

First Parish Congregational Church

United Church of Christ East Derry, New Hampshire

We are a community of faith built upon a firm foundation of worship, prayer and education. In affirming diversity, we are dedicated to welcoming all people who seek the Word of God, Christian fellowship and service to others. In partnership with Christ and led by the Holy Spirit, we reach out to the ever-widening community through active and loving ministry.

Come visit us! Worship is at 10 am.



From the Pastor's Desk...

Dear Child of God,

Grace and peace to you, beloved child! You have in your hands the December newsletter. In the church year, December is not about gift-giving or shopping – it's about waiting: we await the splendid birth that changed the world like no other birth had previously or will ever. And so we wait: and we call that waiting period "Advent." What I like about the word "advent" is that it composes two-thirds of the word "adventure". As Christians, we are indeed on an adventure!

You see, as Christians, we are called to set our focus first and foremost on "things above," on heavenly things, rather than on earthly things. Each week during Advent, we will be reminded of holy attributes that enhance our earthly existence. We light candles and speak of hope, peace, joy and love. We sing the carols of our childhood: "O Little Town of Bethlehem," "Hark the Herald Angels Sing" and "Silent Night." And as modern folk living in America, we are bombarded with sales, shopping and sometimes spending money we don't have.

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Upcoming Events

December 5 & 8, 1-4pm

AARP Smart Driver Course (p. 9)

Saturday, December 6th, 7:30pm

December Song Concert (p. 9)

Sunday, December 7th, 11:30am

Advent Workshop (p. 3)

Tuesday, December 9th, 7pm

Blue Christmas Service (p. 3)

Wednesday, December 10th, 7-8:30pm

Communication Cohort (p. 10)

Sunday, December 14th, 2pm

A Christmas Carol at Pinkerton (p. 3)

December 21st, Following Worship

All Church Christmas Caroling (p. 5)

Wednesday, December 24th

7pm and 10pm Worship Services (p. 3)

March 15th, 2pm

Reader's Theater: Gospel of Mark (p. 2)

ALL ARE WELCOME

"Friend, you enter this church not as a stranger, but as a guest of God. Come, then, with joy in your heart and thanks upon your lips, and offer God today your love and your service."

- Adapted from a 12th Century Church in Hampshire, England



Continued from Page 1:

Quick question for you: What was the one gift you remember getting for Christmas last year? Next question: What about the fourth gift? Do you remember that one? The truth is, many of us don't because it wasn't something we necessarily wanted or needed. Spending less isn't a call to stop giving gifts; it's a call to stop spending money on gifts we won't remember in less than a year. America spends around \$600 billion dollars during the Christmas season, and much of that is joyless and goes right onto a credit card. By spending wisely on gifts, we free ourselves from the anxiety associated with debt so we can take in the season with a full heart.

Christmas? It starts with Jesus. It ends with Jesus. This is the holistic approach God had in mind for Christmas. It's a season where we are called to put down our burdens and lift a song up to our God. It's a season where love wins, peace reigns, and a king is celebrated with each breath. It's the party of the year. Entering the story of Advent means entering this season with an overwhelming passion to worship Jesus to the fullest.

So how about this year: give more! I know what you're thinking. "Wait, didn't you just say I should spend less, and yet here you are telling me to give more? What is up with that?" The most powerful, memorable gift you can give to someone else is yourself. And nobody modeled this more than Jesus.

So what does this look like for you? Tickets to a ball game or the theater? A movie night? The main point is simple: When it comes to spending time with those you love, it's all about quality, not quantity.



Christmas is about Love. Love a neighbor in need. By spending just a little less on gifts, we free up our resources to love as Jesus loves — by giving to those who really need help. There's nothing wrong with the shopping mall — it's just that the better story is about love. Love by spending more time with loved ones. Love by giving gifts to Heifer in honor of a loved one. Love by donating money so that someone in a less-fortunate country can have clean drinking water. Or make gifts to exchange in your family and give a monetary Christmas gift to your church or favorite charity!

