



Parish Visitor

First Congregational Church UCC
603-756-4075
walpolechurch@yahoo.com
www.walpolenhucc.org

February 2025

Friends,

What do you know about Saint Valentine?

There really was a Valentine. He was martyred during the third century. Not only was there a real person, it seems there were at least two Valentines. There were two Italian Christian martyrs named Valentine, both martyred on February 14, St. Valentine's feast day. I don't know if they were both the same year, but what are the chances? According to the Roman Martyrology, one was a priest, the other a bishop. An article I read did not indicate which one was the Valentine we celebrate with cards and chocolate. The martyrology lists a third, who was from Africa.

There is not a lot about Valentine in the historical record that is reliable. There are some legends about him. While serving as a priest, the Roman Emperor Claudius II prohibited young people from getting married. It was believed that unmarried men fought harder because they did not have a wife and children at home to worry about. The largest empire the world had ever known needed soldiers and lots of them. Valentine's witness was a pastoral. Exercising his vocation as a priest, he held weddings in secret. The secret got out. Valentine was arrested, brutally beaten, then beheaded.

That's not what we really talked about when we had our grade school Valentine parties, with lunch-bag mailboxes decorated with construction paper hearts. Every kid gave a card to every other kid. Garrison Keeler said it was a kind of socialism they practiced in Lake Wobegone. Interesting Interpretation. But I think there is an apolitical lesson to be learned from the elementary school valentine tradition. No one should be left out.

There is an epidemic of loneliness in our country. Recent scientific literature has reported that about half of Americans report feelings of isolation and loneliness. Surgeon General Rivek Murthy cautioned, "Loneliness is far more than just a bad feeling – it harms both individual and societal health. It is associated with greater risk of cardiovascular disease, dementia, stroke, depression, anxiety, and premature death."

(Continued)

We practice a religion that is based on love. Both Testaments say so. Deuteronomy 5:5 says, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might." Leviticus says, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." Saint Paul wrote to the church in Corinth, "Love never ends.... And now faith, hope, and love remain, these three, and the greatest of these is love. (2 Corinthians 13: 8,13) Jesus told us,"¹ give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another." (John 13:34-35)

Valentine's Day is a lot of fun.

Chocolate is wonderful, flowers are beautiful, and who doesn't like getting a card? But love is more substantial than trinkets and treats. The Bible speaks of at least three different kinds of love. Romantic love is only one. Even so, romantic love has all the substance we are willing to devote to it. Saint Valentine gave his life so that young couples could devote themselves to each other in the loving covenant of marriage. He refused to be intimidated by the bloodlust of an empire.

We do not have to be martyrs to devote ourselves to the gospel of love. As our culture gets coated in chocolate and buried in a blizzard of red hearts and greeting cards, we can extend ourselves in small and large ways. In a time when loneliness has become a spiritual menace and public health threat, there are always opportunities to make a difference. How can we include the isolated? We invite. We

Welcome. This is what we do. Every Sunday Morning I welcome everyone to worship "In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, whose love calls us together." I end every benediction with the charge to "Take the love that God gives us and give it away, in a world without end." We can always do better. No faithful act is wasted.

In this frigid season, I wish you warm homes, warm bodies and warm hearts. As we remember a Saint who gave his life for the covenant marriage, may we give love that has substance that exceeds sentimentality.

In Christ,
Richard Malmberg

For Women's Fellowship

After church, on Sunday February 2nd, I'd like to call a brief meeting. Just to catch up with finances and discuss the purchase of a refrigerator for the basement.

The one downstairs has died. We use it during receptions and fundraisers. Other repairs to our kitchen. Please plan on a meeting in the Spring or early summer.

Peg W. Chair



Birthdays of the Month

Birthdays for February 2025

Austin Pickering	2/1
Emily Wilson	2/1
Judy Daniels	2/2
Carole Hill	2/2
Sara Beauregard	2/3
Ann Rogers	2/6
Brooke Houghton	2/9
Charles Wright	2/9
Michael Wright	2/12
Paul Trask	2/19
Jane Malmberg	2/20
Ann Looney	2/21
George Jeffrey	2/25



Anniversaries for February 2025

Mark and Brooke Houghton February 6.

