



The Messenger



First Parish Congregational Church, Saco

*"A Christ-centered Inclusive Community of Faith
with Love and Hope to Share"*

December, 2022



Winter Book Retreat Ten Evenings With God, by Ilia Delio

"...the source of our happiness and freedom lies in God when we come to know ourselves in God. To discover our identity is to find God, and to find God is to discover happiness in which lies our freedom."

With these words from the Introduction, author and theologian Ilia Delio invites readers to walk with her through ten short reflections on discernment as framed by fundamentals of the Christian life.

Wondering about where you are at in life? Or where you are headed? Join in this Winter book retreat to share questions, thoughts, and ideas! The group will meet January – March 2023 by ZOOM on Sunday evenings. Come for one or two meetings, or all ten. All are welcome.

FMI contact Tom Kircher at tomkircher999@gmail.com



Pledge Cards

If you need a Pledge card for 2023, we have some available in the Narthex or contact the office at office@firstparishsaco.org.



Scott Cousineau, Senior Minister
Kristine Galasyn, Director of Christian Education
Jacqueline Savage, Music Director
Guy Rochefort, Sexton

12 Beach Street,
Saco, Me 04072
207-283-3771

www.firstparishsaco.org
Facebook – First Parish Saco UCC



Pastor Scott's Message...

The Pastor's Perspective ...



This past Sunday, I spent the afternoon doing what I do most Sunday afternoons; I watched snippets of worship services from other churches. I typically have the football game on the television muted while I peruse worship on my phone. I know that it may not sound very sacred, but it has been my practice for the last couple of years.

This week, I tuned in to a worship service from one of the churches in which I grew up, and the message made me stop and ponder. (Exactly what a message should do!) The pastor introduced his Advent message considering the Nativity scene from the perspective of one of the animals in the stable ... the cow. He pointed out that there is nothing in any of the Gospel accounts that indicate that there was actually a cow in the stable, but most ... if not all ... of our Nativity sets have a cow in them. He considered the cow looking into the manger, the food trough, and seeing something unexpected there.

I do not know the cognitive level of our bovine friends, but we can be pretty sure that when THE cow, or a cow, steps up to a food trough, they expect to find hay or some other sort of grain or feed there. They do not expect to see a newborn human baby wrapped in a blanket in the spot where their evening dinner is supposed to be.

And here is where the pondering begins ... what do we expect to see when we step to the manger?

Unlike the cow, we probably have some expectations beyond hay or grain. Generations of scripture readings and Christmas pageants tell us that there will be a baby there. Our perception is much deeper than, "Moo. Not food." What do we see when we look into that manger?

Do we see a precious figurine with which we will decorate our homes for a few weeks, and then tuck safely away in the attic until next year?

Do we see a child that embodies the purest expression of love, a love that speaks to a longing deep within our own hearts?

Do we see a challenge to the status quo and to the human appetite for the accumulation of control, influence, and creature comforts?

Do we see someone that will take us by the heart and by the hand and lead us to live lives of radical hospitality and service?

The cow stuck a nose into the manger hoping to find food for its stomach. Do we look into the manger and find food for our souls?

As we travel on this Advent journey together, let us take time to stop and ponder. Let us gaze at the stars and listen for angel songs. Let us look for the Presence of God in the faces and events of our daily lives. And let us look into the manger.

May God's wonderful peace fill you during this Advent season.
Scott



Moderator Update



From the Moderator...



Days are getting shorter, it's getting dark before dinner, temperatures are dropping ... must be time to head indoors and hibernate. Many of us are blessed to have an adequate supply of food and warm homes in which to live. Let us be mindful of those who need our assistance, not only during this season of hope, joy, peace and love, but year-round.

Here are the happenings from Church Council. I invited the chairperson from each of the eighteen teams at First Parish to the October Church Council meeting. The purpose was two-fold; to apprise each team chair of activities at the Council level such as building security, the organizational governance structure status, revisit the role of Church Council, By Laws compliance, as well as to receive input from the chairpersons regarding their thoughts and team goals for the future. It was a substantive meeting filled with energy and positive participation. You have heard me reference that the church governance structure that was adopted over ten years ago is not optimized to promote effective communication between the Council and teams. To improve communication, the Organizational Structure Ad Hoc Team determined that all team chairs should attend the Church Council meeting quarterly to replace the Council liaison position that's part of the current governance structure. With your approval, Council meetings with all team chairpersons will start in 2023.

