

*Create in me a
clean heart, O
God. Renew a loyal
spirit within me.*

- Psalm 51:10 NLT -



FROM THE DESK OF PASTOR BOB...

The psalmist writes in Psalm 51; “Have mercy on me, O God, because of your unfailing love. Because of your great compassion, blot out the stain of my sins. ² Wash me clean from my guilt. Purify me from my sin. ³ For I recognize my rebellion; it haunts me day and night. ⁴ Against you, and you alone, have I sinned; I have done what is evil in your sight. You will be proved right in what you say, and your judgment against me is just. ¹⁰ Create in me a clean heart, O God; put a new, faithful spirit deep inside me!”

On Wednesday, March 5, 2025, we enter into the season of Lent. For those who do participate, Lent is typically a time of personal reflection, prayer, and spiritual renewal rather than strict fasting or obligatory practices. The intent of a Lenten observance is to recognize our need for repentance and to recognize that we have perhaps grown apart from God. Lent is our opportunity to return and draw closer to God, and to prepare our hearts for the celebration of Easter.”

This year as a congregation I am asking us, together, to use “The Sanctuary for Lent 2025” written by Justin LaRosa. The Sanctuary for Lent 2025 contains a reading for each day of Lent, from Ash Wednesday (March 5th) through Easter Sunday (April 20th), including a suggested Scripture, a short devotion, and a brief prayer – all based on the Revised Common Lectionary. Through his thoughtful meditations on the Bible, Justin LaRosa helps you to open yourself daily to God as you journey through the season of Lent.

How long is Lent? Lent is the 40-day period leading up to Easter, (excluding Sundays) that starts on Ash Wednesday and ends on Holy Saturday, the day before Easter. Why is Lent 40 days? The 40-day period of Lent is symbolic of significant biblical events, including:

Jesus' 40 days of fasting and temptation in the wilderness. Moses spending 40 days on Mount Sinai receiving the Ten Commandments. Elijah's 40-day journey to Mount Horeb. The 40 days of rain during the Great Flood. The Israelites' 40 years of wandering in the desert.

Psalm 51 that I shared above is a traditional Scripture used for Ash Wednesday and for the start of the Lenten season. It is a call for us to pause and reflect on our lives and our relationship with God; a time of repentance; a time for fasting; and a time of prayer. Psalm 51 is the first writing and devotion in your booklet “The Sanctuary for Lent 2025.” Over the years many of us have developed a practice of giving up or “FAST” from something so we can “FEAST” on that which would help draw us closer to God. I found this prayer a few years back titled *The Fast Life*...the author is unknown. This prayer made a huge impact on me, so much so that I pray this Fast Life Prayer each and every day of Lent. The prayer is included at the end of my writing. I will have copies available so that perhaps you too might use this prayer each day in conjunction with using The Sanctuary for Lent 2025 devotional.

As we journey through Lent, my desire and wish for each of us is that we will experience a transformation in our lives to draw us closer to God...draw us closer to Jesus! I hope you find a deep and meaningful Lenten season this year and above all...I WISH YOU JESUS!

Blessings, Pastor Bob

THE FAST/FEAST LIFE PRAYER ...AUTHOR UNKNOWN

**FAST FROM JUDGING OTHERS;
FEAST ON CHRIST DWELLING IN THEM.**

**FAST FROM FEAR OF ILLNESS;
FEAST ON THE HEALING POWER OF GOD.**

**FAST FROM WORDS THAT POLLUTE;
FEAST ON SPEECH THAT PURIFIES.**

**FAST FROM DISCONTENT;
FEAST ON GRATITUDE.**

**FAST FROM ANGER;
FEAST ON PATIENCE.**

**FAST FROM NEGATIVES;
FEAST ON ENCOURAGEMENT.**

**FAST FROM BITTERNESS
FEAST ON FORGIVENESS.**

**FAST FROM SELF-CONCERN;
FEAST ON COMPASSION.**

**FAST FROM SUSPICION;
FEAST ON TRUTH.**

**FAST FROM GOSSIP;
FEAST ON PURPOSEFUL SILENCE.**

**FAST FROM PROBLEMS THAT OVERWHELM;
FEAST ON PRAYER THAT SUSTAINS.**

**FAST FROM ANXIETY;
FEAST ON FAITH.**

FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH



SUNDAYS
10am



FIRST UMC LIFE

WORSHIP, FUN, AND FAITH IN ACTION AT FIRST UMC

Our Church website fumcportsmouth.com is a great place to remind ourselves of the amazing work we are doing supporting each other, our community in making a difference by sharing our faith in God. Check out the photo galleries here - <https://fumcportsmouth.com/photo-galleries/>



