



# Grace Notes

The Newsletter of First Congregational Church

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## The Pastoral Perspective

After last year brought us an early Ash Wednesday and Lent, this year we have the opportunity to enjoy an extra-long Epiphany. What exactly does this mean for us? After all, it's not as if we celebrate anything. We don't have special services or liturgies to perform. To me, Epiphany is more a state of mind, a context in which we pray and reflect. Yes, on the silly side, we may be grateful that with the Lenten season starting in March we will observe a later Easter—and thus have a better chance of not freezing at the sunrise service. But more consequently, this is a moment to ask whether we are using this extra time to focus on the ways that God has revealed himself to us. My hope and prayer is that we are.

This extended season is a good time to reflect on how God makes himself known to us. How has the Holy Spirit moved in your life and heart? How has Jesus been revealed to you? It need not be through a vision or revelation or mountaintop experience but in the reading or hearing of Scripture, an act of kindness you witnessed or performed, or perhaps in a musical performance you attended or heard on the radio. The persons of the Trinity, but especially Jesus Christ, make themselves known in all sorts of ways, and we, in turn, may make him known to others.

February is when churches often have annual meetings, the time when they consider attendance statistics, survey how many gifts were given, or debate a particular warrant article. But I'd like to suggest that as we look at statistics and issues we remember to focus on those who volunteer. It is not only through our service that the church, not just First Congregational but also the worldwide communion of the faithful, continues; it's also through our service that God makes his presence felt in our community. Recall Jesus saying that we are his hands and his feet! Think of those people serving dinners, singing music, doing the numbers, tidying up the sanctuary, welcoming newcomers. All are doing the work of the Risen Christ. When you volunteer, think about how the Lord has made himself known to us through fellowship and service. And then think of how, through you, he is also making himself known.

Happy Epiphany!

Yours faithfully, *Steve*

## SUNDAY SERVICE

### FCC Annual Meeting 2019

Sunday, February 10, 11:15 am

The Annual Meeting of First Congregational Church of Lebanon, NH, will be held in the Parish Hall on Sunday, February 10, 2019, immediately following the worship service, for the purpose of:

1. The election of all officers provided for under the CONSTITUTION AND BY-LAWS of the church.
2. To hear the reports of all officers, committees, and organizations, as required under the CONSTITUTION AND BY-LAWS of the church.
3. To consider and act upon any other matters relating to the general church welfare that may properly come before this meeting.

#### *Family Potluck and Fellowship Following*

All are welcome—please bring a favorite dish to share with your congregation!

### New Members to Be Received

Sunday Worship, February 10

Please join us on Annual Meeting Sunday as we welcome new covenant members into our community of faith.

### Community Dinner

Sunday, February 24, 5:00 pm

Leader: CORRINE ERSKINE AND BARB LARO

Many thanks to Corrine and Barb for organizing another Community Dinner! Please lend a hand to provide this vital service to our neighbors, especially if you'd like to help for the first time.

*Sign-ups will be posted in the Parish Hall.*

### Queued for Coffee Hour

February—Christian Education Committee

March—Diaconate

April—Mission and Social Action

### LOOKING TOWARD LENT



Ash Wednesday  
Ecumenical Service

March 6, 7:00 pm

Lebanon United Methodist Church

*Please join our neighbors for this annual service to initiate the holy season of Lent.*

### Lenten Lunch Bag Offering

Beginning MARCH 10, the children of our Church School will again distribute decorated collection bags for two important organizations:

David's House ([davids-house.org](http://davids-house.org)) and  
Epilogos Charities ([epilogos.org](http://epilogos.org))

David's House offers lodging, meals, and home-away-from-home care for families whose children are in treatment next door at DHMC. Our Lenten collection will purchase basic supplies for the house.

Epilogos seeks to improve lives of people in San Jose Villanueva, El Salvador, a model for focused global outreach and a town dear to many at FCC. Our offering funds scholarships for SJV's school.

In both cases, this Lenten offering allows FCC's children to help other children in challenging circumstances, encouraging them to consider stewardship as a way to share God's love.

