**Canaan Union Church**

**314 Main Street**

# Canaan, Maine

**June 23-29, 2013**

**Sunday School 9:30 AM**

**Sunday Morning Worship 10:15 AM**

**Pastor: Diana J. Perkins**

**Send your letters to: Canaan Union Church**

**P. O. Box 1642**

**Waterville, Maine 04903-1642**

**The headlines concerning high school graduations across America displayed on the internet caused my heart to sink. The news that prayers and any reference to God are not allowed at graduation anymore really upset me. However, some online videos were shown of students who have taken a stand and read a prayer, spoke from their heart testimonies of their faith in God, and were**

**applauded by the audience. My heart goes out to our young people for to be stripped of the right to give God glory and praise could be a return to the dark period of history when Christians were burned to stakes and put into prison, beaten and martyred for expressing their faith in God. Bibles were burned and people were tortured when Bibles were discovered in their possession.**

**As I was cleaning out a desk drawer this past weekend, I came across the program from my high school graduation back in 1968 from Dexter Regional High School. Students and teachers had ridiculed me through my high school years for bringing my Bible to school and for standing up for my religious beliefs. I was told that I wouldn’t be able to graduate because I didn’t take a required course that was needed in order to graduate and from my Freshman to Senior years, I had to fight for my right to attend school. Finally as a senior, I had been worn down to the point that I was ready to give up and walk away from school. I had been called to the principal’s office for the last time to give me a warning that if I didn’t participate in the required course, I would not graduate with my class. I told Mr. Matthews, the principal, that I was tired of the struggle and he could expect my books to be on his desk the following Monday. I wanted the weekend to think about my options before making a final decision. I didn’t really want to quit school, but the pressure finally got to me. Later that day, Mr. Matthew called me back to his office and told me that the school district superintendent had indeed given me a waiver from the class. I could expect to graduate with my class. Those memories stayed with me and the enthusiasm for school was compromised because of my struggle. I felt very alone and hurt because I was singled out from my peers. Yet on graduation day, my heart rejoiced because God had given me the strength and courage to take a stand for my religious rights and He had helped me win the battle.**

**As I read down through the program I noticed that there were two ministers at our graduation; one said a prayer and one spoke to the graduating class. Our class sang a hymn and there had been no discussion concerning omitting churches from our graduation exercises. We attended church as a class on a Sunday morning service before graduation and it was called “Baccalaureate”. We were encouraged to get involved in our community and to reach out with enthusiasm to achieve our goals and cling to our faith.**

**At that time, I never dreamed that I would see the day that those rights would be taken away and it seems that it happened quite rapidly. Prayer was taken out of the classroom, the pledge of allegiance to the flag was removed; a moment of silence replaced the prayer and then even that was taken away. The Scripture reading was removed and then outlawed and on and on it has gone. Silencing the Christian faith has been necessary before the atheist doctrine can be introduced.**

**This past Sunday morning, we had a few folks attend our worship service at our community church in Canaan, Maine. Someone asked if we could sing “Drifting too far from Shore.”**

**As we sang the old hymn, I thought about the next generation of people who will be replacing us in the workforce, the government, the homes that we live in and the churches that we attend.**

**Will there be faith to keep the church doors open or will it be torn down or turned into a secular building? Will prayer be a thing of the past or will there be a group of people who will stand and fight for the right to pray “Our Father who art in Heaven, Hallowed be thy name?” Will fear and indifference cause our generation to be silenced and let our freedom of religion be stripped while spiritual darkness gradually engulfs America? We are drifting too far from our Christian values and I wonder if America will wake up before it is too late. It appears that we took too much for granted. We always believed that the definition of marriage would remain forever, one man and one woman. We had prayer, Bible reading in school in my Primary school years; One woman fought to get it taken out of the classroom and it has escalated from there.**

**I think of the beautiful song writer, Dottie Rambo, who was visiting Russia many years ago. She walked down the streets of Russia during the Christmas season and it seemed so strange and awkward to her that there were no signs of Christmas cheer as we have in America. The streets were totally void of any lights or Christmas decorations. The store windows were not dressed in red and green and no evergreen trees were decorated for the season. There were no greetings of “Merry Christmas” from the pedestrians who were walking the streets and no smiles were exchanged as they passed one another on the street corners. As Dottie stood near the Red Square, darkness and the night air surrounded her. She looked up towards heaven and the stars twinkled in the sky. She started singing words to a song that came from her heart and mind. “Holy Spirit, thou art welcome in this place, Holy Spirit, thou art welcome in this place. Omnipotent Father of mercy and grace, Thou art welcome in this place.” She testified that she immediately felt the presence of the Holy Spirit and she began to pray that freedom would come to Russia so that the gospel message could be delivered there. Slowly over the years, Russia has allowed Christian ministers to take the gospel message to Russia. It seems ironic that America now is turning her back on God who has blessed our country and made her great. Secularism, socialism, atheism and other enemies of Jesus Christ are eroding the truth from the hearts and minds of American people. Jesus asked this question “When I return, will I find faith on the earth?” I want to be found faithful and watching for the coming of the Lord. I desire to reach the lost for Jesus Christ before it is too late. Please join with me to ask God to send laborers into the harvest fields that many souls will come to him in repentance before it is too late. Perhaps foreign missionaries will be sent to rescue the lost here on American soil. May God help us!**

**Pastor Diana**