

I AM THE

light of the world.

Anyone who follows

Me will never walk

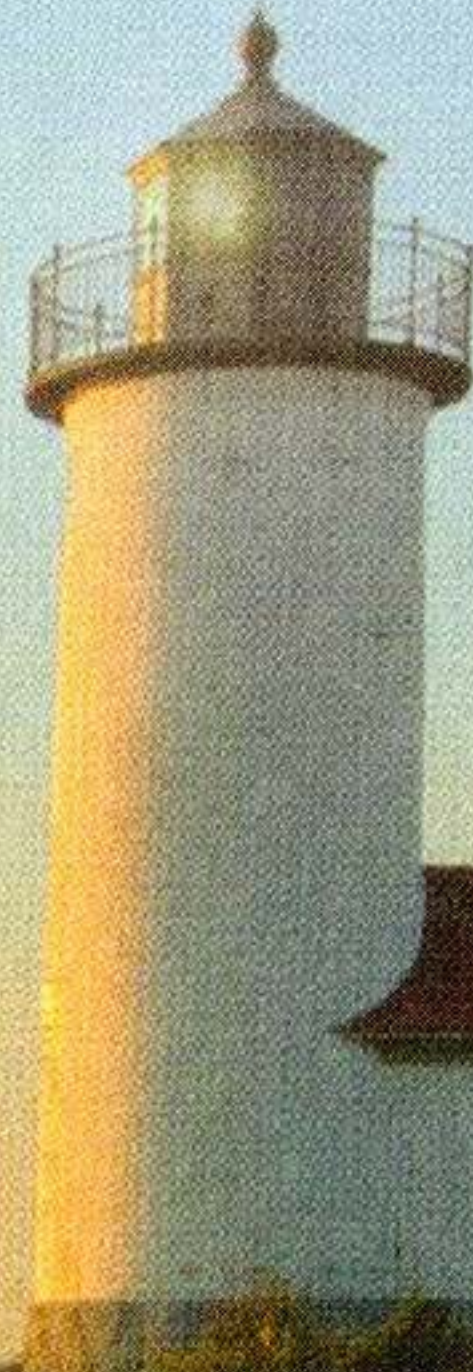
in the darkness

but will have the

LIGHT OF LIFE.

John 8:12

**August 4, 2019
FUMC Portsmouth**



We Gather for Worship

Prelude & Entrance of Christ's Light

Gratitude Moments

***Call to Worship**

L: Come, worship our God!

P: We have gathered together to remind each other of God's love and grace.

L: All are welcome here!

P: It is in this place where we are renewed, healed, restored, and sent forth.

ALL: Let us worship our God!

***Hymn:** "Leaning on the Everlasting Arms" UMH #133

A Time for the Child in all of Us

Prayer (unison)

Healing and caring God, today we are reminded that, too often, we offer excuses for not following your call to serve you. Open our minds, ears, and hearts to the ways in which we can reach out to others as your servants so that we may carry on the work of Christ in our community and world. Forgive us for complacency and for not trusting that you have given us abilities that are meant to be shared in our mission and ministry as followers of Jesus. Amen.

Assurance of Pardon

L: God's forgiveness and pardon are ours through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. In the name of Jesus Christ, we are forgiven.

ALL: Thanks and praise be to God!

Sung Response: "He is Lord" UMH #177

Ministry of Music

We Proclaim the Word

Reading the Word: John 5:1-9b

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

P: Thanks be to God.

Message: "Excuses, Excuses, Excuses"

We Respond to God's Word

***Hymn:** "Bread of the World" UMH #624

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 into 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)

Gracious God, we offer our thanks and praise for all the gifts you have given us. We give them freely and with an open heart, and we ask you to work through them and us to make a difference in our world. Amen.

