

Hello brothers and sisters in Christ Jesus!

Lent is almost here - a season of forty days, not counting Sundays. In 2025 Lent begins on Ash Wednesday, March 5 and ends on Holy Saturday, April 19.

The English word "Lent" comes from the Anglo-Saxon word *lencten*, which means "lengthen" and refers to the lengthening days of "spring." Christians are called to regard Lent as a season of preparation for celebrating Easter.



The United Methodist Book of Worship's "Introduction to Lent" states: *"Lent historically began as a period of fasting and preparation for baptism by converts and then became a time for penance by all Christians. The First Sunday of Lent describes Jesus' temptation by Satan; and the Sixth Sunday (Passion/Palm Sunday), celebrates Christ's triumphal entry into Jerusalem and his subsequent passion and death. The readings during Lent, until Passion/Palm Sunday, focus primarily on the meaning of baptism and discipleship, in continuity with the season's original purpose. In general, every single Sunday of the year is called "Little Easter" because every worship is tempered with the joyous expectation of the Resurrection."*

This year, Holy Week will begin with Passion/Palm Sunday, April 13 and conclude with Holy Saturday, April 19. It's during these days that the scripture readings focus primarily on the last days and suffering and death of Jesus. Holy Week is admittedly one of the most emotional weeks on the Christian Calendar, sandwiched between two celebratory worship celebrations: Palm Sunday and Easter Sunday.

Lent is a season that calls us to step back, reflect, and prepare our hearts for the celebration of Christ's Resurrection. But it's also a time for us to deeply engage with His sacrifice to truly understand the magnitude of Jesus' Sacrifice. Did you know that most people today are inclined to "come to the party" before and after Holy Week but can never bring themselves to experience Christ's pain and suffering on Maundy Thursday or Good Friday. How can we expect to fully appreciate Christ's sacrifice if we refuse to internalize the passion and the grief Christ endured on our behalf? Christians! What example does it set if we neglect Holy Week?

Lent isn't merely about giving up chocolate or coffee; it's about aligning ourselves more closely with Christ and experiencing, even in a small way, the journey Jesus took on the road to our Salvation.

One way we draw closer to Christ is to make the Lenten journey with him. As believers, it's essential that we try to fully engage in the spiritual disciplines of prayer, fasting, and giving to those in need. To that end, I'm encouraging you, your family, and friends, to participate in as many of Gray's Lenten programs as you can. It's through the disciplines of this season that we can approach the cross with a heart of gratitude.

Our April newsletter will feature more details about Holy Week and Easter. This March newsletter will highlight programming for the beginning of Lent including "Shrove Tuesday", "Ash Wednesday" and Gray Memorial's Annual "Prayer Vigil". If ever there's been a time to gather and pray, it's in these volatile times.

March 4 "Shrove Tuesday" Pancake Supper- 4 PM to 6:30 PM. (Free-Will Offering) "Shrove" comes from the old English practice of "shriving" which means to confess your sins. On the Tuesday night before "Ash Wednesday", church bells would ring out calling parishioners to come and be absolved of their sins before Lent began. Family and friends would gather and eat up all of their tempting, rich foods before the fasting season of Lent began. After Tuesday's pancake supper, those who can't return for Ash Wednesday's noon service, are invited upstairs to the sanctuary to receive their ashes with a blessing.

Ash Wednesday Prayer Vigil, March 5: 9:00 AM to 12 Noon - Disposition of Ashes Service Follows

May the Lord richly bless your Lenten spiritual disciplines. I especially pray that the Holy Spirit compels you to invite your friends and family to the whole gambit of worship and fellowship opportunities, especially our annual 12 Noon - Monday through Friday "Holy Week Ecumenical Worship Services " and Gray's Good Friday Worship at 6 PM. Times and details will be made in April's Easter Newsletter. God bless you.

In Christ's Service - Pastor Rich



The Caribou Clock

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Greetings from the Church Office!

Our "special" Valentine's Day Dinner was well received by those who were able to attend. I appreciate our waitstaff - Aurora Barnum, Judi Greenier, Diana Locke and Dave Wakana - who were willing to wear matching outfits and waited on their tables. I believe we all had some fun doing it and our guests were grateful that we treated them special that evening! Also, me very sincere thanks to the volunteers who helped prepare the food, serve and clean-up! It was a blessing to have you there to help us!

The Guest Services Team is sponsoring a Shrove Tuesday Pancake Supper on Tuesday, March 4th from 4:30-6pm. Come and enjoy a good meal and fellowship as we prepare for the Lenten Season.

On Saturday, March 15th, we will celebrate St. Patrick's Day with another special meal - we plan to serve a boiled dinner with corned beef, cabbage, potatoes, carrots and turnips! We will also have a special Irish Wheaten Bread for those who wish to try it, along with homemade rolls. Salads and a special Irish-themed dessert are also on the menu. Cost ~ Adults: \$15, children 5-15: \$8; children under 5 are free! We will have a poster in the Narthex for meal ingredient donations and volunteers beginning on Sunday, March 2nd. For this dinner, we will sell tickets in advance and we will also ask if you plan to come in-person or want take-out meals.

Please help me meet deadlines by submitting things for the Newsletter when due.
For our next Newsletter, all input must be submitted by 10am on Monday, March 24!!

Until next month.....

