

## 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](http://www.somersworthfirstparish.org)

[pastor@somersworthfirstparish.org](mailto:pastor@somersworthfirstparish.org)



### AUGUST, 2020



Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice.

Let your gentleness be known to everyone.

The Lord is near.

Do not worry about anything, but in everything

by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving

let your requests be made known to God.

And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding,

will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Finally, beloved, whatever is true, whatever is honorable,

whatever is just, whatever is pure,

whatever is pleasing, whatever is commendable,

if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise,

think about these things.

Keep on doing the things

that you have learned and received and heard and seen in me,

and the God of peace will be with you. (Philippians 4.4-8)

Beloved of God, even in the midst of a pandemic, we rejoice! Why? Because the Lord is near. Always with us, always companioning us. God is present and among us now just as surely as God has ever been with us! And we know our ancestors in faith testify to God's presence and mighty deeds in times that were excruciatingly difficult for them. God is near! Even now!

continue on page 2

continued - from the Pastor's Heart

Let's look for a moment at the purpose of this church. Let's consider for a moment why are we a church here, and how are we doing in the midst of a pandemic, these times that are an unprecedented experience for us. First, let's look at the purpose of this church as it is articulated in the official church documents:

“The avowed purpose of this church shall be to worship God, to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ, to celebrate the sacraments of Holy Communion and Baptism, to realize Christian fellowship and unity within this church and the Church Universal, to render loving service toward the whole human family, and to strive for righteousness, justice and peace.” (From First Parish United Church of Christ, Somersworth bylaws.)

How do we further the purpose of our church in these times? We worship God still, preaching the Gospel of Jesus Christ, celebrate the sacrament of Holy Communion, and have virtual Christian fellowship every Sunday. Even in a pandemic! Thank you to those who join in and worship with us! Thank you most especially to those who help to produce these worship services, and for everyone's willingness to pivot and adapt to new ways of gathering when we cannot gather physically safely. It has been a challenge! I am so grateful to those who are helping!

All of the vital committees continue to meet during these unprecedented times, using online meeting platforms. Ministry still takes place. The deacons consider worship and prayer and service needs and opportunities. The trustees are observing how collections are down, and of course will need to look at opportunities to fill the gap and fund the ministries of the church. The “Planning for the Future Committee” is tasked with monitoring the COVID situation and considering when and how we can gather safely, and what to do in the meanwhile when we cannot. The Transition Team is trying to develop ways to do the interim work of the congregation while the whole church cannot gather together physically, but most of this work needs to be done in a way that everyone has the opportunity to speak and hear one another together. When council confers it is a time for everything to come together and everyone to hear what everyone's doing.

As you pastor, I am able to visit people now with masks and social distancing, and as you know have been available for porch-visiting and phone visiting throughout the pandemic time. It is not what any of us are used to, but we do the best that we can and know that God is with us. If you have been to a hospital or doctor's office in the past few months, you know that new protocols are everywhere, and the goal is to keep people as safe as possible.

It breaks our hearts that the things that we do when we gather in the sanctuary – meeting close together indoors with the same people for more than a few moments, shaking hands and hugging, singing, speaking congregational responses out loud, gathering for coffee and pastries – all of these activities are why church meetings have been, and are called, *superspreader events*. When we gather, it is not like an encounter with a cashier behind plexiglass at Market Basket that we meet for 2 or 3 minutes. When we gather for worship, we are in the same room, with no air exchange system, doing activities that are known to spread the virus. And we know that we have many, many members whose health is vulnerable. There is a lot of data available, and new data and guidelines coming – from health agencies as well as requirements of the church's insurers – that the Planning for the Future Committee looks at at each meeting in considering how to move forward in the safest way. It is difficult work. Please offer them your thanks and your support.

The last few parts of the mission of this church are these: “to render loving service toward the whole human family, and to strive for righteousness, justice and peace.” We do support the food pantry, and there are mission works that continue, or will be continuing, as we move forward. In what other ways might you lead the church in rendering loving service to others in the community? How does this congregation “strive for righteousness, justice and peace?”

Friends, even in the midst of a pandemic, we are still the church. God is still near. And we rejoice, still. God bless you!

