

UCC Sanbornton  
Congregational Church

# Belfry

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*March Article*

So far, 2024 has been quite a successful year for our church as we navigate without a settled pastor. Our success is supported by so many people in our church community who continue to do the work of the church every day of the week. I am continually amazed at the number of things that happen "behind the scenes." Thank you to you all! At the same time, it must be said that there are times when saying yes to one more thing feels like too much. If the one thing you want to do is sit in the pew on Sunday morning, I say thank you to you too! All of us, no matter how or when we show up, contribute to the health and vitality of our church.

2024 began with a giant snow storm. We, along with hundreds of churches in the state, canceled our worship service. Rev. Rebecca Maccini joined us the following Sunday to lead our worship for two weeks. She will be back with us on the first Sunday in April.

At the end of January, Marg Whedon led us in worship before we transitioned into our hybrid Annual Meeting. Thank you Marg for setting the tone before our yearly gathering.

Conference Minister, Rev. Gordon Rankin was our pastor to start the month of February. He delivered a prayer shawl as a gift from the Helping Hands Ministry of First Congregational Church Wolfeboro, UCC. The shawl is available for use in our sanctuary and serves as a reminder of the interconnectedness and support within our larger community of faith.

Rev. Wanda Lester joined us on the Sunday before Lent began. At the end of worship she invited us to turn and sing the final hymn ("God Be With You") to each other; the feeling of community created in this simple act was palpable.

On Ash Wednesday, a small group of us gathered in the Undercroft to share a simple meal of soup after which Rev. Richard Slater led us in worship and imposition of ashes. He continues to lead us in worship each Sunday and will do so through Easter.

We are continuing to provide pastoral support to those who want it during the week. If you would like to be visited by our chaplain, Rev. Louise Bastille, please let me know and I will help to arrange it. We will all get to meet her in May when she will be leading us in worship on Pentecost Sunday.

Our website's calendar is up to date and contains details about some exciting events that are planned for Sanbornton Congregational Church, UCC.

Kindly,  
Sue Long  
Church Administrator

## **An amusing story from Rhu McBee in support of our decision to switch back to glass communion cups:**

For many years we McBees helped run the Fresh Air Fund out of New York City. The Fund requires all current hosts to undergo a new-house inspection by a Fund Representative whenever a host family moves.

About 10 years ago, a Tilton host family moved to another Belknap town so, as Fund Rep, I arranged to visit their new home. Since they had been hosting a couple of city children for a number of summers, I already knew the family well and knew they would qualify as members of a group Rev. Slater mentioned in his excellent sermon on a recent Sunday. Especially the father.

During the tour of the new house, the two children showed me their room while the parents stood in the doorway. One of the children was particularly proud of having made pretend-sundaes for her dolls, using plastic Communion cups. As I admired one such confection, I murmured, "So there IS a reason for going to church!"

As soon as my ears heard what my mouth had said, my brain prayed, "Please, just beam me up now."

But God had other plans.

I, ever so cautiously, looked up from the transformed Communion cup to glance at the parents by the door. The mother looked blank but, just behind her was her husband, shaking with laughter.

In short, for ecological reasons, I salute our Church for returning to reusable glass Communion cups. But, please, if, like me, you have saved a stack of the plastic ones, share them with young crafters in your life.

Happy Week,

Rhu



Dear Friends,

Many of you received an email in February with some sad news. On Thursday, February 20, 2024, Sharron Danforth passed away. Sharron was transported to the hospital from her home after suffering a stroke. She was treated there but did not recover. This was a shock to so many of us. She was at church the previous Sunday and was sharing her smile and chatting about the plans she was making for her future.

She was an active member of our church for a number of years. Many of you shared memories and thoughts about Sharron:

"I enjoyed her sense of humor and knowing her on church committee work."

"I remember her amusing stories about all of her cats and their antics."

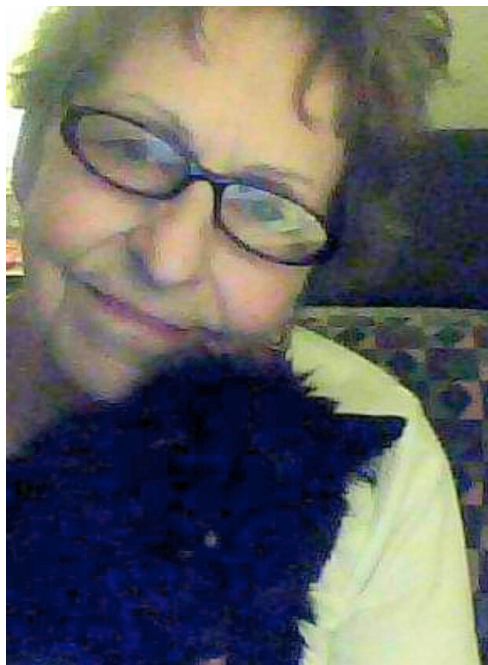
"She loved her family and talked kindly about her dear grandchildren."

