

**The First Community Church of Southborough  
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**The Reverend Paul D. Sanderson, D.Min., Ph.D. – Pastor**  
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**February 7, 2021 – The Fifth Sunday After the Epiphany**

**Blessings, Everyone!**  
**Keeping in Touch**  
**Concerns:**

We hold in prayer:

- Our country. We stand in need of prayer for healing, for an end to the hatred that has led to the polarization of our people around political and social issues. Our tribalistic mentality needs to be replaced with a new, more inclusive, more enlightened vision of who we are as Americans, and the patience and dedication to make the true American way of life a reality for all people.
- Our world. We stand in need of a vision of world community, a world where people care about each other and where we know deep down that we are all in this together. Most of the problems that the peoples of the world face are solvable, if only we put our minds and our tremendous resources to work on them.
- Myanmar (Burma). Once again, we see a military coup overthrow a democratically elected government. And, once again, the nations of the world are reluctant to take a stand against the coup (reminding me of the world's silence when China invaded Tibet). Authoritarianism/totalitarianism is in the ascendant not only around the world but also in our own country. (BTW, what happened on January 6 in our country might be termed an insurrection, but it was technically not an attempted coup.)
- Nature. Our environment. The world in which we live. Approximately 1,000,000 little and some big animals are in danger of extinction. This is not right. The melting ice cap. Our little planet is in need of healing and tender-loving care.
- Those who are hungry or food insecure in our own country and even in our own state and town.
- The over 5,000,000 people in our country who, because of the pandemic, are newly unemployed, many of whom have lost their health insurance because it was tied to their employment (a good argument for at least having an option of obtaining health insurance that is not dependent upon one's employer).
- Those who have become seriously ill though having contracted COVID-19; families that have lost loved ones to this virus; and all those whose lives have been disrupted in serious ways because of the pandemic restrictions. BTW, being asked to wear a mask and socially distance does not qualify one to receive intercessory prayer.

- Joe Biden and Kamala Harris, our President and Vice President, and their new administration and cabinet.
- Sheila (who is a colleague of Dianne Simmons), her husband Danny, and their two sons. Danny, who contracted COVID-19 in December, remains in Hospice Care. The family thanks us for remembering them in our prayers and praying for Danny's recovery. This past week they let us know that Danny is beginning to do better.
- John, the husband of a friend of Marlene & Gil's daughter Cathy, who recently had a heart attack.
- Angie Bird and her family. Angie's father, who was only in his 60's recently passed away. Zach and Angie attended our church before they moved to Virginia.
- We are saddened by the passing of our dear friend and long-time member of this church, Pat Grogan. Pat had had a particularly bad year this past year; it was clear that it was time for her to go. Our thoughts and prayers are with her friends and family, including several members of our church who were childhood friends of Pat.

**Thank you to:**

- Jim Holmes for faithfully ringing the church bell at 11:00 a.m. every Sunday morning to remind our neighbors and the world that we are still here, and for clearing the entrance to the church after each snowstorm
- Four people who keep our church going during this pandemic period:
  - o Jim Holmes, our Church Collector, who receives your pledges and gifts, records them for tax purposes, and gives those designated to the General Fund to our Church Treasurer;
  - o Bob Farmer, our Church Treasurer, who deposits the checks and pays all our bills (when we have the money to pay them, which is not always the case and which is frustrating to Bob, who takes his job very seriously);
  - o Beverly Lees, our Mission Treasurer, who receives the mission offerings and, at the end of every month, sends a check from our church to the mission recipient; and
  - o David Crane, our Webmaster, who posts my newsletter/reflection every week as well as a cleaned-up version of my Audio Worship Service.
- Those who have already turned in their 2021 pledges to the General Fund, and those Friends of the Church who have either already sent or pledged a special gift to support us financially in the year to come.