~Pastor Norma



**Words of Wisdom from Rev. Paul Nickerson,  
Nickerson Consulting, Congregations Moving Forward**

Rev. Paul Nickerson has years of parish ministry and coaching informing his wise and helpful congregational coaching encouragement and guidance. Recently, he had this to say about where we are, five months into this pandemic time:

I have the wonderful opportunity, as a coach, to hear from clergy and lay leaders every week. It really is a delight to have these connections. As the summer moves on, as Covid 19 continues to rage in many parts of the country, and as churches continue to be on line, wondering if they will ever be back in their buildings again, I hear a "weariness" in the voices of many. There is no doubt that all the innovation many church leaders have gone through in the past few months has taken its toll. The initial excitement of technology has worn off, and in fact, 82% of churches are now reporting that on line worship has plateaued or declined, which is just about where we were pre-Covid! Yes, I get it; we would all like something resembling "normal" and it is not there.

If you find yourself "sighing" a lot and feeling a lack of energy and excitement, I would like to offer a few suggestions to get re-invigorated for your ministry:

- Acknowledge that we are transitioning to a new way of doing church. This is the new reality and wasting energy wishing for the "old days" will only lead to further depression.
- Recognize the opportunity: Much of the world has been on line for years and we are catching up with this in the church. People need healing, purpose and meaning for their lives and we can meet them in their digital world and make a difference. Focus on the possibilities.

Friends, we are all ministers in Christ's church. Paul's letter is full of wisdom. I know I am exhausted, and I am sure you are feeling it, too. Please be sure that you get time for rest, and that you take time to open your hearts to the possibilities that are here in this time. Things will be different. How can we create new and better ways of being church, providing healing, purpose, and meaning for those around us?

~Pastor Norma



**MINISTRY OF  
PRAYER &  
CONCERN**

Nursing Home Ministry

**Edith Bowen** *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., 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.*



Sympathy is extended to the  
families of:

**Cindy Mowbray (7/5/20)** John & Carol Cummings'  
daughter

*Please remember this family in your prayers, as we  
ask the Lord to surround them with love and light.*



**NEW ARRIVAL**

**Henry Oliver Rogers**, born  
7/13/20, son of Justin & Lisa  
Rogers, grandson of Richard  
& Diane Shepherd. Such a joy to welcome into  
the world!

*May the blessing of hope and health surround  
this family.*



Craig Breden [health]

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

Helene Courier [healing]

John Cummings [healing]

Barbara Dudley [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*

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!*
- *For our church family and community during the COVID 19 pandemic.*



## AUGUST LECTIONARY READINGS

### **Ninth Sunday of Pentecost - Green**

*August 2, 2020*

Genesis 32:22-31, Psalm 17:1-7, 15

Isaiah 55:1-5, Psalm 145:8-9, 14-21

Romans 9:1-5

Matthew 14:13-21

### **Tenth Sunday of Pentecost - Green**

*August 9, 2020*

Genesis 37:1-4, 12-28, Psalm 105:1-6, 16-22, 45b

1 Kings 19:9-18, Psalm 85:8-13

Romans 10:5-15

Matthew 14:22-33

### **Eleventh Sunday of Pentecost - Green**

*August 16, 2020*

Genesis 45:1-15, Psalm 133

Isaiah 56:1, 6-8, Psalm 67

Romans 11:1-2a, 29-32

Matthew 15:(10-20), 21-28

### **Twelfth Sunday of Pentecost - Green**

*August 23, 2020*

Exodus 1:8-2:10, Psalm 124

Isaiah 51:1-6, Psalm 138

Romans 12:1-8

Matthew 16:13-20

### **Thirteenth Sunday of Pentecost - Green**

*August 30, 2020*

Exodus 3:1-15, Psalm 105:1-6, 23-26, 45b

Jeremiah 15:15-21, Psalm 26:1-8

Romans 12:9-21

Matthew 16:21-28

**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!

## AUGUST Birthdays & Anniversaries

- Aug. 1 Terry Burk
- Aug. 2 Tom Allen, Patty Cote, Saylor Vollkommer
- Aug. 8 John & Barbara Pay
- Aug. 9 Dee Drake
- Aug. 12 Dean Martin
- Aug. 13 Mike & Sharon Sirois
- Aug. 14 Chris Stolpe, Kim Conley
- Aug. 17 Ele Janetos, Fran Nichols
- Aug. 23 Cassidy Richer  
Richard & Cynthia Jutras
- Aug. 24 Jim Goodberry
- Aug. 25 Linda Palmer
- Aug. 28 Linda Breden, Julie Anderson
- Aug. 29 Joanne Anderson



We celebrate with the families of Mike and Christine Allen who had not one, but two, graduate from Dover High School in June. Aidan Allen will attend Great Bay Community College and Avery Major will attend Fitchburg State College in MA. Congratulations to all of them!

