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The Newsletter of First Congregational Church

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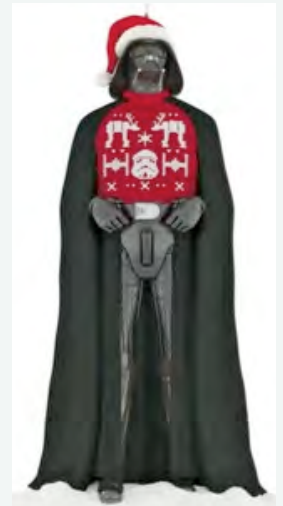
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Later this month, millions upon millions of eager, excited Star Wars fans will flock to cinemas across the country to take in the latest installment of the film series that began “a long time ago, in a galaxy far, far away,” or at least way back during the Carter Administration, in 1977 to be exact. In the ensuing decades George Lucas’ space opera has become a commercial juggernaut, spawning everything from toys to video games to novels to websites to a spirituality rooted in the Force. Simply put, Star Wars has conquered our culture, even nosing its way into Christmas. Consider, for example, one of Hallmark’s ornament offerings for this year: a Yuletide Darth Vader, presumably jolly beneath his black helmet and Santa hat.



It will not surprise you to learn that as your pastor and fellow pilgrim on the Way of Jesus, I find this to be incredibly wrong. Let’s set aside time-worn complaints about the “commercialization of Christmas.” This festive doo-dad has far more profound flaws, ones that betray a complete ignorance (or, even worse, ignoring) of the significance of this season. If one takes seriously the idea that Christmas is about the birth



of our Savior, the arrival of God in human form, does it not seem a bit odd to hang an ornament depicting a character who personifies evil on a tree that serves as a focal point for an observance centered on love incarnate and incarnated?

Many in our society have come to see Christmas as a cultural event, a shared moment that is best appreciated and enjoyed when liberated from outdated religious meanings. We in the church are

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SUNDAY SERVICE



Poinsettias FOR ADVENT AND CHRISTMAS

If you wish to offer poinsettias for the Sanctuary in honor or memory of someone, you may either donate your own flowers or order them through the church office. The church will be purchasing 6-inch poinsettias for \$14 each.

If you would like to be included in the church's poinsettia order, please contact the church office no later than Thursday, December 10.

If you plan to donate your own flowers, please contact the office and deliver them to church by Sunday, December 13.

Dedications will be included in worship bulletins on Sunday, December 20, and Christmas Eve. Information must be received no later than Thursday, December 17.

New Members Open House

Sunday, December 13, at 11:15 am

Have you worshiped with us regularly? Have you found a spiritually nourishing church home here? Would you like to get more involved in our programs and events?

If you're interested in joining our church as a covenant member, you're warmly invited to this informal discussion after worship on December 13, with members of the Diaconate and Steve Silver.

We will welcome new members in worship on the following Sunday, December 20.

Queued for Coffee Hour

December—Board of Governors

January—Stewardship Committee

February—Christian Education Committee

CHRISTMAS COMMUNITY DINNER

Sunday, December 27, 5:00 pm

Leader: NAN PARSONS

Thanks to Nan for leading this holiday effort, a vital service to our neighbors. Nan is asking for help with ingredients, serving, and clean-up—as well as a **small Christmas gift for each guest.**

Please participate! Sign-ups posted on the Missions board in the Parish Hall.

New Year, New Leaders!

We are grateful to have a consistent group of dedicated folks who generously commit time and resources to our Community Dinners.

We would love to expand that group!

Please consider organizing a meal in the new year. There are menu resources available to support you, and the church's Community Dinner Fund can help cover any costs.

Below are our dinner dates in 2016, and we need leaders—**especially for January!** If you're interested or have questions about this role, please contact the church office.

