

First Parish United Church of Christ (Congregational)

P.O. Box 228, 176 West High Street,

Somersworth, NH 03878-0228

Church Office: (603) 692-2057

Interim Minister: Rev. Dr. Norma Brettell

An Open & Affirming Church

www.somersworthfirstparish.org

pastor@somersworthfirstparish.org



APRIL, 2020



Beloved of God, grace and peace to you in the name of Jesus, our brother and Lord! As I write this, I look toward Holy Week, when we accompany Jesus and remember the events leading up to and including his death, and then the joy of resurrection and new life celebrated on Easter Sunday. Our usual ways of remembering these Holy Week and Easter events will be different this year. But that doesn't mean they have to be less meaningful. God is always with us, always companionship us, even during a pandemic. Even the lectionary, with its readings selected on a three-year cycle, has a little surprise for us. When we get to Palm Sunday, listen. See if you hear anything about palms in the Gospel. (You won't find any mention at all of palms in the Gospel reading for Palm Sunday this year!) So we can celebrate Palm Sunday without palms and be right in sync with the Gospel! And we can follow the Way of Holy Week together while apart, knowing that love is not bounded by physical space, and God's love and ours will guide us through this time with hope and kindness and care.

As our time together but apart has extended from our first virtual Sunday worship service on March 22nd, we've gotten better at our virtual Sunday services! In addition, I've offered Noontime Prayer Spots every Monday – Thursday, on Facebook Live at – you guessed it! – Noon! Both the virtual Sunday service and the Live Noontime Prayer Spots can be viewed anytime on the church's Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/Firstparishucc/>



Also on March 22nd, I launched “The Pastor’s on the Porch!,” which is a way for me to visit people from the porch while talking on the phone. Here’s my invitation from the church’s Facebook page: “I may not be able to make in-home visits at this time, as we all take precautions with respect to COVID-19. But, at your request I can visit you on your porch, and will call you on the phone, and have conversation and a visit that way. I won't touch anything when I visit, and I don't want you to even open the door! But there will be good conversation and we will be able to see each other. The closest thing I can think of to a "real" visit. So, if you'd like a visit from your pastor, please call me at home and we'll set up a time! (And if you don't have a porch, it's okay; I'll just be near your door or window!)” Although I've had to suspend this opportunity for the time being while we have been advised to “stay at home,” I hope to resume it when we are permitted to be out and about for

other than essential things.

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~Continued from page 1 - Pastor Norma's Easter Message

In order to protect the most vulnerable among us, we are practicing physical distancing. But that doesn't mean that we have to be out of touch! The deacons have divided up the visitation list and are calling members to check in. The deacons had their first meeting via teleconference, and it went very well!

As we learn to use technology more in ministry, we are seeing opportunities for growth and seeds for new growth. We are reaching people on our Facebook page that we don't usually see in church on Sunday morning. People tune in to the Noontime Prayer Spots at noon or later and spend some time in connection with God and the community of followers of Jesus' way. Some of these people may come to visit us on Sunday mornings when we are able to worship again in the sanctuary, and some may not. But this is valuable ministry and it is one of the silver linings of the cloudy time of the pandemic. Please remember to visit the church's Facebook page, and "like" and "share" the posts; in this way we can reap the benefits of the Facebook platform to increase visibility for the church!

It's important to remember your pledges during this time when we are not present in worship together. Elsewhere in this newsletter you'll see how to make sure that your pledges reach the church. In addition, I've asked the trustees to reconsider electronic giving as an option, not just for our members, but also on our Facebook page, and through opportunities like Facebook Smile, which gives a donation to charitable causes that Amazon purchasers name in their Amazon accounts. If you have familiarity with these options, please let us know! Most people are accustomed to making donations online; relatively fewer people donate by check or cash any more.

Looking ahead to Holy Week, we will have our Palm Sunday worship at 10 AM posted on the church's Facebook page, and on April 12th our Easter Sunday service will be available as well! Be sure to join us! In addition, we are providing a devotional booklet for Holy Week (including a Maundy Thursday Home Service) at the end of this newsletter. (If you are receiving the newsletter by snailmail, there will be a hard copy of the devotional in your envelope with the newsletter.) In addition, during Holy Week, our Noontime Prayer Spots on Facebook Live (on the church's Facebook page) will continue on Monday through Thursday. I hope that you will join in these devotions and that your Holy Week observance is meaningful and faith-filled! In addition, I'll communicate with you by email during Holy Week, so please be sure that we have your correct email. You can email me directly at pastornorma@socialaw.com. And I can be reached at home by phone at 603-374-9092.

