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Reflections



Volume 34 Spring Edition

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Words From Our Pastor

Rev. Mark D. Wilson

Greetings, all.
Grace and Peace to you.

Good news! Our 2020 Pledge Drive exceeded its \$70,000 goal - at last count, we were at \$76,962! Pledges for 2019 were \$3,414.88 over our budgeted amount and income was \$13,297.57 over our budgeted amount. Of the \$61,700.12 we were allowed to draw from the Unrestricted Fund to balance the budget last year, we only needed \$20,000 of that, and I say "needed" because our income was actually \$20,933.67 over our budgeted amount, so we only truly needed \$933.67 of that. Our expenditures were waaaaaay over budget - but this was a **good** thing, because most of these expenses were for our missions. We gave out \$67,082.77 last year through our various missions, out of \$372,283.52 in income (including income to our funds), or 18%, which more than meets our goal - indeed, it almost doubles it! - of tithing (10%) our own income to our missions. Congratulations, Waterville UCC! You are walking the walk!

Holy Week Worship Services . . .

Maundy Thursday—Thursday, April 9. We worship with the Winsloe Congregational Church at Winslow. 7 p.m.

Good Friday—Friday, April 10. Ecumenical Worship at Pleasant Street United Methodist Church. 2 p.m. Good Friday worship here at 7 p.m.

Easter—Sunday, April 12. Ecumenical Easter Sunrise Service, Colby College, Miller Library steps. 6 a.m. Easter Worship here at 9:30 a.m.



What's the status on the stained glass windows?

Remember with me that this past fall we voted to donate the three large stained glass windows in our former entryway/narthex to the Waterville Historical Society/Redington Museum. They have received an estimate for this work from Stained Glass Express of Manchester (formerly of Waterville). Now we are waiting to hear if the Museum has raised the necessary funds to complete the move. We will be taking the window in the Chapel with us into our new space. The other two windows in the Chapel do not have a home, as yet. Stained Glass Express will remove them, if necessary, in exchange for using the glass in them for scrap.

What's the status on the Children's Discovery Museum's purchase of our building?

I meet with Amarinda Keyes, the Executive Director of the Maine Children's Discovery Museum, on a regular basis. They are still in the process of raising funds to complete the purchase of our building. Our Lease/Purchase agreement with them calls for that purchase to be completed by the end of this year. If we are notified by the Museum by September, they may also extend the option to purchase the building through June 2021. If that happens and we vacate the building before then, Half Pints Daycare very much wants to lease the Fellowship Hall from us, securing more income. While this situation would not be optimal, it would at least get us out of the building while providing more income to offset expenses.

Vitality Team Report

After all of these years, I suppose I shouldn't be amazed, but I still marvel in wonder and in awe at how God always leads us to where we need to be. After the disappointment of not being able to lease space in the former Boys/Girls Club building due to some significant structural issues with the building, and the rescinding of our lease offer to the owner of that building by a congregational vote at Annual Meeting, your Vitality Team quickly got back to work seeking a new space for us that met the criteria the congregation approved last June.

A reminder of those criteria:

Our preference is, first, to lease space, then buy, then build.

That we be about the same distance (and maybe closer) to downtown as we are now.

That while a few folks do need to park close to the church, most are okay with a short walk.

That being in another church is okay, but we don't want to lose our UCC identity.

That we have all of our operations under one roof.

That we have a kitchen, multi-use hall, and space for worship, the Essentials Closet, storage, meetings, office space, and Sunday School.

After considering over 15 spaces, and viewing three, we feel blessed to announce that we have found a space that meets our criteria: **the ground floor of The Elm, formerly the American Legion Hall, in Waterville, owned by Bill Mitchell.** This building is located at 21 College Ave. in Waterville, next to the Post Office.

Terms (from Bill Mitchell)

In terms of the monthly rent, it would be \$3,400/mo. For that you will have exclusive use of the space we've discussed to be used at the Sanctuary, Essential Closet, Sunday School room, and offices. You will have use of the Family Room, kitchen, and conference room every Sunday morning from 8:00 AM to noontime.

