

Please Join Us for a Twelfth Night Open House

At the First Parish Church Parsonage

178 York Street

Saturday, January 5 from 6:00 – 9:00 p.m.

Hosted by Dr. Ellis and Rev. Dr. Verlee A. Copeland

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Dear Friends in Christ,

As this new year begins, the world makes New Year's resolutions, joins the gym, and takes back the presents Aunt Loretta sent us in a size that last fit us when we were 9 years old. As Christians, our year begins with Advent, the waiting time for Christ's coming into the world, followed by the twelve days of Christmas. As the calendar flips to 2013, we celebrate Epiphany, a word meaning to show, make known, or reveal.

“In Eastern Christianity as well as in Hispanic and Latin American churches, Epiphany celebrates the fullness of Jesus' significant for everyone, shown through the so-called wise men – ‘gentiles’ who represent the whole world beyond the confines of established belonging and belief. Epiphany also celebrates Jesus' embodiment of divinity, his ‘fullness’ as the Son of God, revealed later, at the time of his baptism in the Jordan River. ‘This is my Son’ (Matthew 3:16). As the Puerto Rican Epiphany carol puts it, ‘Gloria en las Alturas al Hijo de Dios...tu luz bien hechora’, literally translates as ‘Glory in the highest to Son of God...whose light is well made’). Jesus is the light of God, ‘well made’ to shine even in the deepest darkness – even on the cross.”

“We are given more than we can ask or imagine (Ephesians 3:20). From the next breath we take through our last gasp, we are promised life and hope that can overcome the worst – even death itself. We are given the assurance of divine companionship that can withstand the loss of others while finding in those companionships, too, expressions of God’s unconquerable love.” (Rev. Maren C. Tirabassi and Rev. William Green).

We welcome this new year together, perhaps with resolutions and promises to spend more time at the gym and less time on things that don’t matter. But even more so, we gather in this new year at our church, First Parish Congregational, United Church of Christ, to renew our commitment to follow Christ in our daily lives, with the love, support and prayers of our community. And we covenant once again, to let God’s light shine through us in the new season, that we might be light and salt and bread for a hungry world, in Jesus name.

Let the new year begin,

Pastor Verlee

Sharing Good News: *January Edition*

I am writing to you as leaders of the Church and Parish to share the good news that The York Association of The United Church of Christ has scheduled a date for my Installation as your new Senior Pastor on February 10, 2013. There will be an Ecclesiastical Council at 3, followed by Worship and Service of Installation for our entire church and 50-75 delegates from other area churches at 4. A reception hosted by the Women's Fellowship and the Diaconate will follow in Moody Hall.

Since it has been more than a decade since your last Installation service, I thought I might take a moment to tell you about it. As clergy in The United Church of Christ, our authorization for ministry comes through a local association of UCC Churches, in our case the York Association, and through the Maine Conference. An Installation Service is a worship of covenant between pastor and church, and the church and association, conference and wider United Church of Christ. Delegates from other area churches will come to our church to join in their support for this relationship between churches and to authorize the transfer of my "Standing" as a minister in the United Church of Christ from the Illinois Conference of The United Church of Christ to the Maine Conference of The United Church of Christ.

The Ecclesiastical Council which precedes the Installation is an opportunity for me to be introduced to the wider church and is a requirement of the Association. Delegates may ask questions or provide feedback, and anyone who wishes to attend from First Parish is welcome to this first hour as well. I will meet with the Church in Ministry Committee, made up of representatives from area churches, in advance of this, providing paper work required for the transfer of Standing. Ministers must have authorized Standing in order to participate and vote on your behalf in wider church affairs, and to be eligible for participation in the UCC health, life and annuity plans. It is a wonderful opportunity to host other churches who may not have been in First Parish Church.

You may not know that the Feeneys have been elected delegates on behalf of First Parish for some time, which means that they have attended Conference events on our behalf and are regularly invited to events like this at other churches.

As we make plans for a new year in ministry together, I wanted to let you know about this as soon as I received the information. Please mark your calendars now. After the first of the year we will be discussing particular plans for the event.

