

New Members Welcomed December 24, 2017



Hank and Melodie Foster felt welcomed to the United Parish from the first time that they attended worship here. Having been members of the Thornton Heights United Methodist Church in South Portland, Maine for thirty-seven years, they moved to Hopedale last May to be near to their daughter, Beth, son-in-law, James, and three grandchildren (Connor, 10; Parker, 7½ and Jaxon, 2½) who live in Medway.

Melodie was born in Portland, Maine, where she lived until their recent move to Massachusetts. Hank was born in New York City, raised in New

Jersey, and says that he moved to Maine in 1970 to marry Melodie.

Melodie is a retired Medical Practice Administrator. Hank is a retired firefighter (he was Captain of Engine 3 in Scarborough, Maine) and retired sales representative (he worked for a plumbing specialty company in White Plains, NY, for 28 years).

Melodie is passionate about her family. She cherishes the time they have together and is “over-the-moon” when it comes to their grandsons. The older boys are avid soccer players and she said the little guy keeps them on their toes. In her spare time, she loves to read, sew and quilt. She especially enjoys paper crafts and designs greeting cards and memory books. Hank enjoys helping people. He worked as a call fire fighter for thirty three years and is proud of the service that he provided to the community. He is an avid reader and particularly enjoys reading about history. He also enjoys riding his motorcycle in the warmer months.

Melodie’s faith passions include prayer and visitation ministries. She was the prayer and visitation ministry coordinator at their church in Maine. She says “these ministries are dear to my heart and I hope to become involved in similar ways here at United Parish”. As she settles into her life in Massachusetts, she’ll be listening to see how God wants her to serve. Hank is looking forward to putting his skills with electrical, plumbing and carpentry to work at the church. They both look forward to greeting and reading during worship services. They’d like to thank the congregation for making them feel so welcomed and look forward to getting to know everyone.



Deborah Chalak, who also goes by the nicknames Deb and Debbie, has been attending the United Parish for about 13 years, since her middle daughter attended nursery school in 2004 at our Early Learning Center. Deb has been married to her husband, Ed, for 23 years and has 3 daughters, Chereen, age 20, Nadiya, age 16, and Dahnia, age 7, who enjoys Sunday school and VBS. Deb says that the strong sense of community, acceptance and support is what drew her to United Parish.

Originally from Easton, Deb has also lived in Boston where she attended Northeastern University, and then later in Milford before moving to Upton. She is a Mechanical and Biomedical Engineer by education and has continued to work as an engineer throughout her career in various positions and is currently a Global Retail, Design

& Engineering Planner for Bose.

Deb says that the passion she finds herself most involved in these days are her children, their education and activities, whether it's participating in her daughters' STEM events at their schools, playing tennis or basketball with her girls, or mentoring Chereen on prospective internships as a pre-med, Biology major. She also delights in training their adopted German Shepherd, Koda, from Tennessee. Koda recently graduated from the intermediate level program and Deb will continue to train him in hopes of him becoming a service dog. Deb always enjoys spending time with friends and awaits eagerly for her annual vacation to Aruba with her family.

While Deb has now become an official member of the United Parish, our congregation is already a second home to her family, including her mom, Linda Douglas, who has been involved with the food pantry and senior care. Deborah looks forward to participating as a reader, coffee hour host, and baking for events.

Rhonda Pilla was drawn to our congregation by 'the pastor and the people'. She appreciates the open and affirming nature of church community. She moved to Upton 4 years ago after living in Watertown for 18 years. She is originally from Waltham. Rhonda is a software engineer, supporting applicant tracking systems for Fortune 100 companies. She has two children, a daughter Bonnie who is 30 and a son Zach who is 23. Her granddaughter Chloe, who recently turned 2 in September, brings her much joy and happiness. Rhonda is passionate about helping the less fortunate. She enjoys reading and creating jewelry from dried flowers, which most often come from the flowers of passed loved ones.



The Hennessys compare their search for a church home to Goldilocks. “Other churches were too small, too big or too far away”, but after attending United Parish for a while, they found it to be just the right place for their family, including 9-year old Abigail, who is in the 4th grade and was just baptized here last month and 7-year old Gregory who is in the 2nd grade.

Prior to moving to Upton five years ago, the Hennessys lived in Farmington, CT where they attended the First Church of Christ. Meliessa was born and raised in a small farming community in southern Manitoba, Canada on the North Dakota border. Later in life she lived in Winnipeg, Toronto and then Boston. Gary was born in Jersey City NJ, where he lived until age 14, then moved to central CT, where he lived until they moved to Massachusetts.

Meliessa was trained as a nurse and worked as one for about 8 years before coming to Boston to work in the biopharma and medical device industry, where she has been responsible for clinical trials nearly all in oncology. Gary is a computer engineer and has spent his career in technology, including two start-up companies that he has founded. He is currently a Chief Information Officer for a Connecticut tech company.

For the past 9 years their greatest efforts and passion has been raising their children and assisting their aging parents. Gary is passionate about golf and enjoys coaching the kids’ soccer and basketball teams. Meliessa wants to spend more time connecting with people and being part of something that makes life better for others including health. She also enjoys gardening, music, and travel. The Hennessys are grateful for the friends that they have made in the congregation already and look forward to helping out with events and projects around the church.

Katherine (Katie) and David Francis also joined the church family in December. On the same day, Katie and their three children Zachary, Aila and Jonathan were baptized. The Francis family is already feeling at home at the United Parish, with the kids participating in the Young at Heart program, Katie is involved in Faith Development and David will be helping out on the Building & Grounds Team.