



# Grace Notes

The Newsletter of First Congregational Church

## What's Inside

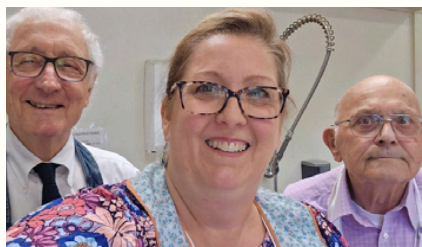
Advent at FCC.....2



Closing the Year.....5



Host a Dinner in 2025! .....5



Sunday Service .....2

Poinsettia Open Door Fund.....2

December Calendar .....3

Stewardship 2025.....4

Blue Christmas Service .....5

Homeless Memorial Vigil.....5

Fill the Cart! .....5

Music at the Meetinghouse.....6

## The Pastoral Perspective

Hope, Peace, Joy, and Love.

These are the four themes of Advent, at least according to the Internet and tradition. Maybe you know these. Me? I did not know this about Advent until this year. I did know that the third Sunday of Advent was dedicated to *gaudete*, or joy. But other than that, nothing.

While one of my clergy colleagues suggests the themes were originally a device used to market calendars, I don't think the origin is so important. The themes make sense as a way for us to understand the season.

As Christians, we should always have hope. We should anticipate peace. Joy at the prospect of Jesus' arrival? Sure. (Think of the shepherds in Luke for a good example of joy in action.) And then there is love. Well, we read in the first letter to John (4:8) that "God is love," so who are we to argue?

I think these four themes are good for us to entertain during the season of Advent. There is no mention of a season of Advent in the Bible. Early Christians just began to have a sense of anticipation, focused mostly on the Parousia, the expected return of Christ, which they believed to be imminent.

But time passed. Things changed, and so did perceptions. The imminence of Jesus' return may have been understood differently, but it was no less longed for. People began to recall the past, and they began to tell the story of Jesus' birth in more detail. What was in some ways an afterthought (there is, after all, no Nativity in Mark's Gospel!) took on more and more importance, to the point where all of Christendom now awaits the birth of the Savior.

Nowadays, Christmas is, for many, the Big Day, and not so much because Jesus will be born, but because of... Santa Claus.

Santa Claus is an iteration of Saint Nicholas, who was a real person, the Bishop of Myra. Nicholas (ca. 270-343) was a Greek Christian from Asia Minor, and this has led to the historically uninformed speculation that he was a Turk (the Ottomans would not conquer Anatolia for another 1,300 years). So, Nicholas was not a Turk, but a Greek, and he possibly participated in the Council of Nicaea in 325. He is remembered for gift-

Continued on Page 4

# SUNDAY SERVICE

## PREPARE YE THE WAY!—ADVENT AND CHRISTMAS AT FCC

*Join us in welcoming the Christ Child this month, either in our Sanctuary or on Zoom.*

Worship bulletins and Zoom links are emailed prior to each service, with recordings later posted on YouTube.

**Sundays through December 22, 10:00—Advent Worship Services**

**TUESDAY, DECEMBER 24—CHRISTMAS EVE WORSHIP**

**Family Service and Pageant, 5:00 pm:** A joyful service of Christmas song and story for all who are young at heart. Children are invited to play a role in acting out the events of the Nativity story. *If you or your children would like to participate, please contact Rachel Silver ([rachelsilver@live.com](mailto:rachelsilver@live.com)).*

**Service of Lessons and Carols, 8:00 pm:** The story of our Savior's birth in lessons from Scripture and traditional carols. The Rev. Steve Silver will offer a reflection, and the FCC Choir will sing.

**Sundays, December 29 and January 5, 10:00—The Journey from Christmas to Epiphany**



### THE CHRISTMAS FUND

The UCC's Christmas Fund offers compassionate support to retired clergy and their families with pension, healthcare, and emergency assistance.

*Please consider contributing as you are able.*

*(Payable to FCC, memo "Christmas Fund")*

**Parsonage Potluck and Carol Sing!**

**Sunday, December 8, 4:00-6:00 pm**

**15 Kimball Street (Corner of Kimball/Elm)**

All are warmly invited to the Parsonage for our annual Christmas party! We'll gather 'round the fireplace for festive fellowship and favorite carols.