Our Generosity Campaign continues but is winding down. However, if you attended Consecration Sunday, I'm sure you'll agree that it was a wonderful day. It was energizing to see the church filled with activity. Thanks to all those who brought food. Of the 205 pledge cards that were mailed out, 116 pledge cards have been submitted to date for a total of approximately \$225K. We thank you for your kindness and generosity. However, we have a huge budget goal ahead. The total budget requests exceed \$453K. We are only half-way there with only a couple weeks left before we must start making critical decisions regarding what we can do in 2023.

We also encourage you to consider giving, not only in financial terms, but in pledging your time and talent as well, by participating in one or more of the many teams, groups and activities that First Parish has to offer. When we changed the governance structure of how the church functions ten years ago, we changed how people join teams and find fulfillment in volunteering. People are encouraged to join any team consistent with the passion in their hearts for the mission of that team. Please consider joining a team to offer your time and talent. I'm sure you'll find it rewarding.

Blessings and peace,
Dale Siulinski





From the TREASURER

Amy Chute – amy.chute@firstparishsaco.org

At the Annual Affirmation Meeting held on January 23, we as a church body, approved the 2022 Mission Plan. As you may remember, this budget projected income of \$340,099 and expenses of \$450,960. We were able to approve a budget with an expected shortfall (or loss) of \$110,861 because the checking account Operating balance had grown to \$207,734 as of December 31, 2021. The Operating balance grew to this amount because we have had several years where income exceeded expenses and the surplus or "carryover" grew that Operating balance account.

We now have financial reports through October as of this writing, so let's look at how we are performing against the budget with 10 months of the year passed.

Budgeted income through October stands at \$269,717. This is actually below our targeted income of \$283,416. 2022 Pledges are just below budgeted at \$200,307 through October. Church rentals and loose cash and checks are under budget, which may reflect that our budgeting for those accounts was optimistic.

Budgeted expenses through October stand at \$314,554. This is fortunately also below our targeted expenses of \$375,800. Many teams are being prudent in their spending to accomplish this, using Legacy and rolling funds when possible.

Through October, expenses exceed income by \$44,837. The checking account Operating balance has been reduced to cover this shortfall.

What can we do? If your teams can continue to be good stewards, this will help expenses stay below budget. Please spend rolling or Legacy funds when possible and make prudent purchasing decisions.

If you are behind on pledge payments and are able to catch-up, thank you! We will send out year-to-date pledge statements through November 30th in early December.

Please get your 2023 pledges into the office as soon as possible. We are going to need to make cuts to team budget expense requests for 2023 based upon our projected income for 2023. Pledges are the biggest part of income at First Parish, so please let us know what you intend to give for 2023 to aid 2023 budgeting.

If you have any ideas to help our church finances, please reach out. We will most likely need to explore fundraising activities in 2023 for which we will need the help of each of you.





Deacon Ministry

Dear Friends,

During this time of thanksgiving, I want to express my sincere gratitude to all of the members of the Diaconate here at First Parish! Our church community is so blessed to have the dedicated, faithful, and friendly group of Deacons that we have. Some have been here for decades, others of us have been members a few years, and some are members of a year or less. Besides working together to support the spiritual needs of our church, we have developed close friendships with each other.

Consider joining this special group! We have a good time together on Sunday mornings, as well as at our monthly meetings (the third Wednesday evening of the month), which have been held at church, in members homes, and on Zoom (during the Pandemic).

I'd like to recognize one of our Deacons today!

Dan Carter, a Diaconate Co-Chair, began attending First Parish Congregational Church with his wife Julie, their two daughters, Haley and Lexie, and their young son, Jack, 27 years ago! Looking for a spiritual foundation for their children, they found it at First Parish!

Through the years, Dan has served in the Diaconate 3 terms, for a total of 10-12 years! (He has also served on the Christian Education and Pastoral Relations Teams.)

