

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 12th Century Church in Hampshire, England

The Pastor’s Page

As Holy Week approaches, we find ourselves once again walking the sacred story from palms and parades to tables and simple meals for bread and wine from the cross to the empty tomb. Every year we tell the story again, and every year we hear something new, because we are not the same people we were last Easter. Faith grows in cycles, just like the seasons.

It is no accident that Easter comes in the spring. Here in New England, we watch the world come back to life around the same time we proclaim resurrection. Snow melts. The ground softens. Small green shoots push up through soil that looked lifeless just weeks before. Trees bud. Birds return. Light lasts longer each evening. Creation itself preaches the Easter sermon long before we arrive on Sunday morning.

The seasons remind us that change is one of God’s greatest promises. Winter does not last forever. Darkness does not win. Life returns. Hope returns. Always.

The mystic Julian of Norwich famously wrote,

“All shall be well, and all shall be well, and all manner of thing shall be well.”

She wrote these words during a time of plague, uncertainty, and suffering, yet she believed deeply that God’s love was larger than fear and stronger than death. Easter is the story that proves that hope. And Thea Bowman once spoke about faith as something alive and joyful, reminding us that we are called not just to believe in the resurrection, but to live it, to sing, to celebrate, to love, to serve, and to bring life wherever we go.

The Pastor's Page – *Continued*

Holy Week invites us to walk slowly. To pay attention. To sit in the story. To remember that resurrection does not come without Good Friday, but Good Friday never gets the last word. Spring reminds us that God is always doing new things, in the world, in the church, and in each of us. Seeds are growing that we cannot yet see. New life is already beginning. What a blessing it is to live in a place where we can watch the seasons change so clearly. They remind us that faith is not a straight line, it is a rhythm of death and life, rest and growth, sorrow and joy, winter and spring.

As we enter Holy Week and move toward Easter morning, may we notice the signs of resurrection all around us, in the longer days, in the melting snow, in the laughter of children, in acts of kindness, in moments of peace, and in the quiet hope that God is always making all things new.

Blessings for Holy Week and Easter,
and thanks be to God for the gift of spring.

Pastor Carrie



A Special Pulpit Exchange – Sunday, April 12

On Sunday, April 12, our congregation will experience a unique and meaningful moment in worship as we welcome Rev. Dean LeFrancois preacher as part of a pulpit exchange with Plymouth Congregational Church.

In a spirit of partnership and shared ministry, Pastor Carrie and her spouse, Pastor Dean will be switching pulpits for the morning, each preaching in the other's congregation. This exchange offers a wonderful opportunity to hear a fresh voice, encounter a new perspective on Scripture, and celebrate the ways God works through relationships.

Pastor Carrie and Pastor Dean are looking forward to stepping into one another's congregations and working on a connection between faith communities. It's a reminder that the Church is larger than any one congregation and that we are all part of Christ's wider body.

We hope you will join us in extending a warm welcome to our guest preacher and in keeping both congregations in prayer as we share in this special Sunday together.



Mission and Coffee and Conversation Guest Speaker

You are warmly invited to join us for a special Coffee & Conversation gathering on Tuesday, April 14 at 10:00 a.m. in the fellowship space.

At this gathering, we will welcome a guest speaker from

REACH, who will share about the important work their organization is doing in our wider community. REACH serves our community through compassionate outreach and practical support, including supporting victims and families impacted by domestic abuse. This will be a wonderful opportunity to learn more about their mission and how communities of faith can partner in making a difference. Please note that this conversation will touch on sensitive topics, and attendees are encouraged to be mindful of this.

All are welcome—bring a friend and join us for a morning of fellowship, learning, and inspiration.



You're invited to join us for **Lunch Bunch** on April 23rd 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!

Founders Month Celebration – Sunday, April 19

This April, we invite you to join us for a joyful and meaningful celebration of our church's story as we mark Founders Month together!

On Sunday, April 19, following worship, we'll gather for a special interactive coffee hour that brings our history to life in a fun and engaging way. Throughout Currier, you'll find a series of stations highlighting key moments, people, and milestones from our past. Each station will include historical highlights along with hands-on or reflective activities for all ages.

