

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

September 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,

Fall is in the air. Although summer is ending, September is a time of beginnings, isn't it? Even for those of us who are more or less "distanced" from the rhythms of "back to school thinking," there is something that gently whispers: "let's begin again." It's a lovely time to set some new goals, or to consider doing something differently, something engaging, something that is somehow "better" than before.

In my sermon this past Sunday (8.27.23) I outlined 5 things that we could do to 'birth joy'. Everyone wants more joy in their life! The reality is that joy doesn't come from "out there" somewhere. Joy is an inside job. Joy comes from within. You could almost say that you – and only you – have complete control over your joy! In case you missed it, here are the 5 easy-to-do steps to "birth joy":

#1: Live as if everything is a miracle.

#2: Pay attention and choose to see awe. Notice and savor the miraculous in what is otherwise seemingly ordinary.

#3: Cultivate a practice of gratefulness.

#4: Be curious. Let yourself be surprised! Cling to the *process* rather than the destination.

#5: Remember that we are not alone. Awe is activated when we remember how connected we are. Joy comes from connection.

One of life's biggest secrets is that we have choices, and we can choose how we see things. Michelangelo said: "I saw an angel in the stone and carved to set it free!" He didn't just sit there and stare at the stone. He chose to see possibility, and in that possibility, there was an angel, which he then set free. How awesome is that?!

The world is exactly as we choose to see it. Do you see trouble and turmoil? Do you see splendor and significant goodness? Do you see problems, or do you see possibilities? Do you see dead ends, or do you see detours?

How different would our lives be if we could celebrate what is "right" with the world? For the past 6 weeks during worship, we have emphasized awe and wonder. We have encouraged prayerful contemplative practices. Continue these practices as much as you are able. If you are feeling discouraged or depressed, do something for yourself by making a list of everything around you that is beautiful, that is helpful, that is positive. Start with the basics. If you are making a list, start by acknowledging that you have paper and a writing instrument (That is, if you use paper. If you are writing on an electronic device, give thanks for that device!) If you are writing, give thanks that you know how to write. How did that happen? Did you have teachers? Give thanks. I think you can see that we could go on and on with this exercise. You'll have a whole list of wonderful things, before you even lift your eyes!! Celebrate all of these things. Celebrate your advantages. Celebrate your health! Celebrate the people in your life! Celebrate where you live! Celebrate the vehicle you drive!

I once heard someone say, "I don't think about whether the glass is half-full or half-empty. I am just so grateful that I have a glass! Not to mention that there is something in it!" Now that's celebrating what is right!

I celebrate you, dear friends of First Parish!
Blessings and Wonder, Pastor Deborah

Christian Education and Faith Formation

We hope everyone had a fabulous Summer. It was wonderful to have some of our younger disciples to come to Vacation Church Camp back in July.

Now we are focusing on the new year for Children Christian Education Program!

To welcome the new season we are entering, we are having a Big Blessing Sunday. This is a blessing for everyone from teachers, students, and nurses, to care givers and more. Please bring your school bags or work bags to be blessed for the new season upon us. Also as a family, bring something to share for the church potluck after service. Stay to share meal and the blessings of all who come into First Parish.

September 17, we start CCEP classes back up. We look forward to having a bigger youth group (grades 5-8), a wonderful elementary group (k-4) and any little ones that would like to join too. As we get ready to explore the bible stories we hear in the service through discussions and activities.

Do you love working with children? As we look forward to CCEP, we would love a few more volunteers to join us. It can be every Sunday, once a month or being a substitute teacher when needed. Please let CE Director Steph Berg know if you are interested.

As we look forward, there are important dates to keep in mind. Take note of the following Sunday dates to remember in 2023:

1. September 10 - Big Blessing Sunday
2. September 17 - the first day of CCEP classes.
3. October 8 - no classes
4. November 26 - no classes
5. December 3 - Advent Workshop, a family event, instead of CCEP classes
6. December 24 - Children Christmas Pageant for morning service (no CCEP classes afterwards)
7. December 31 - no classes

Plus Thursday Sept 7th is the next CE Board Meeting at 6:30 in the CE office. All are welcome to join. We are also looking for 2 more board members. We meet just once a month. If interested please reach out to Anne-Marie the Head of the CE Board ampmerrill@yahoo.com or come to the meeting.

As we say goodbye to our traveling Flat Jesus for the summer, remember to keep Flat Jesus with you wherever you continue to go. Jesus is always with us from sun up to sun down and even in the middle of the night. Continue to pray the prayer Jesus has taught us and stay strong! You are brave and wonderfully made.

