



# The Beacon

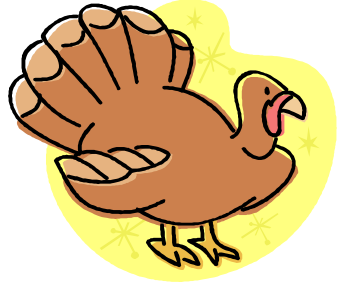
First Congregational Church  
Camden, Maine  
United Church of Christ

November 2011  
Vol. 27, No. 11

## It's Turkey Feather Time!

The turkey is UP! Please plan to pick up your turkey feathers in the Pilgrim Room. Bring in the food items that are designated on the feathers, and help us provide Thanksgiving meals for area families.

**All foods must be at the church no later than 4:00pm on Wednesday, November 16. Food may be dropped off after Monday, the 7th, and left on the stage in the appropriate marked areas.** Please be sure to properly store and mark items needing refrigeration. Let's all make Thanksgiving a day of hearty celebration for some of our needy neighbors.



## From our Cabinet

Congregation Meeting Saturday, November 19  
9-11 a.m., Pilgrim Room

This meeting is a follow-up to our May session. There are two primary discussion topics planned for the morning:

1. Revised church by-laws to better align ourselves and fulfill our goals and visions as outlined through the Church Futures work;
2. Report on the state of buildings from the Facility Planning Committee, an active sub-committee of our Board of Trustees.



## ***Ripples & Reflections***

***Rev. Kevin M. Pleas***

By Pastor Kevin

*Joy does not come from positive predictions about the state of the world. It does not depend on the ups and downs of the circumstances of our lives. Joy is based on the spiritual knowledge that, while the world in which we live is shrouded in darkness, God has overcome the world. Jesus said it loudly and clearly: "In the world you will have trouble, but rejoice, I have overcome the world." The surprise is not that, unexpectedly, things turn out better than expected. No, the real surprise is that God's light is more real than all the darkness, that God's truth is more powerful than all human lies, that God's love is stronger than death.*

From "Here and Now" by Henri J.M. Nouwen

Dear Friends,

The cycle of life here at church is once again at the point of coming full circle. Theologically speaking, the year always begins with the first Sunday of Advent and ends in November with the Reign of Christ. It is, as I've said before, a cycle that is meant to symbolize the whole of human history as seen through the eyes of faith. We are meant to understand that we do not merely live our lives; we live our lives, in all their various seasons, within the grand design of God's creation.

Admittedly, it is sometimes hard to see the hand of God against the backdrop of the world as it is. Life is too often out of whack for us to assume anything like a one to one relationship between God's will and current events; which is, fundamentally, the reason black and white beliefs about God tend to come unraveled when tragedy strikes. Prayers that go unanswered, to all appearances, will either make or break a person's faith. Generally, we'll either come away with a deeper, more

sensitive and more humble understanding of God's nature, or we'll conclude that we've been had.

Nouwen, obviously, discovered a deeper faith. In and through the trials of his own life, he found his way to a joy, "based on the spiritual knowledge that, while the world in which we live is shrouded in darkness, God has overcome the world." I like that. "God has overcome the world." Nouwen doesn't get credit for dreaming it up, but he does deserve recognition for bringing it to our attention. What could be more important than the reminder that the whole world is in God's hands? Just like that great old campfire song: "You and me brother. You and me sister. God's got the whole world in his hands."

Of course, you're not required to believe it. In fact, the whole notion of free will presumes that whether or not you believe it is entirely up to you. For me though, all I can say is that I've had quite a lot of time to consider the various alternatives, and I'm not impressed. Compared to a deep, abiding and joyful faith in God, no life philosophy I've ever come across amounts to a path worth following.

Our adult class has been talking about this lately. One of the things we discover, when talking about God, is that our childhood notions aren't as easily banished as we like to imagine. There persists, in most of us, a desire to use God to control the events of our lives. There persists, an idea that we should be able to curry divine favor through faithful actions, and that God's grace is, at its core, about deserving or not. There persists, a longing to receive whatever we take it into our minds to pray for. And, there persists, in the recesses of our hearts, a sense of disappointment that God isn't really like our childhood notions very much at all.

