

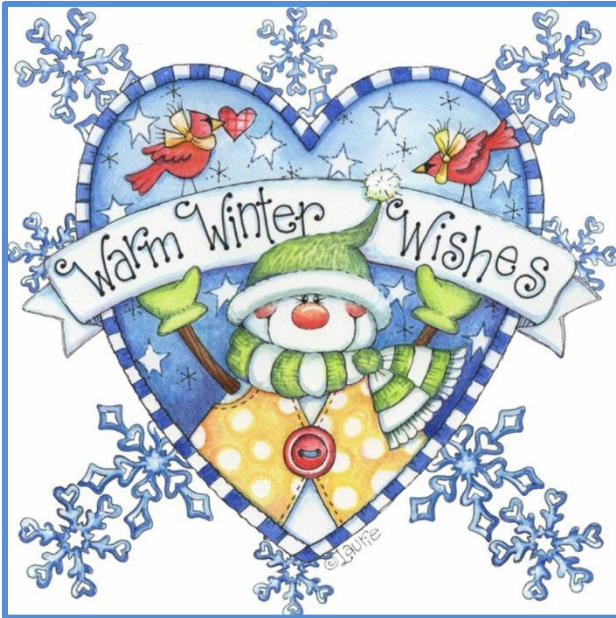


The Messenger



First Parish Congregational Church, Saco
"A Christ-centered Inclusive Community of Faith
with Love and Hope to Share"

December 2023



Pastor's Bible Study

Thursday Evenings 6:30 PM

Come join us!



From Peter Gray...

"I know someone who does research for people looking to locate relatives who might have been in France during WWI. Her name is Heather Warfield. She spoke at our church a few years ago on the benefits of doing a pilgrimage." Please see Peter to get Heather's contact information.



Rev. Scott W. Cousineau, Senior Minister
Kristine Galasyn, Director of Christian Education
Jacqueline Savage, Music Director
Sue Burgess, Office Administrator

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Pastor Scott's Message...



The Pastor's Perspective ...



I love the month of December. I love the excitement and the energy that fills the air. Houses, yards, and Main Streets are decorated for Christmas and people seem to be kinder and more generous. Or maybe we just pay closer attention to the kind and generous people that have been beside us all along.

I love the season of Advent that accompanies the month of December. I love the feelings of expectation and anticipation. The hymns that we sing speak of our anticipation of something wonderful ... "O Come, O Come, Emmanuel" ... "Come Thou Long-Expected Jesus" ... "Tomorrow Christ is Coming" ... "People Look East" ... and then "O Come, All Ye Faithful." We wait for that something wonderful to come, and when he does angels sing and the world is filled with peace and joy.

As I look at the calendar, First Parish Church will also be filled with energy and enthusiasm as we also prepare for something wonderful. The building is decorated, and our spirits soar as soon as we enter in. We will gather for some of the most meaningful and inspirational worship services of the entire year. We will light the candles of the Advent wreath igniting the flame of promise within us. The choirs are preparing stunningly beautiful music. Our Christian Education teachers and volunteers are guiding our Sunday school children and youth through a unit focused upon "Joy."

And then we celebrate the birth of Some-ONE Wonderful on Christmas Eve. We begin the day in the most delightful way with our Christmas pageant. We all have the opportunity to enter into the story as we watch the children and youth tell the most wonderful story ever told. I love seeing them live the story as our sanctuary is transported back to the little town of Bethlehem.

With our hearts still dancing and singing to the songs of angels, we return for our candlelight service that evening. The set pieces will be put away, but the memory of the manger and the holy family will still dwell in our hearts and minds. We will sing songs of shepherds, angels, silent nights and joy for the world. And then, as we pass the candlelight through the sanctuary, my hope is that we look into our hearts for ways that we may pass the Christ Light into the world.

