



Church on the Cape Newsletter



February 2025

From the Pastor's Desk

A LIVING PARABLE FOR ME

I have two colors of Martha Washington Geranium plants. I bought them several years ago. When spring comes, I take them outdoors to grow for the summer. When fall comes, the plants are overgrown and not suitable to bring inside, so I have taken cuttings each year and started new plants. This fall, I took three cuttings from each plant to start inside.

At first, everything looked good. In time, though, I noticed that one of the cuttings didn't seem to be doing as well as the others. I continued to tend them in hope that they would all do well. Sadly, the one continued to deteriorate. It reached the point where it looked like it could not be saved. As I removed it from the potting soil, it was clear that it had not grown roots. It had a couple of small leaves and some green stems left. I thought it was worth a chance, so I cut off the dead portion of the stem, reapplied the rooting hormones, and replanted the cutting.

It took time, but with a little extra care, it became clear that the little plant still had energy left and might not perish. After much patience and nurture, it started to show new

growth. It has now become a healthy, though smaller, companion to its siblings.

As time goes on, it grows stronger and more vigorous. It promises to become a beautiful, healthy specimen.



It is a living parable for me. In so many aspects of life, we often give up too soon. We lack the patience and perseverance to discover the potential of rejuvenation and new life. This can apply to the church. While we may need to consider bold changes and new ways of living—there is often life and hope even when it looks hopeless. Like my cutting, we sometimes have little left to work with, but even that can grow and prosper if we care enough to nurture it back to health and life.

It is also true of our spiritual lives. Often, years of neglect can leave them struggling and stunted. That doesn't mean there is no life or hope, only that it takes careful nurture and

commitment to reinvigorate spiritual growth. Sometimes, it even takes radical steps—like trimming the decaying parts and tending the places that are still alive and healthy.

There is almost always hope. That is what gardening has taught me over the years. You can always have a fresh start, and even when others might give up, I often discover there is still something that can be saved and given new life. I believe that is how God looks at us—and how God wants us to see each other. There is always beauty and new life to discover—and a plant that's just waiting for a bit of love and attention to grow to its full potential!

UMCOR LA FIRE RELIEF

Thank you to everyone for your generosity! As of the publishing of this newsletter, we have collected \$7,600 for the relief effort! We will continue to collect gifts for a few more weeks but would like to send our check in at the end of February. Remember, you may make your gift with cash or check but be sure to label it clearly! If you need to use a credit card, please see Rev. Smith.

AN ENDURING GIFT

Thanks to the generosity and commitment of many people, Church on the Cape has a "Legacy Fund." This fund will soon become a permanent endowment fund to help finance the ministry of the church. While we know that we can support the church through our offerings and gifts, we can also continue to support the church even when we are no longer here. Through bequests in our wills, life insurance policies, charitable gift annuities, and other kinds of planned giving, we can make an enduring gift that will support the church in the years to come. If you have not already considered

this, we encourage you to think about making your support of the church an enduring gift and legacy.

CHURCH ORGAN NEWS

In November, we were presented with a unique opportunity to upgrade our church organ. The pipes on the organ have not been working for some time. While exploring the repair to the pipes, we became aware that a used organ was available that would dramatically improve the quality of sound and potential of our installation. This console was a rare find that would fit perfectly in the small space we have available. Our Trustees decided to act quickly to secure this upgrade for us. The new instrument features an additional keyboard and a number of new "stops." It also has improved digital sound. We can all look forward to enjoying the enhanced beauty of the music we will share in worship and musical programs in the years to come.

—Rev. Greg Smith

February Lectionary

FEB 02 | 4th Sunday after the Epiphany (Green)

- Jer 1:4-10
- Ps 71:1-6 (UMH 794)
- 1 Cor 13:1-13
- Luke 4:21-30

FEB 09 | 5th Sunday after the Epiphany; Scouting Sunday (Green)

- Isa 6:1-8, 9-13
- Ps 138 (UMH 853)
- 1 Cor 15:1-11
- Luke 5:1-11

FEB 16 | 6th Sunday after the Epiphany (Green)

- Jer 17:5-10
- Ps 1 (UMH 738)
- 1 Cor 15:12-20
- Luke 6:17-26

FEB 23 | 7th Sunday after the Epiphany (Green)