May hope, peace, joy and love be yours this Christmas!

Pastor Deborah

An Exciting Biblical Adventure this Lent!

March 15, 2015 - the Fourth Sunday of Lent - at 2:00 pm there will be a Reader's Theatre of the Gospel of Mark, in its entirety. Reading the Gospel of Mark from start to finish takes approximately 2 hours, and is an exciting and meaningful experience. With Reader's Theatre, there is no memorization; simply reading from a script with appropriate emotion. We will have two rehearsals on the Sundays prior to the event, to review staging.

My prayer is for this to be an ecumenical production, with readers from all of our Derry area churches. If you would like to participate, I must have your name by **January 6, Epiphany!** And whether or not you decide to participate, I hope that you will come and hear "the Gospel According to Mark" in one sitting. All will be blessed.

Special Events in December



Annual Advent Workshop: December 7th

This year's Advent Workshop will be **Sunday, December 7th** following worship until 1:30.

Come join us for a light lunch of bread and soup, with ongoing Advent activities for adults and kids of all ages to explore, including: letters to shut-ins, family advent logs, ornaments, and various Christmas crafts. There is **no cost to attend**, but donations are welcome. Please feel free to bring a friend!

A Special Christmas Service

The holidays bring up a lot of memories, making this a difficult time of year for those who aren't quite feeling like rejoicing. If you would like a safe place to feel whatever you're feeling, join us in the sanctuary on December 9th at 7pm. See Pastor Deborah if you have questions.



You're Invited

PLEASE JOIN US

*Wednesday,
December 24th*

7:00 pm – Traditional service with our full choir

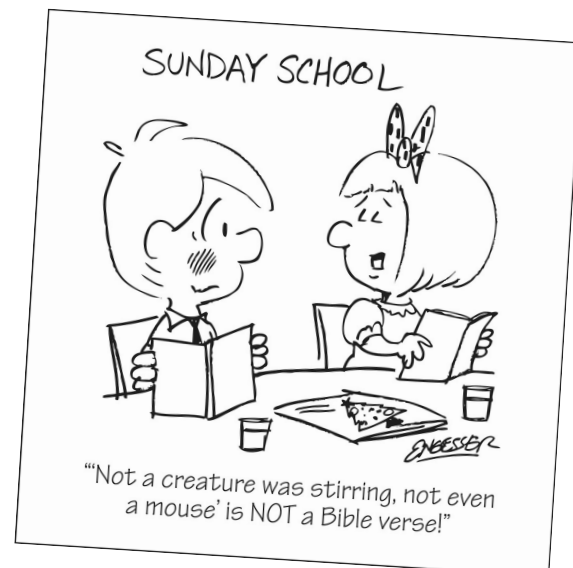
10:00 pm – Evening service featuring special music

Christian Education Updates

Bible Wonder

Join us on **Tuesdays from 2-3:30** as we look at the lectionary scripture texts for the upcoming Sunday. We are not calling this Bible "Study", because it isn't a class and no previous exposure to scripture is needed. Together we will consider the "wonder" of the Biblical texts. Together we will "wonder" about the message that God will invite us into!

We have 3 sessions remaining: **December 2, 9 and 16**. We meet in A/B classroom in the Noyes Building.



SPARK (Pre-K to 5th Graders) Update

During the Advent season, we students are learning about the birth of Jesus through three different workshops: Music, Art and Cooking. After a break on December 28th, Spark workshops resume with a large group Gathering Sunday on January 4th, when all pre-K through 5th graders will learn about prayer. As we transition to a new year, we are also transitioning from Old Testament to New Testament Spark lessons, with our first story about Jesus and John the Baptist. Are you willing to help with the Spark program? There are many ways to get involved - please see Lianne Deranian after church (or email liannedc@myfairpoint.net) to get in on the fun!