Bobbi Pelletier
Church Office Administrator



February Prayer Requests

Prayer Concerns: Dale, Lu & Debbie Sharp, Leland Frost, Ivan Shaw, Jeff Franklin, Sylvia Akeley, Richard Carde, Robin Stuart, Rodric Johnson, Paul Pelletier, Debbie Tardy, Allison Davidson, Brynne Hamilton, Anna Roberts, James Stuart, Linda Cyr, Rodney Nichols, Kristine Brantley, Kay Webb, Dean & Diana Rauch, Del Ramey, Debbie Nichols, Gwen Ellinwood, Kevin Ouellette, Pastor Rich & Karen on their pending retirement, Ruth Ross, Liv Therrien, William Autrey, Jean Hodgkins

Deaths: Family of Ruth Dionne; Family of Betty Holdsworth

Other: Prayers for our Wesley Covenant Group and Confirmation Class; New England Conference Nominating group on work making pastoral assignments

PLEASE REMEMBER TO PROVIDE A MAILING ADDRESS FOR PEOPLE OR FAMILIES YOU PUT ON THE PRAYER LIST SO WE CAN SEND THEM A NOTE FROM PASTOR RICH. WE OFTEN HEAR FROM RECIPIENTS ON HOW TOUCHED THEY ARE THAT WE OFFERED PRAYERS FOR THEM!

REMINDERS

<u>DATE</u>	<u>Greeter</u>	<u>Organist/Pianist</u>	<u>Liturgist</u>	<u>Counter</u>	<u>Coffee Fellowship</u>
Mar 2	Roy Alden	Margaret Cyr	Diane Fitzpatrick	Mary Ouellette	Prayer Shawl Ministry
Mar 9	Ruthann Weeks	Margaret Cyr	Cheryl Martin	Cheryl Martin	NOW Committee
Mar 16	Gwen Ellinwood	Mary Lou Brown	Kim Miller	Cheryl Martin	UMM
Mar 23	Penny Shaw	Judi Greenier	Mary Ouellette	Cheryl Martin	Worship Committee
Mar 30	Gwen Ellinwood	Mary Lou Brown	Bobbi Pelletier	Mary Ouellette	NEED VOLUNTEERS!

Usher Coordinator for March ~ Debbie Nichols
Communion Stewardess for March ~ Mary Theriault
Communion Bread for March ~ Dave Belyea

Changes to the May 2022 Church Directory (please update your copy!):

Holdsworth, Betty: delete - deceased February 9, 2025

* * March Birthdays & Anniversaries * *

Birthdays and Anniversaries are celebrated on the first Sunday during Coffee Fellowship.

Remember your birthday & anniversary by making a special offering!



2	Marilla Cushman, Bobbi Pelletier	15	George Cushman
4	Kent Forbes, Paul Thompson	16	Beth Alden, Danyl Botting
5	Robert Kieffer	19	Debbie Stallings
6	Duska Franklin, Roberta Walton	25	Casey Felix
10	Ryan Genz, Jeanette Peters, Debbie Sharp	26	Roy Alden
11	Kaitlynn Dunn	30	Rickey Bouchard
		31	Todd Theriault



NO MARCH ANNIVERSARIES FOR ACTIVE MEMBERS OR CONSTITUENTS

Note: A number of people with birthdays and/or anniversaries are not listed here due to no response to the August Membership Audit project and church members were reported in the October 15, 2023 annual Church Conference Booklet for ultimate removal from our membership rolls. This also includes some non-members who are no longer active in the life of our church.

If your name or the name of someone in the Gray Memorial Family does not appear on this list and you would like to add it, please contact the church office, 498-2103.

Corrections are ALWAYS appreciated!!! If you know someone whose last name has changed, please let Bobbi know so she can update the database.


 Finance &
 Stewardship
 Committee

Worship Attendance and General Fund Offerings:

Date	<u>In-Person Attendance</u>	<u>*On-Line Attendance</u>	<u>+ Operating Fund Offering</u>
Jan 26	44	31	\$2,055.00
Feb 02	50	35	\$5,039.00
Feb 09	53	27	\$2,802.00
Feb 16	35	38	\$1,090.58
Feb 23	52	(will report next month)	\$2,743.00

+ Needed weekly to meet 2025 Budget: \$4,282.62

* On-line attendance shows the number of unique viewers, but may not capture accurate number of people if more than one person is viewing the service from one location.

“Growing in Faith” Capital Campaign Account: Balance reported in last month's Newsletter was \$37,488.18. Since then, we received interest of \$1.61 and paid \$3,415.00 to Sprinkler Systems Inc. for our 5-year inspection and service work. Our balance as of February 25th is \$34,074.79 (of that amount, the “furnace replacement donation funds” that remain are \$5,424.27).

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The Caribou Ecumenical Food Pantry is in need of the following items:
 Any type of pasta, peanut butter, jelly, marshmallow fluff and breakfast cereals. Donations may be brought to the church on Sunday and placed in the marked box in the Narthex OR
 Monday/Wednesday/Friday from 9am to 2pm. Thank you!
 Monetary donations are always welcome!

Is your household or someone you know experiencing food insecurity? The Caribou Ecumenical Food Pantry serves the communities of Caribou, Connor, Woodland, Wade, Washburn and Perham and will provide food to those households that meet income guidelines. The Pantry, located at 31 Herschel Street in Caribou, is open on Tuesday and Thursday mornings from 8am to 11am. Please call 493-4860 between those hours and the pantry volunteers will help provide you with food boxes (available every 4 weeks or as needed).



