

# **2023 Annual Report**

**First Parish Congregational Church,  
United Church of Christ**

12 Beach Street  
Saco, Maine 04072

Submitted at the Annual Affirmation Meeting  
January 21, 2024

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## NOTIFICATION OF 2024 ANNUAL AFFIRMATION MEETING

### **To All Members of First Parish Congregational Church, United Church of Christ:**

You are hereby officially notified that the Annual Affirmation Meeting of First Parish Congregational Church, United Church of Christ, Saco, Maine will be held on Sunday, January 21, 2024, at 11:30 AM (snow date is January 28, 2024) at First Parish Congregational Church, 12 Beach Street in Saco, Maine to act upon the following business:

**First:** To receive a statement and a prayer by our Minister, Rev. Scott Cousineau.

**Second:** To receive information and take action, if required, on the reports of the various officers and teams of the church, specifically:

1. Approve the minutes of the Annual Affirmation Meeting of January 22, 2023.
2. Accept the Report of the Clerk.
3. Accept the Financial Reports of the Treasurer and the Investment Team.
4. Accept the First Parish Council Report on mission, vision and planning.

**Third:** To receive and act upon the proposed 2024 Mission Plan (budget).

**Fourth:** To elect all Officers, Church Council Members, and Delegates of the Church as required by the by-laws of the organization.

**Fifth:** To ratify the actions taken by the Church Council, its officers, and all teams on behalf of this church from January 22, 2023, until this date.

*All members of First Parish Congregational Church are urged to attend this meeting in person.*

*To convene this annual meeting, a quorum of at least 20% of the active and associate membership is needed to attend which is 52 members.*

*If you would like to attend but need assistance, call the office at 283-3771 by January 18.*

# **Minutes of the 2022 Annual Affirmation Meeting**

Date: January 22, 2023

Start time: 11:30 a.m.

Adjourned: 1:13 p.m.

Quorum required: It was established that there was a quorum present.

**Meeting called to order:** Dale Siulinski, Moderator

**Statement and opening prayer by our Minister:** Rev. Scott Cousineau

## **Minutes of the Annual Affirmation Meeting of January 23, 2022**

The minutes from the Annual Meeting were brought forward for review and approval. Jamie Beals noted correction in the spelling of his name in the minutes. Motion made, seconded to approve the minutes. Unanimously approved.

## **Report of the Clerk**

Margery Condon presented the 2022 Clerk's report on behalf of Marianne Cook, Church Clerk. Baptisms, New Members, 50 Year Members were recognized. Deaths in 2022 were commemorated with a moment of silence. Motion made, seconded to approve the Clerk's report. Unanimously approved.

## **Financial Report**

Amy Chute presented the 2022 Financial Report. The church finished the year with a deficit of approximately \$34k, but there was surplus in the checking account to cover. Pledges were up year-over-year. Motion made, seconded to approve the Financial Report. Unanimously approved.

## **Investment Report**

Lynne Siulinski presented the 2022 Investments Report. The mission of the Investments Team was reviewed. 2022 was a poor year for investment returns. Inflation drove the market down, increased interest rates contributed to the decline in stock market. S&P 500 was down 20%, NASDAQ down 33%. Our portfolio lost. Our year end value was down \$198k from previous year-end; this includes market losses and withdrawals for teams, pledge gift to church and payment to wealth advisors. Outlook for 2023 varies daily based on world events. Robinson Smith Wealth Advisors, and Schwab, hold our accounts. We work with David Smith (our advisor) and adjust our portfolio as needed, with a long-term focus. 12/31/22 balance was \$882k, with a 60/40 split stock/bonds-cash. Infinity Credit Union CS was rolled over into a 6-month 3.75%. Pledge to church was \$18k this year. Restricted Legacy Funds contain \$548k, which exceeds General Fund of \$334k. Our accounts are rebalanced (stock/bond-cash) quarterly. A question was asked about whether we could improve return on the \$29k from CD in our portfolio. These funds came from insurance settlement. The current CD will mature in June. Motion made, seconded to approve the Investments report. Unanimously approved.

## **Moderator Report**

Dale Siulinski reviewed a proposal on Mission/Vision/Planning, with a move toward joint effort to address Organization Governance Structure. Team Chairs will attend Church Council meetings quarterly to replace the Council Liaison approach. There will also be monthly email consolidated communication shared across teams and Council. Another implementation will be the "Wall of Ideas" to be a place for all to post concerns, or info on initiatives underway. A comment from the floor was made that Technology work should be broken out from Good News Team, as it is very important for future of church, and the work of the Good News team doesn't naturally fit with Technology concerns. The Council meeting must remain effective going forward, not become long updates-only meetings. In order to change the structure of Teams, etc. within the church, the By-Laws of the church would need to change. Comment from the floor: monthly running of church should be the priority; long range planning is next priority and could

be done at lesser intervals. Comment from the floor: Good News Team was placed under Assets Ministry initially; they would like to move to Discipleship/Fellowship Team. Comments from the Floor: There is a great need in the church to think about: How is the Spirit moving in the church? This is important to discern. Participation is so important, but without a Nominating Team and focused effort, newer members and others don't start participating. Suggested a "why not me" campaign. Motion was made and seconded to approve the Moderator's Report. Unanimously approved.

### **Proposed Mission Plan (Budget)**

Amy Chute presented the plan. Rolling Funds by team were reviewed, the 2023 budget was explained including the deficit, and lack of sustainability of this approach. Most of the income is from pledges, rental (Spurwink) and investment gains. There is \$12k in "Fundraising Activities" in the Income portion of budget, which does not have a firm plan. There are also Income \$ from Concerts, which did not turn a profit in 2022, so improvement is needed here. The Gingerbread Fair is not a church-wide fundraiser, it is owned by Women's Fellowship. WF makes an annual contribution to the church operating budget at their discretion. Help is needed from the church community to organize and execute fundraising events. Music & Arts, Christian Ed are using their rolling funds that are available for 2023 expenses, which saves \$9k in Church Operating funds. Church expenses are predominately Personnel, followed by Church Building maintenance and utilities. Question from the floor around simplifying the way the Church Finances are managed (so many accounts)! Per Amy, this method is tied to structure of the church, where Teams have their own income/expenses (examples: Gingerbread Fair, Diaper Bank). A suggestion was made to move some of the \$ in the Church checking account into a Savings Account. Amy will pursue this. There was a comment about the Good News Budget, as most of that is IT-related, and a request for reinstatement of \$2400 for Good News Media to support streaming. No action taken at meeting on this request. Motion was made and seconded to approve the 2023 Mission Plan. Motion approved with 2 opposing votes.

### **Election of 2023 Officers and Delegates**

There is currently no one in the Moderator position for 2023. Bob Condon is Vice Moderator. Delegates for Maine State Conference are needed, looking for Volunteers. Dale Siulinski (Moderator) and Peggy Warden (Personnel) are stepping out of their roles. Thank you for your service! Glenys Salas is joining Church Council. The Council will act on behalf of the church with any additions to Council and Officers during the year. Motion made and seconded to approve slate of Candidates. Unanimously approved.

### **Ratification of Actions**

Motion made and seconded to ratify all actions taken by Council and Officers on behalf of the church over the past year. Unanimously approved.

### **Question from the Floor**

Question: Have solar panels for the church been pursued?

Answer: At this point, they are not been investigated.

### **Adjourn**

Motion made and seconded to adjourn the meeting. Unanimously approved.

