



Grace Notes

The Newsletter of First Congregational Church

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The Pastoral Perspective

Since I was a boy, I have loved knowing what was going on. Every day, I'd turn to the paper to see what the latest developments were. I still do, though I'm often reading the news on my iPad. Politics, world events, sports headlines all captured my interest. From an early age, one thing was clear: I was—and remain—a news junkie.

So, with all that's going on, one would think I am living in a golden age. There's news all the time. The headlines are ubiquitous, the latest developments quickly overtaking the slightly older ones. News, news, news. It's like drinking water from a fire hose!

Of course, drinking from a fire hose, which spews out high-pressured water, is never a good idea.

And frankly, this is not a golden age for me. All too often, as I pick up the news in the morning, I am struck by those words so memorably uttered by the late Dorothy Parker, "What fresh hell is this?" I suspect many of you, too, would like a break from the never-ending alerts, the constant bulletins, the non-stop analysis.

This is where I will share some good news with you: the respite we seek is at hand. We need only take hold of it. And this is the moment to do so. As we begin the long season that follows Pentecost—entering what is known in the Church as "Ordinary Time," where we will remain until Advent—we would do well to put the brakes on, to catch our breath, to be confident that we can live without the very latest update.

Will this be easy? For some of us yes, for others, no. But this is something we need to do for ourselves; nobody can take a break for us.

We begin this season after Pentecost on Trinity Sunday, with a familiar and beloved Old Testament lesson from the beginning of Genesis—the Creation stories. We know how the narrative unfolds. We recall that after all of God's labors, on the Seventh Day, God rested. We would do well to follow the Lord's example.

Whether you are a first responder or a medical professional, an artist or teacher or mechanic, a parent or caregiver or something else, whether you are retired or have yet to begin working, rest is important. Each of

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SUNDAY SERVICE

Sunday Worship Online

Zoom Services—Sundays at 10:00 am

Please join us via Zoom conference every Sunday morning at our usual worship time! Following our familiar order of worship, we share prayers and readings, sing hymns, and listen to Steve's weekly sermon. There's even "coffee hour" afterward!

The Zoom invitation is emailed every Sunday morning; if you're not receiving it but would like to, please contact the church office.

YouTube Recordings—Watch Anytime!

If Zoom isn't your thing, or if you can't make the Sunday morning time, you're invited to watch on YouTube whenever you like. We record and post the weekly service every Friday afternoon.

The YouTube link is posted at www.fccleb.org and sent with the Sunday morning email.

For either format, each week's bulletin—with an order of worship, prayers, scripture texts, hymns, and announcements—is posted on our website and sent out with the Sunday morning email. We also post the text of Rev. Steve Silver's sermon.

The Warmth of Blanket Sunday

With generous contributions from our church community, **BLANKET SUNDAY** raised \$745 for the **CWS Blankets** program (cwsblankets.org), the most since 2017! FCC is grateful to honor our mothers past and present in this way.

Many thanks to all those who participated!

SHELTER SUNDAY IS JUNE 21 (See Next Page)

Liturgists Still Needed!

Although we're not worshipping in person, we still invite volunteers to read scripture and prayers during our Zoom and YouTube services.

Please contact the church office if you are interested in participating in worship.

Children's Sunday is June 14

Celebrate the Children's Community Corner!

Amid the turmoil affecting society and disrupting our church life, it is more important than ever to recognize and celebrate the children who study in our Children's Community Corner and the adults who lead them. We'll lift up our church's kids and teachers in worship on June 14, and we very much hope you'll join us to share this special moment in our church's communal life.

If you're interested in participating or have questions, please contact the church office.

Connecting Our Congregation

FCC "Social Hour" on Zoom

Alternate Wednesdays, June 3 and 17, 7:00 pm

Would you like to chat and connect with your church family in this time of social distancing? All are invited to this informal, open time to catch up, ask questions, and connect. Zoom links will be sent out Wednesday afternoons; you may come and go as you please.

Congregational Support—Get Help, Give Help!

If you need some assistance with picking up groceries, running errands, getting to/from appointments, or other tasks while we're all staying at home, volunteers from our congregation are willing to lend a hand.

Fellowship Through Food

Would you enjoy having a meal provided by a friend from church? If you're weary of adding dinner to your to-do list, are overwhelmed with your child's home-schooling, or are experiencing a loss of income, we'd like to help by dropping off a meal. If any of these scenarios speaks to you—or if you enjoy cooking and would like to provide a meal—please let us know.

