

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,

On January 24 we celebrated the life of the Rev. Chester "Chet" Ham, Affiliate Pastor and long-time member and friend to First Parish. The first person to reflect on Chet's life was his son, Peter Ham. Peter, who possesses his father's gifts of humor mixed with wisdom, along with a natural public speaking presence, reflected on his father's willingness to live life fully, never shirking life's challenges – all the while looking to God for guidance. Peter felt that one of Robert Frost's poems described well his father's courage, faith and life path. I commend it to you.

"The Road Not Taken"

Two roads diverged in a yellow wood,
And sorry I could not travel both
And be one traveler, long I stood
And looked down one as far as I could
To where it bent in the undergrowth;

Then took the other, as just as fair,
And having perhaps the better claim,
Because it was grassy and wanted wear;
Though as for that the passing there
Had worn them really about the same,

And both that morning equally lay
In leaves no step had trodden black.
Oh, I kept the first for another day!
Yet knowing how way leads on to way,
I doubted if I should ever come back.

I shall be telling this with a sigh
Somewhere ages and ages hence:
Two roads diverged in a wood, and I –
I took the one less traveled by,
And that has made all the difference.

How does this poem resonate with your life path? How does it speak to your path with God? Which path have you chosen – at what cost? Would you do things differently? How does your answer inform your future choices?

May God add a blessing to your discernment.

Peace and all good,

Pastor Deborah

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



Associate Pastor's Pen

Beloved of God,

As some of you know, this year I joined a running club. It combines two of my greatest passions: running, and Harry Potter. It's called Hogwarts Running Club. Members are sorted into "houses" (just like in the Harry Potter books), and we log miles through the year for charities of our choosing. Running strengthens me in crucial ways. It's also more fun when I do it with people who share my passion. I also quickly discovered that in addition to running, a great source of cross-training and centering came in the form of yoga. Yoga requires me to pause, to slow down, to lengthen, to work on my flexibility in different ways. They each challenge me into new, uncharted territory regularly, even when it makes me anxious.

I think a lot of lengthening muscles and strength building as I think of Lent. Did you know the word Lent comes from the word "lengthen"? It's the time of year when the days are getting longer (glory! rejoice!). Plants that appear to be dead are quietly preparing, beneath sleepy exteriors, to lengthen their roots and spring to life again soon after Easter.

Lent is about strengthening and lengthening. It's about stretching ourselves, too. It's a time to lengthen our own roots more deeply into our faith. Traditionally, it's been a time of giving things up – not to punish ourselves, but to allow time and space for new ideas, commitments, ways of being to grow. And no, I don't mean chocolate cake, or your morning latte.

This Lent I invite you to think more deeply about what God might be calling you to give up? How might you be called to lengthen and let go of what no longer serves you. What might God plant in us to replace the old ways of being? Where could we strengthen and grow our faith in new ways? How might we lengthen our roots into new, fresh soil of our life together?

There are many other ways for you to strengthen and lengthen your faith this Lenten season too. You could sign up to teach church school, attend our Wednesday night Lenten worship services, join me for a conversation on the way at the Coffee Factory some Tuesday afternoon, or simply make a commitment to attend Sunday worship each week. The possibilities are endless!

May the God of new growth be with us all as we seek to strengthen, lengthen, and stretch our connections this Lent.

God loves you and so do I,

Pastor Heidi



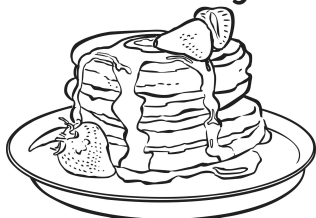
Faith Formation: Offerings for ALL AGES!

First Friday Fellowship, Faith, and Fun

First Friday fellowship kicked off in January with a game night. We'd love to keep it going in 2016. Do you have an idea for fellowship and fun? See one of our pastors to let them know.



Shrove Tuesday



Lenten Wednesday Worship

Wednesday, February 10th (Ash Wednesday) begins our Wednesday night worship series during Lent. Join us at 6 PM for soup and bread, and 7 PM for creative, soul-filling, inter-generational worship. All are welcome if you are here for the first time or the 100th time!



Shrove Tuesday

Join us in Currier for Shrove Tuesday on February 9th from 5-7 PM. Come feast with us on the traditional pancake supper before we begin our Lenten season of repentance and fasting. We'll have pancakes, bacon, and fruit salad to celebrate. Volunteers are needed to both cook and serve! Please be in touch with Pastor Heidi if you can help.

Church School Teachers

WE NEED YOU! The time has come to sign up to teach church school through the second half of the year, and the Christian Education Board needs your help. We love for our kids to have exposure and access to a variety of teachers across the year. Please see Anne-Marie Merrill or Katie Cobban if you are interested in signing up. No prior experience required. All are welcome.

