

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



JUNE, 2020



Dear Followers of Jesus,

What a time this has been. We're experiencing change we didn't ask for. We've had to adapt in ways we hadn't imagined. So many feelings swirl in our hearts: loneliness, grief, fear, sadness, worry, compassion, love, courage, confidence.... Some of us feel bereft, adrift. And yet. And yet.... We know that our God is always with us, and always loving us into new ways of being church!

Lately I've been taking inspiration from the prophet Nehemiah. When I look at his story, I see a process that may help us.

Feel the feelings

Pray

Take courage

Work to equip ourselves

Don't let fear stand in the way of what God is leading us to do

Nehemiah lived in Persia, and was separated from his people. When he heard about the horrible things happening in Jerusalem, he wept. He just sat down and wept. So, that's a first lesson I think Nehemiah can teach us in these days, that it's important to name our losses and grieve them. For some, our grief is the loss of meeting together on Sundays. For others, it is the tremendous loss of life – over 101,000 Americans have died, and over 362,000 people have died worldwide. We grieve and pray with those who've lost loved ones. Some despair over lost jobs, lost income, and all the worries that fall from that. Still others worry over family and friends who live far away, perhaps in regions devastated by the virus. And many of us mourn several or all of these losses. It's important to name our losses. Why? Because when we name our losses, we can bring them to each other and to God, who is the source of our strength and life.

See, after Nehemiah wept, he prayed and fasted for days and days. Only after he had prayed and fasted did he act. Then he went to the king who had conquered Israel intending to ask for permission to go to Jerusalem to rebuild the wall. When he spoke to the king, the king asked Nehemiah why he was there to see him, and before he answered the king, Nehemiah stopped and prayed again, right as he was talking to the king! And the king allowed Nehemiah to go to Jerusalem.

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Going to Jerusalem required courage! It was dangerous! *When he went back to Jerusalem, it was not the same place as when he'd left.* Continually, he prayed. He prayed for resources, he prayed for strength and people to help, he prayed for guidance and courage. He *worked to equip himself and build up others for the work at hand.* And he *overcame fear* by recalling that God was with them through hardship, and had always been with them through hardship. Perhaps the most important thing about the Nehemiah story is that *Jerusalem wasn't the same after the work was done.* Following God's lead, Nehemiah instituted many and great reforms to rededicate the people to God.

So, church, I believe that we are called to these very things in such a time as this! We are called to be aware of our feelings, our losses, our worries, our fears. And we are called to have compassion on one another's feelings in these days. We're called to pray; not so much to tell God what we think but to be open to where God may be leading us. We're called to take courage, and to work to equip ourselves to spread the Gospel and be church in this new reality. And through it all, we rely on one another, support one another, and don't let fear stand in the way of what God is leading us to do!

I miss you and love you all so much! God bless you!
Pastor Norma



**A Reflection from Our Conference Minister
Rev. Gordon Rankin**

Not Yet...And I Don't Know When

Nearly twenty years ago, my wife and I entered the adoption process. At our very first orientation with our adoption agency, we were given pin-on buttons that said, "Not Yet and Don't Ask." The idea was that there are so many times through the adoption process when you are asked when your child will arrive that you have the button to provide the answer for you. To be honest, when I first received that button, I thought it rather rude. I came to appreciate it more as our adoption process moved forward. Just a couple weeks after we received a profile with information and a couple of pictures of the young girl we were to adopt, SARS struck in China. Both the United States and Chinese governments said we were not allowed to travel to China to pick her up. I was heartbroken. The delay was excruciating. It was also absolutely necessary.

In my role as Conference Minister, I am asked several times a day the question "When do you think we will be able to resume in-person worship?" I find myself more and more giving an answer similar to that which was on that adoption button, "Not yet...and I don't know when." It seems the most honest answer I can give. It breaks my heart a little every time I need to say it. But I also believe it is necessary.

So I know there is a lot of talk right now about churches "reopening". So you may rightly wonder why I would say "Not yet". Here is my thinking: First, we have had some changes with regard to public health and Covid-19. We now better understand transmission of the virus. There are also some places around the state where we are seeing declines in cases of the disease. But one very important thing that has not changed at all is that churches (and other faith communities) remain a very high-risk location for transmission. The Center for Disease Control has referred to churches as "super spreaders". Because of the numbers we gather in, what we do when we are together and how we do it, churches are incubators for wide-scale community infection with this virus. Not only has the CDC documented specific cases but, as churches in some communities have begun to resume in person worship (even in modified ways), there has been plenty of anecdotal evidence as well.

