

First Parish Congregational Church United Church of Christ – East Derry, New Hampshire

August 2023

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



“My Lord God, I have no idea where I am going. I do not see the road ahead of me. I cannot know for certain where it will end. Nor do I really know myself, and the fact that I think that I am following your will does not mean that I am actually doing so. But I believe that the desire to please you does in fact please you.”

Thomas Merton

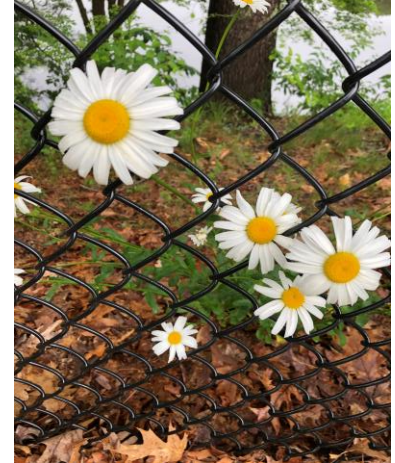
From the Pastor's Desk

Dear Child of God,

I recently came across a lovely poem by Robert Stafford:

“The Way It Is”

There's a thread you follow. It goes among
things that change. But it doesn't change.
People wonder about what you are pursuing.
You have to explain about the thread.
But it is hard for others to see.
While you hold it you can't get lost.
Tragedies happen; people get hurt
or die; and you suffer and get old.
Nothing you do can stop time's unfolding.
You don't ever let go of the thread.



As followers of Jesus Christ, we are not immune to loss or getting old. And things do change – sometimes quickly, sometimes slowly. And time marches on – no matter what.

AND our **thread** is our faith in a compassionate Creator, a generous Christ and an ever-present Spirit that is life-giving and love-effusing. This thread of compassion, generosity and love is our heritage, and it is our destiny. It is our birth rite – no matter what!

And then, holding fast to this mystical thread, we have a responsibility to navigate this life we are blessed with as gracefully and graciously as we possibly can. Is it difficult? Of course! Who wants to love people who hate you? Is it worth it? You betcha! Hating someone is like drinking the poison you have concocted to harm another person. No one needs to choose that. Especially when we hold fast to a thread of love, light, compassion and caring.

We began a 6-week program entitled “Beguiled by Beauty” in our Sunday morning worship service. The sub-text of this series is “Cultivating a Life of Contemplation & Compassion.” We will be talking a lot about contemplation. What it means. What it feels like. What famous contemplatives do we know? Another word for those who contemplate as a life practice are mystics. There is something mystical about contemplating rather than thinking all the time.

Like the poem says – “don't ever let go”. I thank God for each and every one of you and I pray that you are well. Hope to see you in person one day real soon.
In peace and wonder,

Pastor Deborah

Christian Education and Faith Formation

CHILDREN CHRISTIAN EDUCATION PROGRAM

There will be no CCEP classes this month as we continue summer break. We will resume in September. This month, we are planning for fun exciting valuable lessons to share with the children for the Fall.

VACATION CHURCH CAMP (VCC)

The much anticipated week is now over. It was a huge success. This would not have happened without a team of volunteers. There were 10 volunteers for the whole week along with other helpers that came twice or three times. Without their hard work, determination and willing to help, VCC would not have been as fun. So THANK YOU to all who volunteered during the week and/or in the prepping stages! You are appreciated so much more than you know.

We had 15 children enrolled ages 5-11. The children had fun with Mr. Alec and his telling of the bible stories, Ms. Steph with recreational games, Ms. Paula with her yummy themed snacks, Ms. Reni with the science experiments, and Ms. Jennifer with her crafts that all related to how God Provides for Us. Along with the opening and closing sessions led by Top Chef Chris and DJ Cupcake (puppet aka Ms. Steph).

Through out the week, we learned a prayer with the daily specials. All the specials came together at the end for a prayer to say:

God is great.

God is good.

Let us thank God for our food.

By God's hands, we all are fed.

Give us, Lord, our daily bread.

With the Main Course for the week, "Give us this day, our daily bread," Matthew 6:11.

