First Parish United Church of Christ (Congregational)
P.O. Box 228, 176 West High Street, Somersworth, NH 03878-022
Church Office: (603) 692-2057
Thomas Gardner, Pastor
An Open & Affirming Church
www.somersworthfirstparish.org
pastor@somersworthfirstparish.org

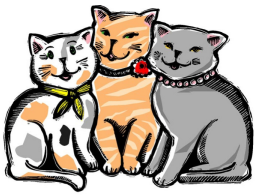






# OCTOBER 2026





## BLESSING OF THE ANIMALS

First Parish invites you to an outdoor, *"Blessing of the Animals"* on **Sunday, October 4 at 2PM** in the lower parking lot.

This brief time of worship and blessing falls near the traditional "feast day" of St. Francis of Assisi [October 4th], who "developed a profound connection with living things through his fascination with nature. His main inspiration came from animals. He viewed animals as living examples of spiritual integrity, blessing them and striving to understand and connect with them. St. Francis is remembered for his love of all creatures, especially birds, and is probably most known for his "Canticle to the Creatures" and "Sermon to the Birds." [from Blessing of the Animals, Diana L. Guerrero, Sterling Publishing Co., NY 2008] Because St. Francis has this connection with animals and the environment, your Diaconate Committee is hosting this event.

**PLEASE NOTE: ALL ANIMALS MUST BE BROUGHT UNDER APPROPRIATE RESTRAINT.** As an expression of the love and joy our pets and animals bring into our lives, **An offering will be received** for the *Pope Memorial Humane Society-Cocheco Valley*. Please consider donating: canned pet foods, **used/clean** towels and blankets, rope toys for dogs, stuffed animal dog toys, litter boxes, small, comfy cat beds, baby blankets [**used/stained, but clean]**, toys for cats/kittens & dogs, milk bone dog biscuits, bottles of bleach, laundry detergent, or financial gifts are welcome as well.




Psalm 46 begins with a simple promise: “God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.” By October, autumn has settled in. The leaves are changing, the days are growing shorter, and the landscape reminds us that change is a natural part of life. There is beauty in this season, but also a reminder that nothing stays exactly as it is.

Autumn teaches us something about letting go. The trees do not cling to what they have carried all summer. They release their leaves when the time comes, making room for the season ahead. We too are sometimes called to release what we have been holding onto. Old worries, disappointments, expectations, or habits may have served a purpose for a time, but they do not always need to come with us into the next season.

Psalm 46 does not promise that life will always be calm or that change will always be easy. Instead, it reminds us that God is present in the midst of it. “Be still, and know that I am God.” In a world that constantly asks us to hurry, produce, and move on to the next thing, stillness can become an act of faith. It gives us space to notice where God is already at work.

As the colors deepen and autumn moves toward winter, may we learn the wisdom of this season. May we let go when it is time to let go, remain grateful for what has been, and trust God with what is still to come.

**Pastor Tom Gardner’s Contact Information:**
Email: thomasedwardgardner@gmail.com
Pastor Tom’s cell: 603-393-4934

FINANCIAL HEALTH

| | August, 2026 | Year-to-Date, 2026 |
|---|---|---|
| Total Income | $ 8,794.37 | $ 67,783.27 |
| Total Expenses | $ 4,985.92 | $ 67,094.47 |
| Net Income | $ 3,808.45 | $ 688.80 |

| | |
|---|---|
| Checking Account Balance as of August 31, 2026 | $ 43,254.37 |
| Savings Account Balance | $ 5,004.64 |
| Total Checking and Savings | $ 48,259.01 |
| *Unavailable Checkbook Funds* | ($4,419.74 |
| **Total Checkbook Funds Available** | **$ 48,839.27** |

| | |
|---|---|
| Memorial Fund Checkbook Balance | $13,414.84 |
| ~~~~~~~~~~ | |
| Funds withdrawn from Investments 8/5/26 | $20,000.00 |
| Funds withdrawn from Investments 8/10/26 | $48,000.00 |
| | |
| Dover Roofing Contractor 8/7/26 | ($20,000.00) |
| Dover Roofing Contractor 8/11/26 | ($28,400.00) |
| | |
| *Note:* On Sept. 4, 2026 JLP Sealcoat did driveway | ($13,536.00) |
| Spots on Lots painting lines and handicap spots | ($ 1,000.00) |
| | |
| Mortgage was paid off | ($ 3,157.51) |

