

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



MARCH, 2020

From the
Moderator

Dear Friends,

By the time you read this we will have held our Special Meeting in order to determine our path forward for the immediate future. While I can't predict the results of the meeting or the future, I can predict there will be members of our church that will step forward and do their best to make us successful.

So how do we get there? I believe that major transformative change is required in order for us to be successful as a church. During a recent meeting between members of our leadership team and our Conference Minister, Rev. Gordon Rankin, we had a very productive discussion and identified several key areas to focus on. One of those key areas is transparency. At times, it seems there are members of our church that are surprised by our financial realities or the role of our Interim Pastor Rev. Norma. That was a wakeup call for our leadership team and we will be working hard to ensure you are all very much aware.

I will also say it is very important that you give this situation your full attention, be an active participant and share your ideas and/or concerns to ensure your voice is heard. 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. Be a part of the church. Be a part of our church family!

If you have thoughts or questions, please see me, a member of the Diaconate, Trustees, Pastor-Parish Relations Committee or Pastor Norma.

Thank you,
Geoff Day, Moderator

TRANSITION TEAM

The Transition Team will be holding two more workshops in March, building on last year's workshops where we focus on our history and all of the many gifts – spiritual and otherwise – that God has gifted each member of our church with. One of our new workshops coming up will relate to the make-up of the geographic area in which our church is situated, that is, our demographics. The other new workshop will look at all of the things we have and can do to connect us to the needs of God's people in this area.

We will then be completing our workshops.

All of these workshops together will help to provide insight into our congregation so that the Transition Team can begin to consider the questions in the church profile, such as: Who are we? Who is our neighbor? and Who is God calling us to become? Renewed discovery of the congregation's purpose will make the search clearer and more effective for the Search Committee, and more appealing for candidates. In addition, based upon your input at our congregational workshops and at other times, the Transition Team, with the help of conference staff, will determine which type of pastoral leadership will best serve our church - full time, part time, or other, the scope of pastoral responsibilities, and compensation package. When the profile is completed, it is submitted to the NH Conference for review and then made available nationally through the UCC ministry opportunities online postings.

Are you willing to become a part of this very important next step - joining the Transition Team?

Once the Transition Team has developed a profile that they believe represents the church well and will encourage candidates to apply, the very next step will be to form the Search Committee. Please be in prayer about how you might serve. We'll have more on the Search Committee in next month's newsletter!



So, beloved of God, how did it go? The reflections, I mean. Remember, in last month's newsletter, we going to reflect together. We read Matthew 25:31-40 (it's printed in last month's newsletter article if your Bible isn't handy), and we were going to do a few things:

“So, let me ask you to do a little exercise. 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.

If you haven't had a chance to reflect – I know, life, right?! – maybe you can take a few moments after reading this month's newsletter to open your heart to God and think and pray about these things. Make some notes! Who is First Parish now? Who is our neighbor? Who is God calling First Parish to become?

I want to welcome the gracious and generous people who have stepped into new leadership roles in the church, as well as those who have stayed on. By the time you get this, several of them will have joined me in attending *Prepared to Serve*, devoting a full day to excellent resources and workshops provided by the New Hampshire Conference to grow lay leadership and all ministry in our churches. We are so fortunate that such an awesome event is presented every year, and such stellar resources are available to us in the United Church of Christ! And if you have been thinking of stepping up and helping during this transition time, but can't decide where your gifts might best be used, please talk to me so that we can see together where you might serve best!

Some people liken a church's transition time between settled pastors to a family road trip. Did you take road trips when you were growing up? No doubt there had been some planning that involved decisions about where to go. And the logistics had been considered, route, rest stops, lodging, etc. And the trip had a goal. For example, we're going to New York to see Niagara Falls, and on the way we're going to stop at the Finger Lakes to see how beautiful they are. I remember fondly a family trip to DC to see the historical monuments and the cherry blossoms.

Was there someone in the car with you – or maybe it was you?! – who every couple of hours kept saying, “Are we there yet?”

