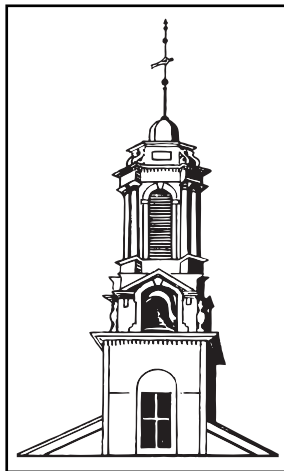


2022 ANNUAL REPORT



First Congregational Church
Lebanon, New Hampshire



Annual Meeting
Sunday, February 12, 2023
(Held online via Zoom)

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(Abridged Version)

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ANNUAL MEETING 2023

Moderator: Barbara Jones

AGENDA

1. Call to Order
2. Invocation
3. Reading of the Warrant
4. Reading of the Minutes of the 2022 Annual Meeting
5. Reports for 2022:
 - PASTOR: Rev. Stephen R. Silver
 - CHURCH COUNCIL: Jon Scott
 - OFFICERS:
 - Clerk – Brian Clancy
 - Auditor – Valerie Nevel (for Parkers Accounting)
 - Treasurer – Dawn Troutman
 - BOARDS:
 - Board of Governors – Walter Scott
 - Board of Trustees – Valerie Nevel
 - Diaconate – Linda Gerlach
 - COMMITTEES: Committee Chairs
 - WOMEN OF THE CHURCH
 - CHURCH HISTORIAN: Corrine Erskine
6. Nominating Committee Report
7. Election of Officers and Committees
8. Old Business
 - A. Review of Committee Structure and Bylaws
9. New Business
 - A. Proposed Budget for 2023 (see pp. 15-16)
10. Closing Hymn: “Blest Be the Tie That Binds”
11. Benediction

WARRANT FOR 2023 ANNUAL MEETING

The Annual Meeting of First Congregational Church of Lebanon, NH, will be held online in Zoom format on **Sunday, February 12, 2023**, at 11:30 am, after that morning's worship service, for the following purposes:

1. To hear the reports of all officers, committees, and organizations, as required under the CONSTITUTION AND BY-LAWS of the church.
2. The election of all officers provided for 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.

Respectfully submitted,

Brian C. Clancy, *Clerk*
Lebanon, NH 03766
January 27, 2023

MINUTES OF 2022 ANNUAL MEETING

Sunday, February 13, 2022

1. Moderator Barbara Jones **called the meeting to order** on Zoom at 11:35 and confirmed that a quorum of at least 25 corporate members was in attendance. (The Zoom call showed as many as 26 participants, representing roughly 40 people.)
2. The **invocation** was offered by the Rev. Stephen R. Silver.
3. Reading of the **warrant** for the 2022 meeting: **Motion made** by Jon Scott, seconded by Linda Jacobs, to dispense with reading the warrant. **Motion passed unanimously.**
4. Reading of the **minutes** from the 2021 meeting: **Motion made** by Linda Jacobs, seconded by Terry Ellison, to dispense with reading the minutes. **Motion passed unanimously. Motion made** by Valerie Nevel, seconded by Jon Scott, to accept the 2021 minutes. **Motion passed unanimously.**

5. Reports

Pastor (Rev. Steve Silver): Expanding on his published message in the Annual Report, Rev. Silver reflected on having served FCC since 2010. It's been a "wild ride," and Steve thanked everyone for their many contributions to the common life of our congregation. He repeated a call in his report to work on our communication with one another, which is important to any organization but especially to a church. Our communication should be honest and faithful, allowing each other to agree to disagree when appropriate. Above all, Steve invited us to remember why we're here—because Jesus has called us together.

Steve also expressed his hope that we will revive our campaign planning. For a variety of reasons we have dropped this planning during the COVID-19 pandemic, but there are clearly things we need to do. In addition to purposes we'd already identified a couple years ago, he cited a Sanctuary audio upgrade as an example.

Another project Steve noted is our bylaw review, which he hopes we can bring across the finish line in the coming months. This effort will require everyone's help and support.

Church Council (Linda Jacobs): Referring to her published report, Linda invited questions from anyone. She expressed her abundant thanks to Clerk Brian Clancy for his help with Council meetings throughout the year.

Clerk (Brian Clancy): Referring to his report, Brian drew particular attention to the results of our now-completed membership audit, which has significantly reduced our membership to a more accurate total than we've had in many years. Barb Jones noted that it was helpful to have the reasoning and explanations for these changes.

Auditor (Valerie Nevel, for Parkers Accounting): Referring to the published report, Valerie reminded everyone that this is not a full, formal audit. While that would be a more involved, more expensive process, we should consider doing that in the coming year.

Treasurer (Terry Ellison): Referring to the published 2021-22 budget report, Terry echoed Steve's words about the pandemic, expressing gratitude 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 in particular, 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, in an effort to bring them up to a fairer level relative to similar positions in the state and region. We have now accomplished that, along with extending health benefits to our church administrator, including an HSA to support healthcare costs. It’s important to be clear that the congregation values and supports all staff members. Terry was happy to report that the pastor, administrator, and even organist now have supplemental benefits of some sort; he thanked Jon Scott for his help leading that effort. He explained that the Finance and Personnel Committees will continue to review staff compensation each year and determine whether that is both appropriate and sustainable. Church administrator Brian Clancy expressed his deep, sincere gratitude to Terry and the entire congregation for this tangible recognition and support.

