

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

www.somersworthfirstparish.org
pastor@somersworthfirstparish.org



MARCH, 2023



HOLY WEEK begins on Palm Sunday and ends of Easter Sunday. Gather for worship around the events of our Savior Jesus' last week. Share in remembering the events that shape and give meaning to your faith—and what you do in God's name in service to others. In others words, come as you are, but do come!

PALM/PASSION SUNDAY [April 6, 2023] 7PM at First Parish Church. Today is the gateway to Holy Week. In worship, we will sing of Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem and share a Blessing of the Palms. The New Journey of Faith Church has been invited to attend with us.

The *Palm Sunday Gospel* for this year, is found in **John 13:1-17, 31b-35**. You can read the ENTIRE Passion story found in **Mark 14:-1-15:47** to look at and reflect on Jesus' final week that leads to the Cross and Tomb.

GOOD FRIDAY WITNESS [April 7, 2023] 7:00PM at First Church Congregational, 400 Main St., Farmington, NH. We will join with the Farmington church for this *Good Friday Service*.

EASTER DAY [April 9, 2023]

Sunrise Services

6:00AM First Parish UCC and United Methodist Church of Berwick, join together **outdoors in a place to be determined.**

Dress for the outdoors!

Morning Worship

9AM at First Parish Church, Somersworth

Gather for worship on **Resurrection Day**, to celebrate God's renewing love in the Risen Christ. There is no Sunday School on Easter Sunday. The Nursery [for toddlers and infants] will be open.

Easter Light

Because upon the first glad Easter day
The stone that sealed His tomb was rolled away,
So, through the deepening shadows of death's night,
[We] see an open door...beyond it light.

--Ida Norton Munson



Many of us are familiar with the 19th century hymn 'Beneath the Cross of Jesus'. It is a hymn that often makes an appearance this time of year, as we move into the season of Lent. In these days before Easter, we take a period of time (40 days), and reflect on our relationships with God and each other. As the song reflects on Jesus' death on the cross, driven there by the fearful powers of the world, with His sacrifice showing love that gives up even life itself for his friends, we read, *"mine eye at times can see the very dying form of One who suffered there for me: and from my stricken heart with tears two wonders I confess, the wonders of redeeming love and my unworthiness."*

During this season of Lent, these are two wonders we might reflect on. The wonders of God's redeeming love, and our own unworthiness. That might sound at first thought like it means reflecting on just how terrible we are, but that's not it! Instead, there is a great piece of "Good News" here, a reminder that our connections to God and others are not transactional, but are based on something called 'grace'.

Grace in a Christian sense is "the free and unmerited favor of God, as manifested in the salvation of sinners and the bestowal of blessings.", according to the Oxford Dictionary. See, if God loves us and blesses us because we do good, or if we give gifts to each other because of what we expect to get in return, then, as Jesus points out in the gospels, "What credit is that?" Instead, God's love and blessing are given to us freely and unconditionally, not because we did anything to earn it, but because of God's own goodness and love.

And so, when we reflect on 'sinfulness' in this Lent, let's remember just what it is that we're talking about. Sin is not about an arbitrary list of do's and don'ts, its about where we are not reflecting that kind of grace-filled love to others, and where we can do better. Love "always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres." This Lent, lets look to the cross, to Jesus' love for us and blessing us not because of us, but because of who He is, and look around at our neighbors, whoever and however they come into our lives, for ways to love better, trust more, hope more, and persevere.



Rev. Tom Gardner's Contact Information

Email: pastor@somersworthfirstparish.org

Telephone: Church Office: 603-692-2057
Rev. Tom's cell: 603-393-4934



The Women's Fellowship has been working on items for our Holly Daze Fair already. We have decided we are going to have vendors join us for the fair this year. So if you know someone who might be interested in selling their craft at our fair on Saturday, November 4th, please let us know so we can send them an application to join us. Also, if you have items you would like to donate, we would appreciate them. We will have gift baskets again at the fair and we need empty baskets and items to fill them. Last, we will need volunteers to help at the fair .

Thank you for your continued support.
Kathy Latchaw

DIACONATE

Rev. Tom has been working hard to help us make up for having no minister for the past couple of years. He is preparing to welcome new members to our church and will be having a baptism on Pentecost . If you would like to join the church or be baptized, please let him know..

Two members of the Diaconate, Kathy Latchaw and Debbie Hall, will join Rev. Tom at the Prepared to Serve workshop on Saturday, February 25th.

