

# Grace Notes

The Newsletter of First Congregational Church

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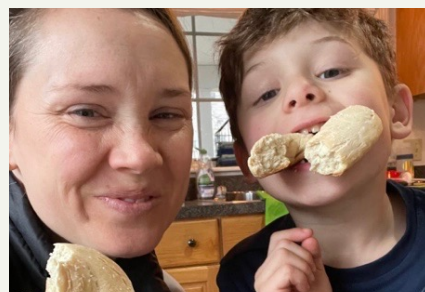
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## The Pastoral Perspective

My hope is that you're as excited as I am by what's coming in mid-April. No, not Tax Day, but Easter.

One of the many differences between the IRS and God is that God will not put us on hold or ask us to wait because "call volume is heavy." God is always there for us, ready to answer our prayers, no matter how many other people are praying at the same time. God's ready to hear them, too.

True, God may not answer our prayers as we might wish, but God will answer them as we need.

God is never too busy for us, ever. God cares so much for humanity that God came to earth as one of us, lived as one of us, and then died as one of us. God knows about our fears of death, and our fears of how death might find us.

One of the sobering things about the Passion story is that we know in our hearts just our plausible it is. People can stink sometimes, often for the basest and most ridiculous of reasons. Look at the lectionary readings for Good Friday and you'll see what I mean. When we encounter evil in our lives, it often takes the guise of a middling figure, rarely an epic figure. But evil should not be discounted. Evil can lead to death.

Fortunately for us, God conquered death 2,000 years ago, on a hillside outside of Jerusalem. That's good news! But wait, you say—people are still dying. I'm going to die. Where, we ask, is this victory?

Truth be told, we experience God's victory over death only in our heads. We are able to resist the fear of death and not succumb to a temptation to live our lives in thrall to our physical ending.

Some say that's not good enough. Some want to upload their minds to the internet. (I'm not kidding, either.) So, what is the upshot of this? One is still dependent on others, in this case, not to push the wrong button or inadvertently pull a plug. The truth is, these immortal wannabes have already lost out to death, surrendered in fear to the Grim Reaper.

Continued on Page 4

# SUNDAY SERVICE

## HOLY WEEK AT FCC

Masks, vaccination, and distanced seating required;  
Zoom links will be emailed prior to each service.

### April 10—PALM SUNDAY

10 am: Liturgy of the Palms (Sanctuary/Zoom)

### April 14—MAUNDY THURSDAY

7 pm: Service of Communion and Tenebrae,  
Stripping of the Altar (Sanctuary/Zoom)

### April 15—GOOD FRIDAY

12-3 pm: Quiet Meditation on the Seven Last Words (Sanctuary)

7 pm: Service of the Word and Prayer (Sanctuary/Zoom)

### April 17—EASTER SUNDAY

6 am: Ecumenical Sunrise Service (Colburn Park)

10 am: Festival Worship Service (Sanctuary/Zoom)



## *The Easter Lily Fund for the Open Door Ministry*

As in past years, we invite you to honor beloved family and friends on Easter morning with a modest contribution to our Open Door Ministry for community assistance (\$5 minimum, payable to FCC, memo "Lily Open Door").

Please submit your dedication information by THURSDAY, APRIL 14 (contributions gratefully accepted after that date). Dedications will appear in the bulletin on EASTER SUNDAY, APRIL 17.

*Many thanks for supporting our local mission while commemorating your loved ones.*

## Sunday Worship at FCC

*In the Sanctuary and on Zoom—10:00 AM*

Worshippers are required to wear masks at all times and observe distancing in the pews; we have not yet resumed coffee hour. Please contact the church with questions, or to receive the Zoom link.

