

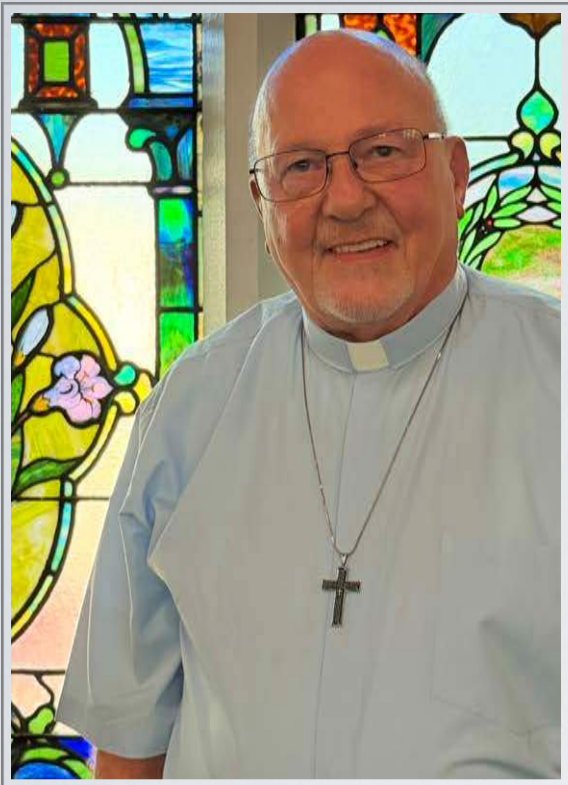
“FOR I KNOW THE PLANS I HAVE FOR YOU,”

SAYS THE LORD. “THEY ARE PLANS FOR

GOOD AND NOT FOR **DISASTER**, TO GIVE YOU

a future and a hope.

JEREMIAH 29:11



From the Pastor's desk.

Pastor Robert Stewart
pastorbobstewart@gmail.com

Dear Church Family,

For those of you who were not in church on Sunday, April 26th, I wanted to share my announcement to everyone via our fabulous Beacon Newsletter.

When Sharon and I arrived at First United Methodist Church in Portsmouth July 1, 2024...I brought two scriptures with me that I wanted us as a congregation to adopt and to allow it to become part of our lives. One scripture was from the Old Testament and the second was from the New Testament.

The Old Testament scripture comes from the Prophet Jeremiah, Chapter 29:11... ***“For I know the plans I have for you,” says the Lord. “They are plans for good and not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope.”*** From the New Testament the scripture was from Philippians 4:13, ***“I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.”***

In January of this year I announced to the SPRC and later to the congregation that I was retiring. The commute between Manchester and Portsmouth for the past couple of years has been difficult and hard for us. I made a decision that I would not seek another appointment and would fully retire from ministry. I had sent our Bishop, our District Superintendent and our Annual Conference Registrar a letter of retirement and that I would be going into full retirement and would not be seeking another appointment to a church.

A few weeks ago, Rev. Dr. David Palmer called me and asked if I would consider not going into full retirement as there was perhaps an opportunity of serving a church that was closer to my home. I asked which church which he could not share with me at that time. He said think about it and when he returned from England, he would reach out to me to see if I would consider this opportunity. He called me a couple days after he returned and asked me if I would consider **un-retiring** and serving another church. I again asked...which church? He said Suncook UMC. I asked when he needed an answer and he said he would give me 24 hours to decide. I asked for the church profile to be sent to me so I could review and ask questions and then give him my decision. I received the churches profile and Sharon and I reviewed it and discussed it with each other. I saw many similarities between FUMC and Suncook with two major exceptions...FUMC is 42 miles from our home one way and is a 50-minute drive. Suncook is 9 miles from our home and a 15-minute drive. There were many other areas of similarity between the 2 churches and we have done some great ministry together here at FUMC and we have flourished in so many ways. I expect that to continue here under the leadership of your new Pastor. [continued on next page]



From the Pastor's desk.

Pastor Robert Stewart
pastorbobstewart@gmail.com

Sharon and I met with the Suncook SPRC on Monday evening (April 20th) and today it was announced at Suncook UMC, that Bishop Bickerton intends to appointment me as the new Pastor of Suncook UMC.