Yes ... I love this season, but there is yet another reason. We also welcome the community to join us for several special events: The Gingerbread Fair, and the Downeasters concert, and Chris Humphrey's Big Band Christmas concert, and the Tri-City Chorus concert are all opportunities for us to welcome our neighbors. But wait, there is more. We serve through the Giving Tree gifts, and the hat and mitten tree, and the shoe ministry, and the diaper bank.

May this Advent season fill your hearts and spirits with loving light of Jesus Christ and may God's wonderful peace be with you.

Pastor Scott





Vice Moderator Update...

Merry Christmas to all in our church community!!

What a remarkable year!!

We have had remarkable growth in our church. When I speak with friends in other church communities, I think they are a bit envious. With the reduction in Covid we see our sanctuary nearly full, our coffee hour after service near capacity, and lots of coffee, and treats being consumed.

I believe we currently have around 244 active individual members of First Parish. The office sent out 176 pledge packages. Of that number 66 pledge cards have not been returned yet. I hope to see the final pledges come in so that we can finalize the budget. December 1, 2023 was set as the date to have pledge cards returned to the office.

The explosion I love the most, is the number of children at Children's Moment up from around 10 last year to around 34 now (my numbers may be a bit off). Scott has such a way of pulling the kids into discussion and the kids have an adorable way of derailing his presentation. I know relatively few Ministers that can handle (and relish) the challenge.

We have contracted with a service for weekly and monthly cleaning along with cleaning after special events.

We have interview an individual for our open Maintenance position.

What can we say about Bill Burgess? He jumped in when we needed someone to take charge of the overall cleaning and maintenance. The Council is very appreciative for him taking on the challenge. As we know with some many of our members, they step up when the need is there.

We need someone to step up to be Moderator. The term will start after Annual Meeting in January. After two years, I will be stepping down from Vice Moderator. Whomever comes forward, I will make sure you understand the duties and how to perform those duties, connect you with the bank and the investors for money management. You will meet so many terrific people!!

I hope you all have a wonderful Christmas holiday!!





As we approach the start of Advent, and await the birth of Christ, consider...

Attending a Sacred Conversations Service at 8:30 Sunday morning, in the upstairs Chapel (Flex Use Room)

Donating time, talent, and treasures in serving God at First Parish

Visioning how you will participate in the First Parish Church Community in 2024

Enjoying the seasonal contemplative music during worship

Noticing church visitors; welcoming them and inviting them to Fellowship Hour

Taking friends or neighbors along to church with you

Wishing you all a blessed Holiday Season,

Margery Condon,
Diaconate Co-Chair



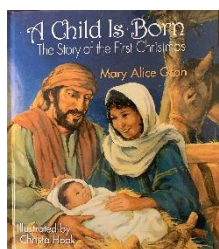


Happy December and Happy Winter Quarter. Winter Quarter begins Dec. 3rd. Our Wonder Word is JOY. This month we will share stories of Jesus' Birth.

Mary's Joy, Joseph's Joy, Jesus Brings Joy, The Joyous News and The Magi.

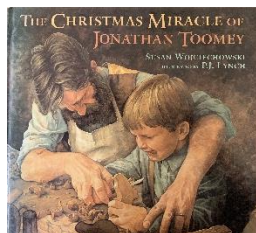
This is such a special time at church as we prepare for the coming of our Savior. As always there are many special programs and service opportunities for us to participate in this month.

"A Child is Born: The Story of the First



Christmas" is a beautiful book by Mary Alice Gran and will be read on our Facebook and YouTube page. This book will be read by our First Parish Christian

Education Team members and our Church school teachers. We will also be reading "The Christmas Miracle of Jonathan Toomey" by Susan



Wojciechowski. The books will be read the second and third Sundays in Advent. December 10 and 17th. Please join us.

The **Elves** are back for the holiday season and they

are ready to help your children be thoughtful gift givers, as they shop at the Christmas Fair on **Sat. Dec. 2nd**. Children please stop by the Elf Station for help.