*Join us as we gather for worship together!*

## Lenten Lunch Bag Collection

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

**WISE ([wiseuv.org](http://wiseuv.org)) and  
Epilogos Charities ([epilogos.org](http://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 difficult circumstances, encouraging them to see stewardship as a way to share and spread God's love.*

Decorated lunch bags may be used to collect savings from sacrificing a regular treat during Lent. **Whatever your sacrifices, please plan to return donations on**

**PALM SUNDAY, APRIL 10.**

## NEWS AND NOTES

### CHURCH COUNCIL

Beginning his term as Council chair in March, Jon Scott explained how he envisioned Council meetings—ideally kept to an hour, collecting regular committee reports in advance and focusing meeting time on more complex issues.

Jon reflected that we are grieving the departure of **two valued members** of our congregation, adding that some may have incomplete information about what happened. In order to understand the facts and feelings around this situation, he invited NH Conference Minister Rev. Gordon Rankin to consult with Council about next steps. Jon encouraged us not to think of the situation in terms of sides or right vs. wrong, but rather to consider how we might improve our communication and process in cases like this.

Jon first invited Council members present to share **goals and hopes for FCC in the coming year**. Several noted the importance of finishing

the bylaws review; a return to more familiar formats for in-person fellowship and service after two years of pandemic restrictions; a renewal of mission efforts and charitable ministries; and an energizing and expansion of our membership, in part with younger families. Rev. Steve Silver added his hope for a resumption of campaign planning, and he cautioned that returning to in-person patterns shouldn't create pressure to participate; we must retain an inclusive, welcoming spirit. He also would like to arrange for Rev. Rankin to preach here as our guest—which had been scheduled early in 2020 but canceled by the shutdown.

Linda Jacobs hopes the Personnel Committee may return to a useful, functioning role. John Gilliatt looks forward to FCC's enabling online giving, in addition to several Board of Governors tasks and a follow-up AED training session. Corrine Erskine joined several in seeing our Zoom progress as a way of growing

membership; she also affirmed our mission achievements in spite of pandemic limitations.

Dawn Troutman hopes for more baptisms and new member commitments (in contrast to funerals) and for revived outreach and invitations to our community. Rev. Silver has discussed baptisms with three families, with children themselves initiating interest in taking this step; Steve credited Nan Parsons' work in nurturing such interest. Nan herself expressed a wish to create a meaningful experience for older youth, inviting help in strategizing for that. Our K-6 program is solid, but new families would help sustain it. Nan also would like to examine possibilities for the space we offer our children, noting limitations of the basement areas.

Brian Clancy expressed a widely held hope that the Ellisons would remain in our congregation, given their considerable contributions over the years, though he acknowledged

**One Great  
HOUR  
OF SHARING**

## 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

that is entirely their choice. Valerie Nevel noted that we might perhaps recognize the limits of relying on volunteers as we have; she speculated that more active Personnel and Pastoral Relations Committees might have averted some of our recent difficulty. She hopes we can set appropriate goals for our church and staff, and she looks forward to being more involved in leading our mission efforts.

Jon Scott himself recognized the considerable time he's devoted to conflict resolution in the past month, effort that's been necessary but not sustainable, and he looks forward to other ways of leading Council and the congregation. Jon suggested that when we accomplish projects, we take care to document and celebrate them. He promoted the attraction of visitors through Zoom worship, preparations for renewed in-person activity, and the prospect of many new residents in our neighborhood who may be looking for a church community.

Council next covered **various items of business**. New Diaconate chair Linda Gerlach reported Deb Scott's interest in rejoining the Deacons, and Council unanimously voted

its approval. Linda also noted that the Deacons would choose another Pastor-Parish Relations Committee delegate at their upcoming meeting. John Gilliatt added that Walter Scott would represent the Board of Governors on the PPRC; as the Board now consists only of John and Walter, Barb Jones expressed interest in possibly joining it. In addition to Walter and the new Deacons' rep, the PPRC would also need an at-large member from the congregation. Jon Scott offered to share best practices from the NH Conference for committee work and operations.