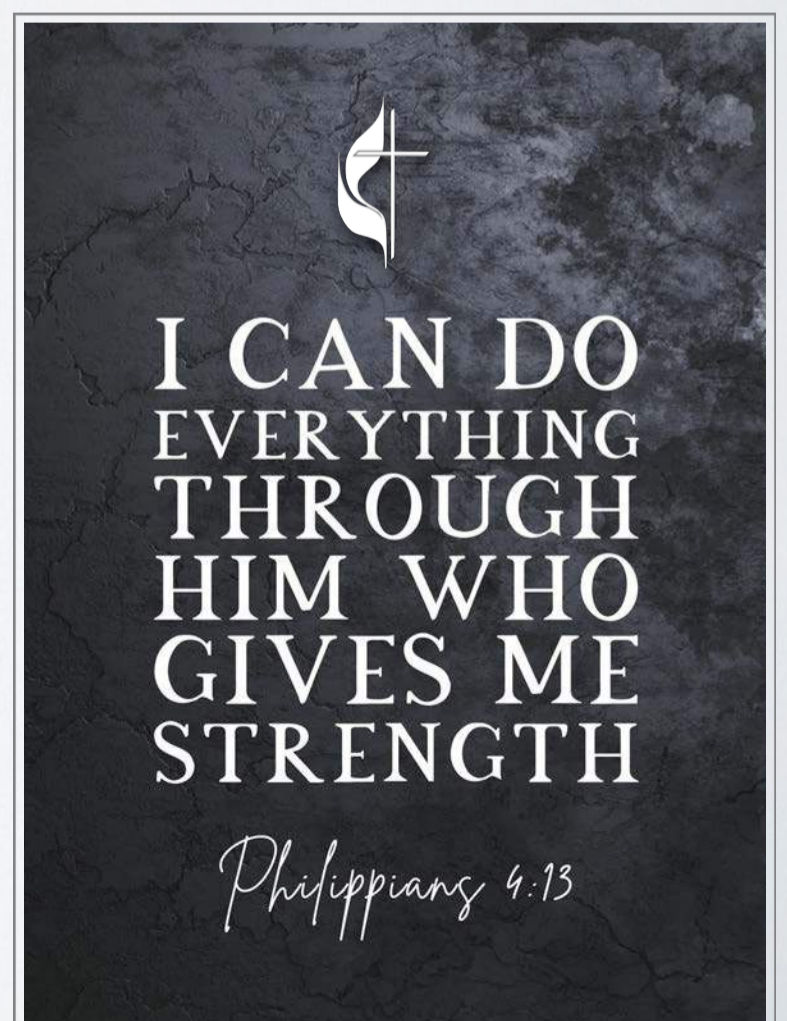
Friends, I am still with you as your Pastor until my current appointment ends on June 30th. My plan was to completely retire from ministry on June 30th but as God said to the Prophet Jeremiah he has also said to me...***“For I know the plans I have for you,” says the Lord. “They are plans for good and not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope.”***

To this my reply is...***“I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.”***

Thank you all for your support and well-wishes after hearing this announcement on Sunday. I feel your love and I witnessed your love for a sister church in the UMC Connection. Some said to me on Sunday...I hope that you can do for Suncook UMC what you did for FUMC. Friends...I am just an instrument of God and it is by ***God's Love*** and ***God's Grace*** that we receive ***God's many Blessings***.

I (we) love you all.

Blessings,
Pastor Bob





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/>



MARILYN STEBBINS 90TH BIRTHDAY

APRIL 26, 2026

[VIEW PHOTOS »](#)



THE SHEPHERD AND HIS SHEEP

APRIL 26, 2026

[VIEW PHOTOS »](#)



OPEN THE EYES OF MY HEART LORD

APRIL 19, 2026

[VIEW PHOTOS »](#)



LECTIONARY READINGS

LECTIONARY READINGS FOR THE MONTH OF MAY:

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!

