



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. Taesung Kang, 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:   

bloom where
you're planted



October 13, 2019
FUMC Portsmouth, NH

We Gather for Worship

Prelude & Entrance of Christ's Light

Gratitude Moments

***Call to Worship**

L: We worship together today with hope in our hearts.

P: We trust in God's presence with us.

L: We are called to serve God in this time and place.

P: We seek God's guidance and direction.

L: Let us give thanks to our amazing God!

P: We lift up our thanks and praise!

***Hymn:** "Joy in the Morning" TFWS #2284

A Time for the Child in all of Us

Prayer (unison)

O God, we sometimes feel that we are not doing enough to minister in your name. Yet, like the nation of Israel, you call us to serve wherever we are. Help us to see those places, circumstances, and situations where we can bring love and care for someone else and help them to know they are not alone on this journey of life. Help us to listen more closely to your nudges and respond without hesitation to follow you as we bloom where we are planted. Amen.

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

We Proclaim the Word

Reading the Word: Jeremiah 29:1, 4-7

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

P: Thanks be to God.

Message: "Bloom Where You are Planted"
Rev. Dr. Deb Hanson

We Respond to God's Word

***Hymn:** "Be Still My Soul" UMH #534

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.

Ministry of Music

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, these gifts are but a small token of what we offer to you today. Use them to make a difference for others who are in need and to support our mission and ministry as your church here in this place. Amen.

We Go Forth to Serve

***Hymn:** "The Trees of the Field" TFWS #2279

***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 - Yvonne Griffin
Lay Leader - Susan Sarosiek
Acolyte - Alexa Langs
Director of Music - Bevan Bloemendaal
Greeters - Langs Family
Ushers - Ken & Jenya Westbrook
Sound Tech - Sue Sarosiek
Worship Service Tech - Steve Scott
Photographer - Dave Atkinson
Sunday School - Dave Atkinson



**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.**

WE LIFT UP IN PRAYER...

**Anne Coffey
Ken Young
Rev. Bill & Gayle Gardei
Marion Collishaw
Sylvia Bartlett
Gil Stebbins
Woodie Lange
Jim New
Bobbie Noble
Barbara Glidden
Judy Doyon
Charles Gilman
Ruth Griffin
Jim Slater & Family
Barbara Sylvester
Barbara Millar
Barbara Clement
Rev. Charles & Anona Hartman
Our Denomination
Our Church Family**



UPCOMING EVENTS

Donations are being accepted for a new hand held microphone. The old one is no longer working. The cost is \$1,000. Thank you!

10/19, at 2 pm is our second Pumpkin Delivery.

9/1 - 10/31, FUMC is collecting your “stuff” for our Savers FUNdraiser. It’s a great time to clean out and have the church get paid. Bag or box up your good, clean, working, sellable condition items and put them on Sanborn Hall stage. We need to deliver everything all together to Savers on 11/6, 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.

11/2, Barbara Slater’s Memorial Service will be at 11:00 am with reception to follow in Sanborn Hall.

11/16, Our annual turkey supper date has changed, please note this on your calendars and we look forward to having you there.

Remember your pumpkins for the fall at FUMC. There are baked goods available, everything from cookies to pies. You can also pre-order pies for a Tuesday or Saturday pick-up. The choices are apple, pumpkin, blueberry and cherry. Come try a tasty treat!

There are still plenty of spots open to volunteer for at the Pumpkin Patch. See Sue R. if interested.

Upper Room devotionals are available near the Narthex monitor.

FRIENDLY REMINDERS

Final results from the golf tournament: \$2,982 - thanks again to everyone who donated, worked, golfed, and helped to organize - especially Cathy VanReenen!

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!

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 Thanksgiving for
Rev. Deb during
Pastor Appreciation
Month**





SERMON TRANSCRIPT GIVEN BY
REV. DR. DEB HANSON

“Bloom Where You Are Planted” – October 13, 2019
First UMC – Rev. Dr. Debra J. Hanson

SCRIPTURE: Jeremiah 29:1, 4-7

THEME: We can make a difference wherever we are.

He was chosen by God even before he was born, destined to be a prophet for Israel. When God called him, he argued that he was only a boy, but God promised that the words would come as he spoke prophecies for God to the people. So, Jeremiah became one of God’s prophets to a people who had turned away from God, did what they wanted to do, ignored the warnings that, if they did not turn back to God, they would face being overpowered by another country and forced into exile.