Jon then introduced **Rev. Gordon Rankin**, who explained what the conference office does to support and strengthen churches throughout the state, working with pastoral call candidacies, operational and financial practices, and collaborative ministries that individual churches couldn't manage alone (e.g. Horton Center). He emphasized that the current proposal starts with our requests as a congregation, rather than any effort by the conference to "fix" one of its member churches—he and his conference colleagues will not offer a "magic wand" but

rather resources to help us reform our own situation. He observed that while it's natural to want to retain individual members, the primary motivation is to treat the health of the congregation as a whole.

Asked what the process involves, Rev. Rankin emphasized gathering our input and comments in a series of active listening sessions, which would seek to broaden participation and prevent individual voices from dominating the discussion. Valerie Nevel and others asked that the parties directly involved be given the chance to express legitimate grievances and feelings, hoping that the conference might help mediate that conversation. Rev. Rankin responded that the active listening process will incorporate some of that; mediation between particular individuals can certainly be added

### **Committee Meetings**

The following regular meetings will happen remotely via Zoom:

**Diaconate** 4/11 and 5/9, 7:00

**Council** 4/12 and 5/10, 7:00

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

### **The Pastoral Perspective**, *continued from Page 1*

A richer, fuller approach is recognizing the gift of life we have each received. We can revel in being alive and thank the One who created us. Oh, sure, we can mitigate the pitfalls of aging and illness, but that is only to ensure comfort and dignity among the aged or those facing a premature end.

I invite you to join me in celebrating the Resurrection, in acknowledging the amazing things that God has done, in trying this year to be Easter people.

Yours faithfully,

*Steve*

if we want. It's up to us how to prioritize the process. Rev. Rankin clarified that while the timeline is flexible, it's important to move it forward and not delay.

Jon Scott cautioned that the process shouldn't hinge on a specific family or individual, instead opening opportunities to hear other issues and voices as well. Perhaps, though, smaller group sessions could happen. He repeated his belief that outside help is essential, as the current issue started small but grew beyond our capacity to resolve it. Nan Parsons supports a more expansive forum for everyone to be heard, although she stressed the need to reach some sort of resolution and clarity going forward. Council thanked Rev.

Rankin for his time and thoughtful advice, and then voted to proceed with the consultation process based on feedback from the meeting.

Revisiting his pastor's report, Rev. Steve Silver asked for input about **plans to continue or relax COVID-19 precautions**. John Gilliatt reported that the choir had expressed its preference for singing unmasked. Others suggested surveying the congregation and emphasized the consideration of children and other vulnerable groups as we make this decision. All agreed that whatever we decide as a church, we should ensure that individual choices are respected, as negative pressure can arise in group social settings. It was agreed that the Diaconate would be best suited to take up this issue at its March meeting, with Council subsequently discussing and voting based on its recommendations.

## Focus on Stewardship

Whether dropped in the collection plate on a Sunday or mailed to the church, your offering contributions continue to be vital to our ministries as we move beyond the worst of the pandemic. While we realize that not everyone can give to the same degree, **FCC is grateful to receive contributions of any amount to these purposes:**

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

**Communion/Open Door Offerings**—Collected on the first Sunday each month, 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 donations may be made at any other time, too.

**Special Offerings** (e.g., Lenten Lunch Bag Offering, Blanket Sunday, and directed 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 OF YOU 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) in the memo line, and either placed in the collection plate or mailed to PO Box 230, Lebanon, NH 03766.**

## DIACONATE

The Diaconate in March shared special prayers for Ukraine and refugees worldwide, among a variety of prayers and pastoral-care needs within our congregation and local community.

The group welcomed Deb Scott as a returning Deacon, though she won't fully join until the summer. Linda and Bob Gerlach will represent the Diaconate on the Pastor-Parish Relations Committee. The group also reviewed monthly assignments, meeting dates, and updated member contact lists.

Looking ahead to warmer weather and continuing COVID-19 measures, the Deacons agreed to schedule outdoor services; we would need to ensure that our Zoom capability can accommodate those. The group also discussed how to safely make communion a more "communal" rite, perhaps as a combination of pre-packaged elements, bread and juice brought by worshipers but blessed for the service, and the more familiar distribution of unpackaged elements. The Rev. Steve Silver also discussed plans for a prayer service for Ukraine and the Easter sunrise and other Holy Week services.