Our Hat and Mitten Tree is up and decorated with those cold weather essentials. Hats, mittens and scarves of all sizes. These items are available to anyone needing them.



Our **Adopt a Family** program is a wonderful opportunity to include your children in service to help provide gifts for children of our Spurwink families needing some extra help this holiday season. **Heather Hanscom** will be overseeing this holiday project. Gifts need to be wrapped and dropped off at church by Dec. 17th. Please see her in the atrium after the 10 AM worship service, Sundays Dec. 3 & 10.

Since Christmas Eve is on a Sunday this year our Church school children will be sharing the Christmas Story through our very own **Christmas Pageant** during the 10 AM worship service. There is a Supper and Rehearsal on Friday, Dec. 22 beginning at 5:30 PM. All families are invited to attend



regardless of whether your child is in the pageant or not. The Christian Education Team is providing the supper and beverages. We ask families to bring a dessert. There will be a sign up so we know how much food to purchase. There will not be a 5PM Family Service this year. Instead we hope to see everyone at the Christmas Pageant that morning.

In the spirit of the season, we are asking our families to donate to our Martin Luther King Day of Service by bringing in NEW socks or underwear.

I believe the best way to focus on the true meaning of the season, is by coming to Church.

See you there,

Kris





Fellowship

Our GIVE THANKS evening was spectacular. We set up our Hat and Mitten Tree, organized the Thanksgiving Baskets, we were told a spooky story by Pastor Scott and then a trip to the steeple, made Turkey donation envelopes, and said Thank you to Pizza by Michael. The owners Michael and Vera Kalegias retired at the end of November. Since 2005 they have supported our Super Bowl fundraiser by supplying our sub ingredients. We were able to sell over 2000 subs in all those years. Happy Retirement to Michael and Vera. Enjoy. Thanks to all our youth that participated. Thank you also to our Faith Community for supporting us by bringing in nonperishables.. Monetary donations exceeded our expectations. We raised \$500.00 to buy Turkeys and cover expenses. Thanks, also, to the Saco Snowmobile club for donating three baskets and turkeys.



This certificate is presented to
Vera and Michael Kalagias

for the freshest meat and veggies for our Super Bowl Subs at Saco First Parish UCC from 2005-2023. Approximately 2000 subs sold. Thank you so much for supporting this fun fundraiser for the youth at Saco FPUCC.

At Pizza
by
Michael



We put together six Thanksgiving Baskets this year. Many thanks to the Snowmobile Club (Gordon Mehlman) for donating three.



Thank you to our Flower and Altar team for the beautiful Cornucopia that was on the altar for Thanksgiving Sunday. It was gorgeous.





Jesus says: "Let the little Children come to me" - Matthew 19:14

Helping **Lisa or Mary** in the Nursery for the month of **November** was:

5th **Glenys Salas**
 12th **Tracy Seymour**
 19th **Lydia Macaia**
 26th **Lindsey Martel**

The need for Nursery volunteers is always great. There is a Nursery sign-up sheet on the Christian Education board in the atrium. Please consider volunteering in the Nursery. We do have a monitor in there so you can view and hear the service. Please see Lisa Edstrom, Mary Coyne or Kris Galasyn for more information.

It's just ONE Sunday and it makes a world of difference for parents.

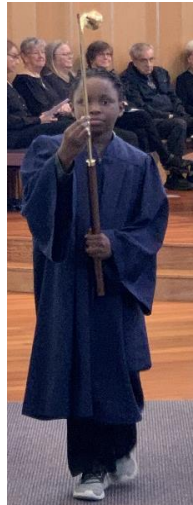
Thank you.



December



3 **August Fernandes**
 10 **Jo Fitzgerald**
 17 **Connor Remillard**
 24 **Cassie Remillard**
 31 **Chloe Remillard**



Five of our newest Acolytes. They did a wonderful job preparing the congregation for worship. There will be two more new Acolytes preparing us for worship this month.



