

December 2025

Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus, who, though he existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be grasped, but emptied himself...

Philippians 2:5-7a

Grace and Peace, Gray Memorial UMC!



As the weather turns colder and the snow has begun to fly, I'm reminded of Author Ralph de la Rosa's wonderful insight about his coffee mug. He writes how, when he reaches into his kitchen cupboard to lift that mug out each morning, he is less interested in the mug itself than the empty space it contains. It's that empty space, the space that can be filled with hot coffee (or tea!) that he's really after. So too it is in the life of faith. It is precisely our encounter with emptiness that reveals our great need for God, and the hope that God is here, now. The One who gave you life waits with patient expectation, in every moment of every day, for you to turn your heart to Christ Jesus to fill that longing for the deeper love, love that enters our scene with the gentleness and humility of a newborn babe.

The season of Advent beckons us to hope beyond hope – in the darkest days of the year – that the dawn of a New Day is certain to come. Where else can we encounter the self-emptying love of Christ, the steadfast trust in an ever-present God, but in the empty spaces, in the darkest of nights? How else are we to be filled to the measure of the fullness of God, filled even to overflowing, unless by trusting that the emptiness itself offers the promise and potential to contain such an abundance of joy?

As followers of Christ, the trust we have come to know in him and seek to grow in him, our encounter with God's self-emptying love is all we need to hold one another's joys, our sorrows, our fullness and our emptiness, and through every season the faithfulness of God shines forth with the awesome splendor of the Son. Your faithful contributions – your time, your offerings and tithes, your talents and treasures, your outpouring of love, your commitment to serve on committees, boards, and trustees, to gather in small groups, to serve your neighbors in Christ's love and grace, to sing and offer your hearts in worship and praise, to pray together in silence, to wait on the Lord, to bear one another's burdens – all of it proclaims the fullness of hope we share in God's abundant grace, hope even and perhaps especially in the midst of emptiness. Faith itself is a gift, as is our life together in Christ. Thank you GMUMC for your willingness to walk the road of faith. May you be blessed in this Advent season, and may your cup overflow!

With Love,
Pastor Ben



The Caribou Clock

Publisher - Gray Memorial United Methodist Church
2 Prospect Street, P. O. Box 69
Caribou ME 04736

Date: December 2025

Church Office: (207) 498-2103

Greetings from the Church Office!

We had 21 people at our Thanksgiving Dinner ~ everyone enjoyed a wonderful meal and fellowship! Donations received totaled \$400 which will go towards the church's operating budget expenses.

I am taking a few days of vacation in December, from the 11th until the 18th, to celebrate Christmas and take a "Girls Trip" to New York City for a few days! During that time, Diane Fitzpatrick has agreed to fill-in' for me in the office. I am so grateful that she is willing to do this! 😊

Even though our Annual Church Conference was held so early this year (September 6th), we still have a number of reports that need to be completed and posted to the Portal. If you know you have something outstanding, please work on getting the forms completed soon.

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 Wednesday, December 24th!!!*

Until next month.....

Bobbi Pelletier
Church Office Administrator



November Prayer Requests

Prayer Concerns: Dale, Lu & Debbie Sharp; Leland Frost, Sylvia Akeley, Jeff & Duska Franklin, Richard Carde, Shirley Bowman, Katherine Noyes, Neal Genz, Kris McEwen, Bernice Dickinson, James Stuart, Rodney Nichols, Peter Doody, William Autrey, Seth Hodgkins, Dean & Diana Rauch, Dave DeMerchant, Claire Hodgkins, Kate O'Boyle, Joyce Noble, Kara Thayer, Jere Leary, George McPherson, Cameron Doody, Gabriel Ben Tepherrith, Eva Cyr, Mary Lou Brown, Loise, Carol Stone

Deaths: Family of Rodney Nichols; Family of James Murphy; Family & loved ones of Norma Jowdry; Family of Rosemary Piccolella

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 BEN. WE OFTEN HEAR FROM RECIPIENTS ON HOW TOUCHED THEY ARE THAT WE OFFERED PRAYERS FOR THEM!

REMINDERS

<u>DATE</u>	<u>Greeter</u>	<u>Pianist</u>	<u>Liturgist</u>	<u>Counter</u>	<u>Coffee Fellowship</u>
Dec 07	Judi Greenier	Mary Lou Brown	Del Ramey	Diane Fitzpatrick	Prayer Shawl Ministry
Dec 14	Duska Franklin	Mari-Jo Hedman	Kim Vandenburg	Diane Fitzpatrick	NOW Committee
Dec 21	Richard Clark	Mary Lou Brown	Aurora Barnum	Diane Fitzpatrick	Church Council
Dec 24	Gwen Ellinwood	Mary Lou Brown	David Belyea	Cheryl Martin	No Coffee Fellowship
Dec 28	Ruthann Weeks	Judi Greenier	Melonie Carlson	Cheryl Martin	Worship Committee

Usher Coordinator for December ~ Neal Genz
Communion Stewardess for December ~ Debbie Barnes
Communion Bread for December ~ Del Ramey

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

Akeley, Sylvia – new address: 6 Dewberry Dr., Apt. 28, Presque Isle ME 04769

Barnes, Debbie – new address: 3 Hillside St., Presque Isle ME 04769; delete previous home phone #476-6332

* * December Birthdays & Anniversaries * *

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

Remember your birthday & anniversary by making a special offering!



