by email or phone no later than Tuesday, August 25, so it can be ascertained if they are in the public domain or not and so that the words can be included in the bulletin for August 30. Thank you!



**In Memory of Thelma Messer**  
**7/12/1921-7/15/2020**

*by Carol Austin, Ladies Aid President*

After a long life of 99 years, church member Thelma Messer died on July 15, just days after her 99<sup>th</sup> birthday which had been celebrated with a parade of well-wishers who drove or walked past her home on Rt. 63.

From the time Thelma walked as a child to the Brick Church and to school, she was actively involved in her church and her community of Westmoreland where she spent her entire lifetime. A year ago, she became Westmoreland's oldest resident and was presented with the gold-tipped Boston Post Cane.

Thelma was active in the Westmoreland United Church's Ladies Aid Society. In 2006, she wrote two articles for the church newsletter about the 1940's to 1980's history of the Society. She described the many projects of the Society: sewing for the Red Cross, goodie boxes sent to soldiers from Westmoreland who were serving their country, a flag and carpeting and choir robes for the Brick Church, donations toward a new stove and refrigerator and supplies for the Town Hall kitchen, cleaning of the Town Hall kitchen once or twice a year, donations toward the Brick Church expenses and toward the building and furnishing of Fellowship Hall, printing of a "Welcome to Westmoreland" booklet made available at locations in Town, and financial donations to many community and area organizations.

Fundraisers during those years included suppers, food sales, penny sales, making lobster bibs for the Ox-Yoke Restaurant, sales of many kinds including plates with a picture of the Brick Church and another of the Park Hill Meeting House, and eventually an annual Ladies Aid Bazaar.

In 2008, the Society celebrated its 100<sup>th</sup> Birthday. Thelma continues: "According to the records during all the years of Ladies Aid, well over 200 Westmoreland women have been active members of this caring and dedicated organization." Thelma herself served as the Society's President for eight years.

Seldom missing Sunday morning worship, and having listened to many pastors over the years, she was a vocal church member who helped on various committees and was certainly an active part of the work of the Society and her church. Thank-you, Thelma, and may you rest in peace.

**Jim Ranson**  
**7/7/39-7/29/20**

*by Jan Carpenter*

Jim was the Town "Perambulation Agent" and regularly mowed the grass for the last several years at Corner School, in addition to keeping the mice population down. He loved spending summer days hiking through the woods of Westmoreland in search of cellar holes, all that's left of many old farms. The last total he gave me was over 80.

**Pat Cooke**  
**7/5/60-3/31/20**

*By Judy Rancourt*

Pat Cooke passed away 3/31/20. She was married to Harold Cooke for 35 years. She is survived by her husband, daughter Sarah and her grandson Ethan and extended family and friends. She was involved with the children in Sunday school and was Assistant Librarian at the Westmoreland Library. Pat also served on the most recent Pulpit Search Committee for the Westmoreland United Church.

**Robert Hamilton**  
**5/31/47-4/3/20**

*by Carrie Staples*

Robert Hamilton, the husband of Georgianna Hamilton and Father of Daniel and Caroline passed away April 3rd at Cheshire Hospital after being admitted with the covid virus. In the middle of the night prior Bob was one of the first local victims of this virus and his family is unsure where he contracted it. Bob was a speech pathologist for the Keene School System and here at our local school and he had just recently retired.

## The Church Chat Room

Newsletter of Westmoreland  
United Church

Reaching out to members  
and friends of

Westmoreland United Church  
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Website: WestmorelandUnited  
Church.org

Copy for the next Church  
Chat Room is due

## CHURCH WEBSITE..and NOW FACEBOOK

We are now on Facebook.  
Just click on the Facebook  
symbol at the bottom of the  
Church's home page to go to  
the Facebook page.

Our church website is  
[www.westmorelandunitedchurch.org](http://www.westmorelandunitedchurch.org)

## CHURCH ANNOUNCE- MENT EMAIL LIST

If you would like to be on  
the church email list to receive  
important church announce-  
ments, please email  
[tina@fixitech.com](mailto:tina@fixitech.com) and I will  
add you to the list.

THANK YOU! *Tina Fletcher*

If you no longer wish to receive  
The Church Chat Room, to  
unsubscribe email  
[jrancourt3@myfairpoint.net](mailto:jrancourt3@myfairpoint.net) or  
call 399-4828.