Respectfully submitted,  
Marianne Cook, Clerk

## Clerk's Report for 2023

<b>Baptisms</b>	<b>New Members</b>	<b>Member Deaths</b>	<b>50+ Year Members</b>
Benjamin Thomas Hanscom	Joyce Belanger	Elizabeth C. Allen	Cathy Baillargeon
Sophie Joyce Matula	Christy Brochu	Jeanne Emerson	Susan Burgess
Ava Delaney Morin	Richard Brochu, Jr.	Barbara Ericson	L. Daniel Dearborn
Jack Salas	Carol Bryant	Barbara Freeman	Jo Dearborn
Philip Salas	Charles R. Carter	Thomas S. Goulding, Jr.	Corleen Garland
Delaney Leora Smith	Robert Clark	Joan Lachance	Anne Kany
Roman Adler Steeves	Eileen Domermuth	Barbara Richardson Murray	Kathy Angel Lee
Oliver Reid Worster	Robert Domermuth	Gen. Wallace H. Nutting	Beverly Loring
	Lucas Edstrom (Confirmant)	Michael E. Pierce	Harry Nielson
	Mary Feeley	Merle Steva	Linda Simonsen
	Heather Leah Ryerson Fountain	Dr. Beverly Stoops	Mari Warner
	Matthew Harold Fountain	Rosemary Worth	
	Susan Rose Griffin		
	Kelsey E. Jackson		
	Christina Kibler		
	Christopher Kibler		
	James W. King		
	Stephanie A. King		
	Wayne G. Laroche		
	Cathi Roberts-Morin		
	Abbie Seymour (Confirmant)		
	Emily Shoop		
	Spencer Shoop		
	Jared Thompson		
	Lauren Thompson		
	Cynthia Watson		

FPC Voting Membership as of 12/31/2023: 255

## **Senior Minister's Report for 2023**

### **Rev. Scott W. Cousineau**

I do not often quote Charles Dickens, but as I thought about how one might sum up 2023 his words came to mind. "It was the best of times; it was the worst of times." (A Tale of Two Cities) As we look back at the year the words are fitting.

It was the worst of times. We were horrified when a tragedy that typically strikes other parts of the country came to Maine. The mass shooting in Lewiston took eighteen innocent lives from our friends and neighbors and caused us to lock down for fear of the same happening here. The war in Ukraine continues to rage, and the war in Israel/Gaza sent shockwaves around the world. And closer to home, we lost some precious members of our church family. Yes, for a number of reasons, 2023 was the 'worst of times' for many of us.

I give thanks to God that my list of 'the best of times' fills an entire page of notebook paper. In response to all of the darkness cited above, First Parish Church continues to shine and serve as a beacon of God's love, hope, peace and joy. Jesus calls us to live lives of humility, but we should also celebrate all of the gifts that we have, as well as the gifts that we share.

Our Sunday school attendance and participation is strong and increasing. So much so that we had to add an extra class to accommodate all of the children. "Thank you," Kris Galasyn, our Sunday school teachers, nursery caregivers, and members of our Christian Education Team for caring for our children and youth.

Participation in our choirs also continues to be strong and increase. It is amazing to look at the choir loft on Sunday morning and see so many people of all ages leading our music ministry. "Thank you," Jacqui Savage, Audrey Cabral, Sue Marston and all of our singers, ringers, and musicians. Every week you lift our spirits and our souls.

We began our year with a projected \$30,000 deficit, but through your generosity and prudent management of our resources we were able to end the year with a surplus! Amazing!

Our Concert Series continues to gain momentum and was able to contribute to the revenue stream for the church. We regularly have people and groups reaching out to us asking if they can be a part of our series. "Thank you" to our concert leadership team and to all of those who have supported the series.

The "Sacred Conversations" early worship service has been blessed by the shared leadership of Bill Donoghue, Peter Gray, Jan Hryniewicz, Ellie Mercer, Kent Schneider and myself. We have also added Tom Kircher and Art Morrisette to the team. I am grateful to all of you for your faithful participation and the ways that you feed the souls of our church family.

As we have continued to emerge from COVID, I felt comfortable adding the Pastor's Bible Study to our Christian Education offerings here at First Parish Church. We have a consistent group of eight to ten people that gather each week to explore and discuss scripture. The focus of each session is the passage that I will explore in my Sunday sermon.

Shall I keep going?

As you can see from the Clerk's Report, we added several more members to our church family. It is wonderful to see so many faces in the pews on Sunday morning and to experience the spirit and the energy in the sanctuary. There is so much JOY it is palpable! That joy is carried forth into fellowship hour and also into the various fellowship events that we have offered the church family. Whether it is Sunday FUN-day, or mini golf, shuffleboard, campfires, Friends-giving, or small gatherings in people's homes, we

are enjoying the opportunity to deepen our relationships and get to know one another better. At one of the recent dinners, one guest said, "This is great! We should do this more often!" And we will. You can read about that in my 2024 annual report.

First Parish Church says that it is "a gathered community with hope and love to share." I am so grateful that those are more than words on the top of our letterhead, we live out those words. Over the last year we have served our community in ways that truly help make our neighbor's lives better. The Diaper Bank serves twenty-five to thirty families a week, the MLK, Jr. Day of Service and our Back-to-School giveaway days clothe and care for individuals and families, and your generosity enables us to utilize the Discretionary Fund to help people that find themselves in the most difficult circumstances (housing, food, fuel, and car repairs). Of course, our shoe ministry and hat and mitten tree provide warmth and comfort to our neighbors as well. Our building is used for AA, Guiding Eyes for the Blind, Girl Scouts and Red Cross blood drives. We host a math tutor and Latin dance classes. We supply Thanksgiving dinners for some of our neighbors and we put presents under the Christmas tree for others. And we host a school that teaches children how to read and write Arabic so that they can assist their parents and grandparents who struggle with English.

In addition to all of that, we are continuing to strengthen our relationships with Saco Main Street and Heart of Biddeford. We are the rain location for the Saco Main Street summer concerts and will be hosting a Restaurant Week event in March. At one of our Nights of Talent, one member of the Saco Main Street board said, "This is what it means to be community! Thank you for what you do!"

The last Sunday in September, we convened an All-Team gathering. The goal was to enhance communication and coordination between the teams, and to brainstorm and share ideas of what more we could be doing. We added a number of exciting programs and ministries to the calendar. The All-Team meetings are a wonderful way for our members to engage in our shared ministry, and they will continue to provide an opportunity for fellowship and inspiration.

This snapshot really only scratches the surface of the many ways that this church family ministers to the need of others. As you read through the various reports from the staff and our teams, you will see the numerous ways in which First Parish Church creates community, and deepens relationships with God, Jesus Christ, and one another. You will see why so many people find a place of welcome and "home" here. I want to thank all of you for everything that you do to make First Parish Church a loving, caring, serving, welcoming, and growing community. I do want to offer a special word of thanks to Bob Condon who faithfully served as our acting Moderator this past year.

As always, none of this would be possible without our amazing, hard-working and dedicated staff. This year we had to say 'goodbye' to Guy Rochefort due to health concerns. We wish Guy all the best and pray that his health will improve. I thank Bill Burgess for stepping up and filling the position as we search for Guy's replacement. Sue Burgess keeps us all organized as she wears many hats in the role of Office Administrator. We are truly blessed by her skill and proficiency. She can complete a task before I even ask her to do it! Kris Galasyn faithfully guides and nurtures our Sunday school and youth ministries each week. And on top of that coordinates the Thanksgiving baskets, Christmas Giving Tree, MLK, Jr. Day of Service and so much more. Jacqui Savage has taken our music ministries to incredible heights. There are very few churches that have music ministries that are growing right now. Many people have commented that they come here for the music. And finally, thank you to Audrey Cabral for leading our Handbell Choir. At a previous church I rang with the youth handbell choir. It is not easy.

It is a pleasure and a privilege to be a part of this church family. I am truly grateful for this opportunity to minister and serve with you.

Grace and Peace, Scott



## Director of Christian Education Annual Report for 2023



When I reflect on 2023, I am reminded of our Advent words. Joy, Hope, Love and Peace. Every Sunday is full of **JOY**. The Joy in our Church school classrooms is phenomenal. My **HOPE** is always more children and families coming into our Church. Since the year started in January, we have had new families come into our church on a regular basis. The outpouring **LOVE** we share within our walls and outside of our walls in our community and in our world is a constant. **PEACE** in our hearts and in our world is something we will continue to strive for. Even though the season of Christmas is over, let us continue to remember the Joy, Hope, Love and Peace it brings to us each year.