1 Alaina Pethick
7 Bonnie Ward
11 Elsie Doody
12 Steven Scott
14 Libby Collier, Connie Ennis
15 Dawn Frost

16 Leland Frost
20 Hazel Barnum
23 Diane Fitzpatrick, Alison Kieffer
24 Carol Norsworthy
29 Jody Smith
30 Kathie Forbes



7 Sally & Richard Carde

24 Jeanette & Ken Peters

26 Ruthann & John Weeks

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

<u>Worship Attendance and General Fund Offerings:</u>			
<u>Date</u>	<u>In-Person Attendance</u>	<u>*On-Line Attendance</u>	<u>+ Operating Fund Offering</u>
Oct 26	60	41	\$2,073.63
Nov 02	60	36	\$2,086.25
Nov 09	49	39	\$6,598.00
Nov 16	36 (snow)	35	\$1,505.63
Nov 23	53	24	\$1,473.00
Nov 30	52	(will report next month)	\$2,265.26

+ 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 \$31,191.75. Since then, we received interest of \$1.34 and did not have any payments. Our balance as of November 28th is \$31,193.09 (of that amount, the "furnace replacement donation funds" that remain are \$5,424.27).



The Caribou Ecumenical Food Pantry is in need of the following items: Any type of jam or jelly, marshmallow fluff, adult cereals and canned vegetables. Donations may be brought to the church on Sunday and placed in the marked box in the Narthex OR Monday through Friday from 9am to 12pm. 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).

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The Worship Committee has resumed their Mission Project to provide supplies to the schools. These are the items needed: shampoo, soap, deodorants, toothpaste, notebooks, bookbags, folders, colored pencils. They also have a “snack closet” the kids come to quite often for items like gummies, cheez nips, trail mix; any single serve items, water, juice boxes. Marked boxes are in the library. Please consider donating to this project! Thank you!

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.

We did not pick up donations in November, so proceeds remain at \$1,337.80! 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 the church office (498-2103), 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.

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.

Here are the links for our December services on Sundays at 10:00am and Christmas Eve at 4:00pm:

Dec. 7 - <https://youtube.com/live/hrTA5jX4etQ>

Dec. 14 - <https://youtube.com/live/bch50qLfrlq>

Dec. 21 - <https://youtube.com/live/j74qssdfunU>

Christmas Eve, 4pm - https://youtube.com/live/Lu_xbnaCIv4

Dec. 28 - <https://youtube.com/live/95Xr5hW5zAq>

The Caribou Assembly of God Church offers “Friday Nite Meals” and 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:



Santa's Snowmen & Friends Christmas Shopping Event with Food!
The Guest Services Team is sponsoring this event on Saturday, December 13th from 8am to 4pm.

Here is the list of what will happen during the day:

Breakfast: 8am - 10am; Lunch with Santa 11:30am - 1pm

Kid's Penny Sale: 10am - 4pm (Ages 4-14); Gifts for parents and siblings; some school supplies.

Christmas decorations and presents for all! We will have a lot of snowmen for sale! Door Prize.

Silent Auction - Decorated Christmas Tree & Ethan Allen Rocking Chair and MORE!

Come talk to Santa 1-4pm. GREAT PHOTO OPS!

The NOW Committee is again sponsoring this year's "Angel Tree"! The tree was set up for Sunday, November 30th and all of the "angel ornaments" giving the gender, age and gift ideas were taken! There was a list that we asked you to sign so we know who has taken each ornament – one ornament (#11) was not signed for. Please call the church office and let Bobbi know you have it! All gifts must be returned to the church no later than Sunday, December 14th and remember to attach the "angel ornament" to the wrapped package or bag. We will also accept monetary donations to help school families in need. Thank you for supporting this very meaningful project for deserving children each year! 😊



PICTURES FROM OUR WORSHIP SERVICE ON SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 23RD
(photos taken by Melonie Carlson)



During the Children's Time, Pastor Ben sang the song "Tell the People I Love Them" and the children joined him!

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Announcement from our Staff Parish Relations Committee (SPRC):

Gray Memorial has an immediate opening for a Financial Secretary. Shirley Bowman has expressed her desire to step down from this position and move on to other plans. Shirley has done a wonderful job over the last three plus years as well as during a previous tenure. She will be greatly missed in this position.

The Financial Secretary position oversees the tracking and reporting of financial gifts to Gray Memorial. It requires weekly deposit reports, a monthly report to the Church Council, two reports annually to donors, and tracking the results of the annual stewardship campaign, all using a computerized software program. Training assistance would be provided. The position also requires a general knowledge of bookkeeping, a detail-oriented work standard as well as an ability to maintain very strict privacy about individual donors and their accounts. The Financial Secretary is expected to attend the monthly Church Council meetings to address any issues brought up relative to the monthly reports.

