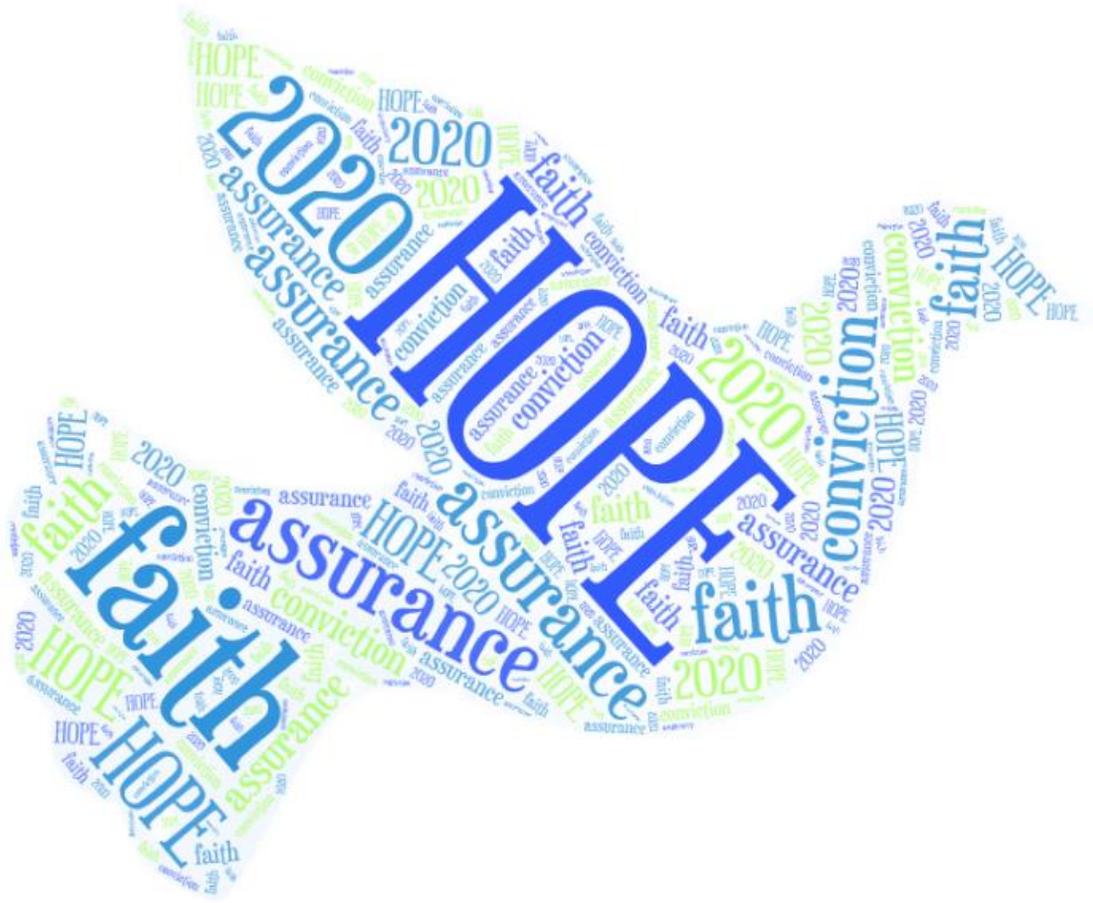


# MID-COAST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

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IN TOPSHAM, MAINE



Now **FAITH** is  
the **ASSURANCE** of things hoped for,  
the **CONVICTION** of things not seen.

HEBREWS 11:11

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## ANNUAL REPORT REVIEWING THE YEAR 2020

CONGREGATIONAL MEETING FEB. 7, 2021

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*Thank you to all the contributors to this year's Annual Report.*



## **REPORT OF THE SESSION**

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***Book of Order (The Constitution of the Presbyterian Church USA) G-2.0301***

*Ruling Elder Defined: As there were in Old Testament times elders for the government of the people, so the New Testament church provided persons with particular gifts to share in the discernment of God's Spirit and governance of God's people. Accordingly, congregations should elect persons of wisdom and maturity of faith, having demonstrated skills in leadership and being compassionate in spirit. Ruling elders are so named not because they "lord it over" the congregation (Matt. 20:25), but because they are chosen by the congregation to discern and measure its fidelity to the Word of God, and to strengthen and nurture its faith and life. Ruling elders, together with teaching elders, exercise leadership, government, spiritual discernment, and discipline and have responsibilities for the life of a congregation as well as the whole church, including ecumenical relationships.*

**KEY SESSION ITEMS OF 2020:**

- Approved an Omnibus Motion authorizing celebration of Communion, filing of Annual Statistical Report, review of Church financial records, and other official functions.
- Examination, Ordination, and Installation of Deacons and Elders.
- Received the quarterly reports of the Treasurer and the budget draft for 2021.
- Monitored the status of the church building and grounds, as well as the shifting financial status.
- Developed various ways to communicate with and engage as many of the congregation as possible.
- Approved proposal for Virtual Vacation Arts School with Godly Play program in August.
- Received Earth Care Recertification.
- In response to the pandemic the church building was closed for worship, committee work, most office work, and all outside groups using our Church (March 12, 2020).
- Supported the transition to online worship and approved the monthly celebration of Communion online.
- Approved Session meeting electronically and encouraged other groups and committees to meet online as well.
- Developed and approved protocols during the Covid-19 pandemic for Outdoor Activities.
- Develop and approve Protocols During COVID-19 Pandemic for outdoor, and later indoor, activities.
- Approved two special events in the Sanctuary – All Saints Prayers and Advent Prayers.
- Approved holding the Pumpkin Patch and a concurrent PW sponsored Fair on two weekends.
- Wrestled with how to best respond to the pandemic and changing state mandates, sacrificing personal wants for the greater good of those beyond the congregation, keeping the congregation safe and healthy, all while sustaining and nourishing the life of MCPC.

*Our HOPE for 2021*

*is to flourish as the body of Christ worshipping and working together in new ways.*

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## BOARD OF DEACONS

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*Book of Order (The Constitution of the Presbyterian Church USA) G-2.0201*

*Deacon Defined: The ministry of deacon as set forth in Scripture is one of compassion, witness, and service, sharing in the redeeming love of Jesus Christ for the poor, the hungry, the sick, the lost, the friendless, the oppressed, those burdened by unjust policies or structures, or anyone in distress. Persons of spiritual character, honest repute, exemplary lives, brotherly and sisterly love, sincere compassion, and sound judgment should be chosen for this ministry.*

The core of the Deacon Ministry at MCPC is to try and meet the needs of the congregation and the community. Our caregiving ministry has certainly been challenging this past year because it has been harder to see with our own eyes where help is needed. The Deacons have instead relied on those who reached out to us with news of their own or to share a concern or joy of another. We are most grateful for the way in which this congregation continues to care for and love one another.