You are asked to use the decorated bags to collect savings from the sacrifice of a regular treat during Lent. Suggestions include skipping a daily coffee or latte; foregoing munchies when watching TV; or having dinner at home and contributing the cost of eating out. **Whatever your sacrifices, please plan to return your donations on PALM SUNDAY, APRIL 14.**

HOLY WEEK IS APRIL 14-21

# FEBRUARY 2019

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<b>27</b> 10a Worship and Church School 11:15a Bd of Govs 5p Community Dinner	<b>28</b> 3p WCBH After-school Group 5:30p Cub Scouts (Bears/Webelos/Girls)	<b>29</b> 7p Boy Scouts/Cubs (AofL)	<b>30</b> 6p UVPRN 7p Bel Canto Chamber Singers	<b>31</b> 10a Dufflebag Theater (LOH) 7p Choir	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b> 8a Men's Breakfast 4p Mother Tongue Vocal Recital
<b>3</b> SCOUT SUNDAY 10a Worship and Church School (Communion) 11:15a MSA	<b>4</b> 3p WCBH After-school Group 5:30p Cub Scouts (Bears/Webelos/Girls)	<b>5</b> 7p Boy Scouts/Cubs (AofL)	<b>6</b> 5:30p Cub Scout Pack Committee 6p UVPRN 7p Bel Canto Chamber Singers	<b>7</b> 3p WCBH After-school Group 7p Choir	<b>8</b> 7:30p LOH on Location: Lula Wiles	<b>9</b>
<b>10</b> ANNUAL MEETING SUNDAY 10a Worship and Church School 11:15a FCC 2019 Annual Meeting and Potluck	<b>11</b> 3p WCBH After-school Group 5:30p Cub Scouts (Bears/Webelos/Girls) 7p Diaconate	<b>12</b> 7p Boy Scouts/Cubs (AofL)	<b>13</b> 8a-4p NH-WIC 6p UVPRN 7p Bel Canto Chamber Singers 7:15p Christian Ed Committee	<b>14</b> 12:30p G-O-S Assn (CoCM) 5:45p Cub Scouts (Lions) 7p Choir	<b>15</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>17</b> 10a Worship and Church School 12:30p Outing Club: Fire and Ice!	<b>18</b> PRESIDENTS' DAY	<b>19</b> 7p Church Council 7p Boy Scouts/Troop Committee/Cubs (AofL)	<b>20</b> 6p UVPRN 7p Bel Canto Chamber Singers	<b>21</b> 3p WCBH After-school Group 7p Choir	<b>22</b> 6-9p Leb Rec Dept Quilters' Retreat	<b>23</b> 8a-3p NHC-UCC Prepared to Serve (Pembroke, NH) 10a-5p Leb Rec Dept Quilters' Retreat
<b>24</b> 10a Worship and Church School 11:15a Bd of Govs 5p Community Dinner	<b>25</b> 10a-6p NH-WIC 3p WCBH After-school Group 5:30p Cub Scouts (Bears/Webelos/Girls)	<b>26</b> 7p Boy Scouts/Cubs (AofL)	<b>27</b> 6p UVPRN 7p Bel Canto Chamber Singers	<b>28</b> 7p Choir	<b>1</b> Paul Ayres Visit (March 1-3) 7p Rehearsal ("The Spacious Firmament")	<b>2</b> 8a Men's Breakfast 1-4p Singing the Psalms: Choral Workshop w/ Paul Ayres

If your event is missing or incorrect, please notify us at [church@fccleb.org](mailto:church@fccleb.org) or 603-448-4281.

# COMMITTEE NOTES

## CHURCH COUNCIL

At the January Council meeting, John Gilliatt reported for the **Board of Governors** on insulation projects in various interior spaces around the Parish Hall and office areas. We are working on estimates and planning for the much larger insulation jobs for Sanctuary ceiling and basement. We are also in process of arranging for a Parsonage energy audit.

