



The Weathervane

RAYMOND VILLAGE COMMUNITY CHURCH, United Church of Christ Newsletter

December, 2023

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From the Pastor . . .

"If the only prayer you ever say in your entire life is -Thank You- it will be enough."

• Meister Eckhart

Happy Thanksgiving Beloved,

I pray you are each well and being held softly in God’s open hand on this blessed day. And today is a blessing for each of us - so, thank you God. Even in our sadness or sickness, today is a blessing; so, thank you God. Even in our hunger and homelessness, today is a blessing; so, thank you God. Even in all our human trials and tribulations, today is a blessing; so, thank you God. I pray that you all witness the blessings before you today, as well.

A prayer that I know is not so easily fulfilled because it is really hard to be grateful when we are hurting, alone, or suffering. I saw this truth when I served St. Andrews Hospital as a chaplain, a few years back. The kindest and most gentle people in the world did not appear that way when they were in pain. There was no gratitude or joy; rather, there were quite a bit of tears and demands. Eventually, when the suffering did come to an end; there was often gratitude. But that only came when the pain and hurting and fear had disappeared.

The problem is that today our world is hurting. We never get a break from the pain because our world is so interconnected. And we Christians feel the sorrow when our sisters are addicted to drugs; when our brothers are homeless on the streets; when our family is running in fear from oppressive governments; when our kin is sick in the hospital with dementia; when our Christ suffers on the cross. Our empathetic hearts feel this pain in the lives of everyone around us and that beloved is a good thing. It is exactly what Christ calls us to do and what the Apostle shared when he said, “Bear one another’s burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.” (Galatians 6:2). Yet, that also leaves no room for us to be thankful.

Continued next page . . .

The Weathervane is published monthly for distribution at the first of each month. Articles may be submitted as paper copy, electronically via disk or email by the 15th of each month preceding the issue for it to be included in. Computer files should be submitted as MSWord (.doc) or rich text format (.rtf). If you have any questions contact Debbie Feagans or Judy Munson. Articles can be dropped off at the church office, mailed or emailed to: Raymond Village Community Church, PO Box 285, Raymond, ME 04071- office@rvccme.org or to Judy Munson, 23 Lawn Ave., Gorham, ME 04038 – cmmunson24@yahoo.com – Thank you for reading our newsletter!

December & January at RVCC . . .

December 3, 2023-	11:00 a.m. – Communion Worship with Rev. Brian Donovan 2:00 p.m. – Alzheimer Support Group
December 5, 2023-	5:00 p.m. – Council & Deacons workshop meeting (in person)
December 9, 2023-	5:30 p.m. – Christmas Season Pot Roast Supper
December 10, 2023-	11:00 a.m. – Worship with Rev. Brian Donovan
December 17, 2023-	11:00 a.m. - Worship with Rev. Brian Donovan
December 24, 2023-	No Sunday Morning Worship 5:00 p.m. – Candlelight Christmas Eve Service with Rev. Brian
December 31, 2023-	No Sunday Morning Worship
January 7, 2024-	11:00 a.m. – Epiphany Worship with Rev. Brian Donovan 2:00 p.m. – Alzheimer Support Group
January 9, 2024-	5:00 p.m. – Deacons’ meeting
January 14, 2024-	Worship with Rev. Sharon Rankin at Windham Hill Church (No service at RVCC)
January 21, 2024-	11:00 a.m. – Worship with Rev. Brian Donovan
January 28, 2024-	11:00 a.m. – Worship with Rev. Brian Donovan

Worship videos will be available on the RVCC YouTube Channel:

https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCc1hBkBTar_nZF-H4O7YN5ew

Please join us for Coffee Hour after Worship!

The Knitting Group will meet on December 12, 2023, December 26, 2023, January 9, 2024, and January 23, 2024 from 2:00 – 3:30 p.m.

Line Dancing – will be every Friday at 10:00 a.m.

Scouts, BSA Troop 800 meets every Monday at 6:30 p.m.

AA meets every Friday at 7:00 p.m.

From the Pastor, continued . . .

So perhaps it is time to do something different in this ever hurting interconnected world: maybe it is time to be thankful for everything. For the horror of the crucifixion because this pain saved our souls; for the rain which falls because God promises it will bring flowers; for all the trials and tribulations of our lives, our families lives, and our kin’s lives because then and only then will we see where we need to bring justice to our world. Maybe living in utter gratitude - first - is what we are truly called to do; so, we can find and provide God’s Love to all our kin in need.

