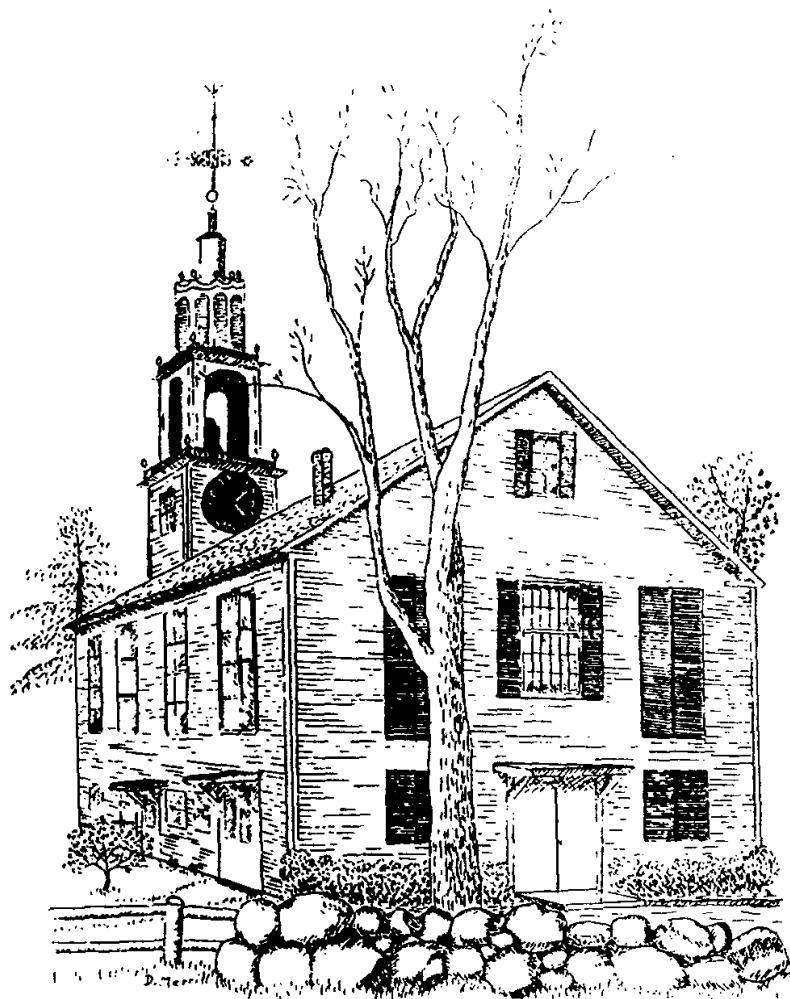


First Parish Congregational Church
United Church of Christ
P.O. Box 114, 47 East Derry Road
East Derry, New Hampshire 03041
Tel. (603) 434 – 0628

May 3, 2015



Doris Merrill

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)

Welcome Visitors!

As members of the United Church of Christ we say: "No matter **who** you are or **where** you are on life's journey, **you** are welcome here! We mean it!"

Please introduce yourself to an usher and come meet Pastor Deborah.

Feel free to join us for refreshments in Currier Hall immediately following the service.

If you would like information about our church or would like to be added to our mailing list, please fill out a bright yellow "How May We Serve You"/ "Communication Options" card located in the pews and at the back of the Sanctuary. We also have cards available in the church office.

Thank you for worshiping with us. We are honored to have you with us today.

WELCOME & ANNOUNCEMENTS & JOYS AND CONCERNS

Pastor Deborah

WE GATHER INTO THE PRESENCE OF GOD

MOMENT OF SILENCE

Lighting the Candles

***HYMN NO. 28**

"For the Beauty of the Earth"

***CALL TO WORSHIP**

One: Come to worship God whose love was revealed in Jesus.

All: Let us proclaim good news to others.

One: Beloved, we are called to love as God loves us.

All: Everyone who loves is born of God and knows God.

