

First Parish Congregational Church

United Church of Christ – East Derry, New Hampshire

January 2024

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



“The Work of Christmas” by Howard Thurman

When the song of the angels is stilled,
When the star in the sky is gone,
When the kings and princes are home,
When the shepherds are back with their flock,
The work of Christmas begins:

To find the lost,
To heal the broken,
To feed the hungry,
To release the prisoner,
To rebuild the nations,
To bring peace among (siblings),
To make music in the heart.

From the Pastor's Desk

Dear Child of God,

We have journeyed together for ten years. What a blessing it has been! And we have so much more to look forward to as we continue to do ministry together here at First Parish. I couldn't be more honored to serve you and this community. There are many reasons that First Parish was named the nonprofit of the year by the Derry Londonderry Chamber of Commerce. We understand that to love God and to serve God, we are called upon to love and to serve our neighbor.

With the season of Christmas behind us and the new year ahead of us, I pray that you will take time to reflect on your choices last year and your hopes for the new year. As you do that, I commend to you one of my favorite poems for this time of year (previous page). And as we look ahead, I commend to you another of Thurman's ponderings: "Through the Coming Year"

"Grant that I may pass through the coming year with a faithful heart.

There will be much to test me and make weak my strength before the year ends. In my confusion I shall often say the word that is not true and do the thing of which I am ashamed.

There will be errors in the mind and great inaccuracies of judgment...

In seeking the light, I shall again and again find myself walking in the darkness.

I shall mistake my light for Your light and I shall drink from the responsibility of the choice I make.

Nevertheless, grant that I may pass through the coming year with a faithful heart. May I never give the approval of my heart to error, to falseness, to vanity, to sin. Though my days be marked with failures, stumblings, and fallings, let my spirit be free so that You may take it and redeem my moments in all the ways my needs reveal.

Give me the quiet assurance of Your Love and Presence.

Grant that I may pass through the coming year with a faithful heart."

2024 holds much promise for us. God says in Isaiah 43:19, "Behold, I am doing a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it?" God is constantly at work in our lives, creating new opportunities and new possibilities for us. Let's be intentional about our hopes and dreams and take advantage of those opportunities and possibilities. Let's expect miracles together as we boldly move forward on our spiritual path.

I thank God for you, First Parish friends. May God bless you and keep you.

In peace and wonder,
Pastor Deborah

Christian Education and Faith Formation

What a year 2023!! We enjoyed many “new” things! A **New** Christian Education Director, a **New** Pageant, and now we enter a **New** Year!

REVIEW OF DECEMEBR 2023

ADVENT WORKSHOP

Thank you all who came to the Advent Workshop. Thank you for all the food that was brought to share. It was a fun time had by all at our sea-sational event. We'll be thinking of a new theme for this coming December, but we first have a lot to do before then.

CHRISTAMS EVE PAGEANT/PLAY

The children did an amazing job Christmas Eve Morning! We are so proud of them. We want to thank all the volunteers that helped make this pageant a success this year. Jon Buck, Katie Cobban, Rachel Cobban, Holly Gorgol, Anne-Marie Merrill, Paula Robinson, Jaime Robinson, Jennifer Robinson, and Heather Paradzick. Thank you to Debbie Gline Allen for the live music. Thank you to Paul Lindemann for the staging and special lights and Pastor Deborah for your input and support. And thank you to the CE Director Ms. Steph for coordinating everything for this pageant. It was a true team effort.

Review of the Symbols of Christmas from the pageant

1. Christmas Tree = everlasting life with Jesus
 2. Ornaments = blessings and memories God has given us
 3. Lights = Light overpowers Dark and Jesus is the light in the darkness
 4. Bells = ringing in the good news and to bring lost sheep home as Jesus is our shepherd and shows us the way home.
 5. Candy Canes = J for Jesus & shepherd's crook for the shepherds who visited baby Jesus
 6. Star = the guiding light that lead important people to see Jesus
 7. Angels = messengers of the good news Jesus is to be born and then again when he is
 8. Wrapping = Jesus wraps us in his love, as we wrap gifts in our love
 9. Bows = Jesus ties us together as one big family, God's Family.
 10. Cookies = God molds us to be unique and special. We are his masterpieces.
- We hope next time as you decorate for the joyous Christmas season that you remember the meanings behind your traditions and why everything points to the reason of the season, Jesus, God's Son.

Here are a few pictures of the pageant with special thanks to Rachel McPherson.



SUNDAY SCHOOL (CCEP)

On January 7, Sunday School will start up again from 11-Noon. This month we follow Jesus as he begins his teaching journey.

Note there will be no Sunday School January 28. The church's annual meeting is after service. If you plan to stay and need childcare, please reach out to Steph Berg at cedirector@fpc-ucc.org.

NOTE FROM THE CHRISTIAN EDUCATION DIRECTOR. STEPH BERG

I just wanted to take a moment to share a thank you for the accepting me as your new CE Director back in April. I am glad I listened to God's calling me into this position. Furthermore, with all that has been done this year, it would not have been possible without the team God has provided me, the CE Board members and friends, along with all the Sunday School teacher volunteers, and Chris Cox for taking lead with Vacation Church Camp this past summer along with other helpful church members. I feel very blessed with all my helpers. I feel blessed with all the wonderful church families who send their children to Sunday School. It is with gratitude and privilege that I continue as your Christian Education Director for 2024. It's going to be a great year!

You Can Make A Difference

Do you have 3 or 4 hours a month to help FPC and others? Do you have special talents or abilities that you would be willing to share? As the apostle Peter wrote to several churches "God has given each of us special abilities, be sure to use them to help each other, passing onto others God's many kinds of blessings".

