



**FUMC PORTSMOUTH
A RECONCILING CONGREGATION**

We, the congregation of the First United Methodist Church of Portsmouth, New Hampshire, are dedicated to worshipping, 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

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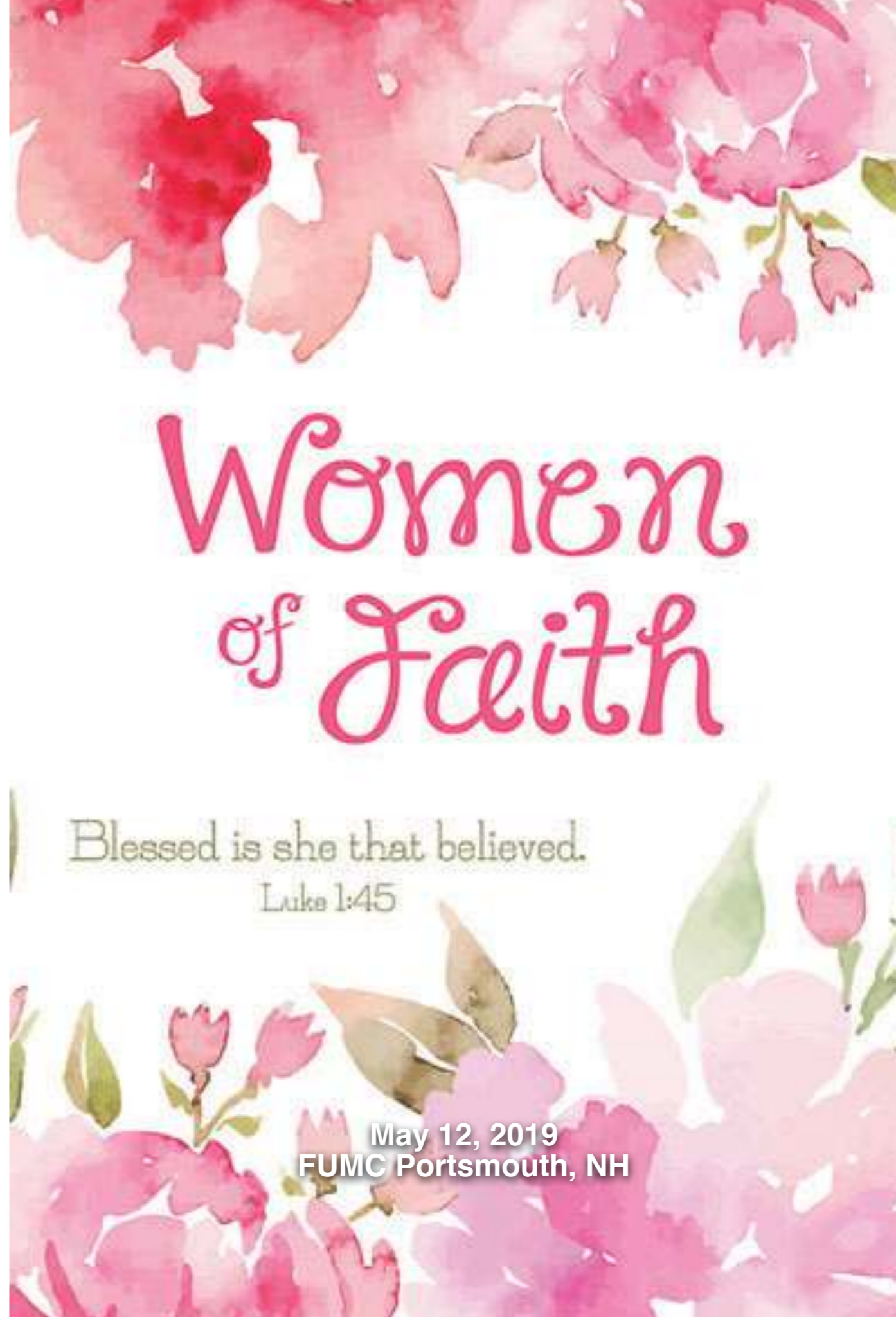
Pastor office hours - Tuesday and Thursday 9 am - 12 pm

[call to ensure availability]

Pastor - Rev. Dr. Debra J. Hanson

Check out our website at www.fumcportsmouth.com

Like and Follow Us On:   



Women of Faith

Blessed is she that believed.

