

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 at the beginning of this New Year! So, have you chosen your New Year's resolutions yet? Do you know your goals and aspirations for the year? If you don't, you are in good company, because I haven't either. Or more accurately, I do have one and it is to not make any New Year's resolutions!

Every year, I struggle with the tradition of writing New Year's resolutions. It's not that I do not have things I want to improve upon or accomplish; I do. But often the things I want to improve upon are so broad that they are hard to break down into quantifiable goals and steps. (How *does* one become more patient?) And this time of year is not a high energy, creative time for me; I've just come through the second busiest season at church and the busiest season for family and friend gatherings. Like many of you, my primary focus is on resting and catching up on all that I didn't get done, not on setting lofty goals for the next 365 days. I have found that I have little success with New Year's resolutions.

Continued on Page 2

Upcoming Events

Friday, January 1

HAPPY NEW YEAR 2016 ☺

Tuesday, January 5

Annual Report Submissions due (p.12)

Sunday, January 10

Congregational Conversation (p.12)

Monday, January 11

Dining for Dollars, Panera (p. 10)

Tuesday, January 12 (19, 26)

Theology Through Television (p.12)

Sunday, January 24

Annual Meeting (p. 12)

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:

And I am not alone. A recent study by the University of Scranton showed that only 8% of people achieve their New Year's resolutions (Forbes, 1/1/13). So for all the reasons above, I've decided to no longer make New Year's resolutions. But there is also a spiritual reason for giving up on them.

New Year's resolutions give us a false sense of control. They allow us to set our own agenda, to focus on the things we want to focus on. They can even act as blinders to God's Spirit and the way it is moving among us, the way it is calling us in a new direction or to a new perspective.

This Christmas season, I found great inspiration in poetry and this poem by Christine Rogers is particularly fitting at the beginning of the year. It reminds us that God's Spirit is constantly guiding us, but like the Magi, we need to pay attention to it and be bold enough to follow it.

So what if, this year, instead of setting our own agendas, we listened for God's guidance? What if, instead of tightening our grip on life, we let go and trusted God a little bit more? What if, like the Magi, we were bold and did not tarry on our own resolutions but instead set out, following the star to the place where we are most in need of, the place where God is?

May God's Spirit guide you in this coming year.

Bountiful Blessings,

Pastor Deborah

**Song on the Feast of the Epiphany**

Be bold
like the
Magi.

Do not
tarry,
settling

Into
your comfort,
but rather

Set out
keeping
the star

in your
vision.
It will lead

You
to the place
you are

Most
in need of,
the place

Where
God is.
And if

An angel
warns you
in a dream

Not
to return
by the old

Way,
please
listen.

- Christine Rogers

Associate Pastor's Pen

Beloved of God,

It is hard to believe that as you read this letter, I will be approaching my one year anniversary with you all. What a year it has been! You have worked hard to listen faithfully to God's voice and lift your eyes to God's vision for our future. Together, we are beginning to dare to dream what we might birth into the world with God in our next chapter.

I want to extend my deep thanks to all of you for your outpouring of love and support around my recent ordination to ministry. I have been genuinely overwhelmed in the best possible sense. Thank you for the beautiful stoles, cards, letters, and gifts you've showered me with. Special thanks to the forty or so of you who made the trip to be with us in person at Old South!

Some of you have wondered with me about what my new role as Associate Pastor means? What kinds of things am I doing? Am I just the pastor for children and families? How do I spend my time? All great questions!

The good news is that I am the WHOLE church's Associate Pastor! If you are reading this, that means you. I spend about half my time focused on Christian Education across the lifespan, including Sunday School and Adult Education. I also serve as the functional Youth Director, serving as staff liaison to youth ministry and youth needs. I spend the other half of my time focused on worship, preaching, and pastoral care. What those tasks look like month to month vary depending on the needs for the church.

Pastor Deborah and I work as a clergy team! We collaborate on worship, preaching, pastoral care, and more. One of the many benefits to the congregation is that this allows a wider variety of needs to be met. Some of you might wonder if it's "okay" if you feel more connected to one of us vs. the other, and the answer is absolutely. Different voices and different people speak to us at different intersections of our lives. We know that, and we encourage you to do what feels most comfortable for you. In all things, we are a team, and we work to support each other's ministries, and all of you.

