

JESUS CARES

Fear ye not therefore, ye are of more value than many sparrows.

—Matthew 10:31



We Gather for Worship

Prelude & Entrance of Christ's Light

Gratitude Moments

***Call to Worship**

L: O God, there are things in life that weigh us down and keep us from lifting our hurts and hopes to you.

P: Help us to feel your presence as we worship together.

L: Fill our hearts with your joy and the recognition of the peace, healing and joy only you can provide.

P: We worship you with thanksgiving and praise!

***Hymn:** "My Faith Looks Up to Thee" UMH #452

A Time for the Child in all of Us

Prayer (unison)

Loving God, we ask your healing in our lives: healing from burdens that sometimes feel too heavy to carry, healing from attitudes that drag us down, healing of past memories that block us from living life fully. Help us to trust your promises, your presence, and the power of your Spirit to bring renewal and restoration to hearts that are heavy or untrusting. Help us to recognize the companions you send to be on this journey with us, and empower us to also walk with others who need to know your loving care through us. We pray in Jesus name. Amen.

Sung Response: "He is Lord" UMH #177

Ministry of Music

We Proclaim the Word

Reading the Word: Luke 13:10-17

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

P: Thanks be to God.

Message: "Standing Tall" Rev.Dr. Debra J. Hanson

We Respond to God's Word

***Hymn:** "His Eye is on the Sparrow" TFWS #2146

Prayers of the People

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!

***Prayer of Dedication** (unison)

Out of gratitude for all you have given us, we return a portion back to you. We know there are many in our world who carry burdens, and we ask that you would use these gifts to make a difference in their lives. Amen.

We Go Forth to Serve

***Hymn:** "Victory in Jesus" UMH #370

***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*

*TFWS = The Faith We Sing UMH = United Methodist Hymnal
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 - Dave Atkinson
Lay Leader - Susan Sarosiek
Lay Servant - Dave Richards
Acolyte - Marilyn Stebbins
Director of Music - Bevan Bloemendaal
Greeters - Shirley Russ & Joyce Blanchard
Ushers - Ken & Jenya Westbrook
Sound Tech - Sue Sarosiek
Worship Service Tech - Sue Richards
Photographer - Dave Atkinson
Sunday School - Aerial Silanpaa & Kaya Sarosiek



WE LIFT UP IN PRAYER...



Ken Young
Gayle Gardei
Marion Collinshaw
Sue Goodhue
Hunter Pinkley
Sylvia Bartlett
Brian Thompson
Malia Broe
Gil Stebbins
Rev. Bill Gardei
Woodie Lange
Roseanne
Kerr Family
Jim New
Bobbie Noble
Barbara Glidden
Judy Doyon
Charles Gilman
Diederich Family
Our Church Family
Jim Slater & Family
Barbara Sylvester
Pauline Boynton
Barbara Millar
Irene Derosier
Barbara Clement
Joette MacKenzie
Vicky Fernandez
Alissa Fernandez
Jessie
John Richards
John Erickson
Maria Fernandez
Anne & Mike Coffey
Gigis Family
Jamie Mohr & Family
Rev. Charles & Anona Hartman
Julia

Come join us for coffee hour
after church service in
Sanborn Hall. We'd love to
catch up with you and see
how your week has gone.

UPCOMING EVENTS

8/31/19 at 5:30, the Saturday Night Supper Club will meet at The Old Salt in Hampton. Please see Keen Westbrook for more information.

9/3, Finance Trustee meeting will be at 6 pm at the parsonage. All are welcome.

9/11, our 11th Annual Golf Tournament will be held at Pease Golf Course. Team sign-up sheets are on the office counter. Golf teams are needed.

9/14, Trustee Clean Up Day, from 8 -12 pm. Please see Dave Richards for more info.

9/14, we will have a Blessing of the Animals service outside on the church lawn at 10:00 am. Bring your pets to have them blessed! We celebrate all creatures, great and small.

9/15, our new D.S. Rev. Taesung Kang will be worshipping with us. Please join us in welcoming Rev. Kang. SPRC will meet after service in the Randall room with Rev. Kang.

9/21, Pumpkin Patch set up us at 9 am. Help is needed!

9/28, Pumpkin Delivery will be at 9:00 am at FUMC.