And yet, once we begin to loosen our grip on the faith of our childhood, if we are open hearted, we will discover that there is more in God, not less. The real surprise, as Nouwen came to understand, is that God's light is more real than darkness, God's truth more powerful than lies, God's love stronger than death. God has, indeed, overcome the world, and that is, indeed, an occasion for joy.

Yours in love,



**Shields Mission Project Committee**  
***A Ministry of***  
**The First Congregational Church**  
**of Camden**  
***Debbi Hitchings***

It is always interesting to observe how the types of requests we receive from our applicants vary over time. There are always the usual requests for rent or utilities but sometimes we will be asked to assist with something a bit more unusual. Lately, it's been BEDS, something that I consider a pretty basic requirement in our daily lives. We've been told of children sleeping on couches or old futons and of adults trying to make do with a small couch or sleeping on just the box spring of a bed.

Last month a case worker came to us seeking assistance for a young couple with a new baby on the way very soon. They slept on the floor of their apartment on an old, thin pad which was both uncomfortable and too small for the two of them. Imagine how difficult it must for a pregnant woman to get a good night's sleep under such circumstances. The woman was employed full time but would soon be on maternity leave meaning that their income would be severely affected. The husband was unemployed. They had been able to purchase the basic necessities for the baby but didn't have the money to buy themselves a proper bed. Shields agreed to share the cost of a queen size mattress and box spring with the referring agency.

I had the good fortune to meet the young man when he and his social worker came by the office. He was so appreciative of our church's generosity to a stranger and so very excited about the birth of their first child.

Once again this year the Shields Committee has been hard at work preparing for our annual sale of alternative gift cards and delicious jams and jellies. The cards are now being produced and will be offered for sale the first three Sundays in December. They are a wonderful opportunity to celebrate the season and to honor your

family, friends and business associates, while at the same time giving help, hope and happiness to a needy person or family in Knox County.

Eric and Beryl Charlton have once again been producing their delicious varieties of jams and jellies and will offer them for sale to benefit Shields. You don't want to miss a chance to stock up on such favorites as gooseberry, blackcurrant, blackcurrant/blueberry, raspberry and rhubarb ginger. We will also have elderberry jelly, blueberry jam and apple butter.

Our church can continue to offer financial outreach because of the support of the congregation and the greater community. (None of our funding comes from the church's budget.) Your kindness assures that our church's mission of reaching out to the community will continue in the years ahead. As always, thank you!



*Our mission: "To help provide less fortunate citizens of Knox County warmth, shelter, food, clothing, transportation, education, childcare, health care etc. and to enable them to become more able to live a productive and self sustaining life."*



*Shields Committee: Betty Bates (Chair), Julianne Edmondson Deb Endl, Bob Garcia, Cate Lamb, Doug Linder, Barbara Pitman, Roberta Walker, Debbi Hitchings (Administrator)*

**From Cate Lamb**  
**Youth & Family Ministries Director**



## SERRV, part of the larger picture.

Our church is always fluid, reaching out to those in need in a variety of ways. As part of our Outreach Committee, the SERRV Committee works to help people in our community and the world.

Here's the story of Abdur from rural Bangladesh.

***“By selling my baskets, I can send my children to school, provide regular meals for my family, and give some small gifts to my wife and children,”*** says Abdur Razzak.



Through basket weaving, Abdur supports his wife and their 3 children who are between the ages of 2 and 13. Before making baskets for SERRV partner Dhaka Handicrafts, Abdur was a farmer on the small plot of land he inherited in rural Bangladesh. While the plot was not large enough to sustain his family, their home remains on the land and his wife grows

chilies and potatoes to supplement their meals.

SERRV works with fair trade organizations as well as small companies, creating a good work environment and training for a variety of products. From a small group of church relief workers helping refugees rebuild after World War II, SERRV has grown into a \$9.5 million fair trade network connecting thousands of artisans in developing countries with customers and volunteers across the United States.

Three times a year we have sales of beautiful handcrafts created by artisans like Abdur. Closer to home, 20% of each sale goes to our own Outreach Programs.