In Christ,

Verlee A. Copeland

Senior Pastor

The Simple Supper Bible Study - *Wednesday, January 9*

The Simple Supper Bible Study that begins Wednesday, January 9 is now full, and a new group offered beginning the third Wednesday night of January, the 16th. Please call the church office by January 8, if you are interested.

What is a Simple Supper Bible Study? We will meet once a month January through June for fellowship, a shared meal, Bible study and prayer. Each meeting participants will be asked to bring one simple part of the meal to share. The host for each Simple Supper will be asked to make a pot of soup. After the first meeting, you will have the opportunity to host a future gathering of your group if you wish.

We gather for a Simple Supper for refreshment, Bible study, prayer, dinner and dessert. No previous knowledge of the Bible is required. If you do not have a Bible, one will be provided for you.

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CELEBRATING GOD'S GIFTS

GRATITUDE PARTY

THURSDAY

JANUARY 17, 2013

6-8:30 P.M.

MOODY HALL

The Stewardship Committee is happy to invite those who generously pledged to our 2013 pledge campaign to the first annual CELEBRATING GOD'S GIFTS party.

We want to take this opportunity to share fellowship and to talk about how your pledges will impact the decisions for programs during the 2013 church year. Not only are we stewards of the money but also stewards of what has been entrusted to us and this will be a chance to

celebrate that stewardship.

Please join us as we share this potluck dinner and enjoy the gifts of all our wonderful cooks here at First Parish. The main course of winter soups will be provided. Please bring an appetizer, side dish, salad or dessert to share. Please contact the church office at office@firstparishyork.org or 207-363-3758 by January 14 to attend. When you make your reservation please indicate which pot luck course you plan to share.

Thank you again for your 2013 pledge and we look forward to saying thank you in person on January 17th.

Stewardship Committee: *Nancy Boucher, Bob Meyers, Sandy LaBonte and Judy Schriefer*

Thank you Notes

Many, many thanks to one and all who helped out in any way with Wreath, Swag and Greens! You are all greatly appreciated for your efforts, talents, support. Blessings to each of you from the committee.

Martha King

Dear Friends, I was so surprised AND grateful to receive your tremendous housewarming gift for our new home in Kittery! Brad and I have been so touched by your love and care and support over the years - and now this financial gift is one more example of how generous and thoughtful you all are! We are getting settled and figuring out how to heat with wood and loving our new home! Our address is 380 Haley Road, if you're ever in the neighborhood! Thank you again for your incredible generosity! Much love,

Linda and Brad Hirst

Pastor's Thank You: I wish to express my deepest gratitude for all the acts of hospitality extended in these first two months of ministry here at First Parish York. I especially thank those of you who hosted welcome parties or neighborhood parties, including: Mel and Marcia Spelman, Per and Jan Jonas, Dan and Nancy Boucher, Ray and Kay Hamlin, Anne Monks, Chick Willing, Cliff O'Connor, Dan and Gail Morse, and Don and Susan Gough. Special thanks to Carmen Stephens for hosting the Women's Retreat Planning group as well, and the opportunity to begin to know these women of the church. With gratitude to Susan Brindle for

hosting dinner for Ellis and me and the Thursday night Bible study in her home. And for the many of you who have welcomed me for afternoon coffee or tea. Such generosity has created opportunities for us to go deeper, to share stories of faith, laughter, and love of First Parish. There are no words sufficient to describe our gratitude for serving here among you. Again, for your generous welcome, thank you.

Pastor Verlee

The York Community Food Pantry wishes to thank you for the generous gift of five \$50. gift certificates to Market Basket. They were greatly appreciated by the families that received them. Thank you for thinking of us and making the season a little more joyful for five families. Sincerely,

Pat Whalen, Manager, York Community Food Pantry.