Sunday Fun Day

When the month gives us a fifth Sunday we are going to have a Fun Day. That happens this month. Dec. 31 which is also New Year's

Eve. So let's have a New Year's Eve Party complete with party hats, and a New Year's countdown.

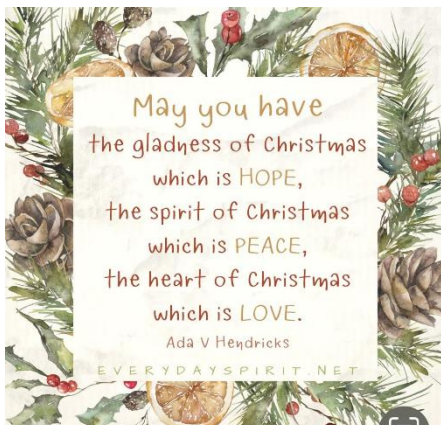


Watch for your Souper Bowl

Subs order form in the January bulletins and on the website. We do need a new vendor if anyone has any leads. Thank you.



**The 16th Annual
Martin Luther King Jr. Day of
Service
January 15, 2024
Not A Day Off, but A Day On**



MLK Day January 15, 2024

Life's most urgent question is
"What are you doing for others?"
-Martin Luther King



First Parish will open its doors to all who need a helping hand on

Monday, January 15th from

9 AM to 1 PM. We will be offering at NO charge:

- Haircuts (simple cuts)
- Showers
- Laundry
- Health Screening
- Eye exams
- Food (breakfast and lunch)

We are looking for people:

- to be **Host/Hostess** to help clients find their way around the church
- **Help with food**
- to **Cut Hair** Please ask YOUR hair dresser if they would be willing to donate 2 hours to help cut hair on that day. Simple cuts
- **Publicity**

We are starting earlier with our MLK Day Collections. Everyone can help by contributing the following items. There will be a MLK Day shopping cart in the atrium beginning Dec. 31.

- **Health and Beauty items:** toothbrushes, toothpaste, soap, feminine sanitary products, deodorant (men and women), shampoo etc.
- **Underwear**
NEW underwear of various sizes medium, large and extra large especially
- **New Socks** of all sizes

Everything donated is given away to those in need. For more info or if YOU can help please email or call: kris@firstparishsaco.org or call 283-3771

Flower and Altar Update



After we created this year's cornucopia, I overheard a team member say, "This is one of my favorite things we do as a team". After shopping for the fruits and vegetables, Martha Conlan and Michelle Fiske, along with Mari Warner, Betty Robidoux (our newest member) and Patrice Tripp, created a beautiful cornucopia. Then on Sunday, FPCC youth took the food and added it to their Thanksgiving baskets. One of the Flower & Altar Team Legacy funds, called Men's Club, is dedicated to Thanksgiving. How blessed we are to be able to help others in our community.

Now we move on to the Christmas Season. Advent, Poinsettia Sunday, Christmas Eve and into 2024. We hope you all enjoy the beauty of the church as much as we do.

Again, we are so fortunate to have all the lovely flowers given each week to adorn the altar. Thank you! If you wish to remember or honor a loved one or celebrate an event in someone's life with altar flowers, the sign-up sheet is on the wall outside the church office or contact Patrice Tripp at 207-590-1109 or Marcia Lord at 207-768-1699. December 17th is open. The 2024 signup sheets will be posted in December.

Flowers for November were given by:

- Shirley Paulhus in loving memory of her husband, David Paulhus and daughter, Rebecca
- Dan, Cathy, Max & Katie Baillargeon in memory of Adam Baillargeon
- Rosemary Guptill in loving memory of Robert Guptill, Sr. and their anniversary
- Edward Olsen

May we all find peace and blessings, Patrice & Marcia



Mission Team Update

FMI – Carol Spencer-Lemay



The next Mission Team meeting is scheduled for December 13th at 6:30 pm in the First Parish Parlor. Please join us!

