

YOU ARE
LOVED
MORE
THAN
YOU WILL
EVER
KNOW

by someone who
died to know you.

Romans 5:8

FIRST UMC  PORTSMOUTH

AUGUST BEACON

2026



From the Pastor's desk

Pastor Larry Holman

PastorLarryHolman@gmail.com

Dear brothers, sisters and friends of FUMC. Here we are on the doorstep to August. I must admit, my first month at FUMC has flown by extremely fast! It has been a whirlwind. Susan (New Sue) and I are extremely thankful for the warm welcome we have been given here by everyone. As Mr. Spock, from the tv series "Star Trek" would say, this past month has been "interesting" and "fascinating". Not quite the leisurely, take some time to get adjusted month I had mistakenly anticipated; but instead, more like being one of the middle runners in an Olympic relay race with Pastor Bob coming up the lane to hand me the baton and then, taking off and running as fast as I can with it. It's actually a good thing though. It proves that this church, and the people in it, are actively sharing the light, love and word of Jesus in this community - with all the challenges that work can bring.

It is all these activities and challenges that help show how the scriptures really do still have meaning today. We see with our own eyes how the stories and parables from Matthew and Paul's letter to the Roman Church, nearly two centuries ago, are still taking place today.

Over this past month we've considered different perspectives on these parables. In the parable of the sower, we know that the seed of God's Word and the Gospel of Jesus may be spread about in different places but it doesn't always grow. Perhaps it landed on a hardened heart or someone who listens but takes no action, but when landing on fertile soil, it falls upon someone who wants to learn more and be more like Jesus in their thoughts and actions. In the parable of the wheat and weeds, we know that even though God planted a good field of wheat, weeds were also planted by Satan in the same field. Weeds that can weaken us or even turn us away from God. Trying to pull out the weeds would also hurt the wheat, so we grow together until separated at the harvest. We also heard, in Paul's letter to the Romans, how much God loves us and works for our good. God's love is unbreakable and eternal.

These parables and scriptures ask us pointed questions. Who am I right now and who do I want to be in God's kingdom? Do I have a hard or angry heart? Do I take the time to read and meditate on God's Word? What kind of soil am I providing for God's word to grow in? Am I the wheat or the weed? Am I trying to grow to be fruitful and bountiful or am I doing things for my own selfish needs? Am I putting up roadblocks to building a better relationship with Jesus and God based on events occurring in my life and blaming it on them?



From the Pastor's desk [continued]