Valerie Nevel noted the **Trustees'** 2018 year-end reports show our investment performance suffered from overall market declines. We made three distributions in 2018 from the Dole Fund for mission purposes; Dole capital funds still accrue, although we didn't make use of them during the year.

Pete Mason observed, with gratitude and poignancy, that after roughly four decades serving FCC in many roles, this would be his last Council meeting, as he will be rotating off the **Memorial Gardens** Committee. Brandon Mason will succeed him as chair. Everyone recognized and thanked Pete for being such a long-term, exemplary leader of FCC.

Marcia Corkins noted that the Christmas pageant was a success, thanking Rachel Silver and others for coordinating it. **Christian Education's** next project will be the annual Lenten Lunch Bag offering.

Amy Driscoll stated that this year's **Nominating** process was in good shape for Annual Meeting. A key challenge is filling the Diaconate, because of recent turnover and the demands of serving as a deacon. She noted that Council at-large positions offer good opportunities for newer members, introducing

them to many FCC programs. Amy also reminded everyone that the Nominating Committee itself needs new members.

Brian Clancy noted for the **Music Committee** that winter and spring offer a typical concert schedule, with another event in the LOH on Location series (Lula Wiles, February 8). Asked about the prospect of another area church-choir festival, Brian could confirm only that a directors' group is considering a mid-late March date, with no definite details as yet.

Plans are taking shape for **Paul Ayres' visit on March 2-3**, with a choral workshop, commissioned anthem, and organ recital all on the schedule. Responding to a question about funding for Paul's visit, Steve Silver noted that a church member was generously helping to support it.

Speaking for **Mission and Social Action**, Corrine Erskine looked ahead to the annual Souper Bowl food collection and a plan to fill a shopping cart in March with food donations, to raise awareness of poverty in our community.

Jon Scott noted for **Stewardship** that we've received about ten fewer pledges than at this point in typical years. Jon reminded us that pledges are important for leadership and planning, not just dollar amounts, and he urged committee leaders to set examples by pledging. Discussion ensued about the difference between pledges and outright gifts, and about reasons why people might or might not submit pledges.

In his **pastor's report** Steve shared thanks for a successful Advent and Christmas season. All Christmas Eve services drew a great turnout,

with around 90 for the Family Service and, more unusually, over 50 and 35 for the two later services, respectively. Many were new visitors.

Steve also proposed that we might consider reassigning some of our yearly **NHC-UCC dues contribution** to our Open Door Ministry, thus shifting support from conference programs to local needs. He briefly explained that conference dues fund programs and services that benefit all NHC congregations, but he sees the rising local demand for financial assistance as more pressing.

There was some discussion of how our dues (currently \$7,000) are set; the conference recommends an amount according to a church's membership. We are updating our membership rolls, and we've reduced dues in the past for reasons unrelated to membership. All agreed that we should support our state conference over the national UCC. Council voted unanimously to cut conference dues in half and reassign \$3,500 to the Open Door Ministry.

### February Meetings

<i>Mission/Social Action</i>	2/3, 11:15
<b>2019 ANNUAL MTG</b>	2/10, 11:15
<i>Diaconate</i>	2/11, 7:00
<i>Christian Education</i>	2/13, 7:15
<i>Church Council</i>	2/19, 7:00
<i>Board of Governors</i>	2/24, 11:15

### March Meetings

<i>Mission/Social Action</i>	3/3, 11:15
<i>Diaconate</i>	3/11, 7:00
<i>Christian Education</i>	3/13, 7:15
<i>Church Council</i>	3/19, 7:00
<i>Board of Governors</i>	3/24, 11:15



# COMMITTEE NOTES

*From Church Council and the Nominating Committee*

## Volunteer Opportunities Still Available

As we approach a new year and a new term for FCC's volunteer committees, Church Council and the Nominating Committee ask you to consider how you might best contribute your skills, interests, and energy to the church's operations, ministries, and mission.

If you're interested in learning more about a committee or available opportunities for service and ministry, please contact the office or **Amy Driscoll (603-448-0976 or [amykdriscoll@gmail.com](mailto:amykdriscoll@gmail.com))**.