### PRAYER MINISTRY



*Do you know someone who needs some prayers? Please contact one of the Prayer Group members listed below:*

Priscilla Chellis, (207) 698-5977,

Email: [prchellis@comcast.net](mailto:prchellis@comcast.net)

Carol Cummings, (603) 842-5059,

Email: [johnandcarol55@comcast.net](mailto:johnandcarol55@comcast.net)

Dottie Douglas, (603) 332-6113,

Email: [dottiedouglas@metrocast.net](mailto:dottiedouglas@metrocast.net)

Fran Karlik, (603) 397-5674,

Email: [kinross2@comcast.net](mailto:kinross2@comcast.net)



The Mission Committee is collecting new life jackets, with the tags attached. We are accepting all sizes - infant, child, youth, and adult. We will also accept cash donations to be used to purchase new life jackets. The life jackets are being stored at the Somersworth Fire Station. The cash is being handled by the school department.

This was started by a teacher at Idlehurst Elementary School in Somersworth. One of her students drowned in a swimming accident at the start of this summer. She wanted to do something in his memory, so she came up with this idea. The life jackets are given to anyone who asks for one. The life jackets must be new, with the tags attached due to liability concerns.

If you would like to donate to this cause you may drop a life jacket off on Sue Vollkommer's porch, just open the porch door and leave it there. I will bring it inside and take any donations to the fire department. Please have all donations to me by October 1st.

The Mission Committee will be collecting socks for the homeless veteran's home. If you have any socks to donate, you may leave them on Sue Vollkommer's porch. These do not need to be new, but they must be in good condition.

It feels good to have a couple ways that First Parish can help out in our community. As always, be mindful of any needs your family, friends, or neighbors may have.



Greetings Friends,

I hope this newsletter finds you healthy and safe. It certainly continues to be a challenging time for us locally and as a nation. I would like to share some candid thoughts with you about our current situation.

Our Planning for the Future committee, a core group from the leadership team, is working hard to figure out what our next steps can safely be during these dangerous times. The group has been putting in the extra effort doing research, discussing options and making the hard decisions because they feel strongly about the safety of our church family.

We are hearing a desire to return to normal from some folks. We are also receiving suggestions on how they would like to do so. Some examples of ideas are a full back to in-building worship or parking lot in-car worship. It is important to recognize that worship won't be normal - looking like it did - until COVID-19 can be brought under control via a vaccine. If we were to go back to in-building worship, we would need to physically distance and wear masks. We also couldn't do some of those things we consider "normal" such as always sitting in the same pew, singing hymns, passing the peace with hugs and coffee fellowship as they have been identified as high-risk activities. In-car worship has its own set of challenges logistically.

I am seeing some people working very hard for our church. In order to plan and implement any variation of a back to in-building worship plan we need to work through all of the details. This is necessary to ensure it is understood and can be done safely. We need more people to help with this and figure it out. Candidly speaking, we can't wish something into existence. We need people who are willing to do the hard work. We need your ideas and your involvement.

As your moderator, I have been doing my best to be inclusive of anyone who wants to participate in the discussions. It has included the unproductive debate via email of decisions previously made by committees. This didn't work well and was very frustrating to those who had been at the meeting. I view this as a significant lesson learned.

Ultimately, we as a church, need to decide how we want to approach this. What needs to be done to ensure the safety of all of our church family. If you want to be involved, please reach out to me and I will make sure you are a part of our Planning for the Future meetings.

Peace be with you,  
Geoff Day, Moderator





## TRUSTEES

We are still in need of a few more trustees on the board. If you feel the calling please join us in this important position. We welcomed Laurel Curtis and Geoff Day to the Trustees as of now. Yet, we cannot function as a full board without more members. We need help!!!

