

THE NEWSLETTER

We welcome everyone who welcomes everyone!

Union Congregational Church of Hancock, UCC

April 2014

Out the parsonage window...

FULLY ALIVE!

“The glory of God is a fully alive human being,” wrote Irenaeus (I-run-ay'-us), an early Parent of the Church. Born about 100 years after Jesus, Irenaeus was a Greek born into a Christian family in Smyrna on the coast of Turkey. He grew up in the church of Pastor Polycarp, a student of John, the disciple of Jesus.

Irenaeus became a pastor in Lyon, France, while Caesar Marcus Aurelius was persecuting the Christian minority in the empire. It was after a massacre in Lyon aimed at forcing his congregation to cower and lose faith that Irenaeus preached, “*Gloria Dei vivens homo.*”

In Latin, *homo* means humanity: you, me, your friends, your family, and everyone who’s ever lived. You can see the direct theological line from Irenaeus through Polycarp to Saint John who preached that Jesus said, “I have come to give you life and life to the full” [John 10:10]. *Living life to the full* and being **fully alive** is what **Easter** is all about!



The Resurrected Christ, 1520

It is commonly said that creation—or nature—displays the glory of God. On April 22, we celebrate **Earth Day**, critically concerned that our greed is destroying Earth and, with it, all of the life that God has created. On Earth Day, we re-commit ourselves to the love of our planet and the political fight to save Earth. Mainline Christians join with all other people of good will in this absolutely crucial cause. Unlike breakaway religious sects who believe that the earth is ours to destroy, true Christians follow God’s call to be good stewards of Earth and the life it supports. You can say we actually *are* pro-life! We see the glory of God in the majesty of our protected national forests, parks and seacoasts, in protecting clean air and clean water for ourselves, our children and grandchildren, and in the glorious diversity of nature from ants to elephants, dolphins to daisies, and white pines to chickadees.



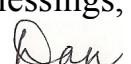
All of nature glorifies God by simply being what it is. By simply *being*, each piece of creation fulfills its destiny to be itself. Except for the one part of nature called human beings. We struggle to know how to be. I suppose the reason why can be said in many ways, but in our spiritual tradition we say that we are created with “free will,” and are free to use our power for good or for ill. Because humans live by learned behavior instead of animal instinct, we socially construct our own ideological worlds, including our politics, our religions and non-religions. Guided or misguided, we are born into the (spiritual) search for how to *be*.

It’s in the context of our search that Irenaeus wrote, “The glory of God is a human fully alive.” What we are seeking is not “christianity,” it is abundant life. And so Saint John and the Early Church proclaimed that the purpose of Jesus Christ was to lead us to life, and life to the full. Easter is our spiritual tradition’s ultimate affirmation of abundant life. No matter what Caesar does to oppress us, even crucifixion itself, God has the last word—*resurrection!*

One of the most glorious expressions of that is Michelangelo’s sculpture, *The Resurrected Christ*. One summer day a few years ago, I was randomly wandering in Rome enjoying a gelato cone when I came upon a humble church on the out-of-the-way Piazza della Minerva. I walked into the open, empty church and, totally astonished, saw the Risen Christ standing 6 foot 7 inches tall in all his naked glory. (The bronze loin-cloth was glued on centuries later by prudes.)

For Michelangelo, it was vital that Jesus appear naked and sexual in the resurrection because, as Irenaeus had said, “*Gloria Dei vivens homo*—the glory of God is the human fully alive”—and that includes our bodies and sexuality. Michelangelo saw the risen Christ as humanity perfected. He believed that it is Christ who ushers us back to the Garden of Eden, once again in harmony with All-That-Is, or God, or Being Itself, or the Great I AM, or whatever you like to call the creative dynamo in, with, and under the universe. It is in this sense that Christians believe it’s the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ that shows us how to *be*.

To be fully human—to be fully oneself—is different for each one of us. In the light of the resurrection, we stand as does Michelangelo’s Christ, holding our crosses—*embracing* our crosses—not just in triumph but in love, as an intricate, intimate part of who we are...and in union with all that is. To be fully human includes being gifted and empowered to live life fully, joyful and free in the company and communion of the Great Spirit. The good news of Easter is that the glory of God is each of us—is **YOU**—fully alive. Alleluia!

