



# Grace Notes

The Newsletter of First Congregational Church

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## The Pastoral Perspective

Former President Jimmy Carter was admitted to hospice a couple of weeks before I sat down to write this. At this moment, he's still alive (at 98!), and I believe I speak for all of us in saying we offer our prayers for his health and for a comfortable passing.

Jimmy Carter's one-term presidency ended more than forty years ago, but the man is still a topic of conversation, in large part because of all that he did after he left office. Carter is the model of an ex-president, dedicated to helping others and working on causes dear to him. No media deals for him. No self-indulgent narcissism or an endless quest for power. Instead, he has offered himself and his name in service to others. He has also been an active member of his church, teaching Sunday School and writing a couple of books about faith and the role it has played in his life.

You may recall that my family and I met President Carter in Atlanta at the beginning of my sabbatical a few years ago. This encounter was arranged by an old friend and colleague, Seema Shams, who has worked for the Carter Center for many years. She was able to arrange for an invitation to a Carter Center event and a meet-and-greet afterward with the former president. The experience was memorable, and I remain grateful to Seem who made it possible.

I have no idea when Jimmy Carter's earthly sojourn will end, but I know that when it does, we will all be poorer for his absence. I know that has been said of many in our congregation, and it will be said again. Loss is hard but inevitable. We all know this, but it's still a hard reality to deal with. A spouse, a child, a pet. The loss of anyone that has been an important part of our lives can take a heavy psychic toll on us.

So, what should we do? How do we handle these losses? Well, hospice care is a great way to care for people who are passing on. People want to be in familiar settings, with loved ones, as they near their end. I know I

*Continued on Page 4*

### *Daily Lenten Reflections from the Rev. Steve Silver*

Every day through Easter Sunday, receive a devotional reflection by email. Sign up by sending an email to [silver@fccleb.org](mailto:silver@fccleb.org).

**All Are Welcome to Worship at FCC**

*Sundays at 10:00 AM (In-Person/Zoom)*

*For in-person worshippers, masks and vaccination are strongly encouraged but optional.*

**Coffee Hour Served March 12**

We've resumed this popular fellowship opportunity on one Sunday each month. Many thanks to Linda Jacobs for volunteering in March. **New volunteers are always welcome—on ANY Sunday!**

**Zoom Greeters and Liturgists Needed**

Congregation members sing in the choir, serve as ushers and Zoom greeters, and read as liturgists. Additional options include reading prayers, sharing stewardship messages, or even leading children's moments. **All are invited to serve in these essential roles, and no prior experience is needed (though Zoom greeting requires some basic training).**

*If you're interested in these opportunities to serve, please contact the church office.*

**HOLY WEEK IS APRIL 2-9**

*Full schedule of worship services on Page 4.*

**Lenten Lunch Bag Offering**

Every year, the CHILDREN'S COMMUNITY CORNER asks for your generous participation in our 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 funds welcome bags given to the children and women at WISE's safe home. Epilogos seeks to improve the lives of the residents of 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 may be used to collect your savings from sacrificing a regular treat during Lent. **Whatever you sacrifice, please return donations on PALM SUNDAY, APRIL 2.**



ONE GREAT HOUR OF SHARING (OGHS) is a vital, nationwide 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 various service partners to maximize its impact in these areas.

*OGHS is observed nationally on the fourth Sunday in Lent, but we'll gratefully accept donations until Easter, April 9. Please give as generously as you can, thanks! (Payable to FCC, memo "OGHS")*



*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 6 (contributions gratefully accepted after that date). Dedications will appear in the bulletin on EASTER SUNDAY, APRIL 9.**