“Be still and know I am God” Psalm 46:10

We look forward to seeing many as we return of the Children Christian Education Program.

Sincerely,

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

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 twice a month, to be announced, starting in September - 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). 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 to get your stories on the list!

Mindfulness Practice - Labyrinth

Pastor Deborah began a labyrinth walking practice during Covid. It continues to this day. We have people from all over NH call in and we participate in a one-half hour mindfulness exercise. Many are UCC and some of our Catholic friends join us. It is open to whoever has zoom!

We gather right at 6:00 pm, we check in and consider a reflection or prayer of the day. We then take 10 minutes to walk or journal in silence. Some write poetry. Some trace the labyrinth. Some color. Some sit silently. We then come back “on screen” and share as we feel called to do so. It is a wonderful way to “reset” and recharge our energy.

Our lives are so busy. We are go, go, going without stopping. This is such a great reminder to just stop and breathe. Everyone who participates is blessed each time.

Please let Pastor Deborah or Jill know that you would like to be added to the list of folks who receive the zoom invitation.

Board of Deacons

The Board of Deacons is excited about ramping up for an exciting Fall Season. We offer you three things of note:

- **Sunday, September 3rd service** will be led by Debbie Gline Allen, while Pastor Deborah and 21 of our First Parish members are worshipping in the chapel on Star Island.
- **Big Blessing Sunday** (formerly Rally Sunday) **Sunday, September 10th**, with blessings of all, Communion, and followed by traditional Potluck lunch. Please bring your favorite potluck dish to share in fellowship! Please let Pastor Deborah know if you wish to receive a special blessing during this service. Pastor Deborah assures us that the worship service will intentionally “run short” so that we may enjoy fellowship. We don’t have many opportunities to just sit and share. Please plan to stay for lunch after worship.
- **Music Participation:** A gentle reminder that there is no one “right way”. Whether you choose to stand or to sit while singing. Whether it’s the hymns or the songs of praise — the congregation is welcome to trust their own bodies’ needs. Stand or sit during these parts of service, whatever your individual preference.

Submitted by Liz Greenberg, Board of Deacons

NH Women of UCC Fall Gathering at First Parish – October 14

A VOICE FOR JUSTICE

Come, spend a day with the UCC women of New Hampshire: October 14: 9:30-3

Tentative schedule:

9:30 Registration and coffee; Set up White Elephant Tables

10:00 Welcome: Rev. Dr. Deborah Roof, followed by worship with communion

11:00 Presentation: FAMILY PROMISE OF SOUTHERN NH: “Out in the Cold”

12:00 Lunch, White Elephant Table, Quilt Raffle

1:00 Business (secretary’s report) (financial report) (any other business)

1:15 “JUST PEACE PLAYERS”: Women of the Greatest Generation: Stories of Faith, Hope, Love, and Courage

3:30 Closing (approximately)

After the closing, for anyone interested, the Rev. Dr. Deborah Roof will introduce her book: “Words, Wonder, and the Divine in You”, which will be available for sale.

Board of Missions

Mission Board Newsletter Article

Recently, the Mission Board has been working hard to disburse funds from previous years accrual of Mission funds. This month we distributed an extra \$500 to the Pastor's Discretionary Fund to support specific needs in the community, and an extra \$500 to Family Promise to purchase diapers for the children in the program.

On a regular basis, First Parish proudly supports the UCC's "5 for 5" Mission Giving Programs. These 5 Missions are: Our Church's Wider Missions (OCWM), One Great Hour of Sharing (OGHS), Strengthen the Church, Neighbors in Need, and The Christmas Fund. See the following description of each of these special missions:

OCWM: This resource highlights work being done in the UCC national setting. Wider Church Ministries of the United Church of Christ supports congregations and other settings of the church in developing relationships with a wider church that is global, multiracial, and multicultural, Open and Affirming, and accessible to all. OCWM also provides support for Justice & Local Church Ministries of the UCC in doing justice, seeking peace, and building vibrant faith communities that are welcoming to all. Justice & Local Church Ministries is responsible for supporting local churches with worship and faith forming publications, resources, and education. The ministries and services of Justice and Local Church Ministries are central to the identity of the United Church of Christ. First Parish contributes \$350/monthly to this important mission.

OGHS: Resources for international programs in health, education and agricultural development, emergency relief, refugee ministries, and both international and domestic disaster response, are administered by Wider Church Ministries, Global Sharing of Resources. This is a Special Offering from the congregation taken once a year, supplemented by \$100 from First Parish.