*Please bring a favorite dish or holiday treat to share.*

### All Are Welcome to Worship at FCC

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

#### Coffee Hour Served!

We're happy to share this popular opportunity for fellowship as often as we have volunteers to supply and serve it. **New volunteers always welcome—please sign up on the list in the kitchen.**

#### 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.***



### The Poinsettia Fund TO BENEFIT THE OPEN DOOR MINISTRY

For years our congregation has offered poinsettias in honor or memory of family and friends. While we always adorn the Sanctuary with flowers, we no longer buy individual plants for each dedication.

***We invite you instead to honor your loved ones with a modest contribution to our Open Door Ministry for community assistance.***

Please submit dedications to the church office by **Thursday, December 19**; contributions may be made beyond that until **Sunday, December 29**.

*(Payable to FCC, memo "Poinsettia Fund")*

If you'd like **ADVENT DEVOTIONAL REFLECTIONS** from Rev. Steve Silver by email daily during Advent, please let him know or email [silver@fccleb.org](mailto:silver@fccleb.org).

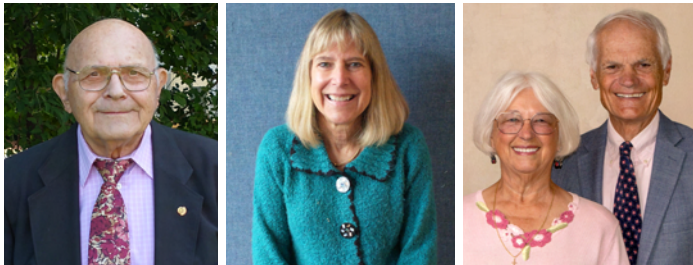
# DECEMBER 2024

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<b>1 ADVENT 1</b> 10a Worship/CCC (Communion) 11a Christmas Decorating	<b>2</b> 4-9p UVMC Suzuki Program	<b>3</b> 12p Cameo Baroque 3:30p FCC Choir	<b>4</b> 2-6:30p UVMC 7p Bel Canto Chamber Singers	<b>5</b> 9:30a UVMC Cello Choir 3-5:15p UVMC Children's Choir 7p NA Group	<b>6</b> 7:30p Anon Coffeehouse	<b>7</b> 'Tis the Season: Lebanon Holiday Celeb (all day) 7p UV Voices: Spirits of Yule
<b>8 ADVENT 2</b> 10a Worship/CCC 2p Classicopia: Four-Hand Holiday 4-6p Parsonage Christmas Party	<b>9</b> 9a-4p (all week) LISTEN Holiday Baskets Project 4-9p UVMC Suzuki Program 7p Diaconate	<b>10</b> 9a-4p LISTEN HB 12p Cameo Baroque 3:30p FCC Choir 7p Council	<b>11</b> 8a-3:30p WIC 9a-4p LISTEN HB 2-6:30p UVMC 7p Bel Canto Chamber Singers	<b>12</b> 9a-4p LISTEN HB 3-5:15p UVMC Children's Choir 7p NA Group	<b>13</b> 9a-4p LISTEN HB 7p Bel Canto Chamber Singers	<b>14</b> 7:30p Bel Canto: In Dulci Jubilo
<b>15 ADVENT 3</b> 10a Worship/CCC 4p Bel Canto: In Dulci Jubilo	<b>16</b> 9a-4p (all week) LISTEN Holiday Baskets Project 4-9p UVMC Suzuki Program	<b>17</b> 9a-4p LISTEN HB 12p Cameo Baroque 3:30p FCC Choir 7p Council	<b>18</b> 9a-4p LISTEN HB 2-6:30p UVMC	<b>19</b> 9a-4p LISTEN HB 3-5:15p UVMC Children's Choir 7p NA Group	<b>20</b> 9a-4p LISTEN HB 5p Blue Christmas Svc (at LUMC) 5:30p Homeless Memorial Vigil (in WRJ)	<b>21</b> 9a-1p Messiah Rehearsals
<b>22 ADVENT 4</b> 10a Worship/CCC 3p UVMC Messiah Sing!	<b>23</b> No UVMC	<b>24</b> CHRISTMAS EVE 5p Family Service and Pageant 8p Lessons and Carols	<b>25</b> CHRISTMAS DAY No UVMC	<b>26</b> 11a-6p WIC No UVMC 7p NA Group	<b>27</b>	<b>28</b>
<b>29</b> 10a Worship/CCC	<b>30</b> No UVMC	<b>31</b> No FCC Choir	<b>1</b> New Year's Day	<b>2</b> No UVMC 7p NA Group	<b>3</b> 7:30p Anon Coffeehouse	<b>4</b>
<b>5</b> 10a Worship/CCC (Communion)	<b>6</b> 4-9p UVMC Suzuki Program	<b>7</b> 12p Cameo Baroque 3:30p FCC Choir	<b>8</b> 2-6:30p UVMC No Bel Canto Chamber Singers	<b>9</b> 3-5:15p UVMC Children's Choir 7p NA Group	<b>10</b>	<b>11</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.

