

*KEEPING IN TOUCH!!
SEPTEMBER 2023*

The First Community Church of Southborough

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The Reverend Paul D. Sanderson, D.Min., Ph.D. – Pastor

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NOTE—

Beginning Sunday, September 3, we will return to our regular time of Sunday morning worship—11:00 a.m.

Beginning Sunday, September 10, we will resume our Sunday morning Bible study at 9:15 a.m.

Beginning Tuesday, September 12, we will resume our Tuesday afternoon Spiritual Study & Growth Group at 2:30 p.m.

The Pastor's Message

Greetings, Everyone!

This communication marks the resumption of our on-line newsletter, through which we will be reaching out to you every month. (Actually, there is no independent entity that could be called "we" to reach out to you; each and every one of us is part of the "we" that is our church—so we are actually reaching out to each other! But that's not the point!—or perhaps it is the point!)

We have just concluded a little more than a year of meeting together as the "gathered church" for worship in our sanctuary on Sunday mornings. It feels so good to be in each other's

presence, to feel connected, to extend greetings to each other, and to welcome new attendees with open arms and actual hugs! It feels so good to join in the rituals of worship that have come to mean so much to us over the years, over the decades. It feels so good to have Michael back at the organ—and at the grand piano that was graciously donated to our church by David Park, a “friend of the church.” We celebrate Jim Duncan and his wife, Linda, who have enriched our fellowship and our music; Jim fills in as our regular substitute organist on those Sundays when Michael is away, and Jim and Linda have shared several organ-piano duets as preludes or postludes for our worship. It has been wonderful to have our choir: Jim Holmes, Cheryl Holmes, Darlene Sanderson, and new members Cathy Ambler and Emma Gohlke back in the choir loft and once again enriching our worship!

I have been pleasantly surprised (as an introvert) to rediscover how much our worship as the gathered church has meant to me this past year. The past two months, we simplified our worship service and also our worship bulletins. Believe me when I say that we have missed Bob L’Heureux, who is still recovering from knee replacement surgery. We have missed his presence on Sunday mornings, in our study groups, and for his creativity in constructing our Sunday bulletins, which he has been doing for many, many years. Hurry back, Bob! Sunday morning worship is definitely one of the cornerstones of our identity as a church, one of the cornerstones of our fellowship. If you haven’t yet returned from your pandemic lockdown mentality, I encourage you to do so! Sometimes we don’t know the value of an action, a gathering, until it is taken away—and then returned to us!

Corey and I have just returned from a week attending the 2023 Parliament of World Religions, which was held in Chicago this year. This was an amazing conference, attended by over 7,000 people from 95 countries representing over 210 religious traditions from around the world. The theme was *A Call to Conscience: Defending Freedom, and Human Rights*. I look forward to sharing all I experienced and learned from this conference in my sermons throughout the coming year!

The crisp fall-like air of the past few weeks reminds us that we are entering into an exciting time in the church year! Through this monthly newsletter we will be keeping in touch, keeping you apprised of all that is happening and will be happening in our little church! We pray that you will be with us in person as well as in spirit in the days to come!

Faithfully yours,

Paul Sanderson

You will never speak to anyone more than you speak to yourself in your head.

So be kind to yourself.

Anonymous

LOOKING AHEAD...

Sunday, September 3, we will return to our regular time of Sunday morning worship—11:00 a.m.

Sunday, September 10, we will resume our Sunday morning Bible study at 9:15 a.m.

This past year we began our study of the Gnostic gospels, specifically the Gospel of Thomas. When we meet on September 10, we will decide as a group whether we would like to continue our study of this gospel, with its unique perspective on the person and teachings of Jesus, or whether we will study another book of the Bible.

Tuesday, September 12, we will resume our Tuesday afternoon Spiritual Study & Growth Group at 2:30 p.m.

This past year we began our study of the writings of the German mystic Meister Eckhart as presented through the translations and commentaries of Matthew Fox. When we meet on

September 12, we will decide as a group whether we will continue our study of this amazing man and his theology, or whether we would like to explore something different.

Rally Day—Sunday, September 10

Although we will resume gathering at 11:00 a.m. for Sunday morning worship beginning September 3, we traditionally celebrate Rally Day, a time of coming together as one of the many beginnings of our church year on the first Sunday after Labor Day. Please join us for worship and fellowship!

Re-Covenanting Sunday—October 1

On Re-Covenanting Sunday, the 26th anniversary of Reverend Sanderson's call to be the settled pastor of our church, we will renew our covenant to each other as pastor and parishioners and we will renew our covenant with our church.

Stewardship Sunday—November 19

Stewardship Sunday will once again be celebrated in conjunction with Thanksgiving Sunday. On this day we consecrate our pledges of financial support to the General Fund, the operating expenses of our church. Your pledge, the sharing of your time, talent, and treasure, makes you a fundamental part of our life and mission as a church. You will be receiving a missive from the Stewardship & Growth Committee as well as a pledge card prior to Stewardship Sunday. We can't emphasize enough how much we need your help as we try to emerge from the difficulty of the past few years!

An Empty Seat . . .

We were deeply saddened to learn of the unexpected death of Bill Guenon this past month. Bill and Ursula, who passed from us two years ago, were a treasured part of our church family. Bill will be greatly missed by his children, his grandchildren, his Air Force comrades/friends, and those of us in First Community Church who loved his quiet sense of humor, his personal depth, and all he did for our church through his membership on the Board of Trustees.

Reverend Sanderson officiated at Bill's funeral service in Milton and his interment in the National Cemetery in Bourne. Since many of you were unable to attend these services because of distance, if you would like a copy of the Words of Remembrance that Reverend Sanderson shared, please contact him directly by email and he will send you a copy.

Bill's passing was a poignant reminder of those members of our church family who have entered into the nearer presence of God since the beginning of the pandemic:

Pat Grogan

Bill Guenon

Ursula Guenon

Bud Hubley

Shirley Hutchinson

Gil Joe

Don Jolie

Rae Kay

Thelma Oakes

They are deeply missed. Our prayers are with their loved ones in their time of grief.

New Members

Since our last newsletter, we welcomed the following new members into full communion with our church:

Cathy Ambler

Rick Belejack

Jack Bennett

Emma Gohlke

Emily Harris

Alan Towne

We welcome these new members and celebrate all they are already bringing to our little church!

Invitation to Prospective New Members

We will be welcoming new members into full fellowship with our church this fall. If you are considering becoming even more a part of the life, fellowship, and mission of our church, please contact Reverend Sanderson.

Birthdays in September

Zachary Webster	9 th
Paul Sanderson	16 th
Marlene Joe	22 nd

Anniversaries in September

Jim & Cheryl Holmes	3 rd
Lou & Jennifer Dundin	13 th
Walter & Nancy Hite	26 th

With all our new members, our listing of birthdays and anniversaries is woefully outdated. Please update Reverend Sanderson on your special celebrations so we can bring our list up to date. And remember—people like to be remembered with a phone call, text, or email on their special days!

The Church in the World

One of the insights that came from the plenary sessions and the many workshops of the 2023 Parliament of World Religions is articulated in the following quote from an unknown author.

Peacemaking doesn't mean passivity. It is the act of interrupting injustice without mirroring injustice, the act of disarming evil without destroying the evildoer, the act of finding a third way that is neither fight nor flight but the careful, arduous pursuit of reconciliation and justice. It is about a revolution of love that is big enough to set both the oppressed and the oppressors free.