

First Parish Congregational Church

May 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,

"April showers bring May flowers." I have always loved that expression! It's pretty true. It rains a lot in April and there are flowers to show for it in May. I also like that expression because it legitimizes the rainy days, which are crucial to future blooms. Those rainy, soggy days are not for no reason. They mean something. And those beautiful flowers – the bright yellow daffodils and dandelions who come first. And then the red tulips - and every other color tulip! We look forward to the magenta of the azaleas and purple rhododendron, followed by the lilacs in every shade of purple! And what about those leaves on the trees! From one day to the next, buds fill up and burst forth new leaves. All because Mother Earth is getting a giant drink of water, mixed with a sunshine that is getting warmer every day.

Is it a coincidence that Easter falls in Springtime? Probably – and who can resist the question? Easter is that time of year when believers remember the resurrection and dwell on the wonder of a new life promised by our Creating God: creating, re-creating and ever-creating. New life. New decisions. New choices. Sometimes you can just smell the newness of the air as it warms and promises us the new hope of all potentiality and wondrous promise.

The thing is that every day is a new day, and every day offers new possibilities. In a way, that's what resurrection represents: a complete break with any past mistakes or former poor choices. Things can be different if and when we choose. How many times during one day do you "replay" an event or situation from the past? We replay it and replay it and replay it in our mind. And all the while wishing that it had been different. We remember losses. We remember resentments. We remember the pain or the betrayal or the defeat. We live in the past.

And it's Spring. **What if** we consider what happened in the past to be the necessary "rainfall" in order for us to **bloom**? **What if** every time we started to replay one of those scenarios from our past, we stopped ourselves and asked the question: what would I like to have happen? **What if** rather than living in a constant revolving door of memories, we lived in visions of what we imagine for ourselves? A few years ago, a member of the church gave me a book by Wayne Dyer: "Change Your Thoughts, Change Your Life." **What if** you changed your thoughts? How would your life change?

During Lent this year, I encouraged everyone to be mindfully kind and compassionate to **themselves**. I had noticed how difficult we are on ourselves and how self-deprecating we can be at times. So, I created a calendar and for 40 days, you were encouraged to notice something positive. Only a few people reported to me that they tried. I'm hoping that many more of you at least thought about it, even if you didn't report back to me. It was hard, wasn't it? It is extremely difficult to change our habits. And the thing is that if we don't change our habits, nothing will change – and then we will complain that good things elude us.

We must endure the rain if we want to enjoy the flowers. We all have endured life's difficulties. And the truth is that it is by our own thoughts, that we continue to relive those storms. Join me as I endeavor to envision a future that is much more grace-filled than the memories of my past. Replace past resentments with visions of meaningful moments in the future, where you can be who you dream of becoming.

Let's plant a garden together – filled with visions of a thriving community rooted in the love of Christ Jesus.

Blessed be! Pastor Deborah

Christian Education and Faith Formation – May 2023

“Loving God, thank you for loving us, no matter who we are. Help us remember to always love other people, even if they are different than us. Help us be kind and love everyone. Amen.”



As we enter our last full month of CCEP for this school year. We will be discussing how we can share God's word and how we are called to be Saints. Additionally, the children are learning the Lord's Prayer in sign language for a presentation during our CCEP celebration in June. A practice sheet and website link will be sent home. Parents, when you can, please help your children practice at home.



fling and for our parents. Stay tuned to see what we come up with. We will meet in person every Sunday this month except

Memorial Day weekend May 28th.

Vacation Church Camp

Wow May is already here! Summer is fast approaching and we on the CE Board are getting ready for our Vacation Church Camp.

Save the Date: July 24-28 Food Truck Party

Volunteers needed:

Before VCC starts:

1. Planning and Organizing
2. Prepping Craft and science experiment materials
3. Distributing the publicity materials
4. Decorating the church for VCC week



During the week of VCC

1. Being a group leader
2. Being an assistant group leader
3. Being the Recreation leader
4. Teaching the science experiments

If any of these tasks you can do, please fill out a form online or in the office. We can use all the volunteers we can. Remember it can be for a day or for the week. Thank you in advance.



<https://firstparishcongregationalchurch.mycokesburyvbs.com/register-volunteer>

Also parents, you may sign up your child(ren) up for vacation church camp. Register today at <https://firstparishcongregationalchurch.mycokesburyvbs.com/register-child> We look forward to having as many children as we can. (Acceptance will be limited to the number of volunteers we have.)

CCEP and the Spring Fling

CCEP classes are prepping great gifts to sell at the annual spring fling. Our youth are preparing sugar scrubs to sell. Our elementary will be making magnets to see as well.

CE is also helping with the Plant Sale. We are looking for bulbs that can be planted now to look pretty come May 20th. If you have any, please reach out to Anne-Marie.