"I remember her willingness to help out on the Church Hospitality Committee for Sunday Coffee Hour and on special occasions like the St. Patrick's Day Dinner."

"She was a good friend to me and a lovely, caring lady. I will miss our friendship."

At this time, plans for a time of remembrance are not firm. It is possible that the family will plan something around Mother's Day. When details are made, I will do my best to share them with you.

Kindly,  
Sue Long  
Church Administrator



**Pastor #26 of the Sanbornton Congregational Church, UCC:  
Pastor Ruth Ann Martz (2011-2020)**



Growing up in the suburbs of New Haven, CT, Ruth was the daughter of two highly educated parents, both holding PhDs. Her father was an English professor, and her mother was an editor for the letters of 18th century writer Horace Walpole. Academics were important in the Martz household, and Ruth got her education at a private girls' school in New Haven. Here, she not only studied languages, but also took voice lessons. At the Church of the Redeemer in New Haven, she sang in the Junior Choir and was part of the youth group. Church and music were important parts of her life.

As a kid, Ruth enjoyed tennis, kickball and knitting, but could also be found playing with her Barbie or Raggedy Ann (and Andy) dolls. Raggedy Ann was a special "friend", as she was the one with whom Ruth shared all her problems and thoughts; this doll was the inspiration for the ragdolls Ruth started making later on, as she found that creating them had a "healing" quality. Interestingly, in 2002 when Ruth's father passed away, Ruth discovered her Raggedy Ann in a box in his basement- this childhood friend was still around after all these years!

Ruth was a sophomore in high school when she met Steve Majeski, a senior, at a "mixer". They continued dating well into their college years, getting to really know and love each other. Ruth attended Yale University with the 2nd class of women! She lived in a dorm and pursued her love of languages by majoring in French and minoring in Latin. She went on to become a French teacher, occasionally teaching some Latin as well. Ruth even furthered her education by attending UMass Amherst in 1976, acquiring her Master's Degree in French. She taught in private schools for 15 years.

In 1978, she and Steve got married, with Ruth keeping her maiden name. They made their home in West Hartford, living in the same house for 32 years, and joining First Church of Christ Congregational. Their son, Stephen Martz Majeski was born in 1983. Two years later, Ruth's mother died of cancer. This was a turning point for Ruth, as she and her mother were very close. As she struggled with her mother's death, she decided to take a year off to reconsider what she wanted to do with her life. After teaching for 10 years at Kingswood-Oxford School, she decided to move in a different direction in 1989.



*Ruth's Raggedy Ann and Andy Ragdolls and a Labyrinth collage using the colors of the church seasons*

Ruth became active in her church, and for the next 7 years she took on the job of a Christian Educator for 10 hours a week. She found great support from the church, and the 2 women Interim Pastors there. In 1995 she began attending the Andover Newton Seminary school part time, after seeing a sign that said, "Does God keep you up at night?" She went on to be the new Youth Minister at First Church of Christ in Farmington CT. She led confirmation classes and went on week-long mission trips to Puerto Rico, the Monument Valley Navajo Reservation in Utah, the Appalachian Mountains, Maine, and the Amish community of PA.

Ruth received her DM in 2001 and was ordained in 2002. She became involved in the feminist movement, studied women scholars and the stories of women in the Bible. In 2001, Ruth went on to become the Associate Pastor of the Immanuel Congregational Church in Hartford. Although this first call was tough at times, she spent 4 years learning about urban ministry. Ruth was then called to be the Associate Pastor at the Glastonbury Congregational Church, where she took on the women's ministry, parish care and monthly preaching. She was there for 5 years, before her position was eliminated by the church.

Wanting to stay in the ministry, in 2011 she updated her work profile to include churches of at least 75 members...and lo and behold, Sanbornton Congregational Church, UCC, hit the radar! She warmly recalls a Zoom call she had when she was being interviewed as a candidate and heard a young Katie Bossey's voice in the background saying, "When can you start?!" Steve retired from his career as tax attorney and he and Ruth moved to NH. This would be Ruth's first time as a solo pastor - and in a much smaller church than she was used to. She loved that it was Open and Affirming, as well as being a Peace with Justice church. She and Steve (who felt welcomed "as the spouse" of the pastor) lived in the parsonage for 3 years before buying their own house (formerly owned by our very own Ed Lebel) in Sanbornton. They still live there to this day.



