

Faith Hope Love

1 Corinthians 13:13



February 3, 2019
FUMC Portsmouth, NH

We Gather for Worship

Prelude & Entrance of Christ's Light

Celebrations

***Call to Worship**

L: The love of Christ Jesus be with you all.

P: And also with you.

L: Once again, God offers us an hour of special opportunity;

P: We are in the presence of an amazing grace.

L: We have been called together by Jesus of Nazareth.

P: He is the Host in this house of prayer.

L: Here all distinctions of age, sex, race or class mean nothing.

P: Here our oneness in Christ's love means everything.

***Hymn:** "Come, Share the Lord"

TFWS #2269

A Time for the Child in all of Us

Prayer (unison)

Merciful God, we confess that we have not loved you with our whole heart. We have failed to be an obedient church. We have not done your will, we have broken your law, we have rebelled against your love, we have not loved our neighbors, and we have not heard the cry of the needy. Forgive us, we pray. Free us for joyful obedience, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Words of Assurance

L: Hear the good news: Christ died for us while we were yet sinners; that proves God's love toward us. In the name of Jesus Christ, you are forgiven!

P: In the name of Jesus Christ, you are forgiven!

ALL: Glory to God! Amen.

Sung Response

"Lord, Listen to Your Children Praying"

TFWS #2193

Ministry of Music

We Proclaim the Word

Reading the Word: 1 Corinthians 13:1-13

L: The Word of God for the People of God.

P: Thanks be to God.

Message: "The Gift of Love"

Rev. Dr. Deb Hanson

We Respond to God's Word

***Hymn:** "The Gift of Love"

UMH #408

Concerns and Joys

Silent Prayer and Pastoral Prayer

The Lord's Prayer (unison)

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil, for Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever. Amen.

Giving of Our Tithes and Offerings

***Doxology:** *(Please join in singing the following:)*

UMH #94

*Praise God from whom all blessings flow; Praise God, all creatures here below;
Alleluia! Alleluia! Praise God, the source of all our gifts! Praise Jesus Christ, whose
power uplifts! Praise the Spirit, Holy Spirit! Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!*

***Prayer of Dedication** (unison)

O God, through the offering of these gifts, we become a more open people—open-minded in hearing your word and wisdom, open-hearted in healing a broken world, open-handed in heeding your call to charity and active love. With thanks for all good gifts, we present a portion of our blessings and all of ourselves. Amen.

A Service of Holy Communion - insert

We Go Forth to Serve

***Hymn:** "Love Lifted Me"

see projection screen or insert

***Choral Benediction** *(Congregation encircles the Sanctuary)*

May the Lord, gracious God bless and keep you forever. Grant you peace, perfect peace, courage in every endeavor. Lift up your eyes and seek His face, and His grace forever. May the Lord, mighty God bless and keep you forever.

***Pastor's Charge**

Postlude

**Please stand as you are comfortable
Large print bulletins are available from the greeters*



DO THIS IN REMEMBRANCE OF ME.

Invitation to Communion

L: Come, the table is set. Let us eat the food that God has prepared for us. Let us drink the wine of the new covenant. Come, the table is set. All are welcome. Come.

Great Thanksgiving

L: The Lord be with you.

P: And also with you.

L: Lift up your hearts.

P: We lift them up to the Lord.

L: Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

P: It is right to give our thanks and praise.

L: It is right, and a good and joyful thing, always and everywhere to give thanks to you, Almighty God, creator of heaven and earth. You have created the earth and sky, the sea and stars, and all the living creatures therein. Your works are the essence of majesty and honor.

Your righteousness lives forever. You demonstrate your power in strange and unexpected ways: from the birth of your Son in a manger, to the gentle nudging of the Holy Spirit calling us to love one another. The works of your hands are faithful and just, and your mercy endures forever. And so, with your people on earth and all the company of heaven, we praise your name and join their unending hymn.

**ALL: Holy, holy, holy Lord,
God of power and might,
heaven and earth are full of your glory.**

Hosanna in the highest.

Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord.

Hosanna in the highest.