Upcycling crafts too! During the event, children can make cute animals, insects and other creatures out of cans of all sizes. If you have cat food cans or vegetable/bean cans that have no sharp edges, please think about cleaning them out to donate. Steph Berg is collecting them.

Thank you all for your help!

Sincerely CE Board,

Anne-Marie, Paula Robinson, Chris Cox and

CE Director Steph Berg

Continuing Progress with Meetinghouse Preservation

This past month, the lead paint stripping, minor repairs, and repainting of the Sanctuary's 1903 metal ceiling were completed to everyone's great satisfaction. The fantastic detail exposed by removing numerous past coats of paint is really beautiful.

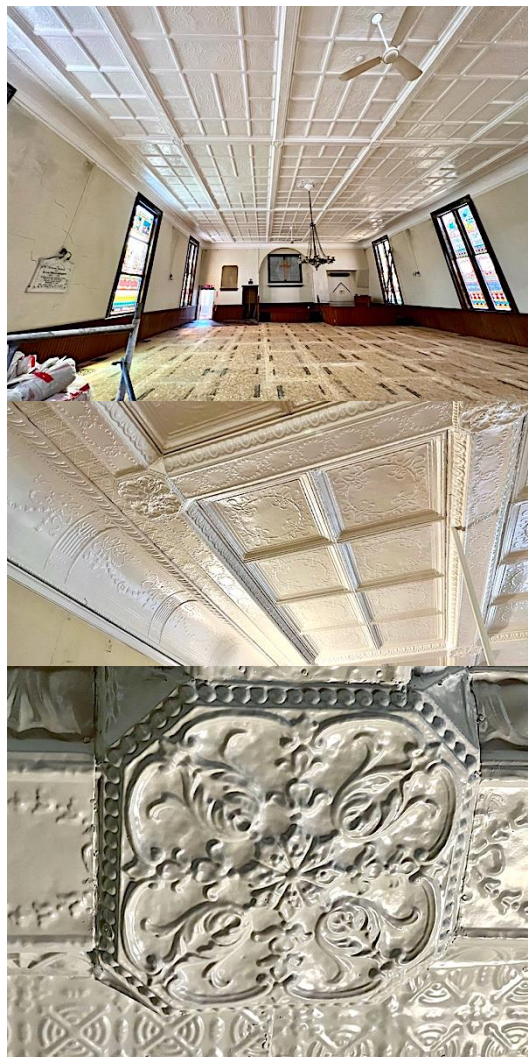
Productive discussions amongst the Sanctuary Design Team are leading to requirements that will guide the renovation plans. Decisions so far include the need to support future worship services with multimedia and streaming capabilities, to add an accessibility ramp to the choir and pulpit platform, to add legroom to the pews by deleting one or two rows, to use half pew sections to leave scattered open areas for wheelchairs or children, and to significantly improve the lighting throughout. This critical high-level planning will continue.

We've been researching and starting to get advice and proposals from experts for the remaining Sanctuary projects: historic plaster repair; electrical, fire, and lighting system updates; new multimedia and streaming capabilities; and final materials and finishes. This work will help us make firm estimates for all the remaining costs and start to sort future project schedules.

One such expert has analyzed the Sanctuary floor structure and found its weight capacities are below current building code standards. However, they also observed no stress or damage since the floor was installed in 1845, and admitted historic timber is stronger than current lumber. We will be working with various parties to determine the best path forward to a safe, strong, and legal floor.

Separate from the Sanctuary Rehab and its funding, we are working to move forward on restoring the tower clock functions: timekeeping on the three clock faces and hourly ringing of the bell. We won a \$7,000 grant for this from the Methuen Festival of Trees, and the remaining roughly \$9,000 will come from directed donations, mostly raised by the Friends of the Meetinghouse. More on this—and all our projects—next month.

— *Your Building Advisory Committee: Larry Krantz, Paul Lindemann, Bill Mann, Fred Merrill, and Bob Wilson.*



Board of Deacons

The Board of Deacons wishes to express its profound gratitude for the many folks who help make worship happen on Sunday morning—greeters, readers, ushers, bell ringers, coffee hosts. We are constantly amazed by your willingness to give time and talents each week.

We decided to bring Communion to you in a new way starting this month. Most of us dislike the little disposable cups-n-crackers that we have been using. We will provide gluten free bread and grapes to represent the “fruit of the vine”. You will be invited to come forward to receive. We welcome your gentle feedback.

A special thank you to the many hands that helped with Matt Pingree’s Celebration of Life. We are strongest when we work as one body in Christ.

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

Board of Missions

Your Mission Board has been busy this month reviewing some of our monthly disbursements and deciding where there may be more of a need at this particular time. We have some carry over money that should be disbursed over the next few months.