If you are in need or you'd like to volunteer to provide help to someone else, the Deacons invite you to contact the church office (603-448-4281 or church@fccleb.org) or Steve Silver directly (silver@fccleb.org). Let's help each other!



Upper Valley
**Habitat
for Humanity**®

**SHELTER SUNDAY
FATHER'S DAY, JUNE 21**

Every Father's Day FCC makes a commitment to support the work of **Upper Valley Habitat for Humanity**, the local affiliate of an international, ecumenical ministry. Since 1976, Habitat has provided decent, affordable housing and home ownership for deserving families who could not otherwise afford to buy a home. Achieving home ownership is one of the most valuable steps a family can take to establish a firm footing, in order to thrive on their own. Families work alongside staff and volunteers, benefiting from discounted materials and services, to renovate or build their own home, which they are then able to purchase at cost with a zero-interest mortgage.

If you'd like to honor or remember the father(s) in your life with a contribution to Shelter Sunday, please contact the church office with your dedication information no later than noon on Thursday, June 18 (contributions gratefully accepted after that date). Any amount is welcome—thanks!

Upper Valley Habitat for Humanity is currently seeking support for several projects. Its most immediate need is the renovation this fall of an existing home in Lebanon for a new partner family—**Isil Chin and her two children, Jacinda (10) and Draco (8)** (shown at right). Next door to the Chins' new home, Habitat plans to construct a new single-family home, starting in the spring of 2021. For more on these exciting projects right here in town, visit uvhabitat.org.



FCC's SHELTER SUNDAY contributions will support these and other Habitat projects in the Upper Valley. Thank you!

**Support Our Friends at
Bike & Build!**



For the first summer since 2007, FCC sadly won't be welcoming and hosting an energetic group of young adults this month on the Northern Route of **Bike & Build**, a program that advocates and raises funds for affordable-housing reform nationwide. Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, the organization made the difficult but necessary decision to cancel all of its 2020 cross-country routes.

Bike & Build riders work with Habitat for Humanity and local organizations along their routes—such as COVER Home Repair in White River Junction (www.coverhomerepair.org)—on a variety of repair and construction projects. These inspiring twenty-somethings also meet with community members and civic officials to discuss housing-related issues. To participate, each biker-builder raises at least \$4,000 toward costs and support for the program's grant-making foundation—which continues to operate despite the cancellation of this year's rides. For more, visit bikeandbuild.org.

We'll miss our spirited biker-builders this year! Please consider supporting this incredible program and the work of Bike & Build's local partners, COVER Home Repair and Upper Valley Habitat.

Reaching Out to Our Immigrant Neighbors

by Kathy Beckett
for the Mission and Social Action Committee

Perhaps you read the May 1 article in the *Valley News*, “New Hampshire Immigrants Struggle to Access Safety Nets During COVID-19 Crisis.” The article calls our attention to the fact that some of our immigrant neighbors, both documented and undocumented, are falling through holes in the financial safety net provided to those who are unemployed due to the pandemic. Undocumented workers particularly affected, because many work in the restaurant industry, which has been highly impacted by the coronavirus outbreak. It is estimated that about 10% of restaurant employees nationwide are undocumented. Since restaurants employ approximately 45,000 workers in New Hampshire, it is reasonable to assume that thousands of undocumented residents in the state have now lost their jobs. Moreover, these individuals are unable to access economic relief like unemployment benefits or stimulus money, despite the fact that the immigrant population, documented or not, pays billions in taxes every year, using taxpayer ID numbers.

Even when immigrants such as asylum seekers qualify for unemployment insurance, they might not apply because they fear that receiving those benefits will negatively impact their eligibility to stay in the U.S. Based on a 2019 ruling, federal officials can deny green cards to legal immigrants who have received certain public benefits or who are deemed likely to do so in the future.

Because immigrants fear using government programs or cannot access them due to their status, it is up to the community—local food banks, church programs, and individual donations—to keep everyone fed and sheltered during this difficult time. Eva Castillo, Director of the New Hampshire Alliance for Immigrants and Refugees, which focuses its work on Concord and Manchester, describes those collective, community efforts as “just scrambling to help them on our own, outside any system.”

These efforts to keep immigrants fed and sheltered are happening here in the Upper Valley too, and you can learn more, get involved, and offer financial support:

Upper Valley Response Team (UVRT). This grassroots, mutual-aid network is dedicated to working with volunteers and COVID-19 relief initiatives to meet the needs of all Upper Valley residents suffering the effects of the outbreak, particularly those most vulnerable. UVRT manages an **Immigrant Relief Fund** to which contributions may be specifically designated. Please visit www.transformationalpractice.org/covid or contact UVRT by email (uppervalleyresponseteam@gmail.com) or phone (802-727-0311).