This wasn’t an easy job for Jeremiah. By the time of the passage we read today, he had been a prophet for over forty years, and his warnings had been repeatedly ignored. In fact, throughout his ministry, the people rejected not only his message, but tried to stop him from preaching it. *He was almost put to death for preaching one of his sermons. Another time, he was slapped in the face and put in stocks, later imprisoned, and another time thrown in a cistern. During the exile, he was not deported to Babylon, but he continued to write to the people who were in exile. In addition, there were other prophets who contradicted what he was saying, many of them claimed that the exile wouldn’t really last very long. (**Will Gafney’s ideas, paraphrased. Found at Text This Week under the commentaries for today’s scripture passage.*)

Many Israelites were in despair and afraid they would lose their identity. They had been transplanted to a new land among people who worshiped many pagan gods, and they were in a foreign land under the rule of King Nebuchadnezzar. Psalm 137:4 reflects what the people were feeling: “How could we sing the Lord’s song in a foreign land?” They longed for home; they longed for their family members who were elsewhere; and they longed to keep their identity.

To understand what the nation of Israel experienced when they were exiled, we might think about what that means or how it would feel. Rev. Will Gafney writes, *“Imagine if their story was our story: Our national government has just collapsed as a result of an invading foreign power. There is no remnant of the military. There is no government. The President, First Lady, Cabinet and Congress have all been exiled. All of the artists in New York and steel workers in Pittsburgh, as well as other workers and talented business people were separated from their families and exiled as well. Only the poor, elderly, physically and mentally challenged people remained in our country.”* (Adapted with a few additions. Found at Text This Week under commentaries for today’s lesson.)

Maybe we have experienced exile in other ways, too. When we move to a new city, a new job, or our health confines us to home, we feel lost and alone; we go through grief after the loss of a loved one; someone in the church offends us; or something happens in our lives to change how we have to live. During those times, we feel alienated, rejected, and we long for the way things used to be.

That is where the Israelites were. And it is into this despair, that Jeremiah pens a different message, not one they particularly wanted to hear, but it contained a note of hope. The exile would eventually end, but in the meantime, he advised to them to prepare for the long haul because they would be there for a while. So they were to make the best of it: build houses, plant gardens, take wives, have children, enjoy grandchildren. They were probably grudgingly saying, “Okay so that may be fine, but we still don’t have to like being here.” But then Jeremiah adds something that flew in the face of the temple leaders teachings, “seek the welfare of the city where you are exiled and pray to God on their behalf because you will find your own welfare in their welfare.” (paraphrased, vv. 5-7) Sound familiar? “Love your enemies, pray for those who persecute you.” Jesus said.

It’s a shift in thinking, isn’t it? Here they are in what they consider to be a horrible situation and feeling lost and alone, and this prophet whom they had tried to silence all along tells them to make the best of it. In fact, he tells them to thrive, to give it their all AND to pray for the city and their neighbors who aren’t even worshipers of their God.

Dave reminded me that, when he went through a divorce, his youngest son Paul was seven years old. Shortly after the divorce was final, Dave’s ex-wife remarried, and Paul came over to where Dave was living to visit. At one point, Paul said, “Dad, you and Mom are divorced now.” Dave answered, “Yes.” Paul said, “And she is going to marry Lou.” Dave acknowledged that. To which Paul said, “Well, Dad, you are just going to have to get over it!” That made Dave laugh, and he took his son’s advice! Now days we might call it “living into your new normal.”

That can happen with church communities, too. Many churches are seeing declining attendance, interest, and involvement in the life of the church. There no longer is loyalty to a denomination, and people church hop to find the right church. At the first sign of a problem, they leave and go elsewhere or nowhere at all. What churches have considered the norm for decades doesn’t work anymore.