Strengthen the Church: Re-imagines and builds the future of the UCC. Shared at the conference and national levels, Strengthen the Church largely supports youth ministries and full-time leaders of new churches in parts of the country where the UCC does not have a strong presence. It also provides support for existing church's new initiatives. This is a Special Offering from the congregation taken once a year, supplemented by \$100 from First Parish.

Neighbors in Need: Supports ministries of justice and compassion throughout the United States, including the Council for American Indian Ministries (CAIM), justice and advocacy, and direct service projects supported by Justice and Local Church Ministries. This is a Special Offering from the congregation taken on October 1st, World Communion Sunday., supplemented by \$100 from First Parish.

The Christmas Fund: Formerly known as "Veterans of the Cross," the Christmas Fund is an emergency fund for retired pastors and pastors of small churches who find themselves in a difficult financial situation. The offering is administered through the United Church Board for Ministerial Assistance, the charitable arm of the Pension Boards. Funds provide direct financial support to active and retired clergy, lay employees, and their surviving spouses may be eligible. In addition, there are Supplementation of Small Annuities, Supplementation of Health Premiums, Emergency Grants, and/or Christmas "Thank You" Gift Checks.

This is a Special Offering from the congregation taken once a year, supplemented by \$100 from First Parish. Submitted by Liz Greenberg

BACK TO THE SANCTUARY - BAC Committee

The BAC (Building Advisory Committee) continues to plan the next projects that will get the church community back into the historic Sanctuary.

We are close to selecting electrical and lighting contractors, have interviewed and will likely use an excellent historic plasterer — who started plastering for his dad at age ten in Northern Ireland — and are working with a fantastic multimedia consultant.

The latter is Tim Griffin, an A/V expert who is also a leader at the Congregational church in Deerfield and whom you may know through his support of many UCC Conference events. He is helping us select excellent but cost-effective equipment and devising ways to unobtrusively blend it all into our beloved historic space.

Our approach to the necessary multimedia, electrical, fire alarm, and lighting system upgrades is to install the infrastructure we need — all the power, cabling, and connectors running in and through the walls — for the foreseeable future, but then start by purchasing only the most essential gear and capabilities.

We defined those essentials in large part through the Sanctuary Design Team.

This group of deacons, CECC reps, church leaders, historians, and folks who grew up in the church have been meeting regularly to help guide the Sanctuary refurbishment. With extensive discussion, they ranked the possible architectural and technological things we want to do as *initial*, *soon*, or *later* priorities.



This ranking — call it *frugal phasing* — is essential to keeping the initial cost of returning to the Sanctuary as low as possible. Even so, we'll need to raise significantly more funds over the next 12 months or so to accomplish this by Christmas 2024.

This fall we'll have actual quotes or estimates for all these costs and will share them — and the beautiful Sanctuary refurb plans! — with the whole congregation. Meanwhile, if you have questions or suggestions, please pass them along.

Submitted by Paul Lindemann for the BAC (Larry Krantz, Bill Mann, and Bob Wilson); the Sanctuary Design Team (Diane Breeden, Chris Cox, Holly Gorgol, Reni Harden, Nancy Heywood, Sue Lindemann, Paula Robinson, Pastor Deborah, Wendy Williams, and Cathy Zylinski; and our internal audio experts (Dani Allen & Alec Cobban).

Extraordinarily Ordinary

I would like to share something wonderful that I think shows how far First Parish has come with the Meetinghouse rehabilitation project! On Saturday June 3, 2023, First Parish Church was the site for a Civil War Encampment. The day was cool and it rained occasionally but the reenactors provided good information about what life was like for Civil War soldiers and the Derry History Museum set up fascinating displays in Currier Hall. One highlight of the day was a gathering in honor of William L. S. Tabor who fought in the Civil War, was awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor, and is buried in Forest Hill Cemetery in Derry. During the Civil War Encampment there was a ceremony in honor of Tabor, and this particular event also recognized the generosity of the family's decision to loan the medal to the Derry Museum of History. Later in the morning, a large group of Tabor's descendants went on a tour of the Meetinghouse. It was wonderful to see this intergenerational group gather outside, hear an introduction by Paul Lindemann, and then walk into the connector building on their way to the interior of the Meetinghouse. The group was comprised of over a dozen people of many ages, including one young man in a wheelchair. As I watched the group head into the connector and saw some head up the stairs, while others including several elderly folks and the young man in a wheelchair, proceeded to the elevator. The entire group ended up in the sanctuary to learn more about the Meetinghouse, various people affiliated with it, and look at significant features (including the stained-glass window in honor of General Thom who fought in the Civil War soldier).

