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The Pastoral Perspective

The mash-up has been receiving a lot of attention lately thanks to Thanksgivukkah, the once-in-a-lifetime confluence of Thanksgiving and Hanukkah. This joyful, only-in-America marriage of the sacred and secular is but the latest example of a genre in which two distinct entities are blended to make something new. The beauty of the mash-up is that it is protean in its versatility—it can involve not only holidays but music (such as guitar-shredding, Mozart-loving videos on YouTube) and literature (*Pride and Prejudice* and *Zombies*, for example).

Oh, and did I mention Scripture?

That's right, Scripture. Consider the Nativity and how we recount the stories told by the Evangelists. Mark, of course, doesn't bother with a birth story, and John is, well, John, giving us his wonderful, mystical discourse on the Logos. Both Luke and Matthew offer straightforward narratives of Jesus' birth. Mind you, their tellings differ, and notably: Luke writes of shepherds, Matthew his Magi. Luke mentions nothing about visitors from the East, while Matthew is silent about angelic visitations to men tending to animals in fields beyond Bethlehem. Yet take a moment to look at the average crèche scene, perhaps even the one in your own home, as in the Silver family's, and you'll see shepherds and Magi gathered together around the Christ child.

This meeting of lowly agricultural workers and Oriental sages occurs not only in crèches but in carols, art, and perhaps most powerfully, the popular imagination. And while some might suggest this is a Bad Thing, indicating a lack of proper Biblical literacy, I'd like to suggest that this Gospel mash-up is actually a Good Thing. Now don't get me wrong: I'd like everyone to be familiar with the Lukan and Matthean narratives and their differences. Each is powerful in its own way and offers a unique

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ADVENT AND CHRISTMAS AT FCC

Please join us as we celebrate Advent and prepare to welcome the Christ child!

Sunday, Dec. 1, 11:30 am (Following Worship)—Church Decorating Party
Come help hang wreaths, string lights, and have fun getting the church ready for this festive season.

Sunday, Dec. 8, 11:30 am (Following Worship)—FCC Community Caroling
Bring some Christmas fellowship to homebound church members and nearby friends and neighbors.

Friday, Dec. 13, 7:30 pm—Classicopia: Four-hand Holiday (*see page 11*)

Saturday, Dec. 14, 4:00 pm—Bel Canto Chamber Singers: Let There Be Light! (*see page 11*)

Sunday, Dec. 15, 5:00-7:00 pm—Christmas Party and Carol Sing at the Parsonage (*see below*)

Friday, Dec. 20, 6:00 pm—Blue Christmas Service, at FCC (*see below*)

Saturday, Dec. 21, 7:30 pm—Will Ögmundson: A Christmas Celebration (*see page 11*)

Sunday, Dec. 22, 5:00 pm—Community Dinner (*see Page 4*)



Tuesday, Dec. 24—CHRISTMAS EVE

5:00 pm: Family Service and Pageant

8:00 pm: Service of Lessons and Carols

11:00 pm: Candlelight Communion Service



* Daily Advent Devotionals *

If you wish to receive Rev. Silver's daily devotional messages by email during Advent, please send an email to either church@fccleb.org or revsrs@live.com.

Blue Christmas Service

Friday, December 20, 7:30 pm

FCC is hosting this special ecumenical service, for those carrying burdens or dealing with loss during what can be a challenging time of year. Come receive support, solace, and the hope and promise of God's grace.

Church Christmas Party and Carol Sing!

Sunday, December 15, 5:00-7:00 pm

At the Parsonage, 15 Kimball Street (Corner of Kimball and Elm)

All are warmly invited to the Parsonage for this year's church Christmas party! We'll gather round the fireplace for fellowship, song, and seasonal cheer. You are welcome to bring an appetizer to share with others.