***PRAYER OF INVOCATION (in unison)**

Open your senses to our direction, amazing God, so we may be alert to opportunities you give us. Fill us with good news to share with those who seek meaning for their lives. We seek to know your Word and to be led by it. May our worship glorify your name and be pleasing to you. Amen.

SONG OF PRAISE #756 - *Gloria, gloria, in excelsis Deo* ; *Gloria, gloria, alleluia, alleluia.

CALL TO CONFESSON

Listen again to this promise and challenge: "If you abide in me and my words abide in you, ask for whatever you wish and it will be done for you....bear much fruit and become my disciples."

PRAYER OF CONFESSON (in unison)

O God, we have pursued illusions of self-interest rather than abiding in your love.

We are afraid to love those who differ from us. We hesitate to take risks of caring for fear that we may be hurt. Discipleship seems too demanding. O God, release from our fears and failures so that we may trust your love and live with bold generosity. Amen.

ASSURANCE OF FORGIVENESS

There is good news for all who sincerely repent and seek a living, growing relationship with God. Those who are open to the gift of God's love are blessed with the capacity to extend love to others. They will experience the depth and riches of life that God extends for all God's children.

WE INVITE FORWARD GOD'S LITTLE CHILDREN

CHILDREN'S OFFERING

"This Little Light of Mine"

This little light of mine, I'm gonna let it shine (x4)

PRAYER OF DEDICATION (in unison)

In our thanks, these gifts we bring, for you give us everything. Teach us how to follow you, in all we say, and all we do. Amen.

CHILDREN'S MESSAGE

Pastor Heidi

Followed by THE LORD'S PRAYER

Our Father, who art in heaven, Hallowed be Thy name. Thy kingdom come; Thy will be done; on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors. Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil; for Thine is the Kingdom, and the Power, and the Glory forever. Amen.

*HYMN NO. 517

"I Need You Every Hour"

THE SACRAMENT OF HOLY COMMUNION

INVITATION TO THE TABLE

PRAYER of CONSECRATION

OUR SACRED STORY: JESUS in the BREAKING of the BREAD and CUP POURED OUT

SHARING the MEAL

We celebrate Communion this morning by bringing you the Bread of Life and the Cup of Salvation. As you pass the trays, try to make eye contact with your neighbor.

As you pass the bread, please say the words "**The Bread of Life**" or "**Take and eat.**" The appropriate response when receiving the gifts or elements is "**Amen**" or "**Thanks be to God.**" You may eat the bread when you receive it. This symbolizes that we, each, have a private relationship with God.

As you pass the tray of grape juice, please say the words "**The Cup of Salvation**" or "**The Cup of Love**". Again, your response will be "**Amen**" or "**Thanks be to God.**" Please hold the cup until everyone is served. We will drink the Cup of Salvation in unison, which symbolizes that we are together in a community of faith.

If you are accompanying your children: they are invited to participate and we trust that you will teach them the meaning of this sacred meal.

Gluten-free bread is available. Let the server know.

PRAYER of THANKSGIVING (in unison)

In deep gratitude, for this moment, this meal, these people, we give ourselves to You. Take us out to live as changed people because we have shared the Living Bread and cannot remain the same.

Ask much of us, expect much from us, enable much by us, encourage many through us. May we live the LOVE you have shown us - to God's glory and to the betterment of God's children of every kind. Amen.

(Children may now go on to their classes.)

CHOIR ANTHEM

"Promised Land"

Natalie Sleeth

WE HEAR GOD'S WORD FOR US

NEW TESTAMENT

Acts 8:26-40

(N.T. pp. 131-132)

GOSPEL

John 15:1-8

(N.T. p. 113)

SERMON

"Bearing Fruit is Risky Business"

The Rev. Dr. Deborah Roof

WE RESPOND WITH OUR PRAYERS

PASTORAL PRAYER

CHORAL RESPONSE

"Eagle's Wings"

WE RESPOND WITH OUR MONETARY GIFTS

OFFERTORY INVITATION

The balm of love was offered for our healing so we might be reconciled to God and one another.
What will we offer in thanksgiving for so great a gift?

