

First Parish Congregational Church

April 2023 Newsletter

United Church of Christ - East Derry, New Hampshire

Our Mission Statement

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

Welcome to the First Parish Congregational Church’s newsletter.

You are receiving this because we have your email address and we want you to know all of the wonderful things that are happening at First Parish.

If you are happy to receive this newsletter and you don’t usually get one - **reply** with **“please add me”** in the subject line.

Please let us know: if you **never want to receive** an email from us again – reply with **“remove”** in the subject line.

Thank you and may God bless you!

From the Pastor's Desk

Dear Child of God,

Sabbath keeping. Why is it so very important to allow oneself a Sabbath rest? Whenever I have a big question like this one, I go to scripture and listen to what God has to say. Genesis 2:3 “So God blessed the seventh day and hallowed it, because on it God rested from all the work that he had done in creation.” Exodus 20:8 “Remember the Sabbath day and keep it holy. 9 Six days you shall labor and do all your work. Deuteronomy 5: 12: ‘Observe the Sabbath day and keep it holy, as the Lord your God commanded you. 13 Six days you shall labor and do all your work. 14 But the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God; you shall not do any work—you, or (a long list of family members including anyone who works for you) 15b therefore the Lord your God commanded you to keep the Sabbath day.”

Sabbath keeping. It was God's idea. It is so important to being completely present, that God – God's self – started it! What is Sabbath? It's a day of rest. God created and God worked six days in a row. And then God rested. It was so important that God listed this behavior among the 10 most important things that a human being can do. God commanded that all people – every person – needs to take a day of rest.

Do you? Do you take a day that is “Sabbath rest” for you?

Over the centuries, different people rest on different days. It is Saturday to many. It is Sunday to others. And to those of us who work for God, the church, and that work happens to be on the Sabbath day, we take a different day. I take Monday. What is your day? Do you teach your children to take some time? In our society today, a whole day is pretty difficult. That doesn't mean that you don't try to take some time, a few hours, and be at Sabbath rest. Try to sit and look around. Take an inventory. What do you see? What do you smell? What do you hear? How does your body feel? Can you feel your heartbeat? Can you feel your lungs contract when you breathe out and expand when you breathe in? Do you stop to read a book that isn't related to your work? Do you just sit and watch the clouds go by? Do you take the time to make of list of all the things that you are grateful for?

Sabbath rest. It's that necessary time when we recharge our Spiritual battery, and we renew our connection with the divine and the divinity within ourselves. For us, as Christians, the Sunday morning worship is part of our Sabbath rest process. It's such an important time for us to gather and remember whose we are and who loves us so much. Since we are participants in our culture that focuses on to-do lists, efficiency, and getting things done, there is a trap. The unfortunate ruse that we can fall into is using Sunday as a time to talk to one another about this decision or that plan or this project or that outcome. All too often, we think of a question for someone on the Board of Missions and we think “Oh, I'll talk to her/him when I see them on Sunday.” OK. It's time for confessions. How often do you wait to talk to this person or that person, thinking it'll be somehow better to talk to them on Sunday? I totally understand. And I am wondering if we could make an agreement that Sunday is Sabbath time? At least until after the worship service. It's 2023. We have email and phones. We can send an email. We can call or text. Whatever the question or comment is, we do not need to wait until Sunday morning. Let's see if we can be better at allowing one another our Sabbath rest. And may God bless our efforts.

Take care of yourself. Remember your Sabbath rest.

Pastor Deborah

Christian Education and Faith Formation – April 2023

The CE Board is happy to announce that Stephanie CM-Berg aka Steph Berg has accepted the position of CE Director. She is a mother of two helpful and delightful children. She has a background in education with a degree in human development along with one in curriculum and instruction. We are so happy that she has stepped up to take on this role for our church. She will be having a “get to know you” segment in church on April 16th. Please welcome Ms. Steph.

Palm Sunday April 2nd will be an inter-generational service. The children will be part of the service starting with greeters and parading into church. The scripture will be a joint reading in taking parts like last Sunday. We look forward to having everyone involved in the service this Sunday.

Mark your calendars for Vacation Church Camp July 24-28th.