Session Focus	Date	Pre-K – 1st	Grades 2-3	Grades 4-5
SESSION 3: JESUS IS BORN MATT. 1:18-25, 2:1-12; LUKE 1:26-58, 2:1-20	Week 1 (11/30)	Music	Art	Cooking
	Week 2 (12/7)	Cooking	Music	Art
	Week 3 (12/14)	Art	Cooking	Music
	Week 4 (12/21)	Christmas Pageant During Worship		
	No class (12/28)	Family Sunday! Nursery Care Only		
SESSION 4: JESUS & JOHN THE BAPTIST LUKE 3:1-18, MATT. 3:13-17	Week 1 (1/4)	Large Group: "Why Pray?"		
	Week 2 (1/11)	Music	Games	Video
	Week 3 (1/18)	Art	Music	Games
	Week 4 (1/25)	Drama	Art	Music
	Week 5 (2/1)	Science	Drama	Art
	Week 6 (2/8)	Video	Science	Drama
	Week 7 (2/15)	Games	Video	Science
	No Class (2/22)	School Vacation Week: Nursery Care Only		



Youth Group News & Update

Calling all youth from grades 6 through 12! Come check out our **Youth Group** every Sunday evening from 6-8pm. All are welcome, so bring a friend. Don't miss out on this fun new way to get to know people and God!

The last few weeks have been full of fun: we attended an amazing night of prayer and celebration at Gordon College along with the Salem First Parish Youth Group at a Christian music concert; we carved pumpkins

and ate a Thanksgiving-style dinner (thank you Paula & Chris); and we have had many laughs and moments of celebration.

We sat as a group to review our journey this fall and to plan a schedule for the next 6-8 weeks. We opened and closed with prayer; a special thanks to Michael for the closing prayer and to Becca who researched and shared an amazing song (you can check it out here: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_ozqh7rJrHk).

If anyone wants to start bringing friends, or can help spread the word, we would love to continue to see the group grow!

Kindest Blessings,
Ms. Kerri & Mr. Matt
Youth Group Leaders

Youth Group Events

Nov 22 – Sugar Plum Fair: Craft Table

Nov 23 – Around the World Night: celebration of multi-cultural food, games, music, prayer; Group Prepared Meal

Nov 30 – Joan of Arcadia Lock in: PJ's and Joan of Arcadia Marathon Night

Dec 7 – Advent Workshop Mission Night – sewing, packing kits

Dec 14 – "Saving Christmas" movie night in Hookset, NH

Dec 21 – Christmas Celebration at the Simpson House! Baking Cookies, Games

Dec 28 – Roller Skating Night



December 21st

The Youth Ministry Committee will be sponsoring an **All Church Christmas Caroling Event**. We will

be meeting in the A/B room after church and will leave from there. When we return to the church there will be snacks for all! Please join us!

Looking Ahead...

Stay tuned for more info on these upcoming events in 2015:

January 18: Snow Tubing

February 6-7: City Reach Overnight in Boston

Stewardship Committee

“Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding.”

- Proverbs 3:5

Have you ever worked on a complicated 1,000-piece puzzle, only to realize when you have it almost completed that a piece is missing? Sometimes life feels like that puzzle: you keep trying to put all the pieces together, only to end up with missing ones. We search and search for that missing piece, but cannot find it.

We want things to work out logically and in a specific order, according to our plans. However, Proverbs 3:5 reminds us that our logic is not the same as God's. Sometimes it is best to listen to that inner voice, to God whispering in our ear, and trust that things will work out fine.

God's understanding is superior to ours because God knows all scenarios, and sees the big picture. Our understanding is limited. We know only what we have seen and learned, but God knows the entire story. Can we open our minds to let something new in?

When we “lean” on something, we put all our weight in that place. God wants all of our trust, instead of trying to make the pieces of our lives fit by ourselves. Even when you may not understand what is happening, trust in God. What you may need to do may appear backwards, but with God, it is in the right order, and you will feel you have found that missing puzzle piece.