Some accomplishments of the Deacons in 2020 include:

- Celebrated "Christmas in July" with shut-in members by surprising them with some home-baked goodies and activities (puzzles, etc.).
- Made Thanksgiving and Christmas contributions to Mid Coast Hunger Prevention Program, Tedford House, and The Gathering Place. (Details available in Deacon financials.)
- Sent Christmas cards out to everyone in the congregation, with thanks to Marci.
- Continuing our ministry of sending birthday greetings to the congregation, with thanks to Linda.
- Nancy continued to administer the MCPC assistance program, providing emergency support where needed, both in the congregation and the community.

As we assume responsibility for the Shepherding Ministry, we continue to ask that if you or someone you know is in need of care or support please send an email to the pastor and the deacons.

*Our HOPE for 2021*

*is to increase our congregational connectedness and communication especially while we are physically apart.*

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## PERSONNEL COMMITTEE

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The Personnel Committee is responsible for the paid staff at Mid-Coast Presbyterian Church.

The challenge this past year has been finding ways to support our pastor in this new technology-driven virtual-worship world. Pastor Diane had to become an expert in live

webcasting, sound and video equipment, and online platforms to continue the ministry of MCPC. Tangible worship feedback from the congregation was lost when worship moved online. We cannot over emphasize the challenges, time demands, and experimentation that goes into preparation for Sunday morning worship. This was new and unexpected, time-consuming, and more...and Pastor Diane responded valiantly.

Pastor Diane's ministry beyond Sunday worship continues as well. Although the building has been closed, the church was still active, as Session, Deacons, PW, and other committees continued to meet. All of this involves coordinating with Zoom and/or Facebook, meetings, planning, and more for Pastor Diane. Also, with the lack of communication through personal contact, her email traffic has tripled. Pastor Diane offers Daily Morning Prayer online. She also prepares Sunday's bulletins. Essential volunteer support included Paul Brown managing the multiple media platforms of Zoom, Facebook Live, and YouTube, all while overseeing the technical aspects of Sunday worship, and Audrey offering Daily Morning Prayers on Saturday and when Pastor Diane is off, as well as enabling congregational communication through weekly updates and the MCPC website.

March 2020 was the last time Pastor Diane's Transforming Community met in person. She participated in two half-day virtual retreats in place of three 3-day retreats; she has been encouraged to "attend" future sessions from a local hotel to provide a greater sense of retreat. Pastor Diane's Terms of Call include *Retreat/Study Leave*, which encompassing formal retreats and workshops and personal retreat time. Because of the cancelled retreats and the lack of study leave in 2020, at Personnel Committee's request Session will carry over the two weeks of pastoral study leave from 2020 into 2021.

*Our HOPE for 2021*

*is to find creative ways to support our staff as future transitions and increasing complex practices develop.*

*Personnel Committee: Marci Clark, Ruth Cook – Chair, Page Lockhart, Dick Reese, and Rev. Diane Hoppe Hugo (Pastor), Ex Officio*

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## **PASTOR'S REPORT FOR THE YEAR 2020**

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A year ago, we were sitting in our sanctuary with big plans and a full building and now here we are, a year later, meeting together from our respective living rooms. None of us could have predicted the seismic shifts we would see in our church community, our country, and our world.

I had just attended the 5<sup>th</sup> retreat of Transforming Community - *Flesh and Blood Spirituality: Honoring the Body as a Spiritual Discipline*, when the pandemic hit full force and we made the hard decision to close the church building.

As I reflect on these past months, I realize the pandemic has revealed just how essential honoring the body is to honoring God. Closing our church building and subsequently

remaining apart felt so hard at times but it also was a conscious choice to honor the living bodies of our congregation and the world. By choosing to be apart, we were making a bold statement about how honoring the safety and health of those around us was essential to honoring the body of Christ. Indeed, one of the most profound memories for me was experiencing the deafening silence when Bright Start went on hiatus. The lonely church building, devoid of the laughter and activity of children, was necessary but hard nonetheless.

The pandemic has revealed both how much we all miss and desire physical contact (hugging, handshaking, so many other loving touches) as well as how much we miss being physically present to each other. We are an embodied people who have been cut off from being a body together! And yet, the body of Christ has continued to keep us connected to each other via online worship – Sundays and Daily Morning Prayer – as well as through weekly prayer emails and updates. While we have missed the verbal sharing of joys and concerns, we have not missed the celebration of anniversaries; marriages; the births of grands and great-grands, and special birthdays including card showers and even a couple parades – Marcia’s 90<sup>th</sup> and Helen’s 83<sup>rd</sup>.

We also grieved as those in our community lost friends or family members to COVID-19. As the world was turned upside down and the pandemic overwhelmed us, we prayed for front-line medical workers and emergency personnel; for essential workers, clerks and service personnel; for the unseen men and women who made sure we had access to our essential needs. We prayed for those battling fires on the West Coast, especially firefighter Peter, and for myriad other disasters. Our world shifted again as the final moments of George Floyd’s life, snuffed out under a policeman’s knee, gave birth to a long-overdue national reckoning over structural racism. With the realization that the pandemic was hitting the “least of these” disproportionately, and as the bodies of our brothers and sisters suffered, we were called to a greater recognition of how our very skin color has provided advantages we hadn’t noticed before 2020.

As you know, I felt compelled to keep on praying after our first Sunday apart and began offering Daily Morning Prayer online – a time of prayer every morning at 10:10 am – and still continue this discipline. In the beginning, it helped structure our lives in the midst of so much change. As the months have passed and we have experienced more turmoil – physically, socially, politically – the Psalms have become an absolute necessity for us as they provide words we didn’t know we needed for comfort as well as for challenge.

Fridays traditionally include Psalm 51, King David’s eloquent prayer of confession. Every week through this confession we have revisited the physical imagery of being washed and being seen, of opening our lips for praise, and the breaking open of our hearts. Words that used to seem confusing or jarring have begun to make more sense each time we pray Psalm 51. The “sacrifice of a broken and contrite heart” is an opening up of one’s self to being renewed and remade into the image God intended. “Being a sinner even before birth” has reminded us of our culture’s generational sins of economic disparity and racial injustice.

As you read the reports that follow, you will see how this body of Christ continued to reach out and live beyond our fears and our doubts. From a church sign asking “What Would Jesus Do? Wear a Mask!” to pumpkins on the lawn to twinkling lights and a silhouette of the Nativity aglow, we continued to invite people to God’s love and grace in a divided and hurting world – whether in person or via the power of digital media.