A Service of Holy Communion - insert

We Go Forth to Serve

***Hymn:** "Precious Name," vv. 1, 2 UMH #536

***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*

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
Acolyte - Alexa Langs
Director of Music - Bevan Bloemendaal
Greeters - Langs Family
Ushers - Jan & Al Cansale
Sound Tech - Dave Richards
Worship Service Tech - Nancy Chesser
Photographer - Dave Atkinson
Sunday School - Rosie Buswell & Aerial Silanpaa

WE LIFT UP IN PRAYER...

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



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

Summer Sunday School

Sunday school will continue for the summer. The children will be watching DVD's on the "Ten Commandments" as well as learning about some of the biblical stories we will be focusing on during our worship time. All are welcome, and if there are those who would be willing to give the regular teachers a break, even if it is for one Sunday, please let Rev. Deb know.

August 4th ,SPRC has been scheduled for after worship.

August 13, The **Finance Trustees** and **Church Council** will have a combined meeting , at 6 pm in the church office.

Saturday 8/24; 10-12 at FUMC, CRASE (Civilian Response to Active Shooter Events) will be held. The Portsmouth Police Department is conducting training for businesses, schools, churches, and community members for direction what they should do if confronted with an Active Shooter event. It provides strategies, guidance, and a plan. This is a church -wide training. *All are encouraged to attend.*

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

September 11, the Annual Golf Tournament will be held for its 11th year at Pease Golf Course. For more information check in the office or the August Beacon.

September 28, Pumpkin Delivery be at 9:00 am at FUMC

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!

School Supplies Collection

Starting August 1, the Sunday school children invite everyone to help them collect school supplies for foster families and a school in Cameroon, Africa. A basket has been placed in Narthex for any donations. For more information, please check with office.

Reverend Deb will be on vacation starting August 5 until August 19. We hope she has a great time!

Our guest musician for this week is Sal Hughes. He is a talented jazz musician and has volunteered his time to help out. Thanks!

As we are celebrating those in Senior Living, feel free to grab a card from the table in Sanborn Hall and send a quick note. Stamps are available in the office or leave on counter for mailing. Thanks!

August 1, is Barbara and Jim Slater's 60th wedding anniversary, Cards for this momentous event would be greatly appreciated as they miss their church family very much. Lets help them celebrate by filling out a card after service and let us mail it for you. **Congratulations Barbara and Jim!!**

Happy Birthday to Steve Lang! I am currently updating birthday and anniversary dates on the office lists and our August Beacon went out without Steve's birthday, so be sure to wish him a Happy Birthday on August 10. Help me update the lists by letting know me of anyone else who needs to be added or removed. Thanks.



**Altar flowers given in
loving memory of
Ernest Drake by Cynthia Drake**



**A Service of Holy Communion
By Rev Moira Laidlaw**

GREAT PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING

L: The Lord be with you.

P: And also with you.

L: Lift up your hearts.

P: We lift them to the Lord.

L: Let us give thanks to God.

P: It is right to give God our thanks and praise.

L: Living God, we offer our thanks and praise to you; creator of heaven and earth, lover of all humanity. You revealed that love when you heard your people's cries of pain and rescued them from slavery. The signs of your love were visible even in the wilderness as, feeding them with bread from heaven and quenching their thirst, you led them to freedom.

L: You bless us and feed us with the greatest sign of all of your love with Jesus - bread of life. In him our hunger is eternally satisfied and our thirst forever quenched. And so, with all the company of heaven and earth we praise your holy name saying:

**ALL: Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might,
heaven and earth are full of your glory. Hosanna in the highest.
Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna
in the highest.**

L: Holy God, this meal which we share today is indeed the celebration of your love for the world love revealed in Jesus, your Son, our Lord. Through his life and sacrificial love, he graced lives with healing and hope, with compassion and power and as if that were not enough, he gave his very life for us.

L: On the night of his betrayal, as he sat at the table and broke bread with his friends, he said: 'Take and eat; this is my body which is broken for you. Remember me each time you do this.'