The Mission Team invites you to help our community in whatever way you can. Below are some possibilities:

PROGRESSO SOUP DRIVE Competition

Join in the fun of supplying soup for the **Saco Food Pantry**! What team will build the biggest pyramid of Progresso Soup cans? People with last names beginning with A to K will compete with people whose last names begin with L to Z. We will have 2 pyramids of soups! Put your soup can(s) on the appropriate table rather than in the cart-- all other donations will go in the cart.

We need your unwanted footwear!!!

If you have sturdy footwear and/or boots in very good condition, but are not using them, please donate them to our shoe ministry table.

Our supply is running low.

BON APPETIT, Second Congregational Church, Biddeford, Maine

On the fifth Friday of the month, members of our church help prepare and serve the meal at Bon Appetit, Second Congregational Church, 19 Crescent Street, Biddeford, Maine. Please sign up under "Missions" on the bulletin board near the office. Bon Appetit is a community meal program in which volunteers serve a free hot meal every weekday evening. Volunteers are needed for **FRIDAY, December 29, 2023 from 3:00 PM or 4:20 PM until 6:00 PM**. Volunteers may help prepare the meal. In addition volunteers serve drinks, salad, the entree, and dessert, and also help with the clean-up after the meal. Please introduce yourself to Jim Cortwright, the manager. **Directions to Second Congregational Church, 19 Crescent St, Biddeford:** From Alfred Street onto Jefferson (at the 7-11), Crescent St is angled left at the five corners. The Church is the large white building at the corner of Crescent and Graham. Park on the Street. Enter by walking up the left hand driveway (facing the church); then go up the narrow cement stairs on your right to the small door at the end of the sidewalk.

MAINE IMMIGRANTS RIGHTS COALITION (MIRC)

The Maine Immigrants Rights Coalition is operating a 77-bed emergency shelter for asylum seeking families in Portland. The ages range from adult, 50+, all the way down to newborn infants. MIRC has created a wish list for items that they would love for the families to have, but simply don't have the budget for. You can view the Target Wishlist here: [View Wishlist](#). At the online Target checkout, any donations can be "shipped to Maine Immigrants' Rights Coalition". If you would like to send a Target gift card through the mail, the address is: Maine Immigrants Rights Coalition, 1 Marginal Way, 2nd Floor, Portland, ME 04101

MISSION TEAM NEWS FLASH

The team recently decided not to renew the \$15,700 loan first given to Four Directions in 2008, and renewed every 5 years since then. *(At the annual meeting in 2008, our congregation decided to give some of the (fire) insurance settlement money and donations received for rebuilding our burned church to Four Directions Development Corporation. Four Directions is a non-profit agency which provides low interest loans to Maine Native People who might not otherwise be able to own their own home or business.)* The total amount received this year, (including interest) was \$16,065. Our team voted to give \$6000 to the Discretionary Fund, and have pledged to give \$10,000 to the 2024 Capital Campaign.

The Good News Team and the Mission Team will be consolidating our teams in 2024.

Women's Fellowship



The Gingerbread Fair
Saturday
December 2, 2023
9:00 am – 2:00 pm





Crafts, hand-knitted items, candy, baked goods, cookie walk, jewelry, books, puzzles and much more!

Lunch served from 11:30 am – 1:00 pm







THE DOWNEASTERS CHORUS PRESENTS

HOLIDAY BENEFIT CONCERT

an evening of barbershop harmony

MONDAY, DECEMBER 4TH • 7 PM

ADDITIONAL
FOOD DONATIONS
ACCEPTED

ADMISSION
\$12

CHILDREN
12 AND UNDER
FREE

**All proceeds donated to
the Saco Food Pantry**

FIRST PARISH CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH
12 BEACH ST. SACO, ME 04072

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Looking for things to do in the area?

