UNITED COMMUNITY CURRENT



FEBRUARY 2024

Email: Unitedcommunitychurchucc@gmail.com Website: UnitedCommunity.church



Leading in the background:

Over the past year your Church Council has, on occasion, had to make some hard decisions to address immediate issues that have arisen. The Council also had to take a lead role in helping the congregation through a difficult transition. Council members understand that being in the forefront of these challenges as they arise is part of our responsibility; however, most of the work that the Council does is done in the background. Major decisions for the church are made in congregational meetings and the work and mission of the church is carried out by our Ministries, ad hoc



committees, volunteers, and individual congregants. The Council's role is to help lay the groundwork for congregational decisions, to support the Ministries, committees, and members in their work, and to guide and coordinate all our efforts so that we are moving together toward fulfilling our mission as United Community Church.

Some of the Council's current "background" work includes working with Stewardship ministry to prepare an FY'25 budget to be voted on during Annual Meeting on May 19th. On an ongoing basis we also review monthly income and expenses with Stewardship. We support Worship & Care ministry in their work to provide pastoral supply, pastoral care, and well-planned worship experiences; Spiritual Nurture ministry as they work with Steve and Jay to plan for Lenten Bible Study and a meaningful Confirmation experience for the young people working to be confirmed on Pentecost Sunday; and Outreach ministry as they plan for the Mardi Gras dance and Maple Festival breakfast, support the Community Meal program, and plan other activities that help carry our ministry into the community.



While the Pastoral Search Team works independently, the Council is kept abreast of their progress and remains available for support and consultation when necessary. We look forward to reviewing and approving the updated Church Profile so that it can be forwarded to the Vermont Conference for posting and distribution to interested pastoral candidates. The Council also reviews progress with the ad hoc committee working toward small group conversations regarding the church's mission and finances. These two committees and the Ministries also have reports to the congregation in this newsletter.

There are two additional background discussions within the Council at this time. The first is the formation of a Nominating Committee whose role will be to identify and recruit members of our congregation with the skills and interests to lead our Ministries and Council in the year ahead. If you are interested in serving on the Nominating Committee, please speak to a member of the Church Council.

The other discussion that we are having in Council is regarding our "Welcome" flags that fly on the front of the building when we are worshiping or when the office is open. In our consideration we are trying to balance the church's desire to visually demonstrate our commitment to active and inclusive welcome with the perceptions that some people may have regarding the flags we currently fly. There is a possibility that the Council will propose a revised protocol for our Welcome flags. If you have thoughts in this regard, please be encouraged to share and have a conversation with a Council member.

Blessings for our ministries together, Phil Brown, moderator



Ash Wednesday Service February 14 7 pm

Ministry Reports

Worship & Care

We began 2024 by celebrating the visit of the Magi with Jazz music and then we quieted down for a few weeks. But just around the corner we will once again be adding special services and events. Easter comes earlier this year! Planning for the season is underway! Lent begins in February with Shrove Tuesday on February 13th (Mardi Gras dance) followed by Ash Wednesday on the 14th with a special service at 7 pm. See page 6. There are plans for a Lenten Bible Study led by our interim pastors, Steve Winkler and Jay Sprout, on Fridays at 1pm for the 7 weeks of Lent beginning on February 16th. We hope you will join us.

On February 18th we will join with the UU Congregation via the internet to hear Dr Francois Clemmons (Officer Clemmons from Mister Rodgers' Neighborhood).

Holy Week is the last week in March. Special services are being planned. As we enter Lent we are looking for people who would like participate in worship. Please contact either the church office or Karen Sayles if you would like to be a participant. We do try to plan ahead so let us know if you have a date or activity in mind.

A BIG THANK YOU to all our regular volunteers! You are so appreciated!

Outreach



Even though this is the sleepy time of the year, Outreach has been busy preparing for several events. Dessert and Dancing to the Swing North Big

Band is scheduled for Tuesday, February 13 from 7 to 9 pm. Since this is the day before Ash Wednesday our theme this year includes Mardi Gras as well as Valentines Day. We are still looking for help with dessert donations of all types; decadent, healthy, gluten-free, sugar free. They can be dropped off at the church on Tuesday, February 13 or you can arrange with Beth for another time. We will be setting up after church on Sunday, February 11 and can use all the help we can get.