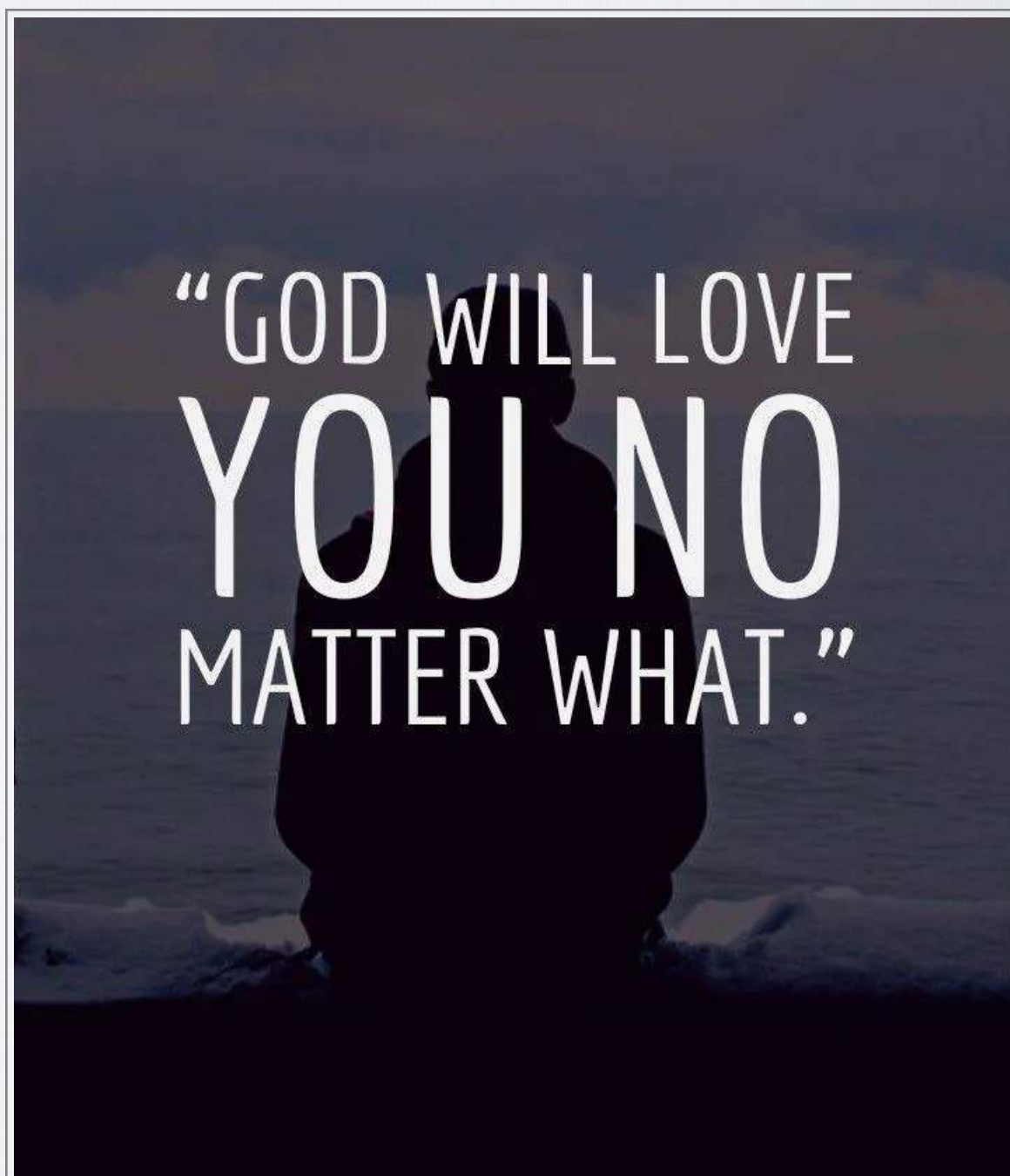
Pastor Larry Holman

PastorLarryHolman@gmail.com

The good news my friends is this - no matter how hard our heart is, no matter if you feel like a weed in a field of wheat, no matter if you are angry or just don't care about God or Jesus - there is nothing that can stop God and Jesus from loving you and working for your good. Through the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives, our hearts can soften, we can be transformed from weed to wheat and we can learn to love ourselves, others and God again. It all starts with a simple reminder that we can repeat to ourselves over and over again - God loves me and there is nothing I can do about it. Basing our gratitude and hope in that one simple statement can start a chain reaction to opening our eyes, ears and hearts to all the blessings that God gives us.

Peace and blessings my friends.

Pastor Larry





FIRST UMC LIFE

WORSHIP, FUN, AND FAITH IN ACTION AT FIRST UMC

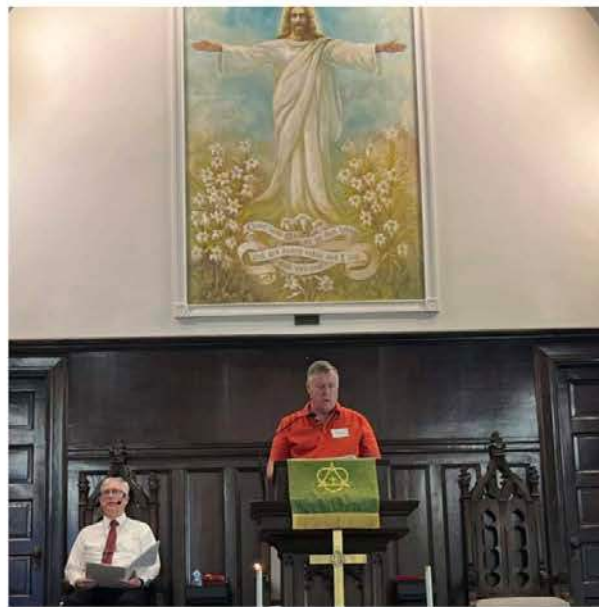
Our Church website fumcportsmouth.com is a great place to remind ourselves of the amazing work we are doing supporting each other, our community in making a difference by sharing our faith in God. Check out the photo galleries here - <https://fumcportsmouth.com/photo-galleries/>



UNBREAKABLE

JULY 26, 2026

[VIEW PHOTOS »](#)