Consider This: What pieces of your life puzzle don't fit like you think they should? How can you start to trust God in all areas of your life?

Take Action: Trusting God, just like building trust in any other relationship, takes time and effort. Think about what you can do today to start building a relationship with God. Maybe you can start simply by talking to God, trusting that through the Holy Spirit, you can build a solid foundation of trust, and build on that foundation of faith to the greatest of strength.

- Submitted by Fran Berube, for the Stewardship Board: John Bartel, Fran Berube, Carl Hepworth, Margie Ives, Diana Roman, Sue Weaver

Finance Committee



The Finance Committee wants to thank the congregation for your solid giving to our Church programs during 2014. We are a new church with a new attitude, and it feels good!

During the Advent season, it is important to remember the Church as we write our Christmas cards. Let us all try to send a card or bring a card to our church. If you are able to include a check, that would be nice, too!

With Advent gratitude, Your Finance Committee:

Fran Berube - Fay Chary - Pat Crowell - Linda dos Santos
Becky Fleury - Ken Gould - Chris O'Brien

Who's Who at First Parish: Doris Merrill

When my sons were preschoolers, we sat in the balcony during worship, and they colored the bulletin with Doris Merrill's sketch of FPC using colored pencils that I always carried in my purse. Since that time, I have wondered: who was Doris Merrill? Her sketch of First Parish Church has graced our bulletin for years, and has been used as a logo on brochures and t-shirts.

Doris was an active member of FPC from the 1970's to the 1990's (her photo here is from the 1996 FPC Directory). She attended church with her husband, Irving Merrill. She was great friends with the late Dena Spofford, of "Dena's Kitchen" fame.

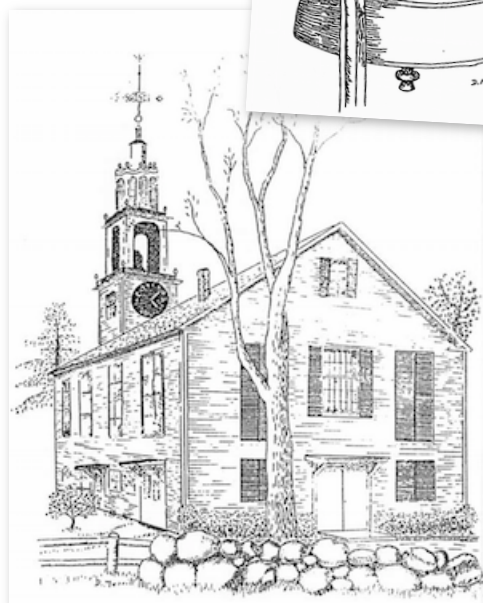
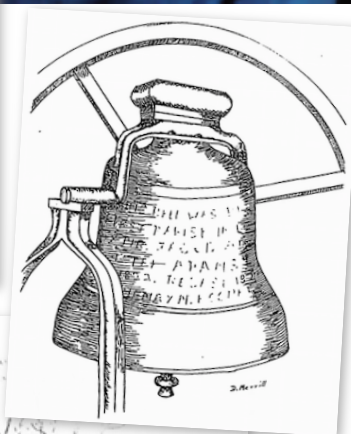
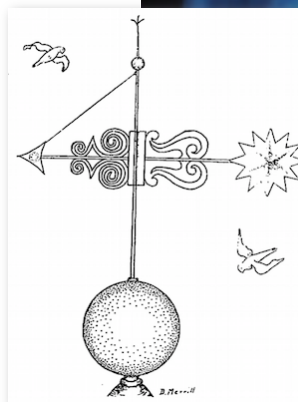
Doris' famous mincemeat pies were often featured at Harvest Suppers. She was very creative and loved making Raggedy Ann and Raggedy Andy dolls for the Sugar Plum Fair. Her little mice Christmas ornaments were also very popular. Her little chihuahua, Chico, was often her companion. Doris' husband, Irving, was also an active FPC member who worked on the Facilities Board and assisted with record keeping.