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 this paper 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- (1)_____

Stewardship Board- (3)_____

Finance Committee At Large- (1)_____

Nominating Committee- (5)_____

Thank you for your support,

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

Stewardship Board

We have spent the last two years reminding ourselves that stewardship is about more than money. However *financial* stewardship is real and this is a good time to acknowledge the completion of our latest annual pledge drive. The stewardship board extends a sincere thank you to all who have pledged to the 2016 drive. The number of pledges was down from last year, but the total amount of money pledged is the highest we have seen in the last five years. Your generosity has allowed First Parish to take the giant step of creating an Associate Pastor position and calling Pastor Heidi to be our Minister of Faith Formation. One of the greatest things about Pastor Heidi, as with our beloved Senior Pastor Deborah, is their ability to think outside the box, and offer new ideas and new ways of thinking about old practices. The future of First Parish is indeed bright.

Do you know what else I am thankful for? A lot of stuff. For example, it recently occurred to me that from the day I was born, a little over sixty-eight years ago, until today, I have never had one single day without a roof over my head, a warm place to sleep, food on the table, clothes on my back, a car (sometimes two) in the driveway or garage, not to mention people in my life who love me. Life is good, in spite of the sporadic crises that shake the foundation of one's faith.

Those crises do happen though, and when they do it's good to be part of a community that supports us and reminds us that we are not in this life alone. In his "Letter from Birmingham Jail", Martin Luther King wrote: "We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly."

Can we look at this statement from a stewardship perspective? Are we not all one? Does gender matter? Race? Religion? Sexual orientation? We are all one with each other. What about the animal kingdom? The environment? Are we not one with the whole of creation? Is that what King is suggesting? If we really believe that does good stewardship imply that every act has an effect good or bad on some aspect of the creation? Just some thoughts, to offer an opportunity to pause and think about how we treat each other in this church, in the wider community, in the environment at large. God bless us all.



Diaconate Board

Happy New Years to all from the Diaconate. We are still in awe with the joys and celebrations we shared during our recent Advent season. The three Christmas Eve services were wonderful, exciting yet traditional in so many ways. The families that we saw there, from new faces to veteran ones, from young to mature, from near and far were an inspiration to the Deacons and staff as we attempted to make everyone feel the spirit of the season. Thank you all for supporting our church and for inviting us into your lives on such a busy time of year.

At the risk of duplicating what Pat Plouff is preparing for the annual report the Deacons wanted to highlight some of the accomplishments we have felt over the last year. Obviously, adding Heidi to our staff as Associate Pastor has been a positive addition to our church family. Church school numbers have shown a large growth, which is a result of our attempts at reaching out to young families. The children performing the acolyte have grown in numbers, some Sundays there are many lined up to enjoy this solemn moment.

Blue Christmas service was held December 16 for those people who needed support this holiday season and for whom Christmas would be a difficult time to get through as they have lost a loved one and still have emotional pain. Christmas Eve services combined resulted in an attendance total of about 450 people. Adult education has become very popular while people learn of the Bible and its relevance to today's world. Our neighborhoods have been strengthened after months of work attempting to find out who is where, who would be assigned to various Deacons, so that you would know who to reach out to for any event. Sunday, January 10 almost 100 people stayed after church to meet more informally, finding out details of others' lives and teasing out what makes First Parish the place to come for their religious needs. We also prepare to start the work of closing down the meeting house for the move-we have more closets to clean than we even imagined!

2016 looks to be an exciting year as well but our work is ongoing. Deacons especially want to be there to help the congregation and to listen to your concerns. Sure, there have been many changes, some positive, some negative, and that is life. We want you to talk to us and let us know your thoughts. We have thick skins and we take it back to the monthly Diaconate meetings and anonymously discuss those concerns. Oftentimes there is another one or two Deacons who have heard the same item and we hash it out as in a democracy. We agree, we disagree, but, in God's shining ways, we always come to a workable conclusion.

Finally, we must say good bye to four Deacons leaving us at the end of January. They were all strong advocates for our church: Steve Davis, Dick Plouff, Pat Plouff and Julie Turner. They will be missed for their talents and insight. As of this writing we do not know who will be joining the Deacons next month but we look forward to working with them over the next few years.

