

Winthrop Congregational Church, U.C.C. Winthrop, Maine



Mission

Our mission is to be a Christ-centered community of prayer and worship, of welcome and care, of learning and growing, of witness and service in the worldwide church of Jesus Christ.

Who We Are

We are a loving, Open and Affirming church family that cares deeply about our faith, about those with whom we share Christ's teachings, about those who need a helping hand in life, about our community, our country and our world. We are a mature congregation with an average age in the late 50s, and we hail from many backgrounds. Our congregation has 85 members; an average of 35 adults and a few children attend weekly services. We gladly welcome people of all races, ethnicities, sexual orientations and past denominations.

Our church is located in a traditional New England town that offers exceptional quality of life, especially for people who love the outdoors. Our church has a prime location in the center of town at Main and Bowdoin streets. The sanctuary seats 105 people comfortably. It is handicapped accessible with a paved ramp to the main entrance. AA, exercise classes, Weight Watchers, craft groups and others use the fellowship hall on a regular basis. It is also home to our renowned Fish Chowder Luncheon, summer fair, sidewalk art show luncheon, Christmas Fair and other fund raising events. In addition to

the office, there is a Chapel and a flexible classroom. We own a rustic camp dwelling on Maranacook Lake in Winthrop that is a God-given, natural jewel. It is used in summer for fellowship and outdoor worship and it offers great potential.

Members of our church make the final decisions concerning the budget, major expenditures and other important matters. The church council directs the month-to-month functions of the church. Deacons assist the pastor with planning and preparations for worship services.



To put it simply: We are a friendly, accepting bunch. Newcomers feel welcome as soon as they enter our church doors.

Where We Are

Winthrop is located in central Maine, 10 miles west of the capital, Augusta, and 20 miles east of Lewiston-Auburn. It is a community of 6,200 people, a number that swells each summer with visitors and seasonal residents. Three large lakes and several ponds surround us, as do trails and nature walks with spectacular sights. Our town recently adopted the slogan, “Winthrop: Where We Play Outside.”

Winthrop has a town beach, boat landing and picnic area – Norcross Point – which is a regular site for weddings, birthday parties and other events. The area’s lakes, trails and mountains afford summer and winter fun for swimmers, boaters, hikers, snowmobilers and cross-country skiers. There are several family and children’s camps nearby including the Maine Conference U.C.C. (Pilgrim Lodge), the State YMCA Camp and a United Methodist Camp (Mechuwana). Recreational opportunities abound.

Our schools consistently rank among the best in the state. Winthrop High School has been named in the “Top High Schools in the State of Maine” by U.S. News & World Report’s America's Best High Schools Annual Report.

The region’s strong health-care offerings took a major step forward in November 2013 when MaineGeneral Medical Center opened a new, \$314 million hospital in Augusta. It is located next to the Alford Center for Cancer Care, which opened in 2007 and is ranked nationally for its level of care. Not surprisingly, recruitment of medical professionals is on the upswing, a potential growth area for our community and congregation.

Winthrop preserved a key part of its downtown history in 2005 by converting the former Carleton Mill building into a health center with radiology and laboratory services, family physicians’ and pediatricians’ offices. Two other full-service hospitals – Central Maine Medical Center and St. Mary’s Regional Medical Center – are located in Lewiston. Winthrop has dentists, chiropractors and veterinarians. Many excellent colleges are within commuting distance: Bates, Bowdoin, Colby, Thomas and University of Maine campuses at Farmington and Augusta. Retail shopping abounds in Augusta and Lewiston.

Winthrop is a sports-oriented community. The grade school and YMCA collaborate to offer sports programs for young children year-round. The middle and high schools have

competitive sports teams that enjoy broad support. The high school also is known for its art, drama and Latin programs, among others.

The Winthrop Performing Arts Center, which opened with our high school in 2003, offers many cultural opportunities, including public concerts, plays and community celebrations. Within a 10-minute ride from Winthrop is the Theater at Monmouth, a vibrant Shakespearean Theater that draws crowds each summer.

