

The Messenger

First Parish Congregational Church United Church of Christ
The Church with Love & Hope to Share



In observance of Independence Day the
office will be **closed on Monday July 5th.**

A vibrant illustration of a tropical island scene. In the foreground, there are lush green palm trees and various tropical flowers, including a large yellow bird of paradise flower and a red hibiscus. A white signpost is partially visible. In the background, there are more palm trees, a small body of water, and a distant island under a blue sky.

Arise!
Shine!

Your light
has come;
the LORD'S
glory has shone
upon you!
(Isaiah 60:1)



Vacation Bible School

July 6 – 9
9 am- 11:30 am

Scott Cousineau, Senior Minister
Kristine Galasyn, Director of Christian Education
Jacqueline Savage, Music Director
Nadeen DeSilva, Office Manager

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The Pastor's Perspective ...



Pride Sunday was a wonderful way to celebrate the love and affirmation that we share with the LGBTQ community. Many tears were shed during the service as we heard powerful and courageous stories and listened to beautiful music. The handprint rainbow embodied our loving embrace. I want to thank everyone that made that day and that service such a meaningful and important moment in the life of our church family.

But ... it needs to be more than a moment. Our commitment to love and embrace needs to be more than a blip on the calendar. We need to continue to live out our commitment throughout the year. There are still people in our communities that are searching for a safe place, looking for a place where they feel welcome. There are still people in our communities that believe that churches are not a safe place for them. As the grumpy character in the video that we created said, "First Parish has been Open and Affirming for years! Everybody knows that!" Yes, everyone that has found their way here has been welcomed and is loved. But what about those who have not heard? What about those who are still searching?

In addition to our new Pride group, the Deacons have spent the last year educating ourselves about racial justice and systemic racism. As we learned we realized that there is so much more to learn! Prejudice, bigotry, racism, homophobia, transphobia ... and all of the other "isms" and "phobias" have deep roots. Many of them have worked their way into our everyday lives and patterns of behavior without us realizing it. We may not ever intend to hurt our neighbors, but there are times that we do through our words, actions, or omissions. If we desire to be a loving community that welcomes all, we need to commit ourselves to the work that is necessary.

One of the gifts that churches can share is the opportunity to connect. Connect to God, connect to the Word and the Way of God, and connect to a community of faithful and loving people. Those are gifts that we have all shared as part of this church family, and they are gifts that we desire to share with everyone.

In the coming months, we will be discussing ways that we can create, strengthen, and deepen our connections. We plan to offer educational opportunities through which we can hear and share our stories. With the glimmer at the end of the COVID tunnel, we can begin to consider providing fellowship opportunities so that we can get to know one another a little bit better. If you have any ideas from previous churches or experiences, please share them with me.

We are the church with Hope and Love to share. I look forward to seeing all of the ways that we will share in the weeks and months to come!

May God bless you all!

Scott



Moderator Update



I hope you are all enjoying a wonderful and blessed summer! It is exciting to have in-person worship services again and to gather together in First Parish's beautiful sanctuary. A huge thank you to Pastor Scott and all of the dedicated FPC teams for their tireless work and dedication to creating meaningful worship services and programs that keep us connected and working together to serve God, our community, and one another.

Thank you to everyone who participated in the SWOT survey that was circulated via Survey Monkey! We received a significant number of responses, some great comments and feedback via email, and your important input will help us prioritize mission and program planning. Your council team is compiling the results, we will review them at next the council meeting at the end of June, and we will provide an update later in the summer.

In addition to Pastor Scott's exceptional spiritual leadership, First Parish Church's wonderful and impactful ministries are made possible by the people of this church family who contribute by sharing their amazing gifts and talents. I am sure we all feel a renewed sense of energy and excitement as the church continues to return to more "normalized" in-person operations. As such, we are looking forward to welcoming additional members and volunteers to FPC teams. Specifically, the Church Council would love to hear from anyone who has a professional background in marketing & media coordination, business budget management, or Maine property law. If you have this professional experience and are willing to share some insight, please email me at jenfullmer1@gmail.com.

I am looking forward to worshipping together again.

In His service,
Jen





DEACONS' CORNER

Dear Family and Friends of First Parish,

What a joy to be back in the sanctuary for worship! At our first open Sunday, June 20, we had about 35 people in addition to deacons, staff members and wonderful soloists (Denise Meiler and Peggy Blood.) If you were there, or watched it online, you know that Scott and Freddie and Jacqui cooked up a little surprise...a video skit in which Scott pretended to forget he was supposed to preach to an actual, in-person congregation. It was hilarious and definitely a fun way to bridge the gap between all on-line and limited in-person worship.

“Limited” is the key word for the next few weeks. We are still asking people to register in advance if they wish to attend in-person church, and to continue to wear masks and practice social distancing. But as the virus situation improves and guidelines change, we will change accordingly. Whether at home or in church, we invite you to continue worshipping with us all summer and be ready for a big reunion in the fall (we hope!)