## Gathering Our Community to Support Ukraine



Hello Pastor Silver, and all who arranged the prayer service on Tuesday evening—

Thank you for organizing a way for the community to come together through prayer and song to pray for the people of Ukraine. I appreciated the prayers, the scripture readings, and the hymns.

Thank you for making it available both in person and via Zoom. I had planned to attend in person, but instead I attended via Zoom—it was great to have that option as well.

Thank you again,

J. Conklin, West Lebanon  
(received by email, March 22)

*There are many options out there for supporting the people of Ukraine. The UCC is providing refugee assistance through both the ACT Alliance and the relief agency of the Reformed Church in Hungary. For more information and to donate, visit [www.ucc.org/global-hope/ukraine-emergency-appeal/](http://www.ucc.org/global-hope/ukraine-emergency-appeal/).*

*On Sunday, April 24, at 2:00, Cameo Arts presents Intersections—a concert to benefit the work of the International Rescue Committee, assisting refugees in Ukraine and Poland (see p. 8).*

**THE DANCING CELLO.** Classicopia's Elizabeth Borowsky joined her mother Cecylia Barczyk for a superb, well attended concert of music for piano and cello. Her father, Dr. Charles Borowsky, a native of eastern Germany and Poland, shared his reflections about the people and music of Ukraine, amid its current tragedy.



## Hearts You Hold



### Meeting the Needs of Immigrants and Refugees

HEARTS YOU HOLD, a non-profit organization based in Thetford, VT, offers immigrants, migrants, and refugees new, self-chosen items they need or want. HYH and its local partners help recipients identify these items—from diapers to bikes, clothing to appliances—and learn how to obtain them. Donors then fund the requests on HYH's website. In three years, donors have funded over 1400 requests!

*HYH believes immigrants, migrants, and refugees should feel valued, respected, and appreciated, in part by asking them what they need and want.*

Visit [heartsyouhold.org](http://heartsyouhold.org) to donate and learn more.



## Our Open Door Ministry

*Supporting Our Community, One Gift Card at a Time*

Throughout the year our neighbors come to the church office seeking assistance. Whether it's a tank of gas for the car, food for dinner, or a payment toward rent or utility bills, our congregation offers help through the **OPEN DOOR MINISTRY**. Available to anyone in Lebanon and nearby towns—and operating continuously even through the COVID-19 shutdown—this ministry is one of the most vital services we extend to our community, especially amidst the challenges of the pandemic.

We don't ask for proof of need; the "Open" Door is just that. We do ask recipients to wait at least four months between requests, just to ensure fair distribution among as many people as possible. FCC has been able to respond to these needs for years, but we *never* have enough to assist all those who ask—and **demand has increased considerably over the past decade, in which time we've helped over 520 people.**

Those who come to us aren't irresponsible or lazy, and the large majority (about 75%) request assistance just once or twice—rather than becoming dependent or taking advantage of the program. Some are chronically homeless; some have been evicted for reasons beyond their control. Some have moved to the area and need a hand getting started; some have lost a job or just started a new one. Some are driving more often because they're caring for a family member; some are referred to us by a counselor at WISE. **All are our neighbors.**



The Open Door is kept open in part by contributions to the monthly communion offering, with which we purchase \$25 gift cards for gas and food from Jake's Market and Price Chopper, respectively. This is supplemented by the Mission and Social Action Fund (from the Dole Trust), providing some assistance for rent and utilities. **In each case, our ability to help those in need depends on you, our congregation. And because of you, we help a lot of people—your neighbors thank you!**



**LEARNING ABOUT LEAVENING.** The Children's Community Corner continued its study of parables in March lessons on Zoom—with some fun and tasty activities for families at home.