January 24	(open)
February 28	(open)
March 27	(open)
April 24	Christian Education
May 22	Women of the Church
June 26	Mission & Social Action
July 24	(open)
August 28	(open)
September 25	Women of the Church
October 23	Christian Education
November 27	(open)
December 25	(open)

DECEMBER 2015 CALENDAR

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
29 FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT 10a Worship and Church School 11:15a Christmas Decorating Party	30 5:30p Cub Scouts (Tigers) 6:15p Cub Scouts (Bears)	1 5:45p Cub Scouts (Wolves) 7p Boy Scouts	2 6p UVPRN	3 6p Handbells 7p Choir	4	5 8a Men's Breakfast 9a Women of the Church Trip to Burdick's
6 10a Worship (Communion) and Church School 11:15a MSA	7 3p WCBH After-School Group 5:30p Cub Scouts (Tigers) 6:15p Cub Scouts (Bears)	8 11:30a UVIP Exec Council 5:45p Cub Scouts (Wolves) 7p Boy Scouts	9 8a-4p NH-WIC 6p UVPRN No Christian Ed Committee	10 9:30a-4p Grafton-Orange-Sullivan Assn 6p Handbells 7p Choir	11 8a UVIP Exec Council	12 9a UVIP Exec Council
13 10a Worship and Church School 11:15a New Members Open House 11:30a FCC Community Caroling	14 7p Diaconate	15 7p Church Council 7p Boy Scouts/Troop Committee	16 6p UVPRN	17 6p Handbells 7p Choir	18	19 2p Miller-MacGregor Wedding
20 8:30a Blue Christmas Communion 10a Worship and Church School 4-6p Christmas Party and Carol Sing at Parsonage	21 10a-7p NH-WIC 3p WCBH After-School Group 5:30p Cub Scouts (Tigers) 6:15p Cub Scouts (Bears)	22 5:45p Cub Scouts (Wolves) 7p Boy Scouts JANUARY NEWSLETTER CONTENT DUE	23 6p UVPRN	24 CHRISTMAS EVE 5p Family Service with Pageant 8p Lessons and Carols 11p Candlelight Communion	25 CHRISTMAS DAY	26
27 10a Worship and Church School 11:15a Board of Governors 5p Community Dinner	28	29 7p Boy Scouts	30 6p UVPRN	31 No Handbells No Choir	1 NEW YEAR'S DAY	2 8a Men's Breakfast

If your event is missing or incorrect, please notify us at church@fccleb.org or 603-448-4281.

CELEBRATE THE SEASON

ADVENT AND CHRISTMAS AT FCC

Please join us as we celebrate Advent and prepare to welcome the Christ child!

Sunday, December 13, 11:30 am—FCC Community Caroling (*see below*)

Sunday, December 20, 8:30 am—“Blue Christmas” Morning Communion (*see below*)

Sunday, December 20, 4:00 pm—Christmas Party and Carol Sing at the Parsonage (*see below*)

Sunday, December 20, 6:30 pm—*Messiah* Sing at LUMC (*see next page*)

Monday, December 21, 5:00 pm—Homeless Memorial Vigil at Tri-County CAP (*see page 9*)

Sunday, December 27, 5:00 pm—Christmas Community Dinner (*see page 2*)

Thursday, December 24—CHRISTMAS EVE

5:00—Family Service

A time for Christmas song and story for families and the young at heart. Kids are invited to participate in a pageant and living crèche (prep at 4:00).

8:00—Lessons and Carols

The story of our Savior’s birth in lessons from Scripture and traditional carols.

11:00—Candlelight Communion

A service of light and song, rejoicing in Christ’s birth with the celebration of the Lord’s Supper.



Caroling in Our Community

Sunday, December 13, 11:30 am

(*Following Coffee Hour*)

Plan to join us after coffee hour for this special annual Christmas ministry, as we share favorite carols with homebound (but enthusiastic and grateful!) church members and neighbors around town.