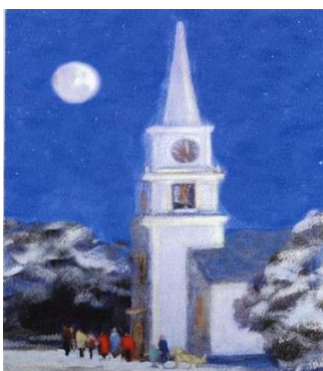
- Gen 45:3-11, 15
- Ps 37:1-11, 39-40 (UMH 772)
- 1 Cor 15:35-38, 42-50;
- Luke 6:27-38

Mission Outreach

Submitted by Diane Hutchins

GIFTS OF LOVE

Formerly known as the Alternative Christmas Fair, "Gifts of Love" is a program to give a donation to a non-profit in someone's honor instead of giving "stuff."



Together, we raised \$8,120! Thank you for your very generous support! Please keep our partner organizations in your prayers as we enter 2025.



All those recyclable bottles and cans cashed out **over \$500** in 2024! As a reminder, Clynk bags are available 24 hours a day by the side entrance. Just fill up a bag and drop it off at any Hannaford supermarket. Proceeds are designated for Mission Outreach. Thank you for your support!

NEXT UP:

Mark your calendars for **Sunday, February 23rd**. **Jim Cortright, Bon Appetit Community Meal Program** in Biddeford, will be our guest speaker to kick off the March "Mission of the Month." **Kathy Johnson is coordinating this event.**

CAMP MECHUWANA RETREAT OPPORTUNITIES

YOUTH LEADERSHIP RETREAT – SATURDAY, MARCH 8TH

For youth in Grades 8-12. Join us for this special event as we explore what it means to be a leader. And let's talk about how you can put those skills to work as a Youth Leader during the summer. The event is free, but pre-registration is required. The limit is 60 youths, so register today to save your spot!

FAMILY CAMP – MARCH 28-30

Do you have children ages 0-18? Want to spend a weekend at Mechuwana with other families for a kid-friendly getaway? Join us for a weekend of games, arts & crafts, dancing, nature walks, & some relaxation, too! Each family will get their own bunk room (or more if needed).

Fee: Varies by family size

ADULT MAKER'S (CRAFTER'S) RETREAT (SESSION I) – APRIL 3-6

Come to Mechuwana for this event led by Pastor Elizabeth Bailey-Mitchell to relax and get to know others who enjoy sewing, crocheting, knitting, scrapbooking/stamping, embroidery, and other "maker" crafts. Bring your UFOs (unfinished objects) or learn a new skill. Beginners welcome. We have makers eager to teach their favorite craft. There will also be time for worship and walks in the woods. Come for the whole retreat or just a day or two.

This event is limited to 40 adults.

The fee is \$145.

Camp Mechuwana is located in Winthrop, Maine. For more information:

www.mechuwana.org

**ADVENT AND CHRISTMAS WORSHIP
AT CHURCH ON THE CAPE**

We wish to express gratitude to Worship Committee members, Music Director Paul, Pastor Greg, choir, soloists, and instrumentalists for leading our congregation in worship through the season of Advent, 2024.

Christmas Eve worship, celebrated with an over-flowing number of worshippers, brought us to witness the renewal of life at our church. The opportunity offered on Christmas morning for a Service of Holy Communion was an added blessing to the season.

Gratefully,

Joan and Jim Lennon



*Ann Emerson
Spaulding
December 31,
2024*

*Martha Young
January 21,
2025*

Please keep the family and friends of Ann Spaulding and Martha Young in your prayers as they deal with the grief of her passing.

Thank You, Jean and Adrien



We are most grateful for the dedicated service of Head Usher Jean Baracco and Assistant Adrien Baracco. Every Sunday, they graciously welcome us with a smile and worship bulletin. They are always helpful, and Jean alertly brings the microphone to members wishing to share a message. And that is not all. After the service, they pick up items left on the pews and replace Bibles and hymn books to their places in readiness for the next service.

COTC AND COS FOOD DRIVE

During February, Church on the Cape will partner with COS and hold a month-long food drive. Please see the list below of needs. Your items for Community Outreach Services. Below is a list of needs for the food pantry.