The fact that First Parish **has** a connector building with **an elevator** and we can **easily accommodate people of various ages and mobility issues** is both extraordinary (for someone like me who has so many memories of people previously using the awkward lift in what looked like a closet) as well as ordinary (in the present I see how people can get to all levels). It was wonderful to see the large tour group moving seamlessly and easily from the flag pole area outside the church into the sanctuary.

I suggest we recognize and celebrate that First Parish has come a long way! The connector works well and we have an elevator that makes access easy!

Submitted by Nancy Heywood, Historical Preservation Committee

UPCOMING WORK SESSIONS RELATING TO HISTORICAL ARTIFACTS

What do a pair of small blue gloves, a painting of the Meetinghouse made in 1963, and medallion commemorating a local anniversary all have in common? They are items from the collections of First Parish's archives and were described by volunteers who attended work parties earlier this year. If you are curious about the past and want to help the Historical Preservation Committee assemble better descriptions for inventory lists and upcoming web presentations, please sharpen your pencils and join in on the fun!

The next two work parties will be:

- Saturday, September 30, 2023 from 9 am – 11 am
- Saturday, October 21, 2023 from 9 am – 11 am

Place: Corinthians classroom

Inventory forms, instruction, and pencils will be provided. Bring a sense of curiosity, some patience to slow down and really look at some items and an understanding that the descriptions will help us care for and manage the items, even if we can't figure out everything about every item. (For example, we don't know who wore those blue gloves or what their exact connection to first Parish is, but we have better information from the work of the volunteers.) Please let Nancy Heywood (email: nancyheywood@yahoo.com) know if you have questions.



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

When it comes to the safety of our members, we can't overdo it! Safe church has met again and has developed a plan to update the church's Safe Church Policies and Procedures, as well as the By-Laws, both of which are out of date. Keeping in mind the welfare of everyone who attends worship with us, we are hoping to get your input and direction. Join us for any conversation/ meeting. Let us know your thoughts. We will meet again in September. In the meantime, we have smaller task forces working to make updates.

Please mark your calendar and plan to attend a "Table Talk Event" sponsored by Law Enforcement agencies who work with a variety of houses of worship. This will be December 10th. An Emergency Management group will come in help all of us to review safety protocols. More details to follow in the next few months.

Our next meetings are scheduled at 11 am on 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

2024 Pledge Drive

Our theme: “**Because of you, our church changes lives.**”

Our Scripture: Galatians 6:9: “**Let us not grow tired of doing good.**”

The Financial Stewardship pledge drive task force has met several times in preparation for the 2024 pledge drive. These faithful disciples are: Eileen Cox, Reni Harnden, Beth Hunter, Margie Ives, Paula Robinson, Cathy Zylinski and Pastor Deborah. If you have any questions, please see one of them.

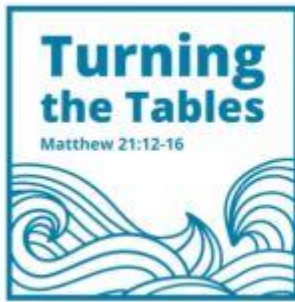
Last year church members adopted a deficit budget. We made as many cuts as we could and even cut the beloved Music program, which is so vital to meaningful worship. AND with a lot of prayer and hard work, we are doing ok, under the circumstances.

We have a challenge ahead of us. The task force recognizes this and decided to start early this year. This fall the Pledge Drive will be in October, in hopes of presenting our Finance Committee with the information they need to prepare the 2024 Budget. We will hear personal testimonies from church members throughout October, sharing why they pledge.

Your Financial Stewardship letter from the pastor, as well as pledge cards, will be available **Sunday, September 24th**. Whatever is not picked up at church will be mailed. Pledging is a faith practice - like gratitude, like prayer, like worship. **Please consider pledging this year.** And feel welcome to contact the members of this Task Force with any questions.