Dan especially enjoys serving on the Diaconate, as he values the spirituality involved with this team (which he described as feeding his soul and making him feel good), and the opportunity to interact with members of the church community.

You may see Dan preparing Communion elements with his wife, Julie, on Communion Sundays, and overseeing the washing of Communion serving pieces, (personally manning the dishwasher) following the service. Dan leads our monthly Diaconate meetings, and has conducted informative trainings for new members of the Diaconate. You may also have seen Dan recently, handing out Hershey Kisses and apples on our NameTag Sunday!

When you see Dan, please thank him for his steadfast service as a Deacon!

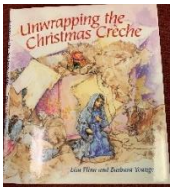
Blessings to you,
Margery Condon
Diaconate Co-Chairperson





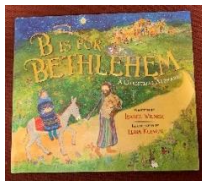
Happy December and Happy Winter Quarter. Winter Quarter begins Dec. 4th. Our Wonder Word is HOPE. This month we will share stories of Jesus' Birth. An Angel Visits Mary, An Angel Visits Joseph, Jesus is Born and the Angels Visit the Shepherds.

This is such a special time at church as we prepare for the coming of our Savior. As always there are many special programs and service opportunities for us to participate in this month.



As you start decorating for Christmas, we hope you remember the Christmas Creche. "Unwrapping the Christmas Creche" is a beautiful book by Lisa Flinn and Barbara Younger and will

be read on our Facebook and You Tube page the first Sunday of Advent, which was November 27th. This book will be read by our First Parish Christian Education Team members and our Church school teachers.



On the fourth Sunday of Advent, Dec. 18th we will be reading "B is for Bethlehem: A Christmas Alphabet" by Isabel Wilner and illustrated by Elisa Kleven.



The **Elves** are back and they are ready to help your children be thoughtful gift givers, as they shop at the Christmas Fair on **Sat. Dec. 3rd**. Children please stop by the Elf Station for help.



Our **Hat and Mitten Tree** is up and decorated with those cold weather essentials. Hats, mittens and scarves of all sizes. These items are available to anyone needing them. Thank you to **Bob Condon** for making us a new and sturdier tree. It's fabulous!!



Our **Adopt a Family** program is a wonderful opportunity to include your children in service to help provide gifts for children of our Spurwink families needing some extra help this holiday season. **Heather Hanscom** will be overseeing this holiday project. Gifts need to be wrapped and dropped off at church by Dec. 18th. Please see her in the atrium after the 10 AM worship service, Sundays Dec. 4 & 11.

On the third Sunday of Advent, (Dec.11), our Church school children will be sharing the Christmas Story through our very own **Christmas Pageant** during the 10 AM worship service. There is a Supper and Rehearsal on Friday, Dec. 9 beginning at 5:30 PM. All families are invited to attend regardless of whether your child is in the pageant or not. The Christian Education Team is providing the supper and beverages. We ask families to bring a dessert. There will be a sign up so we know how much food to purchase.



In the spirit of the season, we are asking our families to donate to our Martin Luther King Day of Service by bringing in NEW socks or underwear.

I believe the best way to focus on the true meaning of the season, is by coming to Church.

See you there,

Kris



Fellowship

GIVE THANKS OVERNIGHT was spectacular. We baked into the night, set up our Hat and Mitten Tree, organized the Thanksgiving Baskets, did other fun projects and even had time to watch a movie. Thanks to all our youth that participated. Thank you also to our Faith Community for supporting us by buying at the Bake Sale and bringing in non-perishable items. Monetary donations exceeded our expectations. We raised just under

\$1000.00 to buy Turkeys and cover expenses. Thanks, also, to the Saco Snowmobile club for donating three baskets and turkeys.



Thank you to our Flower and Altar team for the beautiful Cornucopia that was on the altar for Thanksgiving Sunday. It was gorgeous. We put together Eleven Thanksgiving Baskets.

Thank you.