*Portrait of Steve and Ruth, painted by Terry Spinner (from our church!)*

Ruth has many fond memories of our little church on the hill: the intimacy of the sanctuary with its stained-glass windows, the worship music, the organ, the hospitality and faithfulness of the church family. She felt welcomed, "just as she was"; she felt free to offer creative sermons, liturgy, and Children's Words. She smiles when she recalls the Mardi Gras celebrations, and unexpected "out of the box" fun, as well as the blessing of the animals, confirmation classes, Horton Center, Sunday school, pastoral visits, the Christmas Fair, and Old Home Day (when we opened the doors to let the organ music out and the visitors in)!

During her Sabbatical in 2017, Ruth learned about the Labyrinth as a spiritual tool and later shared labyrinth walks through workshops and the confirmation class. At the 2024 NHCUCC Prepared to Serve Conference, she offered a workshop on creating labyrinth collages, using colors of the chakras and the church seasons. She also enjoys playing the harp, which she took up 5 years prior to joining our church. Although she hadn't played for several years, she now plays daily, as a spiritual and centering practice. She has hopes of maybe one day playing for our congregation!

These days, Pastor Ruth Martz is involved with the Plymouth Congregational Church, UCC, in Plymouth, NH, helping out with pulpit supply and Outreach ministry. She also enjoys skiing with her husband, Steve, and walking a good 4 miles a day to stay healthy. They have purchased a plot in the Centre Cemetery, where (in the far future!) Ruth hopes to be the "first woman pastor" of the Sanbornton UCC church buried there. Seems fitting for the woman who served our church for 9 years and has made Sanbornton her home! Submitted by Karey Caldwell, church historian

## Full moons of February and March: the Snow Moon and the Worm Moon

*"Genesis 1:14 - And God said, Let there be lights in the firmament of the heaven to divide the day from the night; and let them be for signs, and for seasons, and for days, and years..."*

Native American tribes often used moon phases and cycles to keep track of the seasons and gave unique names to each recurring full moon. These full moon names were used to identify the entire month during which each occurred. Although many Tribes gave names to the full moon, the most well-known names come from the Algonquin tribes who lived in the area of New England and westward to Lake Superior. The Algonquin tribes had a great effect on the early European settlers in America, and the settlers adopted their habit of naming the moons. They even invented some of their own moon names that have been passed down through time.

### February 24th - "The Snow Moon"

Since the heaviest snow usually falls during this month, native tribes of the north and east most often called February's full Moon the Full Snow Moon. Some tribes also referred to this Moon as the Full Hunger Moon, since harsh weather conditions in their areas made hunting very difficult.

Other names for February's full moon include Trapper's Moon, Budding Moon, Bony Moon, Little Famine Moon, Moon of The Raccoon, Moon When Trees Pop, Moon of Ice and Storm Moon. Check out this photo of the Full Snow Moon, over a covered bridge in NH, courtesy of Ida Gould.



On March 25th we will see the Full Worm Moon also known as the Crow Moon and the Sap Moon. To the settlers, it was also known as the Lenten Moon and the Paschal Moon (the first full moon or after March 21 - it is used to determine the date of Easter) and was considered to be the last full Moon of winter. Called the Crow Moon for the cawing crows, it signals the end of winter. As the earth thaws, worms start to appear; and it marks the time when maple sap begins to flow.

The Spring Equinox on March 19th, when both day and night are at equal length, reminds us to find our own inner balance. Let the moonlight bring you a balance of light and dark and see the truth in your life however much it may hurt; then let the Lord bring your breakthrough!

## Cool March night sky events!

After the clocks move ahead 1 hour on the 10th, look for Mercury on the 11th! About 30 minutes after sunset, look about 10 degrees above the southwest horizon and, using binoculars, you just might see the tiny planet! Jupiter will be close to the crescent moon on the 13th, with tiny Uranus joining the party just above the two. Look for increased aurora activity around the Equinox on the 19th, as this is said to be the time that brings a heightened chance of lights!



Comet 12P/Pons-Brooks, affectionately known as the "Devil comet", makes its 71-year return, potentially gracing our night skies with some of its maximum brilliance on March 24th. This icy visitor is larger than Mount Everest and has a history of dramatic outbursts, forming temporary "horns" that help boost its visibility. While naked-eye spotting might be possible, using a sky chart and binoculars may offer the best chance to catch this celestial spectacle. Good luck! Photo of Comet 12P/Pons-Brook credit Pexels

Submitted by Karey Caldwell



