



First Parish Federated Church
United Church of Christ ~ United Methodist Church
The Reverend Donna Lee Muise - Pastor
Mr David Deardorff - Minister of Music
Triangle ~ December 2009

Office.....384-4091
Fax Line.....384-6283
Email: Rev Donna ~ revdonna@gwi.net
Joan/General Business ~ fpfc@gwi.net
Church Website ~ <http://www.fpcfme.org/>

December Pastor's Message

I woke up this morning feeling overwhelmed by the number of events looming ahead in the month of December. Yet, I am quite happy to be able to tackle them one at a time because of the joy found in ministering to people in all the different ways we do at FPFC. It is possible to experience both feelings at the same time, but for me, the joy wins out over the pressure.

We are a busy bunch, but I remind you, as I remind myself, to take time to meditate on the Word as the story unfolds over the next 25 days. Our Simple Supper Series this Advent, "Hallelujah! The Bible and Handel's *Messiah*," goes a long way in offering us not simply history of the times preceding the birth of Messiah but also the feelings and struggles and search for a sign of God anywhere in the world. History, as we know, repeats itself; there are many components of Ancient Israel that eerily resemble our struggles to hear from God today.

We may think that the prophets of old do not have much to do with our reality today, but a study of their prophecies can take away any doubt about that. When we approach Isaiah, most commonly read at this time of year, and considering what we are going through in the world, might we not begin to understand how important those words from Isaiah 40 are for us as well? "Comfort, Comfort my people, says your God..."

These words of comfort are those with which both Isaiah 40 and *Messiah* open. Most of us associate them with Advent, and in this context it is quite natural to connect them with the comfort that comes to us in the birth of Jesus Christ. What, after all, could be more comforting than the knowledge of this good news?

God so loved the world that he gave his only Son,
so that everyone who believes in him may not perish
but may have eternal life (John 3:16)

The "Christian Connection" for Isaiah 40 is at once very ancient and very appropriate. Once we know some of the tumultuous background overwhelming the Israelites at the time, we begin to understand why the good news of Messiah's birth was so life-changing, so widely hope-bringing to the people. At the same time, part of what affects us in this day and age is the overwhelming debt, violence, poverty, and war. In these and so many other ways, we feel that crushing weight upon us as a people and we wonder from where our help will come.

For whom will Isaiah's words of comfort and the prophecy of Messiah's birth be most effective? Who needs to receive comfort and hope in these days. Is it you? Is it me? Our church family—all church families? Those who do not yet know that the birth of the Messiah, savior of the world, means something magnificently important for them?

All of the above.

Be comforted my friends, for our redemption is drawing near.

Christmas Blessings,
Rev Donna

(1)

A Letter from the Moderator

Dear Friends,

I'm not sure what happened to 2009. It seems to have rushed by with scarcely a nod in the direction of the grand plans I had for it. As often seems to be the case, the moments for reflection were shorter and the periods of activity were longer than I planned.

The Church Council was busy at its November meeting too. It reviewed proposals from Reverend Donna to attend a professional conference and from the Sound System Task Force to implement a new sound system in the sanctuary. The Council recommended that the Fourth Century Committee approve both proposals to spend money from the Church's trust accounts dedicated for those purposes and forwarded the proposals to the Fourth Century Committee. The Council also renewed the discussion about the allocation of space in the church that began during the "walk through" of the church earlier in the month. Several committees reported on their efforts to acknowledge and follow up on feed back that they received as part of the Every Member Canvass. The Council also rounded out the new Building Use Team with the appointment of Valerie Renaud to the team.

The Financial Team (consisting of our financial officers with me in an ex officio capacity) has also been meeting. The team has met with Reverend Donna and will be reporting to the Church Council this month. The team is preparing for a serious "mid term" discussion with the Church Family in the late January - early February time frame to review how we are doing in meeting our budgetary goals for this year. The Financial Team has worked hard to provide thorough reports to us and I urge all members and friends of the Church to review the monthly reports carefully. Though I can only provide a "numbers-challenged" explanation of the reports, I know that the Financial Team (Marc Precourt, Lois Miller, Harland Goodwin, and Mary Stansfield) and I are happy to discuss those reports and get answers to your questions.

The Sound System Task Force has been moving forward to implement the plan for renewing and upgrading our ability to support the worship experience in our sanctuary with an improved sound system.

2010 is shaping up as another important year in our life together as Christians in the First Parish Federated Church. I hope that this month of reflection and new beginnings brings great joy to all the members of our Church Family and to our world. I am looking forward to continuing our journey together in the year ahead.