Over the coming months, we will all be learning and growing together into this new role. Thank you in advance for your flexibility. I hope if we haven't had the chance to get to know one another yet, we might very soon! In January, I'll be starting "community office hours" at Panera Bread once per week from 4PM-6PM for coffee, tea, and conversation. All are welcome! You are also welcome to make an appointment to see me in the office. I love visiting people's homes as well. The New Year is a wonderful time to start a new or renewed relationship. I want to know you and your stories. Won't you share them with me? I am grateful for y'all and my work in this congregation each and every day.

God loves you and so do I,

Pastor Heidi



Faith Formation: Offerings for ALL AGES!

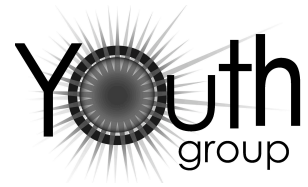
First Friday Fellowship, Faith, and Fun

A reminder that there will be NO First Friday in January as it is New Year's Day. We will resume in February on February 5th. Please see Pastor Heidi if you have fun ideas and would like to join us!



Youth Group

Youth Group will take a breather for the month of January and resume again in February. Stay tuned for a potential service project during January as we look ahead to winter and spring fun. As always, let Mr. Matt, Miss Kerri, or Pastor Heidi know if you have any questions.



Sunday School Teachers

It's that time again! We are in need of church school teachers for January-June. Never done it before? No problem! Want to chat about it more before you sign up? We can do that. Our teachers have so much fun, and regularly sign up to do a second rotation in a year. This is a GREAT way to get to know our church kids better. See Pastor Heidi or a member of the CE Board for more info! Keep an eye out for us at fellowship hour in late November-December too!



Sunday School News and Notes

A reminder that there will be no church school on January 3rd. Church School will resume on January 10th. Looking forward to continuing to go deeper together in the New Year. A reminder that 5th grade students should join our Middle School class in A/B rather than the K-4 class in the Rainbow Room.

Nominating Committee

What Can First Parish Church Do For You?

To give the Nominating Committee a better perspective on your interest in available openings on Boards and Committees for the upcoming year, we would appreciate you filling out this survey to let us know of places that you think that you could serve the church. You may drop it off in the church office or give it a member of the Nominating Committee. If you are uncertain about any of the open positions, please feel free to contact a member of the Nominating Committee.

“Nominating Committee has a place for you in 2016.”

Our goal is always “No Vacancy.”

Positions Available:

Please place your name and phone number next to positions that you are interested in.

Board of Christian Outreach and Mission- (3)_____

Board of Christian Education- (1) _____

Board of Diaconate- (2)_____

Stewardship Board- (3)_____

Personnel Board- (1)_____

Finance Committee At Large- (1)_____

Nominating Committee- (5)_____

Community Life Committee- (1)_____

Thank you for your support,

The Nominating Committee: Bill Armstrong, Paul Dionne, Carl and Gail Hepworth

Stewardship Board

Stewardship as a Faith Practice

'Twas in another lifetime, one of toil and blood
When blackness was a virtue and the road was full of mud
I came in from the wilderness, a creature void of form
"Come in," she said, "I'll give you shelter from the storm."

Those words are from a Bob Dylan song called "Shelter From The Storm". I often wonder out of curiosity not from judgment, what it is that brings people to church, specifically to First Parish. I know what brought me here. I hadn't been to church in forty years, but my wife was battling cancer, possibly nearing the end of her life, so when I asked her if she wanted to go to church, after briefly thinking about it she said yes. Knowing that I would need a church with a progressive theology, we were fortunate to find First Parish. And when I look back, Dylan's words seem apt. My wife passed away about six months after we first came here to First Parish, and six years later I'm still here. Still seeking shelter from the storm.

