**Canaan Union Church**

**314 Main Street**

# Canaan, Maine

**January 12-18, 2014**

**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**

**Thank you for your continued support of this ministry. We would**

**not be able to continue without prayer and financial support from our friends and loved ones.**

**As I walked towards the front of the grocery store, I noticed an advertisement on the bulletin board. It announced that a Goodwill outlet store was opening in Gorham, Maine, that would be selling items by the pound. I thought, “Great, discarded items handed down through several groups! That sure sounds exciting.” It reminded me of family traditions from the past. Clothes got passed down until they had absolutely no use left except to be made into quilts. However, a few months later, Leroy and I were shopping in Portland when he thought of the outlet store. He punched in the address into the GPS and we were on our way. We entered a warehouse that had rows and rows of tables loaded with blankets, household items, toys, clothing and seasonal items. The back wall was lined with furniture and small appliances and the place was packed with bargain hunters. I looked around and didn’t see much that interested me so I focused on looking through a bin of books. I am drawn to books and I love looking at them regardless of the subject matter. I was quite content to stand at this one bin and just check out recipes and read bits and pieces of the material that was written in the books. Time went by and soon I heard Leroy’s voice behind me. I looked and here he came pushing two carts overflowing with wreaths, silk flowers, artificial fruit and other decorative objects. He was excited as he told me that a lady had helped him when she saw what he was interested in buying. My thought was “Thanks Lady, you are no help!” He then told me that an elderly man had stopped by his carts and looked at him inquisitively and asked, “Are you going to be decorating your front yard soon?” I said, “He can tell that you are a Maine Native! Anything from pink flamingoes to discarded household items are transformed into flower beds and used to decorate many front yards throughout the rural towns of Maine. If you are fortunate enough to think of it first, it isn’t long before the neighbors all have the same thing brightening up their homesteads.”**

**As we headed towards the checkout counter, Leroy stopped and said, “Oh, by the way, would you grab those two carts nearby that are being saved for me?” No wonder the elderly man asked questions. He probably thought if Leroy was going to get rich on the junk from Goodwill, he wanted to be the next in line to find out how. By the time we got all of those treasures squeezed into the van, there was just enough room for Leroy and me to get into the front seat. I wish I had a picture of that van as it pulled up to Sonja’s front door. Our daughter, Sonja, had started a little side business making wreaths, seasonal wall decorations and keepsakes and Leroy in his enthusiasm to give her support, cleaned out Christmas items, seasonal items and anything that he thought could be stuck into a vase or a wreath from Goodwill that day and they were happy to see it heading down the road. Since it was in the middle of the summer season, he didn’t face much competition for the items.**

**The elderly gentleman may have thought Leroy was about to jump on a gold mine wagon that would lead him to SUCCESS and he was curious enough to ask questions.**

**These past few months, I have enjoyed my beautiful wreath that is covered with red berries, bows and other attractive decorations. It hangs on the side of our front door and it gives our home a festive appearance. Sonja’s creations have been placed in specialty shops, advertised online, sold to customers looking for unique gift ideas, and bought by people looking for ways to show appreciation to loved ones. They have appeared at weddings, funerals, baby showers and holiday celebrations. Everyone shows appreciation for the beauty that she expertly creates from blending greens, decorations, ribbons and figurines together.**

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**Her logo is “Forget me Not” and the sentiment is always one of appreciation for quality and beauty. No one would ever guess that some of the items were once discarded objects that she has skillfully recycled into items of art. Her talent is remarkable and her vision for creating crafts that draw people’s attention to her skill is commendable.**

**Beauty can be created by artists who see far beyond what is visible to the naked eye. I see an old banged up tea pot; Sonja sees a vintage item that once filled with an arrangement will be treasured by a homeowner who is decorating a kitchen with a country theme.**

**My mailbox contains letters quite often from prisoners who write in response to my bulletins. Often they contain information about the person’s life before they committed a crime that put them behind bars. They tell of past accomplishments and their careers that they loved and the period of time that brought darkness into their lives that caused them to lose their way. When I read those letters, I get the feeling that the person is telling me his story of how he got discarded, maybe once, twice or multiple times. The unasked question hangs in the air, “Is there hope for me? Can I ever be used by God when I have made such a mess of my life?” I want to say to those people, “If a person can develop a skill of making objects of beauty from discarded materials that cause people to be willing to pay hard earned money to own them, how much more to you think that God is able to take the broken pieces of your life and make a vessel of honor and beauty from what you give to him?**

**He promises to do just that. Think about the thief who was hanging on one side of Jesus on Calvary. He had been found guilty and condemned for a crime that society demanded the death penalty for and yet in faith he said, “Lord, remember me when you enter your kingdom.” Jesus said, “Today you will be with me in paradise.” Wow! Talk about transformation! He went from discarded humanity to having a special spot in paradise with the Lord Jesus in one day. Miracles still happen and they can happen for you if you truly believe. What gifts or talents do you possess? Offer them to Jesus Christ and you will be amazed at the work that he will accomplish through you. Just believe. *Pastor Diana***