I believe that if we change our perspective in this way while also thanking God for all the blessings, we see every day, our world will see a difference. We will each see a difference in our world. And, our lives will no longer be consumed with the pain of living; but held in gratitude for the Holy Spirit. Further, I believe that our kin - who are the kin of Christ - the human family in this world will finally witness the kin-dom of God and all the love and joy and gratitude that goes along with that singular promise from Christ.

Therefore, I pray that we all change our perspective to one of gratitude - first - for everything on this blessed day of Thanksgiving; for, today is a blessing; so, I say thank you , God, and maybe that is enough to help You recreate our world into the kin-dom to come.

And, thank you beloved kin, my friends, and my family, thank you and may you have a blessed Thanksgiving - every day.

Pastor Brian



Christmas To-Do List

- ~~Buy~~ ^{Be} Presents
- ~~Wrap Gifts~~ ^{Someone in a hug}
- ~~Send Gifts~~ ^{Peace}
- ~~Shop~~ ^{Donate} for Food
- ~~See~~ ^{Be} the Lights





Please keep the following people in your prayers:

Amanda, Angela's family & friends, Kathleen Bent, Michael Cadotte, Bill Downes, Louise Doyle, Polly Dyer, Christine Eldridge, Linda Eldridge, Rick Emery, John & Linda Gregoire, Anita Holmquist on the death of her son Bill, Liz Kenaly, Shannon Lurvey, Ron Maker, Deb Rand, The family of Charlotte Rowe, Cora Sullivan's sister-in-law Karen, The Thayer family & Janice (in hospice), Hilda Wiley, and for the people of Israel, Palestine, Ukraine, and Maine.

DECEMBER & JANUARY BIRTHDAYS

December 7	Cassi Gordan
December 10	Lois Waldron
December 15	Jeff Stevenson
December 28	Caryl Gilman
January 20	Alice Richards

What if there is a storm on Sunday? Will church be cancelled?

If there is a storm or poor driving conditions, we will move worship to Zoom as the first course of action. If we are unable to do Zoom worship, then we will cancel worship.

How will you know?

1. Lori will send an all-church email from the office Sunday morning (if she has power, otherwise a Deacon will email.)

2. WGME and WCSH TV stations show "Zoom worship" or "services cancelled" for Raymond Village Community Church

For Zoom Worship, click the link below around 10:45 AM

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82211774347?pwd=bkZvL0lIT2lROXR2d1phaEhiZ2MzQT09>

then click "Open Zoom Meeting", then "join with video", then "join with computer audio".

There is a waiting room. The host receives a message you are there as soon as you click "join with computer audio". The host will connect you.

DECEMBER & JANUARY LECTIONARY LESSONS

December 3, 2023 – First Sunday of Advent

Isaiah 64:1-9
Psalm 80:1-7, 17-19
1 Corinthians 1:3-9
Mark 13:24-37

December 10, 2023 – Second Sunday of Advent

Isaiah 40:1-11
Psalm 85:1-2, 8-13
2 Peter 3:8-15a
Mark 1:1-8

December 17, 2023 – Third Sunday of Advent

Isaiah 61:1-4, 8-11
Psalm 126 or *Luke 1:46b-55*
1 Thessalonians 5:16-24
John 1:6-8, 19-28

December 24, 2023 – Fourth Sunday of Advent

2 Samuel 7:1-11, 16
Luke 1:46b-55 or *Psalm 89:1-4, 19-26*
Romans 16:25-27
Luke 1:26-38

December 31, 2023 – First Sunday after Christmas

Isaiah 61:10-62:3
Psalm 148
Galatians 4:4-7
Luke 2:22-40

January 7, 2024 – Epiphany Sunday

Genesis 1:1-5
Psalm 29
Acts 19:1-7
Mark 1:4-11

January 14, 2024 – Second Sunday after the Epiphany

1 Samuel 3:1-10, (11-20)
Psalm 139:1-6, 13-18
1 Corinthians 6:12-20
John 1:43-51

January 21, 2024 – Third Sunday after the Epiphany

Jonah 3:1-5, 10
Psalm 62:5-12
1 Corinthians 7:29-31
Mark 1:14-20

January 28, 2024 – Fourth Sunday after the Epiphany

Deuteronomy 18:15-20
Psalm 111
1 Corinthians 8:1-13
Mark 1:21-28

Summary of Tuesday November 7, 2023 Coordinating Council Meeting

The meeting was called to order at 5:00 PM, by Tom Wiley, Moderator. Present were Tom, Brian, Rolf, Deb, Caryl, Brenda, and Judy.

