

# The Union Rider

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March 2009

## A thought for Lent: the danger of using your cell phone while driving

by Rev. Bill Meyer

The season of Lent, the time when we are invited to review our year as we journey to Holy Week and Easter once again, will have begun by the time you get this letter. During this season we are invited to do the at times hard work of being honest before God about our spiritual shortfalls, intentional or otherwise. So, here's a pastoral thought and concern for you: as each of us does the work of Lent in our journey to Easter, we might do well to remember a cautionary piece regarding cell phones: don't drive and talk at the same time.

I say this because, as I read in a Times Magazine article recently, we really can do only one thing well at a time. In other words, none of that "multitasking" stuff. When we drive we should drive, when we use cell phones we should be stopped, putting our full attention into talking, not driving. When both are done at the same time, neither of them are done well, and it could lead to dangers for ourselves and others.

The same could be said of doing the work of Lent while journeying. In Lent it is our inner spiritual journey that leads us to

the deep places where we need to have a conversation with God, usually in the form of seeking forgiveness. And at these times we really ought to intentionally stop whatever we are doing, pulling over to the side of the road if you will, and put all of our attention into prayer. By doing so we will better receive release from the burden of guilt that none of us seeks to lug along the journey any farther than we need to.

So, folks, as you do the work of the inner journey of this time of the year in your everyday tasks and routines, when you realize a place that needs some divine conversation, stop what you are doing and give it your full attention. Trust me, you and all who are around you will be better off. The journey is essential, and the fruits of the journey require our full attention in order to know the fantastic truth of Easter: You are loved!

Amen? Amen!

P.S.: A special "thank you" to all of you for the new garage door opener and stove at the parsonage. They are wonderful! So, can we talk about that hot tub now? ONLY KIDDING!

## The kids are alright

by Julie Dana, Christian Ed coordinator

What have the kids been up to! Well as many of you have seen during children's moment in church we are walking along on our journey with the Lord. Every Sunday the children never cease to amaze me at just how much they are growing in their church experience.

We are slowly embarking on our new curriculum and enjoying the help of new teachers. Their fresh new faces and teaching approaches have enriched the classrooms.

December was and always is a busy time. The children gathered in Friendship Hall with teachers and volunteers to bake dog biscuits to sell at the Christmas Stroll. They raised \$60! After some discussion it was decided to use the money to help the Franklin Country Animal Shelter in Farmington purchase medicines for the animals there. Sunday Feb 22nd we will travel to Farmington and have some lunch before visiting the shelter.

In January we focused on Peace and Peacemakers. We talked about

Martin Luther King, Gandhi, Mother Theresa, Jacob and Esau. We role played, read stories, baked and frosted cookies.

Lisa and I got really brave and did a painting project...the kids took off their shoes, we painted their feet and they "took steps for justice." Check out the back hallway! I washed each child's feet and when it was Lisa and my turn they had no problem washing our feet.

For the month of February we will be exploring "Acceptance." Relay races in the upstairs hallway brought tons of laughter! Especially when you throw Ernie's big rubber boots in the mix! When little Cory discovered his feet couldn't reach the bottom of the boots when he put them on...his team mates carried him to the finish line!...boots and all!

Encourage our children...ask them what they've learned in school each Sunday. The answers may just light you up the rest of your day!

## Haiti mission presentation and pot-luck

by Jim Webster

Please come and hear Jim Webster speak about his recent mission trip to Haiti on Sunday March 22, 2009 at 5:00 p.m. at Union Church This will be a great opportunity to get a glimpse of God's

children in Haiti and to hear how others are Serving God through their outreach. Hope to see you there!!!

## UMW update

by Christine Merckens

In January the United Methodist Women of Union Church entered its third year as an organized unit. One of our goals since our formation was to become a FIVE STAR unit. What is a FIVE STAR UNIT you ask? This a unit that is committed to support the United Methodist Women by pledging to the five channels of Undesignated Giving allowing the United Methodist Women to be a strong organization, advocating for and serving the needs of women, children and youth.

The five channels of giving are:

**Pledge to Mission:** by prayer, to give gifts to share with others and to spend time studying, reflecting and doing good work.

**Special Mission Recognition:** Many of you know that at charge conference the UMW recognized Dick Tripp for his years of service to Union Church.

**Gift to Mission:** are cards sent to commemorate a variety of special events or occasions and honoring a special person. Cards are available in Friendship Hall for anyone to send to someone special.

## Financial update through January 31, 2009

by Anthony Mastromarino

As in past years, the January data look impressive, although not quite as impressive as 2008. Income for the month of January 2009 totaled \$14,960 which is 10.6% of budget. However, before you feel too good about that sum, it should be noted that that amount includes \$4,980 received in 2008 for 2009 pledges. While that is significant, January's income in 2008 totaled \$17,647 which included \$8,316 in advanced pledges. So, yes we are off to a good start, but not quite as good as in January 2008. As far as expenses are concerned, those were nearly the same this year as last year. Expenses for the month of January 2009 were \$7,667 which is

**Gift in Memory:** could be an appropriate substitute for flowers to honor the memory of a special friend or family member.

**World Thank Offering:** is an offering given in response to God's goodness. There are 13 Five Star units in the Mid Maine District that is made up of 70 units and these units will be recognized at our Spring District Meeting in Rumford. This is an honor and gift to our unit that we are able to share our gifts with others here and afar.