WEEDS & WHEAT PARABLE

JULY 19, 2026

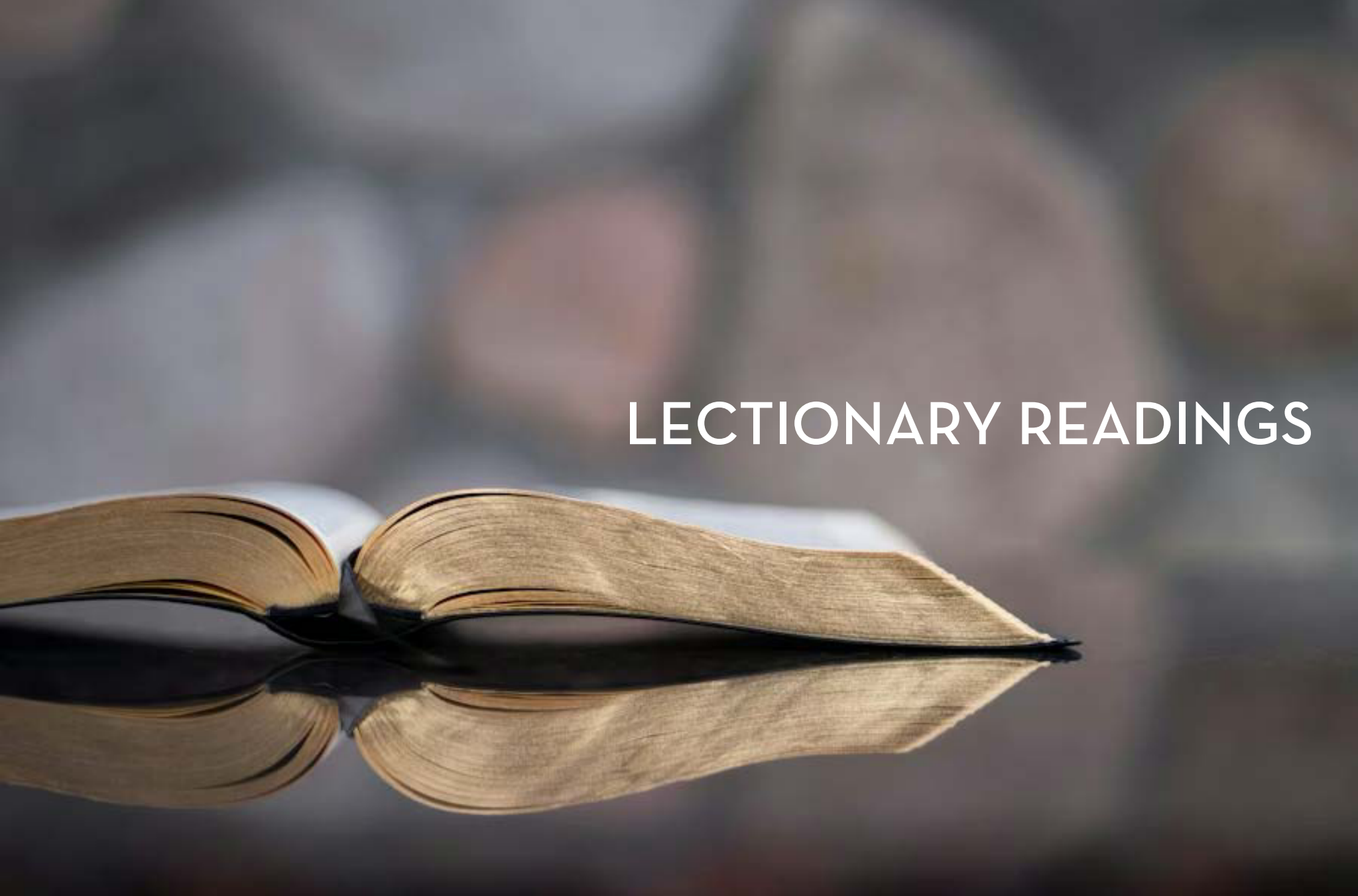
[VIEW PHOTOS »](#)



WELCOME PASTOR LARRY AND SUE!

JULY 12, 2026

[VIEW PHOTOS »](#)



LECTIONARY READINGS

LECTIONARY READINGS FOR THE MONTH OF AUGUST:

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!

Sunday, August 2, 2026

Genesis 32:22-31, Psalm 17:1-7, 15, Romans 9:1-5, Matthew 14:13-21

Sunday, August 9, 2026

Genesis 37:1-4, 12-28, Psalm 105:1-6, 16-22, 45b, Romans 10:5-15, Matthew 14:22-33

Sunday, August 16, 2026

Genesis 45:1-15, Psalm 133, Romans 11:1-2a, 29-32, Matthew 15:10-28

Sunday, August 23, 2026

Exodus 1:8-2:10, Psalm 133, Romans 12:1-8, Matthew 16:13-20

Sunday, August 30, 2026

Exodus 3:1-15, Psalm 105:1-6, 23-26, 45c, Romans 12:9-21, Matthew 16:21-28



FIRST UMC LEADERSHIP

FIRST UMC COMMITTEE LEADERSHIP 2026

Church Council (Leadership Board)

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

Pastor: Larry Holman

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, Steve Beckert (3 year term ending 2029)

Lay Leader: Sue Sarosiek

Pastor: Larry Holman



FIRST UMC LEADERSHIP

FIRST UMC COMMITTEE 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: Larry Holman

Finance Committee

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

Staff (paid)

Pastor: Larry Holman
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)
Demedeiros McMillion (3 year term ending 2029)
Bevan Bloemendaal (Consultant)
Lay Leader: Sue Sarosiek
Pastor: Larry Holman

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)
Jayson Lima (3 year term ending 2029)
Lay Leader: Sue Sarosiek
Pastor: Larry Holman



Finance Update

Aerial Sillanpaa
Chair, Finance Committee

Hello Church!