Turning the Tables



*Official Call to the
2023 Annual Meeting
New Hampshire Conference
United Church of Christ*

Dear Members of the New Hampshire Conference Family,

The Annual Meeting Planning Committee invites you to come together, as the Gathered Conference, for the **222nd Annual Meeting of the New Hampshire Conference, UCC.**

When: Saturday, October 21, 2023 **Where:** **Grappone Conference Center** 70 Constitution Avenue, Concord, NH 03301 **and** via **Zoom** Webinar, YouTube Livestream access information to be provided upon registration

The theme for the 222nd Annual Meeting of the New Hampshire Conference is “Turning the Tables”. We will spend our day reflecting on the lessons the Spirit will draw forth from Matthew 21: 12-16

Our keynote speaker will be Bekah Maren Anderson. Bekah (she/her) is a queer disabled writer, theologian, and activist. She has been writing and speaking about disability Ministry and Theology since 2016, earned her master of divinity from Union Theological Seminary in 2021, and currently serves as co-chair for the United Church of Christ Disabilities Ministries Board of Directors. When not trapped in her inescapable desk, she can usually be found playing Dungeons and Dragons.

Throughout the month of October there will be opportunities to participate in educational sessions to prepare for the business meeting on October 21st and to reflect on the current and future work of the Conference.

- October 10 (7pm): Review of the 2024 Mission Income and Spending Plan
- October 12 (7 pm): Envisioning the Future of Associations w/ Association Capacity Task Force
- October 17 (7 pm): Reflections on General Synod 34 with your NHCUCC Synod Delegates
- October 24 (7 pm): Conversation with Annual Meeting Keynote Speaker Bekah Anderson
- October 22 (4 pm) & October 26 (7 pm): Conversations with the Conference Ministers

On October 21st, the Gathered Conference will convene to:

- Approve the Mission Income Spending Plan for 2024
- Elect Conference Officers and Members of the Board of Directors
- Install Ms. Tivvi Pare as the Executive Director of Horton Center.
- Much more.

We will ground ourselves in the presence of the Holy Spirit through communal worship on multiple occasions during our day together. Our morning will begin with the celebration of the Sacrament of Holy Communion. We will conclude our time together with inspirational reflections offer by our Conference Ministers: the Reverends Sara Marean and Gordon Rankin.

An offering will be received during our afternoon worship for the support of the Fannie Lou Hamer Scholarship Fund for Disabled Theologians of Color. By supporting these theologians, this scholarship will enrich the church through increased awareness of the intersections of race and disability in theology. We encourage churches to send a special offering with your delegates. Churches and individuals may also elect to make a donation online or send a special offering to NHCUC, 140 Sheep Davis Road, Pembroke, NH 03275.

This year's hybrid Annual Meeting will utilize numerous forms of technology. Every effort is being made to allow delegates to select options for interactive participation via a desktop computer, laptop, tablet, or smart phone. Many segments of the meeting will also be shared on YouTube to allow for visitor viewing without interactive participation. We will be providing educational resources, helpful tips, and technology stewards to assist you in this experience. Remote connection information will be emailed to all those registered for the meeting.

The Conference Bylaws define the voting membership as "those delegates duly appointed by the churches, the Conference officers, members of the Board of Directors, and each ordained, licensed, or commissioned minister with standing in a New Hampshire Association." (Bylaws, Article VII, Section 2). Each church shall be entitled to four (4) lay delegates, one (1) of whom shall be under twenty-five (25) years of age at the date of election. Churches with more than one hundred (100) members shall be entitled to one (1) additional delegate for each one hundred (100) additional members or major fraction thereof."

Visitors are welcomed and strongly encouraged as a means of deepening the covenant that our congregations share in the NH Conference and the United Church of Christ.

Please visit <https://www.nhcucc.info/annualmeeting> for up-to-date Annual Meeting Resource Materials and a link to the registration website – which officially opens September 5. This year all registrations will be processed **online on or before Thursday, October 5** at 5 PM, when online registration officially closes. The Youth Delegate Rate will be \$50/person; Retired Clergy and Retired Clergy Spouse/Partners will be \$65/person; and Delegates & Visitors will be \$95.00/person – whether in-person or virtually. Major credit cards and personal checks will be accepted for online registration. Given our hybrid event format, we are unable to accommodate "walk-in" registrations. If you do not have access to the internet or have any trouble registering yourself, please call Cindy Bradley at 888- 642-8229, ext. 1100 (Monday – Friday / 10am-3pm / September 5 – October 5). Please feel free to contact the Conference Office with any questions regarding the Annual Meeting. We look forward to gathering with you on October 21st!