Note: I'm pretty sure we've booked a couple Sunday morning events later in 2020 so there may be one or two Sunday's the Family Room is not available. Otherwise, it's yours to use. Once we sign the lease we'll stop booking Sunday morning events.

\$3,400 includes heat, electricity, water, sewer, plowing, yard care, access to a dumpster, cleaning of common areas, bathroom supplies, and general cleaning of the Family Room, kitchen, and conference room. Of course, we'd ask that you folks tidy up behind yourselves when you're done on Sundays.

You would need to take care of internet, internal cleaning, insurance for your property, liability, etc (I'd be happy to help with that too ;)), replacement of light bulbs, repairs to your space, maintenance of the new heating/AC system, and other things specifically related to the space you are renting.

We would sign a 5 year lease that would have an annual increase of 3%. In the 2nd half of the 5th year, you would have the option of extending the lease for another 5 years assuming you are in compliance with all lease terms. Should you exercise this option, the lease would extend another 5 years and would continue to have a 3% annual increase in rent. You'd have the same option in the 2nd half of year 10 to extend another 5 years. We can look at going out 20 years in these 5 year increments. - Bill Mitchell

Parking: excellent and plentiful, including designated handicap spaces.

Build Out:

We would build out the space to our specifications, using Bill Mitchell's contractor, Paul Grenier. We would pay for the build out. We recoup this money through a longer-term lease. That is, the money we spend making the space the way we want it isn't "taken off the top" of our lease payments, because the next tenant in the space will

probably want something different. As lessees, it isn't like we can take anything with us. We realize a return on this investment by staying in the space for a longer period of time, and having a lease which allows us to do that. I have spoken with our attorney, Rob Levin, and our UCC insurance agent, Jeff McDonnell, and they both say this is how commercial real estate works.

The estimate for building out the space to our specifications is \$132,814.

While there are situations (in markets that are less tight than Waterville's right now) where tenants can negotiate some concessions from landlords in the form of "allowances" to do their work, consider the following, also from Bill Mitchell:

1. Any space is worth some amount per square foot as-is (excluding utilities, common area expenses, etc). In this case, I'm using \$5.00 per square foot, which is low to begin with.

2. Utilities are typically paid by the tenant. In this case, due to the nature of the building, utilities are paid by the landlord and are estimated at \$2.00 per square foot. If they are higher, I have to absorb it.

3. Common expenses are typically shared by tenants in a multi-tenant building. To keep this lease clean, and because it's a little different with my event center upstairs, I am paying all common area expenses (plowing, cleaning, trash, real estate taxes, building insurance, etc). Most of my properties average \$3.50 to \$4.00 per square foot for common area expenses. I'm charging you folks \$3.00 per square foot. Again, if they are higher, I have to absorb it.

4. I am paying for half of the new heating/air conditioning system. Your estimate reflects this. I will also be finishing the hallway carpeting, and installing new doors into the Family Room to make the area more attractive.

5. I am allowing you to use the entire sign on the back fo the building at no additional cost.

6. In terms of the Family Room, kitchen, and conference room, we charge \$275 for the Family Room, and \$50 each for the kitchen and conference room. I am charging you folks \$225 for all three. It's about a \$7,800 annualized reduction.

Different Spaces at The Elm

Dedicated space. We would lease a portion of the ground floor of the building which will contain separate rooms for: the Essentials Closet, sanctuary, general storage, two offices (one for Nancy, one for Mark), two office storage spaces, and the Sunday School, which would be located in a corner of one of the storage rooms. All of these would be spaces only for our exclusive use, and we would have access to them at any time.

Weekly space. Each week, our lease would include exclusive use of the kitchen, fellowship hall (they call it the Family Room), and Conference Room on Sunday mornings, 8 a.m. until Noon.

“As available” space. For church suppers, funeral receptions, wedding receptions, and other gatherings not on Sunday mornings, we would rent the kitchen and hall as they are available. Additionally, if we needed a much larger space, the main hall upstairs (where Waterville residents used to vote) could be rented on an “as available” basis.

Bathrooms: there are decent men’s and women’s rooms on the same level as our space.