Your Deacons,

Fred Merrill, Sarah Keller, Brian Williams, Reni Harnden, Diana Sweeney, Cindy Pingree and Cyndi Gray

Board of Christian Outreach and Missions



Zimbabwe Pen-Pal Program: The Board of Christian Outreach and Missions (BOCOM) in collaboration with the Board of Christian Education are in the process of revitalizing the Pen-Pal program with our sister church at Dangamvura in Mutare, Zimbabwe. There will be a pot-luck luncheon after service on Feb. 28 to kick-off the Pen-Pal program. We have the honor of hosting the Rev. Michele Bagby Allan of the North Hampton, UCC who recently led a delegation of youth to Zimbabwe. Rev. Michele will be here to present information, tell stories of her travels, present relics for show and tell, and answer questions you may have concerning Zimbabwe and its people. We hope you can join us for this event. The luncheon is planned to start around 11:30. Rev. Michele will be at the Church as close to noon as possible. Please stay tuned as more information becomes available.

BOCOM Vacancies: The Board of Christian Outreach and Missions currently has three vacancies to fill as soon as possible. If you would like to take an active part in the Missions work of FPC or would just like more information about our Missions, please contact one of the members listed at the bottom of this article. You can also refer to Missions Brochure located in the pews which describe the Missions we support.

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

Note: All of the \$90 monthly donations are being increased to \$100 starting in February. Thank you for your generous pledges for 2016 which has made this increase possible.

Respectfully submitted,

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

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!

FPC Dining for Dollars:

Our recent Dining for FPC Dollars event at Panera Bread was a great success! Attended by 70 members and friends, the food was delicious and it was great fun to have fellowship together in a social setting. We haven't yet received our check from Panera so earnings figures will be shared at a later date.

Save the Date: Tuesday, March 8th, 4-10 PM, our next FPC Dining for Dollars Fun and Fellowship Event will be hosted by Texas Roadhouse in Manchester. They normally only give a 10% donation for their Fundraising events, but I was able to negotiate 15% for us when I shared how successful previous events have been for us! If you haven't been to one of these yet, come on out to enjoy the fellowship!



Some of our members and friends enjoying Panera Bread Dining out Event

Hannafords Fundraiser:

This very successful program continues to grow and run smoothly. Several people have stepped forward recently to assist in the weekly re-loading process. Some of the new faces you will be seeing are Joyce Pope, Lin Dos Santos, Beth Hunter, and Dawn Gilbert – their support is much appreciated! Our weekly re-load order is running between \$1000 and \$3000 weekly, earning the church \$50-\$150/week – just to buy groceries we would buy anyway!

Even if you're not a Hannafords shopper regularly, you could still support the program (and the church) by purchasing bonus cards we earn each week. FPC earns free gift cards representing 5% of our total order. We currently have several \$50 cards, and several \$20 cards available for purchase. These make great gifts for your college student, a friend or neighbor going through a rough patch, a donation to the Upper Room or Pastor's discretionary fund, or just a "Pay It Forward" gift to someone in the grocery line!

Thank you, everyone, for participating and making these programs such a great success!

- Submitted by Liz Greenberg on behalf of the Fundraising Committee

What IS Continuing Education?

During the year you've probably heard Pastor Deborah or Pastor Heidi say they are going to be away for "continuing education." That's kind of a nebulous term, isn't it? You might wonder, what exactly DO pastors learn about when they are away during this time? That's a great question. It will look like different things at different points in people's ministry.

Each year Pastor Deborah attends the Festival of Homiletics in May. She spends countless hours attending multiple worship services, workshops, and more each day. This is an opportunity to learn with and from some of the very best preachers in all of Christendom. She generally does a second week of continuing education each year focused on a topic or skill applicable to her leadership as Senior Pastor.

This year, Pastor Heidi will spend time leading a retreat for other young clergy under 40 while also learning about different ministry topics in her role on the National Planning Team of the 2030 Clergy Network. Later in the summer, she'll spend time learning about effective ministerial leadership with other women in ministry, and learning about faith formation for all ages through the lens of play on Star Island.

In addition, one of the other big goals of Continuing Education time is relationship and renewal. It isn't often that clergy get to spend time face-to-face with other ministers, learning, growing, and building community together. While not vacation time, these opportunities allow our pastors to spend important time renewing their spirits, and deepening relationships with other clergy. They return to us with fresh skills and learning, and renewed spirits that help them be better pastors to us.

The pastors are always glad to talk about their continuing education time, and what they are up to. Don't hesitate to ask!

Nutfield Cooperative School Priority Registration

Priority registration for the 2016-2017 school year will take place from Monday, February 1st to Thursday, February 11th. Priority registration is for all families who currently have children at Nutfield School, ever had children at Nutfield, or are members of First Parish Church.

We are offering morning 4-year-old preschool classes (a three day program and a four day program combined, or two separate classes if enrollment is sufficient); and a morning 3-year-old preschool class (a two day and three day program combined, or two separate classes if enrollment is sufficient).

