

The Messenger

First Congregational Church of Fryeburg December 2021

PASTOR'S MESSAGE: My Family Christmas Tree

“O Christmas Tree, O Christmas Tree, your branches are uplifted.” Sing Joyfully Hymnal

When I was a little girl every year once we'd taken our last bite of pie and put down our fork, scraping back our chairs from the delicious Thanksgiving meal we just shared with all our loved ones gathered around the table with us, we'd hurry into our coats, hats, mittens, and galoshes and make a dash for my parents' old station wagon to choose and cut a Christmas tree with my dad.

Because I was little, I always had to stay home and help my mom clear the dishes and put everything away, or help keep my little nephews and nieces entertained while my mom and sisters and sisters in law washed and dried the dishes and wrapped all the leftovers before putting them in the unheated storage room off the kitchen my mom used as a pantry.

I remember the very first year I got to go along on the Christmas tree hunt. My mom wasn't sure it was going to be such a good idea, but my dad winked at me with a sideways smile creeping around the corner of his mouth and I knew that meant I was in.

My brothers, Carlton and Clayton, rode up front with my dad while my sister, Rose, and I piled into the backseat with an old wool blanket over our legs to keep us warm. My dad put a big axe, some heavy rope, and one of our old glider sleds into the back end of our station wagon.

I have no idea where we went. I just know the trip took us out of Fryeburg and onto a lot of narrow dirt back roads. When we got to where the dirt roads were no longer plowed, my dad stopped the car and we all got out and walked, with the old sled carrying the rope and axe.

We walked into the woods and my dad always seemed to know where he was and where he was going. Some years the snow came up over the tops of our boots and when the going got too difficult, my dad would lift me onto his shoulders and we'd carry on.

Much later in life I found out we were in the woods that belonged to Peter's grandfather, Harry Eastman, where Stow, Maine and Chatham, NH came together. Harry and my dad were good friends and he often let my dad hunt there as well as doing his Christmas tree choosing.

We'd trudge along through the woods and snow, when suddenly my dad would stop, look up, and that's when I knew he'd picked it. He'd take me off his shoulders, ask Rose and me to stand back, then he'd take that axe and with one clean, swift move, the tree would come down, exactly where he wanted it to fall, and then my dad and my brothers would tie it to the glider and we'd trudge back out to the car, sometimes getting back to our old station wagon after sunset.

Once we were home, our holiday decorating could finally begin. We had a really old metal tree stand that required a lot of maneuvering to get the tree trunk secured straight and tall. Sometimes my dad would have to use a bit of twine to secure the tree to a window pull on one side and a drapery hook on the other side. Then we'd give the tree a good, long drink and pause to take in the wonderful smell of a freshly cut tree.

My mom would already have the boxes of ornaments out and the little metal hooks piled in place to secure each ornament. But before we could place the ornaments and toss the tinsel, my dad had to put the Christmas lights in place.

These were the old bulbs, big and bright in red, orange, blue and green. We used the same strands of bulbs year after year. Once my dad had the lights up and on, which required a massive amount of extension cords, and a lot of prayers that they'd all work, similar to the situation in the Christmas Story movie, he moved outside to our breezeway and porch to string the rest of the bulbs. And now we could decorate the tree!

Each ornament was precious, with its own unique story of how it came to be. Some were salt dough creations, others created here in Sunday School or at CA Snow School, and still others were store bought or gifts from my married brothers and sisters.

Big, round, glass balls. Some had lovely white frosted designs, others were striped, or looked like they'd been dipped in the snow. We made garland out of paper we colored and cut ourselves, using flour and water as glue.

But my favorite decoration of all was the tattered and worn Angel who majestically adorned the top of our tree. Missing much of her angel hair, the glitter all but gone, she was still a beauty to behold with her angel wings outstretched and her face an image of pure Christmas bliss.

Then there'd be about five minutes of tinsel tossing mayhem while our cats watched with great interest and our dogs snoozed under the warm glow of the parlor wood stove.

Our stockings weren't hung till Christmas Eve. And I think the stockings were my favorite Christmas day present. I knew Santa would always leave me a fresh orange in the toe and a chunk of milk chocolate somewhere amongst the other varied treats it held.

We had a big sleigh with Santa and eight reindeer who graced the counter between our kitchen and dining room and a string of glittering white bells with silver and gold sparkles my mom placed around the entry to our parlor. Christmas cards were hung along the parlor entryway underneath the white bells and together, with my mom and dad, we helped gather pine boughs and make Christmas wreaths for our kitchen and porch doors.