Dear First Parish Church Members: Thank you for helping me get to Camp Carefree this August. As usual, Camp was a *ton* of fun. the Green and White Games were won and lost -- Green alas, lost this year. Bass Fishing Day was a huge success, and everyone, boys, girls, youngest to oldest, cried at the Wish Fire and Circle of Sharing. Other Camp traditions: The previous Hiking Coordinator was nowhere in sight, people said things that would sound funny anywhere else, and at least one male counselor appeared in a dress/skirt at the Counselor Show -- that aren't exactly official tradition, but happen every year without fail, were upheld. Summer ends with counting down the days to Camp, and my year revolves around those two weeks of August. Because for two weeks out of fifty-two, I am not the oddity. The insulin pump on my waist does not invite stares for two whole weeks. For two whole weeks,

I am

normal

. We chat about glucose tab flavors all the way up Mount Jesse, someone goes low, and everyone pitches in a comment about what they think of the flavor of glucose tab that the med staff n the hike brought. We sing duets of old pop songs across the wall in the shower house -- boys' side and girls' side -- with at least one Journey song guaranteed. This was my seventh summer, and I always feel so

happy

when I bet back from Camp. My friends back home say I have three stages of grieving when I return home -- a zombie from getting no sleep on the last night, day one at home, sadness and missing all of my friends, the girls and the boys alike, day two at home, and happiness from having been at Camp. I guess what I'm trying to say is, thank you, from the bottom of my heart, thank you so much for helping me get to Camp this year.

Sincerely, Gracie Ciccarelli

THANKS!

Haitis Project: Just a quick thanks to everyone who donated to the Haiti Project through VBS. In total, we collected twelve and a half, pounds of cars and fourteen pounds of crayons that are in Haiti as you read this, so from me, sister Ilene, and the school those matchbox cars and crayons went to: Thank you!

Grace Ciccarelli

An Invitation to Church Members and Membership - Sunday, January 20

Have you ever received one of those notices in the mail offering a once a year “free” day at the library? You know what I mean. It’s that day when the book that fell behind the television set last February and was only just now retrieved by the dog can be turned into the library free of charge, no fines.

January is “Free Membership” month at First Parish Church. Ellis and I will be joining the church on Sunday January 27, and invite you to come too. If you have been attending for a year or ten years and have not joined, now is your opportunity. We welcome you to become part of our first membership class with your new pastor family.

Whether you have been a member a long time, or plan to join this month, we will host a Membership Conversation on Sunday, January 20 following coffee hour to learn more about the history of First Parish Church and what it means to be a part of The United Church of Christ. We think you may find this conversation interesting, so please come to coffee and stay afterwards in Moody Hall to learn more about First Parish Church.

Please contact Pastor Verlee at 207-363-3758 or Verlee@firstparishyork.org to express your interest in joining the church.

Attendance Numbers

-----Date ----- Attendance

-----9:30 a.m.

December 2 -----274

December 9 -----332

December 16 -----400

December 23 -----297

December 24 ----(5:30) 421 --(8:00) 320 --(11:00) 98

December 30 -----86

Christian Education News for Children, Youth and Families

Church School News

January Theme – Epiphany: Let Your Light Shine!

January 6th Church School – Holy Communion, Epiphany Sunday

January 13th Church School

January 20th Gospel Music Sunday, 2nd Grade and up remain in Church

January 27th Church School – Youth Choir sings in Church

Worship change - Beginning in January, we will be changing when the children leave for their Church School classes. The children and Church School Teachers will return to their seats after the Children's Message instead of leaving the sanctuary. They will then stay for the Parish Concerns and Celebrations and Pastoral Prayer. When the hymn after the prayer begins, children and teachers will leave the sanctuary and go to their Church School Classes. Watch for Christian Education Director, Linda Dunn (prplmama@hotmail.com) in the rear of the church to give directions on where to go during this change.

Children's pick-up – The Christian Education Committee are asking parents of the 2nd and 3rd grade class to please come and pick up their children after the service. With so many people coming to coffee fellowship, we want all the children to feel and be safe. Thank you for your help.

Family Registration – In an effort to consolidate and update all our church school family information for children, youth, and parents we are asking for all families to fill out a "Family Registration Form." We especially need help with our children from 5th grade and up. We need the information so we can keep all families informed of what is happening with the many activities here at church. There are forms in the classrooms or you can get one from Linda Dunn (prplmama@hotmail.com) anytime after church.

Earn your Bible – Back again this year is the opportunity for the children to earn their Bible! This happens during Church School class time.

It is available to all 4

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graders that would like to participate.