Terry further noted that recent capital upgrades and more budgeted in 2022—primarily improved insulation of the Parsonage—will help reduce operating costs in future years. He then invited questions for the Finance Committee, in the meeting or at any other time. Terry offered his thanks to everyone for the time he’s served as Treasurer. He thanked Brian for his ongoing assistance, and he offered his support for Dawn Troutman as she prepares to succeed him as Treasurer. Barb Jones, in turn, thanked Terry for his excellent work in this position over the past few years.

Board of Governors (John Gilliatt): Referring to his published report, John highlighted the insulation of the Sanctuary and church building, as well as the upcoming Parsonage phase. He extended special thanks to Brandon Mason, who is taking a hiatus this year to focus on his family; Brandon took the lead in making the insulation project possible, and he and Terry were especially dedicated in doing some of the attic prep work themselves. John also 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 work with the church administrator to collect data about our resource usage, in order to document savings produced by capital upgrades.

Board of Trustees (Valerie Nevel): Referring to the figures her published report, Valerie noted that those numbers tell a story—namely, that it’s been a good year for endowment investments and fantastic year in the market. Our decision to invest in capital upgrades has fortunately been offset by this high growth. Valerie clarified that the 9.33% rate for net of draws reflects our investment return after both fees and investments. Without reading the list in the report, she thanked all those in our history who have set up bequests and trust provisions for FCC. Valerie recognized the generosity of all our church members past and present, and she encouraged people to consider bequests or other planning arrangements.

Jon Scott observed that a different, helpful perspective on our capital spending is that we simply took an asset from one place (our investment portfolio) and moved it to another (our building and physical plant). It’s important to remember that we’re ensuring our building

will continue to provide for our needs and retain its value.

Terry Ellison asked about our expected rates of return for the coming year. Valerie replied that it may be a more difficult year than 2021, more volatile with uncertain interest rates. But while 2022 may not be as good, we're in good shape because of our recent gains.

Diaconate (*Barbara Teeter unable to attend*): Rev. Silver invited Deacons present at the meeting to share any reflections on the past year. Bob Gerlach thanked Nan Parsons for her work with the Children's Community Corner. Steve Teeter offered support for the practice of having each deacon communicate with segments of the congregation.

Church School and Christian Education Committee (Nan Parsons): In addition to her report, Nan expressed what an honor and pleasure it is 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 for her help every week. Nan also commended the Godly Play curriculum for making Biblical stories tangible for the children.

Memorial Gardens Committee (*Brandon Mason unable to attend*): In addition to the report, Terry Ellison noted that Alyson Danyew-Ellison (a member of the committee) truly enjoys working on the church's gardens and has some ideas for this year. Several expressed thanks to her and to Nan Parsons for this work.

Mission and Social Action Committee (*No current chair*): While Rev. Silver commended the work that has been done in several other areas, he appealed to the congregation for more involvement and leadership in our mission and outreach efforts. He affirmed our vital, active Open Door Ministry, commending 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.

Music Committee (Brian Clancy): Report presented in Annual Report document. Barb Jones expressed additional thanks to organist Ernie Drown and the FCC choir.

Pastoral Relations Committee (Barbara Jones): Referring to her published report, Barb explained that the PRC didn't meet in 2021 but recognizes work to do in the coming year.

Stewardship Committee (Jon Scott): Adding to his report, Jon thanked everyone for not only their financial offerings but also their countless hours of service to the church. He noted that the recent appeal to support our technology upgrade has brought in almost \$1000 from quite a few people, for which he extended his gratitude. As we strive to keep people involved and attract more people in the future, this remote connection to worship is vital, and it's wonderful to have improved it so much.

Women of the Church: No formal report submitted or offered.

Church Historian (Corrine Erskine): Corrine invited comments and questions, and Valerie Nevel thanked her for doing a marvelous job recording our history each year.

Motion made by Amy Driscoll, seconded by Terry Ellison, to accept the foregoing reports of all the church's boards and committees. **Motion passed unanimously.**

6. Nominating Committee Report (Barbara Jones)

Rev. Steve Silver offered a word of gratitude to all 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 everyone for their commitment and energy.

Barb Jones referred to the proposed committee roster, noting a good slate of nominees and pointing out that some spots remain open. In addition to the published roster, she gratefully reported that Linda Jacobs will stay on as Council Vice-Chair, with Corrine Erskine filling the open at-large position. Barb then invited nominations from the floor, and Valerie Nevel offered to chair the MSA Committee; while she is already doing a lot, this is so important, and she wants to get MSA meetings up and running again.

7. Election of Officers and Committees

Motion made by Amy Driscoll, seconded by Corrine Erskine, to accept the full slate of nominations as presented and updated at the meeting. **Motion passed unanimously.**

8. Old Business

Review of Committee Structure. Barb Jones 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 committee members and staff. The effort will hopefully produce a proposal to Council and the congregation later this spring. He invited questions from everyone.

Campaign Planning Update. Revisiting Rev. Silver's earlier words, Barb affirmed our need to resurrect the vital goals we envisioned for this campaign prior to the pandemic.

9. New Business

Personnel Committee. Valerie Nevel reported that the Personnel Committee has made progress on formal job descriptions and evaluation processes for staff, and she emphasized our organizational need for more structured compensation oversight. Terry Ellison stressed the need to revive a working Personnel Committee, saying that we've collectively realized the importance of addressing these issues. The Finance Committee has worked hard on this already in 2021, and the Personnel Committee should continue the work this year.

