

Grace Notes

The Newsletter of First Congregational Church

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The Pastoral Perspective

Later this month, we'll celebrate Thanksgiving, that quintessentially American holiday. Football, food, family, and faith are part of what marks this day. If we are serious about the holiday, we'll take time to give thanks to God for the abundance with which we've been blessed: homes, food, community. Not everyone, though, enjoys these blessings, as we've been reminded by the little house that arrived at our church this month.

As you hopefully are aware, our church has offered to host this modified RV, in which two individuals live. Not everyone in the Upper Valley has been excited by the prospect of this vehicle being in their neighborhood. But what kind of church would we be if we failed to offer hospitality? God loves the homeless as much as God loves you and me. They are our brothers and sisters, not a problem to be ignored but people for whom finding housing can prove to be a crippling challenge.

This is an issue that has long been with us. People have "lived rough" in the Upper Valley for a long time. Some live in tents, others under bridges. When it grows cold, some peoples' health and even lives are at risk. Jesus would want us to do something, not to look away and hope someone else will step up and deal with the problem. Part of what we can do is support initiatives like this one, community-based and concrete, that make a real difference in the lives of some of our neighbors.

Doing this is making a statement to everyone about who we are, just as we did by hanging our banner welcoming immigrants and refugees here. In making these statements we proclaim that we take the teachings of Jesus seriously, that we understand who is the focus of God's caring and concern.

So, come the 25th of the month, I'll enjoy all that Thanksgiving has to offer—and one of the blessings that I will acknowledge with a joyful heart is that I am part of a community that tries to show God's love and caring through its faithful and heartfelt actions.

Yours faithfully,

Steve

SUNDAY SERVICE

Sunday Worship at FCC

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

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

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

Join us as we gather for worship together!

Greeters and Liturgists Needed

All are invited to serve as greeters/ushers, liturgists, or some other role in worship—reading the prayers of invocation or dedication, sharing a stewardship message, or even leading a children's moment.

As we continue to offer services online, we also need a volunteer "ZOOM GREETER" each week.

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

Spend Some Time in the Corner!

The Children's Community Corner, that is! We'd like to involve more of our congregation's adults in engaging with FCC's wonderful kids, whether that's on Sunday or another day of the week.

Our ultimate purpose for this interaction is mentorship, not just supervision. Please consider offering your time to our young people—thanks!

If you are interested in volunteering or have any questions, please contact Nan Parsons at nlp3721@yahoo.com or 603-863-8354.

STEWARDSHIP SUNDAY

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 21

We will dedicate our pledges for the coming year and celebrate our congregational community.

Please see additional information on Page 4.



Ecumenical Thanksgiving Service

Monday, November 22
7:00 pm
FCC Sanctuary

All are welcome to share this inclusive, ecumenical worship service, joining friends from across the Upper Valley to faithfully observe Thanksgiving.

Let us give thanks as a community!

Do Your Part to Fill the Cart

Greater Lebanon continues to struggle with rising poverty and food insecurity, exacerbated by all the economic challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic. To address this need, we have resumed collecting items in our shopping cart in the Parish Hall, for a different beneficiary each month.

This month we're collecting non-perishable food and personal-care items for
THE UPPER VALLEY HAVEN

Thanks for fighting local poverty and hunger!

Christmas Decorating Party!

Following Worship on Sunday, November 28

Yes, CHRISTMAS!! Advent begins the last Sunday in November, so plan to stay after worship to hang wreaths, string lights, trim our tree, and have fun getting the church ready for this festive season.

Join in welcoming the spirit of the season!

COMMITTEE NOTES

CHURCH COUNCIL

Treasurer Terry Ellison reported to Council that both income and expenses look as expected for this point in our budget year. We are short of our annual stewardship goal, but much of that typically comes in the last two months of the year. **Trustees** chair Valerie Nevel noted that she's made the full budgeted amount of transfers for the year, and that all our expected trust income has been received. She added that our investment outlook remains positive.

