



Grace Notes

The Newsletter of First Congregational Church

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The Pastoral Perspective

By the time you read this, Lent will have begun. “So?” you might ask, wondering what the big deal is. We do this every year, don’t we? Well, that sentiment points us to the issue at the heart of Lent. We engage in the discipline of repentance, preparing ourselves for Easter.

And then what? Well, most of us probably lose little time falling back into our old, bad habits or giving up that new thing we took on for Lent. The abstinence from chocolate (or any little indulgence we allow ourselves), the extra mile we walk—at the heart of our lives for these six and a half weeks—becomes an inconvenience that we can set aside after Easter. Hopefully, this sacrifice or assumption of duty draws us deeper into the Lenten experience. But entering yet another Lenten season in the midst of the pandemic, we might ask ourselves, “Why?” After all, every day can seem like it’s Lent, a sad time of unrelenting sacrifice.

Well, this stereotype might often seem to be true, but it’s not an accurate vision of Lent.

Lent is derived from the Old English word for *spring*. Spring, of course, is all about new beginnings, life coming forth. Sacrifice is not usually associated with budding trees and blooming flowers.

But after a long, dark winter season, we need to prepare ourselves for something new, something life-affirming. So, we may need to work at readying ourselves for the new season.

I hope that you will see Lent as something more than a weeks-long slog, a time to do what we dislike or abstain from what is fun. I hope we might instead focus on clearing our mental decks, on setting aside our prejudices, our resentments, our habits of mind and heart that separate us from God and God’s people.

Then we will be ready for Easter. Then we will be ready for the new life that has been promised to us by our God.

Yours faithfully,

Steve

SUNDAY SERVICE

HOLY WEEK IS APRIL 10-17

Sunday Worship at FCC

*In-Person Service at 10:00 AM
Remote Viewing Available on Zoom*

Please join us for worship every Sunday at 10:00, either in our Sanctuary or on Zoom. The weekly bulletin and Zoom link are emailed early Sunday; we also record and post the service on YouTube.

All worshippers are required to wear masks at all times and observe distancing in the pews; singing and unison prayer are permitted, with masks. There is still no coffee hour after worship, and we ask that interaction be kept to a minimum.

Join us as we gather for worship together!

Greeters and Liturgists Needed

All are invited to serve as ushers, liturgists, Zoom greeters, or some other role in worship—reading prayers, sharing a stewardship message, or even leading a children’s moment.

None of these roles requires special experience or training! If you’re interested in serving in this way, please contact the church office.

Lenten Lunch Bag Offering

The CHILDREN’S COMMUNITY CORNER asks for your generous participation in our annual Lenten Lunch Bag Offering for two great organizations:

**WISE (wiseuv.org) and
Epilogos Charities (epilogos.org)**

WISE seeks to end gender-based violence through survivor-centered advocacy and education. Our Lenten collection will fund welcome bags given to the children and women at WISE’s Safe Home. Epilogos seeks to improve the lives of those in San Jose Villanueva, El Salvador, a model for focused global outreach and a town dear to many at FCC. Our offering funds scholarships at SJV’s school.

The Lenten offering enables FCC’s children to help other kids in tough circumstances, encouraging them to see stewardship as a way to share God’s love.

Decorated lunch bags (available in the narthex) may be used to collect savings from sacrificing a regular treat during Lent. Suggestions include skipping a daily latte; forgoing 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 10.**



ONE GREAT HOUR OF SHARING

Special Mission Offering
Spring 2022

One Great Hour of Sharing (OGHS) is a vital, nationwide UCC offering for mission initiatives around the world. It funds healthcare, education, agriculture, emergency relief, and refugee assistance in over 130 countries. OGHS support is leveraged with local, national, and global service partners to maximize its impact in each of these areas.