I'm happy to report that pledge offerings and identified giving (that's church-speak for generous gifts from members and FUMC partners that aren't a formal pledge) increased in June compared to May. Thank you for continuing to give, even when summer schedules pull us in all directions! Like many of you, my family has been busy with warm-weather commitments, but I try to keep the church close to my heart and in our regular giving, even when I can't make it to Sunday service.

Looking ahead to fall, our insurance payments will resume. One important note: as of our last Finance Committee meeting, a date for the **Church Conference** was not yet available, but keep an eye out. We expect it to be announced soon.

Our Mission Share amount for 2025 is \$24,993. Mission Shares are our church's financial contributions to support the ministry, outreach, and administrative work of our broader United Methodist connection locally, regionally, and globally. They're calculated based on church size, budget, attendance, and financial health. They reflect how we're part of something much bigger than just our own congregation.

Traditionally, our Pumpkin Patch fundraiser helps us meet our Mission Share obligation. Giving in the form of Pumpkin Patch volunteerism is a great way to support the cause without opening your wallet. Unloading pumpkins, working the booth, providing bake sale items, or even help with setup and consolidation after pumpkins are sold makes a direct impact on our ability to pay Mission Shares. To become involved please see Sue Richards and look for more details about these operations.

Lastly, I'll be giving a **brief mid-year financial update** after the service on **Sunday, August 10th** in the sanctuary. All are welcome! (If spreadsheets make you squirm, feel free to head straight into Sanborn Hall, we won't take attendance.) The update will last less than 10 minutes and will offer the facts you need to understand the current fiduciary status of the church.

As we enjoy the blessings of summer, may we continue to sow generously, trusting in God's faithfulness through every season.

"As long as the earth endures, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter... will never cease."
—Genesis 8:22