Charlie Putnam

(2)

From the Christian Education Committee

As we approach the end of the year calendar year the Christian Education Committee is prepared, excited and waiting to greet you at the Simple Suppers. This year the theme for Advent Simple Suppers will be Hallelujah: The Bible and Handels' Messiah. The gatherings begin on Tuesday, December 1, 2009 and begin at 5:30 PM and end at 6:45 PM. The suppers continue on Tuesdays ending on 12/22/09. Bring a favorite soup or bread to share. Please join us for music, fellowship, prayer, and the delights of the season. Bring the kids, too! Our theme for the kids is "The Twelve Days of Christmas." Children who join their families for the fun won't be disappointed by the great crafts and ornaments they will be able to create. Despite the hurry and organization it takes to deliver the Simple Suppers, I am always delightfully reminded that marking the coming of Christ's birth each week during the Advent Season is where my mind and my faith should be. Won't you join us and mark your Advent Season with us as well?

The Christian Education Committee also would humbly like to thank the many hands that have literally transformed the Sunday School classrooms. Each room warmly welcomes the children with either lions, a garden or Noah's Ark. If you have not seen the newly painted rooms, please drop by after Sunday School. We truly are a congregation with many gifted, hard working, generous and talented people.

Respectfully submitted, Callie Clapp, CE Chair

S.A.M. Notes

***Please take a tag from the Giving Tree in the Narthex to provide a much needed gift to brighten someone's Holiday

*** Fri Dec 4th, 5 - 8pm - Free Soup, Bread, and warm beverages at "Home for the Holidays, South Berwick"

***Angel Food Ministries - Food Co op - Dec order deadline - 12/8 for delivery on 12/19.
To order, contact angelfoodministries.com or St .George's Episcopal Church, 207-363-7376.

Pearl F Bartlett Scholarship

Trustees of the First Parish Federated Church are seeking applications for the 2009-2010 Pearl F. Bartlett Scholarship. This is a cash award which will be sent to one recipient in the spring of 2010.

Applicants are selected from persons or families who are part of our congregation. They must also be enrolled in and attending their first semester of any secondary school. The Trustees ask that you send them a letter indicating that you are interested in applying. Please mention the school that you

are attending and the best way to contact you. In order to be considered for the award, we will require a copy of your first semester grades.

(3)

Annual Christmas Craft Fair and More Friday and Saturday, December 4th and 5th

On Friday evening, the public is invited to assemble on the Church steps at 5:30 PM to carol and stroll the village. Join us in the **Church Vestry from 5 - 8 PM**, where the Quint-Essential Winds will be providing music. An assortment of soups, breads, and warm beverages will be offered free of charge. Handmade crafts and decorated evergreen wreaths are available for purchase. **On Saturday, the "Christmas Fair and More" hours are 9 AM - 2 PM.** The Fair will include various handmade crafts, cookies, other assorted baked goods, homemade food items, a SERRV table, along with wreaths, an assortment of Theme Gift Baskets and the ever-popular White Elephant Sale. Our Yankee Thrift Shop will also be open during both days of the Fair and having a half price sale on all items. A luncheon will be available on Saturday. For more information please contact Joanne Morgan 748-1175 or Julia Ouellette 384-0084.

Church Supper

We will be hosting a traditional Turkey Supper with all the fixins' - stuffing, veggies, mashed potatoes, gravy, homemade biscuits, homemade desserts, and beverages! The supper takes place on **Saturday, December 12, 2009 from 4 - 6 PM in the Church Vestry.** The cost is \$8 for Adults, \$5 for children through age 12, under 2 are free. Please come and bring your friends. Everyone is welcome! This is a supper you won't want to miss!

"Dine with Nine" Wrap-up

On Sunday, December 13 after Coffee Hour, the five "Dine with Nine" groups will be sharing a Pot Luck lunch in the Vestry. We invite everyone to join us and bring a Pot Luck dish to share.

Peacewalk 2009

As we prepare for this Holy season it seems an opportune time to share with all of you reflections from the Peacewalk 2009. Thank you to all who helped this evening happen successfully.

On the evening of October 9th, FPFC hosted the walkers from the New England Pilgrimage for Peace. Participants were on day 34 of their 50 day walk covering approximately 1,000 miles. Their literal steps were intended to be little steps for all, toward transforming themselves and recognizing that peace starts with each of us. The group wound their way through all six New England states, meeting with multi-faith communities, peace groups, schools, retirement communities, and others along the way. The goal was to have conversations at the gatherings to determine how people felt they could best achieve peace in a world that is distressed, discouraged, and struggling—either for themselves or for those around them or in other parts of the world that bear more than their share of challenges.

