

First Parish Congregational Church

United Church of Christ – East Derry, New Hampshire

May 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

Dear Child of God,

Every year, we joyfully welcome new members into the congregation in the Spring and in the Fall. Some folks transfer their membership from their former church and some join simply by affirming their baptism. (And if you were not baptized, I baptize you and then you join!) It is a meaningful time for the whole congregation.

When I worked as a hospital Chaplain in a trauma hospital in western New York, we knew that many people were not affiliated with a church. We learned that the goal was not for us to be “religious” when we spoke to patients. We learned how to have conversations with people about things that held **meaning** for them as they faced their health situations. **Meaning**. Where do you find meaning in your life?

I’ve learned since chaplaincy that this question holds true for us as Christians and as active members of a very active church. Where do we find meaning? Here, at First Parish, we find meaning in gathering for worship on Sunday morning. We also find meaning in serving others, as demonstrated in the myriad of mission projects that we support. We are delighted to have a new leader of music ministry because we find meaning in worshipful music. And as evidenced by our church’s financial stewardship of the Meetinghouse, we find meaning in our historical connection and heritage. Yes, we are 305 years old - and our faith filled ancestors over three centuries did a lot to grow and develop this area of southern NH as beacons of faith in God.

Where do you find meaning in your church? Many people find meaning in the act of “joining”. In our church, people who trust that God has led them to belong to First Parish, are brought to membership through a ritual within the worship service. As Pastor and presider of that ritual, I ask questions that affirm the person’s desire to belong to our faith family. Once members, people have the privilege of voting on matters of the church. Unlike churches or denominations whose leaders make decisions for others, as a UCC church, the people gather, discuss, and decide all matters in the life of the church. Why is the worship at 10:00 on Sunday? Why is Council on the third Wednesday? How much money do staff make? All these decisions have been discussed at the committee or

Board level, then brought to Council and then brought to the people, to the members of the congregation for a vote! Members have the right to vote and every vote matters. You can't get more democratic than that!

In January, at our Annual Meeting, we voted on the First Parish Vision Statement, which is: "To live our faith by being a compassionate, accepting, and generous presence in the community, where all people find purpose and belonging." If you are not a member yet, and would like to join, please see me and participate in the joining service. If you are a member, are you as active as you would like to be? Is there something that you believe our church should get involved in? Talk to a member of Council or to me. We will discern, discuss, and then decide by voting on the necessary action. Help us to live into this vision. We cannot do everything that the world needs. The world needs us to do everything we can!

Faith, hope, and love be yours,
Pastor Deborah

Christian Education and Faith Formation

Sunday School (SS) Calendar

May 5 SS fire drill practice during class time

May 19 Rehearsal during SS for singing on Celebration Sunday

May 26 No SS due to Memorial Day Weekend

June 2 Last Day for Sunday School before Summer

June 9 Celebration Sunday with a potluck luncheon after service

Save the Dates

May 10 Fun Night: Memorial Banner Painting 6:30-8:30

June 7 Fun Night TBD

July 22-26 Vacation Church Camp

A Review of April

In Sunday School we discussed Jesus going up to heaven and what the Apostle Paul did afterwards. We started to discuss the beginnings of the Christian Churches.

In addition, the CE Board held a Game Night. Everyone who came had fun -see some pictures below. The top game played was Rummikub. We had an assortment of food and games. A Big Thank You to all who came and brought food and games. Stay tuned, this night may come back in June. But for now, we have something else planned for May. Keep reading our blast and newsletters to find out more.

A Look into May

We are heading into the last 4 Sundays for this Sunday School year. June 2nd is the last day of Sunday School.

For the first two Sundays of May, we will be focusing on the greatest commandment which is love and the many gifts the Spirit gives to us.

For the last 2 Sunday School classes held on May 19 and June 2, we are going to have some extra fun. After snack, we are planning to rehearse a song for 20 minutes that we will sing at the June 9 Worship Service. Then we are going to play games, buddy read or go play on the playground with the youth and elementary classes combined. It will be a fun social time for the children.

We look forward to seeing all the children downstairs at 11.

Please note:

This Thursday, May 2 is the CE Board meeting at 7pm and it is held in Cook.