OGHS is observed nationally on the fourth Sunday in Lent, but we’ll gratefully accept donations until Easter, April 17. Please give as generously as you can, thanks! (Payable to FCC, memo “OGHS”)



**And now these three remain: faith, hope, and love.
But the greatest of these is love.**

1 Corinthians 13:13

NEWS AND NOTES

2022 ANNUAL MEETING

Roughly 40 people attended the 2022 Annual Meeting on Zoom. After the Rev. Steve Silver offered an invocation, the congregation voted to accept the minutes of the 2021 meeting. Moderator Barb Jones then invited **reports from officers and committee chairs**. Expanding on his published message in the Annual Report, Steve reflected on having served FCC since 2010, thanking everyone for their contributions to the common life of our congregation. He repeated a call to work on our communication with one another, important to any organization but especially in a church. Our communication should be honest and faithful, allowing disagreement when it's appropriate. Above all, Steve invited us to remember why we're here—because Jesus has called us together.

Steve also expressed a hope that we will revive our **campaign planning**. For a variety of reasons we dropped this planning during the COVID-19 pandemic, but there are clearly things we need to do. In addition to the purposes we identified a couple years ago, he cited a Sanctuary audio upgrade as an example. Barb Jones affirmed the need to resurrect the vital goals we envisioned prior to the pandemic. Steve further noted our bylaws review, which he hopes we can finish in the coming months, an effort requiring everyone's help and support.

Outgoing **Council** chair Linda Jacobs then expressed her thanks to **Clerk** Brian Clancy for help with meetings throughout the year. Referring to his report, Brian called attention to our

now-completed membership audit, which has reduced our membership to a more accurate total than we've had in many years.

Valerie Nevel then referred to the **audit** by Parkers Accounting, which she reminded everyone is not a full, formal audit. While that would be a more involved, expensive process, we might consider doing one in the coming year.

Treasurer Terry Ellison next echoed Steve's words about the pandemic, giving thanks that we have survived and adapted financially through this challenging period. We were "on the money" for both income and expense expectations in 2021, and it was an excellent year for stewardship, an important indication that people feel positively about being a part of our church.

One of the Finance Committee's goals during the year was to assess compensation for all staff and bring them to the level of similar positions in the region. We have now done that, extending benefits and an HSA to our church administrator to cover healthcare costs. Terry affirmed that the congregation values all staff, and the pastor, administrator, and even organist all now have supplemental benefits of some sort; he thanked Jon Scott for help with this effort. Terry explained that the Finance and Personnel Committees will continue to review compensation each year to determine whether it is both appropriate and sustainable. Church administrator Brian Clancy expressed deep, sincere gratitude to Terry and the entire congregation for this tangible recognition.

Terry added that recent capital upgrades and more budgeted in 2022—mainly improved insulation of the Parsonage—will help reduce operating costs. He then offered his thanks to everyone for the time he's served as Treasurer, and he offered his support to Dawn Troutman as she prepares to succeed him. Barb Jones, in turn, thanked Terry for his excellent work in this position over the past few years.

For the **Board of Governors** John Gilliatt highlighted insulation work in the Sanctuary and elsewhere in the church building, as well as the upcoming Parsonage phase. He gave special thanks to Brandon Mason, who is taking a hiatus this year to focus on his family. Brandon took the lead on the insulation project, and he and Terry were especially dedicated in doing some of the attic prep work themselves.

John thanked Jon Scott for driving our recent technology upgrade. Future projects will continue the beautification of our Sanctuary. Terry added that the Board of Governors will collect data about our resource usage, in order to document savings produced by capital upgrades.

Referring to the figures her report, **Trustees** chair Valerie Nevel noted

Committee Meetings

The following regular meetings will happen remotely via Zoom:

Diaconate 3/14 and 4/11, 7:00

Council 3/8 and 4/12, 7:00

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

NEWS AND NOTES

those numbers tell a story—namely, that it's been a good year for endowment investments. Our decision to invest in capital upgrades is largely offset by this high growth. Valerie thanked all those in our history who have set up bequests and trusts for FCC, as listed annually in the report. Recognizing the generosity of all church members past and present, she encouraged people to consider similar planning arrangements.

Jon Scott helpfully observed that our capital spending simply takes an asset from one place (our investment portfolio) and moves it to another (our building and physical plant). We are ensuring that our building will retain its value and continue to provide for our needs.