If you started last year, but didn't finish, DO NOT WORRY!!

We have all of your information and you can begin again where you left off.

We will begin this program on Sunday, January 13

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The Bible Award Presentation will be during worship on Sunday, April 28

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If you have any questions, please contact Linda Dunn, or Pastor Eric (eric@firstparishyork.com)

Indoor Picnic is coming! – The Christian Education Committee invites all to stay for brunch/lunch after church on Sunday, January 27th. There will be soups, chili, and food that warms the soul.

More information will be coming as we get closer.

Mark your calendars and watch for more information in the bulletin.

Festival of Lights Parade – Thank you to everyone who came out and either walked in the parade, rode on the float, or came out and cheered our group on. T

Thank you to the Frederick family for the use of their truck, trailer, and warm barn to work in!

Thank you to Jeff O'Connor for all the cardboard, we couldn't make the float without it.

Thank you for the donations of cookies and drinks.

We didn't get a blue ribbon this year, but the good news is that there were many really good floats in the parade.

When do we start planning for next year?

Children's and Youth Choirs

Children's Choir - I hope everyone was able to attend this year's Children's Christmas Pageant. What a beautiful message we were given. Congratulations to all who participated on a job well done!
See you on January 3rd
when choir practice resumes.

High School Choir - The new High School Choir sang at both the "Christmas in the Village Concert" and the Christmas Eve Family Mitten Tree Service. They did an amazing job and we are so excited that this choir has come together. It's not too late to join!
There will be practices before performances that will be posted in the bulletin and newsletter. Interested people can contact Gina Connolly (harborbeach@hotmail.com) or Kim Karchenes (kkarchenes@maine.rr.com).

Youth Ministry

Confirmation Sign-ups - Confirmation begins Thursday January 24 with a Parent/Youth Orientation on Thursday January 24 at 6:30 in Moody Hall of the Fellowship Hall. Please call the church office to register your youth for Confirmation now. The course this year will be led by Pastor Verlee, Pastor Eric and Liz Kinsly.

K-Klub (Grades 5&6) will meet January 4th from 6:00-7:30pm: Come meet Pastor Eric as he leads the group in some group games, and talks briefly with kids and parents about their thoughts of the coming year. Come ready for fun.
Parents invited to stay.

Jr. High Youth Group (Grades 7&8) will meet January 11th and 25th from 6:00-7:30pm. January will be a time for Pastor Eric to get to know the kids and parents using group games, short discussions as well as some art projects.
Come meet Pastor Eric.

Sr. High Youth Group - (Grades 9-12) will meet January 13th and 27th, beginning at 7:00pm. All Sr. High Parents and Youth are invited to come the 13th to meet Pastor Eric and talk about what the heck "Relational Youth Ministry" is all about. Oh, and there will be food!

Women's Fellowship News

Women's Fellowship Meeting

The Women's Fellowship meeting scheduled for January 17 has been cancelled. See you in February.

Prayer Walk

All women of the church are invited to join Heidi Oliver and Pastor Verlee for a Prayer Walk on Sat., Jan. 26 from 9:00 am-12 noon. This outdoor event will be a hike or snow shoe, depending on weather, in the woods. We will enjoy the beauty of nature as we hike/snowshoe and share in

several opportunities to stop and hear scripture and pray. Women need to have their own snowshoes, although we will have a couple extra pairs available. Contact Heidi 363-7340 or Pastor Verlee with questions.

Women's Retreat and More!

Join us for the Women's Retreat, "A Garden in Winter: Befriending the Soul", lead by Senior Minister Verlee Copeland and women of the church. Save the dates for the retreat which will be held March 8 - 10 at The Franciscan Monastery in Kennebunkport. Please note that it is for two nights this year. The price is \$140. for the weekend, and we have space for 40 women. PLEASE REGISTER EARLY through the church office. Please join us for this fun, spiritual weekend! Space is going to go quickly! For specific questions, please contact Kathy McQueeney at kathymcqueeney@hotmail.com (603-580-1184) or Julie Alexander at jules44@comcast.net (207-419-9113)

Women of Faith - "Believe God Can Do Anything"

Conference -- Hartford, CT- Nov. 1, 2013 to Nov. 2, 2013. God can do anything! —Luke 1:37. Don't miss the all-new Women of Faith Friday night-Saturday event packed with compelling stories, dynamic music, engaging speakers, inspiring worship, Bible-based teaching, and more. FPC will be purchasing 15-20 tickets ahead as this is guaranteed to be a quick sell-out. Please contact the Church Office to sign up if you are interested in reserving tickets. Sponsored by the FPC Women's Planning Group.