As part of St. Johnsbury's Maple Festival, we will be again providing a pancake breakfast on Saturday, April 20. Again we will be asking for assistance in set -up, serving, and clean-up. Earlier in April is the solar eclipse on Monday April 8 and we have been discuss-

ing ways we can contribute to St. Johnsbury's celebration—possibly with a chowder supper Sunday night before the day of the eclipse.

The Community Lunch continues to be used by many people in St. Johnsbury. Beth and her crew of devoted workers provide a delicious lunch on both Wednesdays and Fridays. They continue to look for donations each week.

Spiritual Formation & Nurture

We will be looking into a youth curriculum for Lent. There will also be a Lenten Bible study. Spiritual Formation ministry and Sunday School teachers will be completing a training on mandated reporting for APS and DCF. This is a yearly requirement of our Safe Church Policy.

We were so happy to welcome many new visiting families. We offer Sunday School classes on the second and fourth Sunday after the anthem for students in elementary and junior high. With the current research and studies it has been shown that children that spend more time in the service with their families are more apt to attend church as adults. We love to hear the children and see their faces.

The second Sunday of every month the Spiritual Formation Ministry will meet after church. We will not be meeting in February since at that time we will be helping to set up for the Mardi Gras dance.

Stewardship

Stewardship Ministry continues to work on the FY25 budget while also ensuring our buildings are taken care of properly. We have been awarded an Historical Preservation Grant for up to \$20,000 for exterior building repairs. See page 7 for more information and our responsibilities. Thank you Betty Keller and Amanda Cochrane for working on this. The parsonage now has a new oil tank. Thanks to Randall, Greg, Lance, and Keith Norris for carrying in the new tank. Lance Garrett was here to review

the apartments and discuss the needed improvements to them. Many thanks to Greg Brown and Randall Northrup for their ongoing maintenance support to the apartments Our endowment continues to increase in value with enough to pay for the roof.

Reach Out

We assisted persons with 4 gas cards and 3 COVID tests. We supported a person (continued on page 3)



Have you visited our Facebook page? UnitedCommunityChurchUCC

Did you know you can check the website three different ways?

UCCSTJ.com

UCCSTJ.org

Unitedcommunity.church



Ministry reports (continued from page 2) with arranging transportation to New York and helped another person locate a list of counselors. We still need of easy foods that are non-perishable and doesn't need heating for Ted and Frannie's Cabinet.



Archives



I have started to go through boxes of random Church stuff that has been placed in the archive room. There are now extra file cabinets to file away

some North Church bulletins.

Meal Site

The United Community Mealsite is alive and well, with an emphasis on ALIVE! During the months of October, November,



and December 2023 we served over 3,000 meals to our guests. That 3-month figure includes a total of 1,528 "sit-down" meals, 817 take-out meals, and 818 meals carried to the Salvation Army. We also served approximately 300 guests at Thanksgiving, and an additional 150 at the Christmas meal which was hosted by the Beth El Synagogue. Phew! That's a lot of hungry people! On Sunday, 1/28 I asked the kids during the Young People's Talk "What do we need to do to have our mealsite? What does it take?" I was thrilled that the first answer was "Love", followed by "Ingredients for food" and then "People". That's it – it's that simple, and that complicated at the same time. Love, Food, and People! Our congregation has loads of love to share and loads of people who are willing to commit themselves to the task. The Food part of it can get challenging when we have so many hungry guests to feed (and our numbers are increasing). So, we who are on the front lines of prepping, cooking, serving, and cleaningup truly appreciate your continued support with donations of canned goods, bread, juice, and more. We use all of it, so thank you for helping us "Feed My Sheep".

Calling all United Community Church Volunteers!!!

We have an opportunity to have a CPR & First aid class (to include Narcan). This is a hybrid training. If you sign up you complete the online training on your own time and then we will all come together and Calex will watch us practice the skills before taking the certification test.

We need a group of at least 10 people. We are asking that at the time you sign up to pay the cost of \$39.50 a person. If the \$39.50 is a hardship, Spiritual Formation has a limited amount of scholarships. Please sign up or refer questions to unitedcommunitychurchucc@gmail.com Please let Erika know before you start the online class so I can call Calex with the names and number of people **DEADLINE 2/16/24**

Heartsaver® First Aid CPR AED

ONLINE OPTION. For the layperson who wants training in both First Aid and CPR, this option may be your best value. Students complete an on-line course from AHA availa-



ble here (cost is currently \$19.50), and then schedule a skills verification session with one of our instructors (cost is currently \$25). This approach makes the combined First Aid and CPR certification cost \$39.50, rather than doing the courses separately, which would cost \$64. United Community Church will schedule a private skills practice & verification session. Once you have completed BOTH portions, you will receive an AHA card*, good for 2 *Note we are now issuing "e-cards" which come to you via e-mail; please make sure you enter a valid e-mail address!

