

**SEEK THE LORD
WHILE HE MAY BE FOUND
CALL ON HIM
WHILE HE IS NEAR**

ISAIAH 55:6

February 2, 2020

We Gather for Worship

Prelude & Entrance of Christ's Light

Gratitude Moments

*Call to Worship

L: From the this city and beyond, from the confusion of life, from the loneliness of our hearts,

All: Gather us, O God.

L: To feed our minds, to fire our imagination, to free our hearts,

All: Gather us, O God.

L: Gather us together and renew us to keep answering your call.

All: Let us worship together!

*Hymn "Be Thou My Vision"

UMH #451

A Time for the Child in All of Us

Ministry of Music

Prayer (unison)

Gracious God, we come poor in spirit, seeking your forgiveness.

We come in meekness seeking your redemption. We come confessing our sin, seeking your restoration. Heal us of our brokenness and cleanse us of our sin so that we might continue to follow Christ. Amen.

L: Jesus promises that those who hunger and thirst for righteousness will be filled. The first step is confessing our sin and embracing the forgiveness God extends to us. In Jesus Christ, our sins are forgiven. We have been healed and restored. Thanks be to God. **Amen.**

Sung Response "Glory to God in the Highest"

TFWS #2276

We Proclaim the Word

Reading the Word Matthew 5:1-12

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

P: Thanks be to God.

Message "Define Blessed, Please"

Rev. Dr. Deb Hanson

*Hymn "As We Gather at Your Table"

TFWS #2268

We Respond to God's Word

Prayers of the People

Silent Prayer and Pastoral Prayer

The Lord's Prayer (unison)

Our Father, who are 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)

O God, through the offering of these gifts, we become a more open people—open-minded in hearing your word and wisdom, open-hearted in healing a broken world, open-handed in heeding your call to charity and enacted love. With thanks for all good gifts, we present a portion of our substance and the whole of ourselves. Amen.

A Service of Holy Communion

insert

Prayer Team

Marilyn Stebbins and Christine Williams

We Go Forth to Serve

*Hymn "Sent Out in Jesus' Name"

TFWS #2184

*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



UPCOMING EVENTS

2/4 - Finance Trustee meeting will be held at 6:00 pm.

2/6 - The Nurture Team will meet at the church at 1:30 pm.

2/11 - The Peace Circle will meet at Yvonne Griffin's home @ 9:30 am. The lesson is Martha, Chapter 3 in our study book. All are welcome to attend.

2/15 - Celebration of the life of Steve Westcott @ 11:00 am. The congregation is invited.

2/18 - Church Council meeting will be held at 6:00 pm.

2/26 - Ash Wednesday service will begin our Lenten season with a service held in the sanctuary at 12:00 noon.

Sundays - Church Service starts at 10 a.m. Sunday School is right after the children's sermon and we look forward to catching up with you during coffee hour after the worship service...see you there.

Everyday - Be a Prayer Warrior and lift up the world and it's people in prayer.

Sometime this week - write a note, card or visit one of our family members who are either living in assisted living, nursing care or homebound.

2020 Flower chart - is posted in the Narthex. You can bring your own arrangement or have the church order them at a cost of \$25 to you. This is a great way to honor, remember, thank or let someone know they are appreciated.

Altar flowers - Are in honor of all February birthdays and anniversaries.



PRAYER LIST

Dave Richards

Dan Strange

Bobbie Noble

The Westcott Family

Sylvia Bartlett's Family

David Richards

Julia West

Judy Doyon

Mohr Family

Rev. Charles Hartman

Our Denomination

Our Church Family

All those living in assisted living, nursing care or homebound



WORSHIP TEAM

Pastor - Rev. Dr. Debra J. Hanson

Pastor's Assistant - David Richards

Liturgist - Sue Richards

Lay Leader - Susan Sarosiek

Acolyte - Linda Reiber

Director of Music - Bevan Bloemendaal

Greeters - Ken & Shannon Corpron

Marilyn Stebbins

Ushers - Nancy Chesser & Art Munson

Sound Tech - Dave Atkinson

Worship Service Tech - Steve Scott

Photographer - Dave Atkinson

Sunday School - Aerial Sillanpaa &

Rosie Buswell

Prayer Team - Christine Williams & Marilyn Stebbins



THINGS TO KNOW

Welcome from Rev. Deb -

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!