Given the high-risk factor of viral spread in church communities, it is clear that when we resume in-person worship our services will need to be highly modified. Unless there are marked changes in testing and tracing or treatment, our services will likely need to remain significantly modified until there is a publicly accessible vaccine. Based on the CDC's Interim Guidelines for Faith Communities and the current conversations occurring in Governor Sununu's Reopening Task Force, such modifications are likely to include limiting the size of worship gatherings, marking seating locations out in tape to promote social distancing, propping doors open throughout the entire gathering (clearly more problematic in the winter), requiring masks be worn by staff and the congregation, abstaining from physical contact, avoiding use of commonly touched items, vigorous cleaning routines and restriction on how and when food may be served. Further, it seems that Governor Sununu will be expecting denominations (in conjunction with their insurance carriers) to provide guidelines regarding liturgical matters such as abstaining from singing and modified routines for serving communion.

As I have written about before, I can't help but wonder if our current alternative forms of worship are providing a more meaningful worship than these highly modified in-person versions will be able to do. As we all know, it is taking a lot of intentional effort to maintain unity of community right now. Some are not able to connect to worship, study and fellowship opportunities the way others are. From my perspective, our churches have been very attentive to this reality. As we return to in-person worship, I believe our unity of community issues will become more complex rather than less. Because of people's personal health risks, we will have some worshipping in person, some likely by technology, and some who are not able to connect in either method. I have no doubt that our congregations will be able to find ways to keep all three groups connected with one another. But it will take time and planning. My concern is that if we resume in-person worship before we've done such planning, we risk leaving some in our communities feeling isolate and deserted.

Finally, I am concerned for the health of our pastors and church musicians. I well know that a significant number of both in our churches fall in to high-risk populations. As a Type-2 diabetic, I do as well. Never before have I known that to limit what I do in ministry, but now, I'll admit, it has me being far more cautious. I was quite touched to hear a story this past week of a Jewish congregation in Concord who told their Rabbi who has a compromised immune system from medical treatments that they would not discuss resuming in-person worship until it was safe for her to do so. We cannot afford to ignore the health risks to our pastors and musicians in our discernment regarding resuming in-person worship. Such conversations need to be had in a respectful and confidential manner, but they do need to happen. We have talked a lot about how our discernment in these days must reflect the love and care for everyone in our communities. Our staff are very much among those who need our love and care right now.

I expect sometime in the next few week's Governor Sununu's Office will provide guidance for the "reopening" of faith communities. After the opportunity to review the Governor's guidance and consult with our insurance carrier, the Conference will provide some denominational guidelines. With those resources in hand, I expect the leadership of our churches will engage in the faithful discernment of what is the best way forward in their setting. Until that time, and perhaps even long after it, when folk inquire of you when in-person worship will resume, I invite you to share my phrase. You could even put it on a button if you want.

Not yet...and I don't know when.

Blessings during these uncertain days,
Gordon

FROM THE MODERATOR

Greetings!

Your leadership team is hard at work keeping an eye on daily operations and well being of the church while planning for the future. Our critical committees continue to meet virtually and carry on the business of the church. Critical committees will continue to meet over the summer instead of taking our usual hiatus.

In addition to the daily operation of the church we have been actively discussing our status as it relates to COVID-19. Per recommendation of the CDC and the State of NH to limit gatherings to 10 or fewer people, we will **continue** to suspend our in-building worship services and onsite committee meetings **through the summer**. This will be a constant topic of discussion during our virtual committee meetings. Please know that we take our responsibility to keep our church family safe very seriously.

We have also kicked off a Planning for the Future initiative made up of members of our committees. The purpose of this initiative is to have pro-active conversations focused on several key areas.

- * **What is our back to in-building church schedule?:** This discussion is focused on the need to be together in-building vs. the safety of our church family. A few of many things we are considering:
 - We have a high percentage of at-risk individuals in our church family
 - We have to assume that there could always be someone who has been exposed to COVID-19 at our church service.
 - Singing requires 30ft of separation and spoken responses are almost the same as singing.
 - We would need two pews in between attendees for 6 ft separation. That would result in 2 family members on each end and nobody in the middle.
 - We couldn't use the elevator and would need to go in one door and out another.
 - Pastor Norma attends regular UCC virtual meetings on COVID-19. She hasn't heard of any UCC churches planning on going back before the fall.