May 3rd, 2026...Fifth Sunday of Easter

Acts 7:55-60, Psalm 31:1-5, 15-16, 1 Peter 2:2-10, John 14:1-14

May 10th, 2026...Sixth Sunday of Easter

Acts 17:22-31, Psalm 66:8-20, 1 Peter 3:13-22, John 14:15-21

May 17th, 2026...Seventh Sunday of Easter (Ascension Sunday)

Acts 1:6-14, Psalm 68:1-10, 32-35, 1 Peter 4:12-14; 5:6-11, John 17:1-11

May 24th, 2026...Day of Pentecost

Acts 2:1-21, Psalm 104:24-34, 35b, 1 Corinthians 12:3b-13 or Acts 2:1-21, John 7:37-39

May 31, 2026...Trinity Sunday

Genesis 1:1–2:4a, Psalm 8, 2 Corinthians 13:11-13, Matthew 28:16–20



FIRST UMC LEADERSHIP

COMMITTEE ON NOMINATIONS AND LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT LAY LEADERSHIP 2026

Church Council (Leadership Board)

Leadership Board Chair: Kellie Langs (3 year term ending 2027)

Pastor

Lay Leader: Sue Sarosiek

Lay Member to Annual Conference: Dave Richards

Staff Parish Relations Chair: Brock Labadie

Trustee Chair: Mike Coffey

Finance Chair: Aerial Sillanpaa

Financial Secretary : Jen Berry

Church Treasurer: Steve Scott

Recording Secretary: Sue Richards

Church School Superintendent(s) (Sunday School): Dave Richards and Stephanie Labadie

Sunshine Chair: Marilyn Stebbins

Church Historian: Evelyn Laux

Worship Chair: PennySue Orr

Members at Large: Yvonne Griffin, Bella Sillanpaa, Melanie Lindgren

Staff Parish Relations Committee

Brock Labadie (3 year term as chair ending 2026)

Kellie Langs, Christine Williams (3 year term ending 2026)

Sue Richards, Kevin Fickenscher, Anne Coffey (3 year term ending 2027)

Rosie Buswell (3 year term ending 2028)

Rhonda Royal (3 year term ending 2029)

Lay Leader: Sue Sarosiek

Pastor



FIRST UMC LEADERSHIP

COMMITTEE ON NOMINATIONS AND LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT LAY LEADERSHIP 2026

Committee on Nominations and Leadership Development

Stephanie Labadie, Melanie Lindgren (3 year term ending 2026)
Sue Richards (3 year term ending 2027)
Marilyn Stebbins (3 year term ending 2028)
Lay Leader: Sue Sarosiek
Pastor

Finance Committee

Airial Sillanpaa - Chair (3 year term ending 2026)
Steve Scott - Treasurer (3 year term ending 2028)
Jen Berry - Financial Secretary (3 year term ending 2028)
Linda Reiber (1 year term ending 2026)
Jane Richards (1 year ending 2026)
Dave Richards (3 year term ending 2028)
Roseanne Groff (3 year term ending 2028)
John VanReenen (3 year term ending 2028)
Lay Leader: Sue Sarosiek
Pastor

Staff (paid)

Pastor: Bob Stewart
Music Director: Bevan Bloemendaal
Custodian: Pete Engel
Digital Outreach Coordinator: Bevan Bloemendaal

Worship Committee

PennySue Orr - Chair (3 year term ending 2027)
Marilyn Stebbins (3 year term ending 2027)
Michelle Verrill (3 year term ending 2027)
Yvonne Griffin (3 year term ending 2027)
Stephanie Labadie (3 year term ending 2027)
Dave Richards (3 year term ending 2027)
Hollen Groff (3 year term ending 2028)
Debbie Astbury (3 year term ending 2028)
Toby & Diane Thompson (3 year term ending 2028)
Bevan Bloemendaal (Consultant)
Lay Leader: Sue Sarosiek
Pastor: Bob Stewart

Board of Trustees

Mike Coffey - Chair (3 year term ending 2027)
Gary Sillanpaa (3 year term ending 2026)
Steve Langs (3 year term ending 2026)
Steve Scott (Trustee Treasurer) (3 year term ending 2028)
Mark Giandomenico (3 year term ending 2027)
Wayne Rasch (3 year term ending 2027)
Steve Beckert (3 year term ending 2028)
Karl Duval (3 year term ending 2028)
Jayson Lima (3 year term ending 2029)
Lay Leader: Sue Sarosiek
Pastor: Bob Stewart