New Address information from Rev. Deb -

Deb Hanson/Dave Atkinson,
47 Dorfield Lane,
PO Box 1363,
Wells, ME 04090.

Please call the church office if you have a need to reach Rev. Deb when she isn't in the office. Maureen or Sue Sarosiek can reach her, and she will get back to you as soon as possible. Thanks!

Blessings Bank -

The donations collected from the Blessings Bank at the beginning of each church service is going toward helping a school in Cameroon. Our Sunday school kids have a connection with the school and our donations provide them with supplies and the ability to keep educating the children. Thank you for sharing your blessings!

Coffee Hour -

Come join us for coffee, snacks and fellowship directly after the church service in Sanborn Hall. We'd love to catch up.



WITH THANKS

Introducing "Kids First"

The Giving Tree program was a wonderful success this past Christmas 2019 and we thank you for your generosity. With the support of our Congregation, Planet Rangers, and the Portsmouth community we provided Christmas gifts and essentials to 5 families.

Our five families this past year were comprised of children who needed to be removed from volatile family situations and placed into an alternate safe place with extended family.

Sadly, there is an alarming rise in the Seacoast area of children in these types of circumstances. When this happens the caregivers oftentimes are not prepared to take on this emergency and there is an urgent need for essentials for both the children and caregivers.

That said, with our Giving Tree experience and the increased need in our community the Church Council has agreed that this should be a year-long mission program and would like to introduce the KIDS FIRST program. This new program represents another important outreach for FUMC as we continue increasing our presence and support in making a difference for our community in need.

On a situation by situation basis we will put out a call to action for us to respond to with either monetary donations or needed essentials i.e. diapers, clothing, car seats, grocery gift cards. If you would like to learn more about Kids First and the ways you can help, please contact a Church Council member.

THE GREAT THANKSGIVING

L: We give you thanks, O God, for making your love evident since the very beginning of time when you spoke the word which replaced the darkness of chaos with life-giving light: a light which has nurtured generations of people, and plants and creatures, great and small. A light which also revealed the fear and powerlessness caused by corrupt and evil actions. And so you spoke the Word which would once and for all dispel the darkness of chaotic lives. Through your love for the world the Word became flesh and lived among us full of grace and truth. The angels caroled glory to you in the highest heavens and peace to all people on earth, and we join with them and with all people to praise your holy name:

**ALL: Holy Lord, God of endless love,
heaven and earth are surely full of your glory.
The angels sang of it - we have been lavished with it.
Blessed is Christ who was born that we might have life.
Glory to God and on earth peace to all people.**

L: Holy God, we are overwhelmed on finding out the depth of Jesus' love for us, for he showed just how beloved we are to him, by loving us and giving himself for us. On that night when he gave himself up for us, and 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.'

Send the power of your Holy Spirit upon these gifts of bread and cup, O God, that we may experience the presence of the Word-made-flesh - Jesus Christ. Breathe your Spirit in us that we may be one body with him - living out his ministry in the world today and every day. This we pray in Jesus' name.
Amen

BREAKING THE BREAD

We break this bread and take this cup so that we can all share in the life of Christ. These are God's gifts for God's people.

SHARING THE BREAD AND CUP

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION (unison):

Most gracious God, source of all blessing, we give you thanks for inviting us to share this meal as your family. Strengthen us to be a blessing to one another and to all people, letting our light shine in our world and glorifying you in everything we do and say, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.





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. Taesung Kang, District Superintendent

FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH
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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

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SERMON TRANSCRIPT GIVEN BY
REV. DR. DEB HANSON

“Define ‘Blessed’ Please” - 2/2/2020

SCRIPTURE: Matthew 5:1-12

THEME: The church is called to catch God’s vision for humanity.