Pastoral Relations Committee. Barb Jones suggested that it would be an opportune time to officially rename this committee, as has often been discussed informally in conversation. Jon Scott pointed out that such an action would be included within the bylaws review, but several observed that the name change needed emphasis sooner than that. **Motion made** by Amy Driscoll, seconded by Valerie Nevel, to formally change this committee's name to the "Pastor-Parish Relations Committee." **Motion passed unanimously.**

Proposed Budget for 2022. Recalling earlier comments by Terry Ellison and others about the 2022 budget, Barb invited further discussion but none was offered. **Motion made** by Jon Scott, seconded by Terry Ellison, to accept the church's proposed budget for 2022. **Motion passed unanimously.**

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

10. Brian Clancy led everyone in singing the **closing hymn**, “Blest Be the Tie That Binds.”
11. Steve closed the meeting with the **benediction**.
12. Meeting **adjourned** at 12:41.

Respectfully submitted,
Brian C. Clancy, *Clerk*

PASTOR'S REPORT

¹Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. ²Indeed, by faith our ancestors received approval. ³By faith we understand that the worlds were prepared by the word of God, so that what is seen was made from things that are not visible.

—Hebrews 11:1-3

The above passage from Hebrews comes towards the end of the Epistle and is the summation of a long argument to a community of wavering Jewish believers who may have been tempted to abandon the church: Jesus is better.

The verses that come before recount the forebears in faith who carried on, despite great odds, to do great things: Abraham, Moses, David, Abel, Enoch, Noah, Rahab. They trusted in God, and they were able to carry on. They were guided by their faith, in the conviction that the future would be better.

While we do not know the identity of the letter's author, we can see that his or her faith in Jesus, his or her confidence in the mission of the church, was plainly evident. We have much to do, and the payoff may not always be evident, but we are called to bring the Gospel message to life for our own community and the one that surrounds us. We are called to show that Scripture is not filled with empty promises but is a necessary truth for our times.

So, what are the things I believe we should act on, even if the future remains unknown?

I would like for us to resume and complete our by-laws review. A look at the open spots on our volunteer roster offers evidence of why we need to do this—our present structure makes no sense for a congregation of our size, or for the way people live in the early 21st century.

We need to get the Pastor-Parish Relations Committee up and running soon. Barb Jones, our Moderator and the committee's chair, has noted that,

During 2022, the Pastor-Parish Relations Committee did not meet, and it cannot go another year without meeting. It would be very helpful if the by-law revisions could be finished so that PP has a better framework to clarify which concerns are to be under the purview of PP and which fall under the church personnel committee.

Be that as it may, in 2023 the committee and especially its chair need to encourage communication between church members and the pastor, and between the pastor and the members, and to set goals for responding to concerns of both the pastor and members of the congregation.

I agree with this.

For the record, I do not like operating in a vacuum and none of us should. Nor do I believe that it is right to operate under the assumption that a rumor one may have heard is the truth, or for us to be comfortable with doing things a certain way simply because that is how it was done previously.

We also need to continue to work on our livestream capacities. Much has been achieved in this area, and I am grateful to those who have contributed to our progress. But to use a tired cliché, we have not yet reached the promised land. If we are to make the most of this new

hybrid reality, we must make sure that those who are joining us online experience worship or other activities without any difficulty.

There is also the matter of our engagement in what we call “mission and social action” issues. What can we do in the coming year to work for racial justice? What can we do to strive for a healthy environment? And, what about the homeless and needy of our community? These are not so much political issues as they are matters of faith, ones we are called to act on, now.

At present, FCC is like a plane idling on the runway. It is time for us to stop taxiing and to take off. We need to trust that we have a good aircraft, sound operating systems, and a competent crew, both paid and volunteer. Otherwise, we will not be going anywhere. The old bumper sticker claims, “Jesus Is My Co-Pilot.” Okay. But that means you and I are the pilots. We’ve got important roles to play. We fly the plane. Not alone, but we can’t leave the flying to others.

You, the congregation and friends of First Congregational Church of Lebanon, continue to show your commitment to our church. Most every congregation (indeed, every kind of voluntary association) needs more volunteers, and that includes our own. Your efforts make a tremendous difference to our ministry, to our worship, and to both our church- and wider-community.

Our church staff has once again gone above and beyond the call of duty this past year. Brian Clancy, our Church Administrator, has been an invaluable presence in the church office; Barb Teeter, our Sexton, continues to care for our building with affection and diligence. And Ernie Drown has been great to work with, bringing us wonderful music on Sunday mornings and leading our small but mighty choir with aplomb.

Special thanks are due to Nan Parsons for her leadership of the Children’s Community Corner. She has been resourceful, creative, and faithfully committed as she has helped navigate cyberspace with the 3Cs. That so many children have remained engaged as part of this virtual community is a testament to Nan. We are truly blessed!

I’ve concluded my message with these words in years past and do so again: “I look forward to continuing our shared journey of faith, our collective mission to spread the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and our work of helping to make known to one another and to the wider community the beauty of the Christian life, in the year ahead and beyond.”

Yours faithfully,

Steve

CHURCH COUNCIL REPORT

Maintaining the congregation's health and safety and regularly revisiting COVID-19 precautions remained among Council's top priorities in 2022. Effective with Christmas worship services, Council voted to make mask-wearing optional, but still strongly encouraged.

Much of Council's work this year focused on a consultation and support process with representatives from the NH Conference of the United Church of Christ (UCC). This engagement involved a series of listening sessions to gather input and hear concerns from leadership and congregational members, prompted in part by a difficult and at times acrimonious departure from our membership. The process aimed to identify ways to improve internal communications and conflict resolution skills and structures.

This process caused delay in the work of the ad-hoc committee created earlier to review and recommend revisions to FCC's Bylaws, in order to bring our structures better into line with our current congregation size. As work with the NH Conference wraps up, we expect to seek the consultation team's assistance with right-sizing our structures, clarifying the role of the Pastor-Parish Relations Committee, and potentially obtaining training for church leadership to help with communication, conflict resolution, leadership skills, and planning for how the church will evolve and grow in the future.