Finance Update

Aerial Sillanpaa
Chair, Finance Committee

Hello Church Family,

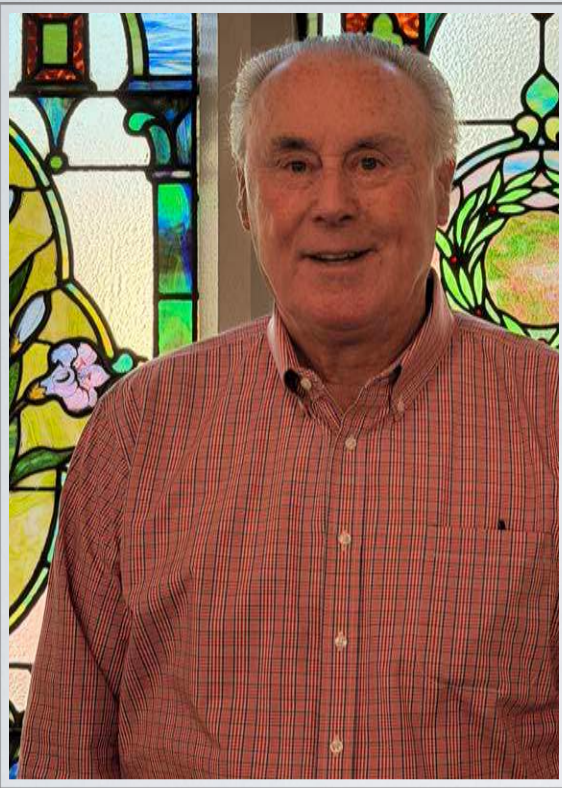
There are some weeks when church life feels very “big picture” and meaningful, and then there are the weeks when service looks a lot more like scrubbing a stainless steel countertop. This past week was firmly in the second category, and it prompted me to think about the many aspects of giving.

With an upcoming kitchen inspection on the calendar, our family, along with volunteers from Recovery Church, cleaned the church kitchen. And by “cleaned” I mean we discovered surfaces that had not been seen since at least two pastors ago. At FUMC service doesn’t always look like a committee meeting or a carefully planned program. Instead it’s very much about pitching in, even if it is not glamorous. Especially if it is not glamorous.

At the same time, there is meaningful progress happening behind the scenes that also deserves to be recognized. Our financial secretary transition is about 80 percent complete, and the treasurer transition is around 50 percent. That may sound like a lot of percentages, but what it really represents is people stepping forward, learning new systems, asking good questions, and carrying real responsibility for the health of the church. My most heartfelt appreciation to Linda Rieber, Steve Scott, Nancy Chesser, and Jen Berry for their commitment, patience and a willingness to figure things out as they go. Pastor Bob has also set a goal to conclude the 2025 annual church audit before his departure in June.

The strength of this church is not in any one role or any one person. It is in the willingness of many people to say yes, even when the task is unexpected, inconvenient, or outside their comfort zone. “Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters.” (Colossians 3:23).

So whether you are the person organizing, the person learning a new financial system, or the person holding a sponge and wondering how on earth something got that sticky, this is how we sustain the mission. Thank you to everyone who continues to show up in ways big and small. It does not go unnoticed, and it makes more of a difference than you might think.



Trustee Update

Mike Coffey
Chair, Trustee Committee

Hello Church Family and Friends,

As the weather gets warmer we are blessed to be able to say thank you so many times. Our church is starting to look refreshed.

Thank you Jay and Corey for making some minor safety repairs to the handicap ramp, It is greatly appreciated.

A grateful thank you to Stephanie Labadie for tending to the flower gardens out front of the Sanctuary, they look great.

Thank you to Emily Battye for volunteering her services for giving the bathroom in the Sanborn Hall foyer a good cleaning along with other general spot cleaning through the church building.

Thank you to the AA groups for purchasing the new traffic cones. Hopefully their placement will deter parking on the grass.