Courage and grace!
Pastor Norma

FINANCIAL REPORT

	<u>January/February 2020</u>	<u>January/February 2019</u>
Income	\$19,007.21	\$25,604.84
Expenses	\$22,125.69	\$28,002.36
Net Income	(\$3,118.48)	(\$2,397.52)



MINISTRY OF PRAYER & CONCERN

Edith Bowen & Jinny Burgess *The Residence at Silver Square*, 100 Sterling Way, Dover, NH 03820

Toddy Eastman, *Wentworth Home*, 795 Central Ave, Dover, NH 03820

Pat Hamel, *The Manor at Canyon Lakes*, #210, 2802 West 35th Ave., Kennewick, WA 99337-2583

Audrey Loika, *Huntington Commons*, 1 Huntington Common Dr., Apt. 208, Kennebunk, ME 04043

Bob Philbrick, *Berwick Estates*, 75 Portland St., So. Berwick, ME 03908

--and all who are residents in long-term care and assisted living facilities in our area.

Please do send your cards and greetings.

Be the Church

Protect the environment. Care for the poor.

Forgive often. Reject racism.

Fight for the powerless.

Share earthly and spiritual resources.

Embrace diversity. Love God. Enjoy this life.

God is still speaking

The **Purpose Statement**, the UCC reason for being, is drawn from a passage in Matthew's Gospel: *To love God with all our heart, mind soul, and strength and our neighbor as ourselves.*

The **Mission Statement**: *United in Spirit and inspired by God's grace, we welcome all, love all, and seek justice for all.*

The **Vision**: *United in Christ's love, a just world for all.*

Remember, every church activity is an opportunity for YOU to invite, include and involve someone who you know into our shared life here at First Parish Church.

You are the face of First Parish Church!



Nancy Anderson [health]

Craig Breden [health]

Priscilla Brock [health] *Robin Hamel's mother*

Eric Burgess [health] *Jinny Burgess's son*

Jinny Burgess [health]

Helene Courier [healing]

John Cummings [healing]

Barbara Dudley [health]

Carol Ebert [health]

Betty Foley [health]

Kathe Johnson [health] *Geoff Day's sister*

Ruth Lucey [healing] *Loved one of Mike & Sharon Sirois*

Gloria Martel [health] *Linda Farrell's mother*

Linda Palmer [healing]

Steve Ricker [health] *Connie Ricker's son*

Susan Sargent [health]

Allen Storms [health]

Mike Watman [health]

Those who walk with mental health concerns, those who walk the pathway of treatment and recover from addiction.

AND ongoing prayer focus during these days:

- *For our Carroll-Strafford Association Churches.*
- *That God will bless and guide our Interim Minister, Rev. Dr. Norma Brettell*
- *That God will bless and guide our Conference Minister, Rev. Gordan Rankin, and Associate Conference Minister, Rev. Richard Slater*
- *Faith formation ministries for all ages - for building strong faith foundations, at all ages and stages of life.*
- *Working together in community - to build community - and to implement strategies for prevention, while providing resources for treatment and recovery from substance misuse and its stigma.*
- **Jesus said: Love God. Love Neighbor. Love Self.**
- *Those serving in the Armed Services and in support capacities around the world.*
- *Peace in our world; harmony in our relationships, hope in our active response for transformational change.*
- *The UKAMA Partnership between the United Church of Christ in Zimbabwe and the NH Conference UCC.*
- *Continued invitational ministry and mission here at First Parish United Church of Christ: invite, include, involve in the good news way of Christ!*