- * **What should or will the church look like in the future?:** We need to consider how we must change and adapt.
 - Would we be able to reach more people with a multi-dimensional/multimedia service?
 - We have been reaching new people with our virtual service on Facebook and YouTube. We don't want to lose them!
 - We are reaching current church family members who can no longer come to worship in person even before COVID-19.
 - What does worship need to look like to ensure we are all safe? Would we need to do COVID 19 testing?

- * **What if we can't go back?:** What happens if we can't return to the ways of 3 months ago?
 - What happens if some of our members don't feel comfortable going back to in-building worship?
 - How do we ensure we are ministering to everyone? Those worshipping in-building and at home.

Each committee will be discussing these topics at its meeting and will provide on-going feedback from their members.

I provide you with this information not to cause you undue stress but to show that your church leadership is being proactive and working hard. However, it is also important for everyone to understand the realities of the situation. I couldn't be more impressed by the individuals involved. It is truly a pleasure to work with Pastor Norma, the church officers and committee members. They give me great comfort and faith that we will come out the other side whole and better than before!

There have been positives out of our situation. I have had the pleasure to work more closely with Pastor Norma and have developed a much better understanding of how hard she works for our church. I would like to extend a special thank you to her for the tireless hours she spends serving our church family.

Peace be with you,
Geoff Day
Moderator



MINISTRY OF PRAYER & CONCERN

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., 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.



Sympathy is extended to the
families of:

Nancy Anderson (2/27/20) Sharon Sirois' mother

Jinny Burgess (4/3/20)

Caroline Ricker (4/25/20): *Connie Ricker's
sister-in-law.*

Freda Ross (3/4/20)

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



**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!



Craig Breden [health]

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

Eric Burgess [health] *Jinny Burgess' son*

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



JUNE LECTIONARY READINGS

First Sunday of Pentecost - Green

June 7, 2020

Genesis 1:1-2: 4a, Psalm 8
2 Corinthians 13:11-13
Matthew 28:16-20

Second Sunday of Pentecost - Green

June 14, 2020

Genesis 18:1-15, (21:1-7), Psalm 116:1-2, 12-19
Exodus 19:2-8a, Psalm 100
Romans 5:1-8
Matthew 9:35-10:8, (9-23)

Third Sunday of Pentecost - Green

June 21, 2020

Genesis 21:8-21, Psalm 86:1-10, 16-17
Jeremiah 20:7-13, Psalm 69:7-10, (11-15), 16-18
Romans 6:1b-11
Matthew 10:24-39

Fourth Sunday of Pentecost - Green

June 28, 2020

Genesis 22:1-14, Psalm 13
Jeremiah 28:5-9, Psalm 89:1-4, 15-18
Romans 6:12-23
Matthew 10:40-42



June 1 Jenny Fortier
June 4 Jonathan & Lizzie Chellis
June 5 Martha Collins, Amanda Hurley
June 7 Dave & Robin Hamel
June 8 Don & Pat Whitten
June 9 John Pay
June 11 Richard & Diane Shepherd
June 12 Jeff & Cecelia Rich
June 14 Gregg & Rachel Fournier
June 16 Bill Libby
June 17 Heather Fournier
June 18 Sharon Sirois, Jeffrey & Carolyn Libby
June 20 Sharon Brown, Kotey McDonough
June 22 Mike & Sue Nye, Ken & Kathy Latchaw
June 24 Keith & Sherie Dinger
June 26 Jaylee Conley
June 29 Jim & Elaine Goodberry

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>



New address & phone number for

John & Carol Cummings
195 Dover Point Rd
Dover, NH 03820
(603) 842-5059

GUIDE TO SELF-CARE FOR FAMILIES TOGETHER AT HOME

Pastor Norma has purchased a short and fun "Guide to Self-Care for Families together at Home" that can be printed up and sent you in booklet form. If you'd like to receive a copy, please send an email to Pastor Norma (pastornorma@socialaw.com), and she'll be sure to get one out to you!



THANK YOU TO:

- ~ Pastor Norma for all her work for our church
- ~ Geoff & Nancy Day for preparing and adding the worship services and prayers to Facebook and YouTube.
- ~ The Chellis Family for donating the new American flag and to Rich Whitten for help getting it on the flagpole.
- ~ Sheryl Parmenter for the flowers by the road sign and for the clean-up and mulch on the gardens by the downstairs doors.
- ~ Priscilla Chellis for the geraniums in the front door urns.

