

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

April 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 12th Century Church in Hampshire, England

From the Pastor’s Desk

Philippians 4:8

“Finally, brothers and sisters,
whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever
is pure, whatever is pleasing, whatever is commendable, if there is
any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about
these things.”

Dear Child of God,

You may recall that after Christmas, in the January newsletter or bulletin, I often quote the poem by Howard Thurman, “The Work of Christmas.” If you do not recall it, allow me to refresh your memory. This poem encourages us to do the “work” of Christmas, even as the sights and sounds of Christmas fade and become fond memories. This Christmas “work” entails serving God’s children by feeding the hungry and welcoming the stranger, among other deeds of faith.

The past Sunday we proclaimed: “He is risen! He is risen indeed!” For we are, in fact, now an Easter people. We are children of the empty tomb, witnesses to the resurrection. For us, resurrection is proof of tangible hope, and it is a witness to the power of love. Were we to imitate Thurman’s poetic imagination, what, then, is the “work of Easter”? When “hosanna” is heard no more, when the nightmarish sounds of our Savior’s limbs being nailed to the cross are but a faint memory, and when the reality of the empty tomb washes over us, what does God call us to do?

We are not like those disciples and friends who knew Jesus and walked with him during his life. We are not an occupied people, living under harsh Roman rule. Most people reading this newsletter have warm houses in which to live and available food when we are hungry. We have the freedom to worship the God of our understanding. We have the ability to work where we choose. We have the liberty to advance our careers in meaningful ways. Our hardships are not like those of first century Middle East, AND they are very real to us. Our burdens weigh us down and our struggles cripple us. Some days our loneliness is palpable. We may be living in the age of information, but we are barraged with data and dreadful predictions of things to come.

What hope is there when we continue to be divided and divisive? How do we live in a world of such mistrust and miscommunication? How? The Apostle Paul had some advice in Philippians 4:8. We must cling to the truth of the Easter story. It was out of love that God gave us God's loving Son. And it was out of love that Jesus lived his life and laid down his life for a purpose – us! And it was out of love that Jesus seeks relationship with each one of God's children. Jesus, who was and is the light of the world, shatters any tomb of loneliness, the way that he shatters any doubt we carry. The “work” of Easter is to live into hope beyond hope. The work of Easter is the flame of a faith more durable than fact. The work of Easter is to seek God and to find God in the midst of any noise and any dispute. The work of Easter is to keep the Sabbath sacred, to keep Sunday worshipful for all!

How?

We need to see an opportunity before us. We need to be intentional about it. And then we need to practice. We all need a time and a place where we can be totally attuned to all that is sacred. For many people, our worship on Sunday morning is the one opportunity to step away from the “world's work” and to step into God-time. Let's work to protect that time. We need to do everything in our power to keep Sunday sacred. It is a blessing that we are a very active church. Many people are doing many wonderful things. However, it is becoming more and more “convenient” to talk business on Sunday morning. And I fear that when this happens too often, Sunday loses its sacredness. I have observed that even the most faithful among us experience some hesitation about attending worship services, because someone will ask them to do one more thing. Their “sabbath time” is not being honored.

I would love to hear your thoughts about this intention. How do we keep the Sabbath sacred for our own faith community? How do we encourage activity all the while encouraging a depth of sacred practice? May God stir in your hearts this Eastertide and lead you in new and sacred practices.

“All shall be well. All shall be well. All manner of thing shall be well.” (Julian of Norwich)
Pastor Deborah