If you would like to register children for VCC please go to

<https://firstparishcongregationalchurch.mycokesburyvbs.com/> and look at the top of the screen. On a computer click on register. On a mobile device click on Menu. On the drop down menu will be register child or volunteer. To make this week a success we need volunteers to help in preparing for VCC and during the week. If you are interested in volunteering, please register and check off how you would like to help. The more volunteers we have the more children we can have in attendance.



Take note this month, there will be no CCEP after Easter Service on April 9th, along with no class on April 23rd, the start of NH school vacation week.

Sincerely the CE Board

Anne-Marie Merrill, Chris Cox, Paula Robinson, CE Director Steph Berg

Board of Deacons

Holy week will be upon us, as this newsletter is received. Maundy service on April 6 at 7:00 pm, will be a Tenebrae service with Taizé chanting. Communion will be served to commemorate the Last Supper that Jesus had with his Disciples.

Good Friday service, April 7 will start at First Parish at 1:00 pm, then proceed to the Episcopal Church of Transfiguration, then to Saint Matthews Methodist Church & finishing at Saint Thomas Aquinas Catholic Church, with the Stations of the Cross. The Ecumenical Services by Pastors & Priests are officiated at each other's churches.

Easter Sunrise Service, April 9, at 6 am, will be at Broadview Farm, weather permitting. Otherwise, the service will be in the Church parking lot.

Easter Service at 10 am, will be beautiful with Easter Tulips & Daffodils! Flowers are still available, see the office for details.

Some of the Deacons accompanied Pastor Deborah to the New Thing Task Force in Hillsboro. This Task force is made up of local church ministries and the NH Conference. The vision is to find new ways to be the church in our changing world. The goal is to encourage enrichment in worship.

The next lesson will be at First Parish on April 22, 9-2:00. The topic will be Theatre Improv. Join us to find out how to add spice & creativity to our stories.

The Deacons would like to thank Paul Lindemann for his diligent work on the Church's website. His persistence and dedication is much appreciated!

The Deacons also would like to recognize the awesome job the Facilities did painting the doors in the hallway of the Education wing. The hallway is so inviting and looks great!

May you have a Happy Easter!

Deacons: Jo Worthen, Liz Greenberg, Sue Lindemann, Tom Wood, Reni Harnden & Sue Brown

Message from the Moderator

Our income for 2023 through Feb is about \$1200 below what was budgeted; pledges are running behind. Our actual operating expenses are about what was expected. There are 2 other concerns with our finances. First, the budget we approved as a congregation specified a deficit of about \$20,000. Our Bridge the Gap campaign has only raised about one-fourth of this amount (\$5630) to date. A second concern is that if we hire a music director soon, we may not have enough money to cover his/her salary for the full year. Please help us meet our financial obligations by keeping up with your pledge and increasing it if possible. (Randy Brown)

Board of Personnel

Personnel has been busy posting ads for CE Director and revising ads for Music Director. We worked with CE committee to revise the job description and write an ad to be posted on NH UCC website, HireMeNH website and Indeed. We did receive 1 application but felt that person was not a good fit for FPC.

We received an application for the Music Director, but after a phone interview he felt that a job with FPC would not work for him. We have been in communication with another person interested in the Music Director job. He will be the visiting musician at our Palm Sunday service.

Personnel and Pastor Deborah met with Stephanie CM-Berg and offered her the job of CE Director. She will start on April 2nd. She will be working on average 10 hours a week (with some weeks off for school vacation). She has been attending FPC for several years and has 2 children in CCEP. Stephanie has been working with the CE Board and attending & participating in CCEP. She is a great fit for this position. We feel very blessed to have her and look forward to seeing all she will bring to the FPC education program.

Karen Wilson, Margie Ives and Beth Hunter

Fundraising Committee

RAFFLE BASKET IDEAS for THE SPRING FLING: it's time to get your creative juices flowing and donate something for our raffle table! You can use a basket, a decorative box or one covered with wrapping paper, a pail, a flower pot or bring a single item that needs no packaging at all.

What to choose: a Spring/Summer wreath or decorative item, beach, gardening or picnic items, a new puzzle, game or toy.

Gift cards are very popular along with scratch tickets, arts and crafts, snacks, and hostess gifts.

How about date night, baking with kids or pamper yourself? There even are web sites with more ideas....

