

# KEEPING IN TOUCH!!

March 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, March 3 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!

I was going to say that it wasn't really a bad winter, but as I write this message the temperature outside has once again dropped into the low 20's and the wind has moved a step past brisk and invigorating! I still think it wasn't a bad winter, though I find myself longing to be surrounded by green, to see leaves once again filling out the trees that grace the side of the road. Winter can be cold, stark, and grey. Consecutive days without sunshine can wear us down. I remind myself that this is why we live here in New England: we love the change of the seasons, even when, as has been the case recently, we experience a change of seasons several times within a given week.

Of course, it's also possible that we brave the long cold winter months here in New England simply because we're stupid!

I'll go with loving the change of the seasons! I'll go with celebrating the tulips and daffodils pushing their little heads out of the frozen ground. I'll go with celebrating the buds emerging on the trees, the change to Daylight Savings Time when we feel we have been "given" some extra hours of sunlight, the gentle warmth of spring that leads us outside our bunkers to engage with other people, nature, and life. I confess that even though winter wears me down as I become a little long in the tooth, it makes spring all the more special. New life! Life returning from the bare and barren ground! A reminder of the beauty and power of resurrection!

Easter comes "early" this year. We are already in the third week of Lent. Our sanctuary is graced with deep purple paraments, and the stark wooden cross constructed by David Crane and decorated every year by Darlene Sanderson. We soon move through the triumphal celebration of Palm Sunday to the somber experience of the Last Supper on Maundy Thursday to the darkness of Good Friday. Then we gather by the side of the lake in Hopkinton for our United Parishes of Southborough Easter sunrise service followed by our own celebration of Easter in this sanctuary! Throughout the next few weeks, the texture of our worship, the celebration of this special week in Jesus' life, mirrors our own movement through the sorrows and joys of life, hopefully ending with resurrection, with new life!

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***

As we here in New England contemplate life without both Brady and Belichick, consider the following comments on football (and life):

*“Some people think football is a matter of life and death. I assure you, it's much more serious than that.”* Bill Shankly

*“If you make every game a life and death proposition, you're going to have problems. For one thing, you'll be dead a lot.”* Dean Smith

## **LOOKING AHEAD . . .**

**Sunday, March 24 – Palm Sunday**

**Thursday, March 28 – Maundy Thursday**

**Sunday, March 31 – Easter Sunday**

## ***Church Activities***

**Sunday, March 3** – The Diaconate will meet at 9:30 a.m.

**Tuesday, March 6** – Spiritual Study & Growth Group will *not* meet.

**Sunday, March 10** – Stewardship Committee will meet following worship.

**Thursday, March 21** – Church Council will meet at 6:00 p.m.

Every board and committee should select a representative to Church Council, which meets quarterly. This is a hybrid meeting. If you will be attending online, please give Lou Dundin, our Moderator, your email address so you can participate through Zoom.

**Thursday, March 28 – Maundy Thursday**

We begin our observance of our Lord's Last Supper with his disciples as we gather at 6:00 p.m. in the vestry for a simple meal of soup and bread. Then we go upstairs to the sanctuary for a communion service set in the context of the ancient order of Tenebrae. During this service, six readers will lead us through the events of Holy Week. This service is quiet, contemplative, and powerful. Some of our people have likened it to our Christmas Eve service in the depth of its meaning.

**Sunday, March 31 – Easter Sunday!**

Parishioners from all the churches in Southborough will gather by the lake in Hopkinton at 6:30 a.m. for an Easter sunrise service. Reverend Sanderson will be sharing the message this year. Our church will serve as a backup in case of inclement weather.

Our regular Easter Sunday worship service, with its special music, will take place in our beautifully decorated sanctuary at 11:00 a.m. There will be no coffee hour following worship.

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

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

We have concluded our study of the 13<sup>th</sup> century German mystic Meister Eckhart with Matthew Fox's comparison of Eckhart and C. G. Jung's teachings about God and the human soul. At our next meeting on March 12, we will begin reading a book recently published by Peter Stilla entitled *Naturally Miraculous*. This is an excellent (and very readable) text for leading us 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 lives in western Massachusetts, has offered to meet with our study group any time we would like.

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; and we love being a part of each other's growth!

### ***Birthdays in March***

Dorothy Larson	2 <sup>th</sup>
Cathy Ambler	6 <sup>th</sup>
Emily Hite	11 <sup>th</sup>

***Thank You!!***

**Thank you** to Women's Fellowship, especially Beverly Lees, Sandy McKeen, and Karin Farmer for hosting our Annual Meeting, and those who provided several varieties of soups/stews/chowders, sandwiches, and desserts. Thanks to Lou Dundin, our Moderator, for presiding over the meeting, and Rick Belejack for setting up the tables. Thanks to all of you who sent in the annual report for your board or committee, and to Cheryl Holmes and Darlene Sanderson for putting together our printed Annual Report. The attendance at this year's meeting was excellent, with several of our new members in attendance.

**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 (131 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 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 served on boards or committees or in appointed positions this past year. Thank you to all who have offered to serve for the coming year or years. All the openings on all the boards and committees have been filled for the coming church 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 have 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***

**Phoebe**, a premature and underweight newborn whom Becky and Nick Smith have asked us to place on our prayer list.

**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. Our prayers are with Teresa, Madeline, and Mike's family and friends.

**Benny** -- Darlene's cousin is facing surgery near the end of the month to remove two small cancerous modules in his lung.

### ***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 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 two 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!

An anonymous person has written the following about the process of peacemaking:

*“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.”*