



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

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:   

With All Your Heart Lenten Series 2019

"A New Thing"

**April 7, 2019
FUMC Portsmouth, NH**

We Gather for Worship

Prelude & Entrance of Christ's Light

Celebrations

***Call to Worship**

L: We come to this place because we want to know God,

P: who helps us set aside the past, to walk the path to new life.

L: We come in these moments because we want to know Jesus,

P: who anoints us with the resurrection, who shares our lives with us.

L: We come with these people because we want to know the Spirit,

P: who shapes us for life with God, so we may praise God forever!

***Hymn:** "Take My Life and Let It Be"

UMH #399

A Time for the Child in all of Us

Prayer (unison)

Holy Source of New Life, you promise to set us free from paths of fear, doubt, and denial. Yet we resist your invitation, seeing only what we must give up if we are to follow the path of Jesus. You call us to have faith in your sustaining presence and power, but your call takes us beyond anything we can see or touch. We fear placing our trust in things beyond our control. We doubt that you can bring water to the dry places of our lives or replace our suffering with joy. Forgive us when we turn away from your promise of abundant life. Heal us and lead us home, Holy One. Amen.

Words of Assurance

L: Whenever we seek to leave behind our old ways and turn to God for help, God forgives our faithlessness and strengthens us for the journey ahead. We are the heirs of God's promises.

We are the children of God's compassion and mercy. **Amen.**

Sung Response

"Breathe on Me, Breath of God," v 1

UMH #420

Ministry of Music

We Proclaim the Word

Reading the Word: Isaiah 43: 16-21; Philippians 3:4b-14

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

P: Thanks be to God.

Message:

"A New Thing"

Rev. Deb Hanson

We Respond to God's Word

***Hymn:** "Living Spirit, Holy Fire" (Worship & Song #3109) insert

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!

***Prayer of Dedication** (unison)

If we want to know you, Generous God, we must see you in those all around us. If we want to serve you, we must give up that which is most important to us, even our material resources, so that blessings of hope and life might be offered to the needy, the lonely, the hungry all around us. Receive our gifts, we pray, so that others might be transformed even as we are. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

A Service of Holy Communion

insert

We Go Forth to Serve

***Hymn:** "Living for Jesus"

TFWS #2149

***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 - Sue Richards
- Lay Leader - Susan Sarosiek
- Director of Music - Bevan Bloemendaal
- Guest Musicians - Paul & Sally Wells
- Acolyte - Sue Richards
- Greeters - Jane Richards & Marilyn Stebbins
- Ushers - Ken Young, Anne & Mike Coffey
- Sunday School - Airial Silanpaa & Rosie Buswell
- Sound Tech - David Richards
- Worship Service Tech - N/A
- Photographer - Dave Atkinson

**Today's altar flowers are given in
Celebration of Joyce's Birthday,
by Ruth Griffin**



WE LIFT UP IN PRAYER



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

UPCOMING EVENTS

MARK YOUR CALENDARS

Thank You to all who contributed toward the Technology Vision. We have reached our goal for the TV Monitor!

April 14 Palm Sunday, Celebrate the entrance of Jesus into Jerusalem.

April 18 Holy Thursday Pot Luck at 6 pm in Sanborn, followed by communion service. All are welcome.

April 19 Sanctuary open for Good Friday Prayers, 9:30 - 12:30. There is also an Ecumenical Service at 12 pm at St. John's Episcopal Church, 100 Chapel St., Portsmouth.

The **Finance Trustees Meeting** has been combined with the **Church Council Meeting** scheduled for 4/16 at 6pm in the church.

Lent 40 Day 40 Item Challenge Remember one item a day! Bags may be returned early to the stage in Sanborn Hall.

Offering envelopes are available on the kitchen counter for those that would like them.



**Thank you to
everyone who
helped make
Clean Up Day a
success!**



Today, Sunday, April 7, marks the fifth Sunday of Lent and our Lenten Series "Repenting". It is through your heartfelt kindness that we continue our community outreach with the "Give Hope" campaign and a challenge...the 40 day - 40 item challenge!