*Please drop off your donations in the church office the week of May 15th and by noon on the 19th at the latest. See you at the **SPRING FLING on MAY 20th!***

Spring Fling

Spring Fling

at Frist Parish Congregational Church
47 East Derry Road, East Derry NH

Come join the fun!

Live Music by Local Talent

"World Famous" Cookie Walk
Food for purchase
Children Activities

Raffle Baskets
Local Vendors
Yard Sale

Saturday May 21st
8am-1pm

Inspiration

The Poet Thinks about the Donkey by Mary Oliver
 On the outskirts of Jerusalem
 the donkey waited.
 Not especially brave, or filled with understanding,
 he stood and waited.

*How horses, turned out into the meadow,
 leap with delight!
 How doves, released from their cages,
 clatter away, splashed with sunlight.*

But the donkey, tied to a tree as usual, waited.
 Then he let himself be led away.
 Then he let the stranger mount.

Never had he seen such crowds!
 And I wonder if he at all imagined what was to happen.
 Still, he was what he had always been: small, dark, obedient.

I hope, finally, he felt brave.
 I hope, finally, he loved the man who rode so lightly upon him,
 as he lifted one dusty hoof and stepped, as he had to, forward.

Lenten Self-love

How has your Lenten self-love project been going? Have you been mindful of times when you have been less than loving toward yourself? Did you catch yourself as you began to call yourself a negative name? Loving yourself is the greatest gift that you can give God! Have you ever thought of it this way? You thought I was going to say: “give yourself”, didn’t you? When, in fact, loving yourself IS a GIFT to God because you ARE a beloved and wonderful child of God and God loves you so much!

Are you able to bless yourself for your efforts? Can you, right now, put your hand on your heart and fully believe that you are loved more than anything by a loving Creating God? Put your hand on your heart and feel compassion and kindness for your beautiful self. We are not taught very well how to love ourselves. I know so many people who suffer from self-deprecation, even self-loathing. I’m hoping that you’re thinking right now “not me” or “I’m not that bad.”

So, work with me for just a minute. Rather than recalling once again the mistakes that you made in some past memory, I invite you to imagine a “future you”, a time and place where you are so very happy. Spend time every day imagining a future, happy, self-loving, delighted YOU. Imagine what you are doing that is giving you such great joy. Be thankful now for the joy you will have then.

Thanks be to God – always and in all ways. Pastor Deborah

Family Promise Update

One of our missions is supporting Family Promise of Southern NH, the program that houses homeless families and helps them get back on their feet. We continue to provide a dinner for the residents the first Thursday of every month, and we provide financial support as well. The facility is located in Nashua.

The program is thriving. It currently has 19 families, comprising 24 adults and 24 children, with additional families being interviewed daily to replace current families graduating from the program and finding their own housing. As noted previously, FPSNH was selected for the Charity of the Year award for 2022 by the Derry/Londonderry Chamber of Commerce. It is also the largest residential Family Promise program in the country, and a model for others.

As you may have heard, Family Promise is currently in negotiations to purchase an additional property in Derry and retrofit it for 8 homeless families. The program has signed an agreement to purchase the currently unused Vintage Grace adult day care facility, pending zoning and planning board approval and grants to cover the cost. While there is no guarantee, the program's executive director and Board of Trustees are confident that the grants needed will be awarded, based on conversations with various agencies.

If you would like to help at the program as a volunteer or wish to join our group that makes monthly meals, or if you'd just like more information, please contact me.

Randy Brown

randybrown1119@gmail.com

Gentle Reminder

Members of Boards and Committees need to look forward to coming to church. To that end, let's think about ways that we might communicate better with one another about various needs and tasks without it interrupting sacred Sabbath time. Perhaps by calling or using email during the week? Maybe we don't need to wait for Sunday to say something to someone.

One example: Facilities – there are task request forms in the office. Please fill out a form and hand it in, rather than bringing it to their attention on Sunday morning when it is time for their worship.

NH Conference UCC: NEW THING TASK FORCE Reimagine Church Using Lessons from Improv



SATURDAY, APRIL 22 9-2 Church Ministry through Lessons from Theatre Improv Story drives our mission and improv adds spice and creativity to our stories.