Winthrop is less than 90 minutes from top ski resorts (Sunday River, Sugarloaf), an hour from the coast and an hour from Portland, Maine's largest city, and the Portland Jetport. Boston is three hours away. Amtrak's Downeaster rail line, connecting Maine to Boston and points south, extends north to Brunswick, a 20-minute drive.

How We Got Here

Our town has a rich history, in which our congregation has played a central role for nearly two centuries.

During the summer of 1776, while other men were meeting in Philadelphia, a group of men and women were holding meetings to organize a church for the isolated but growing community of "Pond Town." Their efforts came to fruition on Sept. 4, exactly three months after the signing of the Declaration of Independence.

The first services were held at a local tavern, Squire Bishop's Inn. In June 1825, the Masonic Lodge of Winthrop (Temple) laid the cornerstone of the Congregational Church on what is now upper Main Street. This was the site of the Church for many years. In 1861, a chapel was built in the center of town, at the present home of the Congregation. Renovation of the fellowship hall was completed in 1904, at which time the large building on upper Main Street was sold. In 1967, the congregation became part of The United Church of Christ. With the help of bequests and fund drives, the church building expanded in 1975 and became handicapped accessible in 1996. In 2013, by unanimous vote, we became an Opening and Affirming Church.



What We Do

Sunday morning worship services are held at 10 a.m. (9:30 a.m. in summer months). Maundy Thursday, Christmas Eve, Ash Wednesday and Easter Sunrise services are also a part of the church's worship offerings. Music is an integral part of our Church's worship. We are fortunate to have a talented Music Director and a dedicated choir.



The Christian Education Board leads our religious education programs. Volunteer lay people lead our youth group and Sunday school classes, which run from September to May. Sunday school enrollment has decreased in recent years and we would love to

see it grow again. We recently re-established an adult education program with lay leadership providing topics of interest for our church family.

Missions, both international and local, are important parts of our church life. They include: two missions to Honduras (in 2012 and planned for early 2014); the Deacon's Fund (Pastoral Discretionary Fund for local assistance/missions); Winthrop Food Pantry (special offerings, food donations, and volunteers); Family Violence Project (white gifts at Christmas, and Christmas gifts for a family at the shelter); St. Francis Hot Meals Kitchen (volunteers from Congregation); and support for Pilgrim Lodge.

Special mission offerings are collected and sent directly to such causes as One Great Hour of Sharing, Church World Service Blanket Sunday, emergency school and health kits, and other causes recommended by the Missions Committee. The Committee also informs the congregation of national and international needs, to which members may contribute. As part of the international mission, the Women's Guild sponsors a child in Honduras through the Child Sponsorship Program.

Who We Are Looking For

Until 2011, Winthrop Congregational Church was led by a full-time pastor. Perhaps because of our Yankee heritage, we live within our financial means. Thus, we transitioned to a part-time minister four years ago. That transition went well and the pattern will be repeated in our current search.

We are a warm, caring church that seeks a minister who is patient with our decision-making process, who will challenge us intellectually, who will share the life journey with us, preach to us rather than at us, lead us without directing us and who will help us grow spiritually. We want to grow as a congregation, both spiritually and in numbers. Come grow with us!



View of Maranacook Lake from Whispering Pines Camp

Web Sites with Additional Information

Church: <http://www.wccucc.org/>

Schools: <http://winthropschools.org/>

Town: <http://www.winthropmaine.org/>

Hospital: www.maine-general.org

Winthrop Chamber of Commerce: www.winthropchamber.org

Augusta Chamber of Commerce: www.augustamaine.com

Local Newspapers: www.kjonline.com and www.sunjournal.com

Lakes & outdoors: www.watershedfriends.org and www.ktl.org (Kennebec Land Trust)

State Office of Tourism: www.visitmaine.com

State of Maine: www.state.me.us

University System: www.maine.edu

Maine Conference: UCC: www.maineucc.org

Lewiston-Auburn: <http://www.laitshappeninghere.com/>