**“Our mission is to help children, youth and adults to develop a relationship with God through the transforming love of Jesus Christ.”**

### **January: Martin Luther King Day of Service**

“What are you doing for others?” -Martin Luther King

We welcomed **Michael Remillard, Danielle Roberge and Tracy Seymour** to the team.

### **February: Youth Souper Bowl of Caring and Sub sale**

“I was hungry and you fed me.” - Matthew 25:35, The Message by Eugene Peters.

**Sunday, Fundays started.** When the month gives us an extra Sunday, we are going to make it a FunDay. Our first was our Sunday Valentine’s Funday.

### **March: Hero Hotline: Called Together to Serve God. VBS online training.**

“So let’s strive for the things that bring peace and the things that build each other up.” -Romans 14:19 (CEB).

**April: Easter Extravaganza**, that is a fun word for Easter activities, games, crafts, story time and an egg hunt. **Palm Sunday**, with our traditional Palm Processional Recorded for Facebook/you tube **“Yosef’s Gift of Many Colors”** by Cassandre Maxwell. **Pilgrim Lodge Sunday, Sunday Create with Marston Funday.**

“Inclusion Elevates All” ---Elaine Hall.

### **May: Youth Blanket Sunday Offering**

**Children’s Sunday:** Celebration of our Children’s Ministries and the adults that make it happen.

**Confirmation Sunday:** **Lucas Edstrom** and **Abbie Seymour** confirmands

**Children’s Ministries banner.** Sunshine and Inclusion Make me Happy

**June/July/August: Pride Sunday.** Reinforcing our commitment to the LGBTQ community

**Vacation Bible School**, a week-long program, 30 children plus, 15 volunteers. **Pilgrim Lodge** support in helping eleven people through our campership program. Children, youth and adults spent time there this summer. **Preparing for the 2023-2024 Program Year.**

“How could anyone ever tell you You were anything less than beautiful? How could anyone ever tell you You were less than whole? How could anyone fail to notice That your loving is a miracle? How deeply you’re connected to my soul.” –Libby Roderic PL Songbook

**September:** Adding a **PreK/Kindergarten class.** Adding **two new teachers: Joanne Howard and Christa Remillard.** Nursery still going strong with five to eight little ones every week. Even with **Lisa Edstrom** and

**Mary Coyne as Nursery Caregivers** we are still in need of a second pair of hands. Please consider signing up for just ONE Sunday every now and then.

Our nursery is our first Welcome for many of our new families.

**October: Acolyte Training.** Our new acolytes are **Aaron Blow, Caleb Blow, Alex Brochu, August Fernandes, Peter Galasyn, Angela Makengo and Ava Morin.**

**Trip to Pumpkin Valley Farm,** six families attended.

**Bible Sunday.** The team hosted a delicious breakfast and we gave Bibles to seven children: **Caleb Blow, Alex Brochu, August Fernandes, Peter Galasyn, Theo Henry, Angela Makengo and Ava Morin.** Molly and Norah Kuntz, received their Bibles later.

**Sunday Funday, fifth Sunday of the month, with a Fall Festival theme.** Costumes, games, yummy treats, and a parade added so much fun for all generations

“Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path” -Psalm 119:105

**November: Thanksgiving Baskets** were put together by our youth and **Hat and Mitten tree** was put up. We said goodbye to our **Super Bowl subs vendors** since 2005, Pizza by Michael. We are currently talking to a new vendor.

“We gather together to ask the Lord’s Blessings”

**December: Adopt a Family program. Youth being Elves at the church Christmas Fair Pageant supper and rehearsal** where 80 people shared a meal.

**Christmas Pageant,** where over 30 children and 15 families participated.

Recorded two stories on FB/You tube “**A Child is Born: The Story of the First Christmas**”

By Mary Alice Gran and “**The Christmas Miracle of Jonathan Toomey**” By Susan Wojciechowski. The final **Sunday, Funday of the year was our Happy Noon Year’s Eve party.** Attended by over 25 children, their parents and other adults.

“I bring you good tidings of great joy, ..... For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior which is Christ the Lord.” -Luke 2:9-11

To all the amazing First Parish families, **thank you.** To our fabulous Church school teachers, **Karen Brann, Joanne Howard, Linda Lambert, Heather Nolette, Danielle Roberge, Christa Remillard, Michael Remillard and Jay Salas, thank you.**

To our Nursery Care Givers, **Mary Coyne and Lisa Edstrom, thank you.**

To our wonderful Christian Education team: **Karen Brann, Mary Coyne, Lisa Edstrom, Linda Lambert, Michael Remillard, Danielle Roberge Mary Sicard, Tracy Seymour and Eric Steva.** You’re the Best. Thank you for all your love, kindness and support to our children, youth, and families and to me. The First Parish Christian Education team meets from 8:50 to 9:30 the first Sunday of every month, except for July and August. In June we have an outdoor pot luck. To our Media Jedi, **Freddie Connelly,** we appreciate everything you do to highlight Family Ministries at First Parish. To my amazing coworkers for all you do every Sunday and every other day, **Scott, Sue, Bill and Jacqui,** thank you.

**To the Glory of God,**

*Kristine E. Galasyn (Kris)*

*Director of Christian Education*

## Director of Music Annual Report for 2023

We started off 2023 with a beautiful Classical Duo, Duo Amie, to kick off our concert Series. The Sanctuary was filled with music at least once a month all year with some amazing musicians. We also held a community event called the "Night of Talent" every other month which was led by William Sawyer. Local musicians receive 7 minutes of stage time to share their talents. The Concert Series brought in over \$4500.00 this year to the church. We have a fabulous Concert Series Committee which consists of Larry McNamara, Sharon Trace, Carrie Suchar, Niki Cousineau, Ellie Osborn, and Scott Cousineau. Committee members work hard to plan concerts and recruit bands/musicians, advertise, and hang flyers, help to get sponsors for concerts, do ticketing at events and also work intermissions. Special thanks to Judy Foote, Cathy Foote, and Richard Foote for working many of the intermissions and buying and organizing food and also to Music and Arts for supporting the series.

The Junior Choir grew this year and it has been a joy to see the group sing during worship for the congregation. Susan Marston continues to be their fearless leader and there are lots of giggles, noodle doodles, bible school songs, old songs, new songs, and a general happy energy in the room week after week. The group also went Christmas Caroling with the Praise Choir and Senior Choir to Atlantic Heights and The Wardwell. There were over 30 adults and children that went caroling and we all had pizza together in the Fellowship Hall between the two Nursing Homes.

The Praise and Worship Choir has continued to provide contemporary hymns and anthems throughout the year. The Intergenerational Group now consists of children and adults. Our theme of "Inclusion" continues to ring out into the church and community as this amazing group of singers sings songs that reflect this theme. They believe in social justice and they believe they can make a difference.

The Bell Choir, led by Audrey Cabral, got back to their regular weekly rehearsals in September and was able to provide music in the Fall, during Advent, in the Winter, on Palm Sunday and on Music Sunday. Audrey continues to inspire her group week after week.

The Senior Choir has seen a handful of new members and the group has grown up to as many as 45 singers. We regularly fill the choir loft and have started to grow out of the Choir Room. This group is a hard-working group, and not only do they rehearse 90 minutes weekly, but they also sing at home for at least 10 min. a day and sometimes attend extra sectional rehearsals when we are working on a difficult piece. The fall of '23 brought new music as the group prepares for Jacqui's Masters Recital which will be on April 13<sup>th</sup>, 2024. The group had many social gatherings which included a spring picnic at Sharon Trace's house, a pool party at Mary Ann Prince's home, a Fall gathering at Jamie and Lynn Beals around the fire eating donuts and drinking cider, a couple potlucks in the choir room, and a Christmas Party in the Fellowship Hall. They sang at Merle and Evelyn Steva's Funeral on Saturday December 30<sup>th</sup> which was a beautiful service and testimony to Merle and Evelyn's amazing lives.