As you explore, you're invited to be curious, try activities, and search for the answer to a question at each station. After you visit each station, you can win a prize! It's a great way to learn, connect, and celebrate the faithful witnesses of those who came before us.

And of course, no celebration is complete without good food and a bit of fun! In honor of our Ulster Scots heritage, we're hosting a potato-themed coffee hour. Bring a dish to share if you're able potato chips, casseroles, potato bread, or any favorite potato creation. Together, we'll enjoy the richness of our shared history and the simple joy of gathering around the table.

Come celebrate where we've been and look ahead to where God is leading us next!

Deacons

As we move deeper into the season of Lent, the Deacons invite you to join us for the sacred journey of Holy Week, when we walk together through the final days of Jesus' earthly ministry and celebrate the joy and hope of the resurrection at Easter. These services help us pause, reflect, and remember the depth of God's love revealed through Christ.

Our Holy Week begins with Palm Sunday, celebrated on March 29 at 10:00 AM in the sanctuary. On this day we remember Jesus' triumphant entry into Jerusalem as crowds waved palm branches and shouted "Hosanna!" It is a joyful beginning to a week that holds both celebration and reflection.

We will then gather for Maundy Thursday worship on April 2 at 6:30 PM. This meaningful service remembers Jesus' final meal with his disciples and the commandment he gave them to love one another as he has loved us. It is a time of prayer, remembrance, and quiet reflection as we prepare our hearts for the events that follow.

Finally, we come to the great celebration of Easter morning. We will begin the day with a Sunrise Service at 6:00 AM at Broadview Farm, greeting the dawn together as we proclaim the good news of the resurrection. There is something especially powerful about worshiping outdoors as the sun rises, reminding us of the new life and hope that Easter brings.

Later that morning, we will gather again for our Easter Festival Worship at 10:00 AM in the sanctuary, where we will celebrate the joy of resurrection with music, prayer, and the proclamation that Christ is risen!

Holy Week invites us to walk the whole story from palms, to the table, to the empty tomb. The Deacons warmly encourage you to participate in as many of these services as you are able. Each gathering offers a different moment in the story of our faith and helps us experience the fullness of Easter's promise.

We look forward to sharing this holy journey with you.

Chairperson: Rachel Cobban
Secretary: Deb-Ellen Brown
Council Rep: Sharon Cann
Safe Church Rep: Woody (Tom Wood)

Council Blurb: Beth Hunter
Music Committee Rep: Kathy Alger
Facilities Rep: James Hayden
Karen Wilson

Christian Education

Sunday School (SS) Calendar

April 5: Easter Sunday with no SS

April 12: SS after service

April 19: Intergenerational Event: Founders Month Celebration

April 22: No SS due to school vacation

May 3: Combined SS Class with special projects

May 10: SS after service

May 17: Last SS classes for 2025-2026 year

May 24: Memorial Day Weekend

May 31: Celebration/Children Sunday with children being involved with many parts of the service

Other CE events Calendar

April 7: CE Board Meeting 6:30 hybrid

May 5: CE Board Meeting 6:30 hybrid

June 2: CE Board Meeting 6:30 hybrid

July 20-24: Vacation Church Camp 9-Noon

Sunday School Recap

This month, the youth have had many discussions on God. These discussions were on how God is described in the bible and for themselves, how God is 3-in-one, proof that God exists and if God still makes things today. It has helped them to be closer in their understanding of God and their faith.

In the elementary class, there were an average of 2 children. Although we wish more were able to come down after service, the children who did come down had fun with games and crafts. The children enhanced the games the CE Director had planned and made them even more fun to play.

On March 22, the younger children enjoyed the mini Olympic games that were planned and added one of their own. The game they created was hiding balloons then letting the other person know if they were warm or cold to

find them. They also enjoyed laundry basket bob sledding, Twister, bowling, and soccer. We ended our time with a medal ceremony and a prize. And then the older children enjoyed an Easter Theme Escape Room created by Chirs Cox. It went well. The group split in two, with each subgroup assigned four problems to solve. Then at the end they all had to figure out what 8 letters were trying to tell them in order to “escape”. Overall, it was a fun experience for all.