The toilets in the lower level mens and ladies rooms are scheduled to be replaced. After several attempts to fix the toilet in the mens room it prompted the replacement(s). The toilets are outdated and not user friendly for people with physical difficulties. One of the toilets has a 1931 manufacture date, we got our moneys worth.

See you in church!





Worship Committee Update

PennySue Orr
Chair, Worship Committee

Hello my church family

Can you believe it is May!!

There are several events upcoming

May 10th - Mother's Day - please bring in a picture of those females who have been or who are an influence in your life. This can be Mom, Grandma, Aunt, Sister, Cousin or friend. The Worship committee will create a display with all the pictures. Oh and the men of the congregation will be providing coffee hour!

May 17th - Pentecost Sunday - this is the Sunday when the Holy Spirit descended upon the Apostles. Remember to wear RED!

June 14th - Children's Sunday - Please come and celebrate our kiddos as they officially end our Children's Church year.

June 21st - Father's Day - Come let us celebrate all the male influences in our lives.

June 28th - Pastor Bob's last Sunday - Join us in saying thank you and good-bye.

There is a song that comes to my mind each Spring - "Pass it On". After a long winter everything starts to come ALIVE!

"What a wondrous time is spring
When all the trees are budding
The birds begin to sing
The flowers start their blooming
That's how it is with God's love
Once you've experienced it
You'll want to sing
It's fresh like spring
You'll want to pass it on"

Let us remember to PASS on God's unconditional LOVE for us to everyone we meet!
Peace in Your Journey



Children's Church Update

Stephanie Labadie & David Richards
Co-Superintendents

Dear FUMC Family and Friends,

Welcome to our last full month of Children's Church before our summer break!

This month's faith word is *ministry*, and we will spend the next three weeks learning about Peter's ministry - how he answered God's call and served the world. We will hear the stories of Jesus declaring Peter the foundation of his church, of Peter healing Tabitha to demonstrate the power of Jesus, and of Peter's miraculous escape from prison with the help of an angel sent by God.

At the end of the month, we will return to the parable of The Sower and the Seed to understand how different people react differently to Jesus' word. We will learn how true faith in the gospel - hearing, understanding, and remembering Jesus' word - produces a plentiful harvest.

We hope that all families and Children's Church volunteers will be able to join us on Sunday, June 14th as we celebrate Children's Sunday by recognizing our kids, their instructors, and especially Pastor Bob and Sharon before they depart at the end of June.

See you on Sunday!

Stephanie & David

Important Dates to Remember:

Sunday, May 24th (Memorial Day weekend) - no Children's Church

Sunday, June 14th - Children's Sunday





SPRC

Brock Labadie
Chair

Church family and friends,

SPRC were surprised to learn that Pastor Bob will be taking a new opportunity with Suncook United Methodist Church but are thrilled that he will still be active and teaching the gospel closer to home.

We continue to eagerly await the announcement of our new pastor, and are expecting to hear an update soon.

Finally, we are still open to anyone who is interested in participating in the transition team.

Thank you,



 **TRANSITION TEAM**

VOLUNTEER

OPPORTUNITY



Seacoast Family Promise Update

Jen Berry
Chair

Hello!

Seacoast Family Promise provides temporary housing, meals, and shelter to families through a structured, trauma-informed program that includes employment support, housing search assistance, financial education, parenting resources, and other proven tools. These services help families regain stability and move toward a place they can once again call home.

We are pleased to share that one family successfully transitioned into stable housing this month, creating space for a new family to enter the program. It is always rewarding to see families achieve success through this journey.

Our team continues to provide dinners for families currently staying at the Joshua House. We extend a heartfelt thank you to everyone who has supported this outreach over the past few months—your generosity truly makes a difference. Looking ahead, Seacoast Family Promise anticipates 2026 to be a year of significant growth, allowing the program to serve even more families in need. Unfortunately, homelessness among families continues to rise due to the ongoing lack of affordable housing in the Seacoast area, making this work more important than ever.

Beginning in January, families will prepare their own meals on Wednesday and Saturday evenings, using leftovers on Wednesdays. Our responsibility will be to provide meals on Thursdays and Fridays during our assigned weeks, while Temple Israel volunteers will cover Sundays through Tuesdays.