We began by looking globally and decided to send \$1000 to the New Hampshire UCC Global Mission specifically earmarked for the relief efforts in Turkey and Syria after the earthquake disaster. New Hampshire’s funds are sent to the National office to be combined with all the contributions from churches all over the United States.

We also voted to increase our pledge to our sister church in Dangamvura, Zimbabwe from \$300 a year to \$500 a year. This is wired once a year directly to their pastor.

On the local front, a representative from the Derry Friendship Center spoke to our congregation in church on Sunday April 30. We support the Friendship Center on a monthly basis but we also presented them on Sunday with an additional check for \$500 to help offset the additional expenses they have had recently due to building repairs.

We are also investigating and exploring ways of perhaps becoming hands on involved in a program called NuDay. NuDay is a nonprofit organization that has been in Derry for about 10 years and is a clearing house for donations made by churches and other organizations around New England and supports people in Turkey and Syria. They ship anywhere from 1-3 containers of goods to the needy in Turkey and Syria a month. We are hoping to possibly organize groups of volunteers from First Parish in the future.

Next month we will continue to discuss other organizations we support and how we might best help them with their projects. As always, we welcome your suggestions and ideas.

Respectfully submitted,

Your Mission Board

Nancy Murdock, Liz Greenberg, Cyndi Gray, Karen Wilson

Board of Personnel

Personnel is pleased to announce that Stephanie Berg signed her contract as CE Director for First Parish and began working April First. She will be working 390 hours (approximately 10 hours a week) through December when we will need to find the money in our budget to continue to fund her position.

We also have hired John Platanitis to play the piano for us one Sunday a month through the Fall. He was the young gentleman who played so beautifully for us Palm Sunday. If things work out mutually with John and we decide we want to hire him as our Music Director, we will have to raise the funds to carry him through the end of the year.

At this time we are very excited to work with both Stephanie and John. It has been a long and difficult path to find what we think is a good fit for our congregation. We hope that you will reach out and warmly welcome them as well.

Respectfully submitted,
Karen Wilson. Beth Hunter, Margie Ives

Fundraising Committee

FUND – FUN – RAISING UPDATES

We are off to a good start with events for the 2023 season – so far all events have been on-line – and the Saint Pauley shed. Please remember that your donations are appreciated in so many ways. By dropping off your still good stuff into the yellow shed – people in need receive and appreciate your merchandise and the church receives a small donation in return.

FUND RAISING EFFORTS FOR 2023 TO DATE

SAINT PAULEY SHED	\$147.18
HAPPY VALLEY SOUP	\$405.37
FAT TUESDAY	\$574.00
MCM - PIES & COOKIES	\$110.00
VENMO/ SQUARE	\$9.89
EASTER FLOWERS	\$122.80
TOTALING	\$1,369.24

Fundraising Committee (cont.)

Less than a month from today – May 20th – is our 2nd Annual Spring Fling! Come celebrate spring with us – there will be a yard sale – donations now being accepted in the John classroom – crafters/vendors will be in Currier Hall or outside. Kittredge Farms from Derry will be in the lot with spring flowers and veggies, etc. AND – who doesn't love snacks and ice cream. The Purple Shack and Sub-Zero Ice Cream will also be on site!!

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**!*

Kid crafts with our new CE Director and the CE board will also be available – as well as music – check weekly e-blasts for further upcoming details. Members of our group are also assisting Cyndi/Ann-Marie with the fall Trivia night – so stay tuned for more details.

We are an active, sharing community of God involved in supporting our family in many loving ways – and have a large goal to support our General Fund/Meetinghouse Restoration.

Save the date: Trivia Night - October 14, 2023

Trivia Night update. **Date change from October 21st to October 14th.** 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

Proceeds to benefit the Meetinghouse project. We'll need sponsors. Who can you think of who might sponsor this event?

Spring Fling – May 20, 2023



2ND ANNUAL SPRING FLING

FIRST PARISH CHURCH
47 EAST DERRY RD, EAST DERRY NH

JOIN THE FUN
SAT MAY 20TH
8AM-1PM



Basket Raffles, Plant Sale, Cookie Parade

Face Painting, Vendors & Crafters

PLUS

Sub Zero Ice Cream Truck 10-1

Children's crafts 9-12



Historical Preservation Committee

Church History: Learn and Do!

Are you interested in history, art, and artifacts? First Parish has manuscripts, books, paintings, photographs and artifacts relating to the history and activities of our three-centuries-old church. You can learn more about them by helping the Historical Preservation Committee at an inventory work party.

Saturday, May 6, 2023, from 9 am -11 am.

Saturday, June 10, 2023, from 9 am - 11 am

If you're able to help with this important but fun project, please email Nancy Heywood, nancyheywood@yahoo.com.