Gray Memorial UMC has an account at the Bennett Drive Redemption Center. When you bring your bottles/cans to the center, you may designate the proceeds to go the church's account! If you are not comfortable bringing them yourselves, you may bring them to the church and we will take them to the Redemption Center.

There were \$10.00 in donations for January, so proceeds are \$1,157.45! Thank you for your support of this project! Just a reminder that these monies are used to cover operating expenses.

Give Us a Hand

Giving continues to be important for our ministries that are continuing and adapting. Your ongoing tithes and offerings will make it both possible to maintain our ministries.

There are currently three ways to make your contributions to GMUMC:

- Send checks by mail to Gray Memorial United Methodist Church, PO Box 69, Caribou, ME 04736. Include your offering envelope if you have one.
- By EFT (Electronic Funds Transfer) via VANCO--several people have already chosen this method for recurring gifts. If you are interested in this method, please contact Shirley Bowman (493-1039), to set up an EFT.
- By Vanco Mobile, an app provided by VANCO. You can download on an Apple or android phone. This method supports both recurring and one-time gifts. For more information, contact Shirley Bowman.

All VANCO methods include a nominal service fee for the church. Many people choose the options provided by VANCO for convenience and, for the electronic options, to ensure their gifts are always regularly given. Because of regular giving, research shows churches receive more funds overall using these methods. Contact Shirley Bowman for more information on giving options.

Here are the links for our March Sunday Worship Services at 10:00am:

- March 2 - <https://youtube.com/live/L9WFisiTBrc>
- March 9 - <https://youtube.com/live/EBwwcCPVWpA>
- March 16 - <https://youtube.com/live/a52R3hUaKsE>
- March 23 - <https://youtube.com/live/ATCFBsYugLU>
- March 30 - https://youtube.com/live/i4ugzGLwP_M

The Caribou Assembly of God Church offers "Friday Nite Meals" and they recently expanded this outreach program to offer hot meals to more households in the area. In order to receive these meals, you must call on Monday of every week if you want a meal for that Friday. Please call Diane at 207-496-0373. You may also pick-up you own meal(s) or eat-in. Deliveries are made to Rose Acre residents or those in town (Caribou).

UPCOMING EVENTS:

The Guest Services Team is sponsoring a Shrove Tuesday Pancake Supper on Tuesday, March 4th from 4:30-6pm. The cost is a free-will offering and proceeds will help pay for security upgrades throughout the church. Come and enjoy a wonderful meal and fellowship as we prepare for our Lenten Season!

SHROVE TUESDAY PANCAKE SUPPER



March's Public Supper will be on Saturday, March 15th and we will celebrate St. Patrick's Day with a traditional boiled dinner with salad, Irish bread or rolls and an Irish desert! All proceeds go towards the church's operating expenses. (Anything over \$1,000 will be set aside to help refurbish our barbeque grill trailer.) Tickets will be available beginning Sunday, March 2nd. \$15 per adult; \$8- children 8-15;

Pictures taken during Worship Services (photos provided by Melonie Carlson)



Sunday, February 23rd – Pastor Rich during the Children's Lesson, talking with Hazel Barnum, Charlotte Hise, Aurora Barnum and Gwen Barnum



Sunday, February 23rd - Pastor Rich provided Special Music, singing "Go Light Your World" by Chris Rice



Church Council Minutes January 23, 2025

Members present: Roy Alden (chair), Pastor Rich Rego, Diane Fitzpatrick, Mary Lou Brown, Cheryl Martin, Debbie Barnes, Bobbi Pelletier, Melonie Carlson, David DeMerchant

Opening Devotion: Pastor Rich offered a prayer.

Discussion Question: Roy asked us to think positively for the future of Gray Memorial and suggest ideas to be considered. Diane suggested that we begin making something for the children a priority. It could perhaps be a special children's moment in the service where the children would be invited forward for a special time, be it a mini

lesson on the gospel reading for that day or a short time to share a story with them. Another suggestion was perhaps a junior church time downstairs when the time for the sermon comes in the service. Roy suggested we reinstate the practice of Del singing "Let Them Come" as the children are being called forward for their children's moment. Roy suggested that a committee be formed to brainstorm ideas for getting a program started for the children. Cheryl, Diane, Melonie, and Roy volunteered to serve. Cheryl will offer an invitation to the congregation on Sunday during the announcements time.

Financial Statements: Reports from Bobbi and Shirley were distributed and reviewed. Bobbi reported that the 2024 Mission Shares are paid in full! Gray has \$924.51 in the bank as of the end of December. Bobbi mentioned that Jud sees a need for repairs to our large BBQ grill that is used for chicken BBQs in the summer. She suggested that we designate any monies over \$1,000 raised at monthly dinners be put towards the needed repairs. Bobbi also talked about the dinners that Colleen and Jud are preparing and delivering to the homeless shelter in Presque Isle two Fridays a month. Meals are prepared to feed fifty people and she has offered to reimburse them for their costs from a “Community Support” fund that was established for ministries such as theirs. Bobbi suggested that we invite our congregation to help by donating to the Community Support Program to help offset the cost of the items purchased to provide the meals. Melonie reported that we had a successful stewardship drive and that it would be ongoing throughout 2025.

Trustees Report: Dave Demerchant reported on several projects that the Trustees have identified that need to be done.