Think about it. What brings you to this church, this community? Is it not a safe space? Sheltered from the storms we all face on a daily weekly basis. Maybe it's a place for your kids to grow up in a safe nurturing environment. Maybe it's a place where you can share your doubts and fears with friends of like minds. Maybe it's a place that for an hour on Sunday morning you can put down your burden, and just listen. Listen to a choir sing beautiful hymns. Listen to a pastor deliver an uplifting sermon. Listen and pray with a loving community. Maybe it's something else, unique to you and your family.

At any rate, I think you would all agree that membership in this church is a rewarding experience. Otherwise why would we keep coming back week after week? For me the Sunday morning worship service is the primary thing that keeps me coming back. But I can't tell you how many Sunday mornings I get out of bed, reluctantly, and think why do I have to get dressed, and go out in the cold (or heat), when I could just stay in my pajamas and bathrobe, with a cup of coffee and Sunday morning television. But somehow I manage to put one foot in front of the other and miraculously find myself in church once more. And suddenly all is right with my world. At least for that one hour.

Our denomination does not place many requirements on individual congregations or individual members. We are asked for regular attendance at Sunday worship, but we are not penalized or judged when we miss a week or more for any number of good reasons. We are also asked to share in the organized work of the church. Boards, committees, mission projects are all opportunities to contribute our time and talent. But we are only asked to do what is personally possible, no more. And according to the church by-laws we are asked to give systematically for the church's support and its benevolences.

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Which brings me to our annual pledge drive, which used to be referred to as the stewardship campaign. Over the last two years we, the Stewardship Board, have tried to impart the lesson that stewardship is not just about money. Yes, “financial stewardship” is important but truthfully, stewardship entails everything we do in support of the church and each other: time, talent, and treasure. Many people give so much in terms of time and talent to make this church community a place filled with love, a true shelter from the storm.

But pledge cards? Many, maybe most of us understand the faith practice of filling out that card and presenting it to the church every year. It is understood that the number one writes on the card is not as important as the faith practice of answering the call to give. But some few are reluctant to answer the call. Maybe they are too focused on the number. I want to tell them it's not about the number and I want them to believe that. They need to know that whatever number they put there is someone in the church who has put a lower number and someone a higher number. It's not important. What is important is that by submitting a pledge they are declaring themselves to be members of this church community. Yes, I come to church nearly every Sunday. Yes, I joined a board and/or committee. Yes, I helped out on a mission project. AND answering the call to pledge my financial support, no matter how large or small is what says “I am a member of this church, and I believe in what this church stands for.”

And another Dylan verse in conclusion:

And if I pass this way again, you can rest assured
I'll always do my best for her, on that I give my word
In a world of steel-eyed death, and men who are fighting to be warm
“Come in,” she said, “I'll give you shelter from the storm”

Thank you for all you give and for all you do.

Blessed Be.

- John Bartel, a member of Stewardship Board



Board of Christian Outreach and Missions

Thanksgiving Basket Program: For many this is the hardest time of the year to get through and the time in which many of us need a helping hand. This year through your very generous donations we were able to provide Thanksgiving dinners to 73 people (25 families) and have enough food remaining that we were able to provide donations to the Upper Room and the Soup Kitchen to support their mission work. We have kept true to the teachings of Jesus concerning the feeding of the poor. This act of kindness is reminiscent of the Bible story of Jesus feeding the multitude with seven loaves of bread and fish found in Matthew 15:36-38 which says: *"Then he took the seven loaves and the fish, and when he had given thanks, he broke them and gave them to the disciples, and they in turn to the people. They all ate and were satisfied. Afterward the disciples picked up seven basketfuls of broken pieces that were left over. The number of those who ate was four thousand men, besides women and children."*

Angel Tree Program: Each year at Christmas time, Missions sponsors the Angel Tree program which assists families in need in providing a little more Christmas joy for their children. The program is also open to adults who may be in need more Christmas joy. This year we were able to provide gifts to 23 children and 26 adults. Thank you for your donations to this wonderful program.