Blue Christmas Morning Communion

Sunday, December 20, 8:30 am, in the Parlor

For those carrying burdens or dealing with loss, this can be a challenging time of year. Join us in the Parlor for a brief, intimate communion service, a chance for quiet reflection on the hopeful light of Christ as we approach the darkness of the Winter Solstice.

Church Christmas Party and Carol Sing!

Sunday, December 20, 4:00-6:00 pm

AT THE PARSONAGE, 15 Kimball Street (Corner of Kimball and Elm)

All are warmly invited to the Parsonage for some pre-Christmas cheer! We’ll gather around the fireplace for fellowship, song, and seasonal fun. You are welcome to bring an appetizer or dessert to share.

DAILY ADVENT REFLECTIONS. If you wish to receive Rev. Steve Silver’s daily devotional messages by email during Advent, please let him know or send an email to church@fccleb.org.

CELEBRATE THE SEASON



Christmas Gifts to Our Community

This year FCC is once again sponsoring families for Christmas through Listen Community Services, with a Giving Tree collection of clothing and grocery vouchers.

If you're offering a gift, please deliver it to church no later than **Sunday, December 13**, so that it can be delivered in a timely fashion. Please contact Barb Teeter (603-448-4529 or barbara.j.teeter@hitchcock.org).

Women of the Church Christmas Road Trip

Saturday, December 5—Meet at FCC at 9:30 am

The Women of the Church are invited on a road trip to Burdick's chocolate in Walpole, possibly with an additional stop at Basketville! We'll meet at church at 9:30 and carpool.

If you're interested, RSVP to Corrine Erskine at cerskine2@yahoo.com or 603-448-3919.

MESSIAH SING!

Sunday, December 20, at 6:30 pm
Lebanon United Methodist Church

Join the chorus—or just the audience—for Handel's beloved oratorio, with local soloists and accompanied this year by a string orchestra. *Free-will donation.*

Participate in Worship

Serve as a Liturgist or Greeter/Usher

Ever wonder how your friends ended up handing out bulletins, delivering the call to worship and reading scripture from the lectern, or walking gracefully from pew to pew collecting the offering?

It's easy—we asked, and they said yes.

No experience or training is required for these important roles in worship!

If you'd like to serve as either a liturgist or a greeter/usher, please contact the church office.

The Pastoral Perspective, *continued from Page 1*

called to journey a different way. We're called to indulge neither the critique of others nor, despite anything I write here, a crankiness born of wistfulness for a supposedly more faithful day gone by. Instead, through our worship, witness, service, and fellowship, we are to remind ourselves and those around us of what an amazing thing God did, on a cold night in a manger, during the days of the Roman Empire and the reign of the Emperor Augustus.

Bethlehem may not be in a galaxy far, far away. Nor, if we believe that Jesus is Emmanuel, God with us, was his birth a long time ago. Instead, it is a present reality, right here, right now, freely given to one and all.

May you all have a blessed Advent and a Merry Christmas!

Yours faithfully,

Steve

COMMITTEE NOTES

CHURCH COUNCIL

At Council's November meeting Jon Scott reported for **Stewardship** that the 2016 pledge mailing had already produced good results. Jon hopes that committee chairs will support the process of encouraging everyone to participate in this vital effort. He also emphasized the need to have pledges from everyone who uses weekly offering envelopes.

The **Board of Governors** received an estimate from Don Collins for repairing damage done by a Casella Waste truck in October; Casella's insurance has sent a check to cover the repairs in full. Steve Silver has noted a crack in the Parish Hall ceiling; while it's unlikely to have been caused by the Casella accident, we may have Don look at that as well. It was also reported that the Cub Scouts had very helpfully assisted in the Fall Clean-up on Halloween weekend.

Barry Schuster asked for support for the **Nominating Committee** process; suggestions should be sent either to him or to chair Amy Driscoll. With respect to the open **Treasurer** position, Barry reported that someone is considering it at this time.