On Sunday, May 5, the children will have a practice fire drill during Sunday School.

Fun Night Friday, May 10 ~ 6:30-8:30

The Christian Education Board is inviting you to a Fun Night. Last month we had a game night and this month we are having a paint night. We are making signs to line up the road leading to the cemetery. These signs are for celebration and memory of those who have served our country.

This event is a drop by event. Come anytime during the 2 hours to make a sign. Light refreshments will be served. Come join the fun!

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

Lu the Lightning Bug is inviting you to a week of camp for free. Join the fun of Camp Firelight with Lu the Lightning 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 grades 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. There are 14 children signed up already which is super exciting! If you know parents who stay home with their children in the summer, share the good news of Vacation Church Camp.

Also, VCC preparations are happening. Preparation is happening Tuesday nights at 6:30 down in John/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 this month. Keep an eye on the eblasts for the date. 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.

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



Some pictures from our game night held on Friday, 4/12 and some April Sunday School pictures

Pictures from Reverend Debbie Gline Allen's Ordination 4/28/24



Music Ministry

Greetings, Church!

As your new Leader of Music Ministry, I'm thrilled to be on this journey with you. I've had a wonderful time getting to know you over the last 2 months. We have some exciting developments—from introducing some new music to reprising our choir program. The Easter choir performance was simply outstanding, and I'm excited to join the choir in the Pentecost season on 5/26. Rehearsals will be held weekly at 9am in Luke throughout May, and all are welcomed and encouraged to join in!

My background in church music spans over 15 years of involvement in Roman Catholic, Episcopal, and Lutheran traditions. Drawing from this diverse experience, I'm eager to introduce a blend of cherished classics and fresh selections to our worship.

Whether we are using new-to-us music or tried-and-true hymnal standards, it's essential to address copyright compliance. While many hymns in The New Century Hymnal feature inclusive language, some lyrical adaptations as they appear in our hymnal are not covered by our existing bulk licenses with OneLicense and CCLI. In such cases, I'll endeavor to secure special permissions from the copyright holders, opt for alternative selections, or utilize hymn texts in the public domain, ensuring compliance with copyright law. This commitment to copyright compliance aligns with our UCC values of social justice, ensuring fair compensation for the creators of the music we use.

As we prepare to return to the Meetinghouse sanctuary, I look forward to engaging with you on matters concerning our organ, keyboard instruments, choir, and other musical groups. Your feedback is invaluable to me, so please don't hesitate to reach out at music@fpc-ucc.org.

Together, let's embark on this musical journey, making a Joyful Noise to the Lord as we go!

Respectfully submitted, Sam Juliano

Mission and Outreach

The Mission Board met on April 10. We reviewed our income from pledges to date. Although the amount received is less than anticipated to date, we know that in the past our income from pledges usually catches up by June. Therefore, we will continue to disburse the usual amount using our retained funds to cover the difference.

The discussion of the UCC 5 for 5 collections focused on the information we share about these ministries with the congregation. The national UCC provides short videos and materials to inform the congregation. We will use these materials and the videos for the Mission Moment for each of these.

The exception is OCWM (Our Churches Wider Mission). The Board feels more information is needed for our congregation to understand what OCWM provides. We will have a speaker for this Mission Moment but it is not yet scheduled.

Our church received \$514 for One Great Hour of Sharing. Our next collection for Strengthen The Church will be on May 19. We will begin to collect for this Mission on May 5

Suzanne, our office Administrator has contacted the entities which receive our monthly disbursements and asked that they send their Thank You and acknowledgement electronically, cutting down on paper. It is working.

We will send Sue Brown to the Upper Room recognition event to represent First Parish Church.

Respectfully submitted, Nancy Murdock

Safe Church

Recently, the First Parish Safe Church Committee has met regularly since the Fall. Our conversations center around keeping everyone safe on Sunday morning. We've asked ourselves the following questions: what if there were a threatening situation while we are in worship? Are we prepared? How do we become prepared?

We have observed that our children know what to do in a fire drill or an intruder drill simply because they practice. We recognized that we, the worshipping congregation, have never practiced any kind of safety drill. Safety matters. We are going to begin practicing intelligent safety on Sunday morning. Each room has an Evacuation Floor plan displayed on the wall by the door. Please locate and familiarize yourself in each room.

