

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

The Pastor’s Page

Melody and I will be visiting family in Minnesota for three unpaid weeks away from the church in August. This was already established when I was called to be your bridge interim pastor until you secure your new settled pastor. Your congregation is rich with ministers, so you are well cared for in the pulpit for the first three Sundays of August. I will be back for the outdoor service on August 24. The outdoor services in July were wonderful with good weather, good attendance, and beautiful music.

In this newsletter, I want to comment on a concern that is national and international. There are forces attempting to divide us, yet the role of the church should be to unite us. Christ welcomed all. The one time he turned a woman away, she corrected him. (Matthew 15:26-28)

I recently quoted a book in one of my sermons, and I want to give you the full reference. The book is *Upswing: How America Came Together a Century Ago and How We Can Do It Again* by Robert Putnam & Shaylyn Romney Garrett. You may recognize the name Robert Putnam from his book *Bowling Alone*.

In *Upswing*, the authors trace how the United States went from an individualistic “I” society to a communitarian “We” society and back again. They ask whether we can reproduce the return to a “We” society by looking at four main factors: political polarization, economic inequality, social isolation, and cultural intolerance. They found that in the early 1900’s, the movement to a greater sense of community was stimulated by young people and progressive pastors and theologians. One pastor who fueled the upswing was Walter Rauschenbusch, who published *Christianity and the Social Crisis* in 1907. He was a major spokesman of the Social Gospel movement in the United States, and there were others.

May our church be part of the upswing to a greater sense of community through our governance, our outreach, and our prayers. And may God inspire my preaching to be biblically based in the radical inclusion of Christ.

Many blessings to *all* of you, and to the wider community,

Rev. Robert Fellows

Christian Education and Faith Formation

Schedule:

August 15- CE Meeting at 5:30 with potluck dinner in Currier Hall

September 7- Big Blessing Sunday-blessing of school/work bags and children and staff heading back to school

September 14- Sunday School Starts Up Again

Vacation Church Camp Success

We just wrapped up a week of fun with campers in the Wild West Wonder Junction. It was a wonderful week learning about Jesus. We had 22 campers attend this year. All the campers enjoyed themselves. It is a wonderful thing we can provide this free camp for our community.



Each year we collect school supplies for those in need. This year Steph Berg saw that Beacon Church on Manchester Rd was doing a school supply drive. The items we collected will be combined with this drive to be distributed to Londonderry and Derry Schools.

Thanks to Pastor Bob for a special entertainment with his Bible Message Magic Wednesday. The campers were all mesmerized! Pastor Bob taught us that miracles were attention getters for people to listen to Jesus and what Jesus had to teach. Pastor started with making Kylie float!!



Alec Cobban, our lead in Bible Time, came up with a song for the campers to learn during the week as each day a new verse was added to go with the life of Jesus. The campers joyfully sang it to their families on the last day. It just wrapped up the week so well.



Christian Education and Faith Formation – *continued*

In church on July 27, Chris and Steph thanked all the volunteers but wanted to thank them again. Chris and Steph both thank each other for teaming up to co-lead VCC. They coordinate everything involved with VCC. VCC takes a lot of preparation and without our helpers it would have taken even longer.

Chris led our decorating team who helped create the wonderful stage with the help of Paul Lindemann's donation of boxes. The decorating team included Paula Robinson, Eileen Cox, Jennifer Petkiewicz and Jaime Robinson with help from little Eva, Reni Harnden, Christine Lehoullier and Steph Berg. We also want to thank our station helpers: crafts-Anne Engelhardt and Emily Engelhardt, Science-Reni Harnden, Bible time and science Alec Cobban and Recreation-Steph Berg. Thank you to our transition leaders, those who helped to bring the campers from place to place: Christine and Kylie Lehoullier, Jo Worthen, Rachel Cobban and Laura Sullivan. Thank you to our snack leaders, Paula Robinson and Eileen Cox. Thank you, Paul, for helping with the technology as well.