If you are interested in forming a new Open & Affirming committee to explore opportunities for mission, ministry and evangelism, please tell Rev. Tom or a deacon.



MINISTRY OF PRAYER & CONCERN

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

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

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

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.



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



In Our Thoughts and Prayers

Madeline Ashley (health)	John Chesley (health)
Carol Cummings (health)	Alexis Dascoulias (health)
Sherie Dinger (health)	Stephen Ferranti (health)
Gina Fortier (health)	Lynn Jackson (health)
Bev Lyndes (health)	Derek Marshall (health)
Ida Patterson (health)	Diane Shepherd (healing)
Mike Sirois (healing)	Don Whitten (healing)

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.*



MARCH LECTIONARY READINGS

Second Sunday in Lent - Purple

March 5, 2023

Genesis 12:1-4a

Psalms 121

Romans 4:1-5, 13-17

John 3:1-17 or Matthew 17:1-9

Third Sunday in Lent - Purple

March 12, 2023

Exodus 17:1-7

Psalms 95

Romans 5:1-11

John 4:5-42

Fourth Sunday in Lent - Purple

March 19, 2023

1 Samuel 16:1-13

Psalms 23

Ephesians 5:8-14

John 9:1-41

Fifth Sunday in Lent - Purple

March 26, 2023

Ezekiel 37:1-14

Psalms 130

Romans 8:6-11

John 11:1-45



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

Table of Plenty

We need your help: **Our team is serving at the Table of Plenty on Wednesday, March 1st and needs volunteers from our church to help.** The meal is served from 4-5:30. We need help with preparing the meal from 3-4PM, serving from 4-5:30 and clean up from 5:30 to end. You can come for part of this time or all of it. The jobs are easy and fun.

If you are interested in helping or have questions, please contact Laurel Curtis at dkc2069@gmail.com or 603-969-1815.

CHURCH WORSHIP CANCELLATIONS

In the event of a church cancellation, we will send an "All Church" email notification and will announce it on Facebook.

If you do not have internet access and would like to be notified, please speak with a Deacon, so they can arrange a telephone call to you.

ALL ARE WELCOME!

Sunday Worship and Sunday School, 9AM

Ministers: The People of the Church

Pastor: Rev. Thomas Gardner

Faith Formation Coordinator: Susan Vollkommer

Moderator: Nancie Cameron

Clerk:

Contracted Treasurer: Linda Gauthier

Assistant Treasurer: Richard Shepherd

Pianist/Choir Director: William Asher

Newsletter & Calendar Editor: Debbie Hall

PRAY FOR TURKEY & SYRIA

Earthquake in Turkey & Syria: The news continues to unfold about the devastating earthquake on the border of Turkey and Syria. The death toll continues to rise, and has grown to 44,330. This is shattering news and adds to the challenges of the war in this area for over a decade.

While the earthquake was on the border, the tremors were felt as far away as Lebanon and Cyprus. At this time, the UCC is issuing an appeal to help recovery efforts in Turkey and Syria. It is hard to tell what other areas are affected or the extent of the damage from the seismic event.

Amid this current uncertainty, you can be certain that with your financial support, the United Church of Christ will be there helping those in need. Give generously. You may make out a check made payable to The United Church of Christ, PO Box 71957, Cleveland, OH 44194. Please be sure to note "Turkey and Syria" on you check in the memo section. Donations may also be made by texting UCCDISASTER to 41444. All donations will be deposited into the International Emergency fund designated for "Turkey and Syria Earthquake Response". Your generous financial support will be used by our partners in the areas of greatest need, for relief and long-term recovery.

Thank you for your generosity.

FLOWER COMMITTEE

The flyer for flowers for Easter is available in the narthex and as an attachment in this newsletter. We also welcome you bringing in flowers for decorating the alter for Easter. Let Kathy Latchaw know if this is something you would like to do.

Thank you, Kathy Latchaw

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!



	January, 2023	Year-to-Date, 2023
Total Income	\$8,120.28	\$8,120.28
Total Expenses	<u>\$8,652.44</u>	<u>\$8,652.44</u>
Net Income	-\$532.16	-\$532.16
Checking Account Balance as of January 31, 2023		\$25,553.29
Savings Account Balance		\$ 5,002.85
Total Checking and Savings		\$30,556.24
Unavailable Checkbook Funds		<u>(\$5,015.02)</u>
Total Checkbook Funds Available		\$25,540.22
Memorial Fund Checkbook Balance		\$20,801.84
Mortgage Balance at Service Credit Union at 1/31/23		\$22,793.39