

First Parish Church Congregational

FIRST PARISH CHURCH CONGREGATIONAL UCC
 40 MAIN STREET
 FREEPORT MAINE 04032

From the Pastor

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“Learning How to Have a Difficult Conversation,” is the title

of the discussions and workshops The Rev. David Hall will be leading our congregation through this summer.

The 7pm - 9pm meetings will be held on :

July 18

August 3

August 29

Please mark your calendars so you can participate. We will try and make arrangements for childcare, though we know this is late in the evening for many youngsters. More specific information will be shared closer to the date of the first meeting.

The need for these workshops was determined by

a meeting of the congregation's Leaderships and the Rev. David Gaewski, our Conference Minister, and approved by a vote of folks at the Congregational meeting on June 4.

Our congregation needs to make some critical and difficult decisions regarding our future together. We have differing opinions about what we should do and how we should go about doing that.

At both of these recent meetings, as a group we agreed that one of our highest priorities was to be able to keep our congregation together, no matter what decisions we ultimately made.

We can achieve this goal if we are willing to work



The Church has a new up and running website with many thanks to Kevin and Josie Johnson.

The site has great eye appeal and easy to navigate!

We have an immediate request for all of you. Please help us update our records. While you're on the site, please give us your email address in the "Join Email List" section, or in the "Guest Book".

Give it a 'click' yourself real soon!

The link:
www.freeportucc.org



We are grateful to Rev. John's aunt, Evelyn Diorio who graciously sent money to help cover the cost of postage for the newsletter. For those who would like to do the same in the future, please call the church office.

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From the Pastor

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toward more cohesiveness. We want to have open and honest discussions about our options this fall, so we can make decisions at our Annual Meeting in November of this year.

In order to do that, in short, we need to learn how to speak with and listen to each other better than we have done in the past.

Recently at a meeting with The Rev. David Hall and some of the Congregation's Leaders, we discussed some of the symptoms or signs indicating we were not hearing each other. We brainstormed a long list of over 15 symptoms.

Some of the symptoms included the presence of high anxiety, sides forming, people getting tired and frustrated, people not valuing the work of others and radically different views of the congregation's recent past. Other signs included accusations and judgments being made without discussion with the parties involved, anger resulting from misunderstandings,

misinformation, and miscommunication, and an overall, deep lack of trust.

It is impossible for us to have healthy conversations with the presence of all these symptoms.

And we have to have healthy conversations in order to faithfully engage in the difficult conversations necessary to make the decisions before us.

The goals of these discussions/workshop meetings will be to build (or rebuild) trust by learning how to better listen, hear each other, ask questions, be honest, give feedback, be more transparent, and value each other equally.

The emphasis will be on the "Learning" and the "How," not on what the difficult conversations will be about, not on what our options are. We will be practicing speaking with each other and paying attention to the dynamics of our conversations.

Breaking out of old patterns is difficult and takes time. We have done work in this area over the last number of years. We have more work to do.

In a recent survey of what helps mega churches grow to be as large as they are, one of the major findings was that the rate of growth is strongly correlated with the absence of conflict in the congregation. That does not mean there are no differences of opinion in these congregations, rather it means they have learned how not to turn those differences of opinion into open and/or behind the scenes conflict.

It is imperative we need to learn how to better resolve our conflicts if we are to remain a unified congregation and to have any chance to grow spiritually and in membership. We can do this if we choose to try.

I know we all look forward to this time of year to be outside and enjoy ourselves. And I know we need to have these discussions with each other now, or come the fall we will not be prepared to have the difficult conversations our decisions will call for. The whole congregation, both members and friends, needs to be involved and engaged in these discussions and workshops.

Without wide participation we will not reach our goal of being able to

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From your president



Do people really hear what you're saying?

If you have poor interpersonal communication skills, which include active listening, your interactions with others will suffer because you don't have the tools to be able to influence, persuade, and negotiate your way through any discussion. Worse than that, you won't be able to maneuver your way through conflict resolution, which unfortunately, occurs to all of us at some point.