Easter blessings,

Pastor Dan



HOLY WEEK SCHEDULE

Wednesday, April 9, Pastor Dan preaches at last Lenten service, 1st Congregational Ellsworth at 7 PM

Palm/Passion Sunday, April 13, worship 10 AM

Maundy Thursday service, April 17, 7 PM

Easter Sunday, April 20

Sunrise service—6 AM—at Tidal Falls

Easter breakfast at the church at 7 AM

The Big Service at 10 AM



Dear Union Congregational UCC,

I'm so happy to see you have a website and a Face Book page. I have been receiving your newsletters and reading them with delight. It is wonderful to see the activities going on in your church once again.

My husband (Gary Hazlett) and I served as Pastor in the 1960's and your congregation helped us grow in many ways. We enjoyed our stay and were blessed with goods friends. Thank you, Clint Ritchie, for seeing that we get the newsletter. Also, thanks to the Lewis's who allow us to come each year in June to enjoy Maine. I have wonderful memories of staying with Lansing Hammond many weekends instead of having to drive back and forth to Bangor Seminary.

Keep up your evangelism. See you in June!

—Kay Farnam Hazlett Williams



Prayer Shawl Ministry

The deacons are beginning a prayer shawl ministry. First step? We need people to knit some shawls for our church.



Prayer shawls originate in the Jewish tradition and are a ministry in many churches across the country. They are blessed by the congregation during a worship service, and then lent to members by deacons or the pastor when they visit the sick. The person who receives a prayer shawl is wrapped in the comfort and prayers of the whole congregation. If you can knit a prayer shawl to give to our church, please contact Tamara or Renata. Thanks!



Easter egg hunt on Saturday, April 19, at 1:00 pm.
Please collect candy (or candy alternatives).

Also this spring we will have a “**Birds & Bloom sale**,” so keep your eye out for bird houses and plants that can be divided and sold here at the church to raise money for the kids going to Pilgrim Lodge.

We will host a **Vacation Bible School** this summer and need volunteers—five 3-hour early evenings—both to teach and to support with things like baking snacks.

Heifer Project Arks – now little cardboard boxes in the social hall. Collect your loose change in them during Lent and turn in Palm Sunday, April 13.



Deacon’s Neighborhood Groups

The deacons are organizing our congregation into neighborhood groups. The purpose is to make socializing and checking in with folks simpler, to provide a friendly setting for newcomers and old-timers to meet, and to have ready-made small groups to explore topics that might come up in our church, either for sharing or in preparation for congregational meetings. The groups are organized geographically for the most part. The deacons are working to pull this together and it’s still a work in process, but hopefully we’ll be ready for summer. Stay tuned for details!



Guild Spring Rummage Sale: The church Guild will host its annual Spring Rummage Sale on Saturday May 3rd beginning at 8:30 am. Donations of gently used summer clothing, household linens, bedding, fabric, yarn and other craft items are needed and appreciated. Items can be dropped off the week prior to the sale beginning Sunday April 27th and volunteers are needed to help set up the sale on Friday May 2nd. Please call Gertrude Wildes at 422-3539 if you can help or have questions.



Church Yard Clean-Up: The annual Boy Scout clean-up of our parking lot and grounds will be held on Saturday April 19th. Please note that this is a revised date. The work starts at 8:30 am and should be finished by 11:30 am. We need flat shovels, push brooms, rakes, wheelbarrows and volunteers to get the job done. The Hancock Fire Department will help by giving the parking lot a final rinse after it is swept. Call Kenny Stratton at 422-3292 if you can help or provide tools.

Annual Church Fair, Yard Sale and Silent Auction: It's not too soon to start thinking about one of our summer's most exciting and important events! All the action takes place on Saturday August 2nd, with a rain date of Saturday August 9th. Please mark your calendars and save these dates. We will need many helpers and lots of donations to make the event the success it always is. Think about what you can contribute and how you can help as you clean up from winter (real spring weather will surely arrive soon!) and get ready for summer. This is an important event in the life of our church and your participation is vital. An organizational meeting will be held later this spring. Please call David Wildes at 422-3739 with any questions or suggestions.



Perpetual Boy Scout Bottle Drive: The Hancock Boy Scouts continue to need your returnable bottles and cans to help fund their activities. Please call David Wildes or Cynthia Wood at 422-3739 to arrange a pick-up.