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

# MARCH 2023

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday		
<b>26</b> 10a Worship/CCC 2p <b>Classicopia: Black Brilliance</b> <i>(Rescheduled to 3/25 at 7:30)</i>	<b>27</b> 4-8p UVMC Suzuki Program	<b>28</b> 4:30p FCC Choir 6p GB Tai Chi	<b>1</b> 7p Bel Canto Chamber Singers	<b>2</b> 4:45p UVMC Children's Choir 7p NA Group	<b>3</b> 7:30p <b>Anon Coffeehouse</b>	<b>4</b> 9a-2p UV Habitat Board Retreat		
<b>5</b> 10a Worship/CCC (Communion)	<b>6</b> 4-8p UVMC Suzuki Program	<b>7</b> 4:30p FCC Choir	<b>8</b> 8a-4p NH-WIC 7p Bel Canto Chamber Singers	<b>9</b> 4:45p UVMC Children's Choir 7p NA Group	<b>10</b> 6-9p Leb Rec Quilters Retreat	<b>11</b> 9a-5p Leb Rec Quilters Retreat		
<b>12</b> 10a Worship/CCC 5p <b>Student Piano Recital (S. Slater)</b>	<b>13</b> 4-8p UVMC Suzuki Program 7p Diaconate	<b>14</b> 4:30p FCC Choir No Church Council <i>(moved to 3/21)</i>	<b>15</b> 7p Bel Canto Chamber Singers	<b>16</b> 4:45p UVMC Children's Choir 7p NA Group	<b>17</b> 7:30p <b>Anon Coffeehouse</b>	<b>18</b> 12-5p UVMC Student Recitals		
<b>19</b> 10a Worship/CCC 3p <b>UVMC Faculty Showcase</b>	<b>20</b> 4-8p UVMC Suzuki Program	<b>21</b> 4:30p FCC Choir 7p Church Council <i>(moved from 3/14)</i>	<b>22</b> 7p Bel Canto Chamber Singers 7p <b>Bible Study: Book of Daniel</b>	<b>23</b> 11a-6p NH-WIC 4:45p UVMC Children's Choir 7p NA Group	<b>24</b>	<b>25</b> 2p <b>UVMC Suzuki Solo Recitals</b> 7:30p <b>Classicopia: Black Brilliance</b>		
<b>26</b> 10a Worship/CCC 1p <b>UVMC Suzuki Solo Recitals</b>	<b>27</b> 4-8p UVMC Suzuki Program	<b>28</b> 4:30p FCC Choir 5:30p Cooking for Families (LISTEN)	<b>29</b> 7p Bel Canto Chamber Singers 7p <b>Bible Study: Book of Daniel</b>	<b>30</b> 4:45p UVMC Children's Choir 7p NA Group	<b>31</b> 7:30p <b>Anon Coffeehouse</b>	<b>1</b> 3p <b>UVMC Cello Festival</b>		
<b>2</b> PALM SUNDAY 10a Worship/CCC (Liturgy of the Palms; Communion)	<b>3</b> 4-8p UVMC Suzuki Program	<b>4</b> 4:30p FCC Choir 5:30p Cooking for Families (LISTEN)	<b>5</b> 7p Bel Canto Chamber Singers 7p <b>Bible Study: Book of Daniel</b>	<b>6</b> MAUNDY THURSDAY 7p Communion and Tenebrae	<b>7</b> GOOD FRIDAY 12-3p Seven Last Words 7p Service of the Word and Prayer	<b>8</b>		
	<b>H</b>	<b>O</b>	<b>L</b>	<b>Y</b>	<b>W</b>	<b>E</b>	<b>E</b>	<b>K</b>

If you have questions or corrections regarding any event, please notify us at [church@fccleb.org](mailto:church@fccleb.org) or 603-448-4281.

## HOLY WEEK AT FCC

Masks and vaccination strongly encouraged;  
Zoom links will be emailed prior to each service.

### April 2—PALM SUNDAY

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

### April 6—MAUNDY THURSDAY

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

### April 7—GOOD FRIDAY

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

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

### April 9—EASTER SUNDAY

6 am: Ecumenical Sunrise Service (Colburn Park)

10 am: Festival Worship Service (Sanctuary/Zoom)

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

would. So, we should give thanks to those hospice workers, whether medical professionals, caseworkers, or chaplains. The work these people do is sacred.

But I would like to focus on the ones we lose. I know that when I die, I would like for people to say that I lived a good life, that I had been wise in my choice of how I used my time. That may seem like quite an aspiration, but it is one I have long had. During this season of Lent, I pray that God will forgive me for how I have spent my allotted time on this earth. I pray, too, that God will help me follow the path of Jesus, that his Spirit will direct me as I make choices about what to do. And so I will end this perspective with a prayer:

*Holy and loving God, I pray that you help me to stay on the path of Jesus; that when I stray you will help me find my way back; and that I will be sensitive to the promptings of your Spirit. In the name of Jesus I pray: Amen.*

Yours faithfully,

*Steve*

## SPRING BIBLE STUDY: THE BOOK OF DANIEL

Wednesdays at 7:00 pm on Zoom  
March 22 through April 19

You may remember something about “the writing on the wall.” Or recall the men who survive a fiery furnace. Or perhaps Belshazzar’s Feast rings a bell.

