

# First Parish Congregational Church

## United Church of Christ – East Derry, New Hampshire

### *March 2024 Newsletter*

*“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 12<sup>th</sup> Century Church in Hampshire, England

### From the Pastor's Desk

Dear Child of God,

As we enter this third week of Lent, how are you doing with your connection to the Divine – inside and outside? How is mindfulness going? And generosity: are you pushing the boundaries of what you thought was possible? Let's take a look these one example at a time.

Divine Presence: C.S. Lewis, author of “The Chronicles of Narnia” said this: “We may ignore, but we can nowhere evade the presence of God. The world is crowded with God. God walks everywhere incognito.” He says that we may “ignore”. In other words, we may not notice, we may be unaware, we may not be paying attention. Now, during Lent 2024 – are you paying attention? Because Lewis says that if we are paying attention we cannot evade or avoid God's Presence. (How cool is that!) Barbara Brown Taylor, who wrote “An Altar in the World” that our Bible Wonder Adult Faith Group read a few years ago, said this: “Earth is so thick with divine possibility that it is a wonder we can walk anywhere without cracking our shins on altars.” I love this image of “cracking our shins”. Not because I'd want to do that, because I don't. And yet, it paints the picture of an unquestionable and palpable presence that surrounds us. We can't escape it. Are you tuning in?

Mindfulness is being fully present to our here and now. It is a profound version of paying attention. How you ever walked into a room to get something and then realize that you don't know why you walked into that room? If you take a pill every day, do you ever experience a day when you can't remember whether or not you took your pill? Do you ever get home from the grocery store and you remember something that you knew you needed but you forgot to remember while you were there? These are all examples of the moments when we are not being fully present. Mindfulness is something that is intentional and, like exercise or prayer, it is a practice. Mindfulness reduces stress and can lower blood pressure. Oftentimes it can even reduce any critical or judgmental edges that we have acquired in our lives. One becomes more fully present and more easily forgiving.

Generosity when it is humble, and earnest, is a double gift, since it benefits both the receiver AND the giver. Movements like “random acts of kindness” have taught us that generosity is not defined by the number of dollars that one can donate to a cause. Generosity is saying hello first; it's holding the door for someone; it's stopping to let someone go ahead of you (whether you are walking or in your car). In our world where criticism is prevalent, extravagant generosity is witnessed in the compliments or positive words that are shared between coworkers.

So how are you doing? We are half-way through Lent. It's a new day. Pray about how you might practice these principles in all your affairs – with God's help. And while you're at it – the next time you look into the mirror, tell that lovely person looking back at you that God is crazy about them!

God bless you!  
Pastor Deborah

## Christian Education and Faith Formation

### Calendar

**March 31** No Sunday School due to Easter

**April 21** No Sunday School due to school vacation

**May 26** No Sunday School due to Memorial Day

**June 2** Last Day of Sunday School for this session

**June 9** Celebration Sunday as we celebrate students and more with a luncheon

**July 22-26** Vacation Church Camp for grades K-6

### Review of Sunday Schol in February

We learned about Jesus's teachings and who He heals. Also, learned ways of how Jesus loves us. His Transfiguration on top of a high mountain is where we got a glimpse of God through Jesus as He shown bright white. We learned to be thankful for everything we have and to thank God for all these blessings and things.

Jesus encourages to share our love with others. We made cards/pictures to give to someone we love.

Spring is around the corner. As we finish off the Lenten season, we look forward to a month of anticipation as Jesus knows what is coming to be relieve with joy on Easter when He rises from the dead.

### Vacation Church Camp (VCC)

**Theme: Camp Firelight "Whenever I'm afraid, I put my trust in you." Psalm 56:3**

*July 22-26 open for children entering Kindergarten through entering 6<sup>th</sup> grade*

*7<sup>th</sup> through high schoolers are welcome to help out with the week of camp as a junior consular.*

*Be on the lookout for registration coming soon.*

We had an interest meeting last month that went well. We are still looking for volunteers to help during VCC week. We are looking for camp consulars to help lead the children from place to place. We also need some station leaders. We figured out that meeting on Tuesdays or Thursdays will be the best night to do some prepping once Lent is over. Starting in April there will be prepping meetings.

**Donations needed for VCC**

Please consider donating the following items:

- Paper towel and toilet paper rolls
- Clear cleaned out plastic jars examples: peanut butter jars or popcorn jars
- Rolls of brown paper
- Tissue paper

We are excited for Camp Firelight! If you want to help in any way, please let Steph Berg know. Email is best at [cedirector@fpc-ucc.org](mailto:cedirector@fpc-ucc.org).