IN CASE OF FIRE: When the fire alarm sounds, please believe that it is real and that it is important to move as quickly and as calmly as possible toward the safest exit. In Currier, there are three available exits: the door we enter by; the kitchen exit; and the blue door by the stage.

We will need “ambassadors” at each exit to encourage and lead the way. They will clear the path, hold open the door and facilitate your exit.

USE COMMON SENSE: if you sit toward the front - go forward. If you sit at the back - use the kitchen door or the main door, whichever is safest for you.

If you walk unaided, please use the front door.

IF YOU WALK with a cane or walker, and if you have a difficult time with stairs, please exit via the kitchen door.

ONCE OUTSIDE: walk across the parking lot in the direction of the dumpsters and go into the field toward the cemetery. In a fire, there will be a multitude of emergency vehicles and we want to be out of their way.

When given the “all clear”, please come back to Currier via any door.

If the fire alarm sounds while the children are in another part of the building, they will reunite with you out in the cemetery field. The teachers will lead them to safety through the playground.

INTRUDER: If ever there were an intruder, we may be asked to vacate the building. We may be asked to shelter in place. Be attentive to the leaders who take charge of the emergency.

As Safe Church members, we will do our best at keeping everyone safe at First Parish.

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

Youth Mental Health

On May 14, 2024, Atkinson Congregational will host and SoRock Coalition co-hosts a screening of “What I Wish My Parents Knew”, a film screening and discussion about Youth Mental Health. The film and discussion are to help parents better understand how to support the mental health of their children. A 45 minute film explores the inner struggle of children battling depression and anxiety in silence, and will be followed by a discussion led by local mental health professionals.



WHAT I WISH MY PARENTS KNEW

Youth Mental Health
FREE Film Screening + Discussion



Tuesday
May 14th,
6:30 PM

Atkinson Congregational
Church UCC
• **Sanctuary**
101 Main St. Atkinson, NH 03811

Pre event refreshments from 6PM
in the social hall.

Fundraising

We could use your help to make our Saturday, June 1 Spring Fling a success.

WE NEED RAFFLE BASKETS - RAFFLE BASKET IDEAS FOR THE SPRING FLING

It's time to get your creative juices flowing and donate something for the raffle table! Use your imagination and fill a basket, a decorative box or one covered with wrapping paper, an interesting container.... Our Fundraising team or Carol Guerrin can help you.

What to choose: a Spring/Summer wreath or decorative item; beach, gardening, cookout or picnic items; Fathers' Day or Graduation gifts; a new puzzle, game or toy; arts and crafts; snacks; spa items

Gift cards and scratch tickets are very popular

How about a theme - date night, baking with kids or pamper yourself - there are web sites with many more ideas....

Please drop off your donations in the church office starting Monday, May 20 and no later than noon on Thursday, May 30.



MAKE SOME COOKIES FOR THE SPRING FLING COOKIE PARADE

We need dozens of COOKIES for the SPRING FLING! Bake your favorite cookies and bring them to Currier Hall on Friday, May 31 or before 8AM on Saturday, June 1. For safety and sanitary reasons, please package 3 or 4 cookies (depending on the size of the cookie) in a sealed sandwich bag. Please label if gluten free, contains nuts or peanut butter. Contact Beth Hunter if you have questions.

Thank you for all contributions.

JOIN US AT THE SPRING FLING on SATURDAY JUNE 1 AND HAVE FUN!!!

Save the date: The 3rd annual Trivia Night is on! Mark your calendars for the Trivia Night on Saturday, October 19 from 4-7 pm at the Boys and Girls Club in East Derry. Last year we broke our previous years' financial and attendance numbers so let's see if we can do it again. Most importantly, we can use sponsors to help offset some of our expenses. Please reach out to committee members Anne Marie Merrill, Liz Greenberg, Cathy Zylinski, Cathy Pottle, Julie Greenfield or Cyndi Gray if you have names of businesses we can approach for sponsorship.

Horton Center



HORTON CENTER HAPPENINGS

More Info at www.HortonCenter.org

YOUTH

- Week-long and half-week long camp sessions June - Aug.

Scholarships available!

