

First Parish United Church of Christ (Congregational)



P.O. Box 228, 176 West High Street,
Somersworth, NH 03878-022
Church Office: (603) 692-2057
Rev. Thomas Gardner, Pastor
An Open & Affirming Church

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FEBRUARY, 2025

NH CONFERENCE UCC - ASSOCIATION UPDATE

The letter listed below is written by the NH Conference UCC.

First Parish Church has been a member of the Carroll-Strafford Association. Historically, Associations were a geographic grouping of local churches with mutual support, oversight of ministerial preparation and authorization, fellowship, training and at times discerning together questions of faith. The needs of the church now, and how we relate and communicate have changed. For the local church and the Association, a revitalized way was recommended.

An Association Capacity Task Force was formed, and has been working for around 3 years. They recommended that the seven associations in the NH Conference UCC become one association, to be named the *Granite State Association*.



All Seven Associations Vote to Adopt “Conference Acting as Association” to Form the Granite State Association Effective April 1, 2025

“Behold, I am doing a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it? I will make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert.” —Isaiah 43:19

You, the members of our New Hampshire Congregations, have voted to adopt the new thing God is doing! Overwhelmingly, each of our seven associations voted to dissolve and form the new Granite State Association [GSA]. This move was initially necessitated by decreased volunteerism, making it difficult for some of our associations to function. But, for those of us privileged to serve on the Association Capacity Task Force [ACTF], that which initially presented itself as a stumbling block quickly turned into a transformational opportunity for a “new thing”!

Over the past two years, with your insights and feedback, the ACTF created a model of this “new thing” and as it all came together, we became increasingly aware of the many positives this streamlined structure could offer. Better use of Conference staff time, greater transparency of the work of the Association, the potential for greater connections between our congregations, increased consistency of ministerial formation and continuing education for ministers and congregations, the ability to recruit members from across the state to serve on the committees of the Association, to name just a few. And now it begins.



MINISTRY OF PRAYER & CONCERN

Bob Behrman, *Kindred Transitional Care and Rehab, 307 Plaza Drive, Dover NH (formally Dover Rehab)*

Charles Drake *New Hampshire Veteran's Home, 139 Winter St., Tilton, NH 03276*

Stephen Ferranti *Johnson Creek Village, 301 Durham Rd., Dover, NH 03820*

Gina Fortier *Wentworth Home 795 Central Ave., Dover, NH 03820*

Richard Jackson *The Residence at Silver Square, 100 Sterling Way, Dover, NH 03820*

Ida Patterson, *Benchmark at Rye, 295 Lafayette Rd., Room 106, Rye, NH 03870*

Bob Philbrick *Pinnacle Health & Rehab, 1142 Main Street, Sanford ME 04073*

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



Rev. Tom Gardner's Contact Information

Email:

thomasedwardgardner@gmail.com

Rev. Tom's cell: 603-393-4934



In Our Thoughts and Prayers

Norm Brown
John Chesley
Carol Cummings
Julie Gowell
Beverly Lyndes

Connie Ricker
Kristen Russell
Diane Shepherd
Linda Palmer
Elaine Weatherbee
Don Whitten

AND ongoing prayer focus during these days:

- *For our Carroll-Strafford Association Churches.*
- *That God will bless and guide our Conference Minister, Rev. Gordan Rankin, and Associate Conference Minister, Rev. Sara Marean*
- *That God will bless and guide Rev. Tom Gardner.*
- *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.*
- *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!*
- *We pray for those who are living with life-threatening illnesses; those who are aging or living with cancer, have mental health concerns and those who are caregivers.*
- ***We long for peace in our world,*** *praying that our nation and world leaders will work together in this time of need, finding peace and harmony with all - the sick, poor, homeless, hungry, victims of violence and abuse, our LGBTQ+ community, refugees, immigration concerns, violence in the schools and violence in our streets.*
- ***We give thanks for all those who have been working non-stop*** *behind the scenes at First Parish so that the day-to-day needs move along seamlessly. For our committees that oversee our finances, our children, our prayer needs, worship and building concerns, plus our local outreach with The Community Food Pantry and the Table of Plenty.*
- ***We are hopeful*** *that God will bless our own church growth in reaching out to new people as we keep the face of First Parish UCC in our community. We share the good news of God's light and love in Jesus Christ, being faithful disciples while inviting and including all who are seeking hope and a spiritual home.*