L: Holy are you, and blessed is your Son, Jesus Christ who came to cleanse us from our sins, and to bring us newness of life. In the power of the Holy Spirit, he healed people, and taught as one who had authority. He brought a new teaching—a teaching of love, forgiveness, and the power of God for justice and mercy.

Words of Institution

L: On the night of his betrayal, as Jesus sat at the table and broke bread with his friends, he said: 'Take and eat; this is my body which is broken for you. Remember me each time you do this.'

After they had eaten, he took the cup, and said: 'Remember me as you drink from this, for it is my life, poured out for you - the beginning of a new relationship with God.'

Sharing the Bread and Cup

(From Ministry Matters for February 1, 2015, Erik Alsgaard)

Unison Prayer following Distribution

All things come from you, O God, and with gratitude we return to you what is yours. You created all that is, and with love formed us in your image. When our love failed, your love remained steadfast. You gave your only Son Jesus Christ to be our Savior.

All that we are, and all that we have, is a trust from you. And so, in gratitude for all your gifts, we offer you ourselves, and all that we have, in union with Christ's offering for us. By your Holy Spirit make us one with Christ, one with each other, and one in ministry to all the world; through Jesus Christ our Savior. Amen.

(Hoyt L. Hickman, U.S.A., 20th Cent., alt.)



Pastor - Rev. Dr. Debra J. Hanson

Pastor's Assistant - David Richards

Liturgist - Sue Richards

Lay Leader - Susan Sarosiek

Director of Music - Bevan Bloemendaal

Acolyte - Marilyn Stebbins

Greeters - Ken & Shannon Corpron & Marilyn Stebbins

Ushers - Anne & Mike Coffey & Ken Young

Sunday School - Rosie Buswell

Sound Tech - Dave Richards

Worship Service Tech - Steve Scott

Photographer - Dave Atkinson



Welcome!

Whether you are joining us for worship for the first time or after many years of attending here at First UMC, we want you to know that you are welcome!

We are an inclusive community that invites everyone to be part of our church fellowship. Thank you for being here, and we hope that you have had a meaningful experience of worshiping our God so you leave this place feeling that you have been blessed to be a blessing. Please join us again!