- Cash in a CD to put \$8,000.00 in the pastor’s moving fund.
- The washing machine in the parsonage needs to be replaced.
- Ceiling tiles in the parsonage living room need to be replaced.
- The upstairs floors in the parsonage are in bad shape and need to be replaced with laminate flooring.
- The outside emergency bell needs fixing.
- Decisions need to be made about the pipe organ once Margaret has moved, unless we find another organist right away. Margaret had suggested forming a special committee whose sole responsibility would be the upkeep of the organ. The committee members would need to have knowledge of the workings of the organ. Another possibility suggested by the Trustees was to “put the organ to sleep”. After much discussion on the organ, it was suggested that the Trustees form the committee that was recommended by Margaret.

Pastor Rich’s Time: Pastor rich reported on the updated Safe Sanctuary document that will be called “Safer Sanctuary”. This new document will include older adults and disabled folks in the congregation. The document will be voted on at the February meeting and will be distributed to the Church Council, Trustees, and SPRC. He also mentioned the need for a Transition Workshop to be held to prepare for a change in pastors. Pastor Rich also mentioned the newly formed Wesley Covenant Group as one whose mission is to build relationships and pray for each other. He also mentioned the need for a bereavement group to be formed. We have lost many members and there are many people needing a support group.

Roy expressed his pleasure in the positive growth that our church has experienced in the past three years and prays that we can keep positive things happening as we move forward when our new pastor arrives.

Diane Fitzpatrick, Secretary

Church Council Minutes February 20, 2025

Members Present: Roy Alden (chair), Pastor Rich Rego, Cheryl Martin, Debbie Barnes, Shirley Bowman, David DeMerchant, Diane Fitzpatrick, Melonie Carlson, Bobbi Pelletier

The meeting was opened at 1:00pm with a prayer by Pastor Rich.

Discussion Question: How are we engaging new people attending our worship services?

Many ideas were shared including: welcoming new people and inviting them to coffee fellowship, asking them how they came to attend for the first time, showing that we are a family oriented and friendly church, point out the new

opportunities for children that will soon be happening, let them know that this is a good place to learn about God, discover their gifts, and discern how God is calling them.

Next Step: How do we promote and grow the church?

Pastor will ask from the pulpit who is visiting and allow them to introduce themselves or be introduced by someone sitting beside them, make sure newcomers receive a visitor bag, members of the congregation should go to visitors following the worship service to engage them, tell them what you love about this church, invite them to coffee fellowship.

Financial Statements:

Shirley shared her monthly report and highlighted special funds. She reported that as of the end of January, we have had a total of \$19,611.00 contributed.

Bobbi then shared her report and highlighted several areas of concern. She is not receiving statements or receipts from Dead River for deliveries. The Trustees will discuss this at their next meeting to see if the problem can be resolved or consider switching to another company. She also raised a concern about being able to cover payroll expenses for February due to a shortage in available funds. Pastor Rich suggested that the existing youth account that has been carried over for many years could be used toward paying operating expenses. This account currently has over \$8,000.00. Bobbi also mentioned that Judson told her the Trustees have access to a fund that we've used before that was created to cover operating cost shortfalls. Roy recommended that we run the deficit. Another item that Bobbi highlighted is the new Maine Paid Family and Medical Leave Act. Beginning on January of this year, premiums must be deducted from each salaried person's pay at a rate not to exceed 0.5 percent. A motion was made by Melonie and seconded by Cheryl to make the deductions on a monthly basis.

Education Committee: Cheryl reported that the newly formed committee met on February 19th and brainstormed on ways to develop a program for the children in our church. She will speak on this at Sunday's worship service. Included in her report will be the need for all people who will be working with the children to have a background check done and a review of the Safer Sanctuary document.

Debbie Barnes asked about a Transition Team recommendation. Pastor Rich will ask D.S. Rick McKinley about this. Dave DeMerchant reported that the Trustees have purchased a new washing machine for the parsonage, the outside bell for the sprinkler system has been fixed, and snow will be removed from the roofs of the portico, parsonage porch, shed and garage before it rains next week.

Pastor Rich's Report:

- He plans to integrate spiritual development and Henri Nowen's third book on discerning the Holy Spirit in our everyday lives into the Wesley Covenant Group. This book may also be extended to others as a book study.
- Aurora's Confirmation class continues and she will be confirmed on Palm Sunday, April 13th. Aurora will make a bulletin insert with her artwork. She will be presented a Bible engraved with her name as a Confirmation gift. A special coffee hour will be held afterwards with special cookies being provided by her sister, Gwen.
- On Tuesday, March 4th, a Shrove Tuesday Pancake Supper will be held. Following the supper, Pastor Rich would like to invite anyone interested in receiving a disposition of ashes to move into the sanctuary. This is to make it possible for folks attending the supper who will not be able to attend the Ash Wednesday Service to receive the ashes.
- Wednesday, March 5th: A prayer vigil will be held from 9:00am until noon. An Ash Wednesday Service will be held at noon.
- Week of March 24th: Andover Organ company will come to inspect, update, and repair the organ.
- March 25th: The elevator inspection will be done.
- March 30th will be Pulpit Exchange Sunday. Pastor Rich will be at the Mapleton church and Joyce Kang will be here at Gray Memorial.
- Pastor Rich and Karen will be in Boothbay Harbor to attend a funeral from April 3 – 6. We will need coverage for Sunday's service.