First United Methodist Church

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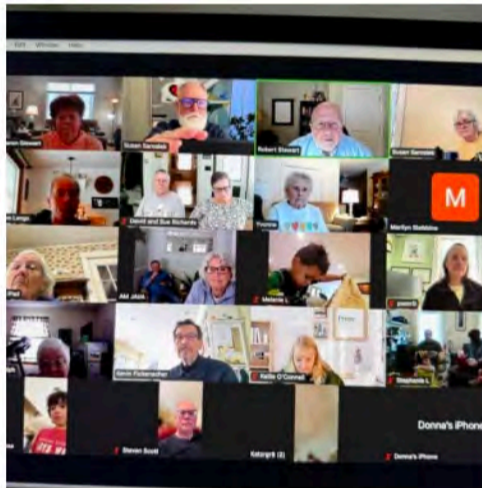
Photo Galleries



FIGHT, FLIGHT, OR LOVE

FEBRUARY 23, 2025

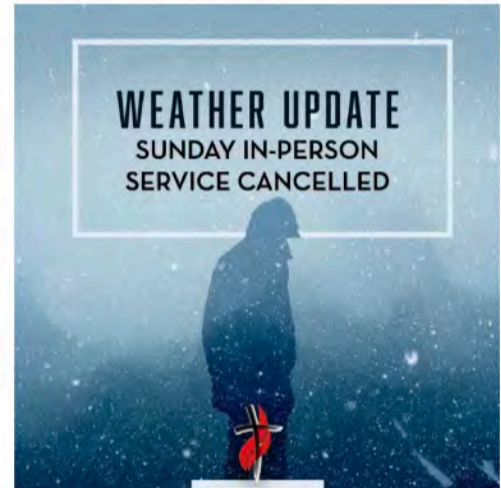
[VIEW PHOTOS »](#)



ZOOM WORSHIP...AGAIN!

FEBRUARY 16, 2025

[VIEW PHOTOS »](#)



ZOOM CHURCH SERVICE

FEBRUARY 9, 2025

[VIEW PHOTOS »](#)



CHOOSE LOVE

FEBRUARY 2, 2025

[VIEW PHOTOS »](#)



TRUSTEE'S GETTING THINGS DONE

FEBRUARY 1, 2025

[VIEW PHOTOS »](#)



AS WAS HIS CUSTOM

JANUARY 26, 2025

[VIEW PHOTOS »](#)

God speaks to you through His personal love letter, the Bible.



LECTIONARY READINGS FOR THE MONTH OF MARCH:

It is truly remarkable how reading God's word draws people closer to Him as He speaks through the Scriptures. The Holy Spirit reaches out to connect with us even before we fully receive the Spirit in our hearts. Through the conviction of Scripture, we will often discover a need we may not have previously recognized, drawing us closer to God. Enjoy getting closer to Him!

March 2 - Transfiguration of the Lord

*Exodus 34:29-35, Psalm 99,
2 Corinthians 3:12-4:2, Luke 9:28-36 [37-43]*

March 5 - Ash Wednesday

*Joel 2:1-2, 12-17, Isaiah 58:1-12, Psalm 51:1-17,
2 Corinthians 5:20b-6:10, Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21*

March 9

*Deuteronomy 26:1-11, Psalm 91:1-2, 9-16,
Romans 10:8b-13, Luke 4:1-13*

March 16

*Genesis 15:1-12, 17-18, Psalm 27,
Philippians 3:17-4:1, Luke 13:31-35, Luke 9:28-36*

March 23

*Isaiah 55:1-9, Psalm 63:1-8,
1 Corinthians 10:1-13, Luke 13:1-9*

March 30

*Joshua 5:9-12, Psalm 32
2 Corinthians 5:16-21, Luke 15:1-3, 11b-32*

FINANCE FLASH

Church Family and Friends,

With the change of seasons approaching, FUMC is seeing some exciting shifts in our financial landscape that show both growth and opportunity. January has set a positive tone, and we're eager to build on this momentum moving forward.