There was additional discussion about where **Open Door Ministry** funds come from. Funds for food and gas cards come from monthly communion offering by way of the Deacons' Fund. That fund was closed and added to the general treasury account in May 2018, but we still designate communion collections for this. Additional Open Door assistance for rent and utilities comes from the separate Mission and Social Action account, which is funded by the Dole Trust.

Resuming his **pastor's report**, Steve expressed great thanks to Marcia Corkins for her years of service as Church School Superintendent, from which she will be retiring on June 30. All joined in thanking Marcia! Discussions about leadership of Christian Education next year are ongoing.

Steve explained that our **capital campaign** was in "hibernation," still with the intention of inviting input from the congregation in the near future. Revisiting plans we made last fall with consultant Bob Barr, we realized that first approaching individual donors wasn't the right model for our church. Bob would have implemented such a strategy, but we couldn't provide him the

appropriate background and funding guidance. Interest in a campaign exists at a wide variety of levels.

Lastly, there was general concern about **snow removal**, specifically the clearance of walkways and the condition of the walk along the east side of the Sanctuary. All agreed that walk should be marked "closed" for the winter. Chip Silver was hired and trained to maintain walkways with the snow blower, and the Board of Governors has placed buckets of salt and calcium chloride at all entrances. However, there will always be a need for volunteers to clear the walks on occasion. Steve Silver volunteered to make sure walks are salted on Sunday mornings, as he typically arrives earlier than anyone else.

### DIACONATE

At the January Diaconate meeting, Alyson Danyew-Ellison reported on the status of **funds for food and gas cards**. Thanks to contributions from January's communion offering, the account has a balance of over \$3,200. Brian Clancy has explained that we now offer a choice of one type of card or the other (not both), except for first-time recipients. The

2019 budget process will allocate more to this purpose than last year.

As part of his **pastor's report** Steve Silver noted the need to increase adult engagement in church school, and reported that new members would be received on Annual Meeting Sunday. He also noted that Genesis has asked us to do additional services in 2019, but a few transitions on the Diaconate prevent us from committing now.

Kathy Beckett expressed support for **engaging more young people** in church. She mentioned a clergy caucus in which Steve is interested. He will speak with other Lebanon churches about possibilities for ecumenical youth service projects.

Phil Hammond reported that the **audio system for worship** remains problematic, given variations in speaker volume and interference with personal hearing devices. Steve proposed looking at the budget and anniversary campaign for an investment in an appropriate long-term solution. The Deacons also discussed the speed of lectionary readings, suggesting more time for congregants to find the indicated pages if not printed in the bulletin. Liturgist training could be helpful.

Biff Simpson asked the Diaconate to consider how we handle political activism in the church environment. In general, it is expected that faith beliefs influence one's stance on political questions, and drawing a line between church and state is inherently challenging.

The need to fill Diaconate vacancies was discussed. Some current deacons have increased demands on their time; others face term limits.

# THE LIFE OF OUR CONGREGATION



## **FIRE** and **ICE**

Sunday, February 24, 12:30 pm  
(Conditions Permitting)

Continuing our program of spiritual walks, FCC's "Outing Club" invites everyone to Ron Bailey's house in Plainfield (1103 NH Route 12A) for **FIRE AND ICE**. We'll grill hot dogs over a fire pit, enjoy some cocoa, then head out on our snow shoes and skis through field and forest, before returning to the fire for s'mores. (Don't have snowshoes? We'll lend you a pair!)

**RSVP to the church office if you plan to come. Please contact Ron Bailey with questions: [ronbaileymtman@gmail.com](mailto:ronbaileymtman@gmail.com) or 603-675-2326.**

## *Prepared to Serve 2019*

Saturday, February 23, 8:00–3:30  
Pembroke Academy, Pembroke, NH

**Prepared to Serve** is an annual training event for all members of the NH Conference of the UCC, offering workshops on topics ranging from stewardship, leadership, and finances to service, missions, and Christian education. All are invited to participate in this enriching day of classes, exhibits, and worship.