Migrant Justice/Undocumented Worker Fund. Based in Vermont, Migrant Justice is partnering with the Undocumented Worker Fund, a project of the national immigrant-rights coalition Movimiento Cosecha, to raise financial support for immigrants excluded from federal relief. More details are at migrantjustice.net and www.lahuelga.com. Migrant Justice focuses particularly on the region’s farmworker community.

UVIP and WANN. The United Valley Interfaith Project has long made immigrant justice one of its primary concerns, a campaign our congregation has supported (unitedvalleyinterfaithproject.org/immigration). The Welcoming All Nationalities Network, based right here in Lebanon at WISE, offers immigrant families legal services and counseling (wiseuv.org/wise-support/).

Please consider a donation to one of these organizations to ensure that ALL our neighbors receive the care they need.

For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me.

—Matthew 25:35

OUR LOCAL AND NATIONAL MISSION

Do Your Part to Fill the Cart—From Home!

Greater Lebanon has struggled with rising poverty and food insecurity for some time. These challenges have only increased as COVID-19 restrictions have threatened employment and income.

We are no longer collecting items for our shopping cart at church, but local need is more urgent than ever.

Listen's food pantry on Hanover Street continues to accept non-perishable donations, and they are serving to-go meals during the week in WRJ. Yet the closure of the Listen Store is a huge financial loss. The Haven, too, would greatly appreciate any donations for its financial assistance programs.

In lieu of filling our cart, please consider a direct contribution (online or by mail) to Listen, the UV Haven, the UV Humane Society, or some other local service organization. Thanks to ALL for fighting poverty in our community.

UV Strong Responds to COVID-19

If you're in need of assistance in these challenging times, or if you're looking for new opportunities to volunteer, UPPER VALLEY STRONG has mobilized its resources for both recipients and volunteers.

Visit uvstrong.org for more information.

FOCUS ON STEWARDSHIP

While regular worship services are suspended, we continue to depend on the offering contributions that you'd normally give on Sundays—in fact, the need is greater than usual. We realize that not everyone can give so generously, especially in these newly austere circumstances, but **we're grateful for contributions of any amount to these purposes:**

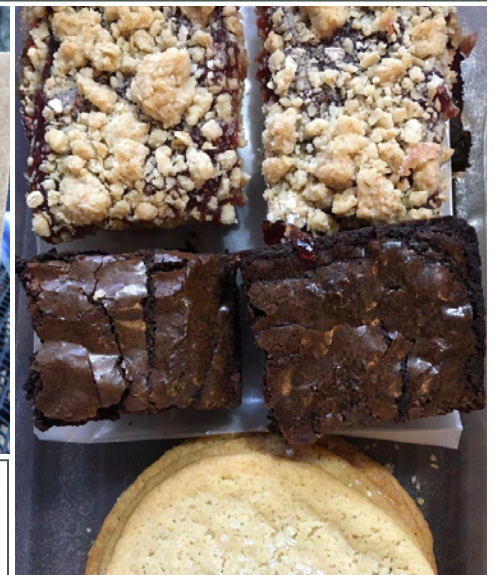
Regular Offering—Collected weekly as unrestricted support for FCC's general operations, ministries, and programs. This includes all pledges and payments in our annual stewardship effort.

Communion/Open Door Offerings—Collected on communion Sundays, directly funding our Open Door Ministry for community assistance (gas/food cards, rent/utilities, etc.). Any contribution in a communion envelope goes to this fund, but Open Door gifts may be made at any other time, too.

Special Offerings (e.g., Lenten Lunch Bag Offering, Blanket Sunday, and UCC offerings such as One Great Hour of Sharing)—Each collected once a year, in conjunction with an event or national campaign for a particular mission or service cause.

THANKS TO ALL for so generously supporting these diverse purposes, at FCC and beyond!

All contributions may be made payable to FCC, with any specific purpose (as applicable) written in the memo line, and mailed to PO Box 230, Lebanon, NH 03766.



GRATEFUL FOR FIRST RESPONDERS. Reaching out to our community, Nan Parsons and Kailyn Rappaport prepared and delivered a delicious, homemade dinner to Lebanon's Fire Department—FCC's neighbor across Church Street.