Christian Education – continued

This Month in Sunday School

April 12

This month we will have one Sunday School downstairs on April 12. The youth theme is why does it say “we believe in the holy catholic church” when we aren’t Catholic? The youth have been exploring parts of the Apostles Creed. This creed has catholic in it, but we are not a Catholic church. They will explore this word that is not capitalized to mean universal. They will explore this with discussions and activities. The elementary theme is Belief. What does it mean to believe in something. Do we always see what we believe? We know air is real, but we can’t see it. We feel the wind and see the leaves move in the trees, but our eyes don’t physically see the wind. In the Bible, Thomas had to see Jesus had risen for himself. However, we have not seen the risen Lord but believe in Him. Believing is having faith that something is real even if our eyes don’t physically see it. We will have fun experiments and more with this topic.

April 19

On April 19, we are having a special intergenerational event in Currier Hall after service. CE Director Steph and the Friends of the Meeting House are putting on a celebration event about the history of our church. April is our church founder’s month, and we want to celebrate all together! Instead of heading downstairs, families can enjoy time together with a station hop to learn about our church’s history and enjoy some fun hands-on activities to solve the question each station has to offer. We will enjoy a potato themed coffee hour as well with lots of goodies to share our church’s Scots-Irish history. Come celebrate the church’s birthday after service.

Looking ahead for Sunday School - As we look ahead, after this month we have only 3 Sunday School classes left! May 3, the Sunday ending spring break for schools, we will have both classes combined. We have special projects to prepare for parents and for our congregation. May 17 will be the last Sunday School Day for this school year. We will pick back up in September. On May 31, all children are welcome to participate in helping put service on. We have a special scripture reading that Sunday. More details next month.



Vacation Church Camp July 20-24, 9-Noon

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” from Philippians 4:13. We will find our strength in God with our guide puppet Ollie the Seal.



Registration is opened! Calling children entering Kindergarten to 6th grade. Guardians feel free to sign them up for a fun filled time as we find our strength in God to do all the fun things planned for the week. Find the registration link here or visit <https://form.jotform.com/260765419217057> to fill out the form.

Calling for volunteers! We are looking for at least 3 more adults to help with being camp counselors to guide the children to the stations. Along with the adults, we are inviting siblings who are entering 7th -12th grade to be junior helpers. They can have their choice of where they want to help out. Volunteers can sign up to help with this link <https://form.jotform.com/260765905145057> or contact CE director Steph in person or through email cedirector@fpc-ucc.org.

In addition, we will be in need of some supplies. Be on the lookout for our first donations list after Easter. With your donations of these supplies, it helps keep this event free for our community. Thank you for your help!

Submitted by CE Director Steph Berg

CE Board: Anne-Marie Merrill (Chairperson), Chris Cox, Sue Lindemenn, 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

Missions

The Mission Board has been busy this Lenten season with the very successful One Great Hour of Sharing. We were so proud of our youngsters and oldsters with their decorated boxes. And then the donations that were added in amounted to a total of \$632. What a great response from all. We should be very happy with our congregation's generosity.

We have accepted two applications for Horton Center for our young ones and will have more available at \$150 apiece if asked in writing.

The grocery bags have been distributed by Pastor Carrie, 4 in all to deserving folks who needed help. Your Mission Board members take turn filling them.

REACH is one of our monthly donations and, as usual, we invite these organizations to speak at a monthly mission moment. Due to the sensitive nature of their work, namely domestic abuse and survivorship, they will bring their message to the April 14 coffee and conversation and Pastor Carrie will deliver a more "sanitized" synopsis during the April 19 church service.

Finally, the non-perishable food collection was very successful. Mackenzie Kittery, who works for the Upper Room, happily took bins of food back to them. Our next collection will be June 7 and the campaign will start May 17 so stock up now!

Thank you all for your continued support.