Consider this – a year ago, no one had heard of Zoom and now we rely on it to connect for lunches, studies, and meetings. Sound issues? We had plenty in the beginning of shifting to online worship, but now we’ve figured out how to share worship leadership from our home to your home and back – “For with God nothing shall be impossible.” And, for Pastor Diane, nothing shall be impossible as long as there is an Angel Audrey to perform miracles and the power of Paul to keep us truly connected every Sunday at 10:10 am. We also give thanks for Balinda’s loving hands stitching hundreds of masks to keep people safe, which many of us gratefully wear each day. I am also grateful to my family as they’ve adjusted to the MCPC channel beaming from our home, including Buckley’s preludes, postludes and hymns, along with my untrained vocal efforts to sing to God’s glory.

As you and I have taken turns lifting one another up and encouraging each other, I close with some profound thoughts sent to me from one of you after the shocking events of January 6<sup>th</sup> at the Capitol:

*Reasons for hope cannot be denied in spite of all the anguish: vaccines for the pandemic, relentless healthcare providers, acts of kindness amidst it all, a new administration and a president that seems to be the exact person for this moment. And most of all, the immeasurable gifts that God has given us through Jesus and the Holy Spirit. It is true that praise and thanksgiving will sustain us through it all. As through the ages, it often takes a gigantic crisis to get our attention!*

Each one of you is an essential member of the body of Christ, even while we are apart we are connected by the sinews of God’s love and the Holy Spirit’s breath of prayer, and I give thanks for you every day! Humbly submitted by, as a Clergy friend in Seattle recently dubbed me,

***"the Presbyterian Pastor who Persists and Prevails  
in the face of Pressing Predominant Challenges on every side"***

*Pastor Diane*

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## **WORSHIP & MUSIC**

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The pandemic of 2020 revealed just how creative we could be as we adapted to online worship! 2020 called us to learn new ways to worship together, both continuing special traditions and finding new and different ways of looking at worship. Even with the abrupt closures due to the pandemic, worship services in 2020 continued uninterrupted. March 15<sup>th</sup> was our first virtual service, cast on Facebook Live, and we soon added Zoom to our virtual worship. The recorded services were, and are, made available on MCPC’s Facebook and (our new!) YouTube pages. We will be forever grateful to Pastor Diane for jumping in

to online worship with both feet and making sure MCPC's worship could and would continue uninterrupted.

In the switch to virtual worship services, Pastor Diane shouldered the burden of figuring out how to conduct a service online, working through issues of equipment, sound quality. After a month or so, Paul took on the heavy lifting of managing the various platforms and figuring out how to have multiple participants. We learned a bit more each week and the quality of the services improved. Initially worship was led from the church sanctuary; over time, as we worked through our learning curve, services were aired from the West Room and then the Hoppe-Hugo home (the current location). We learned how to have liturgists and special musicians participate in services from their own homes and determined that it was best to have a live microphone in just one home at a time! For this reason, our Pastor, with great trepidation, became the solo song leader and she has become more confident over these many months. Zoom is not ideal for unison speaking or singing. Throughout the year, many people took on various roles and we discovered a variety of approaches to worship. Rev. Bob continues to fill the pulpit when the pastor is away or needs a break – how blessed are we to have him in our midst?

**“Remembering what we have done. Remembering what God has done.”**

*Pastor Diane's Sunday Worship Benediction*

In 2020 we continued our “special services”, and in reworking them continued to learn! From March 15 on, worship was held online. Hymnals and palms were made available, and Palm Sunday had us waving branches online. Maundy Thursday worship was held online as snow fell hard, so Good Friday and Holy Saturday relied on our own home worship.

Because we could not grieve together, May 10<sup>th</sup> saw us celebrating the lives of two MCPC saints (Mike and Lenore) as we continued “Adapting to New Realities” (May 24<sup>th</sup> sermon). Pastor Diane delivered a sermon series on the Psalms over the summer.

We are blessed to have so many in our congregation who will share in leading worship. In June, fathers were honored with Page, Mary Ellen, and Joanna sharing how their fathers had influenced their spiritual life. *Women of Faith Sunday* (August 16) was led by the women of the congregation, each from their own home. *Vocation Sunday* (September 6) was dedicated to teachers, looking at a particularly difficult year with the pandemic, and Bud and Mary Ellen spoke about their experiences teaching.

In our virtual worship on *Homecoming Sunday* (September 13) Pastor Diane walked us through our church home with images of the congregation in action, and how the congregation is still alive and active in 2020. October saw us sharing World Communion, honoring Saint Francis with a virtual blessing of the animals, and a sermon series *A Handful of Prayers*. *A Handful of Prayers* explored how prayer beads can help focus prayer time. Pastor Diane created a string of prayer beads just for the series, making enough to hand out. Each sermon looked at a bead or two, both what type of prayer each bead represented and a

deeper look at the meaning behind it. We honored our Saints virtually on *All Saints Day* with a prayer opportunity in the sanctuary later that day.

In *Advent*, instead of Decking the Halls inside, we Decked the Walls outside, decorating with wreaths, lights, and a new Nativity scene silhouette in hopes that passers-by would be invited into the spirit of Christmas. We continued our Advent traditions as the Advent Wreath was lit in a different household each Sunday. (During virtual coffee hour the week before Advent, Pastor Diane did a mini-DIY lesson on the many ways to create an Advent wreath so every home could have one.) There was a “Reader's Theater” sermon of the stories of Jesus’ ancestors, as adapted by Pastor Diane from an Ann Weems piece. Christmas Eve Lessons & Carols included live music from families in the congregation and recordings from the Midcoast Youth Theater. The tradition of lighting candles while singing Silent Night took place in each home, with lights low and candles bright it was Christmas Eve, even in the virtualness of our gathering.

As we continued to adapt to worship in 2020, the Presbyteries of Northern New England and Boston Services provided three prerecorded services for congregations to use in 2020. Led by pastors and elders of the presbyteries, with Cindy preaching, they were wonderfully diverse in the offering of prayers and readings with many leaders speaking in both their native tongue and English.

One of the most creative ways we observed special days was with special opportunities for prayer and meditation in the Sanctuary, designed and prepared by Pastor Diane and Audrey. (Strict CDC guidelines were followed, including masks and social distancing.)

- ❖ *All Saints Prayers* offered an opportunity to remember those who have gone before us. Sunday afternoon, November 1, participants were invited to write the name of someone they wished to honor on the Communion Table (covered with butcher paper!), and to share their memories through writing a story of their saints and leaving it for others to read. A special presentation showed pictures of the saints of MCPC and scriptures & quotes on all the saints of God.
- ❖ *Advent Prayers*, on the 1<sup>st</sup> Sunday in Advent, found Nativity figurines (from Pastor Diane’s wonderful Nativity collection) grouped by character on tables around the Sanctuary. Participants were first invited to reflect on the Nativity through a pictorial and scriptural slide meditation. They were then asked, *Which character in the Nativity most speaks to you this year?*, invited to go to that table, write their reflections, and then chose a figurine and move it to its manger waiting up on the chancel.
- ❖ *The Longest Night* was observed not together in the Sanctuary but with a video-guided meditation, *O Come, Emmanuel*, posted as an opportunity to acknowledge and spend some healing time with the not “all right” this Christmas.