There is a story about a man who asked the Lord about heaven and hell. The Lord said to the man, “Come, I will show you hell.” They entered a room where a group of people sat around a huge pot of stew. Everyone was famished, desperate and starving. Each held a spoon that reached the pot, but each spoon had a handle so much longer than their own arm that it could not be used to get the stew into their own mouths. The suffering was terrible. “Come, now I will show you heaven,” the Lord said after a while. They entered another room, identical to the first – the pot of stew, the group of people, the same long-handled spoons. But there everyone was happy and well-nourished. “I don’t understand,” said the man. “Why are they happy here when they were miserable in the other room and everything was the same?” The Lord smiled, “Ah, it is simple: here they have learned to feed each other.” (Found on line at <http://www.turnbacktogo.com/story-long-handled-spoons/>). <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7mGVOekKMRs&feature=youtu.be>

Today’s scripture from Matthew is what we call “The Beatitudes” from the Sermon on the Mount when Jesus began to teach his disciples about what it meant to be one of his followers. One pastor suggested that we [might] look to the list for the ways WE will become better Christians and ask ourselves: “Am I humble? Do I work for peace? Do I love my enemy? Do I give to the needy, fast, and pray? Do I judge? Upon which foundation to I build?” (Neil Chappell at Text This Week under the commentary section for this week’s Gospel) While there’s nothing wrong with asking ourselves those questions or wanting to grow in our relationship with God and be better followers of Jesus, it could even be that many people are put off by these teachings because most of us think of a blessing as the bestowing of wonderful gifts that make us happy. Certainly blessings CAN mean that, but Jesus clearly isn’t saying that here. Not only is he teaching about discipleship, he is also preaching to those who might be flaunting their possessions, wealth, position, and power in the community, as well as those who are struggling in life and seek to hear about and experience God’s blessing.

Jesus revealed the character of a faithful God and called his disciples – then and now – to live lives of holiness and gratitude. The word “happy” doesn’t quite fit as a replacement for “blessed.” Even when we think of being blessed, often we think of success in position, power, popularity, possessions, and a number of other things that fit with our culture’s idea of blessed. Jesus turns the expectations of the culture upside down, telling his listeners that the kingdom of God isn’t about having things or being given special privilege, but it’s about entering a life of service and seeing others who are struggling as brothers and sisters in Christ, rather than as people to be criticized or pitied.

Jesus nearly always turned things around, teaching the opposite of what was actually expected. When we read “poor in spirit, those who mourn, the meek, those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, the merciful, the peacemakers, those who are persecuted for righteousness sake, and those who are reviled and persecuted and evil is uttered against them, it might not sound particularly inviting or inspiring to us to want to follow Jesus. But when we really look at these words, we can connect with the fact all of us go through times when we are in those places where we are down and out. Being human means in our lives we find ourselves in situations where we are inescapably fragile and vulnerable. It is in our deepest need when God is even more present with us. And it is out of those experiences that we can then be present to others.

We are most blessed when we are open to God's movement in our lives and when we reach out to walk with others who are in similar places. Sometimes it is with those who grieve or who are sick or lonely or in need of friendship. Other times it is walking with the homeless, providing food for the hungry, clothing for those who have little. Being blessed means not filling ourselves with - well - ourselves: our desire to have more and more and more, but to recognize how we walk in God's ways, live a life of gratitude for God's gracious deeds in our own lives, and build the kingdom of God on earth with others. It is answering God's call to reveal the work of Jesus to the world without seeking recognition for ourselves.

I was very moved last week by Jen Berry's sharing about the Ending 68 Hours of Hunger program that we help to sponsor. Here is an example of how we as a church help to provide meals for children and teens on the week-ends. Most of us don't really realize how many people are affected by food insecurity. As Jen said, it was and is surprising how many children go home dreading the week-end because they don't know if they will have food to eat for those 68 hours. Our providing space and participating in the program is part of our walking with those in need.

As the Church of Jesus Christ we are part of the kingdom of God / the Household of God / the family of God - whatever we choose to call it, and our call is to care for all people, those associated with the church, and those who are strangers in need. We are called to offer places where people can experience God's forgiveness, mercy, grace, and goodness, to enter into their lives and be the hands and feet of Jesus to each other and others. The illustration I used at the beginning is a reminder that, whatever our circumstances, we are supposed to care for each other - feed each other.

This, it seems to me, is a picture of God's vision for the world. The story about heaven and hell and learning to feed each other is something that we are called to manifest here on earth; it is building the kingdom of God here and now. God's vision for the world is that we nurture each other and help others. These teachings from the Sermon on the Mount are assurances that, when we are down and out, God is with us, but they are ALSO about our responsibility as the Church, as brothers and sisters in Christ, to live out God's vision for the world. It means living in solidarity with others wherever we are and in whatever situation we might be because we live in solidarity with Jesus.