Seven representatives of the Peace Charter joined nine parishioners from our church and we enjoyed soups, breads, songs, prayers and thought provoking conversations. The Peace Pilgrims were joined, later in the evening, by several additional walkers fresh off the plane from Nicaragua and all spent the night sleeping in our Church. It was a good feeling to host them and share with them our excitement over freshly painted classrooms and our newly themed bathroom on the second floor. (The paint was still drying as the first person jumped at the chance to have a shower!)

(4)

After everyone's belly was full of a scrumptious meal the Peace Walkers sang with us their anthem, "We Walk for the Children." It's a moving song with a proactive message about the hope for the future of humankind and our planet. Then they put us on the spot by asking us what our church was doing to promote peace. Now we all know about the wonderful and exciting things going on in our church - Hannah's Closet, monthly suppers, The A.M.I.G.O.S. Project, our support of Daisy's Children, The Yankee Thrift Shop, SAM's mission work, our support and volunteer efforts at the South Berwick Food Pantry - and countless other community and global involvements - but what do we do for peace?

Turns out the Peace Charter feels every one of those efforts helps to promote peace. The feeling of our friends was that, as long as one person is hungry or homeless, lonely and scared- there is no peace. As long as there is one person who is illiterate - there can not be peace. As long as there is pollution in our world, as long as we continue to foul the air, water, and land - there can not be peace on Earth. Many of the groups they had met with before us echoed the same thoughts so they asked us, why does it keep happening?

Two members of the group on their first visit to the US from Nicaragua, encouraged us to look at our efforts as the starting point of a spiral. Hoping that by joining with others our efforts will become a force growing wider and more encompassing to truly effect change.

Some reflections by those who attended are shared for those of you who could not be with us that evening.

"As we gathered around the table talking about the mission of the walkers, I was rejoicing simply because I was able to be there and experience everyone's presence. I was so impressed with the articulation and translation for the Nicaraguan man's perspective on what kind of help is really needed by folks trying to rebuild their country. The CD 'We Walk for the Children' remains on my desk as a daily reminder that the pilgrimage goes on." - Rev Donna

The Peace Walker from Nicaragua, Guermo, spoke about our country's wealth and his country's impoverished conditions. He stressed that his people are smart and capable; just as American's are - but they have been suppressed by poverty. He urged us to become more involved with our government in hopes of one day achieving global peace. I think we all walked away with a new feeling and different opinions regarding peace, and what it is we need to do in order to achieve it. And the wonderful news is - we here at First Parish Federated Church work everyday towards that goal!" - JoAnn Beaudette

"It was a blessing to be able to share hospitality and shelter with people who are called on a journey for such a noble cause. Our gifts were shared and accepted with much gratitude by both hosts and travelers alike." - Kathie Weber

All who attended were given much to think about. Our place in this world and how we treat it is not

solitary. Our actions are part of the ever widening ripples we send out around us. Working together for the good of each other is a powerful force that can grow beyond our expectations. As we ended our evening we asked our guests to join us in an FPFC tradition, holding hands in a circle we sang "Let there be peace on Earth and let it begin with me..."

Blessing of Peace-SAM Committee

(5)



Spread the Word

UCC Women's Celebration VIII (March 12-14, 2010)

This is just a reminder not to miss early registration for the **UCC Women Leaders of New England CELEBRATION VIII**. Our theme is **Together Building Bridges**. The early registration fee deadline is December 31, 2009. The event will be held **March 12 – 14, 2010**, headquartered at the Sheraton Hotel and Conference Center, Burlington, VT. Sign up now to get your first workshop choices. You may go on line at <http://www.uccwomenscelebration.org> for more information as well as to do your registration. It's fun and easy.

Don't forget to also make reservations at The Sheraton, The Holiday Inn or The Best Western. Ask for the New England Women's Celebration VIII special rate.

Got questions? Call Coordinator, Susan Waldron 860-923-2887 swaldron01@snet.net.

Christmas is coming! Consider giving your wife, daughter, your female clergy and clergy's wife a gift of registration to Celebration VIII. Please invite your daughters, granddaughters (14 and older), and friends for our inter-generational participatory workshop, "**CONNECTIONS**". We hope to see **YOU** there!

Hymn Stories: "Come, Thou Long-Expected Jesus"

Charles Wesley was born on December 18, 1707, the eighteenth child of Samuel and Susanna Wesley. At fifteen months the boy almost died in a church fire. If a maid had not rescued the tiny child, future hymnals around the globe would have been robbed of some of their most celebrated songs.