One of the later books of the Hebrew Bible, **Daniel** offered political lessons for a people living in exile and apocalyptic insights for those yearning to know what the future might hold for the Jewish people in a world of turmoil. The early Church understood this book as pointing to Jesus.

Please join us to explore this fascinating book over the course of five weeks, led by Rev. Steve Silver. We’ll see what Daniel said to people in the past, and what he has to say to us today. All you need is a bible, your faith, and some curiosity!

*If you’d like to participate, please contact the church office or Rev. Silver directly.*

## 2023 ANNUAL MEETING

Roughly 35 people attended our Annual Meeting on Zoom. After the Rev. Steve Silver offered an invocation, the congregation voted to accept the minutes of the 2022 meeting. Moderator Barb Jones then invited **reports from officers and committee chairs**. Expanding on his message in the Annual Report, Steve emphasized his call for the Bylaws review subcommittee to reconvene; this is important and necessary work. He expressed similar urgency about the Pastor-Parish Relations Committee, which has not met in over a year. Steve invited comments and feedback from the congregation, welcoming everyone to contact him at any time. “It’s your church, and I need to hear from you.” He also asked everyone to consider what our church community will or should look like in the post-pandemic period. How are we meeting people’s needs, using Zoom, and addressing changing patterns of participation? He appealed again for more Zoom greeters in particular.

**Trustees** chair Valerie Nevel then referred to the audit by Parkers Accounting, which she reminded everyone is not a full, formal audit but rather a cursory review of our investment statements and accounts. Valerie pointed out that our endowment values are down 18%, while we took just over 5% draw. As the 2023 budget is not balanced, she cautioned that we may well need to take more than 5% this year to cover our expenses.

For the **Board of Governors** Walter Scott reminded everyone that he

hasn’t been chair for the full year, so he is still getting acclimated to the role. He welcomes questions, concerns, comments, and ideas from anyone relative to building and property. **Diaconate** chair Linda Gerlach next extended an invitation to consider filling one of the four remaining Diaconate vacancies. She noted that serving as a Deacon is not an onerous responsibility.

For the **Children’s Community Corner**, Nan Parsons thanked the FCC community for supporting and giving their time to the children, especially the parents who get their kids to church and support the program. Several expressed gratitude to Nan for her work, and Barb Jones appreciated a particular line from Nan’s report: “Inspiration propels a person from apathy to possibility.”

Referring to the **Music Committee** report, Rev. Silver expressed thanks to Ernie Drown, Brian Clancy, and the other members of the choir for their tremendous job on Sundays. “Our choir,” he said, “is punching above its weight.” Adding to the **Mission and Social Action** report, Linda Jacobs noted the committee has discussed an appeal to the congregation on behalf of WISE, for baked goods for families in its safe homes. Anyone interested should communicate with WISE directly.

Speaking as chair of the **Pastor-Parish Relations Committee**, Barb Jones acknowledged that this committee needs to meet and get to work, in order to encourage improved communication between pastor and congregation. The committee has good members; it just needs to meet.

Barb welcomes questions, comments, and information.

The congregation voted to accept all committee reports, before moving on to the **Nominating Committee**. Barb Jones referred to the proposed roster, noting the high number of vacancies. She observed the need to revise the church’s Bylaws to better suit our congregation’s current size. She thanked those who had agreed to continue in their roles. Barb also noted that while Susan Pratt had expressed a desire to continue as a deacon, our Bylaws limit deacons to two consecutive three-year terms. Church Council had recommended a waiver for this case only (not a permanent bylaw change), and the congregation agreed. Sue expressed her appreciation, adding a sincere endorsement to anyone considering service as a deacon.

Barb then asked for nominations from the floor, and Linda Jacobs volunteered to join the Memorial Gardens Committee for the term ending 2025. Rev. Silver added a final appeal for volunteers to help Barb with the Nominating process itself, which is an important job. The congregation voted to accept the full slate of 2023 nominations as presented and updated.

### Committee Meetings

The following regular meetings will happen remotely via Zoom:

<b>Diaconate</b>	3/13 and 4/10, 7:00
<b>Council</b>	3/21 and 4/11, 7:00
<b>MSA</b>	3/27 and 4/24, 7:00

*For information on other groups’ plans to meet, contact the church office.*

Barb then invited discussion of the **proposed budget for 2023**, and **Treasurer Dawn Troutman** noted the challenge of increased operating expenses, similar to what we're all experiencing in personal finances. Stewardship income was also down in 2022, though we're maintaining a goal of \$100,000 for the coming year. Dawn reviewed other income figures, including increased revenue from use of premises; Church Administrator Brian Clancy clarified that rental rates have remained the same and credited the many groups that use our building responsibly. Barb asked whether the rates were variable or voluntary; Brian explained that while we do have fixed rental and heating fees, most users pay a negotiated rate based on purpose, audience, budget, and other variables. We try to make the space accessible and affordable.