A reminder that the UMW is open to all women of the church. We meet every month on the 4th Saturday from 8 – 10 a.m., sharing breakfast we alternate a program meeting and a business meeting. A calendar of our meetings can be found on our website and in the narthex. Another date to remember is the upcoming UMW district retreat at Rockcraft Retreat Center April 24 – 25. If you are interested please see Chris Merckens, Julie Dana, Bobbie Mahler or Cathy Kenney.

5.5% of budget compared to \$7,602 (6% of budget) in January 2008. However there is another caveat. That total does not include payment of our monthly Mission Shares of \$1,160 because the statement from the New England Conference was received late. Our Mission Shares for January and February will be paid together. The net result is that income exceeded expenses by \$7,293 in January 2009. Union Church is off to another good start! Praise the Lord!

## Stewardship

by Anthony Mastromarino

Christian stewardship begins with God as the center. It is Christ-centered. Through Baptism we become members of the Christian family, bringing with it responsibility and commitment. As we begin the liturgical season of Lent in preparation for the wondrous mystery of the Easter resurrection, let us all reconsider our baptismal vows and re-commit ourselves to the mission and ministry of Union Church as faithful stewards of our gifts and

talents in and to His service. As a community of faith, we rely on one another. Let us center our lives and our actions on Christ, sharing the gifts and talents He has given us, as well as our time and our treasures with those in fellowship with us, sharing our faith and proclaiming Christ's message of faithful stewardship to ourselves and to our neighbors.

## Library news

by Pat Pow

The Friends of the Belgrade Public Library are happy to announce the purchase of the property on Depot Road adjacent to the Belgrade Central School. The Belgrade Municipal Building Committee has completed their task with a conceptual plan for a combined municipal complex housing the Town Office, Public Library, Historical Center and Food Pantry proposed to be built on that site. The Select Board has approved the Committee's work and will have a Warrant Article at the March Belgrade town meeting asking for \$75,000 to finalize all permitting, engineering and designing studies. With these study results, Belgrade voters

would have all the data needed to make an informed decision on this project. The Committee will be making presentations in February and March and have an explanatory brochure available at the Town Office. Please contact the Town Office for scheduled presentations or talk to Loyce Hayslett, Dennis Keschl, Town Manager, or any committee member. This is the most significant project the Town has ever undertaken and one that will define our generation for future generations of Belgrade citizens. Your informed vote at the annual Belgrade town meeting on March 21, 2009 is very important.

## Among the pews

by Nancy Mastromarino

Two smiling “new” faces at Union Church are those of Kate and Dr. John Garafalo, who joined our congregation last fall. They are to be numbered among our most enthusiastic members, commuting from their home in Pittsfield for worship on Sundays. They are newlyweds, having married last summer with Pastor Bill officiating.

They felt drawn to this church through Pastor Bill’s caring, compassion, and welcoming outreach. They now have a blended family with four grown children, 2 sons and 2 daughters who live in Maine, Florida, and Washington, DC. Kate is a Mainer, originally from Boothbay Harbor. Formerly an employee at Colby,

she is now a homemaker. John hails from Connecticut and is a physician, currently practicing in North Anson, having practiced in Augusta for 17 years.

Besides enjoying driving, they love animals, keeping 2 dogs and 2 cats. Most of their spare time is focused on family. John’s mother, who lives in Connecticut, has joined in the fun at Union a few times. Kate’s mother lives in Oakland and is blind. They shared a tidbit of how they met—count them among the many successful matches through E Harmony! We’re very happy to have this great couple in our church family!



Photo by Nancy Mastromarino

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**Submissions:** The Union Rider seeks submissions on any topic of interest to the broader community, whether Church-related or not. Please submit all items by the 20<sup>th</sup> of the month for inclusion in the following issue.

## The buzz

## News from the church and community

**Prayer Shawl Ministry** meets the **second and fourth Monday** of each month from 6:30 – 8 pm. See Louise Young for details.

**United Methodist Women (UMW)** meets on **Saturday, March 21 from 8 – 10 a.m.** See Christine Merckens for details.

**Fuel Assistance Public Supper** sponsored by the Belgrade Business Group, Belgrade Bible Church and the Boy Scouts will be held **Saturday, March 7 from 5 – 7:30 pm** at Belgrade Central School. Adults \$7; children 6-12 \$4; children 5 and under are free; \$20 for a family. See Ted McCarthy for details.

**Chili tasting** will be held **Saturday, March 14 from 5 – 7 pm** at Union Church. See Dick Tripp for details.

**Haiti mission presentation and pot luck** hear Jim Webster discuss his recent mission trip to Haiti, and enjoy the fellowship of a mid-winter pot luck supper on **Sunday, March 22 at 5pm** at Union Church. See Jim for details.

## Lent 'rithmetic

Forty days right? That's what we always hear about Lent: it's the forty days leading up to Easter. Forty has a nice resonance: forty days and forty nights of rain for Noah, forty years in the desert for Moses and the Jews, forty days in the wilderness for Jesus. Forty, it seems, has some magic to it.

Forty days from Ash Wednesday is April 5. But Easter Sunday is April 12. So what gives?

To dispel any confusion: it's the forty days beginning on Ash Wednesday, not counting Sundays, and ending not on Easter Sunday but on Holy Saturday.

At least, for most Western churches. Wikipedia includes the following understatement: "Different churches calculate the forty days differently."

In other words: check your local listings.