Your Mission and Outreach Board

Christian Education Survey

In the United Church of Christ, we believe that God is still speaking and that we listen not only through Scripture and prayer, but also through one another. As a people of covenant, we seek to discern together how the Spirit is shaping our shared life of worship, learning, and belonging.

Christian Education is not simply a program; it is the lifelong work of forming faith in our children, in our youth, and in ourselves. Worship is not simply an hour on Sunday; it is the gathering of God's people across generations to be shaped by grace and sent into the world in love.

As we reflect on Sunday School, children in worship, intergenerational life, and future faith formation opportunities, we invite you to share honestly and prayerfully. There are no "right" answers only faithful ones. Your voice matters. Your experiences matter. Your hopes matter.

Thank you for helping us listen for where God is leading next. Please use the link to open the survey. Deadline for the survey to be submitted is April 17th.

<https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSfbC6HtlzWs3Us4Yo4AnT4ayTCu8RJeioIY7oFdFyANwJ7Lpw/viewform?usp=publish-editor>



SPRING FLING 2026 – COMING SOON

Please save the date for May 23rd – our 6th Annual Spring Fling event – come join for fun and spring events.

We will be open in Currier Hall for vendors and crafters to exhibit – if you know of anyone interested – reach out to Cathy Pottle for more details (cjpottle@yahoo.com) or (603) 497-0437.



Anne Engelhardt will be spearheading The White Elephant Sale part of the fair.

And our surprising Raffles will be set up also – Carol Guerrin can answer any of your questions about those.

Our Amazing Cookie walk will also be back this year and it's not too late in the season to get those ovens going to make batches and batches of your delicious cookies!! – Remember – Sugar Plum Fair – 2025 - we were sold out by 10:30.

AND – Spring Fling wouldn't be complete without our wonderful plant sale – Anne-Marie Merrill and friends will be looking for plants to sell – time to start seedlings and separate your yard plants!!

There are many opportunities for volunteering at this fun event – please help us make this an enjoyable, fun filled event. More details as this evolves.

Cathy Zylinski, Julie Greenfield, Anne Engelhardt, Anne-Marie Merrill, Carol Guerrin, Beth Hunter and Cathy Pottle

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For many years, Deanna Butler has been a steady and caring presence in the life of our church. Recently, Deanna has moved to be closer to family. While we will deeply miss seeing her among us, we are grateful she is surrounded by loved ones in this new chapter. **Deanna would truly appreciate hearing from her church family.** Cards, notes, and even visits would mean so much to her during this transition. If you would like to reach out or coordinate a visit, please contact her directly to make arrangements.

Deanna Butler - 122 State Street - Buckland, Ma 01876

Let us hold Deanna in our prayers with gratitude for all she has given and with hope and blessing for this next season of her journey



*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\\_6s1980fengv0fdl7h843u246lc%40group.calendar.google.com&ctz=America%2FNew\\_York](https://calendar.google.com/calendar/embed?src=fpc-ucc.org_6s1980fengv0fdl7h843u246lc%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)

ALL ARE WELCOME!

# SOUPER SATURDAY



April 11th, 12-3pm

TAD'S PLACE  
149 EAST SIDE DR CONCORD, NH

**Nothing warms the body and soul like some good soup  
with some great company!**

On Saturday, April 11th Horton Center friends, families, campers, alumni, volunteers, and more are welcome to join us for a soup luncheon at Havenwood Heritage Height's Tad's Place. Together we will share in a bit of the camp spirit as we enjoy delicious homemade soups, breads, and desserts provided by NH UCC churches. This event is FREE for everyone!

RSVP at the link below to receive your tickets which you'll turn in upon arrival to be entered into our raffle!

Questions? Email Tivvi: [TPare@nhcucc.org](mailto:TPare@nhcucc.org)

## RSVP:

[tinyurl.com/soupersaturday26](https://tinyurl.com/soupersaturday26)



**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**

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

**First Parish Congregational Church**

United Church of Christ

47 East Derry Road

PO Box 114

Derry, NH 03038