If you, or anyone you know, might be interested in this position a formal job description and/or a job application can be requested from the church office or from any SPRC member (Melonie Carlson, Cheryl Martin, Kathy Panaro, Dave Belyea, Mary Lou Brown, or Debbie Barnes).

When you have a chance, please express your thanks to Shirley for the great job she has done for our church and wish her many blessings in her future.

Debbie Barnes, SPRC Chair

TREE OF LIGHTS ORDER FORM

The United Methodist Men are sponsoring a "Tree of Lights" that can eventually have approximately 400 white lights lit and be on display outside the church.

You may "purchase" a light for \$5 and as the lights are "sold", the lights will be lit! Our hope is that all the lights will be "sold" by Sunday, Dec 21st.

Please complete the form below and proceeds will go to the UMM. Payment to the church is due by Sunday, Dec 21st.

Please make checks payable to Gray Memorial UMC and indicate "Tree of Lights" in the memo line.

Number of lights: _____ @ \$5.00 each Total _____

In Memory of: _____

In Honor of: _____

By: _____

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FLOWERS FOR CHRISTMAS SEASON

The Worship Committee is offering people the opportunity to purchase their own plants/flowers and bring them to the church for display during the Christmas Season.

Flowers are to be brought in or delivered from 9am – 12pm or at 1:00pm on **Friday, December 19th** when Worship Committee members are here to arrange them for the December 21st & December 24th Services. If the following information is provided by **Tuesday, December 16th**, a list will appear in the bulletins for the December 22nd and December 24th services:

IN MEMORY OF: _____

IN HONOR OF: _____

BY: _____

PLEASE COMPLETE THIS FORM AND RETURN TO THE CHURCH OFFICE BY TUESDAY, DECEMBER 16th!



Church Council Minutes November 20, 2025

Members Present: Pastor Ben Daggett, Judi Greenier, Diane Fitzpatrick, Bobbi Pelletier, Debbie Barnes, Richard Clark, Cheryl Martin, Melonie Carlson

The meeting was opened by Judi, who was filling in for Roy Alden.

Pastor Ben offered a lovely opening prayer.

Open Discussion Question: Cheryl shared Roy's suggestion on how we can apply the "puzzle" that Cheryl recently preached about to our own experiences at Gray Memorial. Key points from the discussion were: Our puzzle is not complete, God is at the center of our puzzle, encouraging the men of Gray to connect with God on a deeper level, and resting in God is where we have our strength.

The minutes from the October meeting were accepted.

Celebrations:

Congratulations to Pastor Ben on being accepted for ordination as an elder by The Board of Ordained Ministry!! The Harvest Supper was a great event that was well attended and received many compliments. The church's response to the Cookie Booth at the Arts and Crafts festival was wonderful. Many people stepped up to the plate to provide cookies! Our Cluster gathering in Houlton was well represented by nine churches! This event made the headlines in The UM Catalyst weekly newsletter! Our NOW committee is working on decorations for our Cluster tree at the St. Appolonia "Festival of Trees" event to be held in Presque Isle. The theme of our tree is "Fruits of the Spirit".

Committee Reports:

Bobbi presented the financial reports. The monthly financial report for October shows a deficit of \$5,764.69 in Operating Budget funds. However, there is money in the "Special Funds for Church Use" that can be used to offset

some of the deficit and will probably be used in November. If not for the many “Special Funds” accounts that are held in the checking account, we’d unfortunately not have enough money in the checkbook to pay our bills.

Bobbi gave everyone the proposed 2026 budget spreadsheet and noted that the Worker’s Comp figure will not be known until May or June and the Pastor Pension Benefit has not been calculated yet, so this proposed budget may change. These two amounts are not something our church can change, so it should not prevent us from approving the proposed budget. Also, the Mission Shares are now reduced from three separate lines in the budget to just one line. The group went through the budget lines for the various Programs - Most committees stayed the same as last year in their budget proposals. The Trustees have had to increase many of their lines. Mission Shares have been reduced for 2026. As of the end of October, we are seven months behind in paying our Mission Shares. Bobbi asked Judi if the Trustees have discussed withdrawing money from one of the permanent funds and she said she did not think they had as yet. The request for funds from the Permanent Fund would need to be made to the Trustees and the decision to do so would need to be officially approved by the Board of Trustees. *(Note: This was brought up during the Trustees’ October meeting.)*

For SPRC, after some discussion, Debbie suggested leaving the Church Office Administrator’s salary at \$10,000 instead of the proposed \$11,000; also, the Treasurer’s compensation be increased to \$3,000 instead of the \$2,000 that was proposed. These changes offset each other. The proposed 2026 budget, with these changes, totaled \$230,347.20. Melonie moved to accept the amended budget (no change to the original bottom line) and any unforeseen changes that may occur. Debbie seconded the motion and all were in favor. This proposed budget will be presented to the congregation on Sunday, December 7th for discussion and a vote.

Nominations:

There are several committees in need of new members. Discussion was held on how to fill these positions so that we can meet after the worship service on November 30th to prepare a final list to present to the Charge Conference being held on December 7th.