***Send Us Your Directory Photos!***

Our newly-digital directory can easily be updated as our congregation grows and changes. Available to everyone as a PDF file, the directory is distributed by email each month (printed copies are available on request). **If you haven't yet done so, please submit a current photo (along with any updated contact details) to the church office. Photos should be JPG or PNG files, in a frontal, head-and-shoulders format clearly showing faces (like these fine examples!).**



***EVERYONE who feels a connection to FCC is included in our directory—whether or not they have formally joined as covenant members.***

STEWARDSHIP 2025

**Doing What Is Right and Just**

***To do righteousness and justice is more acceptable to the Lord than sacrifice. —Proverbs 21:3***

Scripture teaches us that God is more pleased by what we *do*, rather than by what we give up. Our gifts of money are important and needed, but if we are looking to please God, we must do more. In this traditional season of giving we'll consider righteousness and justice, and what those concepts mean for our church and for us individually.

***We're grateful to have received 19 pledges so far for 2025! No matter how much you pledge, faithful stewardship is vital to our mission and ministry. Thank you for considering your commitment to FCC in the coming year.***

Offering envelopes for 2025 are in the Parish Hall. Please help yourself to a box and record it on the list.

***Committee Meetings***

The following meetings will take place on Zoom:

**Diaconate**                12/9 and 1/13/25, 7:00

**Church Council**    12/10 and 1/14/25, 7:00

*For information on other groups' plans, contact the church office.*

***Please note that content for the***

**2024 ANNUAL REPORT**

***must be submitted to the Church Administrator by Friday, January 10, 2025***

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

giving and for being the patron saint of both children and sailors. The latter role led to his popularity in the Low Countries and his incarnation as Sinterklaas, who made his way to New Amsterdam (New York). From there, the rest is history and a continually unfolding story.

This year, thanks to Target, we now have “hot Santa”—no girth, just cut abs—and he seems to have caught on with a segment of the population. On November 28 the *New York Times* posed (and answered) the question, “Did the World Need a Hot Santa? It Got One Anyway.” So, Santa has gone from being a cleric in the Roman Empire to a sales associate named Kris K. All interesting, but absolutely nothing to do with Jesus, who, as clichéd as it may sound, is the reason for the season.

Our God is one of hope, peace, joy, and love. In a time that is downright weird, we have the opportunity to welcome a God—no, *the* God—who brings us all we truly need. Happy Advent, and Merry Christmas.

Yours faithfully, *Steve*



# A SEASON OF COMMUNITY

## 2025 Community Dinners

We're excited to continue our revival of Community Dinners in the new year! Anyone can lend a hand with meal planning, setup, serving, and cleanup—friends, coworkers, neighbors, ANYONE! If you're interested in leading a dinner in 2025, resources are available—please contact the church office.



*All are warmly invited to come, eat, and share fellowship, regardless of need or affiliation.*

## Blue Christmas Service

**Friday, December 20, at 5:00 pm**  
**Lebanon United Methodist Church**

An intimate, ecumenical service for those carrying burdens or dealing with loss during a challenging season, offering peace, hope, and Christ's love on **THE LONGEST NIGHT** of the year.

## Candlelight Vigil and Memorial

*For the Homeless Who Passed Away in 2024*

**Friday, December 20, at 5:30 pm**  
**LISTEN Parking Lot, 42 Maple St, White River Jct**

All are invited to gather in White River Junction to remember all those in our community whose lives have been cut short by homelessness in the past year. This event is sponsored by LISTEN Community Services, the Upper Valley Haven, FCC, and other organizations.

## Do Your Part to Fill the Cart!

We're currently collecting non-perishable food and personal-care items on behalf of:

**LISTEN COMMUNITY SERVICES**

For a list of current and ongoing needs, please visit [listencs.org/food-pantry#Itemswneeditmost](https://listencs.org/food-pantry#Itemswneeditmost).