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In Memoriam

Karen J. Forbush

May 21, 1941 - December 7, 2012

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“How Your Pledges Make a Difference in our Ministry” (Highlights July-December)

Your stewardship committee is pleased to celebrate the past six months with you and review a few ways your pledge dollars are continuing to work toward our church’s mission.

So many wonderful things have happened in the past several months: the arrival of our new senior pastor The Rev. Dr. Verlee Anne Copeland, our interim associate pastor Rev. Eric Redard, and fellowship opportunities to meet them being a highlight. We also said goodbye to The Rev. Dr. Marlayna Schmidt as she completed her good work as our interim senior pastor.

During our worship services, we celebrated the Youth Mission Trip as well as World Communion Sunday, O.C.W.M. and Neighbors in Need Offering, and Celebrating Stewardship Sunday. We were lifted by the music of the ecumenical Thanksgiving and Christmas in the Village concerts. Worshiping together we are averaging 335 folks at our Sunday service. We are grateful for the stewardship testimonies of Karen Cox, Barbara Jones, Sandra Hooper, Sandy LaBonte, Bill Bayliss and Joanne Meyers.

Pastor Verlee visited with church members at eight house parties. Our pastors presided at

many weddings, funerals and memorial services, and regularly make countless pastoral calls to the sick, hospitalized and homebound. We celebrated 11 baptisms and 5 births during this past six months. Twenty one of our kids graduated from high school and 2 from college. The deacons continue their shepherding program simply “checking in” with a fellow church member families to see how they are doing . The AED’s (Automatic Electronic Defibrillators) were purchased and delivered.

Our outreach mission work with our youth and adults includes, our regular caregiving ministries and special fellowship and community events such as Marketfest, the Wreath and Greens Sale, and the Drive Through Nativity. We can feel assured that our church is making a difference in the lives of many and each of us is richer for what we have given. Our Senior High Mission trip reached out to people in need in New Haven, Connecticut. The Junior High Youth Group had a work day at the Boston Project in Dorchester, Mass.

We are pleased to open our church buildings for public use and hosted Table of Plenty, Boy Scouts, Garden Club, quilters, various support groups, and many community recitals and concerts. Camp CARD NE will be meeting once again at FPC this summer.

Praise be to God that we are able to continue and even increase our good work through each member’s generous giving. As of Sunday, December 16th, we have heard from 185 of you who pledged, with 66 of you increasing your pledge by \$13,665. We've also received pledges from 17 who didn't pledge in 2012. Together you have generously pledged \$232,899 to the church and \$9,314 to Our Church's Wider Mission. Many thanks for your commitment to celebrating Christ and serving all. Every pledge matters to make ministry possible. We look forward to a wonderful winter quarter as we continue God’s work at First Parish!

News from the Assessors'

Work continues to progress on the Parsonage and we are very hopeful that Verlee and Ellis will move into their new home before the end of the month. We celebrate in the joy of their being able to share their new home with family visiting for the holidays. Special thanks to Bob Reed who is our general contractor for this project for working so hard on getting this job completed in such timely manner. Also thanks to the teams of 8 to 13 volunteers who have completed painting 8 of 9 rooms in the parsonage. Their efforts have resulted in saving the church an estimated 8 to 12 thousand dollars in external labor costs.