Each day of Lent, remove one item from your closet/home that you longer wear or need and put it into this bag. At the end of Lent we will gather all the bags on Easter Sunday and donate the items to the community who can really use them. Thanks for being part the Lent Challenge of giving hope to others...With all our heart...Thank you! Bags may be returned to Sanborn Hall, stage area, for collective donation.

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.

1 PM shotgun and includes dinner and silent auction. \$125 per golfer [includes cart]. Buffet dinner and your friends and family can join for \$25 each. Registration underway on seacoastfamilypromise.org

NEW CHALLENGE - THE SWING FOR SEACOAST CHALLENGE open to all area faith communities. Teams of four golfers...the faith community team that comes in first place will receive the SWING FOR SEACOAST trophy and a \$100 gift certificate to Cafe Nostimo.



LIVING SPIRIT, HOLY FIRE #3109

Living Spirit, holy fire, burning bright to light our way, blaze among us and inspire lives that praise you day by day.

Warm us, draw your people near when our love draws weak or cold. Free our frozen hearts from fear, that each story may be told.

Melt away the masks we wear, hiding what we know and feel. Risking growth, we want to share love in action, love that's real.

Open hearts; affirm us all, many splended, one in you, we embrace the work, the call: you are making all things new.

A Service of Holy Communion

(From Bread for the Journey, R.C. Duck, ed.)

Prayer of Thanksgiving:

L: God be with you.

P: And with your spirit.

L: Lift up our hearts.

P: We lift them up to God.

L: Let us give thanks to God, Creator, Christ, and Holy Spirit.

L: Great and wonderful are your deeds, O God Almighty. Just and true are your ways, O Ruler of the ages. We give you thanks, for you have created all things, and by your will they exist. You have delivered your people from bondage, and you have given us Jesus Christ, Lamb of God, Savior of the world, who has won for us the victory over sin and death and all evil.

ALL: Holy, holy, holy, God of love and majesty, the whole universe speaks of your majesty, O God, Most High.

L: Glory be to you, O Christ, for you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed for God people from every tribe, tongue, people and nation. You have made them a nation of priests to serve our God, and they shall reign on earth.

P: The Lamb who was slain is worthy to receive power, wisdom and might, honor, glory, and blessing.

L: Spirit of God, touch our lives deeply, and make us truly yours; and bless these gifts of the bread and cup. O living Christ, bright morning star of this darkened world, come and be our guest. Name us, mark us, and claim us as your own. Free us from bondage to the powers of this world. Glory be to you!

ALL: Amen.

Invitation:

L: Friends, God prepares a feast for you and all people; a feast of good things, a feast of peace. Come and taste. Eat and be filled. Drink deeply and never thirst again. Come to the feast God prepares.

Words of Institution

L: On the night Jesus was betrayed, he sat at the table with his disciples, took bread, blessed and broke the bread, gave it to them, saying, "Take this and eat it. This is my body which is given for you. Whenever you gather together in my name, share this bread to remember me."

After the supper was over, Jesus took the cup, gave thanks to you, O God, then gave it to his disciples, saying, "Drink this cup, all of you. This is the cup of the new covenant offered for the forgiveness of sins to all who receive it. Whenever you drink from the cup in my name, remember me."

Sharing of the Bread and Cup

Unison Prayer of Thanksgiving:

Because the broken bread has meant our healing, because the outpoured cup has meant our life, because our common sharing has meant the communion of our souls, and because we have been graced by your presence here, God, we give you thanks and pray that our lives may be renewed in the life and the love of Jesus



SERMON GIVEN 4/7/19 BY
REV. DR. DEB HANSON

“A New Thing” – 4/7/19
First UMC – Rev. Dr. Debra J. Hanson

SCRIPTURES: Isaiah 43:16-21; Philippians 3:4b-14

THEME: How do we enter into God’s New Thing?