Charles and his brother, John, were given the best education available in England. Both finished college determined to become ministers. At the age of twenty-two, Charles would band together with other students of the gospel and launch the Methodist movement. Ironically, it would be John, who joined the "Holy Club" after the foundation of the denomination had been organized, who would become the leader of this new Protestant band.

In 1735, Charles accompanied John on the mission to the new colony of Georgia. The brothers journeyed to America to bring Old World gospel to the colonists. Having led sheltered and privileged lives, they were no match for the demands of the New World. They won few friends, earned little respect, and began to doubt their own call to the clergy. Within a year, a defeated and disillusioned Charles returned to England. Confused, Wesley began a spiritual quest that saw him studying the words of mystics like William Law as well as trying to understand the missionary zeal of groups like the Moravians.

Charles continue to drift until he experienced another life-changing event. A severe attack of pleurisy almost cost him his life and confined him to bed for months. While unable even to take care of himself, Wesley reconnected with God. After reading Isaiah 40:1, he wrote, "I now found myself at peace with God, and rejoiced in hope of loving Christ. I went to bed still sensible of my own weaknesses, yet confident of Christ's protection."

"Come, Thou Long-Expected Jesus" has emerged as Wesley's second most popular Christmas carol behind "Hark! The Herald Angels Sing." Charles wrote the song around the age of forty, and though this hymn dealt with the birth of Jesus, the composer was actually inspired by Haggai 2:7 to compose this seasonal carol: "And I will shake all nations, and the desire of all nations shall come: and I will fill this house with glory saith the Lord of hosts."

After reading these words, Wesley began to consider what Jesus' birth meant to the world's people. As Wesley considered the plight of so many in the world and then thought of Jesus' birth, a hopeful thought consumed him. With great anticipation he found himself looking forward toward the second coming of Christ, desiring to see that with as much zeal as the writer of Haggai had looked forward to the Lord's birth. And like the man who wrote down those words in the Old Testament, Wesley realized he would have to be patient. God's timing would take precedence over man's desires.

As he thought of what the birth meant in the eyes of those looking forward to it, Wesley began to jot down the lines of "Come, Thou Long-Expected Jesus." Much more than a babe in the manger, the Jesus Charles wrote about was the adult king who came to set people free. He was the fulfilling pf prophecy and the answer to the problems not only of every man, woman, and child, but of each of the earth's nations. Though Wesley's lyrics acknowledged and emphasized the mighty power of God, his words also embraced the loving nature of Jesus. While it was the power that would deliver the world from sin, it was God's love

that would ultimately change us into being more like Jesus. When he finished "Come, Thou Long-Expected Jesus," Wesley had perfectly married power and love.

(7)

During the minister's life, Jesus had come to Wesley often. The writer had known God's presence in good times and bad. He had seen the birth of Christ through the eyes of children in his church as well as writers in the Old Testament. He had been inspired by those who had everything, as well as those who had nothing. And best of all, kept none of these revelations to himself but shared them then, and continues to share them now, through his glorious hymns. Charles Wesley's words were so inspired that we still sing "Come, Thou Long-Expected Jesus" not only for Christmas but all year round.

"Come, Thou Long-Expected Jesus"

*Come, thou long-expected Jesus,
Born to set the people free;
From our fears and sins release us.
Let us find our rest in thee.
Israel's strength and consolation,
Hope of all the earth thou art;
Dear desire of every nation,
Joy of every longing heart.
Born thy people to deliver,
Born a child, and yet a King,
Born to reign in us for ever,
Now thy gracious kingdom bring.
By thine own eternal Spirit,
Rule in all our hearts alone:
By thine all-sufficient merit,
Raise us to thy glorious throne. Amen.*

(8)