We ended the week with a surprise food truck appearance for yummy treats that all enjoyed. A special thanks to Jo and Jon for coming with Purple Snack Shack for a wonderful way to end our VCC Food Truck Party week.





Adult Faith Formation – “Not your average Bible Study”

A good old hymn says: “I love to tell the story.” We know some Bible stories pretty well – or we think we do. How do we go about learning others? How would you do in a Bible trivia contest? How would you like to read the stories in a context where you can ask the questions you may have? Are the same stories in all four Gospels? Who talks about the Canaanite woman and who talks about the Samaritan woman?

Friends, this Fall we will look at your favorite stories from the Bible, specifically the favorite stories from the Gospels. And we will look to notice the differences in the stories from one Gospel to another or why one story is in one Gospel and not another. The book that will be helpful to you is: *Synopsis of the Four Gospels* edited by Kurt Aland. (“I suggest you buy it ‘used’, which will cost around \$20. If you have a problem acquiring it, and you want to participate, please let me know and I will get it for you.” Pastor Deborah)

Our schedule will be the First and Third (and fifth) Tuesday of the month, beginning September 19th - going to Advent. There will be six gatherings. We will meet hybrid fashion so come if you would like to (we will meet in Corinthians). Those dates are: 9/19; 10/3,17,31; 11/7,21. We might be able to cover 3 stories in each session for a total of 18 stories! Won’t that be fun?

Join us on Tuesday evening between 6:45 and 8:00 (dates above) for a fun evening of getting to know the Bible better! No tests! No studying! No worries! If you have any questions, see Pastor Deborah.

Finally: what are YOUR favorite stories from the Gospels? The birth narrative? The resurrection stories? The seed parables? The Beatitudes? Send an email to Pastor Deborah by September 1, to get your stories on the list!



Board of Deacons

The Deacons are a small but mighty team who assist with worship planning and implementation in cooperation with Pastor Deborah. We would welcome more volunteers to join our team!

Pastor Deborah is also seeking volunteers to serve on a Creative Worship Team using the materials and resources from the Worship Design Studio, developed by Reverend Marcia McFee. Pastor Deborah has already been incorporating some of these ideas of creative enrichment into her experiential activities during worship to appeal to the child in all of us. See Pastor Deborah is you're interested in learning more and exploring the possibilities of these resources for our worship experience!

Save the date: Sunday August 20th—2nd outdoor summer service. **Remember to bring your own chair******

The Deacons would like to make the congregation aware of a repeated scam being perpetrated on local church congregations, in which emails or texts are sent to parishioners claiming to be from their pastors, and asking for financial help. The generous and giving nature of church folks makes this a particularly insidious scam! **Please know that Pastor Deborah would never seek your help in this way—and do not ever send money! If in doubt, call the office before acting.**

Submitted by Liz Greenberg, Board of Deacons

Fundraising Committee

Happy summer to all our FPC friends!! We are more than halfway through the year and on our way to a successful year.

Thank you to all who participated in the Dining for Dollars event that happened at Panera - we were able to accrue \$85.06 - by enjoying some good food. If you have any ideas on another location for Dining for Dollars – please let us know.

As of the end of June we have been able to raise over \$5,600 towards our goal for 2024 of \$12,000. Fall is coming and so is the Sugar Plum Fair – stay tuned for further details. If you know of anyone that would like to participate as a crafter – we can get you an application – we have over 20 applications out now and are always looking for new ideas.

Thank you!

Cathy Zylinski, Stephanie Berg, Julie Greenfield, Liz Greenberg, Jill Taylor, Pastor Deborah Roof, Carol Guerrin, Jon Buck, Beth Hunter and Cathy Pottle

Save the date: Trivia Night - October 14, 2023

We are happy to report that plans for the second annual Trivia Night is underway. "Hare of the Dawg" has agreed to return so we can look forward to another scrumptious array of appetizers. We have had a lot of interest in this event, people saying they will return and they "have friends" who want to get a table. The price will be the same of \$25. Tickets will go on sale August 1st.

The Boys and Girls Club can seat 300 people. Wouldn't it be great to fill it up? We are looking for sponsors to defray some of the costs which will promise more profit for our Rehabilitation plans.