Also ahead for Council and its Personnel Committee is work to finalize 2023 compensation arrangements for church employees and to create structures and processes to assist with goal-setting, evaluation, and future compensation negotiations.

We anticipate working with the Board of Governors and others to upgrade the sound systems used during worship in various contexts—the Sanctuary, the Parish Hall, outdoor services, and Zoom services online. We have heard feedback on the need to improve sound quality for both music and spoken word, and to ensure that prayer requests and other communications from congregation members can be heard by all.

For more information about Council's meetings and discussions in 2022, summaries appear each month in *Grace Notes*, and meeting minutes are available from the Clerk.

I would like to thank the Rev. Steve Silver and Ernie Drown for planning and leading our worship services. A very special thank-you to Brian Clancy for writing up an accurate and concise accounting of each meeting and for overseeing the Zoom technology that has allowed us to offer both in-person and remote worship opportunities.

Respectfully submitted,

Jon Scott, *Chair*

Linda Jacobs, *Vice-Chair*

Corrine Erskine and Linda Oronte, *At-Large*

Brian Clancy, *Clerk*

Committee Chairs

CLERK'S REPORT

Membership Changes

During 2022 no new covenant members joined the church, one member transferred, and three members withdrew. In addition, three members died during the year. With these changes, we begin 2023 with 106 covenant members.

Members Who Died (3):

Lorraine A. Noonan (Cushing), d. 1/15/22.

Edward L. "Larry" Doyle, d. 1/21/22.

Carolyn B. Bassett, d. 5/30/22.

Members Who Transferred (1):

The Rev. Eliot Fay, transferred membership to Nelson Congregational Church (Nelson, NH), per email request 7/20/22.

Members Who Withdrew (3):

Terry Ellison and Alyson Danyew-Ellison, withdrew per email 2/28/22.

John Gilliatt, withdrew per email 10/2/22.

Baptisms

The Rev. Stephen R. Silver performed the following **baptisms**:

Jack and Mac Callahan, 6/12/2022 in Great Brook, Goodwin Park, Lebanon, NH.

Emory and Xavian Scott, 9/25/2022 in Cornish Flat, NH.

Memorial Services

The Rev. Stephen R. Silver presided at the following **memorial and graveside services**:

Members of the Church:

Lorraine A. Noonan (Cushing), d. 1/15/22, graveside service 6/10/22, Oak Grove Cemetery, Enfield, NH.

Carolyn B. Bassett, d. 5/30/22, memorial and interment service 9/24/22 at FCC; interment service 9/24/22 at Post Mills Cemetery, Post Mills, VT.

Edward L. "Larry" Doyle, d. 1/21/22, memorial service 10/15/22 at FCC.

Friends of the Church:

Edwin G. Leavitt, d. 2/28/22, memorial service 3/5/22 at Knight Funeral Home, White River Jct, VT.

Larry C. Kirkpatrick, d. 12/1/22, memorial service 12/15/22 at FCC.

Respectfully submitted,

Brian C. Clancy, Clerk

AUDITOR'S REPORT
TREASURER and FINANCE COMMITTEE REPORT
BOARD OF TRUSTEES REPORT

[* *These reports are not available in this edition. For questions or additional information, please contact First Congregational Church directly at 603-448-4281 or church@fcclb.org. *]*

BOARD OF GOVERNORS REPORT

“The Board of Governors shall have general charge and care of the church’s physical property,” according to our church’s *Constitution and By-Laws*. The Board has traditionally met on the fourth Sunday of the month, although it met only a few times during 2022 and communicated primarily via email and direct conversation among members. All meeting agendas and minutes are available in written or digital form.

Following is a summary list of our work this year:

Maintenance and Repairs Completed:

- Replacement of kitchen refrigerator
- Replacement of kitchen screen door
- Removal of dead tree limbs (thanks to Brandon!)

Unfinished Projects:

- Insulation of Parsonage—now scheduled for spring 2023 (in process)
- Church basement air exchange—obtained quotes, Council voted not to pursue
- Repaving of church walkways—difficulty with contractors
- Landscaping of church front lawn

The chair wishes to thank former members John Gilliatt, Brandon Mason, and Terry Ellison for their numerous contributions over many years—you are missed. Thank you also to Wendell Smith for all his help.

Respectfully submitted,

Walter Scott, *Chair and Secretary*

Wendell Smith

DIACONATE REPORT

In 2022 the FCC Diaconate continued to serve the needs of the congregation, both spiritually and otherwise. With FCC embracing a dual mode of worship, both in person and by Zoom, much of the Deacons' time was spent finding ushers and Zoom greeters.

The Diaconate began 2022 with only eight members, down from 11 or 12 in past years. This number decreased to seven with the resignation of Alyson Danyew-Ellison, although it returned to eight with Deb Scott's agreement to rejoin the Diaconate. While small in number, we are mighty in spirit and have striven to do our best.

The Deacons continue to check in with members of the congregation, both by sending cards and making phone calls. Once again, Phil Hammond coordinated collection of donations for Samaritan's Purse. Sue Pratt (along with members of her church in Florida) did a magnificent job providing prayer shawls to give to individuals experiencing a loss or serious illness. The Deacons hope to find others willing to knit shawls for this much appreciated practice.

In June, Linda Gerlach assisted Rev. Silver in the outdoor baptism of the Callahan children at Great Brook in Goodwin Park. In September, Deb Scott assisted Rev. Silver in the at-home baptism of her grandchildren, Emory and Xavian.