COMMITTEE NOTES

CHURCH COUNCIL

Barb Teeter reported to Council the Diaconate's recommendation to transfer to MSA the responsibility of monitoring the purchase of food and gas cards for the **Open Door Ministry**. This is a local mission project, and assistance for rent and utilities already comes from MSA's bank account. The Deacons no longer have a separate account (as of 2018), so purchases of food and gas cards have been made from the general treasury for some time; the Diaconate treasurer has continued to track them for advisory purposes only. Even with this responsibility transferred to MSA, the monthly communion offering will continue to be designated for the Open Door, supplemented by Dole Trust mission funds (which already fund the MSA account). Council unanimously approved the proposal.

Kathy Beckett noted that **Mission and Social Action** met via Zoom on May 3 to address several items, including plans for their upcoming congregational survey. An email appeal has brought some suggestions for organizations to be included on the survey, but we continue to invite responses from the congregation.

MSA also discussed FCC's support of the **NH Immigrant Solidarity Network**. Many undocumented immigrants and refugees have been hit particularly hard by the COVID-19 shutdown, as they have lost work but are ineligible for government relief programs. Kathy will submit an article for the June newsletter (see page 4), and UVIP seeks help for its Asylum and Sanctuary Support

Fund. Council unanimously voted to approve MSA's proposal that we donate \$1,000 to this fund.

Discussion of **UVIP** raised the question of its plans to disband in 2021, with member groups given a choice of affiliating with coalitions in VT and NH. During its upcoming discernment year, UVIP will address contingency plans for its programs and initiatives. The group's annual meeting on Zoom on May 17 drew wide participation from member organizations but only two attendees from FCC. We will have to decide our congregation's role in UVIP's transition going forward.

Nan Parsons has kept in touch with the **Children's Community Corner** remotely. She recorded and sent out a video lesson in early May and plans to mail another physical packet. She remains wary of giving the kids too much, as they already face the demands of remote learning online. Nan will discuss plans for Children's Sunday, scheduled for June 14, with the Rev. Steve Silver.

John Gilliatt emailed a brief **Board of Governors** update. Wayne Braley installed the second chancel railing in the Sanctuary and plans to paint and finish both railings soon. The Board decided not to schedule a full spring clean-up day, but individual members will take care of grounds maintenance and paint touch-ups on the front portico deck.

For the **Music Committee** Brian Clancy reported that applications had been submitted for the organist position, including one that seems especially promising. He noted that current circumstances, while creating

Committee Meetings

These FCC groups continue to meet remotely via Zoom:

Diaconate 6/8, 7:00

Church Council 6/16, 7:00

For information about other groups' plans to meet remotely online, please contact the church office.

some uncertainty, allow us to be more selective and patient while live worship services continue to be suspended. Brian further discussed the challenges facing singing amidst coronavirus concerns, since singing has been identified as particularly problematic in containing the virus.

In his **pastor's report** Steve Silver referred to an analysis of recent stewardship contributions, noting that the closure of services has not affected giving as adversely as we might have expected. He thanked the congregation for its continued generosity. Steve did point out that market downturns have hurt our investment portfolio, although we still have a solid financial foundation. The overall uncertainty makes our capital campaign inadvisable, partly because the facilities it proposes to support (e.g., the kitchen and the sanctuary) are not currently in use.

As parts of the country and state begin to ease COVID-19 restrictions, Steve asked everyone to consider the many issues that complicate the **prospect of reopening the church** for worship and other activities. Noting that we will still need to maintain social distance in the pews, he expanded on Brian's comments about singing and music—even

COMMITTEE NOTES

communal prayer is potentially unsafe. Some have wondered how we would safeguard the children's interactions downstairs. Steve also is seeking guidance from his clergy colleagues and denominational resources, but he cautioned that the closure may well continue for many more weeks. In the immediate term, Council agreed that FCC would at least remain closed through June.

DIACONATE

In May Alyson Danyew-Ellison gave the Deacons a year-to-date account of the **Open Door Ministry**, with receipts of \$2164 against a total of \$4000 in purchases of food and gas cards. (These purchases come from the general treasury, so the disparity isn't a real deficit.) The congregation will be reminded of the importance of supporting this ministry, which is normally funded by the monthly communion offering.

As the Diaconate no longer has its own separate bank account, it was proposed that responsibility for the Open Door Ministry be reassigned to Mission and Social Action, with

financial reporting done by FCC's Treasurer. The Deacons approved recommending this to Council, and they thanked Alyson for her years of service as Diaconate Treasurer.