My dad had a very old nativity that was his grandmothers. The stable, the cradle, and all the people and animals were all hand carved and painted. To keep busy young hands out of temptations way, it was placed on top of the hutch in our dining room.

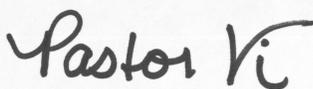
During the week before Christmas, once my dad was home from work, my folks would pick a day and take my sister, Rose, and I, and we'd make the long drive to Westbrook to the Pine Tree Shopping Center where my folks' shopped at Zayres and across the street at Bradlees for Christmas gifts.

They'd always buy Rose and me a box of popcorn to share and some years, if they were feeling really solvent, we'd have our pictures taken in the old style photo booth at Zayres. It was always dark when we got into Westbrook and when we left town with all our Christmas bounty.

I never saw traffic lights except when we made these Christmas shopping trips into Westbrook and to this day, when Peter and I are driving after dark, the colors of the traffic lights always make me think of childhood Christmases.

These Christmas memories of my past have shaped who I am and what Christmas means to me. They've given me the gift of Hope. Hope for a white Christmas. Hope for old fashioned Christmas lights. Hope for food and family and faith. Hope for the anticipation of hoof beats on the roof top on Christmas Eve. Hope for celebrating the birth of Our Lord and Savior, on Christmas Day, and Hope that no matter what comes our way during this pandemic, we never stop believing in the wonder and awe of Christ's birth or the celebration of Christmas.

May this season of Advent bring Hope to all who believe in Christmas. And have a happy, healthy, and joyous Holiday Season.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Pastor Vi". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Covid-19 Statistics – Active Cases (as of December 1st)

Positive Cases

Maine	The United States	Around the World
120,000	48.1 million	264 million

Deaths

Maine	The United States	Around the World
1324	777,000	5.3 million

The Covid-19 Pandemic has surpassed the 1918-1919 pandemic for numbers of deaths in the United States. 2021 has surpassed 2020 for the number of positive cases and deaths in the United States.

Please continue to mask when in a public indoor setting and to distance yourself and wash your hands repeatedly and if you have not done so, consider getting vaccinated.

Maine CDC

Per guidance from the Maine CDC, persons in counties with substantial or high levels of Covid-19 community transmissions are advised to wear face coverings in public indoor settings. Every county in Maine has substantial or high levels of Covid-19.

Do you still need to get vaccinated? <https://www.maine.gov/covid19/vaccines>

Vaccination is the most effective way to protect you and your family from Covid-19. Vaccines are free and are available without needing an appointment.

Visit this web site to learn where you can get a Covid-19 vaccination.

<https://www.maine.gov/covid19/vaccines/vaccination-sites#pharmacies>.

Get Tested for Covid-19. Covid-19 testing is free and widely available in Maine without an appointment.

Visit this web site to learn where you can get tested. <https://www.maine.gov/covid19/testing>

Questions about the Covid-19 vaccinations/boosters? Visit this website

<https://www.maine.gov/covid19/vaccines/public-faq>

Maine Covid-19 Resources

- **StrengthenME:** The Maine Dept of Health and Human Services created **Strengthenme.com** to help Mainers cope with the stress and uncertainty of the pandemic. The program offers a hotline that is open 7 days a week, 8am – 8pm. Anyone in need of assistance can call 207-221-8198.
- **Maine Helps:** The Maine Helps website, <https://www.maine.gov/covid19/maine-helps> offers ways Mainers can directly help nonprofits, health care and businesses during the COVID-19 outbreak.
- **FrontLine WarmLine:** Maine Department of Health and Human Services phone line to help Mainers who are working on the frontlines of the coronavirus outbreak. The phone line will be staffed from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. each day by calling 207-221-8196 or 866-367-4440. The service will eventually include a text option, officials said.

- **211 Maine:** The state's 211 system can answer general questions about coronavirus from callers. Mainers can also text 898-211 to have their questions answered.
- **NAMI Maine Resources:** is offering several programs to help people with mental health concerns due to the COVID-19 crisis.

Supporting Maine People and Families–

Manage unemployment benefits <https://reemploye.maine.gov/accessme/faces/login/login.xhtml>
 Workforce training and resources. <https://www.maine.gov/covid19/workforce-resources>
 Help paying for childcare <https://www.maine.gov/dhhs/ocfs/support-for-families/child-care/paying-for-child-care>
 General Assistance for Mainers harmed by Covid-19 – food insecurity, health care, emergency benefits and more <https://apps1.web.maine.gov/benefits/account/login.html>

Supporting Maine Students and Their Families

K-12 Response. Maine Dept of Education in collaboration with public health experts, created this framework for safely reopening and maintaining in class schools. Visit this website <https://www.maine.gov/doe/framework>.