We have been blessed with amazing instrumentalists and soloists who continue to enhance worship week after week. Stephen Shiman on oboe, Jamie Beals on saxophone and recorder, Ellie Osborn and Linda McVety who both play cello, Kent Schneider who composed and arranged some of our music and also played flugelhorn, Sarah Heath on percussion, trumpet players Audrey Cabral and Peter Flournoy, and William Sawyer who has been accompanying weekly this year. The congregation has enjoyed hearing Will and I play piano duets and piano and organ duets and I hope to continue this into next year.

Special thanks go to Peggy Blood (Music Librarian and soloist), Lynn Beals (assists with robes and choir contacts), and Sarah Heath (copies music as needed). We have a fantastic Music and Arts Team which consists of Team Leader, Cary Olson, and members Jamie Beals, Lynn Beals, Al Sicard, Tucker Austin, Jennifer Poore, Susan Marston (secretary), Jack Neumyer, Delaney Clifford, Richard Foote, Judy Foote, Cathy Foote, Carrie Suchar and new members Ellie Osborn, Linda McVety, and Sarah Heath.

I am continuously grateful for my colleagues Kris Galasyn, Sue Burgess, Freddie Connelly and Scott Cousineau along with the congregation for their continuous support of music at First Parish. I have received nothing but positive feedback through emails, texts, and Facebook messages week after week. I am continuously inspired by the people at First Parish in all they do to help others in our community and in the world. I feel privileged to work for a church that is so loving and caring. I am also incredibly grateful to Pastor Scott for his continued support of the Music Ministry here at First Parish and all the ways he goes above and beyond to cultivate an environment of creativity and welcome. His efforts made so much of this past year's success possible!

Musically--Jacqueline Savage

## **Church Council Annual Report for 2023**

The year 2023 has brought the Council and different teams many challenges which we did not expect. I will highlight only a few but if the congregation is interested, the Council monthly meetings are open for those who wish to attend.

**Staff:** I must say that all of our staff is top notch, forever jumping in to resolve issues, and we would not be such a wonderful community without their leadership. I also need to thank Bill Burgess for jumping in to handle the Sexton's position, while the church regrouped to hire someone to take that position.

**Teams:** I also want to wholeheartedly thank all the Team Leads and Teams for their work to support this church. I know Phil and the Personnel team, and Sue have worked extremely hard to resolve the sexton issue and hire a cleaning team.

**Worship** continues to be a wonderful experience since Covid. In retrospect, we are so lucky to have rebuilt the church 20 years ago, including the ability to stream of our services to the general public, which continues to serve many, thanks to the efforts of Fred and Freddie Connelly.

**Sacred Conversations** has resumed as an 8:30 service led by a group of retired ministers. Sacred Conversation continues to provide a vital worship opportunity for those who prefer an intimate and interactive service. Up to 20 people attend this service each week.

### **Challenges:**

**Finances** had some challenges. In the spring, the electric bill went through the roof, stewardship numbers were down, and a budget deficit was accepted. The finance team moved the majority of our operating budget to an investment account, thereby increasing our interest rate from 0.4% to 5%. We needed to keep an eye on the checking account to ensure that the revenue coming in weekly exceeded the expenses, and the congregation came through. Music and Christian Ed funded themselves with past rolling funds.

There is an active conversation to put together a Building Capital Campaign. The concept of the campaign is to maintain the church in the present, and leave the church in good hands for the next generation of church members.

The campaign conversation started with the investigation of solar panels due to increasing electric bills in the spring. Doug Macrae got quotes, approached the town of Saco with a request for a building permit inside a historic district (approved) and has researched alternative funding sources. When brought to the

council, there were questions about the exterior condition of the existing structure. The church needs to have exterior rot removed, look at some window replacement, and painting, so we await bids from PM Construction before a Capital Campaign is requested.

**Bylaws** needed to be changed because we simply were not following their requirements.

1.) We removed the Ministry structure (Asset, Worship, and Discipleship/Fellowship). There should have been a lead person linking all the teams under each ministry which was never implemented.

2.) We added financial controls that one team could not pay the expenses of another team without approval from Council.

3.) We combined some teams as we had too many teams, and not enough church members to fill all the team member slots. The Bylaws are not perfect, but are much closer to representing our present structure than before. I hope the changes are approved.

**Facilities** has some real challenges with the recent water damage of the lower level. Mold was found on some walls and after the drywall was removed we found that the interior steel studs were all rusted/rotted. We found one of the gutters was being directed into the HVAC pit. There is still minor leakage that is being investigated before the contractor reinstalls stud, insulation and drywall.

**Building Security** has become an issue that none of us wish we had to investigate, but last year Dale attended a conference on Church Facility Safety. The conference included Home Land Security, and State Police. Bill Donoghue and Bob Mohlin attended the same conference a few months later and brought in TJ Swenson from Homeland Security to perform a church walkthrough and write a report with suggestions both easy (Low Hanging Fruit) and more challenging. We have received that report and a few very simple changes have been made to better secure the building during low occupancy (staff only) time. Additional quotes are in the works. Security upgrades are paid for by the Federal Government to better secure facilities of worship.

Respectfully Yours,

Written by Bob Condon (Vice Moderator) for all Council Members

Sorren Arneson, Jamie Beals, Sue Burgess, Margery Condon, Marianne Cook, Faith Garnett, Douglas Macrae, Tim McGee, Glenys Salas, Eric Steva , Patrice Tripp, Mari Warner

## **ASSET MINISTRY**

### **Facilities Team Annual Report for 2023**

One of the major capital improvements projects the Facilities Team completed in 2023 was the Parsonage kitchen remodel project which was way overdue. Thanks to Mike Tripp, owner of Tripp Carpentry (Patrice and Rich Tripp), the work was coordinated directly with Scott and Renee to minimize disruption as best as possible. Quality of the completed kitchen remodel project looks great, and we are grateful that this major improvement to the Parsonage was a success.

One of the major priorities for the Facilities Team during 2023 included the water damage at the Lower Level due to the excessive amount of rain and roof drainage repair work. We are currently working with Brotherhood Mutual on the insurance claim and PM Construction on the interior/exterior repair work.

The other major priority is developing budget estimates and work scopes for the Capital Campaign. Since 2005 when the building was reconstructed, we need major improvements (e.g., Sanctuary LED lighting, carpet replacement, exterior trim, media system, etc.). These are costs that are not budgeted in the annual facility operating expenses for utilities, insurance, cleaning, maintenance, etc.

In light of the current budget concerns, the Facilities Team would like to express to our Church Family how important it is to support our annual contribution to the Capital Improvement Fund to make sure we can address major projects such as the Parsonage deck replacement for the safety and security it delivers.

The main reason the Facilities Team operates so effectively is due to the individual effort of each member being responsible for specific tasks and duties. Facilities Team members perform these tasks and collaboratively work together as a cohesive group.

Individual responsibilities of the Facilities Team members for 2024 are as follows:

1. **John Brockington (Chairperson)** coordinates work activities performed by our maintenance personnel to help ensure general tasks are addressed within the budget allowances. John is also responsible for facilitating monthly meetings and managing the building facility operating expense budget.

2. **Dale Siulinski** manages the various requests for short and long-term building rentals in order to make sure these are coordinated with church staff and other church calendar activities. Dale has restructured the building rental forms with clearly defined terms and conditions.

3. **Sorren Arneson** is the liaison with the Top-of-the-Hill Gang (TOHG) to help coordinate various work activities and monthly inspection of building life safety systems (i.e., elevator, emergency lighting, first aid kits, etc.). TOHG volunteers have provided a great service to the Church and the labor savings from their continuous effort is immeasurable. Sorren is also the team's liaison between the Facilities Team and the Church Council providing a vital communication link on a monthly basis.

4. **Fred Connelly** provides a liaison with the Media Team for coordinating audio/visual resources for weddings, church programs and other building rental events. Fred is a great asset to the Church in his unending willingness to assist in numerous building activities.

5. **Carol Connelly** oversees the church keys and security system to make sure access to the building is provided appropriately to various user groups. Carol's ability to organize and streamline this system has provided a seamless process to this important Church function.