Brenda offered the opening prayer. Tom reviewed the agenda, close time set at 6:30.

Treasurer's Report: Brenda presented monthly (October) and third quarter reports. No big surprises. Income for the month was under budget, but expenses were under as well. She is ready to start the budget process for 2024.

Trustees: Rolf reported that Nate and Deb are still in the parsonage, there was a hold up in getting into their new apartment. Rolf reminded the Council that when the time comes that we have a buyer for the parsonage, we will have to authorize him to handle the closing. Rolf also reported that work on the organ has been completed. We will need to budget for an annual cleaning for it. Air conditioners have been taken out, clocks have been reset, he is all set for someone to plow snow, still working on someone to shovel.

Stewardship: Brenda reported that Stewardship letter and pledge cards have gone out. Tom will speak on Stewardship Sunday. Brian would like to bless the pledges.

Pastor: Brian is working on putting together merger information, defining a merger, and starting to identify churches with whom we might merge. It is a long process.

Moderator. Tom asked how the office functions with Lori and Brian have been going. Things are going well as they develop their chemistry.

Deacons/Missions: Caryl had sent out a written report ahead of the meeting. It included: use of gluten free bread for communion; we are now recording each week; we are welcome to worship at Windham Hill Church on the second Sunday of the month; there will be an ecumenical Thanksgiving service at Windham Hill on November 20, at 6:30 PM; the Casco Village Church Interim minister has invited us to join in an Advent Bible Study, in person, on Dec. 6, 13, and 20. Caryl also included reports of the Conference annual meeting, and visit from Daisy's Children, Maria Elena, and Sharon Beckwith. Caryl also reported that before Sunday Services, there will be a 5 minute meeting with Michael, Brian, the deacon, and the person who is recording. There was discussion about problems with service on November 5, and especially the microphones. We may need to buy new one(s). Also discussion about license(s) we need.

Old Business: There will be a Christmas Season Pot Roast Supper and fun night on December 9.

New Business: The Annual Meeting will be on January 21, 2024, at noon, with lunch to follow. Snow date will be January 28, 2024. Agenda will be brief, just the necessities, hear reports, adopt budget, and elections. All reports need to be in to Lori by January 7.

From the Pastor: Brian continued presentation on merger information. There are a lot of UCC churches in this area, and most of them are suffering. It was suggested that instead of a regular business meeting in December, we do a workshop type meeting concentrating on beginning to explore merger process. Brian made a presentation of 2 awards we received from the Conference Office, one for being a 5 for 5 church, and the other for contributing to conference support. There was a discussion of items to be in the Weathervane which will be printed on November 28. This will include events for December, January, and early February. We do not print a Weathervane in December.

Brian offered a closing prayer. The meeting was adjourned at 6:40 PM.

Respectfully submitted,
Judith Munson, Clerk

HANNAFORD GROCERY CARDS

We have Hannaford shopping cards available for purchase in denominations of \$100 and \$50. Every \$100 you purchase means RVCC gets \$5. You buy the card for \$100, you buy \$100 worth of groceries and RVCC gets \$5!!! How great is that? I am available to get cards to you. Just send me an e-mail (bolsen001@maine.rr.com) or give me a call (207-838-0123). Thanks! Brenda

Looking Ahead to January Worship . . .

January 7th - Rev. Brian Donovan will lead worship for Epiphany Sunday and communion (no more individual cups.)

January 14th - No worship at RVCC. All are invited to 9:30am worship at Windham Hill UCC (140 Windham Center Rd., Windham) with Rev. Sharon Rankin. As of right now, we will share worship here again to witness what we did not see last time. If anything changes, we will make sure everyone is made aware.

January 21st - Rev. Brian Donovan will lead worship with an invitation for anyone to share: "what do we like at Windham Hill" following worship.

January 28th - Rev. Brian Donovan will lead worship.