Many thanks to those of you who contributed to our Dad's Diaper Day fund. Our mission has already grown and had a heartening impact on our community. If you would like to be part of this effort, please send your checks to First Parish Church, with Pastor's Discretionary Fund/Diapers on the memo line.

We are all looking forward to seeing everyone back in church in the coming weeks! Meanwhile, have a wonderful, joy-filled summer.

Love and blessings,





Many years ago, First Parish voted to become an Open and

Affirming Church. This means that not only do we welcome everyone of all genders and sexualities, but we stand true to the Christian ideals of loving everyone equally, just as Jesus asked us to do. All churches say everyone is welcome, but for many, there is an asterisk there, an asterisk especially aimed at those in the LGBTQ+ community. But not here.

Here, at First Parish in Saco, when we say we love and accept everyone, we mean it. We wholeheartedly accept that Jesus calls us to love everyone and we intend to live up to that call. First Parish is a safe place for LGBTQ+ people. A place where you can be loved. A place where you can be accepted. A place where we embrace our differences in celebration that at our core, we are all children of God, the flock of Jesus, and a church family.

In that spirit, The Christian Education Team has called for the formation of a **First Parish**

PRIDE

This group will be our way to better connect with the wider

LGBTQ+ community. FP Pride will have three main focuses: Educate the church community of issues in the LGBTQ+ Community, Outreach to the community and spread our message of love and acceptance to let people of all genders and sexualities know they are welcomed and loved at First Parish as well as help out those in need in those communities in any way we can, and Celebrate the LGBTQ+ community.

This article was in our May Messenger and written by Freddie Connelly. Last month we had our first Pride worship celebration. Our sanctuary was graced with a beautiful rainbow of handprints, signifying that we stand together and we all belong.

The Roberge family shared their journey with us. I am so proud of Cam how he told his story. How he shared from the heart what it is like for him and how his family has been there every step of the way. You are a child of God, Cam. Always remember that.



Sunday, June 27th is Open and Affirming Sunday. As we travel together on this journey of acceptance for all, let us open our hearts and minds to learn new things. On that Sunday we will be inviting people to wear pronoun buttons. This will become a regular part of our Sunday mornings together. Please join us in wearing your preferred pronouns. These buttons are to use during our worship time together and then left here. Just like our name tags. Along with the buttons we will have a list of Pride Resources, adult, youth and children books, videos and websites. We encourage our church family to read or watch any of these resources. Let us always remember that just like God's Doors are open to all, so shall our Church Doors be open to all.



See you at Church,

Kris





It seems like things just might be getting back to “normal”. In person worship began at the end of last month and this month we are

looking forward to our Vacation Bible School being in person. How exciting is that? If you have not signed up for VBS yet please do so ASAP since we begin on Tuesday, July 6.

This year VBS will be only 4 days due to the Fourth of July holiday being on a Sunday. It was a nice way to ease back into doing

things in person. **Discovery on**

Adventure Island is our VBS theme and will be held Tuesday through Friday, July 6-9, 2021, from 9-11:30 AM. We have a fabulous VBS team: **Susan Anton, Peggy Blood, Rev. Scott Cousineau, Judy and Peter Gray, Susan Marston, Danielle and Cam Roberge Nadine Russell, Madeline Sylvester Aldene Walters and Kris**

Galasyn. Our stories for the week are:

- The Creation Story (Genesis 1:1-2:9)
- Moses and the Burning Bush (Exodus 3:1-20)
- Faith Through the Roof (Luke 5:217-26)
- The “Lost” Parables (Luke 15)

Every day we will be looking for an infinity lantern that will give us our word of the day. Our time together will be one of music, Bible Stories, crafts, snack, science and recreation. We will end the day with a reflection of our time together.

Our crafters this year are Judy Gray and her granddaughter, Madeline Sylvester.

Madeline has come to VBS for many years and has now aged out. However, she is back to help lead our crafts activity for the week.

Thank you to Madeline and Judy. We can’t wait to see what crafts you picked for us to create during Discovery on Adventure Island.



We always have a service project and this year we will concentrate on putting our love into action by providing little acts of kindness.

Blankets for Church World Service

Just in case you didn’t hear.....



Thank you to everyone who contributed to Blanket Sunday, held every year on Mother’s Day. This year we brought in \$920.30 which translates to 92 blankets that will be distributed to people in need of help in all types of disasters. First Parish receives these blankets to hand out at our Martin Luther King Day of Service



Christian Education Team

pictured here, but missing Jen Erickson, had a

fun time together with food and fellowship as we shared thoughts about this past year. The team from top to bottom is Linda Lambert, Kris Galasyn, Lisa Edstrom, MarySicard, Mary Coyne, Eric Steva and Karen Brann. It was so nice to be together again. We look forward to another great program year this September



Research from the [Family Acceptance Project](#) found more than 50 family accepting behaviors help protect LGBTQ children against health risks like [#depression](#), [#suicide](#), and illegal substance use AND help to increase [#selfesteem](#), [#health](#) and [#wellbeing](#) in LGBTQ young people.