OFFERTORY MUSIC

*DOXOLOGY #785

**We give you but your own, what-e'er the gift may be;
All that we have is yours alone, we give it gratefully.**

*PRAYER OF DEDICATION

We give, gracious God, because we are grateful. Your love has sustained us through many trials and temptations. We are thankful for those who have guided our attempts to understand the scriptures. We give in order to extend to others the blessings we have received and to continue the ministry we need as we seek to abide together in your love. Amen.

WE ARE SENT OUT TO LOVE AND SERVE A LOVING, SERVING GOD

*HYMN NO. 76

"Sent Forth by God's Blessing"

BENEDICTION

BENEDICTION RESPONSE

"Let Us Now Depart in Peace"

POSTLUDE

**Indicates all that are able may stand.*

First Parish Congregational MISSION STATEMENT: This is who we are!

First Parish Congregational Church, United Church of Christ,

is 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.**

MINISTERS OF THE CHURCH

DEACONS OF THE MONTH

USHERS

GREETER(s)

PASTOR

AFFILIATE PASTOR

MUSIC DIRECTOR

ORGANIST

ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT

CE DIRECTOR

Members of the Congregation

Cyndi Gray and Steve Davis

Diaconate

Michael Bryan

Verna Elwell

The Rev. Dr. Deborah Roof

Rev. Chester R. Ham

Susan Handy

Jeff DeLangie

Lindsey Roman

Heidi Heath

Scriptures – May 3

Acts 8.26-40

26 Then an angel of the Lord said to Philip, ‘Get up and go towards the south to the road that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza.’ (This is a wilderness road.) ²⁷ So he got up and went. Now there was an Ethiopian eunuch, a court official of the Candace, queen of the Ethiopians, in charge of her entire treasury. He had come to Jerusalem to worship ²⁸ and was returning home; seated in his chariot, he was reading the prophet Isaiah. ²⁹ Then the Spirit said to Philip, ‘Go over to this chariot and join it.’ ³⁰ So Philip ran up to it and heard him reading the prophet Isaiah. He asked, ‘Do you understand what you are reading?’ ³¹ He replied, ‘How can I, unless someone guides me?’ And he invited Philip to get in and sit beside him. ³² Now the passage of the scripture that he was reading was this:

‘Like a sheep he was led to the slaughter,
and like a lamb silent before its shearer,
so he does not open his mouth.

³³ In his humiliation justice was denied him.

Who can describe his generation?

For his life is taken away from the earth.’

³⁴ The eunuch asked Philip, ‘About whom, may I ask you, does the prophet say this, about himself or about someone else?’ ³⁵ Then Philip began to speak, and starting with this scripture, he proclaimed to him the good news about Jesus. ³⁶ As they were going along the road, they came to some water; and the eunuch said, ‘Look, here is water! What is to prevent me from being baptized?’ ³⁸ He commanded the chariot to stop, and both of them, Philip and the eunuch, went down into the water, and Philip baptized him. ³⁹ When they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord snatched Philip away; the eunuch saw him no more, and went on his way rejoicing. ⁴⁰ But Philip found himself at Azotus, and as he was passing through the region, he proclaimed the good news to all the towns until he came to Caesarea.

John 15:1-8

15 ‘I am the true vine, and my Father is the vine-grower. ² He removes every branch in me that bears no fruit. Every branch that bears fruit he prunes to make it bear more fruit. ³ You have already been cleansed by the word that I have spoken to you. ⁴ Abide in me as I abide in you. Just as the branch cannot bear fruit by itself unless it abides in the vine, neither can you unless you abide in me. ⁵ I am the vine, you are the branches. Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit, because apart from me you can do nothing. ⁶ Whoever does not abide in me is thrown away like a branch and withers; such branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned. ⁷ If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask for whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. ⁸ My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit and become my disciples.