

First Parish Congregational Church

United Church of Christ • East Derry, New Hampshire December 2022 Newsletter



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.

"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



From the Pastor's Desk

Dear Child of God,

One of the most retold Christmas stories of all time is most likely "A Christmas Carol" by Charles Dickens. There is even a Donald Duck version!! The theme is one of redemption and love of neighbor. One of the most popular Christmas movies of all times is "It's a Wonderful Life." This story, too, touches the themes of redemption and love of neighbor – and also love of self.

In Dickens story, a man with a broken heart spends years chasing his own miserly fortune, somehow believing in the value of treasure as opposed to the value of human connection and love of neighbor. It takes some serious reflection offered by ghosts of Christmas past, present and future to show Scrooge how he had missed the mark and how he had lost what is truly of value.

In the "Wonderful Life" movie, George Bailey, played by Jimmy Stewart, became quite unhappy with his life through the challenging events he encountered. While he had hopes and dreams of his own, due to the death of his Father, he felt "stuck" in his hometown as he took leadership of the Savings and Loan, soon to be defunct. When it appeared that everything had been lost due to the wrong actions of "Mr. Potter," he was moved to the edge of despair. He wondered aloud whether the town – or the world! - would have been better off if he had not been born.

As Christians, we can recognize God-winks throughout these two stories because we know the greatest story ever told: the story of a baby born in Bethlehem. As God's creatures, we were

created to love God, love others and love ourselves. It took the birth of a baby king, born under both cultural shadow and celestial presence to show us that we matter. We matter to God! And what we do for our neighbor matters! This Christmas take time to pay attention to the acts of generosity that surround us. Consider ways that your Board of u can join in the act of generous sharing. It's not about money! We see that truth in the Dickens' story and in George Bailey's life! It's about compassion and kindness and giving what you can.

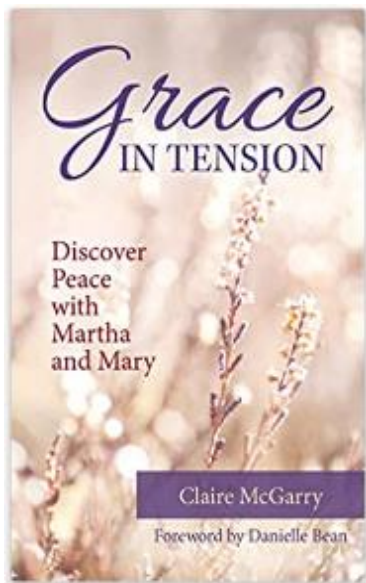
This month I will sing my last concert with the Songweavers. The songs we have sung and the joy of singing together have been so meaningful to me. Permit me to share the words of the last song we will sing in this concert. I pray that you will consider this a motivation and perhaps a challenge to embrace who you are as a child of God:

"What light do you shine in the world?
What gift do you give every day?
What comes from your heart,
And becomes your life's art?
What light do you shine in the world?"

Shine your light, child of God! Shine like never before! You are a gift to this world. Blessings upon you!

In hope, peace, joy and love, Pastor Deborah

Christian Education and Faith Formation – December 2022



“Grace In Tension” January Adult Faith Formation With a busy, yet joy-filled Advent season upon us, we will resume our Adult Faith Formation classes in January with our reading of Claire McGarry’s, “Grace In Tension: Discover peace with Martha and Mary.”

And, as many quote Viktor Frankl, “*There is power in the pause.*” There will be time for those of you who have been curious about the book to either order one or have a book ordered for you. cedirector@fpc-ucc.org or pastordeborah@fpc-ucc.org

Many can attest to the NUMEROUS nuggets of wisdom rich with meaning! Try taking 5 minutes a week to journal your thoughts as we navigate the holiday season. Are you experiencing many Martha or Mary moments? Are you able to see how some of the concepts you’ve learned may help you navigate this time of year? We will excitedly wait to see everyone’s discoveries when we join again in January!

*** In January, we will resume our **Tuesday evening schedule** and meet January 3, 17, and 31. We will try to finish our reading of the book by early February so that we may *meet with the author* before Lent begins on Ash Wednesday, February 22. We do not want to rush our reading, and we do want to finish by the season of Lent. ***

Virtual Interactive Advent Calendar

November 27 – December 24



We are excited to offer a customized Advent calendar this year with lots to offer for everyone!