In June, the Deacons hosted an outdoor reception after the ordination service for Eliot Fay. In October, the Deacons hosted an outdoor reception following the memorial service for church member (and former Deacon) Larry Doyle. In December, Dawn Troutman, assisted by friends of Nan Parsons, provided a reception after the service for Nan's husband Larry Kirkpatrick.

After much discussion, the Diaconate agreed in December to the resumption of communion service by intinction, while still providing a prepackaged option. After thoughtful discussion the Diaconate also agreed that masking should be made optional in worship.

Bob Gerlach has agreed to update the binder that all new Deacons are to receive. He will coordinate with Church Administrator Brian Clancy to see which materials should be included.

In 2023 the Diaconate will continue to provide care for all members of FCC's congregation. We will brainstorm ways to grow membership and regain the feeling of community that was lost during the pandemic. We humbly ask for God's guidance in, and blessing on, our work.

Respectfully submitted,

Linda Gerlach, *Chair*

Stacey Steele, *Vice-Chair*

Bob Gerlach, *Secretary*

Chris Chase

Phil Hammond

Susan Pratt

Deb Scott

Dawn Troutman

CHRISTIAN EDUCATION COMMITTEE REPORT

We've come a long way in time and space since the story of the Creation. The people of God have been led out of slavery; they have ruled their own country; they have been defeated; and they have been carried off into exile. They have returned to rebuild the temple of Jerusalem. God has been with them all the way—but they have not always been with God. These are the stories we learned and shared last year.

Our theme through June 2022 introduced our children to some of the Prophets, with special attention given to the Prophet Jonah. This helped the children get ready for the mystery of Christmas. Epiphany was highlighted throughout the month of January, immediately followed by Christ's baptism. We finished the year by examining a variety of parables, showing how they are metaphors for transcendent symbols, often the Kingdom of Heaven. Being a Christian asks us not only to know the stories of the Bible, but also to understand the lessons that still apply to our lives today.

In the fall of 2022 we welcomed the Children's Community Corner in a hybrid model, both on Zoom and in-person gatherings. Our theme for the 2022-23 school year is "Why Inspiration Matters in God's World." We often focus on measuring ability while overlooking the role of inspiration. Inspiration awakens us to new possibilities by allowing us to move beyond our ordinary experiences and limitations. Inspiration propels a person from apathy to possibility, transforming the way we perceive our own capabilities and those of others (Kaufman, 2011). The Bible has many people who have inspired us; many we have studied over the last three years. This year we will focus on inspirational people of the Bible, our world, our country, and our lives—and how all those people represent God's word.

To date, we've walked with the everyday saints of Martin Luther King, Jr., Harriet Tubman, Mother Theresa, and the Holy Family. Our essential guiding questions for the year ask, "How can we find wonder in the common, and hope in difficulty? How can our past experiences, including experiences through stories and our stories in the 3 Cs, connect to our lives today?"

We look forward to introducing our children to the saints, as we continue our journey to grow in our knowledge and faith. It is our pleasure to engage in the stories of the Bible with your children.

Respectfully submitted,

Nancy Parsons, *Superintendent*

Ashley Oronte, *Childcare Assistant*

Linda Gerlach

Nicole Mason

Steve Teeter

MEMORIAL GARDENS COMMITTEE REPORT

Please Note: The Clerk created this report for 2022 by updating those of previous years.

The Memorial Gardens Committee is responsible for overseeing the maintenance and planting of our memorial gardens in front of the church, as well as preparation and documentation for interments. The garden by the church sign is in honor of Betty and Ellis Howard, given by their family. The Memorial Garden in front of the stone is where cremated ashes of deceased church members and their families may be buried.

On September 24, 2022, the ashes of Carolin Barker Bassett, a longtime and beloved member of our congregation who passed away on May 30, were interred in front of the memorial stone. A large group of family and friends attended the memorial service and committal, conducted by the Rev. Steve Silver.

The memorial stone is now engraved with the names and birth/death years of the following deceased members of our church: Leif and Beryl Thorsrud, Richard and Helen Wallace, Henry "Hank" Watson, Carolin and Robert Bassett, Laura and Gordon Place, Elizabeth and Ellis Howard, Willmott "Bin" Lewis, Marilyn Guild Mason, and Margaret "Ginger" Smith. (The names of spouses may be engraved on the stone at the same time, whether or not both are deceased.)

Anyone who would like to receive more information about the Memorial Gardens, or to contribute to them, should please contact one of the committee members. To reserve a space in the garden for interment, please contact a committee member or the Church Administrator.

Respectfully submitted,

Brandon Mason, *Chair*
Ike Jacobs

MISSION AND SOCIAL ACTION COMMITTEE REPORT

The Mission and Social Action Committee had a transitional year in 2022, amid the ongoing challenges of the pandemic. The committee met online monthly to determine to serve the community despite the limited volunteer resources the church now has.

While there was a desire to have community dinners at the church, members felt that doing so during the pandemic would put guests at risk. As a result, the committee decided to continue to support LISTEN Community Services and the Upper Valley Haven through its shopping-cart collection of non-perishable food and other items. In February 2022, the annual Souper Bowl collected a record 503 cans, to be divided as always among LISTEN, the Haven, and Headrest. In September a special collection was taken for LISTEN's Harvest Match campaign, to which church members contributed.

FCC's staff maintained and even expanded the Open Door Ministry through the pandemic, distributing food and gas cards to more and more people in need. Occasionally, we are able to help with rent and utilities assistance. Demand far exceeds the Open Door's collections and budget, primarily due to cutbacks in federal relief and growing inflation. Mission and Social Action Committee members are working on ways to increase funding for this program.