- If you can help in any way, please see the following list of Planning members:
- Registration: Julie Greenfield and Jill Taylor
- Sponsorships: Liz Greenberg
- Raffle table: Karen Wilson
- Publicity: Cathy Zylinski

Also supporting this team are Pastor Deborah, Cathy Pottle and Cyndi Gray

Proceeds to benefit the Meetinghouse project. Sponsorship is a great way to grease the wheel. Who can you think of might sponsor this event?

Safe Church Committee

After church on July 30th, several members met to discuss keeping our Church safe. We will be ensuring that some of the action items from a Police visit this year are completed. We also will be working on updating the bylaws and policies. On December 10th, we've invited an Emergency Management group to come in and review safety topics with us. More details to follow in the next few months. Our next meetings are scheduled at 11 am on August 27th, September 17th, October 8th and October 29th. If you have any questions or want to discuss certain topics, please reach out to the following members:

Christie Lombardi, Nancy Murdock, Chris Cox, Jo Worthen, Thomas Wood, Ken Williams, Pastor Deborah, Julie Greenfield

BEWARE and BE AWARE

Our world gets more and more beautiful – resplendent with opportunities for growth of all kinds and advantages galore. Opportunities for unsavory people to take advantage of the generous are also growing. Unfortunately, there are people who would like to take advantage of your beautiful selves. You are generous and kind. Some people will manipulate that innocence. Please beware and be aware.

Do everything you can to educate yourselves regarding technology. A whole new stream of vocabulary has emerged. There is hacking and phishing and spoofing impersonating. Malicious actors send messages and pretend to be someone you trust. They manipulate you into believing them and they ask you to give them information or even purchase gift cards. And they say all the right things! Do not fall victim to these malevolent forces.

We are a church, and we are a mission-focused church. You are asked to give financially to the church and to the church's missions every year. We "pass the hat" every Sunday. We inform you of the needs and we report back to you how we spend your charitable contributions.

Just yesterday, the office manager received an email from a person identifying themselves as a staff person, asking for a file with all of the member information on it. Luckily, we are aware that things aren't always as they seem. We called the person who theoretically sent the email. She didn't do it! Upon further investigation, we saw that even though the email was signed with her name, the email address was not hers! We reported it, of course.

And last week a colleague of mine, a pastor at another church, saw me and said, "You didn't get a text from me, did you? Because it wasn't me." Churches are being targeted. We know that several times over the last few years someone has impersonated me either by text or email. Good people have been hurt.

These malicious people are very convincing. They say all the right things. People who get taken advantage of are victims. They are not stupid. Please do what you can to spread the word for everyone to be aware and to beware of any attempts to get information or money. I heard someone say, "Trust but verify." I don't know that I would go that far. I might say "Listen and verify. Don't trust until you have verified!"

We thank you for your continuing financial support of our church and our missions. You are a thoughtful and generous people. I pray your generosity will not be curtailed because of the actions of others. God truly loves a joyful giver!

I thank God for you, Pastor Deborah

UCC General Synod 34

**June 30 - July 4, 2023
Indianapolis, Indiana**

What is General Synod?

The General Synod of the UCC is the national decision-making body for the denomination, responsible for giving general direction to the evangelistic, missionary, and justice programs of the UCC. Because the UCC holds to an explicitly congregational polity, though, any decisions made by the Synod are not binding upon the UCC's congregations (or its associations or conferences) in any way, though the national offices and the UCC's *Constitution and Bylaws* expect serious consideration to be given them. The Synod is responsible for authorizing budgets and electing board members for the "Covenanted Ministries" of the UCC. The Synod usually makes pronouncements and passes resolutions on social and political issues judged to be of concern by delegates as well; most if not all have historically reflected liberal theological and political perspectives, including support for civil rights, feminism, environmentalism, and rights for homosexuals.

The Synod itself is composed of delegates, either clergy or lay, from the 36 conferences of the UCC, apportioned in a manner similar to states in the United States House of Representatives, with each conference assigned a minimum of three delegates regardless of its membership size as a proportion of the national membership. The national bylaws permit a minimum of 675 delegates from all conferences, but no more than 725. Others receiving vote in Synod include the denomination's officers, the corporate members of the United Church of Christ Board and representatives of so-called "Historically Underrepresented Groups," such as racial minorities, the disabled, young adults, and gay and lesbian persons. Conference delegations larger than the minimum of three are required to have at least half their numbers be composed of lay people and, to the extent possible, include as many of the HUGs as previously described.