Church Council Members



Phil Brown, Moderator

stjmusic@sover.net

Alice Kitchel, Assistant Moderator

Elisa Rowell, Treasurer

elisamay1978@gmail.com

Helene Millas, Assistant Treasurer

Kathy Brown, Assistant Clerk

frenchcutie289@yahoo.com Kris Norris, Stewardship

Karen Sayles, Clerk

Pam Dearborn, past Moderator,

dpam2203@gmail.com

Pam Dearborn, Member at Large

dpam2203@gmail.com

alicekitchel@gmail.com Gail Warnaar, Member at Large

gailw@theoldhomestead.com

Karen Sayles, Worship & Care

kmsayles@yahoo.com

KristanNorris312@gmail.com

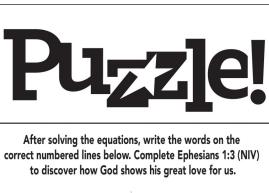
kmsayles@yahoo.com Vicki Scherer Spiritual Formation & Nurture

vickyrscherer@gmail.com

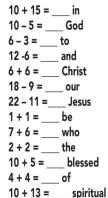
kbpb@together.net Alice Kitchel, Outreach

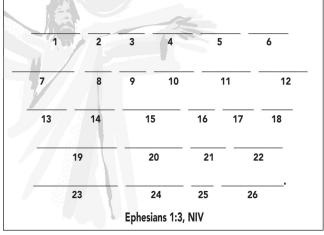
YOUNG AND THE YOUNG AT HEART PAGE

Children's bulletins are available at our worship services as well as downloadable from the Constant Contact with the worship materials and on the website: uccstj.com.

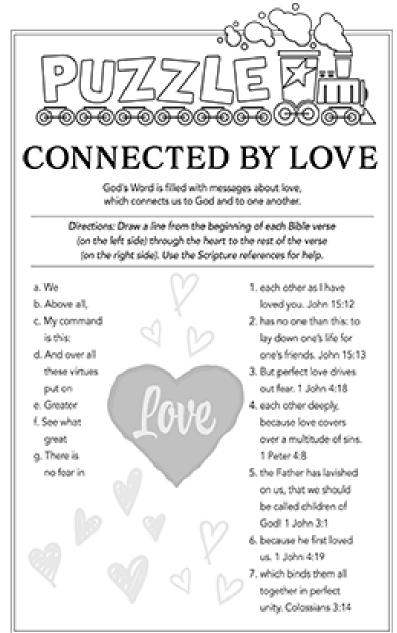


14 – 7 =	Father
10 + 9 = _	heavenly
9 + 9 =	the
12 + 12 =	blessing
2 – 1 =	Praise
7 + 7 =	_ has
11 + 11 =	every
13 + 13 = _	Christ
8 + 8 =	_ us
10 + 10 =	realms
8 + 9 =	_ in
5 + 5 =	Lord
10+ 11 = _	with

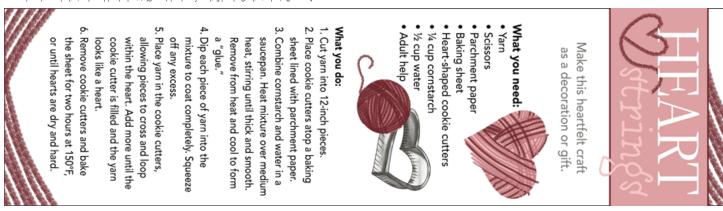




Answer: Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ. Ephesians 1.3, NIV



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Offerings

	Dec	July-Dec(YTD)
Offering	13,196.54	49,774.67
Other directed offering	s 1,000.00	2,695.61
Roof Fund	25.69	1,392.68
Community meal	1,365.15	5,621.74
Total Offerings	15,587.38	59,484.70
Wider Mission	40.00	780.73
Local Mission	25.00	935.00
Total Mission	62.00	1,715.73