COMMUNITY FOOD PANTRY

Food Pantry Update

The staff of the Community Food Pantry would like to thank the church for allowing us to continue to operate even though no church activities have been occurring due to COVID-19. At the start of the pandemic the pantry experienced an increase in business. Then once clients received extra food stamp funds and stimulus checks, the pantry experienced a decline. This week we have started to pick up again as funds are now starting to run low for clients.

During the first four months of this year the pantry has served a total of 1,113 families consisting of 2,672 individuals. At the start of the crisis, donations from the grocery stores decreased substantially. This happened at the same time as our client numbers started to increase. Through meetings with Good Shepherd Food Bank, agencies had a chance to receive emergency food either in case lots or in prepackaged boxes for curbside distribution. That emergency food helped bridge the grocery store shortage, especially for meat.

We have had to alter our food distribution method because of the virus. All pantry staff are required to wear masks both when picking up from the grocery stores and when working inside the pantry. This is for everyone's protection. When clients arrive at the pantry, they are asked to remain in their vehicles. The cars are lined up in a que like at a drive through window. We have a young volunteer who brings out a two-page grocery list for clients to complete in their cars. This allows for the client to still have choices instead of receiving a box that could contain many items the client might not want or use. Once the list is completed it is collected and filled in the pantry. While the groceries are being pulled and bagged, the client can enter a segregated area of the pantry to select breads and produce. Only one client is allowed in at a time and the area is away from where volunteers are working. The groceries are placed in new bags and put in a sanitized cart. The cart is brought out to the client who unloads the groceries into their vehicle. During the crisis, the pantry will serve any family from any town and as often as the family needs help.

This method has been working well as it still allows clients choice while protecting both them and the pantry staff. It is my hope that in June we may be able to allow clients into the pantry again. However, when this is possible, the cars will still be lined up as they are now. Clients will only be allowed in the pantry when their vehicle is being served. Only when the virus is behind us will clients be allowed into the hall to sit and wait for service.



MISSIONS

For the time being our activities to raise money for our various missions has been put on hold, but that doesn't mean the generosity First Parish is known for has to stop. There are many ways we can help out in our own communities. Do you have family, friends or neighbors who have a need you are able to help with? Can you give a quick phone call or write a note to someone who cannot get out? You could place a take out order from a local restaurant or shop. The Community Food Pantry is always looking for donations. Our church has many needs that you could help with. Our building may be closed but our church is open and active as we reach out to others with kindness and love.

**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.

FAITH FORMATION

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

INTERIM DISCERNMENT

Back in our February and March Newsletters, I asked you to engage in a little discernment on your own. Now, I'd like to ask you to share the thoughts you've had after some time of prayer and discernment. If you haven't had a chance to get to it, here's a reminder of what we were doing:

Take a piece of paper, a pen, and go to a comfortable chair and sit down. Relax a bit. Pray that God will open your heart. Ask for God's guidance. Then reflect for a bit and write your impressions of Who First Parish is Now. Then think about the area in which this church is physically located, and consider Who is Our Neighbor? Write your reflections on your paper. And then pray for a bit about Who God is Calling First Parish to Become, and write your reflections down. After you've done this, thank God for guiding your reflection.

Now, I'd like to ask you to share your discernment! Please send your discernings on Who First Parish is Now, Who is Our Neighbor, and Who is God Calling First Parish to Become, by emailing your thoughts to me at pastornorma@socialaw.com, or mailing them to me at the church. I stop by ever now and then, and so I'll be sure to look for them! Thank you!

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

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

Dottie Douglas, (603) 332-6113,
Email: dottiedouglas@metrocast.net

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

TRANSITION TEAM

The Transition Team is working to consider ways that we can continue our work online. One of the most important parts of our work is the workshops that we do together where everyone who is present not only offers their thoughts but has the opportunity to hear what others are thinking. Our discussions about the many spiritual gifts in our church and the parts of our church's history that are most important as foundation for our way forward were fruitful and fun! We've thought about having Zoom meetings online for our workshops, but we are concerned that this will leave too many people out of the conversation. Please let us know if you have any ideas!

One whole-church conversation will be about the demographics of our area, and to what needs/ministries do we perceive God calling us to respond/create in this region. A related whole-church conversation we hope to have will look at all the things/gifts/assets our church community has to offer to minister in the ways that the demographics conversation reveals God calling us.