Worship Committee Update

PennySue Orr
Chair, Worship Committee

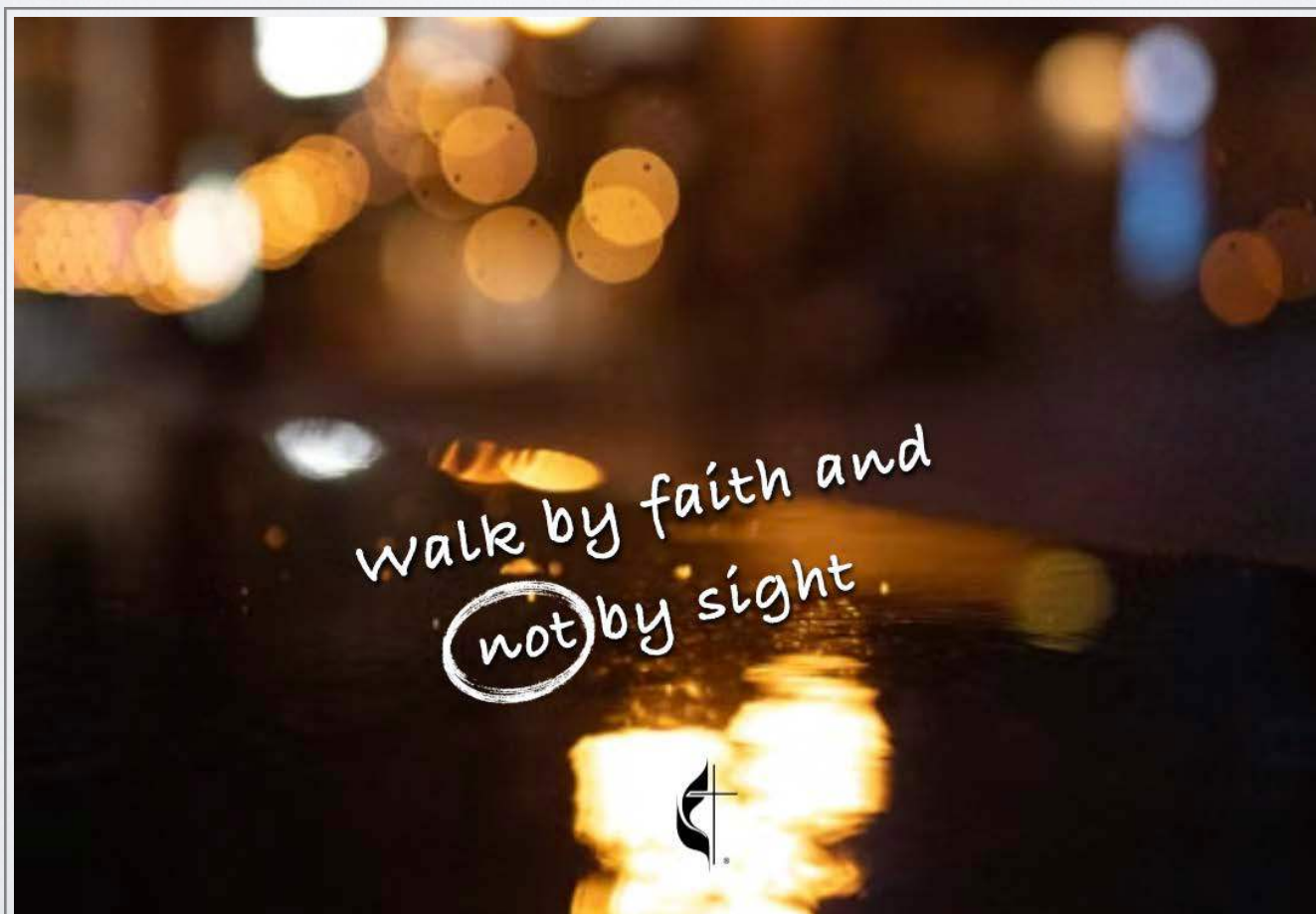
Hello Church Family,

The summer months are time for us to regenerate for the busy fall season that is fast approaching. As always the Worship committee is looking for acolytes, greeters and ushers and liturgists - yup Marilyn and I will be roaming around during coffee hour with our clipboard. While the pulpit has been returned to the upper stage, accommodations can always be made for those who are not able to manage the dreaded stairs.

“Walking by Faith, Tripping Constantly”. This phrase has been popping up on my social media, but what does it mean? This quote is based on 2 Corinthians 5:7 “Walk by faith, not by sight”. Basically living your life based on trusting God rather than what is seen by our eyes. Trusting God by believing in His promises, Having eternal focus- caring about the things that last forever and having Inner Guidance by letting God’s truth guide your choices instead of fears.

Let us remember to trust in God’s plan and his timing. Even when we “trip constantly” His steadfast love and grace helps us to get back up again.

Peace in Your Journey





Sunday School Update

Stephanie Labadie & David Richards
Co-Superintendents

The behind-the-scenes preparations for Sunday School 2026-2027 are ramping up, and we need you!

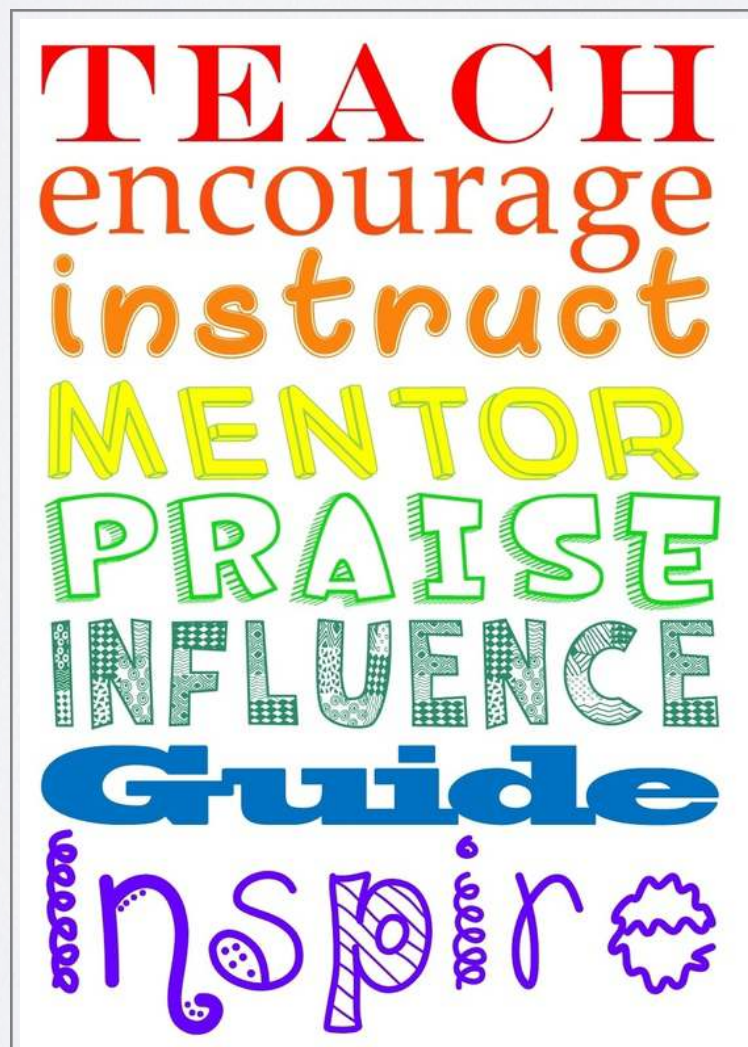
Please reach out to David (cendsdover@gmail.com), Stephanie (SJonesLabadie@gmail.com), or the church office (office@fumcportsmouth.net) if you are interested in serving as a volunteer instructor in the upcoming year.

Even if you've volunteered with us in the past, please confirm your interest in continuing to serve this year.

Each week, a team of instructors will work together to provide a lesson for the kids based on the Cokesbury Celebrate Wonder all-ages curriculum - this year we will purchase the Year 3 installment of the curriculum we have used the past two years. The curriculum includes a variety of activities to choose from related to a particular story from the Bible, or instructors are welcome to go "off script" and create their own activities!