Maybe you already volunteer for a local ministry or maybe you would be willing to join a board or committee here at FPC. The church needs people willing to give of their time and talents to help our church run smoother and to share the workload. Volunteering should be a joy. It should be something that makes your heart happy.

Here is a list of positions on boards and committees that are available. Please contact Pastor Deborah, Beth Hunter, Julie Greenfield, or Reni Harnden if you have any questions. **Christian Education** - 3 openings, **Deacons** - 4 openings, **Facilities** - 3 openings, **Finance Committee** - 2 openings, **Clerk** is open

Staff Appreciation

Each year we give a staff appreciation gift to the pastor and staff (CE director, office manager) to thank them for all they do for our church. If you would like to contribute toward this gift, please put cash or a check in an envelope clearly marked "staff appreciation" and leave it in the offering plate or collection box. The gifts will be given to the pastor and CE director at the annual meeting in January. The office manager gift will be for Jill, for her loyal service to the church over the past year. We will give her this gift as part of the celebration we will hold for her on January 14."

Beth Hunter (Personnel)

Randy Brown (Moderator)

Building Advisory Committee

LOOKING BACK: MEETINGHOUSE PRESERVATION IN 2023

The First Parish Building Advisory Committee (BAC) spent most of 2023 planning for the considerable work needed to finish the Meetinghouse Sanctuary by the end of 2024. This meant executing several critical projects, including:

- Completing phase one of the entrance from the Connector to the Sanctuary,
- Installing approved sheathing to encapsulate the asbestos-laden floor tiles and create a solid, smooth, fairly level subfloor,
- Stripping the flaking lead paint from the 1902 tin ceiling, then repainting it,
- Installing ductwork to prepare for the reinstallation of the pipe organ in 2024,
- Making numerous minor improvements to the electrical systems, including installing Exit signs in the Sanctuary,
- Investigating the damaged east gable wall and East Portico entrance to identify major timber frame failures that will be rehabbed in 2024 prior to applying new plaster to the wall inside.

Planning and other efforts included:

- Leading a multidisciplinary Sanctuary Design Team that developed goals and requirements for the Sanctuary rehabilitation,
- Selecting contractors and getting preliminary quotes for the electrical, multimedia, historic plaster, painting, carpentry, and flooring projects,
- Developing a complete Infrastructure Systems rehab plan including electrical, fire, and lighting refurbishment plus multimedia integration,
- Beginning to restore the functionality of the Tower Clock through electrification of its timekeeping and hourly tolling systems, and
- Supporting multiple fundraising and community events, the Sugar Plum Fair White Elephant sale, and the new Get Back In! fundraising campaign.

Take a look at all this progress in this photo album - bit.ly/Preservation2023.

Now we are focused on the many projects to be done in 2024. Stay tuned for more details on them, and meanwhile don't hesitate to share comments or questions with us.

— BAC: Larry Krantz, Paul Lindemann, Bill Mann, Bob Wilson

Board of Missions

Thanks to everyone who made the work of your Mission Board a huge success. We were able to gather 60 gift cards for Thanksgiving meals and 213 cans of cranberry sauce. For Christmas all orders for Community Caregivers were filled and delivered and a huge array of puzzles and games were delivered to the Upper Room so that parents and other family members could “shop” for the children they serve. Our church is a very generous group, and the Mission Board is very grateful to all who participated.

ELECTRONIC GIVING

We now have electronic giving available for anyone who would like to offer a paperless Christmas gift to the church. God Bless You!

We accept Venmo: First Parish (be sure that you see the icon of our church steeple). We can also process your credit card at <https://square.link/u/g98jLXqb>

Church Calendar January 2024

Tuesday, January 2	6pm 6:45pm	Labyrinth Walk ~ Corinthians & Zoom Adult Faith Formation ~ Corinthians & Zoom
Friday, January 5	2:00pm	Deacons ~ Corinthians
Sunday, January 7	10am 11am	Worship with Communion Sunday School ~ John (The Rainbow Room)
Monday, January 8	End of Day 6:30pm	Annual Meeting Reports due to Office Manager Finance Board Meeting ~ Corinthians
Tuesday, January 9	4pm	Mission Board Meeting~ Corinthians
Thursday, January 11	7pm	CE Board Meeting ~ CE Office
Sunday, January 14	10am 11am	Worship & Celebration for Jill Taylor Sunday School ~ John (The Rainbow Room)
Tuesday, January 16	6pm 6:45pm	Labyrinth Walk ~ Corinthians & Zoom Adult Faith Formation ~ Corinthians & Zoom
Wednesday, January 17	7pm	Council Meeting ~ Currier
Friday, January 19	6pm	Contra Dance ~ Currier
Sunday, January 21	10am 11am	Worship, guest speaker for Mission Sunday School~ John (The Rainbow Room)
Tuesday, January 23	10am	Facilities Board Meeting ~ Corinthians
Friday, January 26	4:30-5:30pm	Spaghetti Supper TO GO
Sunday, January 28	10am	Worship and Annual Meeting
Tuesday, January 30	6pm 6:45pm	Labyrinth Walk ~ Corinthians & Zoom Adult Faith Formation ~ Corinthians & Zoom



Photo credit: Paul Lindemann

**First Parish
Congregational Church, UCC**

(603) 434-0628

Mailing Address:

P.O. Box 114

E. Derry, NH 03041

Office Hours

Generally, our office is open

Monday through Friday 9am-3pm

Please call ahead to make sure we are in the office

Online

www.fpc-ucc.org

facebook.com/fpcucc

Senior Pastor and Teacher

The Rev. Dr. Deborah Roof

pastordeborah@fpc-ucc.org

Office Manager

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United Church of Christ

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