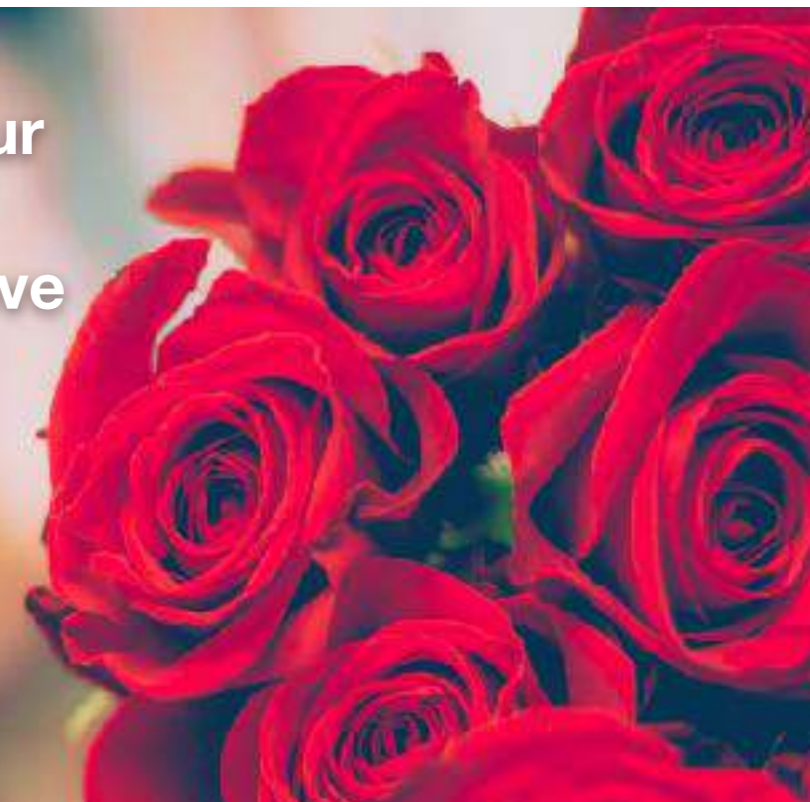
9/1 – 10/31, Need an excuse to clean out your “stuff” and have the church get paid?! Bag or box up your good, clean, working, sellable condition items and put them on Sanborn Hall stage (stage available *after* 9/1). We need to deliver everything all together to Savers on Nov. 6th., for weighing. Here’s an example: 14 lbs. of “Soft Goods” = about a 13 gal. trash bag and a black garden leaf bag from 30 to 40 lbs. Our goal is 10,000 pounds which equals approximately \$2000.00.

Just a friendly reminder, please try to keep your pledge up to date so we can meet our financial obligations as a church. Thank you for your faithful giving!

Anyone still wishing to purchase a CD from Sal Hughes, one of our guest musicians this month, there is still on left for \$10 in office. Please see Sue S. if interested

We continue to celebrate those in Senior Living. Please send a card from the table in Sanborn Hall to brighten their day. Stamps are available in the office or leave on counter for mailing. Thanks!

In Honor of our
Parents,
Rev. Deb & Dave





WHO WE ARE

FUMC PORTSMOUTH A RECONCILING CONGREGATION

We, the congregation of the First United Methodist Church of Portsmouth, New Hampshire, are dedicated in 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
Office Phone 603-436-6038 office@fumcportsmouth.net
Pastor office hours - Tuesday and Thursday 9 am - 12 pm
[call to ensure availability]
Pastor - Rev. Dr. Debra J. Hanson

Check out our website at www.fumcportsmouth.com

Like and Follow Us On:   



SERMON TRANSCRIPT GIVEN BY
REV. DR. DEB HANSON

“Standing Tall” – 8/25/19
First UMC – Rev. Dr. Debra J. Hanson

SCRIPTURE: Luke 13:10-17

THEME: God calls us to receive and offer grace to all.

Sometimes opportunities to offer grace just fall into our laps, or, in my case, it “fell” into the seat beside me on the bus coming from Logan Airport back to Portsmouth when I was on my way home from being with my family in Iowa. A woman – I hesitate to call her an “older woman” given that she may have been not much older than me – but a woman asked if she could sit with me. I answered, “Sure!” and from that moment until we arrived at the bus station, she told me her life’s story.