The Department has also launched a dashboard for tracking Covid-19 cases in Maine schools. <https://public.tableau.com/app/profile/maine.cdc.covid.19.response/viz/COVID-19casesbyschool/maine-covid-19-cases-by-school?publish=yes>

The University of Maine System is updating its operations, policies, and resources for students, faculty, staff, and families affected by COVID-19. Visit this website to learn more. <https://www.maine.edu/together/>

The Department of Education is compiling important advice and resources about talking with children about Covid-19, and coping with family stress and anxiety. Visit this website to learn more. <https://www.maine.gov/doe/continuityoflearning/parent>.

They offer general tips, how to create a positive learning environment, how to talk to your children about Covid-19, how to engage and motivate children during distance learning, maintaining your child's and family's emotional well being, and lots and lots of on line educational resources, virtual field trips, and interdisciplinary learning experiences to enhance your child(ren)'s learning experiences.

Support for Maine Employers

Supporting Maine Businesses <https://apps1.web.maine.gov/benefits/account/login.html>
 University of Maine is updating policies, operations, resources. <https://www.maine.edu/together/>
 Maine Jobs and Recovery Plan t <https://www.maine.gov/governor/mills/news/governor-mills-unveils-transformative-plan-spur-economic-recovery-achieve-long-term-economic>.

What You Need to Know (From the Office of Governor Mills)

November 3rd. through November 12th, Gov. Mills announces launch of Maine's job and recovery plan.
<https://www.maine.gov/covid19/maine-jobs-and-recovery-plan>

Grant monies are available to help strengthen our healthcare workforce; provide small business grants; grants for Maine farmers and food processors to help grow and sell healthy foods; initiatives to cut ener-

gy costs for Maine families; reduce carbon emissions, and strengthen and support clean energy workforce; to support and strengthen Maine's seafood industry; and to support Maine's Forest Economy and Rural Communities.

At this website, you can read each recent announcement, learn about the approved initiatives, upcoming initiatives to support Maine business, to expand and strengthen Maine's workforce, revitalize infrastructure, and how they are progressing as well as reports and recommendations.

Governor Mills Announces Federal Approval of Bonus Payments for Direct Support Workers. November 23, 2021

Governor Mills Administration's plan provides an estimated \$126 million for new-hire and retention bonuses for home- and community-based employees. Governor Janet Mills announced today that the Federal government has approved Maine's plan to allocate an estimated \$126 million in MaineCare funds available through the American Rescue Plan (ARP) for bonuses for new and existing home- and community-based services (HCBS) direct support workers and shared living providers.

These payments represent a major component of the Maine Department of Health and Human Services' (DHHS) plan to improve access to high-quality services for Maine people of all ages living with disabilities and behavioral health challenges.

Governor Mills Expresses Gratitude for the people of Maine and wishes everyone a Happy Thanksgiving. November 24, 2021

In advance of Thanksgiving, Governor Janet Mills issued the following video statement today expressing gratitude for the people of Maine and wishing everyone a Happy Thanksgiving: *"Tomorrow is Thanksgiving, and I simply wanted to say thank you. Thank you to the people of Maine, whose resiliency, determination, and generosity inspire me every day. We have had no shortage of challenges, but we are a state blessed with people who are smart and hardworking and who value one another. To all Maine people, I wish you and your loved ones a very happy, and healthy, Thanksgiving holiday."*

Governor Mills releases a statement on the Omicron Variant, November 29, 2021

Governor Janet Mills released the following statement regarding the emergence of the SARS-CoV-2 variant B.1.1.529, also known as the Omicron variant:

"I have asked the Maine Department of Health and Human Services and the Maine Center for Disease Control and Prevention to closely track the new Omicron variant, particularly its severity, transmissibility, and its potential impact on Maine people and our health care systems.

"Omicron has not been detected in Maine or the United States as of now. Our partnership with The Jackson Laboratory, which continues to conduct genomic sequencing of positive tests to determine the presence of variants in Maine, positions us well to detect this new variant.

"We will also remain in close contact with our hospital systems and other health care providers to assess their capacity and work with them to ensure that Maine people have access to quality health care.

"The emergence of Omicron once again underscores the importance of taking commonsense steps like wearing masks when inside at public places, and, most importantly, getting vaccinated, including now getting your booster if you can.