**On December 3 from 9-2 the SERRV Committee** will spice things up by adding local artists to our sale. Fabric arts, jams, jellies and a variety of jewelry is already lined up! We hope you will come by to pick out a special Christmas gift, or perhaps a little something for yourself, from the beautiful variety which will be featured. If you are interested in selling your work, please contact Cate.

Have a wonderful holiday season, and thank you for helping make the world a little brighter,

Cate, on behalf of the SERRV Committee

# **Spaghetti Supper** Save the date!

**With salad, garlic bread, dessert & beverage**

**Friday, December 9, 5:30-7:00pm**

**\$7/adult     \$5, 12 and under**

**Pilgrim Room**

**to benefit Coastal Opportunities**

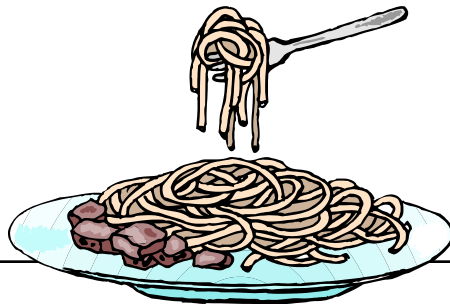
**Special Olympics Team "The Coastal Navigators."**

**Come support Louie, Melvin, and Scott's efforts!**

**Live & Silent Auction**

**For more info or to volunteer, please call**

**Shellie Henry, 354-6925**







## *Christmas Ornament Workshop*

Learn to Create a Beautiful  
Christmas

### *Star Book*

To Benefit  
the Camden Food Pantry

Artist Nan Haid will teach us how to create these lovely Christmas ornaments.

The star books made at the workshop will be sold as ornaments here at church with all proceeds going to the Food Pantry.

Nan will also put together packets with instructions, materials, etc. for everyone to take home.

*Sunday, November 13th  
2-4 p.m.*



Please sign up on the Opportunities Table so that Nan will have plenty of supplies for us.

## A Note from Tom Mueller

Dear FCC Friends,

Thank you all so much for the incredible unexpected gift that you gathered for me, Kristina, and Isabella. I can't begin to tell you what a terrific blessing this is for us, and it will go a long way in helping our household.

I think about FCC every day, and, when I do, the first thing that comes to mind are the people—Kevin and the staff, members of the choir, the congregation, the people who visited Soup Lunches and concerts. I have heard many churches use the phrase “the church is not the building, it's people,” a saying that has been repeated over and over, in so many places. Every church lays claim to this saying, but FCC is the only church I have ever seen that truly **embodies** it!

FCC has so much to offer the world! I am honored to have had the chance to minister in this congregation, and I will always look back on my time in Camden with great happiness.

My favorite hymn is “God Is Here!” (Chalice Hymnal #280),  
And I can't think of a better text for the people of FCC:

“God is here, as we your people  
Meet to offer praise and prayer,  
May we find in fuller measure  
What it is in Christ we share.  
Here, as in the world around us,  
All our varied skills and arts  
Wait the coming of the Spirit  
Into open minds and hearts.”

Thank you again, from the bottom of my heart!  
Blessings,

Tom Mueller  
134 Falmouth St Apt 15  
Greece, NY 14615

**Partners in Health  
TAG SALE**

**Saturday  
November 12**

**8:00 to noon  
Pilgrim Room**



If you have new or almost-new items to donate to the sale,  
please call Mary Amory, 236-3633



**David Dodson**  
**In Concert Sunday, November 6 at 7:00 P.M.**

Camden Congregational Church

**Guests:**

**Denny Williams, Guitar ▾ Michael Nickerson, Bass ▾ Jon Kerr, Banjo**  
**Alan Crichton, Sax ▾ Tom Judge and Susan Groce, Fiddles**  
**Douglas Day and Michael Reeves Singer-songwriters**  
**John and Rachel Nicolas, Hot duo**

Sponsors: Maridadi Jewelry & Fresh Off the Farm

**Red Cross BLOOD DRIVE**  
**Monday, November 28**  
**12:30-5:30pm**



The traditional Thanksgiving Dinner will take place on

**Thanksgiving Day at 1:00 p.m.**

You are all invited to share this wonderful meal with the Church Family.