In this community of Christ, at First Parish Church Congregational, lines of communications must be open between all of us because we rely on one another to get work done.

We all must be able to listen attentively if we are going to learn to work together towards common goals, avoid conflicts and misunderstandings, and to succeed in our individual, and group, call to ministry.

I'm excited that we are going to have the opportunity as a congregation to work with Reverend David Hall to brush up on how we communicate by talking about "Learning to Have a Difficult Conversation." We have tentatively scheduled three sessions, July 18, August 3, and August 29, from 7 p.m. to 9 p.m. Please schedule these dates on your calendars and

make every effort to attend. Summers are a busy time but, while we all realize that fact, I hope you can find the time to set aside for these very important learning events in the life of our congregation. While it is so very important for all members to attend, it is expected that all leaders of the church be involved. You'll be hearing more about the series from Reverend John over the next few weeks. I hope your curiosity is sufficiently aroused so that we'll see you there!

This past year has been a difficult one in the life of our congregation; we've lost treasured, dear friends and we have been trying to cope with all the flurry of activity due to our financial situation. We are a strong and loving group, with many fond memories of those we've lost, and we still rely on each other to uplift one another's spirits. Most of all, we have a deep, abiding faith that keeps us grounded in our common bond.

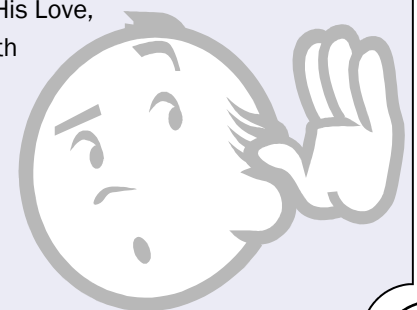
When I think of First Parish Church, I always think first of my relationship with Christ and pray for the guidance to continually strengthen that faith. I think secondly of the people, the congregation, for whom I have so much love and from whom I find so much strength. I have so much to be thankful for at a time when most people would find it difficult to even say the word.

You were there for me in so many ways when my Dad died suddenly a year ago, and you have been so supportive

over this past year while my Mom battled Primary Biliary Liver Disease. You held me up, uplifted me, when she died May 26, even though I was 700 miles away in Virginia. I felt your presence with me each step of the way as though you were right there, physically, with your arms around me, while my arms were around her, talking to her, helping her ease from this life into Jesus' arms. That, my friends, is what a family does, and family is what I feel in your midst each time we're together. I am truly grateful for you and I will witness to anyone who will listen about what our faith community means to me. I hope you will all search deep within your regard towards our church family and witness as well – as often and as powerfully as you can.

There is so much more to First Parish Church than the financial crisis we're in, or who is volunteering and who isn't, or who is pledging and who isn't. Take a moment to think about what uplifts you; make a list if you need to. Then share it with any and all who come across your path. Whether we're "discussing" problems, or worshipping together, if we listen carefully, truly listen, we'll all be able to walk together no matter what God calls us to do.

In His Love,
Ruth



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Financial Secretary Report Jan through may 2006

	Pledges	Plate
Through April	\$27,018.50	\$6,550.00
May Receipts	\$4,764.50	\$ 473.00
To Date	\$31,783.00	\$7,023.00

In addition the Church received for May 06:

Per Capita	\$	24.00
Children's Day	\$	2.00
Communion	\$	25.00
Lent/Easter	\$	5.00
Gifts/Memorials Organ Fund	\$	922.00
Gifts/Memorials General Fund	\$	370.00

If you are a member of record of this Church, Per Capita Dues must be paid for you. When you do not pay them, the money comes from the General Fund.

Whether you contribute to your Church or not, the dues still have to be paid. Please make an effort to pay your dues. They are \$12.00 per year.

Thank you and
Peace,
Elaine Wilmot, Financial Secretary

From the Pastor

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do that. And we do not have to do this work alone.

We believe that God is amongst us. If we take seriously our call to allow God to speak through us, work through us, then we will engage in these workshops with all seriousness, opening ourselves up to the way God moves and changes us all.

God is used to difficult conversations. God is engaged in them all the time. We need more practice, so we too might engaged in ours faithfully.