Church Calendar ~ December 2009

- Tue, Dec 1** "Advent Simple Supper," 5:30 - 6:45 PM in the Vestry
World AIDS Day Service, 7 PM in the Sanctuary
SAM Committee meeting, 7 PM
- Wed, Dec 2** Board of Trustees meeting, 6:30 PM
- Thur, Dec 3** Thrift Shop open, 5:30 - 8 PM
South Berwick Community Food Pantry open, 6 - 7:30 PM
Christian Education Committee meeting, 6:30 PM
Cantata Practice, 7 PM with regular Choir practice at 8 PM
- Fri, Dec 4** Church Office closed
Thrift Shop open, 10 AM - 5 PM
South Berwick Community Food Pantry open, 10 - 11:30 AM
- Fri, Dec 4 & Sat, Dec 5**
Annual Christmas Craft Fair and More (see article for more details)
- Dec 4, 5, 7, 8, and 9**
Olan Mills Portraits, Eliot Baptist Church, Rte 236
- Sun, Dec 6** Before Worship, Prayer, 9:30 AM in the Shorey Room
Worship/Communion Sunday, 10 AM; Sunday School Classes
- Mon, Dec 7** PPRT, 7 PM
- Tue, Dec 8** "Advent Simple Supper" 5:30 - 6:45 PM in the Vestry
Church Council, 7 PM
- Wed, Dec 9** Cantata Practice, 7 PM with regular Choir practice at 8 PM
Board of Deacons meeting, 7 PM
- Thur, Dec 10** Christmas Pageant Rehearsal, 3:30 - 5 PM
Thrift Shop open, 5:30 - 8 PM
South Berwick Community Food Pantry open, 6 - 7:30 PM
- Fri, Dec 11** Church Office closed
Thrift Shop open, 10 AM - 5 PM
- Sat, Dec 12** Church Supper, 4 - 6 PM in the Vestry
- Sun, Dec 13** Before Worship, Prayer, 9:30 AM in the Shorey Room
Worship/Christmas Pageant, 10 AM
"Dine with Nine," after Coffee hour in the Vestry
"Rock My Soul" Concert, 4 PM in the Sanctuary
- Tue, Dec 15** "Advent Simple Supper," 5:30 - 6:45 PM in the Vestry
- Wed, Dec 16** Blue Christmas Service, 7 PM in the Great Room
- Thur, Dec 17** Thrift Shop open, 5:30 - 8 PM

South Berwick Community Food Pantry open, 6 - 7:30 PM

(9)

- Fri, Dec 18** Church Office closed
Thrift Shop open, 10 AM - 5 PM
South Berwick Community Food Pantry open, 10 - 11:30 AM
- Sun, Dec 20** Before Worship, Prayer, 9:30 AM in the Shorey Room
Christmas Sunday/New Members Sunday/Worship, 10 AM; Sunday School Classes
"Do You Hear What I Hear?" Christmas Cantata, 7 PM in the Sanctuary
- Tue, Dec 22** "Advent Simple Supper" 5:30 - 6:45 PM in the Vestry
- Thur, Dec 24** Thrift Shop closed
South Berwick Community Food Pantry closed
Christmas Eve Candlelight Services, 6:30 & 11:30 PM
- Fri, Dec 25** Merry Christmas!!!!
Office closed
Thrift Shop closed
South Berwick Community Food Pantry closed
- Sun, Dec 27** Before Worship, Prayer, 9:30 AM in the Shorey Room
Worship, 10 AM
No Sunday School classes
- Thur, Dec 31** Thrift Shop closed
South Berwick Community Food Pantry closed
- Fri, Jan 1** Office closed to observe New Year's Day
Thrift Shop closed

(10)

Outside Groups Calendar ~ December 2009

- Tue, Dec 1** "Gospel Music Project," 7-9 PM Great Room
- Wed, Dec 2** Fuel Assistance, 9 AM - 3 PM in Room 101
- Fri, Dec 4** W.I.C. Program, 8 AM-4 PM Room 101
AA, 7 PM Room 101
- Sun, Dec 6** South Berwick Youth Soccer League, 7 PM
- Mon, Dec 7** Al-Anon, 10 - 11:30 AM in Room 101
AA, 7 PM in the Vestry
- Tue, Dec 8** "Gospel Music Project," 7-9 PM Great Room
- Fri, Dec 11** W.I.C. Program, 8 AM-4 PM, Room 101
AA, 7 PM, Room 101
- Mon, Dec 14** Al-Anon, 10 - 11:30 AM in Room 101
AA, 7 PM in the Vestry
- Tue, Dec 15** "Gospel Music Project," 7-9 PM, Great Room
- Wed, Dec 16** Fuel Assistance, 9 AM - 3 PM in Room 101
- Fri, Dec 18** W.I.C. Program, 8 AM-4 PM, Room 101
AA, 7 PM, Room 101
- Mon, Dec 21** Al-Anon, 10 - 11:30 AM in Room 101
AA, 7 PM in the Vestry
- Tue, Dec 22** "Gospel Music Project," 7-9 PM, Great Room
- Mon, Dec 28** Al-Anon, 10 - 11:30 AM in Room 101
AA, 7 PM in the Vestry
- Tue, Dec 29** "Gospel Music Project," 7-9 PM, Great Room