**Sign up on the Opportunities Table**

where you will also find a list asking who can help the day before and on the day of the dinner. Or who can bring a dessert. The dinner is free and you won't have to bring a thing. So if you're alone or without family this Thanksgiving or just don't have the energy or inclination to cook, join us here for a fine turkey dinner with all the trimmings!

The dinner is sponsored by our Outreach Committee and is underwritten by funds generated by Heavenly Threads. Donations will be gratefully accepted to defray dinner costs and to continue our Outreach Mission.

# The Dove Tree

We'll soon be counting the days until Christmas. Our congregation will again have the opportunity to help make Christmas brighter for some of our less fortunate neighbors.



**Look for our "Dove Tree" on  
Sunday, November 13.**

Each dove will represent a wish for a child, a family gift or cash towards a Hannaford gift card for a Christmas Dinner. Please note that this year the gifts should be returned **unwrapped. Please place the gift in a plastic bag with the dove attached.** Gifts must be dropped off in the church office by

**Sunday, December 4.**

If you would like to donate wrapping materials such as wrapping paper, ribbon, bows, tags, etc., they would be most welcome.





## Peace and Love

Christmas Alternative Gift Cards will be available **for purchase on Dec. 4, 11 and 18th** and are a wonderful opportunity to celebrate the season and to honor your family, friends and business associates, while supporting the work of the Shields Mission Project in our local communities.

For a tax deductible donation of \$5 or more you can choose an attractively designed Christmas card to personalize and send to your honoree.

What better way to share our blessings than by reaching out to help others in this season of hope and love.

# *Ring in the Season*

The annual  
Christmas-By-The-Sea  
Handbell Concert  
will take place in our  
Sanctuary  
Saturday, December 3  
4:00 p.m.



Seating will begin at 3:00 p.m.  
Pre-concert music will begin at 3:30, and the handbell program will  
start at 4:00 p.m. Free-will donations, to benefit Habitat for Humanity,  
will be accepted at the door after the  
performance.

The concert is a cooperative effort of:  
Choral Bells, First Congregational Church (Camden)  
Penobscot Bay Ringers (Camden)  
Pine Tree Academy Bell Ringers (Freeport)  
Timbrel Ringers (Rockland)  
Soloist, Debra Hall, First Congregational Church (Camden)

Mark your calendars now and join us for this  
wonderful concert of seasonal music!  
For more information, please contact Leigh Smith, 230-6628.

## ***From Heavenly Threads***

***Jean Cox & Helen Kuhl***

The leaves are turning color and tumbling down. The vegetable and flower gardens are put to bed. Heavenly Threads is putting away the summer clothes and items and bring out the winter ones. We have a great selection of winter coats and jackets to ward off the chill. Maybe you need a bright scarf, gloves or a hat to go with your outfit. The holidays will be upon us in no time.

At Heavenly Threads, you can find those extra things you need. Blankets, flannel sheets, lots of dishes for your holiday table. Tablecloths



to brighten your table, candle holders and candles as well. We will be putting out Christmas items soon, so come and have a look. Angels, ornaments, Christmas finery are but a few of our goodies available.

Let us not forget the season for being thankful and remembrance of those who served our country. We are thankful for all our volunteers and the time they put in at Heavenly Threads, especially those who filled in willingly as we are going through the process of hiring a new co-manager. We are thankful for the support of the staff of the church and Kevin. And not least we are thankful for the support you as the congregation give us, by your donations, for volunteering, and for the opportunity to be involved with the mission that Heavenly Threads supports.

It is our hope that you all will have a wonderful Thanksgiving holiday with family and friends. We also wish Melissa well in her future endeavors and we all miss her very much. Thanksgiving Blessings from all of us at Heavenly Threads.