FEBRUARY LECTIONARY READINGS

Fourth Sunday after the Epiphany/ Presentation of the Lord - Green

February 2, 2025

Jeremiah 1:4-10

Psalm 71:1-6

1 Corinthians 13:1-13

Luke 4:21-30

Fifth Sunday after the Epiphany - Green

February 9, 2025

Isaiah 6:1-8, (9-13)

Psalm 138

1 Corinthians 15:1-11

Luke 5:1-11

Sixth Sunday after the Epiphany - Green

February 16, 2025

Jeremiah 17:5-10

Psalm 1

1 Corinthians 15:12-20

Luke 6:17-26

Seventh Sunday after the Epiphany - Green

February 23, 2025

Genesis 45:3-11, 15

Psalm 37:1-11, 39-40

1 Corinthians 15:35-38, 42-50

Luke 6:27-38



Feb. 1 Geoff Day
Feb. 2 Aiden Allen
Feb. 6 Sebastian Asher
Feb. 7 Janice Wentworth
Feb. 11 Julie Hurley
Feb. 13 Bethany Fournier
Feb. 21 Linda Oelkuct
Feb. 22 Alex Vollkommer, Gina Fortier
Feb. 26 Troy Brown
Feb. 28 Stephen Lucey



Thank you to all who donated to the sock drive, Christmas Shoeboxes, and the Riverside Gifts. We collected nine shoeboxes, and granted fourteen wishes for Riverside. Thank you all for your generous giving.

Sue Vollkommer
Missions/Faith Formation



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

Carol Cummings, (603) 842-5059,
Email: :
johnandcarol55@comcast.net

Fran Karlik, (603) 397-5674, Email:
kinross2@comcast.net



Sympathy is extended
to the families of:

Charles Drake (12/28/24) Wife, Dee Drake;
daughter, Teri Ann Cox

Lynn Jackson (1/18/25) Father, Richard Jackson

*May the blessing of hope and health surround
their families.*



The women have been spending part of their time organizing. They took down the Christmas decorations and they are working on going to the different areas downstairs in the church and helping to organize them.

Thank you to everyone who donated to the Christmas stockings. They were truly appreciated by children and parents from the food pantry. [See the thank you note from the food pantry listed below]

The ladies are going to put together 36 Easter Baskets for the Community Food Pantry's children. We would appreciate any donations for the baskets. Most items can be purchased at the Dollar Store. A list of suggested items for gender-neutral baskets are: coloring/activity books, sidewalk chalk, play dough, slinky's, spring/summer outdoor games, bubbles, little stuffed animals like bunnies, crayons, colored pencils, chocolate Easter eggs or bunnies, combs or brushes. Please do not feel like you need to get 36 of an item. Any amount will help.

We welcome all women to our Tuesday gatherings. There are always conversations, catching up, sharing ideas of items we can make for the fair and brainstorming ways to have community gatherings. So, stop in and stay awhile and visit!

Thank you



To the Members of the Women's Fellowship,

This letter is to express the sincere appreciation of Community Food Pantry, Inc. for your generous donations of 36 Christmas stockings, complete with many wonderful items for children. We distributed the stockings to families with age-appropriate children. Many of the parents who received the stockings became very emotional, as they told us they had no stockings for their children. You made many parents and, hence, numerous children very happy at a time that can be difficult for needy families. Thank you from all of us at the food pantry.

Sincerely, Pat Vachon, Executive Director



	December, 2024	Year-to-Date, 2024
Total Income	\$ 6,789.82	\$74,579.76
Total Expenses	\$ 7,130.11	\$92,939.03
Other Expense	\$ 0.00	\$ 100.00
Net Income	\$ (340.29)	(\$18,259.27)
Checking Account Balance as of December 31, 2024		\$ 27,717.53
Savings Account Balance		\$ 5,003.77
Total Checking and Savings		\$ 32,721.30
Unavailable Checkbook Funds		(\$5,349.91)
Total Checkbook Funds Available		\$ 27,371.39
Memorial Fund Checkbook Balance		\$13,264.84
Mortgage Balance at Service Credit Union at 12/31/24		\$13,629.19