Other Specifics

Janitorial: we would only have to clean our dedicated spaces: Essentials Closet, Sanctuary, Sunday school, storage, and our office space. The bathrooms and other common areas are cleaned and supplied by the owner.

Trash: included (a dumpster is on site). We will be allowed to have a cardboard dumpster (at our expense) for the Essentials Closet.

Signage: we would be allowed a “sandwich board” sign on College Ave. for Sundays, Essentials Closet days, and special services and events. We would also have a larger, permanently-fixed, larger, lit sign by our entry door, which is in the back of the building.

Kitchen: we would have a refrigerator in the kitchen, and purchase a warming oven to keep food hot for church suppers. Due to insurance and codes, we are not allowed to have any cook surfaces in the kitchen. There is no dish washer, so we’ll have to go with compostables, paper, or do the dishes ourselves.

Plowing/snow removal: plowing, snow removal, sweeping, and general outdoor clean up is included in our lease and provided by the owner.

Timeline

The Vitality Team viewed The Elm in February, culminating with a meeting Sunday, February 23, with Bill Mitchell, the building’s owner, and Paul Grenier, Bill’s contractor. The Team voted to recommend to the Church Council that the church lease space in the lower level of The Elm.

Sunday, March 8 - the Church Council met, and voted to recommend that the church lease space in the lower level of The Elm. The Council also set a Special Meeting of the

Congregation to discuss and vote on this proposal Sunday, April 5, after the 9:30 worship service.

Sunday, March 22 - an informational session will be held after worship to talk about the specifics of this proposal. Also, the Call to the Special Meeting of the Congregation April 5 will be posted, including a request to expend money from the Unrestricted Fund to pay for the build out of the space.

Sunday, March 29 - an informational session will be held after worship to talk about the specifics of this proposal.

Sunday, April 5 - a Special Meeting of the Congregation will be held to discuss and vote on the recommendation from the Church Council that the church lease space at The Elm, 21 College Ave., Waterville.

A request to expend money from the Unrestricted Trust fund to complete the build out of the space, including funds for items not included in the estimate (signage, moving expenses, etc.) will also be a part of this meeting.

Other questions . . .

How much would it cost for us to rent the hall (Family Room) and kitchen for a church supper or other church function (aka not on Sunday mornings)?

Bill M.: For additional rentals of the Family Room and kitchen (without the conference room), I would charge you \$175. Add \$50 for the conference room. (Mark's note - that is \$150 cheaper than his going rate, see above #6).

If we vote to go ahead with this on April 5, what is the proposed draft timeline for getting the work done (and us moving in)?

Bill M.: I think we could get this done in 90 days of commencement of the project. That's assuming all decisions are made quickly throughout the project. If things need to go back through committee, etc, the timeline would change drastically. To be safe, 120 days.

Essentials Closet

The Waterville Area Essentials Closet continues to serve those in need in the Greater Waterville Area with the assistance of wonderful volunteers. Since September 2019 our numbers have grown each month, reaching a high of 52 new people in one month, with an average of 175-200 returning clients. Some of our volunteers will be taking a break from serving during the summer months and hopefully our “snowbirds” will step in again to assist us on the days we are open.



Many of you know that we have been picking up our large orders from the Dollar Tree on Sunday morning and asking the congregation to assist in unloading after the 9:30 service. This works well and gets our whole church involved. Lora and Pete pick up toilet paper, adult and baby diapers at Sam’s Club once a month filling both our truck and car with these items. We recently had a donation of tampons from an employee of Tambrands, this is a great help to the budget.

The best news we have had recently is a grant award from Northern Light Inland Community Betterment program. This organization awarded us \$3500 for the 2020 year. We are so grateful for this contribution.

We ask that those who are able continue to make financial contributions and item contributions to the church for this effort. If you are interested in volunteering please speak with either Pete or Lora on Sunday morning or email them. We can always use an additional helper.

NEWS FROM WOMEN’S FELLOWSHIP

Women’s Fellowship will be meeting on April 1 and on May 6 for the annual Salad Luncheon. Watch the Sunday bulletin for more details on these dates as it has not been possible to confirm programs at this time.