Food Basket Program: Last October, the Missions board (with the help of Pastors Deborah & Heidi, the CE Board, the Children, and the Deaconate) implemented some changes to the Food Basket program. One of the changes is that the food is blessed during the Communion service before being distributed. Communion Sunday is the first Sunday of each month. You may have noticed that at the beginning of the Children's message during Communion Sunday, the children bring forward the food donations and they place them into the food cart as a visible sign of sharing our resources with those in need. We believe this has worked well to keep this giving up front and center in our Christian lives.

Please note that food donations are welcome anytime and we hope that bringing a donation of food to service is something you would consider every Sunday as a standard routine. The food cart is located at the bottom of the stairs leading up to the Sanctuary. There is also a Blue container upstairs outside of the Sanctuary as well as baskets under the Missions table at the side Church entrance which are also used as drop-off points.

Zimbabwe Pen-Pal Program: The Board of Christian Outreach and Missions is in the process of revitalizing the Pen-Pal program with our sister Church in Mutare, Zimbabwe. We have been in talks with Rev. Michele Bagby Allan of the North Hampton, UCC who has recently led a delegation of youth to Zimbabwe. We are planning to have someone come in from that delegation to give a Mission Moment possibly the last Sunday of February. Please stay tuned as more information becomes available. We look forward to restarting this wonderful program. Mission Moment possibly the last Sunday of February. Please stay tuned as more information becomes available. We look forward to restarting this wonderful program.

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Monthly Giving: Mission is thankful to each of you for sharing so generously with those in our community who are struggling. We can do nothing without your kindness. Below is our list of charities receiving monthly Mission support:

Our Church's Wider Mission (OCWM) \$350
Sonshine Soup Kitchen \$90
First Baptist Food Pantry \$90
Community Caregivers \$90
Vintage Grace \$90
Family Promise \$90
Pastoral Counseling \$90
Upper Room \$90
Pastor Discretionary Fund \$90

Respectfully submitted,

The Board of Christian Outreach and Missions (BOCOM): Joe Weaver, Gloria Bingel, Sue Brown, Beth Hunter, Katelyn Whittier, Karen Wilson, Linda McCarthy

Diaconate News

MEMBERSHIP LIST: The membership list is about as refined as it can be. As a reminder, if any of your information (telephone, address, etc) has changed, please advise Lindsey in the church office so that the membership list can be kept current. Thank you.

NEIGHBORHOODS: All the Deacon's have sent out their notes to their parishioners. If you have not received a note from a Deacon, please notify Lindsey. Thank you.

BAPTISMS: There have been a number of delightful Baptisms recently. This is a wonderful occasion to welcome the participants into FPC's community of Christian love and support.

HEIDI'S ORDINATION: Many Diaconate members along with several church members were able to attend Heidi's beautiful and inspiring service of Ordination. It was a special privilege for FPC to be a part of one of it's Pastor's Ordination into the ministry of Christ. Heartfelt congratulations Heidi!

ADVENT: The Diaconate decorated the sanctuary with enormous help from Diane Breeden. Thank you very much Diane! A Blue Christmas service was held on Tuesday, December 15th @ 7:30 PM. This was an inspirational reflective service of remembrance. There were three Christmas Eve Services; 4:30, 7:00, & 10:00 PM. A candle lighting occurred during the 7:00 service.

As you celebrate the birth of our Savior Jesus Christ may you reflect upon and give thanks for all the blessings that have been bestowed upon you. Have a happy and safe New Year!

Your Diaconate, Steve Davis, Cyndi Gray, Reni Harnden, Sarah Keller, Fred Merrill, Dick Plouff, Pat Plouff, Cindy Pingree, Diana Sweeney, Julie Turner, Brian Williams

Fundraising Committee

The Fundraising Committee welcomes new members, especially to help with managing the gift card program. Ideally, we would like to have a team of four people so we can take one Sunday a month to staff the Gift Card table. If interested in helping with this, see Liz Greenberg. Training provided!

HANNAFORD'S GIFT CARD FUNDRAISER:

Cards can be purchased or reloaded every Sunday before or after church services during Best Breakfast or at Social Hour following church in Currier. Gift cards can be loaded with any amount from \$5-\$500 by personal check made payable to First Parish Church with "gift card" in the memo line, or by cash. Cards will be activated by the next day and available to use. Please remember that cards must be reloaded through the church in order for the church to receive our 5% incentive! Think about ordering some Hannafords gift cards for Christmas gifts or stocking stuffers! Cards ordered on Sunday can be picked up the following Sunday.

