

A “Just Peace” or “Peace with Justice” Church

“The Sanbornton Congregational Church, United Church of Christ, is a church for Peace and Justice. We affirm our dedication to prayer, study and understanding of issues of peace and justice in ourselves, our families, our community, our state and our world.

Knowing that vision of a just and peaceful world begins with the work of God through each of us, we further resolve:

To provide a safe place for all people of good will to converse with God and each other;

To use peaceful and creative ways, to settle conflicts;

To work together with others, to build a world of peace, kindness, responsibility and

justice in God’s name.” *(Church bylaws)*

“The Just Peace Church vision is a hallmark of United Church of Christ theological identity. The movement traces its history to the 1985 General Synod, when a Just Peace Pronouncement called upon all settings of the UCC to be a Just Peace Church, underscoring the words of Dr. Robert V. Moss, the second president of the UCC, who wrote in 1971, “We now need to put as much effort into defining a just peace as we have done in the past defining a just war.”

The General Synod defined “just peace” as the interrelation of friendship, justice, and common security from violence. What does it mean to be a Just Peace Church in times like these? This is the question we continue to ask ourselves and others. Your responses and ideas are most welcome in shaping the new directions of our collective movement.” *(www.ucc.org)*

An International Prayer for Peace *(Adapted from the Upanishads by Satish Kumar)*

Lead me from death to life, from falsehood to truth.

Lead me from despair to hope, from fear to trust.

Lead me from hate to love, from war to peace.

Let peace fill our heart, our world, our universe. Peace, peace, peace. Amen.

Prayer for Peace

O God, who would fold both heaven and earth in a single peace:

Let the design of your great love lighten upon the waste of our wraths and sorrows:

and give peace to your Church, peace among nations,

peace in our dwellings, and peace in our hearts. Amen.

Prayer for Justice

Grant us, Lord God, a vision of your world as your love would have it:

a world where the weak are protected, and none go hungry or poor;

a world where the riches of creation are shared, and everyone can enjoy them;

a world where different races and cultures live in harmony and mutual respect;

a world where peace is built with justice, and justice is guided by love.

Give us the inspiration and courage to build it, through Jesus Christ. Amen.

Recommended Reading

Dear John, *The Nonviolent Life*. Pace e Bene Press (2014).

Leadingham, Carrie; Joann Moschella and Hilary Vartanian. *Peace Prayers*. HarperCollins (1992, San Francisco).

McGinnis, James. *Praying for Peace Around the Globe*. Ligouri (2009, Missouri).

Stassen, Glen, Ed. *Just Peacemaking*. Pilgrim Press (1998, Cleveland).

Wink, Walter. *Jesus and the Nonviolence, A Third Way*. Fortress Press (2003).

MEMBERSHIP

We welcome you as a prospective or new member of the Sanbornton Congregational Church, United Church of Christ!

Membership in our church is open to any person who has been baptized or has been confirmed. If you have not been baptized, you may be baptized before or on the Sunday when you are received into Church membership. If you are a member of another church, we encourage you to request a letter of transfer from that church.

Prospective Member gatherings, led by our pastor and one deacon, are offered three times annually, following Fellowship Hour on Sunday mornings. Anyone may attend these meetings, where you have an opportunity to learn about our church and our denomination, as well as ask any questions you may have. Before joining our church, we ask that you attend two Prospective Member gatherings.

Reception of New Members. Persons may become members of the Church by confession (for those who have never joined a church) or reaffirmation of faith. New members are received into church membership during a regular Sunday Worship service.

Full members of the Church gain the privilege of voting at Congregational meetings and serving as officers of Church boards and delegates to the Merrimack Association or New Hampshire Conference of the UCC. Associate Membership is also available if you wish to maintain membership in another church. Associate Members have all the privileges of membership except voting on disposal of Church real property.

Responsibilities: Members are encouraged to attend regularly the Worship services of the Church; to contribute to its support through time, talent and treasure; to participate in its ministries and activities, to promote the well being of the Church community and the world. Members may attend any meeting of the Church Council of any of the Boards or Committees except for Nominating, Pastoral Relations, Personnel or Search Committee.

Information. There are UCC membership brochures available in our Narthex and Sanctuary. For further information about our denomination, the United Church of Christ, please go to www.ucc.org, and for the UCC New Hampshire Conference: www.nhcucc.org. If you would like additional information or would like to attend an upcoming Prospective Members gathering, please contact our Pastor (286-3018).

CARING MINISTRIES

Every time you are touched by the hand of friendship, every time you are supported by the hand of help, every time you receive the hand of guidance, these are the hands of God.

Human hands helping God's hands. God is love, and when love is present, so God is present.

God hands you God's love to handle with your hands. You are God's instrument, God's hands.

May you let God use them today! (Author unknown)

Jesus calls us to care for one another-- for our neighbors, both friend and stranger-- in times of grief and joy, trouble, illness and need.