Luke 1:45

May 12, 2019
FUMC Portsmouth, NH

We Gather for Worship

Mother's Day

Prelude & Entrance of Christ's Light

Celebrations

***Call to Worship**

L: Awake! Rise up!

P: There is much to be done in the Lord's Name today.

L: Get ready to worship and to serve God.

P: We are ready to hear God's word for us and to respond in action and love.

L: Open your hearts to God's will this day.

P: Praise be to God who walks with us and guides us.

***Hymn:** "Our Parent, by Whose Name" UMH #447

A Time for the Child in all of Us

Prayer Litany for Mother's Day insert

Sung Response: "Spirit of the Living God" UMH #393

Ministry of Music

We Proclaim the Word

Reading the Word: Acts 9:36-43

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

P: Thanks be to God.

Message: "The Heart of God" Rev. Deb Hanson

We Respond to God's Word

***Hymn:** "Happy the Home When God is There" UMH #445

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 in 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)

God of Great gifts, we give you these gifts today knowing that you are the Creator of gifts. You care for us constantly providing for us, nurturing for us. As we have been abundantly provided for, so we give abundantly to the work that you give us to do, the work of the church, the care for those who are poor. Accept these gifts in Jesus' name. Amen.

We Go Forth to Serve

***Hymn:** "I Was There to Hear Your Borne Cry" TFWS #2051

***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*

*UMH = United Methodist Hymnal TFWS = The Faith We Sing
Large print bulletins are available from the greeters*

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 worshipping our God so you leave this place feeling that you have been blessed to be a blessing. Please join us again!

Rev. Deb Hanson



Pastor - Rev. Dr. Debra J. Hanson
Pastor's Assistant - David Richards
Liturgist - Dr. Kevin Fickenscher
Lay Leader - Susan Sarosiek
Director of Music - Bevan Bloemendaal
Acolyte - Kaya Sarosiek
Greeters - Silanpaa Family & Marilyn Stebbins
Ushers - Al & Jan Cansdale, Ken & Jenya Westbrook
Sunday School - Dave Atkinson
Sound Tech - Sue Sarosiek
Worship Service Tech - Steve Scott
Photographer - Dave Atkinson



PRAY TO ME I WILL HEAR YOU

Jeremiah 29:12

WE LIFT UP IN PRAYER DEAR LORD...

Gayle Gardei	Roseanne	Barbara & Jim Slater
Marion Collishaw	Rev. David Kerr	Barbara Sylvester
Sue Goodhue	Jim New	Pauline Boynton
Hunter Pinkley	Kim Hishop	Barbara Millar
Sylvia Bartlett	Bobbie Noble	Irene Derosier
Brian Thompson	Art Munson	Barbara Clement
Malia Broe	Pastor Sue Ellery	Joette MacKenzie
Gil Stebbins	Judy Doyon	Vicky Fernandez
Rev. Bill Gardei	Charles Gilman	Alissa Fernandez
Woodie Lange	Peter	Gabor [Brianna's father in-law]
Barbara Chapman	Our Church Family	Jessie



Thank you to J Verne Wood Funeral Home for their monetary donation and today's desserts!



Today's altar flowers are In Loving Memory and Happy Birthday to Bill and Scott by Yvonne Griffin

UPCOMING EVENTS

Rev. Deb's Vacation

Rev. Deb will be on vacation from Monday, May 13 through Sunday, May 19. If anyone needs pastoral care, please contact David Richards.

Congratulations to Kaya Sarosiek!

On **May 19th**, Kaya (Karen) Sarosiek will receive her Master of Science Degree in Environmental Science, with a concentration in Wildlife Biology, from Green Mountain College. Good work and congratulations! Join us at an Open House Celebration on Sunday, 5/26 beginning at 4:00, at 25 Lovell Road, Stratham.

Widow/Widower's Support Group Meeting

On **Sunday, May 19** at 1:00 pm, another meeting of the Widow/Widower's Social Group will be held at Temple Israel, 350 Court Street, Portsmouth. Chaplain Elisa Senter-Kaplan is the moderator, and all are welcome.

On **Tuesday, 5/21**, at 6:00 Church Council Meeting in church office. All are welcome!

On **Sunday, May 26**, Pati Frew-Waters from Seacoast Family Promise will join us to share the message about their ministry. We support SFP by hosting them during the year and working with other faith organizations who provide food and shelter, as well as support while people who are in this program search for places to live. Please join us to learn more about this amazing organization that has changed many lives.

