

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



**2026 - Newsletter**

*“Friend, you enter this church not as a stranger, but as a guest of God.  
Come, then, with joy in your heart and thanks upon your lips and offer God today your love and your service.”*  
Adapted from a 12<sup>th</sup> Century Church in Hampshire, England

## **The Pastor’s Page**

As we enter this holy season of Lent, we are invited once again into a journey — a journey of prayer, reflection, repentance, and renewal. Lent is not a race to Easter. It is a deliberate walk through the wilderness of our hearts, where we remember who we are, whose we are, and where God is leading us.

This year, I invite you to take part in a special Lenten practice: walking the labyrinth.

Unlike a maze, the labyrinth has one path and one destination. There are no tricks and no dead ends. It gently winds its way to the center and then leads you back out again. In many ways, it mirrors the spiritual life. We walk with intention. We draw closer to God. We pause in the center to listen. And then we return to the world, changed.

Lent itself is a kind of labyrinth. It echoes Jesus’ forty days in the wilderness — a time of testing, clarity, and surrender. As we walk the labyrinth, we may carry prayers of confession, grief, gratitude, or hope. We may release burdens we have been holding too tightly. We may listen for God’s quiet voice. There is no “right way” to walk it. Simply bring your honest heart.

I encourage you to move slowly. Breathe deeply. Pray with your feet. Let each step become a prayer. When you reach the center, rest there. When you begin the journey outward, consider what God is calling you to carry into the world.

The labyrinth will be available Monday March 23, 2026, in Currier Hall from 5:30pm to 7:00pm, for anyone who wishes to participate. Whether you come alone, with family, or with friends, I trust this practice will be a meaningful companion on your Lenten path.

May this season draw us closer to Christ — through repentance, through reflection, and through grace. And may every step we take lead us nearer to the heart of God.

Walking with you this Lent.

Grace and peace,  
Pastor Carrie

## The Pastor's Page – *Continued*

A Community of Faith together at the

# Lenten Table

Wednesdays 5:30 – 6:30pm

Feb 25 - St. Luke's UMC  
March 4 - Journey Church hosted  
by the Salvation Army  
March 11 - First Parish Congregational Church  
18th - St. Luke's UMC

*soup & service*



On Tuesday March 10<sup>th</sup> at 10:00am in Currier we will guide relaxed and uplifting conversations. No preparation needed—just come as you are! Bring your questions, your wonderings. Whether you love deep conversation, gentle reflection, or simply being together with others, you'll feel right at home.

This is a wonderful way to connect with others in a warm and welcoming space, share fellowship and maybe a few laughs! Start your day grounded in God's presence. Everyone is welcome—longtime members, newcomers, and friends. Let's journey together with open hearts, warm mugs, and good conversation. We can't wait to see you there!



You're invited to join us for **Lunch Bunch** on Wednesday March 25 at 11:30 a.m. in Currier Hall. Bring your own lunch and enjoy a relaxed time of conversation and connection. Coffee and treats will be provided. All are welcome, come as you are and stay as long as you're able!

# FPC Music



## SPECIAL MUSIC VOLUNTEERS

Please let me know if you would like to sing or play solo, or in a small group for a Special Music offering. All instruments welcomed as well as voice. We can choose your favorite hymn! Email Sandy to get on the schedule. [music@fpc-ucc.org](mailto:music@fpc-ucc.org)

## EASTER CHOIR SCHEDULE

### COME SING WITH US!

Please lend us your voice and experience the fellowship and good vibes of singing with others. We will meet in Luke rm 108.

Planned presentations are on Palm Sunday and Easter Sunday. We will also be rehearsing hymns to sing at other services this spring. ALL ARE WELCOME.

### REHEARSALS

(choose what fits your schedule)

**Wednesdays: March 4, 18, 25,  
@5:30-6:30pm**

**Thursdays: March 12, 6-7pm; April 2  
@5:30-6:15pm (before Maundy  
Thursday service)**

**Sundays after service: March 1, 8, 15,  
22 @11:30-12:30**

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## HAND CHIMES

Come try Hand Chimes! There will be a meeting/practice after choir rehearsals @6:30-7:30pm on Wednesday March 4, 18, and 25 in Luke Rm108. No experience needed.

## Deacons

### A MESSAGE FROM YOUR DEACONS

Does anyone write letters, send cards, or make phone calls anymore? Or do we all write text messages or email? When it comes to Ash Wednesday and Lent it refers to a period of penance, cleansing, or renewing. Somewhere along the way someone suggested to me that maybe doing more rather than less would be a great way to pass the 40 days of Lent. That year I took up writing my Mother-in-Law a letter each week during Lent, being very hard of hearing I found phone calls particularly hard for her. However, she had horrible handwriting and didn't write letters in return for that reason. She did tell me she truly enjoyed reading my letters and would share them with other members of the family. This year I am starting out again on a card or letter writing Lenten gift for two very special people in my family. I hope this will inspire someone to do something more this year.