The group has held preliminary discussions on what to do with the contents of the church kitchen once our move becomes official. We will be asking for help in packing things up as well as ideas of how to dispose of items that no longer will be needed. Please talk to Regina or Pat if you have ideas and/or would like to help.

Faith Community Nurse News

The Deacons met after worship on Sunday. Infection prevention was on the agenda, because of the recent spread of a new virus, the coronavirus. Preventing the transmission of the coronavirus is no different from preventing flu and cold viruses. On Sunday, March 1st, the Deacons did make changes to the way we serve communion. Instead of having the community coming forward to receive communion by intinction, as has been our practice, the congregation remained seated, the Deacons passed the bread, and then the juice in individual communion cups. The Deacons plan to continue to serve communion in this way, as long as it seems prudent. Of course, accommodations for anyone needing them will continue. The Deacons are also recommending that during the offering, the ushers offer the plate to each person, rather than the plate being handed down the row. This simply decreases the number of people handling the plate. There will be hand sanitizer in the sanctuary, and in the seat pockets. Tissues will also be more available in the sanctuary. The Deacons also discussed options for passing the peace, which include bowing, fist bumps, elbow bumps. Pirouettes are also acceptable, provided there are no small children standing nearby. (Pirouettes were neither discussed nor recommended by the Deacons, I just wanted to see if anyone is still reading.)

Handwashing remains the most effective protection against cold and flu viruses, as well as the coronavirus. Hand sanitizer is also effective and convenient.

Flu and cold viruses, as well as the coronavirus, are airborne viruses, but they also spread by direct contact--touching a contaminated surface--so washing your hands frequently is the most effective protection against all these viruses. Hand sanitizer is convenient if you aren't near soap and water. Refrain from touching your face--the eyes, nose and mouth are entryways for germs. If you need to touch your face for any reason--if you need eye drops, or are applying moisturizer, for example--wash your hands first. If you need to blow your nose, wash your hands afterwards. Handwashing really works! Routine disinfecting of household surfaces, including doorknobs, computer screens can also help. — Sally Melcher-McKeagney, Faith Community Nurse



Lenten Organ Series—First Baptist Church, Park Street, Waterville

March 15: “Budge” (Howard A.) Whalen attended Bates College, then Northeastern for a Masters; all while teaching, and being a school administrator. He later went to the University of Maine for post graduate studies.

Budge began piano lessons at seven, and organ lessons at 13: he has always had a passion for playing the organ. *“It’s fun making music with the king of instruments. There is pleasure in the sounds of beautiful music coming through a fine instrument of hundreds of pipes and having the sounds of heaven right among us.”*

March 22: Sharon Saunders, organist at the Pleasant Street United Methodist Church, a position she had held since 1993. A native of Pittsburgh, she studied organ as an undergraduate at Carnegie-Mellon University and completed graduate degrees in Musicology and Library Science at the University of Pittsburg. Sharon is the Associate College Librarian for Systems and Bibliographic Services at Bates College, and Cara is working in Brooklyn.

March 29: Ed Larson received his Bachelor and Master of Music degrees from Boston University’s School of Fine and Applied Arts, where he studied organ with Max Miller (Marsh Chapel) and George Faxon (Trinity Church) choral conducting with James Cunningham (Tanglewood) and Allen C. Lannon (assistant to Robert Shaw, Julliard School).

As organist/pianist, Ed has served various churches in Massachusetts and Maine, and is currently organist at Penny Memorial Baptist Church, Augusta, ME. He has also been the accompanist for the Coda Chorus, Kennebec Performing Arts Company Chorus, The Capital Chorale, and numerous school music festivals.

Ed Larson is a published composer (USA and Sweden) and his choral works have been performed nationally and internationally.

April 5: Jay Zoller, resident of Newcastle, Maine, is the Director of Music and Organist at South Parish Congregational Church in Augusta, Maine, where he plays the church’s historic 1866 E & GG Hook organ. Zoller is recently retired from the Andover Organ Company where he built and designed pipe organs. He has played concerts in Germany which included recitals in Berlin, Hamburg and Cologne. Recently he played programs in Wyoming and Nebraska in addition to New England.