Vaccination remains the best and most effective way to protect your health and that of your loved ones, and we continue to strongly urge Maine people to get their shot, regardless of whether it's your first or your third."



To everyone who supported the Giving Tree program this year. This mission serves families of school children in all the towns within our MSAD #72. They receive a winter coat, gloves, boots, socks, and a gift for under the tree through the giving tree tags placed within our church and community businesses.

There is still time to make a donation to this program if you were unable to go out and shop for a gift. You can make a monetary donation and mail it to **The Community Giving Tree, PO Box 443, Fryeburg, Maine 04037**. Again, thank you for your support and thank you Linda Russell, for being our church contact person.



Thrift Store News

The two-day thankful sale was a huge success! All clothing was 50% off. And now we are getting the shop ready for December.

If you'd like to volunteer or would like more information, please be in touch with our manager, Ingrid. The store phone number is 935-2329 or you can visit the Thrift Shop web site fryeburgthrift.com.



WE HAVE OPENINGS!!! 18 mos to 5 years old. We are open M-F, 7:30 am to 5:30pm. If you need assistance with tuition, we can help too!

For information on enrolling your child or children, please contact Kerri at 207-935-3276 or by a message on the FirstKids Children's Learning Center Facebook page or email. firstkidsoffryeburg@yahoo.com



God is working through the hands and hearts of our church family to share the Love of Christ during challenging times. We take time to be grateful for the blessings God has bestowed on us.

The ministry of our church and congregation continued virtually in our first year of the pandemic and now in a hybrid format, worshipping together in our historic church and streaming virtually as well. FirstKids Daycare and our Thrift Shop ministries continue to serve those in need and we continue to support other missions

and ministries within our community.

In gratitude, we can come together to personally pledge our financial support to the ministries of The First Congregational Church of Fryeburg. Please return your mailed Pledge 2022 form or you can leave it in the offering plate during worship. Thank you again. The Executive Council



Family of Erwin McAllister, Jr., Paul Chaplin, Ruth Fisher, Ada Beebe, Laura Smith, Shelly Hibbert, Barbara Lawrence's granddaughter, Ellie, John Waldie's brother in law, Wayne, Cynthia Thebault, Norene Hastings, Carlene, Henry & Barbara in the nursing home, Jean Hubbard, Arlin Bigelow, Carlton & Karen Pipe, brother, Chris, his wife, Ginny, and wisdom and discernment for Kitty & Missie. And all our family and friends who will be traveling for the holidays.



Our Christmas Eve Candlelight Service will come to you virtually on our church Facebook page. Fryeburg Congregational Church The Little Church with a Big Heart. If you cannot join us at 6 pm. It will remain available.

Church Closed December 26th. No public or virtual service.

What Our Church is All About



Our Mission

We encourage all to live and grow as disciples of Christ in service to God and the World.

Our Minister

Rev. Dr. Violet Eastman
(Pastor Vi)

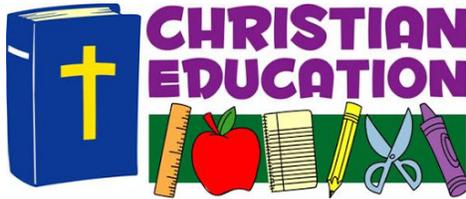
Email: ourpastorvi@gmail.com

Phone or Text:
239-595-4569

Pastor Vi's home address
93 Harding Rd
Brunswick, Maine
04011



Music Director, John Waldie
Pianojaw2@gmail.com



Christian Ed Director,
Linda Russell.

Lindarussell2972@gmail.com



Church Office

Office Phone: 207-935-3227

Please be advised our office phone number is are not monitored daily.

Church website:

www.fryeburgucc.org

Our Physical Address:

655 Main Street
Fryeburg, Maine 04037



Kerri McCormack, Head Teacher

Hours: Monday - Friday

7:30 am - 5:30 pm

Phone: 207-935-3276

We are still asking members and friends NOT to come to the church building during this time of Covid-19 unless it is absolutely necessary.

We are working to keep our learning center children and teachers healthy and safe.



679 Main Street
(just down the street from our beautiful church)

Store Hours

Wed. and Sat. 10am-2pm or by appointment.

Ingrid Kellas, Manager

gardener@smallfryfarm.com

www.fryeburgthrift.com

Phone: 207-935-2329

Our church is on Facebook!



You can find us at
Fryeburg Congregational Church
The Little Church with a Big Heart

Pastor Vi will continue to make worship services available on our FB page even though we open for public worship.

Have a great month everyone!