In her later years, Doris cared for her husband as he declined in health with Alzheimer's disease. When he died, she returned to her artistic pursuits to help cope with her grief.

It was during this time that she produced the drawing we see so often on our bulletin. Ginny True and Marilyn Ham remember Doris as an incredibly gifted artist who painted and sketched prodigiously. There are probably other paintings tucked away in attics, antique stores or homes in Derry. Additional sketches Doris drew were reproduced and sold as notecards for church fundraisers.

As we have organized and searched through our archives at FPC, we have never located the original Doris Merrill sketches. If you have any ideas where those might be, please let any of the members of the Historical Preservation Committee know. We would love to display them prominently for everyone to enjoy.

- Submitted by Janet Wetherbee,
Historical Preservation Committee



Nominating Committee

Check out all of these great ways to serve First Parish Church and the greater community! If you would like more information about serving on a board or committee during 2015, please contact either the chairperson or a member of the Nominating Committee. New members will be confirmed at the January Annual Meeting.

Nominating Committee members are: Bill Armstrong 432-5446, Paul Dionne 244-8360, Carl and Gail Hepworth 434-2053, Sarah Keller 425-1226 and Joe Merrill 247-3051.



Board or Committee	Number of Vacancies	Meeting Time	Chairperson
Christian Education	2	2 nd Wednesday at 7 PM	Lianne Deranian
Community Life	3	Sunday Mornings	Connie Cox
Board of Diaconate	4	1 st Wednesday at 6:30 PM	Steve Davis, Reni Harnden
Library Committee	2	2 nd Sunday at 8:30 AM	Kathy Waller
Christian Outreach and Mission Board	2	3 rd Sunday at 11:30 AM	Gloria Bingel, Joe Weaver
Music Board	1	2 nd Tuesday at 7 PM	(Sue Handy)
Nominating Committee	1	2 nd Sunday at 7:30 AM	Carl Hepworth
Personnel Board	1	Fridays at 12 PM (Fridays vary)	Margie Ives
Safe Church Committee	1	4 th Sunday at 8 AM	Lianne Deranian
Stewardship Board	3	1 st Thursday at 6:30 PM	Fran Berube, Margie Ives
Youth Ministry Committee	1	2 nd Wednesday at 6:30 PM	Nancy Magee, Reni Harnden

Historic Preservation and Restoration Committee

This unusual item is in the collection of artifacts, ephemera, and archives that the Historical Preservation Committee maintains for the church. It is constructed of cement and metal, weighs 70 pounds, and is 18 inches tall. It has removable heavy metal bars extending across the middle, and Chinese writing painted on the sides. It opens into two pieces with a round hollowed space in the center. There is something related to this item currently located in the Sanctuary at FPC.

Any ideas? Enter your guesses in the envelope on the bulletin board across from the Archive Room in the Noyes Building, or give your guess to Lindsey in the office and she'll forward it to us. We'll post the answer in next month's newsletter!

Submitted by Janet Wetherbee for the Historical Preservation Committee: *Janice Braley, Marilyn Ham, Nancy Heywood, Paul Lindemann, Ginny True, Janet Wetherbee*



Derry Community News

December Song



Performed by the Saint Anselm College Choir, directed by Father Bede Camera, OSB, at the Abbey Church on **Saturday, December 6, 7:30pm.**

This is a special service of readings and songs celebrating the Advent and Christmas seasons. The program begins in darkness with a candlelight contemplative song, then progresses through the Advent and Christmas seasons. The program is early in the Advent season, a perfect way to prepare for Christmas.

Admission is free, but the available seating fills up very early. Don't miss out!

Family Promise Annual Fundraising Gala



The Family Promise Gala on November 7 was a well attended, fun-filled event. We were entertained by many talented young people from around the area, as well as hearing from a recent graduate of

the program about her experiences.