Our 2026 schedule is as follows:

May 1	November 12 & 13
June 25 & 26	December 31 & January 1
August 13 & 14	

If you are interested in helping with this outreach, please contact me - Jen Berry - 603-801-3886 or jen_b76@yahoo.com





End 68 Hours of Hunger Update

Jen Berry
Chair

Church Family and Friends,

End 68 Hours of Hunger - Portsmouth continues to thrive as we move through the school year. It's hard to believe that we are already halfway through the year! Each week, we faithfully send food bags home with students and keep school-based pantries well stocked to ensure children have access to nutritious food throughout the week. In addition, we provide healthy snacks to elementary school nurses so they can support students who may need food during the school day. We remain committed to helping in every way we can.

Thank you for your continued support to End 68 Hours of Hunger with your donations of both monetary and time assisting in making a difference!





Sunshine Outreach Update

Marilyn Stebbins
Chair

Hello Church Family and Friends,

We're continuing our effort to stay connected with members of our church family who are no longer able to join us in person each Sunday, and your support truly makes a difference.

Thank you to everyone who takes a few moments to write a note. These simple gestures of care and encouragement are deeply appreciated and help remind each person that they are remembered and still very much a part of our community.

On the second Sunday of each month, notecards will be available at the entrance to Sanborn Hall. A short message can go a long way in brightening someone's day and helping them feel connected.



Barbara Glidden
188 Jones Ave #101
Portsmouth, NH 03801

Jenya Westbrook
20 Islington Street #402
Portsmouth, NH 03801

Cynthia Drake
5 Huntervale Avenue
Rye, NH 03870

Priscilla Wilson
361 Sagamore Road
Rye, NH 03870



Coffee Hour Update

Yvonne Griffin
Coordinator

Hello church family and friends.....

Getting together on Sunday mornings after church is such a nice time for us all to share our time and get to know each other better.

The volunteers who provide the food do a wonderful job with their weekly presentations for us to enjoy. Currently we have 10 volunteers on the team. However, I am still looking for additional ones to help out. (MEN, THAT INCLUDES YOU, TOO!) With summer coming soon, there will be a drop in volunteers as they take "vacation" time. Please see me any Sunday after church if you would like to join us. OR, just let me know if I could count on you to contribute occasionally if I needed a helping hand. We currently have three church friends who are available to the team right now who do exactly that.

I am so happy that our coffee hour has become so successful. Your attendance and donations are MUCH appreciated. Thank you!!





“Heavenly Favorites”

First UMC Cookbook Fundraiser

PennySue Orr
Project Lead

WOW! The chefs of the congregation have been busy submitting their favorite recipes! We have 175 recipes and the next phases of the project have begun.

We are looking for someone in the congregation to assist with marketing (contacting restaurants etc to help promote or buy advertising space to help off set the cost of printing) and to assist me with coordinating.

We are currently looking at options for a printed book and ebook. If you are interested in a printed copy please see me after church or email psorr@comcast.net

In the upcoming weeks the congregation will be asked to vote on a name for the cookbook. “Heavenly Favorites” is just a working title but we want you the congregation to name the final book. A special gift will be awarded to the winner!

Thank you to Diane Thompson, Rosanne Goff, Kellie and Steve Langs, Barbara Kirkham for putting on their aprons to help with the project.

Peace in your Journey





PRAYER

THE MOST POWERFUL
WEAPON
OF A BELIEVER

THERE IS POWER IN PRAYER!

Through prayer, we connect with God, seek wisdom, and hold others in love and faith. We lift up in prayer:

*Al and Jan Cansdale, healing prayers for Jonathan,
and a JOY for the beautiful Mom and Grandma - Marilyn Stebbins*

AN INVITATION

At both church entrances, you'll find red hearts where you can write the names of those you wish to lift up in prayer, as well as any joys you'd like to share. Please give those hearts to one of the ushers or Pastor Bob.



