

KEEPING IN TOUCH!!
NOVEMBER 2023

The First Community Church of Southborough

137 Southville Road

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

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NOTE!!

Our Sunday worship service begins at 11:00 a.m. Please stay for coffee, refreshments, and fellowship following the worship service.

Sunday, November 5 is Communion Sunday. All are welcome to share in the Sacrament of Holy Communion.

The Pastor's Message

Greetings, Everyone!

This is a wonderful time of year in our little church! Our boards and committees are up and running. Saturday evening, October 28, as we continue our recovery from the pandemic lockdown and our slow return to “normal,” we will be holding the first potluck supper that we have had in approximately five years—and the number attending promises to match the number that attend Sunday worship (not unusual for an “eating church” like ours)! This Sunday, October 29 is Reformation Sunday (wear red!), and the first Sunday in November we observe All

Saints & All Souls Sunday, where, in the true spirit of communion, we both remember and celebrate the presence of loved ones who have entered what has been called "the nearer presence of God." This is a beautiful and moving service. We also have several new people who will be joining our church in December!

We are going through difficult times as a nation and as a world. Our hearts are deeply troubled by how the ongoing invasion of Ukraine, the displacement of Armenians in Azerbaijan, the terrorist attack of Israel and the taking of hostages by Hamas, and the Israeli shelling and invasion of Gaza in response are killing, wounding, or displacing millions of innocent civilians. It seems that we have lost all sense of humanity, all sense of restraint. And we need to be vigilant in securing the safety of our own citizens from outbursts of antisemitism and Islamophobia.

There is a Zen Koan that speaks to me at times like these. It asks, "When there is nothing that you can do, what can you do?" That is how I feel at times, especially those times when I find myself unable to discern how God is working in such a broken and hurting world. But the koan, if nothing else, calls me back to my true Centre. If I can do nothing else, I can do that. And I believe that if I can't find peace within myself, there is no way that I will be able to help bring peace to a nation and a world that desperately needs it.

That is what we do in this little church. We welcome *everyone* into a community of seekers, and we encourage everyone to share his/her/their gifts with this church and in our little corner of the world. And we pray.

I encourage you to join us in any way you can. Let the fellowship for which our little church is known shape you deeply and give you resources for the living of a loving and joyous life!

Faithfully yours,
Paul Sanderson

We try to evade the question [of existence] with property, prestige, power, production, pleasure, and, ultimately, by trying to forget that we—that I--- exist. No matter how often we think of God or go to church, or how much we believe in religious ideas, if, as a whole person, we are deaf to the question of existence, if we do not have an answer to it, we are marking time, and we live and die like one of the million things we produce. We think of God instead of experiencing God.

Erich Fromm

LOOKING AHEAD...

Sunday, November 5 is Communion Sunday.

Sunday, November 5 is also All Saints/All Souls Sunday

On this day, immediately preceding our communion service, we enter into the sacred space of remembrance. We remember those near and dear to us who have entered into what the Episcopal church brilliantly calls "the nearer presence of God." During this service, we will read the names that you have submitted to us on 3x5 cards at the beginning of the worship service. Reverend Sanderson will also share brief Words of Remembrance for those members of our church family who have died during the past year, and our choir will sing "Remember the Souls," an anthem written by our own Darlene Sanderson and Michael Larson. This is a beautiful, meaningful, and touching service of celebration for those who have been an important part of our life and a grieving that they are no longer with us in human form.

Sunday, November 19 is Thanksgiving Sunday/Stewardship Sunday

Stewardship Sunday is celebrated in conjunction with Thanksgiving Sunday as an expression of our thanksgiving for our church and a renewal of our commitment to its life and mission. 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. 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!

Sunday, December 3 is the First Sunday of Advent

Advent is a time in the liturgical calendar that we set aside to prepare ourselves for the celebration and (hopefully) the experience of Christmas. In keeping with our traditional themes of Advent: hope, peace, joy, love, and light Reverend Sanderson's weekly sermons this Advent season will be entitled, "The Answer to Fear is Hope/Peace/Joy/Love and Light.

Growing in the Faith

Sunday morning Bible study meets at 9:30 a.m. on the 2nd, 3rd, and 4th Sundays of each month.

This year we are reading and discussing the Gospel of Mark, the first of the three synoptic gospels to be written. We welcome everyone, no matter what your religious background, no matter whether you are "biblically literate" or not to an exploration of the picture of Jesus that is presented to us by John Mark, a disciple of Peter.

Tuesday afternoon Spiritual Study & Growth Group meets every Tuesday at 2:30 p.m.

We are presently concluding our study of the 13th century German mystic Meister Eckhart by reading Matthew Fox's comparison of Eckhart, Thich Naht Hanh, and C.

G. Jung's teachings about God and the human soul. At our final meeting in December, we will decide what/whom we will read next.

We have approximately ten people who attend regularly—and each contributes to our excellent discussions. If you have never attended one of our study groups, give us a try—we're not that bad!