Visit the [Online Advent Christmas Countdown Calendar](#) every day from November 27 through December 24 and open a door each day to find a new devotional, meditation, craft, trivia game, online coloring, virtual puzzles, story readings, festive carols and much more!

Wishing you, your families and friends a blessed Advent season as we wait with joyful and prayerful anticipation for the Christ Child's arrival.

Advent Workshop December 4

Join your friends and fellow families Sunday, December 4, after worship service as we prepare our hearts, souls, and minds for the upcoming season of Advent.

We are looking for volunteers to help with coffee hour after service that day. Please consider bringing in an easy snack to share after service. Thank you in advance. Friends and families are also welcomed to leave for lunch and come back to enjoy the festivities.

The Workshop will begin afterward coffee hour AND once all stations are setup...**please also consider helping set up tables and/or helping facilitate one of the craft tables for this event!** Please call/email/see in person Jill Taylor, Christine Lehoullier or Holly Gorgol to help with coffee hour or a craft table (*don't worry, we'll make sure you'll still be able to craft as well!*).

Jill Taylor/ officemgr@fpc-ucc.org Holly Gorgol/feetpower@usa.net or Christine Lehoullier/cedirector@fpc-ucc.org

Our Advent Workshop this year will be sure to fill everyone with Hope, Peace, Joy, and Love! There's always an activity or craft for adults and children alike. This year we will have a special holiday movie playing for the children as additional entertainment with a fun snack they can assemble themselves (allergen free and gluten free snacks available)!



MERRY CHRISTMAS AND HAPPY HOLIDAYS TO ALL AND MAY GOD BLESS YOU ALL!

2023 Annual Pledge Drive

1 Thessalonians 5:18: “Give thanks in all circumstances for this is the will of Christ Jesus for you.”

Dear First Parish Members and Friends,

The theme for our pledge drive 2023 is gratitude. We ask you to think of all the things for which you are grateful as we share God’s house at First Parish and take loving care of it. This is the time of the year when we reflect on all that God has given us, and we give thanks for God’s gifts and in response, we share what we have. You know that throughout the year we support a healthy mission outreach in our community, in the wider UCC community, and in the world.

We also pay our amazing staff. We work diligently to maintain and improve our physical space. Your financial support is what makes all this possible! Our tradition of estimating the funds that will come into the church is to ask members and friends to pledge, to make a ballpark promise of what you can afford. We need your pledge amount in order to prepare a budget for our Annual Meeting at the end of January. To those of you who are new to us: only the financial secretary knows the amount of your pledge.

At the worship service this Sunday, December 4, we will have pledge cards available for you. Please prayerfully consider now how you can participate financially to support First Parish this upcoming year and be ready to fill those cards out.

We recommend that you sit down with God and your checkbook (or phone!) You look at the amount that comes into your household. You decide on a percentage that you will give back to the church on some sort of regular basis. Pledging is a faith practice. By pledging you help us to plan for a brighter future. Your pledging gives us that place to start.

We are asking you to please join us in gratitude and promise by sending in your pledge as soon as possible.

If there is anything you don’t understand about the budget or any financial practice please ask us or a member of Council.

Thanks be to God,

Randy Brown, Moderator; Cathy Zylinski, Assistant Moderator; the Rev. Dr. Deborah Roof

Board of Christian Outreach and Missions

God loves a cheerful giver. 2 Corinthians 9:7

MISSIONS December DONATIONS: Thank you for supporting our monthly donations.

Community Caregivers \$100
 Family Promise \$100
 Our Church's Wider Mission \$350
 Pinkerton Families in Need \$100
 Sonshine Soup Kitchen \$100

Derry Friendship Center \$100
 First Baptist Food Pantry \$100
 Pastoral Counseling \$100
 Upper Room \$100

ANGEL TREE - The Care Givers name tags and Upper Room lists are available after services in the foyer by the office. When you take a gift card, it is important that **you fill out the form on the clipboard with your name, phone number and the gift tag family number.** The office will have forms for you to fill out if you know someone in need. Respectfully submitted by BOCOM members: Nancy Murdock-Chair, Melanie Pawl, Heather Paradzick, Carol Guerrin, Sue Brown-Treasurer designate.