The Deacons checked in regarding their wellbeing and that of other members of the congregation, as they continue to follow up on their individual lists. Dawn Troutman proposed a program of "fellowship through food" to offer meals to any congregants who might want them. The idea will be promoted through notices in the weekly email, bulletin, and the June newsletter.

In his **pastor's report** Steve Silver reflected on the continuation of "life online," noting that worship participation had risen in some cases for people previously less able to attend church in person. The date of our return to the Sanctuary remains uncertain, but that will inevitably require precautions of social distancing and additional safeguards, including the restriction of several traditional elements of worship such as singing. We will likely continue some level of online broadcasting of services, for which

Congregational Survey Coming Soon from MSA

It has been over four years since we last surveyed the congregation about the mission partners that FCC supports. The Mission and Social Action Committee seeks everyone's input now to update our mission priorities. A new survey will be distributed soon.

To help us prepare the survey, we invite your suggestions of local, national, and global organizations that you feel FCC seems most naturally suited to support.

Please send your suggestions to the church office. Thanks!

we have secured licensing of music. The worship bulletin will continue to be circulated to those who are not active online.

Steve reported that Mark Rowell, who has been serving three yoked congregations in Pennsylvania, has received his ordination there. Eliot Fay remains in his chaplaincy in Florida, still seeking a congregation to serve back here in NH.

The Pastoral Perspective, *continued from Page 1*

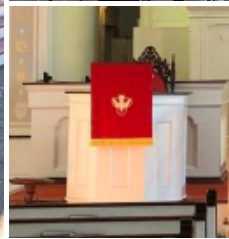
us needs a break—and not just from our labors but from those things that overstimulate us and command our attention to the exclusion of all else.

This is the time. If you're feeling a little lost at sea, if time has no meaning for you, remember this: summer is almost here. We live in a beautiful corner of the world that God has made. Go outside, take a bike ride, sit in a chair outside and read a book or do a crossword puzzle. Appreciate this glorious earth and all that the Lord has put in it.

And try to take a break from the news. I'm not suggesting any of us go cold-turkey, but perhaps we could just spend a little less time looking at our phones or watching cable news. We can do it, with God's help.

Yours faithfully, *Steve*

THE LIFE OF OUR CONGREGATION



Seeking Organist and Choir Director

Despite the ongoing suspension of worship services, we continue to search for a new organist and choir director. This vital member of our ministry team is responsible for all musical aspects of our worship life, playing organ and piano and leading our small but dedicated choir. This quarter-time position offers a flexible schedule during the week, professional development funding, and use of the church for practice and concerts; salary is negotiable based on qualifications and experience.

If you know someone who might be interested in this opportunity to serve FCC, please have them send a cover letter and resumé to church@fccleb.org.

First Congregational Church of Lebanon does not discriminate on the basis of race, ethnicity, religious belief, sexual orientation, gender identity, or any other characteristic.



WELCOMING SPRING AT FCC. Steve Silver settles in at his office for worship on Zoom; delightful weather brought out tree blossoms and lovely plantings in our gardens, tended by the Ellisons and Nan Parsons; the red paraments of Pentecost signify the Holy Spirit; and Nan, Kailyn, and Shawna Osmer enlivened their stay at home by staging the “Quarantine Olympics.”

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 • **Music:** music@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

Welcome!

We are a Christ-centered community that celebrates the love of God. Although we are of varied minds, with varying measures of belief and unbelief, we are one body, bound together in Christ. We recognize the uniqueness of every individual as God's beloved child. We seek to respond faithfully to God's call for justice for all creation. We strive in word and deed to be faithful to Jesus' model of loving acceptance. We seek to create a sanctuary where all will know they are welcome and included.

No matter your age, gender identity, sexual orientation, marital status, race or ethnicity, physical or mental ability, or economic circumstance, you are invited into the full life and ministry of First Congregational Church of Lebanon, including its worship, sacraments, and rites.

Join us as we grow together in God's love.

First Congregational Church of Lebanon

The Rev. Stephen R. Silver, Pastor

Susan Sorensen, Interim Organist and Choir Director • Nancy Parsons, Church School Superintendent

Barbara Teeter, Chair of Deacons • Linda Jacobs, Chair of Church Council • Barbara Jones, Moderator

Brian Clancy, Church Administrator

Church Office Hours: Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday, 9:00-12:00 (or by appointment as needed)

603-448-4281 • church@fccleb.org • prayer@fccleb.org • music@fccleb.org • www.fccleb.org