**Family Events:**

During Lent there is Soul Collage on Tuesday starting 6pm for supper and then crafting at 6:30

After Lent, Steph Berg and CE members will be planning some family game nights, free for all families, so stayed tuned.

**Scholarships:**

CE Board has agreed to sponsor 4 scholarships for UCC sponsored camps this year. One has been claimed so there are 3 left. If you need financial assistance to attend a UCC sponsored camp, please write a letter to the CE Board. You can drop it off or mail to the office.

Sincerely, Anne-Mare Chairperson, Holly Gorgol, Elieen Cox, Chris Cox, Paula Robinson, Kelly Ploof, Sue Lindeman, and CE Director Steph Berg

**Prepared To Serve**

Here in New Hampshire, we are abundantly blessed to have access to an amazing day of learning, networking, and fellowship in the form of Prepared to Serve. This amazing event takes place EVERY year on the first Saturday of the NH school vacation. Between three and four HUNDRED clergy and lay members of NH UCC churches are in attendance.

This year thirteen members and friends of First Parish attended sessions: Pastor Deborah, Debbie Gline Allen, Steph CM-Berg, Diane Breeden, Chris Cox, Eileen Cox, Anne Englehardt, Liz Greenberg, Reni Harnden, James Hayden, Sam Juliano, Paula Robinson, and Jo Worthen. In addition, one member was on the Planning Committee and other members among our group participated as Presenters, Panelists, and Exhibit Hall table hosts. Several of us joined with Church World Services to assemble much needed "Period Packs" for women in underserved areas.

Here is a list of the workshops that these friends participated in during this wonderful and wonder-filled event:

Spiritual Discipline with Art; Pray in Color, Listening to the Holy Spirit, Youth in NH UCC Churches, Your Perspectives on Justice, "Let's Talk About NH End of Life Options Act", "Militias, Extremist, & Anti- Democracy Forces in NH: What Every NH UCC'er Should Know", "Banned Books, Muzzled Teachers, Marginalized Students & Undermined Public Schools: Not in Our Name!", "Words, Wonder, and the Divine in You", "Fostering Vital Anti-Racism Work through Relationships (Anti-Racism Pathway)", "How to Build Christian Community 10 Horton Center Strategies + Tools You Can Use", "Nurturing Non-violent, Trauma Informed Faith Communities", "Ministry and Worship in the Era Beyond membership", "Protecting Your Church with a Homeland Security Grant", "Values Aligned Investing: The Intersectionality of Faith + Finance", "Best Financial Practices for Churches", Lay Preaching (full day).

**Presenters:**

Pastor Deborah: Lay Preaching and "Words, Wonder, and the Divine in You";  
Debbie: "The Transformed Congregation".

**Panelists:**

Debbie: Youth Panel  
Anne: General Synod

**Exhibit Hall:**

Star Island booth: Liz, Jo, Reni  
Southern New England Conf's Faith Formation Leadership Program: Debbie

Please ask these folks to share with you what they learned. And remember to mark your calendar for next year. There is always something for everyone. We are so blessed!

Submitted by Pastor Deborah



## Pictures From Prepared To Serve



## Safe Church

The Safe Church Committee meets regularly. There are a number of safety topics to discuss about how do we keep our church and its members safe in the event of an emergency?

Here are some highlights: We are planning to execute an actual fire drill in the spring, based on the recommendation of emergency response partners.

The suggestion was made that the main lobby screen should display a schedule of events with a contact person for each group meeting in the building at any given time. In the event of an emergency there is less confusion and there is a person from each group who can provide information on the members in attendance.

We decided to create an emergency response notebook detailing procedures to follow in the event of an emergency issue. We will also be seeking to partner with the Derry Fire Department to provide CPR training to anyone interested. The more people who understand CPR procedures and the use of the AED, the better.

If you have any concerns about safety or safety procedures, please do not hesitate to reach out to one of us. Safety First!

Christie Lombardi, Jo Worthen, Tom Wood, Paula Robinson, Ken Williams, James Hayden, Karen Wilson & Terrance Brand

## Personnel

Personnel, the Music Committee and Pastor Deborah have been working with Sam Juliano for the last month or so, hoping to hire him as our permanent Music Ministry Leader. He will replace Debbie Gline Allen, who is happy with the change, and has been working with him.

When Debbie joined us in the summer, she was happy to “help us out” and said, “she needed the practice”. Sam actually sent his resume to us almost a year ago. He was planning a move to NH from Utah to be closer to his family. He and Pastor Deborah have been in conversation with each other for a lot of that time. He made the move here recently and wanted to be a part of the staff at FPC.

Sam visited FPC on Sunday 2/18 and met with the Music Committee. On Sunday 2/25 he was the accompanist for worship and met with Personnel after church. We offered him the position. He was hired as a “contract position”, the logistics of which, were worked out with the finance committee prior to offering him the position. He will receive \$150 per worship service and will meet weekly with Pastor Deborah.