Rev. Deb Hanson

UPCOMING EVENTS

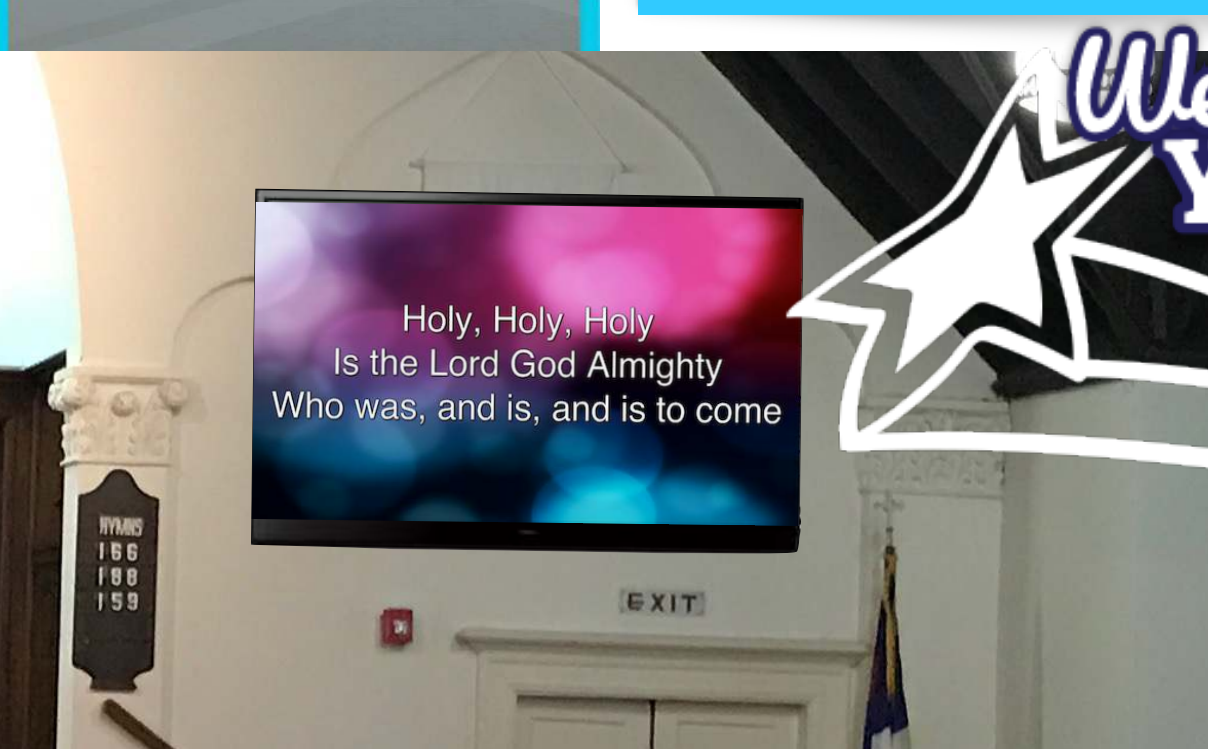
MARK YOUR CALENDARS

Today please join us after the worship service for coffee hour...it's a great time to meet everyone and to catch up with each other.

February 5th Finance Trustee meeting @ 6pm at the parsonage.

February 19th Church Council meeting @ 6pm at the church

March 10th TO NOTE: SPRC meeting scheduled for 1/27 has been moved to 3/10 after worship.



We need
YOUR HELP!

The Finance Trustees are looking for donations to replace the outdated screen and projector being used each Sunday with a large LED monitor. This monitor will provide higher screen quality

for content/visuals and words improving readability/clarity and overall better placement for enhanced visibility from all areas in the sanctuary and less disruption on the pulpit area. Thank you for your thoughtful consideration in our continued goal of enhancing our worship experience here at FUMC. Please see John VanReenen for details.



**WE WILL
GAIN COURAGE FROM EACH OTHER
AND FROM OUR SHARED STORIES OF
GOD'S MIGHTY POWER**

WE LIFT UP IN PRAYER:

Barbara & Jim Slater
Barbara Sylvester
Pauline Boynton
Barbara Millar
Irene Derosier
Barbara Clement
Malia Broe
Trudy Parkhurst
Joette MacKenzie
Kim Hishop
Pastor Sue Ellery
Nancy Chesser's family
Gabor [Brianna's father in-law]
Our Church family
The Family of Pat McLaughlin
Rev. Bill Gardei
Gayle Gardei
Marion Collishaw Gil Stebbins
Sue Goodhue Woodie Lange
Hunter Pinkley Roseanne
Sylvia Bartlett Rev. David Kerr
BrianThompson Jim New

**Today's altar flowers are given
in Thanksgiving of
Our Generous Congregation**



**Thank You!
We collected \$300 in gift
cards for the Coast Guard.**

**FUMC PORTSMOUTH
A RECONCILING CONGREGATION**

**We, the congregation of the First
United Methodist Church of Portsmouth,**



New Hampshire, are dedicated to worshiping, learning, and serving with all people as we embrace Jesus Christ's message of love and acceptance. As a United Methodist Church we stand fully behind the statement "Open Hearts, Open Minds, and Open Doors" We celebrate our diversity and invite all persons regardless of age, gender, racial or ethnic background, sexual orientation, marital or socioeconomic status, nationality, physical or mental ability into full membership and participation in the life of this community of faith.



**New England Annual Conference
Tri-State District**

The Rev. Sudarshana Devadhar, Bishop

The Rev. James McPhee, District Superintendent

FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

129 Miller Avenue - Portsmouth, NH 03801

Office Phone 603-436-6038 office@fumcportsmouth.net

Pastor office hours - Tuesday and Thursday 9 am - 12 pm

[call to ensure availability]

Pastor - Rev. Dr. Debra J. Hanson

Check out our website at www.fumcportsmouth.com

Like and Follow Us On:





SERMON GIVEN 2/3/19 BY
REV. DR. DEB HANSON

“The Gift of Love” – 2/3/19
First UMC – Rev. Dr. Debra J. Hanson

SCRIPTURE: 1 Corinthians 13

THEME: God’s love is the foundation of the community of faith.