New Business: Judi shared a report from Jud about a gentleman named Leonard Clyburn who owns property on the Strickland Road that he may wish to donate to our church. There is a potential buyer for the property, but should that fall through, he would like to donate the property to our church. Further research will be done on this proposal.

Pastor Ben offered another lovely prayer as a closing to our meeting.

We will next meet on November 30th to vote on the Nominations Committee report, with our next regularly scheduled meeting to be held on Thursday, December 18th at 1:00.

Diane Fitzpatrick, Secretary

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Church Council Minutes
November 30, 2025

Members Present: Judi Greenier, Neal Genz, Pastor Ben Daggett, Bobbi Pelletier, Diane Fitzpatrick, Melonie Carlson

The meeting was called to order at 11:30am by Judi Greenier, who was filling in for Chair, Roy Alden. Pastor Ben then offered a lovely opening prayer.

This special meeting was called to discuss and vote on the report of the Committee on Nominations. Bobbi reported that Debbie Nichols is willing to continue as an Alternate Lay Member to Annual Conference. Pam Thompson has agreed to serve on the SPRC. Openings remain for a position on the audit committee, and chairperson of the SPRC.

Pastor Ben reported that he will be discussing the SPRC chair position with a possible candidate this week and is in hopes of having the position filled by December 7th.

Bobbi said she will wait until Friday to publish the report in case some of the vacant positions are filled.

Melonie moved that we accept the proposed slate of committee members that we have thus far and accept any additions that may be made from the floor at the worship service on December 7th. Neal seconded the motion and all present voted in favor. Bobbi noted that Debbie Barnes and Cheryl Martin are also in agreement, though they could not attend the meeting. Bobbi asked that Pastor Ben present and explain this report before the vote is taken by the congregation on December 7th.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:50am.

Diane Fitzpatrick, Secretary

Committee/Group Reports provided to the Church Council during November:

Aroostook Cluster of the United Methodist Churches Meeting Minutes for October 30, 2025

The meeting came to order at 9:00 am with the following present via Zoom. Victor Han, Paula Lilley, Sue Michaud, Joyce Kang, Melonie Carlson, Ben Daggett, Nicholas Perez, Sara Hill, Mary Miller, James Choi, and Sue Brown.

Victor welcomed everyone and led us in devotions. Victor shared artwork entitled Crucifixion painted in the 16th Century by Matthias Grunewald. Victor shared the story that the artist painted this for patients suffering from an extremely unbearably painful condition at that time. The message: Christ suffers with you. Karl Barth had a reproduction of this artwork in his study to always point to Christ in his life. Victor has a printed copy as a reminder that Jesus took all the blame for all of us. Victor closed with prayer.

Secretary's Report

The minutes of the October 2nd meeting were presented. Motion to approve the minutes as presented was made by Nicholas and seconded by James. Motion carried unanimously.

Treasurer's Report

Paula reported that our current checkbook balance is \$538.10. There has been no activity since last we met. Motion to approve the report was made by James. and seconded by Sue B. Motion carried unanimously. Thank you, Paula.

2025 St. Apollonia Festival of Trees

After much discussion, and pursuant to a new policy by the Festival Committee, it was decided to gather all gift cards and give them in a single package to the Festival Committee to provide to the winner of the tree. Melonie will get a sign made to place under the tree to indicate that the gifts are all gift cards. Sue B. will type a list of the types of gift cards. Please let Sue know the names of businesses (i.e. Dead River, Hannaford, whatever) if possible before December 1st.

Pulpit Exchange
Tabled until January.

Fall Cluster Service
Our Cluster service will be held at Houlton UMC on Sunday, November 2nd at 3:00pm. Victor is putting the final touches on this service and will send out the information to everyone. Discussion around possibly including additional congregational singing. The offering will be given to Mission Reach - the street ministry in Brazil shared with us by Anderson Soares. Fellowship potluck meal will follow the service. The pickup choir will sing "Great is Thy Faithfulness."

Sharing Mission and Outreach Ideas
Ben shared positive news about the property across the street from Gray Memorial that houses many homeless folks. As Ben and others have been praying for this situation, one gentleman who lives there invited Ben in and introduced Ben to the others. This man of faith is working with Ben to help reach those there with the love of Christ. Ben asked that we all hold them in prayer as Ben continues to work with these folks struggling with so much trauma in their lives.

Melonie mentioned that we might consider snacks for school children as in the current climate, some children will come to school unable to bring snacks.

Sue B. shared that Lidstone has been asked by the local school nurse to provide sweatpants for young school children.

Mary (and Victor) shared about Houlton UMCs provision of a soup meal once a week (Fridays) for anyone. It will provide food and community as well.

New Business

Service with Bishop Bickerton
Tabled until the new year.

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

Next meeting: Thursday, January 8th via Zoom at 9:00am

Devotions for next meeting: Mary

Meeting adjourned at 9:55 am.

Respectfully submitted,
Sue Brown
Sue Brown
Secretary
Aroostook Cluster Council of United Methodist Churches

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Education Committee Minutes
October 15, 2025

The meeting came to order with the following members present: Cheryl Martin (chair), Pastor Ben, Diane Fitzpatrick, Melonie Carlson, Alaina Pethick and Mary Theriault.