It is interesting to note that many people (myself included at times) really don’t like change. I find it interesting because change is part of life, and it is part of moving forward in life. Just think of it: the cells of our skin change regularly so we can continue to walk, wave our arms, smile, and simply move around. Change comes with a new job, a new school, a new marriage, a new baby, relationships that break up, cars that break down, and any host of events in our lives when change is inevitable and needed. Think of what it would be like **not** to change a baby’s diaper – on the other hand, I would rather NOT think of that! Whew!

There are times when change is absolutely necessary, and there are times when change happens without our consent or our being able to do anything about it. Some changes are really difficult, and some changes are great, important and needed. After serving as a pastor for over 26 years, I can’t even count the number of times I have heard someone say, “I hate change.” OR “We’ve never done it that way before.” Those are the negative reactions to change, the kind we resist because it’s so hard to adjust to them.

In our Isaiah passage, the prophet presents a picture of how things will change when God brings a new thing to them. Here they are in the Babylonian exile, wondering if they will ever return to their homeland, and feeling as though even slavery in Egypt might be preferable to being in exile. Isaiah tells them to forget about the past and look forward to the future. God will bring changes so that the nation of Israel will be restored to their homeland and they will be able to reclaim their identity as God’s people. They will be brought together again. God says, “I am about to do a new thing: how it springs forth do you not perceive it?” (v. 19)

Isaiah’s instructions to forget the past weren’t so much that they should really forget everything, but that they should forget the hurt and pain, the feelings of abandonment and despair, and instead, hold onto the new thing that God will do in their midst. God hasn’t forgotten them, and they can have hope.

Maybe that’s the message that many churches need to hear today. I can remember when I first moved to New England, there were many United Methodist Churches that were full and had a full-time pastor. As we well know here, at some point, some of those larger churches ended up being half time, quarter time or even closing. For many churches, the past was a glorious reminder of what once was, and they want to recapture that – bring in more people again! That makes sense, and it would be wonderful.

But in remembering our past, do we somehow overlook the possibilities we can offer right now in the present? It isn’t that we should avoid trying to welcome new folks into our midst because that is wonderful, but what do we have to offer right now, during this time, during this year? Where is God calling us to grow spiritually, how is God calling us to be in ministry, and in what ways are we able to continue to be an active, vital presence in our community?

I have to be honest, I haven't really heard anyone say, "We've never done it that way before," meaning that we shouldn't look for something new. What if we heard someone say, "We've never done it that way before – let's try it!" Maybe in this case, change will be worth going through to test a new way of doing something that might make life as a congregation different in a good way. What might that be? I think the list of ideas could be long and quite exciting.

In Paul's letter to the Philippians, he does review his past, but only as an example of how he had made power and position so important in his life. He is teaching the church in Philippi that places of honor and prestige are not what is important to God. Rather, through Jesus' death and resurrection, we have been offered life that is unencumbered by possessions or money or social position. When we encounter the risen Christ, our lives are changed, made new. We experience resurrection – a new thing – regularly.

Resurrection defines us; it is what we do as the Church of Jesus Christ. Every Sunday is a reminder of resurrection. Whenever we gather to confess our sins, worship together, and renew our commitment to Christ and each other, we experience resurrection. Today, we will come to the table of the Lord where we receive the symbols of Jesus' body and blood given for us, and as we take in those elements of the Body of Christ, we bring that broken body back together – resurrection. It is at the table where we are blessed, forgiven, and offered once again – new life, restored to God and each other through Christ. When we pray for those who are sick, suffering, marginalized, in pain, we offer the healing balm of God's love – resurrection. Whenever someone is baptized, they die to their old life and put on new life in Christ – resurrection. The new thing that God did for the nation of Israel, the new thing that God offered the Philippian church, is the same type of new thing that God offers us in the 21st century – love and hope in the new life we have in Jesus Christ.

"I am about to do a new thing," God says, not only to Israel, but also to all of us. What can that be? We don't have to fear it, but we can be excited about it and grateful for God's promises to provide for us. What holds us back from trying a new thing?

