

First Parish Congregational Church, United Church of Christ
P.O. Box 114, 47 East Derry Road East Derry, NH 03041
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January 23, 2022

FOR
GOD
SO
Loved the World
that
HE
Gave
His
ONLY
SON
John 3:16

ALL ARE WELCOME

No matter who you are, no matter where you are on life's journey!!!

WE GATHER INTO THE PRESENCE OF GOD

CENTURING MUSIC AND LIGHTING THE CANDLES

He's got the Whole World in His Hands!

WELCOME

HYMN: #365 ***How Blessed Are They Who Trust in Christ***

How blest are they who trust in Christ when we and those we love must part;
We yield them up, for go they must, but do not lose them for our heart.

In ripened age, their harvest reaped, Or gone from us in youth or prime,
In Christ they have eternal life, Released from all the bonds of time.

In Christ, who tasted death for us, We rise above our natural grief,
And witness to a stricken world The strength and splendor of belief.

CALL TO WORSHIP

One: People of God, where do we put our trust in difficult times?

Many: We lift our eyes to the hills, from whence comes our help.

One: Our lives are a gift from God, who loves us more than we can comprehend

Many: Let us rejoice in the grace of God and the gift of Jesus Christ.

INVOCATION (lay reader)

May the winds of the Spirit blow into this gathering of our hearts this day. May we hear the sounds of love and may we feel the transformation made possible through the power of love and the glory of God. Let us be reassured and renewed. Amen.

SONG OF PRAISE:

This is the Day that our God has made// Let Us Rejoice and be Glad

WE HEAR GOD'S WORD FOR US

SCRIPTURE: John 3:1-21 (The Voice presentation)

¹ Nicodemus was one of the Pharisees, a man with some clout among his people. ² He came to Jesus under the cloak of darkness to question Him.

Nicodemus: Teacher, some of us have been talking. You are obviously a teacher who has come from God. The signs You are doing are proof that God is with You.

Jesus: ³ I tell you the truth: only someone who experiences birth for a second time can *hope to see the kingdom of God*.

Nicodemus: ⁴ *I am a grown man. How can someone be born again when he is old like me? Am I to crawl back into my mother's womb for a second birth? That's impossible!*

Jesus: ⁵ I tell you the truth, if someone does not experience water and Spirit birth, there's no chance he will make it into God's kingdom. ⁶ *Like from like*. Whatever is born from flesh is flesh; whatever is born from Spirit is spirit. ⁷ Don't be shocked by My words, *but I tell you the truth*. Even you, *an educated and respected man among your people*, must be reborn *by the Spirit to enter the kingdom of God*. ⁸ The wind blows all around us as if it has a will of its own; we *feel and hear it*, but we do not understand where it has come from or where it will end up. Life in the Spirit is as if it were the wind of God.

Nicodemus: ⁹ I still do not understand how this can be.

Jesus: ¹⁰ Your responsibility is to instruct Israel *in matters of faith*, but you do not comprehend *the necessity of life in the Spirit?* ¹¹ I tell you the truth: we speak about the things we know, and we give evidence about the things we have seen, and you

choose to reject *the truth of our witness*. ¹² If you do not believe when I talk to you about ordinary, earthly realities, then heavenly realities will certainly elude you. ¹³ No one has ever journeyed to heaven above except the One who has come down from heaven—the Son of Man, who is of heaven. ¹⁴ Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness. In the same way, the Son of Man must be lifted up; ¹⁵ then all those who believe in Him will experience everlasting life.

¹⁶ For God expressed His love for the world in this way: He gave His only Son so that whoever believes in Him will not face everlasting destruction, but will have everlasting life. ¹⁷ Here's the point. God didn't send His Son into the world to judge it; instead, He is here to rescue a world *headed toward certain destruction*.

¹⁸ No one who believes in Him has to fear condemnation, yet condemnation is already the reality for everyone who refuses to believe because they reject the name of the only Son of God. ¹⁹ Why does God allow for judgment *and condemnation*? Because the Light, *sent from God*, pierced through the world's darkness *to expose ill motives, hatred, gossip, greed, violence, and the like*. Still some people preferred the darkness over the light because their actions were dark. ²⁰ Some of humankind hated the light. They *scampered hurriedly* back into the darkness where vices thrive and wickedness flourishes. ²¹ Those who *abandon deceit and* embrace what is true, they will enter into the light where it will be clear that all their deeds come from God.

SERMON: "God's Light is a Choice"

HYMN: #503 ***O Savior, Let Me Walk With You*** (vs. 1, 3)

O Savior, let me walk with you In earthly paths of service true;
Tell me your secret, help me bear the strain of toil, the fret of care.

Teach me your patience; let me be in closer dearer company,
In work that keeps faith sweet and strong, in trust that triumphs over wrong.

WE RESPOND WITH OUR STEWARDSHIP

OFFERTORY INVITATION (lay reader)

The faith that sustains is expands as we share it. Faith is an active and dynamic relationship which God calls us to share with one another – not just in the church, but with everyone. Our offerings make possible faithful ministries within our church and our outreach into the world.

If you are joining us virtually, please use the next few moments to share joys and concerns in the chat. Our services are recorded. Please use first names. God knows who you mean.