Thank you to all the families who came. It was great to see familiar and new faces this year. Thank you to all who volunteered their time and energy to make this week happen. Thank you to all who donated food or supplies and returned the take-home kits. Without our community this week would not be possible.

Preparing for Our Fall Season

CE Meeting

Tuesday August 12 is the next CE meeting. We will be meeting in Currier Hall at 5:30 and having a potluck dinner. This meeting is a preparation meeting that will be lengthy. It helps us plan for this coming Sunday School season.

In Need of Sunday School Teachers

We are looking for able bodies to help out with Sunday School. It doesn't have to be every Sunday but twice a month would be fantastic. We are looking to try to rotate our teachers so teachers can have at least a Sunday a month to enjoy coffee hour and mingle with our community.

If you are interested in helping out from time to time, please speak with Steph Berg or email her at cedirector@fpc-ucc.org. Thank you so much.

Student Sign Up for Sunday School

It is that time again! Time to sign up your young disciples up for Sunday School. Sunday School will be starting after service on September 14. If you would like your child or children to attend Sunday School, please click [here](https://forms.gle/fDDd1zGy4GtePeDb7) and fill out the Google form. <https://forms.gle/fDDd1zGy4GtePeDb7>

Thank you for all your summer contributions to CE! From, Chairperson Anne-Marie Merrill, Paula Robinson, Eileen Page, Eileen Cox, Sue Lindemann, and Chris Cox with CE Director Steph Berg and Deacon Rep Deb-Ellen Brown



Missions met on July 23rd. We have had a number of charities contact us for donations and it is always difficult to decide who we can support and who may have other charities to help them. We parse through the list carefully. We did decide to pledge \$100 monthly towards the REACH program which is housed in Manchester. This is a resource for abused women under the New Hampshire Coalition, one of 11 in the state. See www.reachnh.org for more information.

We have also been notified that an orphanage in Zimbabwe has been leveled to the ground by a fire. They need a lot of help and Mission has earmarked \$1,000 for their recovery efforts but will also promote to the congregation in hopes that those who want to help will make personal contributions by sending a check or Venmo to First Parish Church noting it is for the orphanage. A film was shared on July 27 that showed the devastation.

Reverend Gordon Rankin will speak to the congregation on September 28 about Zimbabwe.

We are looking for people who would like to be the liaison or pen pal with Reverend Joshua of our sister church there.

Deacons

Happy August!

We will be having one more outdoor service this summer, on August 24. Bring your chairs to enjoy the service on the side lawn.

Reverend Bob will be on vacation August 3, 10 and the 17. The supply preachers will be Rev. Debb-Ellen Brown, Rev. Kathy Alger and Jay McPherson.



We have started using young people as acolytes up in the sanctuary. If you have a child that would like to be an acolyte (light the candles at the start of service and extinguish them at the end of service), please reach out to a Deacon. Also, if your child would like to help collect the offering let us know.

Now that we are back in the sanctuary, if there is something you would like to see done differently, please feel free to chat with a Deacon.

Prayer Requests

At First Parish Church we have several ways to request prayer for family, friends, co-workers or ourselves. We can send a prayer request to the office and Debi will add it to the worship bulletin and/or send it to our "Prayer Angels". In person, during worship, we can write a request on a piece of paper and the Pastor will read it during Prayers & Concerns. If we are worshipping on Zoom or Facebook, it can be written in the Chat, and it will also be read during Prayers & Concerns. Because our worship service is being recorded and is open for anyone to see, we need to be cautious as to what we write in these requests.

First, we need to make sure we have permission from the person in the request. We also need to make sure we have the information correct:

- Do they want their full name or just first name
- Does the person want details or just that they are "dealing with some issue", "facing Surgery", "going thru tests" etc.

We want to be able to know who and what we are praying for, and we need to be respectful of reasons why some details should not be in the prayer request.