It's natural to want to just identify the next settled pastor and start to get to know them. But this would miss the essential gifts and benefits of the transition time. The transition work that the congregation does is all designed to help the congregation to select a pastor who is called to the very mission that the congregation has discerned God is calling it to. Pastors are not widgets; each is called to ministry in unique ways and has unique gifts. This transition time of getting to know who this church has become – and being able to articulate it to anyone who asks – is a gift to the congregation that when used to best advantage will help the congregation to select the best pastor with whom to minister together. The search committee's work can only be as good as the input provided by the congregation! So, I urge you, sit down for a few moments and relax in the goodness of God. Read the Gospel section in last month's newsletter. Consider the reflection questions at the beginning of this message. Reflect on your time in this congregation. Reflect on the community within which the church is situated and how it has changed over time. Where do you see God in the church and in the community? To what work of God in the world do you feel in your heart that God is calling First Church to be and to do in this community?

Please keep in touch with me as you ponder these questions. The Transition Team wants to have the fullest sense of the congregation's reflections on these themes, and they're counting on you!

Blessings to you in your Lenten journey!
Pastor Norma



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

Bea Gardner, *Rockingham County Nursing Home*, 119 North Rd., Brentwood, NH 03833

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.

PRAYER GROUP

The Prayer Group will meet on Thursday, March 5th at 10 AM. If you would like to have someone added to the Prayer Group's list, please fill out a blue Prayer Card located in the Narthex. You can either give it to a member of the Prayer Group or leave it in the basket for them.

Fran Karlik ~ Dottie Douglas
Carol Cummings ~ Priscilla Chellis

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.



In Our Thoughts and Prayers

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]

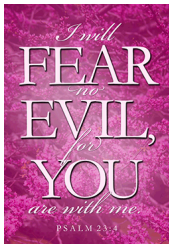
Allen Storms [health]

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!*



MARCH LECTIONARY READINGS

First Sunday in Lent - Purple

March 1, 2020
Genesis 2:15-17; 3:1-7
Psalm 32
Romans 5:12-19
Matthew 4:1-11

Second Sunday in Lent - Purple

March 8, 2020
Genesis 12:1-4a
Psalm 121
Romans 4:1-5, 13-17
John 3:1-17 or Matthew 17:1-9

Third Sunday in Lent - Purple

March 15, 2020
Exodus 17:1-7
Psalm 95
Romans 5:1-11
John 4:5-42

Fourth Sunday in Lent - Purple

March 22, 2020
1 Samuel 16:1-13
Psalm 23
Ephesians 5:8-14
John 9:1-41

Fifth Sunday in Lent - Purple

March 29, 2020
Ezekiel 37:1-14
Psalm 130
Romans 8:6-11
John 11:1-45



March 2	Kaleigh Richer
March 9	Priscilla Chellis, Kelsey Conley
March 14	Becky Scribner
March 22	<i>Doug & Kelly Whitten</i>
March 24	Genevieve Allen
March 28	Don Whitten, Susan Sargent, Jamie Conley

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.

WOMEN'S FELLOWSHIP

There will be an important meeting of the women to continue our discussion about how we want to move forward with Women's Fellowship on March 8th after the church service. We welcome your thoughts and hope all women will attend.

We will be having our Annual Silent Auction on April 4th from 4:00 to 6:00. This year we are going to have a delicious pulled pork dinner that will cost \$8.00 for adults and \$4.00 for children. But, in order to "pull " this off we need your help. There is a sign up sheet going around. If, for some reason you don't see it, either Deb Hall or Kathy Latchaw can get it. We are in need of quality items or gift cards. We also need people to help with the set up and to work the evening of the auction. Please invite your friends and family to this fund raiser.

Thank you in advance.
Kathy Latchaw

FAITH FORMATION

Thank you to all who attended the pancake Brunch. We had fun putting it on and hope to do another one in the near future!