Valerie concluded that 2022 may be a more difficult year, more volatile with uncertain interest rates. We are in good shape, however, because of our recent gains.

Rev. Silver invited **Deacons** present at the meeting to share reflections on the past year. Bob Gerlach thanked Nan Parsons for her work with the Children's Community Corner. Steve

Teeter affirmed the practice of having each deacon communicate with a segment of the congregation.

Nan expressed that it's an honor and pleasure to serve the congregation in her role leading the **Children's Community Corner**. She thanked parents for stepping up in remote formats, and she thanked Ashley Oronte for her help each week. Nan also commended the Godly Play curriculum for making Bible stories tangible for the children.

Alyson Danyew-Ellison, a member of the **Memorial Gardens** Committee, has truly enjoyed working on the church's gardens and has some ideas for this year. Several expressed thanks to her and to Nan for this work.

While Rev. Silver commended the work that has been done in other areas, he appealed for involvement and leadership in the **Mission and Social Action Committee**. He lifted up our active Open Door Ministry, thanking Brian Clancy for being a valuable resource and contact for that. He also cited our commitment to hosting the tiny-house shelter last fall, and he described care for our

building as having a mission aspect in good stewardship of the earth. However, he urged increased participation and commitment to mission work going forward.

Referring to the **Music Committee** report, Barb Jones offered additional thanks to organist Ernie Drown and the FCC choir. Despite the special challenges of the pandemic for singing and performance, our church is still vital in our musical community.

Adding to his **Stewardship** report, Jon Scott thanked everyone for both their financial offerings and their countless hours of service to FCC. He noted that the recent appeal to support our technology upgrade has brought in almost \$1000 from quite a few people, for which he offered his gratitude. As we strive to keep people involved and attract more in the future, the remote connection to worship is essential, and it's great to have improved it so much.

Valerie Nevel thanked **Historian** Corrine Erskine for her marvelous job recording our church's history each year. The congregation then voted to accept all foregoing reports

Stewardship 2022: Giving From the Heart

[Jesus] watched the crowd putting money into the treasury. Many rich people put in large sums. A poor widow came and put in two small copper coins, which are worth a penny. Then he called his disciples and said to them, "Truly I tell you, this poor widow has put in more than all those contributing to the treasury. For all of them have contributed out of their abundance; but she out of her poverty has put in everything she had, all she had to live on." (Mark 12:41-44)

We're so grateful to have received 31 pledges for 2022! No matter the size of your pledge, participation in faithful stewardship is vital to our mission and ministry. Thank you for prayerfully and honestly considering your commitment to FCC this year.

Offering envelopes for 2022 are in the Parish Hall. Please take your preferred box and record it on the list.

NEWS AND NOTES

from committees, before moving on to the **Nominating Committee**.

Rev. Silver offered a word of thanks to those who were concluding their service as officers as of this meeting: Linda Jacobs as Council Chair, Terry Ellison as Treasurer, and Barb Teeter as Diaconate chair. He thanked all for their commitment and energy. Barb Jones then referred to the slate of proposed nominees, pointing out that some spots remain open. She gratefully reported that Linda Jacobs will stay on as Council Vice-Chair, with Corrine Erskine filling an open at-large position. Barb invited floor nominations, and Valerie Nevel offered to join and chair the MSA Committee. While already doing a lot, she regards MSA as a priority for FCC, and she wants to get the committee up and running again. The congregation voted to elect the full slate as updated at the meeting.

Barb then invited Jon Scott to offer an update on our current **bylaws review**. Jon assured the congregation that this important but difficult work has progressed—we have definitely made headway, thanks to generous time commitments by both members and staff. The effort should produce a proposal for Council and the full congregation later this spring.

Valerie reported that the **Personnel Committee** has made progress on formal job descriptions and processes for staff evaluation, emphasizing our organizational need for more structured compensation oversight. Terry Ellison stressed the revival of a working Personnel Committee, as we collectively realize the importance of addressing such issues. The Finance

Committee has worked hard on this already in 2021, and Personnel will continue that this year.

