

# KEEPING IN TOUCH!!

April 2024

## **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, April 7 is Communion Sunday. In our church, everyone is invited and is welcome to share in the Sacrament of Holy Communion.**

### ***The Pastor's Message***

Greetings!

As I write this, it is just a little more than “brisk and invigorating” outside! It reminds me that there is a difference between the first day of spring and the first spring day. Something out there seems to be holding onto winter.

Easter has come and gone—or has it? We have never had more perfect weather for the United Parishes of Southborough Easter sunrise service by the side of the lake in Hopkinton. The lake was like glass; there was no wind; and the sun rose in the east (as it usually does) just as we sang the opening hymn. Our own worship service was also special with the sanctuary adorned with lilies and the standing cross which has continued to evolve throughout Lent to the symbol of resurrection that it presents to us today.

I would like to share the following poem with you because it speaks of an Easter that we can experience not as a day in the liturgical calendar, but also as a spiritual experience. The poem is anonymous; I have taken the liberty of adapting it in several places. It is in the form of a prayer.

*Lord,*

*Send me a surprise,  
one that catches me off guard  
and makes me wonder . . .  
like Easter.*

*Send me a glimpse of new life emerging in the world and in me,  
when everything around me looks dead  
and buried.*

*Send me a light,  
when the night about me,  
the night that surrounds me, the night within me  
seems too long, too dark.*

*Send me spring,  
when the cold and frozen seasons of the year,  
and of life,  
seem too long.*

*Send me a new idea, a spark of creativity,  
creativity in what really matters,  
creativity in my everyday life,  
when my mind  
and my spirit  
feel empty.*

*Send me something to do,  
something important to do in my everyday life,  
when I am just hanging around.*

*Send me a new friend,  
or someone who could become a new friend,  
when I am alone.*

*Send me peace, the experience of peace, a deep commitment to peace,  
when I am at war  
with myself,  
with other people,  
and with life.*

*Send me a future,  
a future that will help me believe  
in the importance of the present,  
of what I do today.*

*Send me a resurrection,  
a rebirth that arises through the grace of God from the ashes of  
the many deaths that I experience in this life,  
and the many deaths I need to experience.*

*Lord,  
send me a surprise,  
one that catches me off guard,  
and makes me wonder . . .  
like Easter.*

Be with us in the weeks to come as we move toward the new life that emerges in the spring and to the resurrection experience of Easter!

Faithfully yours,  
Reverend Paul Sanderson

### **Interesting (and informative) Quotes**

Our VBB (very best buddy) Henri Nouwen has written the following about the spiritual journey and what he calls “the treasure of God’s love.”

*You have found a treasure: the treasure of God's love. You know now where it is, but you are not yet ready to own it fully. So many attachments keep pulling you away. . . . Having found the treasure puts you on a new quest for it. The spiritual life is a long and often arduous search for what you have already found. You can seek God only when you have already found God. The desire for God's unconditional love is the fruit of having been touched by that love.*

Nouwen goes on to say,

*A newfound love needs to be nurtured in a quiet, intimate space.*

I have a sense that he is talking about prayer and worship.

Think about it . . .

## **LOOKING AHEAD . . .**

**Sunday, May 5 – We celebrate Jesus' ascension into heaven**

**Sunday, May 19 – The Day of Pentecost (Whitsunday)**

**Sunday, May 26 – Trinity Sunday**

## **Church Activities**

Sunday, April 14 – The Investment Committee will meet

Saturday, April 20 at 6:00 p.m. – We will be gathering in the vestry for a pot-luck supper! Please check the board in the vestry to help guide you in your selection of what to bring!

Sunday, April 25 at 9:30 a.m. – Diaconate Meeting

## **Pot-Luck Supper!**

The Stewardship & Growth Committee is looking forward to hosting our next pot-luck supper on **Saturday, April 20<sup>th</sup> at 6:00 p.m.** We collated the results

from the survey we handed out asking for your choices/wish list of church events, and a pot-luck supper was at the top of the list!

There will be a sign-up sheet in the vestry. We need to know how many are coming and what you'd like to bring so we can plan and set up.

Please join us! And bring a friend!

### ***Growing in the Faith!***

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

We are currently reading a book by the Reverend Peter Stilla entitled *Naturally Miraculous*. This is an excellent (and very readable) introduction and entrance into a deeper understanding and appreciation of the mystical root, the mystical source of Christianity, and the heart of Jesus' teaching. Peter, who is a friend of our Pastor and who serves a Christian Universalist church in western Massachusetts, has offered to meet with our study group. (We are secretly preparing a list of tough questions for him!)

No matter where you are on your faith journey, we can assure you that you belong with us! We are all beginners; we are all seeking to grow in the faith; we have some great discussions, and we love being a part of each other's spiritual growth!