Thank you, From your Board of Deacons

Confirmation

All-Church Confirmation Trip to Salem, MA

On the last Saturday in July, twelve members from First Parish Church, along with seven friends/family members car-pooled to Salem, MA for a “pilgrimage” to learn about the history of the Christian Church and the United Church of Christ. (The Puritans, who engaged in the 1692 Salem witch trials, are our UCC spiritual ancestors.) As part of our Confirmand our Abbi’s Circle of Blessing in her confirmation process, we joined her in experiencing the 1692 Salem Witch Museum and the Salem Witch Trials Memorial. She and her family also were able to visit the Judge Jonathan Corwin House (also known as “The Witch House,” which serves as better marketing in the town of Salem).

The most compelling part of our trip was the exhibit in the Witch Museum that listed the formula for a Witch Hunt:

Fear + Trigger = Scapegoat

And below the formula, four examples from history were listed.
This is the formula for a Witch Hunt:

God/Devil + Dr. Griggs* = 150 accused townspeople

After spending time walking around the Witch Trials Memorial, viewing the names and hanging dates of the accused that were engraved in bench-like stones, we discussed what we had learned. It was shared that fear has caused much evil behavior throughout history, both in the secular world and in the Church. While we would hope that humanity has learned from its mistakes, the Witch Hunt formula continues even today. This formula could also be considered the formula for “evil.”

We highly recommend visiting these sites in Salem.
There are also some websites that are very informative:

The 1692 Salem Witch Museum educational resources webpages:

<https://salemwitchmuseum.com/student-resources/>

The Witch Hunt Wall Project

<https://salemwitchmuseum.com/witch-hunt/>

(includes a more comprehensive “Witch Hunt” list and a place to submit your own)

The Judge Jonathan Corwin House (The Witch House)

<https://www.thewitchhouse.org/new-page-4>

Salem Witch Trials Memorial

<https://salemwitchmuseum.com/locations/witch-trials-memorial/>

• *Dr. Griggs “diagnosed” the first “witch-afflicted” girl that launched the witch trials in Salem.*
Photos:

All-Church Confirmation Trip to Salem, MA – *Continued*



The Salem “Pilgrims” from First Parish Church



The First Parish group waits for its tour time outside The 1692 Salem Witch Museum



Debbie Allen leads the group discussion at the Witch Trials Memorial



A tableau of the witch trials at the museum

Shawl Ministry



The Shawl Ministry needs help! Do you knit or crochet? Could you help us by making shawls for those who need a hug from the church? All work can be done at your leisure, from your home or favorite vacation spot.

Since 2004 we have been providing shawls in times of sorrow and joy. Shawls have been given to church members, friends and our high school graduates. If you would like information about the background of Shawl Ministries visit their website <https://www.shawlministry.com/>.

For more information here at First Parish church talk to Barbara Williams or email her at bbwtextiles@gmail.com.

Ministry of Care

What is the Ministry of Care

“Carry each other’s burdens and in this way, you will fulfill the law of Christ” Galatians 6:2

You may have heard of the Ministry of Care here at FPC and you do not know what it is and what we do? The Ministry of Care (MOC) seeks to identify any needs of our congregation, so that we may offer help & support in their time of need. So that is our mission. What does it mean? Have you ever been in the hospital, have you lost a loved one or maybe you just had a baby. Whatever you are going through we would like to help. That’s where MOC comes in. We will send cards of condolence, get well cards, cards of encouragement or congratulations. We may call you to see if you would like us to provide a meal or help in other ways. We want to help carry your burdens or celebrate with you. When the Pastor or someone in our congregation hears of a need, they contact MOC and we will take it from there. We are aware of prayer requests made during worship and often respond to them. If you would like to part of this ministry or if you or someone you know has a need, please contact the Pastor or Beth Hunter at 603-505-0702



Karen Wilson, Wendy Williams, Anne Englehardt, Sue Brown, Mary LaFrance, Beth Hunter

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

COUNCIL CORNER

Pastoral search report: We have two very interested candidates, and further vetting will take place.

Safe Church work: The cards are not being taken, in part because people now enter through the Narthex and don't notice them. Walkie talkies are not being used yet but will be addressed.