Building usage contributions saw a remarkable increase in January, doubling from previous months. This boost is encouraging as it indicates strong community engagement and growing support for our mission. However, utility expenses have risen compared to 2024, with the exception of a surprisingly lower-than-expected municipal water bill. While inflation is causing higher costs in many areas, I look for "silver linings" everywhere I can!

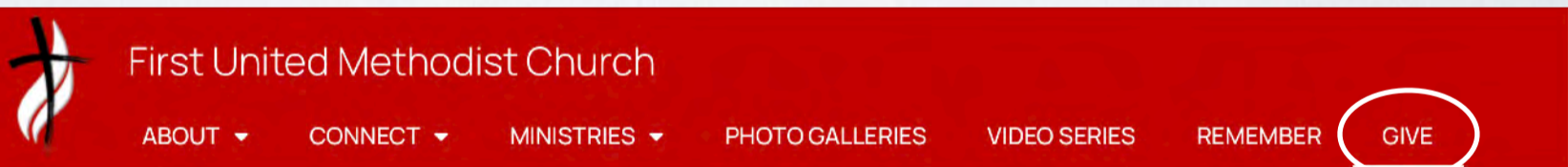
As we look ahead to spring, there is excitement about upcoming fundraising efforts that will help further support our goals. These include the spring patch and lasagna sales—both wonderful opportunities to get involved and contribute to our shared success. We encourage everyone to participate, as your time and effort are truly valued.

As we work together let us be reminded of this verse: 'Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their labor.' - Ecclesiastes 4:9. This passage highlights the strength of unity and collaboration, which is exactly what we rely on to create positive change. Thank you for your continued dedication and support—your involvement truly makes a difference! For those of you who aren't with us each Sunday you can visit us at fumcportsmouth.com and click on the GIVE tab [circled below] as an option of supporting First UMC.

Sincerely,

Airial Sillanpaa

Finance Chair





CHURCH FAMILY

CARING FOR EACH OTHER

At our core, we are a FAMILY. We recognize that some members may not be able to attend church regularly or participate in activities at First UMC. They are always in our thoughts, and prayers, cards, calls, or visits are always appreciated.



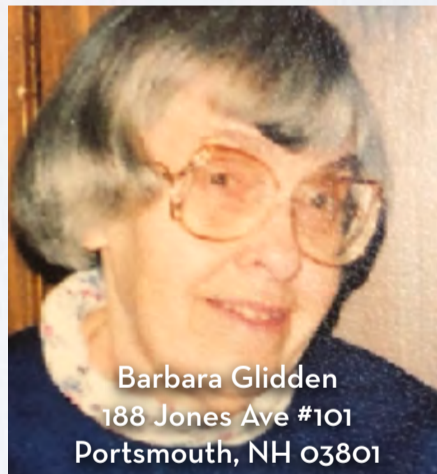
LOVE
IS CARING
FOR EACH
OTHER



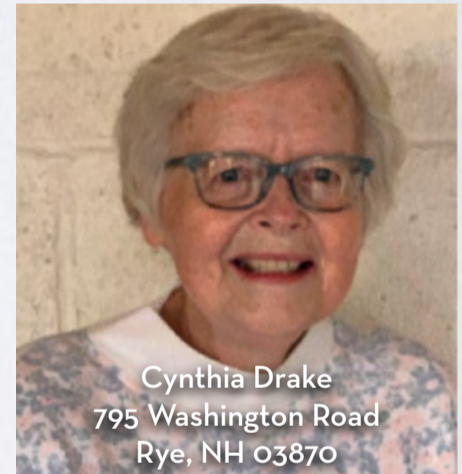
Jim Slater
75 State Street
Portland, ME 04101