Our meeting on February 12<sup>th</sup> was a type of housekeeping meeting, with two new members on the board we assigned jobs and responsibilities.

Chairperson: Rachel Cobban

Secretary: Deb-Ellen Brown

Council Rep: Sharon Cann

Safe Church Rep: Woody (Tom Wood)

Karen Wilson joined our board at the annual meeting and will be a great addition.

Council Blurb: Beth Hunter

Music Committee Rep: Kathy Alger

Facilities Rep: James Hayden

Today we began the Lenten season with an Ash Wednesday service of communion and ashes at FPC with a soup and bread lunch afterwards. We had the minister from St. Lukes Methodist Church taking part and members from the Salvation Army ministry in Derry present. Please check the dates and times for all the Wednesday night services through Lent in the Derry area churches.

February 25<sup>th</sup>, Wednesday 5:30-6:30 PM St. Lukes UMC

March 4<sup>th</sup>, Wednesday 5:30-6:30 PM Journey Church, Salvation Army

March 11<sup>th</sup>, Wednesday 5:30-6:30 PM First Parish Church

March 18<sup>th</sup>, Wednesday 5:30-6:30 PM St. Lukes UMC

As I write this, I am aware that the weather staff on WMUR has predicted more snow in the next few days so to give you something to dream about and plan ahead for, one reminder: Windham Pride has set a date for this year's festival: June 6<sup>th</sup> 12 to 4 PM. Same location.

May your journey through Lent bring you closer to Jesus and the Love God has for us all.

Diane M Breeden, Rachel Cobban, Tom Wood, Beth Hunter, Sharon Cann, Deb-Ellen Brown, Kathy Alger, James Hayden, and Karen Wilson

# Christian Education

## **March CE Calendar**

March 1, 8, 15, 22, 29: Sunday School after service until noon

March 3: CE Board Meeting 6:30 hybrid

March 22: Special Sunday School Themes: Youth-Bible Escape Room  
Elementary-Sunday School Mini Olympics.

## **Sunday School (SS) Recap**

Youth SS finished up their theme of the Bible. They learned that both the Old Testament and New Testament are important. We need to know where things begin to see the growth and changes that happen. In addition, they learned about why there were so many versions of the bible. It is because of language, age level, and faith beliefs. The bible has been translated in multiple ways even from old English to modern day language.

March's youth theme is about the Creed, a statement of belief. We heard the UCC Statement of Faith on February 22 for new member Sunday. The UCC creed is directly related to the Apostles Creed. The youth will have many discussions and fun activities to analyze the aspects of the statement of belief.

Elementary SS enjoyed the themes of Blessings and Salt, Light & Law. Started with collecting blessings in a fun balloon game. Then made a colorful salt decorated picture. They also explored the Ten Commandments in a scavenger hunt around the classroom. We learned God loves us, blesses us and wants us to follow Jesus along with being kind to one another.

On February 15, we enjoyed an intergenerational time together with pancakes, photos, play and promise. This was a joy with so many people staying for fellowship. Many families and children played together in the Lenten Memory Games. Some even made their Lenten Promise to prepare for Easter. It was great to see so many smiles, and some caught in the Mardi Gras photo booth.

Looking forward to the rest of this Sunday School year: All 5 Sundays this month we will have Sunday School. Two Sundays in April and three in May. Sunday School will end May 17. May 31 we will have Celebration/Children Sunday. The children will be involved in service from being lay readers, collecting the offering and possibly more! Stay tuned for more details.

## **CE Board**

If you are interested in attending our board meeting, come join us in Corinthians. Or email Pastor Carrie to receive a zoom link to join virtually. We do have a couple of openings on our board. We are looking for enthusiastic people who want to help continue and grow the faith-based education for our church.

## **Christian Education - *continued***

### **Sunday March 22**

March 22 we are having a special Sunday School. We are having our youth test out a fun bible themed escape room. They will be “locked” in a room to solve puzzles together to be able to get the code to “unlock” the door. The youth will use teamwork and their bible knowledge to succeed together. They will not be actually locked in; the doors will only be shut. Chris Cox has worked hard on preparing this exciting experience for the youth. With youth feedback, there may be a church wide escape room in the future.

