

First Parish Congregational Church
United Church of Christ – East Derry, New Hampshire
April 2025 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

Pastor’s Ponderings

Dear Child of God,

The first thing I want (need) to say is this: “April showers bring May flowers.” A simple little rhyme carries such profound truth. We DO need the rains and wetness of April to bring necessary moisture and fuel to the bulbs, blossoms and buds that have been dormant this winter. So, let’s go easy on those “dreary” days of April and recognize them for the profound gift that they bring our divine planet, Mother Earth.

Secondly, which is akin to the first one, please read the information that I put in March’s newsletter about WAITING to clean out your gardens until Memorial Day. If you are busting to get some work done, start some seeds in your windows or do some more research about NH native plants. You can also do more research about plants that keep the bugs away!! Reduce pesticide use and let nature help you get your desired outcome! (Yes! I am still very motivated by the talk I heard at Prepared to Serve in February!)



OK so now is the ‘real’ newsletter article: “My 2025 Study Leave.” As you know I am granted two weeks of Study Leave every year. These have been so very valuable to me professionally and personally. I have traveled, attended conferences, preaching festivals, taken classes and the list goes on and on. With each Study Leave, I believe that I have grown and I also have brought back to you the many of the gifts that I have received in the process. This year, with one precious week before retirement, what would it be? Conference? Class? Collegiality? As always, when faced with a decision, I spend time in prayer and I listen for guidance.

“Dear God, This will be my last Study Leave in my final months as pastor and teacher here at First Parish, what do I need most; and what gift might I bring to them, the congregation that has been my home for more than 11 years? “

God always answers my prayers. Sometimes the answer is surprising. Sometimes I don’t appreciate the answer, truth be told. And it is always enlightening!! Allow me to share how it all unfolded this winter. As you know we have sold our house and when my duty here in Derry has concluded we will move back to Rochester, NY, to be close to those precious grandchildren (5 under 5). As we pack the house and I survey my office, I have taken an accounting of the books that have been part of my life and my ministry. Many of them are being donated to the Members in Discernment in our Conference, so that they may enjoy them. Some I will keep. Two lovely members of the congregation helped me by alphabetizing them!

Pastor Ponderings – *Continued*

That helped a lot! Books, books, books! I noticed a book entitled “Grace in Tension”, that lovely book written by Claire McGarry from Windham, who came to see us when we read her book in Adult Faith Formation. And then I saw “What’s So Amazing about Grace” by Philip Yancey, an author that was recommended to me by someone in our congregation. Then I noticed a book by Max Lucado, one of our (Adult Faith Formation folks) very favorite authors, a daily devotional entitled “Grace for the Moment.”

“Oh my goodness! God, are You talking to me right now?”

Then I noticed a wonderful little book entitled “Hazelnuts of Grace: selections from Julian of Norwich”. Not only is Julian of Norwich one of the truest lights in my repertoire of favorite mystics, there was this nifty little “God wink” in the title: ‘hazelnuts’. Yes, after 11 and a half years serving the descendants of “Nutfield”, after all we have been through together and done together to honor their service and ministry to us, I had to smile from ear to ear.

“Thank you, God. I guess I’ll be reading up on ‘grace’ for my Study Leave.”

I announced my project and dates to Council and started noticing moments of grace around me. By the way, that wasn’t the end of the book list either! I found four more books with ‘grace’ in the title! Books by Marianne Williamson and Caroline Myss, two of my favorite spiritual teachers. There were two more devotionals: “A Daybook of Grace” and “Grace: quotes and passages for Heart, Mind, and Soul.”

A moment of grace happened when I was scheduled to take the Study Leave and came down with Covid. (Yes, again!) This one was a doozy, too. I hurt so bad and I couldn’t think straight. Grace showed up when someone dropped off a “game changer” called NAC, an immune supplement. Several days passed before I could concentrate long enough to read a few pages. And, you know, in spite of Covid, I was surrounded by grace. There were moments of grace in the texts and concerned emails I received. Liz got it, too. When we were both pretty hurting grace showed up in the form of stuffed shells and a batch of delicious cranberry muffins delivered to our doorstep.

There were moments when I felt guilty because I wasn’t doing “more”. Grace showed up as Liz took care of me and helped me to spend my energy in thoughts of wellness rather than worry. I was coming out the other side when Liz was sickest. Grace showed up for me because I knew exactly how she was feeling. I was able to make her tea before she knew she wanted some. Moments of grace aren’t always enormous and they are always deeply appreciated.

Finally, I was able to read quite a lot, pondering the power of grace, and in the weeks ahead you will hear more about grace - and how amazing it truly is!