May God's Peace be with you. Your 2023 Annual Meeting Planning Committee: Rev. Carlos Jauhola-Straight (Chair), Rev. Gail Doktor, Mr. Bruce Kinney, Rev. Gordon Rankin, Rev. Tanya Stormo Rasmussen, Rev. Dr. Lynn Wickberg; Staff to the Annual Meeting Planning Committee: Ms. Cindy Bradley, Mr. Thaddeus Sieverding

More From "The Goose"

In the book of Psalms, there are several Psalms that were written either for or by a community. It was and is a common practice. In fact, Katie, our Song Leader, compiled verses which many of our Sunday worshipping attenders contributed. We will sing those verses on August 27.

On August 20, I (Pastor Deborah) shared some of the presenters that I heard while at the Wild Goose Festival. Liz and I both participated in a writing workshop with Sanseria Murray. (sanseria.murray@gmail.com) www.SonStarProductions.com
The attendees wrote a collective poem "Love Joy". I commend it to you now:

"Love Joy" Collective Poem

Love is flowing	Joy is bubbling
Love is the paper	Joy is the glue
Love is a long journey	Joy is a single moment
Love is beingness	Joy is heartfulness
Love is beautiful	Joy is magical
Love is always available	Joy is grandchildren
Love is presence	Joy is present
Love is available here	Joy is accessible
Love is being seen	Joy is being held
Love is open arms	Joy is being seen and held
Love is being seen	Joy is expressing my full self as I am
Love is reaching out	Joy is connecting
Love is never ending	Joy is all the colors that exist in the world
Love is an action and a choice	Joy is a blessing; time to rejoice
Love is filling up something or someone else's cup	Joy is ease and abundance
Love is family (especially the ones with paws!!)	
Joy is a smile, a laugh, dance, music, light in the dark	
Love is time, not all time but the ordinary time of being	
Joy is that song I have forgotten I once sung	
Love is a long hug from my daughter	
Joy is seeing my combined family chatting around the table	
Love is being heard and accepted	
Joy is seeing and hearing the laughter of a child	
Love is acceptance by an empathic witness	
Joy is running through a forest free as a bird	
Love is just the right pillow for my head to rest on and rise from	
Joy is an exhilaration of "YES!"	
Love is early morning watching the sunrise slowly over the treetops	
Joy is listening to the simple sounds in the distance	
Love is where? I am still looking	
Joy is to be outside with my hands in dirt	
Love is an ever-changing destination in which you must constantly battle to find	
Joy is finding yourself being centered in whole wonder	
Love is essential, the ground, sticky, effortful and pure ease	

Joy is heavy at times, effervescent at others, a geode
 Love is unconditional without fear everlasting
 Joy is here and there, now and later, let's me laugh
 Love is the sweet, sweet spirit in this place
 Joy is singing in the round
 Love is beautiful sustaining, being, and sad
 Joy is life, a state of being, an expression of love
 Love is having a younger sister
 Joy is sharing the Goose with my younger sister

If First Parish wrote a "Love Joy" collective poem today – September 2023, what would we say? Send me (Pastor Deborah) your "Love is ... Joy is ..." verses and we will publish it in the next newsletter. I'll start:

Love is sharing good news. Joy is hearing from people you care about!

Look forward to your verses!
 Pastor Deborah

"Words, Wonder, and the Divine In You" by Rev. Dr. Deborah Roof

Pastor Deborah is now also an "author." She has always been a writer. Now that the book is "real", it is published, and is available for purchase through Amazon, she can add "author" to her credentials. Here is a bit of the marketing that is circulating about her and her book. Watch for opportunities to hear more about it:

AUTHOR DEBORAH ROOF is an enthusiastic life-long learner and a passionate teacher. She is an ordained minister in the United Church of Christ with a Master of Divinity degree from Colgate Rochester Crozer Divinity School and a Doctor of Ministry in Preaching from the Chicago Theological Seminary. Deborah is fluent in French, holds a Master's degree in French Literature, and taught French for over twenty years. Intrigued by ancient archetypal wisdom, Deborah studied and became a Certified Veriditas Labyrinth Facilitator. Deborah and her wife, Liz, have four adult daughters, their daughters' four spouses, and four grandchildren.

One woman's story of faith, discovery, and joy!

- Fascinating exploration of Biblical text
- Loving messages from spiritual sources
- A queer, sober, UCC pastor's memoir
- Discussion of the subtle meanings of words

"With humor and heart-filled honesty, the words of this beautiful book will instill wonder in your soul, ignite your spirit, and bring love to the center of your life."