Pastor Ben opened the meeting with a prayer.

Melonie made a motion to accept the minutes of the September meeting with Diane seconding it.

New Business

❖ **Sunday School Program**

- Cheryl shared the Sunday school registration form and after a couple of changes are made she will prepare the final copy.
- It was in agreement of the importance of having the children's lessons coordinate with the lectionary.
- It was decided at this point that we will not be order Sunday school materials as the bulletins provided by the Worship Committee are sufficient for now.

❖ **Pray Ground**

- There has been positive feedback about having this space for the children during the worship service. Options for lessening the noise were discussed as well as maybe a need for a larger table at some point.
- A question arose as to what we would do if younger aged children attended and this area wouldn't meet their needs.

❖ **Other**

- Pastor Ben shared that Liturgy means "work of the people" and he brought up some important questions to contemplate and discuss.
What are some ways to revitalize our church community?
Could we be incorporating more teaching modalities in the worship service to meet the variety of learning styles?
How can we further engage the congregation during the service?
Are there more ways we could integrate the children in the service?
- It was decided we would research ways to engage the congregation through readings, skits, etc and share these ideas.

The meeting was closed with a prayer from Pastor Ben.

Our next meeting will be held on November 12th at 9:30. (note - meeting changed to November 10th)

Respectfully submitted,
Mary Theriault

Education Committee Minutes
November 10, 2025

The meeting came to order with the following members present: Cheryl Martin (chair), Pastor Ben Daggett, Alaina Pethick, and Diane Fitzpatrick.

Pastor Ben opened the meeting with a prayer.

The minutes from the October meeting were reviewed and accepted.

- **Confirm membership list**

- Cheryl reviewed the list of members and who was or was not interested in continuing to serve on this committee.

- **Next steps**

- Since the addition of the Pray Ground to the sanctuary, the children's bulletins have not been utilized like before. Perhaps they could be sent home with the children so that they can still have a connection to Christian education.
 - We continued our discussion of ways to incorporate different learning modalities into Sunday services. Cheryl noted we already do many of these things without realizing it. Pastor Ben had an idea for an upcoming Sunday involving an activity with a ball of yarn. Diane offered to help.
 - We will continue to plan monthly for different activities and share ideas as they come up.
 - Cheryl will speak with Debbie Barnes to see if our committee should arrange a list of volunteers to sit with the children at the Pray Ground each Sunday.

Cheryl gave the closing prayer.

Our next meeting will be Wednesday, December 10th at 9:30.

Respectfully submitted,
Alaina Pethick

FINANCE & STEWARDSHIP REPORTS:

From Financial Secretary:

The following is the total church offering for October:

Regular Offering	\$12,872.26
Loose Offering	444.00
Subtotal-Regular Offering	\$13,316.26

Other Sources Operating Fund:	.00
Total Regular Offerings	\$13,316.26

Reimbursements:	
Education-Discovery	22.00

Special Funds for Church Use:	
Prayer Shawl	100.00
Coffee Fellowship	79.98
Bottle Redemption	25.85
NOW Cookie Booth	471.50
Community Support	170.00
Knife Sharpener	51.00
Photography Class	20.00
Memorial Gift; Bessie Thornton	100.00
Memorial Gift: Donald DeMerchant	10.00
Subtotal Funds for Church Use	\$1,028.33

Special Funds Not for Church Use:	
Ecumenical Food Pantry	200.00
World Communion Sunday	55.00
Sub-Total Funds Not for Church Use	255.00
Grand Total:	\$14,621.59

From Treasurer:

Beginning Balance	(1,989.80)	
2025 Operating income	13,316.26	
Bottle Redemption	25.85	
NOW – Cookie Booth	471.50	
Interest	1.32	
Less EFT fee	(32.55)	VANCO fees (EFT deposits)
<u>Less Expenses</u>	<u>(17,557.27)</u>	
Ending Balance	(5,764.69)	

Total “Special Funds for Church Use”, which included many lines for various donations, total \$31,312.99. The “Special Funds NOT for Church Use” total \$100.08. 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 & \$3,000 in Aug 2025; as of October 31, 2025, on-line report shows ending value = \$26,109.01.

The Capital Account Money is as follows as of October 31: Previous Balance - \$31,191.75; Deposits - \$1.34; Expenses = 0.00; Current Balance - \$31,193.09. (Includes funds earmarked for Furnace Fund - \$5,397.33; *Emergency Fund Donations* = \$21,104.23).