Dawn continued her summary of the budget on the expense side, noting the placeholder figure of \$10,000 for increases in staff compensation and benefits. Fellowship and events have been reduced, while expected amounts for special offerings and the Open Door Ministry have been increased, reflecting their rising importance. A new line item of \$1500 will support costs of the Diaconate's congregational care and outreach. An increase in financial services anticipates higher audit costs, and utility costs are all higher.

In total, the budget shows a deficit of over \$30,000, despite efforts to streamline and make cuts. We are not, however, committed to spend all that we've budgeted, and we hope to increase membership and stewardship. Walter Scott noted that

the Parsonage insulation project will reduce operational costs by making the house more efficient. Valerie Nevel reminded everyone that we'll have to cover the deficit by spending from endowment, after a down-market year. She is concerned that fixed costs in the budget mean that this situation will persist in future years unless we are able to increase our membership. She noted that we've never passed a budget that carried such a large deficit. Despite these concerns, the congregation voted to approve the 2023 budget.

Rev. Silver thanked everyone for spending their time on church business, for listening to each other, and for conducting themselves in Christian charity. We may not have agreed on every item, but we had a civil discussion. Despite the limits of Zoom, Brian Clancy led everyone in singing the closing hymn, "Blest Be the Tie That Binds."

## CHURCH COUNCIL

Jon Scott opened Council's February meeting by inviting everyone to share their **hopes and goals for the coming year**. Linda Oronte wants to attract more younger people and families, recalling that when she taught Sunday School many years ago there were around 40-50 children at church.

Others agreed but wondered how and whether we could achieve that. Similarly, Nan Parsons seeks more connections between children and adults at FCC, whether on Sunday morning or in a mentorship program.

Linda Gerlach would like the church to come together more as a single community again, rather than just as

two groups of in-person and Zoom worshippers on Sunday. Several shared the hope that we can re-integrate our congregation in some way. Jon Scott explained that personal reasons still compel him to keep distance; Walter Scott, having two small children, noted that online worship suits his current family circumstances best. (Walter added that he'd like to see online giving implemented this year, along with resuming community dinners and other outreach activity.)

Rev. Steve Silver recognized that all perspectives are valid—he prefers to have people participate and connect in person but affirmed the positive virtues offered by Zoom. He hopes to consult with others in the NH Conference for ideas about how to strengthen ties between in-person and remote aspects of congregational life. He urged patience as we address this and other challenges, such as our diminished population of children and youth. He extended thanks to Nan for her work to welcome and include kids, stressing the importance of engaging them in a faith life amid myriad claims on their attention.

Brian Clancy believes the stalled by-laws review is hindering many aspects of our operations, as evident in the outdated structure of our Annual Meeting agenda. He also observed that it's reductive to consider the division between in-person and Zoom communities when we've lost so many who now don't participate in any way. Jon Scott urged us to recognize what's within and beyond our control, seeing ways in which we can act to make a difference. He noted an opportunity presented by the neighboring residential project

# NEWS AND NOTES

to ensure that we're allowing new people to engage. We can't keep doing everything the way we have, in a changing environment, and expect to grow as we hope.

Jon then moved on to a list of **short-term priorities for Council** that he had included in the agenda, inviting questions or comments on those.

There followed a discussion of the **fees FCC charges for using the building**, and of the possibility of updating those fees to ensure that they keep pace with operational costs. Brian explained current practice regarding building rentals, noting that our formal rates are almost always discounted or negotiated according to several variables. We currently try not to prevent anyone from using the building on the basis of cost, while still managing to draw enough revenue to cover costs such as heating oil, electricity, water/sewer, and other utilities. It was also noted that attracting groups to use the building is a way of enhancing our community image and inclusive mission. There was some debate about the degree to which rental revenues should cover our budget beyond costs incurred directly by users. Rev. Silver pointed out, for example, that we should account for

asset depreciation of our building, which results from increased use. While not an urgent priority, it was agreed that Council would revisit our rental policy to ensure a balance between making church use inclusive and affordable and funding our fixed structural costs.