	Mission	Offering
2023/2024	\$4,780.00	\$70,000.00
% of budgeted amt	35.9%	85.0%

Projects from staff:

- Sunday morning services slide show
- Support Pulpit Supply pastors
- Ladies tea
- Set up new copier/ printer
- Supporting people in addressing community supports
- Press releases and advertising church events
- Assist with worship planning
- Addressing current issues with building use
- Support members of congregation
- Worship and care
- Order supplies for meal site
- Lollipop Wednesday
- Gas cards
- Performed background checks
- Coordinate maintenance request
- Welcome bags
- Assist with send out surveys for search committee
- Reviewing safe church
- Research trainings for church volunteers and Sunday School teachers
- Keeping facebook and website updated
- Help with set up and building needs for First Night
- Update all calendars
- Creating and sharing of flyers for events
- Support families with funerals, and the
- Sharing on constant contact and facebook

Mardi Gras/Valentine Dessert & Dance

February 13,2024

7.9 pm

Mission and Ministries, Apartments and properties, Endowment and finances

These topics are fodder for many questions, discussions, and opinions.

How do they relate to each other, to the finances of our Church, and to the larger picture of our Ministries as we strive to live by our Mission Statement?



Well! Hang in there, because

during March and April you will have a chance to converse and respond on these topics. This is the 'business' of our Church and relates to the properties (as in real estate!) that make us unique among Churches and a prominent landmark in St J. This also helps to define who we are and who we want to become. If the 'business of the Church' is well defined and operates smoothly, the mission and focus of the Church, guided by our Pastor, is free to nurture our spirituality and to serve God and follow the teachings of Jesus in many ways. We can not only feed His lambs, but also perhaps ??

Dream big as we do our preliminary planning work.

"We" is a committee of seven who have been charged by the Council to:

gather helpful information and questions, which will inform intelligent conversations — out to you, the congregants, by the first of March.

provide listening opportunities for gathering your responses, thoughts, an dreams — to be scheduled in March and April.

to present information gathered to the Council for its consideration by the end of May.

We are an Advisory Committee to the Council and will make no decisions. Our reports will assist the Council in charting the future of both the Business and the Spiritual Mission of our Church. It will also help to inform our next settled Pastor.

These are big topics, important questions, and our success depends upon your thoughtful responses. I look forward to our discussions together. Think BIG.....

Mission Statement

As one body in communion with God, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit, we, the members of United Community Church covenant with one another to care for and love each other as Jesus Christ loves us, and to maintain, support, and foster a compassionate ministry in our community and throughout all God's creation

Weather Cancels Swinging Epiphany

Swing North Big Band was deeply disappointed to have to make a weather cancellation for the Swinging Epiphany Celebration on January 7. Swinging Epiphany was "born" in St. Johnsbury in 2012 and we always appreciate the opportunity to bring the celebration "home" to this community. We are looking forward to joining with United Community Church and the wider community to celebrate Mardi Gras on February 13. We hope you will join us in that celebration.

In the meantime, you can still enjoy the 2024 Swinging Epiphany Celebration using this video from our January 6 offering at the Well River Congregational Church: https://youtu.be/xU3XverndPQ.



Lent at the United Community Church

The forty days of Lent that mark a season of spiritual preparation in anticipation of Easter begin on **Ash Wednesday, February 14.** On the 14th we will gather for worship in the sanctuary for a 7:00 pm service featuring music from the Taize community, an offering from the UCC Handbell Choir, and ending with the imposition of ashes. We hope you will join with your brothers and sisters as we journey through these forty days together.

The Reverends Sprout and Winkler will lead a study for members and friends exploring the so-called "seven deadly sins." The study group will meet on **Fridays during Lent, beginning February 16**, following the community lunch, at 1 pm. Each week we will consider one of the seven, beginning with pride, and its subset known as vainglory. We will learn to recognize the pitfalls that can trap us in the

web of the destructive vices that keep us from growth as children of God, and the spiritual resources God offers to set us free. The group will meet in the lounge.

A beautiful weekend in the neighborhood!

Francois Clemmons, aka Officer Clemmons from *Mr. Rogers' Neighborhood*, is coming to our neighborhood in St. Johnsbury.

Dr. Clemmons is best known for his long-running role as the singing African-American policeman who regularly visited with Fred Rogers and the many characters who enchanted decades of children on public television starting in 1968. Trained as an opera singer, Dr. Clemmons also became a leading expert on African-American spirituals and founder of the Harlem Gospel Choir.