- The week of April 14th through the 18th: Ecumenical Holy Week services will be held at noon. Pastor Rich will preach on Friday.
- The clock and tower inspection will be done on April 16th.
- We will have a Good Friday evening service at 6:00pm, April 18th.
- April 20th: Easter sunrise Service at the Caribou Nursing Home grounds at 6:00am.
Easter Breakfast at Gray at 6:45 or 7:00am until 8:00am.
Easter Egg Hunt for all ages from 8:00 to 9:00am.
Easter worship service at 10:00am, a celebration of Resurrection, Glory, and Sacred Music. This will be Margaret Cyr's last day with us. A special cake will be served in the library. (no coffee fellowship in the fellowship hall).
- April 21st through April 27th will be a vacation week for the Regos. Will need pulpit coverage for April 27.
- May 1st and 2nd will be his last DCOM meeting.

The next meeting will be held on March 20th at 1:00pm.

Diane Fitzpatrick, Secretary

Committee/Group Reports provided during February:

Aroostook Cluster of the United Methodist Churches Meeting Minutes for February 6, 2024

The meeting came to order at 9:00 am with the following present via Zoom. Victor Han, Mary Miller, Paula Lilley, Sara Hill, Rich Rego, Sue Michaud, Joyce Kang, Carolyn Kimball, Melonie Carlson, Tracy Reeves, and Sue Brown.

Victor welcomed everyone and Sue M. led us in a time of devotions based on grace.

Secretary's Report

The minutes of the January 9th meeting were presented. Motion to approve the minutes as presented was made by Carolyn and seconded by Sara. Motion carried unanimously.

Treasurer's Report

Paula reported that there has been no activity on our account this month. Our current checkbook balance is \$453.10. Motion to approve the report was made by Joyce and seconded by Mary. Motion carried unanimously. Thank you, Paula.

2024 St. Apollonia Festival of Trees

Sue has reached out to those who are willing to help decide on a theme and make plans for this year's festival. Due to illness, Sue has not followed up...but will soon!

Pulpit Exchange

Those who are willing (available) will participate in Pulpit Exchange on March 30th. Stetson Memorial is already covered by DS Rick McKinley on that day. Victor will check with everyone and share a list of tentative places of exchange via email prior to our next meeting.

Aldersgate Day Service

Saturday, May 24th is Aldersgate Day. Tracy has put together a draft and will continue to finalize the service. We will bring ideas for how to use the offering from that service. Please let Tracy know of any music/dance that your church would be willing to share at this service. Names for Discipleship Recognition need to be provided by our April meeting in order to prepare certificates. Discipleship Recognition Award this year at the Aldersgate Day Service. (Pastors/SPRC are asked to provide a name for this recognition from their respective churches.)

Sharing Mission and Outreach Ideas

Joyce has it on her heart to work with the youth in some manner. Tracy shared that Grant has committed to do 25 meals in 2025, and are well on their way. Rich shared that Gray Memorial has been providing meals to the shelter in Presque Isle. The folks there are in talks with other Caribou churches to discuss how to provide food in Caribou where there is no shelter. They are also in discussions with local officials with what is necessary to become a warming shelter – what stumbling blocks, liabilities, etc. Victor delivered money and goods to the shelter in Presque Isle on behalf of Houlton, Hodgdon, and Mars Hill. Kids at Houlton and Hodgdon collected funds to help out at the Northern Lighthouse in Mars Hill. Lidstone provided food for the warming shelter last week as well as warm hats, mittens, and other items. Victor asked if any of our churches had an ongoing relationship with DHHS (foster children, adoptees, etc.). Melonie discussed Gray’s pen pal program and how to indirectly foster students through the high school years. They currently support 14 (high-risk) high school and 1 college student. Melonie suggested that this could also be done between nursing home folks and high school students.

New Business

Spring Gathering

It was decided to meet at Grant Memorial UMC at 2:00pm on June 8th. We will share a potluck meal as we bid Godspeed to Tracy and Rich on their respective retirements.

Joys and concerns

After sharing joys and concerns, Victor led us in prayer.

Next meeting: Thursday, March 6th via Zoom at 9:00am

Devotions for next meeting: Mary

Meeting adjourned at 10:03 am.

Respectfully submitted,

Sue Brown

Secretary

Aroostook Cluster Council of United Methodist Churches

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FINANCE & STEWARDSHIP REPORTS:

From Financial Secretary:

The following is the total church offering for January:

Regular Offering	\$16,861.00
<u>Loose Offering</u>	<u>244.00</u>
Subtotal-Regular Offering	\$17,105.00

Reimbursements:

Upper Room	15.00
<u>Education - Discovery</u>	<u>10.00</u>
Subtotal-Reimbursements	\$25.00

Special Funds for Church Use:

Prayer Shawl	120.00
Coffee Fellowship	97.00
Bottle Redemption	10.00
Italian Supper	1,334.00
Robert Locke Memorial	325.00
Mission Shares	500.00
<u>NOW Committee</u>	<u>50.00</u>
Subtotal Funds for Church Use	\$2,436.00

Special Funds Not for Church Use:	
Caribou Ecumenical Food Pantry	25.00
Human Relations Day	20.00

Subtotal Funds Not Church Use \$45.00

Grand Total: \$19,611.00

From Treasurer:

Beginning Balance	\$924.51	
2025 Operating income	17,105.00	
Bottle Redemption	10.00	
Fuel Fund (Heating Oil)	2,327.55	
Italian Supper Proceeds	1,000.00	
Interest	1.95	
Less EFT fee	(34.04)	VANCO fees (EFT deposits)
<u>Less Expenses</u>	<u>(19,651.68)</u>	
Ending Balance	\$1,683.33	

Total "Special Funds for Church Use", which included many lines for various donations, total \$5,698.03. The "Special Funds NOT for Church Use" total \$90.08. Details are available in complete report packages available at the church.