See you there.
Peace, John



Mission Moment

The Mission Committee met and decided where they would distribute the mission money for the year.

We have chosen 19 places for your money. We were able to send \$30 to each one—which is a little better



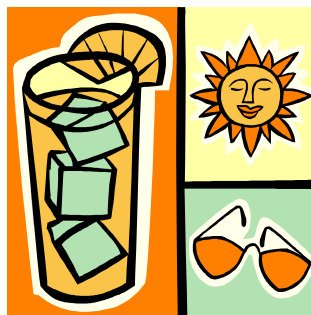
than last year, so that is good.



Don't forget we are always looking for knitters, used books in good condition and also hearing aids.

Circle your calendar for August 19 when we

have our annual food sale!



Who's who for church leaders

- John Ward-Diorio, Pastor
- Ruth Porter, President
- Janice Fogg, Vice President
- Ann Westervelt, Secretary & Historian
- Dianne Vigue, Treasurer
- Elaine Wilmot, Financial Secretary
- Barb McPheters, Asst Fin Secretary
- Thelma Dunning, Auditor
- Binks Colby-George, Chair Board of Trustees
- Judy Colby-George, Dir. Christian Ed., Chair, Nominating
- Brenda Skillin, Chair, Stewardship
- Lois Dennison, Chair, Missions
- Cy Tompson, Chair Hospitality
- Judy Armstrong, Chair Deaconate
- Pat Pooters, Chair, Music
- Laura Perkins, Editor, Newsletter
- Steve McPheters, Trustee
- Wayne Robinson, Trustee
- John Bushee, Trustee
- Barb McPheters, Nominating
- Ted Moon, Nominating
- Karen Bushee, Stewardship
- Fawn Mercer, Stewardship

Music! Music! Music!

Music is an important part of our Worship Service, and many of our parishioners have talked to me about trying to get different people to come and sing at our services.

I would love to be able to accommodate these requests, but do not have any ideas of who to call.

SO, I am turning to all of you for help!

If you know of anyone who has a musical talent, either to sing or to play an instrument and would be willing to share that talent at any of our summer services, please contact me.

My email address: papooters@aol.com or call me at 865-3215.

We would welcome anyone who would like to share their gift of music. Gospel, Christian Rock, Old Favorites, etc.

While our organist, Peter Dickson is taking time off for a few weeks, we are grateful to have Dawn Tritch play the piano for our services during the first two weeks in July.

I hope some of our newer members will consider joining our choir when we begin again. We are a fun group of friendly people, and you don't have

to be able to read music!

Our rehearsals typically take place on Wednesday evenings at 6 PM in the Sanctuary.

Look for more info in an upcoming newsletter, bulletin or an announcement as to when our choir will begin a new season.

Pat Pooters,
Music Chair



Calendar of Church Events

Sun., July 16 **9:30am**

Josie Cameron singing during worship!

Tue., July 18 **7:00pm—9:00pm**

“Learning How to Have Difficult Conversations”, Part 1

Thu., July 20 **6:00pm**

Bring a salad and ideas for a book we can read and discuss next month. The Women’s Salad Supper & Book Club meet downstairs at the church.

Sun., July 23 **9:30am**

After worship please join us for a picnic, swim and ballgame at Freeport’s Winslow Park. Bring a salad or dessert to share. FMI: Brenda Skillin at 865-3700.

Fri., July 28 **7:00pm**

Ceidh House Concert

Sat., July 29 **5:00pm & 6:00pm**

Church Chicken Supper

Sun., July 30 **9:30am**

Josie Cameron singing during worship!

Sun., July 30 **11:00am**

Church Council Meeting

Thu., August 3 **7:00pm—9:00pm**

“Learning How to Have Difficult Conversations”, Part 2



Heads Up

The *Alvin and Florence Dennison Golf Scramble* will be held at the Freeport Country Club on September 16 for the benefit of the Church. Prizes will be given and food served. We need LOTS of players to make this a success. More info to follow. In the meanwhile, contact Archie Dennison at 865-3335.



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