François Clemmons in concert

On Saturday, February 17, he will present an hour-long program of spirituals at South Church Hall at 4 pm. He will be accompanied by Robert Wilson on piano. Admission to the program is free, though donations are welcomed to compensate the artists.

François Clemmons in worship

Then on Sunday, February 18, Dr. Clemmons will speak at the Universalist Unitarian Congregation of St. Johnsbury. Rev. Barnaby Feder, who has known Dr. Clemmons for over a decade as a congregant at the Champlain Valley Unitarian Universalist Society, will engage Dr. Clemmons in this conversation as he shares his life's story. We are planning to "tune in" to the that conversation online, using our church's system. This will be an option after our own shorter service that morning.

Francois Clemmons' life story is an extraordinary tale that begins in poverty on an Alabama farm where he was first introduced to music by a beloved grandfather. The path to fame with Mr. Rogers was representative of many of the barriers Black people encountered in the 1950's and 60's, complicated by Dr. Clemmon's additional challenge as a gay man in circumstances where openness was frequently not an option. Of course, how he ended up in Vermont is its own fascinating chapter.

UCC receives Historic Preservation Grant

The United Community church is excited to have received a \$20,000 matching grant from the Vermont Division for Historic Preservation, for repointing and repair of masonry. This beautiful and unique structure, made of limestone from Isle La Motte in the Champlain Islands of Vermont, is a treasure not just for our congregation, but also for our local community and for the whole state. Limestone is not as strong as granite or marble so stones deteriorate more rapidly, and are more persnickety about what motor goes between them. The craftsmanship in the masonry also makes the repointing more time consuming than just applying some more mortar.

We have some urgent work to do on our bell tower, which is separate from this grant, and needs to be done as soon as possible, rather than waiting for all the pieces for the grant to come together.

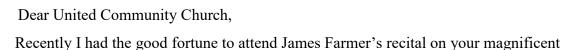
Not including the bell tower project, the masonry work for the rest of the building may cost as much as \$73,000. This grant of \$20,000 must be matched by other funds, and the work must be completed by the end of December, 2025, to qualify for reimbursement with that grant. Between the bell



Elaine Reed Magnan

tower, the additional masonry for which we have received this grant, and the energy upgrades we wish to make, it is time for a capital fundraising campaign. In addition to being good stewards for this building which serves our community with community meals; a worship, community gathering, and concert venue; and a variety of meeting spaces, we also want to be good stewards of our planet. This means creating less of a "carbon footprint" with all the hot water we heat for cooking and washing dishes on Wednesdays and Fridays, as well as all the space we heat. Using less oil will also save money which can then be used toward our mission. Please let anyone on the stewardship committee know if you are able to assist in this fundraising effort, or to assist in seeking grants for energy efficiency work!

Betty Keller, Project Administrator for Historic Preservation Grant for masonry



very moving.

organ. I noticed there was a donation jar to support the upkeep on the organ, but had no cash on hand. My family was very active in the church, then known as the North Church, for many generations. My grandparents Fabian and Glenn Reed, my parents James Ronald and Virginia Reed, and my sister Martha Reed and myself, Elaine Reed Magnan. My folks sang in the choir for many years, including during the time when Jim was playing the organ. My dad especially loved and appreciated the organ and its ability to really fill the church with beautiful music. He passed that appreciation down to us also, though we did not realize how lucky we were until moving on as adults. Jim was two years ahead of me in school, so I also was attending church while he was playing. His talent was extraordinary even back then! I am enclosing a donation for your organ fund. It is a treasure to be loved and cared for. I am sure it requires great expense to keep it

Thank you for the poinsettia plant Karen Sayles delivered to me. Unfortunately, I was not able to keep it because of Elliott, my cat that I am able to have here at Riverglen House where I now live. I do love the little green ornament of the manger scene. Best wishes to the congregation in their search for a minister. Happy, healthy 2024 to all.

Lucy Haworth

in perfect working order. Thanks so much for the opportunity to return to St. J and enjoy the music. It was

Thank you very much for the poinsettia for mom, Joan Knutsen. It was a great way to decorate her room for the Christmas season. The ornament hangs in her window.