Yesterday, our bishop sent out his monthly letter to all the churches and pastors. In it he talked wrote: "A few weeks ago, 16 youth and eight adults returned from India, having taken part in the Mission of Peace sponsored by the Northeastern Jurisdictional Youth Ministries. Two of the participants on the most recent Mission of Peace are from our Conference.

As I read reflections written by the youth and adults on this Mission of Peace to India, one theme stuck out: their experience of "radical hospitality" that was above and beyond what they've experienced elsewhere. I asked my colleagues on the Episcopal Team to read their statements and offer their thoughts. Discerning all our reflections, I realized when our youth talk about their understanding of radical hospitality in the context of their experience in India (where they met leaders and people of all faiths and visited homes and various institutions), they mean something more than welcoming a person into your home or church and feeding them. Radical hospitality for them is about genuinely wanting to be with someone and sharing yourself and your valuable time.

Let me share comments by my colleagues:

These young people experienced a hospitality that they had not experienced before ... and so they called it “radical.” I suspect the ordinary treatment of guests that the Indian people were extending came from their tradition and out of true respect for the “other.” No one is a stranger if you recognize the divinity in each one. So, to be welcomed, even on the street by a stranger, with “Namaste,” was overwhelming to kids who have a hard time belonging in the U.S. culture that excludes and forces people to prove their worth.

They experienced hospitality in the form of gifts: roses, plaques, meals, and lots of tea ... but what seemed to matter even more was the gift of TIME. Important, busy people, religious leaders, medical professionals, government officials...they stopped what they were doing to give attention, to listen, to share in conversation, to eat and drink, often in their own homes (however humble), to invest in a relationship even if the meeting would only be short-lived.

They were especially moved by those from other faith traditions who took this time and valued and respected them from across differences. They recognized that their needs and comfort were prioritized above the needs and comfort of their hosts. They wondered (and doubted) if such hospitality were possible among our Christian communities of faith in the US. And they witnessed this gift of hospitality shown among the Indian people... care offered to the outcast, the poor, the sick, despite their ability to compensate. Because of the fine facilitation and theological framing of the Mission of Peace, young people are now articulating this gift of radical hospitality as "a reflection of God's love and grace through the people who show it."

... The youth [issued] a challenge: “...I challenge everyone here to take this radical hospitality back home and show it to people we know and don't know in the way it was shown to us here in India. For that is the way shalom and peace is truly found in this world full of hate and greed for if you cannot show hospitality to those around you, how do you expect the world to finally be free of the bondage of hate.” Another offered, “I can only hope that if a group of foreign high schoolers ever comes to one of our home churches, we'd be able to reflect the radical hospitality we've been shown here...”

These youth challenge us to ask ourselves: When we are volunteering at our church's soup kitchen, food cupboard, or fund-raising dinner, do we take time to talk and build relationships with those who come through our doors?”

Hospitality is a way of blessing, a way of accepting, a way of welcoming others into our lives, into our churches, into our space wherever we may be. Everything we do and say can be a reflection of God's grace and blessing for others.

We are made up of people with many, many gifts, and with many, many opportunities to minister with co-workers, classmates, in our families, with our friends, neighbors, acquaintances, or wherever we are. As the church, we may be small in numbers, but we are HUGE in capabilities. Our commission to serve Christ and be the hands and feet of Jesus as we carry on his ministry in the world is on-going. Our work is never done, and that is our challenge.

I read somewhere this week that a person can be a living beatitude. For us as a church that seems to put a different spin on the teachings in our lesson today. Instead of asking ourselves: How can we be better Christians by improving OURSELVES? We might ask: How are we living out the blessings to bring Christ to others? The blessings aren't about US but about God at work through us to make a difference in other people's lives.

Let us continue to be open to finding God's vision for us and being faithful servants in our mission and ministry in our community and in the world. Let us pray (sing):

Make me a servant, humble and meek, Lord, let me lift up those who are weak.

And may the prayer of my heart always be: Make me a servant, make me a servant

Make me a servant today. (Faith We Sing #2176) Amen.