Her husband had died only two months earlier, and she was supposed to fly to Syracuse, NY to visit with a friend for three weeks. This was a big step for her: taking a trip on her own. She said she waited nervously for her plane, and after several delays, it was cancelled all together. This was very stressful for her because her husband had always handled things, so she called her granddaughter to tell her she was coming home to Rochester. Interestingly, she saw the whole process, in spite of her fears, as a learning experience, and she was very proud of having been able to accomplish what she did. It seems like what she most needed at that point was someone to be a friend and offer her grace and kindness – and maybe some affirmation.

Her life had been totally changed in a few short weeks when her husband became ill and died, and she was thrown into grief, confusion, and despair. Thanks to her family and friends, she was beginning to find her way, and she was learning how capable she really was and how to stand on her own two feet. I was so glad to have that time with her to listen and support her.

I wonder if the bent over woman in our story struggled with the same type of burdens this woman carried. Maybe her husband had died years earlier, and it devastated her to the point where she carried grief so powerful it made her bend over. According to Luke, her back condition was due to a spiritual malady that dragged her down and forced her to look at the ground, her feet, use her peripheral vision, or twist sideways to see what was going on. We don’t know what her ailment was, only that she had been bent over for eighteen years.

Since no one in the synagogue seemed to pay any attention to her when she arrived for the Sabbath service, she was quite possibly a recognizable figure in their midst. Yet Jesus saw her. Here he was, a guest preacher in a synagogue, and he stopped everything he was doing to minister to her. She most likely had been labeled, marginalized, accused of having done something to bring this condition on herself, or other accusations. Ignoring her was most often the way that the members of the Synagogue dealt with her. Her condition would leave her open to many criticisms and assumptions. She was oppressed, ignored, and judged.

Who do we see like this in our world today? Commentator David Lose says, “*She is everyone who has ever struggled to rise above the pain of oppression and low self-worth and judgment from others . . . she is everyone who has struggled with illness, addictions, loss of value, loss of spouse, or self-esteem or innocence . . . she is anyone who has lived in a situation that is intolerable . . . anyone who has been told ‘You Can’t’ and believed it . . . anyone who has lost hope . . .*” (Found at Text This Week under the commentaries for today’s scripture lesson).

The labels are placed, the assumptions made, the prejudices become part of the way people perceive her or anyone else who has been marginalized. How do our assumptions, prejudices, labels affect our treatment of those who are different from us, who are seeking healing, acceptance, assurance, and affirmation? In Jesus' day, they were shoved outside the city gates, pushed out of their homes and communities, abandoned even by their families, allowed to live among the people, but not participate fully in anything, and they were ignored as much as possible.

When this nameless, bent-over woman slowly made her way through the door and into the dark recesses at the back of the synagogue, Jesus saw her, stopped what he was doing and called her forward. It's hard to know what she was thinking or how embarrassed she might have been. Not only is she not named, but she is trying to quietly enter without drawing attention to herself. Yet, Jesus calls to her, frees her from her ailment, lays his hands on her, and heals her condition. Her response is to immediately stand tall and start praising God, and the entire congregation joins in.

Well, almost everyone. The leader of the synagogue feels like Jesus has taken away his leadership, and, in order to regain his status, he accuses him of healing on the Sabbath – saying that it isn't lawful to work on the Sabbath. Notice, the leader didn't object to the fact that Jesus healed the woman, only that he did it on the Sabbath. Jesus points out that the law allows people to water their animals on the Sabbath, and isn't a human being also allowed care and nurture? The synagogue leader was humiliated because the congregation agreed with Jesus.

Jesus always worked outside the box. While he followed the law, he was reinterpreting it regularly. He pointed out where the flaws were in the way the religious leaders taught the law, and ultimately, he reinterpreted their teachings about who God was and how God interacts with humanity. Jesus interacted with the poor, the outcast, children, women, the sick, the beggars, prostitutes, tax collectors, and those possessed by demons. Jesus touched people he wasn't supposed to, healed when he wasn't supposed to, and loved those he wasn't supposed to love – because God's grace was and is for all people.

There are so many issues that we face in our lives and in our world. So often, we fall into the judgment zone where we determine who is worthy of God's grace and who isn't. Jesus didn't do that. He saw this woman as God's beloved child who was worthy of being rid of what held her down – literally bent her over. He saw the person, not the condition. He treated not the "bent-over women" but a "daughter of Abraham." In naming her a descendent of Abraham, he gave her value, acceptance, and respect. That is the example we are called to follow as Jesus' disciples here on this earth.