After they had eaten, he took the cup, and said: 'Remember me as you drink from this, for it is my life, poured out for you - the beginning of a new relationship with God.'

L: God of all power, we praise you for these signs of your everlasting love and pray that you will breathe your Holy Spirit upon us and upon these gifts of bread and wine, that they may be for us the life of Christ and that we may make that life visible through our faithful witness to him. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

BREAKING THE BREAD

L: We break this bread and take this cup so that we can all share in the life of Christ.

P: God's gifts for God's people.

DISTRIBUTION OF THE ELEMENTS

UNISON PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

Lord Jesus Christ, we thank you for making this no ordinary meal. It has been one in which we have been fed and nourished with your life. May we go from here, refreshed and eager, to share your life and love with others.





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

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SERMON TRANSCRIPT GIVEN BY
REV. DR. DEB HANSON

“Excuses, Excuses, Excuses” – 8/4/19
First UMC – Rev. Dr. Debra J. Hanson

SCRIPTURE: John 5:1-9

THEME: God’s grace is for all people.

One Sunday morning, a husband and his wife rose early, and the wife began to dress for church. It was just about time for them to leave for the service when she noticed that her husband hadn’t moved a finger toward getting dressed. Perplexed, she asked, “Why aren’t you getting dressed for church?” He said, “Because I don’t want to go.” She asked, “Do you have any reasons?” He said, “Yes, I have three good reasons. First, the congregation is cold. Second, no one likes me. And third, I just don’t want to go.” His wife answered, wisely, “Well, honey, I have three reasons why you should go. First, the congregation is warm. Second, there are a few people who like you. And third, you’re the pastor! So get dressed!” (*Illustrations Unlimited*, p. 182, #2)

I’m sure there are times when all pastors have felt like making excuses for not attending some church event or service. Excuses are convenient ways of not facing issues that face us, whether it’s in church, at work, with our families or friends, or other challenging situations. Excuses take the place of responsibility or somehow make us feel less guilty about something. They can reflect apathy or just being comfortable where we are instead of trying to move forward, like the man at the pool of Bethzatha (also sometimes called Bethesda, which is much easier to say!).

When we look more closely at the story there are some things we can note: Jesus was just walking near this pool when he noticed this man who was on his pallet waiting for the waters to move. He had been there 38 years! Why Jesus noticed him is a mystery, but for some reason he picked this man out of many who were waiting by the pool to try to be healed from its mysterious power.

Yet, when Jesus asked the man if he wanted to be healed, the man never answered his question. Instead he whined about waiting and waiting, and said when the water *did* stir, no one would help him into it. Someone always “beat him to it.” Instead of engaging this man in a conversation or asking him about his faith, Jesus just told him to pick up his pallet and walk. The man did. Note that the man didn’t tell Jesus that he wanted to be healed, nor did he thank him or go to the temple to praise God for being healed.

If we were to read past verse 9, we would discover that the man was confronted by the temple leaders who reprimanded him for carrying his pallet on the Sabbath – something that is considered work – a “no-no” on the Sabbath. His answer was to pass the buck to “some man” who had healed him, and when the temple leaders asked who, he said he didn’t know. Later, when Jesus arrived at the temple, the man saw him, went to the leaders and pointed a finger at Jesus. They ignored the fact that Jesus had healed someone and reprimanded him for doing it on the Sabbath. This is a very convoluted story!

What seems clear is that the man was in no way aware or even grateful that Jesus had healed him, and in fact, “turned him in” probably to save himself from more aggravation. He had excuse after excuse after excuse, and certainly no sense of gratitude. His excuses “passed the buck” to someone else.

There are times we all engage in that same behavior. I have to admit that I originally chose this passage this summer for me to study with the hope that I would recognize and maybe understand my own excuses for not following through on my years of attempts to lose weight. I have had an excuse for everything: it’s too restrictive; I’m not losing fast enough; I

have hypothyroidism that stops me from losing; all I do is yo-yo; every time I lose the weight, I put it back on and then some; on and on and on. I was hoping this passage would help me discover a way to give up the excuses and persevere. Of course, it would be nice if Jesus would just heal me, but that would be just too easy! I'm supposed to learn by being involved in the process.