Priscilla Wilson
361 Sagamore Road
Rye, NH 03870



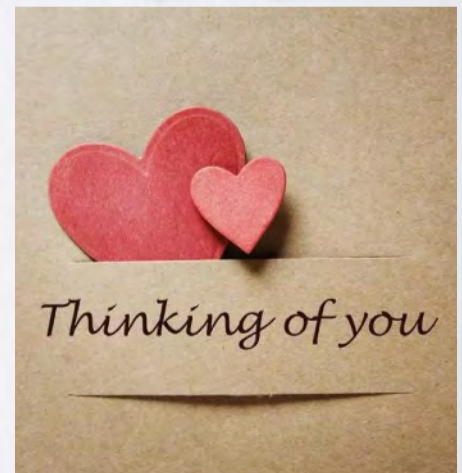
Barbara Glidden
188 Jones Ave #101
Portsmouth, NH 03801



Cynthia Drake
795 Washington Road
Rye, NH 03870




Ken & Jenya Westbrook
20 Islington Street #402
Portsmouth, NH 03801



You can learn more about us by using your camera on your phone and this QR code





PRAYER

THE MOST POWERFUL
WEAPON
OF A BELIEVER

THERE IS POWER IN PRAYER!

Through prayer, we can connect with God, seek His guidance, and intercede on behalf of others.

Building on the prayers lifted up through our Sunday **Red Prayer Hearts**, we are launching a new initiative called the **First UMC Prayer Ministry**—providing a structured way for our community to support one another and amplifying the power of prayer.

Marilyn Stebbins will be leading this ministry, and we are currently seeking those who feel called to be part of this meaningful effort. If you're interested in joining, Marilyn is gathering names. A training session will be held soon to outline how the ministry will work, with more details to come.

So, when you see Marilyn with her clipboard, consider saying, "**Here I am!**"

WE LIFT UP IN PRAYER:

The Krause Family, Diane, Kenneth, Ginger, Steve VanReenen, Cynthia, Charles, Mark G, Pope Francis, Christy and her Family, Art, travel mercies for all those traveling, the marginalized and scared, our country and leaders, and those we silently lift up right now.

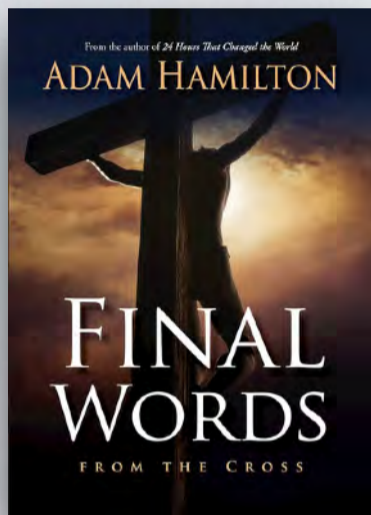


First UMC Prayer Heart

UPCOMING EVENTS


LENT 2025:


LENTEN BIBLE STUDY



Join Pastor Bob for a meaningful Lenten Bible Study as we explore *Final Words from the Cross* by Adam Hamilton.

The study begins on **Ash Wednesday, March 5th**, with two opportunities to participate:

 **In-person:** Wednesdays at 10:00 a.m. at the church

 **Online:** Saturdays at 8:30 a.m. via Zoom

LENTEN DEVOTIONAL



Devotion for each day of Lent booklets are available at each entrance of church.

ASH WEDNESDAY SERVICE March 5th at 11:45 a.m.



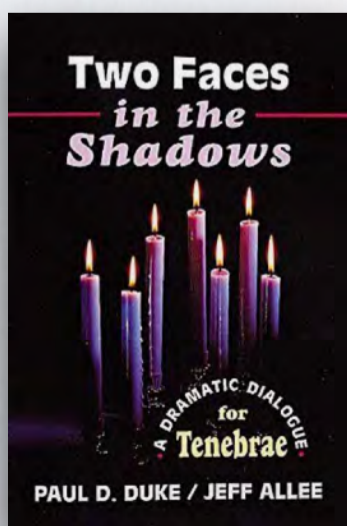
HATCH HOPE PROJECT March 5th - April 20th