When I was teaching music in Sandwich, Massachusetts, I thought I had finally found my niche, but there was this nagging in the depths of my heart that told me I really wasn't there yet. God had been calling me to ministry from the time I was sixteen, and I ignored it over and over again. I just pretended that it didn't happen. But, sometimes when we are the most comfortable, we hear God the loudest. The feeling became stronger until I started talking to clergy in the area who encouraged me to do some discernment about it.

I eventually went on a personal retreat to study the Bible, pray and just have quiet meditation time. On the first morning of my retreat, I randomly opened the Bible to Joshua 1:9 and read, "I hereby command you: Be strong and courageous; do not be frightened or dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go." There is was – do not be afraid. I was afraid of the unknown. I was afraid that if I did this, I would fail. I was afraid of the changes it would bring to my life. But I finally said "yes" to God there in that little retreat house and spent the next three days trying to take it back! Fortunately for me, the "yes" stuck, and I entered seminary a year later. I often told people that it was like jumping off a cliff and not knowing if anyone would catch me.

But the rest of that verse says, “the Lord your God is with you wherever you go.” My prayer became, “God, if you really want me to do this, you are going to have to help me find a way.” I had to trust in God’s promise to be with me, and that has been the case, even though there have been some very difficult times. God did a new thing and continues to do a new thing in my life and in the life of the churches I have served, as well as many other churches. Paul says, “I press on toward the goal for the prize of the heavenly call of God in Christ Jesus.” (v. 14)

Obviously, not everyone’s calling is to be a pastor. Where does God call us? What nudge do we feel at times, tugging at our hearts so we think, “I wonder if I should___?___ you fill in the blank. As part of this church, we have many opportunities to serve God with our prayers, presence, gifts, service, and witness. Maybe God is calling us to do something we haven’t done before or maybe God is telling us to return to some way we had once participated.

In one church, we struggled to find a Sunday school teacher for the fifth and sixth grade class. The Sunday school superintendent decided to have one of the children in the class get up during church to ask for help. He stood in front of the congregation and said something like, “Our Sunday school class really needs a teacher or two. We think you are out there in the congregation, and God may be tugging at your heart. Hopefully, you will answer that tug with a “yes.” We really are a good group of kids, you know!” Two people came forward saying, “How could we resist!”

One woman in a congregation didn’t think she could do anything, and when she saw that we needed a “Sunshine Lady or Man” to send out birthday, anniversary, and other types of cards, she decided that she could do that. People brought in cards for her to use, and she decided as part of her stewardship to buy the stamps and donate them herself.

In another church, the person who had taken the regular Sunday food collections to the food pantry wasn’t able to keep taking them, so a group of people organized themselves into weekly delivery teams so the food would be delivered weekly and the delivery team expanded from one to eight to ten people. In several churches, there was a kitchen team who came into the kitchen regularly to clean out the refrigerators, sort through dishes to be sure there were no chipped and cracked ones, and to clean the kitchen thoroughly. One of the last churches I served we would discover these huge bags of toilet paper and paper towels that suddenly showed up on the counter in the kitchen with a note, “for the church.” Most people had no idea who donated them.

In this church, I have seen your huge generosity whenever there is a need, and I am grateful for so many of you who give financially, as well as of your time and talent to keep our mission and ministry going. To me it reflects your gratitude for the “new thing” that God continues to bring to us as we seek to be faithful followers of Jesus. How can we not be grateful for all God has given us? What might hold us back? How can we perceive the new thing, the new project, the new idea that God is offering us? How do we live and offer renewal and restoration again and again – resurrection!

“See I am doing a new thing!” God says to us! We press on, learning from our past, discarding the things that have not been helpful, building on those that have, and welcoming new ideas.

We have much for which to be grateful! Most of all, most importantly, we have Christ as the head of our church, and the promise of renewal with God's guidance. May the Spirit guide us to discernment, excitement, and action.

Let us pray:

Creator God, help us to recognize your hand working miracles beyond our imagining. Open our hearts to be transformed by the new thing you are doing, so that our lives may proclaim the extravagance of your love for all, through Jesus Christ our Savior. Amen.

(Vanderbilt Divinity Library, under liturgies for today's lectionary readings, adapted)