THE CHRISTMAS FUND - The COVID Pandemic has had a profound impact on UCC clergy and congregations -physically, emotionally, spiritually and financially. Because of gifts to the Christmas Fund, those who have been affected the most have known that they were not alone. The Fund has been caring for active and retired clergy and retired employees of the United Church of Christ for over 100 years. It has provided emergency grants, supplementation of small annuities and health premiums and Christmas "thank you" gift checks to our lower income retirees. Gifts to the Christmas Fund bring relief and hope to those who have dedicated their lives to serving the church. You can make a difference and bring great joy! First Parish Church will be collecting donations during December. Envelopes are provided for this offering or please write Christmas Fund on your check.

UCC 5 FOR 5 - The Christmas Fund for the Veterans of the Cross and the Emergency Fund is a Special Mission Offering that congregations have been supporting for over 100 years. Funds provide direct financial support to those who serve the church and are facing financial difficulties. (Christmas). First Parish Church participates as a "5 for 5" church taking mission to God's children near and far.

Family Promise

There are several members and friends of First Parish who provide meals for the families at Family Promise. We do this every month on the first Thursday of that month.

If you would consider joining us and would like to learn more about this, please contact Randy Brown via email Randybrown1119@gmail.com or phone at 603-612-0489.

Board of Deacons

The Deacons are looking forward to the Advent season, which kicked off on November 27th. We hope that you will consider participating in the Advent Workshop on December 4th. This is a great way to prepare for this holy season.

Our Blue Christmas service will take place on Wednesday, December 14th. Digital Ministries writes that "Not everyone is up and cheery for the Christmas holidays. Dealing with the death of a loved one, facing life after divorce or separation, coping with the loss of a job, living with cancer or some other disease that puts a question mark over the future, and a number of other human situations make parties and joviality painful for many people in our congregations and communities. There is a growing attentiveness to the needs of people who are blue at Christmas. Increasing numbers of churches are creating sacred space for people living through dark times. Such services are reflective, accepting where we really are, and holding out healing and hope." All are welcome to join us, no matter where you are in your life journey.

On Christmas Eve we will have 4:30 and 7:00 in-person services. The 4:30 service will feature a Christmas pageant, while the latter service will be on Zoom and Facebook and include the distribution of lit candles. Then on Christmas Day, from the comfort of her home Pastor Deborah will greet us on Zoom and Facebook where she will present a previously recorded service. Note that there will be no in-person Christmas Day service. On January 1st we will welcome the new year with a Sunday service that will be informal and include a continental breakfast. Stay tuned for details!

Last, we would like to convey our appreciation to all that assist us with conducting the worship services. We are a small Board, and so we especially appreciate all that step up to help in both an official and unofficial capacity. Of course, if you would like to be on the Board of Deacons in an official capacity, please let us know.

Your Deacons:

Sue Brown, Rachel Cobban, Reni Harnden, Jack Grand, Brian Williams, and Joanne Worthen

Improving Communication

This Fall we initiated a new practice of engaging in sacred conversation. We hold these conversations after worship and we learned much. One of the things we learned was that some Sundays are simply too busy – in a good way. Someone asked why these conversations are sacred. The answer? Aren't all conversations between God's children sacred? As we endeavor we get to know one another as a church family and to learn more about things are done we need to talk.

We will be taking December off from these sacred conversations. In January, what would you like to know more about? Please give your topics/questions to Jill, at officemgr@fpc-ucc.org or Randy Brown at randybrown1119@gmail.com

Boards and Committees

ALL HANDS-ON DECK! YOU CAN HELP!

Many hands make light work. As busy as we ALL are, planning meetings can take up more time than we can afford. Time is precious. Your church leaders understand. We realize that we do not need Boards of many members. We can accomplish a great deal with smaller Boards who identify tasks for more individuals. Many people are willing to help with short term projects, but do not want to commit to 2 or 3 years on a Board or committee, going to monthly meetings and doing all the work themselves.

Perhaps there is a task or two that you DO have time to do. It is no longer necessary for 6-10 individuals do all the related work. Instead, we can share responsibilities and tasks. It may be more efficient for 3 people to plan, organize, and delegate the work that needs to be done.

To facilitate moving to this new model, we ask that you click on the link below and complete the questionnaire. Please email it to Beth Hunter (beth.hunter2@comcast.net) or leave it with Jill in the office. <https://fpc-ucc.org/Wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/ALL-HANDS-ON-DECK-QUESTIONNAIRE.pdf>

Return to the Sanctuary – Help Needed

We have unfastened the wooden pews and separated them into 8' sections. Now we need to move these 60 heavy sections downstairs to clear the Sanctuary for essential floor and ceiling work.