## MINISTRY OF PRAYER & CONCERN

**Bill Behrmann,** *Kindred Transitional Care and Rehab, 307 Plaza Dr., Dover, NH (formerly Dover Rehab)*

**Carroll Dudley,** *Harmony Homes By The Bay, 40 Briggs Way, Durham, NH 03824*

**Richard Jackson** *Wentworth Home,* 795 Central Ave., Dover, NH 03820

**Beverly Lyndes** *The Lodges Care Center, 51 Main St., Springvale, ME 04083*

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

*--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) 216-3338, 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

| | |
|---|---|
| Alice | Sarah Gowens |
| Allison Brock | Linda Palmer |
| Priscilla, Richard & Michelle Brock | Steven Parsley |
| Norm Brown | Roger Proulx |
| Lizzy Chellis | Danielle Ratio |
| John Chesley | Diane Shepherd |
| John & Carol Cummings | Kim Shurtleff |
| Win Damon | Scott Vollkommer |
| | Don Whitten |

AND ongoing prayer focus during these days:

- *For our Granite State Association Churches.*
- *That God will bless and guide our Conference Minister, Rev. Gordan Rankin, and our Associate Minister, Rev Linda Hirst.*
- *That God will bless and guide Pastor 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*




# OCTOBER LECTIONARY READINGS

Nineteenth Sunday after Pentecost - Green
*October 4, 2026*
Exodus 20:1-4, 7-9, 12-20
Isaiah 5:1-7, Psalm 80:7-15
Philippians 3:4b-14
Matthew 21:33-46

Twentieth Sunday after Pentecost - Green
*October 11, 2026*
Exodus 32:1-14, Psalm 106:1-6, 19-23
Isaiah 25:1-9, Psalm 23
Philippians 4:1-9
Matthew 22:1-14

Twenty-First Sunday after Pentecost - Green
*October 18, 2026*
Exodus 33:12-23, Psalm 99
Isaiah 45:1-7, Psalm 96:1-0, (10-13)
1 Thessalonians 1:1-10
Matthew 22:15-22

Twenty-Second Sunday after Pentecost - Green
*October 25, 2026*
Deuteronomy 34:1-12, Psalm 90:1-6, 13-17
Leviticus 19:1-2, 15-18, Psalm 1
1 Thessalonians 2:1-8
Matthew 22:34-46




Oct. 1 *Troy & Cori Brown*
Oct. 2 Ken Hall, *Ken & Debbie Hall*
Oct. 5 *Joe & Jenny Fortier*
Oct. 8 Kelly Whitten
Oct. 11 John Cummings
Oct. 14 Brenda Davidson
Oct. 16 Fran Karlik
Oct. 17 Barbara Brown
Oct. 28 Diane Shepherd, Jacob Brown
Oct. 29 Robin Martin
Oct. 30 Angela Richer

If you would like another name to the list of birthdays and anniversaries, please contact Debbie Hall at d_hall47@comcast.net




**Food Collection for the pantry:** As an ongoing mission, we are collecting canned pasta (such as Spaghetti O's) and canned baked beans (such as B&M baked beans). Donations can be placed in the basket in the narthex.




The women have continued to meet all summer and have been very productive. They are continuing to be active this fall.

We are looking forward to the YARD SALE on October 3rd. We tried something new this year by renting tables to people who had items to sell.

We are also continuing to prepare for our HOLLY DAZE FAIR on November 7th.

We would love to have you join us on Tuesday mornings from 9 to 11. You don't need to be "crafty. Come and enjoy a snack, coffee, conversation, and sharing ideas.

Have you noticed the signs that have been posted letting people know what events are happening at our church?
Many blessings .
The Women's Fellowship

Dear Friends in Christ,

I wanted to provide some additional background regarding the recent capital improvements at First Parish, because there has been a tremendous amount of work behind the scenes over the past year that I think is worth sharing with the congregation.