## Merry Christmas to Our Guests!

FCC-Lebanon extends its warmest wishes for a blessed Christmas season and a peaceful, prosperous new year to all who use our building for regular events:

*The Anonymous Coffeehouse*

*The Bel Canto Chamber Singers*

*Lebanon Recreation, Arts, & Parks Dept*  
*NH Women, Infants, and Children Program*

*The "Together We Can" Recovery Group*

*The Upper Valley Music Center*

...and the many, many, MANY performers in our

*Music at the Meetinghouse Series*



Credit: Nathaniel Lew



Former FCC organist Henry Danaher shares a lovely recital; Rev. Silver reads to Lea and Naicha; and even the site where Jesus gave the Sermon on the Mount has had water issues.



Credit: Eric Madison, ReArch

# MUSIC AT THE MEETINGHOUSE



Music  
at the  
Meetinghouse

## DECEMBER CONCERTS

All in the Sanctuary. Masks welcome but optional.

### **The Anonymous Coffeehouse—Fridays, Dec. 6, Jan. 3, 17, and 31 (etc.), all at 7:30 pm**

Our comfy community venue for live music continues its fifth season as an informal “listening room” for the finest folk musicians in New England! *Free admission, donations welcome. For more, visit [anoncoffee.org](http://anoncoffee.org).*

### **Upper Valley Voices: Spirits of Yule—Saturday, December 7, at 7:00 pm**

Leading one of the area’s premier choral ensembles (formerly Thetford Chamber Singers), director Kevin Quigley creatively programs repertoire drawn from around the world. *Spirits of Yule* explores the magical, mystical beings associated with the holiday season. *Admission TBD; more at [uppervalleyvoices.org](http://uppervalleyvoices.org).*

### **Classicopia: Four-Hand Holiday—Sunday, December 8, at 2:00 pm**

Good friends Dan Weiser and Philip Liston-Kraft share the keyboard for festive, four-hand arrangements of seasonal favorites, from the Blue Danube Waltz and the Nutcracker Suite to jazzy carols and show tunes. *Adults \$20, FCC members \$15, children free; more at [classicopia.org/concert/four-hand-holiday4](http://classicopia.org/concert/four-hand-holiday4).*

### **Bel Canto Chamber Singers: In Dulci Jubilo—Sat., Dec. 14, 7:30 pm / Sun., Dec. 15, 4:00 pm**

Bel Canto celebrates winter and the Christmas season with music for choir, strings, and piano, featuring the *Magnificat* of Antonio Vivaldi, pieces by Ola Gjeilo and Eric Whitacre, and settings of traditional English, Spanish, German, and Nigerian carols. *Admission by donation (\$15 suggested); more at [www.belcantosingers.org](http://www.belcantosingers.org).*

### **Upper Valley Music Center Messiah Sing!—Sunday, December 22, at 3:00 pm**

Organized by UVMC’s voice faculty and directed by Mark Nelson, this annual performance of G. F. Handel’s beloved oratorio features student soloists and chamber orchestra. All are welcome to join the chorus (scores are available!) or just listen. *Free-will donation (\$20 suggested); more at [uvmusic.org/event/messiah-sing](http://uvmusic.org/event/messiah-sing).*

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## AND COMING IN THE NEW YEAR...

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### **Benjamin Kulp, Cello—Sunday, January 12, at 3:00 pm**

### **UVMC Children’s Chorus: A Celebration of Song—Saturday, January 25, at 2:00 pm**

### **Cantabile Women’s Voices: Night and Day—Sunday, February 2, at 3:00 pm**

### **LOH ON LOCATION: Don Flemons—Saturday, February 15, at 7:30 pm**

## Lebanon Downtown Holiday Celebration

**Saturday, December 7**

*(Various locations throughout town, all day)*

Lebanon Recreation and local businesses offer an impressive array of festivities around the Green, and the Upper Valley Music Center will present student recitals, caroling, and other events. **More details at [lebanonnh.gov](http://lebanonnh.gov) and [uvmusic.org](http://uvmusic.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

DATED MATERIAL

PLEASE DELIVER PROMPTLY

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

**PREPARE YE THE WAY!—ADVENT AND CHRISTMAS AT FCC**  
Please See Schedule of Worship Services on Page 2



Music  
at the  
Meetinghouse

**From Advent into the New Year!**

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**First Congregational Church of Lebanon**

The Rev. Stephen R. Silver, Pastor

Ernie Drown, Organist and Choir Director • Brian Clancy, Church Administrator

Jon Scott, Chair of Church Council • Linda Gerlach, Chair of Deacons • Barbara Jones, Moderator

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