Current Needs

- **Paper goods (especially paper towels)**
- **Coffee**
- **Brand name cereals**
- **Hot chocolate**
- **Canned beef stew**
- **Chili**
- **Soups** (other than Campbell's tomato, chicken with rice, or vegetable)
- **Mayonnaise**
- **Mustard**
- **Salad dressing**

FREE SPAULDING CENTER MEMBERSHIPS AVAILABLE

The Evangelism Committee is pleased to offer interested congregants a 1-year free membership to the Spaulding Center for Active Living. COTC is grateful to the late Annie and Hank Spaulding for their vision in creating the Center in 1990. The church has sponsored 10 free memberships, 8 of which are still available to interested souls who are at least 50 years old. Check out the Spaulding Center website to see the range of activities. Please let Pastor Greg or Jen (207-967-5787) know if you are interested.

MARK YOUR CALENDAR

Saturday, July 26, will be a busy day at Church on the Cape. Our Summer Fair will join the Cape Porpoise Library's Book Sale to rock the neighborhood. Plans are underway. Please contact Marge Smith or Susie Goodwin if you

would like to get on board. We are all ears for new ideas!

DISCIPLE BIBLE STUDY RESUMES THIS WEEK AT 12:30 IN THE PARLOR OF PEACE

Feb. 4	Chapter 8	Sound Teaching for Faithful Living	Pages 62-71
Feb. 18	Chapter 9	The Son Shall Set Us Free	Pages 72-79
Mar. 4	Chapter 10	Our Great High Priest	Pages 80-87
Mar. 18	Chapter 11	We Never Lose Hope	Pages 88-95
Apr. 1	Chapter 12	A People Set Apart	Pages 96-109

A PRAYER FOR SPIRITUAL GROWTH

When my spiritual vision is foggy, help me to find my way.

When my understanding is incomplete, open my mind and increase my patience.

When my indifference blocks my senses, touch my heart.

When worry or fear raise their voices, speak to my faith.

Let your Spirit permeate my longings as well as my living and my loving. Amen.

—Peggy Ferrell, Prayers and Poems



WHY I BELIEVE IN GOD

by Charlie
Benore

Laying the foundation for my Laity Sunday presentation, "Overcoming Concerns About Believing in God" (Nov. 2024 newsletter Churchonthecape.org), was not appropriate because of time constraints, and I am grateful to the newsletter for communicating it.

Whether to believe in God is the most important question one can think about. I sincerely hope that including the four principal reasons for "Why I Believe in God" in this newsletter will be helpful to our readers.

FIRST IS THE PROPHECIES IN THE OLD TESTAMENT THAT FORETOLD THE COMING OF JESUS, EYEWITNESS CONFIRMATION THAT HE DID, AND SUPPORTING ARTIFACTS

a) The Hebrew Bible, of which the Old Testament is a part, was created many years before the earthly life of Jesus. It tells of His coming and sacrificing His life for our sins so that those who believe in Him will have everlasting life.

It is important to avoid revisionist history in testing the prophecy outcomes, and we are blessed in this regard to have the Dead Sea Scrolls. According to experts, there are reportedly 800 plus manuscripts in the Dead Sea Scrolls' Qumran discovery, with about 220 from the Hebrew Bible. Except for Esther, each

of the books is present, although most are fragmented and have missing pieces.

The ability to trace Old Testament Scripture back to original events lends strong credence to the reliability of our present-day Bible. These books are said to date between 150 BCE to 70 CE. One of the found books, Isaiah, is said to be virtually complete.

Among these books, Isaiah 53 is especially important to me because it foretells the suffering and death Jesus incurred in fulfilling God's plan for our salvation many years before Jesus resided on earth. Selections from the Common English Bible follow:

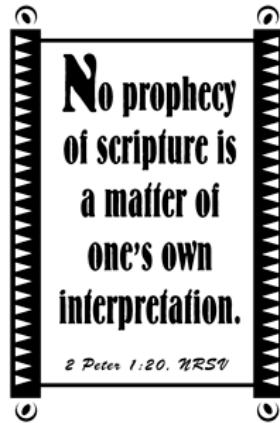
- *He bore the punishment that made us whole; by his wounds, we are healed.*
- *Like sheep, we had all wandered away, each going its own way, but the Lord let fall on him all our crimes.*
- *The Lord's plans will come to fruition through him.*
- *...my servant will make many righteous and will bear their guilt.*
- *Therefore, I will give him a share with the great, and he will divide the spoil with the strong in return for exposing his life to death....*

According to several sources, over 100 prophecies that Jesus fulfilled are noted in the Old Testament. The Old Testament prophecies range in time from 500 to 1200 years before Jesus' birth, and some are very specific, such as "a Child is born." (Isaiah 9:6), "...the deaf shall hear,"..."the blind shall see." Isaiah 29:18; "Behold, your king is coming to you; he is just and having salvation, lowly and riding on a donkey...." Zechariah 9:9; Soldiers "divide my garment...and for My clothing they cast lots." Psalm 22:18; "...his body shall not remain

overnight on the tree, but you shall surely bury him that day...." Deuteronomy 21:23.