Anthony Trussell has been helping with some community service hours and doing odd jobs around the church to help us out. There are some specific things that need to be looked at, foundation painting and retaining wall.

The paperwork has been signed to add the authorized persons to access and manage the checking account and investment funds and just needs to be dropped off at Citizens Bank. They are Nancie Cameron and Geoff Day.

Please keep up with your pledges to the church, its important we maintain everyday expenses. Like running your home, if the monies are down then we suffer as a whole.

We are showing a deficit half way through the year, but also passed a budget with a deficit back in February.

There are many in-person accounts that are down because we are not in church due to covid.

Be well, be safe and hope to see you in person in the future.

### 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 PASTOR'S ON THE PORCH!  
THE PASTOR'S ON THE PHONE!  
AND THE PASTOR'S PHONE RINGS IN!**

The Pastor's on the Porch! The Pastor's on the Phone! And the Pastor's Phone Rings In!

Pastor Norma has been enjoying talking with so many on the phone during this time! Please know that you don't have to wait for her to call you – you can call her anytime you'd like to talk to your pastor! Her home phone is 603-374-9092.

**ALL ARE WELCOME!**

### VIRTUAL SERVICE SCHEDULE

**Sunday Worship, 10AM**

**Wednesday Prayers, 12 Noon**

**on our Facebook page** (*First Parish United Church of Christ Somersworth*)

**"For The Children"** virtual page is on the church's Facebook page every Sunday and Wednesday

**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



The Wednesday afternoon and Sunday morning "For The Children" posts will continue through the summer months. My hope is to encourage children, or anyone who reads these posts, to read their Bible and continue with their daily prayers. Our building may be closed but our faith is strong. God is still speaking to us, we only need to listen.



**Pastor Norma is available to visit you at your request.**

Not inside your house, but she'll visit you on your porch, and will call you on the phone, and have conversation and a visit that way!

It's a great way to have good conversation and be able to see each other. If you'd like a visit from your pastor, please call her at home (603-374-9092) and set up a time!

**Our Monthly Newsletter** can be accessed entirely online! Check it out: [www.somersworthfirstparish.org](http://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.

**International Remembrance of the Bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki**

*August 7, 6:30 p.m. Livestreamed Event*

Every year, all over the world, people gather to remember the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. On this 75th anniversary of those bombings, you're invited to gather with American and international peace groups, for a live streamed remembrance. The speaker will be Masako Wada, who as a young girl in Nagasaki survived the bombing, she is now the Assistant Secretary General of Nihon Hidankyo, the Japanese organization of survivors of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

This remembrance is co-sponsored by the Peace with Justice Advocates Mission Group of the NH Conference. The event will be hosted by Kevin Martin, President of Peace Action and the ceremony will be led by Reverend Elizabeth Theoharis, co-chair of the Poor People's Campaign: A National Call for Moral Revival.

To participate on Friday, August 7, 2020 6:30-8:00 PM go to: [www.facebook.com/ NHPeaceAction/](https://www.facebook.com/NHPeaceAction/)

W O R S H I P F R O M



**Did you love camp as a child? Do you still love camp as an adult?**

**Horton Center Invites Us to Summer Sunday! August 9, 2020**

The team at Horton Center says: *On Sunday, August 9th Horton Center is bringing worship to you in the comfort of your own home. We are looking forward to ending our successful summer season with you! Together with the Horton Center summer staff, deans, campers and Conference Minister Gordon Rankin, we have put together an awesome worship service full of camp-spirit and energy. If you have been to Horton Center one hundred times and long to see the views from the ledges again or if you've never been to Horton Center and are interested in seeing a bit of what camp is like, please join us.*

Please note that the link to this online service will be available early on Sunday morning on our First Parish Facebook page. It's best to watch the service around 10 AM, and there will also be a link to a Zoom Coffee Hour after the service! Please plan to join us!

**PENTECOST THEOLOGICAL  
ROUNDTABLE**

Our New Hampshire Conference Theological Roundtables for Holy Week were so well-received that the Conference has produced a new Theological Roundtable for Pentecost! You can watch it online here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jdDbi-TNAv4&feature=youtu.be>