Corrine Erskine reported for **Mission and Social Action** that a congregational survey had been distributed to assess our mission priorities both locally and globally. Completed surveys should be returned to the church office by mid-December. Corrine also noted

her concern that the same group of people seems to be leading Community Dinners throughout the year, emphasizing that we need to have new involvement from the congregation. Barry Schuster volunteered to speak about this need in worship.

The **Diaconate** has supported the process of getting church members photographed for the new church directory and will follow up with those who were unable to make it to the two Lifetouch photo sessions. They have also gone to Genesis on Sunday afternoons in November to lead short worship services for residents there. On November 22 after worship, the Deacons will moderate a discussion about how we value and practice communion here at FCC. They also continue to discuss how to treat the Israeli BDS issue within our conference and congregation.

Steve Silver reported for the **Board of Trustees** that FCC would be transferring its NH Conference investment funds, in order to avoid the apparent redundancy of paying fees to both.

In his **pastor's report**, Steve thanked Council for his week of study leave, during which he enjoyed productive time for reflection and study in Boston. The church is hosting this year's ecumenical Thanksgiving service, at which Jeff Scott, the new pastor at the West Lebanon Congregational Church,

PLEASE NOTE:

CONTENT FOR THE 2015 ANNUAL REPORT

must be submitted to the
Church Administrator by
**Monday, January 11,
2016**

FCC's 2016 Annual Meeting
will be held after worship on
Sunday, February 14

will preach. Advent will bring many familiar events of church decorating, carol singing, and a Christmas party at the Parsonage. Lastly, Steve lifted up the efforts of our music ministry—Henry Danaher continues to do a fine job, and Elizabeth Duvall and Susan Montmagny have worked hard to revive the bell choir and children's choir.

DIACONATE

At November's Diaconate meeting, Barb Teeter reported for Called to Care that Edith Wheeler had been in the hospital briefly but was recovering. Also, Jane Brandt has settled into her new home at Valley Terrace. The Deacons signed cards for Jane as well as for Harry Reed's son Chris in Enfield.

COMMITTEE NOTES

Deacons also reviewed assignments for assisting with the new church directory, including staffing the photo shoot on November 14. All deacons will reach out to people who haven't scheduled a photo session or who were unable to make it to church for photos.

Susan Montmagny reported on leadership of the Sunday afternoon lay services at Genesis. Teams of Deacons were scheduled for each visit. Between fifteen and thirty residents attend these services, participating in hymn singing more actively than anything else. They have been grateful for our sharing these services with them.

All were reminded of the open conversation about our church's communion practices following worship on November 22. Barb Jones will moderate the discussion.

Addressing the so-called BDS (Boycott, Divest, and Sanction) issue that has arisen within the NH Conference (UCC), Jon Scott distributed some "Possible Courses of Action for Our Church." Steve Silver and Hilary Ryder added significantly to the discussion, and they will work together to draft a position statement for review by the congregation. Barb Jones will update Church Council on these discussions. The issue will be at the top of the Diaconate agenda in December, when we expect to formulate an action plan for responding to the conference's BDS resolution.

Finding Our Hearts: Stewardship 2016

"Time, talent, and treasure" is a common way of describing stewardship. It's a familiar but misleading formula, suggesting that time and talent are not treasures like money. How we spend our time and make use of our talents—like how we invest our financial resources—is not simply a matter of setting personal priorities. It is an expression of our faith, of where our hearts can be found.

By participating fully in the ministry of stewardship, each of us has the opportunity to "store up treasures in heaven," to make a place in our hearts for God's grace and love. Our faithful stewardship enables and enhances everything that we do at FCC.

Thanks to ALL for prayerful, honest consideration of your commitment to our church's mission and ministry in 2016.

* * *

Offering envelopes for next year are available in the Parish Hall. Once you've submitted a pledge form, please take whichever box you wish and record your name and number on the list.

*From Church Council and the
Nominating Committee*

Are You Being Served?

Have you found an ideal service opportunity for yourself at FCC? Have you considered working on a new program or committee?