Terry and Valerie intend to finish the **2022 budgeting process** prior to the end of the year, so they asked that all committees identify and submit any budget requests. A question about funding our Open Door Ministry prompted discussion of how to supplement communion offering, ideally from the Dole Trust for mission purposes.

Terry also conveyed the urgency of reinvigorating the ongoing **bylaws review process** and improve critical governance processes. He and Valerie have considered in particular the Personnel Committee, suggesting that someone in the congregation with human-resources experience would complement the committee's financial role. Other members could come from the Board of Governors and Pastoral Relations Committee, and it may even be helpful to have someone from the Music Committee to help evaluate the organist and choir director position.

Rev. Silver voiced hesitation about adding too many layers, especially as we're already concerned about our volunteer capacity, but there is

general agreement that the Personnel Committee should work more on staff evaluation. All feel that Steve should be directly involved in staff evaluation, simply because of his day-to-day interaction. Terry stressed that an evaluation process should be written into the bylaws, which currently say little about this area. Jon Scott noted that once a process is in place, the committee wouldn't need to meet often, perhaps just once or twice a year. Linda Jacobs suggested that Council members email further recommendations to Terry directly.

The **Diaconate** has agreed that the Deacon of the Month should be responsible for recruiting Zoom greeters, along with ushers, although the pool of volunteers for this role remains limited. A related issue is the ongoing need to improve our technology for streaming services. Our new ethernet connection will help considerably, but sound quality remains erratic.

For **Music at the Meetinghouse** Brian Clancy reported that FCC had recently hosted a number of excellent concerts, and groups have truly enjoyed making music for audiences in our Sanctuary again. There has been an inquiry about whether distancing requirements might be relaxed, but Council agreed that our current policy—requiring vaccination, masks, and distancing—is secure and should continue. The main challenge is ensuring that the vaccination requirement is enforced consistently among a variety of users and participants; total compliance may not be possible. Fortunately, our users are very responsible and

have all made an honest effort to meet our expectations.

Board of Governors chair John Gilliatt reported that he's again arranged for Chip Silver to do snow clearance on our sidewalks for the winter. He also supported the need for revising the personnel areas of the bylaws.

Corrine Erskine noted for **Mission and Social Action** that October is our last month of providing dinners at Dismas House, unless we choose to do another year. The partnership has gone well, but some question whether Dismas truly needs our help, as it seems well cared for by several established affiliations. A related question is the continuation of our shopping cart collection, for which the current process and participation are unclear. Council agreed that we should maintain this ministry as much as possible.

Rev. Silver followed up on a new **proposal to host an RV shelter** on our property temporarily, having met with program coordinator Simon Dennis. The plan is to begin this arrangement on November 1 and host the unit for perhaps six weeks. The house is largely self-sufficient, posing no demand on our facilities or resources, and it can be moved if needed for snow clearance. Council

Committee Meetings

The following regular meetings will happen remotely via Zoom:

Diaconate 11/8 and 12/13, 7:00

Council 11/9 and 12/14, 7:00

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

COMMITTEE NOTES

members expressed full support for this low-obligation way to address homelessness and raise awareness of housing issues in our community.

Wendell Smith then discussed the **Scouting program's relocation** to the American Legion, explaining that missed communications had caused confusion in the chartering process. Brian Clancy added that the Scouts have stated three basic needs—meeting accommodation, storage space and access, and the assistance provided by a charter representative. The first two needs have been freely provided for many years, but it has become difficult for FCC to offer consistent, effective support from a volunteer charter representative. Council members all agreed on these points.

Council had addressed this matter in September, considering and then approving the Scouts' request to be

released from their charter; Wendell advocated his own proposal to keep the Troop at FCC. (Unfortunately, the proposal had not been given to Council sufficiently in advance for members to review it.) He observed that FCC's decades-long relationship with Scouting deserved recognition, a point on which everyone agrees. Brian, Linda Jacobs, and Rev. Silver, however, noted that their contacts with the Scouts had confirmed their intention to leave. The Scouts themselves asked to be released from the charter, and Council had agreed even while recognizing our long, proud involvement with the Troop.