DECEMBER 2013 CALENDAR

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1 ADVENT BEGINS 10a Worship (Communion)/ Church School 11:30a Church Decorating Party!	2 3p WCBH After-school 5:30p Wolf Cubs 6p Tiger Cubs	3 7p Boy Scouts	4 6p UVPRN 7p Bel Canto	5 7p Choir	6 6p Bear Cubs 7p Cub Scouts Committee	7 8a Men's Breakfast 9a Bible Study 10a Lisa Amundsen Student Recital
8 10a Worship/ Church School 11:30a FCC Community Caroling	9 5:30p Wolf Cubs 7p Diaconate	10 7p Christian Ed Committee 7p Boy Scouts	11 11a Grafton- Orange Assn Visitation Committee 6p UVPRN 7p Bel Canto	12 9:30a-4p Grafton- Orange Assn 7p Choir	13 6p Bear Cubs 7:30p Classicopia: Four-hand Holiday!	14 9a Bible Study 4p Bel Canto: Let There Be Light!
15 10a Worship/ Church School 5-7p Christmas Party and Carol Sing at the Parsonage	16 3p WCBH After-school 5:30p Wolf Cubs	17 7p Church Council 7p Boy Scouts	18 6p UVPRN	19 7p Choir	20 JANUARY NEWSLETTER CONTENT DUE No Bear Cubs 6p Blue Christmas Service	21 9a Bible Study 7:30p Will Ögmundson: A Christmas Celebration
22 10a Worship/ Church School 5p Christmas Community Dinner	23 5:30p Wolf Cubs 6p Tiger Cubs	24 CHRISTMAS EVE 5p Family Service 8p Lessons and Carols 11p Candlelight Communion	25 CHRISTMAS <i>(FCC office</i> <i>closed)</i> 6p UVPRN	26 No Choir	27 12p WCBH After-school 6p Bear Cubs	28 9a Bible Study
29 10a Worship/ Church School	30 5:30p Wolf Cubs	31 NEW YEAR'S EVE No Boy Scouts	1 NEW YEAR'S DAY <i>(FCC office</i> <i>closed)</i> 6p UVPRN	2 No Choir	3 6p Bear Cubs	4 8a Men's Breakfast 9a Bible Study

If your event is missing or incorrect, please notify us at church@fccleb.org or 603-448-4281.

SUNDAY SERVICE

CHRISTMAS COMMUNITY DINNER

Sunday, December 22, at 5:00 pm

Team Leader: Nan Parsons (603-863-8354/nparsons@sau88.net)

Please plan to participate in this vital service to our local community, which this month is very much a part of our celebration of Christmas. Volunteers old and new are welcome to donate ingredients and help with cooking/prep, set-up, serving, and clean-up. **To offer help, please sign up in the Parish Hall, or contact the church office or Nan Parsons.**

Never helped before but interested in trying? Make THIS your month!

New Year, New Leaders!

We need volunteers to lead our monthly dinners for the New Year (2014!). If you're interested in this important role, or if you have questions, please contact the church office.



Poinsettias FOR ADVENT AND CHRISTMAS

If you wish to offer poinsettias for the Sanctuary this season in honor or memory of someone, you may either donate your own flowers, contribute to the church's order, or both. (The church will be purchasing 6-inch poinsettias for \$14 each.)

If you would like to be included in the church's poinsettia order, please contact the church office no later than Sunday, December 8.

If you plan to donate your own flowers, please contact the office and deliver them to church by Sunday, December 15 (earlier is better!).

Dedications will be included in worship bulletins on Sunday, December 22, and Christmas Eve.

Participate in Worship!

Serve as a Liturgist or a Greeter/Usher

Ever wonder how your friends got to hand out bulletins at the door on Sunday morning? Or deliver the call to worship and read scripture from the lectern? Or walk gracefully from pew to pew collecting the offering?

It's easy—we asked, and they said yes.

No experience or training is required for any of these important roles in worship!

If you're interested in serving as a liturgist, contact the church office. If you're interested in greeting/ushering, please contact Carolyn Crocker (603-448-9410/carolyn.crocker@gmail.com).

Your congregation will thank you!

Queued for Coffee Hour

December—Board of Governors

January—Stewardship Committee

February—Christian Education

COMMITTEE NOTES

A MESSAGE FROM CHURCH COUNCIL

Church Council met on November 19 in executive session with Nancy Brown, to review and clarify complex issues which precipitated our contract with NPB & Associates and to determine our next steps in helping our congregation move forward. Our goal has been, and continues to be, to learn from the past to ensure a healthy, functioning, and vibrant congregation.