The more teaching teams we have, the fewer weeks each team will be assigned to teach between September and mid-June.

Thank you all!





SPRC

Brock Labadie
Chair

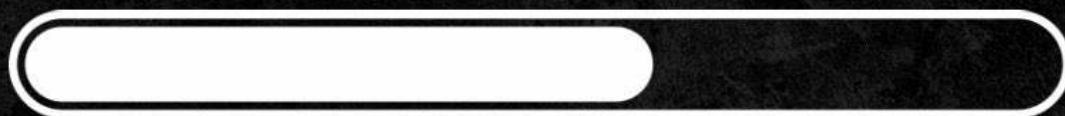
Church family and friends,

As we settle into this exciting new chapter with Pastor Larry and Sue, we hope many of you have also had the opportunity to enjoy time away this summer with family and friends.

Over the coming weeks, the Staff-Parish Relations Committee (SPRC) will continue meeting with Pastor Larry as we support his transition and work together to strengthen the ministry of First UMC.

Please know that the SPRC is here to support and care for our congregation, our pastor, and our staff. If you have questions, concerns, or simply wish to connect, I encourage you to reach out to any member of the committee. As always, we are grateful for your prayers, encouragement, and support as we move forward together.

**A NEW CHAPTER IS
LOADING...**





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 the Joshua House expansion and remodel is now complete and additional families can now be supported. Over the course of 2026, SFP's goal is to increase funding sources so they can hire the additional staff that will be needed to support the maximum number of families at the Joshua house, which is expected to be 8-10 depending on family sizes. Currently, they can handle 5 - 6 families. 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.

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 6 months—your generosity truly makes a difference!

Families now 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 remaining dates are:

August 13 & 14

November 12 & 13

December 31 & January 1

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





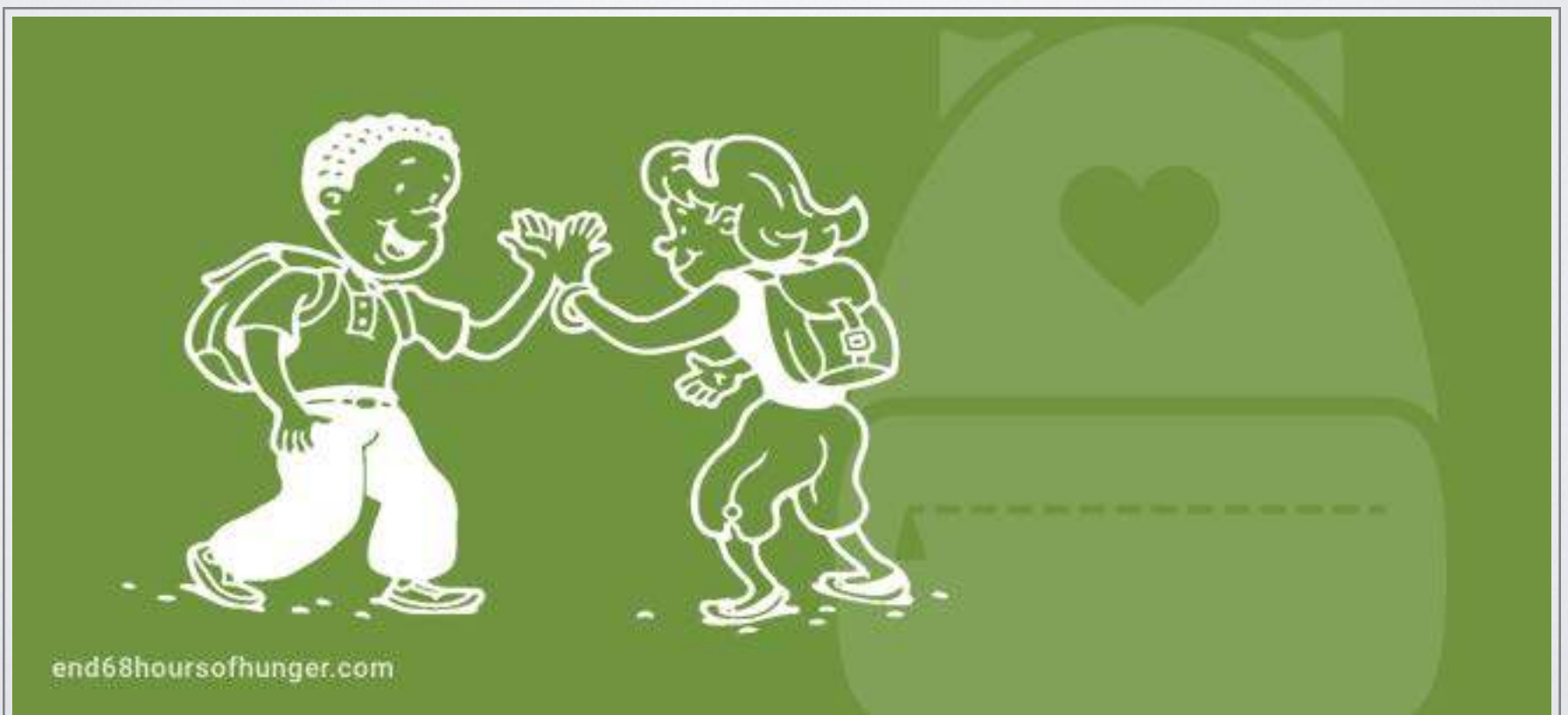
End 68 Hours of Hunger Update

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 only have 2 weeks left and the school year will be complete! That will make 16 school years that we've been providing food to children in need in the Portsmouth school system. It's truly unbelievable how times flies! In that time, we have delivered approximately 3,000 bags with over 20,000 meals in them. When this church started this program back in 2010, I never envisioned it still going strong 16 years later, but here we are.

We will take a short break in July and August. During the summer, Gather food pantry takes care of our kids, providing meals for them as part of a summer lunch program. Then we'll gear up again to start the next school year, since unfortunately food insecurity for both children and adults continues to be a serious problem in the US. I praise God that he brought this idea to us via Pastor Deb Shipp and continues to make a way for the success of this program in Portsmouth! We are definitely making a difference in the lives of these children.





Sunshine Outreach Update

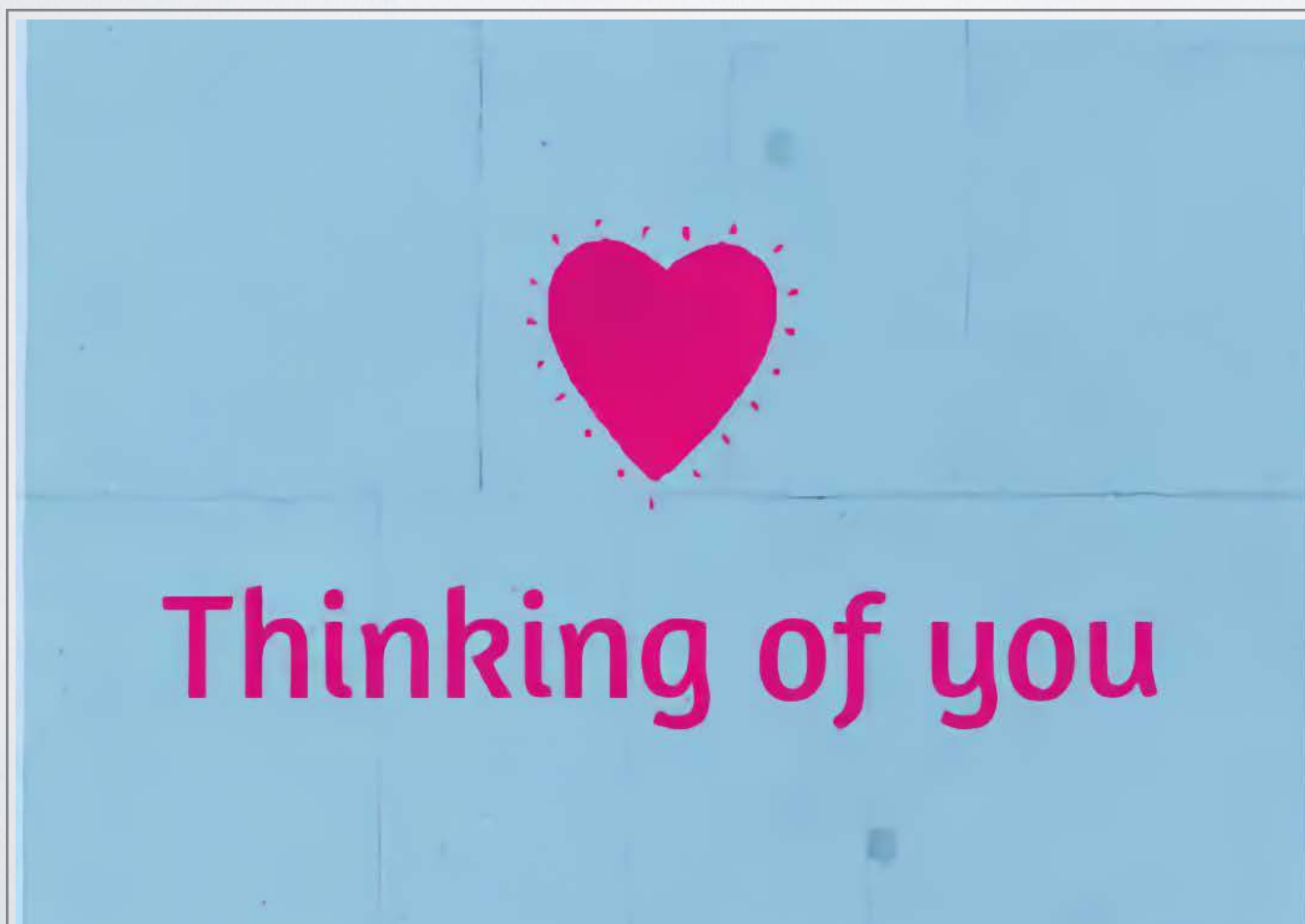
Marilyn Stebbins
Chair

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.