Betty Perreault

Fellowship Groups Begin

Beginning in January on the first Saturday of each month, men and those that identify as males meet for breakfast. This is a time to talk, share stories and enjoy a breakfast. All men and those that identify as males are welcome to this time of fellowship. You need not attend every month but rather when you are able. Breakfast is served at 8:30 am.





Not to be outdone, the women and those that identify as female are meeting on the last Wednesday of the month at 1 pm. This "Tea Time" is a fellowship time to talk together, relax after serving Community Lunch, share how we can serve United Community Church better. There were cucumber sandwiches, tea, and cookies this past month. If you don't drink tea we have lemonade, ice tea, and punch.

Pot-luck lunch to hear about the coming St. Johnsbury Food Co-op

On Sunday, March 3, as the Universalist Unitarian Congregation of St. Johnsbury is hosting an ecumenical pot-luck lunch and panel discussion on how the proposed development of a new Food Co-op in St. Johnsbury dovetails with religious values. The panel discussion will be led by Jay Craven, a founding Board member of the St. Johnsbury Coop, which now counts some of us and hundreds of other neighbors among its members.

This event is a follow-up to the New Year's Eve interfaith service we held at St. Andrew's Episcopal Church. We hope this second gathering will create even broader interest in interfaith partnerships and long-range benefits for our entire region.



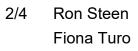
MARDI GRAS, TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 13

Admission by donation

Proceeds to help fund the kitchen's indoor grill

United Community Church 1325 Main St. St. Johnsbury, VT





2/6 Kate Roosa

2/9 Ashley Scherer

2/11 Brahm Schweigert

2/12 Steve Slayton

2/13 Susanne Roberts

2/15 Sanne Brown Rodney Sayles

2/21 Chris Ummer

2/23 David Brown

2/26 Jonah Raser

2/27 Jennifer Goodhue

2/28 Carol Stock



Ferguson McRay

June 21, 1932—December 2, 2023

Jane McKay

November 8, 1923—December 16, 2023

Nathalie "Sunny" Wood

May 8, 1934 - January 18, 2024 Memorial service February 10, 2024 at South Church Hall, St. Johnsbury Academy



CHOIR REHEARSALS

9 AM SUNDAYS

11:30 AM—12:30 PM

FEBRUARY 4

FEBRUARY 18



UNITED COMMUNITY
HANDBELL ENSEMBLE
REHEARSALS

6-7:30 PM WEDNESDAYS



2/14 Sally & Elliott Crocker

Dale & Arlene Morse

2/24 Joelle & Scott Beck

SUNDAY SCHOOL PRE K—6TH GRADE 2ND AND 4TH SUNDAY STUDENTS LEAVE SANCTUARY FOR CLASS FOLLOWING THE ANTHEM





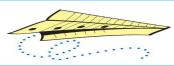
Congratulations to Luke Raser

He will be representing St. Johnsbury Schools at the District II Junior High Music Festival in March.

In our Thoughts and Prayers

Julie Brisson
Bob Chapman
Mary Feron
Joan Knutsen

David Martin
Pam Parker
Gail Warnaar
Wood family



If we have missed your birthday or anniversary **please** let either Barbara or Erika know at 802-748-2603 or UnitedCommunityChurchUCC@gmail.com

United Community Church

United Church of Christ 1325 Main Street St. Johnsbury, VT 05819



Just a reminder: ()



Although we don't require mask wearing we ask you respect one another's choices to stay safe



In- person and

Facebook Live /Zoom

Zoom etiquette:

https://www.facebook.com/watch/?ref=saved&v=209599687060439

STAFF

Music Director /OrganistBarbara ConnellyHandbell DirectorPhil BrownVirtual Worship DirectorPhil BrownVirtual TechniciansSean Cavanaugh, Betty KellerSecretariesBarbara Connelly, Erika Thompson

CONTACT INFORMATION

United Community Phone number 748-2603 Email UnitedCommunityChurchUCC@gmail.com Website UnitedCommunity.church



February



Lectionary Texts

February 4

Isaiah 40:21-31 Psalm 147:1-11, 20c 1 Corinthians 9:16-23 Mark 1:29-39

February 11

2 Kings 2:1-12 Psalm 50:1-6 2 Corinthians 4:3-6 Mark 9:2-9

February 18

Genesis 9:8-17 Psalm 25:1-10 1 Peter 3:18-22 Mark 1:9-15

February 25

Genesis 17:1-7 Psalm 22:23-31 Romans 4:13-25 Mark 8:31-38