### ***Birthdays in April***

Lou Dundin	1 <sup>st</sup>	
Ron Sickles	7 <sup>th</sup>	
Skip Willman		17 <sup>th</sup>

***Thank You!!***

**Thank you** to Carole Jolie, one of our new members who has already adopted the guiding principle of participating in our church: “When you see something that needs to be done, do it!” “When you see something that we need, provide it!” Carol recently purchased a (badly needed) new toilet for our vestry and had it installed. Thank you, Carole! (Thankfully, we will refrain from holding a special celebration of its installation by gathering around the bathroom and singing every hymn we can find that makes reference to “the throne.”)

**Thank you** to everyone who is contributing to the United Parishes of Southborough Food Pantry, which is housed at Pilgrim Church. The food pantry presently serves approximately 75 families (161 individuals) from Southborough who are food insecure. Thanks to Jim Holmes, Dianne Simmons, Cheryl Holmes, and Darlene Sanderson, there is a container in our narthex to receive our contributions every week. You should be receiving an email from Darlene each week letting you know what food or other items (diapers, laundry detergent, etc.) are especially needed.

**Thank you** to Linda Duncan who is creating and printing our Sunday morning and other special worship bulletins.

**Thank you** to the readers, the choir, and the communion servers for making our Maundy Thursday Tenebrae service so special.

**Thank you** to Bob L’Heureux for the many, many years that he created and printed our Sunday bulletins and the bulletins for all our special services. Bob, as you know, is our Deacon Emeritus.

**Thank you** to all who have offered to serve on boards or committees or in appointed positions for this coming year. We are off to a good start!

**Thank you! Thank you! Thank you!** to all who responded to our Stewardship Appeal by pledging to support First Community Church for the coming year! As of the time of our annual meeting, members of our church family had pledged \$31,280 to the General Fund (our operating expenses) for the coming year. This represents an increase of \$1,600, 5.4% higher than it was in 2023! The number of pledging units also increased by 1 to a total of 17. The *average* amount pledged per week for the coming year will be \$35.38—an excellent degree of support for a church of our size and demographic!

**BTW**, this is the highest amount pledged since 2018! We are now back higher than we were when we entered into the pandemic shutdown!

**BTW**, it's not too late for YOU to make your pledge! We still need to draw from our Investment Fund each year to cover the deficit. Whatever you can do to help will be greatly appreciated!

**BTW**, this past year the members of our church contributed \$4,080 to our twelve mission recipients!

## **Prayer Concerns**

*“The prayer of faith will save the sick; therefore, pray for one another so that you may be healed. The prayer of the righteous is powerful and effective.”*

(James 5)

**Kathy**, Diane Hagan's niece, who had a serious reaction to the antibiotic administered to treat an infection and ended up with burns over 80% of her body. She is in stable condition and is recovering.

**Andy**, Dianne Simmons's cousin in Florida, who is transitioning from this life to the next.

**Michael V**, a good friend of Michael Larson and a fellow organist. Michael V. is struggling with cancer, and the intense chemotherapy he is receiving is making it impossible for him to continue to share the music he loves with others.

**Mike** -- Teresa Boyce's daughter's boyfriend unexpectedly passed away from a sudden heart attack at age 28.

**Cathy**— is still receiving treatments for a serious post-shingles condition in both eyes; surgery remains a possibility.

**Benny** -- Darlene's cousin, has just had his third surgery this week. In addition to complications from abdominal infections and abscesses, he now has congestive heart failure and is very weak.

**Emily** – is going through a difficult time. She had a strong reaction to an infusion of iron, which she needs, and ended up in the ER.

**Ed** – a colleague of Paul who has a subdural hematoma resulting from a recent bad fall. He is doing better and may be able to avoid having to have brain surgery.

### ***Making Music!***

Would you like to make music? Would you like to make special music that touches your soul and contributes to our Sunday morning worship? There is a place for you in our church choir! Rehearsals are held on most Tuesday afternoons at 4:30 p.m. – right after Spiritual Study & Growth Group meets. Make it an afternoon!!



## ***The Church in the World***

We have recently been hearing or reading about the emergence of a particularly virulent form of Avian Influenza-- the bird flu. In addition to having killed approximately fifty million wild birds (a terrible loss!), it has spread to other species. It has spread to mammals, causing the death of tens of thousands of seals and sea lions along our coast and the coast of South America. There has been one reported case of a human being infected, though there is no evidence that it has yet to be transmitted from human to human.

Have we learned anything from how we, as individuals, as states, as a nation, and as a world, handled the coronavirus over the past four years? The polarization and politicization of our people, along with ubiquitous misinformation and disinformation, “information” consciously intended to deceive, has made it difficult for us to respond in a constructive manner to situations like this as they arise. But what was also missing quite often was the willingness to make sacrifices that scientists and medical experts told us we needed to make for the common good.

Jesus taught that we have to move past ourselves to think of others. We need to feel not only a deep compassion for our brothers and sisters (and also little animals) around the world; we need to feel a deep commitment to make whatever sacrifices we need to make for the common good.

Let us pray that we will meet whatever challenges life brings to us as people of faith. Remember, if there is one lesson we learned these past four years, it is that we are all in this together.