I thank God for you, First Parish friends.
Every. Single. Day.
Pastor Deborah



Christian Education and Faith Formation

Christian Education Schedule

April 2: CE Board Meeting 7pm in Corinthians

April 6: Sunday School followed by Liz's Gratitude Party

April 13: Children will parade in with Palms before service; Sunday School 11-12

April 20: No Sunday School due to Easter

April 27: No Sunday School due to NH School Break

May 4: Sunday School 11-12

Sunday School:

During Sunday School, we have been having our own journey to the cross through the lessons we are learning from Jesus' parables. We are learning to be kind to everyone like the Good Samaritan. We are learning to be patient and ask forgiveness from the Barren Fig Tree parable. We are to be joyful when things are found and know God rejoices when we return to him! God is a loving parent from parable of the Prodigal Son.

On April 6, Sunday School will run until noon. We ask parents to come down to the bottom on the stairs to pick up their children. Then you can head into Liz's Gratitude Party. This will cause less confusion as other guests will be entering the hall to head to Currier for the party.

April 13 is Palm Sunday. It is a tradition right before service begins, children parade in waving palms. Children who would like to participate, please plan to meet in the hall 10 minutes before service at 9:50.

Sunday School has two Sundays off in a row this year due to Easter and NH Break falling close together. Enjoy family time (and church time) during these Sundays. We will return to Sunday School on May 4.

Camp Scholarships:

CE has scholarship money set aside for attendees who like to participate at Horton Center this summer. Please write a letter to the CE Board that you would like a scholarship to Horton Center and why. Paracord bracelets are coming back! We have some for sale to help with the scholarships. We will be planning a time for children to help make these bracelets. Stay tuned for that.

Vacation Church Camp (VCC): Wonder Junction

July 21-25, 2025, 9-Noon

Registration is open! It is open to children entering into kindergarten through 6th grade for the 2025-2026 school year. We already have 19 children enrolled!! VCC is a fun week of Bible stories, activities, music and festive snacks. This year's theme is Wonder Junction which takes place in the Wild West as we learn about Jesus' story on earth.

Click [here](#) to register.

Looking for volunteers! The grab and go craft bags were a hit last month. Thank you all who took one (or more) to help cut for us. It has been a big-time saver and blessing you were able to do this. We will provide some more this month too.

Also looking for those who can help out the week of July 21-25. We are looking for our guides. Guides are adults who can lead groups of children to their stations and help at those who need assistance during the station times.

Thank you to Reni Harnden for stepping up again for Science Station, Anne Engelhardt for leading Crafts, Alex Cobban for being our wonderful Storyteller. For Paula Robinson taking the lead on Snacks and Chris for Assembly leader. We are looking for anyone who would like to take on Recreation for the week.

Register as a volunteer [here](#). Or see Chris Cox or Steph Berg if you are interested in helping. Thank you!

Sincerely, Anne-Mare Merriell, Paula Robinson, Chris Cox, Eileen Cox, Sue Lindemann,
Holly Gorgol and CE Director Steph Berg



Confirmation

Save the Date: Saturday, June 28 for our All-Church Confirmation
 "Puritans vs. Witches" Tour in Salem, MA



Easter Sunrise Service

Sunday April 20th, we will gather at
 Broadmeadow Farm at 5:45 am for our
 Easter Sunrise service.



CHOIR

We are still recruiting new choir members, please speak to Sandy Olson if you are interested.



Thursday April 3 @ 6:00-7:00 pm in the Sanctuary
 Sunday April 6 @ 9:00-9:30 am in the Sanctuary
 Thursday April 10 @ 6:00-7:00 pm in the Sanctuary
 Palm Sunday April 13 @ 9:00 am in the Sanctuary
 Thursday April 17 - No practice because of Maundy
 Thursday service
 Easter Sunday April 20 @ 9:00- 9:30 am
 in the Sanctuary

Bridge Pastor Update

REV. BOB FELLOWS WILL BE OUR BRIDGE PASTOR AFTER PASTOR DEBORAH RETIRES

Many of you are wondering how on earth we will cover the many roles that Pastor Deborah fills so well for First Parish once she retires on May 18, since it is unlikely that we will have found a “settled” pastor by then. Your council has been hard at work attending to that. The Associate Pastor of UCC-NH, Rev Sara Marean, recommended that we hire a “bridge” pastor to fill those roles between the time Pastor Deborah leaves and a new, settled pastor begins. She recommended Rev Bob Fellows, who has held similar bridge pastor roles. Council representatives met with him in a joint meeting to discuss our needs and his background, and we were all quite impressed. We have also followed up with his references, which were very complimentary. Our own Rev Debbie Gline Allen also knows Bob and spoke highly of him. Based on all this input, Council voted at our meeting last week to sign a call agreement with him, and have now done so.

Rev Fellows is a magician and an artist, in addition to being a UCC pastor, and he incorporates those skills in some of his pastoral work. We think he will be a good fit for First Parish.