So, what does “living into a new normal” look like for churches in the 21st century? A week ago Saturday, John, Sue and I attended a workshop called “How to Reach New People,” with Paul Nickerson. Nickerson’s premise is that most churches are still trying to live in a 1955 model where people come to the church just because the church is there and it’s what everyone did. We (speaking of churches as a whole) spend our time trying to get people in our doors, when many have rejected the church all together. He shared some startling statistics:

- Nationally 19% of the US population attends church
- 160,000 churches have closed or are in the process of closing in the last twenty years
- The church has a negative public image
- The church has become isolated from the community
- When we try to bring in more members, we fall back to the 1955 patterns of chasing inactive members, printing new brochures, doing mailings to invite people, put up new church signs, or advertise, or as he put it, stand at the door and wait for them to come to us.

Nickerson’s point is that we need to have a new normal. Instead of thinking people will just find us, he reminded the group at the workshop that the church is part of a community, not the

center of community life anymore. We need to be part of our community in a variety of ways as we serve our community. In other words, we are called to bloom and grow where we are planted. In addition, if we want the attendance to grow as well, we need to get out into the community to be productive citizens living in the midst of the community, and then we can begin to invite people to join us.

Nickerson said that research has shown that 83% of the people who come to church and stay, do so because someone invited them, met them or picked them up, and sat with them. 65% of un-churched people would visit a church if they were asked. 73% of un-churched people have never been asked. Only 2% of church members EVER invite anyone to church. The average church member invites one person to church every 38 years. I was reminded about planting a garden. If we only planted one seed every 38 years, would we expect the crop to come up in abundance every year? I doubt it.

What about First UMC, Portsmouth, NH? When I first arrived here about a year and a half ago, I kept hearing about the Visioning Team. Eventually, I was able to read the notes and attend a meeting with them, and I'm delighted to say that your Visioning Team (of which you can all be a part if you wish), has done some of this work of moving us forward into the 21st century. You probably have noticed some of what they have done from the professional looking bulletins, newsletter/Beacon, social media, and projection in church to the web site that should win an award for its news and information about what is happening here as well as what we are doing in the community.

John, Sue, and I kept remarking that we have a beginning already because of the work of the Visioning Team; we have started to bloom where we are planted – all over again! There are places where we can improve, of course, but we have a good beginning, and we will be meeting again soon as a Visioning Team to keep moving forward. We will gradually find more ways to reach out to the community, including my trying to find places where I can be more visible in some way at times, as well. We will try to put a periodic update on what is happening in the Beacon – and, as I said, anyone who is interested, let Kevin Fickenscher know you would like to be part of the process!

We have been planted here, and God speaks to us to say, “Let’s make this a place where we are blooming, growing, and being involved in and part of the communities where we live, as well as with the people around us. I have said fairly often, we aren’t just the representing the church, we ARE the church in the world – ***our*** world wherever we are. God has called us to be together in this place at this time, and we have the opportunity and the commissioning to make a difference. We do that because we bloom where we are planted, and we continue to invite God’s guidance and direction as we live, work, play, shop, and interact with the people around us.

One commentator writes that we can take at least three things from this text: *First, we need to be open to everyone and not stay in our own social and cultural ways of doing things, and seek ways to have our Christian traditions address today’s social realities. Second, we need to move away from that private-ness of the church and into the world to address issues that affect all of us, especially those who are marginalized and experience discrimination. And third, we need to seek shalom which is life in all its fullness, not only for ourselves but for our cities and*

neighborhoods. (found at Text This Week under commentaries for today and adapted from Monica Jyotsna Melanchthon, October 7, 2013 from Seeking the Peace and Prosperity of the City.)

Where we have been as a church has been and continues to be a wonderful journey, and we are fortunate to not be forced into exile. And the journey continues! God is not finished with us! God is here with us! God is leading us! Our work is to bloom from God's garden and to accept the commissioning to be the church in our world, to invite others to join us, and to send each other forth to be actively involved in our communities. We are blessed to have so many people who are committed to the mission and ministry of this church. As we grow, we can keep an open mind and heart and be part of helping us to become the Church that God has envisioned us to be and to become – growing more, reaching out and interacting with others, and finding ways to bring the love of God to others without expectations, but certainly with hope!

Let us pray: *Sometimes, O God, we become just too comfortable where we are, and we ignore your nudges and guidance to move out of our comfort zones. Remind us that we all are your ministers in the world and that we all have been called to live our faith, be part of wherever we are planted and to grow and prosper together and with our neighbors. We pray for the welfare of our communities, our nation, and our world, and we pray in Jesus' name. Amen.*