Christian Education and Faith Formation

Sunday School (SS) Calendar

April 21 No SS due to April Vacation

May 26 No SS due to Memorial Day Weekend

June 2 Last Day for Sunday School before Summer

June 9 Celebration Sunday with a luncheon after service

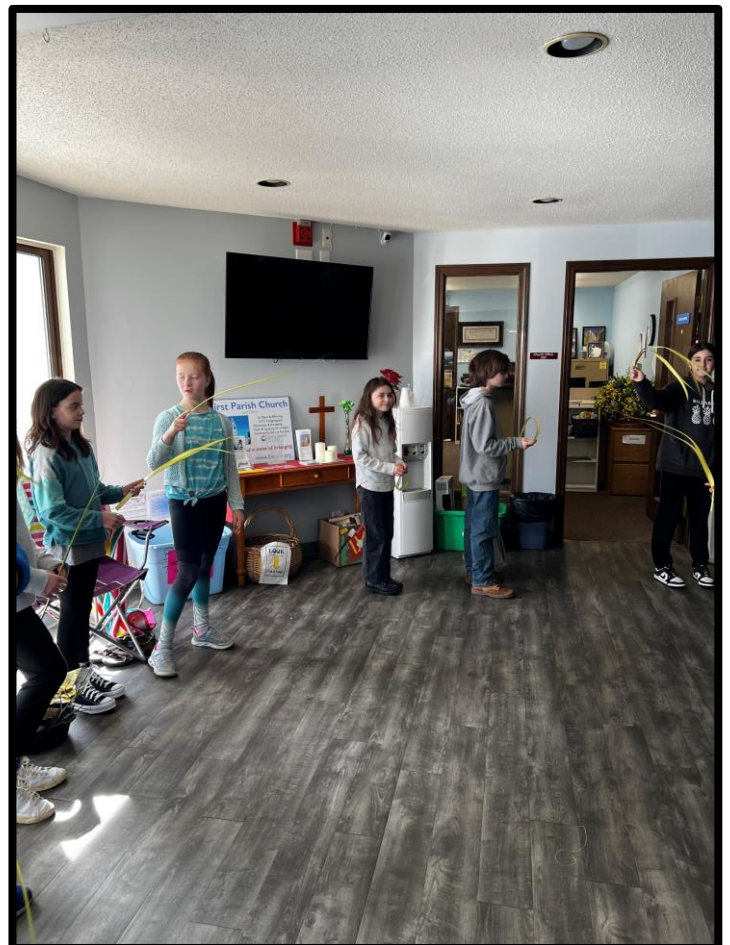
Save the Dates

April 12 Game Night

July 22-26 Vacation Church Camp

A Review of March

In Sunday School we reviewed the stories that lead up to Easter as we learned more about why Jesus came and died for us. We shared our joys and concerns with each other. We had fun with skits, music, crafts and more.





Look into April

In Sunday School, we will be learning that Jesus sends his disciples to share the Good News. We will learn about how the early church began. There are experiments with oranges and crafts with cotton balls and more. We look forward to seeing the children at 11am after service.

Game Night Friday April 12 6:30-8

The Christian Education Board is inviting you to our first Game Night. It is a time to come together for fun. Bring the family or a friend to enjoy the festivities. It is a potluck style dinner so anything goes.

Bring a dish to share with one another as food and games bring us closer. We look forward to seeing you there.

Vacation Church Camp (VCC)

July 22-26 from 9 to Noon

Theme: Camp Firelight

Bible Verse: "When I am afraid, I put my trust in you." Psalm 56:3

We are going to Camp! Come join the fun of Camp Firelight with Lu the Lightening Bug as our guide as we learn Bible Stories of those who were afraid and put their trust in God. Along with fun camp games, crafts and snacks! Oh and cool fun science experiments too!

Registration is now open for both students and volunteers. Click [**STUDENT**](#) or [**VOLUNTEER**](#) to connect to the registration forms.

We are planning to have two groups this year, one for grades K-3 and one for 4-6. We will have our opening and closing assembly all together along with snacks. Our sessions of Bible Story, Recreation, Crafts and Science will be done separately by group. This is new this year and we are excited to be able to open it to more ages. So far we have 9 children signed up. We have room for a max of 20 children.

VCC preparations are on their way. Preparation is happening Tuesday nights at 6:30 down in Luke. Feel free to stop by to help cut, organize or create for the big week.

Please consider helping out the week of VCC. Steph Berg will be in touch with volunteers to get the background checks done, as all 18+ volunteers working with children need a state background check. This will happen in May. So if you think you are planning to help, please let Steph Berg know by email cedirector@fpc-ucc.org.

We are looking for 7th grade through high school helpers as well. Those young adults will not need a background check.

Note from the Christian Education Director Steph Berg

I just wanted to take a moment to reflect on the year I have had as your CE Director. First, I am thankful for accepting the call God gave me. Second, I want to thank Pastor Deborah for her guidance and help as I took on this position. Third, I want to thank the CE Board for all their support and for all they do for the children. Fourth, I want to thank the volunteers who help out each Sunday with School Sunday. Without them there would be no Sunday School. Lastly but not least by any means, I want to thank all of you for your acceptance of me in the role of CE Director.

This past year, I had time to learn the ropes and get to know our Sunday School students and families a bit more. I tried new things like a brand-new Christmas Pageant. This coming year, there are plans to do more gathering for our church community, like game night, and a youth trip. I feel very blessed that this position is a fit and I love what I do for our church and families.