- Leaders in Training
June 27-29

- NEW: Pride on the Mountain camp for LGBTQIA+ youth
August 4-7

- Fall Confirmation Retreat
October 4-6

ADULTS

- Adult Women's Retreat "Peace, Faith, and Rejuvenation"
August 1-4

- Adult volunteer counselors for camp sessions each week

- Wilderness First Aid certification course
June 8-9

- Quilting/Crafting retreat
September 6-8

EVERYONE

- Opening Work Days - volunteers welcome!
May 17-19

- Open House event
June 15

- Family and Friends Weekend
Aug. 30- Sept. 2

- Retreat season availabilities for your church/group!
August - October

Contact Tivvi Pare with questions: TPare@nhcucc.org



For Fun: God, on Lawn Care

(By The Gazette Editorial Committee From Issue 41: Winter 2019)

GOD to ST. FRANCIS: Frank, what in the world is going on down on the planet? What happened to the dandelions, violets, milkweeds and stuff I started eons ago? I had a perfect no-maintenance garden plan. Those plants grow in any type of soil, withstand drought and multiply with abandon. The nectar from the blossoms attracts butterflies, honey bees and flocks of songbirds. I expected to see a vast garden of color by now, but all I see are these green rectangles.

St. FRANCIS: It's the Suburbanites that settled there, Lord. They started calling your flowers 'weeds' and went to great lengths to kill them and replace them with grass.

GOD: Grass? But, it's so boring. It's not colorful. It attracts only grubs and sod worms. It's sensitive to temperatures. Do these Suburbanites really want all that grass growing there?

ST. FRANCIS: Apparently so, Lord. They go to great pains to grow it and keep it green, fertilizing it each spring and poisoning any other plant that crops up in the lawn.

GOD: The spring rains and warm weather probably make grass grow really fast. That must make the Suburbanites happy.

ST. FRANCIS: Apparently not, Lord. As soon as it grows a little, they cut it; sometimes twice a week, and then most of them rake it up and put it in bags and pay to throw it away.

GOD: Now, let me get this straight. They fertilize grass so it will grow, and when it does grow, they cut it off and pay to throw it away? These Suburbanites must be relieved in the summer when we cut back on the rain. That surely slows the growth and saves them a lot of work.

ST. FRANCIS: You aren't going to believe this, Lord, but when the grass stops growing fast, they water it.

GOD: What nonsense. At least they kept some of the trees. The trees grow leaves in the spring to provide beauty and shade in the summer. In the autumn, the leaves form a natural blanket to keep moisture in the soil and protect the trees and bushes. It's a natural cycle of life.

ST. FRANCIS: You better sit down, Lord. As soon as the leaves fall, they rake them into great piles and pay to have them hauled away.

GOD: No! What do they do to protect the tree roots in the winter, to keep the soil moist and loose?

ST. FRANCIS: They go out and buy something which they call mulch. They haul it home and spread it around in place of the leaves.

GOD: And where do they get this mulch?

ST. FRANCIS: They cut down trees and grind them up to make the mulch.

GOD: Enough! I don't want to talk about this anymore. St. Catherine, what movie have you scheduled for us tonight?

ST. CATHERINE: 'Dumb and Dumber,' Lord. It's a story about....

GOD: Never mind, I think I just heard the whole story from St. Francis.

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. **(To avoid the Church incurring Venmo fees, please DO NOT enable the feature “Turn On For Purchases”. Thank You!)**

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

Estate Planning

When Liz and I moved to NH ten years ago we consulted with a lawyer and made critical decisions about our estate planning. We made decisions about our health care and filled out advance care directives – assuring that each of us knew what the other wanted if there were a health crisis. We updated a will that reflected the disbursement of our assets. We filled out power of attorney paperwork so that our finances were secure. We named beneficiaries, which included our children and the church. We also chose to do a living trust. Not everyone does. Every decision reflected our current reality.

As a pastor, I have counseled so many bereaved folks who have no idea what their loved one wanted done with their assets. This causes a great deal of stress on loved ones. Please consider today what you would like done with your assets when you have gone to meet Jesus. It is a gift to your loved ones. Trust me.

Pastor Deborah

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

facebook.com/fpcucc

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