The committee also decided to invite non-profits with which FCC has close relationships to speak at the church about their work. Epilogos representatives spoke about its work focusing on housing and education in San Jose Villanueva, El Salvador. Plans are in the works to have LISTEN and WISE speak about their programs. The hope is that church members will volunteer or donate to these worthwhile organizations.

In the fall, the organizer of a local program for temporarily housing homeless individuals in an RV shelter approached FCC about hosting the shelter on church property again. If it is possible to resolve city zoning restrictions that arose last year, FCC hopes to host the shelter in the winter of 2023.

Respectfully submitted,

Valerie Nevel, *Chair*

Lola Baldwin

Corrine Erskine

Linda Jacobs

Barbara Laro

Denise Moriearty

Jon Scott

Steve Teeter

MUSIC COMMITTEE REPORT

FCC's music ministry fared remarkably well in 2022, as the community slowly moved beyond the pandemic despite the persistence of the disease itself. Music continues to be a vital presence in the worship life of the congregation, and our building has become increasingly integral to the Upper Valley's broader musical community.

Ernie Drown has now shared with us his considerable talent and musical knowledge—along with a sharp sense of humor and an inexhaustible reservoir of stories—for two and a half years. He has been grateful to finally enjoy a full year of in-person worship and choir participation, and music enriches our worship services every Sunday. Although the choir has unfortunately lost a couple members in the past year, a reliable, dedicated group happily continues to sing two pieces most weeks, sometimes more. Ernie has played beautifully on both the organ and the piano, and he has worked closely with Watersmith Pipe Organs to maintain and even improve our modest instrument.

The Music at the Meetinghouse schedule has returned to its pre-pandemic form, with at least one concert (often more) in our Sanctuary on most weekends. The Anonymous Coffeehouse offers a new lineup every two or three weeks, Classicopia has continued to present superb performances several times a season, and Bel Canto Chamber Singers rehearse here weekly in preparation for spring and winter concerts. The Upper Valley Music Center has continued to use our entire building for its sprawling Suzuki program on Monday afternoons, and many of its recitals and concerts throughout the year happen in our Sanctuary, culminating this December in the full return of the beloved Messiah Sing. Classicopia also used FCC for the revival of its very successful summer camp in August, not long after the musicians of the inaugural Oak Hill Music Festival took up residence here for a full week in July. Ernie Drown's Cameo Baroque ensemble presented a number of benefit concerts here, including one for Doctors Without Borders' vital work in war-ravaged Ukraine. Camerata New England, Cantabile Women's Chorus, and the professional choral ensemble Counterpoint also presented concerts at FCC in a very full 2022.

Our wider community recognizes FCC for its generous and enthusiastic support of music both in its worship services and in the cultural life of the Upper Valley. Our congregation can justly be proud of its musical achievements and contributions.

Respectfully submitted,

Brian Clancy, *Chair*

Ernie Drown, *Organist/Choir Director (ex-officio)*

Meghan Donahue

Steve Teeter

Gail Wasson

PASTOR-PARISH RELATIONS COMMITTEE REPORT

During 2022, the Pastor-Parish Relations Committee did not meet, and it cannot go another year without meeting. As we consider the broader revision of the church's bylaws, the committee's priority for 2023 will be to clarify its scope and function.

Be that as it may, the committee and especially its chair need to encourage communication between church members and the pastor, and between the pastor and the members, and to set goals for responding to concerns of both the pastor and members of the congregation.

Respectfully submitted,

Barbara Jones, *Moderator and Chair*

Bob Gerlach

Linda Gerlach

Susan Pratt

Walter Scott

STEWARDSHIP COMMITTEE REPORT

Although many churches are reporting severe financial hardship as a result of pandemic-related declines in membership and attendance at worship, First Congregational Church of Lebanon continues to do well. We are grateful for the loyal and generous support of our congregation—gifts of both money and time. For the most part, our pledges and special-offering collections in 2022 remained comparable to 2021. Pledge commitments received so far for 2023 have allowed your Finance Committee to prepare a solid budget for the coming year. Most families and individuals who pledged and gave during 2021-22 have promised to give again in 2023, with some pledging at increased levels.

We can expect to receive gifts and offerings throughout 2023 in the form of cash, checks, gifts of stock, small grants, and donations from IRA retirement accounts. Our endowment funds, created through legacy gifts by earlier generations of church members, play an increasingly important role in sustaining our church mission and ministry at a time of rising costs and relatively consistent giving levels.

Again in 2022 we increased the support we provide to community members in need through our Open Door Ministry, which is funded in part by special communion Sunday offerings.

The church is committed to making online pledging and giving opportunities available during 2023. We look forward to launching this component of our stewardship offerings as soon as we are able.

We all are truly blessed to be part of such a caring, compassionate, and generous faith community. That is every bit as true today as it has been in the past. Many thanks to all in our congregation and extended Church Family!

Please refer to the 2023 Budget and related financial information for additional detail on 2022-23 giving and projections.

Respectfully submitted,

Jon Scott, *Chair*
Meghan Donohue
Barbara Jones

WOMEN OF THE CHURCH REPORT

The Women of the Church did not submit a formal report for 2022. No transactions were recorded for the year in their dedicated bank account.

Balance on January 1, 2022	\$ 3,835.28
Receipts	\$ 0.00
Expenditures	(\$ 0.00)
Balance on December 31, 2022	\$ 3,835.28

Respectfully submitted,
Barbara Laro, *Treasurer*

CHURCH HISTORY

The year 2022 opened with COVID-19 variants abounding across the world. We continued to worship responsibly in church and offer Zoom for those who want to stay home. We upgraded our sound and video system to make the Zoom experience better.

In January we lost two members of the congregation. Lorraine Noonan passed away on January 15, Larry Doyle a week later. We all miss Larry's crazy stories!