One of my colleagues and a good friend used to commiserate with me. It seemed as if, when she lost weight, I was gaining and vice versa. This year at Annual Conference, she told me about a program that had helped her go beyond just following a diet plan but finally worked to help her find one tiny thing a day to change and not beat herself up when she didn't lose weight quickly. The goal of the program was to work on the internal process and stop feeling like a failure when the scale didn't move downward all the time. Forgiveness of self seems to be the theme – forgive and move on until you aren't focusing on the negatives but on the positives and what you are doing right. So, I'm following her example and will see what happens.

When we make excuses, we give ourselves an “out.” We don't recognize the presence of Christ with us or the call that God has in our lives, and we end up trying to blame others for what we could be doing in making positive and healthy changes for body, mind, and spirit. The man at the pool, seemed to be a most self-centered and ungracious man, and it's interesting to realize that Jesus healed him anyway. There was no mention of faith or gratitude or praise or going to show himself to the priests. It was the grace of God offered freely as a gift, and nothing was mentioned about faith, as it has been in so many other healing stories.

Rev. Elisabeth Johnson writes, *“If ever we are tempted to think that God's healing depends on the quality or quantity of a person's faith, this passage offers a strong corrective.”* (From Text This Week commentaries for this passage) I have prayed for years for God to help me with my weight loss attempts, and it isn't that my faith is lacking but that my excuses continue to keep me from being fully involved in the process. I give up too easily. The thing is, God has been working with me, and as I look back at my journey, I can see things that I have learned along the way, so I haven't been alone on the journey, but I haven't acknowledged that God's grace is wide and deep and big enough for me to learn and keep trying.

Faith is believing that God is at work in our lives, even when we are not aware. John Wesley called that Prevenient Grace – the part of grace that works in us, nudges us, carries us, and brings us to awareness of God's presence. Faith leads us to be partners with God in ministry, in caring for others, and in finding ways to heal. But there is no thermometer in measuring how strong or weak our faith is. God's grace is there for everyone. Our faith is the gift of recognizing God's grace in our lives, and living our faith in the world so others can see God at work in our lives.

Today we are introducing something new to our Communion service. I put out a request a few weeks ago to see if anyone would like to be part of a healing prayer team, and I'm thankful that five people have volunteered. If anyone else would like to be part of this, please let me know. What will happen is this: we will forward for communion as we have been, and then anyone who might like to have prayers for healing, either for themselves or stand in for someone else, can go over to the team (*point to where they will be standing*) and receive a prayer with a laying on of hands.

No one has to say what the healing is for, just give your name or the other person's name, and the prayer team will pray the healing prayer that they have on this card with the name inserted. If, after the prayer, you would like to kneel at the altar, or stand for a few moments to add your own prayer, that is fine. Everyone needs healing of some kind, and our

hope is that this will open us to the Spirit's guidance and healing touch in our lives. It is for anyone who would like to be part of it. If you prefer not to receive a prayer that way, that's fine. The grace of God is for everyone, and we all have different ways of receiving that grace. The man by the pool was healed, even though he may not have actually been looking for healing. Sometimes we can be part of helping that healing to happen just by being a friend, showing care, working for justice, finding ways to support and encourage, and certainly by praying for others and for ourselves. Maybe we can pay attention a little more to whether or not we are making excuses for not doing something. And as we move forward and persevere in serving our God, may we find the joy of God's grace filling us and share that with others.

Let us pray: God of grace, you touch our lives even when we are not aware of it. Fill us with the sense of your presence, help us to trust you more and more every day, and help us to live our faith in this world so that we may open doors to healing for ourselves and others. Amen.