A little girl was sent on an errand by her mother. She took much too long in coming back. Mother, therefore, demanded an explanation when she finally did return. The little girl explained that on her way, she had met a friend who was crying because she had broken her doll. “Oh,” said the mother, “then you stopped to help her fix her doll?” “Oh, no,” replied the little girl, “I stopped to help her cry.” (*Illustrations Unlimited*, p. 113, #5).

This story made reminded me of the hymn “Blest Be the Tie That Binds,” especially the third verse: “We share each other’s woes, our mutual burdens bear; and often for each other flows the sympathizing tear.” (UMH #557). In the church, we support each other, work together, and reach out to others in Jesus’ name, as the apostle Paul instructed in the 12th chapter of 1 Corinthians. He taught a church that was divided over many issues about what it meant to live as a community of faith with spiritual gifts and as the Body of Christ. 1 Corinthians 12 provides insights about how we are to work at getting along, how we are to treat each other, support and care about each other, and know that everyone is welcome as part of the church family.

Interestingly, the people who put together the lectionary, left out the last half of the last verse in chapter 12. But this verse is pivotal in leading into Paul’s continuing teaching about God’s gifts and God’s call for us to be the church. That verse reads, “And I will show you a still more excellent way.” (*1 Corinthians 12:31b NRSV*) The more excellent way is about the love of God that is describes in Chapter 13; it is a poetic and beautifully written description of God’s love, and the love we are to have for one another.

The love described here is *Agape* love, the Greek word that encompasses all the fruits of the Spirit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control (Galatians 5:22-23). I have officiated at many weddings where 1 Corinthians 13 has been read, and it really is a great passage for couples who enter into the marriage covenant. Yet, probably most of them may not realize that the passage isn’t about romantic love, but about the *agape love* of God that the church is called to live in the world, starting within the congregation.

Paul’s paints a beautiful picture of God’s love, one that, let’s face it, only God can really accomplish. However, it is held up for us as a goal, as the way we grow in faith, the way we treat each other and others, and how we are called to be in relationship with each other. There is so much negative talk, criticism, and fault-finding in the world, and we tend to see the worst in others. We just don’t celebrate each other enough!

There is a wonderful story by Sister Helen Mrolsa that demonstrates the impact that we can have on each other with small acts of kindness and love:

He was in the first third grade class I taught at Saint Mary’s School in Morris, Minn. All 34 of my students were dear to me, but Mark Eklund was one in a million. Very neat in appearance,

but had that happy-to-be-alive attitude that made even his occasional mischievousness delightful.

Mark talked incessantly. I had to remind him again and again that talking without permission was not acceptable. What impressed me so much, though, was his sincere response every time I had to correct him for misbehaving – “Thank you for correcting me, Sister!” I didn’t know what to make of it at first, but before long I became accustomed to hearing it many times a day. . . At the end of the year, I was asked to teach junior-high math.

The years flew by, and before I knew it Mark was in my classroom again. He was more handsome than ever and just as polite. Since he had to listen carefully to my instruction in the “new math,” he did not talk as much in ninth grade as he had in third. One Friday, things just didn’t feel right. We had worked hard on a new concept all week, and I sensed that the students were frowning, frustrated with themselves and edgy with one another. I had to stop this crankiness before it got out of hand. So I asked them to list the names of the other students in the room on two sheets of paper, leaving a space between each name. Then I told them to think of the nicest thing they could say about each of their classmates and write it down. It took the remainder of the class period to finish their assignment, and as the students left the room, each one handed me the papers. Mark said, “Thank you for teaching me, Sister. Have a good weekend.” That Saturday, I wrote down the name of each student on a separate sheet of paper, and I listed what everyone else had said about that individual.

On Monday I gave each student his or her list. Before long, entire class was smiling. Really?” I heard whispered. “I never knew that meant anything to anyone!” I didn’t know others liked me so much.” No one ever mentioned those papers in class again. I never knew if they discussed them after class or with their parents, but it didn’t matter. The exercise had accomplished its purpose. The students were happy with themselves and one another again.