**FEE: \$40 ONLINE THRU 2/13, \$55 AT THE DOOR**  
(Includes resources, breakfast, and lunch.)

**For registration and details, please visit [www.nhcucc.org](http://www.nhcucc.org).**



## **Building God's Future:** *A Legacy of Giving*

Each year we're encouraged to recognize the many gifts that we have received from our most generous God. As we continue celebrating our congregation's 250th anniversary, we consider Joshua's provocative question for the children of the Israelites: "What do these stones mean to you?" (*Joshua 4:6*)

**What does this church mean to us?** Our answers to that question—the stories we've told and continue to tell about our congregation and its ministry—inspire our stewardship commitments, for 2019 and for the next 250 years. Regardless of the size of your pledge, your participation is vital to our plans for this year!

**We have so far received twenty-two generous pledges of time, talent, and money for FCC's mission and ministry in 2019. Additional pledges will gratefully be received anytime—and thanks to all for your faithful stewardship!**

**Offering envelopes for 2019 are available in the Parish Hall.** Please take whichever box you wish and record it on the list.



### FCC WELCOMES PAUL AYRES IN MARCH!

As we continue celebrating our congregation's 250th anniversary, we welcome composer, conductor, and organist Paul Ayres to Lebanon on the first weekend in March. A native of London who studied music at Oxford, Paul has composed extensively for solo voice, choral ensembles, and theatrical productions. He enjoys arranging and "re-composing" music from classical, folk, jazz, and pop repertoire. Paul has conducted numerous choral groups, served as musical director for a range of projects, and devoted himself to musical education and advocacy. As an active organist and accompanist, he has also performed around the world.

For more about Paul's background and music, visit [www.paulayres.co.uk](http://www.paulayres.co.uk).



#### *Singing the Psalms: A Choral Workshop*—Saturday, March 2, 1:00 to 4:00 pm

Open to all singers and interested observers, this workshop will explore the rich, centuries-long tradition of setting Psalm texts to music, including early Gregorian chant, Scottish metrical hymns and Anglican chant, choral anthems, and Paul's own treatments of these beloved Biblical verses. *Free-will donation.*

#### *250th Anniversary Commission: The Spacious Firmament*—Sunday, March 3, 10:00 am

In worship on March 3, we will enjoy the premiere of *The Spacious Firmament*, commissioned from Paul for our 250th anniversary. The piece is based on Joseph Addison's 1712 poem, a familiar hymn text.

#### *Paul Ayres Organ Recital*—Sunday, March 3, 2:00 pm

Rounding out Paul's visit with us, this concert will feature music by J. S. Bach and the astronomer William Herschel, along with Paul's own classical reinterpretations of Beatles songs. *Free-will donation.*

#### *Vermont Chamber Artists: Revival*—Saturday, March 9, 2:00 pm

Among the region's premier choral ensembles and directed by Jessica Pierpont, Vermont Chamber Artists presents a program of music for women's voices. *Advance tickets at [vermontchamberartists.weebly.com](http://vermontchamberartists.weebly.com): adults \$15, seniors \$10, 17-and-under free (\$5 more for each category at the door).*

#### *UVMC Faculty Showcase*—Saturday, March 23, 4:00 pm

All are welcome to enjoy this diverse performance featuring the vocal and instrumental excellence of the faculty next door at the Upper Valley Music Center. *Adults \$15, under 18 free; more at [www.uvmusic.org](http://www.uvmusic.org).*

#### *Camerata New England: Spring Piano Trios*—Saturday, April 6, 7:00 pm

The acclaimed chamber music group Camerata New England makes its premier performance at FCC with a program of glorious piano trios by Haydn, Mendelssohn, and Turina. Violinist Omar Chen Güey, cellist Linda Galvan, and pianist Evelyn Zuckerman have all performed on international stages. *Adults \$28, under 18 free; tickets available online at [cameratanewengland.org](http://cameratanewengland.org), by phone at 802-785-4833, or at the door.*

### First Congregational Church of Lebanon

Weekly Worship and Church School: Sundays, 10:00 am • Office Hours: Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday, 9-12  
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