All of the Lenten Concert Programs are held at 2:00 p.m. Sunday afternoons, and are open to the public.

Mark your calendars! March 15th after worship from your Creation Care Team.

Brandon Kulik will present a talk and slide show describing the amazing comeback of the alewife, a native migratory fish that until recently was greatly diminished in the Kennebec watershed. The Sebasticook River, a nearby Kennebec tributary now hosts the largest run of these fish in the world. Learn how these fish play an important ecological, economical and historic role in coastal and inland Maine, and what is being done to fully restore them to their original range. Brandon is a fisheries biologist with over 40 years' experience working on river restoration and hydroelectric power projects throughout North America.



One Great Hour of Sharing Special Offering – March 22, 2020.

When we participate in OGHS we provide valuable support. OGHS reaches people who suffer from emergencies, chronic poverty, and violence worldwide. What may seem like a small investment to us, yields amazing results worldwide with water, sanitation and adequate food, children are more likely to attend school, and women, no longer searching for water, are able to earn money to contribute to their families' well-being and overall health. Together, we are co-workers in God's service, planting and watering seeds for God to nurture. Thank you for your generosity.

Pilgrim Lodge, our Maine Conference UCC Summer Camp, is now accepting registrations for camps this year! This church has scholarships available for campers of all ages. If you want to attend a camp, check out www.pilgrimlodge.org If you want a scholarship, see our Pastor, Mark Wilson.

A reminder that this church has a way for you to contribute on-line.

Visit <https://www.watervilleucc.org/donate>





Most Beautiful Christmas Tree EVAH!

News from Starfish Village Ministry

Starfish Village Ministry is in its 8th month of service to the homeless and it's been 4 months since we began working with a second homeless family and making a significant difference in their lives.

Our second family, Cassie and her 2 young boys, Chris (12) and JR (13), arrived in Waterville on Friday, November 8th with nothing but the clothes on their backs. Cassie took her boys right out of their classrooms to flee life-threatening domestic violence that included arson.

I shared some of their story in our Sunday, December 22nd service, also telling you about the most pathetic, mishappen, and abandoned Christmas tree I've ever seen – shoved into a corner in the Garden Center at Home Depot, wanted by no one. Let's say I had a real "attitude adjustment" when I heard Cassie say, "Oh, Rev Mo, that is the most beautiful Christmas tree evah!" Chris and JR agreed.

Rather amazingly, we managed to shove this fresh tree into my small Honda FIT. Santa would have been amazed at the contents of my sled: A 93-lb dog, dog blankets, my usual collection of extra coats, spare boots, some books, dog treats, water & water bowl and leashes, 2 growing rambunctious boys, one somewhat dazed mom, a Christmas tree and moi. This happened Saturday the 21st, 4 days before Christmas.

Then we went to Dollar Tree (maybe Dollar General?) and I let the boys buy what they thought they needed to decorate the tree. Their frugality in a store where it's hard to spend any serious money amazed me: They thought everything was too expensive but somehow we all agreed upon 2 boxes of the cheapest Christmas tree lights slave labor can make, even cheaper tinsel that I was not at all convinced was fire proof, a box of edible candy canes, and construction paper, cotton balls, glitter and glue so the boys could create their own ornaments.

What a blessing to be a part of Christmas with this family!

Two days later, a family in our congregation delivered to my home 3 cheerful holiday gifts bags that each contained several beautifully wrapped presents, as well as a valuable gift card. Each gift was carefully considered for each recipient. Wow. Just WOW.



Bags loaded with presents & gift cards!

What a joy to be the lucky person who played Santa in the afternoon of Christmas Eve. How amazing it was to see the surprise and delight on the boys' faces, and the immense gratitude in mom's heart, when Shadow and I delivered these Christmas gifts. They were the only gifts under the tree,

except for the more modest gifts from Shadow and the cats. How equally amazing it was to see that strange little tree transformed into a thing of magical beauty. I said it looked beautiful, it was an entirely different tree.

Cassie said, "That little tree just needed to be loved."

Wow. Don't we all need to be loved?