Do you have creative ideas or suggestions for particular aspects of our congregational life or governance? We want to know!

If you're interested in serving or learning more about an FCC program or committee, please contact the church office or **Amy Driscoll (603-448-0976 or amykdriscoll@gmail.com).**

December Meetings

Mission/Social Action and Stewardship	12/6, 11:15
Christian Education	12/9, 7:00
Diaconate	12/14, 7:00
Church Council	12/15, 7:00
Board of Governors	12/27, 11:15

January Meetings

Mission/Social Action and Stewardship	1/3, 11:15
Diaconate	1/11, 7:00
Christian Education	1/13, 7:00
Church Council	1/19, 7:00
Board of Governors	1/24, 11:15

2016 ANNUAL MEETING
Sunday, February 14, 2016

THE LIFE OF OUR CONGREGATION

Lincoln "Frankie" MacGregor *and* Karen May Miller

GRATEFULLY INVITE THE CONGREGATION
TO SHARE IN THE CELEBRATION OF THEIR WEDDING

Saturday, December 19, at 2:00 pm
Sanctuary, First Congregational Church of Lebanon



November 2015

Dearest Reverend Silver, Brian, Trish, Ike and Linda, Steve and Barb, Chuck and Carol, Wendell and Ginger, and many I cannot name,

Thank you so very much for extending yourselves in so many kind and generous ways for my parents and recently my father. All the thoughts and prayers, visits to his home, cards to express your caring, rides to church, helping Dad get his coffee, visiting him and helping with his service.

You are all so very appreciated, as my father cared for you all.

Thank you again, and God bless you.

Sincerely,

*Grace, Mel, Chris, and
the entire Reed family*

Thanksgiving and Advent. Kathie Schuster's creative gift produces another gorgeous altar display; Elizabeth Duvall and Susan Montmagny lead worship on Native American Sunday; the FCC bell ringers offer a lovely prelude from the back of the Sanctuary; with Advent come the children's creche and seasonal decorations.

OUR LOCAL MISSION

26th Annual Homeless Memorial Vigil

Monday, December 21, at 5:00 pm
Tri-County CAP Office
57 Mechanic Street, Lebanon

All are welcome to share in this important annual commemoration—on the longest night of the year—of all those in New Hampshire who have lost their lives during the previous year because they've lacked an adequate, stable place to live. Donations of non-perishable food items gratefully accepted.

For more information, please contact the
Tri-County Community Action Program
at 603-443-6150.

MERRY CHRISTMAS!

First Congregational Church extends its warmest wishes for a blessed Christmas season and a peaceful, prosperous new year to all those who use our building for regular meetings:

Boy Scout Troop 279 / Cub Scout Pack 279

The Grafton-Orange-Sullivan Association

Juneberry Music Choral Singing School

NH Women, Infants, and Children (WIC)

United Valley Interfaith Project

UV Professional Resource Network

West Central Behavioral Health

...and the many performers in our
Music at the Meetinghouse Series



Called to Care offers special assistance to those in our congregation who need it, for whatever reason—illness, loss of a loved one, loneliness, depression, aging issues, and divorce, to name a few. We offer support in the form of cards, phone calls, visits, meals, and transportation.

Now with just eight caregivers, Called to Care needs help! If the Spirit moves you to join this rewarding group, please contact Linda Jacobs (mrandmrs.j@comcast.net / 802-296-8251) or Steve Silver.



First Congregational Church of Lebanon

Weekly Worship and Church School: Sundays, 10:00 am • Office Hours: Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday, 9-12
10 South Park Street, P.O. Box 230, Lebanon, NH 03766 • 603-448-4281 • church@fccleb.org • www.fccleb.org
Rev. Stephen R. Silver — silver@fccleb.org • Newsletter Submissions — church@fccleb.org



First Congregational Church of Lebanon

10 South Park Street

PO Box 230

Lebanon, NH 03766

DATED MATERIAL

PLEASE DELIVER PROMPTLY

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

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