New business: Improving communication continues to be a task everyone should be mindful of as well as being polite even if you are in disagreement with someone. Boards decide decisions, not individuals or a group of individuals in an ad hoc setting such as at Coffee Hour. Per the By Laws, all committee and board minutes need to be submitted electronically to Debi.

Reminder: If you have issues to be addressed by committee or Board members, don't bother them with those at church on Sundays-remember they are there to worship at that time, not address issues.

Board member changes: Anne Englehardt has volunteered to join Mission and Eileen Page has for CE; both were approved by council. Kelly Ploof has resigned as Clerk so Nominating will need to find a replacement.

Pastors Report: Rev Fellows has much to report from our member church in Zimbabwe and will present to Mission next week. Reverend Gordon Rankin has been there and will preach September 28 about the work there. Rev. Bob informed Council of some parishioners who need our prayers. Also, he is very willing to assist in forming an opportunity for paint therapy and Deanna Butler is willing to carry on the work as needed if she is able. There are many books in the office which are obviously good resources for anyone to peruse as desired. Rev. Bob asked about PAC. He feels that it needs to continue and asked for member names and was given same and he will schedule a meeting. He also described a new resource, *Completing the Circle*, that lays out a process for obtaining high quality feedback about how church members are experiencing the life and mission of the church. This approach is a far better way to do annual reviews of our pastor. He would like our church members to become educated by this initiative and hopefully embrace its work.

Treasurers Report: Our General fund is the strongest it has been in 5 years. Balance sheet shows unrestricted fund at \$53,486.36; Building rehab at \$54,614.97. Expenses are running below the year-to-date budget, and contributions are ahead of budget.

CE: CE-getting ready for VCC. Currently they have 28 students registered. Many thanks to all who have assisted.

Facilities: Replaced burned outside lights. Worked with Derry Fire for inspection and get assembly permits. Septic pumped two tanks. Second, insect spraying for the tower and application for perimeter. YMCA is now using facility. Major upcoming projects include painting the Pastor's office, repair paver walkways and steps alongside Nutfield school; replace Nutfield lower-level windows; replace pastor's and main Office window. Also, they are reviewing policy for outsiders utilizing our facility and explained that the Pastor should always know who will be in our building. People who submit maintenance requests may not always receive an email back when the work has been done due to the fact they have a limited number of members at this time. The church should consider buying a new sandwich board for advertising purposes. There is a request for a changing table in the men's room, which provoked the question: Are we ever going to have a nursery again?

Jo Worthen reported for Deacons: They are temporarily three Deacons short. Agree with CE that they can choose their own lectionary. People should not provide the last name when asking for prayers for people unless it is ok with the person in question.

The Council CE representative thanked Paul Lindemann for the large boxes used for VCC backdrop.

One issue raised was distraction during Sunday services with crying children and low volume of the audio system. Paul will address the volume issue.

Ongoing building needs: There are small holes in the slate roof that need attention. The Stewardship fund will pay for touch up painting.

~Randy Brown, Moderator

UCC General Synod

Hello FPC,

It was an honor to be a delegate from the New Hampshire Conference at General Synod 35 in Kansas City. I would like to share our Conference Minister article that gives an overview of the event and if you want more information please feel free to reach out to me. ~ Anne Engelhardt

General Synod 35 is now in the books. I always find it an impossible task to summarize five days of General Synod content, so I won't even try to do so. But let me see if I can at least offer you a few highlights from the New Hampshire Conference delegation's perspective.

The New Hampshire Conference was definitely in the house. Our delegation was comprised of 13 Delegates, myself as an Associate Delegate, Cameron Keller as staff support, and several Synod visitors. Beyond many, many hours of plenary sessions, your Delegates attended committee meetings, workshops, heard presentations at specialized meals, participated in demonstrations, and worshiped together with another 2,000 folks from across the United Church of Christ.

We heard our General Minister and President; the Reverend Dr. Karen Georgia Thompson provide a State of the Church address.