FPC Dining for Dollars:

We have scheduled another popular First Parish dining out event at Panera Bread in Derry. **SAVE THE DATE:** January 11th, 4-8 PM. Watch for flyers to bring with you! These events are a great opportunity for fellowship and fun. Why not invite one of our many new members to join you for a meal, get to know them better and extend some of our famous First Parish warm hospitality!

A huge thank you to La Carreta Restaurant for their VERY generous donation of \$700 following our FPC dining out event in October at the restaurant!

- Submitted on behalf of Fundraising Committee, by Liz Greenberg



Pastor Heidi's Office Hours

Pastor Heidi has updated her office hours for January-March! Her office hours will be Tuesdays, 12-3:30, and Wednesday 11-5. She is always available to meet with you by appointment as well. Join her at Panera Bread on Tuesdays from 4PM-6PM for Conversations on the Way beginning Tuesday, January 5th. All are welcome for coffee, tea, and conversation in an informal setting.



New Fundraising for Meetinghouse Rehabilitation

Last year's internal capital campaign raised an amazing \$812,000 (1/8th for Facilities and 7/8th for Building Rehab). So far we have received \$354,000 of these multi-year pledges, which has enabled us to move forward with planning and work on a new furnace for the whole facility and major Meetinghouse rehab projects for 2016.



But to do everything we hope to accomplish by our 300th anniversary in 2019, we'll need about a million more dollars.

You've hopefully already heard about a big step towards this, the December 15th announcements of a \$125,000 grant award from the NH Land and Community Heritage Investment Program (LCHIP)!

This matching grant is for the Tower Rehabilitation project, which by itself is estimated to need \$301K and take two years (starting with removing the unsafe top this past September). The 19 LCHIP grants for historic buildings awarded this year range from \$7,550 to \$252,032, with ours being the second largest.

This is the fourth LCHIP application we've submitted in recent years, and the first to be successful. With it comes public recognition by the state's leading preservationists of the significance of our historic Meetinghouse and the value of preserving it. The glow from this will certainly boost all aspects of our public fundraising efforts.

Those efforts got a second big step forward on December 16th with Council approving a new group to focus on them. Called the Rehabilitation Fundraising Committee (RFC), its mission is to raise rehabilitation funds from sources outside the church membership, including community donations, business sponsorships, events, and grants.

The RFC has already gotten started with the help of the advisory team listed below. We've been interviewing potential fundraising consultants, starting to plan spring events, setting up website donations, and more.



Through January and February, we'll be getting out more information on the rehab projects and fundraising needs, and also building up the team with folks interested in joining the new committee or just helping in any way. Stay tuned!

- Submitted by Paul Lindemann for the External Fundraising Advisory Team: Becky Fleury, Liz Greenberg, Harry Handy, Bill Mann, and Chris O'Brien

Around Our Church



Theology

Theology Through Television

Join Pastor Deborah and Pastor Heidi for our January series on Faith and Television from 6:30-8:30 PM in the Cook Conference Room. We'll be looking at the intersections of faith, race, and other contemporary issues through the lens of different television shows. We'll screen an episode together and then share in discussion. All are welcome! **Tuesdays January 12th, 19th, and 26th**. No preparation needed, just come as you are with an open heart and willing spirit.

A Message from the Financial Secretary

If you want contributions to be included in your tax returns for 2015, they must be at the church on or before **January 8, 2016** and should be dated **December 31, 2015**.

The books will be **closed Monday, January 11, 2016**.

Thank you.

Important January Meetings

There will be a Congregational Conversation on **Sunday, January 10, 2016** after church in Currier Hall from 11:30am-12:30 with light refreshments. Communication is an expression of Christian Unity. Team building in a church is building up the body of Christ. Let's share information, listen to others, relay any new information about ministries in the church.