6. **Sue Burgess** manages all activities in the Kitchen including training potential users and monitoring proper use of the food service equipment. Sue's efforts in the care and use of the Kitchen are an important part of Church activities. The Facilities Team is also very grateful to Sue for processing invoices, payments, maintenance contracts, deliveries, rental agreements, and other day-to-day tasks. We could not do the work we do without her!

Anyone interested in joining the Facilities Team – we would love to have you! For more information, please contact John Brockington at [jbrockington1@gmail.com](mailto:jbrockington1@gmail.com).

Respectfully submitted,

John Brockington (Chairperson), Dale Siulinski, Sorren Arneson, Fred Connelly, Carol Connelly, and Sue Burgess

## **Investment Team Annual Report for 2023**

Although 2023 had a rocky start with continued aggressive short-term hikes from the Federal Reserve, raging inflation, and bond yields going haywire, the markets ended on a high note with stock and bond returns. At the end, the Fed paused, inflation moderated, and the economic news became a little more optimistic. The Dow Jones Industrial Average was up 16.0%, S & P up 24.5% and Nasdaq (tech heavy index) up 44.3%. Predictions/Expectations for 2024 include a slowing but growing economy with Federal Reserve's rate cuts and company earnings expected to grow. It will not be a straight line to recovery, but most agree that steady improvement is on the horizon.

The Investment Team met twice by Zoom in 2023 with our investment advisors (Robinson Smith Wealth Advisors) on February 15 and July 25, 2023. After consultation at both calls about their investment model for First Parish, several changes were made to our portfolio to rebalance our fixed income to equity ratio goal of 60% equities to 40% fixed income. Rebalancing twice in a year is uncommon for our portfolio, however the market fluctuations required regular review and we thank them for their attention and advice.

The Investment Team asked RSWA to perform an Endowment Analysis to see how long our endowments would last with the assumption of the current portfolio, policies and procedures, and withdrawal rate of up to 5% for the annual church operating budget pledge.

The results were sobering. Without making any contributions to the non-legacy funds, there is less than a 33% probability of success that funds will be available in 20 years. Adding just \$30,000 annually would increase the probability of success to 79% in 20 years. The advisors also recommended that the church pledge rate be reduced from up to 5% average of the previous 3 years to up to 4%. The Investment Team agreed and has added this to the bylaw change recommendations. The Investment Team will continue to discuss ways to strengthen the non-legacy portion of the portfolio.

The Investment Team partnered with the Finance Team in 2023 in the following ways:

- Facilitating the relationship between RSWA and the Finance Team to set up a separate interest bearing Money Market Account with Charles Schwab for operating funds.
- Partnered with the Finance Team during Sunday Mission Moments to provide tax strategies on donating appreciated stock and qualified charitable distributions to satisfy pledge obligations for 2024.
- Partnered with the Finance Team and Bylaws Task Force in reviewing and recommending bylaw changes related to current Investments and Endowment policies. These changes will be presented to the congregation at the 2024 Annual Meeting for discussion and approval.

The total investment portfolio on 12/31/23 was \$984,182.71 (see "Investment Portfolio as of December 31, 2023"). Gains for the managed portion of our portfolio totaled \$130,779.75.

A Certificate of Deposit (CD) at Infinity Federal Credit Union matured in July 2023 and the Investment Team closed the account and transferred \$29,603.23 into a separate money market (cash) account within the portfolio. These funds originated back to when the Church Fire Fund was established and have always been part of the total church investment portfolio. In 2022, the Building Fund balance was transferred from IFCU to the Facilities' Team rolling fund and the Investment Team saw no reason to maintain the IFCU relationship.

No income into the legacy funds was recorded in 2023. The unused 2022 Johnson Atkinson funds of \$3,500 have been reallocated for 2024 JASGF applications. CCMG did not spend any money out of the legacy account in 2023 (see CCMG income/expenditures in separate CCMG report). Because of the overall portfolio losses in 2022, interest was not available for teams in 2023.

During the year, the Investment Team paid \$4,484.01 in fees to Robinson Smith Wealth Advisors, and \$18,601.83 was paid to the Church in fulfillment of the annual investment pledge.

The 2024 investment pledge to the Church's operating budget will be \$14,845.90. This represents 4% of the last 3-year average of our unrestricted investment holdings. We are thankful the current members of the team will continue serving in 2024. We appreciate their insights and interest in supporting the Church.

Respectfully submitted,

Lynne Siulinski (Chair), Marianne Cook, Brian Doyle, Allison DiMatteo, Richard Foote and First Parish Investment Team

### Investment Portfolio as of December 31, 2023

\$20,801.59		Cash
\$65,233.96		Corporate Bonds
\$119,239.05		Exchange Traded Funds (ETFs)
\$88,100.20		Blackrock Strategic Income Bond Fund (BSIIX)
\$45,183.28		Blackrock Total Return I (MAHQX)
\$106,895.03		Dodge & Cox Income I (DODIX)
\$35,597.92		Pimco Low Duration Income (PFIIX)
\$109,326.03		DFA International Core E (DFIEX)
\$120,532.34		DFA US High Relative Profitability (DURPX)
\$52,924.71		Neuberger Berman Sustainable Equity Fund (NBSLX)
\$124,522.77		Parnassus Core Equity Institutional Fund (PRILX)
\$66,222.69		Schwab Total Stock Market Fund (SWTSX)
\$29,603.14		Schwab Government Money Market (SNVXX)
\$984,182.71		Total Investment Team Legacy Funds

		<b>LEGACY FUNDS</b>
\$14,854.90		Pledge amount available from General Fund for 2024
\$372,688.96		Beginning General Fund balance 1/1/24
\$59,531.75		Music & Arts Fund Principal
\$6,862.16		Available interest for 2024
\$2,760.74		Mission Fund Principal
\$318.23		Available interest for 2024
\$75,725.01		Building Administration Fund Principal



\$8,728.74		Available interest for 2024
\$6,445.19		Christian Education Fund Principal
\$742.93		Available interest for 2024
\$17,188.16		Flower & Altar Fund Principal
\$1,981.26		Available interest for 2024
\$328,721.10		Johnson-Atkinson Spiritual Growth Fund Principal
\$37,891.31		Available interest for 2024
\$64,597.18		Charitable Contributions & Memorial Gift (CCMG) Fund Principal + Interest
<b>\$611,493.75</b>		<b>Restricted Legacy Funds Total</b>

## Finance Committee

The Finance Committee was created in 2023 and met one meeting per month. The function of the committee is to review financial statements produced by our Treasurer Amy Clute and make recommendations as necessary. Normally this committee does not write a report for the Annual Meeting but because important financial changes were made, we wanted to report them to the congregation.

During the spring of 2023, we had roughly \$330K sitting in a checking account at Saco Biddeford Savings Bank with an interest rate of 0.035%, yielding an interest of \$100 per month. One of our members recognized this as being a very inefficient use of money and voted to move a significant portion to an investment account (Smith Robinson), which was managing our legacy funds.

An account was set up with Smith Robinson (4.5% interest rate) and we set up a transfer pathway between Smith Robinson and Saco Biddeford Savings Bank.

We moved \$10K as a test transfer to start and when that worked successfully, we transferred an additional \$280K, leaving roughly \$40K in our operational checking account. It is imperative to monitor the balance of the checking account so that we never bounce a check. What we found is that our revenue stream from pledged and loose offertory collection exceeded our expenses for the week, so everything was absolutely stable.

We had ONE transfer from the investment account which covered the kitchen renovation in the fall. We will maintain this system, as this produced an additional \$12K.

We expect the Finance team and the Investment team to merge in 2024. Legacy investments will continue to be managed by the existing Investment team, while the Operational Investment will be managed by the Finance side of this merger. The Investment will meet 2x per year while the Finance will meet every other month.