SFP CHARITY GOLF TOURNAMENT Monday, June 3rd at Pease Golf Course...Open to all! Win a Subaru Assent courtesy of Exeter Subaru. Silent auction, games, history of golf hole special and more. Registration underway on seacoastfamilypromise.org

UMC Market Place

<https://umcmarket.org/>

Do you shop on line? Have you ever heard of UMC Market Place? This is a place where you can shop on line with places like Staples, Bed, Bath, and Beyond, and many other online stores, and when you go through the UMC Market.org, a percentage will be sent to the church. It's a great way to do fundraising with what you are already doing! To learn more, visit the website above and read about how it works, then sign up using First UMC, Portsmouth as the benefitting church. If you have any questions, please ask Rev. Deb.

FUNDRAISERS NEWS

At their March meeting, the Church Council voted not to hold the Bell Bazaar this year. After asking for feedback from the congregation (see the February Beacon), and receiving no input, the decision was made to focus on other possibilities.

We **WILL** hold our Golf Tournament in September, thanks to the leadership of Cathy VanReenen. We will be looking for people to help, so watch for "recruiting" information in a few months.

This summer, we will hold a "**rent a space**" yard sale, tentatively scheduled for June 22, 8 am – 1 pm with lunch. The church will have spaces, but others who might like to be part of a "giant yard sale" may rent space. We need a coordinator or two to take reservations for the sellers and help organize the day. Please contact Sue Sarosiek if you are willing to lead this.

Thank You to Barbara Slater

As many of you know, Barbara Slater has given up being the chairperson of the Nurture Committee due to health reasons. We invite everyone to send Barbara a note of thanks - shower her with love and gratitude.

Thank you, Barbara, for your faithful leadership of our Nurture Committee for so many years. It is our turn to nurture you! You are such a blessing! Many blessings from your Church Family.



Mothers' Day Litany

Lord, on this day set aside to honor and remember mothers, we give you thanks for our mothers. We are grateful that you chose to give us life through them, and that they received the gift of life from your hands, and gave it to us. Thank you for the sacrifices they made in carrying us and giving us birth.

We thank you for the women who raised us, who were our mothers in childhood. Whether birth mom, adopted mom, older sister, aunt, grandmother, stepmother or someone else, we thank you for those women who held us and fed us, who cared for us and kissed away our pain. We pray that our lives may reflect the love they showed us, and that they would be pleased to be called our moms.

L: We pray for older moms whose children are grown.

P: Grant them joy and satisfaction for a job well done.

L: We pray for new moms experiencing changes they could not predict.

P: Grant them rest and peace as they trust you for the future.

L: We pray for pregnant women who will soon be moms.

P: Grant them patience and good counsel in the coming months.

L: We pray for moms who face the demands of single parenthood.

P: Grant them strength and wisdom.

L: We pray for moms who enjoy financial abundance.

P: Grant them time to share with their families.

L: We pray for moms who are raising their children in poverty.

P: Grant them relief and justice.

L: We pray for step-moms.

P: Grant them patience, understanding, and love.

L: We pray for moms who are separated from their children.

P: Grant them faith and hope.

L: We pray for moms in marriages that are in crisis.

P: Grant them support and insight.

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L: We pray for moms who have lost children.

P: Grant them comfort in the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

L: We pray for mothers who aborted their children.

P: Grant them healing and peace.

L: We pray for moms who gave up their children for adoption.

P: Grant them peace and confidence as they trust in your providence.

L: We pray for adoptive mothers.

P: Grant them joy and gratitude for the gift you have provided.

L: We pray for girls and women who think about being moms.

P: Grant them wisdom and discernment.

L: We pray for all women who have assumed the mother's role in a child's life.

P: Grant them joy and the appreciation of others.

L: We pray for those people present who are grieving the loss of their mother in the past year.

P: Grant them comfort and hope in Christ's resurrection.

Unison Prayer of blessing:

Lord, we thank you for the gift of motherhood. We thank you for the many examples of faithful mothers in scripture, like Sarah, Hannah, Elizabeth, and Lois. Hear now the first names of other women who have inspired us by their motherly examples . . . We are mindful this day of all these women, and especially Mary the mother of our Lord Jesus Christ, who had the courage in faith to say "yes" to your calling. May these women gathered here today emulate these examples of faith. And may they model for all the rest of us what it means to be your disciple. Bless them on this special day; in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

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SERMON GIVEN 5/12/19 BY
REV. DR. DEB HANSON

“The Heart of God” – 5/12/19 (Mother’s Day)
First UMC – Rev. Dr. Debra J. Hanson

SCRIPTURE: Acts 9:36-43

THEME: God gives us gifts and talents to share with others.