As the youth will have this exciting experience, the elementary Sunday School will have their own mini-Olympics experience. As we have just finished the World Winter Olympics, we will bring the fun in our own space with a time full of games and medals. Everyone will leave a winner. The games are still in the works, so stay tuned to some sneak peaks in the eblasts or on FPC Facebook page.

### **Offering Horton Center Scholarship**

Horton Center is an outdoor UCC summer camp on top of Pine Mountain. It is a camp that helps connect you to God. It has fun filled weeks and weekends for all ages. Some of our members have been volunteer counselors and a small group of our children have experienced the wonders of this camp. It is that time of year when summer planning is happening. CE Board would like to offer scholarships for 4 people who would love to go experience what Horton Center is about. Three scholarships have been claimed. One more left. If you are interested in attending any time this summer, and need financial assistance, please write a letter to the CE Board.

### **Vacation Church Camp**

Save the dates: July 20-24. It is going to be a wintery blast to cool us off this summer.

We are heading to Snowball Mountain with the attitude of “I can do all things through God who strengthens me”, Philippians 4:13. We will find our strength in God through our snowy winter sports adventure. Registration will open this month for those entering kindergarten through 6<sup>th</sup> grade for the 2026-2027 school year. In addition, we are looking for volunteers to help with stations and being counselors for our campers. Junior helpers, entering 7<sup>th</sup> through 12<sup>th</sup> grade, are welcome to help that week as well. Please talk to Chris Cox or CE Director Steph Berg if you are interested in helping.

Registration will open up by the end of the month. Stay tuned to eblasts for when the registration officially opens.

Submitted by CE Director Steph Berg

CE Board: Anne-Marie Merrill (Chairperson), Chris Cox, Sue Lindemann, Holly Gorgol, Eileen Cox along with friend of the board Paula Robinson.

## 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 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 and 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 and 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 603-505-0702



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

## 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](mailto:bbwtextiles@gmail.com)



## Missions

This has been a busy season for your Mission Board. Collecting boxes for One Great Hour of Sharing has been so rewarding especially as the children were so engaged with them. Collecting nonperishables for the Upper Room to be distributed early March is a wonderful way to help our local neighbors and making the final gathering on Communion Sunday gives a nod to the importance of sharing.

The Board is so excited to buy the food for Pastor Carrie's grocery bags. Already these bags have met with much gratefulness from the recipients. We continue to ask any of you who are motivated to donate the new recyclable bags for us to fill. We look forward to continuing this work.



On a different note, Mission will have 4 scholarships for children to attend Horton Center. Ideally the child will write their request directly to the Board. We will then make sure \$150 is available toward their cost,

We thank you in advance for your assistance in these initiatives.

Cynthia Gray, Karen Wilson, Marge Palmer, Beth Nelson, Anne Englehardt, Sue Brown.

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### **2026 American Red Cross Babysitting for First Parish Church Youth**

11–16-year-olds - Priority will be given to FPC Youth

Maximum size 6 participants

Cost: Books are \$17.00 / Certificate is \$19.00= \$36.00

Instructor: Anne-Marie Merrill – 9 years of experience as an American Red Cross Instructor

Fee for instructor = Donation

Hours: estimate 5 hours, 9:00- 1:30-2:00ish, 30 minutes for lunch

Date: March 28

Location: John's classroom.

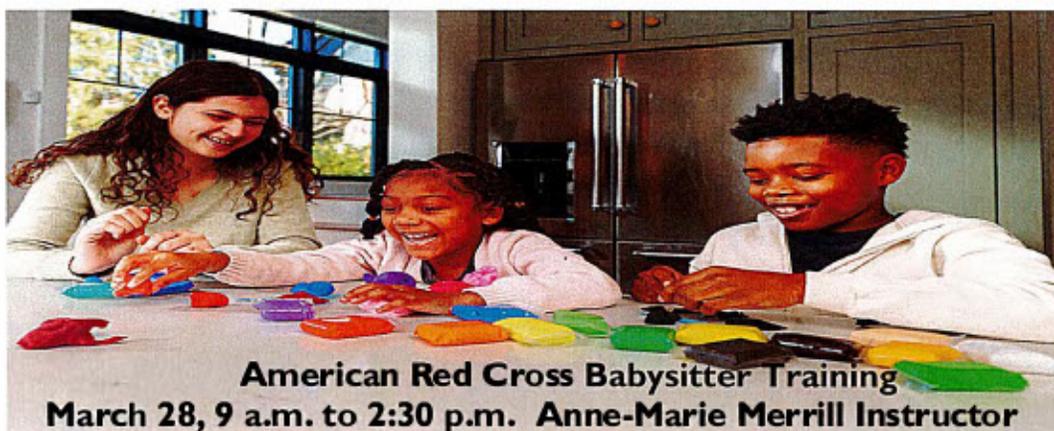
Technology: The instructor will supply

Participants' Needs: Snack, lunch

To secure your spot, the \$17 textbook. The remaining \$19 is due on the day of the course.