Welcome and Affirmation for Rev. Brian Donovan on October 29, 2023



Sunday October 29th was a special worship service led by Rev. Deborah Loomis-Lafond. She reminded us of Pentecost when past and present laid the foundation for a new church and a new future that sought to leave no one behind, but to flend the gifts of the faithful in response to God's call to do a new thing. Rev Deb talked about her kitchen renovation and likened some of the feelings (grief for the old and anticipation of the new) to RVCC feelings as we look to the future. We are experiencing a "re novation". (new in place of the old). We, the congregation, looked at each other and spoke aloud gifts each brought to RVCC to help on our journey. We grasped each others' hands to move into our new beginnings.

2023 Advent Studies

Bible Study on the "Clobber Passages" led by Rev. Brian Donovan

10:00 a.m. on Thursdays starting November 30, 2023
(fellowship starts around 9:30 am)

At the First Congregational Church of Gray, UCC

People within the Christian Church throughout the eons have referred to one of only seven passages within the Bible to falsely attack homosexuality and individuals who are born gay. Yes, there are only seven passages in the whole Bible which could be seen as speaking about or against the LGBTQIA+ community. These passages are generally referred to as the "clobber passages" due to their weaponized use against this same community. That said, these passages are still part of the Bible and should be taken seriously. Therefore, I would like to invite each of you to join me over the course of five weeks to discuss these passages for us today and also in accordance with translations, cultural understanding, and the Christian theology throughout the years.

If you are interested but cannot make the time/place of this Bible study, please reach out to Pastor Brian by phone (207) 350-9561 or email (pastorbrian.m.donovan@gmail.com).

If there is interest, I may also lead an additional time online or in person.

Advent Bible Study

Casco Village Church interim minister, Rev. Dr. Amy Lignitz Harken has invited our church to join in an Advent Bible Study which will be on "Paul's Letter to the Philippines." This will be on Wednesdays, Dec. 6, 13, and 20. There will be a mid-day in-person study, probably around 1:00 p.m., at Casco Village Church, 941 Meadow Rd., and an additional session on Wednesday evenings via Zoom, for those who cannot get out or are at work.

Missions Corner

Christmas Fund

On December 24th, envelopes will be available to make an annual contribution to the Christmas Fund. The Christmas Fund for the Veterans of the Cross and the Emergency Fund is a Special Mission Offering that congregations have been supporting for over 100 years. The offering is administered through the United Church Board for Ministerial Assistance, the charitable arm of the Pension Boards. Funds provide direct financial support to those who serve the church and are facing financial difficulties. Active and retired clergy, lay employees, and their surviving spouses may be eligible for the Supplementation of Small Annuities, Supplementation of Health Premiums, Emergency Grants, and/or Christmas "Thank You" Gift Checks.

Maine Seacoast Christmas Wishlist Program

Cherryfield ME (location of Downeast Edge Campus) is going to have some happy children and adults at Christmas! Thanks to all of your donations, RVCC sent a variety of items from Amazon worth over \$200! Blanket, puzzle books, chapstick, dolls and other toys, reading lights and more! Just the thought of this can give us a warm fuzzy feeling! THANK YOU!



Daisy's Children

When Caryl attended Maine Conference Annual Meeting she was met with a surprise! Maria Elena from Honduras and [Daisy's Children](#) was in attendance, pictured here with Daisys' founder Sharon Beckwith (left). Maria Elena came to Maine from Honduras for a month to spread the word about what is happening in Concepcion del Norte, Honduras. Maria Elena has been a pastor for 30 years serving the local congregation. Sharon Beckwith of North Berwick met Maria Elena when she visited Honduras in 2008. Since that time, they have forged a partnership to provide nutritional, educational, and medical support to the children of the village.



Over the 15 years, Daisy's Children has gone from feeding a few children to feeding over 150 children. They provided uniforms to impoverished children so they could attend school. (uniforms are required) They built a building for the children to meet, be fed and to learn. They have made a positive difference in the community. Children first served in the early years are now helping Maria Elena and/or are working in the community.



KNITTING & CROCHETING GROUP

The knitting & crocheting group meets the 2nd & 4th Tuesday of the month at 2:00 p.m. in the classroom at the top of the stairs. Everyone is welcome whether you knit or crochet, or want to learn. We are usually working on projects for donations and we have plenty of yarn. Please join us and share your favorite project or a donation that you would like to be involved in. Whether you join us or not you are always welcome to make donations. Look for information about our next donation project in next month's weathervane. Please let me know if you have any questions. Thanks! Brenda (bolsen001@maine.rr.com) or 207-838-0123



Raymond Village Community Church is a founding partner of Fuller Center.

Sebago Fuller Housing – In Service to Our Community!