The Old Testament prophecies were fulfilled reference for reference in the New Testament.

These prophecies, inspired by the Word of God, were proven and affirm God's Word in Scripture.



The New Testament clearly describes the life of Jesus with us, thanks to those who authored it, including several who served as eyewitnesses.

Like the Old Testament, the New Testament also has an early archeological foundation testifying to its authenticity. Reportedly, the first complete copy of a single book in the New Testament goes back to around 200, and the earliest complete New Testament copy, the Codex Sinaiticus, dates to the 4th century.

b) There are eyewitnesses of Christ's coming to earth to show us how to live and give His life for us so that we might be saved. For example, the apostle Peter wrote:

We are witnesses whom God chose beforehand, who ate and drank with him after God raised him from the dead. He commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that he is the one whom God appointed as judge of the living and the dead. All the prophets testify about him that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name.
Acts: 10: 41-43

Also, 1 Corinthians 15:3-8, written by the apostle Paul, notes: *...Christ died for our sins in line with the scriptures, he was buried, and he*

rose on the third day in line with the scriptures. He appeared to Cephas, then to the Twelve, and then he appeared to the more than five hundred brothers and sisters at once – most of them are still alive to this day, though some have died. Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles, and last of all, he appeared to me...."

Moreover, there are historical records of Jesus' time on earth from two historians.

**"This Jesus
God raised up,
and of that all
of us are
witnesses."
Acts 2:32, NRSV**

Tacitus (A.D. 55-120), a leading historian of his time, writes, "Christus (Greek for Christ), from whom the name had its origin, suffered the extreme penalty during the reign of Tiberius at the hands of one of our procurators, Pontius Pilate...."

Another is Josephus' record, published in his "Jewish Antiquities" in the year 93. "About this time, there lived Jesus, a wise man, if indeed one ought to call him a man. For he was one who performed surprising deeds and was a teacher of such people as accept the truth gladly. He won over many Jews and many Greeks. He was the Messiah. And when, upon the accusation of the principal men among us, Pilate had condemned him to a cross, those who had first come to love him did not cease. He appeared to them spending a third day restored to life, for the prophets of God had foretold these things and a thousand other marvels about him. And the tribe of the Christians, so called after him, has still to this day not disappeared."

While Josephus' reference is controversial to some, perhaps because it sounds too Christian for a historical record, it is nonetheless, at its core, supportive of the earthly existence of Jesus. Josephus also wrote of James: "the brother of Jesus, the so-called Christ."

c) From another historical perspective, several important artifacts support people, places, and events in Scripture. Several of the most important include The Dead Sea Scrolls, which is already mentioned and described as the most remarkable discovery, with minimal differences between the Scrolls and Old Testament Hebrew texts. According to experts, these differences do not alter the meaning of God's Word in our Bible.

And there are two scrolls named the Ketef Hinnom Scrolls with citations of biblical texts in Hebrew that are reportedly even earlier than the Dead Sea Scrolls. The Tel Dan Inscription reportedly refers to the House of David, Israel's king and ruler. Also among the many findings is The Pilate Stone, which mentions Pontius Pilate, the Prefect of Judea.

SECOND IS INTELLIGENT DESIGN

Intelligent Design professes that the universe and humans are so complex that they cannot be explained except with an intelligent cause. I know no one or what, for example, could have created the planets where we on earth have adequate temperatures, water, gravity, ozone protection, proper orbit, and the like that provide for human life. Who or what force other than God has that creative power?