The Music Committee, Pastor Deborah and Personnel are excited to see what he will bring to our worship services. He is energetic and passionate about music. When you get a chance talk with him and welcome him to FPC.

Please, if you have any concerns, input or positive comments about his music speak with anyone on the Music Committee, Personnel, Pastor Deborah or Sam.

Your Personnel Committee,  
Beth Hunter, Margie Ives, Karen Wilson

## **Fund/Fun Raising Thoughts and Ideas**

We are excitedly planning our upcoming events for the 2024 year.

So far, these are the 2 definite events that have been scheduled so mark your calendars:  
June 1, 2024 for our third Spring Fling (see flyer on next page)  
November 23, 2024 for the 80th Annual Sugar Plum Fair.

Some other ideas that are in the works:

Dining for Dollars

Online sales (popcorn – maybe)

Still evaluating the possibility of a dinner here at the church

Stephanie Berg will be looking for ideas for a cooking/Pampered Chef event

If you want to help support the church, there are a few ways to help that are already in place:  
The yellow shed takes clothing donations and some of the proceeds come back to the church  
How about Hannaford's shopping cards? You can purchase/replenish your card for your food shopping or give cards as gifts. The church gets a portion of all proceeds.  
Fund/Fun Events - We are also always looking for new ideas for fund raising. We love events that bring our church and all our families together. We have a lot of ideas and we need a lot of energy to support them... can we count on you?

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



# ***First Parish Church***

## **SPRING FLING**

***Yard Sale ~ Crafters ~ Food ~ Plant Sale  
Kid's Activities ~ Raffles ~ Cookie Parade  
Live Music & More!***

**June 1st ~ 8am-1pm**  
rain or shine

47 East Derry Road, Derry, NH ~ [FPC-UCC.ORG](http://FPC-UCC.ORG) ~ 603.434.0628





## The Church Calendar

We keep our public Google calendar up to date with all church events, meetings and all groups that are using our building. Check out our calendar on our website

<http://www.fpc-ucc.org>

or by clicking [https://calendar.google.com/calendar/embed?src=fpc-ucc.org\\_6s1980fengv0fdl7h843u246lc%40group.calendar.google.com&ctz=America%2FNew\\_York](https://calendar.google.com/calendar/embed?src=fpc-ucc.org_6s1980fengv0fdl7h843u246lc%40group.calendar.google.com&ctz=America%2FNew_York)

## Electronic Giving

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



First Parish

@First-Parish · 7 friends

***We accept Venmo. Please note **where** you want the contribution to go. **General fund** (we need all the help we can to get to close the books in the black); **Mission – which one?** Or **Meetinghouse** or some other fund. Make sure you pick the right Venmo account – see our account picture on the left.***

We can also process your credit card at <https://square.link/u/g98jLXqb>

## First Parish Church's Identity Statements:

The United Church of Christ is guided by covenants rather than creeds. We don't tell you what you must believe. As an organization we discern how we see ourselves in God's Creation. We are then guided by various statements, which are voted upon by the entire congregation at a meeting called for that purpose. See below our Mission Statement, Our Open & Affirming Statement and our new Vision Statement.

### Mission Statement

(Background: First Parish worked with nationally known consultant Alice Mann to discern who we were as a church. The result was the Mission Statement. Over the past decade leaders have looked at this statement to see if it still fits. It does and so it stands.)

“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.” (Adopted April 2000)

## **Open & Affirming Statement**

(Background: In 2013, First Parish underwent a dedicated study with the goal of discerning whether we felt called to become Open & Affirming. The result of that process was a vote to be listed as Open & Affirming and the following statement.)

“We affirm Christ’s call to love God and love our neighbors as ourselves. We therefore pledge ourselves to be open to and affirming of all people of every age, race, ethnicity, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, physical or mental ability, socioeconomic status, family configuration, or cultural background. All who affirm the love of Christ in their lives are welcome into this community and to share fully in its life and ministry. We rejoice in the worth, gifts, and dignity of every person as a child of God.” (Adopted January 2014)

## **Vision Statement**

(Background: In 2023, the Council recognized that although we had a Mission Statement that we liked, we lacked a Vision Statement. The following is the result of this process.)

“To live our faith by being a compassionate, accepting, and generous presence in the community: a church where all people find purpose and belonging.” (Adopted January 2024)



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**First Parish  
Congregational Church, UCC**

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**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](http://www.fpc-ucc.org)

[facebook.com/fpcucc](https://facebook.com/fpcucc)

**Senior Pastor and Teacher**

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**First Parish Congregational Church**

United Church of Christ

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