First Parish Congregational Church, UCC, East Derry
Led by Rev. Maren Tirabassi and Mr. Don Tirabassi

SATURDAY, MAY 20 9-2 Church Ministry through Lessons from Improv Recovery of Materials. - Reuse and recycle what you've got to improvise a new church.

First Congregational Church of Littleton Church, UCC
Led by The Rev. Dr. Elizabeth Mae Magill (Liz)

Fee: \$20/person/session \$50/church/session FREE for 6 or more members of a Church

Registration and Questions: Please contact. ANewThingTaskForce@gmail.com for questions and registration. Payment will be at the door. You may register for individual sessions or all 3.

Sponsored by: The A New Thing Task Force of Local Church Ministries of the NH Conference. Our vision is to find new ways to be the church in our changing world. Financial sponsors are the Local Church Ministries and the NH Conference Board of Directors' Fun

Save the date: Trivia Night - October 21, 2023

Trivia Night update. We are looking for someone to head up Trivia Night on October 21. The venue and DJ have already been reserved but there is a need to facilitate the very successful event. All information from last year will be shared. Please email church office or Cynthia Gray if you are interested. Cagray5851@gmail.com

Horton Center NHUCC Summer Camp



Come to Camp This Summer!

Horton Center on Pine Mountain in the beautiful White Mountains of New Hampshire is OUR camp!

It is owned and operated by the NH United Church of Christ and offers week-long camping experiences for all ages.

Programs include hiking, canoeing, rock climbing, caving, and other favorite camp activities such as S'mores around the campfire, archery, and field games.

Register for camps such as Climate Superheroes, Archery, Music/Arts/Drama, Hiking, Wacky Water World, Hogwarts on the Mountain, Grandparents/Grandchildren, Women's Week, and Family Camp.

Registration is now open!

Visit <https://hortoncenter.org/> to see the list of camp offerings, admire photos of the beautiful camp site and the surrounding mountains, and register for the camp that interests you and/or your children.

Debbie Allen will be the Dean at Wacky Water World this summer for those entering 3rd, 4th, & 5th Grades in the fall. Come and join her for a fantastic week of swimming, canoeing, water games, water stories and more. (Cabins leaders are needed, too — let's make this a First Parish week!)

Church Calendar

- Sunday, April 2 at 10am – Palm Sunday Worship Service (Communion)
- Thursday, April 6 at 7pm – Maundy Thursday Worship Service
- Friday, April 7 at 1pm – Good Friday Ecumenical Worship Walk/Drive starts here
 (Participants are not required to walk from place to place.)
 From here, we go to Transfiguration Episcopal Church; on to St Luke’s Methodist Church;
 Concluding at 3:00 at St Thomas with Stations of the Cross
- Sunday, April 9 at 6am – Easter Sunrise Worship Service at Broadview Farms
- Sunday, April 9 at 10am – Easter Worship Service
- Sunday, April 16 at 10am – Sunday Worship Service
- Saturday, April 22 9-2 – New Thing Task Force HERE at First Parish
- Sunday, April 23 at 10am – Sunday Worship Service
- Sunday, April 30 at 10am – Sunday Worship Service

Narrative Lectionary – April 2023

April 2	NL136 Triumphal Entry Palm Sunday	Matthew 21:1-17 Triumphal entry, cleansing the temple (Psalm 118:25-29)
April 6	NL137 Words of Institution Maundy Thursday	Matthew 26:17-30 Preparing for the Last Supper, mention of betrayal, Words of Institution (Psalm 116:12-15)
April 9	NL139 Easter: Matthew Easter	Matthew 28:1-10 Resurrection, empty tomb, women encounter the risen Jesus (Psalm 118:19-24)
April 16	NL140 Great Commission Second Sunday of Easter	Matthew 28:16-20 Great commission, Go therefore and make disciples of all nations (Psalm 40:9-10)
April 23	NL141 Peter’s Vision Third Sunday of Easter	Acts 10:1-17, 34-48 Peter’s vision shows how God cleanses people of every nation (Matthew 9:36-37)
April 30	NL142 Paul’s Mission Fourth Sunday of Easter	Acts 13:1-3; 14:8-18 Beginning of Paul’s mission. Healing at Lystra, gospel to the Gentile world (Matthew 10:40-42)



Photo credit: Paul Lindemann

**First Parish
Congregational Church,
UCC**

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Office Hours

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

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