Concluding with his **pastor's report**, Steve again commemorated long-time member Ardell Mansfield, who passed away on October 2. He has appreciated the collective efforts to improve our worship livestream and keep our in-person experience safe for everyone. Steve also expressed

his gratitude that the church choir has resumed singing in worship (albeit masked), and his hope that our bylaws work can progress.

DIACONATE

The Deacons in October agreed to add recruitment of Zoom Greeters for Sunday worship to the Deacon of the Month's responsibilities. The Zoom Greeter needs to be on site at church, but the role does not require tech expertise. Hesitant volunteers can observe someone else at first. A new Sanctuary ethernet connection has eliminated wifi-related glitches.

The DoM already is asked to find ushers, which has been harder due to reduced in-person attendance. It was suggested that more families or couples be asked and that a list of experienced ushers be consulted.

In other worship-related news, we continue to use individual elements for communion as a precaution, but a more easily opened design will be researched. Congregants are asked to dispose of their empty packets in a basket following the service; ushers will check the pews for discards. We do not plan to resume coffee hour before the end-of-year holidays. And, until a vaccine is available to them, FCC's young kids will participate in the Children's Community Corner only by Zoom, a few times monthly.

The Diaconate wishes to note that prayer shawls are available for any individual or caregiver who may be in need of comforting (contact your deacon or the church office). Deacons have also stressed the benefit of in-person visits to anyone who might appreciate that.

Stewardship 2022: Giving From the Heart

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

As the story in **Mark 12:38-44** recounts, Jesus offers a warning about following the wrong motives in both faith and philanthropy. While the scribes and the wealthy act in ostentatious self-promotion, the poor widow is comparatively more generous, giving the meager amount she can simply because it is the right thing to do. As we approach our own stewardship, we're invited to follow her example—to give from the heart.

STEWARDSHIP SUNDAY IS NOVEMBER 21. Please consider your commitment, prayerfully and honestly, to FCC's mission and ministry in 2022, and join in dedicating our pledges together.

Silent Auction Benefit for Local Afghan Refugees

UV Group Teams Up with Anonymous
Coffeehouse for November 19 Event

As refugees from Afghanistan arrive and seek new homes in this country, Upper Valley residents are generously preparing to facilitate their efforts. One such initiative is the **UV Neighborhood Support Group**, working in collaboration with NGOs **Seeds of Peace** and **Terra Firma International**. The group has arranged for a benefit silent auction of works by internationally known artists, and for complementary entertainment it proposed a partnership with FCC's **Anonymous Coffeehouse**, which offers live music at our church throughout the fall and winter.

The auction will be set up in the Parish Hall on **FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 19, with bidding open from 6:00 to 9:00**. The Anonymous Coffeehouse's show will start as usual at 7:30 in the Sanctuary (see page 7), and guests can move freely between the two. (FCC is donating the space for the entire event.)

All auction proceeds (and any additional donations unrelated to bids) will fund basic expenses for local Afghan refugees. All donations will be managed by Terra Firma online (terrafirmainternational.org).

Please support this important mission effort!

Friday, November 19, from 6:00 to 9:00



First Congregational Church of Lebanon

10 South Park St, on Colburn Park / Masks and proof of vaccination required

Live Music at 7:30 with The Anonymous Coffeehouse

Featuring *Ava Burnham, Rose Hip Jam, and 2x2*

Isaak Alexandre Kabalian

Meet Our New Guests!



Earlier this fall Church Council unanimously agreed to have FCC participate in a pilot program offering two unhoused individuals short-term shelter in an RV. Project organizer Simon Dennis has appealed to several Upper Valley churches for help covering the period from October 2021 through March 2022. After a month at the UU church in Norwich, the RV trailer has crossed the river for a six-week stay in the back of our parking lot.

The trailer's residents have each struggled to find housing amidst other challenges for several years. **Leon Simmons** made his way by bus from Florida to the Upper Valley in June, while **Brandi Briggs** has lived in parts of Vermont all her life. Each in their own small unit in the RV, they're grateful to have a warm home as winter approaches.