Last fall, I began researching alternatives to our approximately $17,000 annual church insurance cost. During that process, I learned that the age of our roof—approximately 25 years—was preventing us from obtaining competitive insurance quotes. That made replacing the roof our first priority.

With considerable help from Ken Latchaw, we solicited and reviewed several roofing proposals and ultimately selected Dover Roofing. With approval from the Board of Trustees, I requested $48,000 from the First Parish Fund held with United Church Funds to complete the project. That fund exists because of the generosity of parishioners who have supported First Parish over many years.

I also worked directly with JLP Sealcoat on repairing the cracks and sealing our parking lot for $13,500. Ken introduced me to Spots on Lots during the bidding process, and we ultimately selected them to complete the parking lot striping for approximately $1,000.

Originally, I anticipated that the parking lot work would cost approximately $20,000. With approval from the Board of Trustees, I therefore requested $20,000 from the Leola Pepler Fund held with United Church Funds.

I think Leola Pepler deserves special recognition here.

When the church terminated the former trust arrangement with Citizens Bank in 2019, approximately $56,000 was transferred to United Church Funds. Through investment growth, that fund eventually exceeded $100,000. Even after the recent $20,000 withdrawal, approximately $80,000 remains invested for the future benefit of First Parish.

Because the parking lot project ultimately came in well below the amount originally anticipated, the remaining funds also allowed us to pay off the church's mortgage with Service Federal Credit Union.

So when everyone drives into our newly repaired, sealed and striped parking lot—and when we celebrate having paid off the remaining mortgage—I hope we will remember Leola Pepler and the legacy she left to First Parish. Her generosity continues to benefit this congregation many years later.

The work isn't finished. With approval from the Board of Trustees, I am currently working through the process of terminating the Adelaide Willett Trust held at BNY and bringing those assets under more appropriate management for the benefit of First Parish. I am also continuing the insurance review that started this process, with the goal of maintaining appropriate coverage while reducing what I believe are unnecessarily high premiums for a small church largely supported by volunteers.

None of these things happen because of one person. They require approval and support from the Trustees and help from people like Ken, and I'm grateful for that. At the same time, I felt it was important for the congregation to understand the work that has actually been taking place behind the scenes, where the money came from, and how these decisions are helping protect the financial future of First Parish.

I'm proud of what we've accomplished, and I'm especially grateful to those past and present members whose generosity made these improvements possible.

Gregg Fournier

Brother in Christ 😎

# A CHRISTMAS STOCKING

The Women's Fellowship is starting to prepare for Christmas stocking/bags to be given to 36 children who visit the Community Food Pantry. We are starting now to give us extra time to pick up items to add to the bags. A list of items we have given in the past is listed below. We have also added the number of each item that we already have.

Your donations to these bags would be greatly appreciated. Just a reminder that we need gender-neutral items only.

Thank you in advance for your help!

Diane Chessman
Women's Fellowship
Live Well, Laugh Often, Love Much

| ITEM | HAVE | NEED 36 | ITEM | HAVE | NEED 36 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Crayons | 40 | 0 | Tooth Paste | 1 | |
| Paint w/water books | | | Candy/Candy Canes | | |
| Brushes for above | | | Hand Spinners/ Snall Toy | 48 | |
| Colored Pencils | 8 | | | | |
| Markers | | | Glow-in-the-dark Bracelets | 11 | |
| Coloring Books | 52 | 0 | Colored & White Chalk | 10 | |
| Water Paints | | | Pencils | Tons of them | |
| Sticker Books | | | Small Travel Games | 4 | |
| Blank Notebooks | | | Hand Spinners | 48 | 0 |
| Scratch Art | 4 | | Play Dough/Clay | 60 | 0 |
| Bouncy Balls | | 11 | Stuffed animals (small) | 22 | |
| Bubbles | 32 | 4 | | | |
| Squishies | 4 | | | | |
| Combs | | | | | |
| Toothbrushes | 1 | | | | |