Our Church was represented:

Anne Engelhardt and Debbie Gline Allen from our church attended General Synod 34 in Indianapolis from June 30 to July 5th. The theme was "Making All Things New" (Isaiah 43:18-19).

The Keynote speaker was author Rev. Nadia Bolz-Weber. History was made when Rev. Karen Georgia Thompson was elected the first woman, and the first Black woman as the UCC General Minister and President.

Fourteen Resolutions were worked on and voted on with only one resolution being defeated.

Resolutions that passed:

- Denouncing the Dobson Decision and Proclaiming Abortion as Healthcare
- A Resolution Calling for a New Study by our Church on our Relationship with the Indian Boarding Schools and the Boarding Schools in Hawaii
- Closing the Digital Divide: Calling on the UCC to Seek Digital Justice and Inclusion
- A Resolution Urging Planning for the Implementing Electrification
- Faithful Advocacy for Intersectional and Transformational Healing in Harm Reduction
- Affirming Guns to Gardens and Other Gun Violence Prevention Ministries

- A Resolution to Urge All Responsible Entities to Join in Reparations to Fund Christian Hawaiian Language Education Programs to Undo a Century of Extinction. Americanization and Indoctrination Policies Extinguished the Original Christian Hawaiian alphabet.
- Free from Plastic Pollutions
- A Resolution Supporting Public School Educators, Academic Freedom, and Equity Efforts in Schools
- A Resolution to Study and Develop Reparations Proposals for African Americans
- A Resolution Condemning Prolonged Solitary Confinement as a Form of Torture
- Actively Affirming the Human Dignity of Transgender and Non-binary Persons
- A Resolution Calling on the UCC Local Churches to Witness “A White Supremacy Free Zone” & Confronting White Supremacy

Bylaws were also voted on and passed. Six UCC women were honoured as “Movement Makers’ a biennial award from the Justice and Local Church Ministries. The Antoinette Brown Society honoured two clergy.

A thousand of hygiene kits were assembled and a blood drive was held. Quilts were on display from “The Quilt Stories From the Names Project” dedicated to those fallen victim to AIDS and the “Sacred Ally Quilt Ministry” from nine New Hampshire Churches that collaborated to make 10 quilts that together memorialize George Floyd’s dying words.

As a first-time attendee it was such a wonderful experience. The worship was outstanding and the people were friendly and kind. You could feel the love and acceptance for one another and the joy of being together and the sharing of the Love of God. One of my favorite parts was the “Speak Out” sessions where anyone could sign up and step up to the microphone for two minutes and talk about what-ever was on your heart or what you wanted to share. Everyone had a voice.

Next General Synod 35 will be July 11-15, 2025 in Kansas City. I will be there and I hope others from our church will be there too.

Anne Engelhardt

Church Calendar – August 2023

Thursday, August 3 at 6:30pm – CE Board Meeting

Sunday, August 6 at 10am - Sunday Worship Service

Sunday, August 6 after church service 11am - Fundraising Committee

Monday, August 7 at 7pm – Finance Meeting

Tuesday, August 8th at 6pm – Labyrinth Walk Hybrid

Tuesday, August 8th at 7pm – Sanctuary Design Team

Sunday, August 13 at 10am – Sunday Worship Service

Wednesday, August 16 at 7pm – Council Meeting

Friday, August 18 at 2pm – Deacons Meeting

Sunday, August 20 at 10am – Sunday Worship Service Outdoors

Sunday, August 20 at 11am – Pastor Deborah presents “Wild Goose Festival”

(her Study Leave July 2023) inside

Sunday, August 20 at 3pm – Jazz Jam – come listen or come play or sing!

Friday, August 25 at 4:30pm – Spaghetti Supper To Go

Sunday, August 27 at 10am – Sunday Worship Service



Photo credit: Paul Lindemann

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UCC**

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as office hours may vary daily

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