Our next hosting week will be January 11-17. If you are interested in helping with a meal, sitting with the families, or staying overnight, please contact Randy Brown at 603-612-0489.

- Submitted by Randy Brown

Interfaith Choir: A Christmas Story

The Interfaith Choir will be presenting *A Christmas Story* on two occasions:

→ **Saturday, Dec. 6th at 7pm** at the Hampstead Congregational Church

→ **Sunday, Dec. 7th at 4pm** at St. Luke's United Methodist Church in Derry.

Admission is FREE, and there will be refreshments following each concert.

AARP Smart Driver Course: Dec. 5 & 8

On December 5th and 8th from 1:00-4:00pm Lee DeBell will present the AARP Smart Driver Course at First Parish. This six-hour research based classroom course is designed specifically for the 50+ population and enables drivers to refresh their driving skills and understand how to adjust to age-related challenges. Participants may qualify for an automobile insurance discount by completing the course.

To register, please call or see Lindsey in the church office. Attendance on both days is required. The cost of the course is \$15 for AARP members and \$20 for non-members. Payment should be made on the first day of the course by bringing a check (payable to AARP) or cash. If you have any questions, please contact Lee DeBell at 746-6077.

- Submitted by Lee DeBell

Church Community News

Welcome to Our Newest Member

FPC welcomes **Debby McGrath** as its newest member; she joined on November 16th and already sings in the choir. Debby joins her daughter Darcy and seven other new members who were in our October class. If you are interested in learning more about our church and membership, please contact us or Pastor Deborah.

Warmly, Your Membership Committee: Sandy Carter - Nancy Cheyne - Andrea Cooper - Carol Guerrin - Ruth Honnors - Suzanne Hunt

Sunday Morning Coffee, Conversation & Fellowship

Looking for a fun way to “serve” First Parish Church? The Community Life Committee invites all who are interested in pouring coffee on a Sunday morning to speak to any one of the Sunday servers you see, leave your name in the church office, or contact Connie Cox at 432-2398. We will train you in the art of making the coffee, and add you to our list of Coffee Hour helpers.

Not able to pour the coffee? We are always looking for healthy snacks and baked goods to offer on Sundays. Can you donate crackers, popcorn, fruit or veggies? Do you have a special recipe you'd like to bake and share? Please look for a sign-up sheet at coffee hour and let us know how and when you can help.

- Submitted by Lisa Hall,
Community Life Committee

Brrrr! It's Cold Outside!

We are now collecting items to donate to unsheltered homeless individuals. There will be a bin in the lobby area near the office for donations. We are in need of the following items: gloves, thick socks, toiletries (small trial sizes) including lotion, body wash, toothbrushes, toothpaste and chapstick. If you have any questions, please contact Melissa Glassman at 818-6475. Please help us to help others make it through this harsh winter.

Communication Cohort

On November 12, the Communication Cohort met for a third time! There were 22 people in attendance representing the majority of Boards and Committees and Programs of the church. We are talking to each other! We are listening to one another! We are sharing with one another our hopes and dreams for the future!

At each gathering our agenda is the same: We begin with prayer and a scripture lesson. Then we go around the circle three or four times. The first time we share one salient point that our ministry is involved in or working on: one main point. The second time around the circle, each person gets to ask one question of someone in the circle. The third time around (time permitting) each person shares a second major theme or salient point with the group. And the last time around each person shares a hope, vision, or dream for the near future.

We will meet in December on Wednesday the 10th from 7-8:30. All are welcome!



