

# First Parish Congregational Church January 2023 Newsletter

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.



*“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 12<sup>th</sup> Century Church in Hampshire, England



## From the Pastor’s Desk

Blessings and Greetings! And of course, Happy New Year to you and yours!

2023 has announced itself already – proposing many opportunities for spiritual growth and transformation! I hope that you will take some sacred time to check in with your heart and soul. Give thanks for all of the joy that 2022 delivered and remember to give thanks for the sacred presence of our loving God through all of the difficulties that we have endured.

As we look into 2023, I offer you a poem by Abbé Pierre (1912 – 2007), who was a French Catholic priest, member of the Resistance during World War II. In 1949, he founded the Emmaus movement, with the goal of helping poor and homeless people and refugees.

### On Hope

I will continue to believe, even if everyone loses hope.  
I will continue to love, even if others distill hatred.  
I will continue to build, even if others destroy.  
I will continue to talk peace even in the midst of a war.  
I will continue to spread light, even in the midst of darkness.  
I will continue to sow, even if others trample the harvest.  
And I will continue to shout, even if others are silent.

And I will draw smiles on faces in tears.  
 And I will bring relief when we see the pain.  
 And I will offer reasons for joy where there is only sadness.  
 I will encourage the one who decided to stop to keep walking ...  
 And I will stretch out my arms to those who feel exhausted.

Incorporating hope and faith into our daily lives is a sacred practice. It can be a habit - one that we all need a little assistance achieving. To that end, I pray you will read over the following offerings that are coming your way. Say some prayers and then circle some dates on the calendar. Try to participate in one more activity than you did last year – maybe more than one!

In January, join the Adult Faith Formation discussion groups who will finish reading “Grace in Tension”. We will meet at church (hybrid option) on the 3<sup>rd</sup>, 17<sup>th</sup>, 31<sup>st</sup> and then on February 7<sup>th</sup>, the author Claire McGarry will be with us. (Free events. Let me know if you need a book.)

In February, on the 25<sup>th</sup>, the NH Conference of the UCC will return to its much beloved and very successful “Prepared to Serve” program in person at Pembroke Academy. This day begins with a wonderful worship with folks from all over NH, followed by a plethora of workshops of all kinds. It is an incredible day! (Scholarships available. See me.)

“Celebration XI” – March 17-19 in Manchester: **calling all UCC women of New England!** This gathering is scheduled for every three years – except in times of pandemic! The last one was in Portland, ME 5 years ago. This is your chance to meet and greet UCC women from all over New England. What an opportunity! Since it is in Manchester, you won’t need the hotel. The food plan is a very good idea. There are 3 nationally known speakers, an awesome marketplace, and dozens of workshops! (Liz and I are both presenting!) There is something for every woman you know! Sign up as soon as you can. (Scholarships available. See me.) Let’s make sure the First Parish is well represented!

#### **AND THERE’S MORE!**

The NH Conference started something a few years ago called, “The New Thing Task Force”. Their offerings were never at a time when we could fully take advantage. Perhaps you have read about them in the Conference Newsletter. (Let me know if you do not receive that newsletter and would like to.) This Spring they invited members for churches all over the state to explore, experience, and practice skills that are inherent in jazz music, Improv Theatre and Comedy, and Creative Reuse of Materials. Their plan sounds doable and exciting and could help to integrate vitality into our church programming. This is a time and place where we will build community – without fear of making mistakes! The dates are March 25<sup>th</sup>, April 22<sup>nd</sup>, and May 20<sup>th</sup> from 9am to 2pm at a location to be determined. Let’s get a bunch of people to participate in this innovative program!

Last but not least: Labor Day weekend on Star Island. Join us for a fabulous weekend on the island. This year Peggo Horstman Hodes will talk to us about claiming our authentic voice. Peggo writes: “Our voice is a barometer of truth, an audible expression of who we are. When we deepen our relationship with our voice, we deepen our relationship with ourselves. As we explore the three spheres of the voice – public, private, and inner voice, we discover our soul voice at the core. Reclaiming the wildness of our soul voice frees our personal power for authentic self-expression.” How exciting is that? And we hope to offer some drum circles, as well, which was a major hit last year. The weekend will be about building community and growing into our authentic selves.

Do you see what I mean? 2023 will offer us plenty of opportunities to grow in faith and grow in grace. I am sure that in addition to the offerings above, we will read other books and provide other opportunities to build community together. I do hope that you will participate to the best of your ability. Set your intention, circle the date and plan accordingly!