* \$25,000.00 invested with Thompson/Hamel LLC for Memorial Garden on June 29, 2017. Investment cost of \$1,073.78; withdrew \$3,000 in March 2021 & \$3,000 in May 2023; as of January 31, 2025, on-line report shows ending value = \$26,765.63.

The Capital Account Money is as follows as of January 31st: Previous Balance - \$37,488.18; Deposits - \$1.61; No Expenses; Current Balance - \$37,489.79. (Includes funds earmarked for Furnace Fund - \$5,397.33; Emergency Fund Donations = \$21,104.23).

Expenditures for January 2025:

Programs:

Education	\$ 74.00
Office	731.81
NOW Team	35.00
<u>Programs Sub-Total</u>	<u>\$ 840.81</u>

Trustee Expenses:

Church Utilities	\$4,262.10
Parsonage Utilities	787.77
Telephone/Internet	194.96
Property Insurance	1,707.43
Snow Removal	960.00
Maintenance/Cleaning	573.70
<u>Technology</u>	<u>16.95</u>
<u>Trustee Sub-Total</u>	<u>\$8,502.91</u>

Staff-Parish Relations Expenses:

Pastor's Salary	\$4,420.00
<u>Health Insurance</u>	<u>1,788.83</u>
Pastor's Total Comp	\$6,208.83
Choir Director	200.00
Treasurer	166.67
Church Office Administrator	833.33
<u>Custodian</u>	<u>1,625.00</u>
Total Other Salaries	\$2,825.00

Other Expenses:

Guest & Substitute Staff	\$200.00
<u>FICA</u>	<u>241.61</u>
Total Other Expenses	\$441.61

Sub-Total SPRC Expenses \$9,475.44

New England Conference:	
Pastor Pension Benefit	832.52
NEC Total	\$ 832.52
Grand Total Expenses	\$19,651.68

Weekly Average Needed for 2025: \$4,282.62 (52 Sundays)
 Mission Shares = \$2,387.33/mo. As of EOM January. 1 month behind - \$2,387.33.
 Note: Dead River bills for church also include charges for propane deliveries
 Balances as of January 21: Church = \$655.10; Parsonage = (\$1,626.48)

2025 YTD REVIEW – January 2025	
Annual Budget	\$222,696.29
Required Monthly	\$18,558.02
Required Weekly	\$4,282.62

January:
 Target = \$18,558.02; Beginning Operating Fund Balance (Jan only) - \$924.51; Operating Fund Income from F/S YTD - \$17,105.00; Special Funds Used for Operating Fund Expenses YTD = \$3,337.59; Total Expenses YTD - \$19,651.68; Unpaid Mission Shares = \$2,387.33.

An aggregate of in-person and virtual attendance shows monthly average of 88 and 88 YTD.

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NOW Team Meeting - February 12, 2025
Nurture - Outreach - Witness

In attendance: Sandy Pethick, Bobbi Pelletier, Kathy Panaro, Melonie Carlson, Cheryl Martin, Alaina Pethick, Ruthann Weeks
 Absent: Karen Rego, Rhonda Cyr, Pastor Rich Rego

Meeting was called to order at 10:06 am.

Opening Prayer - Cheryl
 (Ruthann will do the opening prayer next month.)

Treasurer’s Report -

Cheryl provided the following report.

Treasurer’s Report January 28, 2025:	
Beginning Balance	\$3708.07
12-31-24 Interest	\$0.63
12-23-24 Christmas donation to Caribou Ecumenical Food Pantry (Check #538)	(\$800.00)
1-20-25 Reimbursement to Roy and Beth Alden/ return trip from Boston	(\$312.66)
Balance 1-27-25.	\$2596.04

Gift Card Update 1-27-25

2 Hannaford gift cards \$50.00 each
 1 restaurant gift card \$50.00
 1 Visa Debit card (original value \$100.00) available balance \$55.59

Discussion took place about the gift cards and whether to hang on to them, replenish them, etc. There is a great need at the food pantry. Bobbi made a motion to give the remaining gift cards (except the restaurant card) to Ruthann Weeks for use at the Caribou Ecumenical Food Pantry. Alaina seconded the motion, the motion passed.

Ruthann made a motion to accept the Treasurer's Report. Kathy seconded, the motion passed.

Camp Mechuwana

Alaina presented two letters written by Aurora and Gwen Barnum requesting sponsorship to Camp Mechuwana. Aurora would like to attend the Middle/High School Creative Arts Camp from July 20-24. Gwen would like to attend the Elementary Creative Arts Camp from Aug. 3-7. The cost of each camp is \$500. Ruthann made a motion to reimburse Alaina for the cost of these camps (\$1000). Sandy seconded the motion, the motion passed. There was a follow up discussion about the possibility of splitting the cost with the Youth Ministries Fund.

Shrove Tuesday - March 4

There was some discussion about the Shrove Tuesday Supper. It was unknown at the time of the meeting whether the Guest Services Team would be sponsoring the event. The NOW Team concluded that we would be willing to sponsor the event if no other committee is doing so. *Update: The Guest Services Team is sponsoring this event. Please see a recent email from Bobbi for details on how the NOW Team can assist.*

Tablecloths - Fellowship Hall

We have all had an opportunity to take a look at the sample tablecloths in the Fellowship Hall. Bobbi moved to purchase 12 of the blue/white print tablecloths and possibly 1-2 of a longer size. Ruthann seconded the motion, the motion passed. Further discussion included the possibility of getting additional prints in the future.