Scripture Readings

December 7th – Second Sunday of Advent

Isaiah 40:1-11
 Psalm 85:1-2, 8-13
 2 Peter 3:8-15a
 Mark 1:1-8

December 14th – Third Sunday of Advent

Isaiah 61:1-4, 8-11
 Psalm 126
 1 Thessalonians 5:16-24
 John 1:6-8, 19-28

December 21st – Fourth Sunday of Advent

2 Samuel 7:1-11, 16
 or Psalm 89:1-4, 19-26
 Romans 16: 25-27
 Luke 1: 26-38

December 28th – First Sunday after Christmas

Isaiah 61:10-62:3
 Galatians 3:23-25; 4:4-7
 Luke 2:22-40
 Psalm 148

Worship Leadership

Deacons of the Month

Diana Sweeney & Sandy Carter

Lay Readers

Dec. 7th: Ashley Cox

Dec. 14th: Reni Harnden

Dec. 21st: Various Readers

Dec. 28th: Pat Plouff

Ushers & Greeters

Weekly Usher – Michael Bryan

Dec. 7th: Ushers: Diaconate;
 Greeter: Verna Elwell

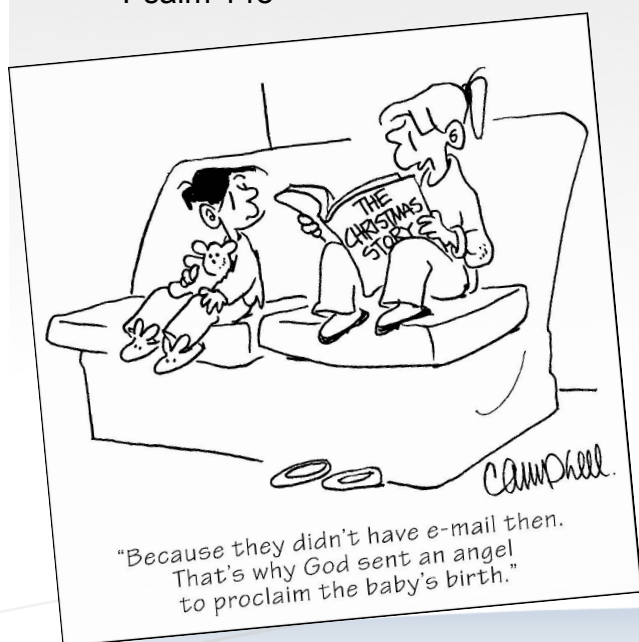
Dec. 14th: Ushers: Stanley & Holly Gorgol,
 Tom & Andrea Cooper;
 Greeter: Diane Breeden

Dec. 21st: Ushers: Ross & Linda Webber
 Kevin & Diane Gordon
 Greeter: Ruth Honnors

Dec. 28th: Ushers: Rod & Sue Hunt,
 Becky Fleury, Verna Elwell
 Greeter: Lisa Hall

Nursing Home Friends

Patricia Rankin & Theo Johnson,
 Hillsborough Country Nursing Home
 Phil Guertin,
 Pleasant Valley Nursing Home



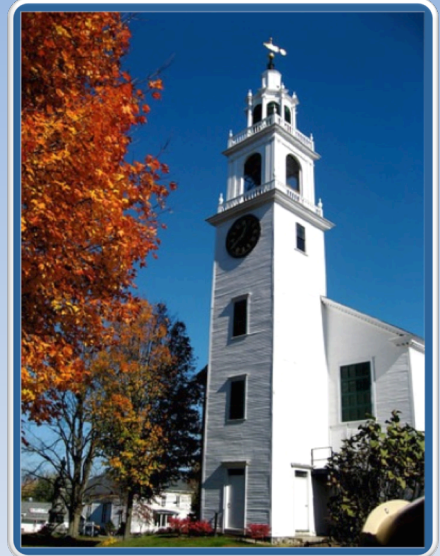
First Parish Congregational Church, UCC

NEW Church Office Hours:

Monday: Closed
Tuesday, Wednesday, Friday: 9 am – 4 pm
Thursday: 10:30 am – 6 pm

You are most warmly invited:

10 am Sunday Worship & Church School
11 am Coffee Hour



Check us out on the web:

www.fpc-ucc.org

Email our office manager, Lindsey Roman:

officemgr@fpc-ucc.org

Email our pastor, the Rev. Dr. Deborah Roof:

pastordeborah@fpc-ucc.org

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