While we recognize that incidents experienced by some church members may have been felt or perceived differently by others, we also recognize there are areas in which we need to review and strengthen the way we work together.

We reviewed concerns in the following general categories—issues primarily related to change; issues primarily related to the learning curve of a pastor new to ministry; issues of concern around the role and function of boards, committees, and other groups within the congregation; and general statements of concern.

We discussed the invitation sent to all members of the congregation to engage in a facilitated conversation, either with Steve or with others within the church. It was noted that this is an open-ended invitation—with no time limit. The hope is that accepting this invitation may offer a way for healing to begin, both for those who felt the need to take a break from the life of the church and for any members who have stayed but have lingering issues they wish to address.

We concluded with a commitment to address the issues mentioned above and raised in the contract. I will work with Nancy to prioritize remaining issues. The Council will keep you posted on planned steps in this process as we proceed.

If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact me.

Warren Belding, for Church Council

Blessed by God, Blessed to Give—Stewardship 2013-14

We have been blessed by God in ways seen and unseen, most powerfully through the gift of Jesus. Created in God's image, we are blessed to give, too, sharing our time, our skills, our money—sharing the hope and promise we have known in the church.

To date, we are grateful to have received 25 pledges for the coming year, and we continue to welcome new pledge forms as they come in. Thank you to all, for your faithful response to God's call of service in and through First Congregational Church!

Offering envelopes for 2014 are available in the Parish Hall, on a self-serve basis.
Please take whichever box you wish and record your name and box number on the list.

COMMITTEE NOTES

PLEASE NOTE:

Annual Report Content

must be submitted to the
Church Administrator

by **Monday, January 13, 2014.**

THE 2014 ANNUAL MEETING

will be held after worship on
Sunday, February 9, 2014.

From the Nominating Committee:

Volunteer Opportunities Available!

As we approach a new year, and soon after, a new term for our volunteer committees, Church Council and the Nominating Committee ask you to consider committee service as an opportunity to contribute your skills and interests to the church's mission and ministry.

If you're interested in learning about a particular committee or available opportunities, **please contact Warren Belding** (603-448-2630/warren.d.belding@dartmouth.edu) or **Amy Driscoll** (603-448-0976/amykdriscoll@gmail.com).

December 2013 Meetings

Diaconate	12/9, 7:00
Christian Education	12/10, 7:00
Mission & Social	12/15, 11:15
Church Council	12/17, 7:00
Board of Governors	TBA

January 2014 Meetings

Diaconate	1/13, 7:00
Christian Education	1/15, 7:00
Mission & Social	1/19, 11:15
Church Council	1/21, 7:00
Board of Governors	1/27, 7:00

Last Call for Music Ministry Surveys

Thanks to those who have already returned music surveys (32 received so far!). If you haven't yet shared your opinions, thoughts, and suggestions, you may still do so! Blank forms are available in the Parish Hall or from the church office.

The Music Committee will begin compiling surveys in December, with the hope of reporting results in January.

Thank you for helping us guide our music ministry!

The Pastoral Perspective, *continued from Page 1*

perspective on the birth of Jesus. But when the two are blended, the mash-up makes a powerful theological statement: the Christ child is ready to be approached by the lowly and the powerful, the Jew and the Gentile, in short: anyone and everyone. The One who came to us as an infant, the Lord of Hosts who chose to become incarnate as a baby, did so for all humanity. Not for some of us, but for *all* of us.

The birth narratives remain among the most potent illustrations of why Fact and Truth aren't one and the same. The former points to verifiable data, the latter to something deeper, more profound. When we tell the story of the birth of Jesus and of those who came to worship the Christ child, we are not recounting fact. Instead, we are telling the Truth, the story of how much God loves us, as individuals and as a community. And the Truth doesn't mind a mash-up—as long as it faithfully points to the reality of God's profligate, boundless, healing love for his people.

