

# KEEPING IN TOUCH!!

May 2024

## **The First Community Church of Southborough**

137 Southville Road

Southborough, Massachusetts 01772-1937

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, May 5 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 missive, we are slowly and meaningfully making our way through the liturgical season of Easter. This is a time when we reflect on the disciples' experiences of their risen Lord—at the tomb, in the Upper Room, on the road to Emmaus, and by the side of the lake.

The fifty days between Easter and Pentecost are rich with meaning—not only historically, but also in our own lives, in our own spiritual journeys, in our own relationship with our risen Lord. This Sunday we celebrate Ascension Day, which occurred forty days after Easter, and open our hearts to its teaching about heaven, about where heaven is, about where Jesus is. Then, fifty days after Easter, we celebrate Pentecost, the moment when the disciples became aware of the Holy Spirit among them and within them. From that point on,

they knew that they could never be separated from their Lord. Then, following Pentecost, on Trinity Sunday we deepen our understanding of what has been called “God’s Crazy Math,” how God can be both three and also One.

We pray that you will be with us in the weeks to come as we move toward the new life that emerges in the spring, and as you enter more deeply into the resurrection experience of Easter!

Faithfully yours,

Reverend Paul Sanderson

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

*“When the power of love overcomes the love of power, the world will know peace.” (Jimi Hendrix)*

*“The most valuable possession you own is an open heart. The most powerful weapon you can be is an instrument of peace.” (Carlos Santana)*

Let us be the peace that we seek in our nation and the world.

### **LOOKING AHEAD . . .**

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

**Sunday, May 12 – Mother’s Day**

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

**Sunday, May 26 – Trinity Sunday**

### **SUMMER WORSHIP – BEGINS JUNE 23 at 10:30!**

This summer First Community Church and Pilgrim Church, our sister church across town, will once again be participating in what our pastor has dubbed the “Pony Express Ministry.” For five weeks this summer, Charley Eastman of Pilgrim Church will lead worship at Pilgrim Church at 9:30 a.m., then ride across town to lead worship at First Community at 10:30 a.m.—

preaching the same sermon in both churches. The other five weeks, our pastor will do the same. The organists at both churches will also split the ten weeks of summer—playing at both churches.

We at First Community Church have a long and treasured relationship with Pilgrim Church. Our pastor served as pastor at Pilgrim Church from 1969-1972, and we have several members of our sister church who attend our Tuesday afternoon Spiritual Study and Growth Group as well as other church functions. By resuming this Pony Express Ministry, in addition to strengthening ties between our churches and giving our pastors some time off at no expense to their church, each church gets to know the pastor at the other church. This could be helpful should that pastor be called upon in the event of a pastoral emergency.

The theme of our summer preaching will be interesting people in the Bible.

**Please note the change in time: starting Sunday, June 23, our worship service will begin at 10:30 a.m.**

### ***Church Activities***

On Sunday, April 28, Finley Ray Hubley, son of Justin and Mary Hubley, received the Sacrament of Baptism in our sanctuary surrounded by family and the community of faith that welcomed him into the Christian church. Justin is the grandson of Bud and Martha Hubley, and the entire Hubley family have been an important part of our church through many decades. Our prayers are with Finley and his parents as together they grow in the faith within the welcoming, supportive, comforting community that we know as the Christian church.

It was so good to have Martha with us for the baptism! We miss her!

***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 May***

Cricket Port	10 <sup>th</sup>
Jan Bishop	13 <sup>th</sup>
Scott Webster	15 <sup>th</sup>
Rick Belejack	18 <sup>th</sup>
David Crane	23 <sup>rd</sup>

### ***Stewardship Moment***

The Stewardship Committee is happy to support the Southborough Food Pantry as one of our missions. Dianne Simmons, a member of the committee and a volunteer at the food pantry, updates me regularly on specific needs, enabling me to send out a weekly email to all of you with specific requests. You kindly donate items by leaving them in the "grocery cart" in the narthex on Sunday mornings. Dianne or Jim Holmes delivers them to the food pantry. It's a simple process that's working very well!