That group of students moved on. A few years later, I learned that Mark was killed in Vietnam, and his parents asked me if I could attend his funeral. I had never seen a serviceman in a military coffin before. Mark looked so handsome, so mature . . . The church was packed with Mark’s friends, and at the graveside service that followed, the pastor said the usual prayers, and the bugler played taps. One by one those who loved Mark took a last walk by the coffin and sprinkled it with holy water. I was the last one to bless the coffin. As I stood there, one of the soldiers who acted as pallbearer came up to me. Were you Mark’s math teacher?” he asked. I nodded as I continued to stare at the coffin. “Mark talked about you a lot,” he said.

After the funeral, most of Mark’s former classmates headed to a friend’s farmhouse for lunch. Mark’s mother and father were there, obviously waiting for me. “We want to show you something,” his father said, taking a wallet out of his pocket. “They found this on Mark when he was killed. We thought you might recognize it.” Opening the billfold, he carefully removed two worn pieces of notebook paper that had obviously been taped, folded and refolded many times. I knew without looking that the papers were the ones on which I had listed all the good things each of Mark’s classmates had said about him.

“Thank you so much for doing that,” Mark’s mother said. “As you can see, Mark treasured it.” Mark’s classmates started to gather around us. Charlie said, “I still have my list. I keep it in the

top drawer of my desk at home.” Chuck’s wife said, “Chuck asked me to put his in our wedding album.” “I have mine too,” Marilyn said. “It’s in my diary.” Then Vicki, another classmate, took out her wallet and showed her worn and frazzled list to the group. I carry this with me at all times,” Vicki said without batting an eyelash. “I think we all saved our lists.”
(<https://www.truthorfiction.com/markeklund/>)

A small act of kindness changed a group of young people who saw themselves differently after reading the positive and supportive comments of their classmates. In the church, we, too, can offer compassion and support for others who struggle. More than that, we can offer acceptance of another person without trying to change them, but walking with them and encouraging them to become all of who God intends for them to be. These are acts of love, offered with patience, kindness, self-giving, and consideration for the other person. The scripture doesn’t say that we have to like everyone, and Paul pointed this out because the Corinthian church continually argued among themselves. It’s clear that, he was well aware that not everyone got along. His letters gave them tools for living the Christian life, for how to be in community together.

That’s what makes this passage from 1 Corinthians 13 even more important as we try to grow into a mature faith, a life-long process. We practice our faith – we practice what it means to live in God’s ways as God would have us act in the way we choose our words, in the ways we behave, and in attitudes we display. When we practice acts of love together, we are empowered to share similar acts of love in our homes, work places, meetings, clubs, and wherever we interact with others in the greater community.

Loving someone with God’s love is an action, a verb, a way of living. We may not always share God’s love well, but as verse 12 reminds us, we only know in part what it means to live in God’s love and grace. We begin to understand a little more each time we put aside acts of self-centeredness or thinking we have the right answers, and truly listen, care, and act because of God’s love for us. That kind of sharing brings healing, assurance, hope, and builds up the other person rather than tearing them down.

Just one way we can be more aware is to support and encourage those who are in nursing and long-term care facilities. Whether we send cards, make phone calls, or visit, we make a difference by being in contact with them. There are some folks who rarely have visitors, which makes them feel isolated and alone – forgotten. This morning, we will have the opportunity during fellowship time to sign “thinking of you” cards that we will send or take to some of our shut-ins. And next Sunday the children will be making Valentine cards for our shut-ins. These acts of kindness, caring, and love will help them feel included and may even transform our lives and the life of a church.

Agape love wishes wholeness, wellness, and grace for the one to whom it is offered, and we are blessed in return. We are blessed to be a blessing. One small act, one smile, one card, one phone call, one caring action can be part of making a difference in the world.

Let us pray:

O God, the source of love, may our faith open us to the mystery of your love, and may the love shown through Christ show in us. In Christ's name we pray. Amen.

*(The Rev. Michael Bos is senior minister of West End Collegiate Church in New York, NY.
found at Text This Week under sermons, also at Day 1)*