Welcoming New Members

We will be welcoming five new members into full fellowship with our church during Sunday morning worship one of the Sundays in Advent. We are really excited about having these people, who are already an integral part of our fellowship, become full members! We already have a sense of what they bring to our community, and we hope to play an ever-deepening role in their own spiritual development in the years to come.

Birthdays in November

Beverly Lees	12 th
Emma Gohlke	21 st
Sharon Willman	26 th

Anniversaries in November

Ron & Diane Sickles	8 th
Paul & Darlene Sanderson	18 th

Congratulations!!

Congratulations to our two recent nonagenarians—Carole Jolie and Bob L'Heureux! And also, deep gratitude to each of them for lives well lived. The world is definitely a better place with the two of you around!

Bob, our Deacon Emeritus, is presently recovering from his second knee replacement this year—so he probably won't be dancing on any tables this coming Monday, October 30. We look forward to having him back with us as soon as he recovers.

Thank You!

Thank you to the Stewardship and Growth Committee for organizing our Saturday night potluck supper!

Thank you to everyone who has been contributing to the United Parishes of Southborough Food Pantry, which is housed at Pilgrim Church. The food pantry presently serves approximately 75 families from Southborough who are food insecure. Thanks to our two representatives to the United Parishes of Southborough Lay Council, Jim Holmes and Dianne Simmons, and also to Darlene Sanderson and Cheryl Holmes, for organizing the "Food Item of the Week" program. By letting our parishioners know what food item or other necessity is most needed by the pantry every week, our Food Pantry donation box has been filled to overflowing! This, by the way, has caught the attention of Lay Council representatives from other Southborough churches. I know it's not a competition to see who gives the most per capita, but if it were . . . Our church rocks!

By the way, just for November, thanks to Cheryl's help we are concentrating on "Thanksgiving Fixins." Stewardship will send out an email to those of you who attend worship or who are in our area listing two items associated with Thanksgiving dinner. Donations of one or both items are appreciated, as well as donations of diapers, pet food, paper goods, and gift cards to grocery stores. Anything and everything is appreciated—but please check expiration dates on food items.

Thank you to all who provide a variety of delicious and nutritious goodies for our legendary coffee hour (or two) that follows our worship service every Sunday. This time set aside to just be together, a time that is also being utilized by several boards or committees for their monthly meetings, is an important part of our Sunday morning experience as the "gathered church!"

The Church in the World

Despite the numerous wars, invasions, and slaughters of the innocents that are recorded in the Old Testament of our Bible (and are often attributed to, instigated by, or brought about by Yahweh), we know that, as Christians, if we take on the heart and mind of Jesus, we will do everything we can to avoid inflicting unnecessary suffering on our fellow human beings, on all sentient beings.

However, there are times when we do need to fight for something we believe is right, for a just cause, or to protect ourselves or those who are not capable of protecting themselves against someone who threatens to harm us. Throughout the centuries, the concept of a "Just War" which emerged contains (at least) the following:

1. The conflict must be defensive in nature; it must be undertaken to defend our country, our people, or people around the world that are too weak to defend themselves against an aggressor.
2. The forces of power must be directed against the forces of power—armies should fight armies; armies should not inflict devastation on innocent civilians. Civilians should not be targets of violence; they must be protected by both sides.
3. We should never use more force than is necessary to achieve our goal. This is why the "nuclear option" is not an option.
4. We should not mistreat prisoners of war.

5. We should not execute either civilians or enemy combatants over whom we have power and control.
6. We should not conscript children or others into our armed forces.
7. We should not use civilians as human shields.
8. We should not deprive civilians of food, water, hospitals, medicines, and protection from the elements.
9. We should not force mass evacuations of civilians, making them refugees from their homeland, as a way of gaining control over a piece of land.
10. We should make every effort not to bomb hospitals, churches, museums, or residential areas.
11. We should make peace, a just peace, with our enemy as soon as possible, and work for reconciliation and the rebuilding of what has been torn down as soon as the conflict is ended.
12. We should abide by these guidelines even if our enemy does not do so.

The Zen master Thich Naht Hahn was asked whether he, an avowed pacifist, would protect himself were his best friend to attack him with a knife. He answered that he would, for not to protect himself would be to dishonor himself as an incarnation of God's creative spirit. He said he would fight with his friend with the end of taking the knife away from him. However, when he had obtained the knife and rendered his friend incapable of inflicting further harm, he would not stab his friend with the knife. He could not do this because he knows that for a fellow human being to attack him, that person could not possibly be in his/her/their right mind. His ultimate goal, therefore, is to help the person regain their right mind, and any unnecessary violence or retribution on his part would not be in the service of this end.

We may have to fight with someone whom we identify as our enemy, but we do not have to hate them or dehumanize them. We need to remember that we are all children of God, and that the goal of responding to our brothers' or sisters' insanity

is to restore them to their right mind and to restore them to a peaceful, loving relationship with all humanity.

As we watch what is unfolding in Ukraine and the Middle East, we wish more nations would abide by the Just War guidelines or the teachings of Jesus and this gentle Zen master.