On October 6th we partnered with Saint Joseph's College's Beth Auger Day of Service. We had 12 volunteers from SJC join 10 volunteers from Fuller Housing to tackle 4 projects in our community. The crews did a lot of prep and painting for a couple in Windham -- and finished attaching handrails on the wheelchair ramp at another Windham home. Another crew installed insulated skirting to winterize a home for a veteran who lives on Pettingill Pond.

On November 6th we were recognized by the Town of Windham for providing most of the labor and materials to build the new pavilion at the Windham Community Park Complex (adjacent to the skate park & the fire station).

Then, for the third year in a row, volunteers for the Sebago Lakes Region Fuller Center for Housing committed their time on Veteran's Day, November 11th, to helping others. Sixteen volunteers including four veterans and several new volunteers worked on four projects in Windham, Raymond, and Standish. The projects ranged from yard clean-ups to cleaning out gutters to emptying out rooms that had accumulated "stuff" over the years. One project involved rebuilding a shelf to make it easier for the owner to reach her laundry detergent. A task like that may seem small to many of us but our goal is to make sure our seniors can complete common household chores safely.

Overall, the day was another example of "Faith in Action." Special thanks to Jersey Mike's in Windham for donating sandwiches to all of the volunteers and families, to Windham Rental for the free use of a bush hog, and to Home Depot for \$100 off on project materials and supplies.

We know that the need is great throughout our community, so if you know of a family in need, please reach out to one of us or through our website. And if you are interested in volunteering or donating to help, please be in touch. And thank you again to the NWUC Family for supporting our efforts through an annual Founding Partners contribution of \$500.

Faith in Action!

Enjoy the Holidays!

Diane Dunton Bruni	Jim McBride	Caryl Gilman
President	Treasurer	Volunteer Coord.

Join us for an Advent series "Christ's Four Births"

Which of the Gospel's four "Birth" stories reveals who you want to be as a Christian - who you want us to be as a church - who you hope we will become as a people of God throughout this world? Each week through advent, we will ask this question as we patiently await the gift which has both already arrived and that which has not yet come: the birth of our Christ on Christmas. I hope you will take some time this year to join us as we celebrate the Advent season - together.

Sunday, December 3rd *Hope*

11:00 A.M. – Worship and Communion
Focus Scripture for the week: **Mark 1:9-11**

Sunday, December 10th *Peace*

11:00 A.M. – Worship and Hanging of the Greens
Focus Scripture for the week: **Matthew 1:18-23**

Sunday, December 17th *Joy*

11:00 A.M. – Worship
Focus Scripture for the week: **Luke 2:5-11**

Sunday December 24th *Love*

A special video presentation of the Advent message will be shared on Facebook by 12:00 p.m.

Focus Scripture for this week: **John 1:1-5, 14**

5:00 P.M. – Family candlelight worship service.





**Come and Join the Fun
Invite your friends, family, neighbors**

CHRISTMAS SEASON POT ROAST SUPPER

Food: Bring your favorite Christmas cookie to share

Ornament Swap: Bring any ornaments that you are not using and decorate the Christmas tree. At the end of the evening take home any that you wish!

Candy: Guess the number of candies in the jar – the closest to the actual count takes it all home!

Games: Christmas Friendly Feud (Family Feud with a Christmas theme). Special prizes for the winners!

SATURDAY, DEC. 9TH 5:30PM

RAYMOND VILLAGE COMMUNITY CHURCH

Please sign up on the list in the vestry

Line Dancing News!

Rachel is pleased to announce that Line Dancing will resume in the Vestry, on Fridays only, starting on October 20th, at 10:00 a.m. We will welcome Maggie Holnaider as our new instructor. This will continue as a beginner low impact class. If you have any questions, you may continue to contact Rachel at 232-1172. Rachel may not be able to dance, but she will continue to be involved in these classes.

Maine Conference Annual Meeting at Pilgrim Lodge October 20 & 21, 2023

The 92nd Annual meeting of the Maine Conference was the first in-person session in 4 years and it was held at Pilgrim Lodge!