Family support truly saves lives!

Some helpful behaviors that families can practice include:

1. Tell your LGBTQ/gender diverse child that you ❤️ them.
 - .
 2. Support your child's gender
-
3. Talk with your child or foster child about their LGBTQ identity and listen respectfully -- even when you feel uncomfortable or think that being gay or transgender is wrong.
 - .
 4. Welcome your child's LGBTQ friends to your home.
 - .
 5. Use your child's chosen name and the pronoun that matches their gender identity.
 - .
 6. Talk with your religious leaders to help your congregation become supportive of LGBTQ people.
 - .
 7. Find a congregation that welcomes your LGBTQ/gender diverse child and family.

8. Require other family members to treat your child with respect.

- .
9. Bring your child to LGBTQ groups and events.
- .
10. Speak openly about your child's LGBTQ identity.
- .
11. Ask your child if--and how--you can help them tell other people about their LGBTQ identity.
- .
12. Tell your LGBTQ/gender diverse child that you will be there for them--even if you don't fully understand.
- .
13. Welcome your child's LGBTQ partner to family events and activities.
- .
14. Connect your child with LGBTQ adult role models.
- .
15. Show affection when your child tells you or when you learn that your child is LGBTQ.
- .
16. Express enthusiasm for your child having an LGBTQ/gender diverse partner when they're ready to date.
- .
17. Tell your LGBTQ/gender diverse child that you're proud of them.
- .
18. Participate in family support groups and activities for families with LGBTQ and gender diverse children to get support for yourself and your family and guidance for supporting your LGBTQ child.

19. Get accurate information and educate yourself about your child's sexual orientation, gender identity, and expression.

20. Stand up for your child when others mistreat them because of their LGBTQ identity or gender expression -- at home, at school, in your congregation and in the community.

21. Believe that your child can be a happy LGBTQ adult--and tell them they will have a good life.

Visit the Family Acceptance Project for additional resources to support an LGBTQ youth in your life. You can find them online here <https://familyproject.sfsu.edu/>



Children's

SUNDAY



First Parish Congregational Church, Saco
12 Beach Street

"Diaper Day"

DIAPER ASSISTANCE

Every Wednesday

4 - 7 PM



Good News Team

Hello First Parish,

Do you remember the last Church Directory? You know the one we did in 2015? It was a lot of work and took months to complete...



Nothing has changed in the church since then right? Well of course there has! Well, do I have **Good News** for you!

The GNT has been working on a virtual Church Directory and soon we will have an on-line Directory for our church members and friends. Changing information will be done quickly and easily, It will be password protected and there will be room for family pictures for you to share.

Plus just like in the old paper version your address, phone number and email addresses will be available. It will be, as in the past, a wonderful communication tool. Only this time the latest changes will be able available in days not years.

Please stay tuned for more information. **This is gonna be great!**

Remember when you all piled into your best friend's dad's car and went to the drive in movies? Well even if you don't remember, this summer we will get a chance to go to the Saco Drive In for a church night family Movie night. Details will be forth coming look for an e-blast in the near future!



That's it for now. Enjoy in person services and stay safe. See you soon.

Rick Campbell GNT

Flower & Altar

As I write this month's Messenger article, I look around and see how green the grass is and all the beautiful annuals and perennials around. Check out the gardens at First Parish. Guy has been working hard cleaning them up. Marcia Lord and Jim Wheater have done some additional plantings. How blessed we are!

Last month, Marcia mentioned that Flower & Altar would be starting **Weeding Wednesdays** this summer. **July dates are 7/14 & 7/28 at 10:00 AM.** We would love to have anyone who is interested join us.

How wonderful it is that we are now able to attend services in the sanctuary. If you wish to provide flowers for the altar, there is a signup sheet outside the office or contact Patrice Tripp at 207-590-1109 or rtripp@maine.rr.com or Marcia Lord at 207- 468- 1699 or mvlord@aol.com.

Thank you to all who have provided altar flowers throughout this last year.

June 6th Charles and Debra Flower Fund in Memory of Constance Clark

June 13th Bill and Martha Conlan in Memory of Irene Smith

June 20th Sue Burgess in Honor of Father's Day, Troy's Birthday, Our 40th Anniversary and the Reopening of Church!

June 27th Mari Warner in Memory of Vera and Robert Warner





A RHETORICAL QUESTION

When open,
inclusive
of all others,
all are open
inclusive
of you
no matter
how different
or alike...
isn't that how
it was meant to be?

Poem by Sandy Duross
Photo by Lynne Gaudette

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