The members of the Finance team for 2023 were:

Bob Condon, Amy Chute, Glenys Salas, Dale Suilinski, and Patrice Tripp

Respectfully submitted by Robert Condon, Vice Moderator

## **Personnel Team Annual Report for 2023**

The Personnel Team spent this year dealing with the responsibilities as outlined in our bylaws. The team completed its annual review of the Personnel Handbook and has implemented our new staff evaluation process which was developed last year. The team continues to refine our job descriptions to make them clearer and more realistic. It has become clear that our expectations of current staff are no longer reasonable and must be revisited. We have undertaken the task of revising our staffing for the cleaning and maintenance of the building and will be making recommendations to the council.

The team has recommended small increases (3%) for our staff in the upcoming year.

We also have been working to project staffing needs in the church. Our priorities at this time are Pastoral support, IT leadership, and custodial/maintenance.

Respectfully submitted,

The Personnel Team

Phil Blood, Faith Garnett, Peggy Warden, Mari Warner and Doug Macrae

## **Johnson Atkinson Spiritual Growth Fund Annual Report for 2023**

The Johnson - Atkinson Spiritual Growth Fund is a gift to the church to inspire and support development of church ventures and to facilitate spiritual growth. It is intended to serve as a catalyst for new energy and commitment to grow in the knowledge and love of God in Christ and radiate God's love in an ever changing world. We are thankful for the thoughtfulness of this gift from Bill and Mary Johnson who established this fund for the church. Any church group, member, or staff of First Parish is eligible to complete and submit an application. Submission deadlines are February 28 and September 30 each year. The application form may be accessed on the church web site under the Offering and Services link.

The Johnson - Atkinson Fund Team, facilitated by the Vice Moderator, will review the applications and determine the recipient(s). The funds may be distributed annually or semiannually, dependent upon the Committee's judgment and fund balances. The fund is not intended to support the annual budget of the church, personnel costs, or cost of operations. I thank the JA Team for their time and efforts.

Members who are stepping down are Martha Perkins and Peter Browne. Thank you for your years of service.

If there are members of the congregation that would like to be on this team, please connect with Tom Kircher, incoming Vice Moderator.

Due to the market conditions, there was not available growth funds from investments for 2023.

Respectfully submitted, Robert Condon, Vice Moderator

## **Money Counters Annual Report for 2023**

The dedicated money counting team is as follows: Susan Anton, Joyce Bissell, Susan Marston, Nadine Russell, and Nancy Twomey. Jean Johnson and Richard Twomey have joined the team.

The team is responsible for recording all contributions to the proper church accounts as well as tracking church member's accounts. There are many different funds, sub funds, and other special offerings (such as the diaper fund) that require attention to be properly accounted for. It is very beneficial to the team if envelope numbers are specified on the checks for tracking purposes.

We also make the bank deposits and all reports go to Amy Chute for recording in PowerChurch.

Blank offering envelopes -weekly, monthly, and special offerings are available. If anyone is interested, please call the church office.

Information submitted by:

Nancy Twomey

## **Stewardship Annual Report for 2023**

The Stewardship Team is not formally populated.

Many folks were involved in the Stewardship effort this year. We started by building a budget with all teams submitting requests to Amy Chute for the operating funds for 2024. The budget was reviewed by the Finance Team (Bob Condon, Amy Chute, Glenys Salas, Dale Suilinski, and Patrice Tripp) and suggestions were made to reach the final budget for Council.

Sue Burgess single-handedly put together all the mailings, coordinated with Scott for a Stewardship letter, and stuffing, stamping and labeling the envelopes.

I asked Tim McGee and Richard Foote to provide a testimonial about their attendance at FPS and their planned pledging which they did in the October timeframe.

Sue again, received all the pledges, entered them into a database and kept us all informed of the status.

I expect that there will be a campaign to raise funds for the necessary maintenance and lighting upgrades, and also the consideration of solar panels to keep our electric budget in check. We purposely waited until we received the construction bids for maintenance before bringing any information about the campaign to the congregation.

I cannot say thank you enough to all who helped. Stewardship can be a challenge as it is a very public event of which many do not feel comfortable with, but many thanks to many willing hands to get the job done.

Respectfully submitted by Robert Condon, Vice Moderator

## **Charitable Contributions & Memorial Gifts Team Annual Report for 2023**

The CCMG Team monitors gifts and donations made to First Parish Church on behalf of the Memorial Gift Fund. If a gift is approved to be received, the CCMG Team accepts and acknowledges the gift or donation. We oversee the distribution of funds from the Memorial Gift Fund for the purchase of tangible items that support the mission of First Parish Church.

CCMG Team responsibilities and functions were performed by the Investments Team.

During 2023, the CCMG Team gratefully received gifts of \$545:

In Memory Of:

- Jane W. Nutting
- Barbara G. Ericson
- Diana Stites

Expenses of \$749. from the Memorial Gifts Fund during 2023 were:

- New portable air conditioning for the Chapel Room

Respectfully submitted by

Lynne Siulinski (Chair, Investments Team)

## **Good News Team Annual Report for 2023**

No report available.

## **DISCIPLESHIP AND FELLOWSHIP MINISTRY**

### **Historian Annual Report for 2022**

No report available.

### **Meal Ministry Annual Report for 2023**

The Meal Ministry was revived for 2023 and we began our monthly Bean Suppahs. These Suppahs are held on the second Saturday of each month between February and November. I can't tell you how grateful and blessed I am to be able to work with this group of folks and those who volunteer to serve and help clean up after every event.

The mission of the Meal Ministry group is to provide food and great fellowship to those in our community and beyond. We do this by holding our monthly suppahs and selling the leftovers after church on Sundays after the event... that is if there are any leftovers.

The folks who attend the suppahs are basically from our local areas, whether they are "locals" or visitors from "away" or those returning home for a vacation. Some folks even stop in to ask what a "Bean Suppah" is. It's truly wonderful to see the fellowship and First Parish shine. We "Enter as strangers and leave as friends".

The proceeds from these meals are going to the General Fund to help support the good works of First Parish.

The time and talent of the following individuals make this ministry work:

Amy Chute, Jen Erickson, Patrice Tripp, Lorie Faubert, Vanessa and David Johnston, Tim, Hope and Sagan Guerrette, Kathy Angel Lee, Michelle Fiske, Aiden Fiske, and the many other individuals of this church who have helped with setup, cooking, serving, eating and the all important clean up. Even Pastor Scott has been seen at the grill and serving our guests.

My heartfelt and sincere thanks to each one who have made this ministry so successful! Feel free to join us anytime. We would love to have you join us in the fun!

Respectfully submitted,

Sue Burgess

## **Mission Team Annual Report for 2023**

### **Mission Endeavors of 2023:**

**MLK Day of Service**- members helped Kris Galasyn.

The **Shoe Ministry** display was updated with help from Nancy and Rick Twomey, and donations from the congregation and Lamey Wellehan. Thanks!

We showed the video **Who We Are** (with discussion afterwards) in celebration of Black History Month.

We advertised **Daisy's Children** and sponsored a **Mum Sale** as a fundraiser for Daisy's Children with the help of Sharon Beckwith, Marcia Lord, Jim Wheeler, and Patrice Tripp.

We advertised and supported **Jen Wright's HEAL** program.

We sponsored 2 **Red Cross Blood Drives**.

We supplied volunteers, donations, and advertisements for the **Bon Appetit's meal program**. (In November, Linda Sprague Lambert helped us sell raffle calendars as a fundraiser for this charity.)

We organized the **Back-to-School Giveaway** with lots of help from the congregation. (Thanks to Emily Shoop for giving haircuts)!

We advertised the needs of, and supplied volunteers for the **Saco Food Pantry**. Doug MacCrae initiated a **Progresso Soup Drive** for the Pantry.

The **Called to Care Committee** has 9 team members that visit parishioners in need of company. The list of people needing a visit is being updated for 2024.

Other organizations we helped support with donations or advertising:

- **The Diaper Bank**
- **Welcome In Our New Neighbors (WIONN)**
- **Maine Immigrants Rights Coalition (MIRC)**

- **Seeds of Hope**

We decided not to renew the loan to Four Directions, but gave \$6000.00 to the **Pastor's Discretionary Fund** and \$10,000 has been pledged to the solar panel capital campaign.