I believe this family, like others, was sent to us by God so that we could serve them, but the fascinating part to me is always how God makes such things happen. Forced to flee from a small town along the Canadian border, Cassie and boys were hastily driven to Waterville by friends. She sought refuge in several domestic violence shelters, but none could accommodate the 3 of them, and there was no room in any homeless shelter from Bangor to Lewiston. They ended up at General Assistance in Waterville on Friday afternoon, November 8th.

Cassie's situation was particularly dire because her abusive boyfriend-turned-arsonist deliberately destroyed every vestige of her identify and the identity of her children. In the world today, we need ID to get ID, and we need ID to get admission into hotels and shelters. We also need ID to apply for emergency assistance at state and local agencies, and many non-profits, as well as some churches, also require "proof of residency" before they release funds. Cassie's license, Social Security card, EBT card (for SNAP food benefits and child care benefits), proof of entitlement for disability, Maine Care paperwork, birth certificate, her kids' birth certificates, and school and medical records, were all destroyed in a bonfire set for that purpose.

I helped her get the documents she needed to get more documents that she needed, and I accompanied her to Social Security in Waterville and state agencies in Augusta. Starfish Village paid the fees for duplicate copies and certified mailings and other charges for replacement of various documents. In this terrorist age and war on immigrants, it's very difficult to establish identity. Although I appreciate a reasonable degree of lawful scrutiny, I'm appalled at the chilling effect these processes have on the dignity of people; I've seen how they are especially onerous for the poor, less educated, disabled, and easily intimidated. Who would think someone might need an advocate to help them obtain new certified copies of their own birth certificate in their own country? It took New Hampshire almost 2 months to *expedite* the boys' certificates and Massachusetts almost as long to mail Cassie's. Birth certificates often drive access to getting other IDs and even the restoration of previously approved benefits.

So it began for Starfish on that Friday in November when the Waterville General Assistance Office called to ask if Starfish could help this family. It is noteworthy that our second family came to us through local government only 4 months after we launched this ministry. This is proof, my friends, that our reputation precedes us, and we are greatly appreciated by those who work frontline. Despite lack of any ID, I am pleased the folks in our GA office didn't turn Cassie away. They secured for them a small unfurnished apartment on College

Avenue and reached out to Starfish.

It took several days to connect with Cassie because her phone was shut off (and GA didn't realize that); however, a good Samaritan bought her a phone card and I was finally able to reach her Sunday, November 10th. I don't know what I was expecting when I went over to that tiny unfurnished apartment, but it was hard to see 3 hungry and defeated people, 2 being just kids, who'd been sleeping on the floor in the same clothes they wore when they fled the County 3 days earlier. The shock of their sudden flight into what they thought was a large and confusing "big city" was evident, but underneath were also multiple levels of both recent and distant trauma.

None of them had taken a bath or shower since the night before the day they fled; the unfurnished apartment had no soap or towels, and there was only a shower (no tub) without a shower curtain. The place didn't have a stick of furniture and they'd been using napkins from Dunkin' Donuts and Burger King for *toilet paper*.

When have I ever not had toilet paper? Never.

Mom had difficulty receiving help, common in a surprising number of the most desperate and destitute. At first Cassie said they were fine but agreed it would be nice if I could find a little bit of food for the boys (remember, there is no food assistance over weekends in this town). "We'll get by," she said, but Chris, the realist, said "Mom, this is not getting by...." and looked at me and asked "Can you really help us? We're really, really hungry and I need a shower, I stink." (The honesty of youthful desperation.)

I am almost brought to tears again when I write that I was able to say, "Yes, I can help you." And in that moment, I spoke for all of us: *Starfish Village Ministry of the Waterville United Church of Christ can and will, through the Grace of God, help you.*

I ask that you read that last paragraph several times and meditate on it. This story began in Christmas but is amazingly suitable to revisit in Lent.

To me this is where walking with Jesus gets real and this is what my faith and call to ministry is all about. It is saying "Yes, I will help you" and praising God that I am able to do so. As we all know, it is one thing to want to help, but it is a blessing from God to be able to help. I believe it is a blessing for all of us to be a part of this service to others.