# 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—Fri., Apr. 8; Sat., Apr. 23; and Fridays, May 6 and 20, 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](http://anoncoffee.org).*

### **Classicopia: Fabulous Females—Friday, April 22, at 7:30 pm**

Virtuoso violinist and Hanover native Roseminna Watson joins pianist Dan Weiser for an evening of great music by women composers, including Clara Schumann, Florence Price, Pauline Viardot, and NH’s own Amy Beach. *Adults \$20, FCC members \$15, children free; for more, visit [classicopia.org/concert/fabulous-females/](http://classicopia.org/concert/fabulous-females/).*

### **Intersections: Bach, Merlet, and Mendelssohn (Benefit for Ukraine)—Sunday, April 24, at 2:00 pm**

Cameo Arts presents this benefit chamber music program by a superb ensemble—flautist Leslie Stroud, cellist Peter Zay, and pianist Matthew Odell. They’ll play selections by Johann Sebastian Bach, Felix Mendelssohn, and contemporary French composer Michel Merlet. *Free-will donation to support the International Rescue Committee (IRC), which is assisting refugees in Ukraine and Poland; visit [www.rescue.org/](http://www.rescue.org/).*

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

We’re delighted to have Bel Canto return to our Sanctuary under the direction of Jane Woods! The program features music for choir, strings, timpani, and piano, including a premiere by NH composer Travis Ramsey. *Adults \$15, students \$10, under 13 free; more at [www.belcantosingers.org](http://www.belcantosingers.org).*

### **Classicopia: More Broadway Violin!—Sunday, May 15, at 1:00 pm**

Violinist Tim Schwartz returns for a reprise of last summer’s wildly popular “Broadway Violin” concert with pianist Dan Weiser. *Adults \$20, FCC members \$15, children free; for more, visit [classicopia.org](http://classicopia.org).*

### **Cameo Baroque: Music of Johann Sebastian Bach—Saturday, May 21, at 7:00 pm**

Our own Ernie Drown brings his excellent ensemble back for an evening celebrating the master of Baroque music. *Free-will donation (\$20 suggested); beneficiary TBD. For more, please visit [cameoarts.org](http://cameoarts.org).*

### **Roseminna Watson, Violin, and Melody Fader, Piano—Sunday, May 22, at 3:00 pm**

Having shared a wonderful concert with us last October, this pair of friends returns with a new program for the spring. *Program and more details coming soon.*

### **Cantabile Women’s Chorus: Gloria!—Sunday, June 5, at 4:00 pm**

We are delighted to welcome back Cantabile for a concert originally planned for January but canceled due to COVID. The program includes music of Antonio Vivaldi, Johannes Brahms, and a new commission from Philip Silvey to commemorate Cantabile’s 20th anniversary last year. *Adults \$15, students \$10, under 13 free, advance ticket purchase preferred; more at [www.cantabilewomen.org/](http://www.cantabilewomen.org/).*

## **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](mailto:church@fccleb.org) • [www.fccleb.org](http://www.fccleb.org)  
**Rev. Stephen R. Silver:** [silver@fccleb.org](mailto:silver@fccleb.org) • **Music:** [music@fccleb.org](mailto:music@fccleb.org) • **Newsletter Submissions:** [church@fccleb.org](mailto:church@fccleb.org)





## First Congregational Church of Lebanon

10 South Park Street  
PO Box 230  
Lebanon, NH 03766

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### HOLY WEEK AT FCC APRIL 10-17

**Palm Sunday**

**10a\*** Liturgy of the Palms

**Maundy Thursday**

**7p\*** Communion, Tenebrae, Stripping of Altar

**Good Friday**

**12-3p** Meditation on the Seven Last Words

**7p\*** Service of the Word and Prayer

**Easter Sunday**

**6a** Ecumenical Sunrise Service (*Colburn Park*)

**10a\*** Festival Worship Service

*All in Sanctuary unless noted (\*Zoom available; contact office for link)*



Music  
at the  
Meetinghouse

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### 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

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