

KEEPING IN TOUCH!!

February 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, February 4 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!

We have a lot to celebrate in this little church! Despite a snowstorm that prevented us from meeting on of the Sundays in January, people have been coming to worship and our boards and committees are up and running. Of particular note is your response to our annual Stewardship Appeal. Members and Friends *just like you* have pledged \$32,470 to help cover the operating expenses of our church in the coming year. This breaks down to approximately \$35 each week per pledging unit! It is the highest amount pledged since pre-pandemic times, in fact, since 2018. Yes, we have a lot to celebrate!

February, for all its bleakness, all its cold, grey days, is also a rich month. It begins with Groundhog Day, which we know has little effect upon how quickly we will emerge from winter, but which we nevertheless observe in the hope that, in some strange way, even a groundhog can have an effect on the forces that determine our lives. Wednesday, February 14 is Valentine's Day. It is only fitting that if we have National Pickle Week and National

Pancake Month, we should set aside one day in the year to celebrate the mysterious power of love!

This year, Valentine's Day coincides with Ash Wednesday. Ash Wednesday is a day of reflection and repentance. It (hopefully) leads us into an experience of forgiveness and healing and the new life that we celebrate through Easter. Perhaps on some deep level, love and repentance are connected. Sunday, February 18 is the first Sunday in Lent. Although the United Parishes of Southborough clergy were, once again, unable to get their act together in planning the Lenten series that so many of us fondly remember, we as a church need to find ways to engage with this deeply meaningful liturgical season. If you have any suggestions of things we can do in our church, please let me know.

Sunday, February 25, following our worship service and a luncheon, we will hold our Annual Meeting. I believe this is the 158th time our little church has gathered for an annual meeting. The annual meeting is a reminder that the polity of our church is grounded in democracy; the power lies with the people. This church polity is an expression of our belief that God, who is present within each and every one of us, speaks through each and every one of us and uses our gifts of time, talent, and treasure to guide the unfolding of the church.

We hope you will 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

"Even a happy life cannot be without a measure of darkness, and the word 'happy' would lose its meaning if it were not balanced by sadness. It is far better to take things as they come along with patience and equanimity." C. G. Jung

"Where there is love there is life." Mahatma Gandhi

LOOKING AHEAD . . .

Wednesday, February 14 – Valentine's Day

Sunday, February 18 – The First Sunday in Lent

Sunday, February 25 – First Community Church Annual Meeting following a luncheon in the vestry

Growing in the Faith!

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 with Matthew Fox's comparison of Eckhart and C. G. Jung's teachings about God and the human soul. When we finish this section, we will decide what/whom we will read next.

Group members have expressed an interest in a book by Peter Stilla, who has preached in our church in the past. This excellent book, *Naturally Miraculous*, is a very readable and enlightening explanation of mysticism.

We have approximately ten people who attend regularly. No matter where you are on your faith journey, we guarantee that you belong with us. We are all growing in the faith, and we love being a part of each other's growth!

Birthdays in February

Bob Farmer	8 th
Evelyn Till	10 th
Joan Brunelle	10 th
Joyce Harrington	11 th
Jim Holmes	13 th
Helen Varney	14 th
Diane Sickles	22 nd

Thank You!!

Thank you to Rick Belejck and all who helped with the de-decorating of our sanctuary as we emerged from the Christmas season. We were sad to see the trees, the creche, and all the decorations go. This year, thanks to the creative ideas and the hard work of so many, our sanctuary looked absolutely beautiful!

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.

Thank you to Linda Duncan who is now in charge of creating and printing our Sunday morning and other special worship bulletins. She is doing an excellent job! And she had a tough act to follow!

Thank you to Bob L’Heureux, who is still recovering from two knee replacements, 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 the Board of Trustees: Rick Belejack, David Crane, Cheryl Holmes, and Bob Farmer (ex officio member) for making sure that our parking lot is plowed and our sidewalks shoveled and sanded for our Sunday morning worship and our Tuesday afternoon study group meetings and choir rehearsals.

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 end of January, members of our church family have pledged \$32,470 for the coming year. This is 9.4% higher than it was last year, in 2023! The number of pledging units also increased by 2 to a total of 18. The average amount pledged per week for the coming year will be \$34.69—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!

BTW, if you would like to purchase Girl Scout Cookies from Olivia Dundin to support the scouts this year, Lou will be happy to take your order. You can place your order with Lou through the end of February.

The Church in the World

We are deeply saddened by the tragic loss of life, both Ukrainian and Russian soldiers and civilians on both sides caused by Putin's invasion of Ukraine. The people of Ukraine are fighting against tremendous numbers to hold onto their homeland and their national identity. They need our prayers and support.

We are also deeply saddened by the tragic loss of life in the Middle East as the animosity between Israel and the Palestinian peoples continues unabated. We condemn the recent terrorist attack of Hamas on Israel, the taking of Israeli hostages, and also the genocide that is unfolding as Israel turns Gaza into a wasteland. These peoples need to live together in peace as two sovereign peoples with strong, secure borders and a relationship that is marked by mutual respect and international cooperation, if not friendship. War is not the answer!

We recently received a request from our own Mattie Cummings that we pray for the people of Haiti. As you may know, our church helps support a little church and school in Haiti that Mattie helped found and which she continues to support. At the present time, approximately 80% of Haiti's capital Port-au-Prince, is under the control of rival gangs. Two weeks ago, six Roman Catholic nuns and two laypeople were kidnapped by one of these gangs and are still being held for ransom. We need to pray for the people who have been kidnapped, for the captors' change of heart, and for the people of Haiti, the poorest country in the western hemisphere, whose lives are continually upended by social and political unrest.

And we as a church need to continue to do all we can to support Mattie, Pastor Laurenson, and his people as they try to bring the Word of God and the peace of our Lord Jesus Christ to a people who desperately need it.