***Note: If you have not yet turned in your pledge, please do so as soon as possible. At the present time, the total amount pledged to the support of the General Fund (the operating expenses of the church) is approximately 50% of what it was last year. It is questionable whether our church will be able to survive at this level of support.***

**COVID-19 and Sunday Worship as the Gathered Church**

I am not sure what we should do about the Annual Meeting, which is usually held the first or second weekend in February. There is not much to report from our boards and committees which have, for the most part, not met since last year's Annual Meeting. It is

also not clear how we could meet to vote on a new slate of church offers or vote on the Annual Budget. While it is theoretically possible to hold a church meeting through Zoom (I think I could set this up), we would be excluding all church members who are not comfortable with this format, and that doesn't seem right. There is no way we can meet in person, even with masks and social distancing. Our son Corey's church in Groton, after briefly meeting for worship this past December, has decided to eschew worship as the gathered church and return to a short audio service like the one we have.

I think we should basically keep the Church Budget the same as it was this year. I also hope that everyone who offered to serve on a board or committee but did not have the opportunity to do so this past year, will be willing to extend his/her term for the coming year as well. **I also hope that everyone who pledged support to the General Fund last year will renew his/her pledge for the coming year.**

<b>Birthdays</b>	
Bob Farmer	8 <sup>th</sup>
Evelyn Till	10 <sup>th</sup>
Joan Brunelle	10 <sup>th</sup>
Joyce Harrington	11 <sup>th</sup>
Thelma Oakes	11 <sup>th</sup>
Jim Holmes	13 <sup>th</sup>
Helen Varney	14 <sup>th</sup>
Jason Elias	19 <sup>th</sup>
Diane Sickles	22 <sup>nd</sup>
Cody Willman	24 <sup>th</sup>
<b>Anniversaries</b>	
Helen and Dick Varney	16 <sup>th</sup>
Marlene & Gil Joe	19 <sup>th</sup>

BTW, this coming week, Joannie Brunelle will be celebrating her 90<sup>th</sup> birthday! If you wish to send her a card commemorating this important milestone, her address is 12 Beach Street, Apt 36B, Westboro, MA 01581.

### Audio Weekly Worship Service

We are offering an abbreviated weekly worship service with a link to it on the Home page of our church website: [www.firstcommunitychurch.com](http://www.firstcommunitychurch.com). It can also be accessed from a link at the top of the Sermons page. Each service is listed by date. The reflection/homily is the reflection that is sent to those on our expanded church contact list, a list that is comprised of church members, members of our larger church family, and friends of the church who have asked to be put on our contact list. The pastor's reflection is also accessible in printed form on our website in the sermon section.

### Quote/Thought of the Day

*"Lord, please give me patience, but not strength right now. If you give me strength, I will also need bail-money."* (Unknown)

### Attention-Grabbling Church Signs

*God Gave Us  
Mouths That Close  
And Ears That Don't.  
That May Tell Us Something!*

### Kids Say the Darndest Things!

*"The people who followed the Lord were called the twelve opossums."*

### **Worship Service Music**

Several people have asked for information about the Preludes in the Audio Worship Service. This week's Prelude is the well-known cantata, *Jesu, Joy of Man's Desiring*, performed by the Orpheus Chamber Orchestra on a Deutsche Grammaphon recording. This cantata was written in 1723, while Bach was organist at Thomaskirche in Leipzig; It is the 10<sup>th</sup> movement of Cantata #147, Herz und Mund und Tat und Leben, which was originally designed to be performed on the last Sunday of Advent. Some believe that a more accurate translation of the text written by the lawyer/poet Salomo Franck should be "Jesus remains my joy, my heart's comfort and essence," rather than "Jesu, joy of man's desiring."

### **Missions:**

Our mission recipient for the month of February is the Pastoral Counseling Centers of Massachusetts. Located in Westborough, this pastoral counseling service provides counseling/psychotherapy to individuals regardless of their ability to pay. Our church has supported their mission both financially and through representation on their Board of Directors since long before I came to this church. From time to time, we have had members of their staff come and speak to us during worship about the importance of providing counseling that is sensitive to people's religious background and spiritual issues as well as psychological issues.

If you would like to help us support this ministry, please send your check to First Community Church and indicate that you would like it to be in support of the Pastoral Counseling Centers of Massachusetts.