Steve further expressed a hope that we can revive our **capital campaign plans**, which had stalled even prior to the pandemic hiatus. He called for a review of the priorities we outlined several years ago, seeking greater enthusiasm from the congregation for a drive to fund those. Jon agreed that the campaign should be given weight and consideration by Council and the congregation at large.

Jon noted that our **Bylaws revision** is more accurately a revision of the structure of the church, its systems and operations. Walter Scott asked what our plan was for that revision, and what exactly it entails. Jon and Brian explained that the earlier subcommittee's efforts did in fact make progress. We inventoried current operations and needs of the church, with respect to the existing Bylaws and the reality of our congregational capacity at present. There's a framework in which to renew and continue this important work.

Similarly, the **Personnel and Pastor-Parish Relations Committees** have clear tasks and need to reconvene, get to work, and report to Council. Jon also repeated his hope that we can provide specific, direct **feedback to the NH Conference** on last year's consultation process.

Although no one besides Rev. Silver was able to attend the **Prepared to Serve** conference, Jon reiterated his belief in the value of such training events, to gain perspective from other churches and tools for improving our leadership. Steve also noted his desire to have both the Conference Minister (Rev. Gordon Rankin) and newly named Associate Conference Minister (Rev. Sara Marean) visit our church as guest preachers.

Jon next asked whether there was any further response regarding **COVID policies** in the two months since Council voted to modify them. Steve noted that a congregation member had shared an article stressing the care of older and more vulnerable people, suggesting COVID concerns are still very much active and valid.

Referring to a report from **Treasurer Dawn Troutman**, Jon cautioned that a disparity between our early-year expenses and income from offerings

## ANOTHER SOUPER BOWL RECORD!

THANKS TO YOU—and an opening drive from the friends who attended Larry Kirkpatrick's memorial—we now have another SOUPER BOWL record:

# 556 CANS

The total was split as always among HEADREST, the UV HAVEN, and LISTEN COMMUNITY SERVICES.

## Help LISTEN'S Heating Helpers

Amid a sharp rise in utility costs, LISTEN'S Heating Helpers Program has struggled to assist those of our neighbors who need help warming their homes.

*The Byrne Foundation has offered a \$25,000 match for this winter's program. Please consider a donation, and it will be doubled! For more, visit [www.listencs.org/heating-helpers](http://www.listencs.org/heating-helpers).*

# MUSIC AT THE MEETINGHOUSE



Music  
at the  
Meetinghouse

## Upcoming Concerts: Winter Into Spring

All in the Sanctuary. Masks and vaccination recommended.

**The Anonymous Coffeehouse**—Fridays, March 3, 17, 31; April 14, 28; and May 12, 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. Patrons come and go as they please; baked goods and non-alcoholic drinks available. *Free admission. For performers and more, visit [anoncoffee.org/](http://anoncoffee.org/).*

**Upper Valley Music Center Faculty Showcase**—Sunday, March 19, at 3:00 pm

This popular annual program features the vocal and instrumental excellence of the faculty next door at UVMC, ranging from classical repertoire to traditional and folk genres and original compositions. *Freewill donation; all proceeds benefit tuition assistance fund. More at [uvmusic.org/event/faculty-showcase-2023](http://uvmusic.org/event/faculty-showcase-2023).*

**Classicopia: Black Brilliance (A Celebration of Black Composers)**—Saturday, March 25, at 7:30 pm  
Pianist Dan Weiser and Borowsky siblings Emmanuel (violin) and Frances (cello) offer a delayed celebration of Black History Month, with music of Scott Joplin, Samuel Coleridge-Taylor, Florence Price, and William Grant Still. *Adults \$20, FCC members \$15, children free; for more, visit [classicopia.org/concert/black-brilliance/](http://classicopia.org/concert/black-brilliance/).*

**UVMC Cello Festival**—Saturday, April 1, at 6:00 pm (with rehearsals starting at 3:00)

**Acacia Chamber Music (Donahue, Stroud, and Odell)**—Friday, April 21, at 7:30 pm

**Classicopia: Virtuoso Violin (Watson and Weiser)**—Sunday, April 30, at 2:00 pm

**UVMC Faculty Recital: Jennifer Turbes, Viola**—Saturday, May 6, at 1:00 pm

**Bel Canto Chamber Singers**—Saturday, May 6, at 7:30 pm / Sunday, May 7, at 4:00 pm

and endowment earnings was to be expected, not indicative of a pattern.