Sincerely,

Chair Person Anne-Marie Merrill, Holly Gorgol, Paula Robinson, Chris Cox, Eileen Cox, Sue Lindemann, Kelly Ploof and CE Director Steph Berg

Mission and Outreach

Our own Beth Hunter made the Community Caregivers' 2023 Report. Thanks for all you do for our community, Beth!



OUR YEAR **2023**



The Outreach and Mission Board met on March 12, 2024. Financial information was reviewed and it was affirmed that Mission Board would support 4 scholarships for Horton Center (up to \$150 each).

Cyndi Gray reported that 68 Hours of Hunger is in good shape financially. The Mission Board will not be making a financial donation at this time. The Derry Lunch program has a debt of \$20,000 and it was decided not to contribute to this program as any donation we would make would have little impact. Other ways to support the school program will be investigated.

One Great Hour of Sharing (one of the 5 for 5 UCC efforts) was collected in March. This is when the coin boxes are provided to the children and the children of all ages. There were also envelopes for additional congregation contribution. The results will be reported from our April Mission Board meeting.

OCWM (Our Churches Wider Mission), is supported each month with a contribution. This pledge is handed in at the worship service at Prepared to Serve. We have been prayerful about our contribution since we haven't raised it in several years. After prayer and research, we did decide to raise it to a monthly gift of \$400. Our support of our denominational structure is so crucial. We hope to report to the congregation more specific examples of how this money helps us directly.

We try to report each month during the worship service during scheduled "Mission Moments" You pledge faithfully to Mission, and it is important that you know what your money is going. In case you've missed it, these are among the ministries and services that your Mission dollars support:

Community Caregivers, Derry Friendship Center, Sonshine Soup Kitchen, First Baptist Church Food Pantry, Family Promise of Southern New Hampshire, Upper Room Resource Center, Pinkerton Family Program, Pastoral Counseling Services (providing counseling to anyone who wishes a faith approach to talk therapy).

In addition to these local organizations, we also support the Pastor's Discretionary fund.

If you are wondering what the other three missions are in that "5 for 5" giving initiative: Strengthen the Church – which we talk about at Pentecost; Neighbors in Need – which is an October request and The Christmas Fund – which used to be called Veterans of the Cross, a fund to help retired clergy with limited resources.

We thank God for you because you take the Bible as seriously as we do: generosity and tithing a portion of our income is a time-honored, God-inspired act of faith. Thank you!

Your Board of Mission and Outreach:

Cyndi Gray, Nancy Murdock, Sue Brown, Liz Greenberg, Karen Wilson

Fundraising

Fundraising Committee is busy at work planning events for the year.

1. On April 13, we have a cooking show event. Thanks to Stephanie Berg for hosting this – see more details below.
2. Save the Date Saturday June 1 for our 3rd Annual Spring Fling. This event has done well in the past and we are bringing it back again. We will be asking for raffle donations, and white elephant items. For the white elephant we ask for no furniture and only nice condition used items, please. Think of the church this month as you start your spring cleaning. Start putting items aside to donate. We will start collecting in May. See flyer below.
3. In September, we are planning to bring back Vendor Bingo. A free to attend event with food, fun and prizes! Date is still to be determined.
4. Save the Date Saturday, November 23 for the beloved Sugar Plum Fair. We always have this fair the Saturday before Thanksgiving and it is full of crafters, sweet rolls and so much more!

Those are our in-person events so far. We will have some online events and dining for dollar events coming as well. We will keep you posted.

If you want to help out in any way for any events, please let Cathy Pottle or Cathy Zylinski know. Also, we are always looking for new ideas. If you have any, please share with the fundraiser committee.

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

April 13 Cooking Show - Come join us for some sweet treats and more at the Cooking Show Fundraiser. Hosted by FPC member and Pampered Chef Consultant Stephanie CM-Berg or Steph CMB as she goes by for pampered chef. She is planning to make a gluten free meal with Salsa Chicken and Cilantro Rice and a vegetarian option too of Mexican Quinoa Bowl. Then there will be time to try out the Pampered Chef tools to make a veggie platter, fruit salad and some other sides to go with the meal. She will have tasty treats to sample as well.

Come join the fun and invite your friends to come. There is a registration fee to help support the church and to offset the cost of food. \$10 per adult, \$6 per child, \$30 per family of 4 or more. In addition, there will be a special Pampered Chef link to order product where 15% of the sales will go to the church.

In 2021, we did a virtual cooking show fundraiser and now in 2024 we will do an in person cooking show! This time you can try the food that is made. YUM! See you there.