See Anne-Marie Merrill with questions.

Please see flyer on next page



**American Red Cross Babysitter Training**  
**March 28, 9 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. Anne-Marie Merrill Instructor**

## Be the Best Babysitter in the Game

Are you ready to become a top-notch babysitter? Our in-person training course prepares you with essential knowledge and skills to handle a wide range of child care scenarios with ease and confidence. Whether it's engaging children in fun activities or preventing accidents and managing emergencies, you'll learn everything you need to become the best babysitter around.

### Skills You Will Learn:

**Basic Child Care:** Learn how to competently care for infants and children including how to pick up, hold, feed, diaper and more through engaging videos and hands-on practice.

**Effective Leadership:** Discover how to communicate effectively, set clear boundaries and manage conflicts calmly to foster a nurturing and structured environment.

**Lifesaving Skills:** Participate in interactive lessons that simulate real-life scenarios so you can act with confidence.

**From hands-on practice to real-life scenarios, you'll master essential child care skills that will equip you to be the best babysitter in the game.**

### The Course:

Designed by science experts and trusted by parents, this instructor-led course will prepare participants ages 11-16 for babysitting success both in and outside the classroom through:

- Skill Videos and Hands-On Practice
- Video-Based Guided Discussions
- Lively Activities and Conversation
- Comprehensive and Engaging Resources

### Key Topics:

Equip learners with comprehensive knowledge in key areas:

- Staying Safe on the Job
- Caring for Children and Infants
- Playing and Promoting Positive Behavior
- Handling Emergencies with Confidence
- Basic First Aid Skills
- Once the course is completed, a certification of completion is issued.

To learn more about the course, please visit [redcross.org/babysitting](https://redcross.org/babysitting)



**American Red Cross**  
Training Services

# SAFE CHURCH

Safe Church has posted Immigration resources & procedures to outline what to do & know your rights, if ICE arrives on site. Below is a copy:

## IMMIGRATION RESOURCES AND PROCEDURES FOR FIRST PARISH CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH 2026

First Parish Congregational Church welcomes all people in its ministry to the community. To facilitate this mission, we will have resources available to members and all those who use our facility. Procedural guidelines and resources follow in both English and Spanish formats. A designated member will update resources regularly.

### PROCEDURAL GUIDELINES

1. Stay calm if ICE arrives on site. Follow "Know Your Rights Cards," handing them to the person questioned.
2. Advise those with concerns to obtain legal help. Do not help them with paperwork.
3. Note that ICE cannot go into private areas of a church without a judicial warrant (different from an administrative warrant). Private areas of First Parish Church are the locked pastor's and clerical offices.

### RESOURCES

1. Red: Know Your Rights Cards" in English and Spanish will be located in boxes In the Vestry, Entrance to Sanctuary and other areas as helpful.
2. A Resource folder with English and Spanish will be in a designated mailbox. The folder includes:

Additional copies of Red "Know Your Rights" cards.

Or here

The Red cards: Know Your Rights Cards" in English and Spanish

Can be found here: [Know your Rights Red Cards - Spanish.pdf](#)

Other resources available

<https://ilrc.org> The Immigrant Legal Resource Center has legal and educational resources and downloadable form

<https://www.nhcucc.org> The NH Conference website has many articles & resources available

Safe Church members want our Congregation to stay safe & know their rights. We do not advocate to be for or against ICE.

Your Safe Church members: Jo Worthen, Christie Lombardi,  
Ken Williams, James Hayden, Bill Armstrong, Tom Wood, Paul Lindemman, Paula Robinson & CE



*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=fpcucc.org\\_6s1980fengv0fd17h843u246lc%40group.calendar.google.com&ctz=America%2FNew\\_York](https://calendar.google.com/calendar/embed?src=fpcucc.org_6s1980fengv0fd17h843u246lc%40group.calendar.google.com&ctz=America%2FNew_York)

## Electronic Giving



First Parish

@First-Parish • 7 friends

We have electronic giving available for anyone who would like to offer a paperless gift to the church. God Bless You! **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 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](http://www.fpc-ucc.org)

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

**Pastor**

Reverend Carrie Burnap

[pastor@fpc-ucc.org](mailto:pastor@fpc-ucc.org)

**Office Manager**

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