This year presented challenges which require special thanks to all who helped make our year of virtual worship possible. We are especially grateful to Pastor Diane and Paul for all the time and effort they put in to getting us online. Buckley Hugo continues to volunteer as

accompanist every Sunday (with Becky and Teal pitching in for breaks) – special thanks to them for providing music under difficult circumstances. Thanks to Audrey for all her administrative support and to Elaine for providing liturgists for each service.

*Our HOPE for 2021*

*is to not only be back in the Sanctuary, but to determine how to enable everyone to be present, whether online or in the sanctuary – we are all one body.*

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## **COFFEE HOUR**

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MCPC's formal Coffee hour – complete with fair-trade coffee and treats provided by the hosts for the week – has been on hiatus since March 2020, owing to the pandemic. But we still gather for a Zoom virtual Coffee Hour – with plenty of coffee mugs in sight – each week after worship. Over time we have learned to make it a refreshing time of community and fellowship.

My father used to say that Christian love is an act of will, not an emotion; we can still love God and each other through our actions, by remaining patient and remembering that we live in God's time, not our own.

*Our HOPE for 2021*

*is that we may continue engaging each other face-to-face, whether it is on Zoom or in person.*

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## **PROPERTY COMMITTEE**

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The year 2020 was certainly a very different year for the Property Committee. Fortunately, many necessary repairs and maintenance needs had been taken care of in 2019 making things easier to maintain this year. The Property Committee met only a couple of times prior to the building being closed to all meetings and activities in March due to the pandemic. With no meetings, I, as Chair, maintained regular email communication with the committee on required maintenance, building utilities systems, safety systems routine inspections, and urgent and emergency issues. Monthly reports were made to the Session. Committee members pitched in and made building visits and contacted utilities as needed. Due to all these coordinated efforts our property and building have been properly maintained, repaired, and upgraded as needed. The building was kept safe, operational, and ready for occupation upon reopening.

While there were no new major renovations or improvements, committee members and many from the congregation worked on general upkeep of the property. Despite the work left undone when last year's Fall cleanup was cancelled due to an early snowstorm, the many Spring cleanup volunteers accomplished all the needed tasks, including landscaping, pruning

in the courtyard, and plantings in our sacred Columbarium area, and the volunteers continued to work on the large task of removing invasive vines and brush along the drive and in front of our property. One silver lining of the pandemic was the extra time and care that could be devoted to caring for the grounds – raking, mowing, mulching, and more. The 2020 Fall cleanup was coupled with the closing of the Pumpkin Patch, with pallets removed and stowed away and all lawn areas raked. Many thanks to all the hard-working volunteers.

As temperatures dropped in the Fall, Russ refilled the heating system and fired up the boiler as usual. All was running well until low temperatures were noted in the building. Investigation discovered low boiler pressure as the problem, which was corrected. As outdoor temperatures dropped further, the same problem occurred resulting in a light freeze up in the kitchen. The boiler pressure was again corrected, and no damage occurred. Other leaks have since been discovered and repaired. Additional work on the boiler and the boiler room will be done in 2021 to make the system fully code compliant.

The members of the Property Committee wish to express our gratitude for all the continued support from the entire congregation of Mid-Coast Presbyterian.

*Our HOPE for 2021*

*is that we will soon begin meeting together in our building and making plans for this new year.*

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## **BUILDING USE**

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For the first 3 months of 2020, our building was being used by all of our community partners: Midcoast Youth Theatre, Una Voce, Girl Scouts, and AFG (Alanon Family Group). However, with stay-at-home orders issued in March, all use was suspended. And still our relationships continued as witnessed in the Christmas Eve solo offerings from the MYT. Pray for each of them as they continue to find ways to maintain their groups in these difficult times.

*Our HOPE for 2021*

*is the return of our extended family to our home. They have all been in contact with us and have been assured that they will be welcomed back.*

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## **COLUMBARIUM COMMITTEE**

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In 2020 there were two deaths in the MCPC congregation, both of whom had chosen to be inurned in MCPC's Columbarium. Lenore, who joined the communion of saints April 22, 2020 was inurned October 18, 2020. Mike, who joined the communion of saints April 16, 2020 will be inurned in 2021.

This was also a year of regrouping for MCPC's Columbarium. The policies and procedures, as well as paperwork and brochures provided to those interested in the columbarium all required updating. Much of that work has been completed.

There is a need to expand the scope of the committee, because Pastor Diane is currently the primary manager of all things columbarium, which is not an ideal situation. In addition to maintaining the Columbarium's beautiful gardens, the committee responsibilities would include management of documentation, record keeping, and physical preparation of the columbarium for an inurnment when needed.

Please know that there are columbarium niches available for purchase, please contact the church office for more information.

*Our HOPE for 2021*

*is to increase awareness of and appreciation for the Columbarium ministry among the congregation.*

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## **CONGREGATIONAL LIFE TASK FORCE**

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The Congregational Life Task Force was formed in 2018 from a group of Mid-Coast Church members seeking to enrich our life together as a congregation by offering opportunities to gather for fellowship as well as to learn about current social issues and how people of faith can respond. 2019 had been a challenging year, with schedule conflicts and cancellations due to snow; but it was also fruitful with good discussion on the how the Task Force wanted to move forward.

In 2020, the lack of public events during the pandemic put further pause on the group's goals. But there is still a strong conviction that educating ourselves on the needs in the community by learning from those in the community is a powerful way to seek clarity on where and how we are called to serve. As we move forward into the new year, we will try and find new ways to enrich our life and ministry as a congregation.

*Our HOPE for 2021*

*is that we may develop creative ways to engage the congregation online or in person.*

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## **ADULT EDUCATION MINISTRIES**

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### **PASTOR'S LIVELY BIBLE STUDY (LBS)**

Off to a good start in January, the study was put on hiatus in March 2020. Daily Morning Prayers, while not a Bible study, provide ongoing education in the Psalms. (See following report for more on Morning Prayers.)

*Our HOPE for 2021*

*is to find ways to study scripture in small groups online, and in time return to our Tuesday morning Bible study at church.*

### **DAILY MORNING PRAYER**

On Monday March 16, the day after our first online worship service, Pastor Diane awoke compelled to continue a ministry of connectedness, to pray and worship each day with her congregation. The result was Daily Morning Prayer at Mid-Coast Presbyterian Church, streamed live on Facebook Monday through Saturday at 10:10 AM, and saved to our Facebook videos for later viewing. These daily prayers continued to be held through the rest of the year and are ongoing.