Are you curious about the people who visit the food pantry? Who are these neighbors in need? Why do they need our help?

It might surprise you to learn that more than a million Massachusetts residents receive SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program) benefits. **More than 33 percent are in working families.** Fifteen percent of the state's population (1,024,000 people), or **one in seven Massachusetts residents**, receive benefits!! We all feel the bite of inflation (pun intended)! I think we all know that some of us are able to adjust to the rising cost of food easier than others.

Food stamp recipients represent different races and/or ethnicities. White 37%, African American 26%, Hispanic 16%, Asian 3%, Native American, 2%.

When I was four years old, my mother made a brave and necessary, maybe even a life-saving decision, to leave her abusive husband/my biological “father.” One day after he left for work, she grabbed me and what clothes and photos she could carry, and we ran to my grandparents’ house where we would be safe. Eventually she got a restraining order, and a parttime job, and we moved to small apartment.

Trust me. The “apartment” wasn’t much! My “father” rarely sent the court ordered child support payments. We eagerly checked the mail for the weekly support check, but it rarely came. My mother had to take him to court over and over again, and that cost money. My mother HAD to do what she tried NOT TO DO. She signed up for assistance.

I was too young to know how it worked. I don’t know if she/we received food stamps or a voucher. What I do know is how she grateful she was for the little help she received. But I also remember how embarrassed she was, how determined she was to work more hours so she could stop receiving help.

I remember a cashier telling my mom that some grocery item she wanted to buy wasn’t acceptable with the voucher, so she had to leave the item with the cashier. That was embarrassing! There were times I lied and created stories

for my friends about my family situation because I was so embarrassed by the truth. My mom did the best she could, but sometimes it just wasn't enough. Eventually she found a better job and we were able to get by without assistance.

I don't know who needs to use our local food pantry. I don't need to know; I'm just glad it's there! I'm also happy that we at First Community Church are helping in our small but very significant way.

I hope the people who visit the Southborough Food Pantry do not feel shame in doing so. I just hope that someday those who need the assistance now will be able to offer it gratefully to others in the future.

Darlene

### ***Thank You!!***

**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 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!

**Reminder**--it's not too late for YOU to make your pledge! At present, we continue to draw from our Investment Fund to cover the budget 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! That is approximately 15% of what our members pledged to the General Fund. If we did not reach out to those in great need, as we do, we would not be a church.

### **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)

**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, is doing much better and thanks us for our prayers. After five weeks in the hospital, he is now happy to be at home and is slowly regaining his strength.

**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.

## ***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***

The ongoing war in the Middle East is troubling. The two “sides” are polarized, which means they split the world into “good guys” and “bad guys.” A depth psychologist might conclude that each side is projecting its shadow onto the other, accusing the other of acts of terrorism and crimes against humanity that they are perpetrating as well.

As we know, when we project our shadow onto “the other,” whether the other is an individual, a group, a race, a religion, a people, or a nation, our honest self-reflection is radically diminished; we lose touch with a healthy sense of humility; and we forget that we are all children of God. Both sides could benefit from entering into an honest and searching prayer of confession.

Jesus tells us to take the beam from our own eye; then we have a better chance of helping our brother to remove the speck that is in his eye.

Both the Israelis and Hamas have committed atrocities, crimes against humanity, and both harbor genocidal aspirations as evidenced in both their words and their actions. This makes it difficult for our government and other governments because the two sides do not need the unconditional support they seek; they both need to be restored to their right mind. Even on university campuses, the protests in support of each side are so polarized that participants cannot dialogue with each other, cannot listen to each other, cannot respect each other, cannot understand each other, and cannot work together for peace.

The two sides desperately need to listen to each other, try to understand each other, and work together to create a solution where both sides, both



peoples can live in safety, in peace, and can experience the fruits of self-determination.

From what we know of Jesus, we suspect that what is happening to the people of Israel and Gaza doesn't make him happy. He expects more; he expects better of us.