Yours faithfully,

Steve

Report on the 212th Annual Meeting of the NH Conference, UCC

Linda J. Jacobs

On October 26 Laura Place and I traveled to Concord as annual conference delegates, and these notes do not do justice to the day. The conference theme of “Surprising Joy” was expressed throughout in a variety of ways, beginning with the keynote address by Rev. Talitha Arnold, minister of the United Church of Christ of Santa Fe since 1987. Her message, entitled “Rejoice Always, Pray without Ceasing: Being the Church God Calls You to Be,” could have inspired an entire paper on its own.

After a welcome from Associate Conference Minister Rev. Richard Slater and our opening worship service, Laura Seigny called the business meeting to order. She introduced staff and contractors who provide special services to the Conference, then those who serve on the Planning and Worship Committees. Rev. Kim McKerley introduced a 12-member Zimbabwe delegation, part of the Zimbabwe Ukama Partnership. Forty-three UCC churches in NH are partnered with a Zimbabwean church, and much “surprising joy” comes from these partnerships.

Rev. Gary Shulte spoke on the state of the Conference and introduced our 2014 Mission Income and Spending Plan, basing his message on Hebrews 11:10: “For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God.” He lifted up youth and young adults as our present and our future in the UCC, despite the relative lack of under-25 conference attendees. Rev. Schulte noted that as we have lost members, some pastors have taken part-time jobs since they are part-time

ministers! All 138 member churches need to support the Conference, each doing its part so that the denomination can thrive.

A representative from the Budget and Finance Committee summarized the 2014 budget, projected to show a \$23,000 loss unless the Horton Center can bring in its proposed revenue. This new ministry hosted only 250 campers this year, 150 short of the minimum to break even. An extension of our Christian Education programs and a wonderful way to strengthen youth ministry, Horton Center cannot continue to exist on nostalgia alone; one has to experience it first hand. A visit there opens children and adults alike to the presence of God and a life in Christ.

Rev. Warren Bouton, chair of the OCWM (Our Church’s Wider Mission) Committee, added his own words about Horton Center and discussed OCWM’s ability to change lives by strengthening stewardship and missions together. We all seek justice for those who need our collective voice, and the work of the church is to spread the love of God.

The Medicaid resolution was addressed, and we all were encouraged to speak to our NH legislators so that approximately 58,000 lower-income citizens can access healthcare services.

Rev. Slater explained the dissolution of the Sullivan County Association and the resulting revision of boundaries to accommodate its member churches. The Grafton-Orange, Merrimack, and Cheshire Associations all absorbed some Sullivan County churches into their membership.

A delegation from this year’s General Synod made it sound so wonderful that the rest of us felt left out for not having attended! They told us about experiences of feeling united despite

Continued next page

THE LIFE OF OUR CONGREGATION

NHC-UCC Annual Meeting, *Continued from previous page*

differences, such as participating in the rainbow scarf projects that raise awareness of bullying and hate, especially that directed toward the gay community.

After a wonderful lunch, the business meeting continued. Clergy were recognized for their number of years serving the state, the Conference Registrar delivered a report, and the election of Conference leadership was held.

We ratified the vote on new boundaries for the Grafton-Orange, Cheshire, and Merrimack Associations, then discussed and unanimously passed the new budget.

The meeting closed with a lovely worship service of bidding prayer, offering, Communion, and hymns.

Should anyone wish to review it, my conference folder is in the Parish Hall.

LEAVING... *But Not Leaving*

Most of you have likely heard that I am starting as the Interim Pastor of First Congregational Church of Croydon, United Church of Christ, on December 1. In the newsletter last month Steve explained a bit about the process that I am going through on my path to ordination, and this isn't directly part of that process. I guess you can call it an experience supplement to the ordination process—which may become part of the process after I have passed through my ecclesiastical council but in the meantime is running parallel to it.

This may bring up a question for you about what this means for my relationship with FCC Lebanon. There is a lot that we need to figure out yet, but I can answer part of it. As the interim pastor, I am not allowed to become a member of the Croydon congregation. This reflects the fact that I am there to provide an outside perspective, to help them tackle the challenging process of figuring out what part of their congregational identity left with the retirement of their pastor and what part resides with the congregation itself, and to help them decide “what’s next.” I am also not allowed to be considered for the position of their settled pastor, to maintain that outsider status when it comes to this process.