Jesus says: "Let the little Children come to me" - Matthew 19:14

Helping **Lisa or Mary** in the Nursery for the month of

November was:

6th **Glenys Salas**
 13th **Cathy Baillargeon**
 20th **Lynne Siulinski**
 27th **Tracy Seymour**

The need for Nursery volunteers is always great. There is a Nursery sign-up sheet on the Christian Education board in the atrium.

It's just ONE Sunday and it makes a world of difference for parents.

Thank you.



Coming in January

Watch for your Souperbowl Subs order form in the January bulletins and on the website.



**The 14th Annual
 Martin Luther King Jr. Day of
 Service
 January 16, 2023**

Not A Day Off, but A Day On



Confirmation

Our first Confirmation class was Sunday, November 6th. We heard the UCC Statement of Faith and discussed and illustrated what is God to us. Our next class is December 6th and our topic will be Jesus. Mentors and Parents are invited to this gathering. Confirmands are: **Lucas Edstrom and Abbie Seymour.**



Baptisms

Welcome to the UCC.

November 6th

Tucker Michael Lachance

Parents: Michelle and Anthony Lachance

November 13th

Mallory Katharine Higginbottom

Parents: Lindsey and Shamus Higginbottom



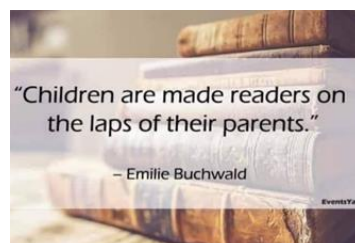
November

November 6 **Connor Remillard**

November 13 **Jo Fitzgerald**

November 20 **Cameron Wiggins-Mehlman**

November 27 **Cassie Remillard**



Flower and Altar Update

Most recently, the team met to work on our contributions for the Gingerbread Fair. We are looking forward to decorating the church for the upcoming Christmas season.

Thank you to all who ordered poinsettias for Christmas Sunday. They always make the church so beautiful.

The 2023 Altar Flower Sign Up Sheets are available outside the church office. You can also contact Patrice Tripp at 207-509-1109 or rtripp@maine.rr.com or Marcia Lord at 207-768-1699 or mvlord@aol.com

Are you new to the church and looking for a way to get more involved? Join our team and make some new friends!

Altar Flowers given for the Month of November

November 6th – Given by Phil and Dolly Curtis in honor of their 4th anniversary.

November 13th– Given by Jack and Sue Neumyer in celebration of Brad and Darcy's Wedding.

November 20th – Given by Rosemary Guptill in loving memory of Robert Guptill, Sr. and their anniversary.

November 27th – Given by Edward Olsen in memory of Great Aunt Kermis L. Jones.



Diaper Bank Update

The First Parish Diaper Bank has moved to our new Wednesday home in the Nursery on the Lower Level.

We continue to see 25-35 families each week and distribute 1500 – 2000 diapers each week.

Please keep us "on your radar" and continue to support this mission. Financial gifts are always appreciated and diaper donations are welcome; sizes 4 – 6 please.

Don't forget us! We depend on your support.

Thank you,
Pam Mohlin, Cathy Baillargeon, Heidi Byrd and Nadine Russell



One of our favorite customers...

FMI – Carol Spencer-Lemay
SpencerLemay2@gmail.com

The Mission Team Meetings are now held on the 2nd Wednesday of the month at 6:30 pm in the Parlor of First Parish Congregational Church. Join to learn more, or contact Carol SpencerLemay at spencerlemay2@gmail.com or (207) 229-1902.



Don't forget to donate to the Saco Food Pantry if you are able. The need is great.

The Saco Food Pantry is highlighting the need for the following items this month:

Hot cocoa mix

Hearty Soups/stews/chili

Pancake mix

Canned Beef Stew

Syrup

Instant Oatmeal

Please consider donating hygiene items:

hand soap	shampoo
toothpaste	toothbrushes

What is the Veterans of the Cross collection on the 4th Sunday of Advent? (Also known as the Christmas Fund)

The Veterans of the Cross has been caring for active and retired clergy and lay employees of the United Church of Christ for over 100 years, providing emergency grants, supplementation of small annuities and health premiums and Christmas 'than you' gift checks each December to our lower-income retirees. Veterans of the Cross gifts helped pay the rent for low income retired ministers and bridged the gap for one active minister's family when her husband lost his restaurant due to the COVID19 pandemic. Christmas Fund donations took care of the unexpected expense of a major car repair, helped a retired minister attend his brother's funeral and assisted in paying for daunting medical expenses, prescription costs and groceries.