Each Morning Prayer includes an opening prayer, candle lighting (to remind us of the Holy Spirit among us) and silence, special readings, praying the Lord's Prayer in preparation for, and then responsively praying three Psalms (including introductions to and ending prayers for each Psalm), and closing readings and prayers.

*“Open my lips and my mouth will declare your praise.” Psalm 51:15*

The gift unveiled in Morning Prayer was twofold: the spiritual connectedness of coming together each day and the greater appreciation of the depth and beauty of the Psalms.

*Our HOPE for 2021*

*is reaching other folks online who are looking for a place to share in scripture and prayer, as well as growing in knowledge and appreciation of the Lord's prayerbook that is the Psalms.*

### **MEN'S BREAKFAST & BIBLE STUDY**

This men's study group met together the first two months of 2020, at the Broadway Deli. After the pandemic struck we shifted the monthly meeting to Zoom, and continued sharing joys and concerns, praying together, participating in lively discussions and fellowship. While we missed the delicious breakfasts, Zoom allowed our reach to include those too far away to participate pre-pandemic, including some from the states of Virginia, Texas, and Wisconsin! Sixteen men have participated in one or more Saturday mornings during 2020. We've enjoyed each other's company and insights, even as we wrestle with putting our faith into practice in our lives and the life of the congregation.

Different members of the group take turns leading each month. At the beginning of 2020 we concluded exploration of World Religions using Adam Hamilton's book *Christianity and World Religions*. Adam Hamilton's book *Confronting the Controversies – Biblical Perspectives on Tough Issues* was used as a basis for later study, including topics of the Death Penalty, Separation of Church and State, and Abortion. We also explored favorite and challenging

Bible verses, Dismantling Structural Racism, and Christmas in the four Gospel Houses among other topics. We may not always agree on every aspect of the subject matter, but the brotherly love and mutual respect is always to be found in the Men's Group.

We would love to expand the group as geography is no longer is a barrier! Though we look forward to a return to the Broadway Deli, Zoom gatherings will continue. Please join us from 9 to 10:30 AM on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Saturday of the month and let us get to know one another even better as we discuss the call to live faithful lives. And we look forward to hopefully conducting a 2021 Men's Worship Service and working in the kitchen at the Christmas Fair.

*Our HOPE for 2021*

*is to continue to offer an opportunity for personally growth in the Lord, and to collectively support MCPC, whether virtually or in person!*

## **SPECIAL STUDIES**

### **LENT 2020 – LIVING UNAFRAID**

In Lent 2020, Rev. Bob began a 4-week study titled *Living Unafraid – Preparing for the End of Life* based on his personal book *Living Unafraid at the End of Life – A Caregiver's Memoir*, his beautiful story of caring for his beloved wife as she was living into her dying. Unfortunately, the study was interrupted just two weeks in; but in July, he resumed the study via Zoom, over a period of three sessions. It was very well received, highlighting the great need to discuss end of life issues in a safe and open way.

### **THE RACIAL JUSTICE CHALLENGE**

As a Matthew 25 Congregation, one of our commitments is to work for the dismantling of structural racism. In all our very best intentions, there is so much we have yet to understand from those who are crying out for justice. In a letter from our Presbytery, we were invited to participate in the PC(USA) 21-Day Racial Justice Challenge. The challenge was designed to raise awareness about the unseen aspects of racism in our personal and corporate lives. In conjunction, Pastor Diane encouraged the congregation to read the PC(USA) church-wide anti-racism policy.

### **ALL SAINTS, ADVENT, & LONGEST NIGHT**

Limitations on corporate worship in pandemic times challenged us to find new ways to engage the congregation in education and prayer. While initially planned as worship opportunities, the All Saints Prayers, Advent Prayers, and Longest Night experiences also provided a format for both personal reflection and deeper understanding of these Liturgical Seasons. You can read more about these three experiences in the Worship report.

*Our HOPE for 2021*

*is to continue special studies with the congregation and invite congregants to share their ideas.*

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## CHILDREN'S & YOUTH MINISTRIES

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### CHILDREN'S SUNDAY SCHOOL & YOUTH MINISTRY AT MCPC

In the circumstances of the pandemic, including the need to keep everyone safe and healthy, the Children's Sunday School and our (unconventional\*) Youth Ministry activities had to be cancelled. We were able to get creative with Vacation Art Camp – taking it virtual in its second year.

\*While MCPC does not have a Youth Group in our congregation, we consider the youth organizations who call MCPC home for their activities a part of our family and ministry. Indeed, over the years Midcoast Youth Theater and the Girl Scouts have joined us in worship, have been dedicated pumpkin-unloaders, and pitched in around the church. For Christmas of 2020 the Midcoast Youth Theater reached out to offer music for our Christmas Eve worship, a wonderful gift!

*Our HOPE for 2021*

*is to enlarge our children's and youth ministries, in new and creative ways.*

### VACATION ART CAMP

Following on the joyous success of the 2019 first-ever MCPC Vacation Art Camp, we were determined to hold it in 2020! I love interacting with children and creating art. Could I possibly still do this while not letting a crowd into the church, in a manner that addressed the realities of the pandemic? In prayerful contemplation I was led to create a series of videos and Virtual Art Camp came alive!

*“and a little child shall lead them” ~ Isaiah 11:6d*

Each day of the 12-day Camp had a Bible story told in the Godly play style, a flat paper art project, and a three-dimensional art project. All the art projects would need specific supplies in order to be completed, and not knowing what each participant would have at their home Art Camp included the delivery a box of supplies for each day's art projects. Many people from this congregation helped pack the art supplies in Fellowship Hall in July and August while being masked and socially distanced. What an amazing effort! In the end, we had a total of 14 participants. We got back some fun pictures from the participants, and we learned a great deal about doing art and camp virtually.

*Our HOPE for 2021*

*is to build on the virtual art camp so, even when we can hold Art Camp in the building again, we can continue to include children who are not able to be with us in person.*

## **THE CONNECTIONAL CHURCH**

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### **THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH (USA)**

The significance of the Connectional Church was never more apparent than in 2020. Our connections offered much needed support in a difficult year, ranging from information and response information in March, to guidance on how best to respond to many varied situations, to resources for worship (including the Presbyteries of Boston & Northern New England providing a broadcast-ready worship service for July 4<sup>th</sup> weekend and for the Sunday after Christmas). As we did at MCPC, the larger church continued its work and ministry, relying on online venues for meetings and other events.