# *Christmas Jam and Jelly Sale*

**To benefit The Shields Mission Project**

**Raspberry Jam  
Gooseberry Jam  
Black Currant Jam  
Black Current Blueberry Jam  
Blueberry Jam  
Elderberry Jelly  
Rhubarb-Ginger Jam  
Apple Butter**



**Master jam makers  
Eric and Beryl Charlton & Debbi Hitchings**

**\$5.00**

**On sale at the  
Shields Alternative Gift Card Table  
Pilgrim Room  
Dec. 4, 11, 18  
SERRV Christmas by the Sea sale  
Dec. 3**



## November BIRTHDAYS

11/1	Gail Vincent	11/13	Don Flock
11/3	Ross Holt	11/25	Natalie Hamalainen
11/5	Debbi Hitchings Terry Njaa	11/27	Scott Achorn
11/8	Barbara Davidson	11/28	Mary Wells
11/9	Bob Garcia	11/29	Ron Smith

### Look What's Happening Here Christmas by the Sea Weekend

**Dec. 3, Saturday, 9:00am-2:00pm** SERRV Holiday

Marketplace. Arts and Crafts Sale. Find that perfect gift from our collection of jewelry, foods, and beautiful items for body, soul, and home



**Dec. 3, Saturday, 4:00pm** Ringing in the Season, Handbell concert

**Dec. 4, Sunday, 7:30pm,** Ann Dodson Concert

## November Activities

1 Tuesday, 6:30pm, Kevin's Class

2 Wednesday, 9:15am, Staff meeting; Noon, Soup's On!; 1:00 Prayer Service;  
7:00pm, Sanctuary Choir rehearses

3 Thursday, Noon, Prayer Shawl meets 6:00pm, Boards & Committees meet

4 Friday

5 Saturday

**6 SUNDAY, 9:30am, Worship, Communion; 10:45am, Youth Synod**

**Presentation; 7:00pm, David Dodson Concert**

7 Monday, 7pm, Choral Bells rehearse

8 Tuesday, 6:30pm, Kevin's Class

9 Wednesday: 9:15am, Staff meeting; Noon, Soup's On!; 1:00 Prayer Service;  
7:00pm, Sanctuary Choir rehearses

10 Thursday, Noon, Prayer Shawl meets; 5:30pm, Faith on Tap

11 Friday, **Church Office closed. Happy Veterans' Day**

12 Saturday, 8:00-Noon, Partners in Health Tag Sale

**13 SUNDAY, 9:30am, Worship**

14 Monday, 7pm, Choral Bells rehearse

15 Tuesday, 6:30, Kevin's New Class

16 Wednesday, 9:15am, Staff meeting; Noon, Soup's On!;  
1:00 Prayer Service; 7:00pm, Sanctuary Choir rehearses

17 Thursday, Noon, Prayer Shawl meets; **6:30pm, Cabinet meets**

18 Friday

19 Saturday, 9-11am, All Church Meeting

**20 SUNDAY, 9:30am, Worship**

21 Monday, 7:00pm, Choral Bells rehearse

22 Tuesday, **December BEACON COPY DUE**

23 Wednesday, 9:15am, Staff meeting; **NO SOUP LUNCH**;  
1:00 Prayer Service; 7:00pm, Sanctuary Choir rehearses

24 Thursday, **HAPPY THANKSGIVING, Dinner at 1:00pm**

25 Friday, **Church Office Closed**

26

**27 SUNDAY 9:30am, Worship, 1:30pm, Anderson Inn Chapel Service**

28 Monday, **12:30pm, Blood Drive**; 7:00pm, Choral Bells rehearse

29 Tuesday

30 Wednesday, 9:15am, Staff meeting; Noon, Soup's On!;  
1:00, Prayer Service; 7:00pm, Sanctuary Choir rehearses



First Congregational Church  
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Camden, ME 04843

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## **ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED**

FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH OF CAMDEN, UCC

### **OUR MISSION & VISION**

Our vision is that all people here find a spiritual home, grow in faith, and experience and share God's unconditional love and grace through Christ. As disciples of Christ, our mission is to build a community of faith by learning and living the word of God.

### *To CONTACT US:*

Call the Church Office at 207.236.4821, Monday through Friday, 9:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.

E-mail the Church Office at [conchurch@myfairpoint.net](mailto:conchurch@myfairpoint.net)

**Check out our website: [camdenucc.org](http://camdenucc.org)**