This offering will be collected on December 18, 2022 but you may give at any time. Checks should be made payable to First Parish Congregational Church, Saco with Veterans of the Cross in the memo line. Or you may donate online at <https://www.pbucc.org/index.php/Christmas-fund-home>



Women's Fellowship *Gingerbread Fair*

First Parish Congregational Church
12 Beach Street Saco

Saturday, December 3rd
9am-2pm

**Featuring live instrumental
and vocal music!**

Lunch served 11:30am-1pm



First Parish Concert Series

2022

All shows begin at 7:00 pm

Tickets \$10.00

FMI visit www.firstparishsaco.org

or call 207-283-3771

June 26th
Jazz Night with
Chris Humphrey Quartet



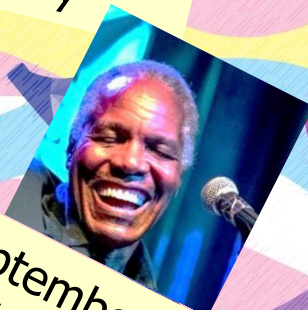
July 24th
Folk Night with
Bold Riley



August 21st
Classical Music
Joel Pierce



September 25th
An Evening with
Rodney Mashia



October
Blue Grass w/
Southern Rail



December 11th
Christmas Jazz with
Chris Humphrey
14 piece Jazz Ensemble



Last Concert for 2022!!! Join
us on December 11th! Tickets
on sale now at the FPCC
Office!

Looking for things to do in the area? Check out
www.pressherald.com/things-to-do/do-this-calendar

You can search by date, within a number of miles...
you'll be amazed at what is happening in Maine!



Tri City Community Chorus presents its Holiday Concert ... and you're invited!

by Joyce Hollman
President, Tri City Community Chorus
<https://tricitycommunitychorus.com>

As President of the Tri City Community Chorus, I'm reaching out to invite the First Parish community to attend our Winter/Holiday Concert.

As you may know, our concerts were presented at First Parish for many years, until our director became a choral teacher at Biddeford High School. This provided us with a large, COVID-safe and inexpensive space in which to rehearse and perform. Although we have a new director, we continue to present our concerts there for the time being.

We value our long-term, warm relationship with the First Parish community, and would love to see you in the audience! The concert will be held on Saturday, December 17 at 7 pm, at the Performing Arts Center at Biddeford Middle School.

Tickets can be purchased in advance for \$10 from any TCCC member, myself included. Tickets will also be sold at the door for \$12.

As usual, our 50/50 raffle and holiday gift basket raffle will make the evening even more festive!

If you have any questions about obtaining tickets or anything else, please feel free to reach out to me at 730.8610, or through our email, tricitychorus@gmail.com.

Thanks – hope to see you there! Wishing you and yours a blessed and healthy holiday season!

City of Saco Holiday Festival and Parade of Lights

December 2 and 3, 2022

<https://sacomainstreet.wixsite.com/holidayfestival>

Friday, December 2nd 5:30 pm – 6:15 pm

Christmas Tree Lighting and Caroling with cocoa at the Saco Train Station

Saturday, December 3rd

Dyer Library Crafts 9:30 am – 12:00 pm

Holiday Festival Downtown 12:00 pm – 3:00 pm

Specials at Downtown Merchants

Trolley from Saco Train Station to Museum with downtown stops along the way

Children's Ornament Crafts with Parks & Rec at City Hall

Nativity Scene at Post Office Park

Story Time with Santa and Mrs. Claus at Saco Train Station

Holiday Photo Op with colorful standees at Vic & Whit's Park

Children's Activities at The Saco Scoop

Bean Supper at Trinity Episcopal Church 4:30 pm – 6:00 pm

Parade of Lights 6:00 pm

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