The project is designed so that the RV shelter and its residents are fully self-sufficient, drawing power from a generator and well insulated from the elements. FCC and other host churches are invited to offer resources and support as they wish, but the program's only requirement is the site itself.

Please help make our residents feel welcome, while also respecting their privacy and space. If you are interested offering help or connecting with them, please contact the church office.

OUR MISSION NEAR AND FAR

CHRISTMAS COMES TO ALL The Listen Holiday Basket Program



For years FCC has participated in the **Holiday Basket Program** organized by Listen Community Services. The economic challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic have increased demand for this program, as families struggle to provide warm clothing for their children and food for holiday meals. **There is already a wait list.**

Listen is once again doing all the shopping this year, but they need our help. While we won't be offering items on our familiar giving tree, please consider a gift to this vital program. Last year our church gave a total of \$1600 toward gift cards and clothing for families and seniors in need. **Contributions gratefully accepted until November 19** (payable to FCC, memo "Listen Baskets").

Thanks to all of you for giving to our neighbors in the true spirit of Christmas!

Operation Christmas Child is Happening Online National Collection Week: November 15-22

You're invited to participate in OPERATION CHRISTMAS CHILD, an annual gift campaign organized by Samaritan's Purse, which ships shoeboxes of supplies and toys to children worldwide. Gloria and Phil Hammond have managed our collection at FCC in recent years; this year you may build shoeboxes online before national collection week, November 15-22.



For more information about this year's virtual operation, and to build a box online, please visit www.samaritanspurse.org/what-we-do/operation-christmas-child/. Thank you!

Dear Parishioners,

On behalf of Epilogos Charities I would like to express my appreciation for your generous gift of \$1080 to support our education programs. Education is the hope for the future for children in San José Villanueva, and your donation helps support many students.

Thank you for your ongoing commitment to Epilogos Charities.



Brooke Finnell
US Executive Director

FCC's Building Use Policy

As we host worship services, concerts, and other regular events at FCC, we have continued to be cautious about the risks of COVID-19. Council has regularly revisited this important issue, and we are working closely with our user groups to ensure a safe environment for all.

All users are now required to be vaccinated, wear masks, and maintain physical distance (when possible) while inside our building. User groups themselves are responsible for enforcing these requirements at their events.

FCC's policies are subject to change, depending on local data and circumstances.

MUSIC AT THE MEETINGHOUSE



**Music
at the
Meetinghouse**

Upcoming Concerts at FCC

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

The Anonymous Coffeehouse—Fridays, November 5 and 19, December 3, all 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. *For more, please visit anoncoffee.org. In conjunction with the November 19 show, there will be a silent auction in the Parish Hall from 6:00 to 9:00, to benefit local Afghan refugees. Please join us to support this cause while you enjoy great music! (See Page 5.)*

Classicopia: Four-Hand Holiday—Sunday, December 5, at 1:00

Pianists Dan Weiser and Elizabeth Borowsky collaborate on a program of seasonal favorites arranged for four-hand piano, from *Sleigh Ride* and *Jingle Bells* to Tchaikovsky’s *Nutcracker Suite*, and all the carols in between. *Adults \$20, FCC members \$15, children free; for details and advance tickets, please visit classicopia.org.*

Bel Canto Chamber Singers—Saturday, December 11, at 7:30 / Sunday, December 12, at 4:00

We regret that these concerts have been **relocated to the Norwich Congregational Church**—but we heartily encourage everyone to attend anyway! *Adults \$15, students \$10, under 13 free; more at www.belcantosingers.org.*

UVMC Messiah Sing (Abridged)—Sunday, December 19, at 2:00

Our annual performance of G. F. Handel’s beloved oratorio, in a covid-safe format. *More details to come!*

October 15, 2021

Dear Steve, Brian, and the Congregation of FCC-Lebanon,

This is a small attempt to express our deep gratitude for being such wonderful neighbors to us—not only through words, but through a multitude of generous and thoughtful actions. When this summer came we were able to switch from long months of remote lessons and ensembles—even tiny kids had to use Zoom!—to in-person ones outdoors under tents. These would have had to be impossibly close together if we had been limited to our property, but you allowed us to place quite a few on your lawn, nicely spaced far apart. It was wonderful to be able to make music together again, and we hope the melodies that reached your ears during that time, though mostly not of professional quality, were pleasant enough—and that they gave you satisfaction in the happiness you made possible.