As a reminder...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.



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

Sue Lange
100 Hahnemann Trail
Apt 150
Pittsford, NY 14534



Coffee Hour Update

Yvonne Griffin
Coordinator

Hello Congregation,

As I was writing my Coffee Hour Update for the Beacon early one morning, it was going to be another plea for volunteers and donations. But before I shared the update, something wonderful happened...an answer to prayer. As I was leaving church that Sunday, Jen Berry told me that the extended Labadie family had made a very generous donation in support of our Sunday coffee hour. I will be forever grateful! God is good...all the time!

I also want to thank so many others who generously support our time together. The Langs keep us supplied with bottled water, Shirley Russ brings hard-boiled eggs and potato salad, Mary and her daughters have kept us supplied with Dunkin' Donuts since returning to FUMC (and we are so glad they are back!), Steve B. keeps us stocked with Moxie, Recovery Church provides donations, and thank you to everyone who supports the donation basket. It truly takes a village, and what a wonderful village we have here at FUMC. Beyond the food prepared each week by our assigned angels (at their own expense), we are also grateful to Bevan for faithfully preparing the coffee each week and to Jayson and everyone who helps set up the tables and chairs.

The Sunday coffee and fellowship hour is a blessing, but it is also a big task, and it truly takes a village to make it happen each week. We are so blessed by the support we receive through the preparation, set up, and clean up. I hope I haven't forgotten to thank anyone. Please know how truly grateful we are for every act of kindness.

Starting in September we will be welcoming some new Coffee Hour Angels, including "New Sue" (Pastor Larry's wife) and some of the FUMC men. Once again... THANK YOU, THANK YOU, THANK YOU!!!!





PUMPKIN PATCH UPDATE

Sue Richards
Chair

Hello Church Family & Friends,

The pumpkins are coming!

Important Dates to think about as we have volunteer opportunities for almost every age and physical ability. I promise that if you show up, I'll find something you can help with! 😊

- Saturday, September 19th from 9-Noonish: Come help set-up pallets and signs.
- Saturday, September 26th from 10:30-1:30ish: Come help unload all sizes of pumpkins and small gourds from our 1st full truckload.
- Saturday, October 17th from 10:30-1:30ish: Come help unload all sizes of pumpkins and small gourds from our 2nd full truckload.

Stay tuned for information next month on Booth Shifts, Tuesday and Friday morning pie baking, and bringing in homemade baked goodies and candy! (If you can't wait until then, talk to me and I'll be more than happy to fill you in! 😊)

Love and Hugs





AUGUST BIRTHDAYS AND ANNIVERSARIES

4 Steve Beckert
5 Pete Engel
8 Anne Coffey
10 Steve Langs
12 Art Munson
13 Pastor Sue Ellery
13 Andrew Laux

18 Priscilla Zoffoli
20 Jesse Bennett
20 Suzanne Olbricht
25 Bevan Bloemendaal
26 Linda Reiber
27 Jan Cansdale
28 TJ Scott

2 Bill & Connie Parsons
6 Pastor Larry & Susan
7 David & Sue Richards
29 Kevin Fickenscher &
Suzanne Olbricht

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!

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.

8/26 - Recovery Church 3rd anniversary dinner @ 6pm service @ 7pm

 FIRST UMC WORSHIP SCHEDULE
August 2026

DATE	LITURGIST	ACOLYTES	9:55 BELL RINGERS	GREETERS & USHERS	FACEBOOK LIVE	WORSHIP TECH	SOUND TECH	COFFEE HOUR
8/2/26	Jayson Lima	TBD	D. Richards	R. Groff H. Groff	PS. Orr	S. Richards	S. Sarosiek	J. Berry N. Chesser
8/9/26	Maribeth Karr	TBD	J. Lima	S. Beckert M. Stebbins	S. Richards	S. Scott	S. Sarosiek	Y. Griffin D. Pierce
8/16/26	Steve Beckert	TBD	H. Groff	R. Royal M. Giandomenico	S. Richards	S. Scott	S. Sarosiek	R. Groff
8/23/26	Steve Langs	TBD	S. Scott	Kellie & Alexa	S. Richards	S. Scott	D. Richards	PS. Orr R. Buswell
8/30/36	Grayson	Georgia	Liam	Sillanpaa Family	S. Richards	S. Scott	D. Richards	Sillanpaa Family



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



**DON'T FORGET
THAT MAYBE...**

**YOU ARE THE
LIGHTHOUSE IN
SOMEONE'S STORM.**



ABOUT US

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.



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.



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.