One Great Hour of Sharing

Invest in futures

Give to One Great Hour of Sharing



On Sunday, March 22, First Parish will collect the special offering, One Great Hour of Sharing. In I Corinthians 3:9, Paul writes that we are all co-workers together in God's service. Some of us plant, some of us water, but God gives the growth. Paul reminds us that we are all called into the service of God, who cares for each and every one of us. What could the future be like when we work to plant and water together, and trust God to give the growth?

When you give to One Great Hour of Sharing, you invest in the futures of others. Your gifts go to provide education, vocational training, basic necessities and community support. When we share the love of Christ in this way, we see lives transformed. Not just the lives of others, but ours as well. Because when we empower others to build a life for themselves, we help God build a better world for all of us.

Through your generosity the world is a better place. Be a co-worker with God. Building, planting, watering... and trusting that God gives growth to all gifts shared in Faith. Please consider how you can help One Great Of Sharing on March 22.



We need volunteers for a short commitment for a Lenten Choir! We will sing March 22, 29, April 5 (Palm Sunday), April 12 (Easter). We have started to practice for these Sundays! Rehearsal is on Thursday evenings 6:30 to 8! Come one, come all! Just a six or seven week commitment! Please join us! It's FUN!!!!!! See you there!

DIACONATE

We welcomed new members Susan Nye and Cynthia Jutras. A wonderful meal was provided by our Senior Deacons Kathy Latchaw and Debbie Hall. Thank you so much to Kathy and Debbie for their service to our church family! And thank you to Debbie who has agreed to stay on for another term.

We discussed several worship opportunities that might appeal to a diverse community:

- Contemporary music worship service
- Afternoon coffee house

We are reviewing the current list of active members in order to true-up our list. We are conducting this review in order to ensure we are accurately tithing to the NHCUCC. Inactive membership is defined as those members who fail to attend the church for worship and/or enter into its activities and/or support the financial program of the church for a period of two years.

We conducted training for our new members based on the Diaconate Duties and Actions document.

Up-coming events:

- Pastor Norma will be on vacation – March 3rd – 13th. Debbie Hall will be on call.
- Dave and Robin Hamel will be leading worship on March 8th
- Maundy Thursday is on Thursday, April 9th. We will host the Tenebrae service at 7pm
- Sunday, May 31st is Pentecost Sunday. Typically, it is a new member Sunday. If you would like to become a member, please see Pastor Norma or a member of the Diaconate.
- Pastor Norma is working with Faith Formation on an All About Communion Sunday during which the kids will teach us about communion.



TRUSTEES

We had a training session with Pastor Norma, focusing on By-Laws and committee responsibilities and expectations. We elected Dave Hamel as Chair for the trustees and we welcomed Nancie Cameron to our committee. We still have two slots open if you feel the calling to join the trustees.

Dave has scheduled the altar light and cracked sanctuary window for replacement.

Any possible work on the hallway flooring is on hold due to our church financial situation.

Budget **was ** adopted as printed, but the trustees caution the church that we cannot continue past this year at this “current burn” rate, as it draws down our investments.

Switchover of bank accounts is continuing due to changeover of treasurers and trustees.

Trustees will start up a Stewardship Committee per the By-Laws. If you feel called to join this team, which will operate separate from the trustees, please contact Nancy Brown or Rich Whitten.

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



We will be adding a box to the Zimbabwe Shipping Container. This shipping container will have donations from many churches. We are part of the group from the Wakefield, NH UCC church. For our box, we are looking for sewing items, such as thread, needles, cloth, zippers, etc. Do you have any items left over from a project? Do you have cloth that was never used and needs a new home? These do not need to be new items, but they should be clean and in good condition. There is basket in the Narthex to collect these Items in. Thank you for your help!

Our Chicken Dinner Luncheon is coming! On Sunday, March 29, following worship, the Mission committee will be putting on its Chicken Dinner Luncheon. YUM! Please plan to join us as we serve up platters of delicious chicken, and heaping bowls of green beans and rice pilaf.

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!