GETTING TO KNOW A CHILD OF GOD: Christine Lehoullier

DOXOLOGY: ***Gloria, in excelsis Deo, Gloria, in excelsis Deo.***

PRAYER OF DEDICATION (Led by lay reader, please join in.)

Thank you, God, for glimpses of your grace and compassion. We are grateful for encounters that lift us beyond ourselves. We rejoice in our relationship with your Son and we ask your blessing upon what we offer in His name. Amen.

WE RESPOND WITH GRATITUDE AND PRAYER

HYMN: #472 ***Precious Lord, Take My Hand*** (vs. 1)

Precious Lord, take my hand Lead me on, let me stand
I am tired, I am weak, I am worn
Through the storm, through the night Lead me on to the light
Take my hand precious Lord, lead me home

SHARING JOYS AND CONCERNS and PASTORAL PRAYER,
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.

WE GO OUT TO LOVE AND SERVE A LOVING, SERVING GOD

ANY FINAL ANNOUNCEMENTS

HYMN: #8 ***Praise to the Living God*** (vs. 1, 4)

Praise to the living God, the God of love and light,
Whose word brought forth the myriad suns and set the world in flight;
Whose infinite design, which we but dimly see,
Pervades all nature, making all a cosmic unity.

Praise to the living God, around, within above,
Beyond the grasp of humankind mind, but whom we know as love.
In these tumultuous days, so full of hope and strife,
May we bear witness to the Way, O Source and Goal of life.

BENEDICTION

POSTLUDE

Please visit our Facebook page or our website for recent videos of services and moments of Christian Faith Formation and inspiration.

MINISTERS OF THE CHURCH - Members of the Congregation
SENIOR PASTOR AND TEACHER - The Rev. Dr. Deborah Roof
LAY READER – Christine Lehoullier
GREETERS – Sue Brown, Sue Lindemann (Remote)
MUSICIAN – Kaitlyn Leahy
CHRISTIAN EDUCATION DIRECTOR - Christine Lehoullier
OFFICE MANAGER - Michelle Guerrin
AV/ TECHNICAL – Paul Lindemann with Brian Williams and Mike Schroeder

IN OUR PRAYERS - January 23, 2021

PRAYERS OF JOY

Fred Merrill is a gift from God and an answer to prayer! He has served this congregation with grace and wisdom for several years. Words aren't enough to express how much we all appreciate his service to First Parish.

Congratulations and joy to Mark and Cindy Pingree on the birth of their new grandbaby.

The staff was filled with joy for the generous monetary gift to each of us for Christmas!

Thank you for allowing us to serve you and thank you for seeing how much we care.

Cards of Care to Hospital workers- Thank you...

Thank you to everyone who pledged and to those people who have increased their pledge! Technology allows us to stay connected during this pandemic!

Gratitude to lay leaders who stepped up last week when Pastor Deborah was quarantined with Covid;

Gratitude for members and friends in Indiana, Georgia, Zimbabwe, and N. Ireland.

PRAYERS OF CONSOLATION

Family of Ruthlee Root, who died on January 20. Family of Danny, Mary Jane's brother who died from cancer; Marie Greene whose son Jeremy died suddenly. Cards of condolences can be sent to 2 Golen Dr.; Apt 364; Londonderry, NH 03053. The family of Betty Burnell (died on 12.11.21); For the family of Joe Merrill; For the families of Oxford, OH shooting victims: Tate Myre, 16, Hana St. Juliana, 14, Madisyn Baldwin, 17, Justin Shilling, 17; For family and friends of Brian, especially Wendy W. & Jeff S.; For the families of the **860,000** people who have died in the US due to COVID. (1/21/22)

PRAYERS OF STRENGTH, HEALTH, AND HEALING

Sue (Jo W's sister) still in the hospital awaiting surgery and family cannot see her; Gail and George (Jo's friends) in ME need our prayers; Lincoln, Karen W's nephew, struggling with Autism and other mental health concerns. Jenny, friends of Jeff S; Davida, Jo's friend, suffering from migraines after surgery; Thavy, friend of the Guerrin family, during her high-risk pregnancy- third trimester. Nancy's friend Erin H.- Prayers that her medical condition will improve enough that her boys will be able to return to live with her

Benjamin Plouff, Dick's brother, suffering from cardiac issues, breathing now difficult
Jim, Jeff S.'s father, for prayers of confidence and healing

For those with cancer: Caroline M, surgery is scheduled for 1.17; BB Dinan (friend of the Bob and Karen) – approaching the end of his life; Bruce with stage 4 colon cancer; Janice P continues to fight her cancer; Priscilla with colon cancer; Tracey with aggressive cancer who has 3 children/ only 46 years old; Liza D's husband's Uncle Walt has Stage 4 cancer; Martha, close friend of Pat and Dick P, recurring leukemia

SPECIAL ONGOING PRAYERS

Law Enforcement, fire fighters; first responders, active military

Prayers for peaceful resolution to conflict situations around the world

Parkland Hospital personnel, Elliot Hospital personnel, and all nurses and doctors, Hospice workers and Southern NH Family Promise; Sonshine Soup Kitchen; Marion Gerrish; Upper Room; United Theological College in Zimbabwe, as well as our friend Kennedy Gondongwe; Tim B – Health & strength and Bonnie H, friend of Tim B
Friends of the Meetinghouse Board of Directors