We especially appreciate your help during this academic year. Our Suzuki classes are too big for our building, and the local schools which accommodated them in the past are no longer renting to outside groups. So you have opened your Sanctuary, Parish Hall, and basement to all our Suzuki group classes every Monday afternoon for the whole school year, at quite a reasonable cost. Playing music with others in person is critical to students’ growth in skills and character. It’s been a big undertaking to make it work, and you, Brian, have been super helpful. You have all been supportive in every way as we’ve sought alternatives.

We could not ask for a better neighbor. We hope to be as good to you as you are to us. Please let us know whenever you can use our helping hands!



With sincere appreciation,

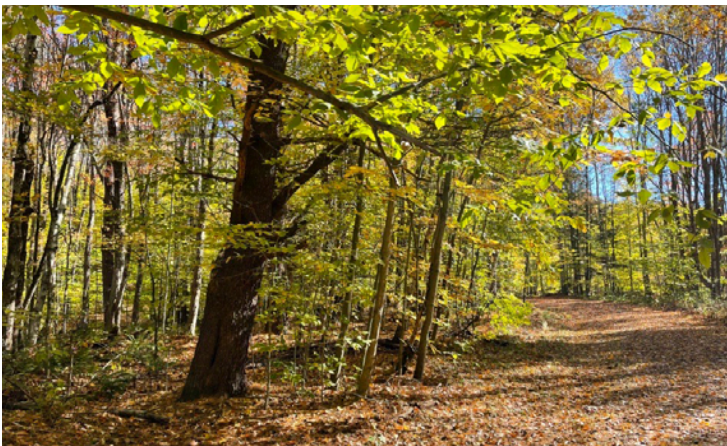
Judy Pond, Secretary

on behalf of the Board of Directors, Staff, and Faculty

THE LIFE OF OUR CONGREGATION



FALL ON FARNUM HILL. Ranger Ron Bailey led a small group along familiar trails that he himself had once surveyed and created—including the trail now named for him. Ron also pointed out Saddle Rock, a glacial erratic that was a boyhood favorite of his son David.



First Congregational Church of Lebanon

Weekly Worship and Church School: Sundays, 10:00 am • Office Hours: Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday, 9-12
10 South Park Street, P.O. Box 230, Lebanon, NH 03766 • 603-448-4281 • church@fccleb.org • www.fccleb.org
Rev. Stephen R. Silver: silver@fccleb.org • Music: music@fccleb.org • Newsletter Submissions: church@fccleb.org



First Congregational Church of Lebanon

10 South Park Street
PO Box 230
Lebanon, NH 03766

DATED MATERIAL
PLEASE DELIVER PROMPTLY

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED



Music at the Meetinghouse

Upcoming Concerts at FCC

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

The Anonymous Coffeehouse—Fridays, Oct. 22, Nov. 5 and 19, and Dec. 3, all 7:30 pm

Classicopia: Four-Hand Holiday (Weiser/Borowsky)—Sunday, December 5, at 1:00

Bel Canto Chamber Singers—Saturday, December 11, at 7:30 / Sunday, December 12, at 4:00

UVMC Messiah Sing (Abridged)—Sunday, December 18, at 2:00

Silent Auction Benefit for Local Afghan Refugees

Friday, November 19, 6:00 to 9:00

CHRISTMAS COMES TO ALL
The Listen Holiday Basket Program
Contributions accepted until November 19



First Congregational Church of Lebanon

The Rev. Stephen R. Silver, Pastor

Ernie Drown, Organist and Choir Director • Nancy Parsons, Children's Community Corner
Barbara Teeter, Chair of Deacons • Linda Jacobs, Chair of Church Council • Barbara Jones, Moderator
Brian Clancy, Church Administrator

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

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