We're looking for some strong, agile folks to carefully carry each pew section down the two flights of stairs to their temporary new home in MacGregor Hall. Slightly less agile folks can help arrange and stack the pews once downstairs. Others can work with the fabric pew cushions: these need to be shrink-wrapped, then carried down to be stored on top of the pews. All of this will help with the next step in returning the Sanctuary to regular use.

If you are able, please join the WORK PARTY Saturday, Dec. 10, from 10:00 am – 3:00 pm. There'll be free pizza lunch!

Steward(s) of the Kitchen

We are still looking for a Kitchen Steward(s). We are proud to be able to offer this facility for outside use. Many times, after a meeting, the kitchen looks ok but perhaps, not the way we would like our kitchen to appear. We need someone to take charge of the kitchen and show it a lot of love. Are you THAT person? Please let either Pastor Deborah or Jill know if you interested in this important ministry.

Path to the Sanctuary Update

December 3 @ 8am – 11:30am Santa and Mrs. Claus will be in Currier Hall hosting a wonderful breakfast. Save the date and tell all your friends. Everyone is welcome – children of ALL AGES!! Tickets are \$10 for adults, \$5 for ages 3-8 and Free for 2 & under. Tickets are sold at the door.

The Granite Statesmen Chorus Christmas Concert on December 11 at 2pm. - It is time to break out the Christmas dresses and bow ties as we celebrate the Holiday season at the Stockbridge Theatre. This is truly a family event, not adults only show so please encourage families to join us. It is a large venue so little ones are welcome to move about if necessary. We need all of you to come to support us but also to get everyone into the Christmas spirit. Tickets are \$30 for adults and \$10 for children 12 and under. It will feature a singalong by some of our male church members and will appeal to all ages. The Granite Statesmen Chorus recently went on tour in Nova Scotia so they know how to give a good performance. We are soliciting sponsors ensure this be a pure profitable endeavor. Can we count on your support whether in sponsors or ticket sales?

Finally, if you have made a pledge to the Path to the sanctuary for 2022 and have not paid yet, please do so soon. We need to plan our finances for the work upcoming sanctuary work

NEWS FLASH! – Next year's Trivia Night is booked for October 21, 2023. **SAVE THE DATE!!!**

ELECTRONIC GIVING - Venmo

Use **Venmo** to make contributions to the church via credit card (3% fee applied), debit card (no fee), or direct transfer (no fee) from their checking account directly into the church's account.

1. Download the Venmo app on your phone. Click "pay". Type in @first-parish. Fill in the blank labelled "what's it for" (VERY IMPORTANT). Examples are: general fund, mission, building rehabilitation, Christian Ed. You must also indicate if this is payment toward a previously made pledge or is a new, separate contribution—e.g., "December pledge toward operating budget."
2. Click on the button labelled "public,". This will give you the option to restrict who sees that you made a contribution to the church. Otherwise, anyone who uses Venmo can see that you made a contribution to the church (but not the amount).
3. Enter the amount and your payment info.

If a contribution does not contain the required information about what it's for the default for your payment will be that it will go into the general fund as a new contribution, not payment of an existing pledge.

To find out how to set up a Venmo account (it's VERY easy), and learn more about it, please visit this website: <https://venmo.com/signup/> You will be asked to provide one or more methods by which you will make payments, and your formal name. Julie Greenfield (juleslab1@comcast.net) can also offer advice on Venmo.

Randy Brown, First Parish Council Moderator

UCC 2023 Celebration

UCC NEW ENGLAND WOMEN'S CELEBRATION XI March 17-19-2023

RIGHT IN OUR NEIGHBORHOOD!

Celebration XI will be in Manchester, NH at the DoubleTree by Hilton in just under 4 months! Registration is now open. On January 1 prices will go up. The famous Marketplace will be open Friday, March 17, 12:00pm -10:00pm and Saturday, March 18, 7:00 am - 7:30pm.

*Please note, the registration fee does not include meals or accommodations.

All the details and registration for Celebration XI are on our website - www.uccwc.org

Keynote Speakers:

Dr. Velda Love, national UCC Justice & Peace speaker and advocate

Rev. Karoline Lewis, PhD, foremost Biblical scholar, Gospel of John interpreter

Rev. Marcia McFee.

These amazing women collaborated with our worship team for months putting together 4 fabulous worship experiences.