Expenditures for October 2025:

<u>Programs:</u>	
Education	\$ (22.00)
Office	303.03
NOW Team	133.00
Programs Sub-Total	\$ 414.03

Trustee Expenses:

Church Utilities	\$793.85
Parsonage Utilities	737.11
Property Insurance	1,394.87
Maintenance/Cleaning	94.03
<u>Real Estate Taxes (parsonage)</u>	<u>3,251.60</u>
Trustee Sub-Total	\$6,271.48

Staff-Parish Relations Expenses:

Pastor's Salary	\$4,420.00
Social Security	500.00
Health Insurance	1,788.83
Pastor's Total Comp	\$6,708.83

Choir Director	200.00
Treasurer	166.67
Church Office Administrator	833.33
Custodian	1,625.00
Maine PFML Deductions	72.96
Total Other Salaries	\$2,897.96

Other Expenses:

Guest & Substitute Staff	\$150.00
FICA	216.11
Workman's Comp	66.64
Total Other Expenses	\$432.75

Sub-Total SPRC Expenses \$10,039.54

New England Conference:

Pastor Pension Benefit	\$832.24
NEC Total	\$832.24
Grand Total Expenses	\$17,557.27

Weekly Average Needed for 2025: \$4,282.62 (52 Sundays)

Mission Shares = \$2,387.33/mo. As of EOM October, 7 months behind - \$16,711.31. (2 months of Mission Shares paid in March; one month paid in August)

Note: Dead River bills for church also include charges for propane deliveries. Balances as of Oct 31: Church = (\$1,212.24); Parsonage = (\$1,486.92)

2025 YTD REVIEW – October 2025

Annual Budget	\$222,696.29
Required Monthly	\$18,558.02
Required Weekly	\$4,282.62

September:

Target = \$185,580.24; Beginning Operating Fund Balance (Jan only) - \$924.51; Operating Fund Income from F/S YTD - \$145,368.21; Special Funds Used for Operating Fund Expenses YTD = \$18,473.61; Total Expenses YTD - \$170,204.19; Unpaid Mission Shares = \$16,711.31.

An aggregate of in-person and virtual attendance shows monthly average of 80 and 81 YTD.

NOW Team Meeting - November 12, 2025

Nurture - Outreach - Witness

In attendance: Kathy Panaro, Bobbi Pelletier, Ruthann Weeks, Melonie Carlson, Cheryl Martin, Charlotte Willey, Alaina Pethick, Pastor Ben Daggett

Opening Prayer - Kathy

(Cheryl will do the opening prayer next month.)

Acceptance of Minutes -

Bobbi made a motion to accept the minutes from the October meeting. Ruthann seconded. The motion passed.

Treasurer's Report - Cheryl

NOW Treasurer's Report - November 12, 2025

Beginning Balance		\$1558.42
9-30-25	Credit Interest	\$0.35
10-2-25	Reimbursement Check	
	Purchase of 2000 'business cards'	
	(Check #556)	(\$108.64)
10-2-25	Seed money for Cookie Booth	(\$100.00)
10-20-25	Deposit slip order	(\$7.25)
	Deposit	\$943.00
	Deposit	\$250.00
	Deposit	\$100.00
	GMUMC operating budget	
	(Check #557)	(\$471.50)
10-31-25	Credit Interest	\$0.42

Deposit Details:

10-20-25	\$943.00 Cookie Booth proceeds
	\$250.00 Don DeMerchant funeral reception
	\$100 Return seed money

Balance 11-12-25 \$2164.80

Respectfully submitted,
Cheryl Martin

Ruthann moved to accept the Treasurer's Report. Bobbi seconded. The motion passed.

NOW Committee 2026 Proposed Budget

Bobbi explained that our 2025 budget was \$800. She explained that the NOW Committee covers the monthly "dues" for the food pantry which is \$50 per month and the cost of the Upper Room booklets. Other miscellaneous costs might also be included, but since we have our own checking account, most the committee's expenses are covered and don't have to be paid using the operating budget. The group agreed to keep the 2026 budget at \$800.

Cookie Booth Follow-Up

Financially, we did very well. The event went fairly smoothly. We are grateful that the congregation really stepped up and helped bake cookies. The dog treats went fast, so we should plan on making more next year. The most popular cookies were soft gingerbread, molasses, date filled, lemon blueberry, fruit flavors in general, and chocolate

chip. Our total proceeds were \$943. Half of that went to the church operating budget and the other half was added to the NOW account.

DeMerchant Reception Follow-Up

The reception went smoothly. There were quite a few in attendance, but we had enough food. The family was very appreciative.

St. Apollonia Tree

This Sunday there will be an announcement asking for donations from the congregation for a gift card that will be our church's part of the cluster tree this year. The theme is Fruits of the Spirit. After some discussion, we decided on a grocery gift card. The NOW Team will match donations up to \$500. We will briefly meet after service on Sunday, Nov. 30 to determine the total amount of the gift card.

Sandy and Melonie have been working on tree decorations. There are a set of 18 white wooden ornaments with faith words on them. They are also making various fruits with paper quilling to be used as ornaments and a tree topper. Bobbi suggested, and the other committee members concurred, that our committee should reimburse the costs of the supplies for these decorations.

Angel Tree/Advent Decorating

Bobbi has asked Denise for a list of children in need for our tree. The tree will be set up along with all the other Advent decorations on Saturday, Nov. 29 at 1 pm. The presents and donations for the Angel Tree will need to be at the church by Dec. 14.