The month of February was pretty quiet. We had another banner year for the Souper Bowl. The local Mormon church heard about our donation efforts and helped contribute to our record-breaking year. We ended up collecting 503 cans this year! Thanks again to Ron Bailey for coordinating this effort.

After concerts in January by Ernie Drown's Cameo Baroque group and UVMC's Tristan Bellerive and Ben Kulp, February and March brought back the Anonymous Coffeehouse, along with concerts by Classicopia and Atlantic Crossing.

We celebrated Ash Wednesday on March 7 with an ecumenical service at the West Lebanon Church. FCC's children once again collected money during Lent in their decorated lunch bags.

We engaged in several responses to the Russian invasion of Ukraine in late February. An ecumenical prayer service for Ukraine was held on March 22, attended by about 30 people. Many contributed to the UCC's emergency fund, and the Children's Community Corner organized a sale of baked goods and decorated Ukrainian eggs for Children's Sunday in June, with proceeds going to the UCC. Several spring concerts also designated international relief agencies as beneficiaries.

Spring came slowly but surely. COVID numbers went down, and Lebanon rescinded its mandate on wearing masks. But because COVID kept rearing its ugly head, we continued to wear masks in church for a while longer.

We collected the money from the children's Lenten lunch bags on Palm Sunday (April 10). All Holy Week services were held in person at church and on Zoom again this year. We brought back the Easter sunrise service in Colburn Park, though without the breakfast at FCC. We had more people at the 10:00 service than we have had in three years. We even had enough children to actually have them come up to the chancel for their story time!

April and May brought lots of musical options: the ongoing Anonymous Coffeehouse, Classicopia, Leslie Stroud and friends, the Bel Canto Chamber Singers, and Roseminna Watson and Melody Fader. Cameo Baroque did a benefit concert for Doctors Without Borders, raising over \$800.

COVID numbers went up again in the spring, so Council decided to continue masking and distancing in worship for at least another month or so. Very discouraging.

The Bike & Build program arrived for the first time in three years on June 14. There were about 25 biker-builders participating. This year Habitat for Humanity offered to supply

dinner for them on the first night, and Cover held a BBQ for them on the second night. FCC provided dessert and salad, along with breakfast the next morning.

Children's Sunday on June 12 again brought FCC's children back to the Sanctuary. They presented to us what they had been working on all year in Zoom, and they did the readings for the service. Musically we were treated to Chip Silver playing the cello and the Van Vliet family playing strings. After church followed the benefit sale for Ukraine along with pizza and more refreshments. It's amazing what Nan Parsons has managed to sustain all via Zoom.

On June 25 we hosted the ordination service for Rev. Eliot Fay. Members of both our congregation and his new church in Nelson, NH, attended, followed by a lovely reception outdoors. We all wish Eliot well.

July brought plenty of music, with the inaugural Oak Hill Music Festival and a concert by Vermont's professional choral ensemble, Counterpoint. It was a hot month, but fairly quiet. The Rev. Gail Dimick led worship several Sundays while Steve took vacation; Chris Chase also filled in for one Sunday.

We had two outdoor services in the month of August—nice to be free of masks for a while. We had coffee hour after the service each Sunday, although sadly, the flies attended as well! After the service on the 21st, we listened to Phil Hammond speak of his 60 years of marriage to Gloria, followed by his singing "I Love You, Truly." They brought their wedding album for all of us to see—Gloria was petite as ever, and Phil had hair!

In September the Children's Community Corner enjoyed Kickoff Sunday, with their backpacks blessed and a pizza lunch after church. We also supported Listen Community Services' Harvest Match campaign this month. Former music director Will Ögmundson gave a concert on the 25th. Good to see him back.

Also in September, we shared a memorial service for longtime member Carolin Bassett, who had passed away in late May. The service brought family and friends together, and an elegant reception afterward would certainly have pleased Carolin herself. A month later we hosted a memorial service for Larry Doyle, giving the congregation an opportunity to remember a dear friend. Once again, a sumptuous reception captured Larry's spirit of hospitality.

Also in October, Rev. Silver began a six-week reading study group on Zoom discussing the book *Reading While Black*. The CROP Walk took place on October 9, with about 50 people participating. After the walk they came back to church where they enjoyed goodies and apple cider, which we provided outside.

The FCC Outing Club had tried a hike on the Lower Shaker Trails in Enfield in June, but just a couple people attended. A much larger group enjoyed a hike through Pine Park in Hanover on October 16, a beautiful autumn day. Many thanks again to Ranger Ron Bailey!

Fall concerts included programs by Classicopia, Camerata New England, and several events organized by UVMC. The Anonymous Coffeehouse resumed as well, and Cameo Baroque offered a benefit for the Haven's 19 Days campaign.

In November we reached the milestone of 1,000 days since we saw our first COVID case in the country. In New Hampshire we have had 360,478 people hospitalized and 2,866 deaths. We continued to wear masks in worship and distance ourselves in the pews through the fall.

On November 19 former FCC pastor Rev. Richard Slater retired from his role as associate conference minister. The occasion was celebrated with a beautiful service in Concord, with three Slater children and one of his ten grandchildren participating!

An ecumenical Thanksgiving service was held at FCC on November 22, with Congregational and Methodist churches participating. We also collected gifts again this year for Listen's Holiday Basket Program and Operation Christmas Child.

The holiday season brought concerts by Classicopia and Bel Canto, along with UVMC's annual Messiah Sing. The Parsonage was open again this year for the Christmas party, attended by almost 30 parishioners. We enjoyed lots of food, caroling, and conversation.