Rev Fellows will work $\frac{3}{4}$ time, and because he lives in Peterborough, he will normally be in the office only one day during the week (barring special circumstances), in addition to the Sunday service. He will be accessible at any time, however, working from home on his sermons and other duties. He will perform all of the primary duties that Pastor Deborah does—preparing and delivering sermons, working with our music director, officiating at weddings, funerals and baptisms, visiting members with health problems in the hospital or at home, teaching adult education at some point, etc. Because he is not full time, he will work with Boards to help cover a portion of the responsibilities.

Between now and May 18, let’s all focus on giving Pastor Deborah and Liz a great send-off. Knowing that plans are well in place for the future, we can give Pastor Deborah and Liz our full attention, just as they have given us their full attention for the last 11 years.

Randy Brown
For Council





Contact Information for the Search Committee Members

Name	Email	Phone
Debbie Gline Allen	glineallen@mac.com	(603) 553-0920
Bill Armstrong	e.armstrong@juno.com	(603) 548-8715
Randy Brown (chair)	Randybrown1119@gmail.com	(609) 240-6049
Julie Greenfield	juleslab1@comcast.net	(603) 930-1507
Katie (Cobban) Greenfield	kcobban11@gmail.com	(603) 490-3332
Reni Harnden	finance.secretary@fpc-ucc.org	(603) 785-2848
Beth Hunter	beth.hunter2@comcast.net	(603) 505-0702
Joannie Krohn	joanniekrohn@gmail.com	(603) 479-9199
Heather Paradzick	paradzickheather@gmail.com	(978) 500-5585

Safe Church

Your Safe Church members are excited about resuming church services in the Meetinghouse!

We have been working diligently to prepare for all the safety precautions to keep everyone at First Parish safe. We have revised & reworked our safety cards to have assistants in areas that we deem necessary. Please see our list to familiarize yourself with these cards. We may need your help with these on a given Sunday.

A new Fire Safety Assistant checklist will be posted by the bell entrance in the area below the Sanctuary (MacGregor Hall). Terrance Brand will be instructing what this includes & what has to be done before every service in the Meetinghouse. This will need to be done until all the downstairs rooms & ceiling are completed.

We hope that you enjoyed "Name that door" during "Getting to know you" during service. It is our hope to have a master list of all the names of doors throughout the church facilities. The facilities Board has done a great job on marking all the inside doors. We appreciate all that they have done to help keep our Beloved Church Facility safe!

As always, it is our pleasure to keep you safe! Your Safe Church Members:

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

Missions

The Mission Board met March 18. Our finances continue to look very good. Thank you for your continued support. Last month we sent \$500 to Pastor Joshua in Zimbabwe for the purchase of 2 sewing machines. We have heard that the money was received and will wait to get word that the machines were purchased.

Jack Kennedy will visit us April 13 to speak of his work in Sumbawa, showing a video and meeting with interested persons after service.

Michelle from Family Promise will speak to us on May 18 on the opening of the new facility in Derry.



Thank you all for your generous support in the One Great Hour of Sharing. Next month we will report on the actual amount raised.

Please seek out any members if you need to find out more information about our work and ways for you to get involved.

Cynthia Gray for Mission Board

Gratitude Journaling Prompts *for* April

..... Ordinary & *Happy*

M	T	W	T	F	S	S
31 	1 The best thing that happened this year.	2 The kindest thing someone did for you.	3 Any things you have that the majority of people don't.	4 The best thing that's ever happened to you.	5 Your greatest achievement.	6 Your biggest supporters in life.
7 Your best friends.	8 Skills or talents you have.	9 Things that you appreciate about yourself.	10 The nicest compliment you've received.	11 Your favorite memory.	12 People in your life who inspire you.	13 Your favorite trip.
14 The most important lesson you've learned.	15 Something you're looking forward to.	16 Best advice you've ever received.	17 The book that had a big impact on you.	18 Little things that bring you happiness.	19 The people in your life who make you smile.	20 The best job you've had.
21 Recent new opportunities.	22 What you like about the city/town you live in.	23 The times you felt truly loved.	24 What you like about your job.	25 The times you've felt appreciated.	26 Songs that uplift you.	27 Seasonal things that make you happy.
28 Quotes that inspire you.	29 The thing you're most grateful for.	30 The person you're most grateful for.	1 	2	3	4

You're Invited
 to a
Gratitude Party
 for
Liz Greenberg

April 6, 2025
12-2

First Parish Church
47 E Derry Rd. Derry, NH

by March 23 to Rachel Cobban
 (603) 490-8635
 cobbanclan@comcast.net

RSVP




YOU ARE INVITED TO

Rev. Dr. Deborah Roof's
Retirement Party

SUNDAY
MAY 4 2-4 PM

FIRST PARISH
CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH
47 E DERRY RD. DERRY, NH

RSVP
 by April 27

If you would like to
 be part of the
 program let Rachel
 know by April 13

Rachel Cobban
 Cobbanclan@comcast.net
 603-490-8635



Calling All First Parish Campers



What is a great place to spend July 4th week then up on Pine Mountain at Horton Center. On Friday, July 4th we will be watching the fireworks below us from the mountain. We want to get a big group from our church to attend week 2 -June 29 to July 5th up on the mountain. If you are in grades 3rd to 5th then Elementary Eco-Explorers would be your theme. Grades 6th to 8th theme is Middlers on the mountain and grades 9th to 12th theme is Senior High: Choose Your Own Adventure.