Members attending meetings in 2023:

Carol Bryant, Bob Domermuth, Eileen Domermuth, Lorie Faubert, Jane Kircher, Wayne LaRochelle, Joan Sonneborn, Carol Spencer-Lemay (Chair), and Trina Triggs. Jane will not be remaining on the team in 2024.

The Good News Team will be meeting with us in 2024. **We are meeting the 2nd Wednesday of the month at 6:30 PM in the Conference Room.**

## **Hospitality Team Annual Report for 2023**

Hospitality Team is not currently populated.

## **First Parish Diaper Bank Report for 2023**

Thanks to ongoing financial support from the congregation, community friends and organizations, First Parish Diaper Bank has distributed diapers to low-income families every Wednesday afternoon during the past year.

We consistently serve 25-40 families every week. Many families have more than one child in diapers. If available from donations, diaper wipes are also included. From the start of diaper bank, women's sanitary supplies have also been offered. Donations from Women's Fellowship, Glen Ellen Roth, Richard Caron and Carol Spencer-Lemay have ensured a steady supply of feminine hygiene items.

Diapers and menstrual supplies are basic requirements for moms and their babies to function every day with dignity.

Diaper Bank continues to cultivate relationships within the community and beyond. Maine Families occasionally delivers diapers to low-income moms who lack transportation but have diaper need. Sister Joanne at Esther's Residence introduces us to moms who need our assistance. Altrusa members of Saco and Biddeford have frequently purchased baby supplies and items for infants to hand out with diapers. Residents of The Pines retirement community knit hats, mittens and blankets to share with diaper bank families. Grandparents from Cider Hill donated many items at Christmastime that guaranteed Merry Christmases for several Diaper Bank families. These are just a few examples of how our diaper bank has made itself known as a valuable resource for both donors and recipients.

This past June, Saco Bay Rotary presented Diaper Bank with its "Humanitarian Award" for recognizing diaper need in our community and responding by forming a diaper bank. Rotary has also supported the bank financially and with diaper drives.

Many volunteers from our congregation and our community faithfully help every Wednesday. Diaper Bank is about more than just diapers. Offering to staff Diaper Bank has created new partnerships and friendships. With our welcoming smiles and your generosity, we can offer a safe place for needy moms to receive support and supplies to care for themselves and their babies.

Faithfully,  
Pam Mohlin and all volunteers

## **First Parish Prayer Group Annual Report for 2023**

No Report Available

## **Christian Education Committee Annual Report for 2023**

Happy 2024 everyone! It has been a wonderful 2023 at First Parish. I would like to thank Kris Galasyn for all of her hard work and dedication to the youth of our church and continued commitment to making MLK day happen every year. She is a true Blessing.

I would also like to thank the CE Team, Eric Steva, Lisa Edstrom, Christa & Mike Remillard, Linda Sprague-Lambert, Danielle Roberge, Tracy Seymour, Mary Coyne and Mary Sicard for all their dedication and hard work. Without them we would not be able to make many of special events happen, such as Bible Sunday Breakfast, Sunday Funday, Christmas Pageant rehearsal dinner, Vacation Bible School, Souper Bowl Sunday and so many more. Thank you all. I really enjoy working with all of you.

I would also like to thank all of our teachers, nursery care providers and nursery volunteers. The love, effort and energy you bring to the youth in our church is a gift and we are so grateful. Also, with that being said, if you are able to be a nursery volunteer, please see Lisa Edstrom or the sign-up sheet in the atrium. It is just one Sunday and means the world to the children.

I am very excited to see what 2024 has to bring to First Parish.

Blessings to all,  
Karen Brann - CE Team Chair

## **WORSHIP MINISTRY**

### **Diaconate Annual Report for 2023**

Although 2023 may be considered a year of transition (several long-time Deacons stepped down, as others re-joined, or became members of the Diaconate for the first time), the Diaconate has had a very productive and busy year! Besides supporting Pastor Scott's ministry, and assisting with weekly church services at both the 8:30 Sacred Conversations, and the 10:00 worship service, the Diaconate has continued to provide support with monthly Communion, Baptisms, Receptions of New Members, Funerals, and Celebrations of Life. Deacons also assist Pastor Scott with New Member Classes. In addition, under the leadership of Deacon Russ Tremblay, the Welcome Station is a busy place each week, as guests and visitors are welcomed, and hearing systems are made available to those who need them.

As of November 9, 2023, our membership rolls are as follows:

- Active Members: 243
- Inactive Members: 55
- Active Friends: 51
- Inactive Friends: 32
- Former Members/Friends 256
- Deceased: 27

The 2024 Diaconate members will be: Pam Campbell, Linda Carroll, Chris DiMatteo, Jen Erickson, Lorie Faubert, Carole Macrae, Doug Macrae, Susan Loker Schneider, Russ Tremblay, Aldene Walters, and Peggy Warden.

Although I will be stepping down (after almost 4 years as a Deacon), Peggy Warden is currently the other co-chair, and already has made significant improvements to the inventory and budget tracking and recording procedures, since becoming co-chair in September.

We continue to seek additional Deacons, to better reflect the composition of our congregation. Please see a member of our Diaconate, or Pastor Scott, if you would like to serve our church in this way, or if you have further questions regarding the Diaconate.

The January Diaconate meeting will be held Sunday, January 28th at 11:45 am in the Conference Room.

Blessings to you,  
Margery Condon, Diaconate Co-chair

## **Women's Fellowship Annual Report for 2023**

### Our activities of 2023:

- We have almost weekly get-togethers (on Tuesday mornings) to enjoy each other's company, and some of us knit or do other crafts while we talk.
- We helped with the MLK set up.
- We enjoyed a catered brunch at the church in April.
- We cleaned and organized our church closets with the help of Judy Foote.
- We organized the December Gingerbread Fair and raised about \$8000.00!
- We helped host the receptions of some funerals.

### In 2023, we spent our funds on:

- Coffee and cream for the church (The Meal Ministry also contributed)
- Pledge to the church's budget
- Pilgrim Lodge Camperships
- Air Hockey game for the Youth Room
- Dishwasher for the parsonage
- Small refrigerator by the church's coffee machine
- Rocky Coast Marketing (for our church's Facebook advertising)
- Supplies for the Diaper Bank
- Cleaning fee for our fabric tablecloths
- Church employee Christmas gift cards
- HEAL (We bought white boards for the children's school in Kenya)
- Esther Residence (Women's recovery residence.)

In 2024 we hope to support Daisy's Children again.

We meet Tuesday mornings at about 9:30 AM (some arrive earlier, some later) in the church hall.

Members: **All** women, members and friends, of First Parish Congregational Church, Saco. Glen Ellen Roth is the Chair. Carol SpencerLemay sometimes is the secretary, and Sue Neumyer was the main organizer for the Gingerbread Fair.



## **Media Team Annual Report for 2023**

To the congregation of First Parish Congregational Church of Saco,

Hard to believe 2023 has come to an end! Throughout the year, the media team has continued to live stream Sunday services and special events and we have seen good attendance online, though numbers have fallen a little as in person attendance has risen. The live stream is still a good option when the weather is poor. Weekly, Freddie Connelly has continued to produce the First Parish News update with Scott, and Freddie also produces the First Parish Families update with Kris Galasyn each month. His technical skill and creativity are a huge asset to the team and bring a tremendous energy to the online presence of First Parish Church. Thank you, Freddie, for all you do! Other media team activities and productions, often presented in partnership with Christian Education, Music and Arts, or Worship teams include:

- Special videos included within regular worship services.
- Maintaining a presence on Facebook and YouTube web services.
- Storytime videos in which a story book is presented and read by members of our church family.
- Weddings, memorial services, and other special events and slide shows.
- Support for online sales of concert tickets.
- And don't forget teams and individuals can purchase First Parish merchandise! Please check out the First Parish shop at: <https://my-store-10943380.creator-spring.com/>

Every week, Freddie Connelly and Fred Connelly can be found in the media booth, supporting the service both online and within the sanctuary. Outside of Sunday mornings, they often work extra hours recording and editing presentations presented online or during worship. And thank you to the Web Hosts (Carol Connelly, Diana Burton, and Kathy Lee) for hosting online services each week. These folks all work hard to ensure First Parish presents a friendly face to the community and is accessible for members and non-members alike.