APRIL LECTIONARY READINGS

Palm Sunday - Purple

April 5, 2020

Isaiah 50:4-9a

Psalms 118:1-2, 19-29, Psalm 31:9-16

Matthew 21:1-11, Philippians 2:5-11

Matthew 26: 14-27:66 or Matthew 27:11-54

Maundy Thursday - Purple

April 9, 2020

Exodus 12:1-4, (5-10), 11-14

Psalm 116:1-2, 12-19

1 Corinthians 11:23-26

John 13:1-17, 31b-35

Good Friday

April 10, 2020

Isaiah 52:13-53:12

Psalm 22

Hebrews 10:16-25 or Hebrews 4:14-16; 5:7-9

John 18:1-19:42

Resurrection of the Lord - White

April 12, 2020

Acts 10:34-43 or Jeremiah 31:1-6

Psalm 118:1-2, 14-24

Colossians 3:1-4 or Acts 10:34-43

John 20:1-18 or Matthew 28:1-10

Second Sunday of Easter - White

April 19, 2020

Acts 2:14a, 22-32

Psalm 16

1 Peter 1:3-9

John 20:19-31

Third Sunday of Easter - White

April 26, 2020

Acts 2:14a, 36-41

Psalm 116:1-4, 12-19

1 Peter 1:17-23

Luke 24:13-35



April 1 Rachel Fournier, Andy Allen, Shawn Richer
April 3 Eden-Faith Trussell
April 4 Madeline Ashley
April 5 *Ed & Helene Courier*
April 8 Leah Stucker
April 9 Clay Oelkuct
April 10 Marc Cote, Lauren O'Connor
April 14 Linda Burk
April 19 Christina Giles
April 21 Jeff Rich
April 23 *Terry & Linda Burk*
April 24 Mark Rideout, *Sue & Butch Boucher*
April 26 Barbara Pay
April 29 Juliana Carolina

MISSIONS

We will not be collecting sewing supplies for the Zimbabwe Shipping Container. We decided not to participate this time, but we will participate in the next Zimbabwe Shipping Container.

A Gentle Reminder:

* Sunday Bulletin announcements/information needs to be in writing to the Church Office by TUESDAY, or you may e-mail it directly to Debbie Hall at d_hall47@comcast.net.

* Monthly Newsletter, Calendar and updates on birthdays or anniversary items MUST be submitted by the 1st Friday [OR as noted in the monthly newsletter calendar]. Earlier is better! Email directly to Debbie Hall at d_hall47@comcast.net. Written items may be left in the pocket on the copy room door as well (just let Deb know!).

Note: If you serve on a committee, please communicate directly with your Committee Chair if you are unable to attend a scheduled meeting or event.

DIACONATE

The Diaconate held our first virtual meeting during March. While we faced technology issues, we were able to overcome and have a productive meeting. We focused on a number of topics:

- * Our virtual worship services
- * Pastor Norma has been doing a fantastic job with her virtual ministry.
- * Feedback from our March 22nd virtual service was very positive.
- * Facebook compatibility: we have found that Google Chrome provides the best quality. Apple Safari appears to have intermittent video and sound synch issues.
- * We discussed ideas for our virtual worship service. If you have ideas, please let us know.
- * If you would be able to record a prayer, read scripture, etc, please let us know.
- * The Food Pantry continues to provide services using the church. Patrons drive up and stay in their cars to be served.
- * Teatotaller (Emmett Soldati) is coordinating surplus food donations from the local restaurant community.

The weekly and monthly virtual duties of the Diaconate:

- * Visitation and Outreach
 - If you need help, please let us know and we would be happy to help.
 - The Pastor's on the Porch: If you would like to have Pastor Norma come and visit you, please let her know. She will sit outside so you can see her through the glass and talk via the phone.
- * Church Vitality
 - Sandwich Board sign to say Thank You to groups providing services in the community (Health Care workers, Grocery and Pharmacy clerks, etc)

Open & Affirming

- * We discussed the need to reinvigorate the committee.
- * Get a permanent small flag on the sign.

There are a number of up-coming events for which we are planning to provide a virtual service. Would you like to help?

- * Sunday, April 5th is Palm Sunday
- * Thursday, April 9th is Maundy Thursday
- * Sunday, April 12th is Easter Sunday

The next virtual Diaconate meeting will be on Tuesday, April 7th at 6:30PM.

For the Diaconate
Geoff Day

FAITH FORMATION

I will be submitting two short messages, For The Children, on the Facebook page every week. On Sunday I will write about the week's Sunday School lesson. On Wednesday I will write something to help encourage the children to keep up with their prayers. My hope is to reach children, or even adults, who may be encouraged by these messages.