The **Annual Meeting** will be held on **Sunday, January 24, 2016** in Currier Hall from 11:45am-2:00pm. There will be a luncheon. Please plan on attending if you are able. Contact a member of Council with any questions.

2015 Annual Report Submissions

Submissions by Boards, Committees, Projects, Events for the 2015 Annual Report are due to Lindsey **no later than Tuesday, January 5th by end of day (4:30 PM)**. Send all reports to officemgr@fpc-ucc.org. Thank you!



Around the Church

Scripture Readings

*Readings are from the Revised Common
Lectionary for Sundays and Festivals – Year B*

Jan. 3rd – Second Sunday after Christmas

Jer 31:7-14
Psalm 147:12-20
Eph 1:3-14
John 1:(1-9), 1-18

Jan. 10th – The Baptism of Christ

Isa 43:1-7
Psalm 29
Acts 8:14-17
Luke 3:15-17, 21-22

Jan. 17th – Second Sunday after Epiphany

Isa 62:1-5
Psalm 36:5-10
1 Cor 12:1-11
John 2:1-11

Jan. 24th – Third Sunday after Epiphany

Neh 8:1-3, 5-6, 8-10
Psalm 19
1 Cor 12:12-31a
Luke 4:14-21

Jan. 31st – Fourth Sunday after Epiphany

Jer 1:4-10
Psalm 71:1-6
1 Cor 13:1-13
Luke 4:21-30

Worship Leadership

Deacons & Lay Readers

Deacons of the Month

Pat Plouff and Cyndi Gray

January 3rd: Libby Keller

January 10th: Sarah Keller

January 17th: Steve Davis

January 24th: Pat Plouff

January 31st: Beth Hunter

Ushers & Greeters

Weekly Usher – Michael Bryan

Jan. 3rd: Ushers: Diaconate

Greeters: Verna Elwell, Shirley Dickason

Jan. 10th: Ushers: Ken Gould, Diane Breeden

Dee Deranian, Shirley Dickason
Greeters: David and Lorie McGrath

Jan. 17th: Ushers: Stanley and Holly Gorgol

Tom and Andrea Cooper
Greeter: Diane Breeden

Jan. 24th: Ushers: Becky Fleury, Verna Elwell

Joe Weaver, Suzanne Hunt
Greeters: Lisa and Wayne Hall

Jan. 31st: Ushers: Ross & Linda Webber

Kevin & Diane Gordon
Greeters: Mark Pingree, Nancy Magee

Nursing Home Friends

Theo Johnson

Hillsborough Country Nursing Home

Phil Guertin

Pleasant Valley Nursing Home

First Parish Congregational Church, UCC

Church Office Hours:

Monday: Closed

Tuesday-Friday: 9 am – 4:30 pm

You are most warmly invited:

10:00 am Sunday Worship & Church School

11:00 am Coffee Hour

Check us out on the web or call our office:

www.fpc-ucc.org | 603-434-0628

Email our Administrative Assistant, Lindsey Roman:

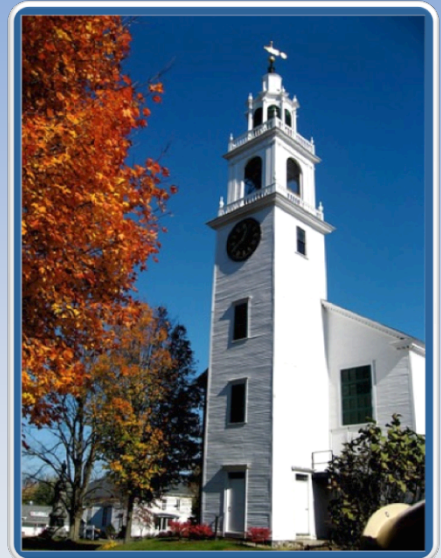
officemgr@fpc-ucc.org

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

pastordeborah@fpc-ucc.org

Email our Associate Pastor, the Rev. Heidi

Carrington Heath: pastorheidiheath@gmail.com



First Parish Congregational Church
United Church of Christ
P.O. Box 114, 47 East Derry Road
Derry, New Hampshire 03041
Address Service Requested

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january