Spring Fling / City Wide Yard Sale

The City Wide Yard Sale will be May 16-18 this year. Melonie began discussion about whether we should participate again and if we should continue with the garden theme. The team was in agreement to continue the garden theme and have the plants outside this year. Bobbi made a motion for the NOW Team to participate in the City-Wide Yard Sale this year. Ruthann seconded the motion, the motion passed. Melonie will share this with the Church Council so that other committees will be aware and can participate too.

Public Suppers

The next meal being delivered to the homeless shelter is on Feb. 28. It will be a turkey dinner with apple crisp for dessert. Bobbi asked for volunteers to make a pan of apple crisp. Ruthann, Sandy and Melonie/Cheryl will make the apple crisp. It needs to be delivered to the church on Friday, Feb. 28.

There was a short side discussion at this time about the coffee fellowship responsibilities of the NOW Team. From this point on, we will no longer divide into "even" and "odd" groups. Each month, we will put on the coffee fellowship as a whole group.

Discussion then returned to the suppers for the homeless shelter. Bobbi shared that it costs roughly \$200 a month to provide these meals. She then made a motion to make a \$200 donation to the Community Support Fund to help cover the costs of the meals. Sandy seconded the motion, the motion passed. The team also agreed to revisit this topic as needed.

Updates

- Food Pantry
 - There is a great financial need now that USDA support is no longer available. The pantry is having to make adjustments to the allotments given out. This need should be shared with the congregation.

- Pen pals
 - One pen pal has moved away and several have been out sick in the recent weeks. Melonie is planning to speak with Denise to try and make the hand off of letters a little smoother. The pen pal program was brought up at a recent Cluster meeting. There was interest in starting a program at other churches.
- Visitor Bags
 - Pastor Rich is finishing up the brochure and will send it out soon. The visitor bags will be assembled soon.
- Willow Church (AK) Auction
 - Melonie has reached out to the Alaska church for information on their state gift box auction and is waiting to hear back.

Additional Business

- There was some discussion about the CROC Program sponsorship at the Rec. Center. Is it an annual recurring sponsorship? If we decide to give \$500 this year, will we still have our logo on the booklet? More information is needed.
- The discussion regarding replenishing the pastor's discretionary fund has been tabled until after the appointment of our next pastor.

Closing Prayer - Melonie

Our next regular meeting will be March 5 at 10 am. (*Correction – next meeting is on March 12th*)

The meeting was adjourned at 11:10 am.

Alaina Pethick, Secretary

Gray Memorial United Methodist Church
 United Methodist Men's Club Meeting
 Jan 25, 2025 draft

1. Call to order and opening prayer:

- Members gathered at 0800 at kitchen/fellowship hall.
- Meeting was called to order at 0830 by Pres. Neal Genz. Members present were: Neal Genz, Richard Clark, Jay Bullard, Dave Belyea, Dave DeMerchant, Bruce Fitzpatrick, Roy Alden, Conrad Walton, and Pastor Richard Rego. We also had one guest – Ruthann Weeks, our guest speaker.
- Opening Prayer was led by Richard Clark.
- Meeting was adjourned at 0835 for breakfast of breakfast casseroles, muffins, fruit, juice and coffee.

2. Program: Today's program was by our own Ruthann Weeks. She is the long serving COO of the Caribou Ecumenical Food Pantry (CEFP). She gave us an excellent update on the pantry operations and the ever-increasing need for food in the local area. As some of us volunteers saw first-hand, the refrigerator and freezers were all virtually empty after the Dec. 17th distribution. She said there are a lot of children being served right now and they don't get things such as jams, jellies, marshmallow fluff, and breakfast cereals from Good Shepherd or USDA, so any of those items donated would be much appreciated.

The UMM took up a free will collection to support the CEFP and voted to match that amount from our checking account – the treasurer wrote a check for \$ 260 and presented to CEFP.

3. Prelate's message: Richard gave another very timely presentation based on reading from Acts ch. 16, 18, and 20; John 3-8, and 1 Corinthians 1-4 concerning the holy spirit .God resides in all of us – but the holy spirit faces great obstacles in today's world - wealth, power, technology, and extreme ideologies prevalent throughout the world. More and more the holy spirit is leaned on by bureaucrats and charismatic leaders who

use it to promote themselves. It seems like our church is adapting to the current realities rather than standing firm on its principles.

4. Old Business:

- Secretary's Report: copies of our last meeting minutes – Nov. 23, 2024 draft were emailed and passed out. Accepted as presented.
- President Neal asked again for help with procuring programs and ideas for future meetings. Roy Alden will look back at some recent Kiwanis program speakers and report back.
- Picnic table project – Jud has one rectangular table made and in storage; but has changed his mind on the octagon shape for the parsonage and will make a second rectangular one. One of the major issues with getting these tables in place seems to be how to secure them from theft.

5. New Business:

Treasurer's Report: Checkbook balance as of December 31, 2024: \$ 483.67. A deposit of \$ 650, the net proceeds from the Tree of Lights project, was made on Jan 6th. The current balance is \$ 1,133.67.

6. Other Business:

- President Neal thanked the members for their continued support of the coffee fellowship and noted our dates for the coming year are: Mar 16; May 18; Jul 20; Sept 21 and Nov 16.