Status Reports

- Food Pantry
 - Ruthann reported that the pantry has been busy, but they have been receiving lots of donations, so they are doing okay. 20 frozen turkeys were purchased for the food pantry at a cost of \$294.87. The NOW Team will cover this expense.
- Photo Class
 - The last class was postponed with a new date TBA. The class has gone well and they are working on creating a final display for the church.
- Penpals
 - The letter drop-off/pick-up schedule is a little off. We need to coordinate to get it fixed. Christmas is coming and penpals are encouraged to think about a gift for their student.

Membership Additions

Charlotte Willey would like to become a member of the NOW Team.

Coffee Fellowship

The NOW Team has Coffee Fellowship on Sunday, Dec. 14.

Additional Business

Pastor Ben shared that the guest speaker from the Children's Museum has had to reschedule her visit to our church. A new date has not been set yet, but he was thinking of the Hope Sunday (first) of Advent – November 30th.

There was a brief discussion of a possible event at the end of January or February. It will probably be a dinner of some kind. The discussion was tabled until our December meeting.

Closing Prayer - Melonie

Our next regular meeting will be December 3 at 10 am.

(We will have a brief meeting after service on Sunday, Nov. 30 regarding the gift card for the St. Apollonia tree.)

Respectfully submitted,

Alaina Pethick

NOW Team Recording Secretary

Gray Memorial United Methodist Church
United Methodist Men's Club Meeting
Oct. 26, 2025

1. Call to order and opening prayer:

- Members gathered at 0830 at kitchen/fellowship hall for breakfast of eggs, sausage gravy and biscuits, fruit, juice, and coffee.
- Opening Prayer was led by Richard Clark.
- Meeting was called to order at 0900 by Pres. Neal Genz. Members present were: Neal Genz, Richard Clark, Dave Belyea, , Conrad Walton, Jay Bullard, Tom O'Neal, Dave DeMerchant, and Del Ramey. One guest was also present – Steve Hughes.

2. Program: Today's program was an excellent presentation by Senior District Executive of the Katahdin Area Council, Scouts USA. He gave us an update on the changes that have taken place at the national level to accept females into the scouting program and that the name change from Boy Scouts of America to Scouts America to reflect that change as well as the reasons for the change. He also gave a summary of the Council and District statistics and some information on the Eagle Scout rank.

3. Prelate's message: Richard gave another exceptional message on communication with God. Several bible passages he used talked about communication, speaking in tongues and foreign languages. Do we need a special language or speak in tongues to talk with God. Would we even recognize or understand that communication? We each have to find our own time and way to communicate with God!

4. Old Business:

Secretary's Report: copies of our last meeting minutes – September 27, 2025 draft were emailed and passed out. Accepted as presented.

5. New Business:

Treasurer's Report: Checkbook balance as of September 30, 2025: \$ 667.88. Accepted.

6. Other Business:

- The setup for the Tree of Lights was set for December 6th after our meeting. Del will supply the tree again this year.
- Voted to contribute \$ 100.00 to Katahdin Area Council, Scouts America. Treasurer will send a check.
- Discussed next meeting dates for November and December. Voted to have one meeting on Dec. 6th.
- President Neal thanked the members for their continued support of the coffee fellowship and noted Nov 16 is our last for this year.

Next meeting: December 6, 2025

David Belyea
Secretary

**Worship Committee Minutes
November 13, 2025**

Members Present: Pastor Ben Daggett, Richard Clark, Gwen Ellinwood, Diane Fitzpatrick, Cheryl Martin, Bobbi Pelletier (chair)

The meeting was opened at 10:30am by Bobbi.

Gwen Offered devotions called "The Gift of Grace you Give Yourself". It was a lovely reading that said that when we give blessing to others, we are blessed ourselves.

The minutes from the October meeting, which had been published in the November newsletter, were approved.

Old Business:

- Bobbi reported that we have not yet been billed for the Red Cross training that was presented for ten people.
- The new projector that we will use to project the announcements on the screen has not yet been ordered. Bobbi reported that the Trustees are still discussing what to purchase, with an alternative to a projector being considered. A large screen TV is a possibility. Pastor Ben updated the latest from Jud. He believes that a roll-up fabric screen that lights up could be used with our existing screen.
- Denise Hamlin has been picking up the boxes of donations for our Mission Project, usually two boxes at a time. It is nice that people are responding so well with their donations!
- Bobbi thanked Beth Alden and Diane Fitzpatrick for the beautiful altar display they created for World Communion Sunday.
- November 2nd was All Saints Sunday. Bobbi gave thanks to Will and Alaina for setting up the projector so that we could show pictures of those being honored on the overhead screen. She mentioned that we did a great job in honoring our saints. Bobbi gave a special thank you to Aurora and Gwen for lighting the candles on the altar during the presentation. The bulletin board created by Wendy Bossie was very nice!
- November 9th was our delayed Laity Sunday. The Ministry Team (Melonie, Cheryl, and Kim) did an OUTSTANDING job on this service! It was nice to incorporate the children as well.
- The November 9th Cluster Service that was held in Houlton was very nice and was well attended. There was great participation by many people. The offering collected will go to Anderson Soares for his street missionary program in Brazil.
- The Advent devotionals have arrived and will be distributed by Bobbi and Diane at the end of the service on November 23rd, as Advent begins on November 30th. One devotional per family will be given.
- We will meet on Saturday, November 29th to decorate the sanctuary for Advent. Bobbi, Claire, Diane, Cheryl, and Gwen will meet at 1:00pm to decorate. The NOW Committee will also be there to assemble the Angel Tree.
- Cheryl volunteered to wrap the Advent candles in blue for this year's color theme.