Barb Jones suggested that it would be an opportune time to officially rename the Pastoral Relations Committee, as has often been discussed informally. Jon Scott noted this was included within the bylaws review, but others observed the importance of the name change in recognizing this valuable two-way communication channel. The congregation voted to change the name to **Pastor-Parish Relations Committee**.

Barb then invited further discussion of the **proposed budget for 2022**, recalling comments on this earlier in the meeting. Hearing none, she asked for a vote. The congregation approved it unanimously.

Rev. Silver again thanked everyone for generously devoting time to the business of our church, recognizing a genuinely grateful spirit throughout our congregation. Barb applauded the incredible work of all who have led FCC in various ways, adding her thanks that we are able to work out our differences. Lastly, Amy Driscoll thanked Barb in turn for her service as Moderator.

Despite the limits of Zoom, Brian Clancy led everyone in singing the closing hymn, “Blest Be the Tie That Binds.” After Steve offered a benediction, the meeting adjourned. Here’s hoping next year will allow a congregational potluck once again!

DIACONATE

The Diaconate in February thanked Barb and Steve Teeter for their years

of service, as term limits prevent them from continuing as deacons; they remain available to help with occasional duties. Linda Gerlach volunteered to succeed Barb as chair of the Diaconate. The group sees a need for additional Deacons and offered several suggestions, including youth candidates.

Recent tech upgrades have served our Zoom worship broadcasts well, although we still need more Zoom greeters. Integration of Sanctuary speakers remains to be addressed, and in-person sharing of Joys and Concerns would benefit from the portable microphones, especially with masked speakers. The capital campaign would include upgrades to the audio/visual system, kitchen, and other areas.

Deacons also discussed the treatment of indigenous peoples generally, and Native Americans in particular; prayer requests are planned. The Rev. Steve Silver suggested available materials on the relationships between Native Americans and the Congregational Church. Chris Chase recommended a video on Cape Cod populations.

Rev. Silver inquired about interest in a Lenten book discussion series. Spiritual practices was suggested as a theme, and interest would depend on the examples featured (e.g., prayer, meditation). Chris suggested *The Poet’s Book of Psalms* for reading.

Steve also presented a request from the Callahans for a baptism of their boys in the river at Storrs Hill, maybe in June. The Deacons discussed including Children’s Community Corner participants, a congregational picnic, and music.

OUR LOCAL MISSION



**Now Accepting
Applications for
Homeownership!**

UPPER VALLEY HABITAT FOR HUMANITY, our partner every year on Father's Day for SHELTER SUNDAY, works with local families who could not otherwise afford to buy their own home. Families work alongside HfH staff and volunteers, benefiting from discounted materials and services, to build a new home, which they are then able to purchase at cost with a zero-interest mortgage.

Because a partner family has taken an opportunity to move out of the region, UVHfH has opened a special application period to select a new family for the 3-BR home in Lebanon it has already designed. Construction will begin this summer, and the house will be ideal for a family of 3-4 people. Applicants must satisfy certain eligibility and income-range criteria, and partner families commit to 300 hours of "sweat equity" to help with construction.

Please help Habitat reach as many prospective families as possible by sharing this opportunity with friends, family, neighbors, and colleagues.

The deadline to apply is Friday, April 1; applications and further details are available at www.uvhabitat.org/homeownership.

ANOTHER SOUPER BOWL RECORD!

Thanks to YOU—and a tremendous contribution off the bench from a local LDS church—we blew away our previous SOUPER BOWL record on the way to

503 CANS

The total was split as always among HEADREST, the UV HAVEN, and LISTEN COMMUNITY SERVICES.
Many, many thanks for another record year!

UV GEAR Giving Emergency Aid & Resources



UV GEAR is a non-profit organization that provides assistance and supplies to Upper Valley citizens who are experiencing homelessness. It was created to fill the gaps between government social-service programs, and it serves all kinds of people—individuals and families, young people and seniors, veterans and marginalized groups. Assistance ranges from tents, sleeping bags, and backpacks to personal hygiene items, prepaid phones, and gas cards.