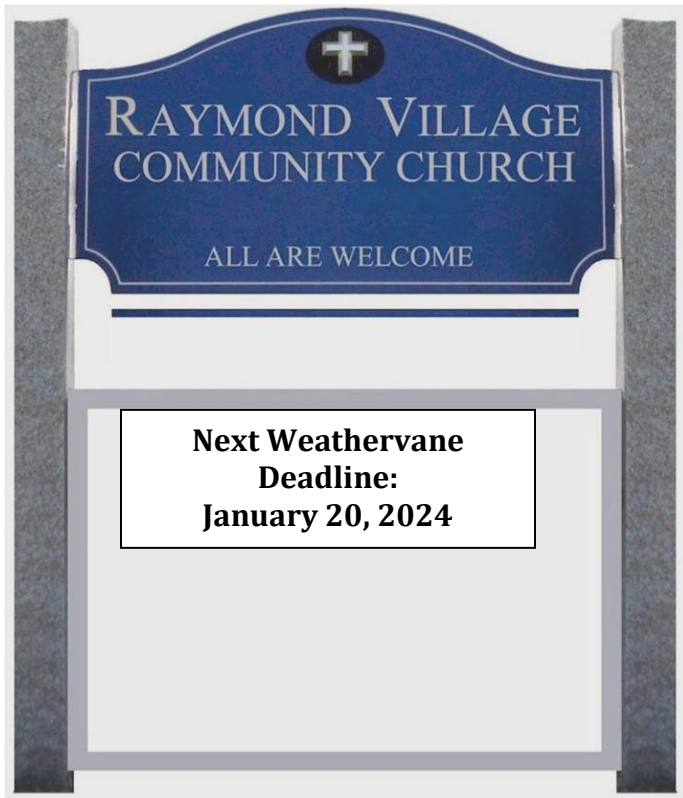
Friday was a day of workshops. Between Caryl and Pastor Brian, we attended:

- “Wait, when’s worship?” Discussion about best practices for the church website with checklist handout. We use the list to plan improvements to RVCC website.
- “Small Church Story Project Ministry - Revs. Doug Dunlap and Susie Craig explained the project and What it has taught us, what it has taught the project churches, and what they could teach us churches of every size – even today. Ask yourselves “What is most important to you?” Let the answer guide all decisions.
- Calling a Circle of Elders - Discussion about the power of elderhood and using a “Circle of Presence” as a spiritual practice. In this workshop, we sat in a circle, then each spoke their name and why they chose the workshop. I “slowed down” so I could breathe deeply and listen to stories others shared about retiring, about unexpected medical issues when retiring, about finding joy in retirement.
- No Excuses: Growing Your Childrens' Programing, Serving the World
The discussion on the church's youth engagement was led by Rev. Amelia Edson, Kristen (Coleman) Tripp, and Lydia Hoffman. The focus of the discussion was to reveal how we as communities of faith can re-engage the younger generation through “creativity, collaboration, and an idea called, 'don't be afraid to be silly.’” Further, I found there was an underlying truth throughout the conversation which asked me, “if we are engaging with children and young families in the ways in which they need? Are we being welcoming to these younger generations?” Perhaps the greatest takeaway from this workshop was the idea that we need to ask the young families in our community how they need to be supported? Through this engagement and listening, we may find a future for the youth in our CE programs and in our churches.

Saturday morning was the annual business meeting of the Maine Conference, UCC including budget review/approval, pastoral compensation guidelines (update salary with 3.2% cost of living), and vote on officers in governance of the Conference. Contact Caryl Gilman if you want more detail.

Saturday afternoon was the installation of Maine Conference Minister Rev. Dr. Marisa Laviola. A wonderful, inclusive worship ending with laying on of hands.





Raymond Village Community Church

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REMINDER:

We will NOT publish a Weathervane edition for January, 2024. We wish everyone a Merry Christmas and a Happy, Healthy and Safe New Year!

Raymond Village Community Church, UCC

Warrant for Annual Congregational Meeting

January 21, 2024

Notice is hereby given to the members of the Raymond Village Community Church, UCC in Raymond, Maine that you are duly called to meet at our Annual Congregational Meeting on Sunday, January 21, 2024 after the Sunday service, beginning at approximately 12:00 p.m. In case of inclement weather, the meeting will be held on January 28, 2024.

The business of the meeting shall be as follows:

Article 1: To hear and act upon the reports of all officers, Coordinators, Task Force, and Committees;

Article 2: To adopt a budget for the fiscal year 2024;

Article 3: To elect a slate of officers to serve for the year;

Article 4: To transact any other business that shall lawfully come before this meeting.

Notice of this meeting is hereby given on this the 7th (and 14th) day of January, 2024.

Respectfully,

Judith T. Munson, Church Clerk