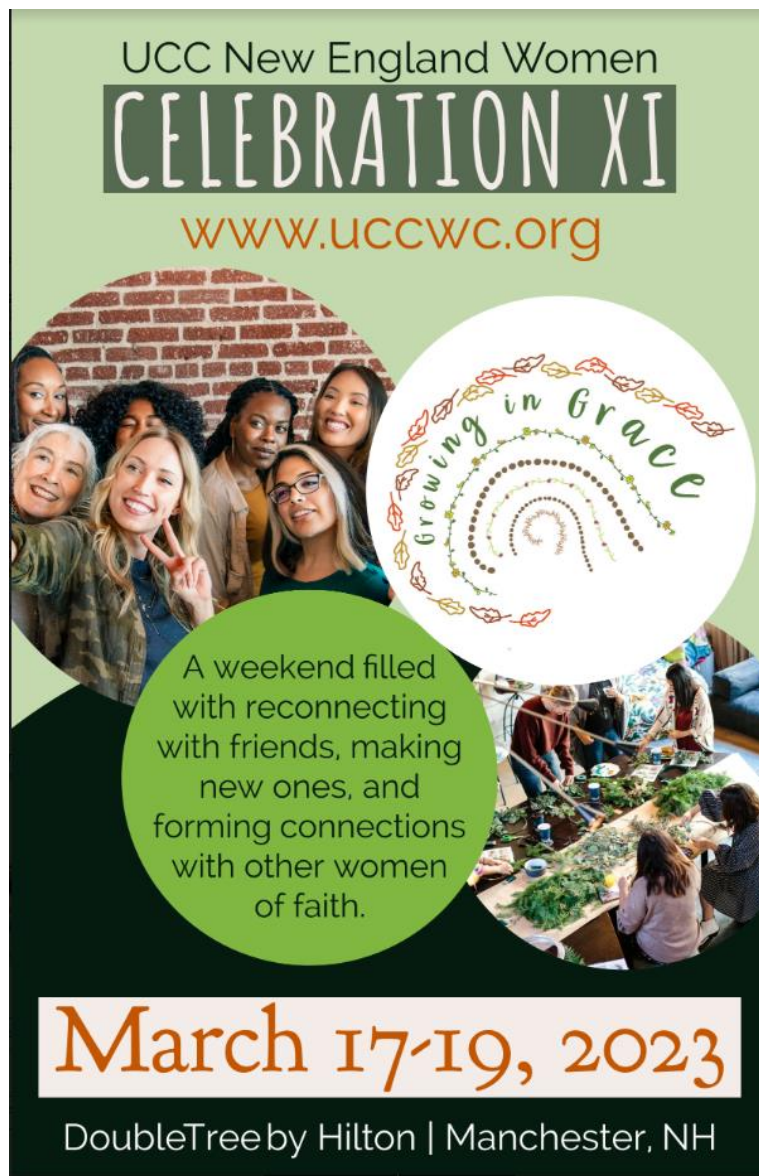
Register now!

Tell your friends and women of faith in your lives to join us.

Do small fundraisers to help women with the registration fees.

Talk it up anywhere you go!

Hope to see you all there!



UCC New England Women
CELEBRATION XI
www.uccwc.org

Growing in Grace

A weekend filled with reconnecting with friends, making new ones, and forming connections with other women of faith.

March 17-19, 2023
DoubleTree by Hilton | Manchester, NH

Registerhere: <https://sites.google.com/view/uccwc/register-hotels/register-now>

Call for your room reservation.

More info here <https://sites.google.com/view/uccwc/register-hotels/accommodations>

Pastor Deborah and Liz Greenberg are both presenters this year!