We continue to share financial support for the upper levels of the PC(USA) through Per Capita, a financial amount based on membership numbers of a congregation. For 2021, PNNE has set this amount at \$49 per member; MCPC invites members to specifically contribute toward this expense.

*Our HOPE for 2021*

*is to remember that we are a connected church and accept the gift that such a connection brings.*

### **SPECIAL OFFERINGS**

In 2020, the need for the Special Offerings of the PC(USA) was as great as ever. These offerings connect us with, and invite us to support, ministries of the larger church. In 2020 MCPC participated in all four Special Offerings: One Great Hour of Sharing, Pentecost, Peace and Global Witness (MCPC's local portion went to the Restorative Justice Institute of Maine), and Christmas Joy Offering. Giving opportunities that support these ministries are also available year-round through the Giving Catalog ([www.presbyteriangifts.org](http://www.presbyteriangifts.org)). Financial details are in the Treasurer's Report.

*Our HOPE for 2021*

*is to find stronger ways to share the work of the Special Offerings ministry with the congregation.*

### **PRESBYTERIAN WOMEN**

The Presbyterian Women's Group is committed to nurturing faith through prayer and Bible study, to supporting the mission of the church worldwide, to working for justice and peace, and to building an inclusive, caring community of women that strengthens the Presbyterian Church (USA) and witnesses to the promise of God's kingdom. All women who attend Mid-Coast Presbyterian Church (MCPC) whether they are a member, a friend, or just an occasional visitor, are considered to be a part of PW and are welcome to participate in any activity sponsored by the group.

MCPC's PW has a coordinating team which sets programs and outreach efforts and determines how any money that is taken in will be spent. While many of the traditional events sponsored by PW were canceled in 2020, efforts were made to carry on with some activities either online or outdoors.

The year 2020 began with the usual monthly gatherings for lunch at a local restaurant on the first Thursday of the month. Once the pandemic closed all restaurants, this event was moved to meeting online via Zoom. It was quite an adjustment to no longer meet in person but Zoom allowed some who were far away to attend, and it was good to see one another and catch up.

The annual PNNE PW Spring Retreat had to be canceled. This was especially disappointing as MCPC was to be the host and was all prepared for the event having chosen the topic; however, we appreciated the need to abide by state mandates and keep everyone safe. We eagerly look forward to the next opportunity to gather with the women of PNNE.

One summer day, PW sponsored an opportunity to help people in our community struggling with poverty and homelessness. Congregants were invited to bring donations to the church where they were collected at the front door in a safe manner (masked, etc.). Items collected included foodstuff for The Hunger Prevention Project, coffee for The Gathering Place, and jelly jars for canning jams and relishes. Through this event and the generosity of the congregation, we were able to give over one hundred pounds of food to the food pantry and several pounds of coffee to The Gathering Place.

The hard decision was made to cancel the annual MCPC Christmas Fair; but we still found a way to have the Fair in a different format. Thanks to Laurye's energy and determination we were able to be out on the lawn during the Pumpkin Patch offering preserves, crafts, and baked goods for sale. This event was well attended and brought in more than \$1,000.

*Our HOPE for 2021  
is to continue to offer PW activities in creative ways.*

### **SOUTH AFRICA CONNECTION: J.Z.S. NCEVU MEMORIAL CHURCH**

The worldwide Pandemic of 2020 reminded us all that we are connected to every part of our increasingly smaller world. As we prepare this report, we have recently learned that the pandemic has caused many deaths in the JZS Ncevu Memorial Congregation, and our prayers for our sisters and brothers in Christ continue.

Our connection with the congregation in Queenstown, South Africa began in 2014. The MCPC—Ncevu pen pal program we started program in 2019 continues to help bring our two congregations together. It was through these exchanges that we learned of the powerful August 9, 2020 storm whose heavy winds damaged the front of the Ncevu Church building.

Our Connection relationship has never been about sending money. Yet, knowing how MCPC has responded to natural disasters in our own country, we asked if any in our congregation could make a special gift to help our sisters and Brothers in Christ repair their church building. The congregation opened their hearts generously and we were able to send a gift of \$865 for disaster relief to South Africa. As a Matthew 25 Congregation, our hope was that this gift would be a tangible expression of Christ's love. The response from our friends in Queenstown was immediate – the gift filled them with joy in that difficult time.

*Our HOPE for 2021  
is that our relationship continues to grow deeper and wider.*

### **SUDANESE PRESBYTERIAN FELLOWSHIP OF PORTLAND**

The Sudanese Fellowship has continued to stay connected as much as possible in 2020, despite challenges. Due to lack of technology, communication for their congregation is limited and they do not have worship online. They do have group phone calls on a regular basis. The Steering Committee from MCPC has been able to stay in contact with Matthew, the lay leader. None of the congregation has been ill in the pandemic for which we give thanks.

Thank you for continuing to support their children and families through providing school supplies in the Fall and gift cards for Christmas.

*Our HOPE for 2021  
is that their congregation may stay strong in their faith during the coming year.*

### **EARTH CARE TEAM**

During the first quarter of 2020, the Earth Care team was quite active:

- To begin the year, with the help of Pastor Diane, Balinda, Darryl, and Eileen, we submitted the Earth Care (EC) Congregation (re)certification, a survey of over 200 questions assessing how well MCPC integrated EC practices into all facets of congregational life including: worship, education, facilities, and outreach. Notice of Recertification was received March 11, 2020.
- The EC Bulletin Board & Minutes for Ministry in Worship highlighted the global problem of excessive plastics & microplastics contaminating the earth's environment, highlighting the *National Geographic Magazine* series: "We are Drowning in Plastics."
- Dick attended the local ecumenical EC monthly meetings held at First Parish Church.
- Books were added to the EC library shelf in the West Room. (Available for borrowing!)
- Groups using the kitchen and the Bright Start children continued to compost plant wastes; mature compost was tilled into the Bright Start raised beds in late spring 2020.

After the pandemic-related church building shut-down in March 2020, our EC Team's activities were dramatically curtailed including: the suspending of the local ecumenical EC monthly meetings held at First Parish, little role for updating the EC Bulletin Board, and the suspension of Bright Start-EC related activities. Fortunately, Pastor Diane did continue to periodically incorporate EC ideas into worship in her virtual sermons, hymns, & prayers.

If you have specific ideas or suggestions about ways we can improve our environmental stewardship, please let us know.