—Karoline M. Lewis, PhD, biblical scholar, Luther Seminary

UCC General Synod 34

June 30 - July 4, 2023 Indianapolis, Indiana

Please find below the approved resolution from the Thirty-Fourth General Synod of the United Church of Christ, held in Indianapolis June 30-July 4, 2023. I was on a committee that looked at a resolution from Florida and New Hampshire. We combined it and you will see below the end result.
Anne Engelhardt

Free from Plastic Pollution A Resolution of Witness

WHEREAS the scriptures (Genesis 1:1-2:6, Psalm 24:1, Isaiah 24:3-6, Jeremiah 4:23-26) hold us responsible for the way we co-live and use God's creation, the Earth, and

WHEREAS plastics resist degrading for hundreds of years, and they break down into microplastic beads; and animals, birds, fish, and humans consume microplastics¹ to the detriment of their health, and

WHEREAS United Church of Christ General Synods have passed environmental resolutions The Earth is the Lord's ² (2017), The Use of Plastic Foam³ (2019), and The Rights of Nature⁴ (2021), and

WHEREAS plastic pollution is an environmental justice concern of the UCC, ⁵and

WHEREAS plastic pollution disproportionately impacts vulnerable communities, including low income people and people of color, and must be addressed from production to waste,⁶ and

WHEREAS plastics are made from harmful petrochemicals that impact the health and well-being of biological life and planetary ecosystems, and the production of toxic petrochemicals disproportionately harms those living in close proximity, ⁷ and

WHEREAS the United Nations has called upon global faith communities to work against plastic pollution,⁸ and

WHEREAS current attempts, locally, nationally, and internationally to manage plastic pollution are woefully inadequate, and

WHEREAS local cleanups of plastic litter have limited impact and recycling is not effective for most plastic items.⁹

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Thirty-Fourth General Synod of the United Church of Christ is called to speak truth to power against plastic "de-creation" (an academic and theological term that may refer to desacralizing, destroying or undoing that which is whole or has been whole in nature, the Earth, plants, animals, forests, and pollution, even when it is inconvenient or difficult), and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT the Thirty-Fourth General Synod encourages all our I settings to commit to changing from a disposable culture to a reusable, sustainable one, and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT the Thirty-Fourth General Synod encourages education within our congregations and in our communities to advocate for alternatives to single use plastics,

whether through mitigation efforts and campaigns or by supporting local and state bans on single use plastics, and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Thirty-Fourth General Synod encourages all settings of the Church to determine the best pathway forward for strategies and actions to mitigate plastic pollution, using as examples the following resources:

- The Story of Plastics, (95-minute documentary)¹⁰
- Sierra Club Solutions to Plastic Pandemic¹¹
- Ten Towns –Ten actions Toolkit of New Hampshire.¹²
- National Environmental Education Foundation (NEEF): Join the Fight for Reducing Plastic Pollution¹³
- Break Free Plastics: resources, articles, list of the worst corporate polluters and suggestions for actions.¹⁴ and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Thirty-Fourth General Synod encourages Conferences, Associations, Congregations, Synods and all settings of the United Church of Christ to reduce the use of single-use plastics and packaging, and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Thirty-Fourth General Synod commends all settings of the church to join in possible opportunities for participation in addressing plastic pollution including the following:

- Encouraging all settings of the Church to commit to change from the throwaway and disposable culture and consumptive practices to reusable and compostable products.¹⁵
- Encouraging replacement of single use plastics with bioplastics, reusable, or compostable substitutes.
- Preaching on ecological sustainability principles articulated by Sallie McFague on responsible use of ecological resources¹⁶ and the sustainable goal of mitigating singleuse plastics.
- Educating on the importance of mitigation of single-use plastics and plastic straws as well as plastic bottles at our churches, their events, and gatherings.
- Educating on the toxicity of plastic pollutions and microplastics to the health of our environment, to our own health, and the health of non-human life.
- Educating on policies and practices of local recycling and composting services and advocating for better practices.
- Organizing low or zero waste events in collaboration with local organizations and infrastructures.
- Supporting businesses that use sustainable practices such as reusable containers and
- Participating in public cleanup of God's creation, including all bodies of water, parks, and beaches.¹⁷
- Installing fountains for water bottles in church campuses, wherever possible.
- Actively supporting and lobbying for local, state, national, and international legislation and policies that align with the intention of this resolution including bans of or fees on single use plastics, and reusable bags.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT the Thirty-Fourth General Synod acknowledges that accommodations in expectations need to be made for certain impacted groups such as those who

are disabled or unhoused, and

BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED THAT the Thirty-Fourth General Synod encourages all settings to speak truth to the public square against plastic pollution of the planet.