FCC recently contributed \$500 to UV GEAR, recognizing that its mission aligns with our own.

Visit www.uvgear.org to learn more and donate.

YOU CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE IN A CHILD'S LIFE

Attend a Virtual Info Session

March 23 at 12:30 p.m.

Learn more about becoming an advocate and the need for volunteers in Grafton County.

www.casanh.org/infosessions



Volunteer for CASA-NH

Virtual Info Session—March 23 at 12:30 pm

CASA (Court-Appointed Special Advocates) of NH trains and supervises compassionate and concerned citizens to advocate for abused and neglected children in our court system. Offering their common sense, experience, commitment, and skills for about 10-15 hours a month, these volunteer advocates help ensure that children grow up in safe, permanent homes.

For more, contact Katie Pelczar at 603-528-8006 (x6) or kpelczar@casanh.org, or visit www.casanh.org.

MUSIC AT THE MEETINGHOUSE



Music
at the
Meetinghouse

Upcoming Concerts at FCC

All in the Sanctuary. Masks, distanced seating, and vaccination required.

The Anonymous Coffeehouse—Fridays, March 11 and 25, April 8 and (Sat.) 23, all at 7:30 pm

Come enjoy our popular community venue for live local music! Conceived as an informal “listening room” for emerging musicians, each show features several acoustic acts, and patrons may come and go. Baked goods and non-alcoholic drinks are available, and it’s all free of charge. *For more, please visit anoncoffee.org.*

Muskeg Music Presents Atlantic Crossing—Saturday, March 12, at 7:00 pm

Enchanting contra-dance halls throughout New England for over two decades, Vermont-based Atlantic Crossing draws from both Celtic traditions of the British Isles and the music of Maritime and French Canada. Join us for this special concert rooted in a rich heritage of music and dance. *Adults \$15, under 18 free; for more, please visit atlanticcrossingvt.com or facebook.com/NorwichCommunityDances.*

Classicopia: The Dancing Cello—Sunday, March 20, at 2:00 pm

Our friend Elizabeth Borowsky brings back her mother, famed cellist Cecylia Barczyk, to usher in spring with bright, brilliant music for piano and cello. The program includes dances and rhapsodies by Ludwig van Beethoven, Frédéric Chopin, Claude Debussy, and more. *Adults \$20, FCC members \$15, children free; for advance tickets and more, visit classicopia.org/concert/1091/.*

Upper Valley Music Center Faculty Showcase—Saturday, April 2, at 4:00 pm

All are welcome to this diverse program featuring the vocal and instrumental excellence of the faculty next door at UVMC. *Free-will donation; all proceeds benefit UVMC tuition assistance fund. More at www.uvmusic.org.*



A SOUPER SURPLUS. Many thanks to all for a record-setting collection this year! Ron Bailey tabulated the results and delivered about 200 cans to the UV Haven, while Betsy Alexander shuttled the same amount over to Listen’s food pantry on Hanover St. The remaining 100 cans will cross Church St to Headrest—once the kitchen in their renovated residential center is finished.



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

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**Music
at the
Meetinghouse**

Upcoming Concerts at FCC

All in the Sanctuary. Masks, distanced seating, and vaccination required.

The Anonymous Coffeehouse—Fridays, March 11 and 25, April 8 and (Sat.) 23, all at 7:30 pm

Upper Valley Music Center Faculty Showcase—Saturday, April 2, at 4:00 pm

Classicopia: Violin and Piano—Friday, April 22, at 7:30 pm

Leslie Stroud, Flute, and Matthew Odell, Piano—Sunday, April 24, at 2:00 pm

Bel Canto Chamber Singers—Saturday, April 30, at 7:30 pm / Sunday, May 1, at 4:00 pm

ONE GREAT HOUR OF SHARING / Lenten Lunch Bag Offering *Thanks for your support!*

First Congregational Church of Lebanon

The Rev. Stephen R. Silver, Pastor

Ernie Drown, Organist and Choir Director • Nancy Parsons, Children's Community Corner
Jon Scott, Chair of Church Council • Linda Gerlach, Chair of Deacons • 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