So, on that first day we headed over to Governors (those 2 boys were so hungry!) and then to Wal-Mart and Starfish purchased immediate necessities like pillows and blankets, a few towels and shower curtain, some pots/pans, dishware/utensils, 2-cup coffee pot, some food and a few items of clothing. Then we went to church and gathered what they needed from the Essentials Closet and after that we went

Below: Chris (left) & JR (right) at Governors; JR calls himself a "ginger" because of his red hair; Chris insists if JR is "ginger" then he's "a chocolate"



to my house where the boys helped me dig into the garage and retrieve some lawn furniture, a small bistro table and chair, and chaise lounge (the chaise lounge was a real treat for mom who did not sleep well on the floor).

That evening I ordered inflatable air beds from Amazon. The next day, Monday, I began helping Cassie start the process of reclaiming her identity and that of the boys. We also had to obtain medical records and Cassie had to update her medical status to qualify for a BRAP voucher (a kind of housing subsidy based not just on economic need but a degree of disability). I accompanied Cassie and the boys for a tour of the Waterville Junior High and helped acquaint them with the town, including the library where they obtained library cards and learned to navigate the big city library (to their delight they found board games and a series of books they enjoy reading).

It was traumatic to be yanked from their lives up north, removed from their classrooms without any warning, and taken to a strange place. All their little treasures and collections and sports equipment were left behind, as were friends they grew up with – and it was another shock when they fully realized they were not going home, at least not now, and probably not for a long time. For me, working with the kids through their processing of such a profound loss and big adjustment in their young lives was very intense and very touching. One of the things I helped accelerate for them was supportive professional counseling to help them cope and eventually thrive.

Fortunately, Cassie was approved for a housing voucher rather quickly but ran into the usual problem of trying to find an apartment that would qualify under the terms of the subsidy. The caseworker helping her acquire the housing subsidy decided the family needed to move to Skowhegan where there was more available housing, but this wasn't acceptable to her or the boys. The boys went into a meltdown about moving again; they were just beginning to settle in at school after a bumpy start and who could blame them? I intervened, advocating for more time to find an apartment in Waterville, and then worked to find suitable housing.

It's hard to find appropriate housing in summer; in winter the market tightens even more but I made some personal calls and, thanks to the relationships and reputation Starfish is building in the community, managed to talk a landlord into hurrying to make an apartment here in town more quickly available. This man had been in no rush to finish the place, at least not over Christmas week, but kindly agreed to do what he could. He and his helper spent Christmas Eve day and the day after Christmas painting the apartment and making repairs so the family could move in as soon as 2 days after Christmas. (They took their Christmas tree with them and it traveled rather well!). What a great start to a new year!

The Poverty Action Coalition gave Cassie a \$200 voucher to use at The ReStore and Pastor Mark and the boys' father met Cassie and me at the ReStore and moved some nice furniture into the new apartment right after New Year's.

This brings me to the boys' biological father, Walter, Sr. He is now back in their lives after

several years' absence and successfully working a recovery program connected to the Center Point Church. Center Point has also been generous to this family and found a part-time job for the father whom, I should make clear, is not the abuser.

This has provided me with an opportunity to collaborate with another faith community. Out of this and initiatives fostered by the Interfaith Council, I'm hopeful there will be future discussions with more churches about how to coordinate charitable services to the advantage of those we serve.

Over time, Starfish purchased real beds (platforms and mattresses) to replace the air beds (which I will keep for the next emergency), continued to help with food and other items like the replacement of their clothes. It wasn't until mid-February that ALL of Cassie's subsidies for food and the children were restored. One of our largest expenses was purchasing dentures for Cassie.

Some really great news is she passed a series of tests in the Adult Continuing Education Program and is now enrolled in a Certified Nurse Assistant (CNA) program. How great is that? Both boys are now doing well in the Jr. High School and they are in several clubs and activities and JR is on track to graduate from 8th grade this spring.

Our first Starfish family is launched and no longer in a relationship with Starfish Village, but I anticipate they will continue to have struggles and ask you to hold them in prayer. Amy's daughter, Emily, however, continues to do well and for the second time made Honors, most recently High Honors. It has been such a joy to see her thrive.