*Our HOPE for 2021*

*is that we will successfully complete our annual recertification as an EC congregation, work with Property Committee to further assess the feasibility of solar power at MCPC, and reassess and refocus our priorities of EC activities when we are able to re-open the MCPC building.*

## **A MATTHEW 25 CONGREGATION**

*Being a Matthew 25 Congregation is a call to "actively engage in the world around us, so our faith comes alive and we wake up to new possibilities" and "recognize Christ's urgent call to be a church of action, where God's love, justice and mercy shine forth and are contagious. And we rejoice how our re-energized faith can unite all Presbyterians for a common and holy purpose: our common identity to do mission." The three areas of focus in being a Matthew 25 Congregation are Congregational Vitality, Systemic Poverty, and Structural Racism.*

**Congregational Vitality** at MCPC was both challenged and strengthened in 2020. As evidenced through each section of this Annual Report, MCPC took seriously the challenge to remain alive and active during the pandemic. Moving in to 2021, this congregation is strong and working as a community to continue ministry in this time and place.

**Systemic Poverty** and **Structural Racism** were even more visible in 2020. We sought to be intentional about not becoming overwhelmed by it all. Worship and sermons often spoke to the issues of systemic poverty and structural racism, and we sought education and new ways to respond. It was especially important to have a Pumpkin Patch in 2020 given its connection to and economic impact on the Navajo Nation. At several points in 2020 the congregation donated supplies (from food to warm clothing) for local social support agencies The Gathering Place and Mid Coast Hunger Prevention; Tedford Shelter meals continued each month, including providing a few additional meals to help fill gaps that arose this year; and the Deacon's fund gave financially to each of these organizations. Several congregants walked in or supported a walker in Habitat's Virtual Spring Walk fundraiser. Our Alternative Christmas Market highlighted ways to shift the focus of Christmas to ways we can support work around the world that addresses poverty. Many in the congregation participated in the PC(USA) Racial Justice Challenge, designed to increase awareness of the realities of racism *and* ways to respond. We highlighted each of these things on our webpage in hopes that it would help spread the word.

*Our HOPE for 2021*

*is to keep our eyes open and our hearts alert to being called to live the message of Matthew 25.*

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## **BRIGHT START CHILD CARE**

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In getting ready to do this year's report I pulled up what I had written last year. It sounds like a different world that existed in January of 2019. Indeed, it was a different world. We started the year with 28 children enrolled, 6 full time staff and a part time office assistant. Unfortunately, in January, after not clearing one of the required screenings, the newly hired office assistant simply disappeared. She did not respond to any texts, calls or mail and was therefore considered no longer an employee. With more and more news about the pandemic, we closed along with the public schools on March 13. We determined to follow what the school districts were doing. We anticipated that it might be a short closure as more information became available, and so we prepared a plan/protocol for re-opening of the center for a summer session and then for a fall session. Unfortunately, circumstances surrounding the pandemic and staffing simply did not afford us the opportunity to reopen. Employees were officially laid off as of March 16. They were encouraged to apply for unemployment benefits and those that did apply received benefits through the funding to aid workers during the pandemic.

The biggest challenge of this year has been trying to deal with the financial data. The office assistant had started inputting data for the new QuickBooks program. However, I did not know how to continue this. Finally, in the fall I contacted Practical Resources for Churches which Pastor Diane had made us aware of. Since then, I have been working with the via Zoom to get the financial data into the system and print reports. It has been a long and difficult journey, but I have almost completed the past year's information. they have been a wonderful asset.

Several staff have secured new positions in childcare. I have officially retired as of December 31, 2020, and the Bright Start Board is in the process of writing the job description for a new Director as well as discerning the best way forward as a childcare center. I remain available to assist with a transition to a new director and am working on an orientation notebook which will contain information about how the program was run and where things are.

This will be the end of an era as we move forward with a "new" program whenever it is possible. I wish to thank the church for all the help, assistance, support, and concern that they have shown over the 12 years I have been here as director. God brought me to you in 2008 and I know that he will lead us onward into a new future.

*Our HOPE for 2021*

*is for the Board to discern how Bright Start can best respond to the current needs of the community, seek out a new director, and continue to be a beacon of hope and encouragement in the Mid-Coast area.*

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## COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS & OPPORTUNITIES FOR SERVICE

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### PUMPKIN PATCH

Thank you to Session for trusting that this ministry to the Indigenous People of the Navajo Nation could be done safely during the pandemic. The response of the church family to the call for volunteers for all aspects of the project, from preparing the pallets to unloading pumpkins and selling them, was amazing! Safety protocols set by the Session were incorporated into the daily operation of the Pumpkin Patch—social distancing, hand sanitizer, cleaning wipes, and extra masks.

This year we are grateful to the team from Southern Maine Movers. We hired them to unload the pumpkin delivery truck so that MCPC volunteers could then safely move them to the waiting pallets. Their team members were intrigued with the project and thanked us for allowing them to help!

Given the large number of pumpkins delivered (more than twice the number expected), sales were beyond expectation. Returning customers expressed gratitude that we continued the tradition, and many new customers, due in part to positive publicity by the news media as well as the usual word of mouth will, we hope be back next year.

The Pumpkin Patch sales for 2020 totaled \$14,263, with \$10,696 (75%) sent to our growing partners in the Native American population in the area of Farmington, New Mexico. MCPC's profit from this year's event was \$4,011 (both pumpkins and \$444 in baked goods sales). Part of our success is, as the Pumpkin Patch people say, "We are selling pumpkins with a purpose." That we return 75% of our proceeds resonates with our customers.

#### *Our HOPE for 2021*

*is that we may continue this partnership with Pumpkin Patch Fundraisers and the indigenous farmers and harvesters in this ministry of caring and support.*

### TEDFORD SHELTER MEALS

MCPC's ministry with the Tedford Shelter remained faithful throughout the pandemic. As an expression of caring concern for the homeless and hungry in our community, a wholesome meal has been delivered to the residents of the Tedford Shelter on the fourth Monday of each month. Some months we provided a second meal when Tedford asked if we could help. Shirley is the primary chef for the dinners (including making Pumpkin Patch Pumpkin Soup from our own Pumpkin Patch pumpkins), and the congregation is generous in providing the accompaniments for each meal.

Thank you to all who contributed during this challenging year. You can be a part of this local ministry by helping to prepare meals, donating ingredients, or helping with delivery to the shelter on Cumberland Street in Brunswick. Watch for notices in the Mid-Coast Presbyterian Church Update to see what is needed each month. This truly is an opportunity to serve our neighbors in need.

*Our HOPE for 2021*

*is that through feeding our hungry and homeless neighbors, we may live our Matthew 25 commitment to care for the marginalized in our community.*

### **ALTERNATIVE CHRISTMAS MARKET**

In December of 2020, MCPC's Alternative Christmas Market moved online. The congregation – through both weekly updates and website postings – was invited to this wonderful tradition of a giving gifts that give twice: a gift to the family member, friend, or colleague – remembering them with a charitable contribution made in their name; and a gift to the organization – supporting the work they are doing. Shifting to the online venue let us include MCHPP, Tedford, and the Gathering Place.