Our thoughts and prayers went out to Nan Parsons in December on the loss of her husband Larry Kirkpatrick. A memorial service was held for him at FCC with a reception following. Nan still managed to provide us with a great children's pageant on Christmas Eve. The church was almost as full as in days gone by with about 60 people in attendance, many of whom joined the children in the pageant.

Because Christmas fell on a Sunday this year, Rev. Silver decided to forgo the 11:00 Christmas Eve service because we had a regular service the next morning.

Here's hoping 2023 will be a little bit better than 2022!

Respectfully submitted,

Corrine Erskine, *Church Historian*

NOMINATING COMMITTEE REPORT

Note: All positions are three-year terms ending in February of the year listed, except for one-year terms as marked with an asterisk (*). Membership size or ranges, as specified in FCC's bylaws, are shown in parentheses. Positions marked *Vacant* must be filled to meet membership minimums; those marked *Open* are available but not required.

THIS IS A PROVISIONAL REPORT: Several positions marked “Vacant” are in fact in the process of being filled, but not confirmed as of report publication on February 3.

*MODERATOR	Barbara Jones
*CLERK	Brian Clancy
*TREASURER	Dawn Troutman
*ASSISTANT TREASURER	<i>Vacant</i>
*HISTORIAN	Corrine Erskine
*AUDITOR	<i>Vacant (Parkers Accounting)</i>
*CHURCH SCHOOL SUPERINTENDENT (Term: July 1, 2023 to June 30, 2024)	Nancy Parsons

CHURCH COUNCIL

*CHAIR	Jon Scott
*VICE-CHAIR	Linda Jacobs
*MEMBERS-AT-LARGE	Corrine Erskine, Linda Oronte

<u>DIACONATE (end of eligibility)</u>	<u>(12)</u>	<u>BOARD OF GOVERNORS</u>	<u>(4-9)</u>
Susan Pratt (2023 ¹)	2026	Wendell Smith	2026
Stacey Steele (2026)	2026	Benjamin Van Vliet	2026
<i>Vacant</i>	2026	<i>Vacant</i>	2026
<i>Vacant</i>	2026	Walter Scott	2025
Bob Gerlach (2025)	2025	<i>Open</i>	2025
Philip Hammond (2025)	2025	<i>Open</i>	2025
Deb Scott (2028)	2025	<i>Open</i>	2024
<i>Vacant</i>	2025	<i>Open</i>	2024
Chris Chase (2027)	2024	<i>Open</i>	2024
Linda Gerlach (2027)	2024		
Dawn Troutman (2027)	2024		
<i>Vacant</i>	2024		

¹*Pending waiver of term-limit requirement.*

<u>PERSONNEL SUBCOMMITTEE</u>	<u>(4)</u>
*Council Chair (J. Scott)	2024
*Diaconate Chair (L. Gerlach)	2024
*Bd of Govs Chair (W. Scott)	2024
*Mem Finance (V. Nevel)	2024

<u>BOARD OF TRUSTEES</u>	<u>(3)</u>
Wendell Smith	2026
Barry Schuster	2025
Valerie Nevel	2024

CHRISTIAN EDUCATION COMMITTEE (4-6)

Nancy Parsons	2026
<i>Vacant</i>	2026
<i>Open</i>	2025
<i>Open</i>	2025
Linda Gerlach	2024
Steve Teeter	2024

FINANCE COMMITTEE (5)

<i>Vacant</i> (Member-at-Large)	2026
*Treasurer (D. Troutman)	2024
*Mem Bd of Govs (W. Smith)	2024
*Mem Stewardship (J. Scott)	2024
*Mem Trustees (V. Nevel)	2024

MEMORIAL GARDENS COMMITTEE (3)

Brandon Mason	2026
<i>Vacant</i>	2025
Ike Jacobs	2024

MISSION AND SOCIAL ACTION
COMMITTEE (6-8)

Linda Jacobs	2026
Barbara Laro	2026
Denise Moriearty	2026
Corrine Erskine	2025
Valerie Nevel	2025
Jon Scott	2024
Steve Teeter	2024
Lola Baldwin	2024

MUSIC COMMITTEE (4-6)

Brian Clancy	2026
<i>Open</i>	2026
Steve Teeter	2025
<i>Open</i>	2025
Meghan Donahue	2024
Gail Wasson	2024

NOMINATING COMMITTEE (3)

<i>Vacant</i>	2026
<i>Vacant</i>	2025
Barbara Jones	2024

PASTOR-PARISH RELATIONS
COMMITTEE (5)

Susan Pratt (Member-at-Large)	2025
Mem Bd of Govs (W. Scott)	2025
*Moderator (B. Jones)	2024
*Diaconate Chair (L. Gerlach)	2024
*Other Deacon (B. Gerlach)	2024

STEWARDSHIP COMMITTEE (4-6)

Jon Scott	2026
<i>Vacant</i>	2026
Barbara Jones	2025
<i>Vacant</i>	2025
<i>Open</i>	2024
<i>Open</i>	2024

NHC-UCC DELEGATES (4)

* <i>Vacant</i>	2024
* <i>Vacant</i>	2024
* <i>Vacant</i>	2024
* <i>Vacant</i>	2024

Respectfully submitted,

Barbara Jones, *Chair*

Blest Be the Tie That Binds

Blest be the tie that binds
Our hearts in Christian love;
The fellowship of kindred minds
Is like to that above.

Before our Father's throne
We pour our ardent prayers;
Our fears, our hopes, our aims are one,
Our comforts and our cares.

We share each other's woes,
Each other's burdens bear,
And often for each other flows
The sympathizing tear.

When we are called to part
It gives us inward pain,
But we shall still be joined in heart,
And hope to meet again.

— *John Fawcett (1739/40-1817)*