Horton Center is a summer camp on top of Pine Mountain in the heart of the Presidential Range Gotham, New Hampshire. It is owned by the New Hampshire Conference of the United Church of Christ which First Parish Church is a part of. Also remember you don't have to be a member of a UCC church to attend camp because all are welcome. So, share this information about Horton Center with your family and friends.

The camp is surrounded on all sides by the National Forest and includes two separate mountain peaks. Camper activities include rock climbing, archery, caving, hiking, swimming, games, crafts and other traditional camp activities.

We have several church members who will be volunteering as dean and camp counselors that week. Registration is open at www.hortoncenter.org/sessions and the NHCUCC. First Parish Church also has scholarship money available to help offset the cost. If you have attended before or if you have never attended, please consider coming this year. If you are curious to learn more about what camp will be like, please join us for an hour-long informational Zoom call all about Horton Center's site, staff, volunteers, activities, and schedule on Thursday, May 15th from 6:30 to 7:30pm. Sign up to attend a Zoom informational session here: <https://forms.gle/6H3pdYt654KfDFH16>. We hope to see you there because we want you to join us for lots of fun this summer!

If you have any questions, please feel free to talk to Anne Engelhardt - Elementary Eco-Explorers Dean (annehardt@comcast.net or 603-321-9428) or Ann Marie Merrill -Elementary Eco-Explorers Counsellor before or after church services. I hope we see you on the mountain this summer.

Do It Anyway

People are often unreasonable, irrational, and self-centered.

Forgive them anyway.

If you are kind, people may accuse you of selfish, ulterior motives.

Be kind anyway.

If you are successful, you will win some unfaithful friends and some genuine enemies.

Succeed anyway.

If you are honest and sincere people may deceive you.

Be honest and sincere anyway.

What you spend years creating, others could destroy overnight.

Create anyway.

If you find serenity and happiness, some may be jealous.

Be happy anyway.

The good you do today, will often be forgotten.

Do good anyway.

Give the best you have, and it will never be enough.

Give your best anyway.

In the final analysis, it is between you and God.

It was never between you and them anyway.

Hanging on the wall in Mother Teresa's home for children in Calcutta.

Upcoming Events

SPRING FLING

FREE ADMISSION

May 10

9-1

First Parish Church
47 East Derry Rd. Derry NH

*Crafters/Vendors, Raffles,
Cookie Parade, Music, Food
& More*



From Your Fundraising Team

Thank you to all who joined Stephanie on Saturday for the cooking show.

The Spring Fling will be on May 10th, if you would like to join us with a yard sale space - or know someone who would like to be a vendor or crafter - please pick up a form to sign up. The application is also on the facebook event description. This has become a fun, family event for all. Any questions please contact Cathy Pottle clpottle@yahoo.com

Anne-Marie is already at work getting plants and seedlings ready for sale. And don't forget your boutique items to donate.

RAFFLE BASKET IDEAS for THE SPRING FLING

Your past donations have been fantastic and have made the Raffle Table a big money maker supporting First Parish Church. We can't wait to see what you create this SPRING! You can put your item(s) in a clear plastic bag, a basket, a decorative container or a box covered with wrapping paper. Donate a seasonal decorative item; a new puzzle, game, or toy; Spring and Summer accessories and Boston sports memorabilia. Gift cards are very popular along with scratch tickets, arts and crafts, and hostess gifts. How about a date night, baking or planting with kids or pamper yourself? There are web sites with many more ideas....

Please drop off your donations in the church office beginning late April and by noon on Wednesday May 7th at the latest.

SEE YOU AT THE SPRING FLING on SATURDAY MAY 10TH!





SAVE THE DATE!

We need people to sign up to set up and take down our table and display.
Please see Rachel Cobban.



Monday 12-2:30
Tuesday 9-2:30
Wednesday 9 -2:30
Thursday 9-2:30
Friday 9-1



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_6s1980fengv0fd17h843u246lc%40group.calendar.google.com&ctz=America%2FNew_York

Electronic Giving

We 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.

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)



**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-2:30pm
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

officemgr@fpc-ucc.org

First Parish Congregational Church

United Church of Christ

47 East Derry Road

PO Box 114

Derry, NH 03038