We elected the Reverend Shari Prestemon as Associate General Minister for Love of Neighbor and Co-Executive for Global Ministries.

We learned that a search process for a candidate for the position of Associate General Minister for Love of Church will be held in the fall and a special virtual gathering of Synod will be held early in 2026 to elect this candidate.

We considered, discussed, and passed 12 resolutions. Among these resolutions are two that entered us into Full Communion agreements with other denominations: the Evangelische Kirche of Deutschland and Iglesia Evangelica de Puerto Rico. Two resolutions spoke to the harm being done to immigrant communities by current immigration policies. One of the longest discussed resolutions addressed the genocide that is currently occurring in Gaza and the United State's complicity in what is occurring. If you visit generalsynod.org, the final versions of these resolutions as passed by General Synod should be posted in the next couple of weeks. And if you have questions about any of the Synod resolutions, any of our delegates would be willing to speak with you.

We passed a motion to combine the Penn West, Penn Central, Penn Northeast, and Penn Southeast Conferences into one Keystone Conference.



UCC General Synod – Continued

We passed two amendments to the United Church of Christ By-laws. One adjusts the terms for United Church of Christ Board Members and members of the General Synod Nominating Committee. The other adjusts the terms for those serving on the United Church Funds Board. A proposed amendment to the UCC Constitution, which would have altered the election process for Associate General Ministers, was defeated with approximately two-thirds of the assembly voting in opposition to the amendment. (Just in case you believe that General Synod passed everything that is proposed to it, please know that is certainly not true.)

We celebrated the publication of the new Manual on Church. We learned that Pilgrim Press is developing a new UCC Book of Worship.^[SEP]

We looked toward the celebration of the United Church of Christ's 70th Anniversary in 2027 and learned that in 2028 General Synod 36 will be held in the birthplace of the United Church of Christ, Cleveland, Ohio.^[SEP]

All of that, and I think it is safe to say that we all had our fill of Kansas City barbeque.^[SEP]
-Gordon

Mark Your Calendars
it is time to start thinking about this
amazing event



**81st Annual
Sugar Plum Fair**
The Saturday before Thanksgiving
November 22, 2025
9 a.m. to 3 p.m.



PRESENTED BY



First Parish
Congregational
Church, UCC



\$30 per person,
or \$200 for
team of 8

Admission includes
appetizers, desserts,
and a night of game
play!

4TH ANNUAL TRIVIA NIGHT

To benefit the historic 1769 Meetinghouse

**Registration
& More Info:**

Scan me



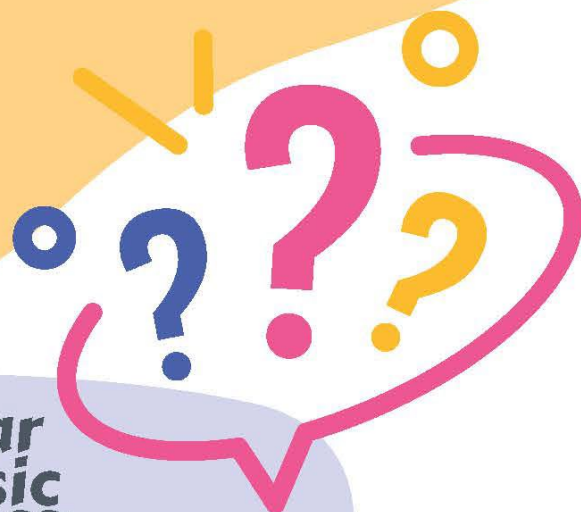
**SATURDAY
October 18**

**4:00 PM -
7:00 PM**

Boys & Girls Club
40 E. Derry Rd
Derry, NH

Family-friendly
event, but
game is best
enjoyed by
ages 13+

**Cash Bar
Live Music
50/50 Raffle
Ticketed Raffle**





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



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

Bridge Pastor

Reverend Robert Fellows

pastor@fpc-ucc.org

Office Manager

officemgr@fpc-ucc.org

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