December is the time of year where the Assessors turn their attention to the closing of the current year budget and drawing up next years budget. At last year's annual meeting we passed the 2012 budget with a shortfall of approximately \$12,000 dollars, our projected shortfall at this time is \$14,255 (as of December 16, both of these numbers are before non-recurring expenses). The shortfall would have been substantially higher were it not for the fuel savings realized due to last years mild winter. A significant driver of this shortfall lies in the current level of 2012 pledge receipts which we are projecting will come in \$16,670 under what was pledged for 2012. For the 2013 budget, which we are still in the process of defining, we are well short of our goal of \$300,000 in pledging. As of December 11, we're at 174 units pledging \$225,578 to church expense. We realize that these are tough economic times for many and truly appreciate your faithful giving to date to our shared ministry. Please make sure that your 2012 pledge is current, and if you can please prayerfully consider giving a bit more to help reach our 2013 goal for pledging.

Thank you and God bless you all, *Per Jonas, Chair of the Assessors*

Addendum to the Assessors' Message

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I neglected to mention in my original message that at our December meeting, the Assessors addressed the need to start looking at staffing requirements for the church as we move forward □ and the financial challenges that we are currently facing. You may have observed the increasing vitality and attendance in worship, as we continue to build under new leadership the already strong ministry and mission of First Parish Church. The Assessors made two decisions that we believe are essential to strategic ministry planning for 2013. We confirmed the appointment of an ad hoc committee on staffing to study the staffing needs for First Parish Church. The committee will meet in the first quarter of 2013 and make recommendations to the Assessors regarding administrative, building and grounds and associate pastor staffing.

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Additionally we voted to support the work begun on best practices in stewardship during our interim, when we read and studied the book. "Not Your Parents Offering Plate, A new Vision for Financial Stewardship" □ by □ J. Clif Christopher. □ After much thought and discussion, the Assessors □ authorized our Senior Minister Verlee Copeland to confidentially access and review financial giving records with Financial Secretary Gail Berneike in order to develop strategic financial recommendations to the Assessors. I want to emphasize, that detailed information on

individual giving will not be shared with the Assessors. It is our clear intention to set a path to build and strengthen the financial base of First Parish as we plan to grow our ministry together. If you wish to "opt-out" of the sharing of this information with Pastor Verlee, please contact Gail Bernier. If you have any questions concerning this direction, please feel free to contact Pastor at 207-363-3758 or Chair of the Assessors at 207-363-3180.

Mission Opportunity:

There will be a potential mission trip to Guatemala May 18-25. If you want to know more, please come to an orientation meeting on January 12 in the office of Pastor Verlee in the Parish House at 10 a.m. on January 12.

Prior to accepting the call to be your new Senior Pastor, I had already booked a mission trip to Guatemala with Common Hope. This is a faith based group that provides education, health care, social services, and in cooperation with Habitat for Humanity, housing to the poorest of the Mayan population. I had intended to lead this group as a graduate course for The Chicago School. Since the dates are already reserved and the deposit made, I am inquiring whether or not there is interest among about a dozen folks here at First Parish to participate in this adult mission trip opportunity.

Please let me know by calling the church office, and come to the orientation meeting on January 12 to learn more.

Thanks so much.

Pastor Verlee

First Parish Staffing and Stewardship

Beginning in January, an ad hoc committee convened by Rev. Copeland in cooperation with the Personnel Committee and the Assessors will begin meeting to consider staffing needs for First Parish Church. Committee members include Mel Spelman, Xanthi Gray, Jodi Lawlor, Joanne Myers, and Jeff McConnell. They will make a recommendation to the Assessors in March regarding needs for a settled associate pastor, as well as looking at other staffing needs for the church.

At the same time, Gail Berneike and Rev. Copeland will meet to confidentially review financial giving records and develop stewardship recommendations for the Assessors to fund potential staffing proposals. The congregation will be regularly informed of recommendations for staffing our ministries and support services here at First Parish Church. If you have further questions about the process please see Rev. Copeland at verlee@firstparishyork.org.

Coffee Hour Needs YOU!

Coffee Hour is a fun time of fellowship right after worship each Sunday, made more fun by the congregation taking turns to provide the refreshments. Why not team up with a couple of friends to host an upcoming Coffee Hour? It's easy to do! You provide the goodies for about 75 adults and 30-40 kids, and serve the refreshments during Coffee Hour. The Java Mama or Papa on duty makes the coffee, so you don't have to worry about that part! Please sign up on the Coffee Hour poster in Fellowship Hall! Thank you!