The team has made several improvements to the audio and streaming systems in recent years, but there are still some significant pieces of equipment that will need attention. In particular, the team is monitoring the projection system and sanctuary speakers as the most vulnerable pieces of equipment.

If you have additional ideas or would like to actively participate in any of the work we do, please don't hesitate to reach out to any of us any time during the year. Stop by the media booth on any given Sunday to learn more about our work. Thank you!

Respectfully submitted,

Eric Steva, Fred Connelly, Sue Burgess, Freddie Connelly, Carol Connelly, Kathy Lee, Diana Burton

## **Flower & Altar Team Annual Report for 2023**

The Flower & Altar Team continues to receive great joy in helping to make the sanctuary warm and welcoming with flowers, banners and other decorations, depending on the season. We appreciate the flowers provided by members of the congregation that are placed on Altar in celebration, honor, and memory of loved ones, whether it be on a Sunday, Easter, or Poinsettia Sunday. We also maintain the Fish Garden and urns outside the entrance to the church.

The fruits and vegetables for the Thanksgiving Cornucopia were purchased through the Men's Club Legacy Fund. FPYF included these in their Thanksgiving baskets. We purchased the Christmas tree and garlands for the Atrium through Hewes Legacy Fund.

Team members put on their provided decorated wine bottle lights for the Gingerbread Fair.

We appreciate all the assistance from Jim Wheeler and The Top of the Hill Gang!

Thank you to Maureen O'Donnell and Judi Klingensmith for all their contributions to Flower and Altar over the past few years. We welcome Betty Robidoux to our team. We would love to have more new members join our team!

Patrice Tripp & Marcia Lord, Co-chairs

Team Members:

Cathy Baillargeon	Martha Conlan	Michelle Fiske
Eleanor Howe	Marcia Lord, Co-chair	Betty Robidoux
Patrice Tripp, Co-chair	Mari Warner	

## **Program Development Annual Report for 2023**

Program Development is not currently populated.

## **Music & Arts Team Annual Report for 2023**

Each week, our church is blessed with beautiful music to praise God. Under the leadership of Jacqui Savage, choir members and musicians provide meaningful contributions to support our music ministry which aligns with our church ministry. Members in all of the choirs devote their time and talent to share music that enhances each worship service.

As well as the contributions each Sunday, many members of the choir as well as members from the Music and Arts team, work together to provide the Concert Series, Night of Talent, and other special musical performances. These special events invite community members to come to First Parish and continues to demonstrate the importance of our community outreach to help grow our congregation.

We are grateful for the opportunity to provide our special music ministry and be such an integral part of our church community.

Sincerely,  
Cary Olson-Cartwright

## 2023 Slate of Officers and Delegates

### Elected Annually

Officers		Contact Info
Moderator	Tim McGee	<a href="mailto:tmanford27@gmail.com">tmanford27@gmail.com</a>
Vice Moderator	Thomas Kircher	<a href="mailto:tomkircher999@gmail.com">tomkircher999@gmail.com</a>
Clerk	Marianne Cook	<a href="mailto:xnbury@maine.rr.com">xnbury@maine.rr.com</a>
Treasurer	Charles Carter	<a href="mailto:ccarter@carterlsc.com">ccarter@carterlsc.com</a>
Assist Treasurer	Amy Chute	<a href="mailto:amy.chute@firstparishsaco.org">amy.chute@firstparishsaco.org</a>

At Large Councilors	Contact Info
Sorren Arneson	<a href="mailto:sorrenarneson@gmail.com">sorrenarneson@gmail.com</a>
Jamie Beals	<a href="mailto:jbealsie@gmail.com">jbealsie@gmail.com</a>
Eric Steva	<a href="mailto:esteva@maine.rr.com">esteva@maine.rr.com</a>
Sue Burgess	<a href="mailto:sueb1972@gmail.com">sueb1972@gmail.com</a>
Glenys Salas	<a href="mailto:gflaitz@gmail.com">gflaitz@gmail.com</a>

Delegates	
Vacant	Vacant

### 2023 Team Members – Volunteer and are not elected.

#### 2023 Asset Ministry

Stewardship/Generosity	
Sue Burgess	

Facilities	
John Brockington – Chair	Carol Connelly
Sorren Arneson	Fred Connelly
Sue Burgess	Dale Siulinski

<b>Investments</b>	
Including CCMG (Charitable Contributions Memorial Gifts)	
Lynne Siulinski – Chair	Brian Doyle
Marianne Cook	Richard Foote
Allison DiMatteo	

<b>Money Counters</b>	
Nancy Twomey – Chair	Susan Marston
Susan Anton	Nadine Russell
Joyce Bissell	Jean Johnson

<b>Johnson Atkinson Spiritual Growth Fund</b>	
Tom Kircher	

<b>Personnel</b>	
Phil Blood – Chair	
Faith Garnett	Mari Warner

## **2023 Discipleship & Fellowship Ministry**

<b>Calling Committee</b>	
Trina Triggs	

<b>History/Library</b>	
Jon Edstrom – Historian	

<b>Prayer Ministry</b>	
Not populated at this time.	

<b>Christian Education</b>	
Karen Brann – Chair	Danielle Roberge
Lisa Edstrom	Tracy Seymour
Mary McInnis-Coyne	Linda Sprague-Lambert
Heather Nolette	Mary Sicard
Michael Remillard	Eric Steva

<b>Mission</b>	
Carol Spencer-Lemay – Co-Chair	Wylie Herzberg – Co-Chair
Lorie Faubert	Trina Triggs
Jon Edstrom	Marc Roberge
	Al Sicard

<b>Program Development</b>	
Not populated at this time.	

<b>Hospitality</b>	
Not populated at this time.	

<b>Meal Ministry</b>	
Sue Burgess - Chair	Michelle Fiske
Amy Chute	Jennifer Erickson
Vanessa Johnston	David Johnston
Lorie Faubert	Patrice Tripp

## **2023 Worship Ministry**

<b>Diaconate</b>	
Margery Condon – Co Chair	Dan Carter – Co-Chair
Julie Carter	Jean Johnson
Chris DiMatteo	Susan Loker-Schneider
Karen Donoghue	Nadine Russell
Lorie Faubert	Russell Tremblay
Jamie Johnson	Aldene Walters

<b>Flower and Altar</b>	
Patrice Tripp – Co Chair	Marcia Lord – Co-Chair
Cathy Baillargeon	Eleanor Howe
Martha Conlan	Betty Robidoux
Michelle Fiske	Mari Warner

<b>Media</b>	
Eric Steva – Chair	Jack Neumyer
Sue Burgess	<b>Web Hosts</b>
Ron Bissell	Diana Burton
Fred Connelly	Carol Connelly
Freddie Connelly	Kathy Angel Lee
Doug Macrae	

<b>Music and Arts</b>	
Cary Olson-Cartwright - Chair	
Tucker Austin	Ellie Osborne
Lynn Beals	Jack Neumyer
Jamie Beals	Hope Poore
Delaney Clifford	Jennifer Poore
Cathy Foote	Alex Savage
Judy Foote	Jacqui Savage
Richard Foote	Al Sicard
Jamie Johnson	Carrie Suchar
Susan Marston	

<b>Pastor Parish Relations Team</b>	
Geordi Campbell	Jamie Beals
Jennifer Poore	Joan Sonneborn

<b>Women's Fellowship</b>	
Glen Ellen Roth – President	Carol Spencer-Lemay - Sec

<b>Top of the Hill Gang</b>	
Sorren Arneson – Chair	Dan Dearborn
Phil Blood	Peter Gray
Wayne Carlson	Ken Maclay
Bob Condon	Paul Martin