Next meeting: Feb. 22, 2025

David Belyea
Secretary

Worship Committee Minutes February 7, 2025

Members present: Bobbi Pelletier (chair), Cheryl Martin, Margaret Cyr, Diane Fitzpatrick, Diana Locke, Richard Clark, Pastor Rich Rego

Devotions were offered by Diana Locke, who shared a lovely reading on prayer.

Minutes from the January meeting were approved as published.

Old Business:

- Bobbi asked if we wish to begin the Mission Project again for the schools in Caribou or if we should consider having our donations go to the homeless shelter in Presque Isle. Bobbi will check with Denise Hamlin to see if the schools still have a need for our donations and report back to this committee.
- February 9th is Scouting Sunday. Dave Belyea and Blane Hartley will be worshipping with us in their scouting uniforms.
- Margaret reported that she has met with the Trustees about the organ and the maintenance of it. She suggested that they form a committee of people who have knowledge of the workings of the pipe organ to oversee its maintenance. There has not yet been any news from the Trustees as to their plans.

New Business:

- Ash Wednesday will be on March 5th. We decided to do the same as last year by holding a prayer vigil from 9:00am until noon, and then a worship service at noon.

- April 13th will be Palm Sunday. Bobbi will order palm crosses for each person, palm fronds, and an arrangement for the altar. This day will also be Confirmation Day for Aurora Barnum. If there is anyone else interested in joining our church in membership on that day, they may be included. Pastor Rich will put a notice in the bulletins.
- Holy week will be April 14th through April 19th. Noon services will be held Monday through Friday of that week. So far, the only clergy scheduled is a Catholic priest on Monday. Bobbi is hoping to have the rest of the schedule by our meeting in March.
- We will hold a Good Friday service at 6:00pm on Friday, March 18th.
- April 20th will be Easter Sunday. Plans are being made for a sunrise service followed by a breakfast, which Bobbi will ask the UMM to prepare. There also may be an Easter Egg Hunt for the children before the regular worship service at 10:00am. This will also be Margaret Cyr's last Sunday with us. She has invited former choir members to join with the choir on that day. Pastor Rich mentioned the possibility of having a cake, punch, and coffee in the library following the service since we don't typically have coffee fellowship on Easter.
- Bobbi reported that she has asked Debbie Barnes to keep her informed on the status of the vacancies that need to be filled (child care worker, organist, choir director).
- May 11th will be Mother's Day and June 15th will be Father's Day. Bobbi will research catalogs that may have gift suggestions for these two special days and will share them at our next meeting.
- Bobbi reported that Ellen Cleaves has offered to pay a year's subscription for children's bulletins that we will begin having available each Sunday for the children in the congregation. It was decided that the Worship Committee will pay for them.
- Pastor Rich reported that our Conference is in "flux" at this time, so it may be a while before we learn who our new Pastor will be upon Pastor Rich's retirement. He also informed us that Gray Memorial will always be a full-time, never a half-time, appointment.

Our next meeting will be held on Friday, March 7th at 9:30am.

Margaret volunteered to offer devotions.

Diane Fitzpatrick, Secretary

LOOK WHAT'S HAPPENING IN MARCH 2025!!!

Saturday 01 8am-9pm Global Church Gathering at Big Bank Theater, Caribou
11:00am Confirmation Class (#5)

Sunday 02 10:00am Worship; Transfiguration Sunday

Monday 03 1:00pm Prayer Shawl Ministry Meeting

Tuesday 04 4:30-6pm Shrove Tuesday Pancake Supper (sponsored by Guest Services)

Wednesday 05 9am-noon Ash Wednesday Prayer Vigil in Chapel

12:00pm Ash Wednesday Service

2:00pm Senior Choir Practice

Saturday 08 11:00am Confirmation Class (#6)

DAYLIGHT SAVINGS TIME STARTS - TURN CLOCKS AHEAD ONE HOUR!!!



Sunday 09 10:00am Worship; First Sunday in Lent

Monday 10 11:30am "Gray Gals" Pot-Luck Luncheon (all women are welcome!); date change!!!!

Tuesday 11 6:00pm Caribou Ecumenical Food Pantry Board Meeting at Pantry

Wednesday 12 10:00am NOW Committee Meeting

12:00pm Wesley Covenant Group

2:00pm Senior Choir Practice

Thursday 13 1:00pm SPRC Meeting

Friday 14 9:30am Education Committee Meeting

Saturday 15 11:00am Confirmation Class (#7)

4:30-6:00pm St. Patrick's Day Public Supper

Sunday 16 10:00am Worship; Second Sunday in Lent

Tuesday 18 1:00pm Trustees Meeting

Wednesday 19 12:00pm Wesley Covenant Group

Thursday 20 FIRST DAY OF SPRING

1:00pm Church Council Meeting

Saturday 22 8:00am UMM Breakfast & Meeting

11:00am Confirmation Class (#8 - final)

Sunday 23 10:00am Worship; Third Sunday in Lent

Monday 24 10:00am DEADLINE FOR ALL NEWSLETTER INPUT

Wednesday 26 12:00pm Wesley Covenant Group

Sunday 30 10:00am Worship; Fourth Sunday in Lent; UMCOR Sunday (special offering);
Aroostook Cluster Pulpit Exchange - Joyce Kang (Hodgdon & Mars Hill UMCs) preaching at Gray Memorial UMC; Pastor Rich preaching at Mapleton UMC