New Business:

- The 2026 Worship Committee budget was discussed. The 2025 budget was \$1,000.00 and we spent \$715.35 through October. The committee voted to keep the budget the same as last year at \$1,000.00.
- The Weekly Advent Themes will be: November 30th – **Hope**, December 7th – **Peace**, December 14th – **Joy**, December 21st – **Love**. Rather than purchase special bulletins, Bobbi will copy and paste bulletin covers from the internet for each Sunday.
- The Christmas Eve Family Candlelight Service will be held at 4:00pm on December 24th. We will check on the batteries needed for the candles following our meeting on December 4th.
- Bobbi will have bulletin inserts beginning on November 30th for people to sign up for purchasing their Christmas plants. People will be asked to bring their plants to the church on December 19th from 9am – noon, or at 1:00pm. Diane, Cheryl, and Gwen offered to help Bobbi arrange the plants in the sanctuary on December 21st at 1:00pm.

Pastor's Time:

- Pastor Ben discussed doing “something different” on the fifth Sundays of the month in 2026. He will involve the Worship Committee in designing the liturgy for each service. He would like to have us help in thinking of different ways (modalities) of presenting the service. It can be simply an element of the service as opposed to
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the entire service. The committee members present thought this would be a great idea! The 5th Sundays in 2026 will be on March 29, May 31, August 30, and November 29th.

- On November 30th, our guest speaker will be Elise Perrault from The Children's Museum.
- Pastor Ben mentioned a book called **Work and Worship**. The book mentions how having people bring in items for worship that represent their line of work would be meaningful. The book also tells of ancient practices of worship.
- Pastor Ben mentioned that our Bishop will be attending our Cluster service in May.

Other Business:

- Diane reported that it had been mentioned to her that the front of the sanctuary seems very crowded during the distribution of elements during the Communion services. We as a committee went into the sanctuary to discuss where each participant should stand so that there is more space between them and Pastor Ben. A solution was reached that should work nicely.

The next meeting will be held on Thursday, December 4th, at 10:30am. Diane volunteered to offer devotions.

Diane Fitzpatrick, Secretary

LOOK WHAT'S HAPPENING IN DECEMBER 2025!!!

Monday	01	10:00am	"Redeeming Conflict" Book Study (class #3)
		1:00pm	Prayer Shawl Ministry Meeting
Tuesday	02	7:00pm	Caribou Choral Society Practice at Caribou United Baptist Church
Wednesday	03	10:00am	NOW Committee Meeting
Thursday	04	10:30am	Worship Committee Meeting
		3:00pm	Weekly Prayer Service (all are welcome)
Saturday	06	8:00am	UMM Breakfast & Meeting (set up "Tree of Lights")
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Sunday	07	10:00am	Worship; Second Sunday of Advent (Peace)
		11:30am	Special Church Conference following Worship Service to Discuss and Vote on 2026 Budget and Leadership Report
Monday	08	10:00am	"Redeeming Conflict" Book Study (class #4)
		11:30am	"Gray Gals" Pot-Luck Luncheon
Tuesday	09	7:00pm	Caribou Choral Society Practice at Caribou United Baptist Church
Wednesday	10	9:30am	Education Committee Meeting
Thursday	11	1:00pm	SPRC Meeting
		3:00pm	Weekly Prayer Service (all are welcome!)
Saturday	13	11:30am	Senior Choir Practice
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Sunday	14	10:00am	Worship; Third Sunday of Advent (Joy); (Choir sings)
Monday	15	10:00am	"Redeeming Conflict" Book Study (class #5)
Tuesday	16	1:00pm	Trustees Meeting
		7:00pm	Caribou Choral Society Practice at Caribou United Baptist Church
Thursday	18	1:00pm	Church Council Meeting
		3:00pm	Weekly Prayer Service (all are welcome!)
Friday	19	7:00pm	Caribou Choral Society Concert at Holy Rosary Catholic Church, Caribou
Saturday	20	7:00pm	Caribou Choral Society Concert at Grant Memorial UMC, Presque Isle
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Sunday	21	10:00am	Worship; Fourth Sunday of Advent (Love)
			<u>FIRST DAY OF WINTER</u>
Monday	22	10:00am	"Redeeming Conflict" Book Study (class #6; will resume study in January)
Wednesday	24	10:00am	<u>DEADLINE FOR ALL NEWSLETTER INPUT</u>
		4:00pm	Christmas Eve Family Candlelight Service
Thursday	25		<u>FEDERAL HOLIDAY - CHRISTMAS DAY - CHURCH OFFICE IS CLOSED</u>



Sunday	28	10:00am	Worship; 1 st Sunday after Christmas Day
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