## Some resources for devotions, reading, worship, music...

\*\* To read the United Church of Christ's daily devotional: [https://  
www.ucc.org/daily\\_devotional](https://www.ucc.org/daily_devotional)

and also the "Weekly Seeds" resource: [https://www.ucc.org/  
weekly\\_seeds](https://www.ucc.org/weekly_seeds)

\*\* From the Franciscan tradition: [https://cac.org/category/daily-  
meditations/](https://cac.org/category/daily-meditations/)

\*\* The Revised Common Lectionary scripture readings: [https://  
lectionary.library.vanderbilt.edu//](https://lectionary.library.vanderbilt.edu/)

\*\* From St. Olaf College in Minnesota there is a weekly program of  
music, with brief pastoral commentary, based on the week's Revised  
Commentary Lectionary scriptures. [https://www.stolaf.edu/  
singforjoy/listen/](https://www.stolaf.edu/singforjoy/listen/)

\*\* (Episcopalian) Daily Office to read, listen to, or participate in:  
<https://dailyoffice.wordpress.com/>

\*\* Please let Pastor Lynn know of any other resources you would  
have to share with our church community. Thanks!

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## Information from the New Hampshire Conference, United Church of Christ -

Guidelines for safer gatherings in person: [http://nhcucc.org/uploads/  
documents/weekly-news-documents/  
Things%20To%20Be%20Considered%20in%20Discerning%20June%202020.pdf](http://nhcucc.org/uploads/documents/weekly-news-documents/Things%20To%20Be%20Considered%20in%20Discerning%20June%202020.pdf)

## What's it worth?

*NewsletterNewsletter*

As a man browsed through a rare-book store, he chatted with its  
owner. The customer had recently thrown away a dusty old Bible he'd  
found in the attic of an old house he'd bought.

"Someone named Guten-something-or-other had printed it," he  
mentioned offhandedly.

"Not Gutenberg?" the shop owner gasped.

"Yes, that was it," the man replied.

"You threw away one of the first books ever printed!" the owner  
exclaimed in dismay. "A copy recently sold at auction for half a mil-  
lion dollars!"

"Oh, I don't think this Bible would've been worth anything like  
that," the man replied. "It was scribbled all over in the margins by  
some guy named Martin Luther."

## AMAZON SMILES

The Westmoreland United Church is now set up through Amazon Smiles. Simply click this link:

<https://smile.amazon.com/ch/02-0407386>

and you will be taken directly to the Westmoreland United Church through Amazon Smiles. Once you select this as your charity - anytime you shop on Amazon Smiles, Westmoreland United Church will receive a donation! During this time where we are ordering more often on line so we don't have to physically go into stores we hope you will take the time to do this to help our Church.

If the link doesn't work, you can just sign up for Amazon Smiles and it will ask you what your charity is. Just type in Westmoreland United Church and it should come up.

Thank You for supporting Westmoreland United Church!

Please feel free to share this email with friends and neighbors!

## Upreach Ministry

*by Carrie Staples*

As the new person in charge of Outreach Ministry I am hoping to be able to reach out to the residents here in town, old and new and encourage them to come and see what a special part of the community we are. Its hard for me to believe I have been a resident here for fifty three years, and though not always an active member of the church, its part of the community that has always been welcoming and supportive of my family and the community as a whole. Though many may think of me as a flatlander, I have been here long enough that I joke and say I am a little bumpy now, and happy to have raised a family here, watched my parents grow old here and love the life they chose when they came here to spend their final years in a quieter , less hectic way.

We are a town that has changed dramatically as many new people have come here to live for varied reasons. I am hoping we can connect with them and have them share their reasons for coming here and their varied life experiences. It is harder to do that these days as so much of our lives are conducted electronically. Lives are busy , even in retirement and we don't always take the time to meet new neighbors and learn their names and share a part of ourselves.

## Schedule of Upcoming Events

**Sunday, March 29** - 5th Sunday in Lent - 10 am worship service, followed by a Special meeting of the congregation and, as it is a 5th Sunday in the month of March, followed by a potluck lunch!

**Palm Sunday**, April 5, 10 am - worship services move back into the Brick Church, it is a communion Sunday and we also gather in food donations for Joan's Pantry.

**Maundy Thursday**, April 9, 6pm, Fellowship Hall - simple supper of soup and bread with communion and Tenebrae service;

**Good Friday**, April 10, from 3-5pm, the Brick Church - throughout this time period, folk are invited to come and at your own pace read and reflect on the eight different portions of the gospel of Matthew's account from when "1. Jesus is praying, betrayed, arrested, and deserted." through to when "8. Jesus' body is placed in a tomb." This is in a setting of candle (and day) light, quiet, and prayer. (This is not a "formal" led service, rather come at any time in that time range.)

**Easter Sunday**, April 12 - 7 am service - on the South Village Commons (weather permitting - and if not in the Brick Church); 7:30 am breakfast (organized by the Governing Board) in Fellowship Hall; and 10am worship service in the Brick Church.