One of the bulletin bloopers that always makes me smile is “Don’t let worry kill you; let the church help.” Even though we might laugh at the blooper, there is a sort of sad truth that could be behind it. There are times when churches do get in the way of what they are called to do. It might be in the structure of the denomination or within an individual congregation. Our purpose for being a church is to follow the great commission that Jesus gave: “Go make disciples.” How is that accomplished? We, as the church of Jesus Christ in the world, as the Body of Christ who carries on his work in the world are called to share God’s love with others and to witness to our faith through our words and actions, both within the church as well as in the world around us. We receive and share the heart of God.

In our scripture passage today, we heard the story of Tabitha – in Greek “Dorcas” – who gave of her resources and talents to make a difference in the lives of the widows in Joppa. She shared God’s love and witnessed to her faith in word and deed, and she was the only woman to be actually called “a disciple.” But something happened to her, and she died, leaving the widows in deep despair and mourning until Peter arrived and brought her back to life. In order to understand why her death and being brought back to life was so important to those widows, it’s helpful to understand what it meant to be a widow in that time.

Women relied on the men in their lives to give them status and to provide for them. When their husbands died, the sons took over caring for them, and if there were no sons, it was up to their husband’s brother or other male relative to take them into their homes to care for them. Widows who had no male head of household were pretty much left to fend for themselves; they had no identity except through the male head of household, and when that was gone, they had no way to support themselves. Throughout the scriptures, there are reminders about caring for the widows and orphans, the poorest and most neglected outcasts in society. Widows were often exploited and cheated out of any financial resources or property that they might have had, and many ended up begging and struggling to stay alive. Without a male in the household, they were often abandoned and left alone, dying in poverty with no one to care for them or even care about them.

Tabitha became their provider. She had a gift for making clothing, and she apparently had the means to help them in their struggles to even subsist. It’s hard for us to imagine this because we don’t see that kind of marginalization so blatantly in our society, although, many widows have shared how their relationships changed with friends after their husbands died. Married friends stopped inviting them to be part of their social groups because it was awkward to have the so-called “fifth wheel” there. Friends who had related mostly to the husband dropped their contact with them, and some widows have had to form their own groups for support and comfort.

Today’s widows have far more opportunities to have connections that provide support and care for them even when they have no other family left. They can find companionship and friends in the midst of the company of other widows and hopefully in the community of faith, the church.

But sometimes we as members of the church don't step up and miss ways to care for others. Some people believe that they have no gifts to share, so they can't do anything. Someone shared this story with me that I think offers some food for thought on this.

An elderly Chinese woman had two large pots, each hung on the ends of a pole, which she carried across her neck. One of the pots had a crack in it while the other pot was perfect and always delivered a full portion of water. At the end of the long walks from the stream to the house, the cracked pot arrived only half full. For a full two years this went on daily, with the woman bringing home only one and a half pots of water.

Of course, the perfect pot was proud of its accomplishments. But the poor cracked pot was ashamed of its own imperfection, and miserable that it could only do half of what it had been made to do. After two years of what it perceived to be bitter failure, it spoke to the woman one day by the stream. 'I am ashamed of myself, because this crack in my side causes water to leak out all the way back to your house.' The old woman smiled, 'Did you notice that there are flowers on your side of the path, but not on the other pot's side?'

'That's because I have always known about your flaw, so I planted flower seeds on your side of the path, and every day while we walk back, you water them.' For two years I have been able to pick these beautiful flowers to decorate the table. Without you being just the way you are, there would not be this beauty to grace the house.'

Each of us has our own unique gift or gifts, as well as flaws. It's the cracks and flaws we each have that make our lives together so very interesting and diverse. We just need to take each person for who they are and look for the gifts they have to offer. God can, will, and does use all of us – flaws and all – to further the work of the kingdom here on earth. Each one of us has at least one gift to share in some way to build the church up, to work together in cooperation, and to glorify God as the family of faith. Each person is an important part of our life together as a congregation. It's when we begin to see only the flaws in others that we get into trouble.

Tabitha shared her gifts with the widows of her community. This passage from Luke starts with Tabitha's death and describes the grief, sorrow, and loss that overwhelmed them. Tabitha was their life-line, and she was dead. Tabitha's death meant that the widows were again destitute and alone. Their physical needs would no longer be met, and more than likely, the companionship they shared in Tabitha's company would also disappear. We can understand their grief and loss and their loss of hope. When people who are our neighbors, friends, part of our congregation go through challenges, we are called to support them, to care for them.