PALM SUNDAY April 13th



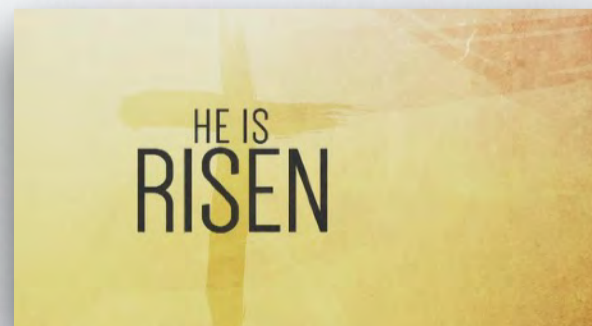
MAUNDY THURSDAY SERVICE April 17th at 6:30 p.m.



GOOD FRIDAY April 18th time TBD



EASTER SUNDAY April 20th at 10 a.m.





HATCH HOPE THIS EASTER

A Flock of Chicks Can Change Lives!

This Easter, we are partnering with Heifer International to bring hope and opportunity to families in need. Instead of donating traditional Easter lilies, tulips, hyacinths, or azaleas in memory or honor of a loved one, we invite you to “Hatch Some Hope” by contributing to our Flock of Chicks initiative.



A single flock—10 to 50 chicks—provides a family with food security, sustainable income, and the training they need to build a better future. Your generosity can help transform lives!

How You Can Help:

 **\$10** - Provides a flock share

 **\$20** - Provides an entire flock

Our goal is to donate at least **25 flocks** this Easter, and every contribution—big or small—makes a lasting impact! In the Narthex and Sanctuary, you’ll find colored eggs with donation cards inside. Simply fill out a card, place it back in the egg, and drop it into the glass jar to help us **Thanks for making this Easter a season of renewal and hope—one flock at a time.**

MARCH BIRTHDAYS

Get a card in the mail or send a quick text or instant messenger to wish these church family members a Happy Birthday day filled with love, laughter and lots of cake!

MARCH BIRTHDAYS

3 Debbie Astbury

7 Devin (Scott) Barrass

7 Daphne Labadie

11 Pastor Bob Stewart

13 Carson Crisp

24 Melanie (Berry) Lindgren



SPRING FORWARD

March 9th don't forget to move your clock ahead by one hour!



GIRL SCOUT SUNDAY

Each year, Girl Scouts celebrate Girl Scout Week in honor of the organization's founding on March 12 by Juliette Gordon Low in Savannah, GA. The week begins with Girl Scout Sunday, a special day for girls to reflect on the connection between their faith and the values they learn in Girl Scouts.



On March 9, we are excited to welcome members of the Newmarket Girl Scout troop to join us for our service! Participating girls will have the opportunity to serve as bellringers, acolytes, greeters, ushers, and readers and are invited to attend Children's Church.

After the service, there will be a display showcasing the projects the girls have worked on to earn their "My Promise, My Faith" pin, highlighting their reflections on the intersection of Girl Scouting and faith.

And YES—of course, the girls will be selling Girl Scout Cookies during coffee hour! Don't miss this wonderful opportunity to support them.

Stephanie Labadie
Troop Leader



FYI...YOU DESERVE BETTER!

You can prevent a "snackcident" by getting your Girl Scout Cookies during coffee hour at 11 a.m. at First UMC - 129 Miller Avenue. The Newmarket Girls Scout Troop will be represented there!



LEARN MORE ABOUT THE GIRL SCOUTS HERE: <http://www.girlscouts.org/> AND <https://www.girlscoutsgwm.org/>

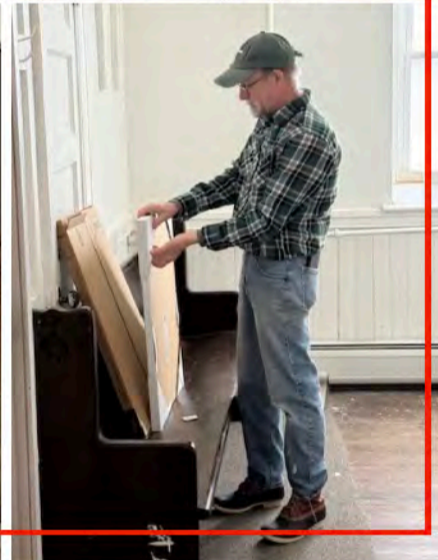


WITH GRATITUDE

THANK YOU TRUSTEES!