The online Alternative Market provided giving information for each of these organizations:

The CEOLI School (serving children in Cochabamba, Bolivia), Habitat for Humanity 7-Rivers, Heifer International, Mid Coast Hunger Prevention Program, PC(USA) Giving Catalog, The Tedford Shelter, & The Gathering Place.

*Our HOPE for 2021*

*is to continue including the additional organizations and to spread the invitation more widely.*

### **THE GATHERING PLACE:**

How do you shelter at home when you have no home? What is a very difficult time for most in the community is devastating for the homeless, and during this pandemic and economic crisis more people are threatened by homelessness every day.

The Gathering Place (TGP) is a daytime shelter created through the effort of the local faith community to provide “a safe, welcoming and comfortable place for people to gather where everyone will be offered respect, encouragement, companionship, and hope.” Located at 84B Union Street behind the Seventh Day Adventist Community Center and in front of the Mid Coast Hunger Prevention building, where all three facilities offer help and comfort to those in need.

With great reluctance, the Board of TGP voted to close the shelter on March 16, 2020. This daytime shelter was a refuge for 70 or more people a day. These folks were now set adrift.

As soon as TGP was closed, staff and board members started meeting weekly to determine how and under what conditions the shelter could be reopened. They were able to make changes to the physical set up both inside and outside the shelter so that TGP was able to open with a limited capacity on a parttime basis on June 18. An awning was installed outside the building so people could gather and, sitting socially distanced, have a cup of coffee; as the weather grew colder heaters were added. Unfortunately, the coming winter months will make this less effective and because a limited amount of people are allowed inside some will no doubt have to be turned away.

Everyone, guests, volunteers, and staff, has faced these changes with goodwill and hopefully by mid-2021 TGP will once again be able to welcome all comers. A bright spot during everything that has happened was a recent announcement that TGP has received a substantial grant which will ensure the continuation of services into the new year.

In 2020 MCPC has undertaken several efforts to help the guests at TGP. PW held a drive during the summer to collect coffee for them (some members continue to supply coffee monthly) and contributed money for gift cards that were handed out to guests just before Christmas. Even more welcome were the 40 hats, 40 pairs of gloves and 52 pairs of socks donated in October by members of this congregation.

*Our HOPE for 2021*

*is that our continued involvement at TGP strengthens our work as a Matthew 25 church.*

### **MID COAST HUNGER PREVENTION PROGRAM:**

*Their Mission: "MCHPP is a 501-c-3 nonprofit organization. Our mission is to provide hungry people with access to healthy food, work to improve the quality of their lives by partnering with others, and serve them in a manner that recognizes their dignity."*

The Mid Coast Hunger Prevention Program consists of many parts including the Food Bank, Soup Kitchen, and Food Pantry. These are all located at 84A Union Street, Brunswick, just behind Hannaford. The MCPC Board of Deacons coordinates our involvement with MCHPP. For Thanksgiving 2020, nonperishable food donations for MCHPP were accepted at the church. (Special thanks to Joanna for coordinating!) Financial contributions were made by the Board of Deacons to support the work of MCHPP as well.

*Our HOPE for 2021*

*is to continue supporting MCHPP as they work to support those in need in the community.*

## **HABITAT FOR HUMANITY**

MCPC's primary Habitat involvement was with the 2020 Virtual Spring Fundraising Walk. Despite the walkers being on their own, our intrepid MCPC participants raised \$1,025 – double 2019! Way to go, MCPCers! Volunteering at ReStore MCPC's Alternative Christmas Market rounded out our Habitat involvement. Unfortunately, the pandemic dramatically slowed home construction, so no actual construction projects were held.

Four areas of rewarding and challenging activity lie ahead for 2021. Volunteers are always needed with no prior experience required! Contact the Habitat Office (504-9333).

- MCPC has committed to work on at least one new home build. Hopefully 2021 will see a resumption of this most important work.
- Winterization and Repairing projects continue. A new Bookcase Brigade has been formed to supply Restore with much sought after bookcases.
- Mailing and other office projects done at home or, eventually, at the Topsham Habitat office.
- Restore is open with Covid-19 guidelines fully in place. The ReStore retail store needs help "behind the counter" as cashier, stocking shelves, and helping shoppers.
- The Spring Walk Fundraiser is tentatively scheduled for early May of 2021. Join us! Volunteers will also be needed to work during the Walk and to provide snacks.

### *Our HOPE for 2021*

*is to expand awareness and active volunteering in support of Habitat and for resumption of hands-on activities once it is safe to do so.*

## **FARMERS' MARKET, KNITTERS, HYMN SING, & BLOOD DRIVES!**

The circumstances of 2020, including the need to support the safety and wellbeing of our congregation and community, meant we did not participate in:

- the Brunswick Farmers' Market: we are hoping that they reopen the Market to non-profits in the summer of 2021.
- the gathering of the knitters (and other crafters) at MCPC in the West Room: we did keep in touch with each other as well as possible.
- the Hymn Sing and Communion at the Mid Coast Senior Health Care Center: we are seeking new ways of reaching out to those residents.
- Red Cross Blood Drives: we are in need of a new coordinator (which has been John for many years). Please contact the office if you can help!

### *Our HOPE for 2021*

*is that we can find ways to safely engage in these typically hands-on, in person activities in the coming year.*

## **FINANCE COMMITTEE**

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The MCPC Finance Committee met less often and remotely (by video conference) from spring onward due to the pandemic in its role of supporting the treasurer and providing input to the Session on financial matters. Ongoing updates in income, expenses and the balance sheet were reviewed to evaluate results, trends, and to try to ensure accurate accounting. The primary concern of the committee in this unusual year was to maintain a steady financial position.

Items of note during the year:

- Transition from Church Windows to QuickBooks continues. Two remaining goals are to have QuickBooks provide quarterly giving statements and a detailed balance sheet.
- Rental income and premiums for Bright Start's portion of the building's property insurance was not available to be collected during the majority of the year due to their suspension of operations. This reduced income and increased church expenses.
- As of this time there has been no review of the church books for 2019.
- A proposed operating budget was developed for 2021 and presented to Session.
- Building and grounds maintenance expenses were fortunately lower than normal but that may not continue upon full resumption of activities on the property.

Not meeting in the church meant we missed the assistance of several volunteers who normally help with counting, reconciliation in the computer, and transitioning to the new QuickBooks software to get contribution reports out. Assistance with those tasks will certainly be appreciated once we resume.

We are very thankful that the church community maintained their financial support and love of the church during this difficult year.

*Our HOPE for 2021*

*is that the Finance Committee and the overall financial processes at MCPC are restored to optimum functioning post-Covid.*