Starfish Village is growing in respect throughout the community and has received compliments from Mayor Isgro, local agencies and various churches. Of course, this insures to the good reputation of our church. The Mayor and I have formed a task force to study homelessness in Waterville and it's been a positive experience to work with him. I've found his respect and support to be genuine. He's also shared that he's aware of the important role the Waterville United Church of Christ plays in the community and is very happy that we've committed to stay in Waterville. Nick Isgro and I think we're a good example of how very different people can come together for the greater good. This gives both of us some hope, as I pray it does you.

I know this has been a lot to share but I wanted to take the time to do it; I thank you for your patience reading this long missive. I feel it's important that you and other generous people supporting this ministry get informative updates. I want you all to feel that you're the backbone of this special ministry because, of course, you ARE. If you have any questions, feel free to contact me. I'd love to hear from you.

Please continue to pray for me and the people we serve.

God bless you;
Rev Mo

March 2020

Sun

Mon

Tue

Wed

Thu

Fri

Sat

1 9:30 Worship 9:30 Sunday School 10:30 Fellowship 10:45 Deacons	2 3:45 Yoga in Sanctuary	3	4 11:30 Study Group 1:00 Women's Fellowship 5:30 Yoga 6:00 Study Group	5	6	7 8:00 Men's Fellowship at Selah Tea
8 8:15 Church Council 9:30 Worship 9:30 Sunday School 10:30 Fellowship	9 3:45 Yoga in Sanctuary	10	11 11:30 Study Group 5:30 Yoga 6:00 Study Group	12 9:30 Church & ministry meeting 6:00 Music that Makes Community	13	14
15 9:30 Worship 9:30 Sunday School 10:30 Fellowship 10:45 Alewife talk and discussion	16 3:45 Yoga in Sanctuary	17	18 9:00 Essentials Closet 11:30 Study Group 5:30 Yoga 6:00 Study Group	19 5:00 Essentials Closet	20 First Day of Spring 9:00 Essentials Closet 	21
22 9:30 Worship 9:30 Sunday School 10:30 Fellowship 10:45 Vitality Team Informational Session	23 3:45 Yoga in Sanctuary	24	25 9:00 Essentials Closet 11:30 Study Group 5:30 Yoga 6:00 Study Group	26 5:00 Essentials Closet	27 9:00 Essentials Closet	28
29 9:30 Worship 9:30 Sunday School 10:30 Fellowship 10:45 Vitality Team Informational Session	30 3:45 Yoga in Sanctuary	31				

April 2020

Sun

Mon

Tue

Wed

Thu

Fri

Sat

			1 11:30 Study Group 1:00 Women's Fellowship 5:30 Yoga 6:00 Study Group	2	3	4 8:00 Men's Fellowship at Selah Tea
5 Palm Sunday 9:30 Worship 9:30 Sunday School 10:30 Special Congregational Meeting	6 3:45 Yoga in Sanctuary	7  Holy Week	8 11:30 Study Group 5:30 Yoga 6:00 Study Group	9 Maundy Thursday 9:30 Church & Ministry Committee 7:00 Service at Winslow Congregational Church	10 Good Friday 2:00 Ecumenical service at Pleasant St. United Methodist Church 7:00 Chapel Service at Waterville UCC	11 Holy Saturday
12 Easter Sunday 6:00 Sunrise Service at Colby 9:30 Worship 9:30 Sunday School 10:30 Fellowship	13 3:45 Yoga in Sanctuary	14	15 9:00 Essentials Closet 5:30 Yoga	16 5:00 Essentials Closet	17 9:00 Essentials Closet	18
19 9:30 Worship 9:30 Sunday School 10:30 Fellowship	20 3:45 Yoga in Sanctuary	21	22 9:00 Essentials Closet 5:30 Yoga	23 5:00 Essentials Closet	24 9:00 Essentials Closet	25
26 9:30 Worship 9:30 Sunday School 10:30 Fellowship	27 3:45 Yoga in Sanctuary	28	29 8:00 ME Conference Boundary Training 5:30 Yoga	30		