May God’s Presence be more perceptible than ever before in 2023! “For I know the plans I have for you – plans for your welfare to give you a future with hope.” (Jer. 29:11)

Pastor Deborah

## Christian Education and Faith Formation – January 2023

Happy New Year. We hope all of you had a relaxing healthy new year. We want to thank all the families who were involved in the pageant. It was a great multi-generational performance. During the month of January, we will be having CCEP on January 8<sup>th</sup> and 22. As a congregation, we will be celebrating Miss Christine on January 15. The annual meeting is on January 29<sup>th</sup>, we will be providing childcare coverage, please let us know if you will need it so we can plan accordingly. We will be starting the process of looking for a new Christian Education director, If you would like to be part of the process, please let the Christian Education board know. Thank you, Anne-Marie and Holly

## Board of Christian Outreach and Missions

**God loves a cheerful giver. 2 Corinthians 9:7**

**MISSIONS January 2023 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

**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. First Parish Church participates as a "5 for 5" church taking mission to

## Board of Deacons

What a joyous Advent and Christmas season we have had at First Parish, ending with a delightful inter-generational pageant and a peace-filled candlelight service to welcome the Christ child. The Deacons would like to thank all of the talented, hard-working staff and volunteers without whom these and all Sunday morning services could not happen.

Digital Ministry      Visual Ministry      Zoom hosts      Greeters  
 Musicians              Bell ringers      Lay Readers  
 Pageant children and their parents  
 Everyone who just saw a need and filled it

You are all vital to our ministry at First Parish, and we thank God for each and every one of you!  
 Your Deacons: Sue Brown, Rachel Cobban, Reni Harnden, Jack Grand, Brian Williams, and Joanne Worthen

## 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.

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  
God’s children near and far.

## Stewardship: Time, Talent as well as Treasure

Stewardship isn't just about money!!

While it is true that we need financial support for our budget and for the Meetinghouse Rehab Project, there are a lot of other ways to serve God and First Parish. Here are just a few ideas:

- volunteer at Sunshine Soup Kitchen or our Spaghetti Supper ministry,
- participate in adult education and other offerings beyond the Sunday worship service,
- help provide outreach support and care and services to parishioners who need it,
- help the Deacons to ensure the Sunday morning worship services are effective and satisfying for the congregation while also supporting the pastor,
- offer to make coffee Sunday morning after worship,
- help the Facilities team in making our physical surroundings safe and conducive to community and worship,
- volunteer to help with events and activities,
- imagine new ways the Church might support the surrounding community,
- join boards or committees or Council to help the organization run efficiently,
- get involved with the financial stewardship work,
- talk to neighbors and friends about all the service work that we do, or
- evangelize the great “return on investment” First Parish brings its members.

## 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](mailto:juleslab1@comcast.net)) can also offer advice on Venmo.

Randy Brown, First Parish Council Moderator

## Improving Communication

This Fall we initiated a new practice of engaging in sacred conversation. We held 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 that are done and we need to talk.

In January, what would you like to know more about? Please give your topics/questions to Jill, at [officemgr@fpc-ucc.org](mailto:officemgr@fpc-ucc.org) or Randy Brown at [randybrown1119@gmail.com](mailto:randybrown1119@gmail.com)

## BAC Rehab

We've recently completed several projects bringing us all closer to resuming use of the Sanctuary

Contractors are vetted, approved, and scheduled for removing the failing lead ceiling paint then prepping, priming, and painting the ceiling in March. A new plywood subfloor will get installed before that in February, safely encapsulating the asbestos-rich floor tiles and

providing a smooth scaffolding surface for the ceiling work.

Completing the doorway opening between the Connector and the Sanctuary is also scheduled for January or February.

Volunteers helped us execute two essential prerequisite projects.

In November we removed the plaster and wooden lath and stringers from the MacGregor Hall ceiling, which were historic but too badly deteriorated to consider repairing. This revealed the structure supporting the Sanctuary floor. That structure looks adequate to proceed with current projects, but we'll need to beef it up before returning the pews and completing the Sanctuary.

In December we loosened and separated the pews, then carried down and stacked the 60 pew sections in MacGregor Hall. We also carried down and wrapped the pew cushions. These will all reside safely downstairs until the final flooring and other Sanctuary finish work is completed.

We had applied for another state LCHIP Grant for \$85,000 towards the ceiling, but did not win this one. Even so, our current Rehab Funding is adequate for these next projects, but we will need to do more fundraising to support the next phases of work.

In January we 'll start the detailed planning for those next phases, including the plaster rehab; electrical, fire, and multimedia system upgrades; and final installations, refurbishments, and finishes. Assuming success in executing these projects, we remain on track for resuming regular use of the Sanctuary for Christmas 2024.

Thanks for all your interest and support,  
Larry Krantz, Paul Lindemann, Bill Mann, and Bob Wilson



## NAUCC 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](http://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!**  
**Register**

here: <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!

UCC New England Women  
**CELEBRATION XI**  
[www.uccwc.org](http://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



## Church Calendar

**January 1 at 10am** – Worship Service, Communion, Continental Breakfast

**January 3, and 17 at 6pm** – Labyrinth Walk

**January 3, 17, 31 at 6:45pm** – Adult Faith Formation

**January 10<sup>th</sup>** – Annual Meeting Reports Due to Jill

**January 15 at 10am** – Worship and Miss Christine Celebration

**January 27 at 4:30 – 5:30pm** - Spaghetti Supper **TO GO**

**January 29 at 10am** – Worship and Annual Meeting





Photo credit: Paul Lindemann

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UCC**

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**Office Hours**

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

**Online**

[www.fpc-ucc.org](http://www.fpc-ucc.org)

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