TRUSTEE WORK WEEKEND

Thank you:
Gary Sillanpaa, Mike Coffey, Alan Kristoff, Michelle Verrill, Wayne Rasch, and Sue Sarosiek.



NOTES OF GRATITUDE

From David Stebbins:

Dear First UMC Family and Friends I appreciated all of your kind thoughts and prayers for my kidney surgery...you are all a TRUE BLESSING. I am recovering and doing well at home.

From the Tuesday Night AA Group:

Thank you for allowing us to continue using the space at First UMC for our meetings. It is such an important fixture for our community!

COMMUNITY OUTREACH

HELPING THE COMMUNITY STAY WARM

We continue to provide cold weather packs to our community with hat, gloves, socks, and scarf. We have kept 90+ people warm this winter thank you!



I GOT BRIDGED

Learn more about Freddy Petrone and how I Got Bridged is bridging the gap for people in need.



RECOVERY CHURCH

Every Wednesday @ 6pm for food & fellowship and service @7pm creating a bridge between addiction and faith in the community.

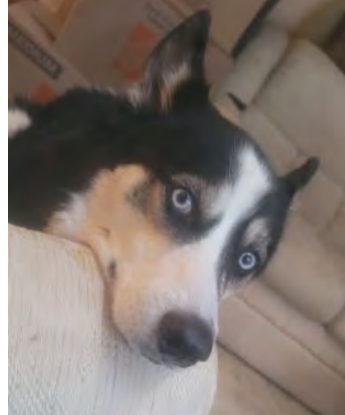
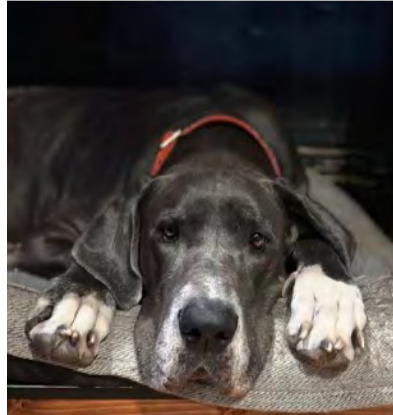
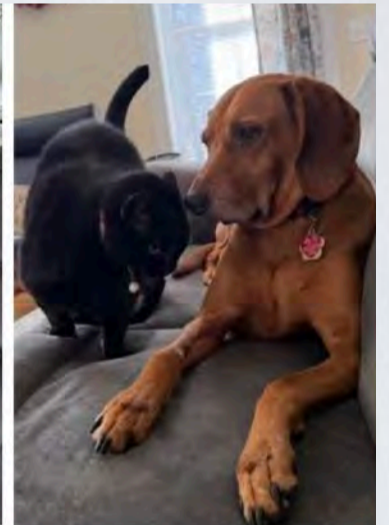
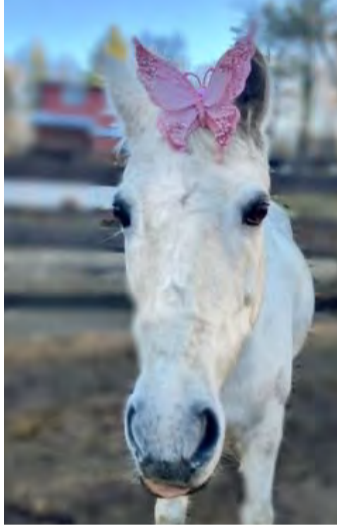


Do you want to learn more about how you can help call the church office @ 603.436.6038 or visit:
First United Methodist Church - Portsmouth <https://fumcportsmouth.com/>
I Got Bridged <https://www.igotbridged.com/>

WHO LOVES OUR PETS?...WE DO!

Our Facebook post for National Love Your Pet Day showcased these adorable four-legged members of the First UMC Family and Friends!