It is so easy to see everything from our own perspectives and think that everyone should measure up to what we expect, what we want, what we think should happen. But Jesus saw things through God's eyes, and he saw a beloved child of God. Our actions and behaviors will reflect to others who we really follow. When we show acceptance, grace, kindness, and respect, we model for others how we honor and follow Christ, and one of the ways we can do that is to try to put ourselves into the other person's shoes (so to speak).

There is a poem written by Mary T. Lathrap in 1895 titled,

Judge Softly.

*Pray, don't find fault with the man that limps,
Or stumbles along the road.
Unless you have worn the moccasins he wears,
Or stumbled beneath the same load.*

*There may be tears in his soles that hurt
Though hidden away from view.
The burden he bears placed on your back
May cause you to stumble and fall, too.*

*Don't sneer at the man who is down today
Unless you have felt the same blow
That caused his fall or felt the shame
That only the fallen know.*

*You may be strong, but still the blows
That were his, unknown to you in the same way,
May cause you to stagger and fall, too.*

*Don't be too harsh with the man that sins.
Or pelt him with words, or stone, or disdain.
Unless you are sure you have no sins of your own,
And it's only wisdom and love that your heart contains.*

*For you know if the tempter's voice
Should whisper as soft to you,
As it did to him when he went astray,
It might cause you to falter, too.*

*Just walk a mile in his moccasins
Before you abuse, criticize and accuse.
If just for one hour, you could find a way
To see through his eyes, instead of your own muse.*

*I believe you'd be surprised to see
That you've been blind and narrow minded, even unkind.
There are people on reservations and in the ghettos
Who have so little hope, and too much worry on their
minds.*

*Brother, there but for the grace of God go you and I.
Just for a moment, slip into his mind and traditions
And see the world through his spirit and eyes
Before you cast a stone or falsely judge his conditions.*

*Remember to walk a mile in his moccasins
And remember the lessons of humanity taught to you by
your elders*

*We will be known forever by the tracks we leave
In other people's lives, our kindnesses and generosity.
Take the time to walk a mile in his moccasins.*

(<https://www.aaanativearts.com/shop/walk-mile-moccasins-print-poster-wall-decal-p-8110.html>)

And we can go a step further. When we recognize that others are abusing, ostracizing, and treating others with disrespect, we can stand tall, shed our fears, and speak up for them. We become, as I've mentioned before and as Bishop Desmond Tutu has called it, "The Voice for the Voiceless." Labeling, mocking, abusing, and any other derogatory behaviors are not from God, but from human prejudice and fear of not having power. The synagogue leader demonstrated his fear of losing power by trying to humiliate Jesus, but Jesus acted with kindness, compassion, grace, and love toward a woman whom he then restored and renewed so that she could again stand tall and be part of society. She responded with praise, so did the congregation.

As followers of Jesus, we are called to help others arise from circumstances that keep them imprisoned, such as oppression, cruelty, misunderstandings, poverty, illnesses. When we create an atmosphere where people can rise out of their situations, we all stand tall together. Following Jesus isn't an easy path. Standing tall for Christ means putting him first and being willing to risk speaking for others, advocating for someone who is having difficulties, or creating a place at home, at work, in the marketplace, at meetings, or wherever we are that opens doors to acceptance, compassion, kindness, and grace.

I don't know what will happen to the woman who sat beside me on the bus, but I'm glad I was able to offer a listening ear and support for her in that short time we were on the bus. She never knew that I was a pastor – it didn't matter – it was not about me being a pastor, but about me offering her the grace she most needed at that point. I continue to hold her in my prayers, and I'm proud for her in the way she is rising from a major loss in her life. I'm also thankful she has family and friends who are there for her. Maybe it's small acts of grace, kindness to one another, along with a lot of prayer that can help us transform our world to a kinder place to live and inspire others to do the same.

Let us pray:

Gracious God, who created all of us with more possibilities than we can fulfill, help us to see where our need for transformation is and work through us so that it can happen. May we be a kinder and compassionate people who stand tall, speak for others, and inspire a grace filled society. In the name of Jesus Christ who offers us this power. Amen.

(adapted from Day 1, a sermon by the late Rev. Dr. Robert M. Holmes who was a United Methodist minister in Montana, found under sermons for this scripture passage)