Lastly, Walter Scott stated for the **Board of Governors** that refinishing the Sanctuary floor should be made a priority, recalling that efforts were made prior to the pandemic to get an estimate for that work. Nan Parsons added that research was done into pew cushions and carpeting too, but she isn't sure what became of that information, which now likely needs updating anyway.

## DIACONATE

At the Deacons' February meeting, Bob Gerlach shared a devotional reading from Leo Tolstoy regarding pillars of faith. The group also wished

Stacey Steele well as she prepared to start a new job later that month.

The Deacons also assigned monthly duties for the year, including leaders for communion service. Bob will be updating the Deacon packets of contact lists, communion guidelines, and usher instructions. Stacey has created a flyer for recruiting Zoom Greeters from the congregation.

The group also considered how best to recruit new Deacons. Some felt that current bylaw requirements of covenant membership and term limits might be hindering participation. It was suggested that prospects might benefit from shadowing current Deacons in their duties. Recruitment falls within the wider effort to attract new visitors and members, an effort

the Deacons hope to lead. The group discussed how to retain relationships with members who have become largely dormant in recent years.

Stacey also observed that UVMC's new children's choir, which rehearses in the Parish Hall, has now grown to around 40 children. These families may offer new church connections. There is also a need to engage older youth at FCC, to bridge their participation into young adulthood.

While Zoom has been valuable in facilitating remote connections when needed, the Deacons are sensitive to its unintended division of the church family across the two formats. It will be important going forward to offer opportunities for integration and shared community.

# The End of an Era

## Bike & Build to Discontinue All Routes

In February we received sad news from BIKE & BUILD, our longtime partners in affordable housing advocacy, who have visited Lebanon every June (except in two pandemic summers) since 2005. The organization is ending all its cross-country routes, as explained in a February 22 email:



Dear Bike & Build Hosts and Build Partners,

As the saying goes: There are no bad days on Bike & Build, some days are just better than others. Today, sadly, is not one of those better days as it is **with heavy hearts we are announcing the plan to sunset Bike & Build after this summer's programming—our 20th year pedaling for affordable housing.**

We are reaching out to our hosts and build partners because we have also made the difficult decision to consolidate this year's trips to ensure rider safety. It makes the most sense for the organization to run only our Central US and Drift West routes for one last summer, and **to cancel our Northern US and Southern US routes.** We are devastated that we've had to make this decision, and we really wish we could spend one more summer with our incredible hosts and build partners on our Northern and Southern routes.

Over the years, rider recruitment for our summer programming has been dwindling. Our past and current staff and board members have chased down every idea, lead, and partnership to keep our organization, and therefore our mission, afloat. The COVID-19 pandemic made this challenge more difficult, as we had to cancel trips two years in a row and lost our #1 source of recruitment—recent alumni. The dip in rider enrollment, combined with rising costs (gear, vehicles, fuel, etc.), has put Bike & Build in survival mode for too long. **Our mission may be more relevant than ever, but our model is no longer sustainable.**

We are currently exploring options to keep Bike & Build's legacy and mission alive after we sunset, which means that we might be able to connect our hosts and build partners to another organization with a similar mission. If and when we have news regarding the future of Bike & Build's mission, we will reach out and make connections to our partners.

**Bike & Build has been, and always will be, the sum of the collective love and support this community has provided over the years.** We owe our hosts and build partners a deep debt of thanks and gratitude—you gave us purpose and work, you housed us, you fed us, you taught us, you inspired us with your impacts on your communities. While we won't be riding your way this summer, we hope you'll consider joining in on the celebration however you are able—options for participation can be found on our [website](#).



Much love and, as always, in spandex,

*B&B Board and Staff*

*For more information about Bike & Build's current and future plans, please visit [bikeandbuild.org/about/sunsetting/](https://bikeandbuild.org/about/sunsetting/).*

*Going forward, please consider supporting—with volunteer labor and financial contributions—the two local affordable-housing organizations with which Bike & Build worked every June, [COVER Home Repair](#) and [Upper Valley Habitat for Humanity](#). Thank you!*



**First Congregational Church of Lebanon**

10 South Park Street  
PO Box 230  
Lebanon, NH 03766

DATED MATERIAL  
PLEASE DELIVER PROMPTLY

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED



Music  
*at the*  
Meetinghouse

**Upcoming Concerts: Winter Into Spring**

*All in the Sanctuary. Masks and vaccination recommended.*

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**BIBLE STUDY: THE BOOK OF DANIEL**  
Wednesdays at 7:00 pm on Zoom, Starting March 22

**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

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