This means that Marty and I will remain members of FCC Lebanon as long as I am the pastor at the Croydon church. On my part this will largely be represented through my continuing financial pledge in support of FCC’s ministry. In essence, it will be very similar to my time as an intern at the Lyme church. Beyond that Marty and I have a lot to figure out before we settle on a new routine as we fully enter the career and life change that this opportunity represents.

Thank you for the part you have played in my journey thus far and will continue to play going forward.

Wishing you a holy Advent and Christmas,

God Bless,
Mark

THE LIFE OF OUR CONGREGATION



Gotcha! Some of the children of FCC (Emma and Michael Chavaree, Kailyn Rappaport, Katie and Grace Clancy, and Chip Silver) surreptitiously enjoy chocolate-covered pretzels behind the scenes at Coffee Hour.

It's That Time of Year Again!

The "Parish Players" ham it up in a revival of Jane Mason's stewardship play during worship on November 10.



A season of abundant gratitude. Many thanks to Kathie and Barry Schuster for this gorgeous altar array for Thanksgiving!



STEWARDSHIP AND MISSION



Christmas Gifts to Our Community

This year FCC is again sponsoring families for Christmas through Listen Community Services with a Giving Tree collection. We are pleased and grateful to report that all of the gifts were claimed by November 24! If you are donating a gift, please deliver it to church no later than Monday, December 16.

Thanks to all who helped us stock the Giving Tree!

Knitting Workshop

If you'd like to learn the basics of knitting, Linda Jacobs has offered to share her skills at her house in White River Junction. Possible times are Monday night, Dec. 2, Saturday morning, Dec. 7, and Monday night, Dec. 16, for a couple hours each.

Please contact Linda directly if you're interested, so that everyone can agree on a time that works (mrandsmrs.j@comcast.net or 802-296-8251).

CALLLED TO CARE

Called to Care offers great opportunities for stewardship within our congregation.

If you would like to learn more or join the group, please contact Linda Jacobs.



Scenes from Community Dinner. Above: Chip Silver and Khuan-Yu Hall perform "Happy Birthday" for dinner guests in November. Right: Ike and Linda Jacobs, Chip Silver, Katie and Grace Clancy, and Shelley Shipley serve baked ham, potatoes, peas, and salad in October.



Music *at the* Meetinghouse

December Concerts

All in the Sanctuary
First Congregational Church of Lebanon

Classicopia: Four-hand Holiday

Friday, December 13, at 7:30 pm

For over ten years, pianist Daniel Weiser and Classicopia have offered an engaging combination of brilliant musicianship and informative discussion in a relaxed atmosphere. This month Dan and fellow pianist Philip Liston-Kraft treat us to a seasonal program of Tchaikovsky, Gershwin, Copland, and more. \$20 suggested admission, \$10 for church members, children free.

For more, call 603-643-3337 or visit www.classicopia.org.

Bel Canto Chamber Singers: Let There Be Light!

Saturday, December 14, at 4:00 pm

Hal Sheeler leads this wonderful ensemble in a concert featuring Morten Lauridsen's *Lux Aeterna*, which the composer describes as "an intimate work of quiet serenity centered around a universal symbol of hope." The program also includes Mozart's offertory *Alma Dei Creatoris* and a variety of other works to uplift spirits for the season. \$12 admission, \$6 for students, children 12 and under free.

For more, visit www.belcantosingers.org.

Will Ögmundson, Piano: A Christmas Celebration

Saturday, December 21, at 7:30 pm

Enjoy a festive evening featuring the sensational, virtuosic talent of our own Will Ögmundson! He'll play a piano adaptation of the Nutcracker Suite, treat us to his own arrangements of some favorite carols, and welcome a special, mystery guest. *Free-will offering.*

LOOKING FOR THE MESSIAH THIS ADVENT?

Sunday, December 22, at 6:00 pm — St. Denis Catholic Church, Hanover

All are welcome to join either the audience or the choir for this community performance of Handel's beloved oratorio. Bring your own score; some will be provided. Visit www.saintdenisparish.org.

First Congregational Church of Lebanon

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