Memorial Committee

Our church was so fortunate to have the gift of Bruce Martin – he was truly a saint. He not only served on many committees, including Stewardship, Finance, Search, and Trustees, but also led the campaign to raise money and oversee the addition to the church. He had the ability to convince others to hop on board, probably because of his military background but also because of his wonderful smile and sense of humor. And now, others have the opportunity to send gifts to the church in Bruce’s memory. The Memorial Committee has already received several donations to the Memorial Fund, and most likely will receive many more.

At our last meeting, the Memorial Committee voted to give \$1000 to the church to go towards the cost of the new church sign which will be installed on the north side of South Street. The sign will be on the opposite side of the road from St. John’s Episcopal sign and will be a wonderful “advertisement” so to speak for our church.

There seems to be quite a bit of interest in signing up for altar flowers, which is wonderful! Here is February’s altar flower schedule:

February 2: Sandy Pickering
February 9: Liz Bradley
February 16: Richard Malmberg
February 23: Linda Jeffrey

There are FIVE Sundays in March, so please sign up, or call Ellie Shaw at 756-4866. It’s a special way to remember a loved one, celebrate a birthday or anniversary, or just because you’d love some fresh flowers! Remember that the Village Blooms is closing right after Valentine’s Day but is re-opening sometime in March as The Company of Flowers. While they are closed, Halladays in Bellows Falls is an excellent choice.
Ellie Shaw.



Greetings from your deacons! Brrr!

It has been a quiet month for the deacons. We were honored to assist with the memorial service for our beloved church member, Bruce Martin, on January 18th. It is our most solemn duty as a deacon, and we feel blessed to share in the service.

We are thrilled to welcome Ann Looney to the diaconate! She will be a wonderful addition to our group. Ann's term won't begin until July, but she will join us for our February meeting to see how much fun we have. Welcome Ann!!

February 9th is Souper Bowl Sunday. Even though it is a "Missions and Action" sponsored event, I am putting in a plug here because I am in charge this year. (Can I do that? :-). Please feel free to bring a crock pot of soup or rolls, and/or buy some soup to take home.

Let one of the deacons know if there is someone who needs a call or a visit. Linda Wright is the deacon of the month for February.

Becky Pearson
603-860-0221

MISSIONS

Missions will be donating \$1,150 to the Fall Mountain Food Shelf and \$200 to Our Place. This comes from monies collected over the past few months.

The church collected \$562 in support of the "Christmas Fund" on Christmas Eve. This is one of our 5 for 5 offerings for Our Church's Wider Mission.

SOUPer BOWL Sunday is coming soon! Proceeds benefit the Fall Mountain Food Shelf and Our Place. Fresh Homemade Soup and Bread to go. Sunday, February 9, 11:15 am – 12:30 pm. We need volunteers to provide soup and/or rolls. Please speak with Becky Pearson to sign up.

Sunday, February 16, will be our food offering for the Fall Mountain Food Shelf.

Church Calendar February 2025

Sunday, February 2	Worship Service w/ communion in the sanctuary and on zoom Peg W has called a meeting immediately following worship in Fellowship Hall,	10:00 am
Wednesday, February 5	Bible Study on Zoom	4-5 pm
Saturday, February 8	Church Council in Fellowship Hall	8:30am
Saturday, February 8	Community Potluck Supper in Fellowship Hall	5.30pm
Sunday, February 9	Sunday Worship in the sanctuary and on Zoom Souper Bowl immediately following the service in Fellowship Hall	10:00am
Wednesday, February 12	Bible Study on Zoom	4-5pm
Friday, February 14	Valentines Day!	
Sunday, February 16	Sunday Worship in the sanctuary and on Zoom Food offering for the Fall Mountain Food Shelf	10:00 am
Monday, February 17	The office is closed for Presidents Day	
Wednesday, February 19	Bible Study on Zoom	4-5pm
Sunday, February 23	Sunday Worship in the sanctuary and on Zoom	10:00 am
Wednesday, February 26	Bible Study on Zoom	4-5 pm
Church Office Hours:	M-F 9 am – 12 pm	
Monday, February 24	Deadline Parish Visitor	



First Congregational Church, UCC
PO Box 393
Walpole, NH 03608

Parish VISITOR