At the Sanbornton Congregational Church, UCC, we seek to support one another through hospital and home visits with our pastor and/or a Friendly Visitor (a church member), and through support in a variety of ways, such as providing meals or transportation. We have an active Prayer Shawl Ministry, as described on this page. Please contact our Pastor at the church to request a visit or phone call: 286-3018.

STEWARDSHIP

In essence, stewardship means “to manage the household.” Theologically speaking, we manage the households God owns and lends to us to manage. Yes, our households include money, but stewardship reaches far beyond money, to include our caretaking of creation and one another.

It isn't how much you have in life; it's what you do with it that counts. Everything we have is a trust from God. And the important thing is to learn to use it wisely by sharing it and taking care of God's world. When we do this, we are making an investment in our own souls. (John Killinger)

Pastor and author Anthony Robinson writes that the stewardship ministry of a congregation is about two things: (1) The purpose or mission of the church. What is it that God has called us to do and be? (2) A personal, spiritual practice: that is, about becoming a more generous, giving and sharing person. *(Stewardship for Vital Congregations)*

Stewardship is a practice that continues throughout each year and throughout our lives. Like many UCC churches, the **Sanbornton Congregational Church** offers special stewardship information, resources and biblical reflections in the fall of each year. On the first Sunday of November, people are invited to come forward during Worship to offer their pledges of “time, talent and treasure,” in support of the ministries and mission of the Church.

Church members and friends receive “Time and Talent” sheets, along with pledge forms, so that they may indicate the ministries and activities where they would like to serve, according to their gifts and abilities. For the annual monetary pledge, we encourage people to start, if possible, with a pledge of at least 2-3% of their annual income, in the hope of increasing their pledge each year. No matter what amount you are able to contribute, everyone in the congregation is encouraged to make a monetary pledge, because EVERY contribution is an essential part of the whole, unified body of the Church.

Here is an excerpt from one letter sent to our congregation from the Stewardship Committee.

“Our Stewardship theme for this year is “**Blessed to be a Blessing**,” based on God’s words of promise to Abraham: *...all peoples on earth will be blessed through you*. Each one of you is a blessing to our church, and we pray that our congregation is a blessing to each one of you. Our call as the body of Christ is to rejoice in God’s blessings and to spread these blessings among *all peoples on earth!*

At the heart of every blessing is the sharing of our time, talent and treasure. Your monetary gift and your willingness to use your talents to serve others make it possible for God’s blessings to flourish...

Praise God from whom all blessings flow! **We thank you** for all that you give and do in service to God, our church, and our neighbors. Truly, our congregation is *blessed to be a blessing.*”

CONFIRMATION PROGRAM

WELCOME TO THE CONFIRMATION JOURNEY!



“Confirm, not Conform”

Through this Confirmation program, we hope to offer youth the opportunity-

- to explore what they believe & value and how they want to live that out
- to ask tough questions and search out possible answers
- to explore the Christian faith in terms of tradition, Scripture and personal experience
- to make new friends, deepen friendships, and meet people in the church
- to build a relationship with an adult mentor (and the Pastor too!)
- to understand and have an impact on the ministries of the church
- to participate in outreach/service and different Worship experiences

This program is for youth in grades 8 and up. Each youth will have an adult mentor who will be a companion for the journey, along with the Pastor, parents and members of the congregation. This is a two-year program, with two meetings/month in the first year and one meeting/month, with a few trips for Worship and Outreach, in the second year.

In the spring, each youth who has completed the two-year program will be asked if he or she would like to be confirmed, which includes becoming a member of the Sanbornton Congregational Church, UCC. Confirmation Sunday takes place on the first Sunday in June. Becoming a church member is not required, but rather the personal choice of each youth. Please contact our Pastor if you are interested in learning more about our Confirmation program. (286-3018).

ADULT FAITH FORMATION

Through Adult Faith Formation gatherings, we seek to deepen our relationship with God and grow in our understanding of God's vision for us and for the world. Our gatherings are discussion-based, that we might learn from one another. Discussion groups and programs are open to church friends/members and everyone in the wider community.

Each year, we offer opportunities for adult learning and discussion groups

- 1) During the church seasons of Advent (November/December) and Lent (February/March)
- 2) A summer series in June and July
- 3) Special workshops and films.

Discussion groups may consist of two to six sessions and may be based on a film, book or curriculum. Here are some examples of discussion groups that have been held.

Films: "The Power of Forgiveness;" "The Way;" "Inside Planet Earth"

The Book of Ecclesiastes (UCC curriculum)

Walking in the Dust of Rabbi Jesus, by Lois Tverberg

Every Valley: Advent with the Scriptures of Handel's "Messiah," by Albert Blackwell

Just Eating: Practicing Our Faith at the Table (curriculum)

Being Mortal, by Atul Gawande, followed by a workshop on End of Life Issues

Child of the Light, by Beth Richardson

What Is The Bible? (Dickenson Series)

Times for such gatherings vary, but tend to be on Tuesdays or Wednesdays, in the morning or evening. We welcome suggestions for themes and ideas, as well as anyone who would like to serve as a group facilitator. For upcoming Adult discussion groups, please read our church newsletter, *The Belfry*.