Aside from the whole-church conversations together, Pastor Norma has asked that everyone share their discernment around a few specific questions by sending their discernings to her in an email or by snail mail. These will help us greatly because these questions she's been prompting you to think about are some of the very questions we have to answer when we put together the church profile! And these are the kinds of questions that prospective candidates will ask the Search Committee. For example, if the Search Committee is in an interview, and the prospective candidate asks, "Where do you perceive this church to be in five years?" what would you say? Or if the prospective candidate asked, "What are the most pressing needs in the community in Somersworth right now, and how is First Church helping to address them?" what would you say?

Both the Transition Team and the Search Committee (when it is formed) will want to be able to respond and share the fullest and most complete picture of our church as possible.

Thanks, and God bless you!

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.

TRUSTEES

Is it summer yet? Sure feels like it! The trustees are still busy even with the lockdown. We are carefully monitoring the finances and physical condition of the church. We meet via the Zoom application and frequently email each other.

Here's our current financial numbers with last year's for comparison:

	Jan - Apr 2020	Jan - Apr 2019
Income:	\$34,801.22	\$44,778.23
Expenses:	\$40,404.03	\$60,206.27
Net:	(\$ 5,602.81)	(\$15,428.04)

January's income was even with January, 2019
February's income was \$6,000 lower than February, 2019
March's income was \$10,000 lower than March, 2019
April's income was \$10,000 lower than April, 2019
Our expenses are down this year.

Checking Account Balance: \$49,118.35
(\$2,821.45 unavailable, reserved for various committees)

Mortgage Balance: \$34,205.02

This is somewhat deceptive as the Trustees invested significantly in repairs to the parsonage causing a dramatic increase in expenses in 2019. But we passed a budget with a \$70,000 shortfall, and at this point we're doing far better than that, but still with a significant shortfall.

As church continues while not meeting in the building, the trustees urge you to continue your pledge. You can mail in your pledge every week or once a month. 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.

The trustees thank EVERYONE who has sent in their pledges, and those folks who have continued to send in checks for loose collection. We appreciate it.

The trustees have replaced a few lightbulbs here and there, adjusted the siding in a few spots, and we are trying to get multiple estimates for replacing the cracked window in the sanctuary. The lawn is mowed weekly, the hall floor has been scoured, and the building is just waiting for us to return.

We are still looking for volunteers to assist us on the trustees. If you feel called to serve, please contact Rich Whitten, Nancy Brown, or Nancie Cameron.

We look forward to seeing everyone when we return to church, but in the meantime, see you on Sunday on Facebook!

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

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.*

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!

GREETINGS FROM THE DIACONATE!

Even though we can't be together, your Diaconate has been hard at work virtually.

1. **Virtual Worship:**

- * **The Service:** We spend a lot of time trying to make our virtual worship services meaningful for you and to meet your spiritual needs. We are always looking for new ways to improve our delivery and more importantly the content. While there is a lot of work that goes into the production of the virtual service, as Rich Whitten said last week, it is a labor of love. We are also discussing other options to bring us together virtually.
- * **Pictures:** If you have any pictures of the church that we could include in the service please send them to Geoff Day (geoffrey.d.day@daysoftheweek.net).
- * **Greeters:** Would you like to read scripture or be a virtual greeter? A virtual greeter could share a brief message on "why I love this church!".

2. **Lent/Holy Week:** We felt that the virtual worship services went very well. We hope you did as well. Thank you to those who help make them special.

3. **UCC Conference Minister Worship Service:** The worship service provided by the UCC Conference ministers on May 24th was amazing! We hope you enjoyed it as well.

4. **Visitation/Outreach:**

- * If you know of anyone who needs us to reach out to them please let Pastor Norma or a member of the Diaconate know.
- * Pastor Norma is reaching out, via our church family contact list, to check-in with everyone. It is a long list so please be patient if you haven't heard from her yet.

5. **Church Vitality:**

- * We have a sign out front saying "Thank You" to the various groups of special people working very hard during these troubled times.
- * If you watch our virtual service on Facebook or YouTube please "Like" it or write a comment. It really helps to share our service with others.

6. **Open & Affirming:** Geoff Day and Diane Chessman are collaborating by building and painting a sign with a rainbow to add to our sign in front of our church building.

We plan to continue meeting virtually through the summer in order to stay focused on our work. If you have feedback you would like to share, we would love to hear from you.

I will leave you with this thought Pastor Norma shared during our last meeting: Jesus has left the building – and we need to follow him! Our church is its people, not the building. This is an opportunity to look at how we do our worship service as we need to change with these unprecedented times. We are reaching people that we don't otherwise!

Peace be with you and stay safe,
Geoff Day
For the Diaconate