Register in advance for the workshop by filling out this form [Cooking Show Registration](#)



COOKING SHOW FUNDRAISER

This is a hands on fun fundraiser for the oldest church in Derry NH, First Parish Congregational Church hosted by Steph CMB Independent Pampered Chef Consultant.

Food & Fun
Come try out some Pampered Chef Tools & make some yummy food to enjoy together.

When & Where

- ✓ 47 E Derry Rd, Derry NH
- ✓ Saturday April 13 from 11-1
- ✓ Contact Steph CMB by email for more info at stephkitchen10@gmail.com

*Half of registration fee and 15% of Pampered Chef sales goes to support the church



Registration Fee due at door

Cash, Check, Venmo, Paypal accepted

\$10 for Adult \$6 for Child
\$30 for Family of 4 or more



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 ~ 603.434.0628



An Ordination is Coming ... and you are invited!

For the past five years, Debbie Gline Allen has been working with our Rockingham Association Committee On Ministry to complete all of the steps required for becoming an ordained minister in the United Church of Christ (UCC). As of February 4th, after her Ecclesiastical Council ("final exam/dissertation," in English), she has been approved for ordination.

**You are invited to attend this service of ordination on Sunday, April 28th at 3:00pm
All ages are invited!**

**If you would like to sing in the Pop-Up Choir for this service,
please contact Debbie at glineallen@mac.com for a copy of the music.**

Since it has been a few decades since First Parish Church has hosted an ordination, here are the answers to some frequently asked questions about ordinations, and about this one in particular:

I thought Debbie already was a minister. Why is she getting ordained?

Debbie is already a Commissioned Minister of Christian Formation in the UCC and has been for 32 years. But with some shifts in the understanding of ordination in the UCC, she has discerned that ordained ministry (ministry of the Word and Sacrament, i.e. a more generic ministry than commissioned ministry) is an appropriate and desired step to enhance and broaden her current ministry in Christian education and faith formation.

What will happen at this service of ordination?

It will look much like a regular service of worship, complete with hymns, prayers, a sermon, and Communion, along with the ritual of ordination. Debbie is designing this service so that it will be welcoming for all ages. It will include a PrayGround area for children, beautiful images projected on the screens during the more wordy parts, lively hymns with jazz trumpet, and puzzle pieces (the purpose of which will be revealed during the service).

What does the ritual of ordination look like?

It involves inviting Debbie to make solemn promises as she enters ordained ministry, followed by the Laying on of Hands. This is a symbolic act where Debbie will kneel at the front, and all of the ordained ministers who are present will gather around her and place their hands on her shoulders. As this act has been practiced since the time of Jesus' apostles as they passed on ministerial authority to the Early Church leaders, it is a powerful symbol of affirmation from the Cloud of Witnesses of the Church throughout the ages. Everyone present will also be invited to place their hands on the people in front of them so that all may bless Debbie into her future ministry.

How long will the service last?

It could be as long as one and a half hours, but there will be lots to see and hear and participate in, so it should feel much shorter.

Will there be food?!

Yes! Our marvelous Kitchen Angels will be preparing a reception to follow the service.

We hope you will come and represent First Parish Church at this service of ordination, as First Parish is the church where Debbie is not only a member, it is the church that called (hired) her to her first Christian education position and launched her on this exciting journey.



All ages are welcome to this
intergenerational

Service of Ordination for Debbie Gline Allen

SUNDAY, APRIL 28, 2024
3:00 P.M.

First Parish Congregaitonal Church UCC
47 East Derry Rd., East Derry, NH

Clergy are invited to arrive at 2:30 p.m. to
process in robes & red stoles.

If you would like to join the Pop-Up Choir,
rehearsal will begin at 2:00 p.m.
Please contact Debbie at
glineallen@mac.com for a copy of the music.

Personnel

Personnel is working on revising the staff annual review process. We would like the focus of the reviews to be looking toward the future and setting goals. These goals will be revisited quarterly to see what is working and what is holding us back from reaching the goals. This process will involve help from staff, council, boards & committees and the congregation. When we implement this new process, we hope that all of you will be willing to help us make this work as we look towards the future of our church. We would love to hear what your thoughts are on future goals for FPC.

Beth Hunter, Karen Wilson, Margie Ives, Randy Brown and Pastor Deborah

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

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 @First-Parish. 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)



Beautiful Walk © Mary Southard www.ministryofhearts.org Used with permission

**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

pastordebora@fpc-ucc.org

Office Manager

Suzanne Finocchiaro

officemgr@fpc-ucc.org

First Parish Congregational Church

United Church of Christ

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