Dangamvura

First Parish Church has had a long relationship with a sister church in Dangamvura, Zimbabwe. Our office manager, Jill Taylor, joined the church and hopes to help us develop an even stronger relationship with our brothers and sisters in Zimbabwe.

Currently Pastor Deborah corresponds with Pastor Joshua who serves two churches right now. He walks 14 kilometers one way to do ministry among the folks in Dangamvura. He recently received word that he has been assigned there from 2024-2027.

There are several people in Dangamvura who would like to connect with someone here. Several members of FPC are active pen pals with a members of that church and there are several more folks over there who would like to correspond with someone here. Please consider becoming a "pen pal". There is a free app called "WhatsApp" that can be downloaded to your phone or device that is used extensively in other countries.

While we support them financially, and we have this handful of pen pals, what more might we do? We hope to see this program grow and to bring us closer together as we support their church with relationship and encouragement.

If you are interested in becoming a pen pal or if you have ideas on programs we might do, please contact Jill Taylor via email at officemgr@fpc-ucc.org

Inspiration

Please find below an excerpt from Annie Dillard's classic, The Writing Life, laid out as a poem for your reading pleasure.

How we spend our days
is, of course,
how we spend our lives.

What we do with this hour,
and that one,
is what we are doing.

A schedule
defends from chaos
and whim.
It is a net
for catching days.

It is a scaffolding
on which a worker
can stand
and labor with both hands
at sections of time.

A schedule is a mock-up
of reason and order —
willed, faked,
and so brought into being;

it is a peace and a haven
set into the wreck of time;
it is a lifeboat
on which you find yourself,
decades later,
still living.

Each day is the same,

so you remember
the series afterward
as a blurred and powerful pattern.

+ Annie Dillard

Celebration of Life for Matthew Pingree

I would like to extend a huge, heartfelt thank you to all of you who baked for me last week for Matthew's Celebration of Life. Never before have I seen so many wonderful desserts. We filled 24 trays of dozens of varieties of cookies, brownies and bars. There was such a selection; something for everyone, enough for family to take some home, and still enough to put a few trays in the freezer for future Sunday coffee hours or small gatherings.

Once again we prove it takes a village and that our village is strong at First Parish!

Thank you to those of you who offered but were turned away. I hope you understand now why. I appreciate your offers and hope you found another way to participate.

To quote Mark Pingree "It was a perfect Ceremony" and you all helped to make it to be just that for the family. Thank you.

Karen Wilson

Granite Statesmen

On behalf of the Church, I want to thank the Granite Statesmen for helping to raise funds for the rehab effort via the 2022 Christmas Concert given at Pinkerton Academy.

Please see the Meetinghouse update and photos of the progress made in the Sanctuary with information about what needs to be done going forward. To that end, the Church has scheduled the Chorus to return to Derry on Dec. 2 to put on another fund-raising Christmas performance.

Praise the Lord, Larry



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 30 at 10am – Sunday Worship Service-
Horton Center

Tuesday, May 2 at 6pm – Labyrinth Walk
Tuesday, May 2 at 6:45pm – Adult Faith Formation

Sunday, May 7 at 10am – Sunday Worship Service
Communion

Sunday May 14 at 10am – Sunday Worship Service
Mother's Day (Katie Cobban, worship leader)

Tuesday, May 16 at 6pm – Labyrinth Walk
Tuesday, May 16 at 6:45pm – Adult Faith Formation

Saturday, May 20 at 8am – Spring Fling

Sunday, May 21 at 10am – Sunday Worship Service

Sunday, May 21 at 3pm – Jazz Jam

Friday, May 26 at 4:30pm – Spaghetti Supper To Go

Sunday, May 28 at 10am – Sunday Worship Service
Pentecost begins

Tuesday, May 30 at 6pm – Labyrinth Walk
Tuesday, May 30 at 6:45pm – Adult Faith Formation

Narrative Lectionary – May 2023

May 7	NL143 Gospel as Salvation Fifth Sunday of Easter	Romans 1:1-17 Gospel as power of God for salvation to all, both Jews and Greeks. <i>(Matthew 9: 10-13)</i>
May 14	NL144 God's Love Poured Out Sixth Sunday of Easter	Romans [3:28-30] 5:1-11 God's Love has been poured into our hearts through the Spirit; Christ died for the ungodly. <i>(Matthew 11: 28-30)</i>
May 21	NL145 Hope of Resurrection Seventh Sunday of Easter	Romans 6:1-14 We are buried with him by baptism into death, so that we might walk in newness of life. Hope of resurrection. <i>(Matthew 6:24)</i>
May 28	NL146 Nothing Can Separate Us Pentecost	Acts 2:1-4 Pentecost Romans 8:14-39 The groaning of creation, Spirit helps us in our weakness, nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus. <i>(Matthew 28: 16-20)</i>





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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