**PRAYER
IS POWERFUL**

MAY BIRTHDAYS & ANNIVERSARIES

- 5 Joyce Murphy
- 13 Jennifer Berry
- 13 Brock Labadie
- 24 Georgia Sillanpaa
- 24 Liam Sillanpaa
- 25 Susan Richards
- 26 Will Minnihan
- 28 Jane Richards
- 28 George Bennett

8 Mike & Anne Coffey

HELP CELEBRATE!

Take a moment and get a card in the mail or send a quick text or email to wish these church family members a day filled with love, laughter and lots of cake!



Edit cover photo



Fumcportsmouthnh Church

331 friends



+ Add to story

Edit profile

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!



UPCOMING EVENTS

LOOKING AHEAD!

Here are the upcoming events, and the month's worship schedule.

5/3 - Worship Committee meeting after church

THANK YOU MY SPECIAL CHURCH FAMILY!

Thank you for your special Happy Birthday surprise and for staying after church Sunday April 26, to help celebrate my 90th Birthday! Didn't get to talk to each of you but thank you from the bottom of my heart for your love and best wishes! The greatest surprise birthday party ever! THANK YOU Bevan for singing and playing 2 of my favorite songs/Hymns! I pray God will continue to keep me well to continue sharing His love with others!

Love and hugs, Marilyn Stebbins

FIRST UMC WORSHIP SCHEDULE May 2026

DATE	LITURGIST	ACOLYTES	9:55 BELL RINGERS	GREETERS & USHERS	FACEBOOK LIVE	WORSHIP TECH	SOUND TECH	SUNDAY SCHOOL	COFFEE HOUR
5/3/26	B. Labadie	Jack	S. Labadie	S. Olbricht K. Fickenscher	S. Richards	S. Scott S. Labadie	D. Richards	J. Berry H. Groff	R. Groff
5/10/26	K. Fickenscher	TBD	S. Scott	S. Beckert M. Stebbins	S. Richards	S. Scott	S. Sarosiek	S. Stewart M. Lindgren	FUMC MEN
5/17/26	R. Groff	D. Thompson	T. Thompson	R. Royal M. Giandomenico	S. Richards	S. Scott	D. Richards	PS. Orr R. Buswell	Y. Griffin R. Buswell
5/24/26	M. Giandomenico	TBD	D. Richards	H. Groff R. Groff	S. Richards	S. Scott	D. Richards	---	PS. Orr S. Stewart
5/31/26	R. Buswell	TBD	S. Scott	J. Lima M. Stebbins	S. Richards	S. Scott S. Labadie	B. Labadie	K. Langs A. Langs	S. Labadie

AUDITIONS/SIGN UPS

TTS PLAYERS
PORTSMOUTH



**SUGGESTED FOR
ACTORS AGES 5-15**

AUDITION

All actors (ages 5-15) are welcome to audition. (Those auditioning for leads should prepare to sing part of a song.) The auditions are fun and can include readings from the script, light choreography. Please wear comfortable clothes and footwear.

WHEN

Saturdays, May 2 & May 9, 3:30-5 p.m.
Parent/Cast Meeting/Registration
"to claim your role" - Saturday May 16

REHEARSALS

Saturdays, 3:30-5:30 p.m.
Additional rehearsals to be added
during TECH week.

WHERE

First United Methodist Church
129 Miller Avenue, Portsmouth, NH

SHOW DATES/TIMES (3 SHOWS)


Friday, August 14
Saturday, August 15
Sunday, August 16

PRODUCTION FEE

\$195 (\$25 off additional sibling)

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Contact program director Mike Fay at (978) 476-6053 or email coachmikefay@gmail.com.

 Like us on Facebook: TTS Players Portsmouth



ABOUT US

First UMC is a Reconciling Congregation dedicated to worshipping, 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.



RECOVERY CHURCH - PORTSMOUTH

You are invited to join the Recovery Church every Wednesday at 6 p.m. for dinner and 7 p.m. for worship service.

Thank you Silanpaa crew for all the Recovery Kitchen help and Steve Beckert for the MOXIE caps!





FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH



SUNDAYS
10am



LOOK UP!

Not just as a reflection of how far we've come,
but also as an act of hope for a brighter tomorrow.

Join us as we re-open our doors
with a new and fresh look and outlook.