NATIONAL LOVE YOUR PET DAY



BEING A DIGITAL DISCIPLE IS AN IMPORTANT ROLE FOR ALL OF US!

LIKING A POST



You

Your Friends

Your Friends, Friends

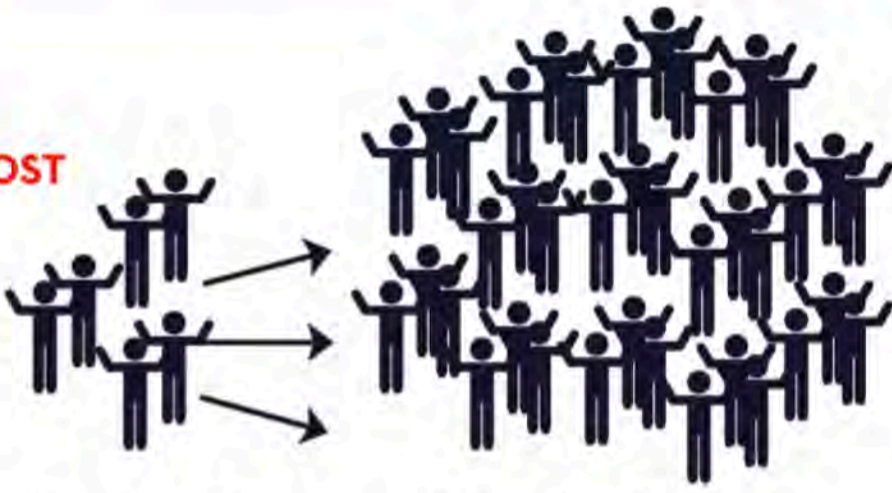
SHARING A POST



You

Your Friends

Your Friends, Friends



SHARING IS PART OF OUR OUTREACH!

Did you know that when you “like” our Facebook post, you show support. But when you “SHARE” it, you help spread the message to even more people! Sharing can make a real difference for someone who just might need it today. Thanks for helping us by clicking “share”!

LET'S BE FRIENDS ON FACEBOOK!

Facebook is a fantastic way to stay updated on events, prayers, daily inspiration, and to connect with Church family and friends. We appreciate it when you “like” our posts, but we absolutely LOVE it when you share them too!



Edit cover photo



Fumcportsmouthnh Church

331 friends



+ Add to story Edit profile



March 2025

FIRST UMC WORSHIP SCHEDULE

NOTE - If you are unable to meet the proposed schedule please let the office know immediately and we will reschedule.

DATE	LITURGIST	ACOLYTES	9:55 BELL RINGERS	GREETERS & USHERS	FACEBOOK LIVE	WORSHIP TECH	SOUND TECH	SUNDAY SCHOOL	COFFEE HOUR
3/2/25	J. Berry	Grayson	Rosie & Will	R. Groff H. Groff	PS. Orr	S. Scott	S. Sarosiek	J. & C. VanReenen	S. Olbricht Y. Griffin
3/9/25	M. Stebbins	Maria	Norah	A. Coffey M. Coffey	S. Richards	S. Scott	S. Sarosiek	J. Berry H. Groff	S. Stewart S. Lange
3/16/25	R. Groff	Georgia	Lilly	K. Fickenscher S. Olbricht	S. Richards	S. Scott	S. Sarosiek	D. Richards S. Labadie	J. Berry M. Lindgren
3/23/25	PS. Orr	Dominic	Daphne & Jack	Sillanpaa Family	S. Richards	S. Scott	S. Sarosiek	S. Stewart M. Verrill	L. Reiber R. Groff
3/30/25	S. Labadie	Rosie & Will	Marie	S. Russ S. Lange	S. Richards	S. Scott	S. Sarosiek	R. Buswell, K. & A. Langs	PS. Orr A. Sillanpaa



YOU ARE LOVED
ACCEPTED &
CELEBRATED
JUST AS YOU ARE



First UMC is a Reconciling Congregation dedicated to worshiping, learning, and serving with ALL people embracing Jesus Christ's message of love and acceptance.

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.

WORDS TO LIVE BY!

LOVE YOUR
NEIGHBOUR