The four day four-year-old program and three day three-year-old program provide the children with more continuity and allow the teachers to go more in depth into our current curriculum. It will give the children more opportunity to interact with their peers, If you have any questions about these programs, please feel free to speak with me.

Classes will be held from the Monday after Labor Day until the second week in June. Morning classes will be held from 9:00-11:45. The four day four-year-old class will be held Monday through Thursday; the three day four-year-old class will meet on Monday, Tuesday and Thursday. The schedule for the three-year-old preschool class will depend on enrollment. Our Extended Day program will be offered from 11:45-4:00 every day we have class.

If you would like to observe a class please call Carol Flint at 434-5008 to make an appointment. If you have any questions about registration please contact Carol Flint.

Thanks, Kathy

Around Our Church

Children's Messengers!



Do you enjoy being part of the Message for All Ages/Children's Message on Sunday mornings? Would you be interested in sharing a message with our children? If so, we'd love to have you. Please see Pastor Heidi or email her at: pastorheidiheath@gmail.com. A multitude of voices is both welcomed and appreciated.

Lay Reader Opportunities

Many thanks to those of you who have volunteered to be lay readers in the past – especially Diane Breeden, Dee Deranian, Beth Hunter and the teens who do it the first Sunday of the month. If you would like to volunteer, please don't hesitate to contact me at cgray5851@comcast.net.

Thanks, Cyndi Gray

Pastor's Vacation & Continuing Education Updates for Feb.

Pastor Heidi will be on vacation Monday, February 22nd – Monday, February 29th. She will return to the office on Tuesday, March 1st.

Red Cross Blood Drive

There will be a Red Cross Blood Drive in Currier Hall on Friday, February 19th from 1:00-6:00 PM. Appointments are recommended. Please schedule online at redcrossblood.org or call 1-800-RED CROSS (1-800-733-2767).

Also new is RapidPass! Save lives in less time. Start the donation process before leaving home by completing an online pre-donation and health history questionnaire at your convenience on the day of your appointment. You can save up to 15 minutes at your next appointment. Learn more at redcrossblood.org/RapidPass.



Around the Church

Scripture Readings

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

Feb. 7th – Transfiguration

Ex 34:29-35

Psalm 99

2 Cor 3:12-4:2

Luke 9:28-36 (37-43)

Feb. 14th – First Sunday in Lent

Deut 26:1-22

Psalm 91:1-2, 9-16

Rom 10:8b-13

Luke 4:1-13

Feb. 21st – Second Sunday in Lent

Gen 15:1-12, 17-18

Psalm 27

Phil 3:17-4:1

Luke 13:31-35

Feb. 28th – Third Sunday in Lent

Isa 55:1-9

Psalm 63:1-8

1 Cor 10:1-13

Luke 13:1-9

Worship Leadership

Deacons & Lay Readers

Deacons of the Month

Brian Williams and Diana Sweeney

February 7th: Jennifer Robinson

February 14th: Brian Williams

February 21st: Diana Sweeney

February 28th: New Member

Ushers & Greeters

Weekly Usher – Michael Bryan

Feb. 7th: Ushers: Diaconate

Greeters: Verna Elwell, Shirley Dickason

Feb. 14th: Ushers: Ken Gould, Diane Breeden

Dee Deranian, Shirley Dickason

Greeter: Becky Fleury

Feb. 21st: Ushers: Stanley and Holly Gorgol

Tom and Andrea Cooper

Greeter: Beth Hunter

Feb. 28th: Ushers: Becky Fleury, Verna Elwell

Joe Weaver, Suzanne Hunt

Greeter: Betsy McCall

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:

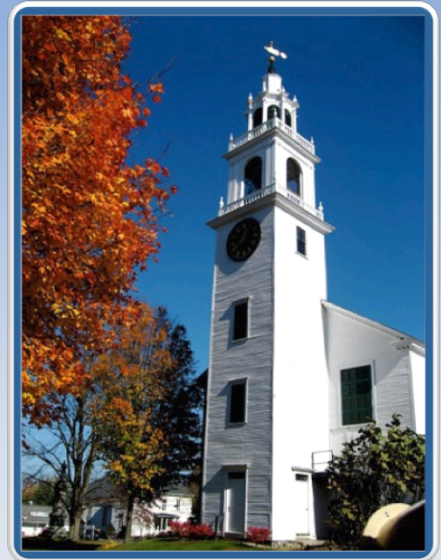
officemgr@fpc-ucc.org

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

pastordeborah@fpc-ucc.org

Email our Associate Pastor, the Rev. Heidi

Carrington Heath: pastorheidiheath@gmail.com



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United Church of Christ
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