COMMUNITY FOOD PANTRY

The Community Food Pantry is remaining open serving clients at their vehicles. At this time when many of our clients have experienced a job lay off or a drastic cut in food stamps, it is vital the pantry continue to help with food. In addition, we have been directed by the Good Shepherd Food Bank to serve any client who walks through the door during this crisis, even if they are not in our normal serving area. This is because the pantry receives USDA food from both Maine and New Hampshire.

For those of you who would like to donate items, the pantry could use the following things that are hard to obtain:

Toilet paper, shampoo/conditioner, bar soap, deodorant, crackers, and disinfecting wipes.

Thank you to all who so faithfully donate to our food pantry. Your donations are greatly appreciated.

Our Monthly Newsletter

can be accessed entirely online! Check it out: www.somersworthfirstparish.org. Paper copies are available in the Narthex. If you prefer to have the newsletter sent to you in the mail, please send \$20 with your name and address to: First Parish Church, P.O. Box 228, Somersworth, NH 03878, Attn: Newsletter Editor.

Comments from the Moderator

Greetings, as your Moderator, I would like to provide an update on the overall status of the church.

It continues to be a very difficult time for our church, community and nation as the Coronavirus/COVID-19 situation evolves. Our focus and priority as a church leadership team has been on the well-being of our church family. With this in mind, we continue to take the following actions:

1. The church leadership has been communicating on a regular basis in order to stay in sync on the daily updates and recommendations provided by the Center for Disease Control and the New Hampshire Conference of the UCC.

As a result, we will continue to suspend our in-building worship services and committee meetings until further notice.

1. Our committee meetings are being held virtually in order to manage the business and well-being of the church. We ask that you be patient as we work through the challenges of being a virtual team.

If you have questions about the activities of a specific committee, please reach out directly to a committee member or me.

Now is not the time for you to think someone else will take care of our challenges. We need everyone in the church participating in order to be successful. To that end, I ask that you send your weekly pledge directly to the church. Even though we are operating virtually, we still have operating expenses. Nancy and I do this automatically through our bank. Please consider doing the same.

I know this is an upsetting period for many of us, including me. For those of you who may be at risk for serious illness from Coronavirus/COVID-19 we strongly encourage you to take the necessary steps to protect yourself. If you are unsure if you are at risk, we encourage you to reach out to your doctor as soon as possible to make that determination.

By sticking together, helping each other, and being patient and understanding, we will get through this. During the days ahead, we need to provide a caring environment that is focused on taking care of each other. If you need help let us know.

Let's work hard to be a little extra patient and kind, offer additional support and encouragement, and look out for each other. This is what makes our church special!

Thank you,
Geoff Day
Moderator

TRUSTEES

The Trustees are still busy even with the lockdown. We are carefully monitoring the finances and physical condition of the church. We met informally through email, with no new activity. Dave Hamel has stepped back from Trustee activities, so we now have three slots open if you feel the calling to join the Trustees.

Switchover of bank accounts has started and we will continue switching over management of the fund accounts.

As we continue with the church on hiatus due to the harsh possible effects of the coronavirus, the Trustees urge you to continue your pledge. You can mail in your pledge every week or once a month to: First Parish Church, P.O. Box 228, Somersworth, NH 03878. Or you could change your pledge to have it automatically sent to the church each week. If you would like information on how to change your pledge to an automatic payment, please contact your bank or credit union and ask for assistance.

With Dave Hamel stepping back from trustee activities, let us take the opportunity to thank him for his dedicated, meticulous work on the church. Dave handled so many day-to-day activities at the church, including snow-shoveling and lawn-mowing, elevator inspections and repairs, parsonage cleanup and repairs, equipment inspections and battery replacements, lighting and window repairs. We very much appreciate his work at the church.

ALL ARE WELCOME!

SUNDAY SCHEDULE

Sunday Worship & Sunday School- 10:00AM

Fellowship Time Follows Worship

Holy Communion is celebrated on the first Sunday of each month.

Ministers: The People of the Church

Interim Pastor: Rev. Norma Brettell

Faith Formation Coordinator: Susan Vollkommer

Moderator: Geoff Day

Co-Clerks: Robin Hamel & Debbie Hall

Contracted Treasurer: Linda Gauthier

Assistant Treasurer: Richard Shepherd

Organist/Choir Director: Bette Daley

Newsletter & Calendar Editor: Debbie Hall