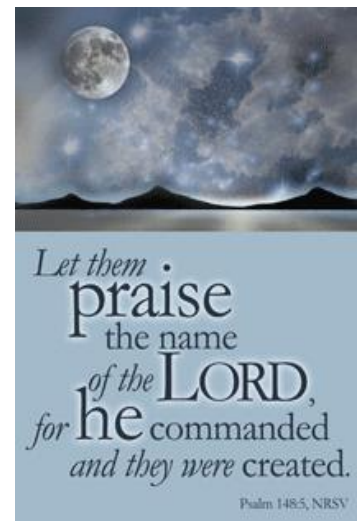
Noted theoretical physicist Stephen Hawking in "The Grand Design" offers an answer. He believes that the Big Bang, or universe creation,

was inevitable because of laws such as gravity and occurred spontaneously out of nothing.

His theory of creation has been criticized for not having a "first-order event" or an explanation for how gravity and other forces were present that created the universe along with the laws of nature to control the universe's growth and keep it intact and functioning.

Could there be a force beyond our scientific comprehension that did so? The vastness of space, the complexity of the solar system, and the fact that at least one of the planets supports life point to an Intelligent Designer. The Intelligent Designer, I believe, is God.

On another scientific front, Darwin's "On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection" suggests that humans were the result of biological evolution where all life on earth evolved over time from a single ancestor in contrast to the beginning of



humanity as Adam and Eve. The study of the first replicating molecule's evolutionary path, according to this theory, ultimately led to different animal types and human beings.

There are objections to this theory, such as Intelligent Design, where it is held that only a supernatural force could accomplish the biological diversity of life and complexity of the human anatomy.

Notably, there also needs to be a "first-order event" to explain how the first molecule got

here. A beginning organism from somewhere needs to be present for evolution to occur.

Intelligent Design by God is, I believe, a more compelling answer to how we got here. Science is useful for showing how natural law works, but not about the origin of our planet and its inhabitants. Psalm 19:1 proclaims, "The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament shows His handiwork."

THIRD IS THE CONSCIENCE OR THE MORAL GUIDE WE HAVE BEEN GIVEN

"But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed." James 1:14. Fortunately, we have a moral compass to guide us away from temptation.

As far back as I can remember, my Mom and others would guide me to what was right and wrong in the normal course of being a youth, but as I grew older, it became apparent that my sense of what was right and wrong was much broader and deeper. The question is, where did this recognition come from?

In my studies, I especially liked the Gospel of John, and there I found that my conscience extender was the Holy Spirit.

I have spoken these things to you while I am with you. The Companion, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything and will remind you of everything I told you." John 14:25

Jesus, I believe, planted into our minds a helper – the Holy Spirit – that He sent to us soon after His ascension so we would know right from wrong.

FOURTH IS THE EARTHLY REWARDS OF PEACE AND JOY

Because Jesus died on the cross for our sins, and since I sincerely believe, love, and have faith in Him – and endeavor to follow His commandments – I have forgiveness of my sins and, in turn, peace in my mind and joy in my heart.

He has not dealt with us according to our sins nor punished us according to our iniquities. For as the heavens are high above the earth, so great is His mercy toward those who fear Him; as far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us. Psalm 103: 10-12

My faith strengthened over time from grade school to much later in my life. Initially, I believed in God based more on what I had been taught versus what I understood and deeply believed. Subsequently, attending church, being inspired by several ministers and church families, studying the Bible, and reading books by biblical scholars, my faith in God steadily increased.

Then, one day, as I was walking on my way to church meditation, it dawned on me why I was doing so. I was doing so because I could say with sincerity and truthfulness from my whole mind, heart, and soul that deep down, I believe in God and love Him. I could feel a smile coming to my face and a wonderful feeling of being close to God and acceptable to Him. It was a glorious experience for me.

In closing, *Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy, and My burden is light. Matthew 11: 28-30.*

Amen

Church on the Cape A United Methodist Church

We of The Church on the Cape represent various religious and cultural backgrounds and lifestyles. We are young, old, middle-aged, single, married, widowed, divorced, parents, grandparents, and members of extended families.

Above all, we are people who take risks, make mistakes, confess, repent, and try again.

At the center of our community is Jesus Christ, whose life, death, and resurrection are the reasons we are together. The life and hope in this community have more to do with Christ's faithfulness to us than ours to Christ.

Whether you are searching for a faith community or just passing through, we want you to feel at home. Whoever you are, whatever your history, your scars, your gifts; You are among persons like yourself.

Join us from wherever you call home. If you like what you see here, we post our virtual Hymn Sing and Sunday Worship Service on our website, www.churchonthecape.org.

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