Check out [www.pressherald.com/things-to-do/do-this-calendar](http://www.pressherald.com/things-to-do/do-this-calendar)

You can search by date, within a number of miles... you'll be amazed at what is happening in Maine!

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The Alumni Band

Dan Evans, Conductor
Audrey Cabral, Conductor

Proudly presents

Visions of Sugar Plums

Special features

First Parish Handbell Ringers

Directed by Audrey Cabral

St. James School Choir

Directed by Estelle Beauchesne

**Biddeford Middle School Performing
Arts Center**

25 Tiger Way , Biddeford Me

Friday December 8th at 7:00pm

General Admission \$10.00 at door, under 12 are free

We will also be collecting non-perishable food donations for the
Biddeford Food Pantry at the concert.

**Purchase tickets at Midtown Music, 321 Elm Street
Biddeford or at the door (Check or Cash only)**

First Parish Fellowship Opportunities

First Parish Writers Group

Grab your pens and your pencils, your typewriters and your tablets and join us as we offer this new fellowship opportunity. Several people in our church family write books, poetry and articles and have inquired about getting together from time to time. Well ... why not?!

Sunday, December 10, 11:30 AM ... grab a snack and have a quick chat during fellowship hour then gather in the Parlor.





Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
					1 All Day set up for Fair	2 9am Gingerbread Fair 
3 Advent Begins 8:30am Sacred Conversations 8:50am CE Team 10am Service 11:30am M&A Team 1pm TV Service	4 9am Counters 6pm Bell Choir 7pm Downeasters Chorus Concert 7pm Big Book	5 9:30am Fellowship Workshop 3pm Tutor & Ed Testing 5pm SoME Dance 6:30pm Facilities Team 7pm Men's Fellowship	6 4pm Diaper Bank 5:30pm Jr Choir 6pm GS 1106 6:45pm Sr Choir	7 9am TOHG 5pm SoME Dance 6:30pm Book Club 6:30pm Bible Study	8	9 
10 8:30am Sacred Conversations 10am Service 11:15am P&W Choir 1pm TV Service 4pm Chris Humphrey Big Band Christmas Concert	11 9am Counters 6pm Bell Choir 7pm Big Book	12 9:30am Fellowship Workshop 3pm Tutor & Ed Testing 5pm SoME Dance 7pm Men's Fellowship	13 4pm Diaper Bank 5:30pm Jr Choir 6:30pm Mission Team 6:45pm Sr Choir	14 9am TOHG 5pm SoME Dance 6:30pm Bible Study	15 5pm TriCity Chorus Rehearsal	16 7pm TriCity Christmas Concert 
17 8:30am Sacred Conversations 10am Service 11:15am P&W Choir 11:45am Diaconate 1pm TV Service	18 9am Counters 6pm Bell Choir 7pm Big Book	19 9:30am Fellowship Workshop 5pm SoME Dance 7pm Men's Fellowship	20 10am Theological Group 4pm Diaper Bank 5:30pm Jr Choir 6:30pm Finance Team via Zoom 6:45pm Sr Choir	21 9am TOHG 5pm SoME Dance 6:30pm Bible Study 6:30pm Choir Party 7pm GNT	22 5:30pm Pageant supper and rehearsal	23 
24 10am Pageant Service 11:15am P&W Choir 1pm TV Service 7pm Candlelight Service	25 Merry Christmas Office Closed	26 9am Counters 9:30am Fellowship Workshop 5pm SoME Dance 6:30pm Men's Fellowship 6:30pm Personnel Team	27 4pm Diaper Bank 5:30pm Jr Choir 6:30pm Council via Zoom 6:45pm Sr Choir	28 9am TOHG 3pm Guiding Eyes for the Blind 5pm SoME Dance 6:30pm Bible Study	29 	30 11am Memorial Service for Evelyn and Merle Steva 
31 8:30am Sacred Conversations 10am Service 11:15am P&W Choir 1pm TV Service Happy New Year!!!						

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