I remember one of the things my Mom always did when she heard of a death in someone's family. She would make something – a casserole, a cake, a salad, sandwiches, whatever she had – and take it over to the house. I never really understood why she did that or the impact it had on the family she shared food with until my friend Phyllis died and no one brought anything to us. Her sons and I were grieving her death, trying to get ready for the memorial service, and running around setting up things, and in between we either had to eat out or stop at the store and come back to the house to cook. It would have been so nice to have someone bring by even a bag of apples, some chips, bread and lunch meat, or whatever they had to share so we

didn't have to stop to cook. I finally understood Mom's generosity in taking something to the grieving family.

After Tabitha's death, the widows must have felt alone and again destitute. But someone sent for Peter who heard the story, saw all the things that Tabitha had made for the widows, realized that she had shared her God-given gifts to the glory of God, and prayed for her to be brought back to life.

There are some parallels in this story with other Biblical stories. In 1 Kings 17, Elijah brings the only son of a widow back to life and restored him to his mother. In 2 Kings 4, Elisha also brought the only son of a Shunammite woman back to life. Mark 5 has the story of Jesus raising Jairus' daughter, and his command to her was "Talitha cum" which means "Little girl, get up!" This sounds very much like Peter's words, "Tabitha, get up!" All of these situations tie together because they reveal the power of God to bring new life and hope to us as human beings.

Miracles come about when the unexpected happens. Maybe they don't start out to be miracles, and often they take us by surprise and move us to a new place in our own lives. That's how God gives us miracles. I think we have seen the power of God in our lives, but we don't recognize it because we are expecting a big bang with glitter and glitz. Miracles often happen after something devastating – think of the thousands of dollars that pour into "Go Fund Me" web sites, or the hundreds of volunteers who pitch in to help communities rebuild after flooding, tornados, or other natural disasters.

Think about the ways we rally as a congregation to support and care for those who are going through a tough time or the prayer support we give someone who is going through challenging times. Our prayers uplift and support them as they take a difficult journey. We see many miracles in our lives that we simply don't identify as miracles: love, healing through modern medicine, reconciliation where it seemed impossible, and I'm sure we could each name our own.

As the church of Jesus Christ in this world, we are called to BE the hands and feet of Christ in the world, to participate in the miracles that God brings as we share our God-given gifts. I know I say that a lot, and I think that we do that pretty well at times. But we can always do more. We can always grow. We can always improve. One pastor asked, "Would those who hear about us, and those who watch what we do, hear and feel echoes from the story of Christ?" (Kate Huey, Weekly Seeds, April 24, 2007).

How are we witnessing to our faith in this world? What are we doing to bring Christ to others? How do our actions and words invite others to want to know Christ better? In what ways are we bringing hope to others? How do we share our gifts to help make the Body of Christ, the Church, more whole? How are we encouraging one another?

Even though some people have not always had good relationships with their mothers, there are many of us who have, and we have learned about God's love from our mothers or the mother figures in our lives. I have heard some of you share how your mother brought you to church from an early age and brought you up praying and learning about God through Sunday

school, church activities, youth group, summer camps, and many other ways. Our mothers of those who have been like mothers to us, often are the way we most understand the unconditional love and depth of God's love for us. Although none of us is perfect, somehow when we are older, we can learn to appreciate the gifts our mothers gave us because they loved us.

The family and the church are the primary training ground for living out our faith in the world. This is where we learn to work in cooperation with each other; this is where we learn to respect and work with even those people we don't particularly like; this is where we learn what it means to discern God's vision for us and for the world as well as how to set an example for the world through forgiveness, tolerance, reconciliation, humility, and acceptance. This is where we grow in faith so that we can send each other out into the world to BE the Church.

Faith is a verb – it is the living faith in Jesus Christ that helps us to bring hope to the world, to help others to see that a life in Christ can make a difference to others, and that we have the tools for a new beginning, for a new life, one of hope, joy, peace, and love. Tabitha teaches us that, when we use our gifts and talents to glorify God as we care for others and glorify God in the way we live, we are following the path that Jesus has set for us and living with the heart of God. May we appreciate all those who care for us, who mother us even when we are adults, and may we bring the heart of God to those whose lives we touch. Amen.