Funding: The funding for the implementation of the Resolution be made in accordance with overall mandates of the affected agencies and the funds available.

Implementation: The Officers of the Church, in consultation with appropriate ministries or other entities within the United Church of Christ, will determine the implementing body.

¹ The environmental impacts of plastics and micro-plastics use, waste and pollution: EU and national measures, Study Requested by the PETI Committee, European Parliament, [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2020/658279/IPOL_STU\(2020\)658279_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2020/658279/IPOL_STU(2020)658279_EN.pdf)

² https://www.ucc.org/wpcontent/uploads/unitedchurchofchrist/pages/9126/attachments/original/1499204117/UCC_Synod_2017_Climate_Resolution_-_FINAL_as_passed.pdf?1499204117

² GS32-Minutes.pdf (uccfiles.com) page 48

⁴ Approved_UCCB-21-10-04-Minutes33rdGeneralSynod_10.15.2021w-App.pdf page 42

⁵ Both the Florida UCC Conference and the New Hampshire UCC Conferences have passed resolutions at the 2022 Annual Gatherings.

⁶ Picking Up Litter: Pointless or Powerful Tool in the battle of plastic pollution?" UN Environmental Program, <https://www.unep.org/news-and-stories/story/picking-litter-pointless-exercise-or-powerful-tool-battle-beat-plastic> Program

⁷ 'Do Plastics Make Us Sick?' " Plastics Health Coalition,

<https://www.plastichealthcoalition.org/>

⁸ UN Calls Upon Faith Communities to work against Plastic Pollution, Crux, February 22, 2022, U.N. wants faith groups to help work against plastic pollution | Crux (cruxnow.com)

⁹ "More Recycling Won't Solve the Plastics Pollution," Scientific American, <https://blogs.scientificamerican.com/observations/more-recycling-wont-solve-plastic-pollution/> 15 [https://www.congress.gov/bill/117th-congress/senatebill/984#:~:text=Introduced%20in%20Senate%20\(03%2F25%2F2021\)&text=This%20bill%20sets%20forth%20requirements,or%20compost%20products%20and%20materials.](https://www.congress.gov/bill/117th-congress/senatebill/984#:~:text=Introduced%20in%20Senate%20(03%2F25%2F2021)&text=This%20bill%20sets%20forth%20requirements,or%20compost%20products%20and%20materials.)

¹⁰ <https://www.storyofstuff.org/movies/the-story-of-plastic-documentary-film/how-to-watch/>

¹¹ <https://www.sierraclub.org/maryland/zero-waste/story-of-plastic>

¹² <https://www.10towns.org/resources/plastic-pollution-book-list>

¹³ <https://www.neefusa.org/nature/water/join-fight-reduce-plastic-pollution>

¹⁴ <https://www.breakfreefromplastic.org/>

¹⁵ See Yes Magazine The Solving of the Plastics Issue,

<https://www.yesmagazine.org/issues/solvingplastic> Also see eco-friendly alternatives, Eco-Friendly Alternatives for Disposable Plastic Water Bottles | Cedar Springs Blog (cedarspringswater.ca)

¹⁶ McFague, *A New Climate for Theology*

¹⁷ See Green Peace, <https://www.greenpeace.org/international/campaign/toolkit-plastic-free-future/>

Church Calendar – September 2023

Friday, September 1-4 – Star Island Fall Family Gathering

Sunday, September 3 at 10am – Worship Service with Debbie Gline Allen

Monday, September 4 – Labor Day Holiday

Tuesday, September 5 – First Parish Office is closed.

Tuesday, September 5 – 12:00 – Pledge Drive Meeting

Tuesday, September 5 at 6pm – Labyrinth Walk and Adult Faith at 6:45

Sunday, September 10 at 10am – Big Blessing Sunday Worship, followed by potluck,
followed by animal blessing at 1PM

Monday, September 11 at 7pm – Finance Committee Meeting

Tuesday, September 12 at 6pm – Labyrinth Walk and Adult Faith at 6:45

Friday, September 15 at 5pm – Contra Dance

Sunday, September 17 at 10am – Worship Service
 at 11am – CCEP begins
 at 11am – Safe Church Meeting
 at 3pm – Jazz Jam

Sunday, September 17 – Please send all reports to Council Clerk

Wednesday, September 20 at 7pm – Council Meeting

Sunday, September 24 at 10am – Worship Service

Friday, September 29 at 4:30pm – Spaghetti Supper To-Go



Photo credit: Paul Lindemann

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as office hours may vary daily

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