In Other News

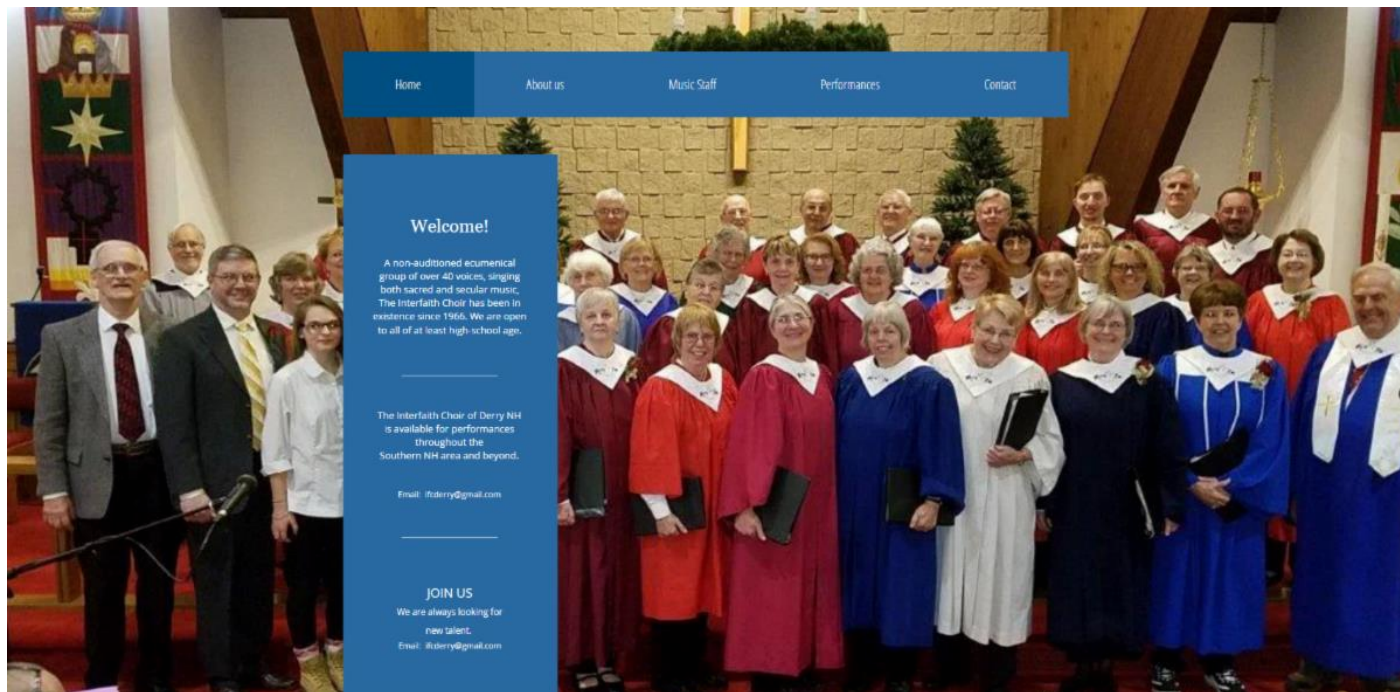
Fall Leaf Clean-up – On Sunday, November 13th Pack 405 cleaned up the leaves at the Currier entrance and the playground! Thanks to all of you who were a part of this awesome endeavor. See pictures on the following page.



Message from the Interfaith Choir

You may have heard that the Interfaith Choir of the Greater Derry and Londonderry Area has started up again after a 2-year hiatus. We were very excited to regroup, and we have a great selection of music planned for our **free** December Holiday Concert!

This year, we will be having just one public concert on Sunday, December 4 at 4PM in the sanctuary of Hampstead Congregational Church. There will be refreshments in Hadley Hall immediately following the concert.



Church Calendar

December - No Adult Faith Formation for December.

December 1, 8, 22 from 6 to 6:30pm Labyrinth Walks

December 3 from 8am – 11:30am Breakfast with Santa – Saturday

December 11 at 2pm - Granite Statesmen's Choir - at Stockbridge Theatre, at Pinkerton Academy

December 14 at 7pm - Blue Christmas

December 24 at 4:30pm - Christmas Eve Pageant

December 24 at 7pm - Christmas Eve Candlelight

December 30th at 4:30 – 5:30pm Spaghetti Supper **TO GO**

**First Parish
Congregational Church,
UCC**

(603) 434-0628

Mailing Address:

P.O. Box 114

E. Derry, NH 03041

Office Hours

Please call to make an
appointment as office hours
may vary daily

Online

www.fpc-ucc.org

facebook.com/fpcucc

Senior Pastor and Teacher

The Rev. Dr. Deborah Roof

pastordeborah@fpc-ucc.org

Office Manager

Jill Taylor

officemgr@fpc-ucc.org

(603) 434-0628



The oldest church in the immediate area, First Parish Church founded by Scotch-Irish Presbyterians in the spring of 1719. Faith was and continues to be a priority. Worship was held one day after arrival; a church body was organized in one month and a building was built in 1722. A “more imposing structure” replaced the first in 1769, and although altered and expanded through time, the main building and sanctuary remain our center of worship.

Photo credit: Paul Lindemann

**First Parish Congregational
Church**

United Church of Christ

47 East Derry Road

PO Box 114